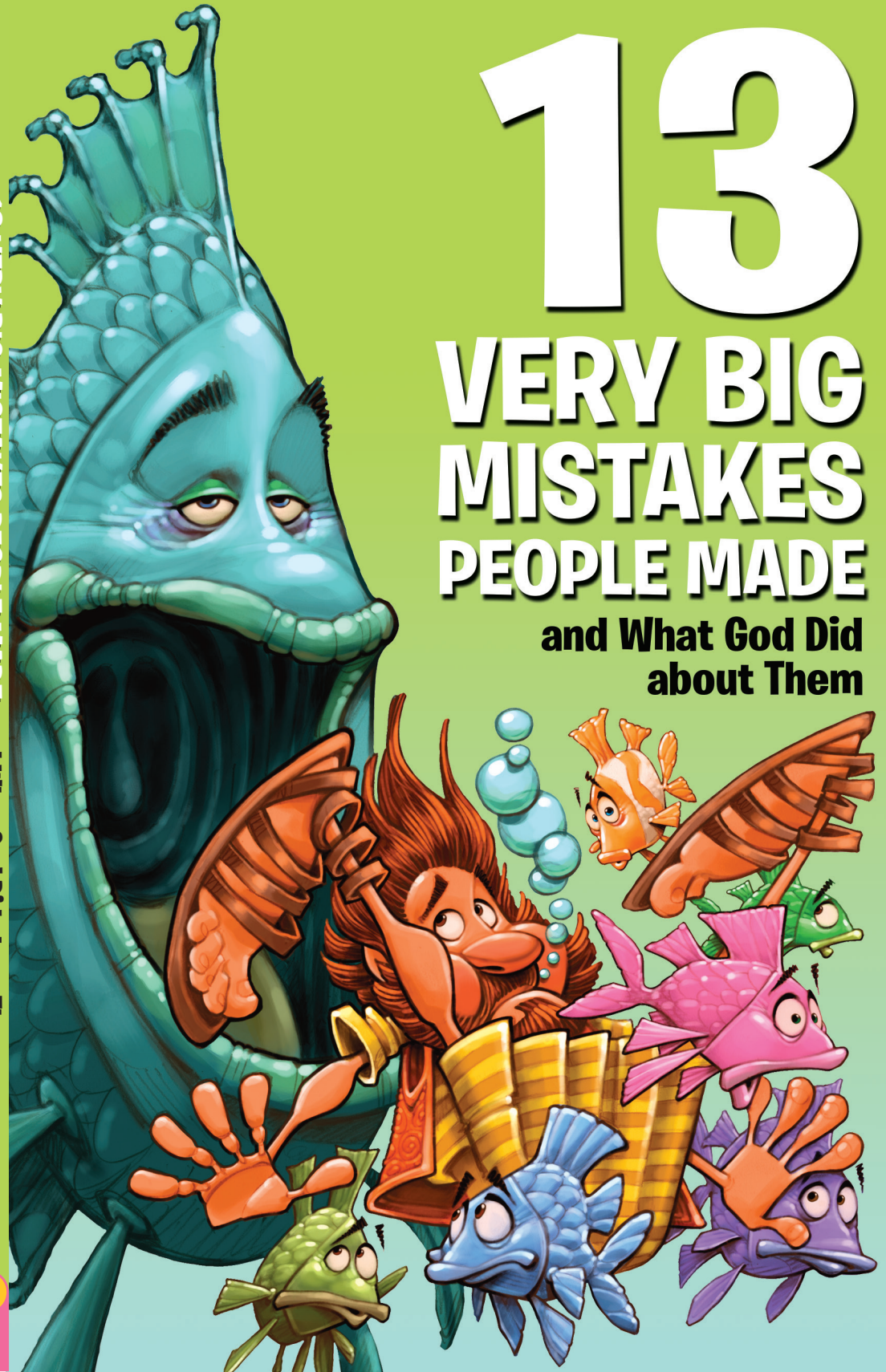


# 13

## VERY BIG MISTAKES PEOPLE MADE

and What God Did  
about Them

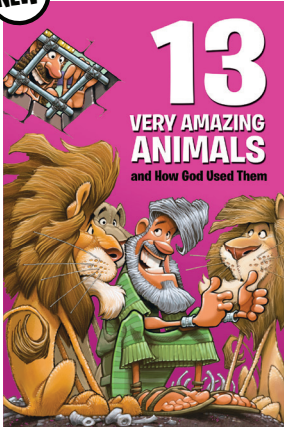


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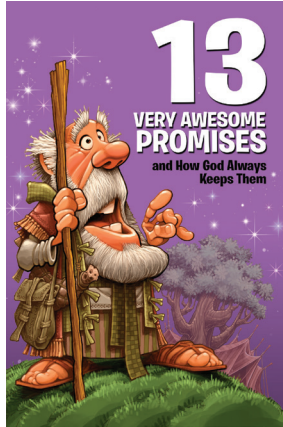
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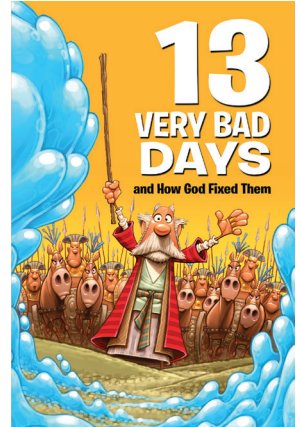
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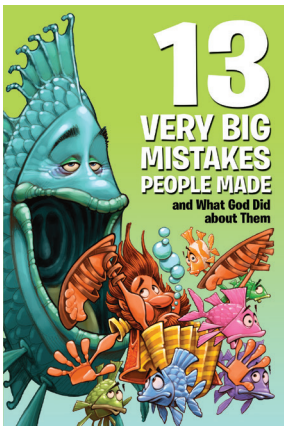
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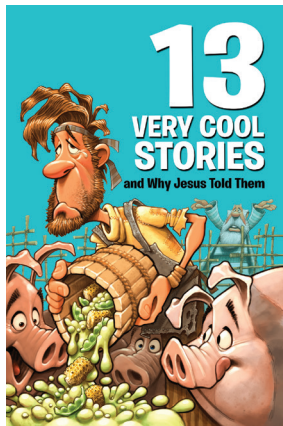
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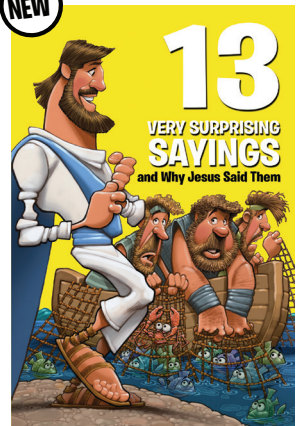
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# 13

## VERY BIG MISTAKES PEOPLE MADE

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about Them

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13 VERY BIG MISTAKES PEOPLE MADE AND WHAT GOD DID ABOUT THEM

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**“If we confess our sins to him,  
he is faithful and just to forgive  
us our sins and to cleanse  
us from all wickedness.”**

**1 John 1:9**



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# How to Use These Sessions

First, thanks. Thanks for caring about children and for helping them dig up 13 mistakes—big mistakes!—that people in the pages of the Bible made. You'll explore the mistakes, figure out what went wrong, and show kids how to avoid those mistakes themselves. Your kids might be surprised at all the ways people got themselves in trouble, and even more surprised at how God used those people for his purposes anyway.

## **Welcome to Easy**

These sessions for elementary kids are carefully designed to make your life easy. They're light on supplies, quick to prepare, and long on fun. You'll find most supplies in the church's supply closet or kitchen or at home in your garage, pantry, or junk drawer—no need to spend time ordering materials online.

Because these sessions are created so beginning teachers or mature teenagers can lead them confidently, you won't need highly trained teachers. And the variety of options in each session will snag the attention—and hold it—of first-grade through six-grade children, including the boys!

Best of all, you'll see kids grow in their faith as they open their hearts to what God shares with them through these 13 sessions.

## **Welcome to Simple Learning**

Preparation is easy too. Each week you'll focus on one key Bible truth, which children will explore and apply. You'll drive that point home through Bible exploration, fun discussion, giggle-worthy games, and “Oh, wow!” activities that engage kids in multiple ways through multiple learning styles.

## 8 13 Very Big Mistakes People Made and What God Did about Them

### Welcome to Deep Bible Discovery

Each week, your children will actually *experience* a Bible story. They'll discover it, ponder it, talk about it, pray about it, and apply what they learn. If that's what you're looking for—for your children to *do* God's Word instead of just hear it—you're in exactly the right place. And here's a tip: supersize the learning by using a kid-friendly version of the Bible to make sure the stories are understood by children.

### Welcome to Flexibility

We get it: sometimes you have to punt. A sermon goes long ... or short. Kids are quick to dive into a lesson or need some time to warm up to being together. Older kids might zip through an activity while their younger friends take longer.

Relax. We've got you covered.

You can use these sessions with kids in practically any setting: in Sunday school, children's church, evening programs, or while kids' parents are attending an adult class or small group. There's maximum flexibility because each session is written to last 45 minutes and then provides enough extras to fill a full hour. These sessions stretch to fit exactly what you need, when you need it. They're ...

- **multi-aged**—suitable for mixed ages of elementary children;
- **easily adapted**—sessions work for just a couple kids or a packed classroom;
- **relational**—children grow close to Jesus *and* one another
- **flexible**—brimming with options to fit varying time frames; and
- **fun**—even easily distracted kids can engage, learn, and grow!

So are you ready for some fun? Let's dive in!

# Adam and Eve's Big Mistake

**The Point:** We honor God when we obey him.

**Scripture Connect:** Genesis 2:15–18, 22; 3:1–19

**Supplies for all Session 1 activities options:** pencils, prepared poster, paper, plastic or paper cups (1 per child), water, towels, Bible, clean socks (1 per child), markers (that won't bleed through) or colored pencils, 10-foot clothesline (or heavy twine)

## The Basics for Leaders

It's easy to criticize Adam and Eve. They had just one rule to obey. Just one—to not eat the fruit from a specific tree—and yet they disobeyed. Big mistake.

But are we all that different?

Jesus said that, to please God, we should love him with all our hearts, souls, and minds and love our neighbors as ourselves (Matt. 22:35–40).

Two rules. Just two.

And how have we done with obeying those two rules?

As you prepare for this session with your kids, if you feel a tug of conviction about your own disobedience to God, pause. Let that conviction do what it needs to do: call you to change, repentance, and freedom.

In what ways can you honor him today?

## OPENING ACTIVITY—OPTION 1

### HOWZITGOIN'

*Time:* about 5 minutes, depending on attendance

*Supplies:* pencils, prepared poster

## 10 13 Very Big Mistakes People Made and What God Did about Them

Before kids arrive, draw a line on a poster. Write a 1 on the left end of the line, a 10 on the right, and a 5 in the middle. As kids arrive, ask them to pencil in their initials on the line.

**Say: If this past week was so awful you wish you'd slept through it, place your initials by the 1. If it was a great week you wish you could repeat, put your initials by the 10. Place your initials anywhere on the line that shows how you feel about this past week—except exactly on the 5. Because there's no such thing as a week that's exactly half good and half bad!**

After kids have signed in, give them 30 seconds each to explain why they placed their initials where they did. Be sure to include your own initials and explain your placement on the line. Kids will begin to express themselves more over time, and hearing their stories will help you adapt this lesson to make it relevant to your kids' lives.

### OPENING ACTIVITY—OPTION 2

#### TV FAMILIES

*Time: about 10 minutes*

*Supplies: none*

**Say: Think of a family you've seen on TV—any TV family will do—but don't tell which family you're thinking of! (pause) Okay, now let's take turns, and we'll each pretend to be someone in the TV family we were thinking of. You can use words or actions, but you can't say the name of the family member or the family. I'll go first.**

Act out the character you've chosen. Encourage kids to guess who you're impersonating. Then let kids take turns acting out the characters they've chosen.

Note: While you should choose a G-rated TV show, you might find that some of your kids watch shows you consider off-limits. Avoid giving a lecture. Keep conversation going. As you dig deeper into the discussion, your kids may discover for themselves that they could choose better shows.

Have children circle up and discuss:

- **How does the family you acted out compare to your real family? What's alike and what's different?**
- **Compared to the kids in the TV family you chose, do you obey your parents more or less than those kids? Why?**

- Why do you think it's important to obey parents ... or is it not important?
- What helps you obey? What makes it difficult?

Say: Today we're talking about honoring and respecting God in one special way: obeying him. We honor God when we obey him.

## Big Mistakes Game

### WATER POUR

*Time: 10 minutes or more, as desired*

*Supplies: plastic or paper cups (1 per child), water, towels, Bible*

Note: Cups don't all have to be the same size, but each pair of kids must have the same size cups. This game is best played on a non-carpeted floor.

Ask children to pair up. Give each pair two cups: one empty and one two-thirds full of water. Ask pairs to position themselves around the room so there's space between pairs.

Say: **Those of you holding cups of water, keep standing. Your partner will now lie down with his or her head near your feet.** Pause while kids do as you ask. Note: Make adjustments if girls are wearing skirts.

