LESSON 49: SACRIFICE

JEREMIAH PROPHESIED A NEW COVENANT

Jeremiah 1, 17:1–10, 31:31–34

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JEREMIAH PROPHESIED A NEW COVENANT

- Jeremiah 1, 17:1–10, 31:31–34
- Big Picture Q&A: Why should we obey God? We obey God because He loves us.
- Key Passage: Revelation 3:19 – As many as I love, I rebuke and discipline. So be zealous and repent.

JESUS CONNECTION

Jeremiah told about a day when God would forgive sin and change people's hearts. Jesus made these words come true. God forgives our sin through His Son, Jesus. He changes us and gives us power through His Spirit to obey His commands.

LIFEWISE QUALITY

SACRIFICE – Giving of myself to help someone else.

LEADER BIBLE STUDY

"I chose you before I formed you in the womb; I set you apart before you were born." These words from Jeremiah 1:5 reveal a Creator who is sovereign, working out everything in agreement with the decision of His will (Eph. 1:11). Jeremiah 1:5 ends with a specific call for a man named Jeremiah: "I appointed you a prophet to the nations."

Jeremiah was the son of Hilkiah the priest. He lived just north of Jerusalem. Jeremiah's ministry began when God called him. At that time, Josiah was king of Judah. Whom else did God call in the Old Testament? God called Noah to build an ark (Gen. 6); He called Abram to leave his home (Gen. 12:1–4); He called Moses to lead His people out of Egypt (Exod. 3).

Each time God calls someone, He equips him or her to do His work. Like Moses, Jeremiah was hesitant: "Oh no, Lord God! Look, I don't know how to speak since I am only a youth" (Jer. 1:6). God assured Jeremiah: "I will be with you" (Jer. 1:8).

God called Jeremiah to be a prophet to Judah. Judah was deep in idol worship and other sins. God's judgment was coming. Jeremiah's job was to warn them. God gave Jeremiah two visions. The first—a branch of an almond tree—was a sign that God would keep His promise to send judgment and He would do it soon. The second vision—a boiling pot—meant that God's judgment was coming from the north. God would bring the Babylonians from the north as judgment on His people. Then, God sent Jeremiah out to announce His declaration.

As you teach, help students connect Jeremiah's ministry to the ministry of Jesus. God called Jeremiah to warn the people of the judgment for their sin. Jesus also came to tell people to turn from their sin. He didn't just tell them about the punishment; He took the punishment on Himself.

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Shortly after God rescued the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, He made a covenant with them at Mount Sinai. The terms of the covenant are found in Exodus 19. God said through Moses, "If you will listen to Me and carefully keep My covenant, you will be My own possession out of all the peoples ... and you will be My kingdom of priests and My holy nation" (vs. 5–6). God's people responded, "We will do all that the Lord has spoken" (v. 8).

But the people did not do all that the Lord had spoken. The people had God's law, but they were not able to obey Him because of the sinfulness of their hearts. God punished His people for their unfaithfulness, eventually sending the Northern Kingdom into exile. But God was faithful: He preserved two tribes, keeping His promise to establish David's house forever.

The Israelites in Jeremiah's day broke the covenant just like their ancestors before them. The prophet Jeremiah told about a new covenant. He prophesied about a coming day when God would forgive sin and write His law on the hearts of His people. This prophecy is fulfilled in Jesus.

Jesus did not come to get rid of the law (Matt. 5:17). Through His sinless life, Jesus fulfilled the demands of the Old Covenant. The New Covenant promised that God would forgive sin. God forgives sin through His Son, Jesus. He changes our hearts and gives us power through His Spirit to obey His commands.

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BIBLE TIMELINE & REVIEW (3 MIN)

During our last class, we heard about the prophet Joel. Does anyone remember why the people were plagued by locusts? (*They disobeyed God.*) What did God tell the people they should do? (*Repent.*) What did Joel warn the people was coming? (*The Day of the Lord.*) Whom did God promise to save? (*Any who called on the name of the Lord.*)

Today, we will meet another of God's messengers, a prophet named Jeremiah. At this time, the Northern Kingdom of Israel had been conquered by Assyria. Jeremiah prophesied both bad and good news about the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Remember, the word *prophesy* (PRAH fih sigh) means "to speak about or tell what is going to happen in the future."

Jeremiah's story is found in the book of Jeremiah in the section called the Major Prophets. That doesn't mean Jeremiah was more important than the minor prophets like Hosea, Jonah and Joel. It just means the book of Jeremiah is longer than their books.

SESSION STARTERS (5-10 MIN)

Careful Instructions (Older Students)

- Form groups of three to five students. Give each group a set of 20 cards and challenge them to build the tallest tower when you say *go*. Tell groups to start, being careful not to say the word *go*. When they finish, ask if they followed your instructions. As students realize you never said *go*, gently knock down each of their towers. Ask them to start over.

- You did not completely follow my instructions. In today's Bible story, whole nations of people refused to obey God. What do you think God did?

Change Ball (Older Students)

- Guide the students to sit in a circle. Challenge them to see how quickly they can pass the ball around the circle. Then, call out different ways they should pass the ball (small kicks with their

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feet, with their left hands, behind their backs and so forth). Then, allow them to pass any way they want.

- We changed up the way you passed the ball. Which way was the easiest? Which way was hardest? Today, we are going to hear a Bible story about a change that was coming. The prophet Jeremiah said that God was going to make a new covenant with His people.

Old Or New? (Older and Younger Students)

- Before class, gather some old and new objects. Create signs labeled *OLD* and *NEW* and hang them on opposite walls. Display the old and new items. Instruct students to work together to sort the items under the correct sign. Ask them to explain how they know if an item is old or new. Which items do they think are better—old or new? Why?

- A lot of times, new items are better than old items. They might work better or taste better or look better. In today's Bible story, we will hear about something new that the prophet Jeremiah talked about. It was called the New Covenant.

Knock Them Down (Younger Students)

- Form two or three teams. Give each team a set of dominoes. They should work together to make a design, standing the dominoes on end. Invite a student to knock over the first domino and watch the chain reaction! Repeat as time allows, allowing other students to knock them down. If time or dominoes are in short supply, set up dominoes in one or several patterns ahead of time and ask for a volunteer to come start the chain reaction.

- Part of God's message through Jeremiah had to do with "knocking down" nations that would not obey God. But that's not where the story ends!

Changes

- Instruct the class to line up single-file. Give the first child in line a ball. He will pass it over his head to the next student. She will pass it through her legs to the student behind her. He will pass over his head to the child behind him, and so on. Time them to see how fast they can move the ball to the end of the line. Play again, occasionally calling out changes in how they should pass the ball, such as passing overhead, passing while standing on one foot, alternate passing to the left and right, etc.

- Changes can sometimes be hard to keep track of and might even make things harder. However, today we will learn about a change that God planned to make with His people. We'll learn that it was a very good change!

KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY/BIG PICTURE Q&A (5 MIN)

Revelation 3:19

As many as I love, I rebuke and discipline. So be zealous and repent.

Jump Up (Older and Younger Students)

- Show the key passage poster and read Revelation 3:19 aloud together several times. This key passage is packed with important words, but they are words we don't necessarily use every day. Let's talk about a few of the words to help us better understand the passage:

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- ✧ **Rebuke** – to confront and point out someone's sin
- ✧ **Discipline** – to teach, correct or give consequences for sin
- ✧ **Zealous** – to be "all in" or set your heart on something
- ✧ **Repent** – to have a complete change of mind and heart and go in a new direction (e.g., turn away from sin and follow Jesus)

- ✦ Show the key passage poster and read Revelation 3:19 aloud together. Form three groups, and assign each group a phrase of the key passage. Read the key passage aloud again. Instruct students to remain seated until you reach their group's phrase. When it is their turn, each group should jump up and say their phrase together.

Big Picture Q&A

Q: Why should we obey God?
A: *We obey God because He loves us.*

BIBLE STORY (10 MIN)

Jeremiah Prophesied About a New Covenant | Jeremiah 1; 17:1–10; 31:31–34

The people of Judah were afraid. The Northern Kingdom of Israel had been destroyed by the Assyrians. The people in the Southern Kingdom of Judah were not sure they would survive. God called a priest named Jeremiah to speak to His people. At this time, Josiah was the king of Judah.

God said to Jeremiah, "I knew you before I made you in your mother's womb. Before you were born, I chose you to do very special things. I chose you to be a prophet to the nations."

Being a prophet meant listening to what God said and telling the people God's message. **Jeremiah said, "Oh no, God! I don't know how to speak in front of other people. I'm just a boy**, only a youth."

God replied, "Don't say that. You will go where I send you and say what I tell you to say. You do not need to be afraid because I am with you. I will protect you."

Then, God reached out His hand and touched Jeremiah's mouth. God said, "I am putting you over nations and kingdoms. **You will give the people My message. It is a message of destruction, of bad things happening because of their sin.** It is also a message of reconstruction. **After I tear down the people, I will rebuild them."**

God gave Jeremiah two visions. The visions were like dreams, except Jeremiah was awake. **God said, "What do you see, Jeremiah?"**

Jeremiah said, "I see a branch of an almond tree."

"You are right," God said. **The almond branch was a sign for Jeremiah so he would know that God would do what He said He would, and He would do it soon.**

Then, Jeremiah saw a second vision. He saw **a boiling pot. The pot was overflowing from the north!** God told Jeremiah that **this vision meant trouble was coming from the north.** Trouble would come for everyone in Judah.

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God told Jeremiah that the rulers in the north were going to come and set up their kingdoms outside the city gates of Jerusalem. They were going to attack cities in Judah. God was going to judge the people of Judah for their sin. They had walked away from God and worshiped their own man-made gods.

Jeremiah had a big job to do, and God was ready to send him on his way. **"Get ready! Tell the people everything I say. Do not be afraid.** I am making you strong against the people. They will fight you, but they'll never win. **I'm here to protect you and to rescue you."**

No matter how hard they tried, the people of Judah kept turning away from God. **God spoke through Jeremiah to explain that something was terribly wrong, but God had a wonderful plan for them.**

Jeremiah said that the people of Judah had a sin problem. The problem wasn't going to just go away; it was permanent, like words carved into stone. **And the sin problem was spreading—parents who sinned had children who sinned. Everyone was affected.**

God explained through Jeremiah that sin has consequences. God had made a covenant with His people that said if they obeyed Him, He would bless them. But the people did not obey, and God had to punish their sin. God said the people would lose their land, their wealth and their freedom.

Jeremiah said that people have hearts that are deceitful, or tricky. People's hearts trick them into thinking they are better than they actually are. They trick people into wanting things or doing things that God does not want for them.

God is not tricked by people's hearts, though. **Jeremiah told the people of Judah that God had a plan to change their hearts. God promised a new and better covenant so they could be saved from their sins.**

God said that the New Covenant would not be like the Old Covenant. In the Old Covenant, the people had God's commands in writing. They disobeyed His commands and made sacrifices every year for their sin. **In the new covenant, God was going to write His law on their hearts. He would give His people the power to obey His commands. God said, "I will forgive their wrongdoing and never again remember their sin."**

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JESUS CONNECTION

Jeremiah told about a day when God would forgive sin and change people's hearts. Jesus made these words come true. God forgives our sin through His Son, Jesus. He changes us and gives us power through His Spirit to obey His commands.

LIFEWISE QUALITY (3–4 MIN)

SACRIFICE – Giving of myself to help someone else.

Living LifeWise

Because God is always with us, we can willingly sacrifice to live His way.

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Character Connection

At times, we will have to sacrifice to do something important or help someone else. And sacrifice isn't easy. But if the person or thing is important to us, it's worth doing it.

Jeremiah understood sacrifice. It cost him time, energy, reputation and sometimes his safety to share God's message. But God was the most important thing to Jeremiah. He had called Jeremiah and promised to always be with him, so Jeremiah was willing to make that sacrifice.

Living God's way will cost us as well. We aren't prophets like Jeremiah, but that doesn't mean it's easy to follow Him. It takes time to read the Bible and pray, time we'd rather spend doing something else. God may ask us to be kind to someone who isn't cool, turn off the shows or music our friends like or go to church on Sunday with your family. And doing what God asks might be very hard.

Thankfully, God has promised to always be with us, too. We are never alone, and He helps us to live His way. So while it isn't easy, we can trust God will give us the strength to follow Him, no matter what it costs.

Would these examples be a sacrifice for you? Explain.

- Doing your homework completely before you play on your device.
- Helping your someone do a chore.
- Spending 30 minutes every day practicing a skill (piano, free throws, etc.).

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BIBLE STORY REVIEW (5 MIN)

- **When did God choose Jeremiah?**

  Before he was born, Jer. 1:5

- **What did God do when He touched Jeremiah's mouth?**

  Gave him His words, Jer. 1:9

- **How did God reassure Jeremiah?**

  Told him that he would go to everyone God sent him to and say whatever God told him, Jer. 1:7

- **What did Jeremiah see in the first vision and what did it mean?**

  A branch of an almond tree, Jer. 1:11; God would do what He said He would do, Jer. 1:12

- **What did Jeremiah see in the second vision and what did it mean?**

  A pot boiling over from the north, Jer. 1:13; Disaster would come from the north, Jer. 1:14

- **What problem did the people of Judah have?**

  A sin problem, Jer. 17:1

- **What was the Old Covenant?**

  God's commands were in writing and the people made sacrifices.

- **What was the New Covenant?**

  God would write the commands on their hearts, Jer. 31:32–33

- **What did God promise at the end of the Bible story?**

  That He would give people power to obey commands and forgive their sins, Jer. 31:34

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REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES (5-10 MIN)

No Excuses! (Older Students)

- Form teams of three or four. Give each group a piece of paper and a pencil. Explain that you will call out a request. Teams will have two minutes to list as many excuses as they can think of for not doing the requested action. Examples:
  - Please clean all the school's bathrooms.
  - Please copy by hand the entire book of Psalms.
  - Please do 100 push-ups.
- Set a timer and allow students to write. When the timer beeps, invite them to share their excuses. Award a point for each excuse not also used by another team. Play additional rounds as time allows.
- Do you remember what excuse Jeremiah made when God called him to be a prophet? ("I am only a youth," Jer. 1:6.) Did God accept Jeremiah's excuse? (*No.*) God told Jeremiah that He would be with him. God wants us to obey Him and the people He has chosen to take care of us. Why should we obey God? We obey God because He loves us.

Compare and Contrast (Older Students)

- Draw a line down the middle of the board or a large piece of paper. Label the sides *Old Covenant* and *New Covenant*. Give the students Bibles and help them find Exodus 19. Have a volunteer read aloud Exodus 19:5–6. Remind students that God met with Moses at Mount Sinai. He established a covenant with them and gave them the Ten Commandments.
- Did God's people keep the covenant by obeying God? (*No.*) The people were not able to obey because of the sinfulness of their hearts. Lead students to compare and contrast the old and new covenants. If time is short, consider writing the points ahead of time and covering them until you're ready to share them.
  - In the Old Covenant column, list the following: Required complete obedience from God's people, God's people broke the covenant, God punished the people for their unfaithfulness.
  - Say: God promised a new and better covenant. The New Covenant is fulfilled in God's Son, Jesus. In the New Covenant column, list the following: Jesus obeyed the old covenant for us, God forgives our sin when we trust in Jesus, God changes our hearts and gives us power to obey.

Paper Wad Trivia (Older Students)

- Before class, write some of the review questions on pieces of paper and crumple them up. Mix up the paper wads. Briefly review the Bible story. Form two teams and have them stand against opposite walls. Scatter the paper wads in the center of the space. When you say, "Go," the first student from each team will race to the pile of paper wads. The student who reaches the pile first must grab a paper wad, open it and give the question to the teacher to read. If he cannot answer the question, his opponent may try. The student who answers correctly wins a point for his team. Continue until each student has a turn to play. The team with the most points wins.

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Out of Order (Older and Younger Students)

- Before class, write the following sentences on 8x11 paper and hang on a white board or the wall. Draw a simple picture to go with each sentence for a visual.

    - No matter how hard they tried, the people of Judah kept turning away from God.
    - God called Jeremiah to speak to His people.
    - Jeremiah told the people their hearts had a sin problem.
    - An enemy came and took away everything from the people of Judah.
    - God promised to give the people a new and better covenant.
    - God gave the people new hearts to obey God.

- Challenge the students to put the sentences in order of the story about the prophet Jeremiah. When they are done, explain that the order of events of this story starts with the beginning of Jeremiah's story and ends with Jesus rising from the dead.

Hot Potato (Older and Younger Students)

- Direct the class to sit in a circle. Pass out two balls of different colors. Instruct them to pass the two balls in opposite directions. Play a song as the students pass the balls. Stop the music at random intervals and choose a color. Whoever is holding that ball must answer a review question. If he doesn't know the answer, he must ask the person with the other ball and share the answer. Restart the music and continue playing the game.

Write to Missionaries (Older and Younger Students)

- Explain to the class that a *missionary* is someone who shares the good news about Jesus with others as a full-time job. Give each student a piece of paper, a pencil and markers or crayons. Provide a short list of local missionaries. Share any information you have about the missionaries or the area in which they are serving. Invite students to write letters or draw pictures to encourage the missionaries in their work of sharing the gospel. Suggest that they tell the missionaries something they learned today about God's plan for the prophet Jeremiah. When students finish, collect the letters and send them to the appropriate addresses or organizations.

- Full-time missionaries have a lot in common with Jeremiah. Telling others about God can feel scary, and in some places in the world, being a Christian can get you in trouble. However, Jesus tells us that anyone who believes in Him should make disciples of all people, even if they live far away! Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to make it possible for us to speak God's words to lost people. Writing cards to missionaries is a great way to encourage them and help them serve God joyfully.

The Law On Your Heart (Younger Students)

- Give each student a piece of red or pink construction paper and a piece of gray or pale green construction paper. Help students fold each in half, draw half a heart along the folded edge and cut out the shape from both papers. They can then unfold the cutouts to reveal two hearts.

- Help them glue the two hearts together and write *Old Covenant* on the gray or green side and *New and Better Covenant* on the red or pink side. Allow them to decorate the red side with nice-looking things (stickers, ribbon, glitter glue) and the other side with plain adhesive bandages.

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- God promised a new and better covenant. Under the New Covenant, God said that He would write His law on peoples' hearts. That means that He would renew our hearts and give us power to obey Him. Because of the forgiveness and life we have when we trust Jesus, our hearts don't have to stay stony; we don't have to live in sin!

Activity Page & Recap Cards (5–10 min) (For in-class or take-home use)

- Called By God (Older Students)
  - Answers: *1. Abraham, Gen. 12:1–4; 2. Moses, Ex. 3:4–10; 3. Gideon, Judg. 6:11–14; 4. Samuel, 1 Sam. 3:1–8; 5. Jeremiah, Jer. 1:4–5.*
- A Future Promise (Older Students)
  - Answers: *Forgive someone who isn't sorry*; *Admit that you are a sinner*; *Pray and ask God for help* and *Tell the truth no matter what.*
- Deceptive Eyes (Younger Students)
- When You Were Young (Younger Students)

Prayer & Requests (3–5 min)

God, we are so amazed by Your love and goodness. Thank You for establishing a new covenant and writing Your laws on our hearts when we trust in Jesus. We know that we still sin; please help us remember Your love and how much You have done for us so that we can obey You joyfully. Amen.

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Journal Page

Write or draw a thank-you note to God for the new covenant, which involved sending Jesus to take our punishment for sin.

FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS

- Why did God's people not keep the old covenant?
- Why is the new covenant better than the old covenant? Who keeps the new covenant for us?
- How does God help us obey His commands?

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JEREMIAH PROPHESIED A NEW COVENANT

JEREMIAH 1; 17:1-10; 31:31-34

MAIN POINT: GOD PROMISED A NEW AND BETTER COVENANT.

God had called Jeremiah to speak to His people. God spoke through Jeremiah to explain that something was terribly wrong, but God had a wonderful plan for them.

Jeremiah said that the people of Judah had a sin problem. And the sin problem was spreading—parents who sinned had children who sinned. Everyone was affected.

God explained through Jeremiah that sin has consequences. God had made a covenant with His people that said if they obeyed Him, He would bless them. But the people did not obey, and God had to punish their sin.

Jeremiah said that people have hearts that are deceitful, or tricky. People's hearts trick them into thinking they are better than they actually are. They trick people into wanting things or doing things that God does not want for them.

Jeremiah told the people of Judah that God had a plan to change their hearts. God promised a new and better covenant so they could be saved from their sins.

In the new covenant, God was going to write His law on their hearts. He would give His people the power to obey His commands. God said, "I will forgive their wrongdoing and never again remember their sin."

Jesus Connection: *Jeremiah told about a day when God would forgive sin and change people's hearts. Jesus made these words come true. God forgives our sin through His Son, Jesus. He changes us and gives us power through His Spirit to obey His commands.*

Key Passage: *Revelation 3:19 - As many as I love, I rebuke and discipline. So be zealous and repent.*

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CALLED BY GOD

Look up each Scripture reference. Match the reference to the person whom God called for a special purpose.

- Genesis 12:1-4
- Exodus 3:4-10
- Judges 6:11-14
- 1 Samuel 3:1-8
- Jeremiah 1:4-5

Moses

Jeremiah

Samuel

Gideon

Abraham

Jeremiah was a prophet to Judah.

E _____

R _____

E _____

M _____

I _____

A _____

H _____

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A FUTURE PROMISE

What did God promise through the prophet Jeremiah?

Use the key to decode the answer.

Example

V T M = C A T

God promised a _ _ _

G X P

and _ _ _ _ _ _

U X M M X K

_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _.

V H O X G T G M

TRICKY HEARTS

Jeremiah explained that our hearts can trick us about what is right and wrong. Cross out the things that are sinful and circle the things that would please God.

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WHEN YOU WERE YOUNG

INSTRUCTIONS: Draw lines to match each living thing to what it looked like when it was young.

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KEY PASSAGE:
Revelation 3:19 - As many as I love, I rebuke and discipline. So be zealous and repent.

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:
- Why should we obey God? We obey God because He loves us.

BIBLE STORY: JEREMIAH PROPHESIED A NEW COVENANT
- God chose Jeremiah as a prophet to the nations.
- Jeremiah was afraid he was too young to be God's messenger.
- God showed Jeremiah two visions.
- Jeremiah's second vision meant that kings from the north would come attack Judah.

FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS:
- Who can be a part of God's plans?
- When did God first plan to send Jesus?
- What might be God's plan for you?

FAMILY ACTIVITY:
- Go through an old photo album and show your kids pictures of when you were a child. Talk to them about the ways God has worked in your life, and the ways you have seen Him working in your children's lives.

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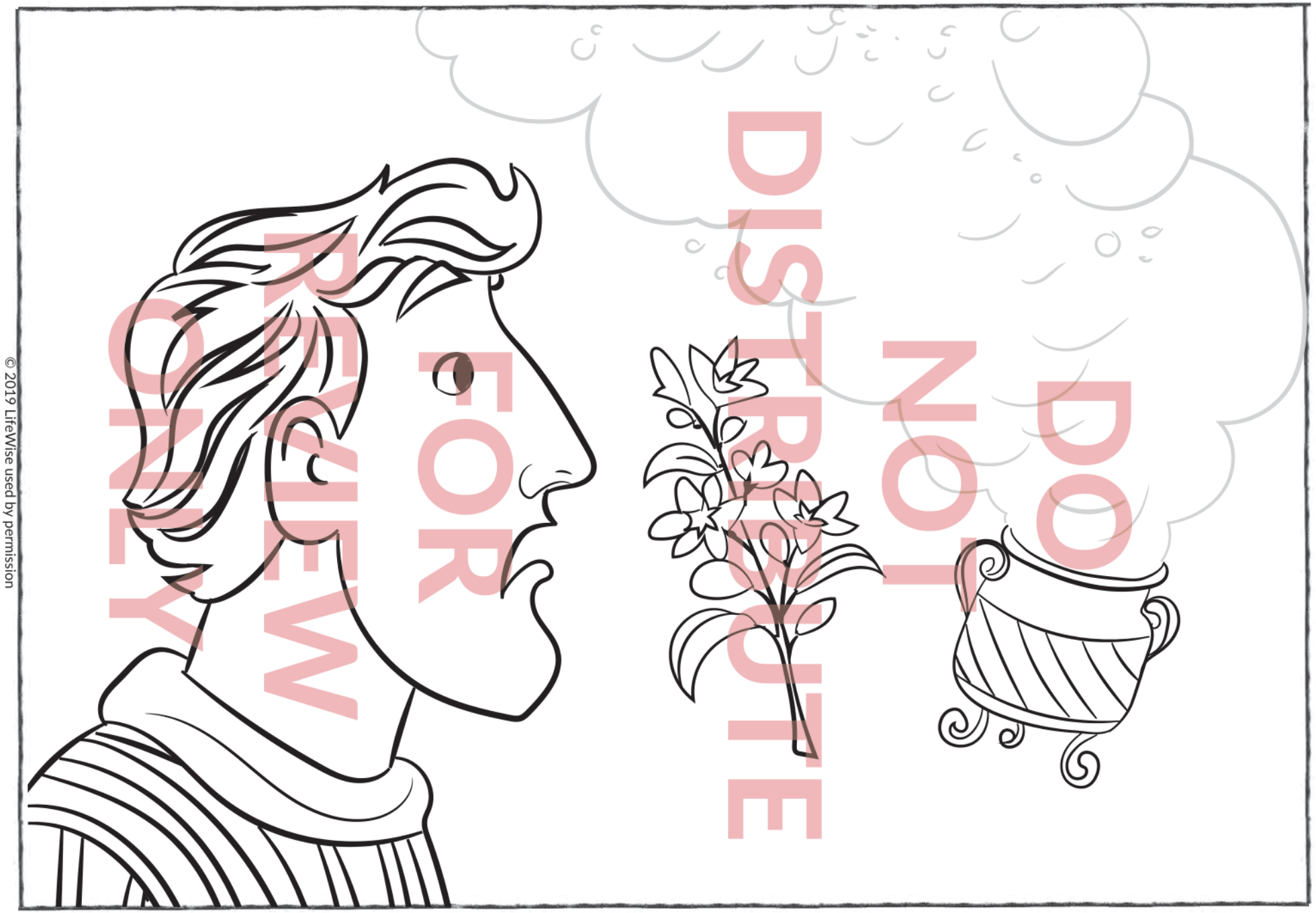

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GOD CHOSE JEREMIAH AS A PROPHET TO THE NATIONS.

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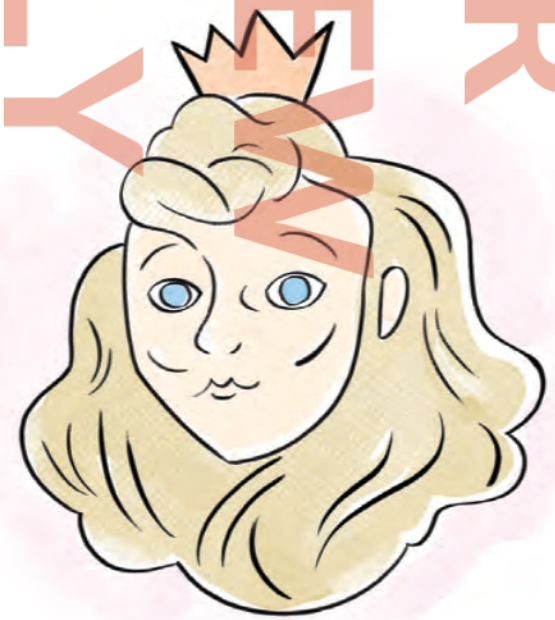
DECEPTIVE EYES

INSTRUCTIONS: Look at the images below. Label the top and bottom of each face. Then rotate the paper. Do they look different?



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KEY PASSAGE:
Revelation 3:19 - As many as I love, I rebuke and discipline. So be zealous and repent.

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:
- Why should we obey God? We obey God because He loves us.

BIBLE STORY: JEREMIAH PROPHESIED A NEW COVENANT
- Jeremiah explained that Judah had a sin problem.
- God said that our hearts are sick and can trick us.
- God promised to give people new hearts and write His law on their hearts.
- God promised a new and better covenant.

FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS:
- What do you think it means to have God's law written on your heart?
- What makes the new covenant better?
- Who initiated the new covenant?

FAMILY ACTIVITY:
- Read Jeremiah 17:7-8 aloud to your family. Then take a trip to a home improvement store and buy a young tree to plant in your yard, or (with permission) in a park or at a school.

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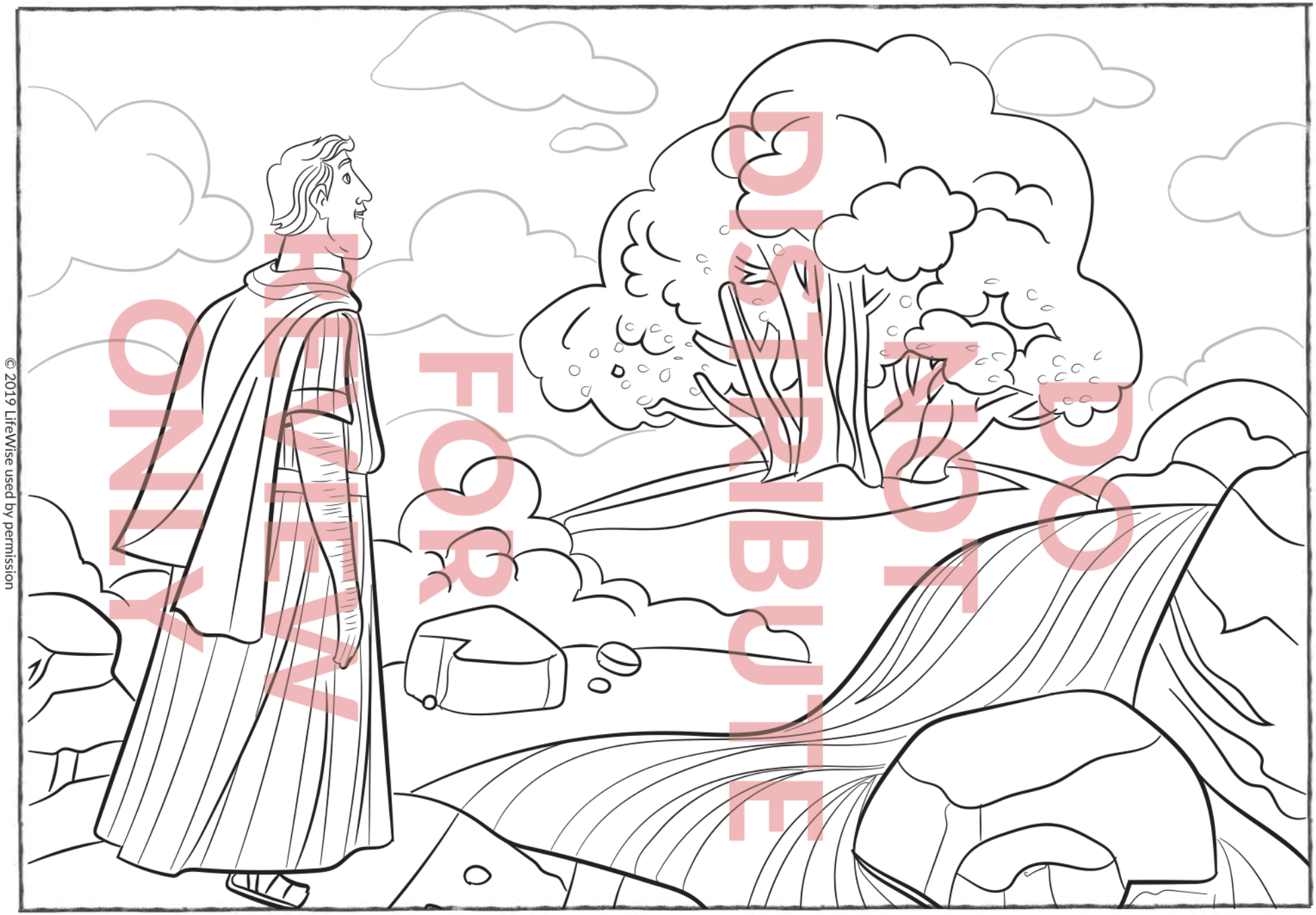

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LESSON 50: RELIABILITY

JUDAH WAS TAKEN INTO CAPTIVITY

2 Chronicles 36:1–21

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JUDAH WAS TAKEN INTO CAPTIVITY

- 2 Chronicles 36:1–21
- Big Picture Q&A: Why should we obey God? We obey God because He loves us.
- Key Passage: Revelation 3:19 – As many as I love, I rebuke and discipline. So be zealous and repent.

JESUS CONNECTION

God was right to punish His people for their sin, but He kept His promise to provide a king through David's family. Ultimately, God punished our sin through His Son, Jesus, and made Him our King forever.

LIFEWISE QUALITY

RELIABILITY – Living so that others can depend on me.

LEADER BIBLE STUDY

Warnings had come from the prophets for decades. God patiently waited for His people to turn from their sin. The prophet Jeremiah spared few details when he warned Judah what would happen if they did not turn from their evil ways (Jer. 25:1–14).

But the people of Judah did not change their ways. The kingdom had been declining for years despite King Josiah's efforts to prompt nationwide repentance. When King Josiah died, the people went back to their old ways, worshiping idols and disobeying the Lord. The time of judgment had come. God used Nebuchadnezzar—the king of Babylon—to deport the people from Judah to Babylon where they would live in exile for 70 years.

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Nebuchadnezzar went to Judah when Jehoiakim was king. He put Jehoiakim in chains and took him to Babylon. Jehoiachin became king, but Nebuchadnezzar came back for him too. Many of the people in Judah were taken, along with treasures from the Lord's temple. Next, Nebuchadnezzar put Zedekiah on the throne in Jerusalem.

The people of Judah were unfaithful to God. Zedekiah rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, and God poured out His wrath on Judah. Nebuchadnezzar showed no mercy to the people of Jerusalem. The Babylonians set fire to the Lord's temple and the king's palace. They destroyed the wall around Jerusalem. Nebuchadnezzar's armies carried most of the people away to Babylon as prisoners; only poor farmers were allowed to stay and work the land. The people were held captive in Babylon, serving the king for 70 years.

God did not abandon His people. The prophet Jeremiah told what would happen next: "The days are certainly coming ... when I will restore the fortunes of My people Israel and Judah" (Jer. 30:3). God was

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going to save His people from captivity and raise up a new King—a forever King—from the line of David (Jer. 30:9).

BIBLE TIMELINE & REVIEW (3 MIN)

Let's quickly review what we've learned about Jeremiah so far. The Bible tells us God chose Jeremiah as a prophet to the nations. Was Jeremiah young or old when God called him? (*Young.*) What did God promise to do even though Jeremiah was afraid to speak to the people? (*Protect him and tell him what to say.*) Last time, we learned that God's people failed to keep their part of the Old Covenant. Why were God's people unable to keep their part of the Old Covenant? (*They couldn't stop sinning.*) What did God promise to give the people so their hearts could be changed? (*A new and better covenant.*)

SESSION STARTERS (5-10 MIN)

Stranded On an Island (Older Students)

- Instruct the students to sit in a circle. The first child will begin the game by saying, "If I were stranded on an island, I would want to have [*name an object*]." The next student will then complete the sentence, naming a new item and then repeating all previous items. The last person in the circle will complete the sentence and repeat in order what every other player named.
- Today we are going to learn that the people of Judah were taken captive. That means they were taken from their homes and forced to live in another place. What do you think the people would have wanted most when they were taken away from their country? [*Allow students to respond.*] Interesting thoughts!

Capture It (Older and Younger Students)

- Have students sit on the floor in a circle. Choose a volunteer to sit in a chair in the middle and close his eyes. Place a small object under the middle chair, then point to one of the players. She should quietly capture the object and hide it with her at her spot. Invite the student in the middle to open his eyes and guess who took the item. Play several rounds as time allows.
- In this game, your goal was to secretly capture the object. In today's Bible story, we will hear how the king of Babylon attacked and captured the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

Bad King, Bad King, Exile (Younger Students)

- Set up chairs in a circle (or mark spots on the floor with masking tape), one fewer than the number of players. Select a volunteer to be *It*. She will walk around the circle, tapping each student's head and saying "bad king" each time. When she taps a student and says "exile," *all* students who were tapped will get up and run to a new chair. Whoever is unable to find a new chair becomes *It*. Play continues until every child has had a chance to run for a new chair.
- Judah had a string of bad kings. It seemed every king wanted to lead God's people into sin. Eventually, just like God promised, He exiled them for their sin. *Exile* means "to remove or send away." We'll learn more about what it looked like for the people of Judah to be exiled later.

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KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY/BIG PICTURE Q&A (5 MIN)

Revelation 3:19

As many as I love, I rebuke and discipline. So be zealous and repent.

Balloon Bop (Older and Younger Students)

- Practice the key passage with the class several times together. Invite students to stand in a large circle but tell them they may not move from their spot in the circle. Challenge them to say the first word of the passage together as one student hits the balloon across the circle. Each time a student bops the balloon, the class must say the next word of the verse. If the balloon touches the floor, they must start the verse over.

Big Picture Q&A

Q: Why should we obey God?
A: *We obey God because He loves us.*

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BIBLE STORY (10 MIN)

Judah Was Taken Into Captivity | 2 Chronicles 36:1–21

The last four kings of Judah came from King Josiah's family. His three sons—Jehoahaz (jih HOH uh haz), Jehoiakim (jih HOY uh kim) and Zedekiah (ZED uh KIGH uh)—**and his grandson** Jehoiachin (jih HOY uh kin) **each had a turn as king of Judah.**

Jehoahaz was not king for long. He did what was evil, and the king of Egypt came and made Jehoahaz a prisoner. The king stole silver and gold from Jehoahaz. **Then, he put Jehoahaz's brother Jehoiakim on the throne.** The king of Egypt took Jehoahaz to Egypt.

When Jehoiakim was king of Judah, he too did what was evil. The king of Babylon attacked Jehoiakim, made him a prisoner and took him to Babylon. The king of Babylon stole some of the things from the Lord's temple and put them in his own temple. **When Jehoiakim was taken away, his son Jehoiachin became king of Judah.**

Jehoiachin was king of Judah for just three months. He too **did what was evil. The king of Babylon** sent for Jehoiachin and **brought him to Babylon. The king** of Babylon **made Jehoiachin's uncle Zedekiah king of Judah.**

Like his brothers, **Zedekiah did what was evil. He led the people of Judah to do evil things too.** The prophet Jeremiah warned Zedekiah that God would punish him, but Zedekiah did not listen.

God was angry with the people of Judah. They sinned and did not obey God. But God loved His people. He wanted them to turn back to Him. God sent prophets to warn the people, but the people did not listen.

Finally, it was time to punish the people of Judah for their sin. **God allowed the king of Babylon and his army to attack Judah. Many of the people died. The king of Babylon** took everything out of the Lord's temple and carried it back to Babylon. Then, the king **and his army burned the temple. They tore down the wall around the city and burned the palaces.** Anything they did not take with them was destroyed.

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All of the people who were still alive were taken back to Babylon. The king forced them **to be slaves. Everything the prophet Jeremiah had warned about happened, just like God said it would.**

JESUS CONNECTION

God was right to punish His people for their sin, but He kept His promise to provide a king through David's family. Ultimately, God punished our sin through His Son, Jesus, and made Him our King forever.

LIFEWISE QUALITY (3–4 MIN)

RELIABILITY – Living so that others can depend on me.

Living LifeWise

We can rely on God fully, and He will help us be reliable, too.

Character Connection

God was very clear about what He expected His people to do. He had told them how to live His way in the law and through His messengers, the prophets. They said they would obey, but they did not do what they said they would. They broke God's laws and lived their own ways, even the kings. They were not reliable.

God, on the other hand, always keeps His Word. Whatever He says He'll do, He does. Period. He gave the people many chances to follow Him, but they didn't. So finally, He allowed them to be taken captive in Babylon because that's what He said would happen to them.

To be reliable, it's just as important to do the hard things you say you'll do as the fun ones. If you promise to play with your little sister or clear the table after dinner, and you do it, then others know you're reliable. They know they can depend on you to do what you say. God is always reliable, and His Spirit will help us be reliable too.

What would it look like to be reliable in these situations?

- The teacher asks you to take something to the office.
- There is a new student in your neighborhood that you promised to help find his way to school.
- You said you'd do your work as soon as you got home from school today, but your favorite Youtuber finally released their newest video today.

BIBLE STORY REVIEW (5 MIN)

- Who took Jehoahaz prisoner?

  The king of Egypt, 2 Chron. 36:3–4

- What did all the kings have in common?

  They did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, 2 Chron. 36:5, 9, 12

- How did the people respond to the messengers God sent?

  They disobeyed God and made fun of His messengers, 2 Chron. 36:16

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- How did God punish the people of Judah?

  He allowed the king of Babylon to attack the people and many died, 2 Chron. 36:17

- What happened to the temple?

  The Babylonians took everything and burned it to the ground, 2 Chron. 36:18–19

- What happened to the people who were not killed?

  They were taken to Babylon as slaves, 2 Chron. 36:20

- Ultimately, who took the punishment for sin?

  God sent Jesus to take the punishment for sin when He died on the cross and rose again, Rom. 5:8–9

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES (5-10 MIN)

Capture the King (Older Students)

- Students will sit in a circle and close their eyes while the teacher walks on the outside of the circle and chooses the King of Babylon by tapping someone on the head one time and Jeremiah by tapping someone on the head twice. The rest of the students will be Kings of Judah. The teacher will tell everyone to open their eyes. Jeremiah moves to the middle of the circle and tries to determine where the King of Babylon is. The King "captures" the other students (Kings of Judah) by secretly winking at them. When a King of Judah is killed, that player should put their hands behind their backs. Jeremiah has three chances to guess where the King of Babylon is.

- God sent prophets to warn the people, but the people did not listen. So God sent the kings and people of Judah into captivity because of their sin. God promised to gather them back together one day and give them new hearts and power to obey Him (Ezek. 11:14–21).

Broken Chains (Older Students)

- Distribute Bibles and help students find 2 Chronicles 36:1–21. Hand out strips of paper and markers. Explain that as you review today's Bible story, students should list facts about the story on the paper strips. Have students raise their hand to share before they write their answer on the strip. Assist students as needed, making sure each student prepares at least one strip. Sample strips might include:

  - The last four kings of Judah came from King Josiah's family.
  - God sent prophets to warn the people, but the people did not listen.
  - God allowed the Babylonians to attack Judah.
  - The Babylonians burned the temple to the ground.

- Provide tape or a stapler and prompt students to work together to form a paper chain with their strips of paper. Tape or staple together the ends of one strip of paper. Add each new link by threading a strip of paper through an existing link and connecting the ends. When students finish, use the paper chain as a visual to explain the gospel.
- God was right to punish His people for their sin. They deserved to be punished because they refused to obey God. [*Hold up the paper chain.*] God sent Judah into captivity because of their sin. Like the people of Judah, we deserve to be punished for our sin. The Bible says that the fair punishment for sin is death. That is bad news for us. But God loved us so much that He sent His Son, Jesus, to take the punishment we deserve. Jesus never sinned, but He died on the cross in our place. On the third day, Jesus rose from the dead, and He is still alive today! When we trust in

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Jesus as Lord and Savior, God forgives our sin. He frees us from sin [*break the paper chain*] and gives us eternal life—not because of anything we have done but because of what Jesus has done for us. That is the best news ever!

Sorry (Older and Younger Students)

- Prepare large colored cards with review questions from the Bible story. On the back of most of the cards, write a point value. On the back of two to four cards, write the word *Sorry*. Place all of the cards on the board or wall. Form two teams. Teams will take turns choosing whatever color or question they wish to answer. If the team gets the correct answer, they win the points on the back of the card. If they get a *Sorry* card, the opposite team has their points wiped out.

- The people of Judah turned away from God again and again. God sent prophets to warn the people, but the people did not listen. So, God sent the kings and people of Judah into captivity because of their sin. The people were very sorry that they didn't listen to God before it was too late.

Paper Chains (Older and Younger Students)

- Provide a strip of construction paper for each student. Help them think of different reasons why God sent Judah into captivity and let them write or draw one on each strip. Loop the strips together and tape them to form a paper chain for the class. [*Suggested reasons: The people were living in sin, the people refused to listen to God's prophets, the kings of Judah were bad kings, etc.*]

- God sent Judah into captivity in Babylon because of their sin. But even before that, they were already captives; the people were prisoners of sin. The Bible tells us that, without Jesus, all people are slaves to sin; we can't choose to love because our hearts are broken by sin. God's people were slaves to sin, and they did not love or obey God. God was right to punish His people for their sin, but He kept His promise to provide a special King through David's family. Ultimately, God punished our sin through His Son, Jesus, who is our King forever. When we trust in Jesus, He frees us from sin!

Four Corners (Younger Students)

- Before class, write the following names on separate pieces of paper: *Jehoahaz*, *Jehoiakim*, *Zedekiah*, *Jehoiachin*. Post each paper in a separate corner of the room. Write each name on a separate strip of paper and put them in a container. Play music and instruct the class to walk around the room. When the music stops, each student must stand in the corner of the room they are closest to. Randomly choose a strip of paper from the container and read the name on it. Students in the corresponding corner are out. Play several rounds until only a few students remain. Then invite all of the students to play again.

- Were the kings in today's Bible story good kings or evil kings? (*Evil.*) God sent Judah into captivity because of their sin.

Activity Pages & Recap Cards (5–10 min) (For in-class or take-home use)

- Captivity Crossword (Older Students)
  - Answer: *God was right to punish His people for their sin, but He kept His promise to provide a king through David's family. Ultimately, God punished our sin through His Son, Jesus, and made Him our King forever.*

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- Obey the Law (Younger Students)

Prayer & Requests (3–5 min)

Lord, You are good and fair at the same time. You punish sin because You are holy and good. We confess that we sin against You. Thank You for Your forgiveness. Help us trust in Jesus more each day. Fill us with love for You and give us the ability to obey You joyfully.

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Journal Page

Write about a time you faced consequences for disobedience. Sin is disobeying God. Like the people of Judah, we deserve to be punished for sin. Thank God for sending Jesus to rescue us from sin!

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FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS

- Why did God allow the king of Babylon to attack Judah?
- Did God still love His people? How do you know?
- Will we be punished too for our sin? Why or why not?

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DISCARD

JUDAH WAS TAKEN INTO CAPTIVITY

2 CHRONICLES 36:1-21

MAIN POINT: GOD SENT JUDAH INTO CAPTIVITY BECAUSE OF THEIR SIN.

The last four kings of Judah came from King Josiah's family. His three sons and his grandson each had a turn as king of Judah.

Jehoahaz was not king for long. He did what was evil, and the king of Egypt came and made Jehoahaz a prisoner. Then he put Jehoahaz's brother Jehoiakim on the throne.

When Jehoiakim was king of Judah, he too did what was evil. The king of Babylon attacked Jehoiakim, made him a prisoner and took him to Babylon. When Jehoiakim was taken away, his son Jehoiachin became king of Judah.

Jehoiachin did what was evil. The king of Babylon brought him to Babylon. The king made Jehoiachin's uncle Zedekiah king of Judah.

Zedekiah did what was evil. He led the people of Judah to do evil things too.

God was angry with the people of Judah. They sinned and did not obey God. But God loved His people. He wanted them to turn back to Him. God sent prophets to warn the people, but the people did not listen.

God allowed the king of Babylon and his army to attack Judah. Many of the people died.

The king of Babylon and his army burned the temple. They tore down the wall around the city and burned the palaces.

All of the people who were still alive were taken back to Babylon to be slaves. Everything the prophet Jeremiah had warned about happened, just like God said it would.

Jesus Connection: *God was right to punish His people for their sin, but He kept His promise to provide a king through David's family. Ultimately, God punished our sin through His Son, Jesus, and made Him our King forever.*

Key Passage: *Revelation 3:19 - As many as I love, I rebuke and discipline. So be zealous and repent.*

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CAPTIVITY CROSSWORD

Use the clues to complete the crossword puzzle.
Word List: *Babylon*, *Jehoahaz*, *Jehoiachin*, *Jehoiakim*, *prophets*, *temple*, *Zedekiah*.

ACROSS

3. this king of Judah was attacked by the king of Egypt (2 Chronicles 36:2-3)
6. the brother who became king of Judah after Jehoahaz (2 Chronicles 36:4)

DOWN

1. God allowed the king and army of this nation to take over Judah (2 Chronicles 36:18-20)
2. God sent these people to warn the people of Judah (2 Chronicles 36:15-16)
3. the son of Jehoiakim (2 Chronicles 36:8)
4. the last king of Judah (2 Chronicles 36:10-11)
5. The Babylonians burned this, the place people went to worship God (2 Chronicles 36:19)

SCRAMBLED UP

Unscramble the words from the Jesus Connection.

God was _____ (GHRIT) to _____ (SHPINU) His people for their sin, but He kept His _____ (OPRMSEI) to provide a _____ (KNIG) through _____ (DDVAI'S) family. Ultimately, God punished our ____ (NSI) through His ____ (NOS), _____ (SEJUS), and made Him our King _____ (FROVERE).

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OBEY THE LAW

INSTRUCTIONS: Circle the images that show someone obeying a law or rule. Place an *X* over those that show someone disobeying.

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KEY PASSAGE:
Revelation 3:19 - As many as I love, I rebuke and discipline. So be zealous and repent.

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:
- Why should we obey God? We obey God because He loves us.

BIBLE STORY: JUDAH WAS TAKEN INTO CAPTIVITY
- Judah continued to sin against God.
- God allowed Babylon to come and capture the king of Judah and steal many treasures from God's temple.
- God sent Judah into captivity because of their sin.

FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS:
- How did God warn Judah before sending them into exile?
- Why doesn't God send us away when we sin?
- Who took the punishment for our sin?

FAMILY ACTIVITY:
- Organize a game of capture the flag with your family and neighbors. Afterwards, share the Bible story of Judah's captivity, and explain how Jesus took the punishment for our sin.

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GOD SENT JUDAH INTO CAPTIVITY BECAUSE OF THEIR SIN.

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LESSON 51: FORGIVENESS

EZEKIEL TOLD ABOUT A FUTURE HOPE

Ezekiel 37

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ZEKIEL TOLD ABOUT A FUTURE HOPE

- Ezekiel 37
- Big Picture Q&A: Why should we obey God? We obey God because He loves us.
- Key Passage: Revelation 3:19 – As many as I love, I rebuke and discipline. So be zealous and repent.

JESUS CONNECTION

God showed Ezekiel a valley of dry bones. The dry bones remind us of what we are like when we sin. God showed Ezekiel His power to make dead people alive. We see God's power at the cross. Jesus died to save sinners. God raised Jesus from the dead, and He gives us eternal life.

LIFEWISE QUALITY

FORGIVENESS – Letting go of a grudge against someone who has wronged me.

LEADER BIBLE STUDY

Ezekiel had a tough job: ministering to people who had rejected God and suffered the consequences. The exiled people of Judah were eager to blame God for their circumstances. "It's not fair!" they argued (Ezek. 18:25).

Ezekiel told the people that they were at fault for their exile; their faithlessness had provoked God's wrath. The people were getting what they deserved. "I take no pleasure in anyone's death," God said. "So repent and live!" (Ezek. 18:32).

God gave Ezekiel a vision. In this vision, God showed Ezekiel a valley of dry bones. The bones represented Israel. Ezekiel prophesied that God would put tendons, flesh and skin on the bones. He would put breath into them so they would come to life.

Ezekiel encouraged the exiles. Apart from God, they were dead. But God was offering them life. He would restore their future. "My dwelling place will be with them," God said. "I will be their God, and they will be My people" (Ezek. 37:27).

We too are dead in our sin (Eph. 2:1). Sin separates us from God because He is holy. We are apart from God's presence. But God does not delight in our death. He is patient and wants us to repent and live!

Hundreds of years after Ezekiel died, God's presence came to His people through Jesus Christ, *Immanuel*—meaning, "God with us." Jesus is the source of life; He offers us living water (John 4:10, 14). If we do not drink of it, we will become like the dry bones. No life will be in us. Christ changes that. God saves us by grace, making us alive with Christ through the Holy Spirit (Eph. 2:4–5).

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BIBLE TIMELINE & REVIEW (3 MIN)

We learned in our last class that God sent Judah into captivity. Does anyone remember why God punished His people? (*They refused to repent of their sin.*) What did the people do when God sent messengers to tell the people to repent? (*They laughed at them and treated them unkindly.*) What nation did God send to attack Judah? (*Babylon.*) What did the Babylonians do when they came to attack? (*They burned the temple, destroyed the city and took the people to Babylon as slaves.*)

As you can imagine, God's people were extremely sad. They probably felt abandoned by God, but God did not abandon them. Though God was punishing their sin, He sent them a message through His prophet Ezekiel. And it was a very good message!

SESSION STARTERS (5-10 MIN)

Gather Them Up (Older and Younger Students)

- Form groups of three or four students. Give each group colored paper, one color for each group. Have students make three paper wads per player in their color. Allow students a minute or two to toss their paper wads around the room. Then, have them stand in their groups. When you say go, each team should race to collect its paper wads. The first group to collect all of its paper wads wins. Play again as time allows, allowing groups to change colors if desired.

- Good job, everyone! In this game, you gathered your papers that were scattered all over the room. Today's Bible story is about a promise God made to His people through the prophet Ezekiel. God promised to gather the people together.

Bones In the Body (Older and Younger Students)

- Briefly explain the technical names of different bones in our bodies. If possible, put a picture of a skeleton with the bones labeled on the board. Point to your head (*cranium*), fingers (*phalanges*), arms (*humerus*, *radius*, *ulna*), legs (*femur*, *fibula*, *tibia*), and so forth. Talk about how God gave us bones to give our bodies structure. Take guesses for how many bones people have (*270 at birth, but only 206 by adulthood*).

- Who knew there was so much to know about bones? Today, we will learn a story about a man who saw a valley with many bones in it! That could be kind of scary, but we'll learn that what happened wasn't scary. It was amazing!

Fix What Was Broken (Younger Students)

- Show the class a few objects like craft sticks, pencils or pieces of paper. Break or tear the objects into two or more pieces. Ask the students if they can put them back together, just like new. Provide tape, glue or staples to let them try. Provide hand wipes to clean up any mess.

- These are really simple objects. They don't have many parts or moving pieces. But when these simple objects are broken, it is impossible for us to make them just like new. Imagine if our bodies break down. Do you think we could fix our bodies all on our own if they were broken to pieces? No way! Do you think God could?

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KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY/BIG PICTURE Q&A (5 MIN)

Revelation 3:19

As many as I love, I rebuke and discipline. So be zealous and repent.

Key Passage Line-Up (Older Students)

- Write words or phrases of Revelation 3:19 on separate index cards (For larger classes, make more than one copy, using a different color per set), one card per student. Tape a card to each student's back and challenge them to assemble the key passage. The class should line up single-file so each student can see the word in front of him. Invite the class to say the key passage by reading the cards one at a time. Each student will read the card in front of him. The first kid in line can give the reference. Refer to the key passage poster to check their work.

Passage Key Words (Younger Students)

- Before class, write down the following words on separate index cards: love, rebuke, discipline, zealous, repent. Write the key passage on the board and leave blank spaces where the key words should go. Ask for the classes help to place the key words in the correct order.

Big Picture Q&A

Q: Why should we obey God?

A: *We obey God because He loves us.*

BIBLE STORY (10 MIN)

Ezekiel Told About a Future Hope | Ezekiel 37

God had allowed the Babylonians to take over Judah. **God's people were taken to Babylon as slaves.** Ezekiel, one of God's prophets, was in Babylon. **God gave Ezekiel visions so he could tell God's people about the future.** A vision is like a dream, but Ezekiel was awake.

In one vision, God led Ezekiel through a valley filled with old, dry bones. God asked Ezekiel, "Can these bones come to life?"

Ezekiel replied, "Lord God, only You know the answer to that question."

God said, "Speak to these bones for Me. Say, 'This is what God says: I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then, you will know that I am God.'"

Ezekiel spoke to the bones. Suddenly, there was a noise—a rattling sound. The bones were coming together: bones to bones, tendons to bones, flesh over bones and skin over flesh. **But there was no breath in the bones.**

God said, "Speak to the breath for Me. Say, 'This is what God says: Breath, come into these bones so that they may live!'"

Ezekiel did what God said, and the breath entered the bones. They came to life, and a vast army stood before Ezekiel.

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Then, God said to Ezekiel, "These bones are like My people Israel. I want you to speak to them for Me."

The people of Israel were sad. They had been taken from their homes. They were living in another country and serving another king. **God told Ezekiel to say, "This is what God says: I am going to bring My people back to the land of Israel. I will put My Spirit in you, and you will live."**

Another message came to Ezekiel. God told him to write on a stick: *This stick belongs to Judah and his friends, the people of Israel*. Then, God told Ezekiel to write on a second stick: *This stick belongs to Joseph and his friends, the people of Israel*. **The first stick represented the Southern Kingdom of Judah, and the second stick represented the Northern Kingdom of Israel.**

God told Ezekiel to hold the sticks together in one hand so they would become one single stick. God explained that His people would be one nation. They would have a new king to rule over them and guide them. God said, "My people will live forever in the land I gave to their ancestors."

God would make a covenant of peace with His people forever. "I will be with them," God said. "I will be their God, and they will be My people. Then, everyone will know that I am the Lord."

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JESUS CONNECTION

God showed Ezekiel a valley of dry bones. The dry bones remind us of what we are like when we sin. God showed Ezekiel His power to make dead people alive. We see God's power at the cross. Jesus died to save sinners. God raised Jesus from the dead, and He gives us eternal life.

LIFEWISE QUALITY (3–4 MIN)

FORGIVENESS – Letting go of a grudge against someone who has wronged me.

Living LifeWise

God has forgiven us, so we can forgive others as well.

Character Connection

We sometimes think discipline is a bad thing. That enforcing a consequence is unkind or cruel. But the purpose of discipline isn't to get even. It's to make a relationship right again. It allows the person who did wrong to confess their mistake and ask for forgiveness and the person who was hurt to extend forgiveness. It's like rebuilding a bridge.

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God sent Israel into exile as a consequence for their sin. But He also promised that He would bring them back again. He forgave them and promised that, one day, He would put His Spirit in their hearts as the ultimate bridge between Him and them.

God has forgiven us the same way. Because Jesus took the punishment for our sins, for all the ways we've broken God's law and hurt others, we can be completely forgiven. When Jesus died on the cross and rose again, He made a bridge so we can have a relationship with Him. God gives us the desire and ability to forgive others the same way we've been forgiven.

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For each situation, how could choosing to forgive build a bridge? How might refusing to show forgiveness cause more problems?

- You find out a classmate is talking about you behind your back.
- Your brother grabs the remote (or video game controller) even though it's your turn.
- Your ride to the store cancels on you.
- The teacher accused you for something you didn't do.

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BIBLE STORY REVIEW (5 MIN)

- **What did God ask Ezekiel about the dry bones?**

  "Can these bones live?" Ezek. 37:3

- **What was Ezekiel's answer to God?**

  "Only You know," Ezek. 37:3

- **What happened to the bones when Ezekiel spoke God's words to them?**

  They came together and tendons and flesh came over them, Ezek. 37:7–8

- **What was missing from the bones?**

  Breath, Ezek. 37:8

- **What caused the bones to come to life?**

  Ezekiel spoke God's words, commanding breath to come into the bones, Ezek. 37:9–10

- **Who were these bones like?**

  The people of Israel, Ezek. 37:11–14

- **What two things were in the next vision from God to Ezekiel?**

  Two sticks, Ezek. 37:16

- **Whom did each stick represent?**

  Judah and Israel, Ezek. 37:16

- **When the two sticks became one, what did it represent?**

  God's people would be one nation, Ezek. 37:21–22

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES (5-10 MIN)

Connect Two (Older Students)

- Give each student five craft sticks and a marker. Instruct students to label their sticks with the numbers 1-5. Give the following directions:
  - Hold the sticks with the numbers down so they are hidden in your fist.
  - Find a partner. Each partner will gently draw one stick from the other player's hand.
  - Compare the sticks. If the numbers match, you win! If the numbers do not match, return the sticks and play again.
  - Encourage students who draw matching sticks to see how many times they can draw a pair.
- Does anyone remember what Ezekiel's vision of the two sticks showed? (*God said His people would be one nation.*) God planned to bring His people back to their land and give them new life.

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True or False (Older and Younger Students)

- Read the following statements and ask the class to determine if each is true or false:
  - God allowed the Ninevites to take over Judah. (*False, Babylonians, 2 Chron. 36:20*)
  - God led Ezekiel through a valley filled with old, dry sticks. (*False, bones, Ezek. 37:1*)
  - God told Ezekiel to speak to the bones. Ezekiel did, but nothing happened. (*False, they came together, Ezek. 37:7*)
  - God told Ezekiel to hold the sticks together in one hand so they would become one single stick. (*True, Ezek. 37:16–17*)
  - God explained that His people would be one nation. (*True, Ezek. 37:19*)
  - We obey God to make Him love us more. (*False, we obey God because He loves us.*)
  - God planned to bring His people back to their land and give them new life. (*True, Ezek. 37:21*)

Body Bible Trivia (Older and Younger Students)

- Draw a body (stick figures are fine) on a white board or chalkboard. Divide students into 2–4 groups, depending on the size of the class. Ask the lesson's review questions. If a group answers a question incorrectly, they have one chance to say the correct answer. If they fail to give the correct answer again, erase a body part. Erase parts in the following order: *leg, leg, arm, arm, torso, head*. Each time a group answers correctly on the first try, add a body part back to the figure. If they get through all the questions before the head is erased, they win.

Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes (Younger Students)

- Sing "Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes," pointing to each body part as you sing it. Sing it multiple times, replacing words one by one with "mmm" sounds.

- God made our bodies, complete with the bones that give us structure. If it weren't for our bones, we wouldn't have heads, shoulders, knees or toes. We also have muscles that help us move and organs that let us breath, taste, see, hear, smell and think. In today's story, God was able to put the bones together and turn them back into whole bodies!

Activity Pages & Recap Cards (5–10 min) (For in-class or take-home use)

- Vision Match (Older Students)
  - Answer: *1. A valley of dry bones came to life, God was going to bring His people to Israel and give them life, God has power to make dead people alive; 2. Two sticks became one single stick, God was going to bring His people together as one nation, God is King over His people.*

- Dry Bones Maze (Younger Students)

Prayer & Requests (3–5 min)

God, thank You for giving life to dead things. You created each of us and breathed life into us. You sent Jesus to save us from sin so that our hearts can be made alive in You again. Help us to trust You and love You. Show us what it means to be spiritually alive, and help us to live that way for You. Amen.

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Journal Page

Write about or draw a picture of what a person's heart is like before trusting in Jesus. When we trust in Jesus, God changes our hearts to be open to Him. He gives us power to love and obey Him.

FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS

- What did Ezekiel see in his visions?
- What did God promise to do for the people of Israel?
- If you are a believer, talk about how your life has changed since trusting in Jesus.

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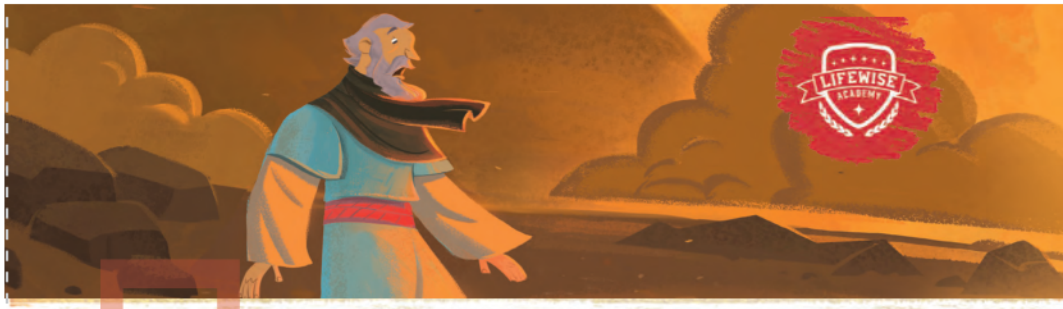

EZEKIEL TOLD ABOUT A FUTURE HOPE

EZEKIEL 37

MAIN POINT: GOD PLANNED TO BRING HIS PEOPLE BACK TO THEIR LAND AND GIVE THEM NEW LIFE.

God's people were taken to Babylon as slaves. God gave Ezekiel visions so he could tell God's people about the future. In one vision, God led Ezekiel through a valley filled with old, dry bones. God asked, "Can these bones come to life?"

Ezekiel replied, "Lord God, only You know."

God said, "Speak to these bones for Me. Say, 'This is what God says: I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am God.'"

Ezekiel spoke to the bones. Suddenly, there was a noise—a rattling sound. The bones were coming together. But there was no breath in the bones.

God said, "Speak to the breath for Me. Say, 'This is what God says: Breath, come into these bones so that they may live!'"

Ezekiel did what God said, and the breath entered the bones. They came to life, and a vast army stood before Ezekiel. Then God said to Ezekiel, "These bones are like My people of Israel. I want you to speak to them for Me."

God told Ezekiel to say, "This is what God says: I am going to bring My people back to the land of Israel. I will put My Spirit in you, and you will live."

Another message came to Ezekiel. The first stick represented the Southern Kingdom of Judah, and the second stick represented the Northern Kingdom of Israel. God told Ezekiel to hold the sticks together in one hand so they would become one single stick. God explained that His people would be one nation. They would have a new king to rule over them and guide them.

God would make a covenant of peace with His people forever. "I will be with them," God said. "I will be their God, and they will be My people. Then everyone will know that I am the Lord."

Jesus Connection: *God showed Ezekiel a valley of dry bones. The dry bones remind us what we are like when we sin. God showed Ezekiel His power to make dead people alive. We see God's power at the cross. Jesus died to save sinners. God raised Jesus from the dead, and He gives us eternal life.*

Key Passage: *Revelation 3:19 - As many as I love, I rebuke and discipline. So be zealous and repent.*

DISCUSSION GUIDE

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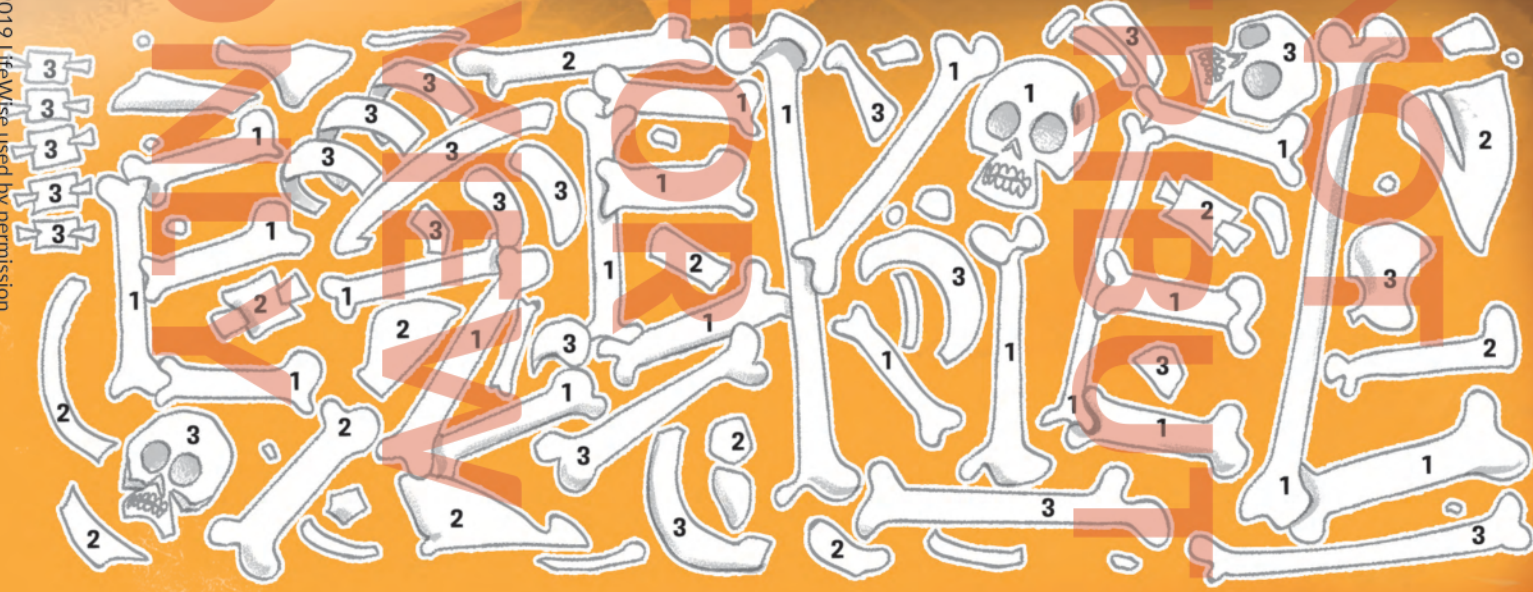
VISION MATCH

Ezekiel had two visions. Match each vision with its meaning and what it reminds us of God.

Visions	Meanings	Truth about God
• a valley of dry bones came to life	• God was going to bring His people together as one nation	• God has power to make dead people alive.
• two sticks became one single stick	• God was going to bring His people to Israel and give them life	• God is King over His people.



SECRET MESSAGE

Color the 1 spaces blue, the 2 spaces yellow, and the 3 spaces brown to discover the name of a prophet who told about a future hope.

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DRY BONES MAZE

INSTRUCTIONS: Find the correct path to navigate through the valley of dry bones.

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KEY PASSAGE:
Revelation 3:19 - As many as I love, I rebuke and discipline. So be zealous and repent.

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:
- Why should we obey God? We obey God because He loves us.

BIBLE STORY: EZEKIEL TOLD ABOUT A FUTURE HOPE
- God gave Ezekiel two visions about His people's future.
- Ezekiel's first vision had bones rebuilt into bodies, and then brought to life.
- Ezekiel's second vision showed a broken stick becoming whole again.
- God planned to bring His people back to their land and give them new life.

FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS:
- How did God plan to give His people new life?
- How are we like the dry bones?
- How can we experience new life, too?

FAMILY ACTIVITY:
- Dissect sterilized owl pellets with your family. Pick out the bones and try to arrange them correctly on paper, gluing them down. Remind your kids how Jesus makes us alive.

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LIFEWISE ACADEMY
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GOD PLANNED TO BRING HIS PEOPLE BACK TO THEIR LAND AND GIVE THEM NEW LIFE.

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LESSON 52: RESPECT

DANIEL AND HIS FRIENDS OBEYED GOD

Daniel 1

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DANIEL AND HIS FRIENDS OBEYED GOD

- Daniel 1
- Big Picture Q&A: How can we obey God? We trust God to give us strength to obey Him.
- Key Passage: Hebrews 11:1 – Now faith is the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen.

JESUS CONNECTION

Daniel chose to obey God no matter what, and God blessed Daniel and his friends. In an even greater way, Jesus always obeyed God. He came to Earth and followed God's plan to save sinners. Jesus never sinned, but He died the death we deserve. Jesus rose from the dead, and those who trust in Him receive God's forgiveness and blessing.

LIFEWISE QUALITY

RESPECT – Acting considerately toward people based on their God-given value and worth.

LEADER BIBLE STUDY

God's people had been warned. The prophets had come with messages from God: "Turn from your sin, and turn back to God!" But the people did not listen. The nation of Judah was consumed by idol worship; the kings did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. So, God kept His word—He allowed His people to be taken from their land.

Nebuchadnezzar was the king of Babylon, the strong and powerful nation that overtook Judah's capital of Jerusalem and brought God's people from Israel to Babylon. Daniel was a young man in Judah when this happened. He might have heard about the prophet Isaiah's warnings (Isa. 39:5–7); now, he witnessed their fulfillment.

King Nebuchadnezzar called for the best young men from Judah to be trained for service in the palace. Among these teens were Daniel and three of his friends. The chosen boys were given new identities—new names, new education, new culture. But Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah stayed faithful to the one true God and refused to make themselves unclean by eating the king's food.

God blessed Daniel and his friends. Daniel's obedience to God led to his favor with King Nebuchadnezzar, and Daniel's life would be a testament to God's control over all things. God remembered His people during the exile and promised to bring them back to their homeland and set up a new kingdom.

As you share this story with the students you teach, explain that obedience is not always easy, but we trust God to give us strength to obey Him. Point out that Daniel lived about 600 years before Jesus—the

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perfectly obedient Promised One. We can trust that Jesus will return someday to set up His kingdom forever.

BIBLE TIMELINE & REVIEW (3 MIN)

During our last class, we learned about a vision God gave to Ezekiel. What did Ezekiel see in the vision? (*A valley filled with dry bones.*) What did God do for the bones? (*Brought them to life.*) Why did God bring the bones to life in the vision? (*To give His people hope that He would restore them and their land one day.*) Where was Ezekiel living when God gave him this vision? (*He was living in Babylon.*) Ezekiel and his people had been taken away from their home in Israel because God's people refused to obey Him. We've talked about how the Israelites were taken away, but today we will find out what life in Babylon was like for them.

SESSION STARTERS (5-10 MIN)

20 Questions (Older Students)

- Think of a specific vegetable, but don't tell the class what it is. Invite students to ask yes-or-no questions to guess the specific food you are thinking of. Examples: "Is it a dessert?" or "Is it green?" Remind them that you may only answer *yes* or *no*. Challenge them to guess the correct answer in 20 or fewer questions.

- In today's Bible story, four friends chose to obey God by eating only vegetables for three years. Do you think you could do that? We know that all of God's instructions are for our good, but that doesn't always make them easy to obey! God gives us strength to obey Him.

Mystery Bags (Older and Younger Students)

- Place a piece of fruit or a vegetable inside a brown paper bag. Invite a volunteer to reach into the bag to feel the item and describe it to the rest of the class. Challenge the other children to guess the mystery item. Consider preparing a few mystery bags and allowing multiple volunteers to participate. [*Suggested items: onion, broccoli, banana, lettuce, dry beans, etc.*]

- Though you couldn't see what was in each of these bags, you listened carefully to the description and thought about what you heard. Today, we will learn about listening carefully to God. We can trust God to help us listen to and understand His Word.

Scavenger Hunt (Younger Students)

- Hide several vegetables (real or plastic) around the room. Allow the group to move around the room, searching for the vegetables. Give instructions such as "look higher," "look lower," "move to the left," "turn around," etc. When students find vegetables, they may each claim one and bring it to you. Allow students to hunt until each student has claimed a vegetable.

- In today's Bible story, four friends chose to obey God by eating only vegetables for three years. Do you think you could do that? We know that all of God's instructions are for our good, but that doesn't always make them easy to obey! God gives us strength to obey Him.

KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY/BIG PICTURE Q&A (5 MIN)

Hebrews 11:1

Now faith is the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen.

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Rainbow Tracing (Older and Younger Students)

- Provide each student with a half-sheet of heavyweight paper. Instruct them to write out the key passage, copying it from the poster. Then, provide the class with crayons to write the verse in 3-5 more colors, with each letter offset just slightly from the letter they wrote in the first color. For younger classes that struggle with writing, print out copies of the verse and have the students read it slowly with you, then trace over the letters with crayons.

Big Picture Q&A

Q: How can we obey God?

A: *We trust God to give us strength to obey Him.*

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BIBLE STORY (10 MIN)

Daniel and His Friends Obeyed God | Daniel 1

When Jehoiakim (jih HOY uh kim) was the king of Judah, **Nebuchadnezzar** (NEB yoo kad NEZ uhr)**, the king of Babylon, went with his army to Judah.** Because God's people had sinned against Him, **God allowed King Nebuchadnezzar to take over the city** of Jerusalem.

King Nebuchadnezzar told one of his leaders to bring some of the people to Babylon. He wanted boys who were healthy, handsome and good learners to serve in his palace. Every day, King Nebuchadnezzar gave **the boys** a special diet. They **ate the same food and drank the same drinks that the king ate and drank.**

Four of the boys who came from Judah were different from the others. They worshiped the Lord, the one true God. Their names were Daniel, Hananiah (HAN uh NIGH uh), Mishael (MISH eh uhl) and Azariah (az uh RIGH uh). The man in charge of the boys gave them new Babylonian names. Daniel's new name was Belteshazzar (bel tih SHAZ uhr). Hananiah's new name was **Shadrach** (SHAD rak). Mishael's new name was **Meshach** (MEE shak), **and** Azariah's new name was **Abednego** (uh BED nih goh).

Even though Daniel and his friends weren't in Judah anymore, **Daniel** still **wanted to obey God. God's laws told Daniel what he could and could not eat. Daniel was not allowed to eat some of the food that the king gave the boys. Daniel asked the man in charge for permission to eat other foods,** but the man in charge was afraid.

"If you don't eat the king's food, you won't be strong like the other young men. The king might get angry and kill me!" he said.

Daniel said, "Try this for 10 days. Let us eat only vegetables and drink only water. Then, see if we are healthier than the other young men."

The guard agreed. At the end of 10 days, Daniel and his friends looked healthier than the young men who had eaten the king's food. After that, the guard allowed Daniel and his friends to keep drinking water and eating vegetables.

God was happy that Daniel obeyed Him. God blessed Daniel and his friends. He made them wise and smart. They learned lots of new things. God gave Daniel the ability to understand visions and dreams. When their training was over, Daniel and his friends stood before the king. The king saw that they were

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smarter and stronger than all the other young men. They were even ten times wiser than the wise men who worked for the king. **Daniel and his friends were chosen to serve the king for many years.**

JESUS CONNECTION

Daniel chose to obey God no matter what, and God blessed Daniel and his friends. In an even greater way, Jesus always obeyed God. He came to Earth and followed God's plan to save sinners. Jesus never sinned, but He died the death we deserve. Jesus rose from the dead, and those who trust in Him receive God's forgiveness and blessing.

LIFEWISE QUALITY (3–4 MIN)

RESPECT – Acting considerately toward people based on their God-given value and worth.

Living LifeWise

Because God is in control, we can choose to respond respectfully to those around us.

Character Connection

We often excuse ourselves from being respectful to others if we are tired or upset or hungry or sad. And while it's good to realize that how you feel is making you grouchy and disrespectful, it isn't an excuse. God made everything and every person. He is in control of it all, so it's important to be respectful to people, the world, our things, and other people's things, too.

Daniel is a valuable model for this kind of respect. Instead of demanding his way or throwing a fit, he asked for permission. He didn't start a rebellion; he tried to work with his new leaders even as he asked for change. He was careful to keep his supervisor from getting in trouble. Daniel knew God was in control, so he was polite, helpful and willing to negotiate. Most of all, Daniel was intentional about showing respect for God first as well as others around him.

We show respect or disrespect by how we talk to someone, our body language, and the way we listen to or follow someone. Showing respect isn't always easy. It's much easier to let our emotions or the situation determine our behavior or control our responses. But God is always in control, and He can help us live and respond respectfully in every situation.

What it might look or sound like to be disrespectful in these situations:

- Your teacher accuses you of talking in line, but you weren't.
- Someone reminds you to do a chore you're required to do at home.
- You ask if you can go to a friend's house.

BIBLE STORY REVIEW (5 MIN)

- How were the four boys from Judah different from other boys?

  They served God, Dan. 1:8–9

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- How long were the boys trained before they could serve the king?

  Three years, Dan. 1:5
- What did Daniel and his friends refuse to do?

  Eat the king's royal food, Dan. 1:11–16
- What did Daniel and his friends ask to eat instead of the royal food?

  Only vegetables and water, Dan. 1:11–16
- Why did Daniel and his friends refuse to eat the king's food?

  To obey God's law, Dan. 1: 8
- Why was the chief official afraid to give Daniel and his friends only vegetables and water?

  If they became weak, the king would be angry, Dan. 1:10
- What test did the chief official allow Daniel and his friends to try?

  A 10-day trial of water and vegetables, then compare them with the other men, Dan. 1:12–14
- How many times wiser were Daniel and his friends found to be than all the other men who served the king?

  Ten times wiser, Dan. 1:20

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REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES (5-10 MIN)

Difficult Scenarios (Older Students)

- Have the class stand in the middle of the room. Designate one side of the room as "A" and the other as "B." Read a scenario. Students will decide which response (A or B) is a biblical response to the problem and move to that side of the room. After the students have chosen, tell them the correct answer and read the Bible verse that supports it. Briefly discuss if needed, then have the class move back to the middle of the room for the next scenario.

  - **My friend asks me to lie to one of our other friends so her feelings aren't hurt.**
    a. *I tell my other friend the truth gently, even though it makes her sad.* (Proverbs 27:6 – Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses.)
    b. I tell my other friend part of the truth, but not the full truth so her feelings won't be hurt.

  - **My parents tell me that going to church is a waste of my time, and I should be home to help them instead.**
    a. I go to church every now and then and spend most of my time helping my family.
    b. *I keep going to church regularly, but find a way to help my parents more often.* (Matthew 5:16 – In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in Heaven.)

  - **My brother wants me to watch music videos with a lot of inappropriate things.**
    a. I make a deal with him: I will watch a few of his music videos if he will watch a few of my Christian music videos.
    b. *I explain that those kinds of music videos give me a bad attitude and ask if he wants to watch American Ninja Warrior instead.* (Philippians 4:8 – Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely,

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whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.)

- **My teacher says I should stop talking about God at school because it makes other students uncomfortable.**
  a. *I read my Bible at school and share with others about God when they ask me about it.* (Matthew 28:18 – Go and make disciples of all nations.)
  b. I keep my Bible in my bookbag and only read it when I'm by myself.

- It can be very difficult to obey what the Bible says when others don't seem to be listening to God. The Bible teaches us that we must show our love for God by putting Him first before anyone or anything else. Daniel loved God and wanted to put Him first. Even though it wasn't easy, Daniel chose to obey God before the king, and God enabled Daniel to do the right thing.

Timeline Relay (Older and Younger Students)

- Divide into teams, and give each team a set of the statements below, already cut apart. [*Consider using pictures from a story Bible for classes that struggle to read.*] Challenge the teams to race to put the story statements in order. On your signal, the first player for each team will run to the opposite wall and tape up his statement, then return and tag the next player. Each player will run to the wall and tape a statement in the appropriate place (above or below the first statement). Players can rearrange the statements before they hang theirs. After a team has all the statements on the wall, quickly review the list. If anything is incorrect, a player can run up and rearrange the statements. Check the list again. Continue until one team has all the statements in order.

- **Statements:**
  - Daniel and his friends were taken prisoner by the king of Babylon.
  - Nebuchadnezzar chose young men to be trained.
  - Daniel and his friends asked for permission to avoid the king's food.
  - The chief official allowed Daniel and his friends a 10-day test.
  - Daniel and his friends ate only vegetables for 3 years.
  - Daniel and his friends were healthier than the men who ate the king's food.
  - God made Daniel and his friends wiser than any of the king's helpers.

Scene Drawings (Older and Younger Students)

- Provide Bibles and guide students to find Daniel 1. Remind them that the Book of Daniel is in the Old Testament. Invite a volunteer to identify which book comes before Daniel (*Ezekiel*) and another volunteer to identify which book comes after Daniel (*Hosea*).

- Give each student a sheet of paper. Assign students one scene from the story, and ask them to draw that scene as a group. After students finish pictures, have them group the pictures in order of the scenes. Allow the students to walk along the pictures as you discuss the events of the story. Suggested scenes are as follows:

  - **Scene 1:** Daniel and his friends were captured by the king of Babylon. (Daniel 1:1)
  - **Scene 2:** Nebuchadnezzar selected young men to be trained. (Daniel 1:3–5)
  - **Scene 3:** Daniel and his friends asked for permission to avoid the king's food. (Daniel 1:8)
  - **Scene 4:** Daniel and his friends ate only vegetables. (Daniel 1:12–14)
  - **Scene 5:** Daniel and his friends were healthier than the men who ate the king's food. (Daniel 1:15–19)

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Tic Tac Toe (Older and Younger Students)

- Write nine Bible review questions on large colored cards and hang them on the board or wall. Make 5 *X*s and 5 *O*s. Divide students into two teams. Teams may choose any question on the board to answer. If the team answers correctly, they will put their *X* or *O* over that question. To win, a team must get a tic tac toe by answering three questions in a row.

Activity Pages & Recap Cards (5–10 min) (For in-class or take-home use)

- Friends in Babylon (Older Students)
  - Answer: *Daniel obeyed God by not eating the king's food.*
- Menu Mix-Up (Younger Students)

Prayer & Requests (3–5 min)

God, we thank You for giving Daniel and his friends strength to obey You despite pressure to disobey. Thank You for Jesus and His obedience to Your plan. Thank You that through Him we can be forgiven of all the times we disobey and receive the strength to obey too. Amen.

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Journal Page

Write about a decision you can make that would honor God or show obedience to Him.

FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS

- Share about a time when obedience wasn't easy.
- How do you think God wants believers to live differently than unbelievers?
- How can we honor God with our choices and actions?

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DANIEL AND HIS FRIENDS OBEYED GOD

DANIEL 1

MAIN POINT: DANIEL OBEYED GOD BY NOT EATING THE KING'S FOOD.

Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, went with his army to Judah. God allowed King Nebuchadnezzar to take over the city.

King Nebuchadnezzar told one of his leaders to bring some of the people to Babylon. He wanted boys who were healthy, handsome, and good learners to serve in his palace.

Every day, the boys ate the same food and drank the same drinks that the king ate and drank.

Four of the boys who came from Judah were different than the others. They worshiped the Lord, the one true God. Their names were Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

Daniel wanted to obey God. God's laws told Daniel what he could and could not eat. Daniel was not allowed to eat some of the food that the king gave the boys. Daniel asked the man in charge for permission to eat other foods.

Daniel said, "Try this for 10 days. Let us eat only vegetables and drink only water." The guard agreed. At the end of 10 days, Daniel and his friends looked healthier than the young men who had eaten the king's food.

God was happy that Daniel obeyed Him. God blessed Daniel and his friends. Daniel served the king for many years.

Jesus Connection: *Daniel chose to obey God no matter what, and God blessed Daniel and his friends. In an even greater way, Jesus always obeyed God. He came to Earth and followed God's plan to save sinners. Jesus never sinned, but He died the death we deserve. Jesus rose from the dead, and those who trust in Him receive God's forgiveness and blessing.*

Key Passage: *Hebrews 11:1 – Now faith is the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen.*

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FRIENDS IN BABYLON

Decode the names of the four boys in today's Bible story.

D _ _ I _ L

S _ _ D R _ C _

M _ S _ _ C _

_ B _ D _ _ G O

KEY

A

E

H

N

HONORING OUR GOD

Circle the things that are honoring to God. Cross out the things that do not honor God. Then use the bolded letters in the God-honoring things to fill in the missing letters in today's main point.

PRAYER
CHEATING
BIBLE STUDY
GIVING
DISOBEDIENCE
LYING
SERVICE
PRIDE
THANKSGIVING
OBEDIENCE

D _ NI _ L O _ _ YE _

_OD BY _OT _AT _NG

TH _ _IN _ 'S F _ O _ .

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MENU MIX-UP

INSTRUCTIONS: Look at the foods and unscramble the letters to spell the name of the food. Circle all the foods that are vegetables.

werta

telutec

atopot

tarroc

pritaco

tunape

dunto

yrrebwarts

coolibrc

geg

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KEY PASSAGE:
Hebrews 11:1 – Now faith is the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen.

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How can we obey God? We trust God to give us strength to obey Him.

BIBLE STORY: DANIEL AND HIS FRIENDS OBEYED GOD

- Babylon forced the talented young men of Judah to serve the king.
- The king wanted the men to eat foods against God's law.
- Daniel and his friends obeyed God by not eating the king's food.
- They were healthier than those who ate the king's food.

FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS:

- What do you think would have happened if Daniel and his friends had eaten the king's food?
- Why do you think Daniel and his friends were healthier than the other men?

FAMILY ACTIVITY:

- Find a recipe that only uses vegetables or other plant-based foods. Prepare it with your kids as a reminder of Daniel's obedience.

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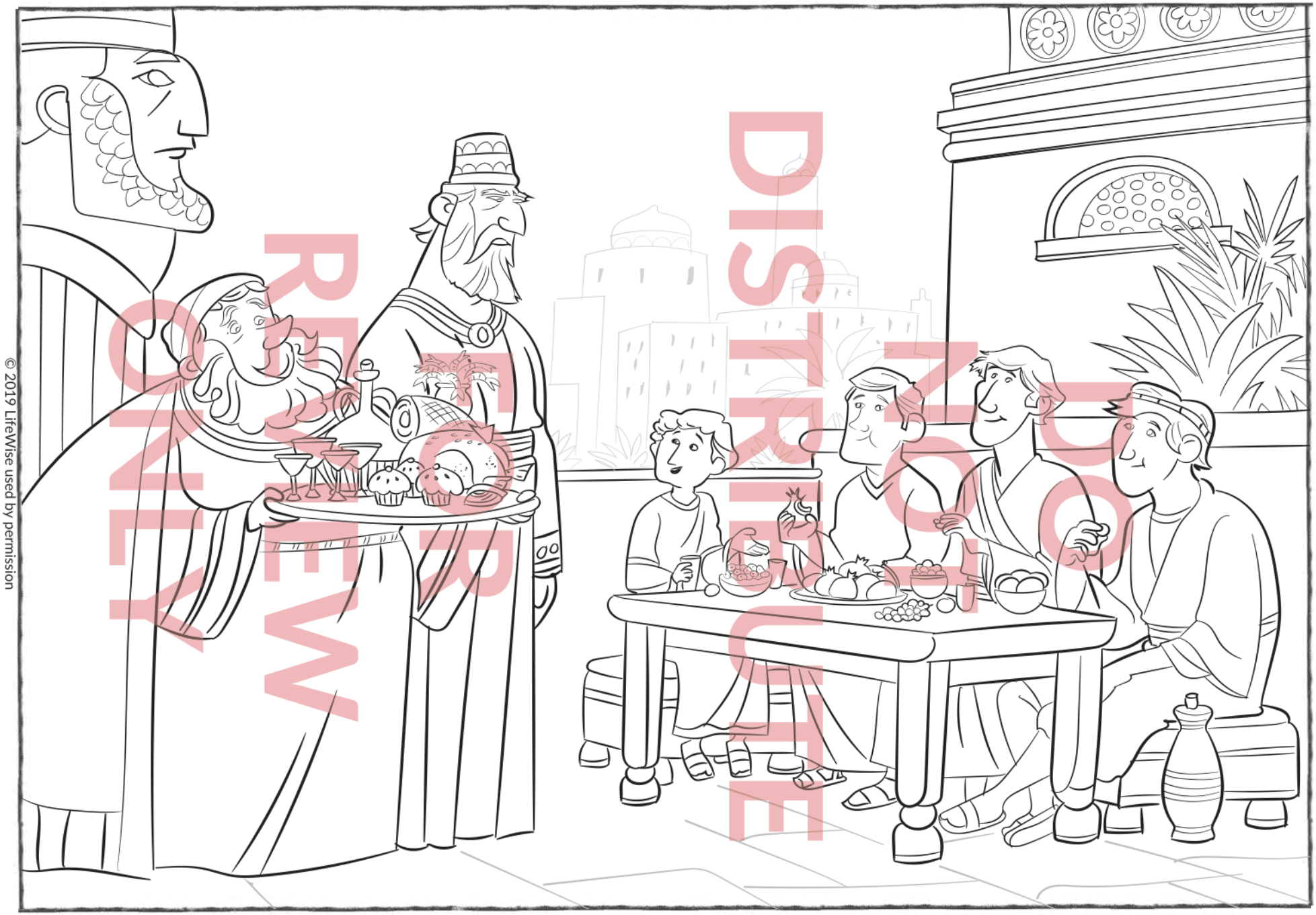

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DANIEL OBEYED GOD BY NOT EATING THE KING'S FOOD.

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LESSON 53: COURAGE

SHADRACH, MESHACH AND ABEDNEGO

Daniel 3

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SHADRACH, MESHACH AND ABEDNEGO

- Daniel 3
- Big Picture Q&A: How can we obey God? We trust God to give us strength to obey Him.
- Key Passage: Hebrews 11:1 – Now faith is the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen.

JESUS CONNECTION

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

LIFEWISE QUALITY

COURAGE – Boldly doing the right thing, even when it's hard.

LEADER BIBLE STUDY

Nebuchadnezzar built a tall gold statue and issued a new law: "When you hear music, you are to fall down and worship the statue." The penalty for defying this law was severe. "Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a furnace of blazing fire" (Dan. 3:6).

So when music played, all the people bowed down and worshiped the gold statue. Well, almost everyone. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused to bow down and worship the statue because they loved and worshiped the one true God. Only He was worthy of their worship.

The Book of Daniel says that the Chaldeans—a group of astrologers and dream interpreters (Dan. 2:2, 4)—took this opportunity to go to the king and betray Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. But not even the threat of death could convince the three friends to renounce their loyalty to God.

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

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

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

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BIBLE TIMELINE & REVIEW (3 MIN)

Last time, we learned about some young men that were taken prisoner and trained to serve King Nebuchadnezzer. Does anyone remember their names? (*Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego.*) As they trained to serve the king, what did they eat instead of the king's food? (*Only vegetables.*) How did Daniel and his friends compare to all the other young men at the end of three years? (*They were wiser and stronger.*) King Nebuchadnezzer saw that God was with Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and chose them to serve him. Today, we will learn what happened while Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego served the king.

SESSION STARTERS (5-10 MIN)

Imaginary Scenes (Older Students)

- Instruct students to stand up and spread out. Direct them to close their eyes and listen as you describe a scene or event. As students imagine the scene, they should act out how they would respond to the situation. [*Suggestions: build a snowman in your bathing suit, play basketball on the moon, explore an underwater city, roast marshmallows on the surface of the sun, etc.*]

- Some things are difficult to imagine! Can you imagine being thrown into a blazing fire? Today, we will hear about three friends who were thrown into a furnace. But God did something miraculous to rescue His followers. Let's listen to hear what God did.

Fire Safety (Older and Younger Students)

- Discuss your fire safety plan with your students. Talk about where they would exit, how they would walk, what the alarm sounds like, etc. Explain why it is important to have a fire safety plan. Remind them that a fire is unlikely, but fire can be dangerous if you are not prepared for it. Practice a fire drill with your class and take them outside. Then, return to the classroom and ask about any rules they have at home that might help prevent fires.

- Today, we are going to learn about three friends who were threatened with being thrown into a fire as punishment for worshiping God. There was no exit strategy, but God gave His followers strength to obey Him no matter what. Let's listen to the story to hear about the miraculous way God cared for these friends.

Furnace Fort (Younger Students)

- Build a blanket fort by draping thick blankets over a table. Use a hair dryer to blow hot air into the fort, trapping the heat inside. Allow the students to take turns crawling through the fort one at a time. When they exit, ask them how they felt inside the fort.

- Today, we will learn about a group of young men who refused to worship a statue. They knew that only God deserved their worship, but the king was furious with them and threw them into a furnace, a place where very hot fires burn. What do you think happened next? Today, we'll find out.

KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY/BIG PICTURE Q&A (5 MIN)

Hebrews 11:1

Now faith is the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen.

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Key Passage Group Motions (Older and Younger Students)

- Show the key passage poster and lead students to read the verses aloud. Divide the class into four groups and assign each group one phrase of the passage.

    1. Now faith is the reality
    2. of what is hoped for
    3. the proof of
    4. what is not seen

- Groups will work together to create and practice a motion for their phrase. Have the class say the verse together while each group quickly stands and performs their motions, one after the other.

Big Picture Q&A

Q: How can we obey God?

A: *We trust God to give us strength to obey Him.*

BIBLE STORY (10 MIN)

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego | Daniel 3

Nebuchadnezzar (NEB yoo kad NEZ uhr) **was the king of Babylon. One day, Nebuchadnezzar made a tall statue out of gold. His herald made an important announcement** from the king: **"When you hear the sound of music, you must fall down and worship this statue. Anyone who does not obey this rule will be thrown into a fiery furnace!"**

The rule was for everyone in Babylon. **So, when the people heard the sound of music, they fell down and worshiped the gold statue** like the king commanded. **But** not everyone bowed down and worshiped the statue. **Three men from Judah—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—refused to bow down to a statue. Some men went to King Nebuchadnezzar to complain about Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.** They did not like these men from Judah who did not obey their king.

"You have made a rule for all the people," they reminded the king. "But some of the men from Judah do not bow down and worship your statue."

This news made **King Nebuchadnezzar** angry! He **called for the three men and asked them, "Is it true that you do not serve my gods or worship the gold statue? If you do not bow down when you hear the music, I will throw you into a fiery furnace!** Then, what god could rescue you from my power?"

The three friends answered, "King, the God we serve is able to rescue us from the fiery furnace. He can save us from you. But even if God chooses not to rescue us, we will not serve your gods. And we will not bow down and worship the gold statue."

King Nebuchadnezzar was even angrier! He **told the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. The soldiers threw them into the fiery furnace.**

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

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

Nebuchadnezzar praised God. "The God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego sent an angel and rescued His servants!"

King Nebuchadnezzar made a new law for all the people. "Anyone who says anything against Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego's God will be punished! No other god can save people like this!" Then the king gave Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego even more important jobs in the kingdom of Babylon.

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JESUS CONNECTION

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

LIFEWISE QUALITY (3–4 MIN)

COURAGE – Boldly doing the right thing, even when it's hard.

Living LifeWise

Because we know God can save us, we can live with boldness for Him.

Character Connection

When we think someone is watching, we might be tempted to hide that we're living God's way or just go along with everyone else. But courage means doing the right thing, even when other people are watching, even when they might not like it. That's the kind of courage Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego had when they chose to obey God instead of the king. Do you think that was easy? [*Take answers.*]

Living with courage means living God's way *in public*, and it is not an easy thing. You might not be thrown into an actual furnace, but you might get teased or laughed at. Someone might stop being your friend. In some parts of the world, Christians are still killed for following Jesus. And yet God calls us to have courage, not because hard things won't happen, but because even when they do, God is with us.

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Provide Bibles and have students look up some of the verses below and read them aloud. Or choose one verse for everyone to find and read together. Provide index cards and markers or pens and encourage them to write down one of the verses (or the verse you choose) to take with them to remind them that they can live with courage because God is with them.

- Joshua 1:9 (Joshua)
- 1 Chronicles 28:20 (Solomon)
- Matthew 28:20 (Great Commission)
- Hebrews 13:5 (Christians)

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BIBLE STORY REVIEW (5 MIN)

- What was the name of the King of Babylon?

  Nebuchadnezzar, Dan. 3:1

- What command did the king give to everyone?

  At the sound of the music, fall down and worship the golden statue, Dan. 3:4–5

- Were Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego sure that God would save them?

  No, Dan. 3:18

- Did Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego believe God could save them?

  Yes, Dan. 3:18

- How many people did the king see in the furnace?

  Four, Dan. 3:24–25

- Whom did God send to protect Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego?

  An angel, Dan. 3:25, 28

- What happened after God saved Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego?

  The king declared no one could say anything bad about the one true God, Dan. 3:29

- What did the king say about God after seeing Him save Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego?

  No other God can save in this way, Dan. 3:29

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES (5-10 MIN)

Lava Hop! (Older Students)

- Before class, tape pieces of construction paper on the floor in positions that will require students to think of strategic ways to hop from one piece to another. Challenge the class to hop from one side of the room to the other without touching the floor. Explain that the floor is hot—like lava! If someone steps on the floor, he must move to the back of the line to try again. If your group is large, prepare two paths and form two teams. Then, race to see who can move across the room faster.

- In this game, you were able to make a plan for how you could cross the lava and not get burned. In the Bible story, however, surviving the fire was impossible—apart from a miracle! Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego trusted God to do what was best; God was their only hope. God was with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the fire. Today, our only hope for rescue from sin comes from God. Only God the Father has the power to rescue and save us through His Son, Jesus.

North Korean Idol Worship (Older Students)

- Before class, print off the copy of North Korea's idols of the former country leaders. Share with students that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego's story is still happening in other countries today.

- Or consider reading this short excerpt from "If I Perish" by Esther Ahn Kim regarding the Japanese occupation of Korea during World War II:

> "Miss Ahn! Are you there?" It was the principal. She had come to look for me herself. In silence I got up and opened the door. She was glaring at me, anger smoldering in

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her taut features. "Today is the first of the month." As if I didn't know. "We have to take the girls up the mountain to the shrine," she informed me. "Remember?"

Persecution had not just begun today. Across Korea, many Christians had already given their lives because they would not be swayed from their faith in Christ. Now, the same persecution had fallen upon our little school. I knew why the principal wanted to force us all to go to the shrine, but I could not understand how she could have reached such a decision. I did not know why she would go directly against the Word of God by compromising with idolatry.

"If you want me to go to the mountain, I will," I told her, leaving the quiet safety of my music room and going down the stairs ahead of her.

"And you will worship at the shrine, Miss Ahn," she called out as she hurried after me. "Right?" I had no answer for her.

I looked up into the sky and thought of Daniel. We in Korea were facing the same sort of idolatry which Daniel had resisted. The Japanese had built shrines in all the cities and villages of our captive land, forcing our people to place miniature shrines in every school, government office and household. Shrines were placed in every Christian church, and police were dispatched to every service to see that every person who came bowed to the pagan god before the worship service.

As we made our way up the mountain, I fixed my gaze on the vast sky beyond the hills and within myself repeated the words of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego which they had spoken to the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar. "But if not" (Daniel 3:18). Even if God did not save them from the burning fire, they were saying, they would die honoring Him. I was going to make that same decision. With God's help, I would never bow before the Japanese idol, even if He did not save me from the hands of the Japanese. I was saved by Jesus. I could bow only before God, the Father of my Savior. I felt as though I could already see the burning furnace yawning for me.

While we walked, I was praying. I knew what I was going to do. "Today on the mountain, before the large crowd," I told myself, "I will proclaim that there is no other God beside You. This is what I will do for Your Holy name." Peace filled my heart and I was surprised to find that I felt like singing.

We finally reached the shrine, and a great crowd had already gathered. Probably a dozen schools were represented, their pupils standing in straight, respectful lines, not daring to whisper or to move from their positions. Because I had been so reluctant to come, our school was the last to arrive. Everyone was looking at us, especially the disapproving Japanese policemen.

"Attention!" A strident order shrilled above the murmuring of the crowd. The people straightened, line by line. We were accustomed to being subservient, for we had been the captives of the Japanese for more than 37 years. "Our profoundest bow to Amaterasu Omnikami [the sun-goddess]!" As one person, that enormous crowd followed the shouted order by bending the upper half of their bodies solemnly and deeply. Of all the people at the shrine, I was the only one who remained erect, looking

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straight at the sky. Moments before, uneasiness and fear had troubled my heart, but now they were completely gone.

My mind was like that of a general who had just declared war, but as we made our way back to the school my heart was overshadowed by a dark cloud. Everyone had seen me refuse to bow to the shrine. I would be dragged to the police station and kicked and beaten. [pp. 11–16]

(Resolution: God miraculously intervened for Esther. She was taken to the police station and questioned. The man questioning her got a phone call and suddenly got up and ran out, leaving her alone. Esther was able to escape and hide with different family members for years. Eventually she was captured and taken to a Japanese prison camp where she shared the good news about Jesus. She was later freed and allowed to leave the country.)

- Spend time praying for countries like these and asking God to give these students even more faith and love for Him and that the Holy Spirit would help them to be bold just like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

Partner Trivia (Older Students)

- The Book of Daniel is in the Old Testament. Does anyone remember which division of the Bible the Book of Daniel is in? (*Major Prophets.*) Have the students find a partner. Today, we heard a true story about how God gave His people the strength to obey Him and protected them from a dangerous fire. When I ask a question, turn to your partner and tell him or her the answer. After each question and answer, switch and find a new partner. When I ask the big picture question—*How can we obey God?*—I want everyone to shout out the answer together: *We trust God to give us strength to obey Him.* Ask the Bible story review questions. Give students time to share their answers with their partners.

True or False (Older and Younger Students)

- Explain that you will say a sentence about the Bible story. If the sentence is true, students should put their thumbs up. If it is false, they should put their thumbs down.
  - The name of the King of Babylon was Nebuchadnezzar. (*True, Dan. 3:1)*
  - The king commanded everyone to bow down and worship him when the music played. (*False*; *the golden statue, Dan. 3:4–5*)
  - Nebuchadnezzar was angry because Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego would not speak with him. (*False*; *bow down to the statue, Dan. 3:12–13*)
  - Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego didn't know if God would save them from the fiery furnace. (*True, Dan. 3:18*)
  - The king had four people thrown into the furnace. (*False; three, Dan. 3:20,24*)
  - The king saw four people in the furnace. (*True, Dan. 3:24–25*)
  - God was unable to save Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego from the fiery furnace. (*False; He was the only one able to save them, Dan. 3:17,28*)
  - After God saved Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, the King declared that everyone must respect the one true God. (*True, Dan. 3:29*)

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North Korean Idol Worship (Younger Students)

- Before class, print off the copy of North Korea's Idols of the former country leaders. Share with students that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego's story is still happening in other countries today. Show them the picture of North Korean people who are forced to bow down and worship idols.

- Spend time praying for countries that persecute Christians and asking God to give these students even more faith and love for Him. Pray that the Holy Spirit would help them to be bold just like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

Act It Out (Younger Students)

- Divide the class in half. Choose students from one half of the class to play Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, Nebuchadnezzar, the guards, the angel, the golden statue and the idol worshipers. Read the bold words from the Bible story and have them act out the story for the other half of the class. Repeat the activity with students from the other half of the class playing the characters and acting the story out.

Statue Dance (Younger Students)

- Select one student to control when the music stops. All other students will stand in a circle and dance as the music plays. When the music stops, each student must strike a statue pose and remain motionless until the music comes back on. Anyone caught moving while the music is off must sit out until the next game. The last student remaining wins. If time permits, play again with the first round's winner controlling the music.

- King Nebuchadnezzar ordered everyone to worship his statue when the music played. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused to worship his statue, so he tried to have them burned up. The king thought no one could save them, but God was with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the fire. In a similar way, after Jesus died on the cross, God raised Jesus on the third day and showed His power to save us from sin.

Activity Pages & Recap Cards (5–10 min) (For in-class or take-home use)

- Truth Revealed (Older Students)

- Color the Flames (Younger Students)

Prayer & Requests (3–5 min)

God, thank You for being completely in control of every situation—even situations we don't understand and situations that scare us. Please give us strength to trust and obey You and You alone. Give us faith to trust and follow Jesus as our Savior and our Rescuer from sin. We pray these things in Jesus' mighty name. Amen.

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Journal Page

Would you obey God if it meant losing your friends? Would you obey God if it meant losing your family? Would you obey God if it meant losing your life? Write your thoughts below.

FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS

- Are you surprised that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were willing to die rather than bow to the statue?
- When might obedience be a hard choice in your life?
- How do we know God was with the friends in the fire? How do we know God is with us?

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SHADRACH, MESHACH AND ABEDNEGO

DANIEL 3

MAIN POINT: GOD WAS WITH SHADRACH, MESHACH AND ABEDNEGO IN THE FIRE.

Nebuchadnezzar was the king of Babylon. One day, Nebuchadnezzar made a tall statue out of gold. His herald made an important announcement: "When you hear the sound of music, you must fall down and worship this statue. Anyone who does not obey this rule will be thrown into a fiery furnace!"

But three men from Judah—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—refused to bow down to a statue. Some men went to King Nebuchadnezzar to complain about Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

King Nebuchadnezzar called for the men. "If you do not bow down when you hear the music, I will throw you into a fiery furnace!"

The three friends answered, "King, the God we serve is able to rescue us from the fiery furnace. He can save us from you. Even if God chooses not to rescue us, we will not serve your gods. We will not bow down and worship the gold statue."

King Nebuchadnezzar told the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. The soldiers threw them into the fiery furnace. Suddenly, King Nebuchadnezzar jumped up.

"Look!" the king shouted. "I see four men walking around in the fire. They aren't tied up, and the fourth man looks like a son of the gods!"

Nebuchadnezzar called out, "Shadrach, Meshach Abednego—servants of the Most High God! Come here!" So Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the fire. They had not been hurt by the fire at all!

Nebuchadnezzar praised God. "The God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego sent an angel and rescued His servants!"

King Nebuchadnezzar said, "No other god can save people like this!"

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

Key Passage: *Hebrews 11:1 – Now faith is the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen.*

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For each picture, write a short description of what happened in today's Bible story.

TDSGHTVE
GOTVSTDW
ERVSGRSE
RDHGLVWE
ILSBVRSA
BWDGLHTE

TRUTH REVEALED

To find the hidden message, color in these letters:

- **Every fifth letter**
- **Every vowel**
- **The first and last letter in each row**

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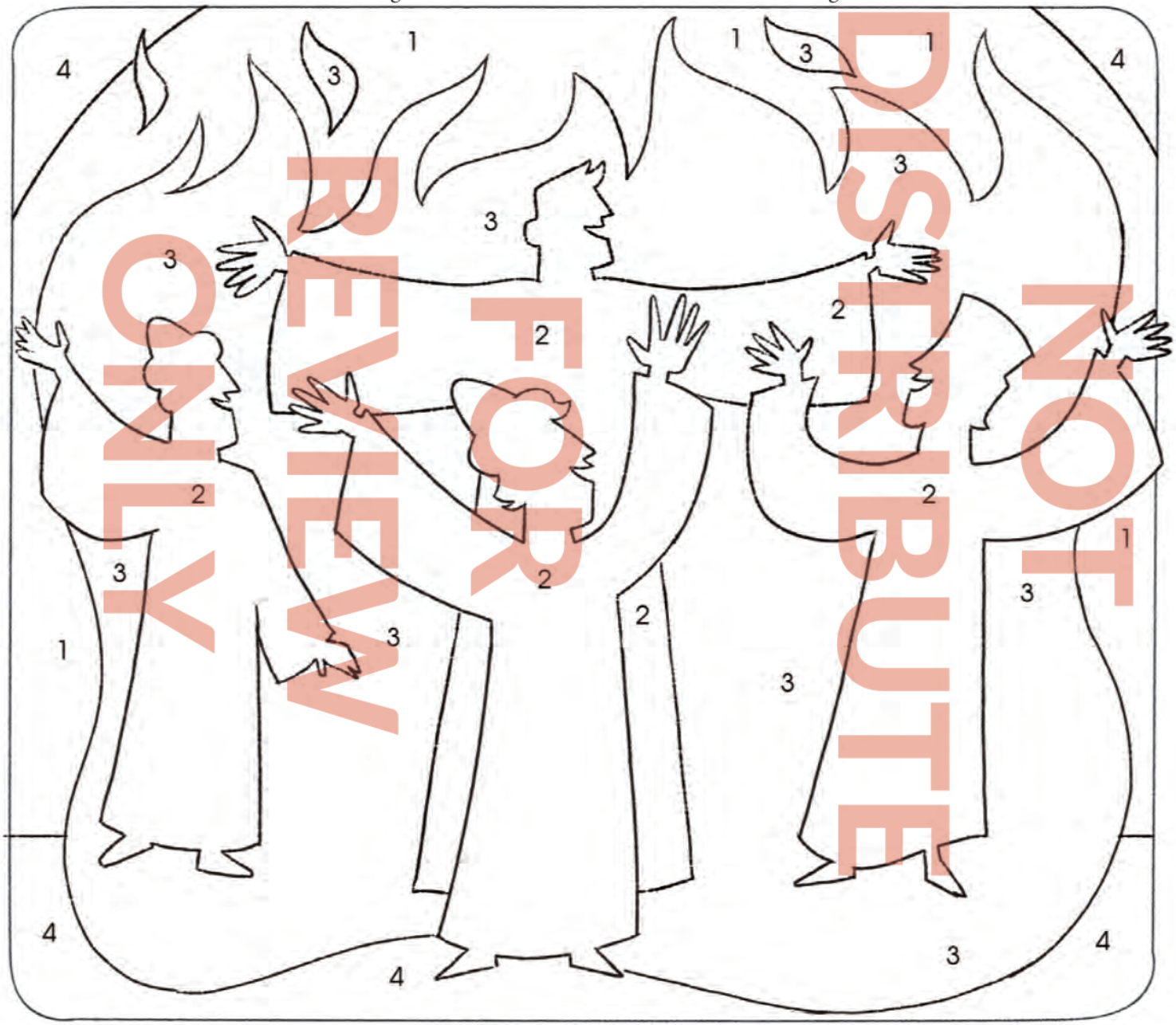
COLOR THE FLAMES

INSTRUCTIONS: Color each section according to the number written in it. 1 = Red, 2 = Orange, 3 = Yellow, 4 = Black.



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KEY PASSAGE:
Hebrews 11:1 – Now faith is the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen.

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How can we obey God? We trust God to give us strength to obey Him.

BIBLE STORY: SHADRACH, MESHACH AND ABEDNEGO

- King Nebuchadnezzar wanted everyone to worship a gold statue.
- Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego knew only God deserves worship.
- They obeyed God even though the king would throw them in the fire.
- God protected them in the fire to glorify Himself.

FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS:

- When might obedience be a hard choice in your life?
- How did God rescue us from our greatest enemy?

FAMILY ACTIVITY:

- Cover a cookie tray in wax paper. Place plastic army men on the lined tray and heat them in the oven until they begin to melt. Ask your kids how the army men might be protected. Test some of their ideas!

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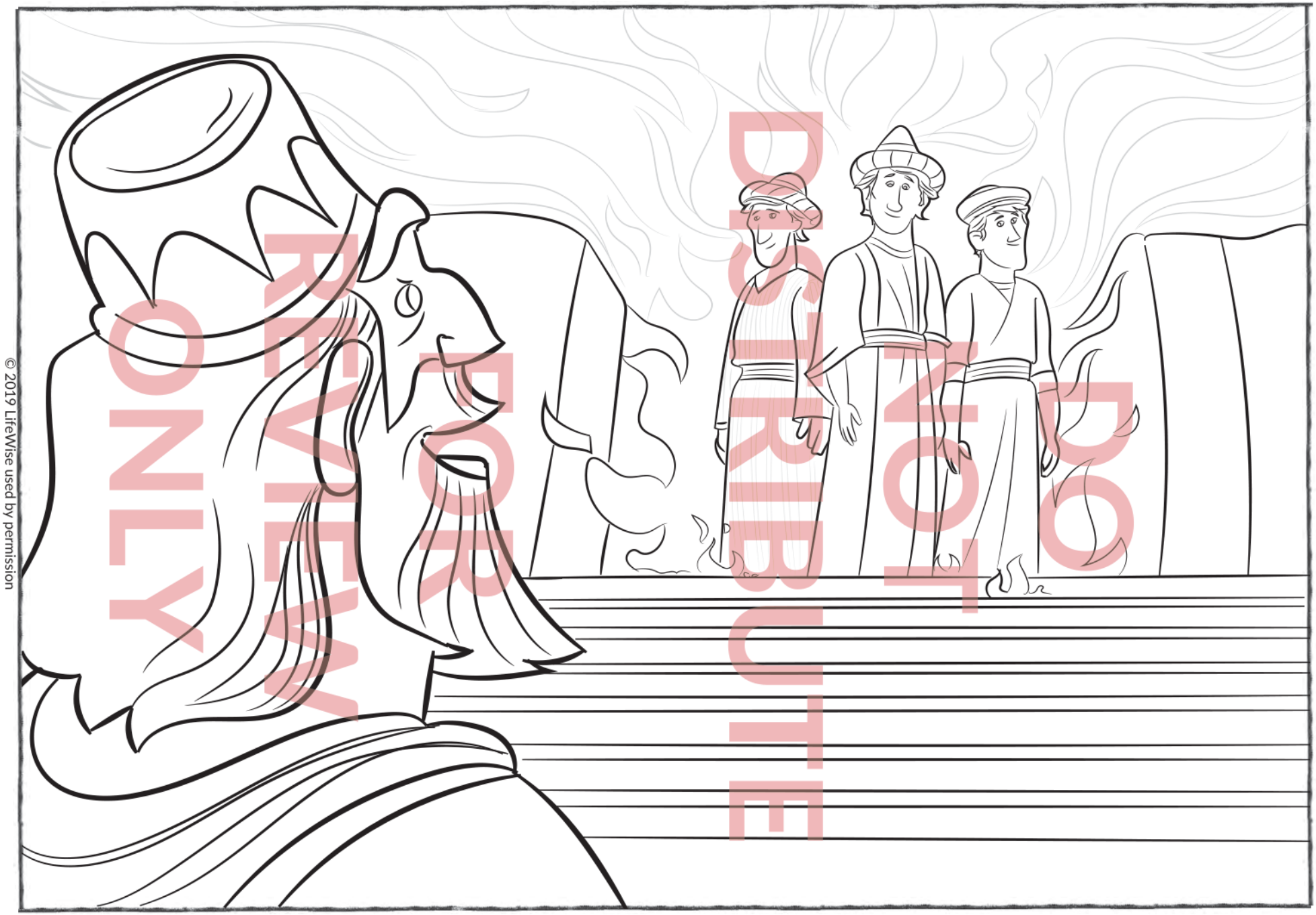

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GOD WAS WITH SHADRACH, MESHACH AND ABEDNEGO IN THE FIRE.

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MANSU GRAND HILL MONUMENT, PYONGYANG, NORTH KOREA

STATUES OF FORMER LEADERS KIM IL-SUNG AND KIM JONG-IL

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LESSON 54: PERSEVERANCE

DANIEL WAS RESCUED

Daniel 6

DANIEL WAS RESCUED

- Daniel 6
- Big Picture Q&A: How can we obey God? We trust God to give us strength to obey Him.
- Key Passage: Hebrews 11:1 – Now faith is the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen.

JESUS CONNECTION

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

LIFEWISE QUALITY

PERSEVERANCE – Refusing to give up even when things are hard.

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LEADER BIBLE STUDY

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

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

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

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

As you teach, emphasize that Daniel was faithful to God—the true King—and God rescued him. God's protection of Daniel served to show all the people that the God of Daniel "is the living God, and He endures forever; His kingdom will never be destroyed, and His dominion has no end" (Dan. 6:26).

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

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BIBLE TIMELINE & REVIEW (3 MIN)

During our last lesson we learned about three men who were thrown into a fiery furnace. Does anyone remember why? (*They refused to bow down to an idol.*) Why wouldn't they bow down to the idol? (*God forbids idol worship and they would only worship the one true God.*) How did God save Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego from the fiery furnace? (*Sent an angel, kept them from being burned by the fire.*) God was there with them in the fiery furnace. Today, we will learn another story of how God protected His people.

SESSION STARTERS (5-10 MIN)

Lion Creature Features (Older Students)

- Ask students if they have ever seen a lion in real life, perhaps at a zoo. Ask them what was most impressive or scary about the animal. Share the following information:
  - Length: 4.5 to 6.5 feet; tail: 26.25 to 39.5 inches
  - Weight: 265 to 420 pounds
  - A male's loud roar can carry up to five miles
  - Lions are the second largest cat in the world
  - Males are capable hunters by the age of two
  - Lions can go 4–5 days without water. They survive on the prey they eat and plants.
  - Males are forced out of their pride around age two. They follow herds with other lions until they are strong enough to challenge a leader of a pride and take over the pride.
- Today, we will learn about a man who had a very dangerous sleepover. He spent the night with a group of lions! You may have heard of him; his name was Daniel.

Animal Noise Talent Show (Older and Younger Students)

- Invite volunteers to show off their best animal noises. Students should take turns, allowing the rest of the class to guess what animal sound they are making. Finish by leading everyone to roar like hungry lions.
- Imagine being a hungry lion. Imagine that some guards tossed a tasty meal into your den. Now imagine that, no matter how hungry you were and no matter how hard you tried, you just couldn't eat your meal! That is what happened in today's Bible story. Daniel was thrown into a den of lions, but God kept him safe.

What Time Is It, Mr. Lion? (Younger Students)

- Select one student to be Mr. Lion. Mr. Lion will stand at one end of the room, facing away from the other students. The other students will stand at the far end of the room and will ask in unison, "What time is it, Mr. Lion?" Mr. Lion will respond with a time (1 o'clock, 2 o'clock, etc.). The students will take that many steps toward Mr. Lion. The goal is to reach Mr. Lion without him knowing and tap him on the shoulder. At any point, Mr. Lion may respond with "Dinner time!" and turn around to chase the students. Any student he tags is out of the game.
- Lions usually eat other animals. But if they get hungry and there are people around, lions are big and dangerous enough to eat humans. Today, we will learn about Daniel, who had to spend the night with hungry lions as punishment for praying to God. Do you think God could rescue Daniel?

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KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY/BIG PICTURE Q&A (5 MIN)

Hebrews 11:1

Now faith is the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen.

Key Passage Echo (Older and Younger Students)

- Write the key passage on a chalkboard or white board. Divide the passage into two sections and the class into two groups. Group A will say the first part of the key passage, and group B will echo them. Then group A will read the second part, and group B will echo. Repeat the verse, this time with group B starting and group A echoing.

Big Picture Q&A

Q: Question
A: *Answer*

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BIBLE STORY (10 MIN)

Daniel Was Rescued | Daniel 6

King Darius (duh RIGH uhs) **was the new leader in Babylon. Babylon was a large kingdom, so Darius picked men to be leaders over small parts of Babylon.** King Darius picked Daniel to be one of the leaders. Daniel was very good at his job, so **Darius decided to put Daniel in charge of all of Babylon.**

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

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

Daniel knew the law meant he was not allowed to pray to God. Still, Daniel went into his house and prayed to God three times a day, just like he had always done. The jealous leaders saw Daniel praying, and they told the king that they had seen Daniel praying to God.

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

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

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

Daniel shouted back, "God sent His angel to shut the lions' mouths! I am safe!" The king was so happy! He ordered for Daniel to be taken out of the lions' den. Daniel wasn't hurt because he had trusted in God.

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

JESUS CONNECTION

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

LIFEWISE QUALITY (3–4 MIN)

PERSEVERANCE – Refusing to give up even when things are hard.

Living LifeWise

God is in control, so we can choose to live His way with perseverance.

Character Connection

For decades, Daniel had prayed three times a day to God, and everyone knew it. Prayer was an important practice for Daniel because it helped him stay connected to God. God helped him persevere, to keep praying, even when he was tired or busy or bored. For years!

When the king was tricked into making a law against praying to someone other than him, Daniel had to make a choice. He could persevere, keep praying to God and be punished. Or he could stop for 30 days. What do you think you would do? [*Take answers.*]

Perseverance means refusing to give up, no matter the outcome. Daniel knew he could trust that God was in control and do the right thing, whether the king promoted him or threw him in a lions' den. Choosing to persevere is never easy. It's easy to come up with excuses for why we can't do the right thing this time. But God is still in control, and His Spirit will help us live His way with perseverance, too.

Which of these options shows perseverance? If not, how could God help us to persevere?

- Reading your Bible every day for a month
- Quitting the sports team because the coach makes you run laps
- Coming back to the math lesson (or video game level) that you can't seem to get until you figure it out

BIBLE STORY REVIEW (5 MIN)

- How often did Daniel pray?

  Three times a day, Dan. 6:10

- The king's officials convinced the king to create a new law. What was the new law?

  Everyone had to pray only to the king for 30 days, Dan. 6:7, 12

- What was the punishment for breaking the new law?

  Being thrown in the lion's den, Dan. 6:7

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- How did the king feel when he heard that Daniel broke the law?

  Upset, Dan. 6:14
- Did the king want to punish Daniel?

  No, but he could not change the law, Dan. 6:14–16
- How did God reward Daniel's faithfulness?

  Rescued him, Dan. 6:21–22
- What did God do to protect Daniel?

  Sent an angel to close the lions' mouths, Dan. 6:22
- What did the king do after he learned that God protected Daniel?

  Ordered that people should worship the one true God, Dan. 6:25–27

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES (5-10 MIN)

Sculpt a Scene (Older Students)

- Divide the class into groups of 5 or 6. Groups will "sculpt" their favorite scene from the Bible story (Daniel praying with the leaders catching him, Daniel being ordered to the lions' den, Daniel in the lions' den, etc.) by having one student pose the rest of their group as characters from the scene. The sculptor may move his group mates' heads, arms and legs into the correct position. When groups finish, guide students to tell about the corresponding scene from the Bible story.
- In today's Bible story, Daniel was stuck in a difficult position. He could obey the king and disobey God, or he could disobey the king and obey God. Either way, he would be obedient and disobedient at the same time. Daniel trusted God to give him the strength to obey God's commands. Daniel was faithful to God, and God rescued him from the lions. God was glorified by saving Daniel. Daniel and the king worshiped God for His faithfulness.

Daniel Grab (Older Students)

- Before the session, cut 24 index cards in half to form 48 cards. Write *lion* on 40 of the cards and *Daniel* on 8 cards. Prepare a set for every four students in your group. Invite students to play a card game. Form groups of four and instruct them to mix up the cards and distribute them facedown, 12 cards per player. On the count of three, each player will turn over his top card and place it on the table. If a player sees a card that says *Daniel*, he should slap his hand over it. The player to collect the most *Daniel* cards wins.

- Today, we heard a story from the Bible about Daniel being rescued from lions. Daniel was thrown into a den of lions, but God kept him safe!

Speed Bible Jeopardy (Older and Younger Students)

- Before class, print off the Speed Bible Jeopardy questions. Write the three categories (God, Exile, People) on a white board. Write point values under each category that can be erased once a team has answered the corresponding question correctly. The Speed Bible Jeopardy questions for each category range from easy (200 points) to moderately challenging (400 and 600 points) to difficult (800 and 1000 points).

- Form two or three teams. Students may choose the category and point value. They may answer as a group or individually, but will have only 30 seconds to give their answer. If the answer is correct,

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the team earns the points listed. If incorrect, no points are subtracted. The opposite team will then have a chance to answer for the points. They will then choose a question for their turn. For extra fun, designate some "daily double" questions that are worth twice the listed number of points.

Story Sequence (Younger Students)

- Before class, print the Story Sequence Cards and cut them apart. For large groups, form teams of five students and print one set for each group. Mix up the cards and give the students time to arrange them in the order of events in the story. If multiple groups are playing, see which team can finish first. Review the story with the students, showing each picture as you go.

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

Caught Praying (Younger Students)

- Make three signs numbered *1*, *2* and *3* and tape them around the room. Prepare a bag or container with the three numbers on separate slips of paper. Designate a contained area that will serve as the "lions' den." Play music and instruct students to walk in a circle past the signs until the music stops. When it stops, they must run to the closest number. Draw one slip out of the bag and tell that group, "You've been caught praying. You must go to the lions' den!" Continue playing music and following the same instructions until only one student is left outside the lion's den.

- Daniel prayed to God faithfully every day even though he knew it might get him in trouble. The more we know about God, the more we love Him and want to spend time with Him. One way we can spend time with God is by praying. We can stop and thank God for the good things He has done. We can thank God for our food before we eat. We can pray when we have a hard time during the day. We can talk to God before we go to sleep at night. We can even pray with others who need help. I hope you get caught praying faithfully, just like Daniel.

Activity Pages & Recap Cards (5–10 min) (For in-class or take-home use)

- Babylon Word Search (Older Students)
  - Answer: *God blessed Daniel and his friends (Dan. 1), God was with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the fire (Dan. 3), God rescued Daniel from the lions (Dan. 6)*

- What Did Daniel See (Younger Students)

Prayer & Requests (3–5 min)

God, we praise You for Your wisdom and power. Thank You for helping Your people and for teaching us to trust You. Give us strength to obey You and to follow Jesus every day. Thank You for rescuing us from sin and death through Jesus. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

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Journal Page

List ways you can obey God in your everyday life and with your everyday choices.

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FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS

- If you had been Daniel, what do you think you would have done about the new law? Why?
- What can you do the next time you feel pressure to do something you know God would not want?
- How did God rescue us from sin and death?

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DANIEL WAS RESCUED

DANIEL 6

MAIN POINT: DANIEL WAS FAITHFUL TO GOD, AND GOD RESCUED HIM.

King Darius was the new leader in Babylon. Babylon was a large kingdom, so Darius picked men to be leaders over small parts of Babylon. Darius decided to put Daniel in charge of all of Babylon.

The other leaders were jealous. They watched Daniel and waited for him to do something wrong so they could get him in trouble. But Daniel did what was right.

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

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So, King Darius ordered Daniel to be thrown into the lions' den. "May the God you serve save you," he said.

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

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

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

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

Key Passage: *Hebrews 11:1 – Now faith is the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen.*

DISCIPLE

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BABYLON WORD SEARCH

Find and circle the words hidden in the puzzle.

A	D	L	K	H	X	N	K	S	K
S	A	A	T	I	O	I	P	A	Q
W	N	A	N	L	N	K	R	F	F
N	E	O	Y	I	D	G	A	E	Z
D	I	B	I	O	E	O	Y	T	T
I	A	S	W	L	U	L	E	Z	S
B	E	U	C	S	E	R	R	D	U
J	D	A	R	I	U	S	R	I	R
F	G	O	D	J	E	S	U	S	T
A	K	C	J	P	Y	C	N	O	R

BABYLON
DANIEL
DARIUS
DEATH
GOD
JESUS
KING
LAW
LIONS
PRAYER
RESCUE
SAFE
SIN
TRUST

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GOD IN BABYLON

God was with His people in Babylon. Review these Bible stories and circle how each story ended.

Daniel and His Friends Obeyed God (Daniel 1)

Daniel obeyed God by not eating the king's food. What happened?

The king punished Daniel and his friends.

God blessed Daniel and his friends.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (Daniel 3)

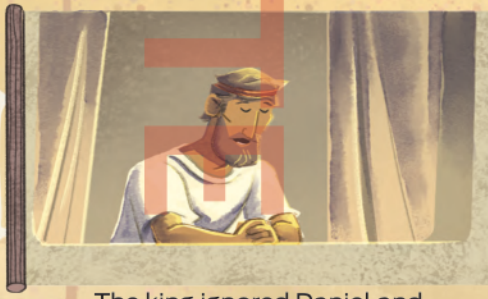
Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused to worship the gold statue. What happened?

God was with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the fire.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego died in the fiery furnace.

Daniel Was Rescued (Daniel 6)

Daniel was faithful to God. He continued to pray. What happened?



The king ignored Daniel and did not punish him.

God rescued Daniel from the lions.

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WHAT DID DANIEL SEE?

INSTRUCTIONS: Connect the dots in numerical order to complete the picture.

KEY PASSAGE:
Hebrews 11:1 – Now faith is the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen.

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How can we obey God? We trust God to give us strength to obey Him.

BIBLE STORY: DANIEL WAS RESCUED

- Jealous men convinced the king to make a law so that Daniel would be punished.
- Daniel prayed to God despite a law saying he could only pray to the king.
- The king had to throw Daniel in the lions' den as punishment.
- God protected Daniel from the lions.

FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS:

- What should you do if an adult or leader tells you to do something sinful?
- What are other ways God rescues His people?
- What is the biggest way God rescued His people?

FAMILY ACTIVITY:

- Plan a trip to the zoo to see lions.
- Pray with your family and talk about and pray for people who live in places where it is illegal to worship God.

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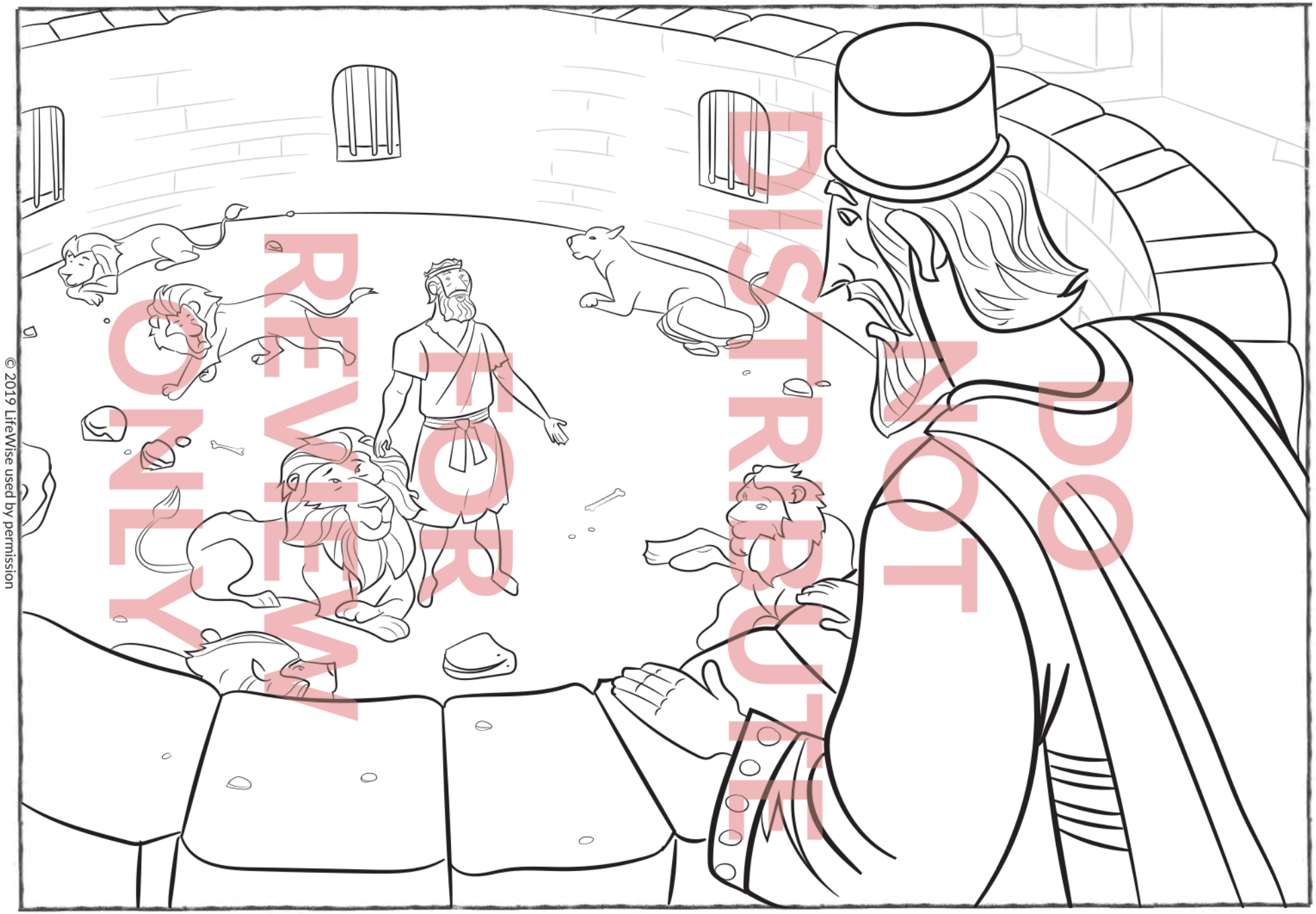

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**DANIEL WAS FAITHFUL TO GOD,
AND GOD RESCUED HIM.**

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Story Sequence Cards

Instructions: Print and use as directed in the leader guide.

L 54 Daniel Was Rescued | PERSEVERANCE

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SPEED BIBLE JEOPARDY RULES:

Split the class into two or three teams. Students choose the category and point value. They may answer as a group or individually, but will only have 30 seconds to give their answer. If the answer is correct, the team earns the points listed. If incorrect, no points are subtracted. The opposite team will then have a chance to answer and then choose a question for their turn. For extra fun, designate some "daily double" questions that are worth twice the listed number of points.

GOD

200

How can we obey God? *We trust God to give us the strength to obey Him*

400

How did God help Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego as they trained to serve the king? *He made them stronger and wiser than any other men*

600

How often did Daniel pray and worship God? *3 times a day*

800

What did God show King Nebuchchadnezzar by protecting Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego from the fiery furnace? *God was the one true God and no other god could save like their God*

1000

What rule did King Darius make after God saved Daniel from the lions? *Everyone had to worship Daniel's God*

EXILE

200

Why were the people of Judah taken away from their home? *They disobeyed God, worshiped idols and refused to repent*

400

How did God punish the people of Judah? *The Babylonians attacked Judah, destroyed everything and took the people into exile*

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600
Where were God's people taken into exile? *Babylon*

800
What did the King of Babylon do with boys who were healthy, handsome, and able to learn? *Trained them to be his servants*

1000
In Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones, what did God show Ezekiel He would do for His exiled people in the future by bringing the dry bones to life? *He would restore the people and fill them with His spirit*

PEOPLE

200
Who forced his people to worship a large golden statue? *King Nebuchadnezzar*

400
Name the three men who were thrown into a fiery furnace. *Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego*

600
What was the name of the King of Babylon that destroyed Judah? *King Nebuchadnezzar*

800
Who was sent to protect the men in the fiery furnace and Daniel in the lion's den? *An angel*

1000
Who convinced King Darius to make a law that the people of Babylon could only pray to him? *The king's officials*

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Story Sequence Cards

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LESSON 55: GRATITUDE

THE PEOPLE RETURNED TO COMPLETE THE TEMPLE

Ezra 1-6

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THE PEOPLE RETURNED TO COMPLETE THE TEMPLE

- Ezra 1-6
- Big Picture Q&A: How can we obey God? We trust God to give us strength to obey Him.
- Key Passage: Hebrews 11:1 – Now faith is the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen.

JESUS CONNECTION

God's people rebuilt the temple so they would have a place to worship God. Years later, God sent His Son, Jesus, to be with His people. Now, God dwells not in the temple, but directly with His people. Because of Jesus, we don't need a temple anymore.

LIFEWISE QUALITY

GRATITUDE – To appreciate what someone has done for or given to me.

LEADER BIBLE STUDY

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

Before the people of Judah were exiled, God had spoken through the prophet Jeremiah. These are the words of the Lord: "These nations will serve the king of Babylon for 70 years" (Jer. 25:11). Then, the Lord said, "When 70 years for Babylon are complete, I will attend to you and will confirm My promise concerning you to restore you to this place" (Jer. 29:10). The time had come for God's people to go back home.

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

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

Ezra 2:64–65 says nearly 50,000 people traveled back to Judah. When they got to Jerusalem, they began working to rebuild the temple that the Chaldeans had destroyed (2 Chron. 36:19). The temple was the place where God met with His people. Some time after the temple's foundation was laid, the work stopped. With the encouragement of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, God's people resumed the work of rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem. Approximately 15 years had passed without progress.

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By this time, Darius was king of Persia. The Persian Empire was vast, so Darius appointed governors over the provinces. A man named Tattenai watched over the province that included the land of Judah. Tattenai noticed the work of God's people, and he was concerned. He sent a letter to King Darius. "Is this allowed?" he asked. "The people say that King Cyrus said they could rebuild the temple and the city. Please investigate this matter."

King Darius did investigate, and Cyrus' decree was located in the Babylonian records. Darius instructed Tattenai to allow the people to rebuild the temple and the city. God had turned the heart of the king for His people's favor (Prov. 21:1; Ezra 6:22). The people completed the temple. They dedicated it joyfully and observed the Passover.

God declared in Haggai 2:9 that the glory of this second temple would be greater than the first. This prophecy was fulfilled by the presence of the Messiah, the Son of God. Jesus said that He is greater than the temple (Matt. 12:6). He came to Earth to rescue us from sin. When He returns again, He will restore the earth and will dwell with His people forever.

In Christ, we find the substance of which the temple was a shadow. The Lord was not confined to a building, yet His deity lives fully in Christ (Col. 2:9). Jesus is our High Priest. He entered the most holy place for us (Heb. 6:19–20). The priest offered the blood of animals, but Christ offered His own blood once and for all (Heb. 9:25–26). He gives us access to the throne of grace (Heb. 10:19–22).

