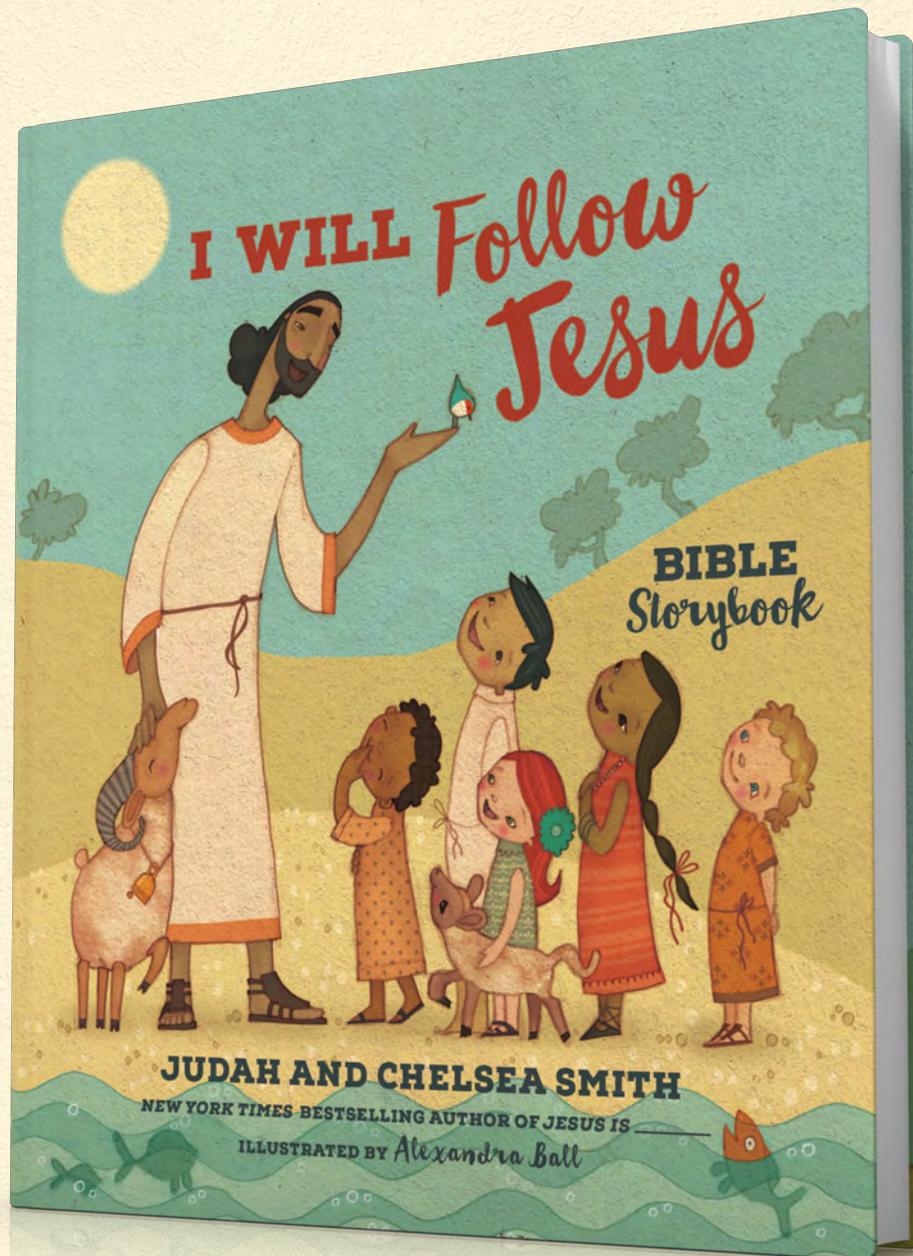
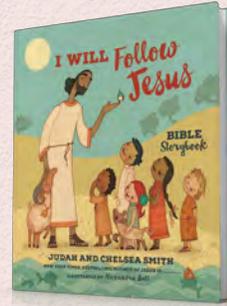


# *I Will Follow Jesus Bible Storybook* Curriculum



Lesson Book  
*Perfect for Kindergarten–5th Grade*

# Thanks for downloading the *I Will Follow Jesus Bible Storybook* Curriculum!



It means the world to us you are using the *I Will Follow Jesus Bible Storybook* curriculum! It is a labor of love and we hope it helps you in your mission to show the children in your kid's ministry exactly who Jesus is.

There are so many ways to communicate the gospel to a child. Some work better than others. This means HOW we choose to communicate who Jesus is, is almost as important as WHAT we say. We wrote these messages in a way that children will find simple, fun, and easy to grasp. As you get started, here are a few details we hope will help you squeeze as much goodness out of them as possible! Each message in the *I Will Follow Jesus Bible Storybook* curriculum:

## **TELLS A STORY**

Everyone loves a great story. Stories paint a picture and make us feel. We connect with them on emotional and visceral levels. Jesus used stories to turn lifeless facts people knew about God into life-giving truth they could relate to. Each message strives to tell the story about a Biblical character and how their personal story points us to Jesus.

## **HAS ONE MAIN POINT**

Growing up it seemed the more points a sermon had the more "in-depth" it was. The problem was, we forgot 99% of what we heard by the time we left the parking lot. If we can't retain more than one or two concepts as adults, why in the world would we expect kids to fare any better? Each message in the *I Will Follow Jesus Bible Storybook* curriculum concludes with one main point. Easy. Simple. Significant.

## **FOCUS ON WHAT JESUS DID RATHER THAN WHAT WE DO**

The Gospel is all about what Jesus did for us, not what we do for Him. We don't want children to leave church fixated on what they should do to earn God's approval. Instead, we want kids consumed with everything Jesus did for them. Does Jesus give us rules that show us the way life works best? Yup! Can we do any of them without His power? Nope! Our goal is to show them that everything we do is in response to what He already did!

## **SHOULD BE COMMUNICATED IN TWO DIFFERENT WAYS**

This is confusing. Let us explain. The 4-and-5-year-old and the Kindergarten–5th grade messages are very different. When using the 4-and-5-year-old curriculum, the speaker will read the story section out of the *I Will Follow Jesus Bible Storybook*. Think story time with a concluding thought and prayer.

The Kindergarten–5th grade messages, are meant to be preached rather than read. We recommend the communicator read through the message notes ahead of time to internalize the details and the main point. It's one thing to read notes off of a page. It is something entirely different when you paint a picture and communicate the story in a way that is energetic, passionate and fun!

The fact you are in some way connected to children's ministry makes you OUR HERO! We pray the *I Will Follow Jesus Bible Storybook* curriculum serves the incredible kids and leaders in your children's ministry by reinforcing the gospel story in simple, beautiful ways that they too will choose to follow Jesus forever.

We love you!

Judah and Chelsea Smith – Lead Pastors, The City Church  
Damon Strom - City Kids Pastor, The City Church

# Chapter 1: God Makes Everything

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

## THE BIBLE

Genesis 1

## INTRODUCTION

Has anyone ever made fun of you before?

I've been made fun of, and it feels lame!

*(Tell the kids a story about a time someone made fun of you.)*

Have you ever had someone tell you that they like you and think you're cool?

How does that make you feel? It feels incredible!

Do you know that is how God thinks about you? He thinks you're amazing. He loves you just the way you are! Why? Because He made you awesome!

## TRANSITION

In our story today, we find out that God made everything—and everything God makes is amazing!

## MAIN POINT

### OPTIONAL: READ THE STORY ON PAGES 4-5: GOD MAKES EVERYTHING

In the very first book of the Bible called Genesis, it says everything started with God. Before anything existed, God was there.

Then it says that God created the universe and everything in it.

This includes the planet Jupiter, apple trees, black holes, chipmunks, flowers, and volcanoes!

God made everything just how He wanted it.

What's even cooler is that the whole time God used His words to make everything, He thought about you and me!

That's right, He thinks about us!

We are His absolute very most favorite part of creation.

On the day God decided to make the world, the first thing He did was create light.

On day two, He made the wide blue sky that is high above our heads.

On day three, He made the ocean for swimming, the beach for building sandcastles, the ground for walking, the flowers for smelling, and the trees for climbing. Love that stuff!

On day four, He created the hot yellow sun, the cool white moon, and the tiny stars twinkling in the night sky.

On day five, He made fish and sharks and whales, along with everything that swims in the oceans. Then He made the birds that sing in the morning and fly high in the sky all day.

On day six, God started by making the animals that live on the ground, like cats and dogs and lions and giraffes. Then He made the most special part of all of creation: people. He created a man and a woman, and He loved them very much.

When He was done, God looked around. He liked what He had made. He liked it a lot.

He said with a smile, "It is very good." And He decided to take a day off just to enjoy all the amazing things He had made.

## **CONCLUSION**

Everything God makes is VERY GOOD!

God made you and me, and that means that we are VERY GOOD!

So if someone says your head is too big, or you are too short or too tall, or you don't run fast enough or sing pretty enough, just remember this: God thinks you are perfect!

God loves you just how you are. God likes to watch you play and have fun. He loves to hear you laugh and sing. You are amazing.

When you climb a tree, jump in the ocean, smell a flower, or chase a squirrel, remember this: God made all those things, and He likes them a lot. But His favorite part of creation is YOU.

## **PRAYER**

Jesus, I want to think about myself the way You think about me. I want You to show me how much You love me!

## Chapter 2: God is Our Friend

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### THE BIBLE

Genesis 2

### INTRODUCTION

There is a lot of great stuff in the world, but having a best friend is one of the best!

Candy? It's great. Birthday gifts? Love them. Summer vacation? Awesome!

But a best friend is even better.

Who here has a best friend? What is their name and where did you meet them?

*(Tell a funny story about your best friend growing up.)*

Best friends make life amazing!

### TRANSITION

In fact, best friends are so amazing, God created the world and people just so He could have them! His very first best friends were a man and woman named Adam and Eve who lived a long time ago.

### MAIN POINT

The Bible is the most incredible book ever written!

It isn't just a big fat book from a long time ago. It is the number one way we discover Who Jesus is. In our story today, we find out that God wants to be best friends with another person: you!

### OPTIONAL: READ THE STORY ON PAGES 6–7: GOD IS OUR FRIEND

In the very beginning of time, God made the world using only His words. Now that's POWERFUL!

But there was no one to live in it. That wasn't good, so God said, "I have a great idea! I am going to create people. They will be my friends."

He started by making the very first man.

God picked up a handful of dirt and breathed into it. Suddenly, it became a real person! God named him Adam.

God gave Adam a beautiful garden to live in called Eden. It had green grass, blue rivers, friendly animals, and trees full of delicious fruit. It was Adam's home, and it was awesome.

But Adam was lonely.

So God said, "Adam, you need a friend too. I'm going to create a wife for you!"

So while Adam was asleep, God took out one of Adam's ribs and made it into a woman. Adam named the woman Eve.

Adam and Eve were perfect for each other. They loved each other, and they were husband and wife.

God loved them too, and he loved to spend time with them in the garden that He had made for them. All of God's creation was good, but the best part of it all was that God and people were together, and they were best friends.

Think about how good it feels when you're with your best friend. That is how God feels when He thinks about you!

### **CONCLUSION**

God wants to be YOUR best friend! And guess what? He's the best friend you could ever have.

God is always with you, even though you can't see Him. He will love you no matter what. He loves you when you are happy and when you are sad. He loves you when you are nice and even when you act mean.

You can talk to God about anything, whenever you want. He is always listening, and He loves it when you pray and talk to him. God loves to spend time with you!

### **PRAYER**

Dear Jesus, thank You for being my friend. I know You will always love me and never leave me alone. I can talk to You about anything. You are my best friend.

## Chapter 3: A Bad Decision

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### THE BIBLE

Genesis 2-3

### INTRODUCTION

Who here has a brother or a sister?

I have a question for you. Have you ever gotten into a fight with them?

(With feigned shock) NO! I'm shocked!

Just kidding! We've all gotten into fights with our siblings before.

But let's face it, not all fights are the same. There are little baby fights, and then there are BIG granddaddy fights where people scream, yell, and say mean things to each other.

*(Tell a story about a time you got into trouble for fighting with a sibling or friend.)*

If you have a big fight with your sister or brother, what happens when your mom or dad find out about it? You're in TROUBLE!

We may say it was the other person's fault, but we know that it was our fault too, and then we get disciplined.

Discipline is sometimes hard to understand when we're young. But our parents discipline us because they love us and want to help us live the best life possible.

### TRANSITION

Just like with my (sister/brother) and me, the story of Adam and Eve shows us how God loves us even when we make really big mistakes.

### MAIN POINT

God created the earth, the moon, sea gulls, flowers, and corn on the cob.

And last of all, He created the first man and woman. Their names were Adam and Eve.

### OPTIONAL: READ THE STORY ON PAGES 8–9: A BAD DECISION

God loved Adam and Eve, and they loved God. They never did bad things, and they were friends with God.

God told Adam and Eve, "I want you to be happy and safe. I made the Garden of Eden for you to live in. You can eat any the fruit from any trees you want—except that one over there. If you eat from that tree, you will be punished."

One day, Eve saw a snake. "Pretty snake," she thought. But it was actually a bad snake.

Then something crazy happened. The snake talked to her! Now, Eve didn't seem surprised by the fact that she was having a conversation with a large reptile.

Maybe the Garden of Eden was next door to Narnia. Who knows?

Just then, Adam walked up next to Eve, and the two listened to the sneaky snake begin to tell the first lie in history.

The snake said, "Eve, eat the fruit from that tree—even though God said not to. It will make you smart and strong like God."

Adam and Eve knew they shouldn't eat it. They knew it was wrong. But the snake sounded so convincing. So they did the one thing God asked them not to do: They ate the fruit from the tree that He had told them not to eat from.

Eve picked the fruit took a bite. So far so good. But the moment Adam sunk his teeth into the juicy fruit, suddenly a terrible feeling swept over them. Their joy disappeared, and in its place a dark, gross feeling overcame them.

They felt so horrible that they wanted to hide—from God, from the light, from everything.

Just then, God called their names. "Adam and Eve, where are you?" He wanted to hang out and laugh with His best friends.

But instead of laughing with God like they used to, they ran away and hid. They were sad, embarrassed, and scared.

God was sad too. He told Adam and Eve, "I love you. But now I have to discipline you because you disobeyed. You will need to leave the Garden of Eden forever. You will have pain in your lives, and one day you will die."

But God's love for them was just as strong as the day He created His children. God disciplined Adam and Eve because He loved them.

So from that day on, God took care of Adam and Eve. He promised them that someday, there wouldn't be any more pain or dying.

You see, sin stole His best-friend relationship with His children, but God already had a plan to win them back!

## **CONCLUSION**

Can you think of a time when you made a mistake and got in trouble?

Maybe it was with a parent or a teacher at school?

Getting in trouble isn't fun at all, especially if you got disciplined.

When your parents discipline you, it doesn't mean they don't love you.

Actually, it means they DO love you a lot! They care about you and want to help you live better.

Hebrews 12:5–6 (MSG) says:

"My dear child, don't shrug off God's discipline, but don't be crushed by it either. It's the child he loves that he disciplines; the child he embraces, he also corrects."

God disciplined Adam and Eve because they disobeyed Him. He did it because He still loved them.

In fact, even before Adam and Eve ruined God's perfect world with sin, Jesus knew He was going to die to rescue people and fix their broken relationship with God!

Just like with Adam and Eve, God loves us even when we make mistakes.

### **PRAYER**

Jesus, thank You for giving me the best life possible and for loving me enough to tell me when I am doing wrong things. Help me follow and obey You always.

## Chapter 4: The Floating Zoo

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### THE BIBLE

Genesis 6:9–10, 18–22 (MSG)

9–10 *This is the story of Noah: Noah was a good man, a man of integrity in his community. Noah walked with God. Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.*

18–21 *“But I’m going to establish a covenant with you: You’ll board the ship, and your sons, your wife and your sons’ wives will come on board with you. You are also to take two of each living creature, a male and a female, on board the ship, to preserve their lives with you: two of every species of bird, mammal, and reptile—two of everything so as to preserve their lives along with yours. Also get all the food you’ll need and store it up for you and them.”*

22 *Noah did everything God commanded him to do.*

### INTRODUCTION

Who here hates getting stains on your favorite shirt or sweatshirt?

It’s terrible! I don’t care if I soak my other clothes in mud or cover them in spaghetti sauce, but if I spill syrup on my Seahawks jersey . . . AAAHHH!

Who else has a favorite shirt they hate getting dirty? What is it?

The worst is when you get a stain you can’t get rid of.

### TRANSITION

But worse than a stain on your favorite shirt, sin stained God’s perfect creation. Our story today shows how He dealt with it.

### RECAP

The Bible is the most incredible book ever written!

Not because it is really old and super thick, or because some Bibles have that stringy little tail hanging out of them.

The Bible is incredible because every story shows us who Jesus is!

Last week, we saw how the story of Adam and Eve shows us that Jesus created people to be His best friends. We also learned that Jesus is our Rescuer from sin!

### MAIN POINT

This week, we will continue our journey through the Bible by looking at a man who survived one of the worst natural disasters ever!

His name was Noah.

Here's what happened:

### **OPTIONAL: READ THE STORY ON PAGES 12–13: THE FLOATING ZOO**

After Adam and Eve left the Garden of Eden, they had lots of kids. Those kids had more kids until people began to build towns and cities.

But there was a problem: Adam and Eve's disobedience let sin into the world. Sin turned people nasty and mean.

That's right—people only cared about themselves. They lied, stole, murdered, hurt, hated, and basically did as much bad as they could. Everything had gone wrong.

Everyone in God's creation had decided they didn't need God anymore.

Everyone except a man named Noah. The Bible says Noah was different from everyone else on earth, because Noah was best friends with God.

So God told Noah about His plan. God was going to start over.

That's right! There was so much sin and nastiness that God wanted to get rid of it all. He was going to do it by washing everything away . . . literally.

God told Noah he was going to send a humungous kitchen sponge to clean the world.

Wait, that's not right.

God told Noah he was going to send a team of giant dentists to brush the sin away.

Um, that's not right either.

What did God send to wash away the sin? That's right!

God told Noah he was going to send a FLOOD.

But Noah was different, because Noah knew how much God loved him. Noah said yes to God's love. So God protected Noah and his family from the flood by asking him to build a gigantic boat called the ark.

But Noah and his family weren't the only ones on the ark. God sent two of every kind of walking and flying animal in the world!

Water covered the whole earth! Everything died but Noah, his family, and the animals that were safe in the ark.

For forty days and nights, Noah and his family floated in the ark. They took care of bugs, tigers, birds, polar bears, giraffes, hedgehogs, and slugs—everything that walked, crawled, slithered, or flew went into the ark.

Then one day, BUMP! The ark crashed on top of a mountain called Mount Ararat.

Noah opened the big door on the ark (CREEEAK) and looked outside. All the water was gone!

Noah and his family ran outside with all of the animals.

God rescued Noah, his family, and every animal!

But even though the flood washed away all of the hurt and pain, it was only for a little bit. Before long, people were doing bad things and hating and hurting each other again.

Not even flood water was powerful enough to get rid of sin.

## **CONCLUSION**

But God had a bigger and better plan. He was going to rescue people from sin, not by sending a flood, but by sending His own Son, Jesus.

Romans 1:16 (MSG) says:

*It's news I'm most proud to proclaim, this extraordinary Message of God's powerful plan to rescue everyone who trusts him, starting with Jews and then right on to everyone else!*

Jesus is our rescuer!

Only Jesus is strong enough to defeat sin once and for all, and that is exactly what He did when He died on the cross!

Like Noah, when we say yes to Jesus' love, He rescues us from sin's stain on our lives. Jesus is the only one who can wash away our sin!

## **PRAYER**

Jesus, You are my Rescuer. I want to say yes to Your love for me. Please wash away my sin.

## Chapter 5: A Promise in the Sky

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### INTRODUCTION

Who can explain what it means to make a promise?

Has someone ever made a big promise to you . . . and kept it?

That is the coolest feeling ever!

*(Ask the kids about a time someone kept a great promise, and then tell them a story about your own life.)*

When someone makes and keeps a promise, you find out that you can trust them.

### TRANSITION

Thousands of years ago, God made a promise to never again destroy the world with a flood. God always keeps His promises. But what makes this story more amazing is that God's promise to Noah points to an even greater promise. God promised to save the world not only from water, but from sin.

### MAIN POINT

*There are hundreds of amazing characters in the Bible, and hundreds of crazy stories (and I mean CRAZY). But all the characters and their stories point to one main character and one main story.*

*The Bible is all about Jesus. Every story points to Him—even the story about Noah and God's promise in the sky.*

### RECAP

After Adam and Eve disobeyed God, sin flooded in and began to ruin God's perfect world.

When they ran away from God's love, they no longer had any love to show each other.

People became hateful, horrible, and mean. It broke God's heart.

To stop this massive flood of sin, God sent a huge flood of water to wash it away.

But out of all the people on earth, there was one man left who loved God. His name was Noah. God asked His friend, "Noah, will you please build a gigantic floating zoo?"

Noah said, "Yup." God filled it up with two of every kind of walking, slithering, crawling, and hopping animal on the planet. Oh, along with Noah's wife, his kids, and their families.

The earth flooded, and everyone on the boat was safe. They floated on the water high above the mountains, forests, and cities.

## **OPTIONAL: READ THE STORY ON PAGES 14–15: A PROMISE IN THE SKY**

They floated, and floated, and floated.

Everyone was tired of being inside the boat. They wanted to get out and find some nice grass to play on. Well, the dogs and cats wanted to play on the grass—the cows just wanted to eat it!

But they had to wait for the water to dry up.

A few times, Noah opened a window and let a bird fly out to look for land. One day, the bird returned with a fresh green leaf in its mouth. That meant trees were growing and the water was drying up!

They kept waiting. And waiting. And waiting. Finally, the water was gone, and they opened the door. Everyone was so excited! The birds flew circles in the sky. The animals jumped and rolled on the grass. Then Noah and his family thanked God for saving them.

God knew that the next time it rained, people might be scared that another flood would destroy the world. So He made the first rainbow in the sky.

Noah and his family saw the rainbow and said, “Wow! That is beautiful! What does it mean?”

God said, “I will never flood the earth again. Every time you see a rainbow, remember My promise to take care of you.”

### **CONCLUSION**

The next time you see a rainbow, remember how much God loves you.

Just like He did for Noah, God promises to keep you safe.

Noah believed that God loved Him and wanted to take care of Him. He obeyed God, and God kept Noah and his family safe.

God does the same thing for us! He loves us and wants us to be safe. So He asks us to follow and obey Him. When we follow God, He promises to watch out for us and rescue us.

He loves to take care of us!

### **PRAYER**

Dear Jesus, thank You for keeping me safe. I know You love me and watch out for me. I want to obey You because I love You.

## Chapter 6: God's Really Big Promises

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### THE BIBLE

Genesis 15:5–6 (MSG)

Then he (God) took him outside and said, “Look at the sky. Count the stars. Can you do it? Count your descendants (or children)! You’re going to have a big family, Abram!” And he believed! Believed God!

### INTRODUCTION

Have you ever known someone who said crazy things that you knew were not true? What did they say?

*(Tell the kids a story about someone you knew when you were young who told tall tales.)*

Would you believe a kid at school if they told you, “If you give me some of your candy, I will give you eight million dollars”?

Why not? Because you know there is no way they can do what they say they can do.

Now who has a friend who made you a promise and kept it?

Maybe they said they would help with your chores on Saturday, and they came over and helped! Or maybe they promised to give you half of their treat at lunch, and then they did!

Do you believe what those friends say?

Of course you do!

Why? Because you know they do what they say they will do. You believe them.

### TRANSITION

There was a man in the Bible named Abraham who was best friends with God. Just like you believe your friends who tell the truth, Abraham believed God—even though what God said sounded crazy!

### MAIN POINT

Around 250 years after God saved His friend Noah and Noah’s family from the flood, God found another friend. This man was named Abraham.

Abraham loved and followed God, and God loved Abraham.

One day, God said, “Abraham, I want you and your family to leave your home. I will show you where to go.”

Leave his home? Abraham must have wondered what God was up to. Why should he leave his home?

Then God said, "I have big plans for you. I want to give you a very big family. You are going to have as many kids, grandkids, and great-grandkids as there are stars in the nighttime sky!

Uhhh . . . this was a problem. Abraham had lots of things, like money, donkeys, and a closet full of cool robes. But the one thing Abraham DIDN'T have was a baby.

"How can I have gigantic family when I don't have any kids yet?" Abraham thought.

But God didn't stop there. "Also, I want to give you your own country. And I want to make you rich so you can help lots of people."

Whoa! Was God serious?

God said Abraham's family would become a nation when Abraham didn't even have one baby!

God said Abraham's family would own a country, and He asked Abraham to leave his home.

But Abraham knew God loved him, and Abraham also knew God kept his promises.

Abraham believed God so much that he obeyed Him completely. He and Sarah packed up and left their home.

They traveled for many years. Sometimes life was hard. They had to cross hot, dry deserts, sleep under the stars, and even fight off bad people who wanted to hurt them.

But through it all, Abraham believed God would do what he promised. This is called faith.

## **CONCLUSION**

God loved Abraham's faith and how Abraham believed Him.

When Abraham was alive, he was the ONLY person on the planet who got to be best friends with God.

Hundreds of years later, Jesus came to the earth. He died on the cross and rose from the dead to make a way for EVERYONE to be best friends with Him!

If Jesus loves us so much that He died for us, do you think we can believe what He asks us to do? YOU BET!

What are ways we can have faith in Jesus?

1. We can say yes to His love for us!
2. We can do what He asks us to do in the Bible, like obey our parents and be kind to others.

When we believe Jesus, we get to experience friendship with God just like Abraham did.

## **PRAYER**

Jesus, I know You loved me first. I believe You are God and that You want to be my best friend. I say yes to your love for me.

## Chapter 7: A Happy Miracle

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### INTRODUCTION

Have you ever wanted something SO BAD, but you didn't have enough money to buy it?

That is the worst!

What did you want?

*(Tell the kids a story about something you wanted when you were young—something you would have sold your little brother for . . . almost.)*

Do you know what the best feeling is? When your Mom or Dad sees that you can't afford something, and so they buy it for you!

It feels amazing when someone gives you what you can't get for yourself!

### TRANSITION

In our story today, a man and woman in the Bible experienced exactly that. They wanted something that they couldn't get on their own. In fact, it was impossible for them to get it. That is, until God showed up and did the impossible for them!

### MAIN POINT

Last week, we learned about a man named Abraham who was God's best friend.

Abraham and his wife, Sarah, were old. The one thing they wanted most was the one thing they didn't have: a baby.

### OPTIONAL: READ THE STORY ABOUT ABRAHAM ON PAGE 21: A HAPPY MIRACLE

But one day, when Abraham was really old—I'm talking almost 100 years old—God spoke to him and made him a crazy promise. He said, "Abraham, I am going to give you a baby boy!"

Abraham could have rolled his eyes at God and said, "Pffft, that is impossible, God! I'm CRAZY OLD! I am wrinkly and I have arthritis in my hips! How can I have a baby?"

Instead, Abraham believed God because He knew God could do ANYTHING!

Abraham had faith. Faith believes what God says.

When Abraham's wife, Sarah, heard God promise she would have a baby, she laughed! Unlike Abraham, Sarah didn't have faith that God could do it.

"I am so old," Sarah thought to herself. "Pigs will fly before I ever have a baby!"

But she forgot something: We can have faith in Jesus because He always does what He says He will do!

And guess what? One day, shortly after Abraham blew out the birthday candles on his 100th birthday cake (that's a lot of smoke), God did what He promised He would do. Sarah gave birth to a chubby little baby boy, just like your little brother.

Sarah laughed again—but now it was because she was so happy! Abraham and Sarah named the baby Isaac, which means “laughter.”

As Abraham and Sarah held baby Isaac in their arms, they were happy. God had kept His promise, even when it seemed impossible.

God did it! He did what He promised He would do.

### **CONCLUSION**

God always keeps His promises, no matter how impossible they may sound!

Jesus loves you just as much as He loved Abraham. When we have faith in Jesus, it makes Him just as happy as the day Abraham believed Him thousands of years ago!

Abraham did not need to DO anything to make God love Him. All he did was say yes to God's big promise.

All we need to do is believe in Jesus!

### **PRAYER**

Jesus, I believe that You are God and that You always do what You say You are going to do. Thank You for loving me so well!