**Those of you lying down, put a towel under your head. Now place your empty cup on your forehead and hold it steady. Those of you standing, when I give the signal, you'll hold your cup at the height of your waist and pour the water from your cup into your partner's cup—without splashing any water on your partner. Be kind—you will be trading places in a minute!**

After children take turns pouring the water, collect cups and help everyone dry off. Have kids circle up and discuss:

- Which was harder: pouring the water or being the target? Why?
- When I told you what I wanted you to do, did you want to obey? Why or why not?
- Even if you were trying hard to obey, it was easy to fail. How is that like or unlike trying to obey God?

Say: Adam and Eve disobeyed God and that was a big mistake. When we obey God, we honor him. That means we show him respect

## 12 13 Very Big Mistakes People Made and What God Did about Them

because he's so important. The good news is that even when we fail to obey God—that's called sin, by the way—God doesn't just throw us away.

Read 1 John 1:9–10.

Even though God is willing to forgive us, there are still consequences that come from not obeying God. Consequences are more bad things that might happen because of the one bad thing we did. There were consequences for Adam and Eve too. Let's find out more about that!

### Big Mistakes Bible Story

#### FAULT FINDERS

*Time: about 15 minutes*

*Supplies: clean socks (1 per child), Bible*

Ask kids to join you in sitting in a circle on the floor. Read aloud Genesis 2:15–18, 22; 3:1–19. Then give each child a sock to roll up.

Say: **Let's play a game I call Fault Finder. A fault is a mistake or a failure. I'll read again the Bible's account of Adam and Eve disobeying God. When you hear anything that sounds like someone isn't obeying God (is at fault), throw your sock into the center of the circle as quickly as you can. Speed counts!**

Read Genesis 2:15–18, 22; 3:1–19 again. This time you'll pause often to keep kids on high alert as they decide whether to toss socks. And after each sock tossing, pause to congratulate the fastest Fault Finder. As kids are retrieving their socks each time, ask them about the fault—to explain why they thought an action was disobedience. Also ask who wasn't being obeyed and what consequences might happen.

After you've finished reading, collect all the socks and, as a group, discuss:

- **Why do you think Eve disobeyed God's instructions?**
- **Why do you think Adam disobeyed God's instructions?**
- **When do you find it hard to obey God—or even to obey someone else? Why do you think obeying is hard?**

Thank kids for sharing. Then say: **In a minute I'll ask you to tell about a time you disobeyed God by disobeying your parents. I'll go first.**

Tell about a time you disobeyed God when you disobeyed your parents. Explain why you disobeyed. Keep the story lighthearted but true—you'll build rapport with your kids and also give them permission to tell their stories.

**Say: Okay, your turn. Tell about a time you disobeyed God when you disobeyed your parents. Tell what you did and why you disobeyed.**

Allow time for several children to tell their stories. Then say: **Thanks for sharing! It's not always easy to obey, is it? But when we obey our parents, we honor them. And we honor God when we obey him too.**

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

### **STAND-UP PRAYER**

*Time: about 5 minutes*

*Supplies: none*

**Say: If the president walked into the room, we'd stand up. That's a sign of respect given to people we want to honor, so let's stand in respect to God as we pray.** Have everyone stand. Continue: **I'll start our prayer time and wrap up at the end. In between I'll leave time for us all to tell God we're sorry about the times we haven't obeyed him. You don't have to say anything out loud—God is with you and knows what you're thinking.**

**Pray: Dear God, you are so good to us. Please forgive me for the times I've known what you wanted me to do—and I didn't do it. And forgive me for those times I knew what you didn't want me to do—and I did it anyway. Please hear us as we silently tell you about times we didn't obey you.**

Pause for 45 to 60 seconds. Continue: **Thank you for hearing us, God. Please forgive us when we make a big mistake and disobey you. We want to honor you by obeying you. In Jesus's name, amen.**

## **EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY-OPTION 1**

### **WRAPPING PAPER**

*Time: about 10 minutes*

*Supplies: paper, markers (that won't bleed through) or colored pencils*

Give each child a sheet of paper and a marker or colored pencil. Explain that children will have just a few minutes to create wrapping paper in which they'll place a present for God.



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Ask kids to create a design on their papers they think will honor God. Allow several minutes for children to work. As they work, ask them to discuss:

- **What sort of design do you think will show honor for God?**
- **If you could wrap up anything you wanted to give God as a gift, what would you give? Why?**

When kids have finished, have them turn over their sheets and write their own names on the other side. Ask them to fold their papers over so their names are on the inside and their designs are on the outside.

Say: **That's the present God wants most: you. Your heart. Your love. All of you. And part of giving yourself to God is obeying him.**

Have kids discuss:

- **What's one way you'll obey and honor God this week?**

Make a mental note of what each child says, and ask how it went when you see your kids next time!

### EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY-OPTION 2

#### SLIPPERY SNAKE

*Time: about 10 minutes*

*Supplies: 10-foot clothesline (or heavy twine)*

Note: You don't have to cut the clothesline! Free up the 10-foot portion you need and leave the rest wrapped up.

Place the clothesline on the floor. Position one child to hold each end so they can each move their ends back and forth to make the clothesline look like a wiggling snake. Gather the rest of the kids on one side of the snake. Their goal: to get over the moving snake to the other side of the room.

Say: **It would have been good for Eve to stay away from the serpent in the garden. Let's see how well you can avoid this serpent. Don't let it touch you!**

Play several times and then have kids discuss:

- **The serpent in the garden tempted Eve. That means it gave her reasons to disobey God. What tempts you to disobey God?**
- **What can you do to stay away from temptation?**

## EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY-OPTION 3

### INQUIRING MINDS WANT TO KNOW

*Time: about 5 minutes*

*Supplies: none*

Gather kids in a circle. Ask: **If God wants us to honor him, why doesn't he just make us obey?**

Allow kids time to process and discuss this—don't jump in with an answer. Something to suggest, if your kids don't, is that if God forced us to know or obey him, that wouldn't be a friendship. We would be like slaves or robots. God loves us enough to let us choose to obey him!

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# Cain's

# Big Mistake

**The Point:** Being jealous hurts everybody.

**Scripture Connect:** Genesis 4:3–16

**Supplies for all Session 2 activities options:** pencils, prepared poster, paper, calculator (optional), lemon juice, several small bowls, cotton swabs, iron and ironing board, Bible, microwave, microwave popcorn, paper plates (or napkins), spoons (1 per child), cotton balls

## The Basics for Leaders

The story of Cain and Abel is the world's first recorded murder.

And if you think Cain's killing of Abel was a mistake—you're right. It was a big mistake, but it wasn't Cain's first mistake.

Cain's first mistake was letting jealousy take hold in his life. Jealousy that grew into hatred ... and in time caused Cain to kill his brother.

When you're a kid, it's easy to feel jealous. Others always seem to have more money, stuff, or freedom. They get to do things you can't do, go places you aren't allowed to go. Life doesn't feel fair.

So ask yourself: Who are you jealous of? What are you jealous about? When does life seem unfair to you? And how might God be working to remove jealousy from your life? Consider God's answers as you experience this lesson with your kids.

## 18 13 Very Big Mistakes People Made and What God Did about Them

### OPENING ACTIVITY-OPTION 1

#### HOWZITGOIN'

*Time: about 5 minutes, depending on attendance*

*Supplies: pencils, prepared poster*

Before kids arrive, draw a line on a poster. Write a 1 on the left end of the line, a 10 on the right, and a 5 in the middle. As kids arrive, ask them to pencil in their initials on the line.

**Say: If this past week was so awful you wish you'd slept through it, place your initials by the 1. If it was a great week you wish you could repeat, put your initials by the 10. Place your initials anywhere on the line that shows how you feel about this past week—except exactly on the 5. Because there's no such thing as a week that's exactly half good and half bad!**

After kids have signed in, give them 30 seconds each to explain why they placed their initials where they did. Be sure to include your own initials and explain your placement on the line. Kids will begin to express themselves more over time, and hearing their stories will help you adapt this lesson to make it relevant to your kids' lives.

### OPENING ACTIVITY-OPTION 2

#### BUCK AND A QUARTER NAMES

*Time: about 10 minutes*

*Supplies: paper, pencils, calculator (optional)*

Hand out pencils and paper. **Say: Let's find out what your name is worth. To get started, please write the alphabet on your sheet of paper—A to Z. Write it across the sheet or down the side—it's up to you. Just leave a little space around the letters.**

Pause while kids write the alphabet. Then say: **There are 26 letters. Please write a 1 by the A, a 2 by the B, and keep going until 26 is next to the Z.**

Pause while kids do as you've asked. **Say: Now on the other side of your sheet, write your name—your entire name, middle name included. Then figure out what your name is worth by figuring out what each letter is worth and adding up all the letters. It's math time! And keep your score secret. I'll tell you when it's time to share your score.**

Ask kids to stand, sitting down when you call out a range of scores that includes theirs. Begin with 10 to 20, then 20 to 30, and so on. Identify who has the name with the highest score. Discuss:

- **Suppose you got one dollar for each point your name was worth. How would you feel about Wyatt Zwzzzysnik getting more than you got?**
- **Everyone feels jealous sometimes. When do you feel jealous?**
- **When you're feeling jealous, what do you do about those feelings?**

**AGE-ALERT TIPS**

You might need to help **young children** with the math, or have **older and younger children** work in pairs. You may want to have a calculator on hand.

**Say: Being jealous hurts everybody. It hurts friendships. And if you're not careful, jealousy turns into anger or something even worse. Today we'll find out what jealousy did to two brothers. But first ...**

**Big Mistakes Game****HIDDEN THOUGHTS**

*Time: 10 minutes or more, as desired*

*Supplies: lemon juice, several small bowls, cotton swabs, paper, iron and ironing board*

Note: Only do this activity if there are two leaders present; one can take care of the ironing, and the other can make sure no one gets too close to the iron.

Put some lemon juice into several small bowls. Give each child a cotton swab.

**Say: If you're like me, you're glad others don't know what you're thinking. You may not say mean things, but sometimes you think them and you're happy nobody has a super-power of reading minds.**

**AGE-ALERT TIPS**

Assign **older children** to help the **younger kids**.

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When we're jealous, we may think that it doesn't matter. After all, it's not like, say, we were jealous of someone's new bike and actually took it. Our jealous thoughts don't really matter, right? Except ... they do matter. And even if we think we're hiding them, they show. I'll prove it to you.

Explain that kids should dip their cotton swabs in lemon juice and write on their papers something that makes them jealous. Tell them that even though they're using invisible ink, what they write will show later—so they should write something they don't mind others seeing!

While kids are writing, you can set up the ironing board and iron.

Explain that by applying heat to the papers, what's written will become visible. Keeping kids some distance from the ironing board, press a very hot iron on each paper—making the ink visible. Give each child's note back to the child. As soon as you've finished using the iron, unplug it and move it and the ironing board away.

Ask kids to sit. If a few are willing to share what they wrote, let them do so. Then discuss:

- **How is what happened to our “hidden” thoughts like what happens when we get “hot” and our tempers flare?**
- **Tell about a time you were jealous. What happened?**

Say: **The Bible says our thoughts lead to actions.** (You could read Luke 6:45 here.) **That's true of our feelings too. If we're jealous, we become mean and angry and that leads to some bad actions. In our Bible story today, when one brother became jealous of the other, the bad action it led to was ... well, let's listen to learn what happened.**

### **Big Mistakes Bible Story**

#### **OH, BROTHER**

*Time: about 15 minutes*

*Supplies: Bible*

Read aloud Genesis 4:3–16.

Then ask kids to pair up and sit on the floor, facing each other. In each pair, have the child whose name is first alphabetically be Abel; the other child, Cain. Odd number of children? Have the extra child play the part of God.



**Say:** This time please act out what I'm reading. But you can't talk, can't stand up, and please don't actually kill anyone! That would be a big mistake!

Read aloud Genesis 4:3–16 again, pausing often to allow pairs to act out the actions. When you've finished, applaud your kids' acting efforts. Then help kids work through the following discussion:

- **If you played Abel, tell your partner how you feel about this story.**
- **If you played Cain, tell your partner why you did what you did.**

Now draw the whole group's attention back to you for these next questions. Note: When you ask kids to respond to a question, allow time for a response. Kids are used to being talked at—and maybe not *with*—so it may take time for children to believe you really do want to hear their answers!

- **Tell about a time you lost your temper. What happened?**
- **Tell about a time you were angry but controlled your temper.**
- **We can control our jealousy ... but how? What helps you stay calm when you're jealous?**

After several kids respond, say: **Thanks for your thoughts. Being jealous hurts everybody. It can lead us to sin, like it led Cain to kill Abel! But here's some good news: when you feel yourself growing jealous, God will help you if you turn to him for help. Let's do that now.**

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

### **THANKS CIRCLE**

*Time: about 5 minutes*

*Supplies: none*

Ask kids to join you in standing in a circle. Say: **One way to control jealousy is to be thankful for what God has given us. I'll suggest some things for which we can be thankful. When I do, please share a one-word prayer out loud. For instance, if I say we're thankful for friends, you can say the name of a friend.**

Begin the prayer: **God, thank you for all you give us. We sometimes only think about what else we want and we forget to be thankful for**

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what we already have. Please hear us as we're thankful now. We thank you for our friends. I thank you for ... (Mention a friend, and then pause so kids can join in.)