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BIBLE TIMELINE & REVIEW (3 MIN)

Over the last lessons, we have learned how Daniel and his friends obeyed God during exile. Their home, Judah, had been attacked and destroyed when they were young men. They were taken into exile—forced to leave their home, live in Babylon and serve the king. What are some ways that they chose to obey God when it was hard? (*Following rules about what they ate, worshiping only God.*) How did God show the people that He was the one true God? (*Doing miracles: saving His people from the fiery furnace and lions' den, making them stronger and wiser than other men.*) Today, we will continue learning about God's people, how they followed Him and how He was faithful in keeping the promises He made to them.

SESSION STARTERS (5-10 MIN)

Rock, Paper, Scissors (Older Students)

- Invite students to pair up to play Rock, Paper, Scissors. They should play three rounds with their partner. Players who win two rounds can continue playing with a new partner without sitting out. The other student must sit out and count to 70 before finding a new partner. Allow students to change partners multiple times. After several minutes, end the game.

- How did you feel when you had to sit out? Did it seem to take a long time to count to 70? Today, we are going to hear a story about God's people who were in exile for 70 years! They waited a long time for God to keep His promise to let them go home.

Block Stack Challenge (Older Students)

- Invite three volunteers to compete in a building challenge. Give each player a plate and five blocks. Students have 60 seconds to balance the plate on their heads and stack five blocks on the plate. Congratulate players who get all five blocks stacked within the minute. Play additional rounds, allowing new volunteers to compete. If needed, adjust the time limit.

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- Great job, everyone! That was not easy. Today, we are going to hear about a construction project that wasn't easy either. The Israelites worked hard to complete the temple, and construction took several years.

Ha-Ha, Boo-Hoo (Older and Younger Students)

- Invite the students to sit in a circle. Choose a student to go first. She must say "ha" as seriously as possible. The student to her left must then say "ha" twice, the student to his left three times, and so on around the circle. After the *ha*'s have passed all the way around at least once, students may choose to instead say "boo" which switches the direction of speaking and restarts the counting at one. The student to the right of the one who said "boo" will say "boo-hoo," the student to her right will say "boo-hoo-hoo" and so on. After at least three students have followed this pattern, a student may choose to say "ha" again, which resets the game to its original pattern. Students continue passing the laugh or cry around the circle, choosing to reverse the direction whenever they desire.

- In today's story, God's people finally get to go home. At the end of the story, some of the people cheered, and some cried. What do you think could cause two such different reactions from one group of people?

Build It Bigger (Younger Students)

- Form two teams. Provide each team with building materials (blocks, cards, toothpicks and marshmallows, etc.). Challenge the teams to build the tallest and sturdiest building they can in the time allotted. After about five minutes, stop them and tell them that you will bump each table to see if their structures remain standing. If one or both stay standing, allow the students to knock them down.

- God's temple had been destroyed by enemies. Today, we will learn how the people rebuilt it after returning to their homes. Then, we will learn about a sort of temple that was destroyed and rebuilt in less than a week!

KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY/BIG PICTURE Q&A (5 MIN)

Hebrews 11:1

Now faith is the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen.

Build a Church (Older and Younger Students)

- This game is similar to Hangman. Draw four lines to form a square (the church building). Draw two lines to form a triangle (the roof). Draw two lines on the roof to form a cross. Choose a student to say one word of the key passage, and draw a part of the church for each correct response. For incorrect responses, erase a line. Challenge students to see how many churches they can "build" in three minutes. Enlist the help of a volunteer to draw the churches while you point to children to keep up the pace of the game.

Key Passage Knockout (Older and Younger Students)

- Invite the students to stand in a circle. One at a time, each student will say one word of the key passage in order. If a student says the wrong word, she must sit. The student who says the last word of the key passage will turn to the next student in the circle and give him a high five. That

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child must sit. Repeat this process until only one student is left standing. See if he or she can say the whole key passage from memory without help.

Big Picture Q&A

Q: How can we obey God?
A: *We trust God to give us strength to obey Him.*

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BIBLE STORY (10 MIN)

The People Returned to Complete the Temple | Ezra 1:1–2:2; 2:64–3:13, 4:1–7; 5:1–5; 6:1–22

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

Cyrus, king of Persia, had taken over Babylon. God gave Cyrus an idea. Cyrus said, "Let all of God's people go back to Jerusalem so they can rebuild the Lord's temple. Give them gold and silver and animals. Give them gifts for God's temple."

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

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

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

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

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

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

Although God's people were excited to rebuild the temple, their enemies did not want it to be built. They threatened God's people. God's people did not want any trouble, so they stopped. God sent the

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prophets Haggai and Zechariah to encourage the people. So, the leaders—Zerubbabel and Jeshua—**started working on the temple again.**

At this time, a governor named Tattenai (TAT ih nigh) saw the rebuilding had started again. Tattenai worked for King Darius (duh RIGH uhs), the king of Persia. Tattenai had been put in charge of some of the land, including Judah.

Tattenai **talked to Zerubbabel and the others working on the temple. "Do you have permission to rebuild this temple?" Tattenai asked. Tattenai sent a report to King Darius. While he waited for an answer, God's people kept building.**

This is what Tattenai's letter to King Darius said: "To Darius the king—This letter is to tell you that **the people in Judah are building the temple of the great God. They said King Cyrus gave them permission to rebuild the temple. Please search the royal records to see if this is true."**

King Darius' officials searched the royal records for Cyrus' order. They found it—a scroll with a record from King Cyrus. This is what was written on the scroll: "Let God's temple be rebuilt. It will be a place to offer sacrifices. Let its foundation be rebuilt." King Cyrus had also ordered for the cost of building the temple to be paid for out of the royal treasury.

So, King Darius sent a letter back to Tattenai. He gave this order: "Stay away from the workers in Jerusalem. Don't bother them, and don't try to stop them. Give them whatever they need. And if anyone tries to destroy God's temple, may God destroy that person!**"**

Tattenai and the other officials obeyed King Darius' order. The Jewish leaders kept building, and they finally finished the temple of God! The people celebrated and made offerings to God. They chose priests and assistants to serve in the temple.

Then, God's people celebrated the Passover. They killed the Passover lamb and ate the Passover meal. **God's people were so happy** because God had changed King Darius' heart so that he wanted to help them. **Now, the temple of God was finally complete.**

JESUS CONNECTION

God's people rebuilt the temple so they would have a place to worship God. Years later, God sent His Son, Jesus, to be with His people. Now, God dwells not in the temple, but directly with His people. Because of Jesus, we don't need a temple anymore.

LIFEWISE QUALITY (3–4 MIN)

GRATITUDE – To appreciate what someone has done for or given to me.

Living LifeWise

We can be grateful for all the ways God keeps His promises and takes care of us.

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Character Connection

Gratitude means showing how much we appreciate what someone has done for us or given to us. When we're grateful, our excitement always shows. God's people showed their gratitude for God bringing them out of exile by praising Him, obeying His instructions for how to build the temple, and celebrating when it was done. What are some ways we express gratitude? [*Saying thanks, doing something nice back, telling other people about it.*]

God brought His people back from exile, just like He'd promised. He promised a Savior would come to us, and He kept that promise, too. Who is our Savior? (*Jesus.*) God always keeps His promises and takes care of us, in big and little ways. But sometimes we forget to notice all God does for us. We forget to be grateful. But God's Spirit is always willing to help us see how God is working in our lives and thank Him for what He has done, is doing and will do for us.

How can we show gratitude for what the following people have done:

- God
- Our teachers
- Our friends

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BIBLE STORY REVIEW (5 MIN)

- **Which prophet told about God's promise to bring His people home?**

  Jeremiah, Ezra 1:1

- **How long were God's people in exile?**

  70 years, Jer. 29:10

- **How did the people feel when the foundation of the temple was complete?**

  Joy and sadness, Ezra 3:11–12

- **What city was the temple built in?**

  Jerusalem, Ezra 5:2

- **Why did the people stop working on the temple for a while?**

  Enemies opposed them, Ezra 4:23–24

- **What two prophets encouraged the people to keep building?**

  Haggai and Zechariah, Ezra 5:1

- **What message did King Darius send Tattenai?**

  Let them work and give them whatever they need, Ezra 6:6–9

- **What feast did God's people observe?**

  Passover, Ezra 6:19

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES (5-10 MIN)

Bible Promises Game (Older Students)

- Write the following Bible promises on separate index cards. Write out each Scripture verse (with references) on additional index cards:
  - The Lord will never leave us. (Hebrews 13:5)

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- The Lord will be our helper. (Hebrews 13:6)
- All things are possible with God. (Mark 10:27)
- Anyone who believes has eternal life. (John 6:47)
- God will give us what we need. (Philippians 4:19)
- Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. (Joel 2:32)

- Place the promise cards face-up on the floor. Guide half of the students to sit in a circle around the cards. The other half should each stand behind someone who is seated. Give standing students a Scripture reference card. Call on standing students one at a time to read their Bible verse. Sitting students should look at the promises. When a student, sitting or standing, sees the matching promise, she should slap her hand down over the promise card. If the card is a match, she may collect the card. If not, allow other students to look for the matching card. Continue for each Bible verse and promise. For larger classes, make multiple sets of the promises and reference cards and play in groups.

- God always keeps His promises! The Israelites waited 70 years for God to keep His promise, and God did. God changed the king's heart so the Israelites could go home.

Spot the Differences (Older Students)

- Display the "Temple Picture" printable. Ask students to identify or describe things about the temple that are different from their LifeWise site or church.

- The temple was a special place where God's people gathered to worship in God's presence. Because of Jesus, we no longer have to follow such strict rules when building our churches, but we still must obey God in other ways. How can we obey God? We trust God to give us the strength to obey Him.

Rebuild the Temple (Older and Younger Students)

- Build a model temple from blocks for students to see. Place a pile with the same number and shape of blocks as used in the model temple. Ask students review questions from the story. Whenever someone answers a question correctly, allow them to add a block to their temple.

Ball Toss (Older and Younger Students)

- Ask the Bible story review questions, and toss a ball to the student you want to answer. If the student does not know the answer, direct him to Scripture to find the answer. If he still cannot answer, he may toss the ball to a friend who does know. They must toss the ball back to the leader for the next question.

Temple Memory Game (Younger Students)

- Before class, print the "Temple Picture" printable. Show the students the picture of the temple. Give them 60 seconds to memorize as much detail about it as they can. Then, give them two minutes to draw the temple on their own paper as accurately as they can. You may compare the drawings and let the students vote on who they think made the best re-creation.

- In today's story, God's people finished rebuilding the temple. It was not exactly like the original temple that Solomon built, but it would have been very close. Thankfully, God provided detailed instructions for His temple, so the people didn't have to try and rebuild it from memory.

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I'd Never Live There! (Younger Students)

- Provide paper, markers, crayons and pencils for the students. Ask them to design a home that they would never want to live in. You may choose to offer other art supplies for students to use to "clutter" their home. Allow volunteers to share their designs and explain the different features their awful homes would have that make them so bad. If time allows, provide building blocks and allow them to build their designs.

- God changed the king's heart so the Israelites could go home. God was faithful to bring them back to their land, but the world was still broken by sin. Even the land God promised them was not perfect. The world is broken by sin even today. Thankfully, Jesus promised to prepare a place for us to live with God forever. One day, Jesus will return to gather everyone who believes in Him together and restore the earth to make it perfect and beautiful again. We will live with God on the new earth, and it will be our perfect home forever. No matter how good we might think our homes are right now, they are nothing compared to what Jesus will restore when He returns. Jesus will fix everything broken about the world and destroy everything evil.

Activity Pages & Recap Cards (5–10 min) (For in-class or take-home use)

- Better Than a Temple (Older Students)
- Temple: Take Two (Younger Students)

Prayer & Requests (3–5 min)

God, You are awesome, mighty in power, full of wisdom and always in control. Thank You for always keeping Your promises—even good promises we don't deserve! We know we can trust You. Please give us strength to trust and obey You. Give us faith to trust in Jesus and tell others about this wonderful promise of salvation and forgiveness that You have made and kept. We love You. Amen.

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Journal Page

List things you could offer God or ways you could honor and praise Him.

FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS

- Where does God's presence dwell now?
- What does it mean to say God dwells in us?
- In which places or times is God with us?

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FOLD

THE PEOPLE RETURNED TO COMPLETE THE TEMPLE

EZRA 1–6

MAIN POINT: GOD HELPED HIS PEOPLE REBUILD THE TEMPLE.

When God's people returned to Jerusalem, they got to work rebuilding God's temple. But their enemies did not want them to rebuild the temple. God's people did not want any trouble, so they stopped. God sent the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to encourage the people. So the leaders started working on the temple again.

At this time, a governor named Tattenai talked to Zerubbabel and the others working on the temple. "Do you have permission to rebuild this temple?" Tattenai asked. Tattenai sent a report to King Darius. While he waited for an answer, God's people kept building.

This is what Tattenai's letter to King Darius said: "The people in Judah are building the temple of the great God. They said King Cyrus gave them permission to rebuild the temple. Please search the royal records to see if this is true."

King Darius' officials searched the royal records for Cyrus' order. They found it—a scroll with a record from King Cyrus.

So King Darius sent a letter back to Tattenai. He gave this order: "Stay away from the workers in Jerusalem. Don't bother them, and don't try to stop them. Give them whatever they need."

Tattenai and the other officials obeyed King Darius' order. The Jewish leaders kept building, and they finally finished the temple of God! The people celebrated and made offerings to God.

Then God's people celebrated the Passover. God's people were so happy. Now the temple of God was finally complete.

Jesus Connection: *God's people rebuilt the temple so they would have a place to worship God. Years later, God sent His Son, Jesus, to be with His people. Now God dwells not in the temple, but directly with His people. Because of Jesus, we don't need a temple anymore.*

Key Passage: *Hebrews 11:1 – Now faith is the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen.*

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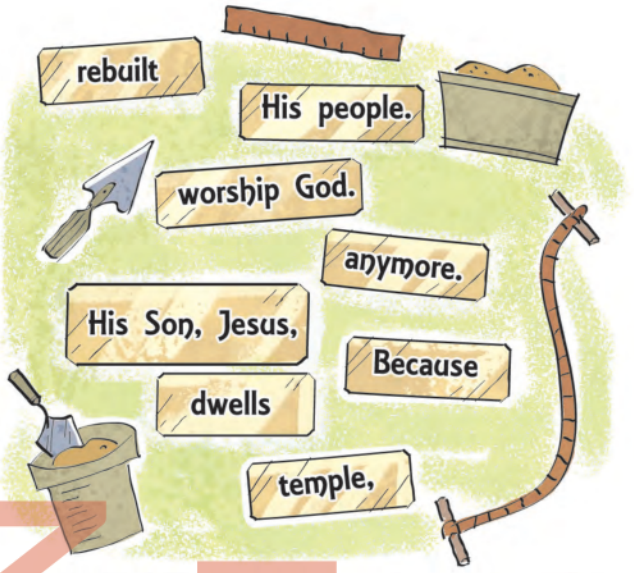
BETTER THAN A TEMPLE

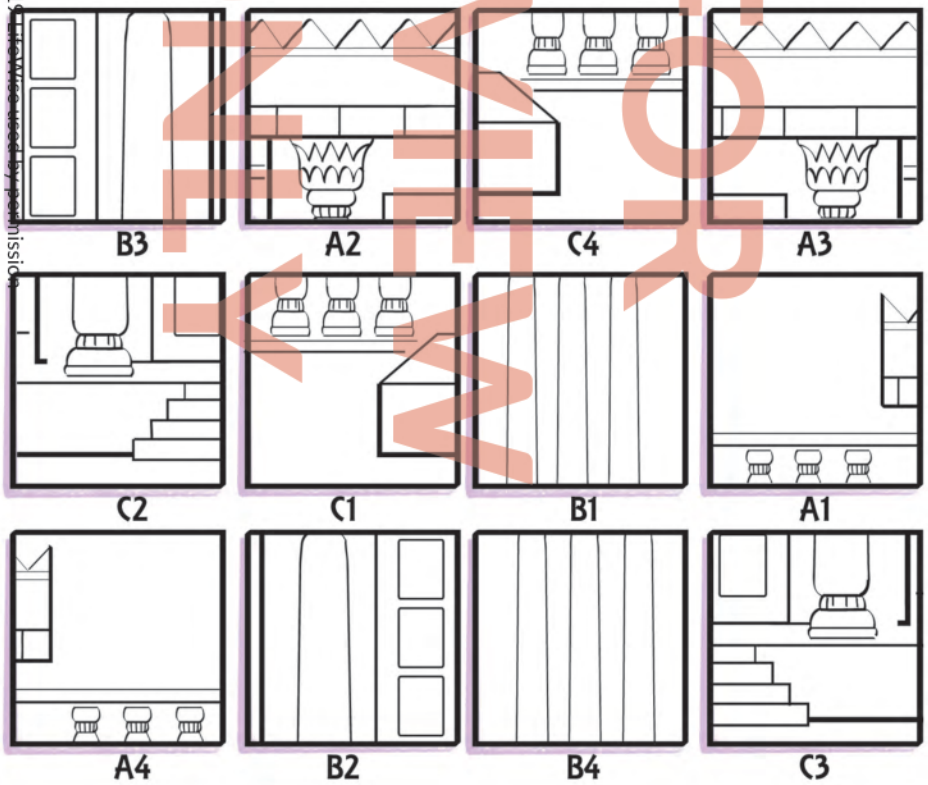
Put the missing pieces into the wall to discover what today's Bible story teaches about Jesus.

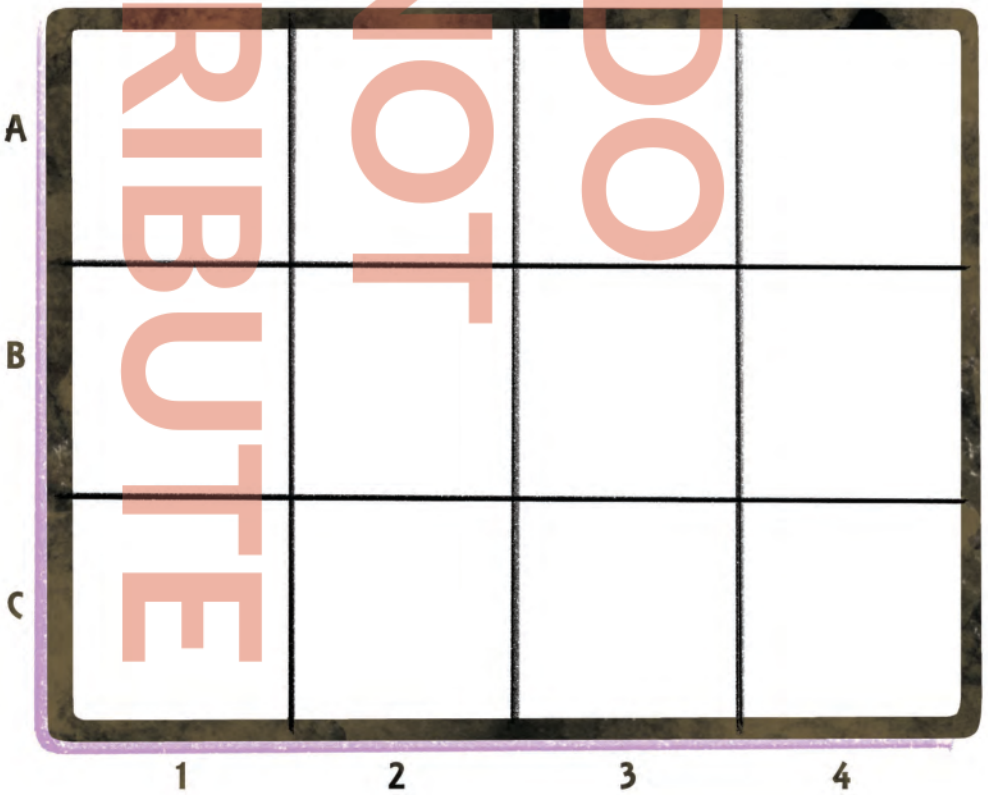
God's	people		the temple	so they	would	have	a	place
to		Years	later, God	sent		to be	with	
Now God		not in the		but	directly	with	His	
people.		of	Jesus,	we	don't	need	a	temple



COMPLETE THE PICTURE

Copy each picture into the correct square to complete the picture.





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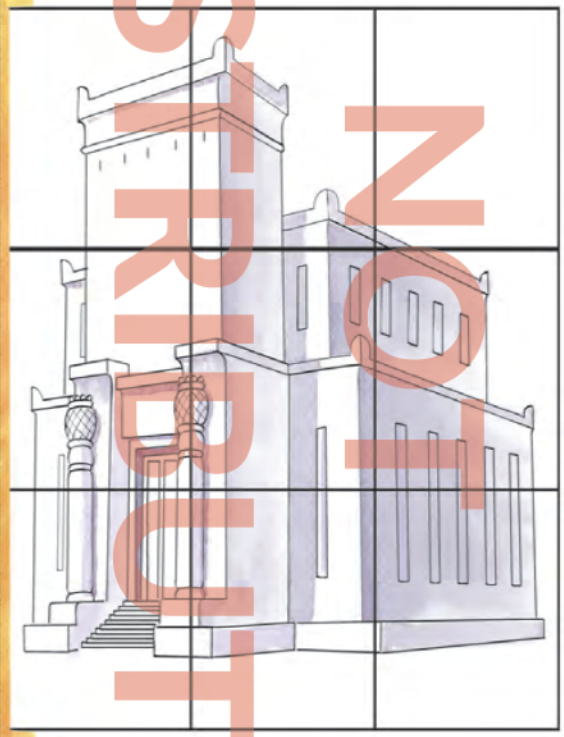
TEMPLE: TAKE TWO

INSTRUCTIONS: Use the grid provided to draw a larger scale picture of the temple.



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KEY PASSAGE:
Hebrews 11:1 – Now faith is the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen.

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How can we obey God? We trust God to give us strength to obey Him.

BIBLE STORY: THE TEMPLE WAS COMPLETED

- The enemies of God's people tried to keep the Jews from rebuilding the temple.
- God used prophets and leaders to encourage them to keep working.
- God helped His people rebuild the temple.

FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS:

- Where does God's presence dwell now?
- What does it mean to say God dwells in us?
- Where could you go that God isn't?

FAMILY ACTIVITY:

- Volunteer with your family to help build a home through an organization that helps those in need. Talk to your kids about our home being with God forever.

The People Returned to Complete the Temple
L 55 | GRATITUDE

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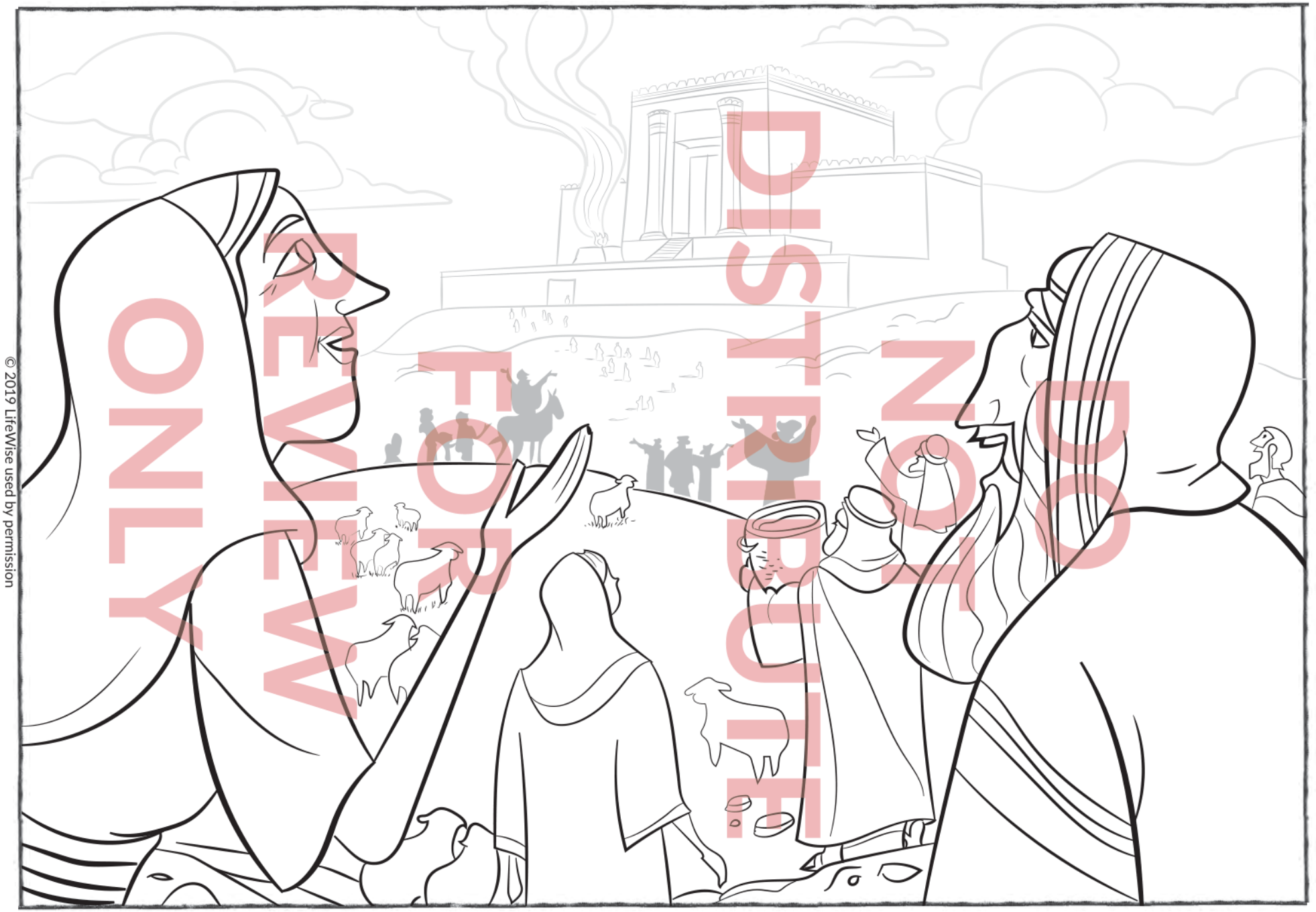

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LIFEWISE ACADEMY
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GOD HELPED HIS PEOPLE REBUILD THE TEMPLE.

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Temple Picture

Instructions: Print and use as directed in the leader guide.

L 55 The People Returned to Complete the Temple | GRATITUDE

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LESSON 56: WISDOM

ESTHER BECAME QUEEN

Esther 1-4

ESTHER BECAME QUEEN

- Esther 1-4
- Big Picture Q&A: Does God keep His promises? Yes, God is always faithful, even when we are not.
- Key Passage: Jeremiah 29:11–12 – "For I know the plans I have for you"—this is the Lord's declaration—"plans for your well-being, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. You will call to Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you."

JESUS CONNECTION

God's plan all along was to send the Messiah through Abraham's family. Haman's evil plan might have stopped God's plan, but God was in control. He was working out a plan to use Esther to rescue His people and make the way for His Son, Jesus, to come into the world.

LIFEWISE QUALITY

WISDOM – Knowledge and skill for doing life God's way.

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LEADER BIBLE STUDY

The Babylonian captivity had ended while Cyrus was king of Persia. Some of God's people—now referred to as Jews (people from Judah)—traveled back to Judah to rebuild the temple, the city and their lives. Others, however, stayed in Persia where life among the pagans was relatively comfortable.

The king of Persia was now Ahasuerus (uh haz yoo EHR uhs), also known by his Greek name, Xerxes (ZUHRK seez). Esther was a young Jewish girl whom Ahasuerus had chosen to be his queen. The former queen had defied the king and was promptly replaced. Esther did not reveal to the king that she was a Jew.

Esther had been an orphan, so her cousin Mordecai adopted her. Mordecai kept in touch with Esther while she lived in the palace. One day, the king gave Haman the Agagite a very important position in the kingdom. The king even commanded the people to bow down to Haman. But Mordecai refused.

Haman was a descendant of Agag, king of the Amalekites. The nations of Israel and Amalek did not get along. Haman was angry about Mordecai's defiance, but instead of just punishing Mordecai, he planned to kill all the Jews in the kingdom.

Mordecai turned to Esther for help. After all, she was in a position of power, and the Jews were her people. The stakes were high. Esther could be killed for approaching the king without permission. But Esther was willing to take the chance and explain her people's plight.

Remind students that the survival of God's people was essential to God's plan. God's plan all along was to send the Messiah through Abraham's family. Haman's evil plan opposed God's plan, but God was in

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control. He was working out a plan to use Esther to rescue His people and make the way for His Son, Jesus, to come into the world.

BIBLE TIMELINE & REVIEW (3 MIN)

During our last class, we learned about the end of Israel's exile. When the first group of Jews returned to Israel, what did they do first? (*Built an altar to God.*) Why did it take the people so long to build the temple? (*Enemies tried to stop them.*) What prophets and leaders did God use to encourage them to finish the temple? (*Zerubbabel, Haggai, Zechariah, Ezra.*)

During this time, God's people became known as Jews. Many of them, including Esther, still lived far away from their homeland. A new king destroyed Babylon and created the Persian Empire. This was a difficult time for the Jewish people. Although God did not speak through the prophets during this time, He did not forget His people. He worked quietly behind the scenes to protect His people through a woman named Esther.

SESSION STARTERS (5-10 MIN)

How Would You Choose? (Older Students)

- Discuss how the students would choose a queen or king if given the opportunity. What qualifications would that person need to have? What makes someone a good king or queen? Consider listing their ideas on a dry erase board.
- Picking a new leader can be tough! Everyone had different ideas about the best way to choose a leader. We will hear a Bible story today about how a king chose his queen.

Ruler For a Day (Older and Younger Students)

- Have the class sit in a circle. Ask students to think about what they would do if they were the president of the U.S. What would they do with their power? The first student will say, "If I were president for a day, I would … [*fill in the blank*]. The next student will repeat what the first student said and add their own idea. Continue to play until each student has had the opportunity to share one task they would complete as the president. If there are too many students, begin the game again at the halfway point. Younger students should reset after three students share.
- Today's Bible story is about Esther, who was in a position of power. Esther had to decide how she would use her power when her people needed help. We will find out today what Esther decided to do.

Good Queen, Bad Queen (Younger Students)

- Talk to your students about what would make a good queen or king and what would make a bad queen or king. Use a chalkboard or poster board to write down their responses.
- Today, we will learn about a woman named Esther. She was selected to be queen of Persia by King Ahasuerus. He didn't make a list of the qualities that make a good queen; he just picked a woman based on her appearance! Thankfully, even in that choice, God was working to protect His people. We'll learn more during our Bible story.

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KEY PASSAGE & ACTIVITY (5 MIN)

Jeremiah 29:11–12 (Older Students)

"For I know the plans I have for you"—this is the Lord's declaration—"plans for your well-being, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. You will call to Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you."

Jeremiah 29:11 (Younger Students)

"For I know the plans I have for you"—this is the Lord's declaration—"plans for your well-being, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope."

Passage Line-Up (Older Students)

- Hold up the key passage poster and read it aloud together. Then, invite the students to stand shoulder to shoulder in a line. Go down the line, prompting each child to read the next word in the passage. For more advanced classes, give each student a word or phrase and have them line up in order of the key passage.

Key Passage Motions (Older and Younger Students)

- Form groups of two or three. Each group will develop hand motions for the word or phrase of the key passage that you assign them. Consider researching some sign language words to help students with ideas. Bring the groups back together to learn the motions for each phrase. Say the key passage all together, using the motions developed by the different teams.

Big Picture Q&A

Q: Does God keep His promises?

A: *Yes, God is always faithful, even when we are not.*

BIBLE STORY (10 MIN)

Esther Became Queen | Esther 1–4

When Cyrus was king of Persia, he sent some of God's people back to Judah to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. God's people were called Jews because they were from Judah. Though some Jews returned to Judah to rebuild the temple, many Jews were still in Persia when **Ahasuerus** (uh haz yoo EHR uhs) **became the new king of Persia.**

When the king's wife, Vashti, did not listen to him, he decided she should not be queen anymore. **The king** of Persia **needed a new queen. The most beautiful women in the land were brought to the King's palace and prepared to see the king. He chose a woman named Esther to be queen. Esther** was very beautiful. She **was a Jew and had been raised by her cousin Mordecai** (MAWR duh kigh). **Esther did not tell the king that she was a Jew.**

One day, Mordecai sat at the city gate and overheard two guards plan to kill the king. Mordecai told Esther, who warned the king. Mordecai had saved the king's life.

Later, the king appointed a man named Haman to be his chief official and commanded everyone to bow down in respect to Haman as he went by. Mordecai refused to bow down to Haman. He would

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only bow down before God. When Haman saw this, he was furious. He decided to find a way to kill Mordecai and all of the Jews.

Later, Mordecai heard that Haman had convinced the king to issue an order that all the Jews could be attacked and killed on a certain day at the end of the year. Mordecai was upset! He was a Jew; he did not want all the people he loved to be killed. **Mordecai and all the Jews cried. Esther** did not know what was wrong. She **sent a messenger to ask Mordecai why all the Jews were upset. Mordecai told Esther about Haman's evil plan.**

"You have to do something!" Mordecai said. "You are the queen. **Ask the king** to stop Haman. Ask him **to save the Jewish people."**

Esther sent a message back to Mordecai. "No one can approach the king unless the king calls for that person first," Esther said. "The punishment is death—unless the king holds out his scepter; then, you may live."

Mordecai encouraged Esther to think about it. "You are a Jew," he said. "If you do not stop Haman, he may kill you too. **Maybe this is why you are the queen. Maybe God made you queen to save your people!"**

Esther asked Mordecai to gather the Jewish people and to fast. They would not eat or drink for three days. **They would pray to God for help. Then, Esther would go to the king. She was willing to die to save the Jews.**

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JESUS CONNECTION

God's plan all along was to send the Messiah through Abraham's family. Haman's evil plan might have stopped God's plan, but God was in control. He was working out a plan to use Esther to rescue His people and make the way for His Son, Jesus, to come into the world.

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LIFEWISE QUALITY (3–4 MIN)

WISDOM – Knowledge and skill for doing life God's way.

Living LifeWise

God alone is wise, so we can ask Him for wisdom in every situation.

Character Connection

We often hear people say that we should follow our hearts when we're trying to decide what to do. The Bible tells us that the heart is "more deceitful than anything else, and incurable" (Jer. 17:9). We can't trust it to give wise advice at all because it only knows how it feels. Despite what many people believe, knowing how we feel is not the same as knowing what is right or wrong.

So where can we go to get wise advice? Did you see where Esther went? She was in a very tough spot. If she did nothing, her people would die. If she went to the king, she could die. She definitely needed wisdom. Whom did she seek wisdom from? (*Mordecai, God.*)

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We can use the same sources of wisdom as Esther did. She asked her older cousin, who knew her, knew the situation and had shown himself wise already. But she also asked God. Did you know that God promises He'll always give wisdom to those who ask for it (Jas. 1:5)? He does. He will give us His wisdom through the Bible any time we need it.

Which of these do you think would be a good source for wisdom? Why or why not?

- The internet
- Your neighbor's baby girl
- The Bible.
- Your teacher.

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BIBLE STORY REVIEW (5 MIN)

- **Where did Esther live?**

  Persia

- **Who was Esther's cousin?**

  Mordecai, Esth. 2:5

- **Why did King Ahasuerus send Vashti away?**

  She would not obey; Esth. 1:12–13, 19

- **Why was Haman so angry with Mordecai?**

  Mordecai refused to bow down to him, Esth. 3:2–5

- **Who wanted to kill the Jews?**

  Haman, Esth. 3:5–6

- **Why was Esther afraid to talk to the king about Haman's plan?**

  Esther could be killed for going to the king without being called, Esth. 4:9–11

- **What did Esther ask Mordecai and the Jews to do?**

  Pray and fast with her, Esth. 4:16

- **What was Esther willing to do for her people?**

  Die, Esth. 4:16

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES (5-10 MIN)

Helping Pairs (Older Students)

- Give each student three index cards, and have them number each card (1, 2, 3). Students should turn the cards face down and find a partner. When you say "Flip," each student should turn over one card. If the numbers do not match, they should sit down where they are. If the cards match, the pair may point to a pair of sitting players and invite them back into the game. Play several rounds. Students may switch partners each round. If none of the partners' cards match, invite everyone to restart the game.

- This was a fun helping game. How did you feel when you and your partner had a match? [*Allow responses.*] Having a match meant that you could help another pair of players. How did you feel inviting others back into the game? In today's Bible story, Esther was in a serious situation. The Jews were in trouble. As queen, Esther was in a position to help. Esther agreed to help her people.

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Support a Community Helper (Older and Younger Students)

- Before the session, identify someone who serves the school or community (firefighter, police officer, doctor or nurse, military personnel, missionary, etc.). You may choose to invite this community volunteer to visit your class, or provide supplies for students to write cards and draw pictures for the volunteer.
- For a class visit, introduce your guest and allow students to ask questions about their duties. You may consider preparing questions beforehand, such as:
  - What do you do to help people?
  - How long have you been doing this job?
  - What is the hardest part of your job?
  - What do you like most about helping people?
  - Why do you think God uses people to help other people?
  - How can we pray for you?
- When writing cards and drawing pictures, explain the volunteer's role in the community and, if available, share a picture of him or her. Encourage students to ask questions about the helper's duties and to thank him for his service. Collect students' cards and deliver them during the week.
- Esther agreed to help her people. This wasn't an easy decision! Esther was willing to die to help the Jews. Let's pray for the people in our community who are willing to give up their time, their safety and even their lives to help those in need.

Saved By the King (Older and Younger Students)

- Use a pool noodle as a makeshift scepter. Briefly discuss how someone might show that they are humble. (*Bow, lower eyes, be quiet, wait patiently, etc.*) Divide the class into two teams. Invite one student from each group to stand before you. Tell them you will extend the scepter to the student who gets on their knees first. That student will take the scepter and attempt to answer the Bible story question. If they answer the question correctly, give the student's team a point. Continue playing until each student has had at least one turn.
  - Is the book of Esther in the Old Testament or New Testament?
    - A. *Old Testament*
    - B. New Testament
  - Where did Esther live?
    - A. Israel
    - B. *Persia*
  - What was the name of Esther's cousin?
    - A. Nehemiah
    - B. *Mordecai*
  - Who was queen before Esther?
    - A. *Vashti*
    - B. Rahab

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- Why did King Ahasuerus send Vashti away?
  - A. *She would not listen to the king*
  - B. She was too old
- Who replaced Vashti as queen?
  - A. *Esther*
  - B. Jezebel
- Who wanted to kill the Jews?
  - A. The king
  - B. *Haman*
- Why did Haman want to kill the Jews?
  - A. *Haman hated Mordecai because he would not kneel before Haman*
  - B. The Jews killed his family
- What did the Jews do when they heard about Haman's evil plan?
  - A. They left Persia
  - B. *They cried*
- Why was Esther afraid to talk to the king about Haman's plan?
  - A. The king might stop loving her
  - B. *If the king did not call for Esther, she could be killed for coming to him*
- What did Esther ask Mordecai and the Jews to do?
  - A. *Pray and fast with her*
  - B. Be ready to escape from Persia

Royal Crown (Younger Students)

- Give each child a paper plate. Help fold their plates in half. students will need to make three cuts (like pie slices), each starting from the center and reaching just to the edge of the plate's inner circle. Then, ask the students to unfold their plates and bend the prongs upward, making a crown. Provide adhesive jewels, markers or other craft supplies for the students to decorate their crowns.
- God always has a plan. God knew about Haman's plan before Haman did, so God planned for Esther to be queen. Esther agreed to help her people. God also knew about our sin before we ever sinned. God's plan to rescue us from sin was fulfilled when Jesus came to earth to die on the cross. When Jesus rose again, He defeated sin and made the way for us to be made new and holy. When we trust in Jesus, we are transformed from the inside out to love and live the way God wants us to.

Activity Pages & Recap Cards (5–10 min) (For in-class or take-home use)

- Who's That? (Older Students)
- Quirky Queen (Younger Students)

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Prayer & Requests (3–5 min)

Father, You are faithful and good. Nothing You plan can be stopped. Thank You for reminding us of that through the story of Esther. Thank You for sending Jesus to save us from sin. Help us to see the ways You have specially placed us in this time and place to tell people in our lives about Jesus. Amen.

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Journal Page

List three ways you can encourage, protect or help people in your life this week.

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FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS

- How can you see God at work in this story?
- Talk about how your neighborhood is special. What do you like about where you live?
- What are some ways you can help others in your neighborhood or community?

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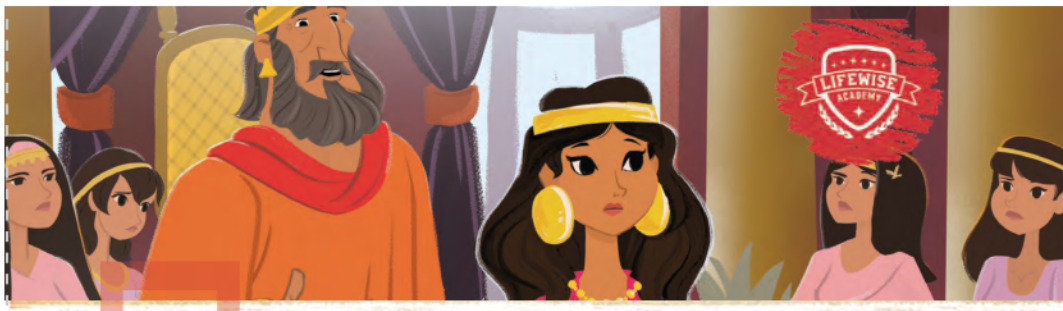

ESTHER BECAME QUEEN

ESTHER 1–4

MAIN POINT: ESTHER AGREED TO HELP HER PEOPLE.

Ahasuerus became the new king of Persia. The king needed a queen. He chose Esther to be queen. Esther was a Jew and had been raised by her cousin Mordecai. Esther did not tell the king that she was a Jew.

One day, Mordecai heard that Haman, a very important leader who worked for the king, was planning to kill all the Jews. Mordecai and all the Jews cried.

Esther sent a messenger to ask Mordecai why all the Jews were upset. Mordecai told Esther about Haman's evil plan.

"You have to do something!" Mordecai said. "Ask the king to save the Jewish people."

Esther sent a message back to Mordecai. "No one can approach the king unless the king calls for that person first," Esther said. "The punishment is death—unless the king holds out his scepter; then you may live."

Mordecai encouraged Esther to think about it. "You are a Jew," he said. "Maybe this is why you are the queen." Maybe God put Esther in the palace to save her people!

Esther asked Mordecai to gather the Jewish people and to fast. They would pray to God for help. Then Esther would go to the king. She was willing to die to save the Jews.

Jesus Connection: *God's plan all along was to send the Messiah through Abraham's family. Haman's evil plan might have stopped God's plan, but God was in control. He was working out a plan to use Esther to rescue His people and make the way for His Son, Jesus, to come into the world.*

Key Passage: *Jeremiah 29:11–12 – "For I know the plans I have for you"—this is the Lord's declaration—"plans for your well-being, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. You will call to Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you."*

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WHO'S THAT?

Use the clues to discover who each person was and what he or she did. Mark correct answers with a dot and incorrect answers with an *X*.

1. Esther was not a leader for the king of Persia.
2. Mordecai did not want to kill the Jews.
3. Haman was not willing to die to save the Jews.
4. The queen of Persia was willing to die to save the Jews.
5. The leader for the king of Persia did not ask the queen for help.
6. Esther was the queen of Persia.
7. Esther's cousin asked the queen for help.

	Esther's cousin	queen of Persia	leader for king of Persia	wanted to kill the Jews	asked the queen for help	was willing to die to save the Jews
Esther						
Mordecai						
Haman						
wanted to kill the Jews						
asked the queen for help						
was willing to die to save the Jews						

ESTHER QUIZ

Circle the correct word to fill the missing details about today's Bible story.

The king of Persia needed a queen. He chose _____ (Bathsheba or Esther) to be queen. Esther did not tell the king that she was a _____ (Jew or widow). One day, Mordecai heard that _____ (Saul or Haman) was planning to kill all the Jews. Mordecai and all the Jews _____ (cried or danced). Mordecai said to Esther, "You are the _____ (princess or queen). Ask the _____ (king or police officer) to stop Haman. Ask him to _____ (ignore or save) the Jewish people." Esther asked Mordecai to gather the Jewish people and to _____ (fast or sleep). They would _____ (pray or sing) to God for _____ (fun or help). Then Esther would go to the king. She was willing to _____ (travel or die) to _____ (teach or save) the Jews.

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QUIRKY QUEEN

INSTRUCTIONS: Circle the five items that do not belong in the picture.

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KEY PASSAGE:
Jeremiah 29:11–12 – "For I know the plans I have for you"–this is the Lord's declaration–"plans for your well-being, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. You will call to Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you."

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Does God keep His promises? Yes, God is always faithful even when we are not.

BIBLE STORY: ESTHER BECAME QUEEN

- The king selected Esther to replace the queen. Esther did not tell him she was a Jew.
- Haman made a plan to kill God's people.
- Mordecai told Esther about Haman's evil plan.
- Esther agreed to help God's people.

FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS:

- How can you see God at work in this story?
- How can you see God at work in your own life?

FAMILY ACTIVITY:

- Play dress-up with your kids and re-enact the story. Discuss with them the ways God showed that He was in control even when Haman made an evil plan to hurt God's people.

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ESTHER AGREED TO HELP HER PEOPLE.

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LESSON 57: CONFIDENCE

GOD SAVED HIS PEOPLE THROUGH ESTHER

Esther 5-10

GOD SAVED HIS PEOPLE THROUGH ESTHER

- Esther 5-10
- Big Picture Q&A: Does God keep His promises? Yes, God is always faithful, even when we are not.
- Key Passage: Jeremiah 29:11–12 – "For I know the plans I have for you"—this is the Lord's declaration—"plans for your well-being, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. You will call to Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you."

JESUS CONNECTION

God was in control over Haman's evil plan to destroy the Jews. Like Haman, Satan wants to destroy believers. Satan thought he had won when Jesus died on the cross, but God raised Jesus from the dead and defeated Satan once and for all.

LIFEWISE QUALITY

CONFIDENCE – Trusting in God's goodness and character no matter what.

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LEADER BIBLE STUDY

During the time of Queen Esther—more than 450 years before Jesus was born—the Jewish people were scattered around the Persian Empire. The Book of Esther tells the unlikely story of a young Jewish woman who, as the queen of the Persian Empire, saved her people.

After Esther was chosen as the queen of Persia, she received news that an evil man named Haman had a plan to kill all of the Jews. The Book of Esther is the only book in the Bible that never mentions God by name, but God clearly worked through Esther and her cousin Mordecai to save the Jewish people. Mordecai even suggested to Esther that God's hand was in the situation: "Who knows, perhaps you have come to your royal position for such a time as this" (Est. 4:14).

Build the tension of the story as you teach. Point out that if Haman was successful in killing all the Jews, his evil plan would put God's promises in jeopardy. God had promised to bless the world through Abraham's family and to send a King from the line of David who would rule forever.

Esther had a choice to make. She could do nothing and face destruction (Esth. 4:13–14), or she could risk her life by approaching the king to plead for the protection of the Jews. Esther and the Jewish people prayed and fasted for three days before Esther went to the king.

Esther was welcomed by the king, who offered to give her anything she wanted—up to half of the kingdom. Esther told the king of Haman's plot against her people. The king ordered that Haman be killed instead!

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Emphasize that God was in control despite Haman's evil plan to destroy the Jews. Like Haman, Satan wants to destroy believers. Satan thought he had won when Jesus died on the cross, but God raised Jesus from the dead and defeated Satan once and for all.

BIBLE TIMELINE & REVIEW (3 MIN)

Last time, we learned that a Jew was chosen to be the queen of Persia. Does anyone remember her name? (*Esther.*) At the same time, a man named Haman, a leader for the king, hated the Jews and came up with an evil plan to destroy them. Esther's cousin Mordecai heard about Haman's plan, and he sent a message to Esther. What did Mordecai beg Esther to do? (*Use her position as queen to help her people.*) What could happen if Esther visited the King without being invited? (*She could be killed.*) That's where our story will pick up today.

SESSION STARTERS (5-10 MIN)

Life Events Timeline (Older Students)

- Instruct the students to draw a brief timeline of their lives highlighting important events. [*Examples: starting school, joining a sports team, becoming a big brother or sister.*] Invite each student to share one or two of the events from his timeline with the group.
- Can you imagine what your life would have been like if you'd been born 100 years ago? Did you know that God planned the exact day that you would be born? It's true! God has a plan for every person, and part of that plan includes when they live (Acts 17:26). In our Bible story today, Esther's cousin reminded her that God had a special purpose for her living in that exact time and place.

King, May I? (Older and Younger Students)

- Guide students to stand shoulder to shoulder at one side of the room. Designate a player to be the king. The king will stand at the other side of the room, facing the students. The first player will ask the king for permission to take a certain number of steps. [*Examples: 5 baby steps, 2 giant steps, 7 jumping steps, etc.*] The king can reply, "Yes, you may," or "No, you may not." Then, another student may ask to take steps. The game ends when one player reaches the king. If your class is large, divide the class so that half the students play the game while the other half completes the activity page, then switch.
- Our Bible story today continues the story we heard about Esther becoming queen. Esther learned that the Jews needed her help. She needed to go to the king to save them. Let's find out what happened!

Perfect Timing (Older and Younger Students)

- Play a series of games with your students to test their reflexes. Hold a yardstick over the open hand of a student. Drop the stick so that it passes between her fingers and thumb and see how fast the student can grab it. Measure where her hand is when she catches it. The fewer inches up the stick, the faster she reacted. Another option would be to use a medicine dropper to drip water steadily. Challenge students to pass their hand through the path of the drops without getting wet.
- Your timing was impressive, but God's timing is perfect. He placed Esther where He needed her to save His people. We will learn more about how she did so during our Bible story.

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KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY/BIG PICTURE Q&A (5 MIN)

Jeremiah 29:11–12 (Older Students)

"For I know the plans I have for you"—this is the Lord's declaration—"plans for your well-being, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. You will call to Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you."

Jeremiah 29:11 (Younger Students)

"For I know the plans I have for you"—this is the Lord's declaration—"plans for your well-being, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope."

Pass The Crown (Older and Younger Students)

- Cut out a simple crown shape from yellow construction paper. Invite the class to sit in a circle and pass the crown while music is played. When the music stops, the student holding the crown must say or read the key passage aloud for the class. As the game goes on, cover words on the poster to see if the students can still say the verses.

Big Picture Q&A

Q: Does God keep His promises?

A: *Yes, God is always faithful, even when we are not.*

BIBLE STORY (10 MIN)

God Saved His People Through Esther | Esther 5–10

The Jews in Persia were in trouble. Haman, an enemy of the Jews, was plotting to kill all of them! Esther was queen, and she was also a Jew. She was going to try to help them.

Esther, her cousin Mordecai and the Jewish people fasted for three days. On the third day, **Esther went to the king. The king** was sitting on his throne. He **saw Esther and held out his golden scepter.** Esther walked toward him and touched the tip of the scepter.

"What is it, Queen Esther?" the king asked. "What do you want to ask me? **I will give you anything—up to half of my kingdom."**

Esther said, "Would you and Haman come to a feast today? I have prepared it.**"**

So, Haman and the king went to Esther's feast. As they sat **after eating, the king said, "What do you want, Queen Esther? I will give you anything—up to half of my kingdom."**

"Please come to my feast tomorrow, you and Haman," Esther said.

The king agreed to come. Haman left Esther's feast and saw Mordecai sitting outside the palace. Mordecai still refused to bow before him and Haman hated him for it. That night, Haman went home and had gallows made where he could hang Mordecai. He planned to ask the king to have Mordecai hanged the next morning.

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That night, the king couldn't sleep. He ordered that the Persian record of great deeds be read to him. As it was read, he was reminded of how Mordecai had saved his life. The king realized that Mordecai had never been rewarded. He decided to honor him.

Early the next morning, Haman went to see the king. Before Haman could ask the king to kill Mordecai, the king ordered Haman to honor Mordecai in front of all the people. Haman was forced to dress Mordecai in the king's robes and crown and lead him through town on the king's horse.

Then, **Haman and the king went to Esther's feast.** As they sat **after eating, the king said, "What do you want, Queen Esther? I will give you anything—up to half of my kingdom."**

Esther spoke up, "There is a plan to kill me and my people."

The king replied, "Who is responsible for this plan?"

"This evil enemy—Haman!" Esther said.

The king was angry! He ordered for Haman to be hanged on the gallows Haman had built to kill Mordecai. Haman was hanged, and the king helped the Jewish people. **He made a law to keep the Jewish people safe from their enemies.**

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JESUS CONNECTION

God was in control over Haman's evil plan to destroy the Jews. Like Haman, Satan wants to destroy believers. Satan thought he had won when Jesus died on the cross, but God raised Jesus from the dead and defeated Satan once and for all.

LIFEWISE QUALITY (3–4 MIN)

CONFIDENCE – Trusting in God's goodness and character no matter what.

Living LifeWise

Because God is in control, we can have confidence that He will take care of us.

Character Connection

God always keeps his promises, big and little. He promised Abraham He would make him a great nation and give his family the land, and He did. He promised the Jews that He would be with them always and that they would be exiled if they didn't repent of their sin. He kept those promises, too. That's why Esther could act with confidence. God was totally in control. He had kept every promise, so she trusted that He would protect her now. And did He? (*Yes!*)

The Bible says that God has given us "great and precious promises" (2 Peter 1:4). He promised He would never leave us (Heb. 13:5). He helps us (Is. 41:10) and gives us peace (John 14:27). He promised that He always provides a way to escape temptation (1 Cor. 10:13), and He promises to finish the good work He's begun in us (Phil. 1:6).

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We can rely on those promises and confidently live God's way, leaving the outcome to Him. We can trust Himt to remind us of God's promises and to help us do what's right. We can be confident (have faith) that God will always keep His promises. Because He always does.

Can you think of a situation at home or school where you might need to trust these specific promises? [*Examples: even if we're alone at recess, God never leaves us; or when we don't know what to do, we can ask God to help us know.*]

- He will never leave us (Heb. 13:5).
- He helps us (Is. 41:10).
- He will give wisdom if we ask (Jas. 1:5).
- He saves us through Jesus (John 3:16).

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BIBLE STORY REVIEW (5 MIN)

- What did Esther ask Mordecai and the Jews to do?

  Pray and fast with her, Esth. 4:16
- How many days did Esther ask Mordecai and the rest of her people to fast and pray?

  Three, Esth. 4:15
- When Esther approached the king, what did she ask him to do?

  Come with Haman to a feast she had prepared, Esth. 5:4
- Whom did the king want to honor?

  Mordecai, for saving his life, Esth. 6:2–3
- When did Esther reveal that Haman's plot was against her too?

  At the second feast, Esth. 7:9–11
- At the second feast Haman and the king attended, what did Esther tell the king?

  That Haman was plotting to kill her people the Jews, Esth. 7:3–6
- How did the king respond to Esther's news?

  He was angry and ordered for Haman to be hanged on the gallows he had built, Esth. 7:9–10
- How did the king protect the Jews?

  Made a law that kept the Jews safe from their enemies, Esth. 8:11

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES (5-10 MIN)

Unintentional Outcomes (Older Students)

- Remind students that in today's Bible story, Haman wanted to kill all the Jews. But Haman didn't realize that God was in control. God used Esther at just the right time to save His people. Read the following list of things that seem bad. Allow students to guess what good thing came from them. Then, reveal the answer.

  - In 1853, a customer complained about his thick, soggy potatoes. The insulted chef sliced potatoes very thin and salted them to anger the customer. (*Potato chips were invented!*)
  - In the 1870s, a chemist studying coal tar got chemicals on his hands, which got onto his food. He noticed that his food tasted very sweet! (*He had created saccharin, or artificial sweetener.*)

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- In 1905, a man left a soda outside with a stirring stick in the cup. That night, the soda froze around the stick. (*Ice pops were invented!*)
- Wanting to make chocolate cookies, a woman in 1930 broke up pieces of a chocolate bar and mixed it into her cookie dough. (*Chocolate chip cookies!*)

- The outcomes of these events weren't what the person had originally expected. That's what happened to Haman. Instead of destroying the Jews, the king ordered for Haman to be hanged. Like Haman, Satan's plan is to destroy believers. The Bible says Jesus came at just the right time to save people from sin. Satan thought he had won when Jesus died on the cross, but God raised Jesus from the dead and defeated Satan once and for all.

Two Step Review (Older and Younger Students)

- Choose one child to be the king (or give yourself the role) and stand at one end of the room. Divide the rest of the class into three or four teams. One person from each team should line up at the other side of the room. Ask the Bible review questions to each team. If the group answers correctly, their player may take two steps toward the king. The team whose player reaches the king first wins.

Bible Story Drawings (Older and Younger Students)

- Give each student a large piece of paper to draw scenes from the story of Esther. Remind them of the events from last week so they can capture the full story. Encourage them to draw some pictures of the ways this story points us to Jesus.

- God used Esther at just the right time to save His people, but God was in control the whole time. We can read the story of Esther and remember how good and trustworthy God is. We know that even now He is working His plans in the world to make sure people from every tribe and nation have the chance to hear about Jesus. We can be a part of God's plan too, just like Esther was, when we trust in Him and obey Him. We can tell other people about Jesus everywhere we go!

Raise the Scepter (Younger Students)

- Select one child to be the king or queen and stand at one end of the room, holding a broomstick (or other staff-like item) as a scepter. The other students will stand at the far end of the room, approaching when the king has the scepter raised and stopping when he puts it down. The first student to reach the king becomes the next king or queen. Consider adding a rule where a half-raised scepter allows the students to move but only in slow motion.

- If Esther approached the king without being called, she could have been killed! However, if the king raised his scepter, she would be allowed to enter the king's presence. Why was Esther willing to risk this punishment to go to the king uninvited?

Activity Pages & Recap Cards (5–10 min) (For in-class or take-home use)

- Esther's Quest (Older Students)
  - Answer: *Haman, Jews, Satan, Jesus, dead, all.*

- Approach The King (Younger Students)

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Prayer & Requests (3–5 min)

God, thank You for the story of Esther in Your Word. In this story, we see Your faithfulness to Your people. Thank You for using ordinary people like Esther—and like us—to work out Your great plans. Thank You for sending Jesus, who willingly gave His life to rescue us from sin and death. He stood in our place so that we could be forgiven. Give us willing hearts to do Your plan in our lives this week. We love You. Amen.

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Journal Page

God desires for everyone to be saved, and He uses ordinary people to share the gospel all over the world. Write about one way God can use you to accomplish His plan.

FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS

- Why was it dangerous for Esther to approach the king?
- Who else put His life at risk to save His people?
- Why should we be willing to risk our lives to tell people about Jesus?

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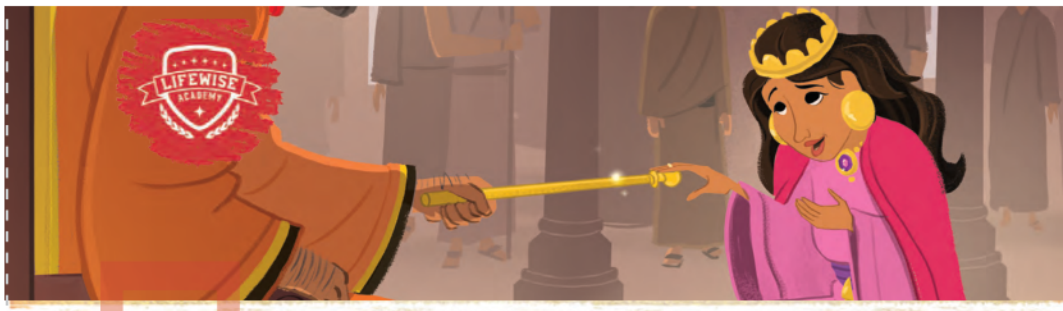

GOD SAVED HIS PEOPLE THROUGH ESTHER

ESTHER 5–10

MAIN POINT: GOD USED ESTHER AT JUST THE RIGHT TIME TO SAVE HIS PEOPLE.

The Jews in Persia were in trouble. Haman, an enemy of the Jews, was plotting to kill all of them! Esther was queen, and she was also a Jew. She was going to try to help them.

Esther went to the king. The king saw Esther and held out his golden scepter.

"What is it, Queen Esther?" the king asked. "I will give you anything—up to half of my kingdom."

Esther said, "Would you and Haman come to a feast today?"

So Haman and the king went to Esther's feast. After eating, the king said, "What do you want, Queen Esther? I will give you anything—up to half of my kingdom."

"Please come to my feast tomorrow, you and Haman," Esther said.

The next day, Haman and the king went to Esther's feast. After eating, the king said, "What do you want, Queen Esther? I will give you anything—up to half of my kingdom."

Esther spoke up, "There is a plan to kill me and my people."

The king replied, "Who is responsible for this plan?"

"This evil enemy—Haman!" Esther said.

The king was angry! He ordered for Haman to be hanged. He made a law to keep the Jewish people safe from their enemies.

Jesus Connection: *God was in control over Haman's evil plan to destroy the Jews. Like Haman, Satan wants to destroy believers. Satan thought he had won when Jesus died on the cross, but God raised Jesus from the dead and defeated Satan once and for all.*

Key Passage: *Jeremiah 29:11–12 – "For I know the plans I have for you"—this is the Lord's declaration—"plans for your well-being, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. You will call to Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you."*

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ESTHER'S QUEST

Trace the path from Esther to King Ahasuerus.

Finish

Start

SAVED FROM DESTRUCTION

Unscramble the mixed-up words. What does today's Bible story teach us about Jesus?

God was in control over _____'s evil
(ANMAH)

plan to destroy the _____. Like Haman,
(ESWJ)

_____ wants to destroy believers. Satan
(TSAAN)

thought he had won when _____ died
(EUSSJ)

on the cross, but God raised Jesus from

the _____ and defeated Satan
(DAED)

once and for _____.
(LAL)

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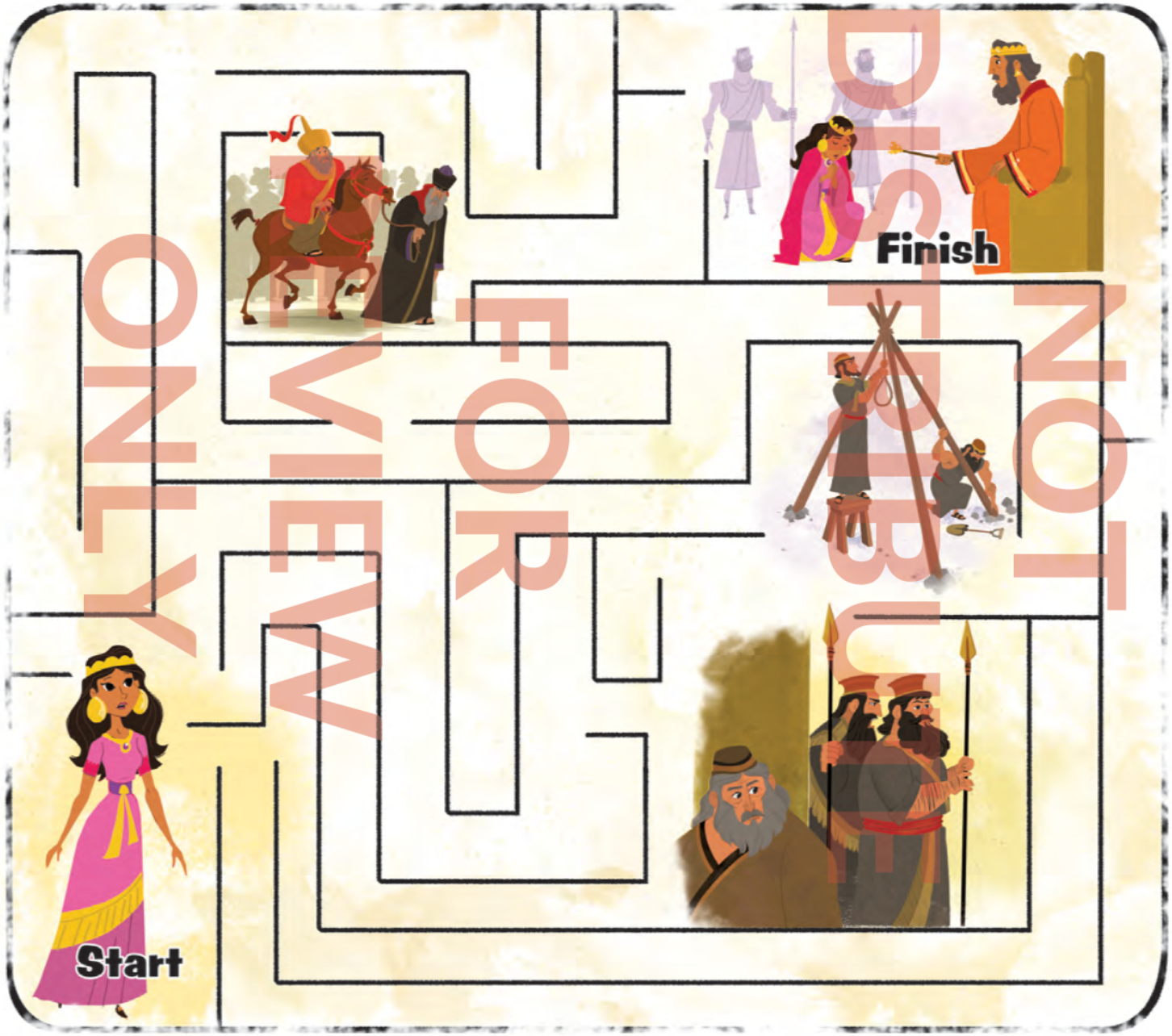
APPROACH THE KING

INSTRUCTIONS: Complete the maze to help Esther arrive in the king's throne room.



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KEY PASSAGE:
Jeremiah 29:11–12 – "For I know the plans I have for you"–this is the Lord's declaration–"plans for your well-being, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. You will call to Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you."

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Does God keep His promises? Yes, God is always faithful even when we are not.

BIBLE STORY: GOD SAVED HIS PEOPLE THROUGH ESTHER

- Esther risked her life to go to the king.
- Esther invited the king and Haman to a feast.
- Esther asked the king to save her people, the Jews, from Haman's plan.
- God used Esther at just the right time to save His people.

FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS:

- Why was it dangerous for Esther to approach the king?
- Who else put His life at risk to save His people?

FAMILY ACTIVITY:

- Play a game like "Mother, May I?" or "Red Light, Green Light" with your family. Talk to them about how Jesus' sacrifice gives us the ability to approach God without fear.

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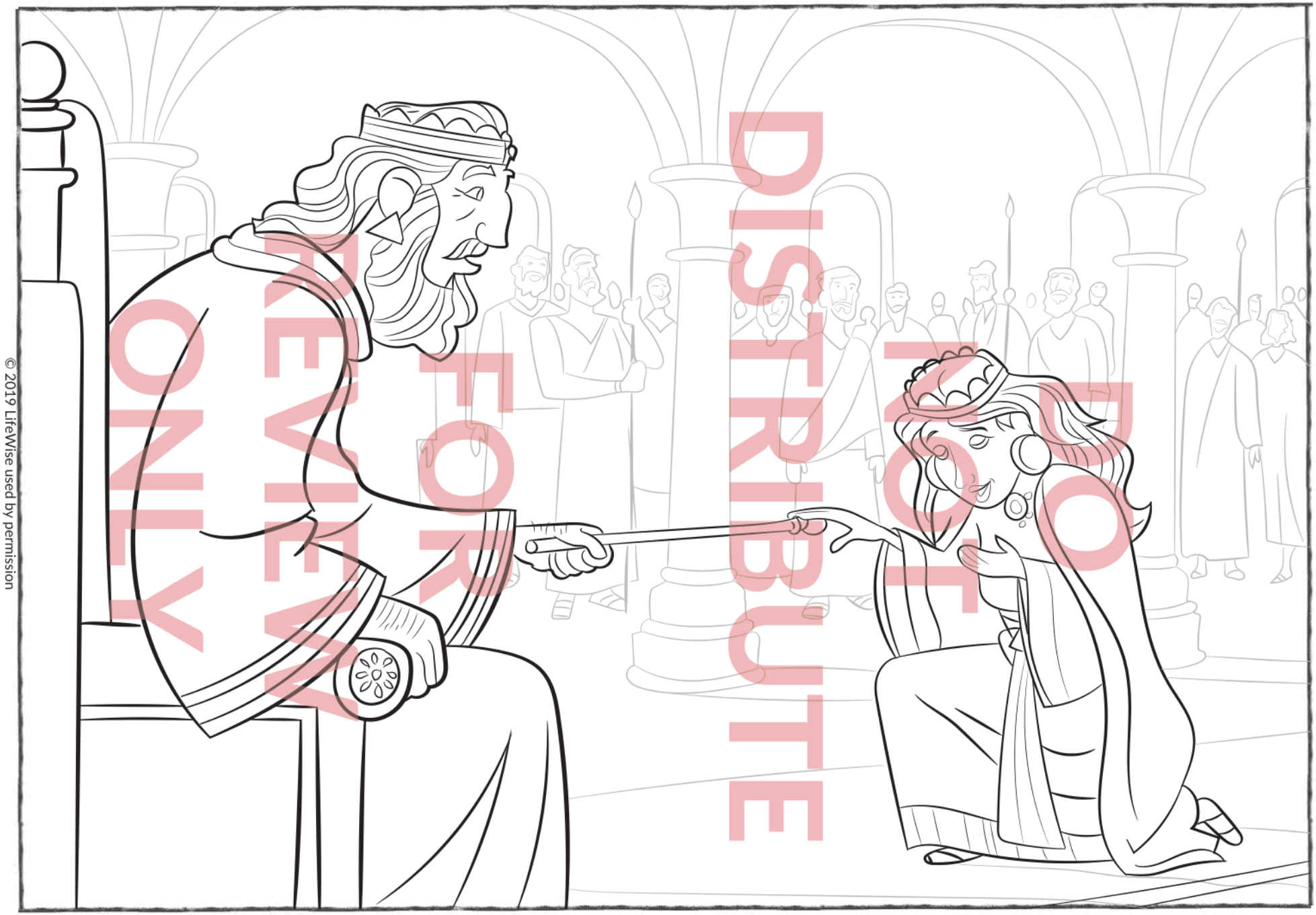

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GOD USED ESTHER AT JUST THE RIGHT TIME TO SAVE HIS PEOPLE.