## Chapter 8: The Hardest Test

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### THE BIBLE

Hebrews 11:17–18 (MSG)

*By faith, Abraham, at the time of testing, offered Isaac back to God. Acting in faith, he was as ready to return the promised son, his only son, as he had been to receive him—and this after he had already been told, “Your descendants shall come from Isaac.” Abraham figured that if God wanted to, he could raise the dead.*

### INTRODUCTION

Have you ever given away something you loved . . . a lot?

Maybe you had a big brownie, and your Mom told you, “You need to share half of that with your sister.”

Maybe you gave some of your favorite lunch to your friend at school who forgot theirs.

Or maybe your family was going to donate stuff to people who didn’t have much, and you gave some of your toys away to help them.

(Ask the kids to share stories about a time they gave away something they really wanted, and then share a story from your own life.)

It’s easy to give away something you don’t care about, but it takes A LOT of trust to give away something you love.

### TRANSITION

In our story today, Abraham showed how much he trusted God when he gave God his most favorite thing in the world: his only son, Isaac.

His story points us to another story. Many years later, God would give His only Son, Jesus, to die for us!

### MAIN POINT

The Bible is the greatest book ever written!

God had people write it to show the world Who Jesus is!

The Bible is two parts: the Old Testament and the New Testament.

The Old Testament is what happened before Jesus. The New Testament is what happened after Jesus came to the earth!

Every story in the Bible, whether it is about Adam and Eve, Noah and the flood, or Abraham, all point

us to the same Person: Jesus!

## **OPTIONAL: READ THE STORY ABOUT ABRAHAM IN ON PAGES 22-23 THE HARDEST TEST**

Our story today picks up a few years after God did an amazing miracle. He gave Abraham a baby son named Isaac.

One day, God said to Abraham, "Abraham, I want you to give me something."

"Cool, God. What is it?" Abraham asked. "Do you want my bike? My favorite donkey? A popsicle?"

"Thanks, but I don't want those things," God said. "I want you to give me something that is going to be hard: I want you to give your son Isaac back to me. He is going to die and come be with me in heaven."

WOAH!!! Abraham waited his whole life to have a baby. And finally, when Abraham turned 95 years old, God gave him his son, Isaac. Now God was asking for Isaac BACK?

It got worse. Not only would Abraham need to give his precious son back to God, but Isaac would need to DIE!

When I was little and my parents asked me to do something difficult, I would stall or try to get out of it. Abraham didn't do that. Early the next morning, he woke up and set out to give Isaac back to God.

Why? Because Abraham knew he could trust God NO MATTER WHAT.

When they arrived at the place God asked him to go, Abraham tied up Isaac, laid him on a pile of rocks, and lifted up a knife!

Just before he did, God yelled out from heaven, "STOP!"

"I never wanted you to hurt Isaac. I wanted to see if you trust me. Now I know you do!"

Abraham cried and hugged Isaac. God had never wanted Abraham to hurt Isaac or even give him back. God wanted Abraham to trust Him.

Every major story in the Bible is about Jesus and what He did for us on the cross.

God didn't want Abraham's son to die, because it was already God's plan to give His own Son, Jesus, to die for us!

## **CONCLUSION**

Years later, God sent His own Son, Jesus, to die on the cross for us. Just like Abraham, we can trust God with everything in our lives. If God gave his precious Son to us, He will give us everything else we need! The Bible says that Abraham trusted God. He believed God's promises, and that made God very happy. God knows that sometimes we do bad things. He knows we are not perfect. Just like Abraham, He wants us to trust Him and believe that He loves us no matter what.

## **PRAYER**

Jesus, I trust You, because if You died for me, I know that You love me no matter what.

## Chapter 9: Joseph's New Coat

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### THE BIBLE

Genesis 37:3-4 (NLT)

*Jacob loved Joseph more than any of his other children because Joseph had been born to him in his old age. So one day Jacob had a special gift made for Joseph—a beautiful robe. But his brothers hated Joseph because their father loved him more than the rest of them. They couldn't say a kind word to him.*

### INTRODUCTION

Have you ever been stuck before?

Maybe you were having too much fun climbing a tree that you climbed too high, and someone had to help you get down. Or maybe you were in your sleeping bag, and your big brother sat on top of you!

That is the worst!

Sometimes we can feel stuck in other ways. Maybe we are having trouble learning something at school, or a friend is being mean to us, or we keep disobeying our parents but we do not know how to stop.

God does not want us to stay stuck. He wants to help us with our problems, big and small.

### TRANSITION

The story of Joseph shows us how God always takes care of us. When we feel stuck, we can ask Him to help us—and He will do it!

### MAIN POINT

We are on an amazing journey, discovering that every story in the Bible points to Jesus.

The Bible is all about Jesus!

We learned about Adam and Eve, Abraham, and his miracle baby named Isaac.

When Isaac grew up, he got married and had a son named Jacob.

Jacob grew up and had a BUNCH of sons. I mean A LOT of sons—eleven to be exact.

Wow! Girls, can you imagine having eleven brothers? Phew! That is a lot of stinky, smelly boys.

### OPTIONAL: READ THE STORY ON PAGES 26-2: JOSEPH'S NEW COAT

Out of his eleven sons, Jacob loved one son named Joseph more than all the others.

In fact, Jacob loved Joseph so much that one day, he pulled out a sewing machine and made Joseph a crazy rainbow-colored jacket with a sweet fur-lined hood. Okay, maybe it didn't have a fur-lined hood, but it was definitely sweet.

Every time Joseph wore the crazy rainbow coat, it reminded his brothers that their Dad loved Joseph the most.

Do you think his brothers liked that?

Nope. THEY HATED IT, and they hated Joseph for wearing it! They were jealous that their dad loved Joseph the best.

One day, Joseph's brothers couldn't take it anymore. They punched Joseph in the nose (BAM), kicked him in the knees (BONK), and ripped off his rainbow jacket. OUCH!

Then his jealous brothers threw Joseph into a DEEEEEEP hole in the ground. "NOOOO!" SPLAT! Joseph was having a bad day. But it got worse.

The Bible says the brothers then saw a group of people, called Ishmaelites, coming toward them riding on camels.

The brothers lowered a rope down to Joseph, pulled him out of the pit, and SOLD HIM AS A SLAVE TO THE ISHMAELITES. The Ishmaelites took Joseph to a faraway country called Egypt.

When Joseph got to Egypt, he was sold to an important man named Potiphar.

God helped Joseph be Potiphar's best worker ever. Potiphar liked Joseph and put him in charge of everything he owned.

Even in Egypt, Joseph obeyed God and did what was good. But once, Potiphar's wife tried to get him to do something bad.

Joseph shouted, "No!" and ran away.

That made Potiphar's wife mad, so she lied and told Potiphar that Joseph had done the bad thing.

Potiphar believed his evil wife and had Joseph thrown into prison, even though he hadn't done anything wrong!

Joseph must have thought, "This is crazy! I didn't do anything wrong. First I'm a slave. Now I'm a prisoner. Why, God?"

But even in jail, God helped Joseph. The guard in charge of the jail liked Joseph so much that he put him in charge of the whole jail.

Even though Joseph was alone and far from home, God always took care of him.

## **CONCLUSION**

Do you think Joseph felt stuck when his own brothers threw him in the deep hole? OF COURSE HE DID!

Do you think Joseph felt stuck when Potiphar threw him in jail for something he didn't do?  
ABSOLUTELY!

Even though he was hurt and confused, Joseph knew something: No matter what bad things happened to him, God loved him and would take care of him!

Joseph trusted God's love for him.

Many years later, when Jesus was on the earth, people accused Him of things He didn't do and threw Him in jail. Then evil people hung Him on a cross to die.

Even though He felt stuck, Jesus trusted God. He trusted that God would rescue Him and use it to rescue you and me from sin!

The next time someone does something hurtful to you, remember: Jesus experienced the same hurt and is right there to help you!

Just like Joseph, we can trust Jesus when we feel stuck!

### **PRAYER**

Jesus, I want to say yes to your love for me. Will you help me with . . . (now, under your breath, tell Jesus what you want Him to help you with).

## Chapter 10: Joseph Saves Everyone

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### THE BIBLE

Genesis 50:20 (NLT)

*You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good. He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people.*

### INTRODUCTION

Have you ever had to eat something you thought would taste gross, but then you LOVED IT?

It was better than you expected!

Or maybe you thought you knew exactly how a movie was going to end, and then BOOM—plot twist!

It was better than you expected!

Tell me about something you ate, watched, or did that turned out better than you expected.

(Tell the kids about a situation you were in that turned out better than expected.)

It is easy to think that we know exactly how things are going to end.

Do you know the Bible says that when we live life with Jesus, He turns everything into something good—even the bad things that happen to us?

Jesus wants to make things end better than we expected.

### TRANSITION

In our story today, God takes the awful things in Joseph's life and turns them into something amazing. Why? Because that's what Jesus does. He takes broken, bad, painful things and turns them into something beautiful.

### MAIN POINT

We are on an amazing journey to discover how every story in the Bible points to Jesus.

The Bible is all about Jesus!

We learned last week about a young man named Joseph. God took care of Joseph even when bad things happened to him.

Joseph's brothers shipped him off as a slave to a country called Egypt. Then Joseph's new boss threw him into prison, even though Joseph hadn't done anything wrong!

**OPTIONAL: READ THE STORY ON PAGES 28-29: JOSEPH SAVES EVERYONE**

God loved Joseph so much, He had the prison guard put Joseph in charge of everything!

One day, two of the prisoners in Joseph's jail each had strange dreams.

They woke up scared because they didn't know what their dreams meant.

Joseph heard them freaking out, and he asked them to share their dreams.

When they did, something funny happened: God told Joseph what the dreams meant! The two prisoners were super surprised!

Years later, Pharaoh also had a dream. He was the king of Egypt, but just like the prisoners, Pharaoh didn't know what his dream meant. That scared him—bad!

Someone told him, "Pharaoh, I know a man named Joseph who can tell you what your dream means."

So Pharaoh sent for Joseph, who was still stuck in the prison.

They took his nasty ragged clothes and dressed him in a beautiful three-piece suit. They cut off his scraggly bug-filled hair and shaved his long dirty beard. Then they pushed him in front of Pharaoh, the most powerful man in the world!

God took Joseph from the prison and put him in the palace in one day!

Joseph thought he knew how his story would end. The truth is he had no idea about the INCREDIBLE things God had planned for him!

So Pharaoh told Joseph about his dreams and said, "Tell me what God is saying, and I'll put you in charge of all of Egypt."

WHAT? Joseph was in jail three hours earlier, picking roaches out of a fellow prisoner's hair. Now a king wanted to put him in charge of a country?

Just like in the prison, God told Joseph what the dreams meant. He said Egypt was going to have seven years with lots of food, and then seven years with no food. Pharaoh needed to save the country's food so they would not starve later.

God loved Joseph so much that He made Pharaoh put Joseph in charge of Egypt so he could save the people from starving.

Seven good years went by, and then the bad years started.

Nobody had food except for Egypt, so people traveled to Egypt to eat and stay alive.

A group of men showed up one day, looking to buy food from Joseph. **THEY WERE HIS BROTHERS!**

The same brothers who had beat him up and sold him as a slave.

At first, the brothers didn't realize the powerful man in front of them was their brother.

When they found out, they were scared. They thought Joseph would be mad at them for how they treated him, and they thought he would hurt them.

But Joseph forgave his brothers for being mean. He knew God took care of him so he could save his family and a whole country!

Then Joseph's dad and brothers all moved to Egypt. Joseph was happy because he wasn't alone, and God always took care of him.

## **CONCLUSION**

Joseph discovered that no matter how bad things seem, Jesus loves us so much that He will take bad things and bad days and turn them into something good!

When we live life with Jesus, even our worst situations can be turned into great ones.

Do you think Joseph felt sad when his own brothers hurt him? Of course he did!

Even though his brothers did really mean things to him, Joseph forgave them and continued to love them.

Why? Because he knew God took the bad things they did and turned them into something good!

Years later, there was another man who chose to love people who betrayed and beat him. His name is Jesus!

Many years after Joseph, Jesus walked on this planet. And just like Joseph, Jesus found himself in a bad situation.

His friends betrayed him and turned their backs on him. People beat him and even killed him.

Just like Joseph, Jesus loved the people who hurt him.

God took Jesus' death on the cross and used it to save the entire world.

## **PRAYER**

Dear Jesus, help me to always trust You, even when I don't understand what is happening or when I feel stuck. Thank You for loving me and turning bad situations into good!

## Chapter 11: A Baby in a Basket

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### THE BIBLE

Hebrews 11:23 (MSG)

*By an act of faith, Moses' parents hid him away for three months after his birth. They saw the child's beauty, and they braved the king's decree.*

### INTRODUCTION

Do you remember when you learned how to swim? Maybe your Mom or Dad took you to swim lessons at the pool or helped you learn in a lake.

*(Ask the kids to share with you where they learned how to swim.)*

Isn't it funny how much STUFF our parents put on us when we learned how to swim?

Sunblock lotion on our skin, goggles over our eyes, swim floaties on our arms, an inner tube around our waist, swim trunks on our waist, and flippers on our feet! We looked like aliens!

### TRANSITION

Our crazy-but-true story today includes a baby, a basket, a river, and an evil king, and ends with us learning that Jesus will take care of us even when we can't take care of ourselves! Wow!

### MAIN POINT

We are learning that EVERY STORY IN THE BIBLE POINTS TO JESUS!

From Adam and Eve, to Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and now Moses, each story points to a bigger story and to the BIGGEST HERO EVER: JESUS!

### OPTIONAL: READ THE STORY ON PAGES 32–33: A BABY IN A BASKET

Our story today picks up where we left off last week.

God's family, called Israelites, followed Joseph down to Egypt and made that their home. When they got there, they numbered only 70 people.

Before the Egyptians knew it, there were two million Israelites! Two million! That is a lot of babies!

However, an evil king named Pharaoh came to the throne and made the Israelites his slaves. He forced them to do terrible jobs.

God's people were miserable and asked God to help them—and that is exactly what He did! But He didn't do it the way you would think. Instead of sending a superhero or a super soldier, God sent a chubby, gurgley, drooly baby.

Whaat? Yes, God sent a baby.

Remember Pharaoh? The bad guy? He wanted to drown all the Israelite baby boys in the Nile, Egypt's

most famous river.

But Moses' mom loved him so much that she refused to let him die.

She made a little basket out of river plants and laid baby Moses in it. She put the basket in the Nile river and let him float away.

She was sad, but she knew God would take care of Moses even when she couldn't.

As the little basket with the baby bobbed up and down in the river, Pharaoh's own daughter happened to look up and see it.

Was this a coincidence? No way! God takes care of us even when we can't take care of ourselves! When the princess heard the baby crying, she wanted to rescue him.

Moses' older sister, Miriam, watched this all happen. She ran up and asked Pharaoh's daughter, "Do you want me to find someone to take care of the baby for you?"

"That's a great idea!" Pharaoh's daughter said.

Miriam went and got her mother. She was so happy! God had taken care of Moses!

When Moses got older, he went to live in Pharaoh's palace.

## **CONCLUSION**

God took care of Moses.

He used the same river Pharaoh wanted to kill Moses in to carry Moses to safety.

Instead of murdering Moses, Pharaoh became Moses' grandpa!

No matter what happens in life, Jesus is right there to help us and take care of us.

When Moses couldn't do anything to help himself, Jesus rescued him and brought him into a life that was better than anything he could have imagined!

Years later, God would send another baby to rescue people. Only this time, this baby wouldn't only rescue a nation—He would rescue the whole world!

## **PRAYER**

Jesus, I know You love me and take care of me. Will you help me with (quietly, under your breath, tell Jesus what you want Him to help you with)? I trust you and know You are my rescuer.

## Chapter 12: A Talking Bush

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### INTRODUCTION

Have you ever been afraid because it was dark and you couldn't see well?

For instance, when I was little . . . *(Tell the kids a story about something you had to do at night that scared you. For example, when you took out the garbage, got something from the basement, or walked to the bathroom in the middle of the night.)*

If you are anything like me, when I found out that I had to \_\_\_\_\_ when it was dark, the first thing I did was ask my mom or dad to come with me!

Why? I knew as long as mom or dad was with me, everything would be okay!

### TRANSITION

In the exact same way, God asked Moses to do something scary, and He said yes. He knew that if God was with him, everything would be okay!

### MAIN POINT

Every story in the Bible points to Jesus!

From Adam and Eve, to Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and now Moses, each story points to a bigger story and the BIGGEST HERO EVER: JESUS!

Our story today picks up where we left off last week. God's people, called Israelites, lived in Egypt. A wicked king named Pharaoh made them prisoners and forced them to do terrible jobs.

Moses, an Israelite baby, was adopted by Pharaoh's daughter after his mom hid him in a basket and put him in the Nile river. This story is amazing!

### OPTIONAL: READ THE STORY ON PAGES 34–35: A TALKING BUSH

Moses grew up as part of Pharaoh's family, but he knew he was actually an Israelite. He loved and followed God, and he was sad because Egypt was hurting his friends and family.

When Moses tried to help Israel, Pharaoh got so mad that wanted to kill Moses.

That's never a good thing, so Moses left Egypt and lived in the desert as a shepherd.

One day, Moses was with his sheep when he saw something very strange. It was a bush that was on fire, but it didn't burn up. It just kept burning and burning.

What in the world is that? Moses thought. This I've got to see!

He walked up to the bush, and suddenly God spoke to him from the fire. "Moses! Moses!"

"Y-Y-Y-Yes?" said Moses. He was a little scared. He had never seen a talking fiery bush before! "H-H-H-Here I am."

God said, "I am your God, and I want you to rescue Israel from Egypt."

Moses was even more scared now. "But God, I tried that already. It didn't work. You need to find someone else—I'm not strong enough."

But God said, "Moses, I am strong enough, and that's all you need. I will be with you and I will help you. If you go in My power, you will rescue Israel."

## **CONCLUSION**

When Moses heard that, everything changed.

The moment he found out that God was with him, Moses knew he didn't need to be afraid anymore. Why? Because when God is with you, everything will be okay.

I may have been scared about (name the thing you were afraid to do in the dark), but the moment dad took hold of my hand or mom put her arm around me, all my fear went away.

Is there something that makes you scared? The dark? A mean kid in your neighborhood? A particular subject in school?

You don't have to be afraid anymore. Just like Jesus was with Moses, He is with you!

Jesus says in Matthew 28:20 (NLT), "And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

The story of Moses and the burning bush points us to Jesus. Jesus came to the earth and died on the cross. Why? So that we could be with Him forever.

## **PRAYER**

Just like Moses, you want to trust Jesus.

Maybe there is something that is making you afraid. Today, Jesus wants to show you that everything is going to be okay because He is with you.

## Chapter 13: Plagues & Passover

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### THE BIBLE

Exodus 4:6–8 (MSG)

*"I am God. I will bring you out from under the cruel hard labor of Egypt. I will rescue you from slavery. I will redeem you, intervening with great acts of judgment. I'll take you as my own people and I'll be God to you."*

### INTRODUCTION

Have you ever had someone protect you from something bad?

Maybe you were about to accidentally eat something gross or a bully was about to hurt you, and your mom or dad protected you.

*(Tell a story from your own life. Now ask three or four kids for their stories.)*

One of the greatest things someone can do for a person is to protect them from something bad. It shows they love you enough to help you!

### TRANSITION

In our story today about Moses, crazy plagues, and something called Passover, we discover that all of it points to what Jesus did to protect us from the worst thing in the universe!

### MAIN POINT

The Bible is the most amazing book ever written.

God had people write it to show us who Jesus is!

Every major story in the Bible points to a bigger, more amazing story, and every major character in the Bible points to one incredible Character: Jesus!

The Bible is all about Jesus.

### OPTIONAL: READ THE STORY ON PAGES 36–37: PLAGUES AND PASSOVER

One of the most famous people in the Bible is a man named Moses.

Moses was an Israelite (God's chosen people) who lived in Egypt a long time before Jesus was born. The Egyptians hated the Israelites so much they made them their slaves. BUMMER!

But God loved the Israelites. He saw how much pain they were in and used Moses to set them free! He told Moses what to do by talking to him through a burning bush. CRAZY! And trust me: It gets crazier!

Moses knew God was with him, so off he went back to Egypt.

When he arrived, Moses saw Pharaoh, the wicked king of Egypt, and told him, "God says to let His

people go! Don't make them be slaves anymore."

Do you think evil Pharaoh agreed to let the Israelites go? NO WAY!

Pharaoh said, "They are my slaves forever!"

Moses told Pharaoh, "If you don't obey, God is going to punish you. I'm warning you—you need to obey God right now."

But Pharaoh would not listen. So God sent ten plagues as warnings.

1. BLOOD: God turned all the water in Egypt into blood! Can you imagine what taking a bath looked like?
2. FROGS: Millions of frogs swarmed all over Egypt!
3. GNATS: A gnat is a teeny tiny bug, and God sent billions of gnats everywhere!
4. FLIES: Ever had a fly buzz around your head and bother you? Imagine being covered in them! That's what happened to the Egyptians. The flies covered everything and everyone. It was disgusting!

After these four plagues, Pharaoh still wouldn't obey God.

5. COWS AND SHEEP: All the cows and sheep died. NOOOOO MOOOOOO!
6. BLISTERS: Giant blisters grew all over every Egyptian. OUCH!
7. HAIL: Hail came and knocked down all the plants.
8. GRASSHOPPERS: Millions of grasshoppers came and ate every remaining plant.
9. PITCH-BLACK DARKNESS: God made it so dark in Egypt that no one could see the sun—or even their own hand in front of their face!

But even after all this, Pharaoh STILL wouldn't change his mind!

10. ANGEL OF DEATH: Last of all, God sent an angel to go through Egypt and kill one person in every family.

But before He did, God told the Israelites to kill a perfect lamb and smear its blood over the front doors on their houses. Why would He ask them to do that?

When the Angel came to the Israelite's houses, He would pass over their home and not hurt anyone. The blood kept everyone safe. No one in Israel died! But the same wasn't true for the Egyptians. Finally, Pharaoh decided to let Israel go free!

After 400 years of slavery, God's people were free to leave Egypt!

Afterwards, God told Israel to eat a special meal called Passover. When the Israelites ate the Passover meal every year, they would remember how God set them free from Egypt and how the lambs died in their place.

## CONCLUSION

Almost 2,000 years later, another Rescuer came.

Like Moses, He came to save people from slavery. But unlike Moses, this Rescuer would not use the lamb's blood to save people—He would use His own blood.

His name is Jesus. God sent His son Jesus, the Lamb of God, to die so we don't have to!

When Jesus died on the cross, He rescued us once and for all from the worst enemy in the universe: sin.

Jesus spilled His own blood for you and me!

**PRAYER**

I know Jesus is my Rescuer, and I want to say yes to His love for me.

## Chapter 14: A Road Through the Sea

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### THE BIBLE

Hebrews 11:29 (MSG)

*By an act of faith, Israel walked through the Red Sea on dry ground. The Egyptians tried it and drowned.*

### INTRODUCTION

Have you ever felt trapped before?

Maybe it was in your sleeping bag, or in one of those teeny tiny bathrooms on an airplane, or in a fabric store your mom took you to that you can't stand.

*(Ask the kids for examples and then share one of your own.)*

Do you remember how you felt when you climbed out of the sleeping bag, left the airplane bathroom, or walked out of the fabric store?

You felt like you'd been set free!

### TRANSITION

This is exactly how the Israelites felt when they watched God set them free from the Egyptian army in one of the CRAZIEST miracles in the Bible!

### MAIN POINT

We know that the Bible is all about Jesus!

From Adam and Eve to Moses, every story contains clues about a bigger story. This big story is about a Hero who would defeat sin, sadness, and death for us!

The Hero's name is Jesus!

In our story last week, we learned how God did miracles, called plagues, to convince Pharaoh to let the Israelites leave Egypt.

God also had the Israelites eat a special dinner called Passover. They ate this dinner to remember how God rescued them using the blood of a lamb.

### OPTIONAL: READ THE STORY ON PAGES 38–39: THE ROAD THROUGH THE SEA

After the Angel of Death swept through Egypt, Pharaoh finally agreed to let the Israelites go.

When he did, the Israelites left as fast as they could.

"What if he changes his mind?" they thought.

Well guess what, that is exactly what Pharaoh did. He changed his mind.

Meanwhile, the Israelites marched through the desert, happy that they were not slaves anymore.

But then they bumped into a HUGE body of water called the Red Sea. BONK.

Meanwhile, Pharaoh gathered his soldiers and chariots and chased the Israelites down. He wanted to bring them back to Egypt.

So there they were—stuck at the edge of the Red Sea. The Israelites thought they were going to get to chill on the beach and go surfing. That is, until one random person looked up at the hill and screamed, “THEY’RE COMING!”

Just then, a massive army of Egyptian chariots and soldiers came over the top of the hill!

“AAAHHH!” everyone screamed, “We’re gonna die!”

Moses said, “Don’t be afraid. God will save us. You’ll see! Just believe.”

God told Moses to raise his walking stick above the sea. Moses trusted God and raised his walking stick into the air. Suddenly, a strong wind started to blow.

The wind made the sea split apart, creating a huge trail through the Red Sea! The Israelites crossed through the water safely.

The Egyptians looked at each other and decided to chase them. Bad choice.

As soon as Israel came out on the other side, God let the walls of water come crashing back down. BOOM! The waves swept away the entire Egyptian army.

Israel was safe on the other side, and their enemies were gone. THEY WEREN’T SLAVES ANYMORE! THEY WERE FREE!

God used Moses to rescue the Israelites. He used Moses to set them free.

## **CONCLUSION**

Hundreds of years later, God would send another Deliverer: a Hero Who would set free a world trapped in sin.

Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead to make us free—free to be loved by Him and love Him back!

## **PRAYER**

I want to say yes to Jesus’ love for me. I want Him to make me free from sin.

## Chapter 15: Rules on a Mountain

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### THE BIBLE

Galatians 2:16 (NLT)

*Yet we know that a person is made right with God by faith in Jesus Christ, not by obeying the law. And we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we might be made right with God because of our faith in Christ, not because we have obeyed the law. For no one will ever be made right with God by obeying the law."*

### INTRODUCTION

Have you ever tried to do something SO HARD that you decided, "This is impossible"?

*(Ask the kids to share stories about something they tried to do that was impossible, and then share a story about you.)*

No matter how hard we try, some things are impossible for us to do by ourselves.

We need someone to do it for us!

### TRANSITION

God knew it was impossible for us to obey enough of His rules to fix our broken relationship with Him. So God did what we couldn't: He obeyed the rules for us!

### MAIN POINT

Every time we open up the Bible, each story and character points us to Jesus!

### RECAP

Last week, we learned how God parted the Red Sea and rescued the Israelites from the Egyptian army!

This happened after He sent ten warnings, called plagues, and saved the Israelites on a night called Passover.

We learned about the lambs that died so the Israelites didn't have to. Jesus is the Lamb of God, and He died so that we don't have to!

Well, after walking through the Red Sea, God led Moses and the Israelites to a mountain called Sinai. While the two million Israelites were setting up their tents at the base of the mountain, God came down out of heaven and sat on top of the mountain!

The Bible says smoke, fire, and lightning swirled and thunder shook the ground!

When the Israelites saw the smoke and fire, they thought God was there to hurt them! "AAAHHH! He's gonna zap us with lightning!"

God spoke to the Israelites and said, "I am not here to hurt you! You are my special people. I love you and I want you to trust me, love me, and follow me. I'm going to give you some rules to help you."

Then God told Moses, "Grab your backpack and headlamp and climb up to the top of Mount Sinai, and I will give you my special rules."

In His rules, God told Israel that He was their God, and that they shouldn't do bad stuff like lie, steal, hurt people, or disobey their parents.

God told Israel that if they sinned (that means if they disobeyed His rules), they could kill a sheep or another animal, and God would forgive their sin. That is called a sacrifice.

The people were still a little scared. They knew they were going to eventually break some of His rules, and they were afraid God would be mad at them.

But Moses told them not to worry. God was on their side. He would help them. God wanted to be their friend.

God wanted to help them live good, fun lives. That was why He gave them His rules and told them to follow Him.

## **CONCLUSION**

**BUT THE RULES HAD ANOTHER PURPOSE!**

Before God gave them the rules, He already knew the people wouldn't keep them.

Just like the impossible task you tried, God wanted the Israelites to realize that it was IMPOSSIBLE for them to keep all of His rules.