We thank you for things you give us. I thank you for ... (Mention something you own that you enjoy, and then pause so kids can join in.)

We thank you for the chance to do things we like. I thank you for ... (Mention something you enjoy doing, and then pause so kids can join in.)

We thank you for our health. I thank you for ... (Mention something you can do because you're healthy enough to do it, and then pause so kids can join in.)

We thank you for the food you give us. I thank you especially for ... (Mention a food you enjoy, and then pause so kids can join in.)

And we thank you for your love, God. Please protect us from jealousy. We know that being jealous hurts everyone. In Jesus's name, amen.

### EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY-OPTION 1

#### JEALOUSY POPPING

*Time: about 10 minutes*

*Supplies: microwave, microwave popcorn, paper plates (or napkins)*

Time for a field trip to the kitchen! Gather kids near the microwave. Say: **When we get "hot" (angry) because of jealousy, our jealousy pops! As this popcorn gets hot, can you tell when the popcorn will pop?**

As you put the popcorn into the microwave, ask children to close their eyes and to hold up a hand when they think the first kernel is about to pop. The goal: be the last person to raise a hand before the first *pop* sounds.

After the popcorn is finished, take it back to where you usually sit. Pass out popcorn on paper plates and, as kids eat, discuss:

- **What are the clues that someone is about to "pop" when angry?**
- **Which of those clues do you feel when you're about to "pop"?**

Say: **Being jealous hurts everyone—it can cause us to explode!**

**EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY-OPTION 2****WHAT? ME JEALOUS?**

*Time: about 10 minutes*

*Supplies: spoons (1 per child), cotton balls*

Pair up the kids and position pairs by one wall. Give one child in each pair a spoon, and tell spoon-holders they must keep their eyes tightly closed at all times. Scatter cotton balls on the floor.

The goal: for “sighted” partners to guide their “sightless” partners to pick up as many cotton balls as possible—one at a time—using only the spoons. The sighted partners will give verbal directions but can’t touch the cotton balls.

Allow several minutes and keep reminding spoon-holders they can’t open their eyes—it’s an almost irresistible temptation to do so!

Crown a winning pair by placing a cotton ball on each of their heads.

As a group, discuss:

- **What made this game hard or easy?**
- **How would it have worked if everyone had been given a spoon but no one was giving directions?**

**Say:** In each pair you worked as a team. The Christian life is like that—we’re different, and we all have a different part to play. We’re a team, helping one another do what needs to be done. There’s no room for being jealous of what others are doing. Being jealous hurts everyone. We’re all here to work together and give glory to God!

**EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY-OPTION 3****INQUIRING MINDS WANT TO KNOW**

*Time: about 5 minutes*

*Supplies: none*

Gather kids in a circle. Ask: **What would life be like if no one ever got jealous in our church? Our schools? Our stores? Our city?**



# Pharaoh's Big Mistake

**The Point:** God is more powerful than anyone.

**Scripture Connect:** Exodus 5:1–4; 7:14–24

**Supplies for all Session 3 activities options:** pencils, prepared poster, stopwatch, Bible, clean socks (1 per child), paper, plastic lids from food storage containers (1 per child), scarves (or strips of cloth)

## The Basics for Leaders

Some say Pharaoh said no to Moses because that's what God made him do. That God "[made] Pharaoh's heart stubborn" (Exod. 7:3), which gave the king of Egypt a bad attitude that sealed the fate of Egypt.

However God's will and timing were operating in those events, what happened to Pharaoh sends a clear message: it's a big mistake to say no to God. You end up with blood in your bathtub and frogs in your soup!

Or do you? We say no to God all the time, and the sky doesn't fall in on us. So are we getting away with saying no to God? First, the fact God is patient isn't the same as him giving us permission to be disobedient—to say no. Second, realize when we say no to God, *we're* the ones who suffer. We miss the chance to honor God and find purpose in the amazing adventure of serving God.

As you lead this session, be reminded of God's power. Consider the answer you usually give God when he calls on you. Is it a no or an enthusiastic yes?

## 26 13 Very Big Mistakes People Made and What God Did about Them

### OPENING ACTIVITY-OPTION 1

#### HOWZITGOIN'

*Time: about 5 minutes, depending on attendance*

*Supplies: pencils, prepared poster*

Before kids arrive, draw a line on a poster. Write a 1 on the left end of the line, a 10 on the right, and a 5 in the middle. As kids arrive, ask them to pencil in their initials on the line.

**Say: If this past week was so awful you wish you'd slept through it, place your initials by the 1. If it was a great week you wish you could repeat, put your initials by the 10. Place your initials anywhere on the line that shows how you feel about this past week—except exactly on the 5. Because there's no such thing as a week that's exactly half good and half bad!**

After kids have signed in, give them 30 seconds each to explain why they placed their initials where they did. Be sure to include your own initials and explain your placement on the line. Kids will begin to express themselves more over time, and hearing their stories will help you adapt this lesson to make it relevant to your kids' lives.

### OPENING ACTIVITY-OPTION 2

#### 30-SECOND MISSIONS

*Time: about 10 minutes*

*Supplies: stopwatch*

Ask kids to pair up. Allow 10 seconds for each pair to decide which partner will be "heads" and which will be "tails."

**Say: Those of you who are heads will go first (but you others will get a turn later). You're going to think of a quick mission (a little job or a message) to assign to your partner—something that can be done in a few seconds. The rule: It has to encourage someone in the room. For instance, I might ask my partner to go to a certain person and say, "You say good things when we answer questions." Or I might ask my partner to go pat someone on the shoulder and say, "I'm so glad you're here."**

When the mission is completed, your partner will hustle back, and you can send your partner out again. But keep missions short; you only have 30 seconds total. Try to do several.

Some instructions for the tails, those of you who are sent out: when you're finished, run back, salute, and say, "Mission accomplished!" If you're asked to do something that you just can't do, say "No can do!" and you'll get another mission.

**Okay, heads, be thinking of missions for your partners. Ready? Go!**

Announce when 30 seconds is up and have kids switch heads and tails roles. When this next 30 seconds passes, tell kids to give you their attention. Ask:

- **Which did you like best: sending someone out on a mission (being the head) or going on the mission yourself (being the tail)? Why?**
- **Why did those of you who said no to a mission turn it down?**

Ask children to sit with their partners from this exercise and to discuss:

- **Tell each other about a time someone asked you to do something and you said no.**

Allow several minutes for children to share their stories. Then gather kids together. Say: **There are times when it's a good idea to say no when you're asked to do something! But it's a mistake to say no to God. God is more powerful than anyone. He knows us, loves us, and wants the best for us. When he asks us to do something, it's always best to do it! We'll find out more about that today.**

## **Big Mistakes Game**

### **12 QUESTIONS**

*Time: about 10 minutes*

*Supplies: none*

Say: **Let's play a game called 12 Questions. I'll be thinking of something, and as a group, you can ask me any 12 questions I can answer with a yes or no, as you try to guess what I have in mind. Every guess you make counts as a question too, so ask smart questions before you start to guess!**



## 28 13 Very Big Mistakes People Made and What God Did about Them

Play several rounds. Use the information below as you lead kids to guess these things that are powerful. Give hints as needed. For example, for the first item you might say, “I’m thinking of a powerful bite.”

- **What animal has the most powerful bite?** (great white shark—the largest can bite with almost 4,000 pounds of pressure)
- **What is the most powerfully dangerous animal on earth?** (mosquitoes—they transmit diseases that kill millions of people each year)
- **What’s the most powerful bird?** (eagles—the African crowned eagle can carry around four times its weight while in flight)
- **What’s the most powerful natural material made?** (spider silk—it’s stronger than steel!)

Applaud kids’ efforts. Fill in the gaps so the kids have heard all the “powerful” information listed. The as a group, discuss:

- **In what ways might someone think we are powerful?**
- **In what ways would you describe God as powerful?**

Say: **God is more powerful than anyone. And he created everything we think is powerful!**

### Big Mistakes Bible Story

#### FLAG ON THE FIELD

*Time: about 15 minutes*

*Supplies: Bible, clean socks (1 per child), paper, pencils*

Ask kids to join you in a circle, seated on the floor. Read aloud Exodus 5:1–4; 7:14–24. Then give each child a clean sock. Say: **You’re now all officially referees. Referees are those people at soccer or football games who look for someone breaking the rules. When a referee sees someone break a rule, he or she blows a**

#### AGE-ALERT TIPS

If your group is mostly **older kids**, you might ask: **In what ways do you think our country is doing what God wants? In what ways do you think we’re not doing what God wants?**

whistle or throws a flag on the field. Then there is some kind of penalty (punishment).

Your job is to listen as I read the story again, and if you hear someone in the story make a mistake, toss your “flag on the field” by throwing your sock into the center of our circle. Be fast! You want to be the first to catch every mistake. If you toss your flag, we’ll stop. And as you go get your flag, you’ll need to explain what you think the mistake was ... and what a fair penalty (punishment) would be.

Read Exodus 5:1–4; 7:14–24 again slowly. Pause often and look around the circle. How you read aloud will keep kids actively listening. If someone throws a flag, ask that person what the mistake was and what would be a fair penalty. Let any child throwing a flag offer his or her comments, and then ask those who didn’t throw a flag why they didn’t do so. As kids talk, they’ll make discoveries.

When you’ve finished, gather up the socks and, as a group, discuss:

- **Pharaoh said no to God’s request. Why might that have been a mistake?**
- **What’s something God has asked you to do? How do you know?** (Lead kids to mention things in the Bible that God has asked them to do, like obeying or being kind.)
- **Why might it be a mistake for you to say no to God?**

Say: **God wants the best for us. God wanted the best for Egypt too, but they didn’t do what God wanted them to do. Pharaoh’s big mistake was saying no to God—lots of times. That got Pharaoh and his country in big trouble.**

The good news is that God loves us! We may not be in charge of making sure our whole country obeys God, but we can obey God ourselves. Let’s not make the mistake Pharaoh made. Let’s say yes to God!

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

### **PRAISING GOD’S POWER**

*Time: about 5 minutes*

*Supplies: none*

Ask kids to join you in standing in a circle. Say: **God is more powerful than anyone, and he shows his power in lots of ways. Let’s take a few**

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minutes to honor God by thanking him for how his power touches our lives. I'll say a way in which we can see God's power. Then I'll pause so you can say a word or two out loud about how you see God's power.

For instance, I may say, "God, thank you for showing your power in nature. You might say, "Thunderstorms" or "Tall trees."

Pray: **Dear God, you are so powerful! Thank you for your power in nature that we see in ...** Pause at least 15 seconds so kids can say words. Don't rush; give them time to think and then pray. But do throw in your own words, if needed, to help the kids.

**Thank you for showing us your powerful love through friends. Say the name of a friend who shows you God's love ...** Pause so children can pray.

**Thank you for showing us your powerful forgiveness by forgiving us. If you would like to have God's forgiveness, say your name out loud ...** Pause so children can do so. Say your name as well.

**Thank you for showing us your power through how you've made us. Thank you for our talents that help us do special things. Thank you that I can ...** Pause so children can name something they do.

**Please hear our prayers, God. We love you! In Jesus's name, amen.**

### EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY-OPTION 1

#### FLYING GOLF

*Time: about 10 minutes*

*Supplies: plastic lids from food storage containers (1 per child)*

Give one plastic lid to each child. Gather kids to one corner of the room. Note: Too few lids for your kids? Put children in pairs and let them tag-team the tossing of lids.

Say: **We're going to play three holes of Flying Golf. The rules: you "tee off" from here and play your lid wherever it lands. Your goal is to get your lid to each "hole" I've chosen, in as few tosses as possible. We'll take turns tossing.**

Mentally select three "holes" (targets) and announce the first. But don't reveal the second hole until all kids have finished with the first. Scratch your chin and pause as if you're deciding what will work as a second hole. If a child suggests one, thank the child, but don't use the suggestion. It's okay if kids feel frustrated as they're waiting for your decisions. Ideas might include: on

the third step of the stairs, in a wastebasket, or in the base of a potted plant. Be creative! It's not important to keep score.

When you've played three holes, collect lids and have kids discuss:

- **Who do you think was more powerful in this game: you because you were throwing lids, or me because I was telling you what to do?**
- **Why is it a good idea for us to let God be in charge of our lives?**

Say: **God is more powerful than anyone. We honor him as we let him give us directions. He wants to help us land in a good place!**

## EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY—OPTION 2

### WHO'S IN CHARGE?

*Time: about 10 minutes*

*Supplies: scarves (or strips of cloth)*

This high-energy game is best played in an open, carpeted area or outside.

Put kids into pairs, though they'll be playing *against* each other. Have kids stand facing each other, with their left feet touching. Use scarves to loosely tie their left legs together just above their ankles. Have kids lift their left feet off the floor.

The goal of the game is for players to move their left feet in such a way as to cause their partners to lose balance. Players can't push or tug on each other; they have to gain control by swinging or shaking their left legs. This game is about balance—not just raw power. Smaller children can easily win!