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LESSON 58: COMMITMENT

NEHEMIAH HEARD NEWS OF JERUSALEM

Nehemiah 1-2

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NEHEMIAH HEARD NEWS OF JERUSALEM

- Nehemiah 1-2
- Big Picture Q&A: Does God keep His promises? Yes, God is always faithful, even when we are not.
- Key Passage: Jeremiah 29:11–12 – "For I know the plans I have for you"—this is the Lord's declaration—"plans for your well-being, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. You will call to Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you."

JESUS CONNECTION

Nehemiah trusted that God would keep His promise to protect His people and give them a home. When we trust in Jesus, we believe God will keep His promise to give us—His people—a home. Jesus obeyed God perfectly. He died on the cross and rose again so we can have a home with Him forever.

LIFEWISE QUALITY

COMMITMENT – Doing what I say I'll do.

LEADER BIBLE STUDY

Nehemiah was a Jew living in Persia. He served as the cupbearer to King Artaxerxes, a position of great trust; the cupbearer made sure no one poisoned the king's drink. Sometimes, the cupbearer even tasted some of the drink himself to ensure it was safe.

When the Persian Empire conquered the Babylonians, King Cyrus allowed God's people to return to Judah. Two or three million Jews had originally been deported, but only a remnant—50,000 people—returned. They set up their homes and rebuilt God's temple in Jerusalem. Nehemiah's story takes place after Ezra led a second group of exiles back to Judah.

Nehemiah received word about God's people who had returned to Judah. They were in trouble and living in shame; the walls of Jerusalem were broken down, and the city gates were burned. They lived in fear, unprotected from their enemies. Nehemiah sat down and wept.

Nehemiah fasted and prayed for days. He remembered God's promise to His people. Their disobedience led to exile, but if they turned back to the Lord, their obedience would lead to blessing. God promised to restore their fortunes and give His people a home (Deut. 30:1–10).

The king noticed Nehemiah's sadness, and Nehemiah was afraid. No one was supposed to be sad in the presence of the king; it was an insult to his greatness. Nehemiah explained the plight of his city. The king granted him leave and gave him letters to ensure his safe passage. Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem. He encouraged the people to rebuild the walls and stood confidently against opposition.

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This story is the beginning of Nehemiah's work to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. As you teach, point out that Nehemiah trusted God's promise to give His people a home. When we repent and trust in Jesus, we can trust His promise to prepare a place for us in His Father's house, where we will be with Him forever (John 14:3).

BIBLE TIMELINE & REVIEW (3 MIN)

Last time, we learned that God used Esther to save the Jews in Persia. What did Esther do in order to save her people from being killed? (*Revealed Haman's plan to the king.*) How did God save the Jewish people? (*The king punished Haman and allowed the Jews to protect themselves from being attacked.*)

After the time of Esther, a second group of Jews went back to Jerusalem with a prophet named Ezra. They sent word back to the Jews in Persia about what things were like in Jerusalem. Nehemiah was a Jew still living in Persia when he heard some bad news from his faraway homeland, Jerusalem.

SESSION STARTERS (5-10 MIN)

True Messages (Older Students)

- Play the Telephone game. Whisper a message to one student, who will whisper what she heard to the next student, who will whisper to the next student, and so on. Ask the last player to announce the message as he heard it. Suggested messages:
  - God is always faithful, even when we are not.
  - Nehemiah heard news of Jerusalem.
  - The people are in trouble.
  - The walls of Jerusalem are broken down.

- Sometimes, when a message is relayed from one person to another and another, the details get mixed up. We will hear how Nehemiah heard a message about the city of Jerusalem. He decided to check out the city for himself to see if the news was true.

Build a Wall (Older Students)

- Form groups of 4–6 students and distribute dry spaghetti and marshmallows to each group. Instruct the students to build a wall using the provided materials. Allow time for each group to share its creation with the rest of the class.

- How sturdy are your walls? Would they hold up against an enemy army? Thankfully, the people in our story today had better building materials than just spaghetti and marshmallows! We are going to hear how Nehemiah prayed that God would help His people rebuild Jerusalem's walls, and the king of Persia gave them the materials they needed.

Your Face Will Surely Show it (Younger Students)

- Before class, write simple emotion words on separate index cards. Invite a volunteer to draw a card and silently act out the emotion. Whoever guesses the emotion correctly first gets to act out the next emotion unless she has already had a turn. Suggested emotions: happy, surprised, angry, confused, sad, tired, etc.

- Our faces often show other people how we are feeling inside. We will learn that Nehemiah was so sad about Jerusalem that the king of Persia could tell just by looking at him.

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Wall Builders (Younger Students)

- Provide students with building blocks. Allow them to build a wall around a table or chair in the classroom. Talk to students about the purpose of a wall. Ask them what would make a wall effective. Then, knock down portions of the wall they built and ask them if it could still work in its broken state.

- Many of God's people had returned to their homes in Jerusalem, but the city walls had been destroyed, and no one had rebuilt them. Walls were very important to cities back then, and when Nehemiah heard about the broken walls, he was extremely sad. We will learn what Nehemiah did when he heard about Jerusalem's broken walls.

KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY/BIG PICTURE Q&A (5 MIN)

Jeremiah 29:11–12 (Older Students)

"For I know the plans I have for you"—this is the Lord's declaration—"plans for your well-being, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. You will call to Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you."

Jeremiah 29:11 (Younger Students)

"For I know the plans I have for you"—this is the Lord's declaration—"plans for your well-being, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope."

Key Passage Puzzle (Older and Younger Students)

- Print copies of the key passage poster on heavyweight paper, one copy per group of 3–4 students. Cut each copy into puzzle pieces and place them into separate bags. Each group should work together to assemble the puzzle and practice memorizing the key passage.

- Just like your puzzles, the walls of Jerusalem were in pieces. Nehemiah wanted to help his people put the walls back together! This key passage was written by the prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah had been sad about the destruction in Jerusalem, just as Nehemiah was, but he learned to praise God no matter what. God is faithful, and He always keeps His promises. We can praise God for everything in our lives. Even bad things can be used for good in God's hands. We're memorizing Jeremiah 29:11–12 so we can remember that God has a good and perfect plan.

Key Passage Block Order (Older and Younger Students)

- Write each word of the key passage on a separate block. Make two sets of key passage blocks. Form two teams and give each team a set of blocks. Time them to see which team can place the blocks in order to make a wall faster. Play again as time allows, shooting for faster times.

- Nehemiah trusted in God's love and believed that God's plan included helping His people rebuild their wall. God loves His people and desires to preserve and protect them. That's why He sent Jesus. Jesus died on the cross and rose again to rescue us and protect us from sin. That is the most important protection we could ask for.

Big Picture Q&A

Q: Does God keep His promises?

A: *Yes, God is always faithful, even when we are not.*

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BIBLE STORY (10 MIN)

Nehemiah Heard News of Jerusalem | Nehemiah 1–2

Nehemiah (NEE huh MIGH uh) **was** a Jew, **one of God's people. God's people had lived in Babylon for many years until King Cyrus**, the king of Persia, took over Babylon and **let them go home. Some of God's people** went home to Judah during the time of King Cyrus. Another group of Jews traveled back to Judah many years later.

Many Jews returned to their homeland, but some of them **stayed in Babylon. Nehemiah stayed and worked for the king of Persia as a cupbearer.**

One day, some men came from Judah. Nehemiah asked, "How are God's people doing in Jerusalem?"

The men had bad news. "The people are in trouble. The walls around Jerusalem are broken down, and the gates have been burned down."

Nehemiah sat down and cried. Then, he prayed and fasted for several days. **"**Lord **God," he prayed, "we have sinned against You. Please remember Your words to Moses: 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples. But if you return to Me and obey Me, I will gather you from the ends of the earth and bring you to the place I have chosen.'"**

Nehemiah went back to serving the king, but he was still sad**. The king** noticed Nehemiah's mood and **asked him, "What's wrong? Why are you sad?"**

Nehemiah was afraid; no one was supposed to look sad around the king. **Nehemiah told the king, "The city where my ancestors are from is in trouble.** It is in ruins, and the gates of the city have been burned down."

"What do you want to do?" the king asked.

Nehemiah prayed. Then, he said, **"Please send me to Jerusalem so I can rebuild the city."**

The king agreed. He gave Nehemiah letters to keep him safe as he traveled. If anyone tried to stop him, Nehemiah could show that he had the king's permission to go to Jerusalem. **The king** also **made sure Nehemiah had wood to help rebuild the city gates and wall. He even sent some men from his army to protect Nehemiah.**

Nehemiah arrived safely in Jerusalem. After three days, **Nehemiah** got up in the middle of the night and **went to look at the city's walls. Then, he told the people there, "**We are in trouble. The city is ruined, and the gates have been burned down. **Come, let's rebuild Jerusalem's wall."**

Nehemiah told the people how God had helped him, and he told them everything the king had said and done. The people said, "Let's start building," and so they did.

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JESUS CONNECTION

Nehemiah trusted that God would keep His promise to protect His people and give them a home. When we trust in Jesus, we believe God will keep His promise to give us—His people—a home. Jesus obeyed God perfectly. He died on the cross and rose again so we can have a home with Him forever.

LIFEWISE QUALITY (3–4 MIN)

COMMITMENT – Doing what I say I'll do.

Living LifeWise

God always does what He says He will do, so we can trust Him to help us keep our commitments.

Character Connection

We have all made a commitment at some point that we didn't keep. Sometimes it was necessary (maybe an emergency came up), and sometimes we just forgot. But one thing we can know about God is that He always does what He says He'll do.

Nehemiah knew that, and he even prayed that God would fulfill His promise to keep the people in Jerusalem safe. And so God did … by sending Nehemiah to work on the walls! Nehemiah was the answer to his own prayer. Even more, Nehemiah made a commitment to the king that he would go and rebuild, and that's exactly what he did, too. He didn't waste time or the king's money. He went to Jerusalem, and he did exactly what he said he'd do.

Best of all, God said He would send us a savior, and He did. He sent Jesus to die for us and make it possible for us to live God's way. Our God is a God who keeps His commitments, and we can ask Him to help us do the same thing in our lives. You probably don't have to build any walls, but God still wants you to be like Him by keeping your commitments.

Do you think you could make and keep these commitments for one week? Why or why not? What might help you keep these commitments?

- Commit to doing your work (or homework) every week.
- Commit to pray for someone every day.
- Commit to reading your Bible every day this week.

BIBLE STORY REVIEW (5 MIN)

- What was Nehemiah's job?

  Cupbearer for the king, Neh. 1:11

- What news did Nehemiah hear?

  Jerusalem's walls and gates were destroyed, Neh. 1:3

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- **What did Nehemiah do after he heard the bad news about Jerusalem?**

  Prayed that God would help His people rebuild Jerusalem's walls, Neh. 1:4

- **What did the king notice about Nehemiah?**

  He was sad, Neh. 2:2

- **Why was Nehemiah afraid to be sad in front of the king?**

  The king's servants weren't allowed to show their feelings.

- **What did Nehemiah ask the king?**

  For permission to go to Jerusalem to rebuild the wall, Neh. 2:5

- **What did the king give Nehemiah to help him?**

  Soldiers, letters that said Nehemiah could travel safely to Jerusalem and permission to take wood from the king's forest, Neh. 2:7–8

- **What did Nehemiah do when he arrived in Jerusalem?**

  Inspected the walls and called the other Jews to rebuild it, Neh. 2:17–18

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES (5-10 MIN)

Pray for People Groups (Older Students)

- Before class, print copies of the Mission's Prayer Cards printable so each student can take home a card. Distribute the prayer cards and allow volunteers to read each card aloud. Spend a few minutes as a class praying for the people groups mentioned. Encourage students to pray this week for the people on the cards. Remind students that we can show care for others by praying and asking God for help.

- Nehemiah cared about the people in Jerusalem. He asked how they were doing. When he heard bad news, he cried. Then, Nehemiah prayed that God would help His people rebuild Jerusalem's walls. Finally, Nehemiah traveled to Jerusalem to help.

Order the Events (Older Students)

- Print and cut apart the Nehemiah sentence strips printable. Mix up the strips and scatter them on the floor or a table. Guide students to open their Bibles to Nehemiah 1–2. Invite the group to work together to arrange them in the correct order. When students finish, guide them to take turns reading the sentences, one strip at a time, to retell the Bible story.

  Correct order of sentences:

  - Men from Judah gave Nehemiah bad news of Jerusalem.
  - Nehemiah cried, prayed and fasted for several days.
  - The king asked Nehemiah why he was sad and what he wanted to do.
  - Nehemiah asked to be sent to Jerusalem to help rebuild the city.
  - The king agreed and gave Nehemiah letters to keep him safe as he traveled.
  - Nehemiah arrived safely in Jerusalem.
  - Nehemiah inspected the city's walls.
  - Nehemiah told the people, "We are in trouble. Let's rebuild Jerusalem's wall."
  - The people began rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.

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Tumbling Tower Trivia (Older and Younger Students)

- Set up a tower block game (Jenga or generic version). Form two teams. Alternate between teams, asking the review questions. For correct answers, players may attempt to remove a block from the tower. An incorrect answer means the other team may answer for a chance to remove a block. When the tower falls, the game ends, and the player who was removing a block when it fell does not keep that block. The team that removed the most blocks at the time the tower falls wins.

Classroom Hunt (Older and Younger Students)

- Before class, hide several objects throughout the room: *a cup, a paper crown, a newspaper, a box of tissues, a paper scroll, a flashlight and a toolbox.*

- Challenge the students to hunt through the classroom to find something you've hidden. Announce the items one at a time. When students find the item, they should bring it to you. Encourage students to explain how the item might relate to the Bible story.

    - Cup—Nehemiah was the king's cupbearer.
    - Crown—Nehemiah served the king of Persia.
    - Newspaper—Nehemiah heard news of Jerusalem.
    - Tissues—Nehemiah sat down and cried.
    - Scroll or letter—The king gave Nehemiah letters to keep him safe as he traveled.
    - Flashlight—Nehemiah inspected the walls at night.
    - Toolbox or tool—The people started to rebuild the walls.

- Nehemiah prayed that God would help His people rebuild Jerusalem's walls. God's people needed strong walls to be safe, and Nehemiah trusted that God would keep His promise to protect His people and give them a home. When we trust in Jesus, we believe God will keep His promise to give us—His people—a home. Jesus obeyed God perfectly. He died on the cross and rose again so we can have a home with Him forever.

Inspection Hunt (Younger Students)

- Hide a number of small stones or blocks around the room. Provide each student with a flashlight and turn off the classroom lights. Instruct the class to search for the stones or blocks and gather them in the center of the room. Once all the stones or blocks have been gathered, guide the students to sit in a circle and build a wall or other structure with them.

- Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem and inspected the walls at night. He found them broken, just as he had heard they would be. However, Nehemiah prayed that God would help His people rebuild Jerusalem's walls. Nehemiah trusted that God would remain faithful to them and help them. God showed His faithfulness by sending Jesus, too. Jesus is the Messiah that God promised to send. God is always faithful, even when we are not.

Activity Pages & Recap Cards (5–10 min) (For in-class or take-home use)

- Breaking News! (Older Students)

- News For Nehemiah (Younger Students)

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Prayer & Requests (3–5 min)

God, thank You for Your Word and for the story of Nehemiah. It shows us a wonderful example of Your faithfulness to Your people. Thank You for sending Jesus to rescue us so we can be Your people, too. Thank You for preparing a home in Heaven for those who trust in Jesus. We know that You are with us, and we pray that You would continue to make us more like Jesus every day. Amen.

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Journal Page

Write about something in your life that you can ask God to help you with.

FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS

- Why do we sometimes forget to pray about our problems?
- How can we know prayer really helps?
- Who do you know who needs help this week? How can you help?

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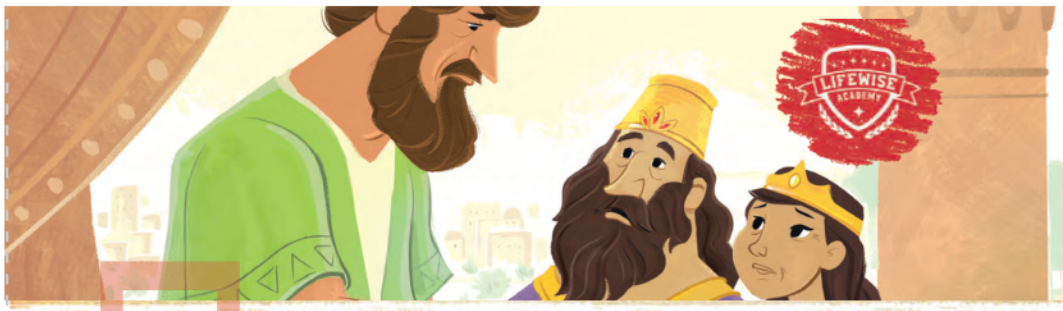

NEHEMIAH HEARD NEWS OF JERUSALEM

NEHEMIAH 1–2

MAIN POINT: NEHEMIAH PRAYED THAT GOD WOULD HELP HIS PEOPLE REBUILD JERUSALEM'S WALLS.

Nehemiah was one of God's people. God's people had lived in Babylon for many years until King Cyrus let them go home. Some of God's people stayed in Babylon. Nehemiah stayed and worked for the king of Persia.

One day, some men came from Judah. Nehemiah asked, "How are God's people doing in Jerusalem?"

The men had bad news. "The people are in trouble. The walls around Jerusalem are broken down, and the gates have been burned down."

Nehemiah sat down and cried. "God," he prayed, "we have sinned against You. Please remember Your words to Moses: 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples. But if you return to Me and obey Me, I will gather you from the ends of the earth and bring you to the place I have chosen.' "

Nehemiah went back to serving the king. The king asked him, "What's wrong? Why are you sad?"

Nehemiah told the king, "The city where my ancestors are from is in trouble."

"Please send me to Jerusalem so I can rebuild the city."

The king agreed. The king made sure Nehemiah had wood to help rebuild the city gates and wall. He even sent some men from his army to protect Nehemiah.

Nehemiah arrived safely in Jerusalem. Nehemiah went to look at the city's walls. Then he told the people there, "Come, let's rebuild Jerusalem's wall."

Nehemiah told the people how God had helped him, and he told them everything the king had said and done. The people said, "Let's start building," and so they did.

Jesus Connection: *Nehemiah trusted that God would keep His promise to protect His people and give them a home. When we trust in Jesus, we believe God will keep His promise to give us—His people—a home. Jesus obeyed God perfectly. He died on the cross and rose again so we can have a home with Him forever.*

Key Passage: *Jeremiah 29:11–12 – "For I know the plans I have for you"—this is the Lord's declaration—"plans for your well-being, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. You will call to Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you."*

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BREAKING NEWS!

Use these questions to interview a friend. Tell your friend to imagine an event that happened—real or imaginary. Then write the answers in the blanks to complete the breaking news story.

FRIEND'S NAME: _____

WHO was involved? _____

WHAT happened? _____

WHEN did this happen? _____

WHERE did this happen? _____

WHY did it happen? _____

_____ (FRIEND'S NAME) told reporters yesterday that _____ (WHEN),

_____ (WHO) _____ (WHAT) _____ (WHERE).

When asked to explain this event, _____ (FRIEND'S NAME) replied,

"_____ (WHY)."

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YES OR NO?

Does God keep His promises? Color in the even numbers to find the answer to the big picture question.

1	2	7	8	1	5	1	4	3	1	7
5	6	1	4	1	8	6	2	5	6	8
7	4	3	8	7	2	4	8	7	2	4
3	9	1	6	5	1	6	2	1	5	1
8	1	4	8	3	8	2	8	4	6	1
2	5	6	2	9	6	8	4	2	8	5
4	7	8	4	5	1	5	6	7	9	1

Write the big picture answer here: _____

_____

_____

_____

What promise did Nehemiah trust God to keep? _____

_____

_____

_____

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NEWS FOR NEHEMIAH

INSTRUCTIONS: Find all the words from the word bank hidden in the grid below.

Nehemiah
news

cup
king

pray
wall

faithful
sad

travel
Jerusalem

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KEY PASSAGE:
Jeremiah 29:11–12 – "For I know the plans I have for you"–this is the Lord's declaration–"plans for your well-being, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. You will call to Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you."

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Does God keep His promises? Yes, God is always faithful even when we are not.

BIBLE STORY: NEHEMIAH HEARD NEWS OF JERUSALEM

- Nehemiah heard about the destruction in Jerusalem.
- Nehemiah prayed that God would help His people rebuild Jerusalem's walls.
- The king of Persia saw how sad Nehemiah was and agreed to send him to rebuild the walls.
- Nehemiah encouraged the people to rebuild the walls.

FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS:

- Why do we sometimes forget to pray about our problems?
- How can we know prayer really helps?

FAMILY ACTIVITY:

- Build a Rube Goldberg machine to do some small task. Talk to your kids about ways we make things harder instead of seeking wisdom from God.

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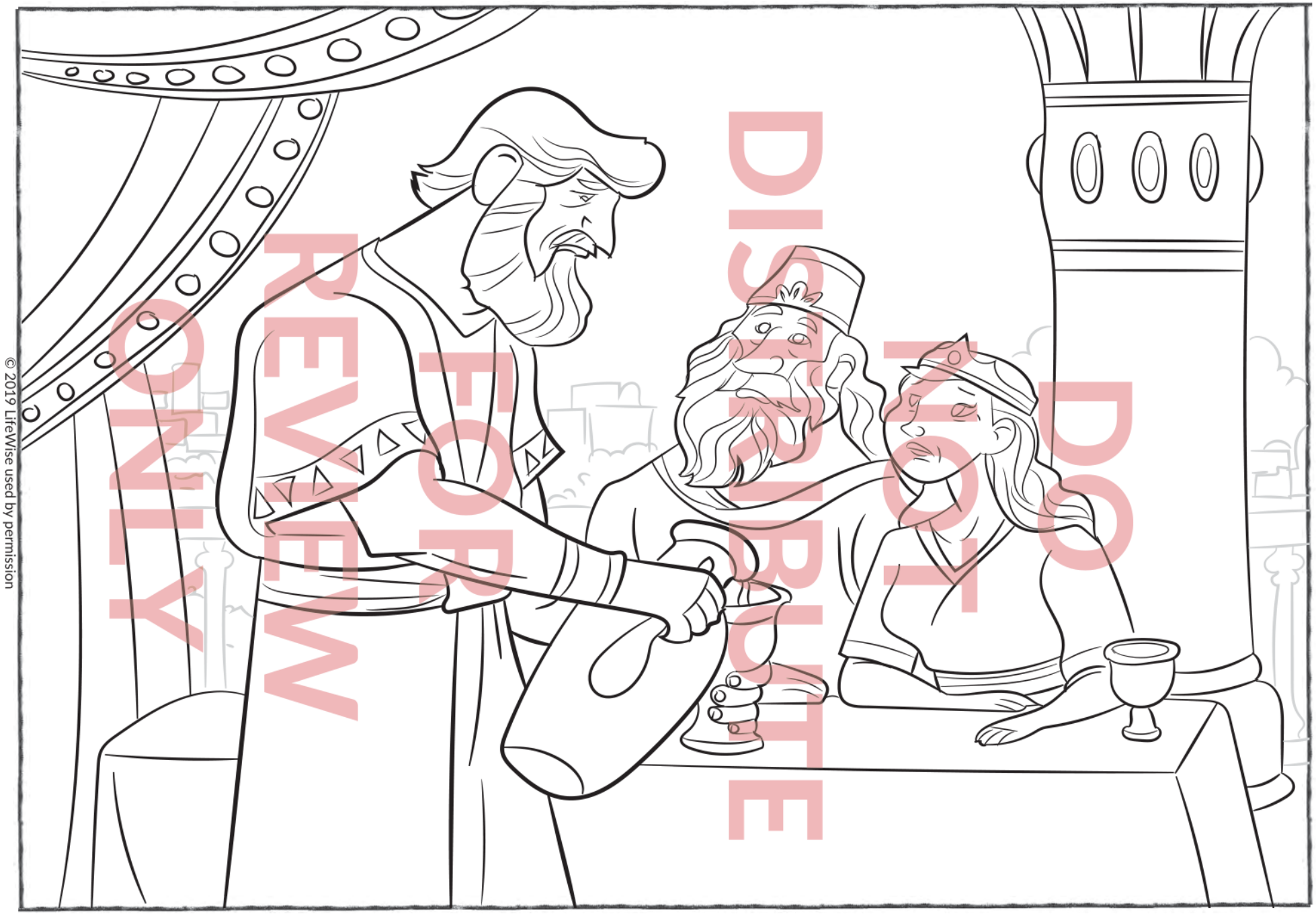

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NEHEMIAH PRAYED THAT GOD WOULD HELP HIS PEOPLE REBUILD JERUSALEM'S WALLS.

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One day, some men came from Judah. Nehemiah asked, "How are God's people doing in Jerusalem?"

The men had bad news. "The walls around Jerusalem are broken down, and the gates have been burned."

Nehemiah sat down and cried.
Then he prayed and fasted for several days.

The king asked Nehemiah why he was sad and what he wanted to do.

Nehemiah prayed. Then he said, "Please send me to Jerusalem so I can rebuild the city."

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Poland

Poland is a country in central Europe. Most of the people in Poland are Roman Catholic, and they speak Polish. Some believe that Polish is one of the most difficult languages to learn because it is so different from English when it comes to spelling, pronunciation, and grammar. Pray for missionaries to learn Polish so they can tell people in Poland the good news about Jesus. Pray for missionary families to help children learn about Jesus through VBS.

Norway

Norway is a kingdom in northern Europe. Most Norwegians are members of the state church, the Church of Norway. Missionaries like the Dove family, however, report that most Norwegians do not know Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Many people in Norway are turning to Buddhism, Hinduism, or do not seek God at all. Pray that missionaries in Norway will share the good news about Jesus with the people so they can be saved.

Russia

Russia is a large country in northern Eurasia (Europe and Asia). In fact, it is the largest country in the world! Many people in Russia are members of the Russian Orthodox Church, but most Russians do not go to church on a regular basis. The territory of Siberia takes up the biggest area of Russia. Siberia is known for its short summers and long winters. Missionary families like the *Culkins travel to Siberia to tell young people and kids the good news about Jesus. Pray that the people in Siberia will hear and believe the gospel.

*names changed

Ontario

Ontario is a province of Canada in North America. Although many people living in Ontario are Canadians or First Nations (similar to Native Americans in the United States), immigrants from all over the world call Ontario home. Many people in Ontario are Catholic, though many people do not say they worship God at all. Pray for missionaries like DJ's family in Toronto (Ontario's largest city) to tell the South Asian immigrants there about Jesus. Pray that the immigrants in Toronto and Ontario will hear and believe the good news about Jesus.

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Mission's Prayer Cards

Instructions: Print and use as directed in the leader guide.

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LESSON 59: INITIATIVE

JERUSALEM'S WALLS WERE REBUILT

Nehemiah 3-6:16

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JERUSALEM'S WALLS WERE REBUILT

- Nehemiah 3-6:16
- Big Picture Q&A: Does God keep His promises? Yes, God is always faithful, even when we are not.
- Key Passage: Jeremiah 29:11–12 – "For I know the plans I have for you"—this is the Lord's declaration—"plans for your well-being, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. You will call to Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you."

JESUS CONNECTION

Nehemiah led the people to rebuild the walls around Jerusalem to protect them from their enemies. Jesus came to protect us from our enemies. He died on the cross and rose from the dead to rescue people from sin and death.

LIFEWISE QUALITY

INITIATIVE – Recognizing and doing what needs to be done without being asked.

LEADER BIBLE STUDY

When the Babylonians took God's people to Babylon, they destroyed Jerusalem. God's people returned years later to rebuild the temple, but when they faced opposition in rebuilding the rest of Jerusalem, they stopped. Some 90 years passed, and the walls and gates around the city were still ruined.

City walls and gates were very important in Bible times. Walls were built to be several feet thick. They protected a city from its enemies and provided a sense of safety and security. Gates were the center of city life, the meeting place for commercial and social transactions. Without these structures, the surviving remnant of God's people struggled and was vulnerable to attack.

Nehemiah traveled from Persia to Jerusalem to lead the effort in rebuilding Jerusalem's walls. Nehemiah's leadership was effective. Nehemiah 3 describes all the people working together to rebuild the gates and walls.

But it wasn't long before Nehemiah met opposition from local governors who planned to attack God's people. God's people armed themselves and kept working. They completed the wall in just 52 days. Note how their enemies reacted: "All the surrounding nations were intimidated and lost their confidence, for they realized that this task had been accomplished by our God" (Neh. 6:16).

Now, God's people were protected from their enemies. Help students see that God provided the way for us to be protected from our enemies, sin and death. He sent His Son, Jesus, to die on the cross for our sins. When we repent and trust in Jesus, He frees us from sin and death. We still sin, but we are no longer slaves to sin (Rom. 6:17–18). We may die a physical death as a result of sin, but we have eternal life (John 11:25–26; Rom. 6:23).

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BIBLE TIMELINE & REVIEW (3 MIN)

During the last class, we learned about Nehemiah. Does anyone remember what his job was in Persia? (*Cupbearer for the king.*) Nehemiah heard that Jerusalem's wall and gates were broken, so the Jews were vulnerable to attack from their enemies. Nehemiah prayed that God would help His people rebuild Jerusalem's walls. How did God answer his prayers? (*The king gave Nehemiah permission to go build the walls, along with supplies and letters of approval.*) Today, we will learn how Nehemiah led the people to rebuild the wall in spite of some very big challenges.

SESSION STARTERS (5-10 MIN)

Materials List (Older Students)

- Draw three columns on a dry erase board. Label the columns *doing math homework*, *planting a garden* and *building a birdhouse*. Invite the students to list materials or tools they would need to complete the tasks. Write their ideas in each column.

- Today, we will hear a Bible story about the Israelites rebuilding the city wall around Jerusalem. They needed many tools to complete this task, but most importantly they needed God's help! Their enemies didn't want them to finish building the wall, so they relied on God to give them success in their work.

Block Pass Relay (Older and Younger Students)

- Form two teams and instruct each team to form a single-file line. Pile 24 blocks at one end of each line. Each team will pass the blocks one at a time down the line. The last player in line should use the blocks to build a wall for their team. The first team to use all their blocks wins.

- Today, we will hear the story of how God used Nehemiah to lead His people as they rebuilt Jerusalem's walls. No one could rebuild the walls on his own! The people needed to work together to complete this big task. God often calls us to do difficult things that we can't do on our own, but God always gives us what we need. We can rely on Him and fellow believers to accomplish His plan.

Two-Handed Activities (Younger Students)

- Provide each child with a sheet of paper, a pencil and a few blocks. Challenge them to build a small structure with one hand while writing their name (or drawing a smiley face, for students who cannot write) with the other hand. Repeat the activity, doing the tasks with the opposite hands. Which hand are they better at controlling?

- In our Bible story today, God's people started rebuilding the walls around Jerusalem. They had enemies who wanted to stop them, so some of them worked with one hand and held a sword with their other to guard against attacks! We will hear how things turned out.

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KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY/BIG PICTURE Q&A (5 MIN)

Jeremiah 29:11–12 (Older Students)

"For I know the plans I have for you"—this is the Lord's declaration—"plans for your well-being, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. You will call to Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you."

Jeremiah 29:11 (Younger Students)

"For I know the plans I have for you"—this is the Lord's declaration—"plans for your well-being, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope."

Build The Wall (Older and Younger Students)

- Write the key passage in words or phrases on adhesive labels or pieces of masking tape. Apply the labels to a set of blocks. Create two sets. Form two groups of students. Instruct each group to work together to build a wall by putting the key passage in order. When students finish, show the key passage poster. Guide them to read it aloud and check their work.

Big Picture Q&A

Q: Does God keep His promises?
A: *Yes, God is always faithful, even when we are not.*

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BIBLE STORY (10 MIN)

Jerusalem's Walls Were Rebuilt | Nehemiah 3:1–6:16

Nehemiah (NEE huh MIGH uh) **went to Jerusalem to help the people rebuild the city walls. The people started working together to fix the walls and the burned-down gates.** The walls and gates had special names. Some of the people worked on the Fish Gate. The Fish Gate was the entrance to the fish market. Some people worked on the Sheep Gate; this gate led to the place men gathered to sell sheep. Others worked on the Valley Gate, the Old Gate and the Horse Gate.

The workers put in doors, bolts and bars. They cut stones and lifted them into place on the wall, and they filled in gaps and holes. All around the city, people worked side by side. Soon, the wall was half as tall as it had once been!

Not everyone was happy that Jerusalem's walls were being rebuilt. **Some men who lived nearby were angry. Sanballat** (san BAL uht) **and Tobiah** (toh BIGH uh) **mocked the people. Sanballat said, "**What do these people think they are doing? **These walls are just piles of trash and dirt. They can't be rebuilt!"**

Nehemiah prayed. God's people kept working on the walls, but their enemies made a plan to attack them and stop their work. God's people prayed and assigned men to guard the walls all day and all night, but they were discouraged. "Our enemies are everywhere," they said.

Nehemiah reminded the people that God was with them. "Do not be afraid. God is great and powerful!" Nehemiah said. "Be ready. **If our enemies attack us, God will fight for us!"** Sanballat and Tobiah could threaten God's people, but they could not make God's people stop building. Sanballat and Tobiah were not in charge of rebuilding the wall; God was!

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So, God's people went back to work. Some stood guard with weapons, and others worked on the wall. Some men worked with one hand and held a weapon in the other. **They were always ready to fight, just in case.**

Nehemiah was a wise and good leader of God's people while they worked. He helped them solve any problems they had. Nehemiah prayed that the leaders would take care of the poor.

Sanballat and Tobiah saw that their threats were not keeping the people from rebuilding the wall so they tried to find a way to kill Nehemiah. Nehemiah prayed, "Lord strengthen my hands." He did not give in to his enemies, and God kept Nehemiah safe.

The people kept working very hard. In just 52 days, the wall was complete! The gates were repaired, and the wall was restored. **When all of Jerusalem's enemies heard that the wall had been rebuilt, they were afraid because they knew God was with His people.**

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JESUS CONNECTION

Nehemiah led the people to rebuild the walls around Jerusalem to protect them from their enemies. Jesus came to protect us from our enemies. He died on the cross and rose from the dead to rescue people from sin and death.

LIFEWISE QUALITY (3–4 MIN)

INITIATIVE – Recognizing and doing what needs to be done without being asked.

Living LifeWise

God always gives us what we need, so we can show initiative to complete the plans He has for us to do.

Character Connection

People with initiative can accomplish a lot in a short amount of time, like God's people repairing a wall in 52 days. But speed isn't really the point of initiative. The key to initiative is knowing what's a priority (the most important thing or the right thing to do) and then doing that thing, instead of all the other things we could do, until it's done. The opposite of showing initiative is doing whatever I feel like doing and putting off the real priorities until later.

Initiative is an important part of success. Sometimes it means finding a creative solution to a problem, but many times, it's much more mundane (common or boring). Initiative means you see what needs done, you do it right away, and you keep doing it over time until it's finished (like homework) or until you succeed (like meeting a goal or completing a project).

Sometimes initiative helps us get famous, make money or get things done, and that's fine. But God wants to help us have initiative to do His will. God has a plan for our lives, and He always provides everything we need to complete that plan. He will give us the strength and creativity to live His way with initiative every day. In His eyes, that's true success.

Which of these approaches show initiative and which one doesn't?

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- Leaving your homework until after school, even if the teacher gives you time to work on it, or getting started on it right away so you can ask for help and get it done early.
- Looking around your room every day to see if you have any clothes to put in the hamper or waiting until someone tells you it's time to do laundry.
- Noticing a classmate who looks like they want to play your game on recess and asking them to join or making them ask before you let them play.

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BIBLE STORY REVIEW (5 MIN)

- **Why did Nehemiah travel to Jerusalem?**

  To rebuild the city walls and gates, Neh. 2:5

- **What did Nehemiah's enemies do to keep them from rebuilding the wall?**

  Made negative comments, threatened them, tried to kill Nehemiah, Neh. 4, 6

- **What did the Jews do when their enemies threatened them?**

  Prayed for God's help, Neh. 4:4–5

- **How did Nehemiah encourage the people?**

  Reminded them that God is powerful and would fight for them against their enemies, Neh. 4:14

- **How did Nehemiah and the builders respond to their enemies?**

  Assigned guards, prayed and continued working, Neh. 4:15–23

- **What did the people hold as they worked on the wall?**

  Weapons, Neh. 4:23

- **How long did it take the people to finish the wall?**

  52 days, Neh. 6:15

- **Who helped the people rebuild?**

  God, Neh. 6:16

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES (5-10 MIN)

In-Person Interview (Older Students)

- Help the students think about the Bible story from different points of view. Have them pair up and conduct in-person interviews. One student will be the interviewer while the other will play the part of a person from the story (i.e., Nehemiah, Sanballat, Tobiah, other Jews building the wall). Prompt the interviewers to ask questions and write down the answers. Guide the interviewee to imagine how the person in the story might answer:
  - How did you feel about the walls being rebuilt?
  - Were you involved in the rebuilding process?
  - Did God help His people? How do you know?

- God used Nehemiah to lead His people as they rebuilt Jerusalem's walls. Imagine how different people experienced the rebuilding process. Remember, the stories in the Bible actually happened. These were real people who experienced God's faithful protection and blessing!

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Construction Stations (Older Students)

- Set up stations around the room with supplies (blocks, poster board, scissors, markers) for a group of three or four students. Form groups and assign each group to a station. Each group should use the supplies to build a gate—an opening in a city wall—complete with a sign identifying the gate's name. Remind students that in Bible times, a gate was an entrance into a city. Gates helped protect a city from enemy attack and were important places where people met to do business and make announcements. Encourage students to give their gates creative names.

- God used Nehemiah to lead His people as they rebuilt Jerusalem's walls. The people also rebuilt the gates around the city. The gates in today's Bible story had names like the Fish Gate, Sheep Gate, Valley Gate and Old Gate. By rebuilding the city gates, the people strengthened their community. The walls and gates protected the people from their enemies. Jesus came to protect us from our enemies. He died on the cross and rose from the dead to rescue people from sin and death.

Tic Tac Toe (Older and Younger Students)

- Write 9 Bible review questions on large colored cards and hang them on the board or wall. Make 5 *X*s and 5 *O*s. Divide students into two teams. Teams may choose any question on the board to answer. If the team answers correctly, they will put their *X* or *O* over that question. To win, a team must get a tic tac toe by answering three questions in a row.

What Protects It? (Younger Students)

- Before class, print multiple sets of What Protects It? cards and cut them apart. Form teams of three or four students and provide each team with a set of cards. Invite them to work together to match each item with what protects it. (*The city is protected by walls, the head by a helmet, the computer by a password, the house by a lock and the heart by the cross.*)

- We try to protect things that are valuable to us. Walls were important to keep God's people safe from their enemies. God used Nehemiah to lead His people as they rebuilt Jerusalem's walls. God wanted His people to be safe, and He showed His faithfulness to them when He helped them rebuild the walls. God showed His faithfulness to us by sending Jesus. Jesus' death and resurrection protect us from the punishment we deserve.

Jerusalem's Walls (Younger Students)

- Guide the class to line up in two lines facing each other and create a tunnel by touching hands with the student across from them. Two at a time, students at one end of the line will run through the tunnel and rejoin the line at the other end. Repeat this process, moving the wall formation until it reaches the other side of the room. Use a stopwatch to see how quickly they can travel across the room.

- As they move, you may sing the following lyrics to the tune of "London Bridge:" Jerus'lem's walls have fallen down, Fallen down, fallen down! Jerus'lem's walls have fallen down, Let's rebuild them!

- God used Nehemiah to lead His people as they rebuilt Jerusalem's walls. When the people finished the wall in just 52 days, even their enemies knew that God had been with His people to finish such a big job. When Jesus died on the cross and rose again, He finished a big job too! Jesus made the way for us to be forgiven of sin and made right with God.

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Activity Pages & Recap Cards (5–10 min) (For in-class or take-home use)

- Timed Art (Older Students)
- Brick By Brick (Younger Students)

Prayer & Requests (3–5 min)

God, You are such a powerful and mighty God. Thank You for the many ways that You protect and care for Your people. We confess that we are not always faithful to You. Forgive our sin, Lord. Thank You for Jesus, who was faithful in every way that we are not. We trust in Jesus alone to be saved from sin. Amen.

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Journal Page

List three ways that you can honor God by helping your friends or family members this week.

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FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS

- What can make us feel discouraged when we have difficult tasks to do?
- How does God's Word encourage us to keep working hard?
- Tell about a time you worked hard to accomplish a task. How did you feel?

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JERUSALEM'S WALLS WERE REBUILT

NEHEMIAH 3–6:16

MAIN POINT: GOD USED NEHEMIAH TO LEAD HIS PEOPLE AS THEY REBUILT JERUSALEM'S WALLS.

Nehemiah went to Jerusalem to help the people rebuild the city walls. The people started working together to fix the walls and the burned-down gates.

The workers put in doors, bolts and bars. They cut stones and lifted them into place on the wall, and they filled in gaps and holes. All around the city, people worked side by side. Soon the wall was half as tall as it had once been!

Some men who lived nearby were angry. Sanballat and Tobiah mocked the people. Sanballat said, "These walls are just piles of trash and dirt. They can't be rebuilt!"

Nehemiah prayed. God's people kept working on the walls, but their enemies made a plan to attack them and stop their work.

Nehemiah reminded the people that God was with them. "Do not be afraid. God is great and powerful! If our enemies attack us, God will fight for us!"

So God's people went back to work. They were always ready to fight, just in case.

Nehemiah was a wise and good leader of God's people. The people kept working very hard. In just 52 days, the wall was complete! When all of Jerusalem's enemies heard that the wall had been rebuilt, they were afraid because they knew God was with His people.

Jesus Connection: *Nehemiah led the people to rebuild the walls around Jerusalem to protect them from their enemies. Jesus came to protect us from our enemies. He died on the cross and rose from the dead to rescue people from sin and death.*

Key Passage: *Jeremiah 29:11–12 – "For I know the plans I have for you"—this is the Lord's declaration—"plans for your well-being, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. You will call to Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you."*

DISPLAY ONLY

FOLD

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TIMED ART

In the first frame, draw a picture of your favorite animal in 10 seconds.

Draw a picture in the second frame of the same animal, but take 2 to 3 minutes to draw.

Which drawing looks better? Why?

IN A NUTSHELL

Use the following key words to write what happened in today's Bible story in your own words: *Nehemiah*, *walls*, *gates*, *enemies*, *God*, *weapons*, *complete*.

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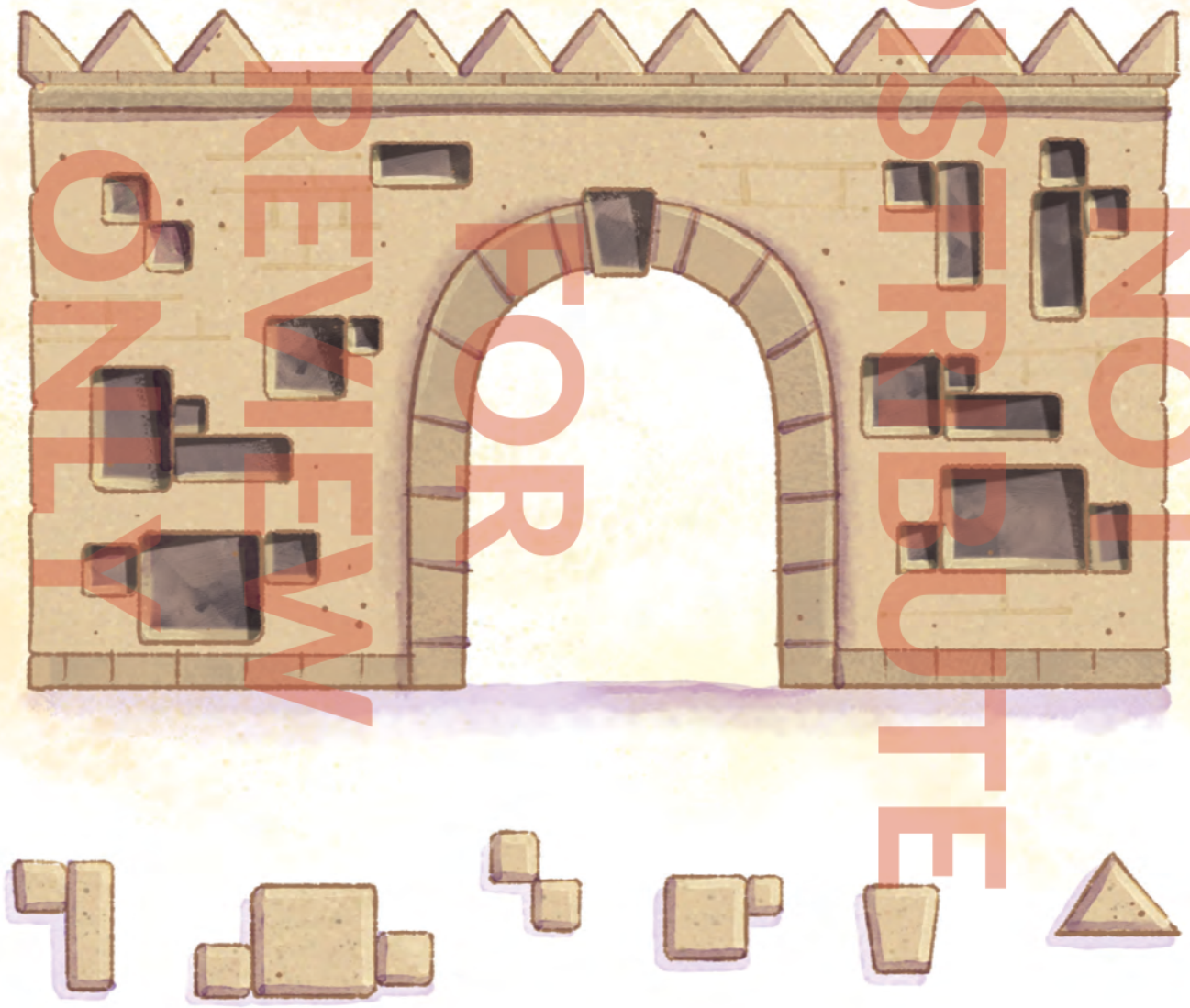
BRICK BY BRICK

INSTRUCTIONS: Match the gaps in the walls to the bricks that are the correct shape to fill them. Not all holes will be filled.



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KEY PASSAGE:
Jeremiah 29:11–12 – "For I know the plans I have for you"–this is the Lord's declaration–"plans for your well-being, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. You will call to Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you."

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Does God keep His promises? Yes, God is always faithful even when we are not.

BIBLE STORY: JERUSALEM'S WALLS WERE REBUILT

- Enemies of God's people tried to stop them from rebuilding the walls.
- God used Nehemiah to lead His people as they rebuilt Jerusalem's walls.
- The people finished rebuilding in just 52 days. Their enemies knew God was with the Jews.

FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS:

- What can make us feel discouraged when we have difficult tasks to do?
- How does God's Word help us remain encouraged to work hard?

FAMILY ACTIVITY:

- Build a pillow fort with your family. Talk about the importance of walls in Bible times. Discuss how Jesus protects us from enemies.

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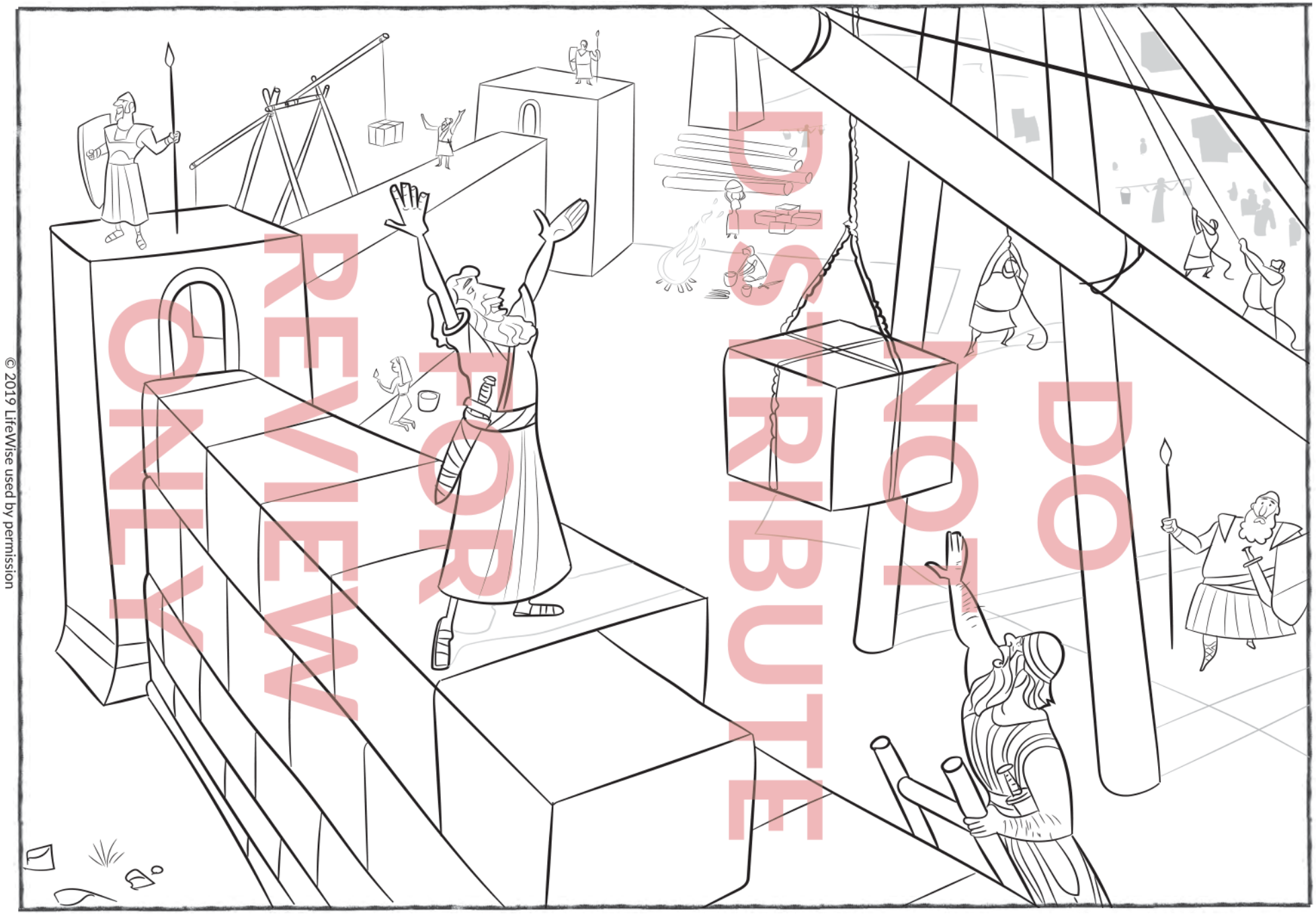

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GOD USED NEHEMIAH TO LEAD HIS PEOPLE AS THEY REBUILT JERUSALEM'S WALLS.

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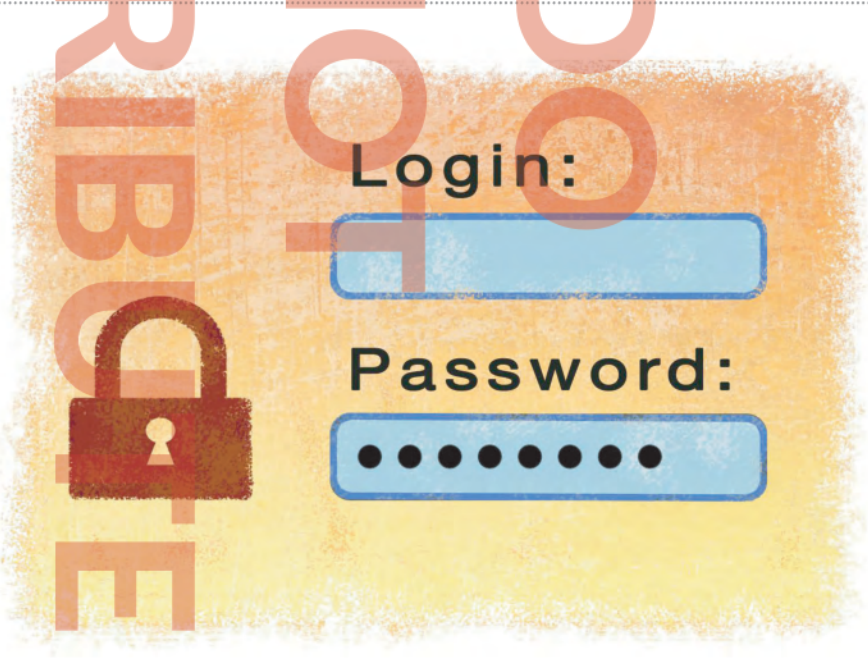

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LESSON 60: ATTENTIVENESS

EZRA READ THE LAW

Nehemiah 8:1–12

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EZRA READ THE LAW

- Nehemiah 8:1–12
- Big Picture Q&A: Does God keep His promises? Yes, God is always faithful, even when we are not.
- Key Passage: Jeremiah 29:11–12 – "For I know the plans I have for you"—this is the Lord's declaration—"plans for your well-being, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. You will call to Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you."

JESUS CONNECTION

God's Word is powerful. When Ezra read God's Word, the people changed their ways and loved God more. The Bible says that Jesus is "the Word." Jesus is God who came to live with people on Earth. Jesus has the power to change our hearts.

LIFEWISE QUALITY

ATTENTIVENESS – Choosing to listen and pay attention to others.

LEADER BIBLE STUDY

Ezra was a priest in Babylon at the end of the exile. As much as 80 years after the first group of exiles returned to Jerusalem and completed and dedicated the temple, Ezra led a second group back to Jerusalem.

Just as God had been with Nehemiah, He was with Ezra—granting him favor with the Persian king. The king gave Ezra permission to go to Jerusalem. He provided Ezra with a letter and access to resources to ensure safe travel (Ezra 7:11–26).

Ezra traveled to Jerusalem with a purpose. God's people had spent 70 years in exile, and they needed to be reminded how to live. As a scribe, Ezra was an expert on the law of Moses, and he had "determined in his heart to study the law of the Lord, obey it and teach its statutes and ordinances in Israel" (Ezra 7:10).

Under Nehemiah's leadership, the people had rebuilt Jerusalem's walls. They gathered together at the Water Gate to hear the law of Moses. Men, women and children—anyone who could understand— came to listen to the reading of God's Word.

From early morning until midday, Ezra read from the book of the law of Moses. He stood on a high wooden platform where everyone could see and hear him. Ezra opened the book of the law, and everyone stood up. The Levites helped the listeners understand the words of the law.

The people reacted strongly to hearing and understanding the law of Moses. Verse 9 says the people wept because the law revealed their sin.

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God's Word is powerful. The law reveals our sin and how short we fall of meeting God's standard. As you teach, help students recognize that we cannot meet God's requirements. We need a Savior. God sent Jesus to obey the law perfectly and die for our sins. We can trust in Him for salvation.

BIBLE TIMELINE & REVIEW (3 MIN)

During our last lesson, we learned how Nehemiah helped the people build a wall to protect the city. What was the name of the city? (*Jerusalem.*) Why did Nehemiah and the builders carry their swords at all times? (*Enemies threatened them.*) When their enemies tried to discourage the Jews, what did they do? (*Prayed and asked for God's help.*) How long did it take to finish the wall? (*52 days.*)

God's people had been taken into exile in Babylon many years before. Later, the king of Persia said the Jews could return to their homeland. About 80 years after the first group of exiles returned to Jerusalem, Ezra the priest led another group back. Ezra knew that God's people needed to be reminded of God's commands, and there was no better way to do that than by reading God's Word.

SESSION STARTERS (5-10 MIN)

Listen and Remember (Older Students)

- Before class, make a list of at least 30 different words. They can all fit a certain category (like fruits, animals or school supplies) or be unrelated. Give each student a pencil and paper. They can work alone or in groups, but no one should write until you say go. Read the list aloud to them once, wait 30 seconds, then read it a second time. Give them 1 minute to write down as many of the words as they can remember. When time is up, see who remembered the most words.

- Ezra read God's Word to the people after the walls were finished. God wanted His people to listen to His Word and remember it. God's Word has the power to change our lives in amazing ways, so it's a good thing to hear and remember!

Familiar Stories (Older and Younger Students)

- Read one or two sentences from classic children's stories and invite the students to guess what story they are from. Examples:
  - "There is no place like home." (*The Wizard of Oz*)
  - "There was another light in the room now ... it had been in all the drawers in the nursery, looking for Peter's shadow." (*Peter Pan*)
  - "Once upon a time, there were four little rabbits, and their names were—Flopsy, Mopsy, Cottontail and Peter." (*The Tale of Peter Rabbit*)

- You were able to guess the stories that were familiar to you. In the Bible story we will hear today, a priest named Ezra read God's Word to a group of people who were unfamiliar with what it said. Let's find out what happened when the people heard God's Word.

Unwritten Rules (Younger Students)

- Have students make a list of rules they follow in the classroom or at home. Call for volunteers to share their lists. Ask if they have a list posted on their bedroom wall of every rule they follow. You probably know to follow these rules because someone told you. How could you follow rules that you don't know about?

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- Today, we will hear about a group of people who heard God's Word and realized they had not been following God's rules. A priest named Ezra read God's Word to teach the people how to obey God.

KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY/BIG PICTURE Q&A (5 MIN)

Jeremiah 29:11–12 (Older Students)

"For I know the plans I have for you"—this is the Lord's declaration—"plans for your well-being, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. You will call to Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you."

Jeremiah 29:11 (Younger Students)

"For I know the plans I have for you"—this is the Lord's declaration—"plans for your well-being, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope."

Fill in the Blanks (Older and Younger Students)

- Display the key passage poster and guide students to read it aloud together. Cover the poster. Write the key passage on a dry erase board or chalkboard, leaving blanks in place of a few key words. Challenge students to read the key passage from the board, filling in the blanks from memory. Then, erase a few more words and play again. For the third round, erase all but a few words. Call on volunteers one at a time to say the key passage from memory.

Big Picture Q&A

Q: Does God keep His promises?

A: *Yes, God is always faithful, even when we are not.*

BIBLE STORY (10 MIN)

Ezra Read the Law | Nehemiah 8:1–12

The walls around Jerusalem were finished at last! With God's help, the people finished rebuilding the walls and the city gates in just 52 days. **All the people in Jerusalem gathered together early in the morning at one of the city gates. Men, women and children—anyone who could understand—came to listen to the reading of God's Word.**

As the sun was just coming up, **Ezra** (EZ ruh) **the priest brought out the book of the law of Moses that God had given to His people.** God's words were written on a scroll. Ezra stood on a high wooden platform and began to read.

Ezra read the law for several hours**, and all the people listened carefully. All the people stood up. They had respect for God's Word. Ezra praised God, and the people lifted up their hands.** "Amen! Amen!" they said. The people in the crowd bowed down with their faces to the ground, and they worshiped God.

Some of the leaders there—the Levites (LEE vights)—**explained the law to the people and helped them understand the words Ezra read. As the people heard the words of the law, they began to cry.** The law was God's rules for living, and the people had disobeyed God. **They realized they had sinned.**

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Ezra, the Levites and Nehemiah (NEE huh MIGH uh) the governor **said, "This day is holy to the Lord your God. Do not be sad or cry."** Even though the people's sin made them sad, this was a happy day.

Then, Ezra said to them, "Go home and prepare a feast! Eat rich food and drink sweet drinks. **Share what you have prepared with those who have nothing prepared."** And again Ezra said, "**Today is holy to the Lord our God. This is not a day to be sad because the joy of the Lord is your strength."**

The people obeyed Ezra. They prepared a feast. They ate rich food and drank sweet drinks. They shared what they had with people who did not have food and drinks, and all the people had a big celebration. **They were glad because they understood the words of the law that were explained to them.**

JESUS CONNECTION

God's Word is powerful. When Ezra read God's Word, the people changed their ways and loved God more. The Bible says that Jesus is "the Word." Jesus is God who came to live with people on Earth. Jesus has the power to change our hearts.

LIFEWISE QUALITY (3–4 MIN)

ATTENTIVENESS – Choosing to listen and pay attention to others.

Living LifeWise

God's Word has the power to change us and inspires us to worship, so we should be attentive to what it says.

Character Connection

Many times we become like the people around us: copying how they talk, think, act or respond. Whom we listen to matters because we will often become just like whoever we are attentive to. When we give our full attention to mean people, they teach us how to be mean, too. When we let wise or honest people have our attention, they help us learn truth and wisdom.

Ezra knew the people needed to hear God's Word so they could be changed to be more like Him. And we need the very same thing. If we're only attentive to other people, even the nice ones, we'll be like them. But God, through His Word and His Spirit, wants to change us to be like Jesus. When we are attentive to the Bible, by reading and obeying it, He does exactly that.

Discussion Questions (pick 1–2):

- How can you tell what you're being attentive to? (*Time spent, focus, what you think about even when you're not doing it*)
- Is it easy to change where we put our attention? Why or why not?
- Whom is it easiest to be attentive to: our friends, our parents or God?
- Is it easier to be attentive when we like what we hear (the teacher says we did a good job) or when we don't like it (our parents ask us to tidy the living room)? Why?

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BIBLE STORY REVIEW (5 MIN)

- Where did the people of Israel meet to hear God's law read?

  The city gate, Neh. 8:1

- Who read God's Word to the people?

  Ezra, Neh. 8:1

- Who helped to explain the law as Ezra read?

  The Levites, Neh. 8:7

- How long did Ezra read the book of the law?

  From daybreak until noon, Neh. 8:3

- How did the people respond when they heard God's law?

  Stood up, raised their hands and said "Amen," bowed down to worship God and wept, Neh. 8:9

- What did Ezra and Nehemiah tell the people to do?

  Not to be sad but to celebrate, Neh. 8:10

- What did the people do if a neighbor didn't have food and drink to celebrate with?

  Share, Neh. 8:12

- Why did the Jews celebrate?

  They understood God's Word, Neh. 8:12

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES (5-10 MIN)

Read the Word (Older Students)

- Write the five story headings below on the board. Form two teams. You will read a few verses from the Bible. Teams can earn one point if they can describe the Bible story you are reading from and one point if they can identify the book of the Bible where the Bible story is found. Read selected verses from a Bible story and give the first team a chance to answer. Then, read the next verses and allow the second team to answer. Suggested stories:

  - Esther Became Queen
    - (Esther 4:13–14) "Do not think that, because you are in the king's house, you alone of all the Jews will escape. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from some other place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to a royal position for such a time as this?"
    - (Esther 3:5–6) When Haman saw that Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honor, he was enraged. Yet, having learned who Mordecai's people were, he scorned the idea of killing only Mordecai. Instead, Haman looked for a way to destroy all Mordecai's people, the Jews, throughout the whole kingdom of Xerxes.
  - God Saved His People Through Esther
    - (Esther 5:2) When he saw Queen Esther standing in the court, he was pleased with her and held out to her the gold scepter that was in his hand. So, Esther approached and touched the tip of the scepter.

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- (Esther 7:3–4) Then, Queen Esther answered, "If I have found favor with you, O king, and if it pleases your majesty, grant me my life; this is my petition. And spare my people; this is my request. For I and my people have been sold for destruction and slaughter and annihilation."

✧ Nehemiah Heard News of Jerusalem

- (Neh. 1:3–4) They said to me, "Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem has been broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire."

- (Neh. 2:1–2 I took the wine and gave it to the king. I had not been sad in his presence before; so the king asked me, "Why does your face look so sad when you are not ill? This can be nothing but sadness of heart."

✧ Jerusalem's Walls Were Rebuilt

- (Neh. 6:9–10) They were all trying to frighten us, thinking, "Their hands will get too weak for the work, and it will not be accomplished." But I prayed, "Now strengthen my hands."

- (Neh. 6:15–16) So the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth day of Elul, in fifty-two days. When all our enemies heard about this, all the surrounding nations were afraid and lost their self-confidence, because they realized this work had been done with the help of our God.

✧ Ezra Read the Law

- (Neh. 8:6) Ezra praised the Lord, the great God; and all the people lifted up their hands and responded, "Amen! Amen!" Then, they bowed down and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground.

- (Neh. 8:10) Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength."

✦ Ezra read God's Word to teach the people how to obey God. God's Word is a gift. The Bible helps us know what is true about God and ourselves. Thank You, God, for Your Word!

Bible Scrolls (Older Students)

✦ Provide each student with two craft sticks and a 3-by-6-inch piece of paper. Help students write out the key passage on their paper. Provide glue or tape to connect the craft stick to each end of the rectangle. Then, show them how to roll up their "scroll." Use a step stool as a small platform. Allow volunteers to the front and read the verses out loud from the "stage."

✦ Ezra read God's Word, which was probably recorded on a scroll at that time, to God's people. Our key passage reminds us of God's faithfulness, love and mercy. All three of these traits are seen in God's promise to send Jesus to rescue us from sin. God kept that promise, showing His faithfulness. Jesus died on the cross and rose again to save us, showing God's mercy and love to make us right with Him.

Cotton Ball Throw (Older and Younger Students)

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- Use a marker to divide a piece of construction paper into six sections, numbered 1–6. Place the paper on the floor. Set a small bowl of water on a table next to several cotton balls.

- Form three teams. Call one player from each team to the front. Have them stand several feet from the construction paper. The first team's player should dip a cotton ball in the water and toss it at the paper. It should leave a wet spot where it first lands. Ask a Bible review question from this session or from LWL 55–59. If the student answers correctly, award his team the number of points in the section where his cotton ball first landed. If a player gives an incorrect answer, award no points and allow another student to give the answer. When each player has had a turn, play another round with three new players. The team that earns the most points wins.

Molded and Remolded (Younger Students)

- Invite the students to sit in a circle on the floor (on a shower curtain) or around a table. Provide playdough or modeling clay for each student to mold into a shape of their choosing. After a minute or so, students will pass their creation to the left and reshape the object they receive into something new. Every minute or two, have them pass their sculptures, each time changing the shape into something new.

- Sometimes, it can be really difficult to give up control over things in our lives, like your sculptures. We don't always like it when other people change things. God's people refused to give God control of their lives for a long time. God eventually punished their sin by sending them into exile. When God brought His people home and helped them finish the wall and the temple, Ezra read God's law to them. God's Word changed them! They threw a celebration to honor God for His faithfulness and power. We give God control of our lives by trusting Jesus as our Savior. The Bible tells us that the Word of God has the power to transform our lives too. Jesus is the Word who came to live with people on Earth. When we trust in Him, He changes our hearts to love God and want to obey Him.

Bible Path (Younger Students)

- Before class, print the "Bible Path" printable and cut out the book images. Fold them in half so they can stand upright, and set them around the room to mark out a path. At the end of the Bible path, set out some toys or play treasure. Make the other path loop back around to the beginning. Invite the students to choose a path and follow it around the room to see where it takes them.

- Lots of books contain good information. We can use them to learn new things, but only the Bible can lead us to the ultimate treasure—Jesus. Without the Bible, other knowledge will just lead us in circles. Ezra read God's Word to God's people to remind them what God wanted for their lives.

Activity Pages & Recap Cards (5–10 min) (For in-class or take-home use)

- Word Wheels (Older Students)
  - Answer: *God created everything (Colossians 1:16–17), Everyone has sinned (Romans 3:23), God sent Jesus into the world (John 3:16–17), Jesus died to save sinners (Romans 5:8), Only Jesus saves (John 14:6).*

- Keyword Crossing (Younger Students)

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Prayer & Requests (3–5 min)

Thank You, Lord, for revealing Yourself to us in Your Word. Give us hearts that want to read and study Your Word. Holy Spirit, fill us with wisdom so we can know how to listen and do what Your Word says.

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Journal Page

List three ways that knowing God's Word can be helpful.

FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS

- When might we feel sad when reading God's Word?
- What do we know from the Bible that gives us a reason to celebrate?
- When can you read the Bible together as a family? Make a plan and spend time this week reading God's Word.

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FOLD

EZRA READ THE LAW

NEHEMIAH 8:1–12

MAIN POINT: EZRA READ GOD'S WORD TO TEACH THE PEOPLE HOW TO OBEY GOD.

The walls around Jerusalem were finished—at last! All the people in Jerusalem gathered together early in the morning at one of the city gates. Men, women and children—anyone who could understand—came to listen to the reading of God's Word.

Ezra the priest brought out the book of the law of Moses that God had given to His people.

Ezra read the law, and all the people listened carefully. All the people stood up. They had respect for God's Word. Ezra praised God, and the people lifted up their hands.

Some of the leaders there explained the law to the people and helped them understand the words Ezra read. As the people heard the words of the law, they began to cry. They realized they had sinned.

Ezra, the Levites, and Nehemiah said, "This day is holy to the Lord your God. Do not be sad or cry."

Then Ezra said to them, "Go home and prepare a feast! Share what you have prepared with those who have nothing prepared. Today is holy to the Lord our God. This is not a day to be sad because the joy of the Lord is your strength."

The people obeyed Ezra. They were glad because they understood the words of the law that were explained to them.