God wanted the rules to help the Israelites realize they needed His help. He wanted them to see they needed a Savior

Galatians 2:16 says:

*Yet we know that a person is made right with God by faith in Jesus Christ, not by obeying the law (rules). And we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we might be made right with God because of our faith in Christ, not because we have obeyed the law. For no one will ever be made right with God by obeying the law.*

Following God doesn't mean being perfect! We all make mistakes, even if we try not to. Following God means believing God loves us. It means loving and knowing Him.

Jesus is our sacrifice. He did the impossible job of obeying all of God's rules—and He did it for us! Because Jesus died, God forgets all our mistakes and forgives all our sins.

We can follow God without being afraid, even though we sometimes do bad things. God is on our side and He loves us, just like He loved Israel.

## **PRAYER**

Jesus, I know You love me. Thank You for forgiving me when I make mistakes. I know You are with me and You are on my side.

## Chapter 16: Rahab Saves the Spies

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### THE BIBLE

Hebrews 11:31 (MSG)

### INTRODUCTION

When I was a kid, sometimes school was hard for me—especially (*pick your subject*).

I used to get frustrated because I had a hard time understanding the homework.

What I didn't know was that God cared about my homework.

"Does God really care about my homework?" Absolutely!

If it's important to you, it's important to God.

### TRANSITION

Joshua was a Bible hero who learned that God wanted to help him with everything—easy things and really hard things! Some of the things were so hard they seemed impossible. But God can do anything!

### MAIN POINT

After God gave the Israelites His rules on Mount Sinai, they hiked through the desert for forty years.

That's right! FORTY YEARS!

That is a lot of sand in their shoes. I guess that is why they call them "SANDles."

Get it, "SANDles"? Never mind.

Moses was Israel's hero, but he died while they were still in the desert. God picked a new leader named Joshua.

Israel finally arrived at the land God promised to their relative Abraham 400 years earlier.

HOORAY! The Promised Land was going to be their new home!

But hold the party . . . there was a problem. A BIG PROBLEM. People already lived there, and they were not happy to see Joshua or the Israelites.

Some of these people lived in a big city called Jericho. Jericho had humongous thirteen-foot-thick walls surrounding the entire city.

Joshua didn't know how they were going to get in, so he sent two spies to sneak into Jericho.

These two spies were like ninjas! Their job was to find a way for the Israelite soldiers to get into Jericho.

The spies snuck into the city and went into the home of a woman named Rahab.

But someone found out the spies were there, so soldiers came to search her house.

Rahab knew God was with the Israelites, and she wanted to be on the Israelite's team. Before the soldiers got there, Rahab took the spies up to the roof of her house and hid them there.

Her house—believe it or not—was built into the side of the huge wall around the city.

After the soldiers left, Rahab went up on the roof to talk with the spies.

"I know that God has given this land to you," she said. "Promise me that you will keep me and my family safe when you come live here."

They told her that if she helped them get away safely, God would protect her. But she had to do one thing: When the Israelites came to attack Jericho, Rahab needed to hang a red rope out of her window. So Rahab did.

The spies climbed down the rope and escaped from Jericho.

They hurried back to Joshua and said, "It's time to go fight Jericho! God has given us this land. We can do it!"

But God remembered the red rope Rahab hung out of her window. And it was that red rope that saved Rahab from what came next!

## **CONCLUSION**

Joshua trusted God to help him defeat Jericho, and Rahab trusted God to save her and her family.

Jesus is there to help us, no matter what it is that we face.

What is something you are having a hard time with? Let's ask Jesus to help us, just like Joshua and Rahab did!

## **PRAYER**

Jesus, thank You that You love me and want to help me with the big stuff and small stuff. Please help me with (*now tell Him what it is you are having a hard time with*). I trust You and I believe You.

## Chapter 17: Shouting Down Walls

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### THE BIBLE

Hebrews 11:30 (NLT)

*It was by faith that the people of Israel marched around Jericho for seven days, and the walls came crashing down.*

### INTRODUCTION

Has anyone ever asked you to do something that sounded crazy, and then they said, “Just trust me”?

For example, when I was little, *(Tell the kids a story about a time someone said “Trust me” and it worked out great. For example, talk about the first time you jumped off of the diving board into your mom or dad’s arms. Ask three or four kids to share their stories.)*

Trusting someone means believing what they say is true. It means believing they are reliable and strong enough to do what they say they’ll do.

Another word for trust is faith.

### TRANSITION

In our story today, Joshua had faith in God and watched God do the impossible. When we have faith in Jesus, He will never let us down!

### MAIN POINT

#### RECAP

After forty years of wandering in the hot desert, the Israelites finally entered the Promised Land.

YAY!

Then they realized there was a giant walled city called Jericho blocking their way.

BOO!

But when God is on your side, you don’t need to sweat small stuff like giant walls.

### OPTIONAL: READ THE STORY ON PAGES 46-47: SHOUTING DOWN WALLS

To find out more about Jericho, Joshua, Israel’s new leader, sent two spies into the city to scope out its weaknesses.

These spies were like sneaky ninjas. But they weren’t sneaky enough, because someone saw them and called the Jericho police!

Meanwhile, the spies went into a woman’s house. Her name was Rahab.

Rahab trusted God and knew He was going to give Jericho to the Israelites. So when the Jericho police pounded on her door and asked if the spies were inside, she did something very smart: She protected them and said they had already left! After saving the spies' lives, she asked them to protect her and her family when Israel attacked the city.

The spies said, "Okay, on one condition: In a couple of minutes, we're going to lower ourselves out of your window using this red rope so we can escape and get back to Joshua. If you keep the red rope in your window, God will save you and your whole family!"

The ninja spies climbed down the rope, slipped past the Jericho guards, and made it safely back to Joshua. They told him everything. After hearing what the spies had to say, Joshua knew God was giving Jericho and the Promised Land to the Israelites!

But HOW was God going to do it?

Hover tanks? Lasers? Monkeys with jet packs?

Joshua didn't know, so he asked God what He wanted Joshua to do. (By the way, this is a great thing to do when you don't know what to do.)

God told Joshua and the Israelites to march around Jericho once a day for six days while the priests blew their trumpets.

On the seventh day, He told them to march around the city seven times, blow trumpets, and then shout LOUD.

Joshua didn't know how marching, playing trumpets, and shouting would knock down a gigantic thirteen-foot-thick wall, but he believed God and had faith in Him.

So Joshua and the Israelites obeyed.

The first day, they marched one time around the city. The priests blew their trumpets but the people didn't say anything. Not even a word. They did that for six days in a row.

Did they have fighter jets? Negative. Did they use laser cannons? Nope.

They had something way more powerful: God's promise. That is all they needed.

On the seventh day, everyone got up at sunrise. They marched around Jericho seven times. When they finished, Joshua said, "Now shout as loud as you can, because God is giving you this city!"

Everybody shouted, screamed, and whooped it up. It was the loudest noise any of them had ever heard!

Suddenly, above their shouts they heard an ear splitting CRACK! They watched as the wall split apart and pieces started to fall. Then the whole wall crumbled and tumbled to the ground. That is, every part of the wall except one tiny section that had a red rope hanging out of the window.

God kept His promise to Joshua to defeat Jericho, and He kept His promise to protect Rahab and her family!

Joshua and the Israelites went into Jericho and was victorious because God won the battle for them! Israel won! Jericho was their city now. God gave them the victory because they had faith in Him.

## **CONCLUSION**

Just like He helped Joshua and Rahab, Jesus wants to help you with the things that are important to you.

It doesn't matter how easy or hard they are. Jesus is bigger and stronger than any problem.

Whether you need help with homework, a sickness, or not being afraid of the dark, when we pray about it, God will help us.

What is something in your life that you need God's help with? You can always trust God! He loves you and wants to help you.

## **PRAYER**

Dear Jesus, I know You are bigger and stronger than any problem I have. Will You help me with (tell Him what it is under your breath)? Thank you for taking care of me. I will always trust You.

## Chapter 18: Let Me Go With You

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### THE BIBLE

Ruth 1:16–17 (MSG)

*But Ruth said, "Don't force me to leave you; don't make me go home. Where you go, I go; and where you live, I'll live. Your people are my people, your God is my god; where you die, I'll die, and that's where I'll be buried, so help me God—not even death itself is going to come between us!"*

### INTRODUCTION

Has anybody here ever argued with their brother or sister before?

*(Feign shock and surprise)* THERES NO WAY. STOP IT. YOU ARE LYING. NO WAY!

Of course you have! We all have.

*(Tell a funny story about an argument you and a sibling/family member had.)*

It's crazy how a sibling or family member can say just the right things and push all your buttons that make you mad! They know you so well!

When you're a part of a family, sometimes you disagree, get grumpy, and are mean to each other. But mostly we love each other!

### TRANSITION

This week, we look at an incredible woman named Ruth and her journey to discover that family is God's idea!

### MAIN POINT

RECAP

We are on an amazing journey, discovering that every story in the Bible points to Jesus.

The Bible is all about Jesus!

We started with Adam and Eve and followed the story all the way to Joshua defeating Jericho! We learned how all these characters and their stories point us to Jesus and His rescue mission to bring us into His family.

Last week, we saw how God led the Israelites into the Promised Land and defeated the city of Jericho for them!

### OPTIONAL: READ THE STORY ON PAGES 50-51: LET ME GO WITH YOU

### STORY

Approximately 260 years after Joshua defeated Jericho, a man named Elimelech and his wife, Naomi, lived in Israel. They were a family with two sons.

Everything was great until a famine hit Israel—HARD.

A famine is when food doesn't grow, so there is nothing on the supermarket shelves and people begin to starve! It's bad news.

Elimelech and Naomi needed to get food to feed their family, so they decided to pack up and move to a country called Moab!

When they arrived in Moab, Naomi's sons fell in love with and married two women: Ruth and Orpah. Then something SUPER SAD happened: Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died!

If that wasn't bad enough, then Naomi's oldest son died!

And it got worse. A little while later, Naomi's youngest son died too. This made Naomi a widow with no children! SO SAD!

At this same time, the famine in Israel ended. They could buy food in the grocery stores once again. When Naomi heard this, she decided to go home.

But what about the wives of Naomi's sons? Orpah left Ruth and went back to her family.

"Go home," Naomi told Ruth. "You won't know anyone in Israel."

But Ruth loved her mother-in-law. "You're my family now. No matter where you go, I am going with you!"

You see, after joining her family, Ruth discovered something about Naomi: She knew God.

And Ruth wanted to know God too.

So even though it meant moving to a country full of people she didn't know and a culture she knew nothing about, she left her home in Moab and went back to Israel with Naomi.

Do you think Ruth was scared? Of course.

Do you think Ruth was confused? Absolutely.

But she wanted to be a part of God's family, and she chose to trust God and follow Naomi. When she did, she became a part of a NEW AWESOME FAMILY!

Did you know that family was God's plan? It's so important to Him that He was willing to give up everything to make family possible! God created families because one day He would make us into a BIG GIGANTIC FAMILY with Him! When Jesus went on His rescue mission to save us from sin, He made it possible for us to be in a family again!

## **CONCLUSION**

Did you know that even when you feel let down by your family on earth, you can trust God and know that He loves you?

Nobody is perfect, and sometimes people say things they don't mean. But even when we feel let

down by our family, we can talk to God about what we are going through. He is always there to comfort you!

Did you know that just like the family you have at home, we are a big awesome family here at church? We've been invited into this family by Jesus! He made a way for us to be a family FOREVER!

**PRAYER**

Jesus, thank You for family. Thank you for inviting us into your awesome family. Thank you for giving me my incredible family here on earth.

## Chapter 19: An Unexpected Harvest

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### THE BIBLE

Ruth 2:5–7, 10

*Boaz asked his young servant who was foreman over the farm hands, “Who is this young woman? Where did she come from?”*

*The foreman said, “Why, that’s the Moabite girl, the one who came with Naomi from the country of Moab. She asked permission. ‘Let me glean,’ she said, ‘and gather among the sheaves following after your harvesters.’*

*She dropped to her knees, then bowed her face to the ground. “How does this happen that you should pick me out and treat me so kindly—me, a foreigner?”*

### INTRODUCTION

Have you ever seen something that, right when you saw it, you had to have?

Maybe you were walking through the store with your mom, and you peeked down the toy aisle and saw the new LEGO Friends set. You had to have it!

Maybe you walked into Ben & Jerry’s and saw your favorite ice cream in the world, Double Cauliflower Fudge. You knew you had to have it!

*(Share a story about something you had to have when you were little. Ask three or four kids to share about something they had to have.)*

### TRANSITION

In our story today, we will talk all about our new friend, Boaz, and the choice that he made.

### MAIN POINT

#### RECAP

We are on an amazing journey, discovering that every story in the Bible is true and points us to Jesus.

The Bible is all about Jesus! Everything from the first page all the way to the last point us to our hero, Jesus.

We started with Adam and Eve, jumped to Abraham, and followed the story all the way to Joshua!

We learned how all these people’s stories point us to Jesus’ story and the rescue mission He undertook to save us from sin!

Last week, we met two amazing women: Ruth and her mother-in-law, Naomi.

Naomi and Ruth were both widows. No, not like the nasty spider! A widow is a woman whose husband died.

Naomi decided to move back home to Israel. Ruth decided to go with Naomi, even though she had never been to Israel before.

Why? Ruth knew that Naomi loved God, and she wanted to know God too.

So they loaded the small amount of stuff they owned onto a small donkey, and they headed off into the desert toward Israel.

### **OPTIONAL: READ THE STORY ON PAGES 52-53: AN UNEXPECTED HARVEST**

Today's story begins as Naomi and Ruth arrived in Israel after their long, dusty journey.

They had no money, no jobs, and no food. They were hungry and needed to eat.

So to get food, Ruth decided to walk behind the farmers as they cut down barley in the fields. She picked up the grain they dropped on the ground.

She walked behind them all day long, picking up the little pieces of grain.

She gathered up what she found and brought it back to Naomi. Then Naomi prepared it so they could eat.

The field Ruth wandered into belonged to a man named Boaz. Boaz was a kind man who loved God. He saw Ruth in the field, and he had heard that she was taking care of Naomi.

He told Ruth, "You are so kind to help Naomi! I want to help you. You can eat lunch with my workers. I'll make sure you are taken care of."

If that wasn't enough, Boaz told his workers to let EXTRA GRAIN fall on the ground ON PURPOSE so Ruth would find it. WOW! God used Boaz to help Ruth and Naomi!

Ruth went home with a TON of food! Ruth told Naomi about Boaz, and Naomi was very excited. She knew that Boaz was a good man and loved God.

Naomi told Ruth, "Tell you what, stay in Boaz's field. I think he may like you."

Guess what? Naomi was right! Boaz like Ruth. He eventually fell in love with her, and they were married!

But wait! I thought Ruth was poor and didn't have anything. And Boaz was rich and had everything. Why did he pick Ruth?

Because when Boaz saw Ruth, he loved her. He felt God tugging on his heart to choose her to be a part of his family!

### **CONCLUSION**

Just like when we see someone we love, Boaz loved Ruth and chose her.

Thousands of years later, another man made an amazing choice. That man's name is Jesus. Just like Boaz and Ruth, Jesus saw us and loved us.

He chose us to be a part of His family!

The moment you took your first breath as a stinky little baby is the moment that Jesus chose you! Jesus chose you to not only be his best friend, but also to be in his amazing family.

**PRAYER**

Dear Jesus, thank You for choosing me to be part of your amazing family. Today, I say yes to joining Your family. I pray that I will feel Your approval and Your love, even when I don't feel it from anyone else.

## Chapter 20: God Makes My Heart Happy

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### THE BIBLE

1 Samuel 1:9–11, 17–18, 20 (NLT)

*Once after a sacrificial meal at Shiloh, Hannah got up and went to pray. Eli the priest was sitting at his customary place beside the entrance of the Tabernacle. Hannah was in deep anguish, crying bitterly as she prayed to the LORD.*

*And she made this vow: "O LORD of Heaven's Armies, if you will look upon my sorrow and answer my prayer and give me a son, then I will give him back to you. He will be yours for his entire lifetime, and as a sign that he has been dedicated to the LORD, his hair will never be cut."*

*"In that case," Eli said, "go in peace! May the God of Israel grant the request you have asked of him."*

*"Oh, thank you, sir!" she exclaimed. Then she went back and began to eat again, and she was no longer sad . . . and in due time she gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, for she said, "I asked the LORD for him."*

### INTRODUCTION

When I was a kid, I got hurt A LOT!

It seemed like every time I turned around, I was tripping, stubbing my toes, or crashing my bike.

One thing I would do a lot is hit my funny bone on my elbow. Why do they call it that?

There is NOTHING funny about it when you hit that weird spot on your elbow! YEEEEOUCH!

*(Ask two or three kids to share a story about a time they hurt themselves.)*

What is the first thing you do when you get hurt? Yell for mom or dad!

Nobody wants to cry alone. You want sympathy and hugs from your mom!

There is nothing like a mom's hug to make you feel better when you're hurt or sad.

### TRANSITION

The Bible says God is our Dad in heaven. That's right! He is our heavenly Father! He loves us so much that when we are hurt or sad, it makes Him sad too.

Today's story in the Bible is about the amazing way God helped a sad woman named Hannah. He helped Hannah just like He helps us when we are sad or disappointed!

### MAIN POINT

We are on an adventure to discover how every story in the Bible points us to Jesus!

Every story in the Bible is true. Every person we read about was a real person just like you and me. Just like Jesus loved them and helped them, Jesus loves us and is ready to help us!

Have you ever wanted something more than anything else in the world?

Hannah did. Hannah was a woman who loved God. She lived about 300 years after Ruth and Naomi. Hannah wanted a baby but couldn't have one.

How do you feel when you want something REALLY BAD but can't have it? Sad, disappointed, frustrated?

Do you know it is okay to feel sad and disappointed?

The question is: What do we do when we feel sad or disappointed?

- Do we choose to have a bad attitude?
- Do we throw tantrums and freak out?
- Do we blame our mom or dad for not giving us what we want?

No! We look to Jesus and ask for His help!

Hannah was heartbroken because she couldn't have a baby. But that wasn't the only thing going wrong with Hannah's day. There was another woman that was mean to Hannah.

That's right. A BULLY was picking on Hannah!

The bully made fun of Hannah because she didn't have any kids. This made Hannah feel worse and cry even more.

Then Hannah remembered something! God cares about us and helps us when we feel sad or disappointed! She knew she could ask God to help her with ANYTHING, so she decided to ask Him for a baby!

Hannah jumped on her donkey and headed straight for church. There she asked God for a child. She said that if she had a baby boy, she would give him to God.

The moment she asked God to help her, her sadness began to lift!

She knew God loved her and would make everything okay.

God answered her prayer and gave her a baby boy! She named him Samuel. Hannah was so excited that she sang and praised God.

She said, "God makes my heart happy! He makes me strong and hears my prayers. There is no one as big and strong and awesome as God!"

Hannah loved Samuel, but she didn't forget her promise to God. When Samuel was a little older, Hannah took him to the temple. Hannah knew that Samuel would love and follow God his whole life.

## **CONCLUSION**

All of us feel sad and disappointed when we don't get something we want.

- Maybe your dad or mom didn't let you buy a sweatshirt that a lot of your friends had.
- Maybe your soccer team lost a close game.
- Maybe your best friend didn't do something they promised to do.

That's normal!

But stop and think about it: What do you do when you feel sad?

Instead of throwing tantrums or getting mad at people, let's stop and remember that Jesus cares about us. We can ask for His help!

God knows what is in your heart. He knows how you feel. He wants to hug you and hold you, just like your mom or dad. He wants to take care of you until you feel better.

Even when sad things happen, Jesus still loves you. He will take care of you and help your heart be happy again.

### **PRAYER**

Jesus, thank You for taking care of me even when I'm sad. I know You are always with me. Thank You for helping me and taking care of me. You make my heart happy!

## Chapter 21: "Who is Calling Me?"

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### THE BIBLE

1 Samuel 3:2-10 (MSG)

*One night Eli, who was almost blind by now, had gone to bed. The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was sleeping in the Tabernacle near the Ark of God. Suddenly the LORD called out, "Samuel!"*

*"Yes?" Samuel replied. "What is it?" He got up and ran to Eli. "Here I am. Did you call me?"*

*"I didn't call you," Eli replied. "Go back to bed." So he did.*

*Then the LORD called out again, "Samuel!"*

*Again Samuel got up and went to Eli. "Here I am. Did you call me?"*

*"I didn't call you, my son," Eli said. "Go back to bed."*

*Samuel did not yet know the LORD because he had never had a message from the LORD before. So the LORD called a third time, and once more Samuel got up and went to Eli. "Here I am. Did you call me?"*

*Then Eli realized it was the LORD who was calling the boy. So he said to Samuel, "Go and lie down again, and if someone calls again, say, 'Speak, LORD, your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went back to bed.*

*And the Lord came and called as before, "Samuel! Samuel!"*

*And Samuel replied, "Speak, your servant is listening."*

### INTRODUCTION

How many of you know what your Mom or Dad's voice sounds like?

You can be in a noisy crowd of people, but the moment you hear your Mom's voice or hear your Dad say your name, your ears perk up. You look around like a prairie dog thinking, "Huh! Huh! I know that voice!"

Hearing the voice of someone you love is the best . . . unless you are in trouble. That's not the best. You know your Mom's voice so well, you can tell in two seconds if she is happy, excited, or (gulp) mad! And you can tell all of this just by how her voice sounds.

### TRANSITION

Today's story is about a child like you, named Samuel. One night, Samuel discovered that just like our parents or best friends, God loves us so much that He wants to talk with us. He wants us to hear His voice!

## THE STORY

In our journey through the Bible, we've met amazing people with incredible stories about God's love! Each story is true and points us to Jesus!

## RECAP

Last week, we learned about a strong woman named Hannah. She was sad because she didn't have the one thing she wanted more than anything: a baby.

Then God stepped in. He showed Hannah that He wants to help us and take care of us when we're sad or disappointed.

He answered her prayers and gave her a chubby baby boy. She named him Samuel.

## OPTIONAL: READ THE STORY ON PAGES 60–61: WHO IS CALLING ME?

Samuel grew up in the temple. He helped the people who came to the temple to pray to God. His bedroom was literally next to the stage in church!

Can you imagine walking out of your bedroom in your PJs and BOOM—you're standing in the City Kids service? That's the way it was for Samuel.

One night, Samuel was asleep in his bedroom in the temple. That night was quiet, peaceful, and dark. Suddenly he heard someone say his name, "Samuel!"

Samuel woke up. He looked around. No one was there! He was a little bit scared, so he grabbed his NERF gun and ran to his friend Eli who lived in the temple too. "Did you call me?"

Eli said, "No, go back to sleep. You must be dreaming."

Samuel went back to bed, but he tucked his NERF gun under his pillow . . . just in case.

"Samuel!" The voice said again.

Samuel sat up in bed. He looked around his room and still didn't see anyone.

So he threw back his covers, ran back to Eli, and asked him, "Are you SURE you're not calling me?"

Eli started to wonder if God was speaking to Samuel.

"Hmm. Go back to bed, Samuel, and if you hear the voice again, listen and talk with Him."

And that's what happened.

Samuel heard God's voice again, "Samuel. Samuel!"

This time he said, "God? Is that you? I'm listening!"

It was God!

God loved Samuel so much that He wanted to talk with him. He told Samuel things that would happen in the future.

Samuel and God talked every day from that night on.

Samuel became a prophet, which means God would speak to him, and he would tell people what God wanted.

For his whole life, Samuel and God would talk like best friends. This went on through elementary school, middle school, high school, college, and after he got married until he was an old, old man. God talked to Samuel, and Samuel listened to and talked with God.

## **CONCLUSION**

That first night, God called Samuel by his name.

Just like He knew Samuel's name, God knows your name! And just like He talked with Samuel, Jesus wants to talk with you.

You might not hear Him talk out loud, but you can hear Jesus' voice in your heart through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is God living inside of you. He talks to you. He helps you know that God loves you. He shows you how to be nice to other people. He warns you when something is wrong and will hurt you.

Part of following Jesus is learning to hear and obey His voice. He wants to show you how to live a happy, good, fun life.

## **PRAYER**

Dear Jesus, I know that You hear me when I pray. Thank You for listening to me, and thank You for talking to me. Help me learn to listen to Your voice in my heart.

## Chapter 22: An Unlikely King

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### THE BIBLE

1 Samuel 16:6-12 (NLT)

*When they arrived, Samuel took one look at Eliab and thought, “Surely this is the LORD’s anointed!”*

*But the LORD said to Samuel, “Don’t judge by his appearance or height, for I have rejected him. The LORD doesn’t see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”*

*Then Jesse told his son Abinadab to step forward and walk in front of Samuel. But Samuel said, “This is not the one the LORD has chosen.” Next Jesse summoned Shimea, but Samuel said, “Neither is this the one the LORD has chosen.” In the same way all seven of Jesse’s sons were presented to Samuel. But Samuel said to Jesse, “The LORD has not chosen any of these.” Then Samuel asked, “Are these all the sons you have?”*

*“There is still the youngest,” Jesse replied. “But he’s out in the fields watching the sheep and goats.” “Send for him at once,” Samuel said. “We will not sit down to eat until he arrives.”*

*So Jesse sent for him. He was dark and handsome, with beautiful eyes. And the LORD said, “This is the one; anoint him.”*

### INTRODUCTION

Have you ever felt too small, too slow, or not smart enough?

I know I have!

*(Tell the kids about a time that you didn’t feel like you measured up to the kids around you.)*

It is easy to look at other people and think, “Am I as smart as them?” or “Am I as popular as them?”

It is easy to think that what we look like, what we can do, or what we have is what makes us important.

But that is not true at all!

### TRANSITION

In today’s story, we learn about a boy just like you and me who discovered that God doesn’t choose us because we’re good enough, pretty enough, or strong enough. Jesus chooses us because He loves us . . . no matter what!

### THE STORY

In our journey through the Bible, we’ve discovered that every story and every character point us to one main story and one main character: Jesus!

The whole Bible is about Jesus and His mission to rescue us from the disease called sin.

Last week, we learned about a boy named Samuel who found out God wants to talk with us just like we talk with our best friends.

Samuel grew up and became a hero in Israel. He was a prophet, which means God spoke with him and he shared what he heard with the Israelite people.

**OPTIONAL: READ THE STORY ON PAGES 64–65: AN UNLIKELY KING**

One day, while the prophet Samuel was pouring himself a bowl of Lucky Charms, God spoke to him and said, "It's time for Israel to have a new king. Go to the home of a man named Jesse who lives in the town of Bethlehem."

"I'm on it!" Samuel told God.

So he hopped on his Audi S4 donkey, put on his sunglasses, and headed out to Bethlehem.

Once he arrived at Jesse's house, Samuel told Jesse, "I'm here to make one your sons Israel's new king." WOAH! Jesse's sons were so excited! They all lined up and started flexing their muscles to show Samuel they were the strongest and toughest.

Samuel looked at Jesse's son, Eliab, and thought "God is definitely going to choose him." Eliab was the biggest, smartest, and best looking, and had the biggest muscles!

Then Samuel heard God speak to his heart, "No, it's not him. You're only seeing what he looks like on the outside. I see what really matters: his heart."

One after another, Samuel looked at Jesse's seven sons. Each time, God said, "Nope," "Nada," "No way,"

When Samuel got to the end of the line, God hadn't chosen ANY OF THEM!

Samuel probably thought, "Uhhh . . . God, did you forget to pick one? We're at the end of the line!" Then Samuel asked Jesse, "Is this ALL of your sons?"

"No," Jesse said. "The runt of the family is outside taking care of the stinky sheep."

"Bring him in!" Samuel said.

So Jesse sent a text message to his youngest son, "Come to the house. RUN! LOL, IDK."

Before they knew it, in ran this little kid.

He was the smallest brother. He was the youngest. His muscles weren't big and he was short.

His name was David.

There was nothing special about the way he looked, but the moment Samuel saw David, God shouted in Samuel's heart, "This is the one I've chosen! His heart loves Me, and that's what makes David GREAT! Make him the next king of Israel!"

From that day on, God was with David and helped David grow into an incredible leader and king.

Why did God choose David? Because He could see David's heart, and David's heart said yes to God's love for him.

## **CONCLUSION**

Most people think someone is important because of:

1. What they look like.
2. What they can do.
3. What they have.

Not God. God chooses us based on His love for us!

What makes us great and important is when we say yes to God's love for us. His love fills up our hearts like it filled up David's.

Someone may tell you that you're not good enough, pretty enough, strong enough, smart enough, or fast enough, but they're wrong.

Jesus chooses you. He loves you!

## **PRAYER**

Jesus, thank You for choosing us. Thank You for filling us with Your love and helping us say yes to You. Your love makes me great!