When one person has to drop his left foot, it counts as a point for the partner. The pair will then quickly raise their left feet again and keep playing. See how many points can be scored by each player in three minutes.

When time is up, have partners play one more round—this time for one minute with the goal of not having *any* left feet touch the floor. It's a cooperation round!

Untie players and, as a group, discuss:

- **What made this game hard or easy?**
- **What can this game teach us about power?**

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Say: It's not always the biggest person who's most powerful. And it's not the loudest either. God is more powerful than anyone, but God doesn't bully us. God invites us to be his friends and followers through Jesus. We get to decide. If you haven't decided to do that, I hope you'll talk about that with your parents or with me before you leave today. It's a great decision to make!

### EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY-OPTION 3

#### INQUIRING MINDS WANT TO KNOW

*Time: about 5 minutes*

*Supplies: none*

Gather kids in a circle. Ask: **When—if ever—would it be okay to say no to someone we're supposed to obey, such as our teachers or our parents?**

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# Aaron's Big Mistake

**The Point:** We worship only God.

**Scripture Connect:** Exodus 20:1–4; 32:1–8

**Supplies for all Session 4 activities options:** pencils; prepared poster; paper; markers; large wastebasket (or laundry basket); Bible; aluminum foil (2 feet of foil per child); wastebasket; mailable envelopes (1 per child); buttons, coins, or flat washers (3 per child)

## The Basics for Leaders

Aaron was in a tough spot. God's people—thousands of them—wanted a god they could see and touch. They were afraid, out in the wilderness, and God was up on a mountaintop, hidden by clouds. So Aaron did what the crowd wanted: he provided a golden calf God's people could worship.

That was a mistake. A big one.

Lots of things and people have worth. And that's fine. But when we worship someone or something, we're saying more than that. Only one Someone is worthy of true worship, of being first in our lives, of being our God.

And that's ... God.

What will help you love God more? Think about that as you prepare and experience this session. As you move closer to God, the idol in your life will slide away, back where it belongs. Let's worship only God!

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### OPENING ACTIVITY-OPTION 1

#### HOWZITGOIN'

*Time: about 5 minutes, depending on attendance*

*Supplies: pencils, prepared poster*

Before kids arrive, draw a line on a poster. Write a 1 on the left end of the line, a 10 on the right, and a 5 in the middle. As kids arrive, ask them to pencil in their initials on the line.

Say: **If this past week was so awful you wish you'd slept through it, place your initials by the 1. If it was a great week you wish you could repeat, put your initials by the 10. Place your initials anywhere on the line that shows how you feel about this past week—except exactly on the 5. Because there's no such thing as a week that's exactly half good and half bad!**

After kids have signed in, give them 30 seconds each to explain why they placed their initials where they did. Be sure to include your own initials and explain your placement on the line. Kids will begin to express themselves more over time, and hearing their stories will help you adapt this lesson to make it relevant to your kids' lives.

### OPENING ACTIVITY-OPTION 2

#### WE'RE NUMBER 1!

*Time: about 10 minutes*

*Supplies: paper, markers*

Say: **Sports teams have pennants, and at games fans wave the pennants of their favorite team.** (Fold one sheet of paper into a pennant shape to make sure kids understand.) **We all have favorites. Maybe we have a number one team, TV show, band, or pizza topping. In the next few minutes, please create a pennant—a small flag—showing one of your favorites.** Briefly explain a favorite food you enjoy and how you might create a pennant showing that it's number one to you.

Allow kids time to create pennants and to draw pictures or write words on them.

Then say: **Let's take a few moments to show off our pennants.**

If you have a small group, give each child 30 seconds to show and tell about his or her pennant. Got a big group? Have kids form groups of three and do the same thing. Then have children circle up and discuss:



- Where in your home would you hang a pennant of your favorite thing?
- In what ways does your pennant show that you respect/like/honor the favorite you chose?
- If you were to make a pennant about God, what words or pictures would you choose to put on it? How would they show that God is number one?

Say: It's okay to be a fan of a team or a TV show. But we worship only God. That means we keep God first in our lives; we don't let anything else get between us and God. We don't let anything or anyone else become more important than God—not soccer or cheerleading or friends. If we do, we're making a big mistake, one made by a person you'll meet in a few minutes!

## Big Mistakes Game

### RAISE YOUR PRAISE

*Time: about 10 minutes*

*Supplies: large wastebasket (or laundry basket)*

Place the basket on the floor. Ask kids to take off their shoes and place their shoes in the basket. Then have kids lie on the floor around the basket so their feet are touching the basket. Note: If girls are wearing skirts, adjust the activity as needed. One girl wearing a skirt could act as a "yardstick," standing nearby to keep an eye on how high the basket is raised compared to her own height.

Say: **Your job is to raise this basket off the floor with your feet, as high as you can—without spilling any shoes. Once you've got it where you want it, tell me. Then I'll count to 10 to see if you can hold the basket up until I finish counting.**

Invite children to adjust their positions and then, at your signal, to see what they can do. After their first attempt ask kids to sit up and discuss:

- **What might help you raise the basket even higher?**
- **Why is it important that we work together?**

Ask kids to again get in position and, at your signal, try to raise the basket. After several attempts—and your applause for their efforts—set aside the basket and its contents. Say: **Great job! Let's talk about something else**

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we can do together: we might say that we “raise” our praise when we worship God, because our praise goes “up” to God.

Have kids discuss as a group:

- In what ways do we praise God?
- How might what we learned in our basket activity help us praise God when we’re together? (Help kids make the connection that we feel stronger when we’re together, it’s more fun, we can last longer ...)
- Why do we praise God at all?

Say: We worship only God—which means we praise him. We remember that he made us. We remember his love for us. We remember that God sent Jesus. We raise our praise!

Unfortunately, that’s not what happened when God’s people left Egypt and were making their way across the wilderness toward the Promised Land. They forgot to praise God. Even worse, they decided to praise something else. Let’s learn more about that.

### Big Mistakes Bible Story

#### IDOL HANDS

*Time: about 15 minutes*

*Supplies: Bible, aluminum foil (2 feet of foil per child)*

Ask kids to join you in forming a circle, seated on the floor. Give each child about two feet of aluminum foil. Say: I’m going to read you an account of what happened when God’s people left Egypt and headed into the wilderness. They saw God do amazing things, but they got scared. Listen as I read—and when the time comes, I’ll ask you all to become instant aluminum artists!

Read aloud Exodus 32:1–3. Say: Please use pieces of your foil to create rings, earrings, maybe a bracelet or necklace for yourself. See what you can make and then wear what you create.

As kids fashion jewelry, have them discuss:

- Describe the nicest piece of jewelry you’ve seen. What makes it so special?

Allow several minutes for jewelry creation, and then ask kids to model what they've made. Continue reading aloud. Read Exodus 32:4–8.

Say: **Artists, please reshape your jewelry and create a calf out of your aluminum foil. You can each make yours any way you wish, but you've only got a few minutes.**

As kids fashion calves, have them discuss:

- **Why might it have been a bad idea for Aaron to make a calf to worship?**
- **How do you feel about building a calf right now?**

Assure kids they can continue—they'll see why it's okay in a few minutes. Allow several minutes and then ask kids to show their sculptures.

Say: **We worship only God, and that's something God's people in this story were supposed to do too. God got angry when they built the calf and worshipped it. He had the calf destroyed, but some bad things still happened because of**

**what the people had done: Moses ground the calf into powder, mixed it in water, and made the people drink it. Yuck! Some people died, and "a great plague" (maybe sickness?) happened to the others (Exod. 32:20, 28, 35).**

**We don't want to make the same mistake those people made, right? If we'd really made the mistake of creating an idol, we should change our minds and not worship it. So let's pretend to do that. Step away from your creations. Just leave them where they are and join me in standing over here.**

### **AGE-ALERT TIPS**

If you have **mostly younger** kids, you may want to leave out some of these details.

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

### **ART CRUSH**

*Time: about 5 minutes*

*Supplies: Bible, wastebasket*

Ask kids to join you standing in a circle.

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Say: We know that we worship only God. That's something the people who built the calf knew too. God had told them when he gave them the 10 Commandments. Listen to the first two of those.

Read aloud Exodus 20:1–4.

The people disobeyed and bad things happened. Let's not make the same mistake. Please flatten the calf you made by jumping on it. Pause as kids retrieve their foil creations and do so. Now pick it up and scrunch it. (pause) Now toss it into this wastebasket. (pause)

Thanks! Maybe it was hard to destroy the art you worked to create. We were pretending that those were real idols, things that we worshipped instead of God. We'd have to get rid of a real idol, wouldn't we? Of course, some things we have or like to do aren't really idols. But if they start to become more important to us than God is, we need to think about that. We need to do something to make sure they're not more important to us than God is.

Let's join hands and tell God that we want to worship him only. I'll begin and end our prayer. In the middle when I get quiet, please pray out loud if you're willing. God likes to hear from us!

Pray: Dear God, forgive us if we let something come between you and us. We know you've done so much to teach us: you gave us the Bible, you sent your Son, you've sent the Holy Spirit, and you give us teachers who help us understand. Hear us as we thank you and tell you that we want to worship you only.

Pause so children who are willing can pray. End the prayer with: Thank you for hearing our prayers, God. In Jesus's name, amen.

### EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY-OPTION 1

#### FAN CLUB

*Time: about 10 minutes*

*Supplies: paper, pencils, mailable envelopes (1 per child)*

Note: If kids will be writing to the president, the envelopes can be addressed to: The President of the United States, The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20500.

Say: It's okay to be a fan of a team or band. There are lots of worthy people and worthwhile things we can like. But we worship only God!

**One person you might be a fan of is the president of the United States. That's a tough job. We learned today it's sometimes hard for leaders to make good decisions. Sending the president a nice note saying that you're praying for him would be a great thing to do.**

Help kids each write an encouraging note to the president and then address an envelope. Be sure kids add their return addresses to the letters and the envelopes. If kids would rather send notes to a pastor or other leader, that's fine too. You can later help get the addresses they need.

Note: It's cheaper to batch the addressed envelopes and send them in a larger envelope. Do that for your children. If sending to the White House, you can include a note asking for each letter to be acknowledged with a return letter.

After kids finish writing, gather up letters and have kids discuss:

- **If you could be in a fan club and meet any TV or movie star, who would you want to meet? Why?**
- **What do you think is the difference between really liking someone and worshipping that person?**

Say: **We worship only God, but we can like lots of people! Maybe someday I'll join your fan club, because I like all of you!**

## **EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY-OPTION 2**

### **TWO TOO MANY**

*Time: about 10 minutes*

*Supplies: buttons, coins, or flat washers (3 per child)*

Ask children to sit in a circle on the floor. Give each child three buttons, coins, or flat washers to hold in one cupped palm. Instruct children to—at your signal—toss their objects up into the air, flip over the hand that was holding the objects, and try to catch all three objects on the back of that same hand.

After the first try—and assuming no one succeeded!—have kids discuss:

- **What will make this task easier?**

Thank kids for their ideas and then have kids try again several times—always at your signal. Then have kids remove two of the items and try the

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activity using just one item. Let them try several times; they'll experience far greater success with just one item to catch. Say:

- **It's easier to keep an eye on one item than on three, isn't it?**

Collect the objects and have the group discuss:

- **What can this activity teach us about worshipping only God?**
- **What helps you remember to worship God?**

Say: **It's hard to worship both God and other things at the same time. In fact, you can't do it. You can have only one thing be first in your life. Let's make sure it's God!**

### EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY-OPTION 3

#### INQUIRING MINDS WANT TO KNOW

*Time: about 5 minutes*

*Supplies: none*

Gather kids in a circle. Ask: **How can you tell if someone worships God (puts God first)? How can you tell if someone doesn't do that?**

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# Saul's

# Big Mistake

**The Point:** God knows best.

**Scripture Connect:** 1 Samuel 13:8–14

**Supplies for all Session 5 activities options:** pencils, prepared poster, paper, Bible, substantial cardboard box (or opaque pillowcase), assorted boxed or canned foods—including 1 dog or cat food!

## The Basics for Leaders

Saul messed up in a big way.

He stepped in and did things only priests were supposed to do. He pushed ahead when God told him to wait. Saul decided he knew better than God, that God's rules didn't apply to him.

Like us, Saul didn't mean any harm. He just figured that some general rule didn't fit his special situation. Certainly God would understand and be okay with it.

God *did* understand—but he wasn't okay with it.

Only God knows the future and understands the full impact of our actions. God does know best, and he expects us to trust and obey him.

As you lead this session with your kids, keep in mind that the teaching is not just for them; it's for you too. If you find in yourself any of Saul's tendencies to lay aside God's rules, thinking that you know best, this session can be a good reality check.

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### OPENING ACTIVITY–OPTION 1

#### HOWZITGOIN’

*Time: about 5 minutes, depending on attendance*

*Supplies: pencils, prepared poster*

Before kids arrive, draw a line on a poster. Write a 1 on the left end of the line, a 10 on the right, and a 5 in the middle. As kids arrive, ask them to pencil in their initials on the line.