Jesus Connection: *God's Word is powerful. When Ezra read God's Word, the people changed their ways and loved God more. The Bible says that Jesus is "the Word." Jesus is God who came to live with people on Earth. Jesus has the power to change our hearts.*

Key Passage: *Jeremiah 29:11–12 – "For I know the plans I have for you"—this is the Lord's declaration—"plans for your well-being, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. You will call to Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you."*

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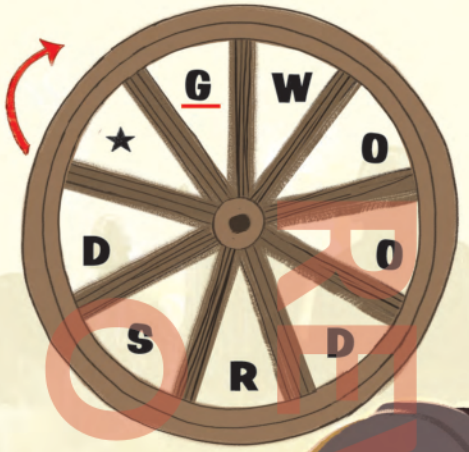
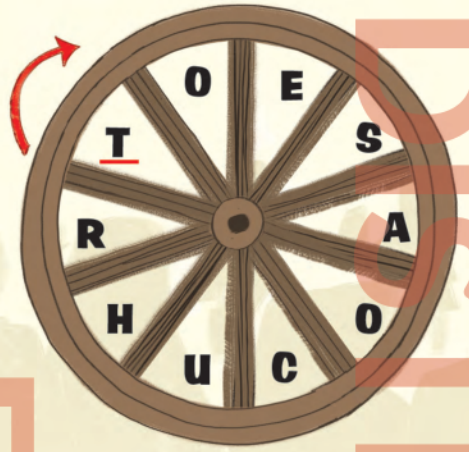
WORD WHEELS

Follow the instructions for each wheel. Use the words to fill in the main point of today's Bible story.

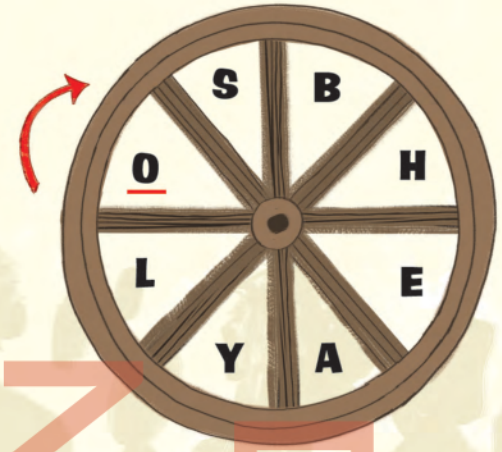
1. Begin at the **G**. Move around twice, collecting every other letter.



2. Begin at the **T**. Move around once, collecting every other letter.



3. Begin at the **O**. Move around once, collecting every other letter.



Ezra read _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ to _ _ _ _ _ _ _

the people how to _ _ _ _ _ God.

WHERE IN THE BIBLE?

Match each statement with where it is found in the Bible.

- God created everything.
- Everyone has sinned.
- God sent Jesus into the world.
- Jesus died to save sinners.
- Only Jesus saves.

- Romans 5:8
- John 14:6
- John 3:16-17
- Colossians 1:16-17
- Romans 3:23

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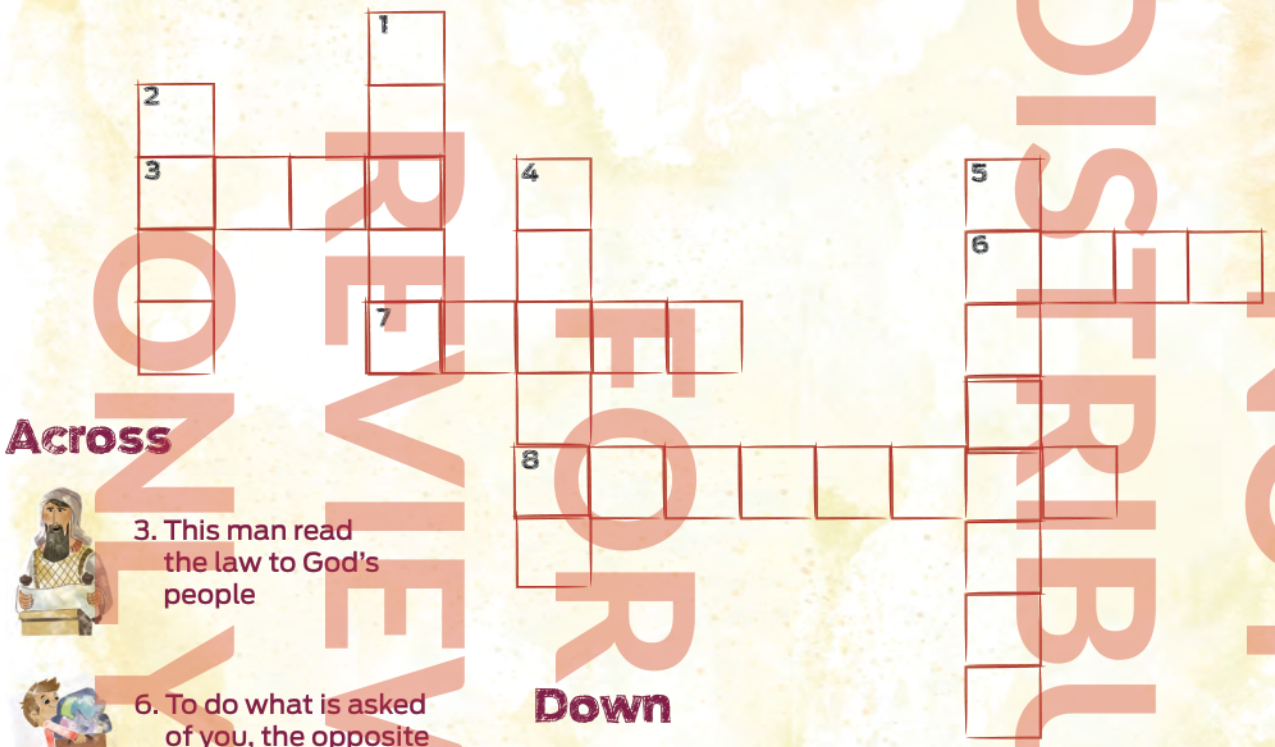
KEYWORD CROSSING

INSTRUCTIONS: Use the clues provided to fill in the crossword puzzle. Use the pictures to help you figure out the answers.



Across

3. This man read the law to God's people

6. To do what is asked of you, the opposite of disobey

7. to help someone learn new things

8. another name for the Bible

Down

1. a body part in our chest, sometimes we think of it when we talk about love

2. You do this with words and books

4. to make something into something different

5. having lots of power or great ability to do things

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KEY PASSAGE:
Jeremiah 29:11–12 – "For I know the plans I have for you"–this is the Lord's declaration–"plans for your well-being, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. You will call to Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you."

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Does God keep His promises? Yes, God is always faithful even when we are not.

BIBLE STORY: EZRA READ THE LAW

- The people asked Ezra to read them God's law.
- Ezra read God's Word to teach the people how to obey God.
- The people were sad because they understood how sinful they were.
- Ezra told them to celebrate instead because God had helped them understand His words.

FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS:

- When might we feel sad when reading God's Word?
- What do we know that is a reason to celebrate instead?

FAMILY ACTIVITY:

- Challenge your kids to memorize a Bible passage. Plan a time for everyone to recite their passage to the family. Then eat a celebratory dinner.

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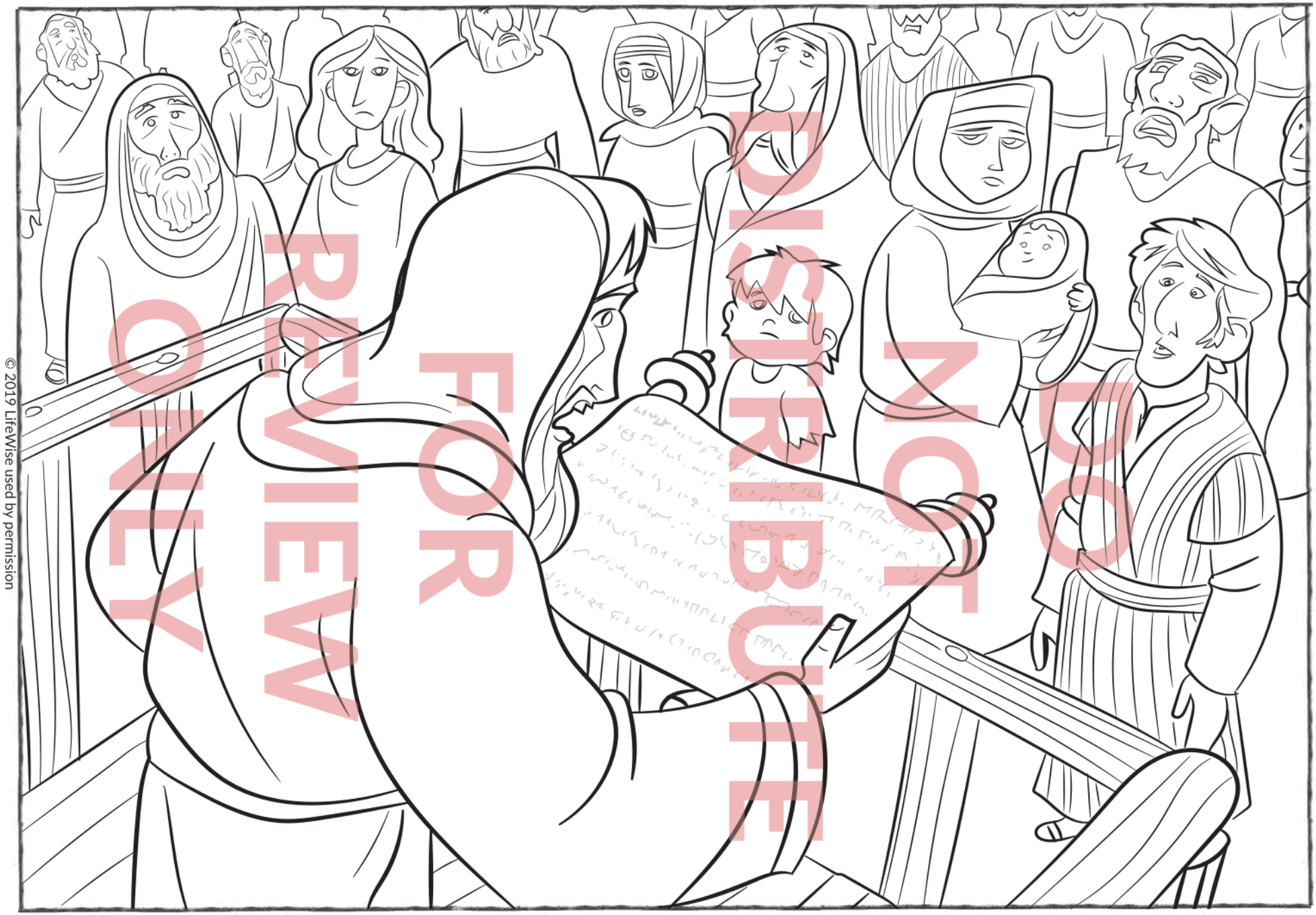

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EZRA READ GOD'S WORD TO TEACH THE PEOPLE HOW TO OBEY GOD.

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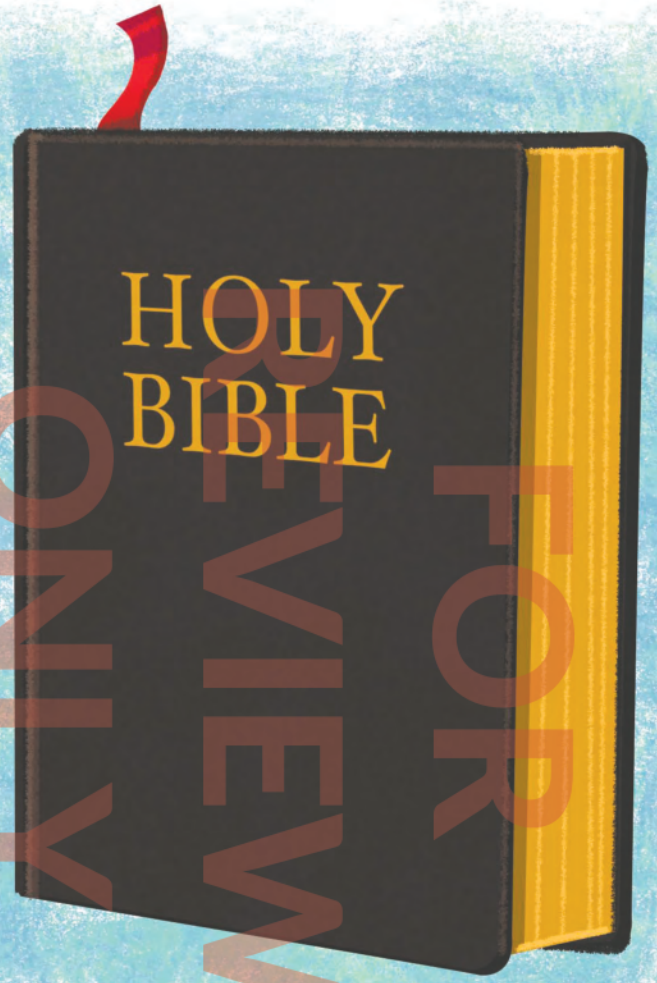

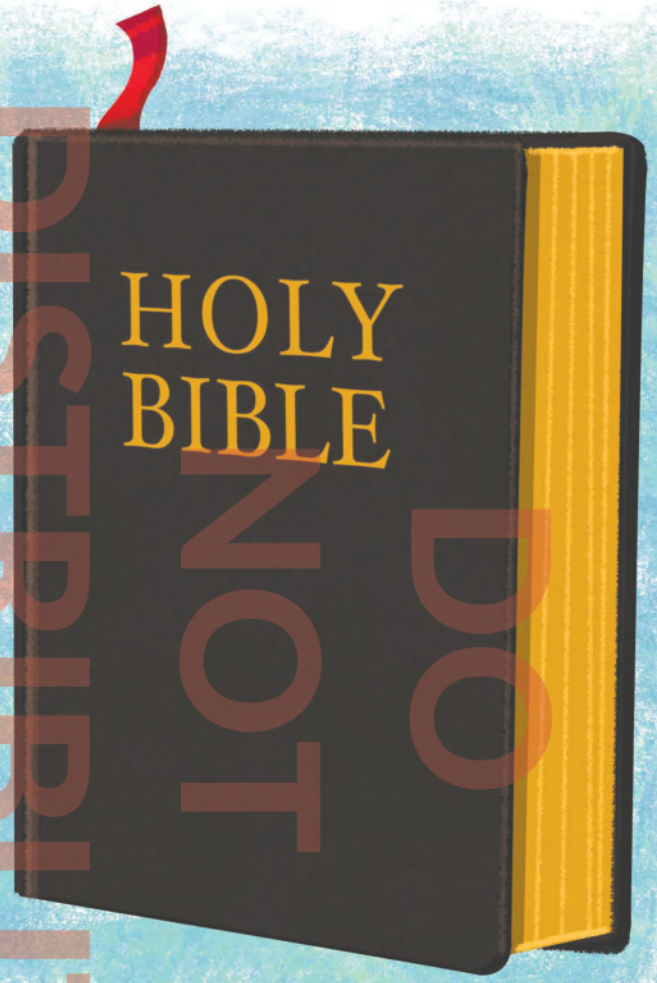

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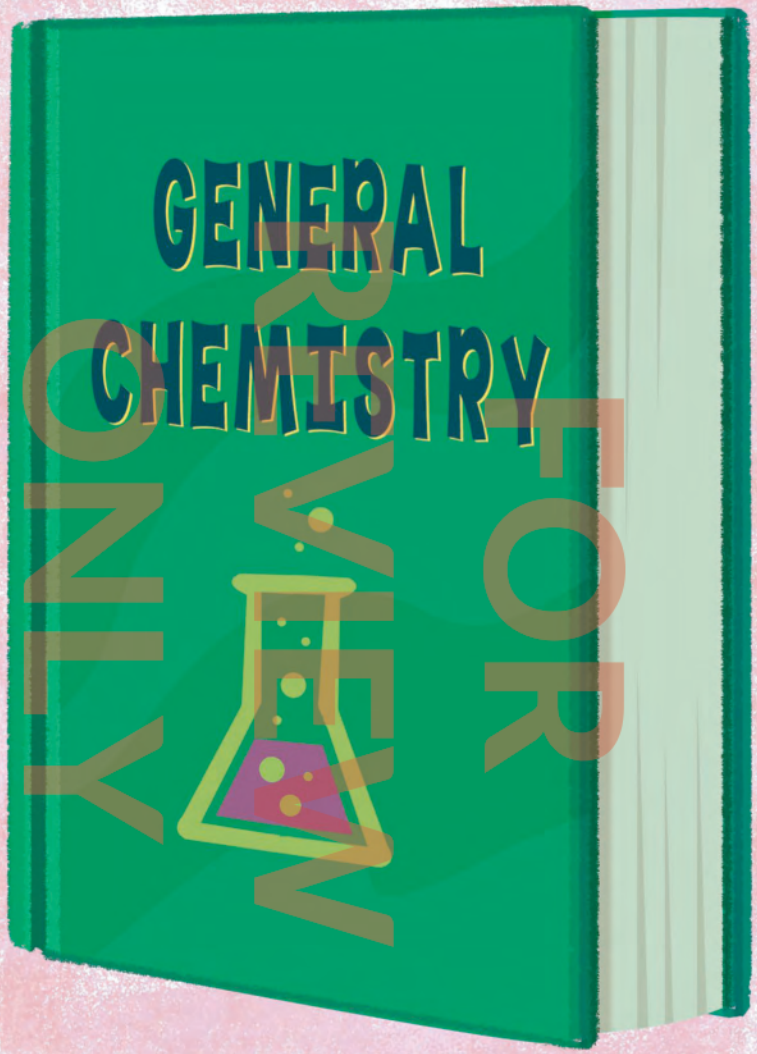

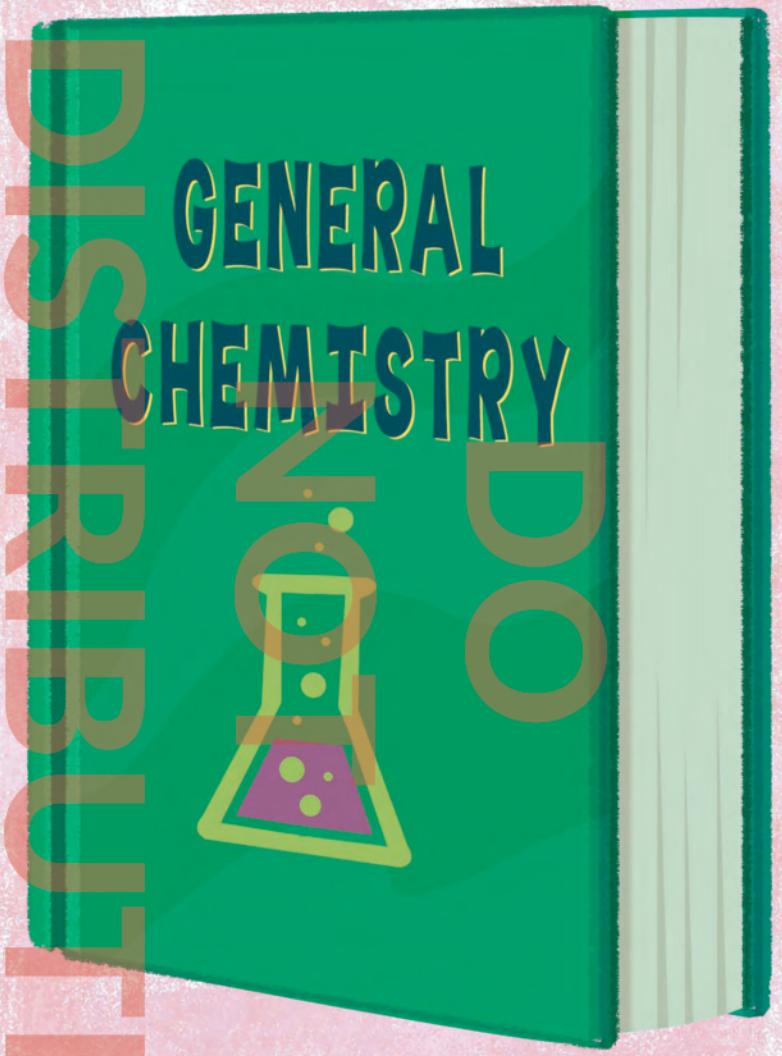

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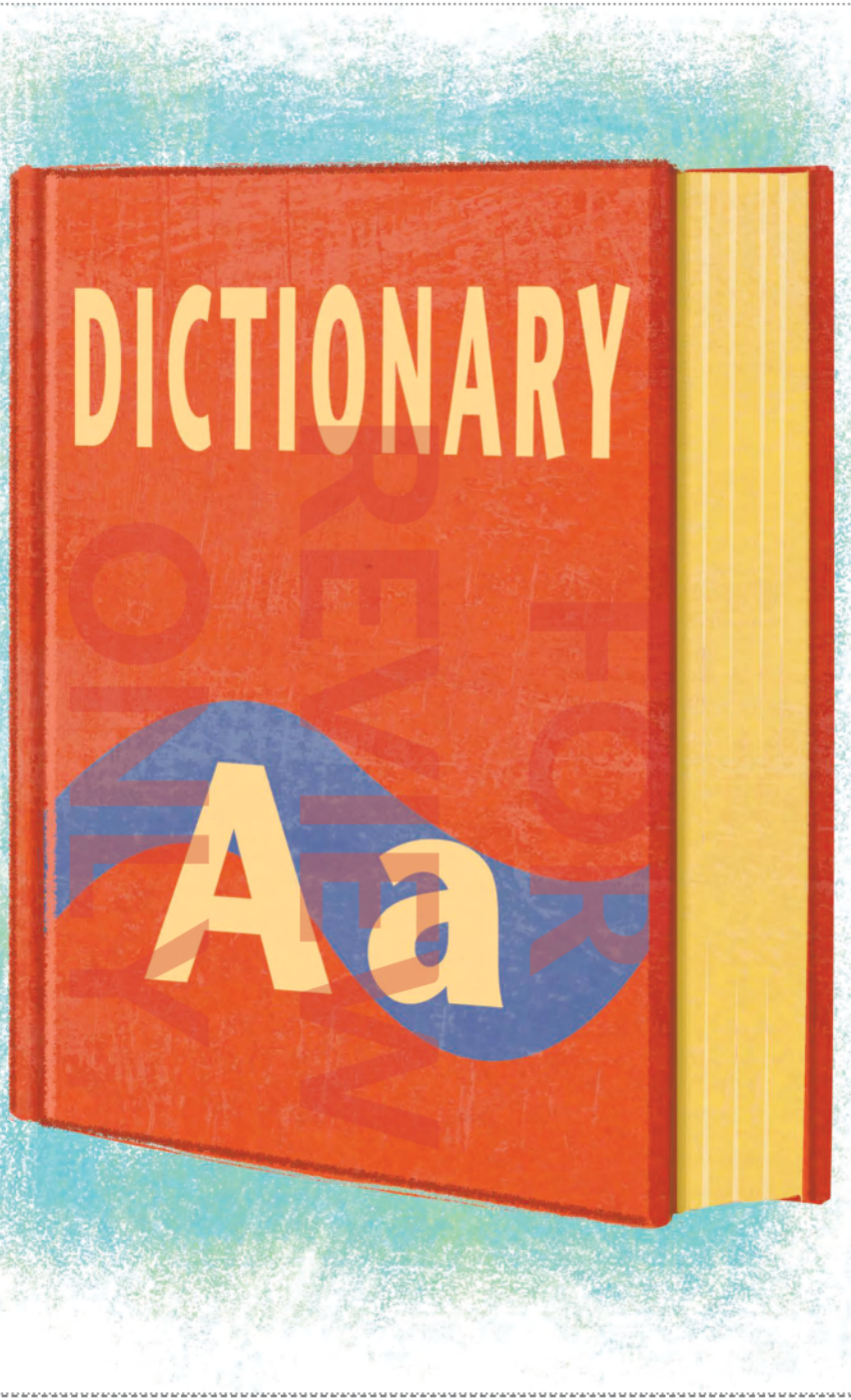

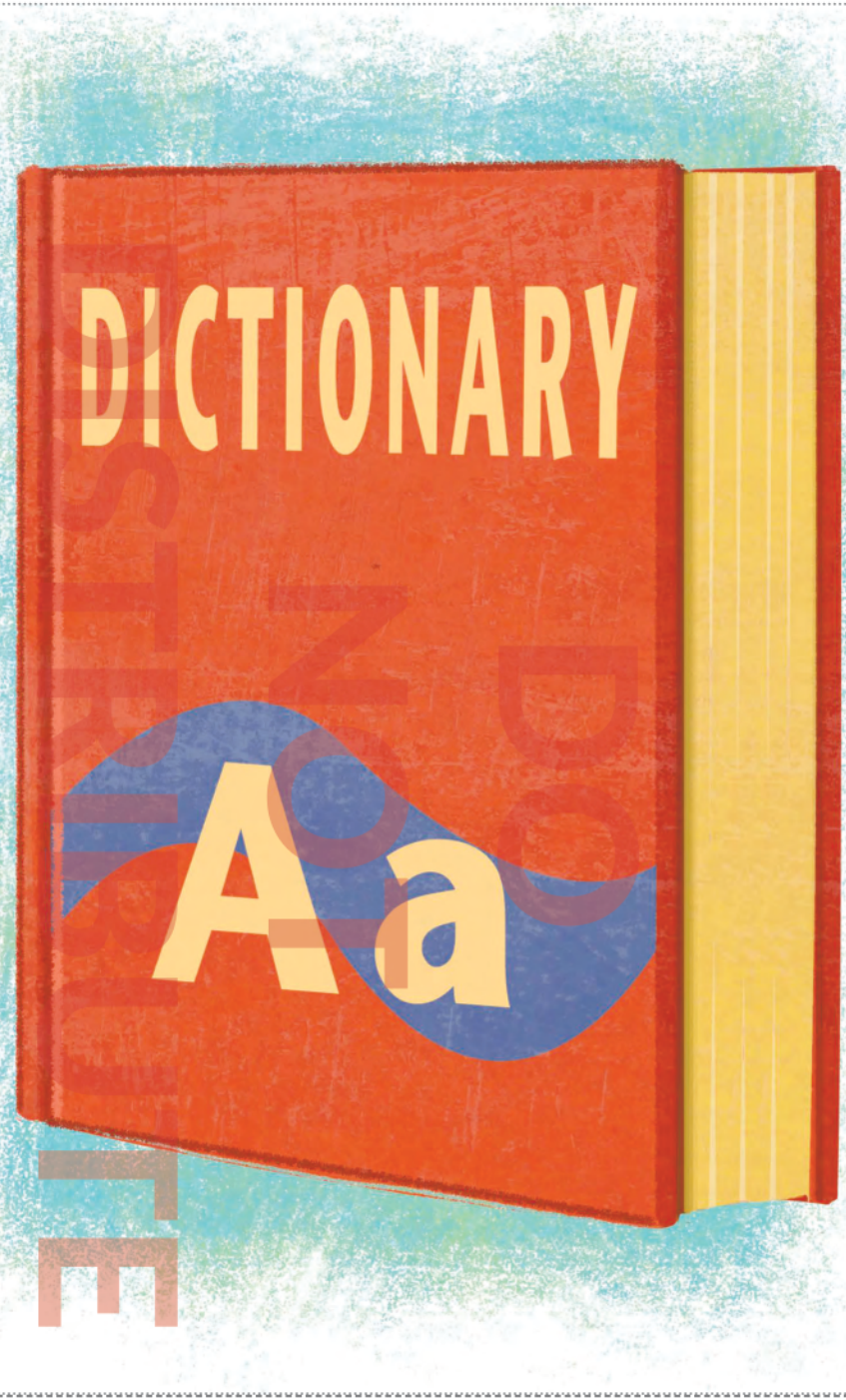

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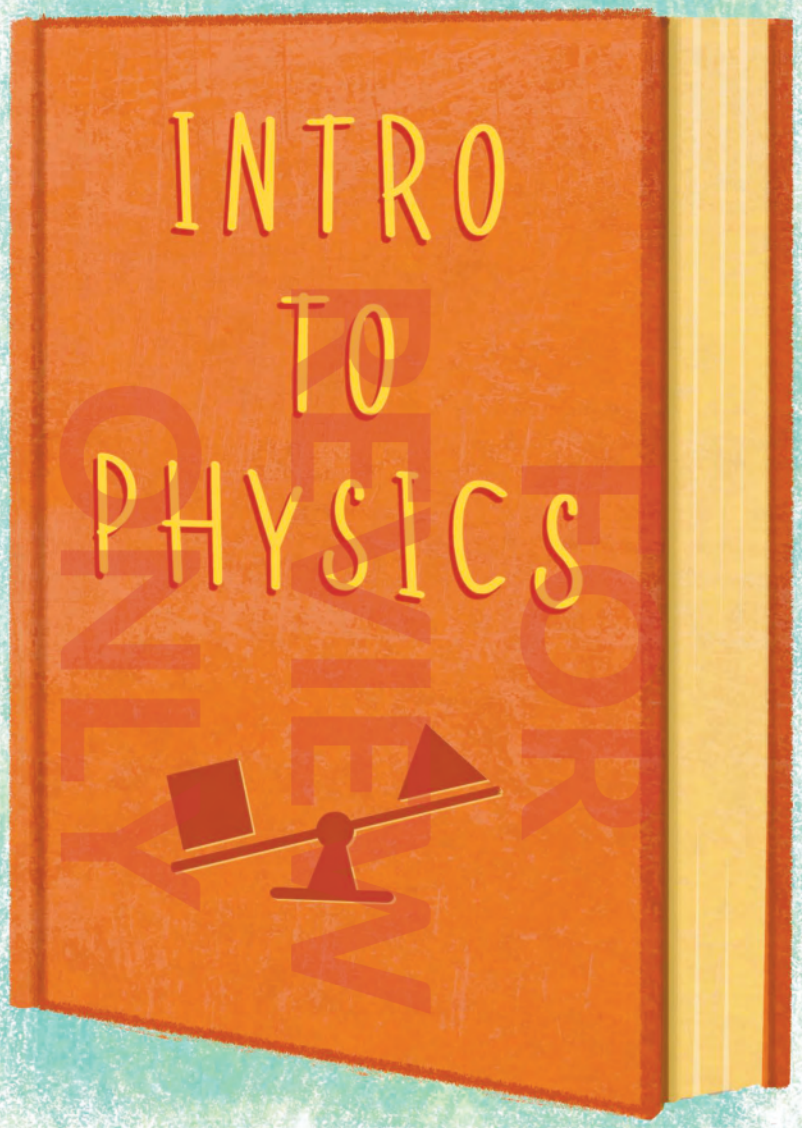

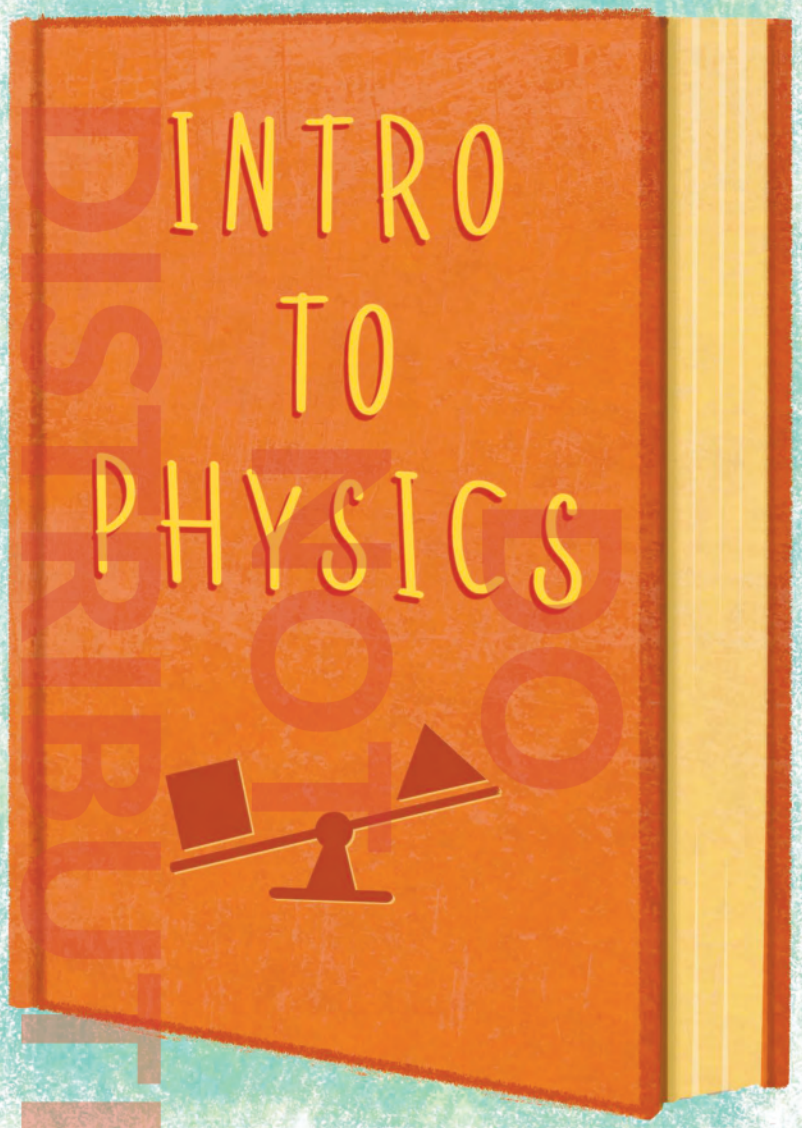

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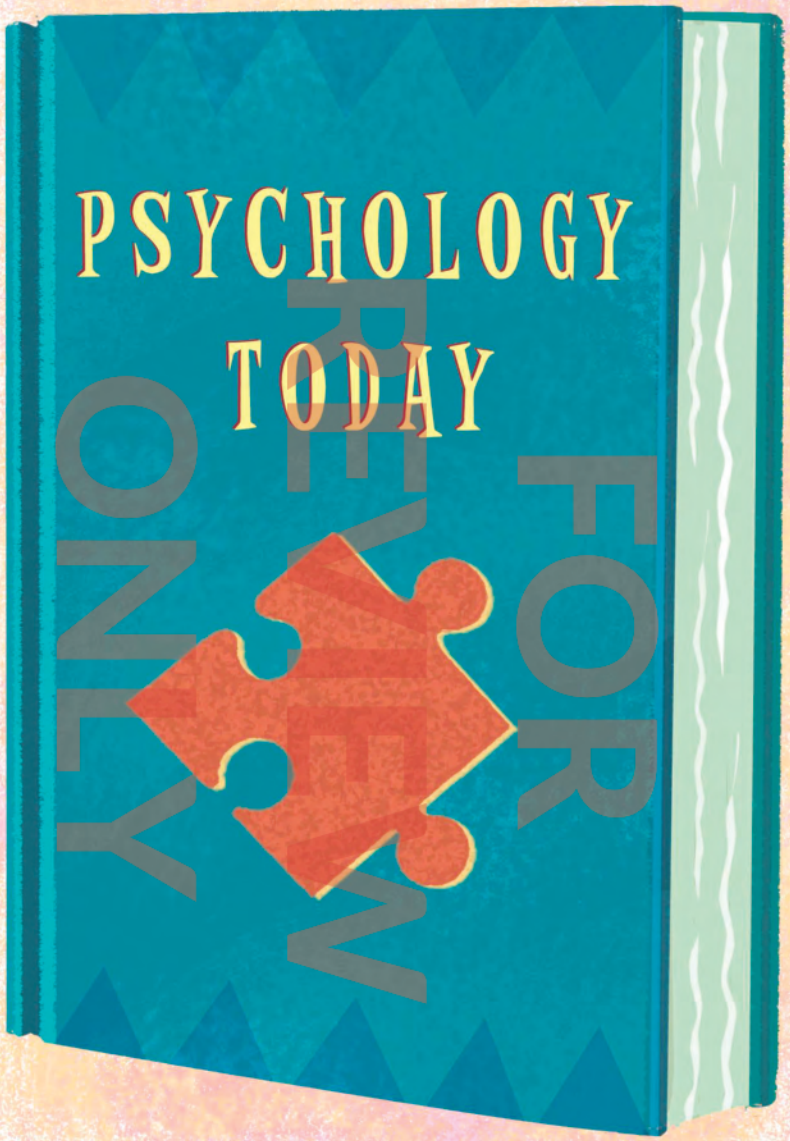

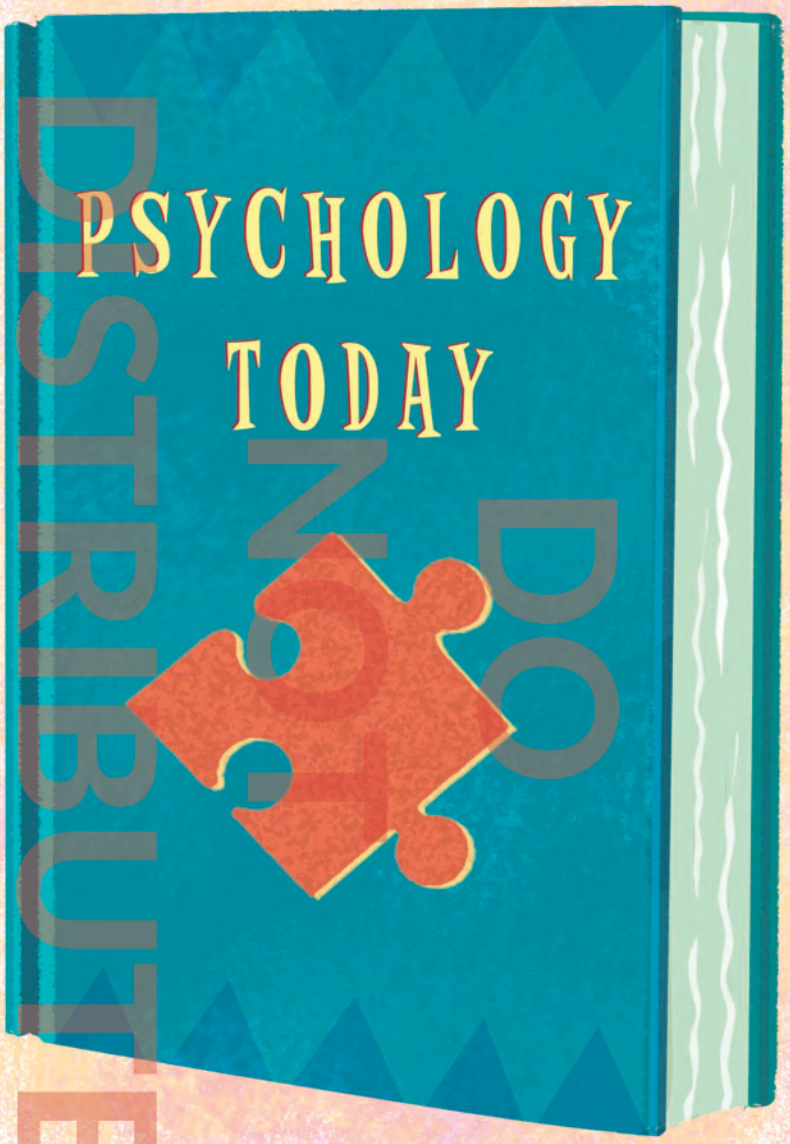

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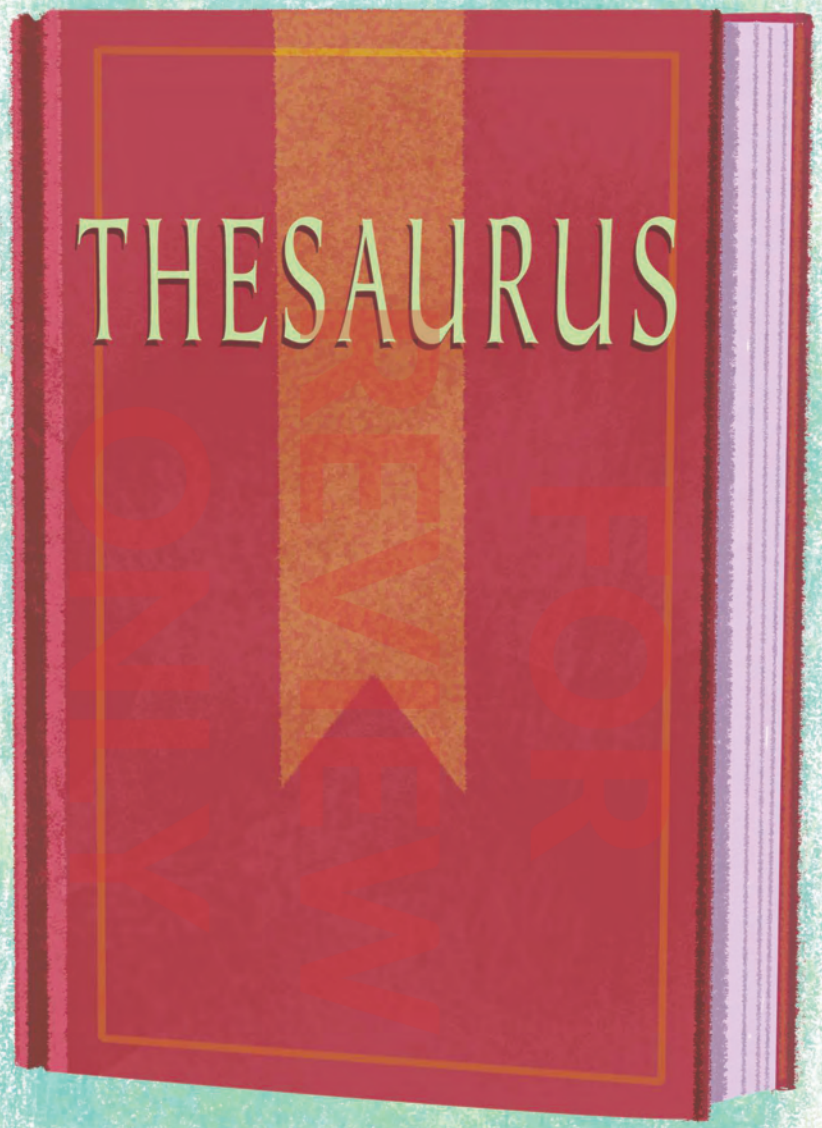

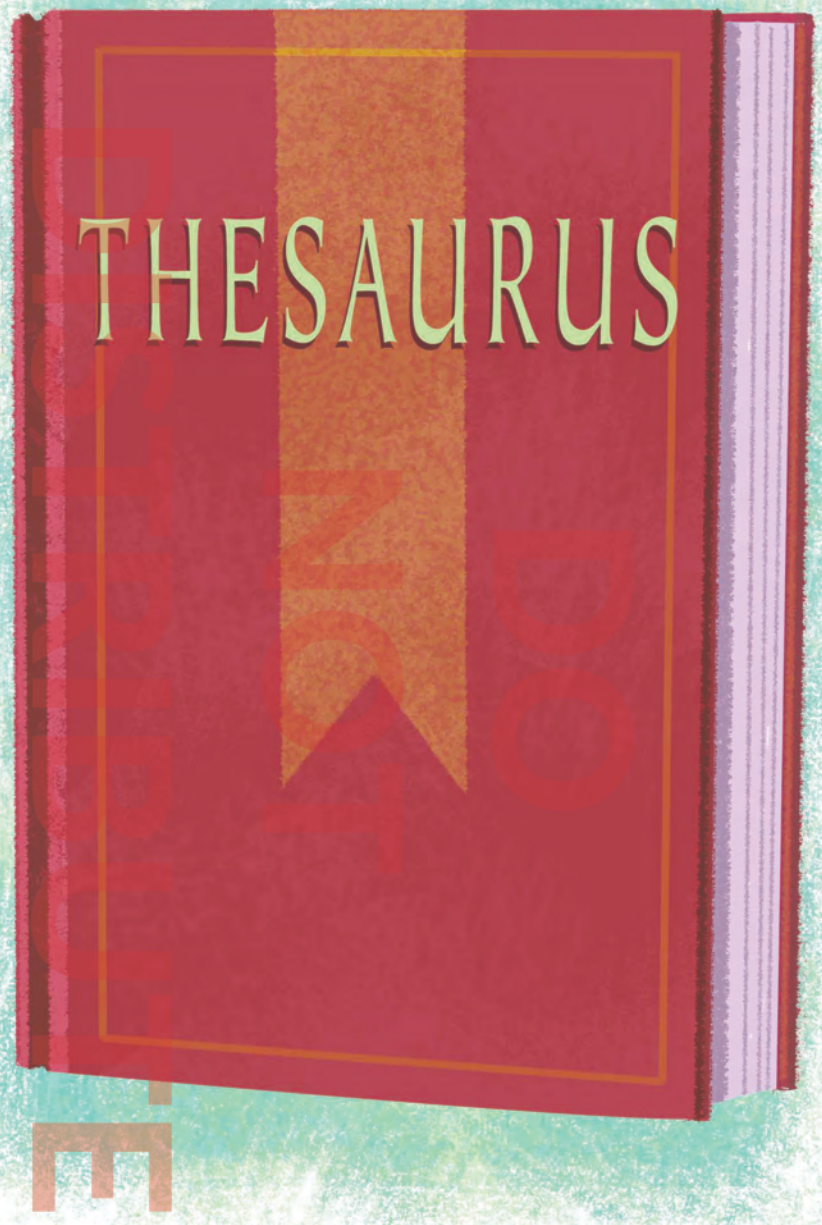

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LESSON 61: PATIENCE

FROM ABRAHAM TO JESUS

Matthew 1:1–17

FROM ABRAHAM TO JESUS

- Matthew 1:1–17
- Big Picture Q&A: What makes Jesus different? Jesus is fully God and fully man.
- Key Passage: 1 Timothy 1:15 – This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

JESUS CONNECTION

Jesus came to Earth as a baby in Bethlehem. Jesus had earthly parents, Mary and Joseph, but His true Father is God. Through Jesus, God kept His promises to Abraham and David. Jesus saves us from our sins and adopts us into His family.

LIFEWISE QUALITY

PATIENCE – Being willing to wait.

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LEADER BIBLE STUDY

The prophecies concerning Jesus' birth are numerous, and many of them refer to Jesus' lineage. Old Testament prophecies tell of the promised Messiah being born from the seed of a woman (Gen. 3:15); from the seed of Abraham (Gen. 22:18), Isaac (Gen. 21:12) and Jacob (Num. 24:17); from the tribe of Judah (Micah 5:2); from the line of Jesse (Isa. 11:1) and from the house of David (Jer. 23:5). The prophecies said He would be born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14) and would be the Son of God (1 Chron. 17:13–14; Ps. 2:7). Jesus fulfilled all of these prophecies.

In Bible times, Jews took great care to accurately record family genealogies. The family a person belonged to was directly linked to property rights. Matthew 1:1–17 and Luke 3:23–38 both chronicle the genealogy of Jesus. The account in Matthew presents Jesus as the king of the Jews—the legal heir to the throne of David. The account in Luke was written to Greek Christians and focuses on Jesus' descent from Adam.

Jesus was born as a baby in Bethlehem. He had earthly parents, Mary and Joseph, but His true Father is God. Jesus is fully God and fully man. As fully God, in Him "the entire fullness of God's nature dwells bodily" (Col. 2:9). As fully man, Jesus has a human body, human mind, and human emotions. (See Luke 2:7,52; Matt. 26:38.) He is our sinless representative (2 Cor. 5:21), sympathetic high priest (Heb. 4:15), and substitute sacrifice (1 John 4:10).

Use this Bible story to review Jesus' ancestors and their stories in the Old Testament. Help students recognize that God had been working out His plan to send Jesus over hundreds of years—through Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Jesse, David, Solomon and Josiah. God sent Jesus to Earth to save people from their sins.

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BIBLE TIMELINE & REVIEW (3 MIN)

Our last lesson closed the Old Testament. God allowed the people to return from exile. What did Zerubbabel lead the people to build for God when they first returned? (*The temple.*) Later, God sent Nehemiah to help the people rebuild something else. What did they rebuild in 52 days? (*The wall around Jerusalem.*) God also sent Ezra and the prophets to encourage His people. How did Ezra and the prophets help? (*Taught the people how to follow God's Word.*)

Under Ezra's leadership, the people worshiped and obeyed God, but once again, it did not last. After Malachi (who wrote the last book in the Old Testament) shared God's Word with His people, God was silent. He chose not to speak to His people again for 400 years. Even though God was quiet during this time, He was still actively carrying out His plan to rescue people from sin.

During those 400 years, more enemies conquered God's people. They did not treat God's people well, but God used them to prepare for the coming of Jesus. The Greek empire spread their language (Greek), giving the entire continent a common language. The New Testament was written in Greek so that many different people could understand it. The Romans also conquered the whole world and were still in power when Jesus came to Earth as a baby. They built roads throughout Israel and the rest of their empire, making it possible for the good news about Jesus to spread quickly.

Look again at our timeline. Remember, the Bible is made up of many different stories that fit together to tell us one big story—the story of how God sent Jesus to rescue people from sin. Our story today is from the first book in the New Testament, Matthew. This story is about the family that God gave Jesus when Jesus was born on Earth.

SESSION STARTERS (5-10 MIN)

Alike And Different (Older Students)

- Print and cut apart the "Alike and Different Cards" printable. If your group is large, print multiple sets and play in groups. Mix up the cards and distribute them to students. Guide them to work together to arrange the cards in a 4-by-4 grid. Explain that each row and column must contain items that are not alike (different animal and different color). For example, a yellow cat may not be in the same row or column as a red cat; a green dog may not be in the same row or column as a green caterpillar. Allow several minutes for students to arrange the cards. Then, check their work.

- These things were alike in some ways and different in other ways. When Jesus came to Earth, He was like us and yet different. Today, we will learn about Jesus' family and how Jesus is like us in many ways, but also different from us, too.

Illustrate Families (Older and Younger Students)

- Distribute paper and invite students to use crayons or markers to draw pictures of their families. Suggest that they include themselves, siblings, parents, grandparents, and other close family members. When they finish, allow volunteers to share their pictures and briefly describe their families.

- Isn't it wonderful that God has given us families? Family members love each other and care for one another. Jesus is God's Son, but did you know that when Jesus came to Earth as a baby, God gave Him a family on Earth? Jesus had brothers and sisters, parents, grandparents, great-grandparents and more! Today, we are going to hear from the Bible about Jesus' family.

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Birth Order (Younger Students)

- Help students determine their age based on the day, month, and year of their birth. Instruct them to line up from oldest to youngest, then help them state their exact age one at a time (i.e., 7 years, 3 months and 23 days) if they can.
- You can tell many things about a person just by knowing when he or she was born. For example, your great-grandparents probably grew up with a favorite radio program. Most of your parents had a favorite television show instead. Today, you stream shows on tablets and smartphones! We will be learning a little about Jesus and the people in His family who were born before Him.

KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY/BIG PICTURE Q&A (5 MIN)

1 Timothy 1:15

This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

One Word (Older and Younger Students)

- Guide the class to stand in a circle. Display the key passage poster and read it aloud together. Choose one student to say the first word of the verse. Move around the circle; the next student should say the second word, the next student should say the third word, and so on. Repeat the key passage several times.

Big Picture Q&A

Q: What makes Jesus different?

A: *Jesus is fully God and fully man.*

BIBLE STORY (10 MIN)

From Abraham to Jesus | Matthew 1:1–17

Jesus is God the Son. God the Son has always existed; no one created Him. God planned to send His Son to Earth to save people from sin. Jesus came to Earth as a baby. He was born to Mary, who was married to Joseph. Jesus is fully God, and He is fully human too. That makes Jesus different from any other man.

Like all people on Earth, Jesus' family had a history—a family tree. Jesus had parents, grandparents, great-grandparents and great-great-grandparents ... all the way back for many generations.

Jesus came from the family of Abraham and the family of King David. Abraham had a son named Isaac. When Isaac had a family, one of his sons was named Jacob. Jacob was part of Jesus' family.

Years later, a man named Salmon (SAL mahn) **was born into Jesus' family tree. He married Rahab** (RAY hab), who hid the Israelite spies when they came to Jericho. **Rahab had a baby, and his name was Boaz** (BOH az). **Boaz** was a farmer, and he **married Ruth. Boaz and Ruth had a son named Obed** (OH bed).

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Obed's son was Jesse. Jesse had many sons, and the youngest was David. David was just a boy when he was chosen to be Israel's king. King David liked to write. He wrote songs—called psalms—and some of them were about the time when Jesus would come to Earth.

Other people in Jesus' family were kings too. David's son Solomon was a king. King Jehoshaphat (jih HAHSH uh fat) **was part of Jesus' family, and so was Uzziah** (uh ZIGH uh)**, Ahaz** (AY haz)**, Hezekiah** (HEZ ih kigh uh) **and Josiah.**

Then came Matthan (MAT than)**. Matthan's son was named Jacob, and Jacob's son was named Joseph. Joseph is the man who took Mary to be his wife. Mary was Jesus' mother, and Joseph raised Jesus as his own son.** Jesus was truly God's Son—the Messiah.

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JESUS CONNECTION

Jesus came to Earth as a baby in Bethlehem. Jesus had earthly parents, Mary and Joseph, but His true Father is God. Through Jesus, God kept His promises to Abraham and David. Jesus saves us from our sins and adopts us into His family.

LIFEWISE QUALITY (3–4 MIN)

PATIENCE – Being willing to wait.

Living LifeWise

God always keeps His promises, so we can wait patiently for Him to act.

Character Connection

We all have to wait. For example, we still have to wait ___ days for summer break. It's a long wait now for Christmas; it's ___ days away! Not all waiting is in days or months, though. Sometimes it's just waiting a few minutes for a new app to download on our phone.

Having patience means being *willing* to wait. It's a choice, but it isn't easy. Sometimes it helps to know that what's coming is good. And it always helps when we trust the person who's asking us to wait. God's people had to wait for thousands of years for God to send Jesus to Earth. But God is good and entirely trustworthy, so His people waited.

Our teachers, parents and friends will all ask us to be patient at times. Sometimes God does too. There will be times when He asks us to wait for Him to fix a problem we're praying about or to trust Him while we go through a hard time. But everything He does is for our good, so we can wait patiently for Him to act.

How can you practice waiting patiently in these situations:

- When you only have 2 weeks of school left until summer vacation.
- When you're waiting to find out if you made the team.
- When someone says you can't play video games until after dinner.
- When you have a fun trip coming up.

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BIBLE STORY REVIEW (5 MIN)

- Who created Jesus?

  God the Son has always existed. No one created Him, Heb. 1:2

- Who were Jesus' parents on Earth?

  Mary and Joseph, Matt. 1:20–21

- Who is Jesus' true Father?

  God the Father, Luke 1:35

- Whom did God promise that his family would be as numerous as the stars?

  Abraham, Gen. 15:5

- Whom did God promise that a king in his family would rule forever?

  David, 2 Sam. 7:16

- Name a woman in Jesus' family tree.

  Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba/Uriah's wife, Mary, Matt. 1:3–6, 16

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES (5-10 MIN)

Family Line Order (Older Students)

- Write the names of about 10 people from Jesus' lineage on separate index cards. Choose 5 other people from the Bible who are not part of Jesus' lineage and write their names on index cards. Mix up the cards and give them to students to arrange them from Abraham to Jesus. Distribute a Bible to each student. Help students locate Matthew 1:1–17 to check their work. Suggested lineage names: *Abraham, Jacob, Rahab, Ruth, Jesse, David, Josiah, Joseph, Mary, Jesus*. Suggested non-lineage names: *Moses, Jonathan, Jonah, Esther, Nehemiah.*

- Great job with those names! Jesus is God's Son, which makes Him fully God. Jesus was also born into a human family on Earth, which means He is fully man. Jesus' earthly family included Abraham, David and others. God used many people to bring about His rescue plan, those in Jesus' earthly family and many who were not. We can join Jesus' family when we trust in Him. When we believe in Jesus, we are forgiven of our sin and adopted by God into His family!

Guess Who (Older and Younger Students)

- Print the "Guess Who" pictures before class. Put the characters from Jesus' family on the board. Secretly choose one character. Invite the class to guess which person you have chosen by asking no more than 15 yes-or-no questions. Give them some example questions. [*Are they male or female? Did they live in the land of Canaan?*] As students ask questions, remove any pictures that don't match the facts of the secret character. [*Example: If a student asks, "Are they male?" and you say "no," remove all the pictures of males.*] The player who guesses correctly may choose the next character and remove the pictures while you answer the questions.

Matching Game (Older and Younger Students)

- Write the following names on separate index cards: *Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Rahab, Boaz, Ruth, Jesse, David, Solomon, Josiah, Joseph, Mary*. Create four sets. Divide into two teams. For each team, mix up two sets of cards and position them face-down on the floor or a table. The first player of each team will turn over two cards. If the names match, they must tell the class a fact about the person

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on the card. If their fact is correct, they may collect the cards. Have the first two players sit down and the next two come up. The first team to find all the matches wins.

- Jesus is God's Son, but God gave Him a family on Earth. Jesus' earthly family included Abraham, David, and others. Over hundreds of years, generation after generation, God had been working out His plan to send Jesus into the world. No one else who was ever born was like Jesus! What makes Jesus different? Jesus is fully God and fully man, and He came to Earth to save people from sin.

Compare and Contrast (Older and Younger Students)

- Draw two overlapping circles on a white board. Label one circle *Jesus* and the other *People*. Label the overlapped section *Both*. Encourage students to call out character traits that are specific to Jesus (*God the Son, has always existed, is fully God, etc.*), specific to people (*born in sin, created by God, start out separated from God, need forgiveness, etc.*), and shared by Jesus and people (*get hungry/thirsty, have families, born on Earth, loved by God, play a part in God's plan, etc.*). As students call out traits, write them on sticky notes and place them in the correct section of the diagram. When students run out of ideas, discuss some of the traits they mentioned.

- Jesus is like you and me in many ways. Our story today listed many of the people in Jesus' family, going back all the way to Abraham! Jesus was a real man with real people in His family history. Jesus is also very different. What makes Jesus different? Jesus is fully God and fully man. We also know that Jesus is God the Son. That means that even when He was first born, He had all the power and perfection and holiness of God wrapped up in a human body. Both parts of Jesus are very important to know and understand. Jesus can relate to us and understand our struggles because He has lived as a human. But Jesus was able to live a sinless life and die to pay the penalty of our sin because He is fully God. When we trust in Him, we are forgiven and adopted into His family.

Family Lineup (Younger Students)

- Before class, print and cut apart the "Family Lineup" printable. Invite your group to arrange the pictures of Jesus' ancestors chronologically, using the Bible as a reference.

- Each of us has a family that goes back many years. Even if we cannot trace our families back very far, we know that we have ancestors because everyone has ancestors! In that way, Jesus was no different. He had a long line of people whom God used to bring Jesus into the world as a baby. However, though Jesus came from a family just like each of us, He is also different from all of us. What makes Jesus different? Jesus is fully God and fully man. When we believe in Jesus, we are forgiven of our sins and adopted into His family. God loves everyone, but only those who are adopted into His family will live with Him forever.

Activity Pages & Recap Cards (5–10 min) (For in-class or take-home use)

- Family Tree (Older Students)
  - Answer: *What makes Jesus different? Jesus is fully God and fully man.*
- Similarity Search (Younger Students)

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Prayer & Requests (3–5 min)

Lord God, thank You for Your Word! Thank You for showing us Your plan from the very beginning. You kept Your promises to Abraham and David, and blessed the whole world by sending Your Son. Help us to tell others about Jesus—the most important person in history! Amen.

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Journal Page

Draw yourself in a picture that includes Jesus and any friends or family members who are believers.

FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS

- Why do you think Jesus' earthly family matters?
- What promises did God make to Abraham and David?
- How can we know Jesus fulfilled those promises?

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FROM ABRAHAM TO JESUS

MATTHEW 1:1-17

MAIN POINT: JESUS' EARTHLY FAMILY INCLUDED ABRAHAM, DAVID AND OTHERS.

Jesus is God the Son. God the Son has always existed; no one created Him. God planned to send His Son to Earth to save people from sin. Jesus came to Earth as a baby. He was born to Mary, who was married to Joseph. Jesus is fully God, and He is fully human too.

Jesus came from the family of Abraham and the family of King David. Abraham had a son named Isaac. When Isaac had a family, one of his sons was named Jacob. Jacob was part of Jesus' family.

Years later, a man named Salmon was born into Jesus' family tree. He married Rahab. Rahab had a baby, and his name was Boaz. Boaz married Ruth. Boaz and Ruth had a son named Obed.

Obed's son was Jesse. Jesse had many sons, and the youngest was David. David was just a boy when he was chosen to be Israel's king.

Other people in Jesus' family were kings too. David's son Solomon was a king. King Jehoshaphat was part of Jesus' family, and so was Uzziah, Ahaz, Hezekiah and Josiah.

Then came Matthan. Matthan's son was named Jacob, and Jacob's son was named Joseph. Joseph is the man who took Mary to be his wife. Mary was Jesus' mother, and Joseph raised Jesus as his own son.

Jesus Connection: *Jesus came to Earth as a baby in Bethlehem. Jesus had earthly parents, Mary and Joseph, but His true Father is God. Through Jesus, God kept His promises to Abraham and David. Jesus saves people from their sin and adopts them into God's family.*

Key Passage: *1 Timothy 1:15 – This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."*

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Family Tree

Unscramble the letters of each person in the family tree. Then draw a picture of each family member.

GERANHATFDR

GEAODRNMTHR

THFAER

EOTHRM

SSITER

BHETORR

The Big Picture

Move through the word maze, passing through the words that answer the big picture question: What makes Jesus different?

Jesus	is	the	or	Father
of	fully	Son	true	
and	world	God	and	fully
brother	at	the	One	man.

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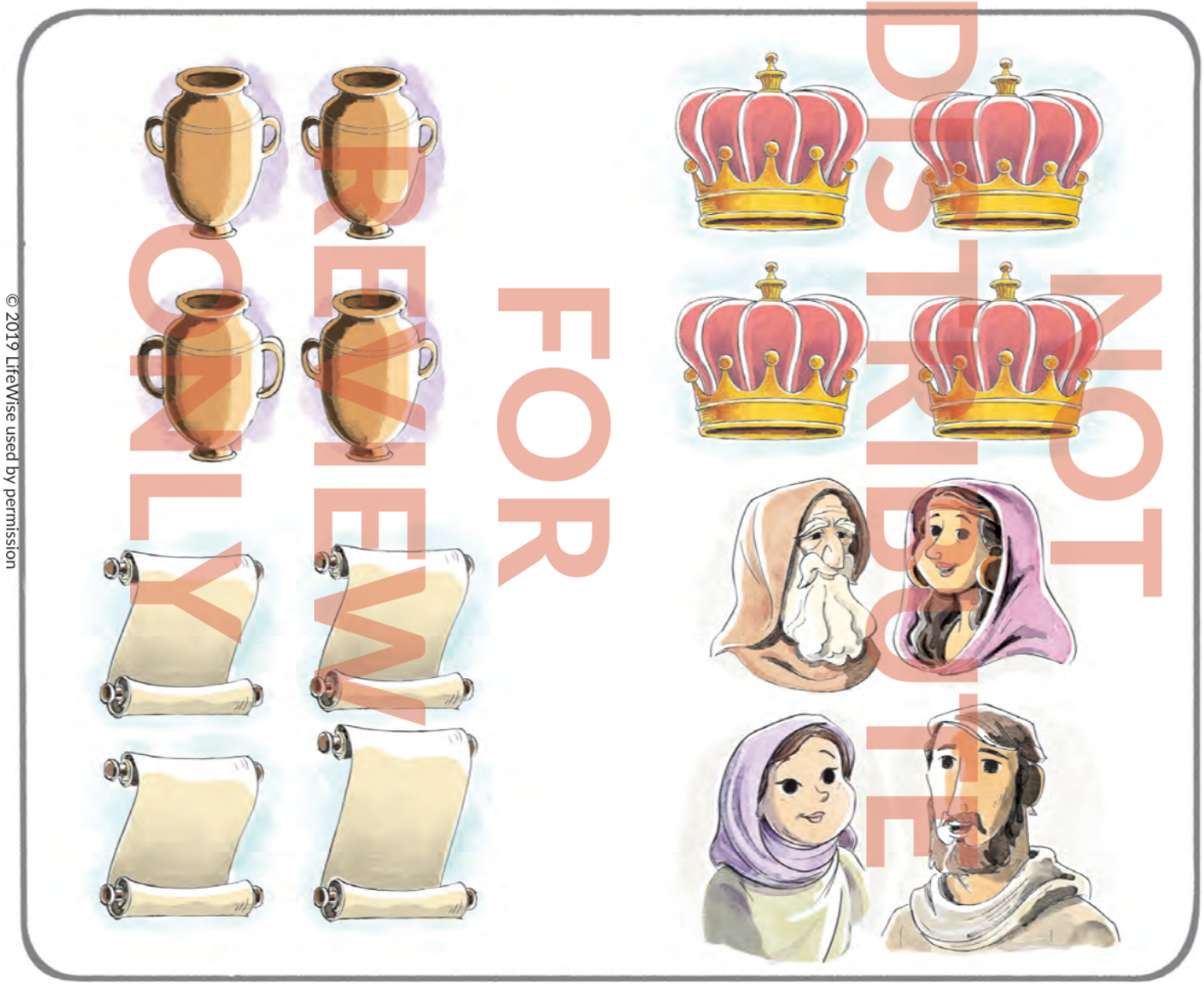
SIMILARITY SEARCH

INSTRUCTIONS: In each of the follow sets of pictures, circle the one that is different from the others.



KEY PASSAGE:
1 Timothy 1:15 – This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:
- What makes Jesus different? Jesus is fully God and fully man.

BIBLE STORY: FROM ABRAHAM TO JESUS
- Jesus' earthly family included Abraham, David and others.
- From Abraham to King David there were 14 generations, and from King David to the exile in Babylon there were 14 more.
- Jesus came 14 generations after the exile to fulfill God's promises to Abraham and David.

FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS:
- Why do you think Jesus' earthly family matters?
- What promises did God make to Abraham and David?
- How can we know Jesus fulfilled those promises?

FAMILY ACTIVITY:
- Work with your kids to research your family heritage as far as you can. Is there anyone interesting or famous in your family tree?

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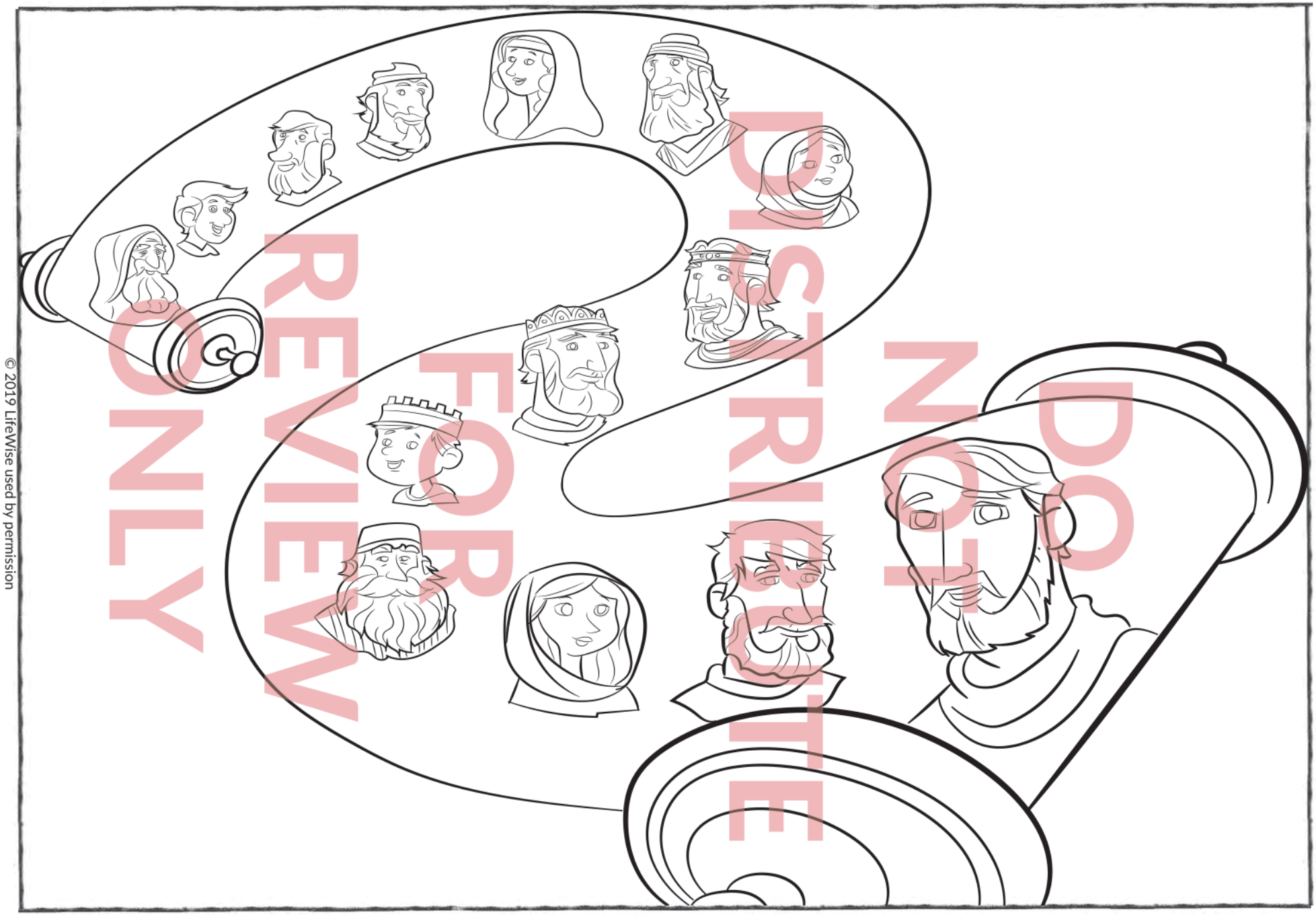

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JESUS' EARTHLY FAMILY INCLUDED ABRAHAM, DAVID AND OTHERS.