## Chapter 23: David & The Giant

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### THE BIBLE

1 Samuel 17:3–4, 32, 48–49 (NLT)

*So the Philistines and Israelites faced each other on opposite hills, with the valley between them. Then Goliath, a Philistine champion from Gath, came out of the Philistine ranks to face the forces of Israel. He was over nine feet tall!*

*“Don’t worry about this Philistine,” David told Saul. “I’ll go fight him!”*

*As Goliath moved closer to attack, David quickly ran out to meet him. Reaching into his shepherd’s bag and taking out a stone, he hurled it with his sling and hit the Philistine in the forehead. The stone sank in, and Goliath stumbled and fell face down on the ground.*

### INTRODUCTION

Have you ever done something SO SCARY that you needed someone’s help to do it?

*For instance, (Tell the kids about a time you did something scary, like jumping off a diving board into your Dad’s arms, or riding a bike for the first time.)*

*(Ask the kids to share about a time that someone helped them do something scary.)*

When we know our dad, mom, or older brother is there to help us, it gives us confidence and helps us be brave!

### TRANSITION

In our story today, David faced a situation so scary that it caused full-grown adults to run away in fear! But David didn’t run because God was right there helping him!

### THE STORY

Every story in the Bible is true! They are amazing, incredible, supernatural, and TRUE!

Each person in the Bible points us to one Person: Jesus!

Every story in the Bible points us to one story: Jesus saving the world through His death on the cross and resurrection from the grave!

### RECAP

Last week, we found out how God chose David instead of his big, muscular older brothers.

Why? Because Jesus does not look at how big our muscles are or how cool our shoes are. He looks at our heart. That is what He cares about the most!

### OPTIONAL: READ THE STORY ON PAGES 66–67: DAVID AND THE GIANT

Shortly after Samuel told David he would be the next king of Israel, the Israelite army went to war with

their enemies, the Philistines.

The Philistines were mean, nasty bullies who hated God and God's people.

In fact, they hated them so much that one day, they sent an army to attack the Israelites.

The fight was on!

The two armies set up camp across a deep valley from each other and got their swords, spears, and armor ready.

But the Philistines had a secret weapon up their sleeve named Goliath.

Goliath wasn't a humongous death ray or massive rocket launcher. Goliath was a giant—a REALLY TALL GIANT. He was over nine feet tall!

And Goliath was as mean as he was tall.

He screamed across the valley at the Israelite army, "Send someone to fight me! If he beats me, you win. But if I beat him, we win!"

When the Israelite soldiers heard Goliath, they yelled out for their mommies and hid in their tents, shaking with fear!

They thought, "We can't beat Goliath. He is too big and strong."

While everyone in the Israelite army was freaking out, along came David riding his bike. He was bringing lunch to his brothers who were soldiers in the Israelite army.

David was still a kid, but he knew about danger.

When he took care of his Dad's sheep, God helped David protect them from lions and bears using nothing but a sling and some rocks.

When David saw Goliath, he felt a little scared. After all, Goliath was huge and David was small. However, he knew something the other soldiers didn't: God was bigger and stronger than any giant, and God was right there with him.

So David picked up some rocks, dropped them into his fanny pack, and ran toward Goliath. Goliath laughed at him. "You're just a boy! You can't win. I'm going to squish you like a bug!" "You're wrong!" David said. "God is with me, and He will help me beat you."

WHOOSH, WHOOSH, WHOOSH! David spun the sling shot above his head, faster and faster, until ZING! David threw the rock at Goliath as hard as he could.

WHAM! God caused the rock to smash right into the giant's head. Goliath went cross-eyed and fell down to the ground with a loud THUD!

David won!

Then he walked over to the unconscious Goliath, lifted up the giant's huge sword, and chopped his head off—CRUNCH!

Israel cheered and the Philistines ran away!

Israel was safe because David trusted God.

## **CONCLUSION**

Do you remember how you felt right before you were going to do something scary?

In that moment, do you remember what it felt like when you heard your mom or dad say, "I'm right here. It's going to be okay."

No matter where we are or how scary the situation is, Jesus is right there with us. He's ready to help us, just like He helped David in the valley with the giant.

What's something that makes you nervous?

- A subject in school, like math or reading?
- The mean kid in the grade above you?
- Having to play a solo in your band concert?

Whatever your giant is, let's keep our eyes on Jesus and ask Him to help us!

## **PRAYER**

Jesus, thank You for loving us so much and helping us even when we feel nervous! We trust You!

## Chapter 24: Best Friends

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### INTRODUCTION

Do you remember a time that someone did something nice for you? Wasn't it amazing how good it made you feel?

*(Ask the kids to share a time when someone did something big for them, and then share a story from your own life.)*

Most people think being great is about being the most popular or getting other people to do things for you.

But in God's kingdom, greatness has nothing to do with how popular you are, how pretty you are, how big your muscles are, or how much money your parents have. Greatness is all about helping other people.

Greatness is being a friend who puts others first!

### TRANSITION

Early in his life, King David discovered firsthand what kind of a friend Jesus is to us. He learned this through his friend named Jonathan.

### RECAP

We know that every story in the Bible is true and points us to the main story: Jesus' unconditional love for us!

Last week, we found out that just as God helped David kill a scary giant named Goliath, He is ready to help us in scary situations!

### OPTIONAL: READ THE STORY ON PAGES 68–69: BEST FRIENDS

Well, the moment God helped David take down the snarling Philistine giant, David became a celebrity! He was the most famous person in Israel!

Everyone knew his name. Little kids bought David and Goliath action figures and put posters of David on their bedroom walls! David was a hero! He even got a job working for the king in his palace!

WOAH!

One day while working in King Saul's palace, he met Saul's oldest son named Jonathan.

Jonathan was the prince of Israel, which means he would be the next king.

Have you ever met someone and immediately become BEST FRIENDS? You loved the same things, dressed the same, and laughed at the same jokes!

That is exactly how it was with David and Jonathan! They instantly became BESTIES!

They did everything together: played together, ate pizza together, talked together, and shot bow and arrows together!

Jonathan loved David. But Jonathan's dad, King Saul, HATED DAVID!

That's right! Saul saw how popular David became after killing Goliath, and it made King Saul jealous! Saul wanted everyone to love him, not David! You see, Saul thought that he had to be better than everyone else to be a great leader. He didn't understand that a great leader helps others and puts them first!

But Jonathan understood this, so he made a decision: He would help David become the next king of Israel. Even though Jonathan was the prince, he put David first. He wanted to help him.

You become great when you put others first.

This made King Saul so mad that he wanted to murder David! You heard me right! One afternoon, Saul picked up a spear and chucked it as hard as he could at David's head! Thankfully, David was lightning fast. He dodged the spear and got away from Saul.

When Jonathan found out his dad wanted to kill David, he told David, "You need to run away and hide. My dad is furious and wants to hurt you."

Jonathan and David hugged each other. They knew they might not see each other again. David promised to take care of Jonathan's family when David became king.

David had to hide from King Saul for a long time. But David and Jonathan stayed best friends. Jonathan did everything he could to help David, and he encouraged him to follow God.

One day, King Saul and Jonathan died in a war against Israel's enemies. David was sad that his friend had died. He missed him very much.

David became king of Israel. But he didn't forget his promise to Jonathan. He found Jonathan's family and took care of them.

## **CONCLUSION**

David was a great leader. God helped him be Israel's best king ever. David always remembered that it was God who made him great. God was the one who helped David love and help the people.

Just like David, God wants to help YOU help other people.

How can you do that? There are lots of ways! You can be a friend to someone who is lonely. You can share with someone who needs something you have. You can say nice things to someone who is sad. And most of all, you can tell others about God's love.

Jesus put us first.

He served us even though He is God.

## Chapter 25: Fire on the Mountain

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### THE BIBLE

1 Kings 18:20–21 (MSG)

*So Ahab summoned everyone in Israel, particularly the prophets, to Mount Carmel.*

*Elijah challenged the people: “How long are you going to sit on the fence? If GOD is the real God, follow him; if it’s Baal, follow him. Make up your minds!”*

### INTRODUCTION

When I was a City Kid, I can remember disobeying my parents a few times. Maybe once . . . or twice.

Uh-oh! That was always a bad idea. It seemed like every time I disobeyed, I ended up getting in trouble.

Have you ever gotten in trouble with your parents for something you did?

*(Ask two or three kids to share their stories, and then share a story about a time you got in trouble.)*

When my parents disciplined me, they weren’t being mean. They were helping me live the right way. They wanted the best for me and didn’t want me to settle for second best!

### TRANSITION

Just like you and me, the children of Israel in the Bible didn’t always obey God, either. But just like our parents, God wanted the best for them. So God sent prophets to talk to them.

### THE STORY

The Bible is the most amazing book ever written! It is packed full of incredible stories about how God helped people just like you and me.

### RECAP

Last week, we learned about King David and his best friend, Jonathan.

God used King David to help Israel follow God and say yes to His love for them.

Then something horrible began to happen.

After King David died, the Israelites forgot about God and stopped obeying Him.

Instead, they started worshiping a horrible fake god named Baal.

It got so bad, and the people made such bad choices, that God chose a man named Elijah to speak to the Israelites and ask them to stop running away from Him.

You see, Elijah was a prophet.

Prophets reminded people how much God loved them.

### **OPTIONAL: READ THE STORY ON PAGES 72–73: FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN**

One day, Elijah had had enough.

“That’s it!” Elijah shouted. “We are going to settle this once and for all. We are going to find out who the REAL GOD IS.”

Elijah brought all of the priests who worshiped Baal to the top of a mountain. “I am going to show you that God is the only real God and that Baal is fake.”

Elijah told the priests of Baal, “This is how this is going to work: I will build an altar to God, and you build an altar to Baal. Then we will pray. If God is real, he will send fire to burn my altar. If Baal is real, he will send fire to burn your altar. The God that sends fire is the only real God!”

The people who followed Baal went first. They built their altar, shouted, sang, screamed, and danced to Baal for a whole day, but no fire came.

By the time they were done, all of the Baal priests passed out exhausted on the ground.

Then it was Elijah’s turn. He prayed a short, simple prayer: “God, show Israel that You are the real God. Show them that You are strong and they should follow You.”

Suddenly, fire shot out of the sky! It burned up the altar. All of the Israelites saw it and shouted out, “God wins! He is the only God!”

Everyone knew that God was real. They knew they needed to say yes to His love for them and no to idols.

### **CONCLUSION**

God sent Jesus to the earth so we could know what God looks like, how He thinks, and how much He loves us!

God sent His Son, Jesus, so that we could know what Elijah knew: God is just as real as you and me!

We trust Him because we know He loves us!

### **PRAYER**

Jesus, thank You for showing me who You are and helping me to know You are my best friend!

## Chapter 26: Swallowed by a Fish

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### THE BIBLE

Matthew 12:40 (NLT)

*For as Jonah was in the belly of the great fish for three days and three nights, so will the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights.*

### INTRODUCTION

Have you ever done something you knew was wrong because you thought no one was watching?

(Tell the kids a funny story about a time you tried to get away with something and got caught.)

Isn't it funny how often we think, "No one is looking, so I won't get in trouble," only to discover that our mom or teacher saw the whole thing?

### TRANSITION

In our story today from the Bible, we learn about a man named Jonah who tried to get away with something, only to find out that God loves us no matter what!

### MAIN POINT

We love the Bible, because the Bible is the number one way we can see who Jesus is!

### RECAP

Last week, we learned about a man named Elijah who watched God do an amazing miracle on top of a mountain.

Elijah was a prophet.

### OPTIONAL: READ THE STORY ON PAGES 74–75: SWALLOWED BY A FISH

Prophets are men and women in the Bible who heard God speak and then showed the people who God is and what He wants.

Approximately 300 years after David became king of Israel, God spoke to another prophet in Israel named Jonah.

One morning while Jonah fixed himself a nice breakfast, Jonah heard God speak to his heart, "Go to the city of Nineveh and tell them about me."

"TIME-OUT, GOD!" Jonah yelled as he put down his blueberry pancakes. "NINEVEH?"

This was a problem. Jonah didn't want to go there. Nineveh was a bad place. The people in Nineveh did not love God, and they did mean things to people. Really mean things

So, just like we sometimes do when our parents ask us to stop playing and do our homework, Jonah

said no.

Question: Is it ever a good idea to tell Jesus no? It's not. Why? Because everything Jesus asks us to do is for our own good!

Jonah didn't want to think about that, so he packed his bags and ran out the door and away from God.

Or so he thought. Did Jonah think God couldn't see him? Did Jonah think God wasn't watching?

I don't know, but Jonah bought a ticket for a boat going in the opposite direction of Nineveh.

As the ship sailed across the clear Mediterranean waters, a dark storm grew overhead.

Before Jonah knew it, he and the sailors were in the middle of the **WORST STORM OF THEIR LIVES!**

It was so bad, the boat was about to sink. Jonah knew the storm was happening because of him.

He yelled at the sailors over the howling wind, "This storm is my fault! I thought I could get away with something I knew was wrong! I thought God wasn't watching. I was wrong! If you throw me in the ocean, the storm will stop!"

So . . . 1, 2, 3 . . . the sailors heaved Jonah overboard, down into the ocean.

Aaahhh! SPLOOSH!

Immediately, the wind stopped and the waves disappeared.

But now Jonah was in the middle of the ocean, sinking deeper and deeper. Was he going to drown?

Nope. Even though Jonah intentionally did something he knew was wrong, God never stopped loving him.

**WHAT HAPPENED NEXT IS CRAZY.**

God sent a huge fish to save Jonah. The fish swallowed Jonah alive! But the giant fish didn't hurt him.

Instead, Jonah sat inside the fish's stomach for three days. It kept him alive under the ocean.

While he sat in the dark gooey fish stomach, Jonah asked God to forgive him. He realized he made a big mistake.

Of course God forgave Jonah! God loved Jonah—when he was good and when he was bad.

The fish spit Jonah out onto the beach . . . next to Nineveh!

God used the fish like an taxi to drive Jonah to Nineveh!

God still loved Jonah even though he had disobeyed.

As he wiped off the slime and goopy seaweed, Jonah was ready to obey God.

He walked into Nineveh like the prophet he was and told the people about God.

The people listened to Jonah and decided to follow God.

The whole city became best friends with God!

Jonah learned that God loves everyone, even when people that do bad things.

God still loved Jonah, and He still loved the mean people of Nineveh.

## **CONCLUSION**

God sent lots of prophets to help Israel follow Him.

A prophet's job was to show the people who God is.

But there is one prophet who is the greatest of all time: His name is Jesus!

Jesus came down from heaven to show us what God looks like and what God thinks about us.

Jesus is the One who shows us how to be best friends with God.

And do you know what Jesus came to tell us?

That He loves us! All the time, no matter what, more than we could ever imagine. That is God's message to you and me.

## **PRAYER**

Jesus, thank You for loving me no matter what. Thank You for telling me how much God loves me and for showing me how to follow God.

## Chapter 27: Saved from a Fire

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### THE BIBLE

Daniel 3:16–17 (NLT)

*Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us. He will rescue us from your power, Your Majesty. But even if he doesn't, we want to make it clear to you, Your Majesty, that we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have set up."*

### INTRODUCTION

One of the things I loved when I was a kid was being the first person to tell my friends about a new toy, cartoon, or video game they didn't know about.

*(Tell a story about something cool you got to introduce your friends to when you were little. Ask the kids for an example from their own life.)*

There is something fun about showing others the amazing thing you've discovered!

### TRANSITION

In today's story, Jesus uses three friends' obedience to show an entire country He is the one true God!

### MAIN POINT

God gave us the Bible so we can see Who Jesus is every time we read it!

Not only does the Bible show us Who Jesus is, it also shows us how life works best!

God is smart. Really smart.

In today's unbelievable story, we meet three best friends who had to make a hard decision: go with the crowd and something they knew was wrong, or follow Jesus.

### OPTIONAL: READ THE STORY ON PAGES 78–79: SAVED FROM A FIRE

Almost 200 years after the giant fish spit Jonah onto a beach and God saved the city of Nineveh, a kingdom called Babylon came into power.

The Babylonians didn't know the real God, so they worshiped idols. Idols are statues people build out of stone, wood, or metal and then worship.

One day, the king of Babylon decided to build a giant idol.

When I say giant, I mean giant! This idol was ninety feet tall!

That is as high as a nine-story building!

If that isn't crazy enough, when the builders asked the king what he wanted them to make the statue out of, he said, "Gold. Bling it out."

The day arrived to show everyone his new gold statue.

The king invited the leaders from across the country to the party.

When everyone arrived, he told them, "Isn't my gold statue cool? Now kneel down and worship it!" Is that a good idea? No way!

But every person got on their knees and worshipped anyway, because the king said, "If you don't worship my gold statue, I will cook you to death in my giant oven!"

True story!

Afraid of what the king would do to them, the people at the party rushed to bow down.

Everyone except for three friends. When the three friends heard the king tell them to worship the statue, they immediately knew it was wrong.

Their names were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were Israelites, God's people. And they loved God—the real God.

They knew worshipping a statue was wrong. They didn't want to bow down to it.

But they also knew that if they didn't, the king would burn them to a crisp in the fire!

The three friends looked at each other. Time was running out.

What would they do?

Would they let the king pressure them into doing something they knew was wrong, or would they follow God and do what they knew was right?

Without saying a word, the three friends made up their minds.

The king looked out across the sea of kneeling people. Off in the distance, he saw three men still standing tall, staring right back at him.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to give into the pressure! They would worship the real God, not an idol.

This made the king so MAD that his face turned red and he began to scream and spit, "Throw them into the fire!"

So the king's soldiers tied Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego up and threw them into a huge roaring

hot fire.

“That’s the end of them!” The king thought.

Then the king looked into the fire. He looked again! Something was weird! He counted the men.

“One, two, three . . . FOUR!”

Four men? There were supposed to be three. And they weren’t burning up! The four people were chilling in the fire, talking.

In fact, it looked like they were having fun!

The king was confused and scared. He yelled, “Look! There are four people in there! And the fourth one looks like the Son of God.”

He yelled into the fire and asked Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to come out.

Now everyone at the party watched as the three friends WALKED OUT OF THE FIRE, SMILING!

They weren’t hurt at all!

They did what they knew was right and God saved them.

The king realized he was wrong to make everyone worship his statue.

He told people they should follow the real God—the God who saved Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

## **CONCLUSION**

Do you know who the fourth man was in the fire with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? It was Jesus! The Bible says He looked like “a Son of God.”

The three friends were probably scared when the king said to throw them in the fire. But they trusted God, and God saved them from the fire.

Then the men were able to tell everyone about how good God is and how much He loves us all.

Sometimes it might seem a little scary to do the right thing, but remember: Jesus is right there with you and He will take care of you!

When we do the right thing when it is difficult, we help show others how to follow Jesus.

Some people don’t know that God loves them.

Some people don’t believe God is real.

But do you know that God still cares about them?

He loves people even when they don’t love Him back!

When we follow God, we help other people know God, too. When they see us, they see how good God is and how much He loves everyone.

That's what three guys with funny-sounding names learned in this story. They had to decide if they were going to follow God or not. They did the right thing, and God took care of them. And because of that, many other people learned about God.

**PRAYER**

Dear Jesus, I know You are always with me, even when things seem scary. Thank You for protecting me and caring for me. Help me follow You and show others how to follow you, too.

## Chapter 28: No Lunch for Lions

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### THE BIBLE

Daniel 6:21–22 (NLT)

*Daniel answered, "Long live the king! My God sent his angel to shut the lions' mouths so that they would not hurt me, for I have been found innocent in his sight. And I have not wronged you, Your Majesty."*

### INTRODUCTION

Has one of your friends ever told you to do something bad, like taking something that wasn't yours or being mean to someone else?

When I was a kid, some friends tried to get me to do bad things. I wanted to follow God—but I also wanted to make my friends happy. I didn't want them to make fun of me or stop being my friends.

But it's more important to follow God than anyone else, even your friends. If someone tells you to do something you know is bad, just say, "No, I'm going to follow God, and you should too!"

### TRANSITION

Raise your hand if someone has tried to get you to do something you knew was wrong.

- Maybe your friends at school tried to get you to pick on a new kid.
- Maybe your brother or sister tried to pressure you into stealing something from the store.
- Maybe your friend tried to convince you to watch something on the computer you knew was bad.

*(Tell the kids a story about a time someone tried to pressure you into doing something you knew wasn't right.)*

It's difficult when someone pressures us to do something we don't want to.

Part of us wants to do the right thing, but another part of us wants them to think we're cool.

What do we do?

### MAIN POINT

There are more books in the world than you and I could read in a thousand lifetimes!

Only one book shows you who Jesus is: the Bible!

Every story in the Bible is true, and every story points us to Jesus.

In our journey through the Bible, we're discovering amazing people and crazy situations. And every person and story shows us how much Jesus loves us!

## OPTIONAL: READ THE STORY ON PAGES 82–83: NO LUNCH FOR LIONS

Last week, we looked at how Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego's decision to worship God showed an entire country who Jesus is!

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had a friend living with them in the country of Babylon. His name was Daniel.

Like Jonah, Daniel was a prophet who helped people understand what God thought and what He wanted.

Daniel was honest, smart, and good, and the king of Babylon loved him.

The king gave Daniel the most important job in the whole country besides his own.

He made Daniel his right-hand man.

But Daniel had a problem. Some of the king's other employees were jealous of how much the king liked Daniel.

Have you ever been jealous before? Jealousy means you want what someone else has. You want it so bad you become angry that they have it and you don't. Jealousy is bad news.

Well, this group of mean guys were jelly of our boy, Daniel.

They were so jealous they wanted to (GULP) . . . MURDER DANIEL!

So the bad guys put their nasty little heads together. They came up with a plan to trap Daniel by tricking the king into making a very dumb law.

The law said people could only pray to the king—no one else. If they disobeyed it, they would be thrown into a deep pit in the ground filled with starving lions.

Talk about a bad day!

When Daniel heard about the law, he wasn't afraid. He also knew he couldn't go along with the law, because the only one we pray to is God!

That is exactly what Daniel did. He went home, kneeled down in his room, and talked with God, his best friend.

Just as you would suspect, the mean guys were spying on him. And when they saw him talking with God, they sneaked off to tell the king.

"Oh king, your friend Daniel disobeyed your law! He prayed to God. It's time for him to become a lion's chew toy! HAHAAHAHAHAHA!"

The king's heart broke when he realized he'd been tricked. He didn't want to let the lions eat Daniel, but he had to follow the law. So he sent soldiers to get Daniel, and they threw him into the lions' den.

The king went home in tears. He was too worried to eat or sleep.

In the morning, the king ran to the lions' den. He yelled, "Daniel, are you alive? Did God save you?"

It was quiet for a moment . . .

Then out from the pitch-dark pit came a familiar voice, "I'm fine! God sent an angel to keep the lions from eating me!"

The king was so amazed that Daniel chose to obey God and that God saved Daniel. He made a new law: He told everyone they should follow God—the one true God!

## **CONCLUSION**

Daniel refused to let people pressure him into doing something he knew was wrong.

No matter what they did to him, Daniel knew it was better to follow God than do what was wrong to get people to like him.

Daniel did what was right, because He knew God would always take care of him.

That is how it is for you, too. God loves you, He is with you, and He takes care of you. You can trust Him.

The next time someone tries to convince you to do something wrong, remember Daniel and trust Jesus!

## **PRAYER**

*Ask everyone to close their eyes.*

I want everyone to pray this prayer after me, out loud. If you are feeling pressured to do something you know is wrong, Jesus is going to help you. He loves you and is always with you!

*Jesus, thank You for loving me no matter what.*

*Help me to follow You and do what is right.*

*Give me courage, because I know You are right beside me wherever I go.*

*I love You!*

## Chapter 29: A Very Brave Queen

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### THE BIBLE

Esther 8:3 (NLT)

*Then Esther went again before the king, falling down at his feet and begging him with tears to stop the evil plot devised by Haman the Agagite against the Jews.*

### INTRODUCTION

Have you ever had to do something that took courage?

Courage is doing something even though it scares you.

*(Tell the kids a story about a time you needed to use courage. Then ask them to share about a time they did something even though it scared them.)*

### TRANSITION

In today's amazing true story, we take a look at one of the most famous women in all of the Bible. Her name is Esther. And Esther's decision to courageously trust God allowed Him to use her to rescue an entire nation!

### MAIN POINT

When we read the Bible, it is important to remember that every story is true and the people in the stories were real, just like you and me.

God loved them even though they made mistakes, and He loves us!

God helped them, and He will help us!

Last week, we looked at how Jesus helped Daniel not give in to peer pressure to do something bad, and how Jesus rescued Daniel from the dark pit full of starving lions!

### OPTIONAL: READ THE STORY ON PAGES 86–87: A VERY BRAVE QUEEN

Today, we look at a woman named Esther who God used to save an entire nation!

Esther was a young Israelite woman who lived approximately 50 years after God saved Daniel from becoming lion food.

Esther was kind and very beautiful, and she loved God.

Both of her parents were dead, and she lived with her uncle, Mordecai.

One day, the king of Persia decided that he wanted to find a new woman to be queen.

He sent hundreds of servants out into the country to look for the most beautiful, wonderful person they could find.

One day, a king's servant rode into Esther's town. The moment the servant saw Esther, his jaw dropped. He took her back to the palace where all of the candidates for queen were living.

Who here has ever been to a spa before? A spa is a place where you relax, get nice massages, and drink cucumber-infused water.

The Bible says Esther and the other candidates for queen lived in a spa for a whole year to get ready to meet the king.

The day finally came for the king to pick his new queen. All of the candidates went to meet the king one at a time.

But the moment the king saw Esther walk around the corner into the throne room, he stood up and said, "You're the one!" He made Esther the queen!

Now, before you think Esther's story is like Cinderella, you have to know something: God brought Esther to the palace and had the king choose her to be queen.

Why? Because one of the king's important officials was an evil, wicked man named Haman.

Haman hated Esther's uncle, Mordecai. Haman was so mad at Mordecai that he wanted to kill all of the Israelites, Esther's people.

Haman was like the Joker, Lex Luthor, and Cinderella's wicked stepmother all rolled into one!

Mordecai told Esther, "Talk to the king! Tell him about Haman's evil plan to kill the Jews! We are all in danger, and I think saving the Israelites is the reason God made you queen!"

Esther said, "Woah! There is a law that says I can't talk to the king in the throne room unless he calls me first. I could be killed! Besides, Haman is the king's friend."

Esther had a huge choice to make. She could stay silent and save herself, or risk dying to help save her people.

Esther was very brave, and she decided to trust God and go to the king.

She walked into the throne room with her head held high. Everyone panicked and knocked on the king's door. The king wasn't mad at all! He was happy to see her. "What do you need, Esther? I will give you anything."

Esther told him, "Save my life! Your friend Haman is trying to kill all the Israelites, including my uncle and me."

The king said, "What? I won't let that happen!" The king immediately put a stop to Haman's evil plan to kill the Israelites. He didn't let anyone hurt Esther or her people.

Because Esther trusted God and chose to be brave, God used the young queen to save Israel from

danger!

## **CONCLUSION**

Esther was just like you and me. She wanted people to like her. She wanted to fit in. But more than all of those things, she wanted to trust God.

Because Esther was best friends with God, she knew He loved her. She knew God would take care of her even though going to the king was super scary.

What is something you can do this week that takes courage?

The reason we can live courageously is because we know that Jesus loves us, just like He loved Esther!

## **PRAYER**

Jesus, fill me with Your courage. Help me to see how much You love me!

## Chapter 30: A Strange Visitor

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### INTRODUCTION

Who here has ever dreamed of being famous?

Of course we have!

*(Tell the kids about what you wanted to be when you were little: an NFL player, a famous singer, a bungee-jumping, balloon-tying tuba player . . .)*

One reason we want to be famous is that we think doing amazing things will make people love us.

### TRANSITION

Sometimes it is easy to think we need to do amazing things to make Jesus love us, but the truth is, Jesus already loves us and has a special plan for our lives!

### MAIN POINT

In our story today from Luke chapter 1, the Bible tells us about a young girl named Mary. Mary was a normal person like you and me, but one day something INCREDIBLE happened to her . . .

### READ THE STORY ABOUT MARY ON PAGE 92–93: A STRANGE VISITOR

God chose Mary to do something so amazing that no one believed her!

God chose Mary to be Jesus' . . . GULP . . . mom!

Can you imagine?

Mary was going about her business, maybe washing the camel, when BAM! God chose her to be a part of His family!