**Say: If this past week was so awful you wish you’d slept through it, place your initials by the 1. If it was a great week you wish you could repeat, put your initials by the 10. Place your initials anywhere on the line that shows how you feel about this past week—except exactly on the 5. Because there’s no such thing as a week that’s exactly half good and half bad!**

After kids have signed in, give them 30 seconds each to explain why they placed their initials where they did. Be sure to include your own initials and explain your placement on the line. Kids will begin to express themselves more over time, and hearing their stories will help you adapt this lesson to make it relevant to your kids’ lives.

### OPENING ACTIVITY–OPTION 2

#### PICK A NUMBER

*Time: about 10 minutes*

*Supplies: none*

Ask kids to pair up. **Say: I’d like each of you to pick a number between one and three, but don’t tell anyone what you picked. (pause) Got one? Okay, tell only your partner your number.**

After kids do so, tell them that each pair is to decide what order to put their two numbers in. For instance, if one child picked three and the other a one, they can decide on 13 or 31. It’s up to them. Instruct them to do so and to call out the numbers selected.

**Say: Great! Whatever number you called out—that’s how many jumping jacks your team has to do. Start hoppin’!**

Allow time for the jumping jacks to be completed, and then play three additional rounds with the same rules: kids pick numbers from one to three,



choosing *before* you reveal what they'll do with the numbers. You don't want kids to know whether they should pick a high or low number, so include both positive and negative ideas. Pull from these options or make up your own:

- Hold your breath for that number of seconds.
- Run in place for that number of seconds.
- Get that number of (make-believe!) dollars.
- Stay on an imaginary roller coaster for that number of seconds.

Afterwards, ask kids to sit and discuss as a group:

- **When in this game did you wish you'd arranged your numbers differently? Why?**
- **What made this game easy ... or hard?**
- **How was deciding what number to pick like making other decisions in your life?**

Say: **One thing that made this hard was not knowing the whole story before you picked a number. You couldn't see the big picture. When it comes to making decisions, it's always a good idea to do as God asks because God does know the big picture. God knows best!**

## Big Mistakes Game

### JIGSAW CHALLENGE

*Time: about 10 minutes*

*Supplies: paper, pencils*

Ask kids to sit on the floor, slightly apart, and give each child a sheet of paper and pencil. Ask:

- **Which of you has ever worked on solving a jigsaw puzzle?**

Let kids answer. Then say: **Great—because you're each now going to make one!**

Ask kids to take no more than 30 seconds drawing squiggles all over one side of their papers. Then have kids tear their papers so they create a jigsaw puzzle (with lots of pieces).

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When they've finished, have kids turn over their puzzles so what's drawn on the papers can't be seen, and to shuffle the pieces. Then, at your signal, have kids switch where they're seated so they're each in front of a different puzzle.

Say: **You've got 60 seconds to put together the puzzle in front of you—without turning over the pieces to see the design. Go!**

Count down from 60 seconds. When time has elapsed have kids turn over the pieces and see how much of their puzzles they can assemble in another minute.

When time is up, have kids discuss:

- **When was it easier to put together the puzzle: when you could see the design or when you couldn't? Why?**
- **Tell about a time you had to figure something out, but you didn't understand enough to do it. What happened?**
- **How was this puzzle activity like solving problems you have every day?**

Say: **Good news: when God looks at our lives, he has the whole picture. He knows our past and our future. When it comes to making decisions, it's good to do what God says in his Word, the Bible, because God knows best! When we don't listen to God, we're making a big mistake. Sort of like the guy we're going to meet now.**

### Big Mistakes Bible Story

#### **FREEZE!**

*Time: about 15 minutes*

*Supplies: Bible*

Explain: **Saul was the king of Israel, so he was in charge of lots of things. But in today's story, God told him to wait and have the prophet Samuel offer a sacrifice before a big battle. Let's find out how good Saul was at waiting.**

Read aloud 1 Samuel 13:8–14.

Then select three kids to play the roles of Samuel, Saul, and the soldier. Say: **Now as I read the events from the Bible again, our stars here will act out those events. But at any time, you—or I—can shout "Freeze!" When someone does that, everyone has to switch roles. Audience members will come up and tap the actor they'll be replacing.**

Note: You know your group. Warn a rowdy group not to yell “Freeze!” on every word. Or if children don’t yell “Freeze!” often enough, do it yourself. You want everyone to get involved! Just three kids in your group? Yell “Freeze!” often and have them change roles. Or have an actor play just the role of Saul, but he switches to the role of Samuel or the soldier when you yell “Freeze!”

Read aloud 1 Samuel 13:8–14. Encourage kids to be dramatic in their acting of the events.

When you’ve finished reading, have all the kids get into a circle and discuss:

- **Saul seemed to have a pretty good reason for doing what he did. Tell about a time you had a good reason for doing something and you still got in trouble. What was it, and how did it turn out?**
- **In what situations is it okay not to do what God says? Or is it ever okay?**
- **How do you feel when people tell you what to do? How do you feel when you read in the Bible about something God wants you to do?**

Say: **God knows best. Even better, God wants the best for you! When he tells us what to do, it’s because he loves us and wants the best for us.**

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

### **PATIENT PRAYER**

*Time: about 6 minutes*

*Supplies: none*

Ask kids to join you in standing in a circle. Say: **God knows best. He gave us the Bible that tells us how to live. But sometimes we aren’t listening to what he says.**

**For our prayer time, I’ll read some things in the Bible that God tells us to do. You listen. I’ll pause between each one. In the quiet pauses, you can silently ask God to help you listen and do those things.**

Read aloud the following Scriptures, pausing between each:

- **The Bible says, “Trust in God” (John 14:1).**

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- Jesus says, “If you love me, obey my commandments” (John 14:15).
- The Bible says, “We surely ought to love each other” (1 John 4:11).
- Jesus says, “Don’t worry ... saying, ‘What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?’” (Matt. 6:31).
- The Bible says, “Children, obey your parents because you belong to the Lord, for this is the right thing to do” (Eph. 6:1).
- The Bible says, “Let everything you say be good and helpful” (Eph. 4:29).
- The Bible says, “Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power” (Eph. 6:10).

Close the prayer: **Thank you, God, for the Bible that tells us what you want us to do. Help us remember that you know best! In Jesus’s name, amen.**

Depending on your group, you may decide to have a brief discussion after the prayer time.

### EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY-OPTION 1

#### LABEL NAME GAME

*Time: about 10 minutes*

*Supplies: substantial cardboard box (or opaque pillowcase), assorted boxed or canned foods—including 1 dog or cat food!*

Note: You don’t need to buy items; simply choose items from your pantry. It’s best to include soups, processed items that contain few—if any—natural ingredients, and you must include one dog or cat food.

Place five or more food items in the box. You need to be able to read the food labels without kids seeing the items or even the shape of the items. Don’t give any hints!

Say: **You can learn a lot when you read the labels on food. I’m going to read what’s inside some common items you find in grocery stores. See if you can tell me what the item is and whether we’d like eating it as a snack.**

Read each label—don’t worry if you mispronounce the ingredients—asking kids to guess what each item is and to decide whether or not they’d eat it. Show each item after they’ve voted. Leave the dog or cat food till last.

Then say: **Whoa. If we'd really been picking out a snack, we might have been surprised! We didn't know everything we needed to know to make a good choice.**

Set food aside and have kids discuss as a group:

- **When you go somewhere new, do you want to know what it's going to be like, or would you rather be surprised? Why?**
- **Do you think it's a good thing or a bad thing that God doesn't tell you everything that's going to happen in your life? Why?**

Say: **God knows everything, and God knows best. I think it's best that God doesn't tell us everything that's going to happen. That way, we can just depend on him!**

## **EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY-OPTION 2**

### **WHAT DO YOU KNOW?**

*Time: about 10 minutes*

*Supplies: none*

Say: **I have a bunch of answers here, but I need you to tell me what questions fit with these answers. For instance, if my answer is "pizza," what question goes with that answer? Maybe it's "What's my favorite meal?" or "What wasn't eaten by pilgrims on the first Thanksgiving?"**

**So here come some answers. Tell me what questions might fit. And for each answer there could be a bunch of questions, so be creative and keep them coming!**

Answers might include lightbulbs, chocolate, hot air, Detroit, watermelon, the library, under your desk, kittens, envelopes, pills, and my great-aunt Bertha.

Note: don't use Jesus. That comes next.

After kids play awhile, discuss as a group:

- **If I'd said "Jesus," what questions might that word answer?**
- **What's a question you have for God?**

Say: **God knows best, but God doesn't always answer our questions. That's okay—maybe we wouldn't understand the answer. Or maybe God just doesn't think we're ready for the answer yet. Can you trust that God**

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loves you and wants what's best for you anyway? I hope you can say yes—because that's the best answer ever!

### EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY-OPTION 3

#### INQUIRING MINDS WANT TO KNOW

*Time: about 5 minutes*

*Supplies: none*

Gather kids in a circle. Ask: **God knows best, but how are we supposed to know what God wants us to do about everything? The Bible tells us some things for sure, like not to lie (Eph. 4:25), but it doesn't tell us whether we should go to summer camp or take trombone lessons. How can we know?**

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# Elijah's Big Mistake

**The Point:** God gives us strength to do what he wants.

**Scripture Connect:** 1 Kings 19:1–12, 18

**Supplies for all Session 6 activities options:** pencils, prepared poster, broom, Bible, paper

## The Basics for Leaders

It had been a tough week for the prophet Elijah. Tough on his body, his emotions, and his spirit. He was exhausted. And even though he'd just won a major battle, he felt as if he'd lost. He felt alone. So Elijah just ... quit. He turned and ran, hiding deep in the wilderness, waiting to die.

And that was a big mistake, because when we're serving God, there's no such thing as losing. As long as we don't give up, we can't lose. That's a lesson Elijah learned—with God's help. And with God's help we'll learn it too.

Maybe this has been a tough week for you. Maybe you're sad or discouraged. Maybe you feel like giving up or quitting. If that's the case, learn from Elijah. The answer isn't quitting—it's relying more deeply on God. How can you rely on God during those times when you're feeling totally alone or defeated? As you experience this session with your kids, ask that question. Thank God for a love that stands with you when you're feeling alone and that brings comfort when you're in pain.

And don't quit. Never give up.

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### OPENING ACTIVITY-OPTION 1

#### HOWZITGOIN'

*Time: about 5 minutes, depending on attendance*

*Supplies: pencils, prepared poster*

Before kids arrive, draw a line on a poster. Write a 1 on the left end of the line, a 10 on the right, and a 5 in the middle. As kids arrive, ask them to pencil in their initials on the line.

**Say: If this past week was so awful you wish you'd slept through it, place your initials by the 1. If it was a great week you wish you could repeat, put your initials by the 10. Place your initials anywhere on the line that shows how you feel about this past week—except exactly on the 5. Because there's no such thing as a week that's exactly half good and half bad!**

After kids have signed in, give them 30 seconds each to explain why they placed their initials where they did. Be sure to include your own initials and explain your placement on the line. Kids will begin to express themselves more over time, and hearing their stories will help you adapt this lesson to make it relevant to your kids' lives.

### OPENING ACTIVITY-OPTION 2

#### NINJA WARRIOR 101

*Time: about 10 minutes*

*Supplies: broom*

You'll need an open space for this activity.

Put children into pairs. The person in each pair whose birthday comes earliest in the year will play the part of the Attack Ninja. The other child in each pair will be the Hero Ninja.

One pair at a time, have the Attack Ninja hold the broom horizontally at arm's length with both hands. The Hero Ninja will then place one hand in the middle of the broom handle. The goal is for the Attack Ninja to push the Hero Ninja off balance while both ninjas stand in place.

Let each pair try briefly, and then call all the Hero Ninjas aside and whisper this advice: **While the Attack Ninja pushes forward, you push the broom upward. That takes away the leverage, and they'll never push you around again!**



Let pairs try again.

Set aside the broom and have kids join you in sitting in a circle.

- **You Hero Ninjas, how tempted were you to give up after the first round? Why?**

Say: **I've had times I wanted to give up too. One such time was ...** (Briefly share about a time, particularly when you were a child, when you were tempted to give up but kept on trying, and in time you achieved your goal. In sharing your story you'll model what sort of story you'd like your kids to share. You'll also help them get to know you better.)

Then say: **It's your turn now.** Let those who are willing tell about a time they wanted to give up but kept on trying (or did give up!).

Thank kids for sharing their stories. Then say: **Today we'll meet someone who had a tough time doing what God wanted and decided to give up. He discovered, though, that God gave him the strength to do what God wanted, and that's a lesson we'll learn today too! When we're following God, quitting is a big mistake!**

## **Big Mistakes Game**

### **FEAR FINDER**

*Time: about 10 minutes*

*Supplies: none*

Ask children to sit on the floor in a circle. Appoint one child to be the Fear Finder, and have that player leave the room. While the Fear Finder is gone, ask your group to come up with a fear they might have as a group. Kids can choose a real fear or make up a silly one. Some options: fear of spiders, snakes, cheese, water, the dark, that your group will suddenly float into space, or the Fear Finder!

Bring the Fear Finder back into the room and let that person attempt to name the fear shared by the rest of the group. Group members can't say what the fear is, but they can act as if it's real and talk about how it makes them feel. You can let the Fear Finder ask a certain number of questions to get clues. Or simply give the Fear Finder three guesses to name the fear.