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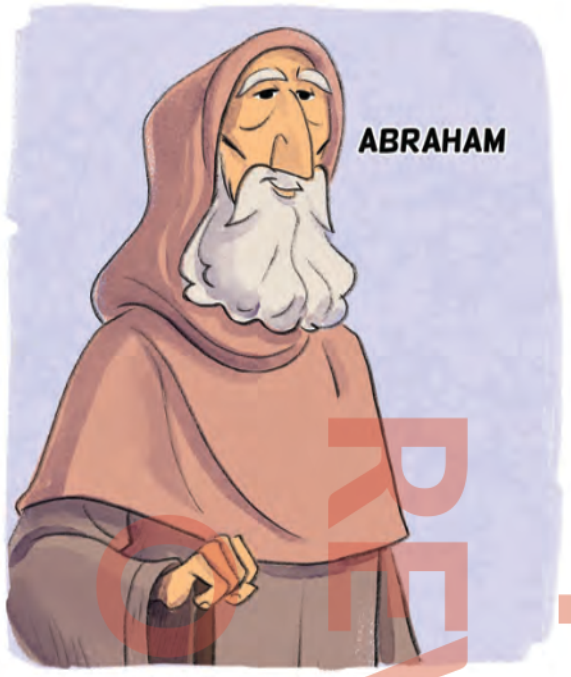

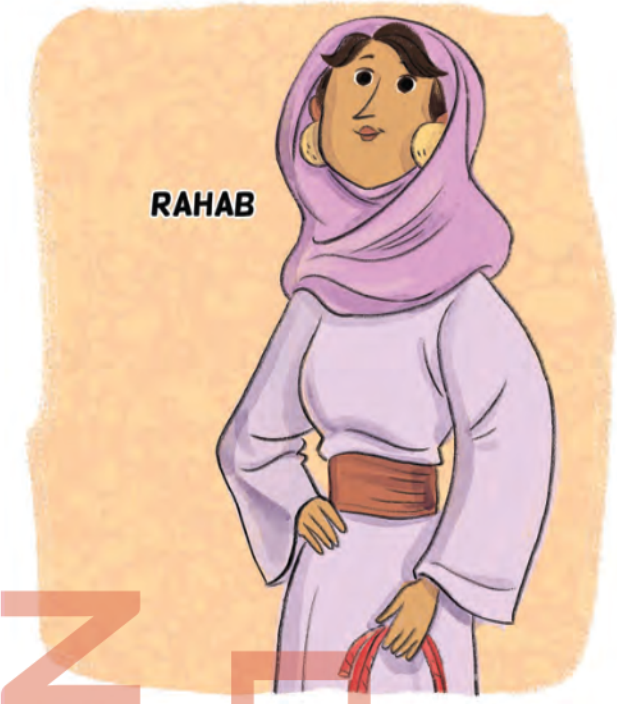

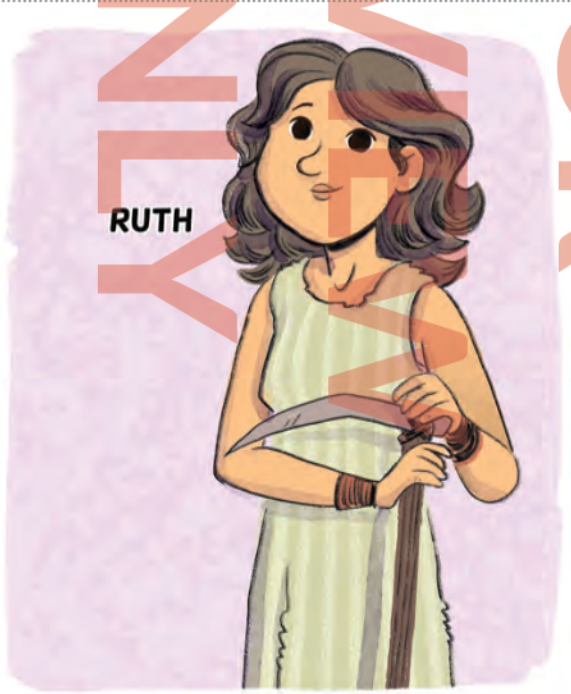

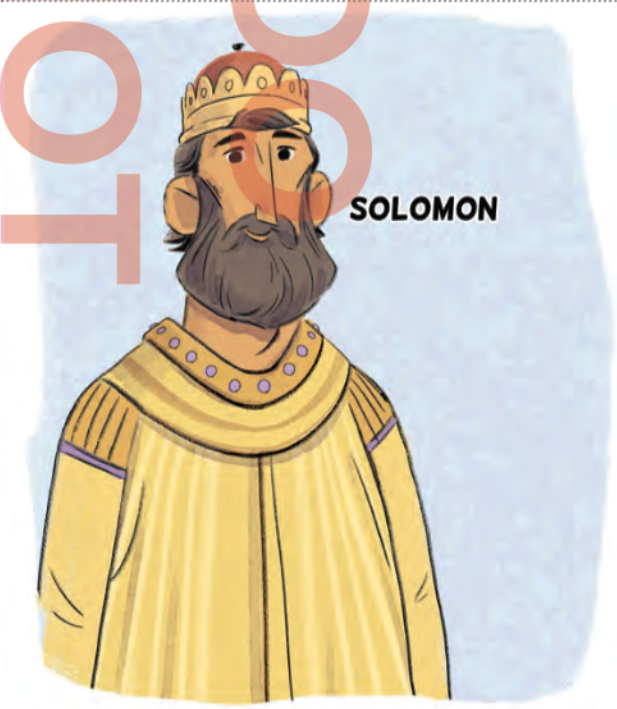

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Guess Who?

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LESSON 62: AVAILABILITY

MARY PRAISED GOD

Luke 1:26–56

MARY PRAISED GOD

- Luke 1:26–56
- Big Picture Q&A: What makes Jesus different? Jesus is fully God and fully man.
- Key Passage: 1 Timothy 1:15 – This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

JESUS CONNECTION

Mary was willing to follow God's plan, even though being Jesus' mother would not be easy. Mary wanted to bring praise to God. Likewise, Jesus brought praise to His Father by willingly dying on the cross to save us from sin.

LIFEWISE QUALITY

AVAILABILITY – Being ready and willing to do my part.

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LEADER BIBLE STUDY

God's people had not heard a clear message from God for hundreds of years. Then, one day, Gabriel—an angel of the Lord—told Zechariah that his wife, Elizabeth, was going to have a baby. The baby's name would be John. Then, the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary and told her that she would have a baby, and her baby would be God's Son.

Mary and Elizabeth were relatives. Elizabeth was old and barren; she and Zechariah had no children. Mary was a young girl—likely in her early teens. She was a virgin, engaged to be married to Joseph. The announcements of these pregnancies were miraculous for both women. Both babies had been foretold by the prophet Isaiah—John in Isaiah 40:3 and Jesus in Isaiah 7:14.

The angel Gabriel told Mary that Elizabeth was pregnant too, and Mary hurried to see her. The journey would not have been easy. Mary traveled nearly one hundred miles to see Elizabeth, and her arrival brought great joy to both Elizabeth and Elizabeth's unborn baby. In the presence of the unborn Messiah, John leaped in Elizabeth's womb. Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she said, "Mary, you are blessed!"

The story of Mary's visit with Elizabeth gives us a remarkable picture of women living by faith. Being a young, unwed pregnant woman could have caused Mary to worry. Instead, her response is marked by her trust in God. Mary's song reflects her knowledge of God's Word and her understanding of who God is.

Mary worshiped God because the coming of the promised Savior was good news! As you teach, remind students that people had been waiting hundreds of years for the Messiah. Being the mother of Jesus would be no small task, but Mary trusted that God was in charge.

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BIBLE TIMELINE & REVIEW (3 MIN)

In our last lesson, we learned about Jesus' lineage. Can you remember any of the people listed in Jesus' family line? (*Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Rahab, Boaz, Ruth, Josiah, Hezekiah, Mary, Joseph, etc.*) Why did God record Jesus' family line in the Bible? (*To show He kept every promise about who and how He would send a Savior to rescue the people from sin.*)

Much of the Old Testament is about God's people, the Israelites. The people faced a big problem; their sin separated them from God. But God had a plan to bring His people back to Himself. Through the prophets, He promised to send a Messiah. The people weren't sure how God would keep His promise, but they trusted Him. In the New Testament, we see how God kept His promise. Today, we will hear what an angel said about how God was going to bring the Messiah into the world.

SESSION STARTERS (5-10 MIN)

Impossible Or Not? (Older Students)

- Give each student an index card and a pencil. Instruct students to write their name and a special talent or ability they have on the card. Collect the cards and read them one at a time. After you read a card, ask: "Possible or impossible?" Allow students to respond. Challenge them to guess which student has that talent or ability. Consider allowing students to stand and perform the talent if they want. Continue until you read all the cards.
- These were some special talents. Some of them even seemed impossible! In today's Bible story, an angel told Mary that something amazing was going to happen. The angel said, "Nothing will be impossible with God!" Let's find out what happened.

Joy Scenarios (Older and Younger Students)

- Form two teams. Explain that you are going to announce some good news. Students should imagine the news is true and react accordingly. If they think the news is good, they should shout and cheer. If they think the news is very good, they should shout and cheer even louder! Announce the scenarios one at a time. Prompt one team to react and then the other team. Sample scenarios:
  - Snow days! School is canceled for a week.
  - The cafeteria is serving your favorite meal today.
  - You received an invitation to a friend's party.
  - You won tickets to see your favorite band in concert.
  - Your parents announced that they are going to have a baby.
- Today, we are going to hear a story from the Bible about a time that Mary praised God. An angel told her good news that brought her great joy.

Jump! (Younger Students)

- Use masking tape or construction paper to mark "stones" on the classroom floor. Instruct students to move across the room by jumping from one stone to the next without touching the floor.
- We don't usually think of jumping as something babies do, especially while still in their moms' bellies! Today we will learn about a time a baby jumped in his mom's belly. What do you think made a baby jump for joy?

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KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY/BIG PICTURE Q&A (5 MIN)

1 Timothy 1:15

This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

Key Passage Pieces (Older Students)

- Before class, write the words of the key passage across three paper circles, and cut each circle into four pieces. Mix up the pieces and scatter them on the floor or a table. Challenge the students to arrange the pieces to assemble the key passage. For an extra challenge, use a watch or timer to see how fast they can complete the puzzle. When students finish, guide them to read the key passage aloud. Play again as time allows. A man named Paul wrote these words to his friend Timothy. Try to memorize our key passage this week. It tells us exactly why Jesus came into the world: to save sinners! Now that is very good news.

Key Passage Rhythm (Younger Students)

- Work with students to develop a simple rhythm to clap as you say the key passage. After repeating the passage a few times with the rhythm, challenge students to recite the passage from memory. A man named Paul wrote these words to his friend Timothy. Try to memorize our key passage this week. It tells us exactly why Jesus came into the world: to save sinners! That is very good news.

Big Picture Q&A

Q: What makes Jesus different?

A: *Jesus is fully God and fully man.*

BIBLE STORY (10 MIN)

Mary Praised God | Luke 1:26–56

One day, God sent an angel named Gabriel to a town in Galilee called Nazareth. The angel went **to visit** a young virgin named **Mary. She was engaged to be married to Joseph**, a descendant of King David.

The angel said to Mary, "Rejoice! You have found favor with God. He is with you." Mary was very afraid and puzzled. Why would God find favor with her? She had done nothing special.

The angel told Mary to not be afraid. He told Mary that she was going to have a very special and unique baby, and they would call the baby Jesus, which means "the Lord saves." The angel explained that the baby would be great—He would be God's Son! He would even be a king—the King God had promised would come.

Mary asked the angel, "How can that happen? I am not married yet."

The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come, and a miracle will happen. The baby will be God's Son."

The angel Gabriel told Mary, "Nothing will be impossible with God!" He told Mary that her relative Elizabeth was pregnant, even though she was old and did not have any children.

Mary replied, "I belong to God. May everything happen just as you said." Then, the angel left her.

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Mary hurried to her relative Elizabeth's house. When she arrived, the baby inside Elizabeth leaped for joy! The Holy Spirit filled Elizabeth and she said, "What an honor, Mary! Your baby will be blessed too!"

Mary was so happy. She **praised God with a song about how great God is.** Mary knew every family in the future would say she was blessed because God was going to do great things through Jesus. **God was keeping His promise to Abraham to bless the whole world through Jesus.**

Mary stayed with Elizabeth for three months. Then, she went home.

JESUS CONNECTION

Mary was willing to follow God's plan, even though being Jesus' mother would not be easy. Mary wanted to bring praise to God. Likewise, Jesus brought praise to His Father by willingly dying on the cross to save us from sin.

LIFEWISE QUALITY (3–4 MIN)

AVAILABILITY – Being ready and willing to do my part.

Living LifeWise

God is powerful and in control, so we can make ourselves available to be used by Him.

Character Connection

I can't complete any plan if I don't have all the pieces available. I can't make cookies if I'm missing flour or chocolate chips. I can't study if I leave my book at school. I can't complete the next level of my video game until I've collected all the weapons I'll need. And I can't play a baseball game if I don't have my whole team.

God is powerful. He can complete His plans all by Himself, but He wants to work with us. The question is, are we willing to work with Him? If we are, we must choose to be available. That means we ask God for direction. We read the Bible and pray so we learn His way. We ask God to help us follow where He's leading. When we make ourselves available to God, He will use us to bring about His plan for the whole world.

We can also be available to help other people complete their plans. Let's think of some ways we can "be ready and willing to do our part" to help specific people we know. Examples:

- A neighbor
- The new student in your class
- The gym teacher

BIBLE STORY REVIEW (5 MIN)

- Who told Mary she was going to have a baby?

  The angel Gabriel, Luke 1:26–27, 31

- How did Mary feel about the angel's announcement?

  Afraid, deeply puzzled, Luke 1:29

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- What did the angel say the baby's name would be?

  Jesus, Luke 1:31
- The angel said the baby would be whose Son?

  God's Son, Luke 1:32, 35
- Who else did the angel say was going to have a baby?

  Mary's cousin Elizabeth, Luke 1:36
- What special role would Elizabeth's baby have?

  The messenger, who would prepare the way for the Messiah, Luke 1:17
- How did Elizabeth know that Mary was pregnant?

  The Holy Spirit, Luke 1:41–45
- How long did Mary stay with Elizabeth and Zechariah?

  About three months, Luke 1:56

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES (5-10 MIN)

Humble or Prideful? (Older Students)

- Before class, write the following scenarios on four separate index cards:
  - You have been chosen to host a special guest at your school. (React HUMBLY.)
  - You have been chosen to host a special guest at your school. (React PRIDEFULLY.)
  - You have been chosen to be the next class president. (React HUMBLY.)
  - You have been chosen to be the next class president. (React PRIDEFULLY.)

- Form four groups. Review the meanings of *humble* and *proud*. (*Humble* means being modest or meek in spirit or manner, not proud or bold. *Proud* means thinking you are better, smarter or more important than other people.) Explain that each group will receive a scenario. Students should briefly decide how to act out the scenario using the assigned reaction. Allow students a couple of minutes to plan. Then, invite each group to share its scenario.

- How did Mary react when the angel said that God chose her to be Jesus' mother? She didn't say, "It's about time you showed up! I just knew I was so awesome that God would want to use me in His plan." That would have been a prideful reaction. But Mary was humble. She knew she hadn't done anything special. Mary said, "I belong to God. May everything happen just as you said." Mary believed God and was willing to follow His plan. God has shown favor and grace to sinners by sending His Son, Jesus, to rescue us from sin. Salvation is a gift from God; we have done nothing to deserve it. We can humbly receive the good news of the gospel and willingly follow God's plan because He has been so gracious to us.

Q&A Match (Older Students)

- Write the Bible review questions and answers/references on separate strips of paper. Instruct the class to sit in a circle. Place the question strips in a gift bag and spread the answer strips in the middle of the circle or on the board. Have the class pass the bag while you play music. When the music stops, the student holding the bag should pull out a question strip. Challenge him to match the question with the correct answer. For classes that struggle to read, have the student on the hotspot answer verbally. If he doesn't know the answer, he may pick the student to his left or right to help answer the question.

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Praise Board (Older and Younger Students)

- Give each student a sticky note and ask them to write or draw on it something for which they praise God. Invite students to stick their note to a wall in the room. Briefly review some of them, and encourage the students to praise God for these blessings. Leave the sticky notes up to guide prayer time.

Pantomime (Younger Students)

- Invite students to perform the different actions they hear as you retell the story using the bold words in the Bible story section:
  - Mary was engaged. (Make a circle with two fingers for a "ring" and slip it on a finger)
  - Mary saw an angel. (Form hands into binoculars)
  - Mary was afraid. (Look away and shield your face with your hands)
  - Mary was puzzled. (Put both hands palm up out to either side, as if asking *why*?)
  - Mary was going to have God's Son. (Use arms to rock a baby)
  - Mary was happy. (Clap hands)
  - Mary praised God. (Raise hands in the air)
- Repeat the story, saying only the action words above. Each time you repeat, increase the speed. See how fast you can get through the actions that summarize the story.

Bible Trivia Game (Younger Students)

- Before class, write the Bible review questions on index cards and tape them to a wall to form a grid. Form two teams and allow them to take turns choosing cards from the wall. Read each card aloud. The first player from a team to clap his hands may answer the question to score a point for his team. If he is wrong, a player from the other team may answer to earn the point instead.

Activity Pages & Recap Cards (5–10 min) (For in-class or take-home use)

- What's Different? (Older Students)
  - Answer: *God chose Mary to be Jesus' mother.*
- Mary's Motto (Younger Students)
  - Answer: *May everything happen just as you said.*

Prayer & Requests (3–5 min)

Father, thank You for sending Jesus. Thank You for Mary's belief and humble obedience to Your will. We know that following You is not easy. Help us to trust You and obey You as Mary and Jesus obeyed even in difficult times. Amen.

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Journal Page

List a few reasons you would be willing to follow God's plan for your life.

FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS

- How do you think Elizabeth's baby knew Jesus was near?
- How do you think Mary felt about being the Messiah's mother?
- Can you think of other difficult things God asks people to do?

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FOLD

MARY PRAISED GOD

LUKE 1:26–56

MAIN POINT: GOD CHOSE MARY TO BE JESUS' MOTHER.

One day, God sent an angel to visit Mary. She was engaged to be married to Joseph.

The angel said to Mary, "Rejoice! You have found favor with God. He is with you." Mary was very afraid and puzzled.

The angel told Mary to not be afraid. He told Mary that she was going to have a very special and unique baby, and they would call the baby Jesus.

Mary asked the angel, "How can that happen? I am not married yet."

The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come, and a miracle will happen. The baby will be God's Son."

Mary replied, "I belong to God. May everything happen just as you said." Mary praised God with a song about how great God is. God was keeping His promise to Abraham to bless the whole world through Jesus.

Jesus Connection: *Mary was willing to follow God's plan, even though being Jesus' mother would not be easy. Mary wanted to bring praise to God. Likewise, Jesus brought praise to His Father by willingly dying on the cross to save people from sin.*

Key Passage: *1 Timothy 1:15 – This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."*

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WHAT'S DIFFERENT?

Find and circle the 10 differences in the picture.

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A SPECIAL PURPOSE

Use the key to crack the code. Fill in the blanks to discover the main point of today's Bible story.

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MARY'S MOTTO

INSTRUCTIONS: Use the shape code provided to put the vowels in the right places to see what Mary said.

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KEY PASSAGE:
1 Timothy 1:15 – This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:
- What makes Jesus different? Jesus is fully God and fully man.

BIBLE STORY: MARY PRAISED GOD
- God chose Mary to be Jesus' mother.
- Mary's cousin Elizabeth was chosen to have a special son too.
- Elizabeth's baby would prepare the way for Jesus, as the Scriptures prophesied.
- Mary praised God for His good plans.

FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS:
- How do you think Elizabeth's baby knew Jesus was near?
- How do you think Mary felt about being the Messiah's mother?
- Can you think of other difficult things God asks people to do?

FAMILY ACTIVITY:
- Work with your family to write a praise song. Sing it together before meals, on the way to church or before bed.

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GOD CHOSE MARY TO BE JESUS' MOTHER.

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LESSON 63: HOPE

JESUS WAS BORN

Matthew 2:1–12; Luke 2:1–20

JESUS WAS BORN

- Matthew 2:1–12; Luke 2:1–20
- Big Picture Q&A: What makes Jesus different? Jesus is fully God and fully man.
- Key Passage: 1 Timothy 1:15 – This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

JESUS CONNECTION

The birth of Jesus was good news! Jesus was not an ordinary baby. He is God's Son, sent to Earth from Heaven. Jesus came into the world to save us from sin and to be our King forever.

LIFEWISE QUALITY

HOPE – Expecting God will do what is best in every situation.

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LEADER BIBLE STUDY

Do you think it was just by chance that Caesar Augustus called for a census? Did it just so happen that Mary and Joseph were traveling to Bethlehem—the very place the Messiah was prophesied to be born (Micah 5:2)? God is in control of all things, which He showed by using a pagan emperor to bring about His plan.

After Jesus was born, Mary laid Him in a manger. A king in a manger! It was so unlikely. But Jesus was no ordinary baby. He was God's Son, sent in the most humble of positions, "not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life—a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28). Imagine the shepherds' surprise when an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared. The Bible says that they were terrified! But the angel brought them "good news of great joy" (Luke 2:10–11). The people of Israel were well aware of their need for a Savior. They made sacrifices daily to atone for their sin. Finally, a Savior had come who would be the perfect sacrifice for sin, once and for all.

Not only did Jesus come into the world as the Savior, He came as our King. Some time after Jesus' birth, wise men came to worship Jesus. They brought Him gifts suitable for a king—gold, frankincense and myrrh. Jesus is the King who will rule forever, just as God promised King David (2 Sam. 7).

When you share this story, remind the class that Jesus came because we needed Him. The purpose of Jesus' birth was twofold: to bring glory to God and to make peace between God and those who trust in Jesus' death and resurrection. Celebrating the birth of Jesus is about rejoicing over the greatest gift we could ever receive. God's own Son came to Earth to be our Savior and our King.

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BIBLE TIMELINE & REVIEW (3 MIN)

The Bible is made up of many smaller stories that all fit together to tell one big story—the story of how God sent Jesus to rescue people from sin. Last time, we heard about an angel who told Mary that she was going to have a baby. Who did the angel say this baby would be? (*God's own Son, the Savior of the world.*) How did Mary respond to this good news? (*Confused, but willing to follow God's plan.*) In today's Bible story the angel Gabriel's message came true!

SESSION STARTERS (5-10 MIN)

Scavenger Hunt (Older Students)

- Before class, make a list of scavenger hunt items related to the Bible story and hide the items around the room. Give the list to students and challenge them to find and collect the items. Suggested items: *clipboard, baby bottle, receiving blanket or piece of cloth, toy sheep, newspaper, star cutout, paper crown, gift bag.*

- Great job on our scavenger hunt! All of these items are related to today's Bible story about Jesus' birth. Listen carefully to the Bible story to see if you can figure out what is important about these items.

Census Workers (Older and Younger Students)

- Provide each child with a copy of the "Census Worker" printable. Students will go around the room, counting the number of people who fit into each category and writing the numbers in the appropriate boxes on the sheet.

- In our game, you counted different people in the room. When a government counts all the people in a country, it's called a *census*. A census helps a government keep track of who lives there. Mary and Joseph traveled to Bethlehem to be counted in a census. We will find out what happened when they got to Bethlehem today.

Star Search (Younger Students)

- Before class, cut multiple star shapes from yellow construction paper. You may make one clearly larger and more ornate, perhaps using glitter pens to add some sparkle. Hide the stars around the room. Challenge the students to find them all and bring them to you. You may form two teams and assign point values to the stars, turning the game into a friendly competition, or simply guide students to separate them into different categories (small, medium, large, etc).

- Today, we will learn about a group of wise men who saw a special star in the sky and followed it for miles and miles. What do you think they were looking for? We will hear what they searched for and if they found it!

KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY/BIG PICTURE Q&A (5 MIN)

1 Timothy 1:15

This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

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High, Low, Fast, Slow (Older and Younger Students)

- Practice the key passage normally all the way through. Explain that you will be saying the verse together four times, in four different ways without stopping. [*If you have incorporated motions into learning the verse, use them in conjunction with this activity.*] The first time, everyone will use a very high voice (use body language by standing on tiptoes), the second time a low voice (crouching down to the ground), the third time a very fast voice (and motions) and the fourth time a very slow voice (and motions).

Big Picture Q&A

Q: What makes Jesus different?
A: *Jesus is fully God and fully man.*

BIBLE STORY (10 MIN)

Jesus Was Born | Matthew 2:1–12, Luke 2:1–20

While Mary was pregnant with baby Jesus, **the Roman emperor**, Caesar Augustus, **announced that everyone needed to be registered for a census.** Every person traveled to the town where his family was from. Since **Joseph** was a descendant of King David, he **and Mary** left Nazareth and **traveled to Bethlehem**, the city of David.

While they were there, the time came for Mary to have her baby. Mary and Joseph looked for a safe place for Mary to have her baby, but every place was full. So, Mary and Joseph found a place where animals were kept, and that is where Mary had her baby, Jesus. She wrapped Him snugly in cloth, and she laid him in a feeding trough, where the animals ate their food.

In the same region, some shepherds were out in the fields watching their sheep. All of a sudden, an angel of the Lord stood before them. A bright light shone around the shepherds, and they were terrified!

But **the angel said to them, "Don't be afraid! I have very good news for you: Today a Savior, who is Messiah the Lord, was born for you in the city of David."** Then, the angel said, "You will find a baby wrapped snugly in cloth and lying in a feeding trough."

Then, a whole army of angels appeared, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest Heaven, and peace on Earth to people He favors!"

The shepherds went straight to Bethlehem to find baby Jesus. They found Mary and Joseph and the baby who was lying in the feeding trough. **The shepherds went and told others about the baby Jesus.** Everyone who heard about Jesus was surprised and amazed. **The shepherds returned to their fields, praising God** because everything had happened just as the angel had said.

Some time later, wise men came to visit Jesus. They had seen a star in the east—a sign from God that Jesus had been born. The wise men went to King Herod. "Where is the king of the Jews?" they asked. "We have come to worship Him."

A new king? Herod was king! "Go and search carefully for the child," Herod told the wise men. "When you find Him, report back to me so that I can go and worship Him too." But Herod was lying. He didn't want to worship Jesus; he wanted to kill Him!

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When the wise men found Jesus, they fell to their knees and worshiped Him. Then, they gave Him gifts: gold, frankincense and myrrh. When it was time for the wise men to go home, God warned them in a dream not to tell Herod where Jesus was. So they took a different way home.

JESUS CONNECTION

The birth of Jesus was good news! Jesus was not an ordinary baby. He is God's Son, sent to Earth from Heaven. Jesus came into the world to save us from sin and to be our King forever.

LIFEWISE QUALITY (3–4 MIN)

HOPE – Expecting God will do what is best in every situation.

Living LifeWise

Because God is with us, we can have hope in every situation.

Character Connection

At Christmas, we celebrate that God came to be with us. That's His actual name—Emmanuel, "God with us." He became human, and He walked on our Earth, ate food like us, had friends and faced all the same struggles we do. But He never stopped being God. So, He never sinned, and when He died on the cross, He made a way for us to be saved.

Because we have God by our side, we have a hope that nothing on Earth can shake. When we feel afraid, we can remember that God is in control. He surrounds us with His love when we're sad or scared. And His Spirit is with us to help us live His way and want to please Him. And because our hope is based on God's presence, it can never fade away.

How could knowing God is with us give the person in each situation hope?

- Reading (or math) is not easy for you, and you struggle to finish your work.
- You don't get very much playing time on your basketball team.
- There's a new girl in class and now your best friend sits with her at lunch.

BIBLE STORY REVIEW (5 MIN)

- Mary and Joseph traveled to what city?

  Bethlehem, the city of David, Luke 2:4
- Where did Mary and Joseph lay Jesus?

  A manger in a stable, Luke 2:7
- What good news did the angel tell the shepherds?

  A Savior, who is Messiah the Lord, was born for you in the city of David," Luke 2:11
- Where did the shepherds go when the angels left?

  Bethlehem, Luke 2:15

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- What did the shepherds do when they left Bethlehem?

  Told others about Jesus, glorified God and praised Him, Luke 2:17–18, 20

- How did the wise men know Jesus had been born?

  Had seen His star in the east, Matt. 2:2

- What did Herod plan to do when he found Jesus?

  Kill him, Matt. 2:13

- What gifts did the wise men give Jesus?

  Gold, frankincense and myrrh, Matt. 2:11

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES (5-10 MIN)

Three In a Row (Older Students)

- Position seven chairs in a row. Form two teams and pass out colored paper for students to hold: red for Team 1 and blue for Team 2. Begin by asking Team 1 a review question. Teams may discuss before giving a final answer. If a team answers incorrectly, give the other team a chance to answer. For a correct answer, the team may either sit a player in an empty chair or choose a chair occupied by the other team (that player must return to his team). Teams will try to fill three seats in a row. If a team gets three players in a row, reset the game and continue until you ask all the review questions.

Storyboard (Older Students)

- Give each student a large piece of paper that they will separate into three sections. Label the sections with the Scripture references: *Luke 2:4–7*; *Luke 2:8–12*; *Matthew 2:1–2,10–11*. [*You may also form three groups and assign each group a Scripture reference.*] Distribute Bibles and markers. Instruct students to find and read the Scripture references, then illustrate a scene from each part of the Bible story. Allow several minutes for students to work. Leave time for students to share their scenes.

- Great work, everyone. These pictures show what happened in today's Bible story. God kept His promise to send a Messiah. He sent His Son into the world! Jesus was born to be God's promised Savior.

Good News Or Bad News? (Older and Younger Students)

- Read the following scenarios to the students, explaining that they should run to one side of the room if it is good news and to the other if it is bad news. Allow students time to discuss why they think each situation would be good or bad.

  - Your parents tell you that you are moving to a new neighborhood.
  - You learn that your aunt is about to have a baby.
  - A bully from your school shows up at church on Sunday.
  - Your brother or sister got a new toy.
  - Jesus was born to be God's promised Savior!

- Some of those situations could have been good or bad, depending on your point of view. Jesus' birth is the best news ever, but even His birth seemed like bad news to Herod. Sin damages how we view the world; it can even make us think that God's plans are bad news. The truth is that

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Jesus' birth is good news for sinners because it means that our Savior came to die for our sin and make the way for us to be with God forever.

Present Pass (Younger Students)

- Before class, write the Bible review questions on strips of paper, and put them in a gift bag. Have the students sit in a circle and pass the bag while you play Christmas music. Stop the music randomly. Whoever is touching the bag must pull a question out and give it to you to read. The student will then try to answer it.

Hide the Baby (Younger Students)

- Use a baby doll to represent Jesus as a small child. Hide the doll somewhere in the room and invite the students to find it. Whoever finds the doll gets to hide it for the next round. Play as time allows.

- The shepherds searched for Jesus to worship Him and told others about Him. When Herod heard the news, he searched for Jesus to kill Him so He wouldn't grow up to be king. God protected Jesus so that His plan would succeed. God's plans always succeed! Without Jesus, we are sinners who, like Herod, don't want Jesus to be King. Jesus lived a perfect life and died for us so that we could be changed and worship Him as King, like the shepherds did.

Activity Pages & Recap Cards (5–10 min) (For in-class or take-home use)

- Jesus Was Born Word Search (Older Students)
  - Answer: *The birth of Jesus was good news! Jesus was not an ordinary baby. He is God's Son, sent to Earth from Heaven. Jesus came into the world to save us from sin and to be our King forever.*

- Follow the Star (Younger Students)

Prayer & Requests (3–5 min)

God, thank You for sending Your Son into the world to save us from sin. Your Word tells us that Jesus is fully God and fully man. He gave up His place in Heaven to come to Earth in the most humble way—as a little baby. We needed Jesus, and You gave Him to us because You love us. Father, help us remember why Jesus was born. He is the answer to our greatest problem of sin. Thank You for giving us this precious gift. Amen.

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Journal Page

Draw a picture of Jesus as a baby and a picture of Jesus as a king on a throne.

FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS

- Why was Herod so upset when he heard about a new King?
- Name some ways God showed His power over all circumstances.

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JESUS WAS BORN

MATTHEW 2:1–12; LUKE 2:1–20

MAIN POINT: JESUS WAS BORN TO BE GOD'S PROMISED SAVIOR.

The Roman emperor announced that everyone needed to be registered for a census. Joseph and Mary traveled to Bethlehem.

While they were there, the time came for Mary to have her baby. Mary and Joseph looked for a safe place for Mary to have her baby, but every place was full. So Mary and Joseph found a place where animals were kept, and that is where Mary had her baby, Jesus. She wrapped Him snugly in cloth, and she laid him in a feeding trough.

In the same region, some shepherds were out in the fields watching their sheep. All of a sudden, an angel of the Lord stood before them.

The angel said to them, "Don't be afraid! I have very good news for you: Today a Savior, who is Messiah the Lord, was born for you in the city of David." Then a whole army of angels appeared, praising God.

The shepherds went straight to Bethlehem to find baby Jesus. They found Mary and Joseph and the baby. The shepherds went and told others about the baby Jesus. The shepherds returned to their fields, praising God.

Some time later, wise men came to visit Jesus. They had seen a star in the east—a sign from God that Jesus had been born. When the wise men found Jesus, they fell to their knees and worshiped Him.

Jesus Connection: *The birth of Jesus was good news! Jesus was not an ordinary baby. He is God's Son, sent to Earth from Heaven. Jesus came into the world to save people from sin and to be their King forever.*

Key Passage: *1 Timothy 1:15 – This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."*

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JESUS WAS BORN WORD SEARCH

Find and circle the key words form the word list in the puzzle below.

S	C	E	N	S	U	S	D	S	J	S	A
V	D	K	S	M	Z	S	R	W	R	H	N
J	Z	R	A	U	A	V	O	E	D	E	G
H	O	R	E	V	S	Y	L	N	I	E	E
E	Y	S	I	H	R	E	H	D	V	P	L
H	A	O	E	O	P	A	J	O	A	P	S
R	R	R	L	P	I	E	U	O	D	S	W
S	J	G	T	S	H	A	H	G	W	Z	A
E	O	X	S	H	K	Y	Z	S	N	U	P
S	O	E	N	E	V	A	E	H	L	I	L
C	M	P	E	A	C	E	Y	B	A	B	K
M	E	H	E	L	H	T	E	B	D	A	M

Word List

ANGELS
BABY
BETHLEHEM
CENSUS
DAVID
EARTH
GLORY
GOOD NEWS
HEAVEN
JESUS
JOSEPH
KING
LORD
MARY
MESSIAH
PEACE
SAVIOR
SHEEP
SHEPHERDS

GOOD NEWS!

Use words from the word list to fill in the blanks to complete the Jesus Connection.

The birth of _____ was _____ _____!

_____ was not an ordinary _____.

He is God's Son, sent to _____ from _____.

_____ came into the world to save people

from sin and to be their _____ forever.

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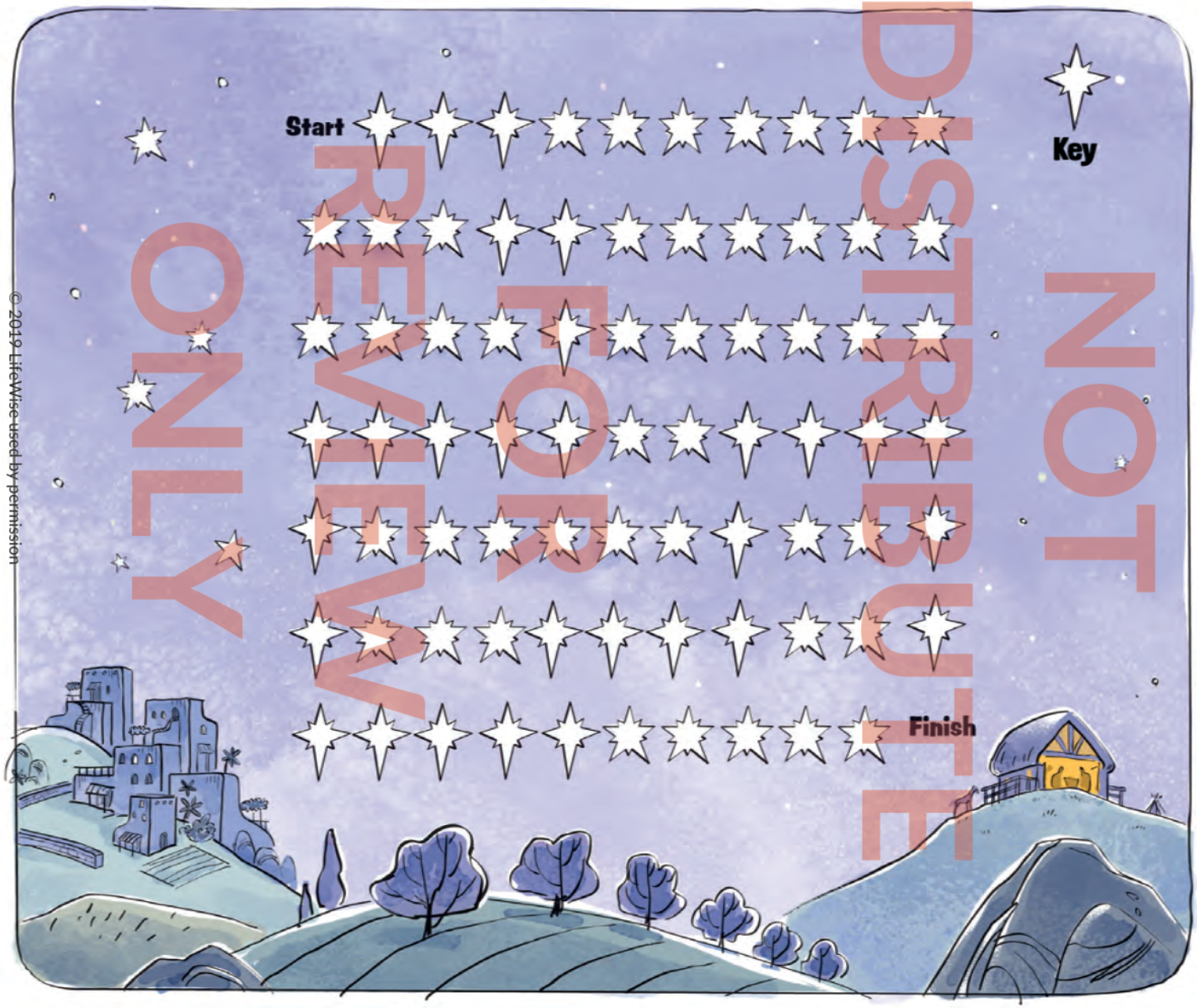
FOLLOW THE STAR

INSTRUCTIONS: Find the pathway of bigger stars to lead the wise men to Jesus.



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KEY PASSAGE:
1 Timothy 1:15 – This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:
- What makes Jesus different? Jesus is fully God and fully man.

BIBLE STORY:
JESUS WAS BORN
- Mary and Joseph went to Bethlehem for a census.
- Jesus was born to be God's promised Savior.
- Angels appeared to nearby shepherds to tell them the news.
- Even wise men from the east traveled to worship Jesus as King.

FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS:
- Why was Herod so upset when he heard about a new King?
- Name some ways God showed His power over all circumstances.

FAMILY ACTIVITY:
- Celebrate a "mini-Christmas" party. Get small presents for your kids, wrap them and surprise them when they wake up. Discuss how much of a surprise the first Christmas would have been for the shepherds.

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JESUS WAS BORN TO BE GOD'S PROMISED SAVIOR.

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Census Worker

Instructions: Count how many kids in your class fit into the following categories.

1. How many girls are there in your class?
2. How many boys are there in your class?
3. How many kids in your class are wearing shoes with laces?
4. How many kids in your class are wearing red?
5. How many kids in your class can snap their fingers?
6. How many adults are there in your classroom?
7. How many total people are there in your classroom?
8. How many people are wearing blue jeans in your class?
9. How many kids have finished with their census?
10. How many people love Jesus in your class?

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LESSON 64: WHOLEHEARTEDNESS

JESUS AT THE TEMPLE

Luke 2:40–52

JESUS AT THE TEMPLE

- Luke 2:40–52
- Big Picture Q&A: What makes Jesus different? Jesus is fully God and fully man.
- Key Passage: 1 Timothy 1:15 – This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

JESUS CONNECTION

Even as a child, Jesus wanted to do His Father's plan. As Jesus grew up, He became strong and wise. God blessed Jesus as He got ready to follow His Father's plan: to die on the cross and rescue us from sin.

LIFEWISE QUALITY

WHOLEHEARTEDNESS – Complete dedication in everything I do.

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LEADER BIBLE STUDY

The book of Luke records just two narratives about Jesus' childhood: His dedication (Luke 2:21–40) and His time at the temple when He was 12 years old (Luke 2:41–52). Both stories set the stage for Jesus' ministry on Earth as an adult.

Mary and Joseph were faithful Jews. They had dedicated the baby Jesus according to the law of Moses, and they traveled to Jerusalem each year to celebrate Passover. God had commanded the men to appear before Him three times a year to observe certain festivals (Deut. 16:16). Once a year, those who followed God's law would travel to Jerusalem—often in large groups—to celebrate Passover.

In Bible times, a Jewish boy became a man at 13. His father would train him to take on all the responsibilities of adulthood, social and spiritual. Joseph was a carpenter, and he likely trained Jesus in his trade. When Mary and Joseph went to Jerusalem, Joseph might have taken Jesus around the city to teach Him the significance of the temple and explain the purpose of the Passover feast.

Jesus' parents started the journey back home after the feast. They assumed Jesus was among their traveling companions, but He wasn't. Jesus had stayed behind at the temple. Mary and Joseph traveled for a day before they noticed Jesus was missing. They went back to Jerusalem and found Him at the temple.

When Mary asked why He had done this, Jesus answered Mary's question with a question: "Didn't you know that I had to be in My Father's house?" (Luke 2:49). Mary and Joseph did not understand. But Jesus is God's Son, and it was necessary that He honor His true Father. In all this, Jesus did not sin.

The Bible does not give many details about Jesus' childhood, but we do know that as Jesus got older, He grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and with people. Jesus carried out God's plan to reconcile the world to Himself (2 Cor. 5:19).

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BIBLE TIMELINE & REVIEW (3 MIN)

In our last few lessons we learned about Jesus' family on earth. Can you name some people in his family line? (*Adam, Abraham, David, Solomon, Josiah, Hezekiah, Joseph, Mary.*) God chose Mary to be Jesus' mother. Why did God choose her? (*She had faith in God and tried to obey him.*) Last class, we learned about the visitors who came after Jesus' birth. Who came the night Jesus was born? (*Shepherds.*) Who visited him later? (*The wise men.*) Every baby is special, but Jesus was unlike any other baby. How is Jesus different? (*Jesus is fully God and fully man.*) Even though Joseph helped Mary take care of Jesus, God is Jesus' true Father.

SESSION STARTERS (5-10 MIN)

Where Does It Belong? (Older Students)

- Write the following words on separate index cards: *astronaut, surgeon, basketball player, taxi driver.* Choose a volunteer to pick a card and draw on the board the environment or location where the person on their card would be found without including the person. The class should guess the person who would fit in the environment drawn. The first student to guess the correct answer can draw next.
- You wouldn't be surprised to see each of these people in these environments; that's where they belong! In today's Bible story, Mary and Joseph couldn't find Jesus, but they found Him exactly where He was supposed to be! We will find out soon where He was.

Where Am I? (Older and Younger Students)

- Invite students to play a game of 20 questions. Explain that you are thinking of a place. Students will take turns asking yes-or-no questions to try to figure out what place you are thinking of. [*For example, Do you go there every day? Is this place warm? Is this place crowded?*] Keep track of how many questions students ask. If they are unable to guess the place after 20 questions, reveal the answer. Play multiple rounds as time allows. Suggested places: *school, church, aquarium, library.*
- Great job figuring out the places I was thinking of. Today, we are going to hear a Bible story about Jesus, Mary and Joseph. Mary and Joseph couldn't find Jesus, and they looked everywhere for Him. During the lesson, we will hear about where they found Him.

Hot and Cold (Younger Students)

- Select a toy to hide in the room. Direct students to find it by telling them they are getting warmer as they approach it or cooler as they stray away from it. When the students find it, discuss if it would be hard to find without clues.
- Jesus' earthly parents took Him to Jerusalem for the Passover festival each year. One year, they left without Him. When they went back to find Him, they forgot about the biggest clue that would have helped them find Him sooner—the identity of His Father.

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KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY/BIG PICTURE Q&A (5 MIN)

1 Timothy 1:15

This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

Key Passage Scramble (Older and Younger Students)

- Before class, write each word of the key passage on a separate index card. Mix up the cards and place them in an envelope. Create two sets. Display the key passage poster and guide students to read it aloud together. Form two teams and give each team an envelope. The first team to arrange the key passage in the proper order wins. Call on both teams to read the key passage out loud.

Funny Voices (Older and Younger Students)

- Have students say the verse together several times using silly voices (basketball announcer, pinching their nose, underwater, foreign accent, etc.).

Big Picture Q&A

Q: What makes Jesus different?

A: *Jesus is fully God and fully man.*

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BIBLE STORY (10 MIN)

Jesus at the Temple | Luke 2:40–52

Every year, Jesus' parents traveled to Jerusalem for the Passover feast. Passover was the biggest holiday for the Jewish people. Many people would travel to Jerusalem to celebrate and remember when God saved His people from slavery in Egypt.

When Jesus was 12 years old, Jesus and His family went to Jerusalem together. When it was time to go home, Mary and Joseph began traveling to Nazareth with a large group of people. They did not notice that Jesus was not with them; they thought He was among the group of travelers. But Jesus was not with the group. **He had stayed behind in Jerusalem.**

Mary, Joseph and the other travelers had been walking for a whole day when they began to look for Jesus. They looked among their relatives and friends, **but they could not find Him.**

So, Mary and Joseph went back to Jerusalem to look for Jesus. They searched everywhere for Him, but they could not find Him. The city was so big, and Jesus was just a boy.

Finally, they found Him. Jesus was **in the temple complex, sitting among the teachers. Jesus was listening to the teachers and asking them questions. Everyone who heard Jesus could hardly believe how much Jesus understood.**

When Jesus' parents saw Him, they were surprised. Mary said, "Son, why have You done this? Your father and I were worried. **We've been looking everywhere for You."**

"Why were you looking for Me?" **Jesus asked them. "Didn't you know that I had to be in My Father's house?"**

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But Mary and Joseph did not understand what Jesus was talking about. Then, Jesus went back to Nazareth with Mary and Joseph. Jesus was always obedient to them. Mary remembered all of these things. Jesus grew taller and wiser. God was pleased with Him, and so was everyone who knew Him.

JESUS CONNECTION

Even as a child, Jesus wanted to do His Father's plan. As Jesus grew up, He became strong and wise. God blessed Jesus as He got ready to follow His Father's plan: to die on the cross and rescue us from sin.

LIFEWISE QUALITY (3–4 MIN)

WHOLEHEARTEDNESS – Complete dedication in everything I do.

Living LifeWise

Because God's plans are good, we can live His way wholeheartedly.

Character Connection

Jesus lived wholeheartedly in every area of life because He knew and trusted God's plan for Him. He was totally committed to His earthly family and to worshiping God at the temple. And as He grew up, He kept on being wholehearted by being fully committed to God's plan of salvation for us.

We can't live wholeheartedly all the time in every area. We will make mistakes and get tired or distracted. But we can trust that God's plans are always good and ask Him to help us live His way with the same kind of commitment that Jesus demonstrated. And His Spirit will help us choose to be wholehearted.

Which one is the wholehearted response in these situations?

- You hate the game your class is playing in gym. Do you stand in one spot and refuse to help your team or try your best to help your team win anyway?
- Someone asks you to clean your room. Do you shove everything into piles or under the bed so you can be "done" quickly or do you pull everything into the middle of the room so you can put it all away, even though it takes longer?

BIBLE STORY REVIEW (5 MIN)

- **Why did Jesus' family travel to Jerusalem?**

  To celebrate Passover, Luke 2:41

- **How often did the Jewish people celebrate Passover?**

  Every year, Luke 2:41

- **How old was Jesus in today's Bible story?**

  12 years old, Luke 2:42

- **Where did Mary and Joseph find Jesus?**

  At the temple, Luke 2:46

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- What was Jesus doing at the temple?

  Listening to the teachers and asking them questions, Luke 2:46
- Why were people at the temple surprised at Jesus' questions and answers?

  He understood God's Word very well, Luke 2:47
- How many days did it take Mary and Joseph to find Jesus?

  Three days, Luke 2:46
- Why did Jesus say He was at the temple?

  He had to be in His Father's house, Luke 2:49

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES (5-10 MIN)

What's the Plan? (Older Students)

- Form groups of three or four students. Give each group a piece of paper and a pencil and an equal number of chenille craft stems. Challenge the groups to build the tallest tower they can out of the stems. Encourage groups to spend a couple of minutes making a plan for building the tower. Allow groups to work for about five minutes, then compare their structures. Ask how closely they followed the plan they made before they began building.
- God had a plan to save people from their sin. That's why Jesus came to Earth. Even as a child, Jesus wanted to do His Father's plan. He went to the temple, His Father's house. As He grew, He became strong and wise. God blessed Jesus as He got ready to follow His Father's plan: to die on the cross and rescue people from sin. Jesus followed God's plan because He loves us. We deserve to die for our sin, but Jesus came to take the punishment in our place. When we trust in Him, God forgives our sin and gives us eternal life.

Mingle Game (Older and Younger Students)

- Instruct the students to move around the room as a large crowd. Explain that you will call out an instruction that students should follow. Anyone who cannot complete the instruction is out. Play a few rounds and then allow eliminated players to rejoin the game. Consider these sample instructions:
  - Form groups of three.
  - Find someone wearing the same shirt color as you.
  - Form groups with others whose birthdays are in the same month as yours.
  - Form groups with others who have the same number of siblings as you.
- In our Bible story, Mary and Joseph could not find Jesus in the crowd. Where did they find Him? (*At the temple.*) We know now that Jesus came to Earth to do His Father's plan.

Ball Toss (Older and Younger Students)

Direct the class to stand in a circle. Toss a soft or inflatable ball to one student and ask a review question. For a correct answer, the student may toss the ball to another player who will answer the next question. For an incorrect answer, the player should toss the ball back to you. You will then choose the next player to answer a question. Encourage students to toss the ball to players who have not yet answered a question.

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Lost (Younger Students)

- Ask students if they have ever become separated from their family in a public place. Ask them about how they felt, their family's response and how they were reunited.

- Getting lost in a public place can be one of the scariest experiences, for students and parents. In today's story, we learned that Jesus stayed behind at the temple without telling His parents. We know that He didn't do this to make them angry because the Bible states that Jesus never sinned. Why did He do it then? He wanted to spend more time in God's house, the temple.

Activity Pages & Recap Cards (5–10 min) (For in-class or take-home use)

- Where Was Jesus? (older students)
  - Answers: *1. True; 2. False, 12 years old; 3. False, He stayed behind; 4. True; 5. False, Jesus never sinned.*

- Find Jesus (Younger Students)

Prayer & Requests (3–5 min)

God, thank You for Your Word. Thank You for sending Jesus to not only show us how to live but to give up His own life so that we may truly live, forgiven of sin and alive in Him. We confess that our biggest priority is not always to serve You. Forgive us for caring too much about things that are not as important as You. Thank You for Your grace. We want to honor You with our lives. Help us become strong and wise for Your glory. Amen.

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Journal Page

List questions you have about Jesus, the Bible or church. Seek out answers to your questions this week—through the Bible, your parents or church leaders.

FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS

- Why do you think Jesus stayed behind?
- Who was Jesus talking about when He said He had to be in His Father's house?
- How can we know God is our Father too?

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JESUS AT THE TEMPLE

LUKE 2:40-52

MAIN POINT: JESUS AND HIS FAMILY WORSHIPED GOD AT THE TEMPLE.

Every year, Jesus' parents traveled to Jerusalem for the Passover feast. When Jesus was 12 years old, Jesus and His family went to Jerusalem together. When it was time to go home, Mary and Joseph began traveling to Nazareth with a large group of people. They did not notice that Jesus was not with them. He had stayed behind in Jerusalem.

Mary, Joseph and the other travelers had been walking for a whole day when they began to look for Jesus, but they could not find Him.

So Mary and Joseph went back to Jerusalem to look for Jesus. Finally, they found Him in the temple complex, sitting among the teachers. Jesus was listening to the teachers and asking them questions. Everyone who heard Jesus could hardly believe how much Jesus understood.

When Jesus' parents saw Him, they were surprised. Mary said, "Son, why have You done this? We've been looking everywhere for You."

Jesus asked them, "Didn't you know that I had to be in My Father's house?"

Jesus Connection: *Even as a child, Jesus wanted to do His Father's plan. As Jesus grew up, He became strong and wise. God blessed Jesus as He got ready to follow His Father's plan: to die on the cross and rescue people from sin.*

Key Passage: *1 Timothy 1:15 – This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."*

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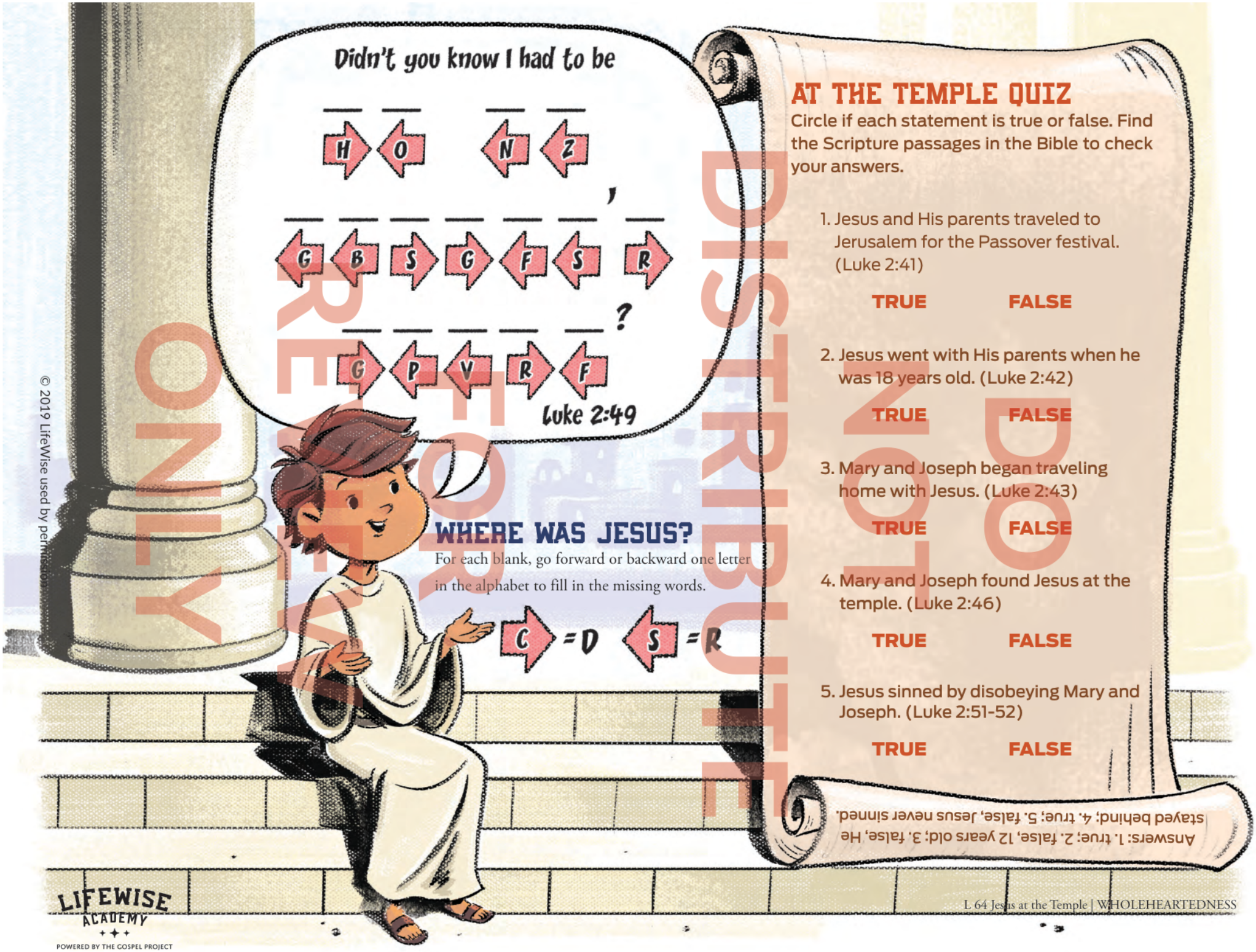

WHERE WAS JESUS?

For each blank, go forward or backward one letter in the alphabet to fill in the missing words.

C = D S = R

AT THE TEMPLE QUIZ

Circle if each statement is true or false. Find the Scripture passages in the Bible to check your answers.

1. Jesus and His parents traveled to Jerusalem for the Passover festival. (Luke 2:41)

   TRUE **FALSE**

2. Jesus went with His parents when he was 18 years old. (Luke 2:42)

   TRUE **FALSE**

3. Mary and Joseph began traveling home with Jesus. (Luke 2:43)

   TRUE **FALSE**

4. Mary and Joseph found Jesus at the temple. (Luke 2:46)

   TRUE **FALSE**

5. Jesus sinned by disobeying Mary and Joseph. (Luke 2:51-52)

   TRUE **FALSE**

Answers: 1. true; 2. false, 12 years old; 3. false, He stayed behind; 4. true; 5. false, Jesus never sinned.

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FIND JESUS

INSTRUCTIONS: Examine the picture of Jesus to find Him in the crowds of the larger picture.

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KEY PASSAGE:
1 Timothy 1:15 – This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:
- What makes Jesus different? Jesus is fully God and fully man.

BIBLE STORY: JESUS AT THE TEMPLE
- Mary and Joseph traveled to Jerusalem for Passover each year.
- When Jesus was 12, Mary and Joseph accidentally left Jerusalem without Jesus.
- When they noticed He was missing, they returned and found Jesus in the temple.
- Jesus came to Earth to do His Father's plan.

FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS:
- Why do you think Jesus stayed behind?
- Whom was Jesus talking about when He said He had to be in His Father's house?
- How can we know God is our Father too?

FAMILY ACTIVITY:
- Create a plan for what your kids should do if they get separated from you in a crowded place.

Jesus at the Temple
L 64 | WHOLEHEARTEDNESS

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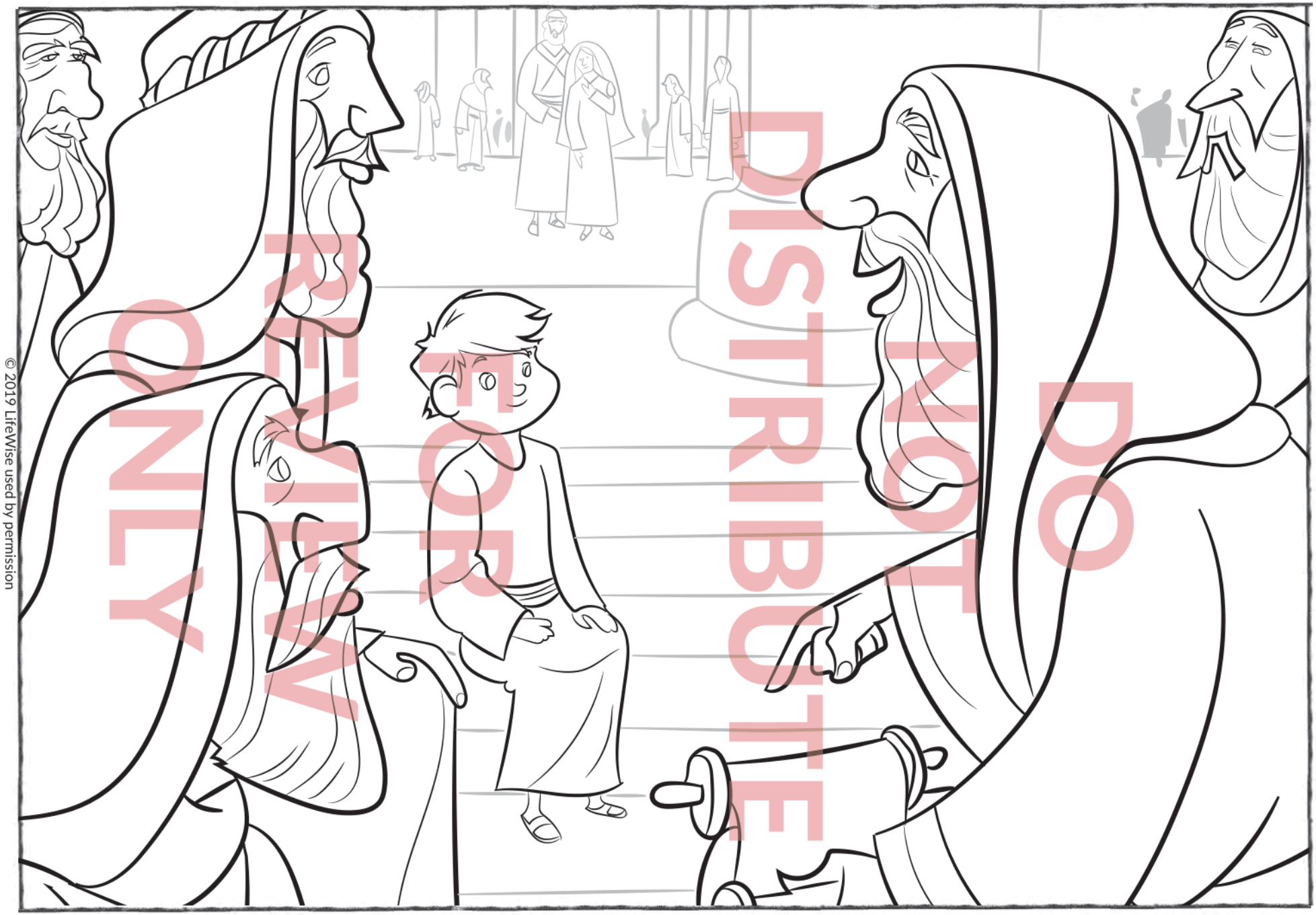

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LIFEWISE ACADEMY
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JESUS CAME TO EARTH TO DO HIS FATHER'S PLAN.

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LESSON 65: OBEDIENCE

JESUS WAS BAPTIZED

Matthew 3:13–17

JESUS WAS BAPTIZED

- Matthew 3:13–17
- Big Picture Q&A: What makes Jesus different? Jesus is fully God and fully man.
- Key Passage: 1 Timothy 1:15 – This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

JESUS CONNECTION

Jesus never sinned, but He obeyed God and was baptized like sinners are baptized. Baptism reminds us of Jesus' death and resurrection. It reminds us that when we trust in Jesus, we turn from sin and start a new life—a life lived for Jesus.

LIFEWISE QUALITY

OBEDIENCE – Listening to and following through with instructions from those in authority.

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LEADER BIBLE STUDY

Zechariah's son, John, grew up in the wilderness. John's ministry began when God's Word came to him, and he began preaching near the Jordan River. John worked to get the people ready for the coming of Jesus, fulfilling the Old Testament prophecy, "A voice of one crying out: Prepare the way of the Lord in the wilderness" (Isa. 40:3).

John called the people to repent of their sins, and he baptized them in the Jordan River. John also instructed the people on right living (Luke 3:10–14). Some of the people suspected that John might be the Messiah, but John insisted, "One is coming who is more powerful than I" (Luke 3:16).

Jesus came from Galilee to be baptized by John at the Jordan River. Wait a second. John was calling people to a baptism of repentance. We know Jesus never sinned (Heb. 4:15; 2 Cor. 5:21), so why did Jesus come to be baptized? John was right when he said, "I need to be baptized by You, and yet You come to me?" (Matt. 3:14).

Commentators' ideas vary about why Jesus was baptized. Perhaps He was affirming John's work. Maybe He was identifying with sinners or showing them how they would be saved—through His death, burial and resurrection. Jesus answered John, "Allow it for now, because this is the way for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matt. 3:15).

As you teach, allow time for students to ask questions. Emphasize that baptism is not what saves us; baptism is a way we show that we have been saved. Baptism reminds us that when we trust in Jesus, we die to sin and come into a new way of life—a life lived for Jesus (Rom. 6:3–4).

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BIBLE TIMELINE & REVIEW (3 MIN)

All the stories in the Bible fit together to tell one big story—how God saves sinners through His Son, Jesus. What promise did God keep to Abraham and David by sending Jesus? (*The Savior would come through their family.)* Jesus is God's Son, but God chose Mary to be Jesus' mother. Why did God choose Mary? (*She had faith in God and tried to obey him.*) Where was Jesus born? (*Bethlehem.*) Every baby is special, but how is Jesus different? (*Jesus is fully God and fully man.*) Where did Jesus travel when He was 12 years old? (*To Jerusalem for the Passover.*) Why did Jesus stay behind at the temple when His family left to return home? (*To spend time with God.*)

SESSION STARTERS (5-10 MIN)

Water Knock-Out (Older Students)

- Consider putting a cup of water where students can see it. Pass out paper and pencils, and set a timer for four minutes. Challenge students to list as many uses for water as they can. When time is up, let them read items from their lists one at a time. Students must cross repeated ideas off their lists. The one with the most unique answers wins. [Examples: drinking, preparing food, bathing, washing clothes and dishes, brushing teeth, watering yards and gardens, washing pets or cars.]

- Did anyone write down baptism as a use for water? Today's Bible story is about Jesus' baptism. John the Baptist baptized Jesus in the Jordan River.

Are You the One? (Older and Younger Students)

- Choose a volunteer to sit in a chair with his back to the group and close his eyes. Put a small bird figure under the chair. Choose another player to sneak up, take the bird, and hide it behind her back. Then, prompt everyone to pat their laps and chant together, "The Spirit came down from above. The Spirit came down like a dove!" The volunteer will turn around and try to guess who has the bird. If he is correct, he may play again. If he guesses incorrectly, the player who had the bird gets a turn to sit in the chair. Play as time allows.

- Today, we are going to hear a Bible story about a time the Holy Spirit came down like a dove. This was a sign that Jesus is the One God promised to send.

Announcements! (Younger Students)

- Before class, come up with a series of silly announcements. Invite the class to line up and whisper an announcement, "telephone" style, down to the last student in line who should say it in a booming or regal voice. Let him move to the start of the line and whisper the next announcement. Suggested announcements:
  - Attention: All ice cream will be spinach-flavored from now on!
  - Attention: The only acceptable walking will be crab walking from now on!
  - Attention: Pig snorts will replace the word *yes.*

- Those were some really silly announcements. In our story today, we will learn about a very important announcement that God made about Jesus.

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KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY/BIG PICTURE Q&A (5 MIN)

1 Timothy 1:15

This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

Key Passage Fill-In (Older Students)

- Show the key passage poster. Have the girls read the key passage together, then the boys. Remove or cover the poster. Write the first letter of each word on a dry erase board. Let students verbally complete as many words as they know, then say the rest for them. Fill in the words as students say them. Keep going until the majority of students can say the entire passage without assistance.

Key Passage Fish (Younger Students)

- Before class, write each word or phrase of the key passage on fish-shaped paper cutouts, and attach a paperclip near the mouth of each fish. Tie a magnet to the end of a string. Challenge students to take turns catching fish in order. If a fish is caught out of order, students must toss it back. Once students catch all the fish in the correct order, read the key passage together. Allow volunteers to say it from memory.
- Jesus was baptized in a river. People can be baptized just about anywhere there is water! Keep working on our key passage to memorize it. It helps us remember that baptism is a symbol of what Jesus did for us: dying on the cross for our sin and rising again on the third day.

Big Picture Q&A

Q: What makes Jesus different?

A: *Jesus is fully God and fully man.*

BIBLE STORY (10 MIN)

Jesus Was Baptized | Matthew 3:13–17; Mark 1:1–11; Luke 3:21–22; John 1:19–34

John the Baptist lived in the wilderness. He wore camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist. He ate locusts and wild honey. John **began telling the people around him, "Repent and be baptized, for God's kingdom is almost here."**

Some people asked John, "Who are you?"

John said, "I am not the Messiah." John also said he wasn't Elijah, and he wasn't the Prophet that God had promised to send after Moses. "Who are you, then?" the people asked.

John said that he was the person Isaiah the prophet was talking about when he said, "There is someone shouting in the wilderness. He says, 'Prepare the way for the Lord; make His paths straight!'" John was born with a very important job. He **was supposed to get people ready for Jesus, God's promised Messiah.**

People started to repent; they turned away from their sins and turned to God for forgiveness. Then, John baptized them in the Jordan River. Baptism was a picture that the people's sins had been washed away.

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John preached: "Someone more powerful than I will come after me. I am not worthy to bend down and untie His sandals." Then, John said, **"I baptize you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."**

By this time, Jesus was an adult. He was in Galilee, and He left to see John the Baptist at the Jordan River. **When John saw Jesus, he said, "Here is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"**

Jesus told John that He wanted to be baptized. But John didn't think he should baptize Jesus, and he tried to stop Jesus. "I need You to baptize me," John said. "Why do You want me to baptize You?" **John** was confused. He **baptized people who confessed their sins; Jesus never sinned!**

Jesus said, "Allow Me to be baptized. God says this is right." So, John agreed, and he baptized Jesus.