*Question: Did God choose Mary because she was such a good person?*

No! Mary hadn't done ANYTHING for Jesus yet.

God picked her to do something special for Him because He loved her.

When Mary learned that God loved her and wanted her to do something amazing, she trusted Him and said Yes.

### CONCLUSION

In the same way God chose Mary because He loved her, He chooses you too!

But I'm not perfect. Why would God choose me?

Simple: because He loves you no matter what!

We can trust Jesus and say yes to Him just like Mary because, no matter what we do, Jesus will always love us!

**PRAYER**

Jesus, I trust You because I know You love me. I say yes to You and Your plan for me!

## Chapter 31: A Baby in a Manger

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### INTRODUCTION

Have you ever wanted something so bad you did something crazy to get it?

*(Tell the kids a story about a time you did something gross or crazy to get/win something you wanted. Maybe you did something daring in order to impress someone you liked, or you ate something nasty to win a bet. Ask two or three kids to share their stories about a time they did something crazy to get something they wanted really bad.)*

### TRANSITION

Sometimes, we want something so bad we do crazy stuff to get it. This is exactly what Jesus did the day He was born. He did something crazy because He wanted us to know how much He loves us!

### MAIN POINT

#### OPTIONAL: READ THE STORY ON PAGES 96-97: A BABY IN A MANGER

How big a deal is Christmas?

Christmas is a HUGE deal! In fact, 160 of the 195 countries in the world celebrate Christmas. That is 82% of the countries in the world! Almost the entire world celebrates Christmas!

And here is the best part: Christmas is all about Jesus. Christmas trees, ornaments, lights, Santa Claus, Frosty, carols, and most importantly, presents—all of them exist because we celebrate what Jesus did for us when He came to the earth over 2,000 years ago.

Think about that for a second.

Even the people who don't know Jesus yet are celebrating a day that exists because God left heaven and came to the earth as a baby.

Christmas is all about Jesus coming to us!

But why did God need to come to earth in the first place?

Why did He need to leave heaven and go through the HUGE inconvenience of becoming a baby?

Believe it or not, the reason for Christmas started way back at the beginning of time in a beautiful garden called Eden.

Adam, the first person on earth and the first person in God's family, disobeyed God's one rule to not eat the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Kids, Adam and Eve only had one rule to follow. That's it! One! Think about how many rules your parents have for you! Adam and Eve only had one, and guess what—they broke it!

When they did, sin entered the world and destroyed our relationship with God.

And like a window shattered into a million pieces, there was nothing we could do to put it back together.

But Jesus could.

So Jesus left His amazing home in heaven and came to earth as a baby.

But before He did, He chose two people to be a part of His new family.

Their names? Mary and Joseph.

Nine months after Jesus started growing inside Mary, her tummy looked huge! Jesus was going to be born any day now.

But Mary and Joseph had to go on a long road trip to a little town called Bethlehem.

After days of walking along a dusty desert road, the couple shuffled into Bethlehem, exhausted and dirty.

The only thing they wanted to do was rent a room in a hotel and go to sleep for four days. But there was a problem . . . There were no rooms left to rent in any of the hotels. NONE! What were they going to do? After knocking on doors all afternoon, they finally found a place to sleep—with the cows and goats and donkeys! It smelled bad and it was dirty and loud. But it was all they could find.

Then it happened: Jesus was born. Mary wrapped the Baby Jesus in cloths to keep Him warm. When it was time for Him to take a nap, she put Him in a manger. That's a fancy name for a box that holds food for the animals. The people in the town didn't know it yet, but the little baby asleep in the manger was God. And one day, He would be their Savior.

Think of it! The God who created EVERYTHING did something crazy! He let Himself be born in a barn rather than a palace. He willingly slept in a feed trough that donkeys and cows ate nasty slop out of.

Why? Because He wanted you and me to know how much He loves us!

## **CONCLUSION**

Jesus wanted us to experience His love for us so much He was willing to do whatever it took. How does it make you feel to know that Jesus loves you that much?

This is what Christmas is about. Christmas exists to celebrate His choice to fix our relationship with God so we can once again join God's family!

## **PRAYER**

Jesus, thank You for loving me so much. ! I love You too.

## Chapter 32: A Sky Full of Angels

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### THE BIBLE

Luke 2:8–15 (NLT)

*That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified, but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped in strips of cloth, lying in a manger.*

*Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying,*

*"Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased."*

*When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go to Bethlehem! Let's see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."*

### INTRODUCTION

Have you ever had a secret you couldn't wait to share with someone?

When you have a good secret, you feel like you're going to pop if you can't share it.

When you find out some piece of super good news, who is the first person you want to tell?

Your best friend, of course!

*(Ask the kids, "What was something you couldn't wait to tell your best friend about?")*

Some news is too good to keep to yourself. You want to tell it to the people you love the most!

### TRANSITION

In the same way, when God had the biggest secret in history, what did He do? He sent a sky full of angels to tell His best friends about it! Who are His best friends? People!

### RECAP

Last week in our journey through the Bible, it finally happened! God came to the earth to rescue humanity from sin!

But it didn't happen how anyone expected. When it came time for Jesus to be born, Mary and Joseph couldn't find a hotel to stay in. So Jesus, the God who created the world, had to be born in a smelly, nasty barn!

But that didn't matter, because the waiting was over. God's rescue plan was in full swing!

### **MAIN POINT**

When you were born, your parents were so happy and proud!

They called their family and friends to tell them the great news that you had arrived!

They were excited because they love you SO MUCH!

### **OPTIONAL: READ THE STORY ON PAGES 98-99: A SKY FULL OF ANGELS**

God was just like your parents!

The moment Jesus was born in Bethlehem, all of heaven began to party and erupted in ear-splitting cheers! God's Son was born!

God's heart felt like it would burst with pride and joy. He had to tell His best friends! So that same night, while Jesus slept like a baby (see what I did there?), up on the hill outside of the town sat a group of shepherds. They were huddled around a campfire as they watched over their flock of sheep.

God couldn't wait any longer. It was time to share His incredible secret!

Suddenly, a brilliant light appeared out of the darkness, almost blinding the shepherds.

The shepherds screamed, hugged each other, and called out for their mommies!

Immediately, they knew he was an angel and probably thought he was there to punish them for something bad they'd done.

"It's all over! We're goners!" They shut their eyes tight and prepared for the angel to shoot lightning out of his fingertips and explode their heads.

But what happened next changed their lives forever. Instead of exploding their heads, the angel smiled and said, "Don't be afraid! I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people."

WHAT? That is not what the shepherds expected to hear.

It got even better. God used the angel to tell the shepherds about the great news and invite them to Jesus' exclusive first birthday party, saying:

"The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger."

Out of ALL the people Jesus could have picked to come to His first birthday party, Jesus chose a ragtag bunch of smelly guys.

Then the sky was filled with many, many more angels. The sky was full of them! The angels celebrated and praised God, saying, "God is greater than everything, and He gives peace to everyone because He loves you so much." Then as quick as they appeared, POOF they were gone!

The shepherds couldn't believe what God had told them. In the blink of an eye, they all jumped to their feet and said, "Let's go see this Baby the angel told us about!"

Down to Bethlehem they ran, as fast as their leather sandals could go. They found Jesus sound asleep in a box full of fresh hay. Mary and Joseph sat on either side of him, smiling from ear to ear listening to their baby breathe.

The shepherds were so excited that they had found Jesus. When they left, they told everyone they could find their incredible secret: God came to earth as a baby and His name was Jesus. This Baby would save the world!

## **CONCLUSION**

God couldn't keep the news about Jesus a secret! He had to share it!

Jesus came to rescue us from the enemy called sin.

This is how much Jesus loves you and me.

This is the best news in history!

This is how great our God is!

## **PRAYER**

Jesus, thank you for leaving heaven to rescue me. Thank you for making me your best friend. I want to be your best friend too. Amen.

## Chapter 33: Follow That Star

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### THE BIBLE

Matthew 2:1–2 (NLT)

*Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the reign of King Herod. About that time some wise men from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking, “Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose, and we have come to worship him.”*

### INTRODUCTION

How many of you love Christmas?

I love everything about Christmas: the lights, the gifts, the trees, the gifts, the decorations, the gifts! There is nothing quite like seeing Christmas gifts neatly wrapped and sitting under the tree, waiting for you to rip them open.

What is your all-time, number-one favorite gift you got for Christmas?

*(Tell the kids about your favorite gift you received as a child)*

Christmas gifts are AWESOME!

When someone gives you an incredible gift, it is their way of telling you how much they love you.

When someone gives you a great gift like that, does it make you love them more or less?

More of course!

### TRANSITION

What would you do if God gave you a gift so incredible that when you opened it, you knew from then on how much He loves you? Well, that is exactly what He did. And the gift’s name is Jesus.

### RECAP

Over the past two weeks, we’ve looked at how Jesus came into the world, and the people Jesus chose to include in the story about His birth.

We learned about Mary and Joseph and how Jesus chose us to be in His family.

We learned about the shepherds and that God couldn’t wait to share the biggest secret in history with us—His best friends!

### MAIN POINT

**OPTIONAL: READ THE STORY ON PAGES 100-101: “FOLLOW THAT STAR”**

Today, we find out about a group of mysterious people called Wise Men. They received a gift so

amazing and so incredible that it made them WANT to give back!

Our story begins two years after Jesus was born in a barn in Bethlehem.

One night, in a place called Judea, God chose a very unusual group of people to visit Jesus.

The Bible calls these mysterious people Wise Men. We don't know how many Wise Men there were.

We don't know where they came from. The Bible only says they were from "the East."

We don't know how long it took the Wise Men to find Jesus. A month, a year, two years? Who knows! There is a lot we don't know about the Wise Men, but we do know this:

These Wise Men were rich, and they spent their time studying the stars.

One night, God put a special star in the sky to tell them a King would be born—a King so powerful, He would rescue the world from sin!

The moment the star appeared, they packed up their bags, strapped some very important heavy boxes to their camels' backs, and set off on an incredible journey to find the new King.

They followed the star across burning deserts, over snowy mountains, through dark valleys, and across deep rivers.

Until finally! The star stopped over a tiny house on a tiny street in a small town.

The star had led them to the new King! The Wise Men couldn't believe they had found Him!

They jumped down from their camels as fast as they could, untied the mysterious heavy boxes, walked up to the little wooden door on the tiny house, took a deep breath and . . . knocked!

The door creaked open, and there standing behind the door was a man with a beard. It was Joseph!

Behind Joseph, the Wise Men saw a young mom sitting in a wooden chair, holding a small two-year-old boy who was drooling and giggling as he tried to grab the candle sitting on the table next to them.

Mary bounced Jesus on her knee as He climbed on her like she was a jungle gym.

The moment the Wise Men saw Jesus, they knew in their hearts that He was God's gift that would rescue the world!

What did they do next? The Wise Men GAVE GIFTS back to Jesus!

The Wise Men dropped to their knees in front of little Jesus, put the mysterious heavy boxes on the floor in front of Him, and opened up the lids.

What was inside these mysterious boxes? Gifts. Very expensive, very precious gifts. Gold, frankincense, and myrrh!

## **CONCLUSION**

When the Wise Men met Jesus, they knew He was God's gift to the world. They understood God gave us the ultimate gift: Himself. Jesus made Himself into our gift. When the Wise Men realized this, the first thing they did was give gifts back to Jesus.

When we realize Jesus gave Himself to us as a gift, it changes us from the inside out. It makes us want to give to others. It makes us want to live with generosity! Because this is Who our God is: He is the ultimate giver! We give to others because Jesus gave everything to us!

## **PRAYER**

Thank You, Jesus, for being born. Thank You for giving your life for me. I want to give back to You and to others because You gave everything to me!

## Chapter 34: This is My House

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### THE BIBLE

Luke 2:41–49 (NLT)

*Every year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the Passover festival. When Jesus was twelve years old, they attended the festival as usual. After the celebration was over, they started home to Nazareth, but Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents didn't miss him at first, because they assumed he was among the other travelers. But when he didn't show up that evening, they started looking for him among their relatives and friends.*

*When they couldn't find him, they went back to Jerusalem to search for him there. Three days later they finally discovered him in the Temple, sitting among the religious teachers, listening to them and asking questions. All who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.*

*His parents didn't know what to think. "Son," his mother said to him, "why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been frantic, searching for you everywhere."*

*"But why did you need to search?" he asked. "Didn't you know that I must be in my Father's house?"*

### INTRODUCTION

Who loves going on vacation?

It's fun to go on trips, isn't it? Maybe you went on vacation to your grandma's house, camping in the forest, to the beach, or to Disneyland?

Vacation is great, but it also feels SOOO GOOD to come home. What is your favorite part about coming home? I loved coming home, playing with my favorite toys, and sleeping on my own super-comfy bed!

Jesus had a home with His parents. But His real home was with His Father, God. That's why Jesus liked to go to the temple (which is like a church). The temple was God's house, so it was Jesus' house too.

### TRANSITION

Home is great. It feels good knowing there is a place where we can be ourselves and know everyone loves us. Do you know that church is your home too? It is Jesus' family. It is a place where we can be ourselves and know everyone loves us! When we know Jesus, His house is our house!

### RECAP

The Bible is the most incredible thing in the WORLD, because it shows us Who Jesus is!

Last week, we learned about the rich wise men who followed the star to find 2-year-old Jesus!

When they saw Jesus for themselves, it made them so excited that they gave Jesus their best gifts!

## **MAIN POINT**

Fast-forward ten years. Jesus is now 12 years old.

Every year, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph would load their minivan, er . . . I mean donkey and go on a road trip with their uncles, cousins, and aunts to the big city called Jerusalem.

There they would celebrate a special holiday called Passover.

## **OPTIONAL: READ THE STORY ON PAGES 104-104: THIS IS MY HOUSE**

Thousands of people packed the streets. It was a huge party as they remembered the time God saved Israel from slavery in Egypt.

Do you have a favorite holiday you love to celebrate with your family? What is it?

For 12-year-old Jesus, His favorite holiday was Passover because Mary and Joseph would take Him to visit the temple in Jerusalem.

Jesus loved to go to the temple (which is like a church). The temple was God's house. Because Jesus is God, the Temple was Jesus' house too.

When the holiday was over, Jesus' parents started walking home with their big group of family and friends. Joseph thought Jesus was with Mary. Mary thought Jesus was with Joseph. But they were both wrong. Jesus was still in Jerusalem. He had been left behind!

When Joseph and Mary realized their Son was missing, they did what all good parents do when they can't find a child: **THEY FREAKED OUT! AAAHHH!!!**

Was Jesus okay?

Did bullies beat Him up?

Did Jesus fall down a hole?

Was He abducted by aliens?

All of these thoughts raced through Mary and Joseph's heads as they raced back to Jerusalem. (Okay, maybe not the alien one.)

For three long days they looked all over the city for their son, calling out His name.

Then they finally found him. Jesus was in the temple! He wasn't crying. He wasn't lonely. He didn't even seem scared. He was listening to the teachers or pastors there asking them questions about God.

When they saw Him sitting there having a great time in church, Mary yelled at Him, "How could you do this to me? You almost gave me a heart attack!"

Mary and Joseph were glad to find Him, but they were mad that Jesus ditched them.

Jesus was happy to see them too, but He was having fun talking with the teachers in the temple about God.

Jesus said, "Why were you worried? God is my father, and this is My house. Being with God is where I am happiest."

### **CONCLUSION**

The Bible says that God is our Father. So when we are with Him, it's like we are at home.

For Jesus, going to the temple was a good way to be with God. How can you be with God? One way is going to church, where you pray, sing songs to God, and learn about how much God loves you.

But God isn't just at church. He is everywhere. He is always with you. You can talk to Him at any time—in your room, in the car, or at the school playground. When you are with Him, you are home.

### **PRAYER**

Jesus, thank You for inviting me into your family. Thank You for giving me such a wonderful home with You here in church!

## Chapter 35: This is My Son

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### THE BIBLE

Matthew 3:16–17 (NLT)

### INTRODUCTION

One of the best things we can hear is when someone says, “I’m proud of you!”

Maybe it is a coach or a teacher that says that to you.

It feels so good to know someone loves you and is proud of you.

*(Ask a few of the kids to share about a time someone told them they were proud of them. (Tell them a story, if you have one, about a time one of your parents told you they were proud of you.)*

### TRANSITION

Do you know that God is proud of you? You make Him so happy that every time He looks at you, He smiles.

### RECAP

Last week in our journey discovering Jesus in the Bible, we learned about the time 12-year-old Jesus ditched His mom and stepdad to hang out in God’s house.

We also learned that church is our house because we’re in Jesus’ family.

### MAIN POINT

Buckle your seatbelts, because today we jump in a time machine and travel eighteen years into Jesus’ future. Gone is the 12-year-old boy. Now Jesus is a 30-year-old grown-up . . . with an awesome beard! When our story begins, only a very few people in the world know Jesus is God! However, all of that is about to change!

### OPTIONAL: READ THE STORY ON PAGES 108-109: THIS IS MY SON

Jesus had a cousin named John. John was . . . hmmm, how do I say it . . . different than most people.

Instead of living in a cozy house like the rest of his friends, John chose to buy a tent at REI and live in the desert. Instead of wearing jeans, sweatshirts, or shorts, John made his clothes out of camel hair.

You’re not going to believe what I’m about to tell you next. Instead of eating peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, John ate bugs and honey. BUGS, people!

But for all of his quirks, John loved God with all his heart, and he loved his cousin, Jesus, too. God told John that He wanted him to tell people about God’s love, so that is exactly what John started to do.

He picked a spot along the Jordan river outside the city of Jerusalem and began telling people about God and baptizing them in the water.

People who didn't care about God came out to hear John talk, and for the first time in their lives, they wanted to be best friends with God.

Poor people, rich people, young people, old people, smart people, unsmart people: They all came out to hear John tell them about the Savior called the Messiah. God was going to send the Messiah to the Earth to rescue people from sin.

John knew the Messiah was close. He could feel it!

One day, Jesus came down to the Jordan river to see His cousin, John, preach.

The crowd was huge, and the sun shone down as the man with the crazy camel-hair clothes, big smile, and even bigger beard told the people about the Messiah, God's rescuer.

Then Jesus did something that shocked John—He asked John to baptize Him in the river. John was surprised. He knew that Jesus hadn't done bad things. He told Jesus, "You should baptize me!"

Jesus said, "No, God wants you to baptize me." Jesus hadn't done anything wrong. He was perfect. But He wanted to show everyone there that He loved and followed God.

So John agreed and dunked Jesus under the river. When Jesus came up out of the water, He and John heard the most beautiful, kind, and strong voice boom out from heaven. It was God's voice! God said about Jesus, "This is my Son, and I love Him! He makes me so happy and proud!"

In that moment as John stood there looking at his cousin, he knew! Jesus is the Messiah! Jesus is God come to rescue us!

From that day on, John told everybody about Jesus. It was his favorite thing to do. He told people that they needed to listen to Jesus, believe Him, and obey Him. Thousands of people believed in Jesus because of John.

## **CONCLUSION**

John joined Jesus' family that day. Not because they were earthly cousins—he joined God's family when he believed Jesus is God.

When you say yes to Jesus' love, you become God's family too! You are God's son or daughter. He loves you more than anyone in the whole world.

Even if you've done some bad things—and we all have—God loves you. He is happy that you belong to Him. When God sees you, He wants to shout down from heaven just like He did for Jesus, "You are my child! I love you and I am so proud of you!"

## **PRAYER**

Jesus, thank You for cheering for me and loving me, no matter what. I know I am special to You, and You are proud of me. Amen.

## Chapter 36: Who is My Neighbor?

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### THE BIBLE

Luke 10:25-37

### INTRODUCTION

Who loves stories? I do!

Raise your hand if your Dad or Mom is great at telling stories?

Is anyone's Mom or Dad not so good at telling bedtime stories?

Great stories have good guys, bad guys, and lots of excitement!

### TRANSITION

Well, believe it or not, Jesus is one of the best storytellers to ever live!

People would travel from miles around to listen to Jesus tell stories.

Only Jesus' stories helped the people understand Who God is and what He cares about.

### MAIN POINT

#### OPTIONAL - READ THE STORY ON PAGES 112-113: WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?

One afternoon, near Jerusalem, Jesus sat surrounded by a massive crowd of people who were excited to hear Him tell another story about God.

As Jesus talked about a verse from the Bible that says, "Love your neighbor," someone interrupted Jesus and asked, "Well, who is my neighbor exactly?"

So Jesus told a story about a Jewish man, a low-down-dirty-rotten street gang, and a mysterious character called a Samaritan.

"Once upon a time, a Jewish traveler who went on a long trip..." Jesus began.

All the people leaned forward. "Ooh, I haven't heard this one yet!" someone said.

"The journey was long and dangerous filled with sharp rocks, steep cliffs and thieves.

As the tired traveler hiked up a particularly steep mountain pass, suddenly the low-down-dirty-rotten gang of bad men jumped out from the rocks around the traveler!

They punched him, kicked him, pulled his hair and poked him in the eye.

If that wasn't bad enough, the gang stole all of his stuff and then ran away, leaving him nearly dead in the middle of the trail.

Then as luck would have it, a priest walked by! He was saved! Surely the Priest would help the traveler, right?

The Priest saw the bloody man in the road. He knew the man needed help, but he didn't stop to help him.

"I'm too busy and too important to stop and help this man," The Priest thought to himself.

"Somebody else will help him." And He walked around the injured man and continued down the trail without even a look back.

Time was running out. The traveler needed help NOW!

Then someone who worked in the temple or church walked by.

YES! Finally someone who would help him, right? WRONG.

When the church worker saw the bleeding traveler, he walked over and leaned down to help.

But as he looked at the traveler's injuries, he realized that he had been attacked by the low-down-dirty-rotten gang. His mind started racing.

"What if they are still around? What if they come back and beat me up too? It's too dangerous!" He thought as he jumped up and ran away from the traveler.

Was anyone going to help this poor man?

Finally, a Samaritan man walked by. Samaritans were people from another country, and the Jewish people didn't like them very much. The Jewish people thought Samaritans didn't love God, so they treated the Samaritans poorly, called them names, and were unkind to them.

But the Samaritan man stopped to help anyway. He put bandages on the man's cuts, stopped the bleeding, and took him to a place where he could stay. Then he paid for traveler to stay there until he felt better.

Jesus finished the story and the crowd sat there in silence.

Jesus then asked them, "Which man was the real friend to the traveler? Who acted like a real neighbor?"

Everyone yelled, "The Samaritan!"

And they were right.

The people realized that day that Jesus told them the story to help them understand how God wants us to treat people around us.

Jesus wants us to love and help everyone who needs it, not just people who are like us.

## **CONCLUSION**

Sometimes it is hard to be a friend to people who are not friendly to us.

It makes us want to ignore them just like the Priest ignored the traveler.

But when we understand that Jesus loved us when we were unlovable, it makes us want to love the people around us.

Who are we kind to? Just the people who look and act like us?

No way! We are kind to everyone around us. Why? Because that is how Jesus treated us!

Who is someone in your school or neighborhood who isn't like you that you can be kind to just like the Samaritan?

## **PRAYER**

Jesus, thank You for being kind to me when I was low-down and dirty-rotten. Help me to show your love and kindness to people who don't look or act like me.

## Chapter 37: You Are Always My Son

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### THE BIBLE

Luke 15

### INTRODUCTION

Raise your hand if you have done something SO BAD you thought your parents would be mad forever. Don't tell me what it was!

*(Tell the kids a funny story about a time you got in big trouble with your Dad or your Mom.)*

### TRANSITION

When we disobey our parents and do something we know is wrong, it is easy to think they are not going to love us as much.

In today's story from the Bible, Jesus tells a story to show us there is nothing we can ever do to change the fact that we are a part of God's family.

### RECAP

Last week we learned that in addition to all of the mind-blowing things Jesus could do like bring dead people back to life, heal sick people and predict the future, He also told incredible stories!

That's right! Jesus told such great stories people would walk for hours to come hear Him.

Jesus told stories to show people Who God is and what He likes!

### MAIN POINT

#### OPTIONAL: READ THE STORY ON PAGES 114–115: YOU ARE ALWAYS MY SON

On this particular day, Jesus told the people a story to show them God loves everyone, even when we do bad things.

"Once upon a time" Jesus began, "A rich man had two sons. The younger son said, "Dad, I know when you die you'll have to give me half of everything you own. I want that money now!"

What the son said broke the father's heart but he gave the money to his son anyway. We're talking hundreds of thousands of dollars!

As soon as the son got what he wanted, he went to a far-away city.

He spent the money very quickly. He bought EVERYTHING he wanted, and he did ANYTHING he wanted.

Pretty soon, all his money was gone.

Once his money was gone, and he couldn't pay for fancy things anymore, all of his so-called friends disappeared too. They weren't his friends. They were using him for his money.

Now the son was poor and alone.

He had to eat, so he started working for a pig farmer. His job was to feed pigs all day long.

It was a horrible, filthy job.

He was cold, starving and dirty.

The boy was tired and sad, and so hungry that even the disgusting pig food started to look good to him.

"What am I doing?" The boy thought. "I should go home. My dad probably won't love me anymore because I've been a bad son but maybe he'll let me work for him as a servant instead of being his son."

He left the pigpen and started the long cold walk home.

When the boy got close to his Dad's house, he started coming up with his speech to try and keep his Dad from being too mad at him.

Have you ever come up with an explanation for why you made the bad choice you did, hoping it would keep your parents from getting too angry? We all have! So did the son.

What the dirty, stinky son didn't realize was that every day since he left, his dad had stood at the front window looking down the road, hoping and praying that his son would come home.

Even though the son had done horrible things, none of it could stop the Father from loving his son.

Then it happened! The father saw his son trudging up the road, and he ran out to meet him.

He was so happy to see his son that he started crying! They hugged each other for a long time.

"I'm sorry, Dad." The boy said. "You're probably mad at me and don't want me in your family anymore..."

The dad interrupted his son and shouted, "You will always be my son and I will always love you, even when you do bad things. Welcome home!"

home!"

## **CONCLUSION**

Have you ever disobeyed your mom or dad? I know I have. I remember doing things I knew I wasn't supposed to do. That made my parents sad, and it made me sad, too. But they always loved me and forgave me.

It's the same with Jesus. We should try to do what is right. We don't want to make God sad. But even when we make mistakes, we need to know something: we are still God's children, and He still loves us. No matter what happens, God is on our side. He is with us, He takes care of us, and He forgives us.

### **PRAYER**

Dear Jesus, thank you for always forgiving me. I'm sorry I make bad choices sometimes, but I know that You still love me. I will always be Your child, and I will always love You. Amen.

## Chapter 38: The Boy Who Shared His Lunch

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### THE BIBLE

Matthew 14

### INTRODUCTION

Who here has an older sister or brother?

Sometimes it seems like older sisters and brothers get to do everything first. That can make you feel small and unimportant.

When you're the little brother or sister it is easy to wonder if you'll ever do big things.

Have you ever felt this way?

I know I have!

*(Tell the kids a story about something growing up that made you feel unimportant)*

### TRANSITION

Let me tell you something: God thinks you are important, no matter how small, or big, or young or old you are. God can do amazing miracles for you and through you. A miracle is something that is too hard for us to do—but not too hard for God.

Jesus can do anything!

### MAIN POINT

#### OPTIONAL: READ THE STORY ON PAGES 118–119: THE BOY WHO SHARED HIS LUNCH

In the Bible Jesus did miracles for everyone, old women, young men, poor people, rich people, and even little boys and scared disciples, as these stories show us!

Jesus was a total superstar. Even though He didn't buy the fanciest clothes or ride on a super-charged camel, everyone wanted to see Him, get close to Him and especially listen to Him.

You see, Jesus told the BEST STORIES! The stories Jesus told showed the people what God is like and how He wants us to live.

One day, word got out that Jesus was in town and a massive crowd swarmed around Him and His disciples.

Jesus taught the people as the crowds sat down on the grassy hill listening to Him.

The people sat and listened to Jesus from morning until evening. By the time Jesus finished telling His last story everyone was hungry.

But there was no Wendy's or Chipotle nearby to eat at.

Jesus looked at His twelve buddies and said, "Fellas. The people's tummies are grumbling. Give them some food!"

Jesus' disciples didn't know what to do. How could they feed all these people? Did anyone have any food they could share?

Then one of them saw a boy carrying food in a basket.

The disciples grabbed the boy and rushed him and his basket to Jesus.

Inside the boy's lunch were two fish strips and five dinner rolls.

It was just enough one kid—not a stadium full of people!

The boy must have been excited to see Jesus but he probably wondered how his little lunch was going to help this huge crowd.