Play several times, selecting a new Fear Finder each time. Afterward, have kids discuss:

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- Tell about something that used to scare you but now it doesn't.
- Tell about a time that being afraid kept you from doing something. What was it—and how did that make you feel?

Say: **Elijah was a prophet (someone who told people what God said), and even though he knew God was powerful—he had seen God's power!—Elijah got scared. Let's see what happened.**

### Big Mistakes Bible Story

#### SOUND EFFECTS STORY

*Time: about 15 minutes*

*Supplies: Bible*

Ask kids to join you in forming a circle, seated on the floor. Read aloud 1 Kings 19:1–12, 15–16, 18.

Then ask kids to take off their shoes. Say: **You're now all the official sound effects experts for what I'm about to read from the Bible a second time. Please add sound effects to help this story. For instance, if there's someone running, slap your shoes against the floor to make it sound like running. If someone goes into the wilderness, make sounds you'd hear in the wilderness: the wind, maybe some animal noises. Ready?**

Read aloud 1 Kings 19:1–12, 15–16, 18, pausing to let kids add sound effects. Some places to pause are during these verses:

- verse 3: running feet
- verse 4: wilderness sounds, running feet
- verse 5: night noises
- verse 6: eating and drinking
- verse 8: eating and drinking, traveling
- verse 11: windstorm, earthquake
- verse 12: crackling fire, whisper

After you're done reading, thank kids for helping and ask them to put their shoes back on. Then as a group, discuss:

- **In what ways did God help Elijah and make him strong?**
- **In what ways does God help you and make you strong?**

- Tell about a time you did something that was really hard for you. What gave you the strength to try and do it?

Say: **God gives us strength to do what he wants. That's true at home, at school, in our friendships ... everywhere! When something is hard for us, God might actually make us feel stronger. Or he might send someone to help us. Or he might help us think of a way to make it easier. Always remember to ask for God's help!**

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

### **HARD PLACES**

*Time: about 5 minutes*

*Supplies: none*

Ask kids to join you standing in a circle. Say: **We all have certain times when (or places where) it's hard to do what God wants. For me that's ...** (Briefly share when you find it hard to do what God wants. Perhaps that's at work because you get impatient. Or maybe it's when you're with friends who aren't doing what God wants. Be brief but be honest.)

Say: **Let's pray now. If you'd like for God to give you the strength to do what he wants, tell him about that. If you're willing, say it out loud, but it's okay to pray silently too. I'll begin, and then I'll stop for you to pray. Then I'll end our prayer time.**

Pray: **God, thank you for hearing us. Thank you for giving us strength to do what you want us to do. We want to serve you well, and that's hard for us sometimes. Please give me strength to do what you want when ...** (Repeat the area of your life in which you could use God's help.)

Then pray: **And please help these kids when it's hard for them to do what you want.** Pause so the children can pray silently or aloud.

Close the prayer: **Thank you for your love, God. Thank you for the strength you give us to do what you want. In Jesus's name, amen.**

## **EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY-OPTION 1**

### **STRONGEST PERSON IN THE WORLD**

*Time: about 10 minutes*

*Supplies: paper, pencils*

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Give children each a sheet of paper and a pencil. Say: **Please draw the strongest person in the world—at least, the strongest person in your world. Maybe it's your aunt who works out every day. Or maybe it's a soldier you know who has been in a war. Who you draw is up to you, but you've only got two minutes to make your sketch.**

When time is up, ask kids to share their drawings and explain who they drew and why. Then as a group, discuss:

- **What do you think makes a person strong?**
- **If you could be strong in any one way, what way would you choose? Why?**

Say: **No matter what way you choose to be strong, you can't do it on your own. You need help to have a strong body. You need help to do well in school. You need help to be spiritually strong (that is, be strong for God). Serving God isn't always easy, but God will give you strength to do what he wants!**

### EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY-OPTION 2

#### STRENGTH TO CARRY ON STORY

*Time: about 10 minutes*

*Supplies: none*

Ask children to sit in a circle. Say: **Here's the first line of a story: "Dan woke up early." The last line of the story is: "And that's why Dan never ate pizza again."**

**Your job is to fill in the middle of that story, one word at a time. I'll say the first line again and then we'll go around the circle, filling in one word at a time until someone thinks it makes sense to say, "And that's why Dan never ate pizza again."**

Repeat the first line and start around the circle to your right. Take turns as you go round and round the circle. When you bring the story in for a landing, say: **Thanks! Whew! That took some work! You know, I was sure that if we didn't give up, we could do it.**

- **How was that activity like not quitting when we're serving God?**

Say: **Serving God, or doing what God wants, isn't something we do once and then never do again. It's every day, in lots of ways. Sometimes we serve in ways that seem little—just like adding one word to a story seemed little. Sometimes we do big things like helping with Mom's chores when she's sick (and we're really tired!) or giving someone who doesn't have any toys our favorite toy (instead of an old, broken one). What matters is that we're willing to serve and that we don't quit. God will give us the strength to do what he wants!**

### EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY-OPTION 3

#### INQUIRING MINDS WANT TO KNOW

*Time: about 5 minutes*

*Supplies: none*

Gather kids in a circle. Ask older kids: **If God gives us the strength we need to do what he wants, how come Christians who serve God in other countries are sometimes thrown in jail or killed?**

Ask younger kids: **When you're too scared or too tired or too mad, how can you remember to stop and ask God to make you strong?**

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# Jonah's Big Mistake

**The Point:** We can't hide from God, and we don't need to.

**Scripture Connect:** Jonah 1:1–5, 15–17

**Supplies for all Session 7 activities options:** pencils, prepared poster, blindfold (a clean pillowcase or bandanna will do), plastic straws (1 per child), 2 cups, 12 dried beans, stopwatch, Bible, large bowl of ice water plus extra ice, paper towels, cloth towel

## The Basics for Leaders

In life, one mistake often leads to another. Just ask Jonah.

He didn't obey God and that was big mistake number one.

But big mistake number two was just as bad: Jonah tried to run away from God to go to a place where God couldn't see him. Jonah found there was no such place. That was true in Jonah's time, and it's true now.

We may not jump on ships to sail away from what God wants us to do, but we sometimes draw lines, set limits. We tell God, "Yes, I will do this, but I won't do that." We may live one way at church and another way at work, school, or home.

Here's the truth: there's no running away from God. No matter where we go, God can see us, and he knows our hearts. And here's the rest of the truth: no matter where we go, God loves us. He calls us to know and love him. To return to him if we've wandered away like Jonah wandered away.

As you experience this session with your kids, reconsider whether you have been running *toward* God or *away from* him.

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### OPENING ACTIVITY-OPTION 1

#### HOWZITGOIN'

*Time: about 5 minutes, depending on attendance*

*Supplies: pencils, prepared poster*

Before kids arrive, draw a line on a poster. Write a 1 on the left end of the line, a 10 on the right, and a 5 in the middle. As kids arrive, ask them to pencil in their initials on the line.

**Say: If this past week was so awful you wish you'd slept through it, place your initials by the 1. If it was a great week you wish you could repeat, put your initials by the 10. Place your initials anywhere on the line that shows how you feel about this past week—except exactly on the 5. Because there's no such thing as a week that's exactly half good and half bad!**

After kids have signed in, give them 30 seconds each to explain why they placed their initials where they did. Be sure to include your own initials and explain your placement on the line. Kids will begin to express themselves more over time, and hearing their stories will help you adapt this lesson to make it relevant to your kids' lives.

### OPENING ACTIVITY-OPTION 2

#### HUMAN RADAR

*Time: about 10 minutes*

*Supplies: blindfold (a clean pillowcase or bandanna will do)*

Gather children to the center of the area, outside if possible. With all of them watching, number all four corners, clearly identifying which corner is one, two, three, and four. Select a volunteer to be the Human Radar.

**Say: After I blindfold our Human Radar, the rest of you will have 10 seconds to go stand in one of the four corners. Move quietly, in stealth mode, because after 10 seconds the Human Radar from here in the center will try to sense where people are and will call out a number. If you're in that corner, you're cooked—you're out of the game and will need to come sit here in the center for the rest of the game.**

Each time the Human Radar calls out a corner, the people who were caught there will come to the center. At the same time, the rest of you in



the other corners will have 10 seconds to change corners. Or not. It's up to you to move or stay. Your goal is to be the last person standing.

Blindfold the Human Radar and play until only one person is left standing or until three minutes pass. If that happens, declare all survivors the winners and have them join you and the rest of the kids in the center of the area.

As a group, discuss:

- Those who survived—what tricks did you use to stay alive? Or was this all luck?
- Human Radar, how did you decide what number to call?
- How would this game have been different if we hadn't blindfolded the Human Radar?

Say: Sooner or later, none of you would be able to hide from our Human Radar. There's someone else you can't hide from either; we'll be talking about who that is today. And we'll be talking about why it's not a problem that we can't keep from being found!

## Big Mistakes Game

### BEAN RESCUE

*Time: about 10 minutes*

*Supplies: plastic straws (1 per child), 2 cups, 12 dried beans, stopwatch*

Cautions: Only use beans large enough that they can't be sucked up into the straws. And don't let any child age three or younger play this game.

Divide the group into two groups of equal size. Odd number of children? Join in yourself to even out the teams.

Have kids sit on the floor in two lines, facing each other. Give all children a straw. At the end of each line, place a cup. Hand both children seated at the other end of each line six dried beans.

To the two children holding the beans say: **Beans aren't happy when they're out in the open—they could get eaten! They want to be safe in the cups at the other end of the lines. Your job is to rescue them by using your straw to suck a bean from your hand and then lean over and drop it in the hand of the person next to you—who'll do the same thing with the person next to him. You must lift the bean using the straw. Go as fast as you can until, at the end of your line, the last person drops the last bean into the cup. Ready?**

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Signal go, and then cheer on the teams. Time their progress. Play two rounds, seeing if each team can improve its time.

Gather up beans and straws and discuss together:

- **You were hurrying. Did that help or hurt your bean-rescue efforts? Why?**
- **Tell about a time you hurried while doing something and hurrying didn't help.**
- **Let's say you were hurrying to hide from someone while playing a game or hurrying to escape a tornado. If you needed to get someplace safe, where would that be?**

Say: Today we'll meet someone who hurried to get someplace safe—somewhere he could hide. The problem was, he wanted to hide from God! Let's find out what happened.

### Big Mistakes Bible Story

#### **COLD TOOTSIES FIELD TRIP**

*Time: about 15 minutes*

*Supplies: Bible, large bowl of ice water plus extra ice, paper towels, cloth towel*

Note: This activity is best done outside or on a non-carpeted floor, since water might spill. If you're inside, place a towel under the bowl. Fill the bowl only two-thirds full to allow for water to be displaced by feet.

Ask kids to join you in forming a circle, seated on the floor. Have them remove their shoes and socks.

Say: **We're going to hear about someone who ended up getting his feet wet, so we'll do the same ... but not quite yet.**

Place the bowl of ice water in the center of the circle. Be sure ice is still visible and drop more ice into the water. You'll have every child's attention!

Read aloud Jonah 1:1–5.

Say: **Jonah ran away because he didn't want to obey God. Big mistake. Have you ever tried to get out of obeying someone by hiding or by trying to not be noticed? For me ...** (Briefly share about a time in your childhood when you tried to avoid doing something you were supposed to do, by hiding or trying to not be noticed.)

Then say: **Your turn! Tell about a time you tried to get out of something by hiding or by trying not be noticed. And tell how that worked out for you.** If the group is very large, you can save time by having kids share a story with a partner rather than going around the entire group.

Afterward say: **Thanks for sharing your stories. Let's talk more about this together:**

- **God threw a storm at Jonah's ship. Do you think God was angry, or could the storm have been for another reason? What do you think?**

After kids share their thoughts, thank them. Then give each child one paper towel and encourage them to, one at a time, scoot forward and dip one foot into the bowl. Expect wide eyes. Ask them to place their wet feet on their paper towels, but not to dry their feet.

Say: **The water in the sea was cold and dangerous. If the ship sank, even sailors who could swim would die from the cold. No wonder the sailors threw whatever they could overboard to stay afloat! And finally, this happened ...**

Read aloud Jonah 1:15–17.

This is a familiar event to many kids. Ask if they know how the story ends. If so, ask them to share with the group what happened. Be sure that these key points are brought out: Jonah was vomited up onto the beach and then went where God had told him to go in the first place.

Thank kids for sharing. Say: **Jonah discovered that he couldn't hide from God, and neither can we. But what do you think?**

- **Does the idea that God can see you no matter where you are make you feel good ... or not?**
- **Why do you think God cares what we do or where we go?**
- **If God knows we're doing something bad, why doesn't he stop us?**

Say: **It's okay that God knows what we do and say. God wants us to choose to obey him, although he still loves us even when we do wrong things because Jesus took our punishment. God wants us to choose to do what he asks. That's because he loves us, and God wants us to love him too.**

## 62 13 Very Big Mistakes People Made and What God Did about Them

We can't hide from God, but we don't need to hide from God! Let's thank him for loving us so much that he chooses to know us inside and out. Let's give ourselves to him so we can be like Jonah—that is, after Jonah landed on the beach!