Jesus immediately came up out of the water. **Suddenly, the heavens opened for Jesus, and He saw the Holy Spirit coming down** on Him. The Spirit was **like a dove. And a voice came from Heaven. "This is My Son," the voice said. "I love Him, and I am very pleased with Him!"**

JESUS CONNECTION

Jesus never sinned, but He obeyed God and was baptized like sinners are baptized. Baptism reminds us of Jesus' death and resurrection. It reminds us that when we trust in Jesus, we turn from sin and start a new life—a life lived for Jesus.

LIFEWISE QUALITY (3–4 MIN)

OBEDIENCE – Listening to and following through with instructions from those in authority.

Living LifeWise

Jesus always does what is right, so we can obey Him and the good authorities He puts in our lives.

Character Connection

Sometimes, obeying the rules doesn't make a lot of sense to other people. They are allowed to play a video game, but your parents won't let you. Or maybe your friend has to leave a party early but you're allowed to stay overnight. It can seem funny to us when someone still obeys a rule even if their parents or teacher isn't watching or the rules are different where they are.

Jesus always obeyed God, even when it didn't make sense to other people. People asked why He was getting baptized (including John!), but Jesus did what He knew God wanted Him to do. We won't always obey on our own. Sin means we try to get our own way or do things our way instead of God's way. But because Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead, we can be changed on the inside so that we obey just as consistently as Jesus did. God helps us to be willing to obey Him and the good authorities in our lives, even when others think we're weird for living God's way.

It can help to prepare some good responses from the Bible to give when others question why we'd obey. What would you say in these examples?

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- Your best friend wants you to watch a YouTube channel you know your parents won't approve of. "It's not that bad," they say. "There's just a couple of bad words."
- Your friend forgot to do the math worksheet. "Can I just copy your answers?" she asks.
- Someone threw a ball in the house and broke a lamp. "When Mom sees it, just tell her you don't know what happened," they say.

BIBLE STORY REVIEW (5 MIN)

- **Who asked John to baptize Him?**

  Jesus, who never sinned, Matt. 3:16

- **John said he, himself, baptized with water, but Jesus would baptize with what?**

  The Holy Spirit, Matt. 3:11

- **What did John call Jesus?**

  The Lamb of God, John 1:29

- **Where was Jesus baptized?**

  In the Jordan River, Matt. 3:6

- **Who descended on Jesus after He was baptized?**

  The Holy Spirit, Matt. 3:16

- **Who did God say Jesus was?**

  His Son, Matt. 3:17

- **Why was Jesus baptized?**

  To obey God, to set an example for us

- **Who baptized Jesus?**

  John, Matt. 3:13

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES (5-10 MIN)

Venn Diagram (Older Students)

- Draw a large Venn diagram. Label the first circle *Jesus' baptism* and the second *Our baptism*. Distribute Bibles. Guide students to find Matthew 3:13–17. Consider reviewing the Bible story using the bolded text of the script. Prompt students to compare and contrast Jesus' baptism with ours. List details that describe Jesus' baptism in the first circle and ours in the second circle. If a detail describes both baptisms, write it in the area where the circles overlap. Avoid listing different church traditions on baptism; focus on using information from the Bible.

  If needed, use the following questions to prompt students:

  - Who was baptized in the Bible story? (*Jesus, who never sinned*)
  - What kind of people are baptized today? (*Repentant sinners*)
  - Where was Jesus baptized? (*In the Jordan River*)
  - Where are people baptized today? (*In water: a pond, lake, ocean, pool, tub or baptistry*)
  - Why was Jesus baptized? (*To obey God, to set an example for us*)
  - Why are people baptized today? (*To follow Jesus' example, to show others we have trusted in Jesus*)

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- Who baptized Jesus? (*John*)
- Who baptizes us? (*A pastor or church leader*)
- Whose baptism is pleasing to God? (*Jesus' and ours*)

- Jesus obeyed God by being baptized. We can follow Jesus' example by being baptized as a sign that we trust in Jesus and want to live for Him. Remember, baptism is a way we show that we have been saved by Jesus. Baptism is not what saves us from sin; faith in Jesus saves us.

Tic-Tac-Toe (Older and Younger Students)

- Write nine Bible review questions on large colored cards and hang them on the board or wall. Make 5 *X*s and 5 *O*s. Divide students into two teams. Teams may choose any question on the board to answer. If the team answers correctly, they will put their *X* or *O* over that question. To win, a team must get a tic tac toe by answering three questions in a row.

Baptism Q&A (Older and Younger Students)

- Arrange for a pastor or church leader to visit your classroom and answer questions students have about baptism. Allow students to ask their own questions, but consider using these questions as well:
  - Why do people get baptized?
  - What happens when a person is baptized?
  - Who should be baptized?
  - How old do I have to be to be baptized?
  - How do I know I am ready to be baptized?
  - What should I do if I want to get baptized but I don't go to church?
  - What should I do if I want to get baptized but my family doesn't want me to?

- Thank you, [*pastor's name*] for answering our questions today. Today, we learned that Jesus obeyed God by being baptized. Baptism reminds us that when we trust in Jesus, we turn from sin and start a new life—a life lived for Jesus.

Who Is It? (Older and Younger Students)

- Write each of the names below on a separate sheet of paper and hang them around the room. Read the descriptions aloud and challenge students to find the person's name and stand near his or her sign. If the classroom is small, write the names and descriptions on cards, mix them up, and challenge the students to work together to match them correctly. To make this activity competitive, make two copies of each card and split the class into two teams. Have the two teams race to match the cards.

- Names and descriptions:
  - David—famous king in Jesus' family line
  - Mary—woman God chose to be Jesus' mother
  - Elizabeth—Mary's cousin, had a son named John
  - Joseph—Jesus' earthly father, engaged to wed Mary
  - John—told people that God's promised Rescuer was coming, baptized Jesus in the Jordan River
  - Jesus—fully God and fully man, He obeyed God by being baptized.

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- Great job! We have learned a lot about Jesus so far. We know that, although Jesus is like us in many ways, He is also very different in some very important ways. What makes Jesus different? *(Jesus is fully God and fully man.)* Today, we learned that Jesus was baptized, and God announced from heaven that Jesus is His beloved Son. Jesus' baptism is different from our baptism because Jesus had no sin to repent of. But it's similar because Jesus obeyed God by being baptized. We can obey God by being baptized too. Our baptism shows the world what Jesus did for us by dying on the cross for sin and rising again on the third day.

Activity Pages & Recap Cards (5–10 min) (For in-class or take-home use)

- Baptism Dot-to-Dot (Older Students)
  - Answer: *Across: 2. John, 3. Repent, 6. Jordan River, 8. Dove, 9. Baptism, 10. Sinned; Down: 1. Holy Spirit, 4. Lamb of God, 5. Messiah, 7. Water*
- Dip and Dunk (Younger Students)

Prayer & Requests (3–5 min)

Dear God, thank You for Your Son, Jesus, who never sinned and who came into the world to save sinners. We confess that we have sinned and need to be made clean. Help us turn away from ourselves and turn to Jesus, who died in our place so that we can be forgiven. We love You. Amen.

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Journal Page

Imagine someone had never heard of baptism before. Write how you would describe baptism and what it means.

FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS

- How do you think John felt before baptizing Jesus? After?
- How do you show your family members that you love them?
- How do you know that God loves you?

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JESUS WAS BAPTIZED

MATTHEW 3:13–17; MARK 1:1–11; LUKE 3:21–22; JOHN 1:19–34

MAIN POINT: JESUS OBEYED GOD BY BEING BAPTIZED.

John the Baptist began telling the people around him, "Repent and be baptized, for God's kingdom is almost here."

Some people asked John, "Who are you?"

John said, "I am not the Messiah." John said that he was the person Isaiah the prophet was talking about when he said, "There is someone shouting in the wilderness. He says, 'Prepare the way for the Lord; make His paths straight!'"

John was supposed to get people ready for Jesus, God's promised Messiah.

People started to repent; they turned away from their sins and turned to God for forgiveness. Then John baptized them in the Jordan River.

John preached: "Someone more powerful than I will come after me. I baptize you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

When John saw Jesus, he said, "Here is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

Jesus told John that He wanted to be baptized. But John didn't think he should baptize Jesus. John baptized people who confessed their sins; Jesus never sinned!

Jesus said, "Allow Me to be baptized. God says this is right." So John agreed, and he baptized Jesus.

Suddenly, the Heavens opened for Jesus, and He saw the Holy Spirit coming down like a dove. And a voice came from heaven. "This is My Son," the voice said. "I love Him, and I am very pleased with Him!"

Jesus Connection: *Jesus never sinned, but He obeyed God and was baptized like sinners are baptized. Baptism reminds us of Jesus' death and resurrection. It reminds us that when we trust in Jesus, we turn from sin and start a new life—a life lived for Jesus.*

Key Passage: *1 Timothy 1:15 – This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."*

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BAPTISM DOT-TO-DOT

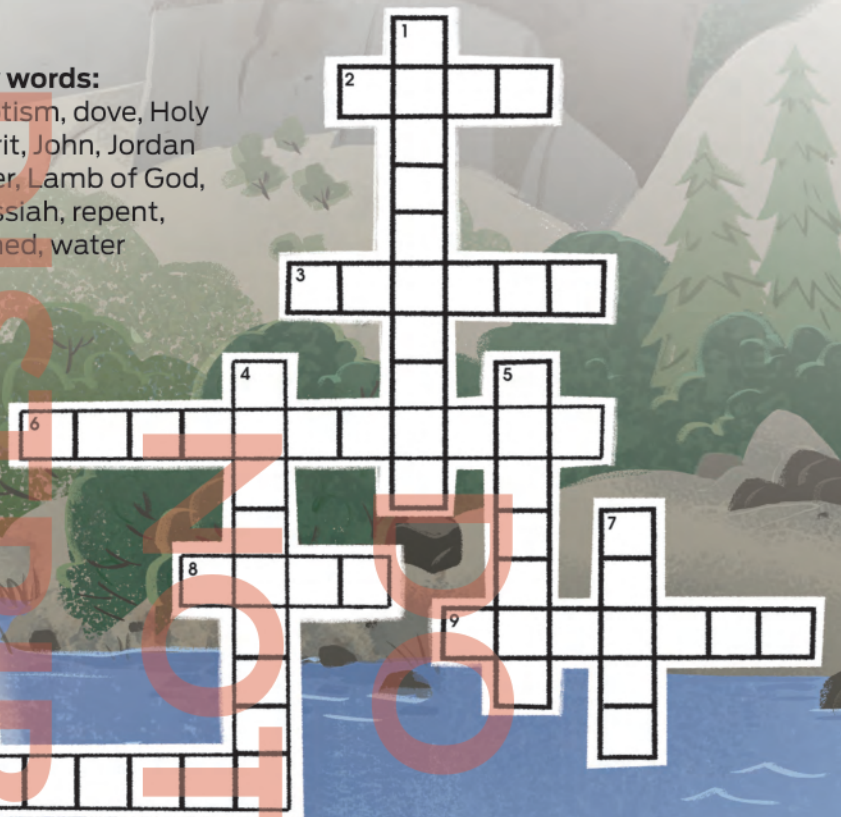
Connect the dots to finish the picture. Then complete the sentence:

_____ obeyed God by being baptized by John.

KEY WORD CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Use the clue and key words to fill in the crossword puzzle.

Key words:
baptism, dove, Holy Spirit, John, Jordan River, Lamb of God, Messiah, repent, sinned, water



ACROSS

2. the messenger who got people ready for Jesus (John 1:23)
3. to turn away from sin and turn to God (Mark 1:4)
6. the place where Jesus was baptized (Matthew 3:13)
8. The Spirit came down like this animal (Matthew 3:16)
9. a way to show that a person's sins are washed away (Mark 1:4)
10. Jesus never did this (Matthew 3:14-15)

DOWN

1. what Jesus baptizes with (Mark 1:8)
4. John called Jesus this name (John 1:29)
5. John said he was not the promised _____. (John 1:20)
7. what John baptized with (Mark 1:8)

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DIP AND DUNK

INSTRUCTIONS: Use blue markers, crayons or colored pencils to add water to each of the following scenes.

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KEY PASSAGE:
1 Timothy 1:15 – This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:
- What makes Jesus different? Jesus is fully God and fully man.

BIBLE STORY: JESUS WAS BAPTIZED
- John the Baptist was preaching that people should repent and be baptized.
- Jesus asked John to baptize Him, but John knew Jesus had never sinned.
- Jesus obeyed God by being baptized.
- God spoke, saying that Jesus is His Son, and He is pleased by Jesus.

FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS:
- How do you think John felt before baptizing Jesus? After?
- How do your kids know you love them?
- How do they know God loves them?

FAMILY ACTIVITY:
- Plan for your kids to attend worship with you. Point out the place where people are baptized. Talk about baptism's purpose.

Jesus Was Baptized
L 65 | OBEDIENCE

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JESUS OBEYED GOD BY BEING BAPTIZED.

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LESSON 66: SELF-CONTROL

JESUS WAS TEMPTED

Matthew 4:1–11

JESUS WAS TEMPTED

- Matthew 4:1–11
- Big Picture Q&A: What makes Jesus different? Jesus is fully God and fully man.
- Key Passage: 1 Timothy 1:15 – This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

JESUS CONNECTION

Jesus was tempted, but He trusted God and never sinned. Jesus is perfect and righteous. A perfect sacrifice was required to take away sin. Jesus was that perfect sacrifice. He died on the cross to free us from sin and to give us the power to say no to temptation.

LIFEWISE QUALITY

SELF-CONTROL – Being able to manage myself so I can do what's right.

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LEADER BIBLE STUDY

After Jesus was baptized, the Holy Spirit led Him into the wilderness. Jesus fasted for 40 days, and He was hungry. There in the wilderness, the Devil, who is the agent of temptation and father of lies, appeared to Jesus. The Devil said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."

If You are the Son of God? The Devil knew who Jesus was. He challenged Jesus to prove it. The Devil wanted to ruin God's plan of redemption which was set in motion in Genesis 3.

In the garden of Eden, Satan used a seemingly innocent question to arouse doubt in Eve: "Did God really say, 'You can't eat from any tree in the garden'?" (Gen. 3:1). Adam and Eve ate the fruit God had forbidden them to eat, and sin entered the world. Jesus came to reverse the curse, to succeed where Adam failed. The Devil's aim was to use a similar trick as in Eden to get Jesus to sin, to disqualify Him from the role of sinless Savior.

The Devil targeted Jesus in His weakness physically, by making food; emotionally, by testing if the angels would protect Him and spiritually, by being in power right away. Each time He was tempted, Jesus used God's Word as a weapon to fight temptation. "Go away, Satan!" Jesus replied.

The writer of Hebrews said that Jesus, our High Priest, can sympathize with our weaknesses because He was tested in every way we are, yet He never sinned. Jesus' actions are an example for believers, but what happens when we do give in to temptation?

Emphasize to students that we can boldly approach God's throne to receive grace to help us through temptation, and mercy and forgiveness when we sin (Heb. 4:14–16). We have hope because Christ died for sinners.

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BIBLE TIMELINE & REVIEW (3 MIN)

First, we heard how Jesus came to Earth as a baby. Jesus' earthly family included Abraham, David and others. We heard about His humble birth in Bethlehem and how He went to the temple as a boy. When He grew up, Jesus obeyed God by being baptized. Do you remember why John the Baptist objected to baptizing Jesus at first? (*Jesus did not need to repent from sin.*) Who came down on Jesus in the form of a dove after He was baptized? (*The Holy Spirit.*) Why do Christians get baptized now? (*To show others they have committed to loving and obeying Jesus.*)

SESSION STARTERS (5-10 MIN)

No Peeking! (Older and Younger Students)

- Instruct students to close their eyes. Explain that you are going to tell them a story, but if they hear some unusual noises as they listen, they must be sure not to peek! Hold a paper bag containing an empty egg carton. As you begin to tell the story, open the paper bag slowly. "Oh, wow! You won't believe what I have here in my bag. This is the coolest thing ever. You will be so surprised when you see it. Let me describe it to you." Rustle the bag and describe the item inside to pique students' curiosity. Tell them about the item's shape, color, purpose and so on. Then, invite students to open their eyes.

- Raise your hand if you were tempted to peek while I was talking about the object. Did any of you actually try to peek? Today's Bible story is about a time Jesus was tempted. Do you think He gave in to temptation?

A Good Fight (Older and Younger Students)

- Write the following words on separate index cards: *fire*, *bear attack*, *the flu*, *shark attack*, *bullies*, *a bad grade*. Form up to six groups and instruct students to imagine they are facing the scenario on their card. How would they fight it? Encourage groups to discuss possible solutions and then act out the best defense. If the class doesn't enjoy acting, simply have them discuss the best way to fight each problem as a group.

- Those are some good solutions to some tricky problems. In today's Bible story, we are going to hear about how Jesus fought against something we all face—temptation. We will find out what Jesus did when He was tempted.

KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY/BIG PICTURE Q&A (5 MIN)

1 Timothy 1:15

This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

Key Passage Loop (Older Students)

- Before class, write each word or phrase of the key passage on a separate craft stick and place them in a cup or jar. Instruct students to sit in a circle. Students will pass the craft stick jar around the circle while you turn away from them. Turn back suddenly. The student you catch holding the jar must pull out a stick and begin the key passage, starting from that word or phrase. The next student should say the next word in the verse, all the way around the circle, until the verse is back to the student who pulled the craft stick.

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Bible Memory Book (Older Students)

- Invite the class to make a book to help them memorize the key passage. Pass out several large index cards to each student. Instruct them to fold the cards in half and stack them to form a book. Staple the fold to bind the cards together. Provide markers for students to write the key passage reference, *1 Timothy 1:15*, on the front cover. On the first page, students should write out the entire verse. On the next page, they should write it again but leave out the first two words. On each following page, students will rewrite the verse, leaving out more words.

Passage Competition (Younger Students)

- Lead the class to read the key passage aloud together. Divide the room in half; call for students on the right half of the room to say the key passage as loudly as possible. Then, have the students on the left half say it as loudly as possible.

Big Picture Q&A

Q: What makes Jesus different?
A: *Jesus is fully God and fully man.*

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BIBLE STORY (10 MIN)

Jesus Was Tempted | Matthew 1:1–11

After Jesus was baptized, He was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the Devil. Jesus did not eat for 40 days and 40 nights. He prayed and thought about God's plan for His life. **When those days were over, Jesus was hungry.**

Then, the Devil, who tempts people to sin, **came up to Jesus. He said, "If You are really God's Son, prove it. Tell these stones to become bread."**

If Jesus used His power to turn the stones into bread, He could eat them so He wouldn't be hungry anymore. **But Jesus refused.** Instead of using His own power, **Jesus chose to trust God to meet His needs. Jesus said, "God's Word says: Man must not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."**

The Devil tempted Jesus again. He took Jesus to Jerusalem, which was called the holy city. The Devil took Jesus up **to the top of the temple.** Jesus stood on the roof, and **the Devil said, "If You are really God's Son, prove it. Jump off this temple and trust God to protect You."**

Then, the Devil said: "God's Word says: God will order His angels to keep You safe, and they will protect You so that You will not even strike your foot against a stone."

The Devil had used words from Scripture, but Jesus knew the Devil's command was foolish. Jesus reminded him, "God's Word also says: Do not test the Lord your God."

Finally, the Devil took Jesus to a high mountain. He showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and how great they were. **The Devil said to Jesus, "I will give You all the riches and power of these kingdoms.** They belong to me, and I can give them to anyone I want. **If You want them, all You have to do is fall down and worship me."**

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Jesus resisted temptation again. He replied, "Go away, Satan! God's Word says: Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only."

The Devil left Jesus, and angels came right away to serve Jesus. Throughout all these temptations, Jesus never sinned. After that, Jesus began His ministry. He preached and said, "Repent, because the kingdom of heaven is near!" Jesus called some fishermen to follow Him. Peter, Andrew, James and John left their nets and followed Jesus.

JESUS CONNECTION

Jesus was tempted, but He trusted God and never sinned. Jesus is perfect and righteous. A perfect sacrifice was required to take away sin. Jesus was that perfect sacrifice. He died on the cross to free us from sin and to give us the power to say no to temptation.

LIFEWISE QUALITY (3–4 MIN)

SELF-CONTROL – Being able to manage myself so I can do what's right.

Living LifeWise

Because we have God's Spirit to help us, we can have self-control.

Character Connection

Self-control is not a difficult concept to understand. But in practice, it can be very hard. We might be able to control our bodies for a short time, but not for longer times. And it's never easy to control our tongues (what we say), our minds (what we think) or our emotions (how we feel). How can a lack of self-control get us in trouble? [*Take answers.*]

Thankfully, God never asks us to just try very hard to control everything about ourselves. Sin means that's impossible. We can't live God's way, do the right thing, or avoid saying mean things without His help. So, He gave us His Spirit who will help us live with the same self-control that Jesus did (Galatians 5:22–23).

What might having self-control look like in these situations? [*Answers can vary.*]

- Your friends are talking and laughing about another classmate, and you think of something they haven't said yet.
- A classmate makes you very angry at recess, and you want to hit him hard.
- You have a clear view of another person's test, and you aren't sure about the answer to number 12.

BIBLE STORY REVIEW (5 MIN)

- Who tempted Jesus?

  Satan, Matt. 4:1

- How long had Jesus gone without food?

  40 days, Matt. 4:2

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- What did Satan want Jesus to prove?

  That He was the Son of God, Matt. 4:3
- What did Satan tempt Jesus to turn the stones into?

  Bread, Matt. 4:3
- How did Jesus fight temptation every time?

  By knowing, speaking and obeying God's Word, Matt. 4:3–10
- Who came to help Jesus after Satan tempted Him?

  Angels, Matt. 4:11
- Whom did Jesus call to follow Him?

  Peter, Andrew, James and John, Matt. 4:18–22
- What was the job of the four disciples before they followed Jesus?

  Fishermen, Matt. 4:18–22

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES (5-10 MIN)

Sword Drill (Older Students)

- Before class, write the references below on separate pieces of paper. Make three sets, each a different color. Then, write or type one set of the corresponding verses on white paper. Form three groups. Give each group a set of colored verse references, and lay the verse papers on the floor. Provide each group with a Bible. They must start with the Bibles completely shut, then race to match each reference with the correct verse. One student from each group may match a reference paper to a verse at a time.

  - Matthew 4:4
  - Deuteronomy 8:3
  - Luke 4:10–11
  - Psalm 91:11–12
  - Matthew 4:7
  - Deuteronomy 6:16
  - Luke 4:8
  - Deuteronomy 6:13

- Did you notice anything odd about the verses you looked up? They were all in our story of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness. These are the Old Testament verses that Jesus used to fight temptation and the Devil twisted to make what was wrong seem right. The Devil knows God's Word, but he misuses it to trick us. To combat temptation, we need to trust in Jesus for power from the Holy Spirit and study God's Word so we'll recognize when the Devil is twisting it. We won't always resist temptation, but we can rest in the knowledge that Jesus was tempted and never sinned. He was the perfect and spotless sacrifice "who takes away the sin of the world." When we trust in Him, God views us as righteous despite our sin, and He gives us new hearts that grow to love God more and more and resist temptation better and better.

The Bell Game (Older and Younger Students)

- Place two bells on a table or desk. Form two teams and have each team line up behind the bells on either side of the table. Students must keep their hands behind their backs until you finish the question. Each question will have one of two answers: Jesus or Satan. The student who rings the

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bell first will answer the question. That pair will go to the end of the line, and the next two students may come forward to the bells.

- Questions:
  - He knows everything (*Jesus*)
  - He was created by God (*Satan*)
  - He tempts us to sin (*Satan*)
  - He is perfect (*Jesus*)
  - He only knows some things (*Satan*)
  - He knows God's Word (*Jesus, Satan*)
  - He obeys God's Word perfectly (*Jesus*)
  - He rebels against God (*Satan*)
  - He is all-powerful (*Jesus*)
  - He has always been alive (*Jesus*)
  - He has some power (*Satan*)
  - He is God's Son (*Jesus*)
  - He loves people (*Jesus*)
  - God is his enemy (*Satan*)
  - He is on the earth (*Satan*)
  - He is sitting at the right hand of God (*Jesus*)
  - He wants to destroy people (*Satan*)
  - He wants to save people from sin and death (*Jesus*)

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Act It Out (Older and Younger Students)

- Form three groups. Assign each group a scenario and give them a few minutes to plan how they will act it out:
  - Someone is tempted to cheat.
  - Someone is tempted to hit another person.
  - Someone is tempted to lie.
- Have groups act out their scenario one at a time. Before the scene ends, direct the actors to freeze. Prompt the class to talk about how the person could react to say no to temptation. Be prepared to read a verse from the Bible that solves the situation. Repeat for each scenario.
- Jesus is fully God and fully man. When He came to Earth, He experienced temptation just like we do. But Jesus never sinned. We can turn to God for help to say no to sin. Jesus fought temptation by remembering God's Word, saying it and obeying it. The Bible says that God's Word is like a sword we can use against temptation and evil, but we have to know what it says to fight with it. Keep reading and learning God's Word and use it to fight against temptation.

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God's Word Bookmark (Older and Younger Students)

- Before class, print 1 Corinthians 10:13 on heavyweight paper cut into 1-by-5 inch strips or have students write the verse on the strip: "No temptation has come upon you except what is common to humanity. But God is faithful; He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation He will also provide the way out so that you may be able to bear it." Help

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them punch a hole in the top and thread a ribbon or string through the hole to create a tassel. Allow them to decorate their bookmarks.

- 1 Corinthians 10:13 reminds us that we are all tempted, but with Jesus' help, we are not doomed to fail. Jesus died to save us from sin, and He gives us the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit helps us overcome temptation. When we feel trapped by temptation, we can pray to God and know that He will keep His promise to provide a way of escape.

Activity Pages & Recap Cards (5–10 min) (For in-class or take-home use)

- It Is Written (Older Students)
  - Answers: *3. Matt. 4:5–6; 4. Matt. 4:8–9; 2. Matt. 4:3; 1. Matt. 4:2.*
- Reveal the Truth (Younger Students)
  - Answer: *Scripture*

Prayer & Requests (3–5 min)

Dear God, thank You for Your Word. We depend on You for the power to fight temptation and say no to sin. Thank You for Jesus who was tempted but never sinned. We trust in Him alone to save us. We love You. Amen.

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Journal Page

List some temptations you face. Then write a short prayer, asking God for strength to fight temptation.

FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS

- What are some ways we can respond when we are tempted?
- Why is it important that Jesus was tempted and never sinned?

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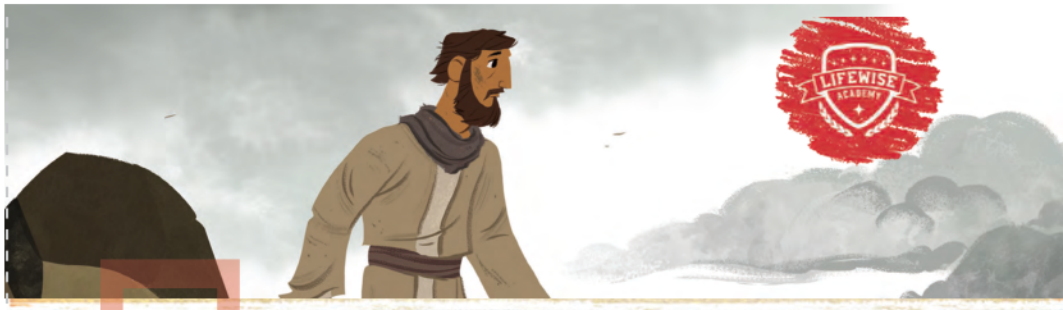

JESUS WAS TEMPTED

MATTHEW 4:1-11

MAIN POINT: JESUS WAS TEMPTED AND NEVER SINNED.

After Jesus was baptized, He was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the Devil. Jesus did not eat for 40 days and 40 nights. When those days were over, Jesus was hungry.

Then the Devil came up to Jesus. He said, "If You are really God's Son, prove it. Tell these stones to become bread."

But Jesus refused. Jesus chose to trust God to meet His needs. Jesus said, "God's Word says: Man must not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."

The Devil tempted Jesus again. He took Jesus to Jerusalem to the top of the temple. The Devil said, "If You are really God's Son, prove it. Jump off this temple and trust God to protect You." Then the Devil said: "God's Word says: God will order His angels to keep You safe."

The Devil had used words from Scripture, but Jesus knew the Devil's command was foolish. Jesus reminded him, "God's Word also says: Do not test the Lord your God."

Finally, the Devil took Jesus to a high mountain. He showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world. The Devil said to Jesus, "I will give You all the riches and power of these kingdoms. If You want them, all You have to do is fall down and worship me."

Jesus resisted temptation again. He replied, "Go away, Satan! God's Word says: Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only."

The Devil left Jesus, and angels came right away to serve Jesus. Throughout all these temptations, Jesus never sinned.

Jesus Connection: *Jesus was tempted, but He trusted God and never sinned. Jesus is perfect and righteous. A perfect sacrifice was required to take away sin. Jesus was that perfect sacrifice. He died on the cross to free us from sin and to give us the power to say no to temptation.*

Key Passage: *1 Timothy 1:15 – This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."*

DISCARD

FOLD

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IT IS WRITTEN ...

Use the code to fill in the words Jesus said when He was tempted to sin.

A	B	D	E	G	H	I	O	P	R	S	V	W

Man must not live on _ _ _ _ _ alone but on every _ _ _ _ _ that comes from the mouth of _ _ _ _.

Matthew 4:4

Do not t _ _ _ t the L _ _ _ _ your _ _ _ _.

Matthew 4:7

_ _ _ _ _ _ _ the Lord your God, and _ _ _ _ _ only Him.

Matthew 4:10

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?

Number the pictures in the order the events happened. Then label each picture with the Scripture reference describing the scene.

Matthew 4:2

Matthew 4:3

Matthew 4:5-6

Matthew 4:8-9

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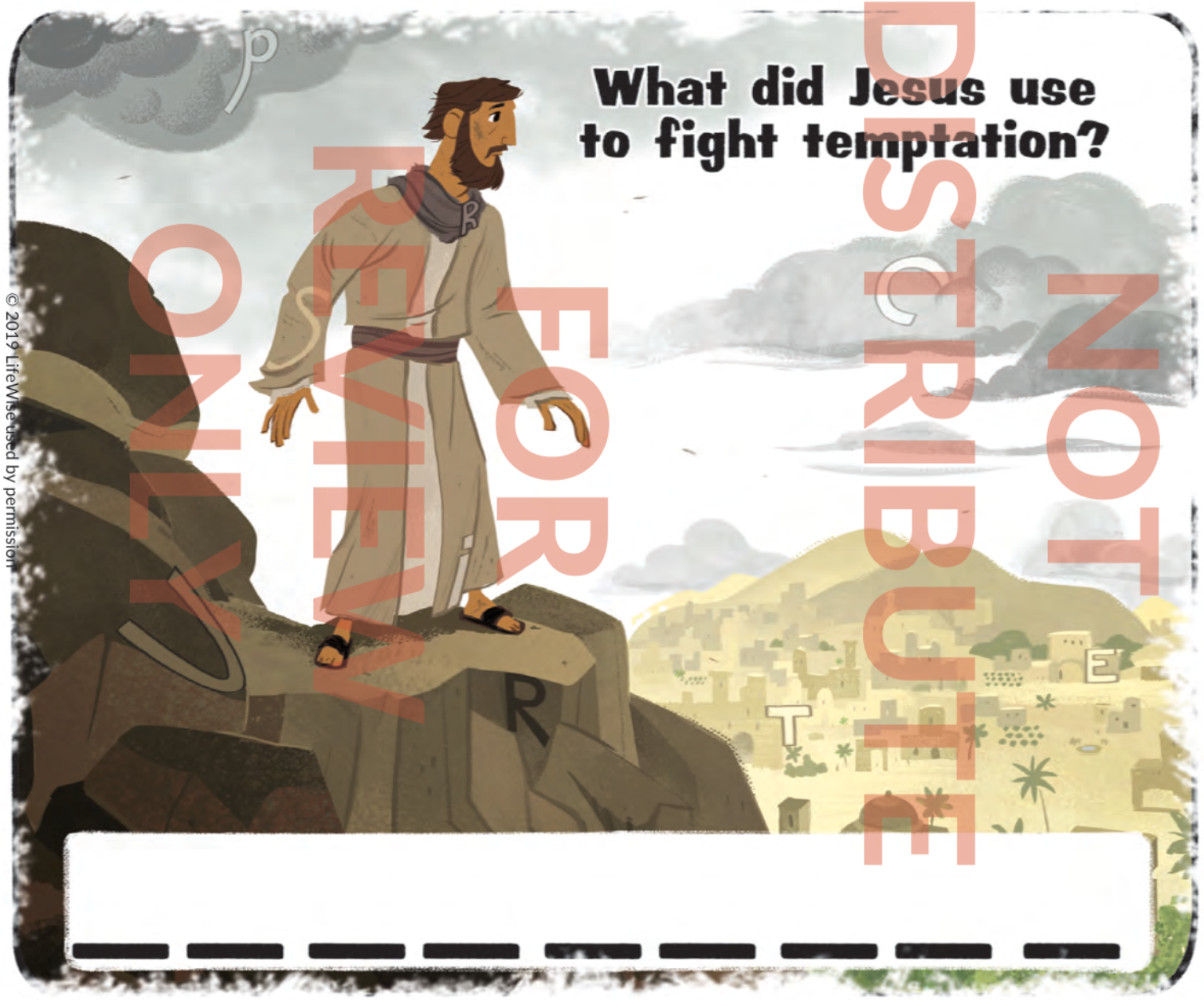
REVEAL THE TRUTH

INSTRUCTIONS: Find the nine letters hidden in the picture and unscramble them to answer the question below.



KEY PASSAGE:
1 Timothy 1:15 – This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:
- What makes Jesus different? Jesus is fully God and fully man.

BIBLE STORY:
JESUS WAS TEMPTED
- Jesus went into the wilderness to fast and pray for 40 days.
- The Devil came to tempt Jesus.
- Jesus responded to each temptation with Scripture He had memorized.
- Jesus was tempted and never sinned.

FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS:
- How do we respond when we are tempted?
- Why is it important that Jesus was tempted and never sinned?

FAMILY ACTIVITY:
- Research how to make a solar oven using stones, aluminum foil, black paper and plastic wrap. Use it to bake bread and talk about Jesus' being tempted to make stones into bread.

Jesus Was Tempted
L 66 | SELF-CONTROL

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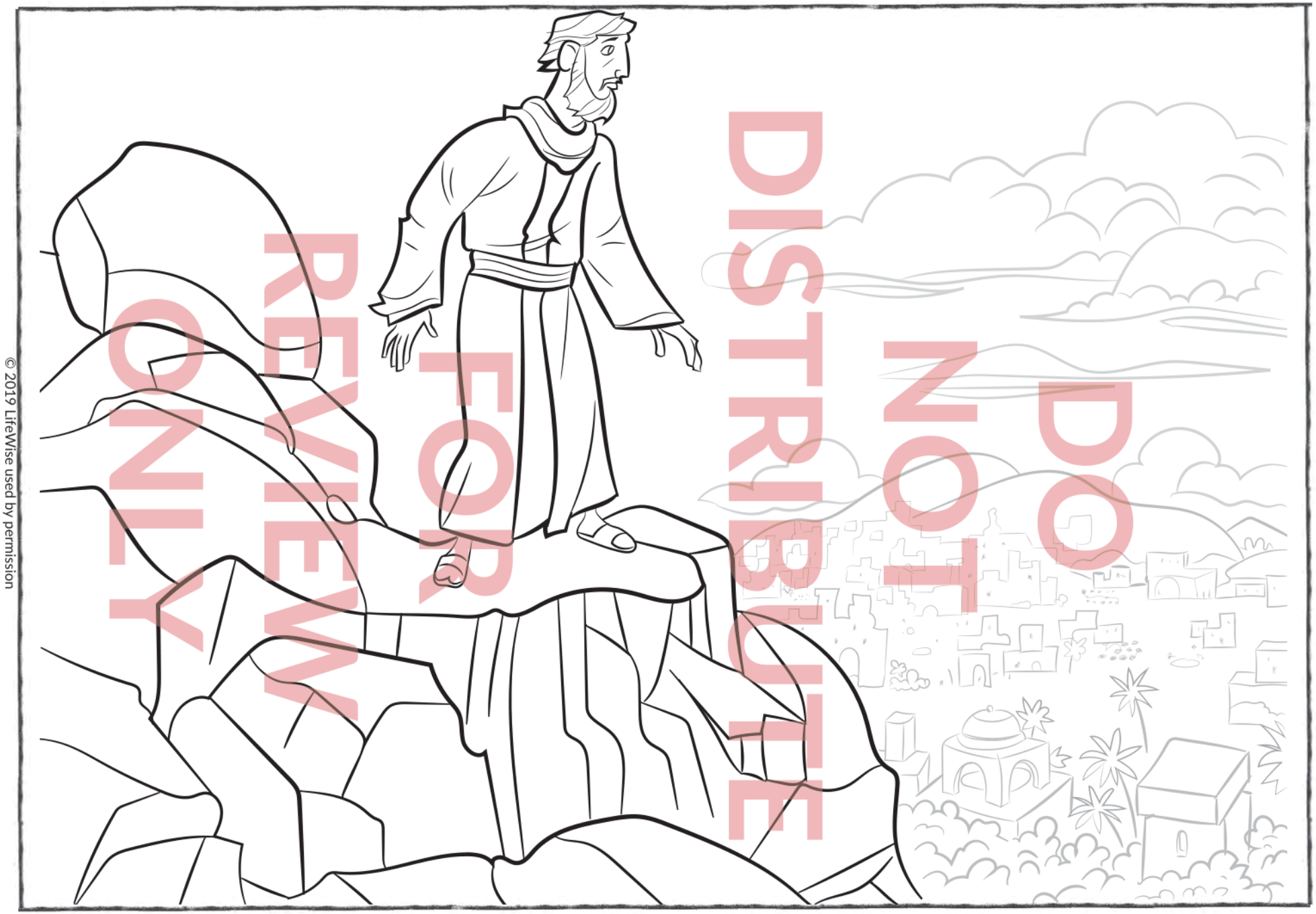

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JESUS WAS TEMPTED AND NEVER SINNED.

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LESSON 67: TEACHABLE

JESUS MET NICODEMUS

John 3:1–21

JESUS MET NICODEMUS

- John 3:1–21
- Big Picture Q&A: Who did Jesus say He is? Jesus said He is the Messiah.
- Key Passage: John 14:6 – Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

JESUS CONNECTION

Nicodemus needed new life—eternal life—but he could not do anything to earn it. Eternal life is a gift that comes only from God. God showed His love in this way: He sent His One and Only Son to save the world. Everyone who believes in Him will not perish but will have eternal life.

LIFEWISE QUALITY

TEACHABLE – Being willing to change my mind and actions as I learn.

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LEADER BIBLE STUDY

Jesus' ministry had begun. His first miracle was at a wedding, turning water into wine. He cleansed the temple in Jerusalem and performed signs, and "many trusted in His name" (John 2:23). Jesus likely spent a large part of His day teaching. When the day was done, He spent time alone or with His disciples. One night, however, a man named Nicodemus approached Jesus.

Nicodemus was a Pharisee and a ruler of the Jews; that is, he was a religious leader who taught God's law, and he was a member of the Sanhedrin—a Jewish governing body. Nicodemus was part of an exclusive group of apparently moral men. He held to the belief that if a person was a law-abiding Jew, he would be accepted by God. Jesus gave Nicodemus a lesson that would turn his belief system on its head.

Jesus was a carpenter (Mark 6:3), so the religious teachers likely assumed He didn't know theology. But they had seen Jesus' miraculous signs in Jerusalem. Nicodemus had to conclude, "You are a teacher come from God" (John 3:2).

Nicodemus initiated the conversation, but Jesus chose the subject. His words perplexed Nicodemus: "Unless someone is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). Jesus explained that spiritual birth is not unlike physical birth in that a person cannot do it himself. It is something that happens to him.

Jesus reminded Nicodemus of an Old Testament account, the disobedient Israelites and the bronze snake. The Israelites could not help themselves, but when they trusted in God and looked to the bronze snake lifted up on the pole, they were healed (Num. 21:4–9).

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Emphasize with students that every person is born a sinner— spiritually dead and alienated from God. It is by God's Spirit—not our own effort—that we are born again. We look to Christ and His finished work on the cross for our salvation.

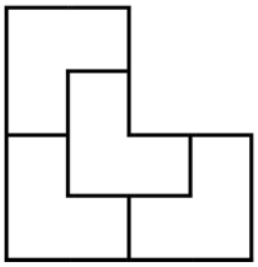
BIBLE TIMELINE & REVIEW (3 MIN)

We recently started studying Bible stories from the New Testament. The New Testament is about Jesus' life, teaching and future return. It is also about the early church. Last week, we learned about Jesus' temptation. Why did Satan tempt Jesus? (*If Jesus chose to disobey God, then God's plan to save all people from sin would be ruined.*) How many times was Jesus tempted? (*Three.*) What did Jesus use to fight temptation? (*God's Word.*)

SESSION STARTERS (5-10 MIN)

One Way (Older Students)

- Before the session, prepare a paper for each student by folding a square of paper into fourths, then unfolding it and cutting away one square to form a wide L-shape. In class, give each student a pencil and a prepared paper. Challenge them to draw lines on the paper so that the shape is divided into four identical pieces. Allow several minutes for students to work. If a student figures out the answer, check his work and encourage him to keep his paper hidden. Finally, reveal the answer.
- Answer:



- Did you feel frustrated as you worked on this challenge? This was a tough challenge because there was only one correct way to divide the shape. Today, we are going to hear a Bible story about a man named Nicodemus. Nicodemus found out that there is only one way to enter God's kingdom. We will find out what that way is.

Question Pairs (Older and Younger Students)

- Instruct students to stand. Explain that you will ask a question, and they should share their answers with each other to find a player with the same answer. When they find a partner, the pair should stand back to back. Allow time for several pairs to form, then ask another question. Play several rounds as time allows. Example questions:
  - What is your favorite color?
  - How old are you?
  - How many brothers and sisters do you have?
  - What is your favorite school subject?

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- One of the best ways to find out new information is to ask questions. Today, we are going to hear a Bible story about a man who asked Jesus some questions because he didn't understand what Jesus said. This man thought he knew the way to Heaven but was completely lost. His name was Nicodemus.

Riddled With Questions (Younger Students)

- Challenge the students to answer the following riddles:
  - When I see you, you see you too. What am I? (*A mirror; when you face it, it shows your reflection.*)
  - I must get wet in order to dry; if you use me too often, I may start to cry. What am I? (*A towel; if you use the same towel too much, it will drip.*)
  - The stronger I get, the less you can see, but turn on a light and I will flee. What am I? (*Darkness.*)
  - The letter I start with and end with is *E*. Open me up; there's a letter in me. What am I? (*An envelope; the letter inside is a written letter.*)
  - I cling to your heels when you walk or you run, but some kick me aside when their day is done. What am I? (*Shoes.*)
- Riddles can be confusing but are often fun. In our Bible story today, we will learn about some things Jesus said that were confusing at first to the man who asked Him a question.

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KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY/BIG PICTURE Q&A (5 MIN)

John 14:6

Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Key Passage Step (Older Students)

- Before class, write or print each word of John 14:6 in large letters on separate sheets of paper. Lay the papers on the floor with space in between each one. Show the key passage poster and read it aloud together. Allow a student volunteer to step from word to word in the correct order. As the volunteer steps on each word, the class should say it. Next, arrange the papers out of order on the floor, but close enough for successive words to be reached in a step. For a small class, have each student step through the mixed-up verse in the correct order. For larger groups, allow several volunteers to step through the verse while other students mix up the verse after each volunteer has gone through.

Motions (Older and Younger Students)

- Form three or four groups and assign a phrase from the key passage to each group. Instruct groups to come up with motions for their phrase. Allow each group to teach the motions to everyone. Say the key passage together using the motions. Invite volunteers to say the verse from memory.

Big Picture Q&A

Q: Who did Jesus say He is?
A: *Jesus said He is the Messiah.*

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BIBLE STORY (10 MIN)

Jesus Met Nicodemus | John 3:1–21

Jesus had traveled to Jerusalem for the Passover feast. One night, a religious man came to see Jesus. The man's name was Nicodemus (NIK uh DEE muhs). Nicodemus was a Pharisee. He studied and taught God's law, and he tried very hard to obey the law. Nicodemus wanted to know more about Jesus.

"Rabbi (RAB igh)**," he said, "we know that You have come from God. You are a teacher, and no one could do the miracles You do unless God is with him."**

Nicodemus had that right. **Jesus said, "I tell you: Unless someone is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."**

Now Nicodemus was confused. He thought that keeping all God's laws was how a person got into Heaven. Besides, what Jesus said didn't make any sense! **"How can anyone be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked.**

Jesus said, "A man cannot enter God's Kingdom unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Whatever is born of the flesh is flesh, and whatever is born of the Spirit is spirit." When a baby is born, he gets physical life from his parents. Physical life doesn't last forever. But the Spirit gives people spiritual life so they can live with God forever.

Jesus said, "Don't be surprised I told you that you must be born again."

Nicodemus still didn't understand. "How is this possible?" he asked.

Jesus replied, "We talk about what we know, and we tell others about what we have seen. But you don't believe what I'm telling you! When you don't believe what I say about things I've seen on Earth, how will you believe what I say about the things I've seen in Heaven?

"No one has ever gone up into Heaven, except the Son of Man. He came down from Heaven. Do you remember how Moses raised up the bronze snake in the wilderness? Everyone who looked at it was healed. Like that, the Son of Man will be raised up, so that everyone who believes in Him will have eternal life."

Then, Jesus told Nicodemus about God's great plan. Jesus said, "God showed His love in this way: He sent His One and Only Son to save the world. Everyone who believes in Him will not perish but will have eternal life. God didn't send His Son to declare the world guilty, but to save the world. Anyone who believes in Him is found not guilty, but anyone who does not believe in Him is guilty already.**"**

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JESUS CONNECTION

Nicodemus needed new life—eternal life—but he could not do anything to earn it. Eternal life is a gift that comes only from God. God showed His love in this way: He sent His One and Only Son to save the world. Everyone who believes in Him will not perish but will have eternal life.

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LIFEWISE QUALITY (3–4 MIN)

TEACHABLE – Being willing to change my mind and actions as I learn.

Living LifeWise

Because God is the source of all truth, we can choose to be teachable.

Character Connection

Part of being teachable is finding and using the best sources. For facts, that's books, trustworthy websites and videos. And when we deal with other people, our best source is talking to the actual person. When it comes to knowing what we should (or shouldn't) do, God is obviously our best source. He's given us His Word and His Spirit to guide and teach us.

Being teachable means adjusting what we think is right to match our best source. We have to give up what we want to be true and accept what God says by choosing to obey Him. It's not easy. Our pride and sinful nature would rather go our own way. But God will always help us to know what we need to know, just like Jesus did that night for Nicodemus, and His Spirit will help us to do it. We can trust God as the ultimate source of truth and let Him teach us His way to live.

Which option are you more likely to take in these situations? Why?

- You aren't sure why your friend is mad at you. Are you more likely to ask them about it directly or ask another friend?
- The teacher assigns a research paper. Do you ask the new AI program to write the paper for you or do you start finding good information so you can write it yourself?
- You have a problem and aren't sure what to do. Do you find out what God says in the Bible or just decide you'll figure it out as you go?

BIBLE STORY REVIEW (5 MIN)

- **Why did Nicodemus visit Jesus at night?**

  So the Pharisees wouldn't know
- **What did Nicodemus call Jesus?**

  Rabbi, or teacher, Jn. 3:2
- **How did Nicodemus think a person found the way to Heaven?**

  By obeying God's laws
- **What did Jesus say must happen for a person to see the kingdom of God?**

  They must be born again, Jn. 3:3
- **How can a person be born again?**

  By repenting of sin and believing in Jesus as Savior, Jn. 3:16–17
- **When a person is born again, what is actually made new?**

  Their heart and spirit, Ezek. 36:25–27
- **How is believing in Jesus' sacrifice on the cross similar to the bronze snake?**

  Just as the people believed God could save them from death by looking to a bronze serpent, so we can believe Jesus saves us from death through His sacrifice for sin on the cross, Jn. 3:14–15

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- Everyone who believes in Jesus will have what?

  Eternal life, Jn. 3:16

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES (5-10 MIN)

Fill-in-the-Blank (Older Students)

- Draw a blank on the board for each letter in the Bible story main point: *Jesus told Nicodemus he must be born again*. Form two or three teams. Call on the first team to choose a letter. If the letter appears in the puzzle, fill in the corresponding blanks. Then, give the next team a turn. If a team guesses a letter that is not in the puzzle, ask a Bible review question. If they answer correctly, they may guess another letter. Teams will guess one letter at a time until they complete the puzzle.

Into the Light (Older and Younger Students)

- Place several common items into a box or gift bag. Choose a volunteer to stand in front of the group and hold the bag behind her back. Challenge her to pull a specific item from the bag without looking. Encourage her to feel the items to select the correct one. When she finds the item, she should hold it up to see if she is correct. Place the item back in the bag and play again with a new volunteer. Once students have displayed several of the items, begin to hand the volunteer an item behind his back. He should describe how the item feels (long, short, round, smooth, etc.) and let the group try to identify it.

- Nicodemus talked to Jesus at night. He did not know the truth about God. Jesus told Nicodemus he must be born again. Jesus came to tell people the truth about God and to bring them into the light so they could see things correctly.

Balloon Bop (Older and Younger Students)

- Before class, gather a beach towel and blow up 10 balloons. Display the Ten Commandments so the class can see them. Ask for two volunteers to hold the corners of the towel and pull it taut. They will move the towel up and down as you add each balloon. Each time a balloon is added, the teacher should say one of the Ten Commandments. Their goal is to keep all 10 balloons in the air at once. Continue playing the game for thirty seconds after all the balloons have been added and replace any balloons that fall. Choose new volunteers and play again as time allows.

- What was it like to try to keep all the balloons in the air at the same time? It was an impossible task. Nicodemus thought he could find the way to Heaven by following all of God's laws, but this was also an impossible task. No one can measure up to God's perfect standards. Thankfully, Jesus told Nicodemus the way to heaven was through faith in Jesus. Only then could Nicodemus be born again and have the ability to follow God.

Flashlight Bible Trivia (Younger Students)

- Form two teams. Instruct students to line up at the front of the room. Give the first player in each line a flashlight. Ask the review questions one at a time, allowing the students to use their flashlights to signal they know the answer. The student who "flashes" first gets to answer the question for a point. If he is incorrect, the opposing team may steal. After each question, students will pass their flashlights to the players behind them and move to the end of the line. The team with the most points wins.

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Activity Pages & Recap Cards (5–10 min) (For in-class or take-home use)

- The Way To Jesus (Older Students)
  - Answers: *way*, *truth*, *life*, *Father*, *Me*. Completed sentence: *eternal*.

- Infant Insights (Younger Students)

Prayer & Requests (3–5 min)

Father, we are dead in sin until we believe in Your Son. Thank You that when we were dead, You brought us to life. Help us to see how much we need You. Teach us to rely on You and Your Spirit each day. Help us to tell the world about You and the gospel of Jesus. Amen.

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Journal Page

List things you can do on your own and things you need others to do for you. Is being born again something you can do for yourself?

FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS

- Why was Nicodemus confused when Jesus said he must be born again?
- What kind of birth was Jesus talking about?
- How can we be born into God's family?

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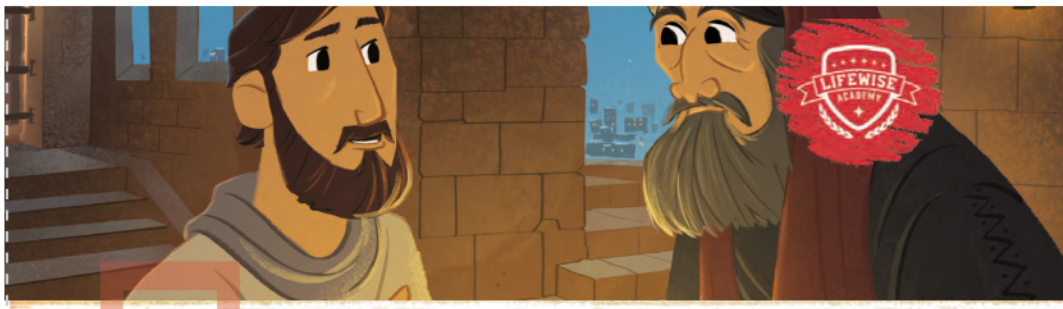

JESUS MET NICODEMUS

JOHN 3:1–21

MAIN POINT: JESUS TOLD NICODEMUS HE MUST BE BORN AGAIN.

Jesus had traveled to Jerusalem for the Passover feast. One night, a religious man came to see Jesus. The man's name was Nicodemus.

"Rabbi," he said, "we know that You have come from God. You are a teacher, and no one could do the miracles You do unless God is with him."

Jesus said, "I tell you: Unless someone is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Now Nicodemus was confused. "How can anyone be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked.

Jesus said, "A man cannot enter God's kingdom unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Whatever is born of the flesh is flesh, and whatever is born of the Spirit is spirit."

Jesus said, "Don't be surprised I told you that you must be born again."

Nicodemus still didn't understand. "How is this possible?" he asked.

Jesus replied, "No one has ever gone up into Heaven, except the Son of Man. He came down from Heaven. Do you remember how Moses raised up the bronze snake in the wilderness? Everyone who looked at it was healed. Like that, the Son of Man will be raised up, so that everyone who believes in Him will have eternal life."

Then Jesus told Nicodemus about God's great plan. Jesus said, "God showed His love in this way: He sent His One and Only Son to save the world. Everyone who believes in Him will not perish but will have eternal life."

Jesus Connection: *Nicodemus needed new life—eternal life—but he could not do anything to earn it. Eternal life is a gift that comes only from God. God showed His love in this way: He sent His One and Only Son to save the world. Everyone who believes in Him will not perish but will have eternal life.*

Key Passage: *John 14:6 – Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*

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THE WAY TO JESUS

Nicodemus went to see Jesus at night. Complete the maze to help Nicodemus get to Jesus.

ONE WAY

Use the words below to fill in the missing words of John 14:6. **Tip: Not all of the words will be used.**

way, life, Father, Son, truth, Messiah, Me, heaven

Jesus told him, "I am the _____,

the _____, and the _____.

No one comes to the _____

except through _____."

Unscramble the circled letters above to complete this sentence:

_____ N _____ life

is a gift that comes only from God.

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INFANT INSIGHTS

INSTRUCTIONS: Circle all the babies. Put an *X* over all the grown-ups.

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KEY PASSAGE:
John 14:6 – Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:
- Who did Jesus say He is? Jesus said He is the Messiah.

BIBLE STORY: JESUS MET NICODEMUS
- A religious leader named Nicodemus met Jesus at night.
- Jesus told Nicodemus he must be born again.
- Nicodemus was confused; how could an old man be born again?
- Jesus explained that God made it possible by sending His only Son.

FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS:
- Why was Nicodemus confused when Jesus said he must be born again?
- What kind of birth was Jesus talking about?
- How can we be born into God's family?

FAMILY ACTIVITY:
- Track the date of your kids' spiritual birthdays and celebrate them with special dinners or other treats. Remind them what it means to be born again.

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JESUS TOLD NICODEMUS
HE MUST BE BORN AGAIN.

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LESSON 68: HUMILITY

JESUS AND JOHN THE BAPTIST

John 3:22–36

JESUS AND JOHN THE BAPTIST

- John 3:22–36
- Big Picture Q&A: Who did Jesus say He is? Jesus said He is the Messiah.
- Key Passage: John 14:6 – Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

JESUS CONNECTION

John the Baptist had told people to get ready for Jesus, the promised Messiah. Now that Jesus was on Earth, John's mission was complete. John the Baptist joyfully stepped aside as Jesus began His earthly ministry.

LIFEWISE QUALITY

HUMILITY – Refusing to think of myself as more important than I am.

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LEADER BIBLE STUDY

Jesus went with His disciples into the countryside of Judea. He oversaw them as they baptized people. At the same time, people came to John, and he was baptizing them. These baptisms were an outward sign of cleansing for people who had repented of their sins.

Some of John's disciples came to John. They had noticed that the disciples of the man John had reluctantly baptized were baptizing others. Perhaps they felt the need to defend John's ministry, but John explained God's purpose for his life. John had been chosen by God long before he was born to be a forerunner—one who prepares the way (Mal. 3:1; Isa. 40:3).

John the Baptist understood who he was and who Jesus was. Consider the comparisons John made to show that Jesus was greater. First, who were they? John was clear: "I am not the Messiah" (John 3:28). John was not the bridegroom, but the groom's friend. Jesus is the bridegroom (John 3:29).

Where did they come from? John was from the earth, and he belonged to the earth. Jesus comes from above and is above all (John 3:31).

What did they do? John said, "He must increase, but I must decrease." John was a witness to the Light (John 1:7–8). He was a voice in the wilderness, and Jesus is the Word (John 1:14, 23). John baptized with water, but Jesus baptized with the Spirit (John 1:33).

Finally, why were they here? John went before Jesus and rejoiced with Him (John 3:28–29). Jesus came to give eternal life (John 3:36).

In the scope of God's plan of salvation, it was time for John to step aside for Jesus to do His work on earth. Jesus' earthly ministry had begun, and He would obediently do God's will to bring salvation to sinners.

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BIBLE TIMELINE & REVIEW (3 MIN)

Last time, we learned about a man named Nicodemus who came to Jesus secretly, at night. How did Nicodemus believe he could enter Heaven? (*Following all of God's rules.*) Jesus told Nicodemus that people can't earn salvation by following the rules. What did Jesus say the way to Heaven was? (*To be born again.*) What happens when a person is born again? (*They choose to believe in Jesus as their savior from sin, and God's Spirit comes to live in them and gives them a new heart and a new spirit.*) How is a person able to be born again? (*Through the power of the Holy Spirit.*)

SESSION STARTERS (5-10 MIN)

Introduce a Friend (Older Students)

- Form pairs, and give each student paper and a pencil. Partners should interview each other and write down the answers to some simple questions. After a few minutes, allow students to take turns introducing their partners and sharing the gathered information. Example questions:
  - What is your name?
  - Where were you born?
  - What is your favorite thing to do?
- Thank you for the introductions. Today, we are going to hear a Bible story about a man named John who came to introduce people to Jesus. Let's find out what John said about who Jesus is, where He came from and why Jesus came.

Names That Begin With *J* (Older and Younger Students)

- Guide students to stand in a circle. Give one player a ball. Instruct her to say a name that begins with the letter *J*. Then she should toss the ball to another student who will say another name that begins with *J* and toss the ball again. Continue passing the ball and saying names until students cannot think of any other names. [*Sample names: Jack, Jacob, Jessica, James, Joshua, Jake, Jayden, Jermaine, Jade, Julia, Jasmine, Jackson, Joel, Jamal, Jason, Jennifer, Jesse, Jonah, Jonathan, José, Jared, Jeff.*]
- Did anyone say the names *John* or *Jesus*? Today's Bible story is about Jesus and John the Baptist. Let's find out more about them.

Order Up (Younger Students)

- Provide the students with multiple sets of manipulatives and counting toys. Ask them to order them in different ways such as smallest to largest, according to the color spectrum, or by approximate weight. You may also use things like assorted buttons, beads, beans, or interlocking brick toys.
- Before Jesus began His ministry, John the Baptist had many followers. When Jesus began to teach people about God and perform miracles, it was time for John to step back because Jesus was the greater of the two. Jesus is the most important person ever! Everything and everyone is less important than Jesus.

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KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY/BIG PICTURE Q&A (5 MIN)

John 14:6

Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Key Passage Line-Up (Older Students)

- Write words or phrases of John 14:6 on separate index cards, one card per student. Tape a card to each child's back and challenge them to assemble the key passage by getting in a single-file line so each student can see the word of the student in front of him. Have them say the key passage by reading the cards one at a time starting with the second student in line. The first student can say the reference. Refer to the key passage poster to check their work.

Key Passage Cover-Up (Younger Students)

- Use sticky notes to cover a word or two from the key passage. Challenge students to read the key passage, filling in the missing words. Cover additional words with sticky notes each round, inviting the students to read the passage each time until the entire verse is covered. See if anyone can say it from memory.

Big Picture Q&A

Q: Who did Jesus say He is?
A: *Jesus said He is the Messiah.*

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BIBLE STORY (10 MIN)

Jesus and John the Baptist | John 3:22–36

Jesus and His disciples left Jerusalem, and they went out into the countryside. Jesus spent time with His disciples, and people came to them. Jesus taught the people, and the people were baptized.

Nearby, John the Baptist was baptizing people too. Some of the people who followed John got into an argument. They went to John to ask him a question.

"Teacher," they said, "remember the man you talked about, the One who was with you on the other side of the Jordan River? He is baptizing people, and people are starting to follow Him."

John answered them, "A person can only receive what God gives him. **You heard me say that I am not the Messiah. I am the messenger who goes before Him to announce that He is coming."**

John tried to explain by talking about a wedding. When two people get married, the man who marries the bride is the groom. His friend stands with him at the wedding, and he is happy to be there and hear the groom's voice. This was how **John felt—like a groom's friend— because he was happy that Jesus, the Messiah, had come.**

John also knew that a wedding is the groom's special day; the groom's friend should not make it about himself. **John said, "Jesus must become greater, and I must become less."**

Then, John explained why Jesus was more important than himself. John was from the earth, and he could only talk about things on Earth. Jesus—the One who comes from Heaven—talked about things in Heaven because He had seen them! Still, no one believed what Jesus said.

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John said, "Whoever believes Jesus knows that God tells the truth. God sent Jesus to Earth, and Jesus speaks God's words." **John also said, "The Father loves the Son and has given Him power over everything. Whoever believes in the Son will have eternal life,** but whoever refuses to believe in the Son will not have eternal life. He will never be able to get away from God's judgment."

JESUS CONNECTION

John the Baptist had told people to get ready for Jesus, the promised Messiah. Now that Jesus was on Earth, John's mission was complete. John the Baptist joyfully stepped aside as Jesus began His earthly ministry.

LIFEWISE QUALITY (3–4 MIN)

HUMILITY – Refusing to think of myself as more important than I am.

Living LifeWise

God deserves all the glory, so we can choose to be humble.

Character Connection

When other people get attention, it can make us jealous. That's how John the Baptist's friends felt, for sure. As Jesus got more attention, they felt John was getting overlooked. And actually, they weren't wrong. The attention was shifting from John to Jesus. And John said that was exactly right. Instead of getting jealous, John wanted Jesus to get all the glory. He humbly responded by giving Jesus the more important place because that's exactly the place Jesus deserved.

Like John, God has a role for us to play in His big plan. But Jesus is the most important One of all. So we don't need to compare ourselves to other people or compare what they get to do with what we get to do. God is the one who deserves the glory because He is the One who changes lives, saves people, keeps His promises and fulfills His plan.

In each of these situations, brainstorm what it would sound like to one-up the other person and then what you could say to humbly encourage them.

- Your friend is excited about their test score. Your score was higher.
- Your friend is excited about reaching a new reading level. Your level is higher.
- Your brother tells a funny story, and everyone laughs.
- A classmate keeps talking about the big trip their family is taking for spring break. Your family isn't going anywhere.

BIBLE STORY REVIEW (5 MIN)

- What did Jesus do in the countryside?

  Spent time with His disciples, and people were baptized, John 3:22

- Who did John say he was?

  A messenger, John 3:28

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- Which person at a wedding did John compare Jesus to?

  The groom, John 3:29
- Which person at a wedding did John compare himself to?

  The groom's friend, John 3:29
- Who did John say must become greater?

  Jesus, John 3:30
- Where did Jesus come from?

  Jesus came from Heaven to Earth, John 3:31
- What will those who believe in the Son have?

  Eternal life, John 3:36
- Who will not have eternal life?

  Those who refuse to believe in the Son, John 3:36

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES (5-10 MIN)

Good, Better, Best (Older Students)

- Before class, come up with at least four groups of three actions or things that increase in value (good, better, best). Include some that refer to Jesus. Create a set of 12 cards by writing each of the actions or things on individual index cards. Make multiple sets. In groups, students will turn over the cards, three at a time, to try to match the trio of cards that relate to each other. Once they have all three examples, instruct students to put them in good, better, best order. Examples:
  - Explaining what sin is (good), warning against sin (better), dying to save you from sin (best)
  - Owning a Bible (good), reading your Bible (better), obeying the Bible (best)
  - Smelling donuts (good), tasting donuts (better), sharing donuts with a friend (best)
  - Listening to your teacher's instructions (good), remembering your teacher's instructions (better), doing what your teacher says (best)
  - Hearing Jesus is the Messiah (good), believing Jesus is the Messiah (better), believing Jesus is the Messiah and telling others about Him (best)
- We tried to create matches based on increasing value. Some of the cards described Jesus, the best of all! Jesus came from Heaven to Earth. John knew that Jesus was the promised Savior who would save people from sin. John knew he would decrease and Jesus would increase in honor and glory.

Kaboom! (Older and Younger Students)

- Print and cut apart the Kaboom! cards and place them in a gift bag. Form two teams. Teams will take turns drawing one card from the bag. If they answer the question correctly, award 10 points. If a group answers incorrectly, allow the other team to answer. If a team draws a *Kaboom!* card, they lose one point.

Less and Less Limbo (Older and Younger Students)

- Play limbo. Have two students hold a broomstick horizontally over their heads. After the whole class has passed underneath the stick, switch volunteers, lower the bar and go again. Anyone who

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touches the stick or whose hands touch the floor as they go under is out. The student who passes under the lowest setting without touching anything wins.

- In our game, you needed to get lower and lower to move to the next round. In a way, that is like what John wanted to do with Jesus. John completed his mission of preparing people for Jesus' arrival, so it was time for him to become less important so Jesus' mission could take place. What do you think it means to "make yourself decrease"? What does it mean to "make Jesus increase"?

Mission Complete! (Older and Younger Students)

- Before class, make two copies of a list of 5–10 tasks students can complete in the classroom. Form two teams and give each team a task list. At your signal, teams should work together to complete the tasks. When a team finishes, its players should sit down and shout, "Mission complete!" Encourage the second team to complete all the tasks. Sample tasks:
  - Measure the height of someone on the team
  - Do 10 push-ups
  - Open a Bible to John 14:6 and read it aloud.
  - Say the alphabet backwards.
  - Line up 25 crayons end to end.
- How did you feel when you completed all the tasks? Finishing something you worked hard at feels great. John the Baptist's job was to get people ready for Jesus. Imagine how John felt when Jesus arrived. Now that Jesus was there, John's mission was complete. John was happy to step aside as Jesus began His earthly ministry.

Spoken Words (Younger Students)

- Display the main point poster. Have students stand in a circle. Choose a volunteer to wear a blindfold and stand in the middle of the circle. The rest of the students will walk around him. When the volunteer claps three times, the students should stand still. The volunteer will point to a player in the circle. That player will say the Bible story's big picture answer: "Jesus said He is the Messiah." She may disguise her voice. Challenge the volunteer to guess who spoke. If he is correct, he should swap places with that player. If he is incorrect, allow the speaker to choose a new volunteer. Play several rounds as time allows.
- John the Baptist told his followers that Jesus was more important than himself. Jesus was the One people had been waiting for—the promised Messiah who would save people from their sins! John said that Jesus came to Earth to speak God's words. He also said that whoever believes in Jesus will have eternal life.

Activity Pages & Recap Cards (5–10 min) (For in-class or take-home use)

- Great, Greater, Greatest! (Older Students)
  - Answers: *1. Who did Jesus say He is? Jesus said He is the Messiah; 2. Jesus came from Heaven to Earth; 3. John the Baptist told the people to get ready for Jesus, the promised Messiah; 4. Now that Jesus was on Earth, John's mission was complete.*
- Bigger and Better (Younger Students)

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Prayer & Requests (3–5 min)

Father, Your glory never ends. It goes on and on forever. We sometimes think we deserve glory or power when it belongs only to You and Your Son. Help us to see the wisdom in John's choice to humbly step aside and welcome Jesus. Help us to welcome Jesus joyfully into our lives too. Amen.

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Journal Page

Write what you would tell someone who asked about who Jesus is. Why is Jesus great?

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FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS

- Why did Jesus deserve the spotlight instead of John?
- Why is it hard to see someone else in the spotlight?
- How can we show that Jesus is most important in our lives?

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FOLD

JESUS AND JOHN THE BAPTIST

JOHN 3:22–36

MAIN POINT: JESUS CAME FROM HEAVEN TO EARTH.

Jesus and His disciples left Jerusalem, and they went out into the countryside. Jesus spent time with His disciples, and people came to them. Jesus taught the people, and the people were baptized.

Nearby, John the Baptist was baptizing people too. Some of the people who followed John got into an argument.

"Teacher," they said, "remember the man you talked about, the One who was with you on the other side of the Jordan River? He is baptizing people, and people are starting to follow Him."

John answered them, "You heard me say that I am not the Messiah. I am the messenger who goes before Him to announce that He is coming."

John tried to explain by talking about a wedding. John felt like a groom's friend because he was happy that Jesus, the Messiah, had come. John said, "Jesus must become greater, and I must become less."

John also said, "The Father loves the Son and has given Him power over everything. Whoever believes in the Son will have eternal life."

Jesus Connection: *John the Baptist had told people to get ready for Jesus, the promised Messiah. Now that Jesus was on Earth, John's mission was complete. John the Baptist joyfully stepped aside as Jesus began His earthly ministry.*

Key Passage: *John 14:6 – Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*

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GREAT, GREATER, GREATEST!

For each row, number the items from 1 to 3. (3 = great, 2 = greater, 1 = greatest)
Then compare your answers with a partner. Do you agree on what is great, greater, and the greatest?

bowling	baseball	football
pizza	cookies	carrots
fall	summer	winter
John	Jesus	lion

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Lights On!

Draw a line to match the first part of each phrase or sentence with the second part.