Jesus wasn't worried because what's impossible for people to do is easy for God!

He told everyone to sit down. He picked up the bread. He thanked God for it, and then He broke it into pieces. He did the same thing with the fish. Then He started giving pieces to the hungry people. At first everyone cheered because they got to eat for free!

Then one by one people started noticing that the fish and the bread WERE NOT RUNNING OUT!

No matter how much the disciples passed out there was more left over!

Everyone ate as much as they wanted!

Seconds? Sure!

Thirds? Why Not!

Fourths? Go for it!

When everyone finished eating, the disciples filled up twelve BIG baskets with leftover food.  
12!

It was a miracle! Jesus used the boy's little lunch and used it to feed the whole crowd.

## **CONCLUSION**

Don't ever think you're not important or that you won't do BIG THINGS!

Just like Jesus used what the little that the boy had to feed a BIG crowd, He is going to use the little that we have and use it to do BIG things to help others!

So how does this happen?

Simple: Just like the little boy did with his lunch, we take who we are, and give it to Jesus!

We will do BIG things when we say "Yes" to Jesus's love for us!

**PRAYER**

Jesus, thank You for caring for me. Even when I feel small and like I don't have much to offer, You take my little and help me do BIG things! You love me and will do BIG THINGS through my life to help others!

## Chapter 39: Jesus Makes the Waves Behave

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### THE BIBLE

Mark 4

### INTRODUCTION

Who here has ever taken a ride in a boat?

Riding in boats is fun, right?!

Maybe you were out on a lake or in the ocean gliding across the water feeling the wet spray in your face, watching sea gulls fly above you as schools of fish swarm around you singing you a song!

Ok, maybe the fish didn't sing to you, but riding in a boat can be a blast!

Now, who here has ever ridden in a boat during a storm?

This is NOT fun!

*(Let 3 or 4 kids share their stories.)*

*(Tell the kids a story if you have one about a time you were on a boat in a storm.)*

### TRANSITION

When we face problems and things get crazy around us, it is easy to get scared and think no one is going to help us. But as we can see from today's incredible story in the book of Mark, Jesus is always with us and ready to help, no matter what!

### MAIN POINT

#### **OPTIONAL: READ THE STORY ON PAGES 121–122: JESUS MAKES THE WAVES OBEY**

It all started with an innocent trip across the lake.

One evening Jesus and His disciples got into a boat to row across the Sea of Galilee.

Jesus was tired. He spent the entire day teaching people about God and His love for them.

When they got into the boat, Jesus put His head on a pillow in the back of the boat and went to sleep.

The moon reflected off the smooth water as the disciples laughed and talked about the miraculous things they watched Jesus do that day.

Everything was perfect.

But then in the blink of an eye it wasn't perfect anymore!

Ferocious thunderclouds blotted out the moon and the sky got dark. Wind whipped across the lake and turned the water from glass into 10 foot waves!

"Storm!" Peter yelled. "Hold onto something!"

The waves reared up out of the black water and crashed down on the disciples' heads and into the boat.

The disciples were so terrified they started to hold each other and scream out for their mommies. Then they remembered Jesus.

The disciples looked back and saw Jesus fast asleep, snoring with a little drool coming out the left side of His mouth.

He obviously wasn't afraid enough for the disciples' taste so they yelled at Him "We're going to drown! Don't you care, Jesus?"

Jesus woke up at all of the shouting and looked around. He saw the wind. He saw the waves. Then He rubbed his eyes, sat up and yelled, "Be quiet!"

Immediately the wind and waves calmed down.

In the blink of an eye, the storm disappeared.

No more wind. No more waves. No more screaming. No more fear.

Just quiet calm.

What in the world? The disciples thought. How did he do that?

Jesus turned and looked at his soaking wet disciples. They looked back at Him, wide-eyed and speechless.

"Why were you so afraid?" Jesus asked them. "Don't you believe I will take care of you?"

The disciples were shocked that even wind and waves obey Jesus, but they were very glad to be alive!

In that moment as the boat floated silently in the moonlight, the disciples realized Jesus would always take care of them. No matter what.

## **CONCLUSION**

Jesus did many more miracles. Incredible, amazing miracles. He did them so we would know no matter what, God will always take care of us. He loves us, and He is big enough and strong enough to help us.

Sometimes, we feel like the disciples in the boat.

When our problems are too scary and too big for us to handle, we remember Jesus is with us ready to help.

Do you need God's help? Do you need a miracle? Let's talk with Jesus today and ask Him to help us or the person we're thinking about. You can always pray and ask God for what you need. He loves to help us!

**PRAYER**

Dear Jesus, I know you can do anything. Please (tell Jesus what you want His help with). Help me to trust you even when I feel scared. Thank you for always taking care of me. Amen.a

## Chapter 40: Super Water

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### THE BIBLE

John 4

### INTRODUCTION

When you are super thirsty, what do you want? A bag of salty chips? A bowl of dry popcorn? A fistful of dust?

No—you usually want something to drink, right? Like a nice refreshing cup of cold water.

### TRANSITION

Just like your body needs water to live, your soul needs Jesus to live. Do you know what your soul is? It's the invisible part of you. It's your heart, your thoughts, and your feelings.

You and I need Jesus even more than we need water. In today's story, a woman learns this lesson in a very unusual way!

### MAIN POINT

#### OPTIONAL: READ THE STORY ON PAGES 124–125: SUPER WATER

Jesus was 100% God and 100% human.

How is that possible? I don't know but it's true! This means Jesus felt everything you and I feel.

He felt happy, sad, frustrated, angry, and joyful.

He laughed, cried, and sang.

On one particular journey, Jesus and his disciples were on a trip from one town to another. It was very hot outside, the road was dusty and Jesus felt tired.

They came to a little town in an area called Samaria. Jesus sat down to rest beside a well while His disciples went into the town to get them all some food.

A well is a hole dug so deep into the ground it fills up with water at the bottom. People then lower their buckets into the hole and have water to drink!

Jesus watched as a woman came to the well to pull up some water with her bucket.

Jesus smiled at her, (He was always smiling by the way) and asked, "Can I have a drink of water please?"

The woman was surprised. She didn't know Him. Jesus was a stranger for all she knew. She said, "Why are you asking me for a drink?"

There is something you need to know about Jesus. Because He is 100% God, He knew EVERYTHING about the woman even though they had never met. Cool huh?

Jesus could see inside her soul. He knew the woman was sad and needed to know how much God loved her.

Jesus replied, "Actually, I have something better than this water. I can give you living water. You'll never be thirsty again!"

That sounded like a good idea to the woman! Getting water out of a well every day was hard, nasty work.

But Jesus wasn't talking about the wet stuff you drink through a twisty straw. He showed her that He is God and how much He loved her.

When we see Who Jesus is and experience His love it is like water for our hearts and our souls come alive!

It helps us live forever in Heaven.

Jesus told the woman all about God. She was so excited that she ran back to town and told everyone about Jesus. The whole town came to hear Jesus talk about God's love.

## **CONCLUSION**

The woman at the well needed something more important than water on a hot day. She needed to find happiness, peace, and life on the inside—in her soul. She needed to know that God loved her and wanted to forgive her sins.

When she said "Yes" to Jesus's love, her soul came alive for the first time!

That is exactly what happens when we say, "Yes," to Jesus. He tells us how to know God and follow Him.

When you have Jesus in your heart, He makes your soul healthy, happy, and satisfied.

It is like drinking a cool glass of pure water on a hot day. It quenches your thirst forever!

## **PRAYER**

Dear Jesus, thank you for making my heart happy. Thank you for giving me your love and peace. Please help me be full of your life, and help me tell other people about your love, too. Amen.

## Chapter 41: Get Down from That Tree

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### THE BIBLE

Luke 19

### INTRODUCTION

Have you ever noticed it is easier climbing up a tree than down it?

You reach up and grab one branch, then another, then another—and suddenly you look down, and you can't believe how high up you are!

You hang out up there for a while, enjoying the view and saying hi to the birds.

But when you decide it's time to get down, you don't climb down fast—you're very, very slow and very, very careful! Or you just pull out your cell phone and call for a helicopter to come pick you up.

*(Ask the kids about a time they got stuck up in a tree.)*

### TRANSITION

Today's story is about a man who climbed a tree. Kind of strange, right? Usually kids climb trees, not adults. But this man had a really good reason to climb this tree.

### MAIN POINT

**OPTIONAL: READ THE STORY ON PAGES 128-129: "GET DOWN FROM THAT TREE!"**

You can find our story today in chapter four of the Book of Luke in the Bible.

The scene opens up with a massive crowd lining the streets, waiting to get a glimpse of Jesus. He is bigger than rock star status. By now, Jesus is a LEGEND in Israel.

"Jesus is coming to town!" someone shouted earlier that morning, and BOOM, a massive mob of Jesus fans showed up!

Everyone was excited. They loved listening to Jesus talk about God. The street was packed with people. It was craziness! "Can you see Him?" "No, I don't see Him yet!" "I'm so excited!"

In the middle of all those people stood a man who also wanted to see Jesus. His name? Zacchaeus.

Zacchaeus had a problem. He wasn't a good man. In fact, Zacchaeus was a low-down dirty rotten scoundrel. He stole money from people. No one in town liked him, and they all called him bad names.

But just like everyone else, Z-Man wanted to know about Jesus.

Remember when I said Zacchaeus was standing in the crowd?

Well, it didn't LOOK like he was standing. It looked more like he was on his knees, because Zacchaeus had another problem. He was short.

When I say short, I mean SHOOORT!

Like the size of a small third-grader, an oversized teddy bear, or your teeny tiny grandma.

Because he was short, Zacchaeus couldn't see over the people in front of him. What could he do?

This is where our tree climbing comes in.

BING! Zacchaeus had a great idea. He ran to a tree by the road and climbed up into the branches. Now he could see Jesus coming down the road! Perfect timing!

When Jesus walked by the tree, He stopped. He looked up. "Zacchaeus!" He said. "Come down from that tree! I'm going to eat lunch at your house today!"

WHAT?

Zacchaeus' jaw almost hit the ground, he was so shocked. "Jesus knows my name? Jesus wants to come over to my house and eat with me? Why would Jesus do that? Doesn't He know I'm a bad guy?"

Even though he didn't understand why, that is exactly what happened.

They ate lunch together. They laughed. They talked about God. When Zacchaeus realized Jesus loved him so much, he started to feel sorry for the bad things he had done. He told Jesus, "I'm going to stop stealing. I'm going to give back all the money I took and then extra. I want to live the right way!"

God's love helped Zacchaeus become a better person. He was so happy he had met Jesus.

## **CONCLUSION**

The thing that I like most about this story is that Jesus is a friend to everyone, even bad people.

Zacchaeus had made a lot of mistakes. He stole money and he was mean to people. He probably thought Jesus wouldn't want to talk to him.

But Jesus found Zacchaeus up in the tree. Jesus didn't get mad at him, laugh at him, or call him names like everyone else. Instead, He told Zacchaeus He wanted to be best friends. He wanted to eat with him and talk to him about God.

No matter what we do, Jesus always loves us and wants to be our best friend!

## **PRAYER**

Jesus, thank You that You are always my friend. Thank You for loving me and helping me even when I make mistakes. Help me follow You always. Amen.

## Chapter 42: A Soldier Who Believed Jesus

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### THE BIBLE

Luke 7

### INTRODUCTION

Getting stuck is the worst!

Who here has ever been stuck and needed someone's help to get out?

For example, *(Tell the kids a story about a time you or someone you know got stuck and needed someone else's help to get out.)*

I want to hear from some of you about a time you were stuck and needed someone's help to get out!

When we are stuck, whom do we call for help? Do we call for our baby brother or our 105-year-old grandma? No way! Why? Because they don't have the power to help us. When we are stuck, we call for someone who has the power to help us and wants to help us!

### TRANSITION

Do you know that Jesus has unlimited power and He wants to use it to help us when we face problems? It's true, and today's story shows us how ready He is to help if we will trust Him!

### MAIN POINT

Jesus lived in a country called Israel that still exists today.

Almost a hundred years before Jesus was born, another country called Rome took over Israel.

When Jesus was born, Roman soldiers and Roman leaders lived all across Israel and controlled almost everything that happened there.

The Israelites didn't like the Romans, and the Romans didn't like the Israelites.

Well, not all of them.

### OPTIONAL: READ THE STORY ON PAGES 132-133: A SOLDIER WHO BELIEVED JESUS

Our story today begins with a Roman soldier who loved Israel and the Israelites, but he had a serious problem.

This Roman soldier had a servant that was very, very sick. It wasn't just any servant—it was the soldier's most loyal, most trusted, favorite servant.

The Roman loved this servant and wanted to do everything he could to help him, but the doctors

were out of ideas.

Then the soldier remembered something.

Not too long before, the soldier overheard someone talking about a special Man from Galilee who people said could do miracles, raise the dead, and heal sick people. He had heard about Jesus.

So the soldier sent his helpers to talk to Jesus.

"Please," the people said. "This soldier loves God and needs your help. Come heal his servant."

Jesus was always ready to help people, so He started walking toward the soldier's house. But before Jesus got to the soldier's house, the soldier sent Jesus another message. The message said, "Jesus, I know you are busy, and I know you can heal my servant. You don't need to bother coming all the way here. Just say the word, and I know my servant will be healed."

Jesus was surprised. Lots of people didn't believe Jesus. But this Roman soldier did.

The soldier trusted Jesus. He knew Jesus wanted to help and he believed Jesus could do miracles. He believed Jesus was so powerful that even His words would heal people.

When Jesus saw the soldier's trust, or faith, a big smile stretched across Jesus' face. (Jesus smiled a lot.)

He smiled because there is nothing in this world Jesus loves more than when people believe Him and trust He can do great things for them.

"Because this soldier believes Me," Jesus said, "I am going to show him how much I love him and his servant! The servant will be fine."

When the messengers got back to the soldier's house, they found the servant 100% healthy.

Then their eyes got wide with wonder as they realized the sickness left the servant's body the moment those words had left Jesus' mouth!

## **CONCLUSION**

The soldier was right: Jesus has the desire and the ability to do incredible things for us if we will trust Him!

The Bible says that Jesus loves it when we trust Him and believe He wants to help us! This is called faith, and God loves it when we have faith in Him.

What is something you need Jesus to help you with today? Is it a small thing? That's great! God wants to help us with small things. Is it a BIG thing? No problem! Nothing is too big for Jesus! Let's ask Jesus to help us just like the soldier did! Jesus loves it when we believe that He can help us.

## **PRAYER**

Jesus, I believe You can help me and that You want to. Will you help me with (Tell the kids to tell Jesus under their own breath what they want His help with)? Thank You for loving me. I love You too.

## Chapter 43: The Little Girl Who Lived

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### THE BIBLE

Luke 8

### INTRODUCTION

There are many things in life that are no fun. Here are a few examples: getting in trouble, falling in the mud while wearing your favorite shoes, or making a mistake on your test.

None of these things are fun.

But few things are as lame as getting sick or getting hurt.

Being sick is no fun at all. Your head feels like a balloon that's ready to explode, your stomach feels like it is on a rollercoaster, and your body is shivering like it is stuck in the freezer.

Being sick is no fun.

Don't get me started on getting hurt. Sheesh. Ain't nobody got time for that!

### TRANSITION

Do you know Jesus cares when we are sick or hurt? In addition to everything Jesus wants to help us with, He wants to heal us when we are sick! True story. In fact, today's story shows us how Jesus helped a girl just your age.

### MAIN POINT

**OPTIONAL: READ THE STORY ON PAGES 134-135: THE LITTLE GIRL WHO LIVED**

In the Bible, there was a dad named Jairus who had a daughter whom he adored. Jairus was a Jewish teacher who loved God. He was sad, because his daughter was very sick. She was so sick that Jairus was afraid she was going to die.

Who here has been so sick your parents took you to the hospital?

Thank God for doctors and nurses who are smart and help us feel better!

Well, Jairus lived in a time where hospitals did not exist. There were no emergency rooms, antibiotics, or vaccines to help his daughter.

Bummer, right?

Jairus and his family tried everything they could to help her: a cool rag over her forehead, a bowl of warm soup, water, and lots of asking God to help her get well.

However, one day the sickness got worse—much worse. Everyone was scared that she wouldn't last another day. While his daughter slept upstairs, one of Jairus' servants told him Jesus was nearby.

Jairus' eyes got big. "Jesus? Here? In our town? That's it!" And before anyone knew what was happening, Jairus grabbed his cloak and ran out the front door to ask God for help.

He ran as fast as he could, until finally Jairus saw Jesus.

A huge crowd surrounded Him. It was dusty and loud. Everyone wanted to see Him, hear Him, and touch Him. But Jairus loved his daughter, and he wasn't going to let anything stop him from getting her the help she needed. He shoved past people, forcing his way through the crowd. People hollered at him and called him names, but Jairus didn't care.

Finally, he broke through and fell to his knees at Jesus' feet. "Please" he panted, out of breath, "Come heal my daughter."

Jesus looked at Jairus and said, "Absolutely!" Jairus led Jesus and His disciples to his house.

But as they were on their way back to the house, one of Jairus' servants ran up to meet them. What he said next was the one thing Jairus feared most.

"Jairus, I am so sorry! Your daughter is . . . dead. It's too late to help her. Don't bother Jesus with it anymore."

Jesus looked at Jairus and said, "Don't be afraid. Just believe in me. Your daughter will be okay."

In that moment, Jairus had to choose: believe the circumstances or Jesus. He chose to believe Jesus.

When they arrived at the house, everyone was crying. Jesus looked at them and said, "Why are you making all this noise crying? Don't be sad. The little girl is going to live."

They were confused. She was dead. It was over. How could she live again? They didn't understand that sickness is no match for Jesus.

Jesus went into the dead girl's room. Jairus looked at his little girl's face. She looked like she was taking a nap. Hot tears welled up in his eyes.

Jesus sat down on the edge of the bed and took her little hand in His. "Little girl" He whispered, "get up!"

Then something amazing happened. At Jesus' words, the little girl's heart leaped to attention and started beating.

Blood returned to her brain, and her brain instructed her lungs to expand. And as Jairus watched, his daughter breathed in air and opened her eyes! She was alive!

She sat up in bed and smiled at her dad. Jairus and his wife probably gave her a huge hug for a long time.

"Get this girl some breakfast, Jairus!" Jesus laughed.

Jairus was so happy his daughter was alive. Jesus did an amazing miracle.

## **CONCLUSION**

Isn't it awesome that Jesus healed sicknesses and raised people from the dead? These true stories show us that there is nothing too hard for Jesus.

Jesus not only died to forgive us for all of the bad stuff we've done. He also died to help us when we are sick or hurt. Jairus did everything he could to help his daughter. God is our heavenly Father and will do everything He can to help us, His sons and daughters!

If you are feeling sick, you might need to go to the doctor or take medicine. This is good! But there is one more thing you can do—you can pray and ask Jesus to help you feel better! He loves you and takes care of you all the time. He loves to do miracles for you.

## **PRAYER**

*Ask the kids if any of them are sick or hurt, and pray for them.*

Jesus, thank You for caring about me and helping me when I am sick or hurt. Will You please heal my body? I believe You can do it!

## Chapter 44: Even Rocks Can Praise God

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### THE BIBLE

Luke 19; Mark 11

### INTRODUCTION

Our moms and dads do a lot for us, don't they?

They work hard to make money to pay for our food, clothes, and home. They help us with our homework and they discipline us. (Trust me, as much as you hate it now, the fact that our parents discipline us is helping us to grow up to be good people.)

Our parents do all of this because they love us. One of the most powerful things we can do is tell them "Thank you" and "I love you!"

### TRANSITION

Did you know that God likes it when we tell Him that we love Him too? One way to do that is to sing songs to God. Another way is to pray and tell God that you love Him.

We call those songs and prayers worship. Worship is like giving God a big hug! God loves it when we enjoy His love and when we love Him back.

### MAIN POINT

#### RECAP

The reason Jesus left Heaven to come to Earth is so he could die on the cross and fix our broken relationship with God.

It was God's plan since Adam and Eve sinned in the garden. After so many years of waiting, the time for Jesus to go to the cross was coming soon.

Jesus could feel it.

### OPTIONAL: READ THE STORY ON PAGES 138-139: EVEN ROCKS CAN PRAISE GOD

Thousands of people living in Jerusalem could feel something too. People couldn't put their finger on it, but something BIG was about to happen.

Everyone was talking about Jesus and whispering, "Is He the One? Is He the Rescuer from God?"

Some people said, "Yes!" Others said, "No way!" But everyone knew Jesus was special.

In the middle of all this excitement, Jesus and His twelve disciples made their way into the big city of Jerusalem.

The disciples walked and Jesus rode on a small donkey.

The people in the city went crazy with excitement when they heard Jesus was on His way.

By the time Jesus arrived in Jerusalem, a massive crowd was waiting for him! Some people cut palm tree branches and laid them on the road. Other people took off their coats and put them down on the ground to make a special path for Jesus.

What a party! People were singing, dancing, cheering, and clapping as Jesus rode by!

It was like a rock concert!

As He passed them, people shouted because they were so happy for all the things God did for them through Jesus. "God is so good to us! Blessings on Jesus the king!" They praised God, which means they talked about how wonderful God is.

Jesus had such a big smile on His face that when the disciples saw it, they couldn't help but smile too!

The people made so much noise and worshipped God so loud that the entire city got caught up in the celebrating.

Everyone wanted to know about Jesus—who He was and where He came from.

Everyone except the Jewish leaders, that is. They were mad. But let's face it, they were always mad about something.

This time, they were mad and jealous because the people were giving their attention to Jesus and shouting and singing and praising God.

Deep down inside, the leaders wanted the attention for themselves.

The leaders told Jesus, "Tell the people following you to be quiet!"

But Jesus knew something super important: We were created to worship God and He wants us to praise Him!

So Jesus shot back at the leaders, "If they are quiet, even the rocks will start singing about how good God is!"

WOAH! When everyone heard Jesus say this, it made them worship God even louder!

## **CONCLUSION**

This is the reason Jesus came to Earth and went to the cross: To fix our relationship with God and make a way so we can worship Him!

How do we worship God? After all, He has everything!

Simple: We thank Him for Who He is and what He's done for us.

God loves it when we thank Him!

What are some good things that God has done for you? Just like you say thank you to your parents or teachers, it's so good to say thank you to God.

God loves it when we remember that He is good to us and that He takes care of us. He wants us to know how much He loves us.

When you pray and sing songs to God, think about all the things He has done for you. Worship Him and love Him because He is so good to you!

### **PRAYER**

Jesus, thank You for everything You've done for me. You gave me everything when You died on the cross for me and fixed my relationship with God. I love You so much because You loved me first!

## Chapter 45: You Are My Best Friends

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### INTRODUCTION

What is your favorite thing to do when you hang out with your friends? Play LEGOs, build forts, talk?

*(Have three or four kids answer, and then tell them what you love to do when you spend time with your friends.)*

Friends are the best! They are a lot of fun. They help us when we are sad, and they share with us and take care of us.

### TRANSITION

I'm so glad God invented friends. He did! Friendship was His idea. He owns the patent for coming up with the idea. Why? Because God is a God that is all about friendship.

Did you know that Jesus is your friend? He's the best friend you could ever have, because He is always with you. He loves you so much, as this story tells us.

### MAIN POINT

After rolling into Jerusalem on a donkey while the city celebrated His arrival, Jesus found a small private room for an important night.

### OPTIONAL: READ THE STORY ON PAGES 142-143: "YOU ARE MY BEST FRIENDS"

Jesus and His disciples were going to celebrate a special holiday called the Passover. Every year during Passover, Jewish families ate a meal together and remembered how God saved them from Egypt a long, long time ago.

The twelve disciples and Jesus sat around a low wooden table eating, laughing, and telling funny stories.

Just like you and I do with our friends.

Jesus stopped talking for a moment and looked at His disciples sitting around Him.

He smiled for a moment and said, "You are my best friends. I love you so much, and I will always take care of you."

The disciples stopped talking and looked at Jesus. Every time He spoke it was like hearing the sound of love. Then Jesus surprised them by saying something that made them sad: "This is the last time I will celebrate Passover with you until we are all together in Heaven."

He said it because Jesus knew it was almost time for Him to die. He was going to give His life to save everyone who loved Him and trusted in Him. He was going to give His life for the sake of their

friendship.

Jesus said, "Always remember how much I love you. Remember that I am with you and that I take care of you. Remember that I am giving my life for you because I love you so much."

Then Jesus shocked them all by telling them one of his best friends, someone eating with them right then, was going to do something horrible.

He told them that one of the twelve disciples would betray Him by telling Jesus' enemies where He was so they could put him in jail and kill him.

It got worse. Jesus also said that all of the disciples would run away and leave Jesus alone.

Everyone was speechless. They couldn't believe it.

Then Peter slammed his fist on the table and shouted, "I'll never do that, Jesus! I'll protect you!" The other disciples all joined in and said the same thing.

They didn't understand what Jesus was talking about, but they wanted to help Him.

Then they all left the house and went to a garden to pray.

## **CONCLUSION**

Jesus' disciples were sad because He had to leave. They were sad because they would betray Him.

But Jesus told them He wasn't leaving forever. He was going to go to Heaven for a little while, but soon His friends would see Him again in Heaven.

It was the whole reason Jesus came to the earth: to fix our broken friendship with God.

Jesus also told His friends that He would never leave them alone. He was going to send the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is God, and He lives inside of us and helps us follow God. It's like having our best friend living inside our heart. Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus is always with us.

## **PRAYER**

Dear Jesus, thank You for being my best friend. I know You are always with me. I love You and I am so glad we are friends. Amen.

## Chapter 46: Jesus Goes to Jail

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### THE BIBLE

Luke 22; John 18

### INTRODUCTION

Is it just me, or has anyone else noticed sometimes we have to do things we don't want to do?

Maybe they are little things, like having to go to bed when we would rather watch a movie.

Or having to do our homework when we'd rather be playing outside with our friends.

Or maybe it is something big, like moving to another city and saying goodbye to our friends.

*(Ask the kids, "What is something you know you need to do but you don't like doing?" Then tell the kids about something you had to do as a child that you didn't like doing. Remember, the funnier the better!)*

We aren't the only ones who had to do stuff we didn't want to do.

### TRANSITION

Jesus did too. In fact, Jesus had to do something SO HARD it makes doing homework, going to bed early, or not getting to watch TV look downright fun.

Jesus had to die. Why? Because that was the punishment for sin. Jesus didn't sin, though—everyone else did. We did. But Jesus was punished for our lies, our bad attitudes, our jealousy, and our hatred.

He was punished instead of us. That is what He wanted to do, even though it was hard. He died for our sins so we wouldn't have to.

### MAIN POINT

#### OPTIONAL: READ THE STORY ON PAGES 146-147: JESUS GOES TO JAIL

Our scene opens at night. It is Passover, the holiday when Jews celebrate how God rescued them from slavery in Egypt.

Jesus and His disciples were leaving Passover meal. Everyone was quiet. The evening didn't go the way the disciples were expecting.

During dinner, Jesus dropped a MAJOR BOMB. He told them it was time for Him to . . . die.

The room went silent. Nobody felt like eating the hummus after hearing that.

It was an intense moment, so Jesus said, "Let's go to our special garden in Gethsemane. I need to

pray.”

So the disciples walked with Jesus to the garden. It was dark. The moon hung low in the black sky.

Jesus was sad. He knew He had to die. But dying didn't scare Jesus. There was something coming that was worse than death—separation from God.

Jesus was brokenhearted, because sin breaks our best friendship with God. In order to pay for our sin, Jesus would have to lose His relationship with God the Father. This is what made Him sad.

But it was the only way to save the world. Jesus would have to do something He didn't want to do.

As He sat in the garden, He talked with God and told Him how He was feeling. He told God He didn't want to lose their friendship. He told God everything and God listened to His Son.

After they talked for a while, Jesus opened His eyes. He knew even though He didn't want to be separated from God, it was the right thing to do. It was what He came to the earth for.

God's love filled His heart. It gave Him the courage and power to say yes, even though He didn't feel like it.

Suddenly a mob of soldiers and religious leaders stormed into the garden! Their shouts broke the silence, and the fire from their torches lit up the surrounding trees and bushes with an orange glow.

Their swords were drawn.

They were there to arrest Jesus. They were there because the Jewish leaders were jealous that people liked Jesus so much. They hated Jesus so much they wanted Him dead.

If that wasn't bad enough, Judas, one of Jesus' twelve disciples, lead the soldiers right to Him! He agreed to betray Jesus and help the soldiers find Him.