Ask kids to dry their feet and pull their shoes and socks back on.

### CLOSING PRAYER

#### RUN FOR IT PRAYER

*Time: about 5 minutes*

*Supplies: none*

Ask kids to stand. Say: **Before we pray, let's all see how fast and how far we can run ... without moving. When I give the signal, run in place as hard as you can for 30 seconds. Ready? Go!**

Count 30 seconds and then have kids stop.

Say: **All that running—and you went nowhere. It's sort of like that when we try to run away and hide from God. We can't go anyplace he won't see us, because he sees everything! But sometimes we still try to run away from what he tells us to do. Let's pray together and ask him to forgive us for those times we've run away. I'll pray something and then pause so you can talk with God. Please pray silently.**

Pray: **God, please forgive us for the times we try to run away from you. (pause) Thank you for inviting us to know you. (pause) We know we're the safest when we run toward you. Help us turn toward you with our whole hearts. (pause) We love you, God. We'll listen to your words in the Bible that tell us what to do. (pause) In Jesus's name, amen.**

### EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY-OPTION 1

#### ITCH GLITCH

*Time: about 10 minutes*

*Supplies: none*

Say: **Here's a challenge for you: see if you can place your left hand where your right hand can't reach it.**

Allow kids up to 30 seconds to see what position they can find where that's true, and then give the solution: **your right elbow!** Ask:

- Where's someplace you go where nobody can get to you?
- Tell about a time you got lost and someone came to look for you. What happened and how did it turn out?
- Where's someplace you could go where God couldn't find you?

Say: Here's the truth: God loves us all, and he sent Jesus to help us know him better. When we do wrong things, those wrong things keep us away from God. But through Jesus we can be forgiven for wrong things we've done.

We can't hide from God and we don't need to. Jesus didn't come to punish us for doing wrong things; Jesus came to help us be friends with God forever!

## **EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY-OPTION 2**

### **RUN AWAY ... SORTA**

*Time: about 10 minutes*

*Supplies: none*

Note: This game is best played in an open area with boundaries—a yard or large open room. If you're meeting in a small area, have children play while seated on the floor. They'll scoot away rather than run away!

Ask children to spread out around the area. Explain that you'll choose two kids to be the Gatherers. Their job is to join hands and then chase other kids while keeping their hands joined. When they tag another child, that child will join the chain of Gatherers. Continue playing until all children have been tagged.

Then ask kids to sit in a circle and discuss:

- What helped keep you from being tagged?
- Was it more fun to run away or to chase others? Why?
- Name some scary things people might run away from.

Say: Jonah ran away from God so he wouldn't have to go someplace scary—a big city where the people were disobeying God and Jonah was supposed to them to stop! Sometimes we run away from God too. Maybe we don't want to obey him, or we're afraid he'll punish us. But God loves you and wants you to be his friend. We don't have to run away from God!

## 64 13 Very Big Mistakes People Made and What God Did about Them

### EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY-OPTION 3

#### INQUIRING MINDS WANT TO KNOW

*Time: about 5 minutes*

*Supplies: none*

Gather kids in a circle. Ask: **Jonah didn't do what God said to do, so God smacked him with a storm, had him swallowed by a fish, and then watched the fish vomit Jonah up on a beach. Was God being a bully? What do you think and why?**

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# The Teachers' Big Mistake

**The Point:** God cares about our hearts *and* our actions.

**Scripture Connect:** Matthew 23:1–7, 27–28

**Supplies for all Session 8 activities options:** pencils, prepared poster, metal forks (1 per child), acoustic guitar (optional), paper, markers, Bible, \$1 bill for each child (to keep!)

## The Basics for Leaders

The religious teachers of Jesus's day couldn't fool him. He saw their hearts.

It's true they gave money to the temple. And prayed in public. And *seemed* to do all the right things at the right times, following all the right rules.

But they did much of it for the wrong reasons—big mistake—and Jesus knew it. The religious teachers wanted people to think highly of them, and maybe it worked. But God didn't think highly of them.

God wants us to obey him and follow his rules, but not because we want to look good to others. God wants us to obey because we love him, because we have a friendship with him. God cares about our hearts as well as our actions. In fact, we could say that he cares *more* about our hearts than our actions, because our actions come out of our hearts.

As you experience this session with your kids, ask yourself why you obey God. Is it because you love him? Or is it for another reason?

## 66 13 Very Big Mistakes People Made and What God Did about Them

### OPENING ACTIVITY—OPTION 1

#### HOWZITGOIN’

*Time: about 5 minutes, depending on attendance*

*Supplies: pencils, prepared poster*

Before kids arrive, draw a line on a poster. Write a 1 on the left end of the line, a 10 on the right, and a 5 in the middle. As kids arrive, ask them to pencil in their initials on the line.

**Say: If this past week was so awful you wish you’d slept through it, place your initials by the 1. If it was a great week you wish you could repeat, put your initials by the 10. Place your initials anywhere on the line that shows how you feel about this past week—except exactly on the 5. Because there’s no such thing as a week that’s exactly half good and half bad!**

After kids have signed in, give them 30 seconds each to explain why they placed their initials where they did. Be sure to include your own initials and explain your placement on the line. Kids will begin to express themselves more over time, and hearing their stories will help you adapt this lesson to make it relevant to your kids’ lives.

### OPENING ACTIVITY—OPTION 2

#### HEARTFELT FORKS

*Time: about 10 minutes*

*Supplies: metal forks (1 per child), acoustic guitar (optional)*

Gather children together and give each child a fork.

Instruct children to very gently hold their forks between their thumbs and forefingers at the narrowest part of the fork. Then have them, with their other hands, pinch and quickly release two of the fork’s tines to *ping* them.

Demonstrate what you want kids to do. And show how (while the fork is still *pinging*) to press the end of the fork (not the tines) against a table and listen carefully—you’ll hear a tone as the fork vibrates.

Ask kids to experiment with placing their forks against other objects in the room such as water glasses, a window pane, or their own foreheads.



After a minute or two of experimentation, collect the forks and have kids sit on the floor in a circle. Ask:

- **So what do you think was happening? What were we hearing?**

**Say: When you touched your fork to the window or table, you created a sounding board. That's like what happens when someone plays an acoustic guitar: the strings vibrate, and the body of the guitar lets you hear the vibrations. The guitar's body is the sounding board. Note: If you brought an acoustic guitar, demonstrate.**

As a group, discuss:

- **When it comes to making sound, do you think the fork or the sounding board is most important? Why?**

**Say: They're both important, but I think the fork is most important. Without the fork, the table or window makes no noise. What we believe is like the fork, and what we do is like the table or window. What we believe decides what we'll do. If we believe we can fly, we might jump off something. If we believe God loves us, we might feel good about ourselves. You can often tell what someone believes by that person's actions. I saw how that was true when ... (Briefly share about a time when someone said one thing but his or her actions told another story.)**

**Say: Now it's your turn. Find a partner and tell each other about a time when someone said something, but what that person did showed that he (or she) didn't believe it. Be sure to tell how you felt when that happened. (Examples to get kids started: Maybe your friend said he wasn't afraid of the dark, but he still wouldn't go outside at night. Or maybe your brother said that the cake looked good, but he didn't eat any.)**

After kids have shared, thank them and continue. **Say: Today we'll talk about some men who taught about God back in Jesus's day. They found out that God cares about our hearts as well as our actions. Let's see how that happened.**

## Big Mistakes Game

### DINNERTIME SIGNS

*Time: about 10 minutes*

*Supplies: paper, markers*

Give each child several sheets of paper and a marker. Say: **Please make signs to put up where your family eats meals at home. Think about the rules at your house at dinnertime. Maybe you can't have dessert until you've finished your vegetables. Or you're not allowed to argue with your sister at the table. Or you have to chew with your mouth closed.**

**Make signs that show the rules at your house. We'll talk about what those rules are in a few minutes.**

Allow kids time to make signs. Ask kids to circle up with you and to share their signs. Then say: **Wow, you guys have lots of rules, and maybe that's a good thing. But here's a question:**

- **What if at your house you had *all* the rules we've talked about today? What would that be like?**
- **Does following all the rules make your family a better family? Why or why not?**
- **Tell about a time you followed a rule at your table or somewhere else—but you didn't want to follow it.**

Thank kids for sharing their thoughts and stories. Say: **We follow rules for lots of reasons. Sometimes it keeps us from getting in trouble. Sometimes it's because we like the person giving us the rules. Other times we follow rules even if we don't really want to.**

**We're going to meet some people who followed lots of rules. Let's find out what happened!**

### AGE-ALERT TIPS

Both **older and younger kids** could draw pictures to illustrate the rules, rather than writing rules. But **younger kids** still might need help.

## Big Mistakes Bible Story

### DO AS I SAY, NOT AS I DO

*Time: about 15 minutes*

*Supplies: Bible*

Note: Depending on your group, you may want to read the Scripture through once before reading it again with the kids acting the roles.

Have kids stand. Explain that they'll pretend to be some very important people: religious teachers. Say: **In Jesus's day, the men who taught religion were smart—they'd studied for many years. When people wanted to know how to live, they asked these religious leaders because the leaders knew God's rules in the Bible. But the leaders came up with a lot more rules to follow, rules of their own. This wasn't smart.**

**Please act out what Jesus talked about when he described the religious leaders. I'll read what Jesus said; you act out what they did.**

Read aloud Matthew 23:1–7, 27–28. Pause often to let kids act out.

When you finish reading, applaud your kids' efforts. Ask kids to join you in sitting in a circle. Check their understanding of what was read by asking a few content questions. If kids aren't sure what something meant, provide a brief explanation. Here are some possibilities:

- **What does the word *rabbi* mean?** (teacher)
- **What's a whitewashed tomb?** (a grave painted white)
- **How would you describe what the word hypocrisy means?** (to be false, to say one thing and do another)

Say: **Jesus had a problem with the religious teachers. His problem wasn't with them as people—he loved everyone. His problem was that they cared more about their actions than their hearts. God cares about our hearts and our actions!**

Discuss together:

- **Would you rather have a friend who says he likes you but treats you badly, or one who says he likes you and shows it by how he acts? Why?**
- **Who do you like? How can others tell you like that person?**
- **God likes us and wants to be in a friendship with us. How do his actions show that's true?**
- **If you like God and want to be in a friendship with him, how do your actions show that's true?**

Say: **God knows us very well. He knows that if our hearts are really with him, our actions will match up!**

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### CLOSING PRAYER

#### TWO RULES

*Time: about 5 minutes*

*Supplies: none*

Ask kids to join you in sitting in a circle. Say: **Jesus was asked what rules we have to follow to please God. And Jesus said there were just two: love God as much as we can and love other people like we love ourselves. That was it. But when you think about it ... that's a lot! Let's ask God to help us have the right heart and right actions about those rules. I'll pray and then pause. During those pauses, you pray—either out loud or quietly.**

Use the key parts of Matthew 22:36–39 (printed here) to guide this prayer.

Pray: **God, you said in the Bible: “Love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.” Help us have the right hearts about that. Help us want to love you.** (pause)

**Help us have the right actions about that. Help us show you our love by what we do.** (pause)

**God, you said in the Bible: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Help us have the right heart about loving everyone.** (pause)

**Help us have the right actions and do things that prove we love people.** (pause)

Close the prayer: **Thank you for being with us, God. Help us be with you too—in both our hearts and our actions. In Jesus's name, amen.**

### EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY-OPTION 1

#### KA-CHING!

*Time: about 10 minutes*

*Supplies: \$1 bill for each child (to keep!)*

Have children be seated in a circle. Ask:

- **If I gave you 100 dollars and you had to use it to help someone else, what would you do with it?**

Allow several children to respond. Affirm their answers. Then say: **As for me ...** (Briefly share how you'd use 100 dollars to help someone. Be very

specific—don't just say you'd put it in the church offering. Tell who you'd help and why.)

- **New question! What if I gave you 100 dollars in one-dollar bills? You have to help 100 people with one dollar each. How could you help someone with one dollar?**

Encourage kids to brainstorm ways to help someone. Get as long a list of suggestions as you can. Say: **Okay, let's see what you really do.**

Give each child a one-dollar bill. Expect excitement—and maybe suspicion as they hold their dollars up to the light to see if the bills are real!

Say: **You get the chance to help someone, but be sure you know why are you helping. If it's to make other people think you're special, you're like the mistaken teachers who Jesus corrected. Jesus wanted them to do good things for the right reasons. In other words, he wanted the good things they did to be done because their hearts loved God. Hang onto your dollar and look for a way to help someone this week—but help someone for the right reason. God cares about your heart and your actions!**

Note: Be sure and tell the parents about this activity so the parents can guide what happens. Also, the next time you meet with your kids, it might be fun to ask how they each used their money.

### EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY—OPTION 2

#### BACKSCRATCH ENCOURAGEMENTS

*Time: about 10 minutes*

*Supplies: none*

Caution: This activity works best with a group in which kids will be chosen fairly equally. Skip this activity if your group has a fringe kid or two who might not be included by the others.