Who did Jesus say He is? ...	... for Jesus, the promised Messiah.
Jesus came from Heaven ...	... John's mission was complete.
John the Baptist told the people to get ready ...	... Jesus said He is the Messiah.
Now that Jesus was on Earth ...	... to Earth.

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BIGGER AND BETTER

INSTRUCTIONS: Circle the item in each pair that is bigger or that you think is better.

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KEY PASSAGE:
John 14:6 – Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:
- Who did Jesus say He is? Jesus said He is the Messiah.

BIBLE STORY: JESUS AND JOHN THE BAPTIST
- Some of John the Baptist's disciples were confused when people followed Jesus instead of John.
- John explained that Jesus is more important. It was good for people to follow Him instead.
- Jesus came from Heaven to Earth.

FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS:
- Why is it hard to see someone else in the spotlight?
- Why did Jesus deserve the spotlight instead of John?
- How can we show that Jesus is most important in our lives?

FAMILY ACTIVITY:
- Hold a family talent show. Give each member of your family an opportunity in the spotlight and a chance to step aside to let someone else take over. Talk about what it means to let Jesus "take over" our lives.

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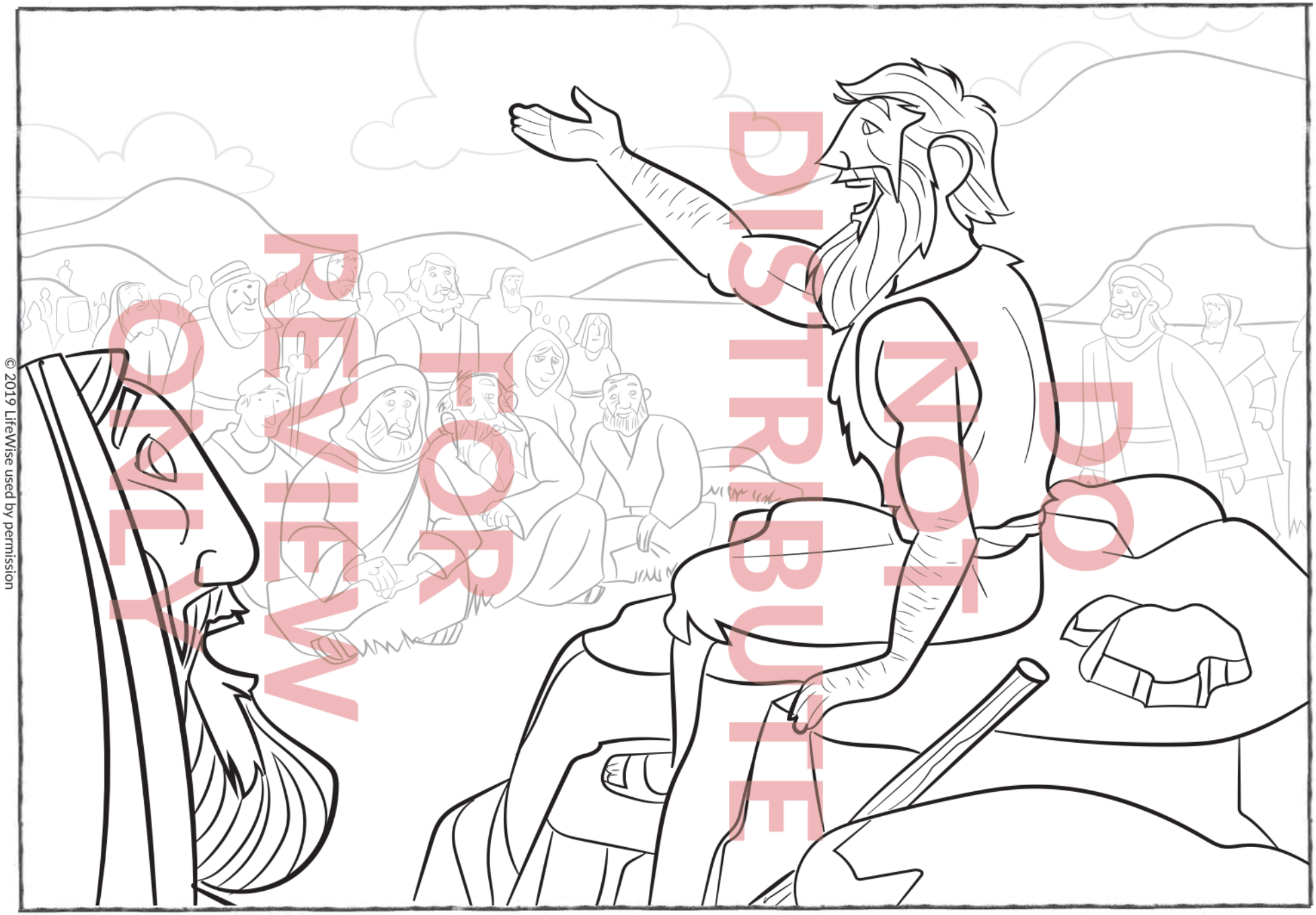

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JESUS CAME FROM HEAVEN TO EARTH.

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What did Jesus do in the countryside?

Who had a question for John the Baptist?

What did John's followers tell John?

John said he was not whom?

To which person at a wedding did John compare Jesus?

To which person at a wedding did John compare himself?

Who did John say must become greater?

Whose words does Jesus speak?

What will those who believe in the Son have?

Who will not have eternal life?

Who did Jesus say He is?

Where did Jesus come from?

KABOOM!

KABOOM!

KABOOM!

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LESSON 69: LOVE

JESUS MET A SAMARITAN WOMAN

John 4:1–42

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JESUS MET A SAMARITAN WOMAN

- John 4:1–42
- Big Picture Q&A: Who did Jesus say He is? Jesus said He is the Messiah.
- Key Passage: John 14:6 – Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

JESUS CONNECTION

Jesus offered the woman something no one else could give her: living water. Jesus wasn't talking about water that she could physically drink; Jesus was talking about the Holy Spirit who would satisfy her spiritual thirst. Jesus gives the Holy Spirit to those who come to Him by faith.

LIFEWISE QUALITY

LOVE – Choosing to support and care for others whether or not they deserve it.

LEADER BIBLE STUDY

At the time Jesus was on Earth, the social food chain went like this: Jews don't talk to Samaritans. The strife between the two groups stretched back hundreds of years, to the Assyrian destruction of Israel.

When the Assyrians destroyed the Northern kingdom of Israel, they moved a large group of God's people away from their homes. But some of the people—the poorest, sickest, least able to work—were left behind in the region that became known as Samaria. The Jews left in Samaria intermarried with other people groups and practiced foreign customs. While the Samaritans still believed in God, they adapted their beliefs.

The Jews who returned home from exile to rebuild God's temple in Jerusalem rejected this new way of life. They were dedicated to obeying and worshiping God, and they didn't agree with the Samaritans' practices. The Samaritans opposed the Jews' efforts to reestablish their nation. In time, the Jews' hate for the Samaritans grew—so much so, that a Jew traveling from Judea to Galilee would take a longer route to travel around Samaria rather than through it.

Jesus broke down barriers when He traveled to Galilee by way of Samaria. Even more surprising, Jesus stopped at a well around noon and asked a Samaritan woman for a drink. Jewish men did not speak to women in public.

But Jesus was kind to her, and He offered a gift—living water. The woman didn't understand, but Jesus revealed His knowledge of her past. He even gave her a glimpse of the future. The Samaritan woman expected a Messiah to come and fix everything. Jesus said, "I am He."

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Explain to students that the living water Jesus offers is the Holy Spirit (John 7:37–39). It is a gift that He is eager to give us when we ask Him. Those who receive His grace will never be thirsty again.

BIBLE TIMELINE & REVIEW (3 MIN)

When Jesus began His ministry, He met all sorts of people. First, Nicodemus came to Jesus at night. What did Jesus tell Nicodemus he must do to get to Heaven? (*Be born again.*) Then, John the Baptist met Jesus. Where did John tell his followers Jesus came from? (*From Heaven to Earth.*) What did John say when his followers were concerned that people were following Jesus? (*Jesus must become greater; I must become less.*)

In today's story, Jesus had another unusual meeting, this time with someone most Jewish men wouldn't talk to. It was against the social rules of the time for a Jewish man to speak to a woman in public, but it wasn't against God's rules, so Jesus did. Not only this, but the woman was a Samaritan—a half-Jew race hated by most Jews. But Jesus didn't hate her. He showed her God's love.

SESSION STARTERS (5-10 MIN)

Boys vs. Girls (Older Students)

- Form two teams: boys and girls. Instruct them to sit in two lines on the floor. Set up two chairs at the front of the room with a Bible on each and call the first student in each line to sit in a chair. Call out a letter. The first player to name a book of the Bible that begins with that letter earns a point and goes to the back of their line. If students get stumped, guide them to look at the table of contents in their Bibles. Play additional rounds with new players. [*Suggested letters: E, G, H, J, L, M, N, P, R, T.*]

- Our game was boys against girls. In today's Bible story, Jesus stopped and talked to a woman from Samaria. Jewish men did not speak to women in public, but Jesus was not like other Jews. Jesus loves everyone. We'll find out what Jesus said to the Samaritan woman.

Water Relay (Older and Younger Students)

- Form two teams. Have each team stand in a single-file line. Position a bucket of water at the front of each line and an empty bucket at the end of each line. Give each student a plastic cup. Announce these instructions:

    1. The first player will scoop water into her cup and pour it into the second player's cup.
    2. The second player will pour the water into the third player's cup, and so on down the line.
    3. The last player will dump the water into the empty bucket.
    4. As soon as the first player empties her cup, she may scoop more water to pass.
    5. The first team to move all of its water (or the team with the most water in the second bucket after a set amount of time) wins.

- In today's Bible story, Jesus met a woman at a well. The woman had to walk to the well every day to get water. Jesus offered the woman living water so she would never be thirsty again. Let's find out what Jesus was talking about.

Would You Rather Drink ...? (Younger Students)

- Call out scenarios that ask what students would rather drink in a given situation. Let them run to one side of the room or the other depending on their preference. For example:

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- On a hot day, would you rather drink sweet iced tea or warm green tea?
- On a cold day, would you rather drink hot cocoa or spiced apple cider?
- After playing dodgeball, would you rather drink water or gatorade?
- While eating dinner, would you rather drink milk or water?
- While watching a movie at the movie theater, would you rather drink pop or lemonade?

- In today's Bible story, Jesus met a woman at a well. The woman had to walk to the well every day to get water. Jesus offered the woman living water so she would never be thirsty again. Let's find out what Jesus was talking about.

KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY/BIG PICTURE Q&A (5 MIN)

John 14:6

Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Coin Pass (Older and Younger Students)

- Instruct students to form a circle. Play music as they pass a coin around the circle. Stop the music randomly. Challenge the student with the coin to recite John 14:6. If they get stuck, invite the entire class to say the key passage with them. Play several rounds. In our Bible story today, who did Jesus say He is? Jesus said He is the Messiah. What does our key passage tell us about who Jesus is? (*He is the way, the truth and the life. He is the only way to the Father.*) Jesus offers us something no one else can give—forgiveness from sin and eternal life. No one else is like Jesus.

Big Picture Q&A

Q: Who did Jesus say He is?
A: *Jesus said He is the Messiah.*

BIBLE STORY (10 MIN)

Jesus Met a Samaritan Woman | John 4:1–42

Jesus had been making disciples in Judea, and His disciples baptized people. Now, Jesus had more followers than John the Baptist. **Jesus began traveling back to Galilee. He traveled through Samaria and stopped in a town at the well. Jesus' disciples went into town to buy food.**

While Jesus was at the well, a Samaritan woman came to get water from the well. "Give Me a drink," Jesus said to the woman.

The woman was surprised. "You're a Jew," she said. "Why are You talking to me? I'm a Samaritan."

Jesus said, "I asked you for a drink. **You don't know who I am. If you did, you would have asked Me for a drink, and I would give you living water."**

The woman was confused. "Sir," she said, "This well is deep, and You don't have a bucket. Where do You get this 'living water'?"

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Jesus said, "Anyone who drinks this well water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks from the water I give will never, ever get thirsty again! In fact, the water I give will become a well inside you, and you will have eternal life." Jesus was talking about the Holy Spirit, but the woman did not understand.

"Sir," she said, "give me this water. If I'm not thirsty, I won't have to keep coming to this well to get water."

"Go get your husband," Jesus said.

"I don't have a husband," the woman replied. Jesus knew she was telling the truth. He said, "You don't have a husband now, but you've had five husbands."

Jesus was right. "I see You are a prophet," the woman said. Maybe this prophet could explain something to her. She said, "The Samaritans worship here on a mountain, but the Jews say we need to worship at the temple in Jerusalem."

Jesus said, "Soon you will not need to be in either of those places to worship God in spirit and in truth."

The woman said, **"I know the Messiah is coming. When He comes, He will explain everything to us."**

Then, Jesus said, "He is talking to you now. I am the Messiah."

The woman left and told the people in her town, "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did! Could this be the Messiah?"

Many Samaritans believed in Jesus because of what the woman said. They asked Jesus to stay with them, and He stayed for two days. Many more believed because of what Jesus said. They told the woman, "We no longer believe because of what you said, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this really is the Savior of the world."

JESUS CONNECTION

Jesus offered the woman something no one else could give her—living water. Jesus wasn't talking about water that she could physically drink; Jesus was talking about the Holy Spirit who would satisfy her spiritual thirst. Jesus gives the Holy Spirit to those who come to Him by faith.

LIFEWISE QUALITY (3–4 MIN)

LOVE – Choosing to support and care for others whether or not they deserve it.

Living LifeWise

God loves and accepts all people, so we can also show love to everyone.

Character Connection

We all know that it's important to show love to people, but sometimes knowing how to be loving is very hard. One way to show love to someone is by being kind. In our Bible story today, Jesus showed love to the woman at the well simply by being kind to her.

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Kindness is not a new idea. We know what it looks like and what it doesn't. But we aren't always kind, are we? Because God loves us, He has shown us amazing kindness by sending Jesus, saving us from our sins and making us part of His family. He wants us to treat others with the same kindness He's shown us, to show them how much God loves them, and He gives us His Spirit to help us to that.

Let's brainstorm some ways we can show kindness to those around us:

- Classmates
- Your siblings
- A teacher

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BIBLE STORY REVIEW (5 MIN)

- **Where did Jesus stop during His journey to Galilee?**

  At a well in Samaria, John 4:3–6

- **Whom did Jesus meet at the well?**

  A Samaritan woman, John 4:7

- **Why was the woman surprised that Jesus was talking to her?**

  Jews didn't speak to Samaritans, John 4:9

- **Why did the Jews dislike the Samaritans?**

  The Samaritans didn't follow all of God's laws

- **What kind of water did Jesus say He could give the woman?**

  Living water, John 4:10

- **How did the woman know Jesus was the Messiah?**

  Jesus knew everything about her

- **Who did the woman believe was coming?**

  The Messiah, John 4:25

- **Who did Jesus say He was?**

  Jesus said He is the Messiah, John 4:26

- **What did the Samaritans say they knew about Jesus?**

  He is the Savior of the world, John 4:42

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES (5-10 MIN)

Pray for People Groups (Older Students)

- Before the session, research information online about an unreached people group. (A people group is unreached when less than 2% of its population is evangelical Christian.) Share facts about the people. Encourage students to write the name of the people group on index cards to keep in their Bibles as a reminder to pray. Example: the Songhai people in Western Africa. The Songhai people live along the Niger River at the edge of the Sahara Desert in Western Africa. Fewer than 200 of the 3.5 million Songhai people are Christians.

- Jesus told the Samaritan woman He is the Messiah. Jesus offered the Samaritan woman living water. Jesus wasn't talking about water the woman could physically drink; He was talking about

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the Holy Spirit, who would satisfy her spiritual thirst. Jesus gives the Holy Spirit to those who trust in Him. Let's pray that the Songhai people would hear and believe the good news about Jesus. We can pray for the safety of missionaries and new believers in Africa.

Ball Toss (Older and Younger Students)

- Form two teams. Position three buckets in a single-file line about six feet from the students. Give each team a table tennis ball. Allow each student a turn to toss a ball toward the buckets. If the ball lands in the closest bucket, award 100 points. If it lands in the second bucket, award 200 points. If it lands in the farthest bucket, award 300 points. Then, ask the teams the review questions. For each correct answer, award a team another chance to toss the ball and earn more points.

Pictionary (Older and Students)

- Write the following words on separate index cards: *bucket*, *well*, *water*, *drink*, *woman*, *walk*, *Jesus*. Choose a volunteer to be the artist. Give the artist a card with a word to draw. Students should try to guess what the artist is drawing. The artist may not speak or write any letters or words. When someone guesses the drawing, prompt students to describe how the drawing relates to the Bible story. Then choose a new artist. Play several rounds.
  - Well—Jesus stopped at a well in Samaria.
  - Woman—A Samaritan woman came to the well.
  - Drink—Jesus asked the woman for a drink.
  - Bucket—The woman pointed out that Jesus didn't have a bucket to use at the well.
  - Water—Jesus offered the woman living water.
  - Jesus—Jesus told the Samaritan woman He is the Messiah.

- Even though Jesus was a Jew, He was kind to the Samaritan woman. Jesus offers salvation to anyone who will trust in Him as Lord and Savior.

Living Water (Older and Younger Students)

- Before class, bring several props: A pitcher of fresh water (labeled "The Holy Spirit"), a clear closed jar with a little dirty water in the bottom (labeled "Us") and a large clear bowl.
- Have students brainstorm a list of daily tasks they have to complete, including brushing teeth, using the bathroom, eating a snack, or completing a chore. Write the tasks they name on the board. Look at the activities you do regularly. Which ones require water? What would it be like to accomplish them without water? Is it even possible? While there are some tasks where water isn't necessary, many things we do every day require water. We even need water to live! We are 60% water, after all … God created us with an essential need for it!

- We hardly notice how much water we use, until it's not available. Then, we recognize how much we need it. It is like this with Jesus too. Jesus said that He is the living water and promised that "whoever drinks from the water that I will give him will never get thirsty again. In fact, the water I will give him will become a well of water springing up in him for eternal life." (John 4:13) [*Show students the pitcher of water.*] We know that God is always with us, and His Holy Spirit lives inside those who believe, but we often don't take advantage of this. [*Show students the jar of dirty water.*] We try to do things on our own and wind up dirty and dried up. We neglect the well that is so close and ready to be used. We NEED God's help just to take a breath. Every part of our day draws from Him. But sometimes we ignore Him until we are at the end of our rope. [*Open the lid on the jar of dirty water and rinse it out in the bowl until the inside is clean and overflowing.*] Don't wait. Take time

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now and every day to thank God for His presence. Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you with the ability to live for Jesus and become more like Him every day.

Activity Pages & Recap Cards (5–10 min) (For in-class or take-home use)

- Well Words (Older Students)
- Water You Doing? (Younger Students)

Prayer & Requests (3–5 min)

Father, thank You for sending Jesus to be the perfect sacrifice for our sin. Help us to trust You more each day. Thank You for giving us the Holy Spirit. Help us to see the way You have given us life. Give us courage and opportunities to share the truth about Jesus with everyone we meet.

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Journal Page

Write a few sentences about who you believe Jesus is. Write about why you believe what you do.

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FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS

- What is "living water?"
- How can we get living water?
- Who can we tell about this amazing living water?

JESUS MET A SAMARITAN WOMAN

JOHN 4:1-42

MAIN POINT: JESUS TOLD THE SAMARITAN WOMAN HE IS THE MESSIAH.

Jesus began traveling back to Galilee. He traveled through Samaria and stopped in a town at the well. Jesus' disciples went into town to buy food.

While Jesus was at the well, a Samaritan woman came to get water from the well.

"Give Me a drink," Jesus said to the woman.

The woman was surprised. "You're a Jew," she said. "Why are You talking to me? I'm a Samaritan."

Jesus said, "You don't know who I am. If you did, you would have asked Me for a drink, and I would give you living water."

The woman was confused.

Jesus said, "Anyone who drinks this well water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks from the water I give will never, ever get thirsty again!"

"Sir," she said, "give me this water. If I'm not thirsty, I won't have to keep coming to this well to get water."

"I see You are a prophet," the woman said. "I know the Messiah is coming. When He comes, He will explain everything to us."

Then Jesus said, "He is talking to you now. I am the Messiah."

The woman left and told the people in her town, "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did! Could this be the Messiah?"

Many Samaritans believed in Jesus because of what the woman said.

Jesus Connection: *Jesus offered the woman something no one else could give her—living water. Jesus wasn't talking about water that she could physically drink; Jesus was talking about the Holy Spirit who would satisfy her spiritual thirst. Jesus gives the Holy Spirit to those who come to Him by faith.*

Key Passage: *John 14:6 – Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*

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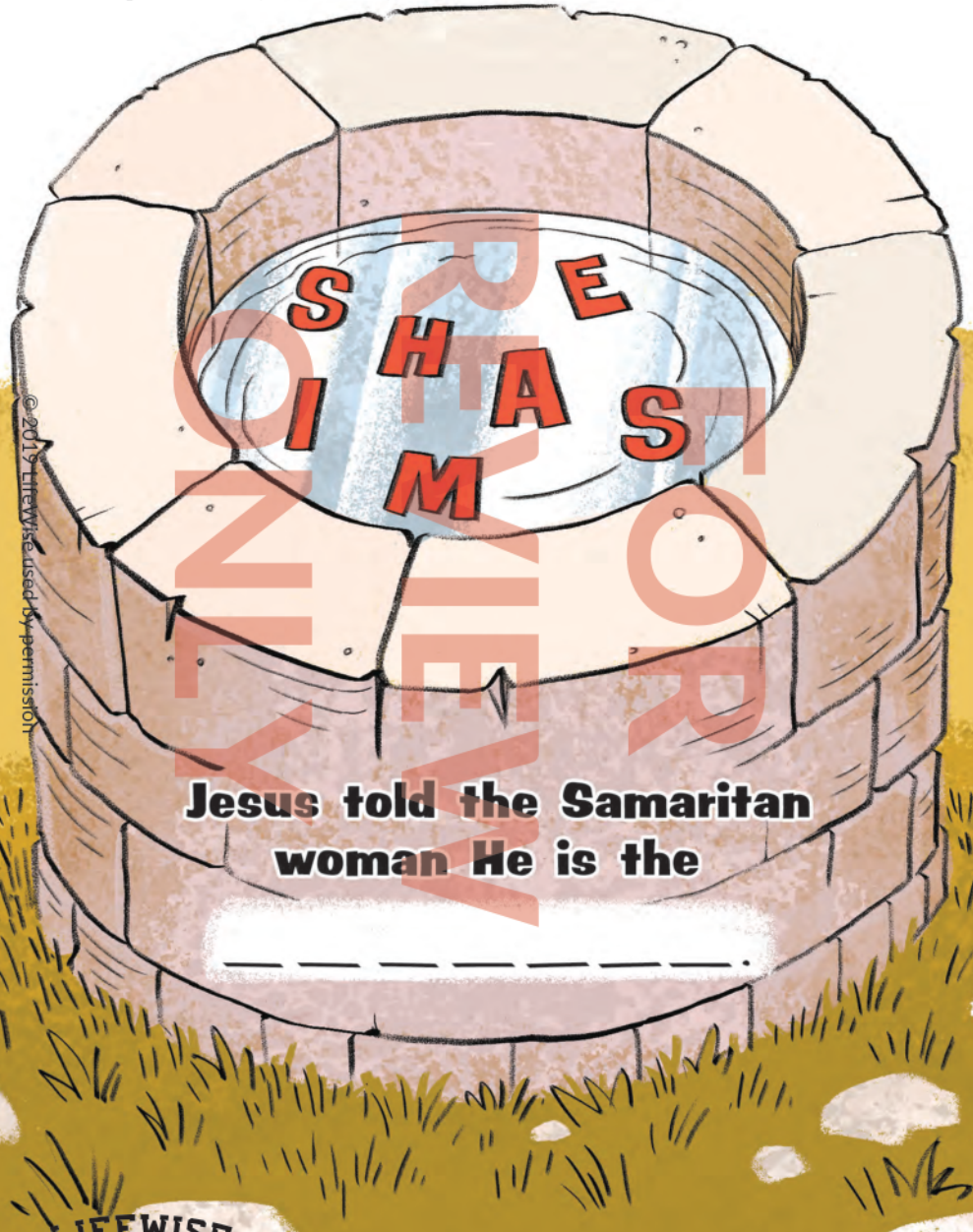
WELL WORDS

List the words you can spell from the letters in the well. Use the letters to complete the main point of today's Bible story.



Jesus told the Samaritan woman He is the

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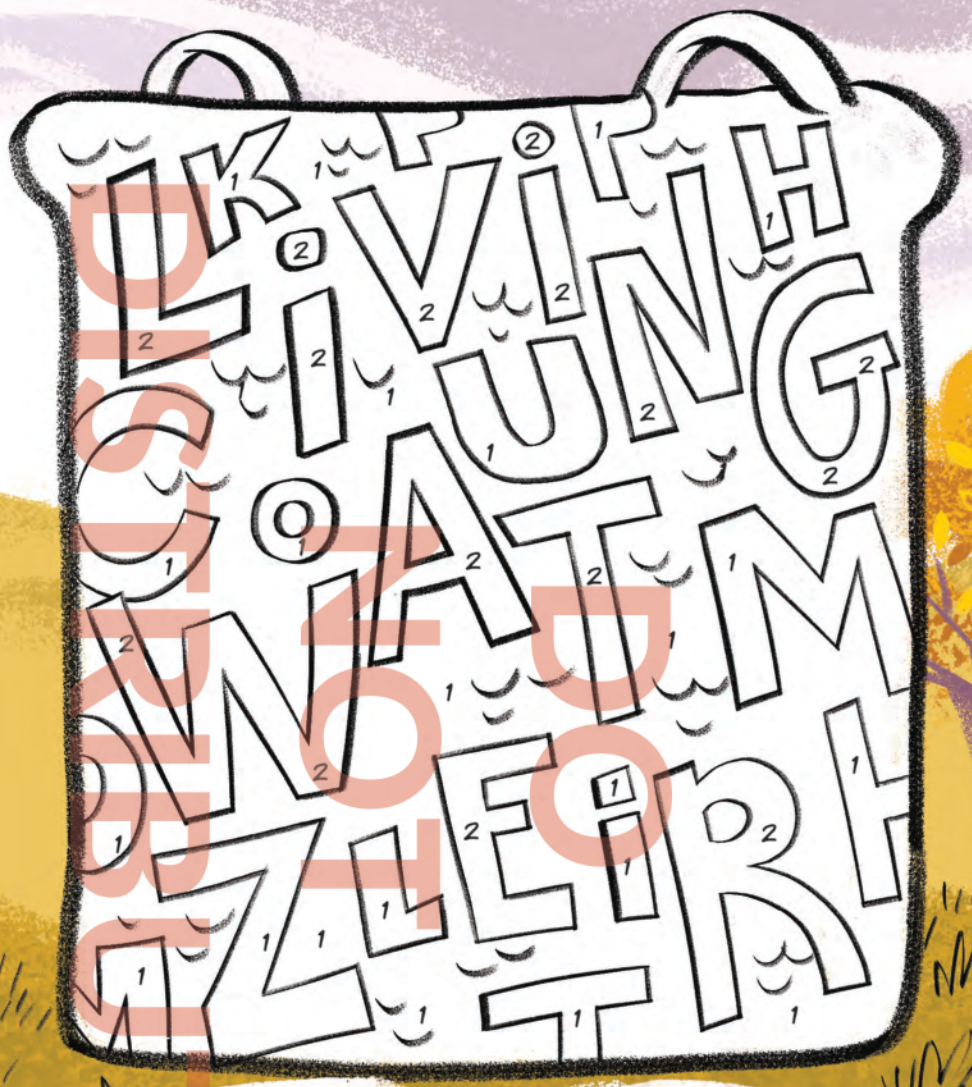

NEVER THIRST AGAIN

Jesus offered the woman something no one else could give her. Color the 1 spaces blue and the 2 spaces yellow.

What did Jesus say He could give the woman?

_____ _____

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WATER YOU DOING?

INSTRUCTIONS: Draw or write as many different uses for water as you can think of.

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KEY PASSAGE:
John 14:6 – Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:
- Who did Jesus say He is? Jesus said He is the Messiah.

BIBLE STORY: JESUS MET A SAMARITAN WOMAN
- Jesus asked a woman for water in Samaria.
- The woman was confused that Jesus would talk to her.
- Jesus said He could give her living water.
- Jesus told the Samaritan woman He is the Messiah.

FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS:
- What is "living water?"
- How can we get "living water?"
- Whom can we tell about this amazing living water?

FAMILY ACTIVITY:
- Get your kids to help install water-conservation and high-efficiency devices in your home. Talk about the importance of water as a resource and how we can steward it wisely. Discuss the unending supply of "living water" Jesus provides and how it becomes a spring inside us.

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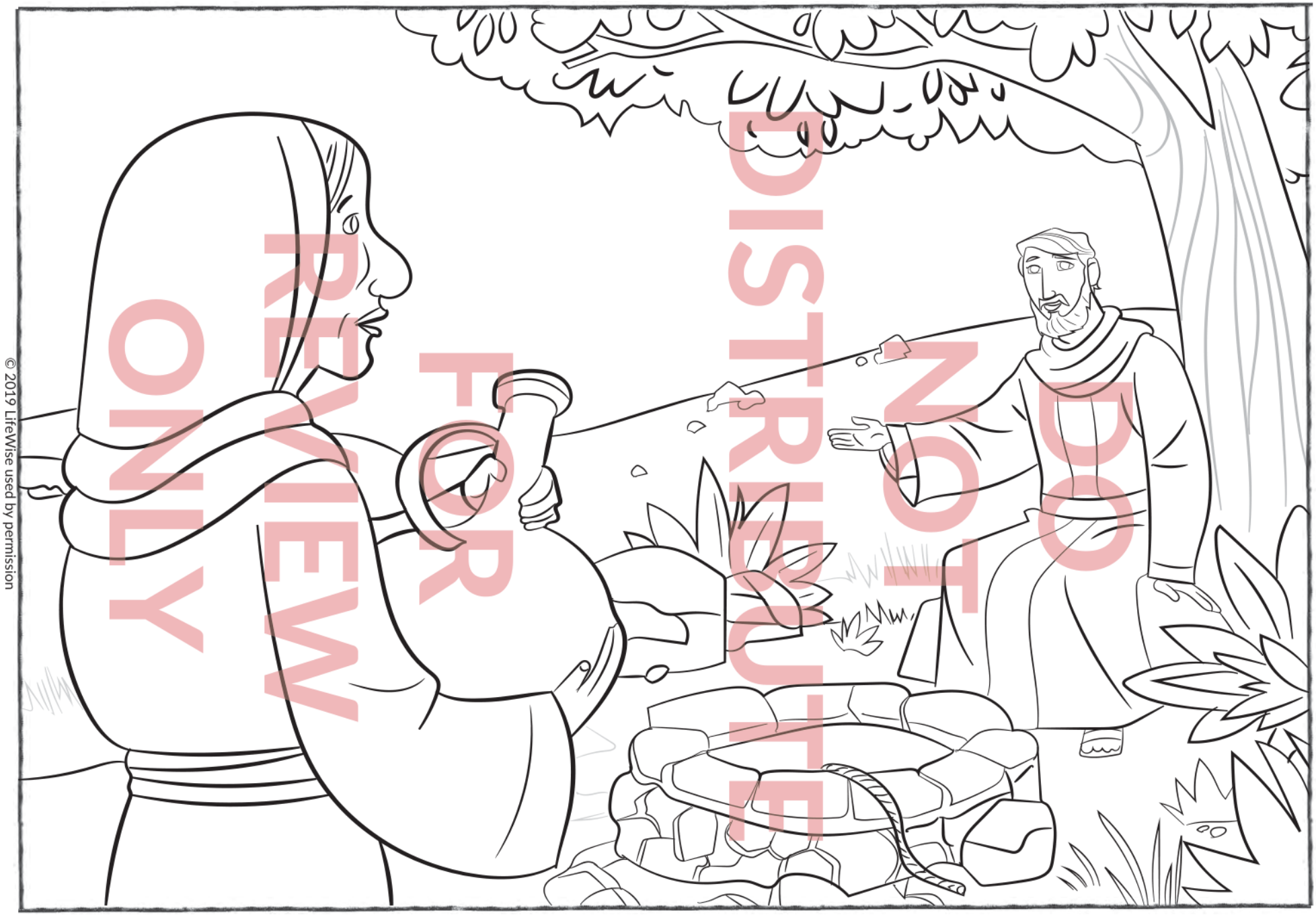

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JESUS TOLD THE SAMARITAN WOMAN HE IS THE MESSIAH.

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LESSON 70: TRUTHFULNESS

JESUS REJECTED IN NAZARETH

Luke 4:14–30

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JESUS REJECTED IN NAZARETH

- Luke 4:14–30
- Big Picture Q&A: Who did Jesus say He is? Jesus said He is the Messiah.
- Key Passage: John 14:6 – Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

JESUS CONNECTION

Hundreds of years before Jesus was born, the prophet Isaiah wrote about God's plan to send a Messiah. He would bring good news and redeem people who were broken and hurting. Jesus read Isaiah's words and told everyone who was listening that He is the promised Messiah.

LIFEWISE QUALITY

TRUTHFULNESS – Choosing not to lie or deceive others.

LEADER BIBLE STUDY

Jesus was about thirty years old when He began His ministry. After John baptized Jesus in the Jordan River, Jesus was tempted in the desert. Jesus traveled to Jerusalem for the Passover. Then, He headed north to Galilee. He went through the region of Samaria, stopping at Jacob's well to talk to a Samaritan woman.

Jesus began teaching in the synagogues. He went to the town of Nazareth. Nazareth was a small village in the hills between the Sea of Galilee and the Mediterranean Sea. This was where Jesus grew up.

On the Sabbath day, Jesus went into the synagogue. He read aloud the words of the prophet Isaiah (Isa. 61:1–2). Jesus sat down. Everyone's eyes were on Him as He explained, "Today, as you listen, this Scripture has been fulfilled." What was Jesus saying? Jesus was saying, "It's Me." The words Jesus read were coming true. Some of the people might have remembered Jesus from His youth. They asked, "Isn't this Joseph's son?"

Jesus knew their thoughts; Jesus had performed miracles in Capernaum, and the people wanted Jesus to do miracles in His hometown too. Jesus reminded them of two Old Testament accounts. Many widows lived in Israel when the prophet Elijah was there, but God sent Elijah to help a widow in another country. And Elisha likely encountered Israelites who had leprosy, but he healed Naaman the Syrian.

Jesus wanted the people to understand that His miracles were an act of grace—a gift. No one deserves God's grace, so God may show grace to whomever He pleases—even Gentiles. The people were angry. They drove Jesus away, intending to kill Him, but Jesus escaped through the crowd.

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As you teach, explain that Jesus came to give sight to the blind and to set the captives free. He came preaching good news to all the people groups. Finally, the Messiah had come! Jesus was God's plan to save sinners.

BIBLE TIMELINE & REVIEW (3 MIN)

Jesus was about 30 years old when He began His ministry. We have heard about many people who met Jesus during His ministry: Nicodemus, John the Baptist and the Samaritan woman. What did Jesus say He would give the Samaritan woman if she asked? (*Living water.*) Who is the living water that Jesus gives? (*The Holy Spirit.*) What did the Samaritan woman do when she realized that Jesus was the Messiah? (*Invited her entire town to meet Jesus.*)

SESSION STARTERS (5-10 MIN)

Accepted or Rejected? (Older and Younger Students)

- Label one paper *Accept* and another *Reject*, and tape them to opposite walls. Students should stand in the middle of the room. Call out an idea. If students accept it (like it), they should run to the first wall. If they reject it (don't like it), they should run to the other wall. Between items, students should return to the center of the room. [*Sample items: uniforms at school, school starting one hour later every day, longer recesses at school, no snacks allowed, no gym uniforms, cell phones allowed at desk, etc.*]
- We usually accept things that we like and reject things that we don't like. Today, we are going to hear a Bible story about a time when Jesus was rejected by people in His hometown. Why do you think they would reject Jesus?

Believe It or Not (Older and Younger Students)

- Read the following statements and ask students to respond by raising their hand if they believe it or shaking their head if they don't.
    - A giant, ape-like creature known as Bigfoot hides in the forests of North America.
    - A long-necked, aquatic dinosaur called the Loch Ness Monster is still living in a lake in Scotland.
    - Pluto used to be considered a ninth planet in the solar system, but astronomers decided it was too small and re-classified it as a dwarf planet.
    - In the southern hemisphere (southern half) of Earth, seasons are opposite: summer is in January, winter in July.
    - Jesus is the Son of God. He died on the cross and rose again to rescue us from sin.
- Talk with students about what makes something easy or hard to believe. Would they change their mind if they saw evidence with their own eyes? What if a trusted friend told them they had seen it? In today's Bible story, some people didn't believe Jesus when He told them the Scriptures are about Him. Believing something can be hard if you haven't seen it or heard it from a trusted person. The Bible is the perfectly trustworthy source that tells us about Jesus.

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KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY/BIG PICTURE Q&A (5 MIN)

John 14:6

Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Ball Pass (Older and Younger Students)

- Display the key passage poster where students can see it. While holding a ball, say the first word and toss the ball to a student. She must say the second word as quickly as she can before tossing the ball to a third student. Continue until students have said the key passage. Play again as time allows. Consider using a stopwatch to time the students. Play again to see if students can improve their time.

Big Picture Q&A

Q: Who did Jesus say He is?
A: *Jesus said He is the Messiah.*

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BIBLE STORY (10 MIN)

Jesus Rejected in Nazareth | Luke 4:14–30

Jesus went to His hometown, Nazareth. On the Sabbath day, Jesus went to the synagogue like He usually did. The Sabbath was a holy day of rest. On that day, the Jews gathered in the synagogue to worship God. The synagogue was a special building where Jews met together to pray, worship and learn about the Scriptures.

Jesus stood up to read Scripture. He unrolled the scroll of the prophet Isaiah and read: "The Spirit of the Lord is on Me. He has chosen Me to tell good news to the poor. He has sent Me to tell the captives that they are free, to tell the blind that they can see, to free people who have been treated badly and to announce that the Lord's favor is on us." Then, Jesus rolled up the scroll. He gave it back to the attendant and sat down.

Everyone who was in the synagogue stared at Jesus. **Jesus said, "Today, as you listened to Me reading these words, they came true."**

The people said good things about Jesus, and they were amazed at Him**. But some of the people in Nazareth had known Jesus from His youth. "Isn't this Joseph's son?" they asked.**

Jesus was far from ordinary. Even though Joseph raised Jesus as his own son, Jesus' true Father is God. Then, Jesus said to them, "You will probably say this old proverb: 'Doctor, heal yourself.' You've heard about the miracles I performed in Capernaum, and you want Me to do them here in My hometown too."

Jesus also **said, "No prophet is accepted in his hometown." Jesus reminded the people of the prophets Elijah and Elisha. When there was a terrible famine in Israel** and no rain fell there for three and a half years, plenty of widows in the country needed help. But Elijah did not help the widows in Israel. Instead, **God sent Elijah to help a widow in another land.**

And when Elisha was a prophet, many people in Israel had leprosy. They wanted to be healed, **but Elisha did not heal them. Instead, he healed a man named Naaman** (NAY muhn), and Naaman was **from Syria**—a country that hated God's people.

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The people listening to Jesus in the synagogue became angry. They forced Jesus out of town. They wanted to throw Him off a cliff, but Jesus walked right through the crowd and went on His way.

JESUS CONNECTION

Hundreds of years before Jesus was born, the prophet Isaiah wrote about God's plan to send a Messiah. He would bring good news and redeem people who were broken and hurting. Jesus read Isaiah's words and told everyone who was listening that He is the promised Messiah.

LIFEWISE QUALITY (3–4 MIN)

TRUTHFULNESS – Choosing not to lie or deceive others.

Living LifeWise

God never lies, so we can tell the whole truth, even when it's hard.

Character Connection

That day in Nazareth, Jesus read a passage from the prophet Isaiah and told the people that He is the One Isaiah was talking about. But the people didn't believe Jesus. They grumbled and accused Him of lying.

Of course, Jesus really is the promised Messiah, and the fact that the people didn't believe Him didn't make it any less true. But their response does remind us that speaking the truth isn't always easy, especially when we talk about God. Not everyone believes that Jesus is God, that He died for our sin, or that we need to trust in Him to go to Heaven. And when we share that, some people get upset.

Some people won't believe us when we tell the truth. Others might get angry because they don't agree with us. They might yell at us or say mean things about us to other people. Do you think that means we shouldn't tell the truth? Or that we shouldn't tell people about Jesus? Of course not. We should tell the truth about everything, including Jesus. But we can ask God to help us so we know when to speak, what to say, and sometimes, when to walk away.

What are some truthful and appropriate responses you could have in these situations?

- The teacher doesn't believe that you turned in the homework on time.
- The bus driver makes you sit in the front seat for passing snacks even though you told him you weren't involved.
- A friend says that believing in Jesus is for little kids and asks you not to talk about Jesus any more.

BIBLE STORY REVIEW (5 MIN)

- Is the Book of Luke in the Old Testament or New Testament?

  New Testament

- In what town did Jesus grow up?

  Nazareth, Luke 4:16

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- Where did Jesus go on the Sabbath day?

  To the synagogue, Luke 4:16
- What did people do at the synagogue?

  Listen to the Old Testament, Luke 4:16
- The people knew Jesus was whose son?

  Joseph's son, Luke 4:22
- What two prophets did Jesus talk about?

  Elijah and Elisha, Luke 4:28
- Where did Jesus say no prophet is accepted?

  In his hometown, Luke 4:24
- Whose words did Jesus read?

  Isaiah's words, Luke 4:17

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES (5-10 MIN)

Bible Trivia (Older Students)

- Before class, write the titles below on the board or separate sticky notes. Ask the review questions as they correspond to the categories. Form two teams. Allow the first team to choose a category and point value. If the team answers the corresponding review question correctly, award them those points. If incorrect, the other team may answer. Then the second team will choose a category and point value. Continue until students have answered all the questions.

- Bible Skills
  - (100) Is the Book of Luke in the Old Testament or New Testament? (*New Testament*)
  - (200) In which division of the Bible is the Book of Luke found: Letters or Gospels? (*Gospels*)
  - (300) Name the four books in the Gospels division of the Bible. (*Matthew, Mark, Luke, John*)

- All About Jesus
  - (100) In what town did Jesus grow up? (*Nazareth, Luke 4:16*)
  - (200) Where did Jesus go on the Sabbath day? (*To the synagogue, Luke 4:16*)
  - (300) The people knew Jesus was whose son? (*Joseph's, Luke 4:22*)

- Prophets
  - (100) What two prophets did Jesus talk about? (*Elijah and Elisha, Luke 4:28*)
  - (200) Where did Jesus say no prophet is accepted? (*In his hometown, Luke 4:24*)
  - (300) From which part of Scripture did Jesus read? (*Isaiah, Luke 4:17*)

True or False (Older and Younger Students)

- Form two teams. Read the following statements one at a time, alternating between teams. Teams must either accept the statement as true or reject it as false. If false, teams can earn a bonus point by explaining why it is false or changing it to be true.

  - The book of Luke is in the Old Testament. (*Reject; the New Testament*)
  - Jesus was from Nazareth. (*Accept, Luke 4:16*)

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- Jesus read from the prophet Isaiah's words. (*Accept, Luke 4:17*)
- Jesus said Isaiah's prophecies would never come true. (*Reject; Jesus said He made them come true, Luke 4:21*)
- Jesus said prophets are only accepted in their hometown. (*Reject; Jesus said no prophet is accepted in his hometown, Luke 4:24*)
- The people wanted to throw Jesus off a cliff, but He fought His way out of the crowd. (*Reject; Jesus passed right through the crowd, Luke 4:29–30*)

Miracles Or Conversations? (Older and Younger Students)

- Talk to your group about amazing things they'd like to see Jesus do. Gather suggestions about topics they'd like to talk to Jesus about. List responses on a white board or chalkboard. Discuss whether they think Jesus would rather perform miracles to entertain and amaze people or have them be good friends with Jesus.

- Jesus performed miracles as a way to show His power and God's love and mercy toward people. In Nazareth, the people seemed more interested in seeing some kind of cool street performance or trick than getting to know the Son of God. The Bible seems to indicate that Jesus would rather speak to people and teach them about God than perform miracles to amaze them. People still make the mistake of wanting to see Jesus do something miraculous without wanting to have a relationship with Him. Asking Jesus to do amazing things in our lives is OK, but knowing Jesus is more important than seeing His work.

Live It Out (Older and Younger Students)

- Open a Bible to Luke 4:18–19 and read the passage aloud. Remind students that Isaiah said these words about the coming Messiah. Teach the students motions for each group of people. Call out the following phrases and challenge students to do the motions. After students have learned the motions well, explain that after the motion is called the last person to do the motions must sit down. Play until one student remains standing.

    - He has chosen Me to tell good news to [*the poor*]. (Hold out hands palm-up in front of you)
    - He has sent Me to tell [*the captives*] that they are free. (Put arms down in front of you with wrists crossed like they are tied together)
    - He has sent Me to tell [*the blind*] that they can see. (Put hands over eyes)
    - He has sent Me to free [*the mistreated*]. (Crouch down and hide head under arms)

- Jesus explained that the Scriptures tell about Him. Hundreds of years before Jesus was born, the prophet Isaiah wrote about God's plan to send a Messiah who would bring good news and redeem people who were broken and hurting. Jesus wants us to show broken and hurting people God's love and truth. He wants us to be quick to help other people.

Activity Pages & Recap Cards (5–10 min) (For in-class or take-home use)

- Says Who? (Older Students)
    - Answers: *John the Baptist, John 3:30; Nicodemus, John 3:4; Jesus, Luke 4:18; Samaritan woman, John 4:29*

- Face Off (Younger Students)

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Prayer & Requests (3–5 min)

Dear God, thank You for Your Word so we can know You and how much You love us. Thank You for Jesus, who died to rescue sinners like us. Without Your grace, we would reject Him too. But You accept us and welcome us into Your family when we trust in Jesus. This is such good news! We love You. Amen.

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Journal Page

Think about how you feel when someone rejects you. Write a short prayer, thanking God for always accepting us through His Son, Jesus.

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FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS

- Why do you think the people of Nazareth wanted to see miracles?
- Why do you think they rejected Jesus?

JESUS REJECTED IN NAZARETH

LUKE 4:14-30

MAIN POINT: JESUS EXPLAINED THAT THE SCRIPTURES TELL ABOUT HIM.

Jesus went to His hometown, Nazareth. On the Sabbath day, Jesus went to the synagogue like He usually did.

Jesus stood up to read Scripture. He unrolled the scroll of the prophet Isaiah and read: "The Spirit of the Lord is on Me. He has chosen Me to tell good news to the poor. He has sent Me to tell the captives that they are free, to tell the blind that they can see, to free people who have been treated badly and to announce that the Lord's favor is on us." Then Jesus rolled up the scroll. He gave it back to the attendant and sat down.

Jesus said, "Today as you listened to Me reading these words, they came true."

The people said good things about Jesus, and they were amazed at Him. But some of the people in Nazareth had known Jesus from His youth. "Isn't this Joseph's son?" they asked.

Jesus said, "No prophet is accepted in his hometown." Jesus reminded the people of the prophets Elijah and Elisha. When there was a terrible famine in Israel, God sent Elijah to help a widow in another land.

And when Elisha was a prophet, many people in Israel had leprosy. But Elisha did not heal them. Instead, he healed a man named Naaman from Syria.

The people listening to Jesus in the synagogue became angry. They forced Jesus out of town.

Jesus Connection: *Hundreds of years before Jesus was born, the prophet Isaiah wrote about God's plan to send a Messiah. He would bring good news and redeem people who were broken and hurting. Jesus read Isaiah's words and told everyone who was listening that He is the promised Messiah.*

Key Passage: *John 14:6 – Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*

DISCARD

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Says Who?

Match each quotation to the person who said it. Look up the Scripture references in the Bible to check your answers.

"How can anyone be born when he is old?" (John 3:4)

"The Spirit of the Lord is on Me, because He has anointed Me to preach good news to the poor." (Luke 4:18)

"Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did! Could this be the Messiah?" (John 4:29)

"He must increase, but I must decrease." (John 3:30)

John the Baptist

Samaritan Woman

Nicodemus

Jesus

FACE TIME

Draw a face that shows each emotion.

HAPPY

ANGRY

CONFUSED

AMAZED

Then listen to the Bible story to hear how people felt when Jesus spoke.

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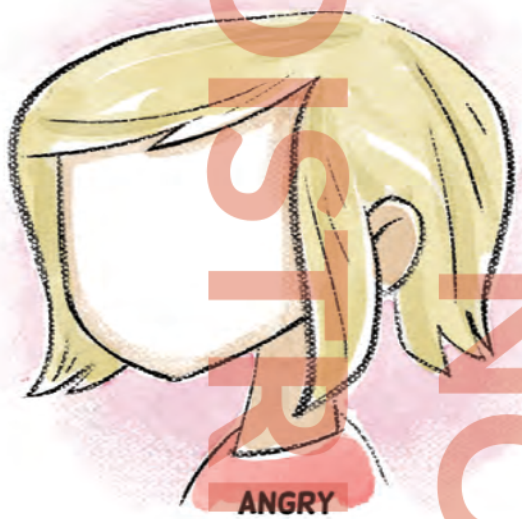
FACE OFF

INSTRUCTIONS: Add features to each face to show the different emotions given.

CONFUSED

HAPPY



ANGRY

AMAZED

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KEY PASSAGE:
John 14:6 – Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:
- Who did Jesus say He is? Jesus said He is the Messiah.

BIBLE STORY: JESUS REJECTED IN NAZARETH
- Jesus visited the synagogue of His hometown, Nazareth.
- Jesus explained that the Scriptures tell about Him.
- The people became angry when He reminded them that God's plan is for gentiles too.
- Jesus passed through the crowd unharmed though they wanted to kill Him.

FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS:
- Why do you think the people of Nazareth wanted to see miracles?
- Why do you think they rejected Jesus?

FAMILY ACTIVITY:
- Share with your kids stories about your childhood. If possible, plan a trip to your hometown and discuss how it feels to return as a grown-up.

Jesus Rejected at Nazarath
L 70 | TRUTHFULNESS

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JESUS EXPLAINED THAT THE SCRIPTURES TELL ABOUT HIM.

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LESSON 71: GENEROSITY

JESUS AND ZACCHAEUS

Luke 19:1–10

JESUS AND ZACCHAEUS

- Luke 19:1–10
- Big Picture Q&A: Who did Jesus say He is? Jesus said He is the Messiah.
- Key Passage: John 14:6 – Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

JESUS CONNECTION

Jesus came to seek and save the lost. He came after us—sinners who do not deserve Him—and He rescues us from sin. Jesus died on the cross for our sin, and He is glad when we repent and trust in Him.

LIFEWISE QUALITY

GENEROSITY – Sharing my best with others.

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LEADER BIBLE STUDY

Zacchaeus lived in the town of Jericho. He was a chief tax collector. Zacchaeus' job was to collect money from the Jews for the Roman government. Many people knew Zacchaeus, and many did not like him.

The Bible says that Zacchaeus was rich. Tax collectors often collected more money than necessary and kept the surplus for themselves. His greed and dishonesty led Zacchaeus to being looked down upon as a "sinner." But Zacchaeus treasured his wealth more than his reputation.

Zacchaeus probably never imagined that his entire life would change in a single day. When Jesus came through Jericho, Zacchaeus wanted to see Him. He couldn't see over the crowds, so he climbed a sycamore tree and watched Jesus from a distance.

Imagine the crowd's surprise when Jesus approached the tree and called out to Zacchaeus, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down because today I must stay at your house."

Of all the people in Jericho, Jesus chose to visit Zacchaeus! The other people complained. What was Jesus thinking, going to stay with a sinner like Zacchaeus?

The story reveals that Zacchaeus's encounter with Jesus changed him. He offered to give half of his possessions to the poor and to pay back four times what he had cheated from others. Zacchaeus no longer treasured his wealth. He realized that Jesus offered something so much better. Jesus confirmed this evidence of a changed heart: "Today, salvation has come to this house."

People who encounter Jesus do not walk away unchanged. Pray that the students you teach would encounter the real Jesus, the One who came into the world because we needed Him. Jesus came to seek and save the lost—people like Zacchaeus and people like us. "I didn't come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mark 2:17). When we repent and trust in Jesus, He changes us.

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BIBLE TIMELINE & REVIEW (3 MIN)

Remember, the Bible is full of many stories that all fit together to tell one big story— the story of how God sent Jesus to rescue people from sin! We have been learning about Jesus' ministry on Earth. Jesus came to Earth to tell people about God and to be the Savior of the world. Jesus met with many people. Last time, we talked about Jesus meeting with a group of people from His hometown of Nazareth. Where did Jesus teach them? (*The synagogue.*) Who did Jesus tell the people He was? (*The Messiah.*) How did everyone respond? (*Amazed, upset, and angry.*)

SESSION STARTERS (5-10 MIN)

Talk About Change (Older Students)

- Before the session, set up three paper bags on a table. Put popcorn kernels in the first bag, bread in the second bag and a bottle of water in the third bag.
- Ask for a volunteer to reach into each bag without looking and describe the item inside to the class. Allow students to guess the item. Show the items and ask students to describe what happens when heat is applied to each item. How do the items change? (*Popcorn kernels change to popcorn, bread changes to toast,and water changes to steam.*)
- Today, we are going to hear a Bible story about a man who met Jesus. When this man met Jesus, his life was changed forever.

Tax Collector Game (Older and Younger Students)

- Give each student a small paper bag containing 12 beans. The object of the game is to collect the most beans. Divide the students into pairs. One student will hide two or more beans in his hand, and his partner must guess if he is holding an odd or even number of beans. If she guesses correctly, she collects those beans. If she's wrong, she must forfeit that number of her beans to her partner. Then the second player should hide beans so the first partner can guess. When both partners have guessed, play more rounds with new partners. The winner is the player with the most beans after a set period of time.
- How did you feel when someone else won and took your beans? Today's Bible story is about a man who was disliked because he collected taxes, and he often took extra to keep for himself.

Tax Season! (Younger Students)

- Instruct the class to sit in a circle. Choose one student to be "Zacchaeus." Give the rest of the students play money which they must hold over their heads. Zacchaeus will walk around the circle lightly tapping the other students' heads. Eventually he will grab a student's play money. That student will stand up and chase Zacchaeus around the circle. If Zacchaeus gets back to the empty place in the circle and sits without being tagged, the next student becomes Zacchaeus; otherwise, Zacchaeus must go around again.
- Zacchaeus was a tax collector. He used his job as a chance to steal money from people. They did not like him and excluded him from their circle of friends. However, when Zacchaeus met Jesus, everything changed. We will hear more soon.

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Coin Capers (Younger Students)

- Before class, put a small piece of double-sided tape on the back of a number of pennies. Give each child a penny and ask them to jump and stick the penny to the wall as high up as they can. You may mark each penny with the student's initials to keep track of whose penny is whose. The student who sticks the penny to the wall in the highest place wins.
- Zacchaeus' job was to collect money for the government. He was a very short man who could not see over the crowds when Jesus traveled through his town. What could Zacchaeus do to see over the heads of other people?

KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY/BIG PICTURE Q&A (5 MIN)

John 14:6

Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Triangle Challenge (Older Students)

- Print and cut apart the key passage triangles in your preferred translation. Prepare one set for each student. Mix together all the triangles on a table. Challenge each player to find three triangles that, when put together, contain the entire key passage. As students finish, prompt them to read the key passage to you as you check their work.

Key Passage Scramble (Younger Students)

- Before class, write each word of the key passage on a separate index card. During class, ask if anyone can do the hand motions. Say the key passage together and then give each student one index card with a word from the key passage on it. Challenge students to put the verse in order. For a large class, make two sets of words and allow teams to race to organize the verse.

Big Picture Q&A

Q: Who did Jesus say He is?
A: *Jesus said He is the Messiah.*

BIBLE STORY (10 MIN)

Jesus and Zaccheaus | Luke 19:1–10

Jesus was traveling through Jericho, where a man named Zacchaeus lived. Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector, and he was very rich. Zacchaeus was in charge of collecting taxes from the Jewish people in Jericho for the Roman government. Many Jews did not like tax collectors because they were often dishonest.

When Jesus came into town, a large crowd gathered to see Him. Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus too, but he was too short to see over the crowd. So, Zacchaeus ran ahead and climbed into a sycamore tree.

When Jesus came by, He looked into the tree and saw Zacchaeus. "Come down, Zacchaeus," Jesus said. "I want to stay with you today."

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Zacchaeus was happy to welcome Jesus, and he **hurried down from the tree. But everyone who saw this complained.** "Zacchaeus is a sinner!" they said. "And Jesus is going to stay at his house!"

Later that day, Zacchaeus told Jesus, "I will give half of everything I have to the poor. And if I cheated anyone, I will pay him back four times as much."

Jesus told Zacchaeus, "Today, you have been saved. You have shown that you are one of God's people." Jesus said, "I have come to seek and to save the lost."

Jesus had come to look for people like Zacchaeus—people who did not know God—and to save them from their sin.

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JESUS CONNECTION

Jesus came to seek and save the lost. He came after us—sinners who do not deserve Him—and He rescues us from sin. Jesus died on the cross for our sin, and He is glad when we repent and trust in Him.

LIFEWISE QUALITY (3–4 MIN)

GENEROSITY – Sharing my best with others.

Living LifeWise

When we realize how generous God is to us, we will want to be generous too.

Character Connection

Zacchaeus was not generous. He was greedy and stingy and, as a result, had no friends. But when he met Jesus, he experienced God's generosity. Jesus accepted Zacchaeus and treated him like a friend, even though Zacchaeus didn't really deserve it. And God's generosity changed Zacchaeus completely; he wanted to be generous to others.

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God is generous with us, too. Can you name ways that God treats us generously? [*Take answers.*] The most generous thing God has done is to send Jesus, His only Son, to die for our sins. There's nothing more generous than that! God's generosity to us prompts us to show generosity to others, even to those we don't always get along with, like Jesus did to Zacchaeus. And it pleases God when we ask Him to help us be generous because then others can see His generosity, too.

God has already given us many things (time, resources, skills or abilities). How can we be generous in these situations?

- You finished the math homework easily, but your friend is struggling.
- Just as the class lines up for the bus, a classmate trips and knocks a bunch of papers to the floor.
- You are supposed to be the one to pick teams at recess today, but another student asks to do it.

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BIBLE STORY REVIEW (5 MIN)

- What city did Zacchaeus live in?

  Jericho, Luke 19:1–2

- What was Zacchaeus' job?

  Chief tax collector, Luke 19:2

- What did Zacchaeus climb to see Jesus?

  A sycamore tree, Luke 19:4

- Where did Jesus tell Zacchaeus He wanted to stay?

  Zacchaeus' house, Luke 19:5

- How much of his possessions did Zacchaeus offer to give to the poor?

  Half, Luke 19:8

- How much did Zacchaeus promise to pay back to those he had cheated?

  Four times what he had stolen, Luke 19:8

- What word means "to turn away from sin and turn toward God"?

  Repent

- Whom did Jesus come to seek and to save?

  The lost, Luke 19:10

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REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES (5-10 MIN)

The Greatest Treasure (Older Students)

- Lead students to sit in a circle. Invite them to imagine they are stranded on a desert island and could have only one object from home. What would they choose and why? Ask each student to briefly share about an object, why he chose it and what he would do with it. After everyone has shared, prompt students to decide which objects are most important to have in order to survive? Which objects bring comfort?

- Before Zacchaeus met Jesus, what was most important to him? (*Money.*) Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector, and he was rich. He probably got his wealth by cheating the Jewish people. He cared more about money than what others thought of him. How did Zacchaeus change after he met Jesus? (*He wanted to give away his wealth and pay back anyone he cheated.*) Meeting Jesus changed Zacchaeus forever. Jesus became Zacchaeus' greatest treasure!

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Magazine Scavenger Hunt (Older Students)

- Give each student a magazine, a pair of scissors, a piece of paper and a marker. Challenge students to flip through the magazine and cut out pictures of items that begin with each letter of their name, one item per letter. Encourage students to list the items on their paper to keep track of what letters they need to find. After several minutes, instruct students to stop and count how many items they found. Applaud their search efforts and recognize creative or unusual findings. Invite students to share which letters were hardest to find and which were easiest.

- You all searched hard for pictures that matched your name. In today's Bible story, Jesus said that He came to seek and save whom? (The lost.) A person is "lost" when he or she doesn't know the way to eternal life in Heaven. Jesus came for sinners—for people like Zacchaeus and us! He came

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after sinners who do not deserve Him, and He rescues us from sin. Jesus died on the cross for our sin, and He is glad when we repent and trust in Him. Jesus is the way to eternal life in Heaven. Meeting Jesus changed Zacchaeus forever, and when we trust in Jesus, we are forever changed too.

Bible Trivia (Older and Younger Students)

- Form teams of four students. Teams should stand in single-file lines. When you ask a review question, the first player for each team should run to the board and write the answer. The first one to write the correct answer earns a point. Have players erase their answers and move to the end of their line. For classes that struggle to write, modify the review questions to be multiple choice or True and False.

Seeking Zacchaeus (Younger Students)

- Copy a colored picture of Zacchaeus from a children's Bible. Cut out and laminate the figure, if possible. Before class, hide Zacchaeus somewhere in the room. During class, tell the students that Zacchaeus is lost in the classroom, and challenge them to find him. Once he is found, allow a volunteer to hide him while the other students close their eyes. Play as many rounds as time allows.
- You searched hard for Zacchaeus. In today's Bible story, Jesus said that He came to seek and save whom? (*The lost.*) A person is "lost" when he or she doesn't know the way to eternal life in Heaven. Jesus came for sinners—for people like Zacchaeus and us! He came after sinners who do not deserve Him, and He rescues us from sin. Jesus died on the cross for our sin, and He is glad when we repent and trust in Him. Jesus is the way to eternal life in Heaven. Meeting Jesus changed Zacchaeus forever, and when we trust in Jesus, we are forever changed too.

Pin Zacchaeus On the Tree (Younger Students)

- Draw a tree on the board or on a piece of butcher paper. Challenge the students to pin Zacchaeus as high up in the tree as possible to see Jesus. Tie a blindfold on one child at a time. Give them a laminated picture of Zacchaeus with a magnet or sticky tack attached. Spin them around three times. Let them stick Zacchaeus on the board. Write their first and last initials on the tree so they can see how close they got to the highest point. Allow the class to work on the activity and coloring page simultaneously, as this activity takes some time for a larger class to finish.
- Zacchaeus knew there was something special about Jesus. He wasn't tall enough to see through the crowd, so he climbed up in the sycamore tree in an effort to find Jesus and found that Jesus changed his life forever instead.

Activity Pages & Recap Cards (5–10 min) (For in-class or take-home use)

- Changes (Older Students)
- Count the Coins (Younger Students)

Prayer & Requests (3–5 min)

God, thank You for sending Your Son to seek and save the lost. Apart from Jesus, we are just like Zacchaeus. We confess that we have treasured the things of this world above You. Forgive us and change our hearts to treasure Jesus most. He alone is worthy of our praise and admiration. Amen.

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Journal Page

Write about or draw a picture of what you treasure the most. What is most important in your life?

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FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS

- Why did the people grumble when Jesus stayed with Zacchaeus?
- How are we like Zacchaeus?
- How has Jesus changed our lives forever?

JESUS AND ZACCHAEUS

LUKE 19:1-10

MAIN POINT: MEETING JESUS CHANGED ZACCHAEUS FOREVER.

Jesus was traveling through Jericho, where a man named Zacchaeus lived. Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector, and he was very rich.

When Jesus came into town, a large crowd gathered to see Him. Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus too, but he was too short to see over the crowd. So Zacchaeus ran ahead and climbed into a sycamore tree.

When Jesus came by, He looked into the tree and saw Zacchaeus.

"Come down, Zacchaeus," Jesus said. "I want to stay with you today."

Zacchaeus hurried down from the tree. But everyone who saw this complained.

Later that day, Zacchaeus told Jesus, "I will give half of everything I have to the poor."

Jesus told Zacchaeus, "Today you have been saved. You have shown that you are one of God's people."

Jesus said, "I have come to seek and to save the lost."

Jesus Connection: *Jesus came to seek and save the lost. He came after us—sinners who do not deserve Him—and He rescues us from sin. Jesus died on the cross for our sin, and He is glad when we repent and trust in Him.*

Key Passage: *John 14:6 – Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*

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CHANGES

Circle the 10 differences between the two pictures.

TO SEEK AND SAVE

Fill in the missing vowels—A, E, I, O and U—to finish the Jesus connection.

J_ s_ s c_m_ t_ s_ _k

_nd s_v_ th_ l_st.

H_ c_m_ _ft_r

_s–s_nn_rs wh_ d_

n_t d_s_rv_ H_m–

_nd H_r_sc_ _s _s

fr_m s_n. J_s_s d_ _d

_n th_ cr_ss f_r _ _r

s_n, _nd H_ _s gl_d

wh_n w_ r_p_nt _nd

tr_st _n H_m.

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COUNT THE COINS

INSTRUCTIONS: Zacchaeus tricked people to take their money. Add up the value of the coins he took in the picture.

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KEY PASSAGE:
John 14:6 – Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:
- Who did Jesus say He is? Jesus said He is the Messiah.

BIBLE STORY: JESUS AND ZACCHAEUS
- Zacchaeus was a tax collector who stole money from the people.
- Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus as He passed through the city.
- Meeting Jesus changed Zacchaeus forever.
- Jesus came to save sinners like Zacchaeus.

FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS:
- Why did the people grumble when Jesus stayed with Zacchaeus?
- How are we like Zacchaeus?
- How has Jesus changed our lives forever?

FAMILY ACTIVITY:
- Start a coin collection with your family. Collect all the loose change in your home. See if any coins found are rare by searching the Internet for the kind of coin and the year it was minted. Talk to your kids about the value of trusting Jesus.

Jesus and Zacchaeus

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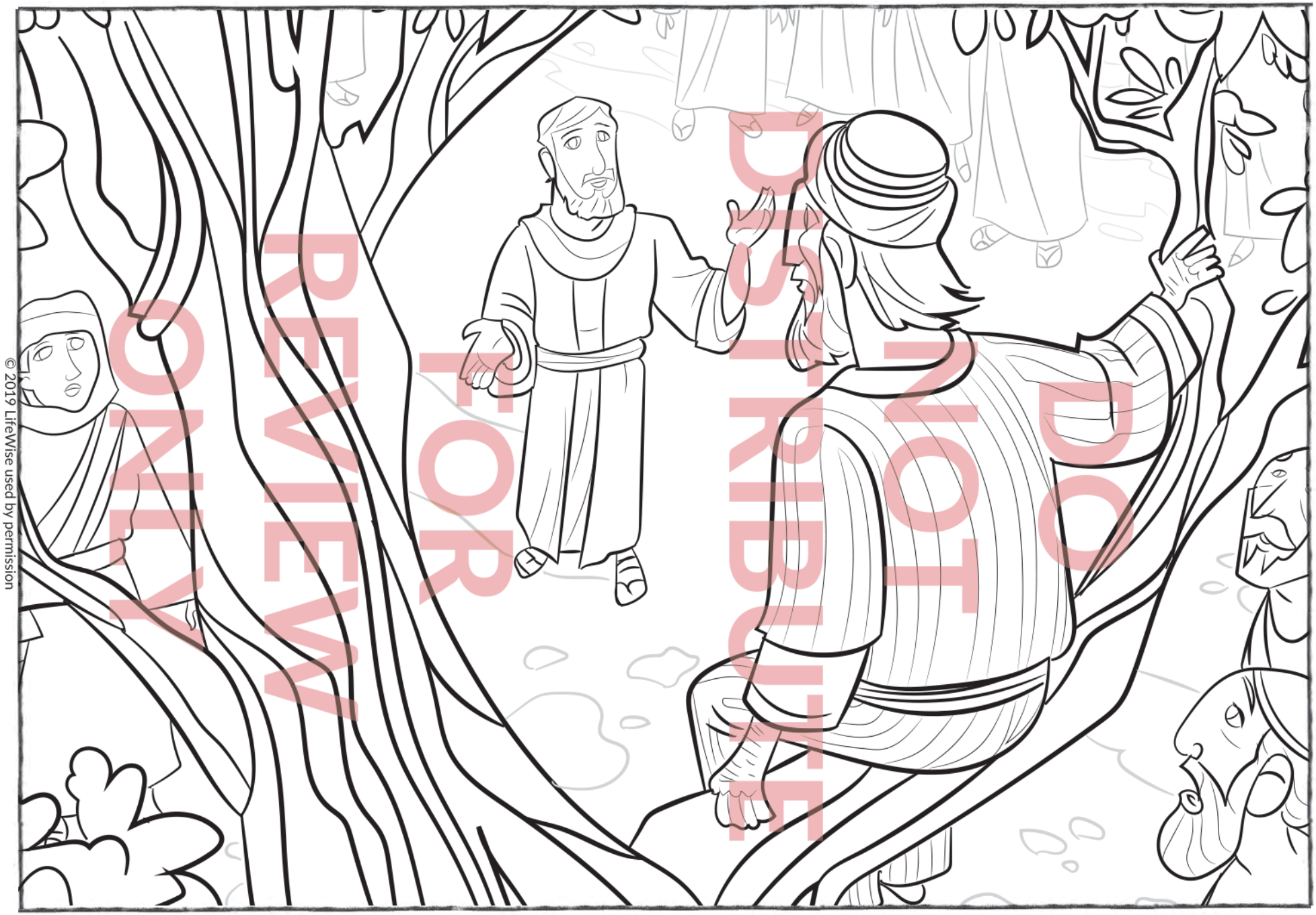

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MEETING JESUS CHANGED ZACCHAEUS FOREVER.

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Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

John 14:6 (CSB)

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Key Passage Triangles

Instructions: Print and use as directed in the leader guide.