The disciples were terrified! Most ran away in fear, but some wanted to fight. Peter grabbed his sword and tried to split a man's head open. But the man moved just in time, and instead of losing his noggin, Peter cut off his ear!

Jesus raised His hands and stopped His disciples from fighting. Sin couldn't be defeated using swords, fighting, or fists. It would only be defeated by God's love

Jesus bent down, picked up the bloody ear, and put it back on the man's head. Good as new. It was a miracle!

Jesus said, "If I didn't want you to arrest me, I could ask God to send a sky full of angels to rescue Me and He would do it. But I am not going to. What happens next is part of God's plan."

Then the soldiers arrested Jesus and took him to jail.

Jesus' disciples were so scared they all ran away and hid. Even Peter ran away, although he stayed close enough to see where they were taking Jesus.

## **CONCLUSION**

Jesus loves us so much and trusted God so much that He did something very hard, something He didn't feel like doing. He died for our sins. I'm so glad that Jesus obeyed God even when it was hard!

Sometimes you will have to do hard things. Jesus understands. He felt the same way you do and He wants to help you. He knows what it is like to do something that you don't want to do.

Being best friends with Jesus means sometimes we will need to do things we don't feel like doing.

He is ready to help us do what is right. He helps us be brave and strong and do what we need to do.

Jesus is with us right now, ready to help us do what is right even when it is hard.

What are you having a hard time doing?

## **PRAYER**

Jesus, You were strong and brave. You did what was right when You didn't feel like it. Will You help me to *(Tell the kids to say what it is under their breath)*? Thank You for helping me be strong and brave. Thank You for helping me follow You.

## Chapter 47: Peter Learns to Be Brave

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### INTRODUCTION

Who here loves to do crazy things or has a friend who loves to do crazy things?

It seems like everyone has a friend that loves to climb tall trees, jump off of a cliff into a lake, or make huge bike jumps!

Those things sound really scary to me! And you know what? That's okay. We can all be brave in our own way. Being brave doesn't mean doing crazy things. It just means doing the right thing, even when you are scared.

### TRANSITION

In today's true story from the Bible, one of Jesus' best friends learns that God wants to help us be brave.

### MAIN POINT

#### RECAP

Here is the scenario: The religious leaders were jealous of Jesus' popularity, so they arrested Him in the Garden of Gethsemane and locked Him up in jail.

All of his disciples scattered and ran for their lives, but Peter wanted to know what happened to Jesus. So when the time came for Jesus' trial, Peter went wearing a disguise and kept a safe distance so no one would recognize him.

### READ THE STORY ON PAGES 150-151: PETER LEARNS TO BE BRAVE

Peter was scared. He waited outside the courthouse with all the people. What would happen to Jesus? What would happen to Peter?

It was a cold night. Everyone huddled around fires in the courthouse courtyard to keep warm. The fire illuminated Peter's face. His disguise wasn't working.

A girl walked up to Peter, looked at him for a while, pointed a finger at him and said, "You are a friend of Jesus!"

Terror shot through Peter's body.

"No, I'm not!" Peter blurted out without thinking. "I don't even know who you are talking about!"

This was his first lie—and not his last.

Peter didn't want people to know he was Jesus' friend. He thought he might get thrown in jail too.

A few minutes went by. Peter thought, "Maybe I'm safe."  
He was wrong.

Two more people spoke up and asked Peter if he was Jesus' friend. Two more times Peter lied, saying "No! I don't know him at all!"

Then suddenly, Peter heard something.

A rooster began to crow: "Cock-a-doodle-doo!"

Peter's face went pale. He remembered something Jesus said before the religious leaders arrested Him:

"Peter, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times." That meant that Peter would say he didn't love Jesus, that he didn't even know Him. Saying he didn't love Jesus was THE LAST THING PETER EVER WANTED TO DO! But He did it.

Peter was very, very sad. He knew he hadn't been a good friend to Jesus. He had run away. He lied.

Peter started sobbing big, heavy tears as he pushed his way through the crowd. He found a secluded spot and cried for a long time.

Thank God this isn't where Peter's story ended.

Jesus had also told Peter, "After you deny Me, you will be sorry. You will love Me and follow Me even more. And you will help other people know Me too."

Peter's bad choices hurt Jesus, but Jesus wasn't mad at Peter. He wanted to help him learn and become a better friend than ever before.

Peter didn't know it, but Jesus was going to replace Peter's heart of fear with a heart of courage. And it would happen very soon!

After Jesus rose from the dead, He found Peter and told him that He loved him.

When Peter experienced Jesus' unconditional love, something on the inside of his heart changed forever.

He stopped caring about what people thought about him.

He stopped putting himself first.

He stopped being afraid.

Instead his heart filled with bravery.

This bravery and courage came from knowing Jesus would always love him!

Peter spent the rest of his life telling people about Jesus and His love!

## **CONCLUSION**

Jesus knew Peter would be scared. He told him ahead of time it would happen. Jesus didn't get mad at Peter for that. Instead, He helped him learn how to be brave even when he was afraid.

At first, Peter was too scared to talk about Jesus, but he didn't stay that way. Just a few days later, Peter became the bravest person around. He told everyone about Jesus.

Do you know how Peter became brave? By following Jesus. When you spend time with Jesus, fear doesn't stop you anymore. Jesus helps you be brave.

## **PRAYER**

Jesus, I want You to make me brave like Peter. Thank You for showing me how much You love me, and thank You for helping me do the right thing even if I feel afraid. Amen.

## Chapter 48: A Very Sad Day

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### THE BIBLE

Luke 23; John 19

### INTRODUCTION

Who's seen a police car race down the road with its lights on and siren blaring to pull a car over?

Okay, be honest, who has been in the car when your mom or dad was pulled over by the police?

Ask three or four kids to share their stories, then tell the kids about a time you were pulled over by the police. Keep it light (e.g., speeding or running a red light)

The police enforce and uphold the law. The law is the set of rules that tells people in a country or a city what is right and wrong.

If we break laws, like the speed limit, there are consequences.

The worse the crime, the worse the punishment.

When the police catch someone breaking a small law, like speeding, they write them a ticket and make them pay money. But when the police catch someone breaking a big law, like robbing a bank, the punishment is much, much worse.

The punishment for the worst crimes is (GULP) death.

### TRANSITION

Just like our city has laws, God has laws too. The punishment for breaking these laws is serious. But God stepped into our story and did something unbelievable right when we were about to be punished.

### MAIN POINT

**OPTIONAL: READ THE STORY ON PAGES 154-155: A VERY SAD DAY**

The Bible says all of us have all done bad things and broken God's laws. His laws are called The Ten Commandments, and the bad things we've done are called sins.

Like a criminal, we deserve the punishment that comes along with breaking God's laws.

The problem is that sin is such a horrible crime, the punishment for it is DEATH!

God loves us and doesn't want us to be punished.

How could He stop the punishment we deserved? The fact is somebody had to die for our sin.

God knew this, so He did the unthinkable: He moved us aside and died the death we deserved. He sent His Son Jesus to take our punishment. The Bible is all about God's rescue mission to save us from sin and fix our broken friendship with Him!

Jesus came to earth to die on the cross and pay for all our sins forever!

Now, to our story:

The Jewish leaders hated Jesus because the people loved Him more than them. They were jealous. So jealous that they wanted Him dead!

But Jesus was way ahead of them! The leaders did not realize that, by murdering Jesus, they were playing right into His master plan!

This is why Jesus didn't resist or put up a fight when the religious leaders came to arrest Him that night in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Later that night, when the soldiers started to torture Jesus, He didn't lift a finger to stop them.

When they made fun of Him and spit in His face, Jesus took it like a man.

When they tore His back open with whips, Jesus screamed but He let it happen.

When they shoved thorns into His head, Jesus sat still for them.

WHY?

Why would God go through all of this pain when He could have stopped it all with one word?

He did it for love. Love for you and for me. Torture and a horrible death was the consequence for our sins.

Once the soldiers finished torturing Jesus, they took Him outside the city to a hill that looked like a human skull. People called it Golgotha.

This is the place where the leaders killed the worst criminals.

There under the morning sun, they nailed Jesus' hands and feet to two wooden beams called a cross.

The religious leaders nailed two criminals to crosses and placed one to Jesus' left and one to His right.

One of these criminals didn't believe Jesus was God. As he slowly died, the criminal decided to make fun of the only Person Who could rescue Him.

But the other criminal believed. He believed Jesus was God in the flesh and wanted forgiveness.

So instead of making fun of Jesus, with His dying breaths the second criminal said, "Please take me to Heaven with You, Jesus!"

Struggling to see through the blood pouring down into His eyes, Jesus looked at the second criminal

and told him, "Yes, I will! Today, you and I will be together in Heaven!"

Soon after that, Jesus said, "It is finished." He knew His work on earth was done. He had obeyed God! He had successfully fulfilled the punishment for our sins.

The crime was paid for.

God's Law was fulfilled.

People could once again be best friends with God.

With one last sigh of relief, Jesus let His body die.

**GOD WON AND SIN LOST!**

Suddenly the sky turned black. Everyone watching at the cross became scared. Even some of the soldiers realized Jesus wasn't a criminal. He was God, and they were afraid because they thought they had killed God.

The truth is nobody can kill God. He chose to die. He chose to die because of His love for you and me.

Later that day, a man who loved Jesus took His body down from the cross then put it in a tomb, or a cave for burying dead people.

Even though He was dead, the religious leaders were still scared of Jesus. They put a gigantic rock in front of the tomb's entrance so that no one could get in.

Jesus' best friends were heartbroken . . . but they didn't realize God was about to do the biggest miracle of all!

## **CONCLUSION**

Jesus loved us so much that He died instead of us. He accepted the punishment for our mistakes and sins. This would be like you getting punished for something your brother or sister did wrong. That doesn't sound fair, does it?

But Jesus took our punishment because He loves us so much. He wanted all of our sins to be forgiven and forgotten.

Because of Jesus, we don't have to be punished. We can live forever with God in Heaven.

## **PRAYER**

Dear Jesus, thank You for dying for my sins. Thank You for loving me so much and forgiving me. I know that You have saved me, and I know that I will be with You in Heaven forever. Amen.

## Chapter 49: A Very, Very, Very Happy Day

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### THE BIBLE

Luke 24; John 20

### INTRODUCTION

One of my favorite days of the year is Easter.

Who doesn't love Easter? For one thing, you get to decorate eggs, eat candy, and receive Easter baskets.

There are two different teams when it comes to candy. You are either on the "chocolate team" or the "fruity candy team."

Who loves chocolate candy? Snickers, Reese's, Baby Ruth?

Who loves fruity candy? Sour Patch Kids, jelly beans?

But more than anything, I love Easter because it's a day we remember that Jesus is alive!

That's what Easter is really about—not eggs, rabbits, or candy. It's about Jesus coming back to life. We call that the resurrection.

### TRANSITION

Jesus died on the cross to take away the punishment for our sins, but that wasn't the end of the story.

### MAIN POINT

#### RECAP

Who remembers why the religious leaders wanted Jesus dead?

That's right, they were jealous of His popularity.

But God used their fiendish plot to help His plan to rescue humanity from sin.

You see, the leaders thought they were getting rid of Jesus. What they didn't realize was they were helping Him defeat sin forever!

### OPTIONAL: READ THE STORY ON PAGES 158-159: A VERY, VERY, VERY HAPPY DAY

But the leaders weren't the only ones who hadn't seen Jesus' master plan.

Even though Jesus told them, "I need to die to rescue humanity," his friends were like, "Say whaaat?" It went right over their heads!

His closest friends completely missed His rescue plan too, so when Jesus died, they were heartbroken.

They thought He was dead and gone forever. They missed Him so much. They didn't understand why He had to die.

After burying His bloody, torn-up body in the tomb, they wept as they watched the religious leaders close the tomb up with a giant stone and post strong, heavily armed soldiers at the entrance to keep anyone from stealing Jesus' body.

One day went by. The tomb was quiet. Jesus' friends cried in their homes.

The second day went by. Nothing.

Then on the morning of the third day, history, Heaven, and creation changed forever!

Deep inside the pitch-black silent tomb, Jesus opened His eyes!

**HE HAD BEATEN DEATH AND SIN!**

Shortly afterward, two of Jesus' closest friends walked to the tomb. They wondered how they would get inside, because they knew a big rock was blocking the door and the soldiers were keeping everyone away.

Were they in for the surprise of their lives!

When they arrived at the tomb, their eyes got wide and their mouths dropped open! The rock was rolled away, the soldiers were nowhere to be seen, and the tomb door was open.

They walked inside and got an even bigger surprise. Jesus was not in the tomb! It was empty—except for two angels.

"AAHHH!" The women screamed!

The angel probably smiled and laughed.

He then told them, "Go tell Jesus' friends that He is alive! He was dead, but God made Him alive again. Soon you will see Him. This was all a part of His master rescue plan!"

Finally, they understood what Jesus had said to them all along. He came to die to defeat sin and rescue humanity!

Saying the women were excited would be an understatement. They ran to find Jesus' disciples and tell them the incredible news. When the women found them, they told them that Jesus was alive.

At first, the disciples didn't believe it. Then Peter and John ran and saw the empty tomb for themselves.

It seemed too good to be true—but it was true! They couldn't wait to see Jesus.

Later, Jesus came and talked to all of them. They were so happy to see Him that they wanted to jump, dance, and sing. Jesus was alive!

## **CONCLUSION**

Before Jesus created the world, He knew His love for people would require Him to die to save them.

But He created us anyway.

Then when the time was right, He left perfect, beautiful heaven to be tortured and nailed to a cross.

Why?

Because Jesus' love for you is unstoppable, forever, and perfect.

If Jesus died for you, do you think there anything you can do or say that will make Him love you less?

No way.

So who wouldn't want to have a God like this as their forever BEST FRIEND?

This is Easter.

## **PRAYER**

If you want to say yes to Jesus' love for you, and you want Him to be your best friend, go ahead and raise your hand. I would love to pray for you.

*Pray for the kids.*

## Chapter 50: The Stranger on the Road

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### THE BIBLE

Luke 24

### INTRODUCTION

Emotions are funny things, aren't they?

Who here saw the Disney movie Inside Out?

Emotions are so powerful, sometimes it really does feel like something is inside our heads controlling how we feel!

Emotions are powerful!

We can wake up in the morning feeling happy and wonderful! We skip downstairs smiling and then hug our mom for no reason when we see her making breakfast.

Then THE VERY NEXT DAY, we wake up grumpy, drag ourselves downstairs, and then burst into tears because our mom made oatmeal instead of pancakes.

Emotions are funny things.

We can feel excited, happy, grouchy, lonely, joyful, and confused.

It is awesome when we feel great!

But what do we do when we don't feel great? What do we do when we feel sad?

### TRANSITION

In today's story from the Bible, we find out that it is okay to feel sad. But Jesus wants to step into the middle of our sadness and turn it into joy!

### MAIN POINT

#### RECAP

In last week's story from the Bible, we experienced the GREATEST MIRACLE IN HISTORY!

Jesus came back to life after dying on the cross, and when He did, He defeated sin and death once and for all!

He took our punishment so we can be best friends with God.

Well, not everyone had received the news that Jesus was alive. All but a handful of His followers thought He was still dead.

They were filled with sadness.

What does Jesus want to do when we are filled with sadness?

Let's begin our story and find out!

### **OPTIONAL: READ THE STORY ON PAGES 160-161: THE STRANGER ON THE ROAD**

Two of Jesus' friends were walking along a dusty road outside Jerusalem. They were on their way to a little town called Emmaus. As they walked, they talked about Jesus.

Their faces were filled with grief, their voices hushed. Their eyes were on the verge of tears.

They had thought Jesus was God and that He would rescue the world, but now He was dead.

All of their expectations were broken.

They were sad.

Then all of a sudden, they realized a third man, a stranger, was walking on the road next to them.

It scared them like when your little brother or sister walks up behind you and you don't know they are there.

"OH! Uh . . . hi!" they said to the stranger.

The man smiled at them so big it made them feel like they were looking at the happiest person on the planet. There was something eerily familiar about the man, but they couldn't put their finger on it.

The man said, "Hi! What are you guys talking about?"

The two friends told the stranger, "About Jesus! Everyone is talking about Him."

"Huh?" The stranger said with a puzzled look on his bearded face. "What happened to Him?"

"WHAT?" The two men were shocked. "Are you the ONLY person in Jerusalem who doesn't know what happened?"

The two men began to tell the stranger the whole story. How God sent Jesus to the Earth to save humanity but how the religious leaders nailed Him to the cross out of jealousy.

"They ruined the whole plan!" The two men said. "Jesus is dead. It is the saddest thing that's ever happened. There is a crazy rumor floating around that He rose from the dead. Crazy, right?"

The stranger laughed loud and long, and the two men looked at each other. Then the stranger said, "Why is that so hard to believe? The whole Bible is about Jesus. From the first page to the last, it tells us that Jesus would have to die for the bad things we have all done, but that He would come back to life. This was God's plan from before He created the world!"

The two men were fascinated! The more the stranger talked, the less sad they felt. In fact, by the time

He finished, their sadness was gone! In its place was a warm feeling of peace, hope, and joy.

When the three men arrived at their destination in the town of Emmaus, the two friends asked the stranger to stay with them and have dinner. They didn't want the stranger to leave. They wanted Him to keep talking.

At dinner, the stranger picked up a loaf of bread and thanked God for it. He broke it into pieces and gave it to them.

The men looked at him, surprised. This was what Jesus used to do!

The stranger looked at them both in the eyes, smiled, and . . . disappeared!

The men almost fell backward! "Jesus! He was Jesus! He IS alive!" they shouted!"

The two friends were so excited they jumped up from the table and ran all seven miles back to Jerusalem. They found where the disciples were staying. When they ran into the room, they found the disciples sitting together crying, filled with sadness.

The two men told the disciples everything that happened.

The stranger. The road. The conversation. The bread. The disappearance.

Right then, while the two men were still talking, Jesus appeared in the middle of the room.

"Hi everyone!" He said. "No more sadness. It's time for joy!"

The disciples and everyone there couldn't contain themselves! Jesus is alive!

## **CONCLUSION**

The moment Jesus appeared, He turned everyone's sadness into joy! It's what He does.

There is nothing wrong with feeling sad. It is a part of how God made us. But Jesus is so good and so amazing that He wants to take our sadness and give us His joy.

John 16:22 (MSG) says, "When I see you again, you'll be full of joy, and it will be a joy no one can rob from you."

So what do we do when we feel sad? We invite Jesus into the middle of it. Do you feel sad sometimes and don't know why? Do you sometimes get sad over little things? Don't worry! Jesus is here to help us. All we need to do is ask Him to help us. He is always with us and ready to turn our sadness into joy.

## **PRAYER**

If you are feeling sad about something, let's invite Jesus to step into the middle of our sadness and turn it into joy.

*Jesus, thank You for loving me. Thank You for caring about how I feel. Please help me when I feel sad to remember that You love me!*

# Chapter 51: Jesus Goes to Heaven

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

## THE BIBLE

Matthew 28; Acts 1

## INTRODUCTION

Have you ever loved a movie, a candy, or a toy so much that you couldn't help telling people about it?

Me too!

*(Ask a few kids what it was they told others about, and then share with them a story about something you loved as a kid.)*

When you love something, it is natural to tell other people about it!

Why do we do this?

Because we want them to experience for themselves how great it is!

## TRANSITION

When you see Who Jesus is and experience His love, joy, and power, the natural result is to want to help others see Him too! In our story today, Jesus goes back to Heaven by flying up into the clouds! But before He leaves, He tells us about the Holy Spirit!

## MAIN POINT

### RECAP

Last week, we heard the story about two men walking on the road to Emmaus, and we learned how Jesus turns our sadness into joy.

## OPTIONAL: READ THE STORY ON PAGES 162-163: JESUS GOES TO HEAVEN

After Jesus came back to life, He wasted no time getting started doing what He loves best: eating pizza.

NO! Being with His best friends!

Jesus went all around Jerusalem to find and talk to hundreds of people who loved and followed Him. In doing so, they became eyewitnesses that Jesus is alive!

He told them how much God loves them, about how life works best, and about His rescue plan for humanity.

Before He died, Jesus would tell His friends, "I need to die and rise from the dead for the plan to

work. Do you understand?" And they would say, "Uhhh . . . what?"

But this time they finally got it!

Jesus' disciples and friends finally understood what He had been telling them the whole time: God loves us and wants to be our best friend.

They finally understood this could only happen if Jesus died and rose from the dead.

He was disciplined for our sin. In doing so, He opened up the door for us to become best friends with God once again.

Before, people thought they had to follow God's rules before He would love them. They were wrong. Now they understood that God loves us before we do anything for Him. They could see God loves us no matter what. Seeing this changed everything. It was the greatest thing they had ever heard.

And just like we tell our friends about amazing things we find, Jesus told them, "Go tell the whole world how much God loves them. Help them follow God and live good lives."

Jesus also told them to stay in Jerusalem for a little while. He said He would send the Holy Spirit to them. The Holy Spirit is God, and He lives inside of us and helps us follow God.

Jesus showed off His power and sweet ninja moves after He rose from the dead by appearing to people out of thin air and walking through walls (true story)! But Jesus saved the best for last!

After Jesus told them about the Holy Spirit, He prayed for His disciples, and then did the coolest ninja move ever. While they were watching Him, He began to float up into the sky! He went into a cloud and disappeared.

Then two angels appeared. "Why are you looking up into the sky?" they asked. "Jesus has gone to Heaven, but one day He will come back."

The disciples went back to Jerusalem to wait for the Holy Spirit. They were happy because they knew that Jesus would one day come back to be with them.

## **CONCLUSION**

Jesus died for our sins, and then He came back to life. He loves us and forgives our sins. That is good news! He loves us no matter what we do. Knowing this makes us want to love Him back.

Jesus told His disciples to tell that good news to the whole world. He told them to tell everyone about Jesus and about His love and forgiveness.

Guess what? You can do that too! You can tell people about how much Jesus loves them. Jesus is in Heaven now, but He also lives in our hearts through the Holy Spirit. And one day, He will take us to Heaven with Him.

## **PRAYER**

Jesus, I am so glad You are alive! I know You live in my heart. Thank You for loving me and forgiving me. I will always follow You. Amen.

## Chapter 52: The Holy Spirit Comes Down

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### THE BIBLE

Acts 2

### INTRODUCTION

Waiting for Christmas or your birthday is hard, isn't it? You know you will get presents, and you know you are going to love them, but . . . you have to . . . (Gulp) . . . wait.

The more exciting something is, the harder it is to wait for it!

What is something exciting you had to wait for?

*(Tell the kids about a time you had a hard time waiting for something.)*

But how amazing is it when the day finally arrives and you get to open your presents?

It is too much fun! You finally get to enjoy the presents your parents promised you!

### TRANSITION

Before Jesus went back to Heaven, He promised His disciples He would send the best present ever: the Holy Spirit. Who is the Holy Spirit? Only the GREATEST GIFT EVER!

### MAIN POINT

#### RECAP

Last week in our story, we learned how Jesus came back to life, met with over 400 of His friends, and then pulled one of the coolest moves ever when He floated into the air back to Heaven!

Talk about the coolest ever!

### OPTIONAL: READ THE STORY ON PAGES 166-167: THE HOLY SPIRIT COMES DOWN

But before He left earth, Jesus made his disciples one of the greatest promises in history.

He said, "I'm leaving and going back to Heaven, but I am sending you the Holy Spirit! You'll never be alone again. Wait for the gift. I promise He is on His way!"

A few days after Jesus flew back to Heaven, the disciples were together in a room. Just like you and I had to wait for our birthday gifts, they were waiting for God to send the gift of the Holy Spirit to come and live inside of them.

Who is the Holy Spirit? He is God!

Wait, I thought Jesus is God? He is!

There is ONE GOD and He has THREE PARTS.

- God the Father
- God the Son (Jesus)
- God the Holy Spirit

It's confusing, I know!

Think of God . . . kind of like an EGG.

One egg has three parts: the shell, the white, and the yoke.

One egg, three parts.

Jesus left Earth but He sent the Holy Spirit, HIS SPIRIT, to live inside of us!

Okay, back to our story.

There they were, 120 of Jesus' closest friends and family all packed into a room.

As they all talked with God, praying, suddenly they heard a loud noise! It sounded like hurricane-force winds—but that didn't make sense because they were inside a house!

Then what looked like little flames of fire appeared on top of everyone's heads! That was really weird and awesome!

If those weren't enough, they all started to speak in different languages—languages they had never learned in school!

It was the Holy Spirit, just like Jesus had promised!

The day of God's Gift had arrived!

People outside the house heard all the noise and ran over to see what was going on. Some of the people were from other countries. They could understand the funny languages that the disciples were talking in.

They were shocked to hear Jesus' followers talking about how good God is in their own languages.

Peter saw how surprised people were, so he decided to tell everyone there about the incredible love of Jesus.

"Friends and neighbors! We aren't crazy, like you might be thinking right now. We love God, and God has sent the Holy Spirit to fill us with His love and power. He wants you to know how much He loves you. He wants you to follow Him, and He wants to be best friends with you too!"

The people listened to Peter.

That day over 3,000 people decided to follow Jesus and say yes to His love. It was a great day!

## **CONCLUSION**

When the Holy Spirit came, people were so excited. They had been waiting for God to come live inside of them, and now He was here!

You can't see the Holy Spirit, but when we say yes to Jesus' love for us, the Holy Spirit lives inside of us.

That means no matter where you are, Jesus is always with you. He is always there to help you.

God is bigger and stronger than anything or anyone. He has all the power in the world. He can help you do amazing things, because He lives in you.

## **PRAYER**

Jesus, I say yes to You and Your love for me. Thank You for giving me the gift of the Holy Spirit. I know You are always with me everywhere I go, and You help me do amazing things. Help me always be full of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## Chapter 53: Jesus' First Followers

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### THE BIBLE

Acts 2

### INTRODUCTION

I have a scenario for you. Tell me what you would do

Let's say you are at home playing with your favorite toy or game. Then your best friend comes over to hang out. They see the toy or game you're enjoying and say, "Can I play with that?"

What do you do? Would you share? Let see a show of hands and be honest. Don't lie in church!

Who would share it? Who wouldn't?

Okay, change the scenario. It is your little brother or sister instead of your friend that wants to play with it. Do you share?

Let's face it: Sometimes it is hard to share. But sharing what we have with other people is one of the best ways to love people. God loves it when we are generous. Generosity means sharing what we have with other people.

### TRANSITION

In this story, we discover Jesus wants to help us learn to love each other and be generous.

### MAIN POINT

#### OPTIONAL: READ THE STORY ON PAGES 170-171: JESUS' FIRST FOLLOWERS

After Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to live in His followers, thousands and thousands of people began following Him!

Every day, more and more people believed in Jesus and joined the disciples.

Just like you and me, these new Jesus followers believed Jesus was God. They believed that He died for their sins, came back to life, and was in Heaven.

BOOM. That's all it takes to become Jesus' BFF!

Jesus' disciples were the leaders of this fast-growing group of Jesus followers. The disciples did many miracles (supernatural, impossible stuff), because the Holy Spirit had given them power.

Dead people came back to life, sick people were healed, blind people could see for the first time . . . awesome stuff!

Everyone who followed Jesus would gather together during the week and listen to the disciples teach them about Who Jesus is—just like we do now.

As this movement grew, people began calling those who followed Jesus “Christians.” It actually means “Little Christ,” funny enough.

The Jesus followers all loved each other, ate together, prayed together, and talked about Jesus together. The Christians were very generous. Everyone shared with each other. No one was poor, because they took care of each other.

This big group of Christians was called the church. Many people who were not Christians saw the good things that the Christians did. Some of them decided to become Christians too. And so, the church grew bigger and bigger.

Most of the religious leaders didn’t like this, just like they didn’t like Jesus. So they tried their best to cause trouble for them. They hurt some Christians, put some of them in jail, and even killed some.

But God helped the church and the people who followed Him. The church kept growing.

The Christians told others about Jesus in Jerusalem, in other towns, and even in other countries. The more they told others about Jesus, the more people joined the church!

This is how the first church started!

## **CONCLUSION**

The Holy Spirit helped people be full of God’s love. And because they loved each other, they shared with each other. That made God happy. He loves it when we take care of each other.

Think about your family, friends, and people around you who you may not know very well.

How can you be a generous person this week? Who can you share your things with?

God wants to help us love people so much that we willingly share with them. When we live generously, it tells people that they are important and loved. It also helps them understand how much God loves them.

And just like people followed Jesus when they saw the love and generosity of the first church, people we know will say yes to Jesus’ love when they experience our generosity too!

## **PRAYER**

Jesus, thank You for being so generous to me. You have given me a lot of good things, and I want to share with others. Help me love people and be generous to them. Amen.

## Chapter 54: Jumping for Joy

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### INTRODUCTION

Have you ever wished you could change something about yourself?

Maybe you wish you had wings and could fly.

Maybe you wish you had super speed-reading powers so you could do your homework in three seconds.

Maybe you wish you had super strength and could pick up a mountain!

That would be fantastic!

Or maybe it is something more real.

Maybe you wish you could make new friends easier.

Maybe you wish you could make better choices and stop getting in trouble at school.

Maybe you wish you could stop lying to your parents and start telling the truth.

We all have things we wish we could change about ourselves.

When I was little, I wished I could . . . *(tell the kids about something you didn't like about the way you behaved when you were younger.)*

But no matter how hard I tried, I couldn't fix myself. I didn't have the power to do it!

If only there was someone who could help us become the boys and girls God created us to be!

### TRANSITION

Believe it or not, there is! Jesus not only died to rescue us from sin, He also died so we could become the men and women that God created us to be!

### MAIN POINT

#### RECAP

I'll prove it to you.

Remember Peter? He was one of Jesus' closest friends and one of His twelve disciples.

Peter went everywhere with Jesus. They were best friends.

But Peter had a problem. He thought about himself . . . a lot.

When one of the other disciples would get to do something cool, Peter would be jealous.

When Jesus would tell Peter something he didn't like, Peter would yell at Jesus. True story!

Do you remember what Peter did when Jesus was arrested? He was so scared that Peter lied. He said he didn't even know Jesus, because he was afraid he would be put in jail too.

Peter wanted to change but he couldn't fix himself. He needed help.

Then he got it!

### **OPTIONAL: READ THE STORY ON PAGES 174-175: JUMPING FOR JOY**

Peter wasn't perfect. He was a normal person just like you and me. But something incredible happened. After Jesus rose from the dead, The Holy Spirit filled Peter's heart.

Jesus changed Peter from the inside out!

The scared, jealous, angry disciple became a brave, generous preacher who told everyone about Jesus.

Jesus did for Peter what he couldn't do for himself!

Peter couldn't wait to tell everyone about God's love and power.

One day, Peter and John went to the temple to pray. The temple was like church.

There they saw a man whose legs didn't work right. He had never walked a single step in his whole life! Every day, this man sat by the temple gate asking people for money. When he saw Peter and John, he asked them for money too.

Peter looked at the man and a thought came into his head, "Jesus can fix this man! No problem is too hard for Jesus!"

Peter said, "Look at us!" The lame man looked up, thinking Peter was going to give him some money.

Peter said, "I don't have any money on me. But I have something even better that I want to give you. In the name of Jesus, be healed and walk!"

Peter grabbed the man's hand, spilling his little cup filled with coins, and helped him stand up.

As the man stood up, Jesus healed his legs! He stood for the first time in HIS WHOLE LIFE! Then he walked. Then he started jumping up and down, praising God.

Jesus fixed the broken part of the man. He did what the man could never do for himself!

All the people that saw what happened were so amazed. They could hardly believe it when they saw the man walking and jumping for the first time. It was a miracle!

Before Peter and John knew what was happening, the temple was packed with people who wanted

to see the man Jesus healed!

Peter, filled with confidence from the Holy Spirit, told everyone there about Jesus. He told them that God's power and love were a gift to them through Jesus, and they needed to trust in Him. He told them that only Jesus has the power to fix us. Many people believed Peter and followed Jesus.

## **CONCLUSION**

What do we do when we have a problem we don't have the power to fix? We bring it to God Who loves us and has all the power in the universe.

What problem are you facing today that you need Jesus' help with?

It doesn't matter if it is big or small, Jesus is with us and ready to help!

Let's ask Jesus to help us, just like He helped Peter and the man at the temple.

## **PRAYER**

Jesus, You love me and care about my problems. Will You . . . *(under your breath, tell Jesus what you want Him to fix)?*

## Chapter 55: Good News for Everyone

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### THE BIBLE

Acts 10

### INTRODUCTION

Let me see a show of hands: Does anybody else sometimes have trouble following the rules?

Those of you who didn't raise your hands are lying!

*(Tell the kids about a time you got in trouble for disobeying a rule when you were a child.)*

No matter how much we want to obey the rules, something inside each of us wants to break them.

After we get in trouble for breaking the rules, we tell ourselves, "I'll never do that again!"

Then three hours later, we are in trouble for the same thing.

Let's face it: We'll never be able to follow ALL of the rules ALL of the time.

### TRANSITION

In today's story, we find out Jesus understood our problem. He knew we'd never be able to obey all of the rules, and He did something about it.

### MAIN POINT

#### RECAP

After God used Moses to rescue the Israelites from Egypt, He gave them special rules to follow, called "commandments."

There were over 300 rules. That is a lot. Most of us have a hard time remembering five.

The rules covered a lot of things, like which kinds of foods they could eat, how to treat people, and what animals were okay to touch and which ones were not. (Great white sharks were on the "no touchy" list. Smart, right?)

The Israelites thought if they followed all of God's rules, they could make up for their sin.

But how many of you know it is impossible to follow all of the rules all of the time!

So Jesus came to earth to obey God's rules for us!

**OPTIONAL: READ THE STORY ON PAGES 176-177: GOOD NEWS FOR EVERYONE**

Well, after years of trying to follow God's rules, the Israelites started to think, "If some food is unclean, and some animals are unclean, then maybe some people are unclean too. Yeah! We need to stay away from everyone who does not look like us and act like us!"

Did God want this? No way.

Well, one of the people groups the Israelites didn't like were the Romans.

Our story today opens with a Roman named Cornelius.

Cornelius was a high-ranking Roman soldier who loved God. But he didn't know Who Jesus was. That's a problem!

One afternoon while the soldier talked with God, an angel appeared to him. "Cornelius!" the angel said. "God loves you so much! Go find a man named Peter. He has something very important to tell you!" POOF! The angel was gone.

Cornelius couldn't wait to hear the secret message from God, so he sent a soldier and a servant to find this Peter guy.

Remember how I mentioned that the Israelites didn't like Romans and thought they were unclean? Yup. That might be a problem.

Jump to Peter. We find Peter chilling outside on the porch enjoying the sun. It was lunchtime and Peter's stomach was growling. While Peter waited for lunch, the Bible

says something weird happened. Peter had a dream while he was still awake!

In the dream, God showed Peter a giant blanket in the sky filled with all sorts of unclean animals.

What God said next was the last thing Peter expected to hear: God told Peter to eat the unclean animals. Peter knew this was against the rules that God had given the Jewish people.

"But God," Peter shouted, "That's against the rules! I can't even touch those unclean animals, let alone eat them!"

God said, "If I say something is okay, then it's okay."

Three times Peter argued with God. He still thought obeying the rules was what made God happy. God said, "It's not about the rules, Peter. I am the one who makes people clean."

Peter woke up confused. What did all of this mean?

Just then, Peter heard a loud knocking downstairs at the front door.

It was none other than Cornelius' people. They asked Peter if he would go with them to Cornelius' house.

Uh oh. Jewish people weren't supposed to even talk with "unclean" Romans.

BOOM! In that moment, Peter remembered the dream with the animals. "That's it!" he shouted. "This is what the dream was about! Jesus fulfilled God's rules for us, so now there is no such thing as clean or unclean. He wants EVERYONE to know Him: Jew, Roman and everyone else! The good news is for everyone in the whole world!"

So this is exactly what Peter did! He went to Cornelius' house and told him and his whole family about Jesus!

In the middle of Peter's talk, the Holy Spirit filled Cornelius and his whole family, and they began to worship God in their special languages.

## **CONCLUSION**

Peter learned that God loves everyone—not just the Jewish people, but everyone in the whole world.

That means you and me too! Even before we were born, God knew our names. He was already thinking about how He would show us His love.

God loved the world so much that He sent Peter and many other people into every country to tell people the good news about Jesus. But there are still a lot of people who don't know about Jesus yet. You and I can help them! We can tell them that God loves them and that Jesus died for them.

## **PRAYER**

Dear Jesus, thank You for loving me even before I was born. Help me to tell other people about Your love so they can follow You too. Amen.

## Chapter 56: Philip & the Chariot

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### THE BIBLE

Acts 8

### INTRODUCTION

When I am excited about something, I can't wait to talk about it. Who else is like that?

For example, if we are going somewhere fun for vacation, I tell everyone about it.

Or if I buy new shoes and I love them, I show them to anyone I can. Or if my favorite football team wins, I talk to everyone about it.

What is something you get excited about and want to tell other people about?

When we are excited and happy, we want to share the good news with other people.

### TRANSITION

Today's story from the Bible is about a man who was so excited about the good news of Jesus that he wanted to tell everyone, including a mysterious rich man riding through the desert.

### MAIN POINT

#### RECAP

Last week, we looked at the story of Peter and Cornelius, the Roman soldier.

We found out God wants EVERYONE to be best friends with him. It doesn't matter what you've done, how much money you have, where you live, or the color of your skin. Jesus loves everyone with all His heart and wants everyone to hear the good news about Him!

### OPTIONAL: READ THE STORY ON PAGES 180-181: PHILIP AND THE CHARIOT

Once the disciples found this out, they began to tell everyone about Jesus and His plan to rescue us.

Everywhere they went, the Jesus followers told people about God's love.

Philip was one of those Jesus followers who loved to tell people about Jesus.

One day while Philip was hanging out, an angel appeared in the middle of the room. POOF!

Angels are sneaky like ninjas, aren't they?

"Howdy," the angel said. "God has an adventure for you to go on, Philip."

"Cool!" Philip responded. "Where am I going?"

"Grab your sunblock, because God wants you to leave Jerusalem and walk down the road that goes through the hot desert."

Before the angel had finished talking, Philip had already grabbed his water bottle and sunglasses and smothered his nose in pink sunblock. "See ya," he said to the angel and hurried out the door toward the desert.

After walking for a while, Philip squinted his eyes and saw a small cloud of dust off in the distance.

The longer he walked, the bigger the dust cloud became.

Suddenly, he could hear the pounding of horse's hooves and the rattle of chariot wheels.

When Philip saw what was making the dust, he said, "Woah."

The chariot was huge and expensive and obviously belonged to someone with a lot of money.

A man was driving the chariot's big black horses, but another man in fancy clothes was sitting in the back.

The moment Philip saw the man in the fancy clothes, the Holy Spirit told Philip, "Catch up with the chariot."

"Done!" Philip said and ran towards the chariot. When he came close, he could hear that the important man was reading the Bible aloud to himself! He was reading about Jesus!

When he heard that, a big smile spread across Philip's face.

"Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip yelled up at the man.

Startled, the man looked down to see Philip running alongside the chariot, wearing sunglasses and pink sunblock.

"No," said the man. "I'm confused. Who is this person the Bible is talking about? I need someone to explain it to me." He invited Philip to climb up and ride in the chariot with him. Philip jumped up and sat down next to the important man.

Starting in Genesis, Philip showed the man how every book in the Bible points to Jesus.

He showed the man how sin ruined our best friendship with God and how Jesus came to Earth, died on the cross, and came back to life to rescue us. He told him about baptism and the Holy Spirit.

The man was so excited to learn what Jesus did and how much Jesus loved him that he yelled, "I want to say yes to Jesus! Look, there is a small lake. Can I become a Christian and get baptized right now?"

"Absolutely!" Philip exclaimed.

The two men climbed down out of the chariot. There in the middle of the desert, the man became a Jesus follower and Philip baptized him in water.

The moment Philip lifted the man up out of the water, something incredible happened. Philip disappeared! POOF! GONE!

God took him away and sent him to another town, where he told more people about Jesus.

The man in the chariot probably didn't even get to say goodbye. But he was very happy, because now He was best friends with Jesus.

## **CONCLUSION**

Philip loved being best friends with Jesus so much that when he found someone who needed to hear the good news, it was easy for him to talk about it.

It isn't hard to tell people about God's love for them. If you see someone who is sad or needs help, you can say something like this: "Can I pray for you?" or "Did you know that Jesus loves you? He wants to help you. Do you want me to pray for you?"

God will show people His love through you. All you have to do is be ready to talk about the good news.

## **PRAYER**

Jesus, I am so happy to follow You. I want to help other people know You too. Help me always be ready to talk about You. Thank You that You show people everywhere how to follow You. Amen.

## Chapter 57: The Voice from the Sky

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### THE BIBLE

Acts 9

### INTRODUCTION

Have you ever had to admit you were wrong? It doesn't feel good, does it?

*(Tell the kids a story about a time you were convinced you were right, only to be proved wrong. Ask three or four kids to share about a time they were wrong about something.)*

It feels great when we are right. It feels terrible when we are wrong.

Being wrong is embarrassing, isn't it? It's even harder to admit, "I was wrong. I didn't know what I was talking about."

### TRANSITION

Today's story tells us about a man who thought he knew everything about God. He thought he was right and everybody else was wrong. But he was the one who was wrong—really, really wrong. So when Jesus showed this man Who He really is, it changed everything.

### MAIN POINT

#### RECAP

We pick up our story today in the Book of Acts, chapter 9. Acts tells us what happened after Jesus floated back up into heaven! It tells us how the Holy Spirit helped the disciples build the Church.

Each day, more and more people put their trust in Jesus and said yes to His love! The Church grew and grew and grew.

The good news about Jesus swept across the country!

But not everyone was happy about this.

The same religious leaders who hated Jesus also hated His disciples and His church.

They wanted to stop the good news and destroy the Church.

### OPTION READ THE STORY ON PAGES 184-185: THE VOICE FROM THE SKY

This brings us to the man we mentioned before who thought he knew everything about God.

His name was Saul, and he was so angry at Christians that he hunted them down and put them in jail!

Have you ever met someone who believed they were ALWAYS right? They are no fun to be around, are they?

That was Saul.

The more the church grew, the more Saul hated it! One day, Saul decided to go to a town called Damascus to look for Christians he could arrest.

Saul put together a gang of mean and nasty bullies to help him on his horrible mission.

The gang set out for Damascus, snarling and scowling.

But Saul had no idea the surprise God had in store for him!

As the gang made their way down the road, BANG! Suddenly a blinding light flashed from the sky! It was so powerful, it knocked Saul off of his feet and slammed him onto the dusty trail.

While Saul struggled to get his breath, he heard a voice speak to him from the light: "Saul, why are you treating me so badly?"

Saul could barely respond! "W-w-who are you?" Saul stammered.

"I am Jesus," the voice replied. "I want you to follow Me instead of trying to hurt Me. It's time for you to stop believing you are always right and time to start believing what I say. Now get up and go into Damascus. There is someone there who will help you."

As Saul listened to Jesus talk, it was like listening to the voice of a best friend. Jesus' voice sounded like love. As quick as it came, the light and voice were gone. Saul laid in the dirt in disbelief.

The bullies with Saul saw the bright light but didn't hear Jesus' voice.

They ran over to Saul and helped him up from the ground. When Saul opened his eyes, he screamed! He couldn't see anything!

He was blind. The men in the gang had to lead him by the hand into Damascus.

Do you think Jesus refused to forgive Saul because he was wrong? No way!

Jesus loves us even when we are wrong and make wrong choices.

After three days, Jesus sent a Christian named Ananias to pray for Saul. After Ananias finished praying, Jesus healed Saul's eyes. He could see again!

And even better than that, he could now see that Jesus is God and that He loved Saul. In that moment, Jesus became Saul's best friend.

Saul's name was later changed to Paul. Paul went on to become one of the most important leaders in the Church.

Think about that!

Saul hated Jesus and put Christians in jail. Now he loved Jesus with all his heart and helped pastor the Church!

Paul spent the rest of his life traveling the world telling people about Jesus.

## **CONCLUSION**

The moment Saul saw Who Jesus really is, it changed his life forever.

He went from being a God-hating bully to Jesus' best friend.

In the same way, when we see Jesus, He changes us just like He changed Saul.

Instead of always wanting to be right and wanting our own way, Jesus helps us to admit when we are wrong and put others first.

Just like Jesus turned Saul the bully into Paul the pastor, He is changing us into the men and women of God He created us to be!

What is an area in your life where you need Jesus' to help to change?

## **PRAYER**

Jesus, thank You for loving me even when I make bad choices and have bad attitudes. Please change me from the inside out so I can be more like You!

## Chapter 58: A Crazy Boat Ride

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### THE BIBLE

Acts 27–28

### INTRODUCTION

Who here has ever had a terrible, horrible, no-good day?

Some days you feel like everything is wonderful, and then some days it feels like everything goes wrong!

Maybe a kid made fun of you at school. Maybe you struck out every at bat in your baseball game.

Maybe you lost your favorite toy. Maybe you crashed on your bike and cut up your knee.

*(Tell the kids a story about a situation that went horribly wrong for you when you were little.)*

Bad days can make you feel sad and lonely.

### TRANSITION

Do you know Jesus cares about our bad days? In fact, He not only cares about our bad days, He wants to step into the middle of our problems and turn them around into something good! In today's story, we find out how Jesus rescued our friend, Paul, from a very bad day!

### MAIN POINT

#### RECAP

Last week, we learned about a crazy character in the Bible named Paul.

Paul was a bully who hated Jesus and everyone who followed Jesus.

Then Jesus showed Paul how much He loved him, and it changed Paul forever!

Paul became best friends with Jesus and traveled the world telling people the good news about God's love!

### OPTIONAL: READ THE STORY ON PAGES 186-187: A CRAZY BOAT RIDE

Paul lived 2,000 years ago. Cars, airplanes, and cruise ships didn't exist.

So when Paul and some of his friends needed to go to Rome, they boarded a wooden ship and set out across the Mediterranean Sea.

The day started well. The sun shone in the sky and the crystal-blue water lapped up against the side of their boat.

Then Paul's day went very, very, very bad.

After they were miles out into the ocean, the sky went dark, the wind began to howl, and huge storm slammed into them. Their wooden boat all of a sudden felt like a tiny row boat.

The wind and the waves smashed into the ship so hard the sailors and all of the passengers thought they were going to die.

Afraid the ship would sink, the sailors threw all of the cargo overboard, including almost all of the food.

Not that anyone cared, because everyone was seasick and throwing up over the side of the ship. This went on day after day.

They were the worst days Paul had ever had.

Then Jesus stepped into the middle of his bad days!

Paul told his friends, "Last night, an angel told me that all of us will live. Be brave! God will take care of us."

Jesus gave Paul and the rest of the travelers hope in the middle of their horrible day!

After a while, one of the sailors pointed and shouted, "LAND HO!"

Everyone cheered for joy! An island appeared on the horizon. They thought they were safe!

But before they could reach the beach, BOOM! The ship crashed into a shallow coral reef and wouldn't budge.

The waves rolling into the beach began to break the back of the ship into pieces.

The day had gone bad once again!

But Paul didn't freak out, because he knew Jesus was with him in the middle of his bad day, ready to turn it around!

"Don't worry! We're going to be okay!" Paul yelled. "Jesus is going to take care of us!"

Everyone believed Paul and jumped into the ocean. Some swam to shore and others floated to the beach on broken pieces of the ship.

Jesus had done it again! He turned a horrible situation into a great one!

They were finally safe—but it was freezing cold outside. Bummer. So everyone gathered twigs and sticks to build a fire. Thankfully, one of Paul's fellow passengers, named Big Al, had been a Boy Scout when he was little and got the fire going! (Okay, I don't think there was a Big Al there, but someone knew how to build a fire.)

Yes! The bonfire warmed everyone up. The day was getting better again!

Suddenly, a poisonous snake hiding in the sticks slithered out of the fire and sunk its fangs into Paul's hand!

"This is not a good day for you, Paul," one of the other people said after they saw the snake dangling from Paul's hand.

But Paul didn't freak out. He knew Jesus was with him in the middle of his bad day. So Paul shook the snake off into the fire, sat down, and began drying off his toga.

Everyone thought he would swell up and die, but he didn't.

Jesus stepped into Paul's bad day again and turned it around!

It got better. When the people on the island saw the miracle Jesus did for Paul, they asked him to come pray for the sick people in the nearby town. "Do you think Jesus will help them too?" They asked.

"Absolutely!" Paul replied. "He wants to help everyone having a bad day."

Paul prayed for the sick people on the island, and God healed them all. Paul told the people about Jesus.

Even though the storm, shipwreck, and snakebite were bad things, God turned them around. He used them to help many people and show them His love and power.

## **CONCLUSION**

Jesus loves you so much! Just like He stepped in and helped Paul in the middle of his bad day, He wants to help you too!

The next time you find yourself in the middle of a horrible situation, remember Jesus is with you and wants to step into the middle of your day and turn it around into something good!

## **PRAYER**

Jesus, help us to remember how much You love us and that You want to help us when bad things happen. (Ask the kids to tell Jesus about a specific problem they face that they want Jesus to turn around.) Thank You for always being there for me, Jesus!

## Chapter 59: An Earthquake in Jail

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### THE BIBLE

Acts 16

### INTRODUCTION

Have you ever thought, “If I was cooler, more people would want to be my friend?”

Or, “I would be more popular if I was prettier, funnier, smarter, or had better clothes.”

We’ve all thought things like that.

When I was in elementary school, I wished (*Tell the kids about something you wanted to change about yourself*).

Then you find a friend who doesn’t care about your shoes, how fast you run in PE, or how cool your clothes are. This friend likes you for you!

This is how best friends treat us. We don’t have to try to impress them.

### TRANSITION

This is the kind of best friend Jesus is. We don’t have to try to impress Him by being good or obeying rules. He loves us no matter what we do, and it makes us want to love Him back!

### MAIN POINT

#### RECAP

The Apostle Paul helped build the first church, and he wrote two-thirds of the New Testament! Not bad.

We learned last week that Jesus wants to step into the middle of our bad days and turn them around for good!

### OPTIONAL: READ THE STORY ON PAGES 188-189: AN EARTHQUAKE IN JAIL

In our story today from the Book of Acts in the Bible, we find Paul hanging out with Silas, one of his best friends.

The two friends were doing what they loved to do best: tell people about Jesus and His love. That’s a good thing.

What wasn’t good is that the religious leaders caught wind of what Paul and Silas were doing—and they were NOT happy.

These same leaders crucified Jesus and sent Paul out to destroy the church.

You can imagine they didn't like it much when Paul became a Jesus follower and started telling others about Jesus' love. They were fed up.

The religious leaders sent the police to arrest Paul and Silas. The police were not very nice. They punched Paul, kicked Silas, put them in chains, and locked them in a deep, dark, nasty underground jail.

But Paul and Silas weren't scared. They were happy because even though they couldn't see Him with their eyes, they knew Jesus was with them in that dungeon.

They were so happy that they began to sing! In the middle of the night, Paul and Silas started praying and singing to God!

That's right! Covered in cuts, bruises, dried blood, and mud, Paul and Silas started belting out worship songs to Jesus!

The other prisoners couldn't believe their ears. Why were these two men singing in jail?

Boy were they in the shock of their lives!

Suddenly the ground began to shake, dust streamed down from the ceiling, the metal doors clanged against their hinges, and an ear-splitting roar filled the jail. It was a huge earthquake! The jail shook so violently it felt like the whole thing would break a part.

The prison doors flew open, and the prisoners watched the handcuffs fall off of their wrists and ankles. It was as if some invisible person unlocked all of their chains at the same time!

When the man in charge of the jail felt the earthquake, he grabbed his sword and a torch and ran down the worn stone steps into the jail.

Seeing the jail doors open made his face turn white.

"They've escaped!" He thought. Instead of getting in trouble with the religious leaders for losing the prisoners, the jailer pulled out his sword and was about to kill himself with it.

"Don't do it!" yelled a voice from inside the cell at the end of the jail. It was Paul. "It's okay! We are all still here!"

The jailor was amazed that they hadn't run away. He asked Paul and Silas, "Jesus is real and I know you are best friends with Him. I want Him as my best friend too! Tell me what do I need to do to be good enough for His love?"

They said, "You don't have to do anything! Just believe in Jesus and you will be saved." Then they explained to him that Jesus loved him and died for him. He didn't have to try to impress God.

That night, the jailor and his whole family believed in Jesus and decided to follow Him. Paul and Silas baptized the jailer in water.

The jailor cleaned the blood out of Paul and Silas' cuts. He took them into his own home, gave them food to eat, and treated them well. He was so happy that he and his family were now best friends with

Jesus!

The jailer knew he didn't need to try to impress God anymore. He knew Jesus wanted to be his best friend.

### **CONCLUSION**

Before Paul met Jesus, he thought God only loved people who did good things. He thought we had to work really, really hard and be really, really good to go to Heaven.

But Paul was wrong.

Jesus showed Paul that God loves everyone. He told Paul we don't go to Heaven because we are good—we go to Heaven because we trust and believe in Jesus.

That is the good news of Jesus. He loves us no matter what, and He forgives all of our sins when we trust in Him.

### **PRAYER**

Dear Jesus, thank You for loving me and saving me. I believe that You died for my sins, and I know that You have already forgiven me. Amen.

## Chapter 60: Heaven is Awesome

Age Group: Kindergarten–5th Grade

### THE BIBLE

Revelation 22

### INTRODUCTION

If you could go anywhere in the world, where would you go? *(Let five or six kids quickly share where they would go.)*

There are so many cool places in the world! Beautiful, fun, amazing places!

If I could go anywhere in the world, I would go to (\_\_\_\_\_).

### TRANSITION

The Bible tells us about a place that is better than all these amazing places combined. It's called Heaven. Heaven is God's home. It's where Jesus lives. And because we are God's children, someday it will be our home too.

In this story, God showed a man named John what Heaven is like so he could tell us.

### MAIN POINT

#### OPTIONAL: READ THE STORY ON PAGES 192-193: HEAVEN IS AWESOME

John was one of Jesus' twelve disciples. He was with Jesus from the beginning. The Bible calls him "the disciple Jesus loved." This means John and Jesus were best friends.

Just like you talk about everything with your best friends, John and Jesus talked about everything.

They laughed together, told jokes, helped people, and cried together when things were hard.

After Jesus rose from the dead and floated back into heaven, John dedicated his life to telling people the good news about Jesus' love.

He preached to thousands of people, and the Holy Spirit used John to do incredible miracles.

So many people decided to become best friends with Jesus because of what John said that it made the religious leaders furious!

They beat him up and threw him in jail to try to stop him. But it didn't stop him, just like it didn't stop Paul.

So the leaders put John on a boat, sailed him out to a barren island called Patmos, and left him there to die.

“Ha! See if he tells anyone about Jesus stuck on a desert island!” They sneered. The leaders thought they’d won.

They hadn’t.

One day while John talked with Jesus, Jesus gave him a vision. A vision is like a dream, except John was awake. Peter saw one before he visited Cornelius the Roman soldier.

In the vision, John saw a lot of things that God was going to do in the world. He heard God promise to always take care of the people that love Him and follow Him.

Then Jesus showed John what Heaven looks like. That’s right! John was on an island, but Jesus let him see into Heaven. It was awesome! Everything was beautiful and perfect. The streets were made out of gold. Everyone was happy. No one was sick or hurt, no one cried, no one did bad things, and no one ever died.

What John saw was so beautiful that it made him cry tears of joy. Heaven is everything Jesus wanted the Earth to be before sin messed things up.

Jesus told John, “I am going to come back soon! Tell everyone to wait for me and follow me.” God showed John that everyone who follows Jesus is going to live in Heaven forever with God. It is the perfect home, and God made it just for us!

## **CONCLUSION**

My favorite place isn’t Disneyland or Hawaii. It’s my home. I love to be with my family at our house.

That is what Heaven will feel like—like coming home. But it will be better than any home on Earth, because God will be there. God will make sure that everything is perfect. We won’t ever be sad or lonely or hurt.

Heaven is God’s gift to everyone who follows Jesus. Someday we will live there with Him and with each other forever.

When we talk with Jesus during our day, worship Him and sing songs to Him in church, hear someone talk about the good news, and show other people His love by sharing what we have with them, we experience a little of what Heaven will be like when we see Jesus.

Being best friends with Jesus is Heaven on Earth. And when we die, we get to spend forever in the best place with our best friend.

Do you want to say yes to Jesus’ love for you and become His best friend? It’s so easy.

## **PRAYER**

Dear Jesus, I say yes to You. I believe You died for me and want to be my best friend. Thank You for making Heaven for me. I know that someday I will go to Heaven with You. I love You, and I want to live with You forever. Amen.