Have children find a comfortable place to lie on their stomachs, facedown, eyes closed. Explain that you'll read a list of qualities that people sometimes have. After naming each quality you'll tap two kids who will then go around and scratch the backs of all the people they think show that quality.

Note: If you have just a few kids, pick one to be the backscratcher. After each quality, select a different child to be the backscratcher.

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Read the following list of qualities, one at a time, assigning the backscratcher(s) for each. Depending on the age of your group, add explanation as necessary to make sure everyone understands the meanings of the words:

- loving
- joyful
- peaceful
- patient
- kind
- good
- faithful
- gentle
- self-controlled

Ask kids to get up and sit in a circle. Discuss:

- How did you decide who has those different qualities?
- Where do you think we get those great qualities?

Say: The nine qualities I read are “the fruit of the Spirit” (Gal. 5:22–23). When we love and follow God, those things begin growing in us. They start to show in the way we act.

The good news is that we don’t have to pretend to be those things—we actually start becoming more kind, more gentle, and so forth. That’s because our actions follow our hearts, and God changes our hearts. God cares about our hearts and our actions!

### EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY-OPTION 3

#### INQUIRING MINDS WANT TO KNOW

*Time: about 5 minutes*

*Supplies: none*

Gather kids in a circle. Ask: **Jesus was hard on the teachers whose actions didn’t match their words. But no one is perfect. Our actions can’t match our words every single time, can they? What should we do about that?**

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# Peter's Big Mistake

**The Point:** We can trust Jesus.

**Scripture Connect:** Matthew 14:22–31

**Supplies for all Session 9 activities options:** pencils, prepared poster, raw potato, fork, stopwatch, blanket, Bible, flashlight, newspaper, clean socks

## The Basics for Leaders

Poor Peter. He was doing everything right.

Listen to Jesus? Check. Follow Jesus? Check. Do what Jesus asked him to do? Check and double-check.

Trust Jesus? Um ... not so much. And that's when he got in trouble.

In the midst of a terrible storm, Peter saw Jesus walking across the water. Peter believed Jesus was powerful, trusted that Jesus could keep him afloat, and crawled out of the boat to go to Jesus.

So what was Peter's big mistake?

It was taking his eyes off Jesus. Peter failed to *keep* trusting Jesus.

It's one thing to trust Jesus for a moment. It's another to trust him for a lifetime.

As you experience this lesson with your kids, reevaluate where you really are as far as trusting Jesus. Are you still in the boat? Are you sinking? Or are you walking boldly across the water toward Jesus?

## 74 13 Very Big Mistakes People Made and What God Did about Them

### OPENING ACTIVITY-OPTION 1

#### HOWZITGOIN'

*Time: about 5 minutes, depending on attendance*

*Supplies: pencils, prepared poster*

Before kids arrive, draw a line on a poster. Write a 1 on the left end of the line, a 10 on the right, and a 5 in the middle. As kids arrive, ask them to pencil in their initials on the line.

Say: **If this past week was so awful you wish you'd slept through it, place your initials by the 1. If it was a great week you wish you could repeat, put your initials by the 10. Place your initials anywhere on the line that shows how you feel about this past week—except exactly on the 5. Because there's no such thing as a week that's exactly half good and half bad!**

After kids have signed in, give them 30 seconds each to explain why they placed their initials where they did. Be sure to include your own initials and explain your placement on the line. Kids will begin to express themselves more over time, and hearing their stories will help you adapt this lesson to make it relevant to your kids' lives.

### OPENING ACTIVITY-OPTION 2

#### SHARE THE SPUD

*Time: about 10 minutes*

*Supplies: raw potato, fork, stopwatch*

Ask children to sit in a circle on the floor. With them watching, stab a raw potato with a fork and hold the fork upright so the potato is on top.

Tell children you want to time them completing a challenging task: passing the potato around the circle by touching only the fork. If a child should accidentally touch the potato, the group has to start over.

After kids complete the task, thank them and continue. Say: **By the way, that wasn't the challenging task. The challenging task is doing the same thing—with your eyes closed. Trust me, it can be done! Let's see how much time it takes us to get the potato around the circle without being able to see what we're doing. If you accidentally touch the potato, say so, and we'll start over.**



Play several rounds, seeing whether the group's time can be improved. Collect the potato and fork and, as a group, discuss:

- **What made this game easy or hard? Why?**
- **Did you trust me when I said you could do it? Why?**

Say: **I've had people tell me to trust them too. One time was ...** (Share a positive story about a time you trusted someone.)

Then say: **Now it's your turn. Find a partner and sit so you can easily hear each other. Tell each other about a time someone said, "Trust me." Tell who it was and how everything turned out.** (Examples to help kids get started: **Maybe a friend said, "I'll take good care of your bike. Trust me." Or, "I'll come back by six o'clock. Trust me."**)

Give kids a few minutes to share. Then thank them and say: **Today we'll talk about a man who discovered he needed to trust Jesus. That's something we need to do too!**

## **Big Mistakes Game**

### **WHO DAT?**

*Time: about 10 minutes*

*Supplies: blanket*

Ask for a volunteer. Have the volunteer sit on the floor. Cover his or her head with the blanket. Arrange the blanket so the volunteer will be able to hear, but not see, who's speaking.

Ask the other kids to walk around the seated person in a circle so the volunteer can't identify who is where. Explain: **I'll point to one person who's walking, and that person will say "hello" out loud but disguise his or her voice. If the person under the blanket wants to hear the voice again, repeat "hello" up to three times—while continuing to walk. The person under the blanket will guess who is speaking.**

Play several rounds, with different kids under the blanket. Point at different children to be the speaker too—though it will confuse the volunteer if you select the same speaker twice!

After several turns, have kids sit in a circle with you. Ask:

- **What made it easy or hard to guess the name of the speaker?**

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- Whose voice do you think you'd recognize right away if you heard it? What makes you so sure you could recognize it?

Say: Jesus said he wants his followers to know his voice—to know when he's talking to them. And he talks to us all the time through his words in the Bible. But unless we trust him, it doesn't matter if he tells us to do something. We won't do it!

The good news is, we can trust Jesus—even when we're afraid. And he doesn't change or hide his voice. Jesus wants us to know him and to trust him.

That's what a man named Peter found out. Let's see what happened!

### Big Mistakes Bible Story

#### WATER WALK

*Time: about 15 minutes*

*Supplies: Bible*

Ask kids to join you sitting in a circle on the floor. Read Matthew 14:22–31 aloud.

Then say: **I need some help reading this account from the Bible again. It's an action story, but I couldn't afford special effects. So I'm counting on you to help me by doing sound effects. Let's practice these sounds:**

- **Make the sound of wind.** (pause for kids to experiment)
- **Now the sound of waves.** (pause)
- **Now the sound of thunder.** (pause)
- **Now oars in the water.** (pause)
- **Feet walking.** (pause)
- **Scared men shouting.** (pause)
- **Now all of them together.** (pause)

Great! We're ready! I'll read what happened, and when I pause, you fill in the sound effects.

Note these suggested times to pause during the story in Matthew 14:22–31:

- verse 22 (walking)
- verse 24 (wind, waves, oars in water, thunder—sustain through rest of reading)

- verse 26 (add scared men)
- verse 29 (“walking on water” sounds)
- verse 30 (add scared Peter)

After you complete reading, applaud your sound effects experts. Say: **Great job!** As a group, discuss:

- **If Peter made a mistake, what was it?**

Say: **Peter was a fisherman. He knew how dangerous it was to be on the lake at three o'clock in the morning, in the dark, and during a storm. And to jump out of the boat! Then Peter got scared and forgot to trust Jesus. I remember a time I didn't trust Jesus. It was ...** (Briefly tell about a time you didn't trust Jesus.)

Say: **Now you tell about a time you didn't trust Jesus.**

- **Why didn't you trust Jesus? Were you scared of something? How did things turn out?**
- **If you prayed to God then, what did you say?**

After children have shared, say: **It can be hard to remember to trust Jesus when you're afraid because a bully is picking on you or when someone you love is very sick. That feels bad.**

- **What might help us remember to trust Jesus when we're afraid?**

Thank kids for sharing their ideas. Say: **Peter trusted Jesus enough to get out of the boat and walk toward Jesus. But Peter took his eyes off Jesus. He didn't keep trusting Jesus—and that's what caused Peter to sink. We can keep trusting Jesus!**

### CLOSING PRAYER

#### EYES WIDE OPEN PRAYER

*Time: about 5 minutes*

*Supplies: flashlight*

Ask kids to sit in a circle. Place the flashlight in the center of the circle and turn it on. Darken the room. Join the kids.

Say: **Please keep your eyes open as we pray today.**

#### AGE-ALERT TIPS

If very young children are present, be careful about darkening the room too much.

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Note: When you pause to let kids pray, pause for at least 30 seconds before moving on. Give kids the chance to get comfortable with praying out loud and with their eyes open.

Pray: **God, thank you for being light in darkness just like this flashlight lightens the dark room. Help us trust that you will always be there for us, always love us, and always hear us when we speak to you.**

Tell the kids: **Now please join me in saying one or two words that tell God when you have a hard time trusting him (keeping your eyes on him). Maybe it's at school or at home. Maybe you think a lot about the problems there, but you don't trust Jesus to help solve those problems. I'll go first.**

Share where and when you have a challenge keeping your eyes on Jesus. Invite kids to do the same out loud. When they're finished, close the prayer: **Help us trust you more, God. In Jesus's name, amen.**

Turn on the lights. Turn off the flashlight and put it away.

### EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY-OPTION 1

#### PAY ATTENTION

*Time: about 5 minutes*

*Supplies: newspaper, pencils*

Give each child a pencil and a page from the newspaper. Instruct kids to place their newspaper on the floor in front of them and kneel facing it.



Say: **Please kneel so your nose is about 18 inches from the newspaper (demonstrate for them). Hold the pencil about six inches in front of your nose (demonstrate) and so you can see the side of the pencil.**

**Close your left eye and see what words are visible on the newspaper as you look through your right eye. (pause)**

**Now, without moving your head or the pencil, open your left eye and close your right eye. (pause) See how the words jump to the side? Switch which eyes are open again, quickly. (pause)**

Have kids join you by sitting in a circle. Say: **You know that nothing moved—not the paper, the pencil, or your head.**

- **Why did the words jump around? What was happening?**

Let several kids suggest explanations. Thank them for their ideas. Then say: **When you look at the paper through both eyes, your brain puts the picture from your left eye together with the picture from your right eye to make one picture. When you close your right eye, you just see the picture from your left eye. When you close your left eye, you just see the picture from your right eye. And they're not quite the same!**

**Peter's big mistake was not keeping either of his eyes on Jesus! He looked at the storm and paid attention to his fear. He forgot to trust Jesus. And Peter started to sink.**

**We can trust Jesus. That means we can believe that he's with us when we're afraid. Or when we're thinking about doing something wrong, we can trust him and ask for his help to do the right thing.**

**Keep your eyes on Jesus ... and stay afloat!**

## **EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY-OPTION 2**

### **SOCK IT TO ME**

*Time: about 10 minutes*

*Supplies: clean socks*

Ask children to lie on the floor, faceup, in groups of four, with their heads together and their bodies going out like spokes of a wheel. Give a rolled-up sock to the person in each group wearing the most blue. Say: **The object of the game is to toss the sock up in the air so it comes down to land on someone else's nose. The rules: no catching the sock, and it must go up in the air at least three feet before falling back to the floor.**

**Bonking a neighbor's nose is surprisingly hard to do, but you'll have fun trying!**

Play several rounds, giving everyone a chance to toss the sock at least twice. Then collect socks, have kids sit up, and start a discussion. Ask:

- **How many of you couldn't help but watch the sock—even though you knew it might bonk you in the nose or eye? Why did you have to look?**

**Sometimes we see things and we want to look away, but we just can't. Maybe that happens to you when you see a fight at school. Or**

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you know a scary TV show or a movie will give you nightmares—but you watch anyway. For me ... (Briefly share something that you knew you shouldn't see—but you couldn't look away.)

Then ask:

- How about you? What's something you knew you shouldn't look at, but you did anyway?
- What's something you're supposed to look at (like math homework) that's hard for you to look at?

Allow time for several kids to share. Then thank them and say: **So you know we're supposed to always keep our eyes on Jesus. Keeping our eyes on Jesus means remembering Jesus and thinking about what he says in the Bible. When you're scared, look to Jesus. When you're angry, look to Jesus. When you're happy, look to Jesus. Always look to Jesus! You can trust Jesus always and forever!**

### EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY—OPTION 3

#### INQUIRING MINDS WANT TO KNOW

*Time: about 5 minutes*

*Supplies: none*

Gather kids in a circle. Ask: **If we really trusted Jesus, believed Jesus—and what he has said in the Bible—how would that change how we live? What would change at school or at home?**

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# Paul's

# Big Mistake

**The Point:** Let's make sure we're doing what God wants.

**Scripture Connect:** Acts 9:1–6; 13:2–5

**Supplies for all Session 10 activities options:** pencils, prepared poster, plastic comb, wool sweater (or blanket; or someone's long hair—see note in activity), access to the kitchen sink, paper plates (1 per child), pens or markers, Bible, forks, spoons, thread

## The Basics for Leaders

As God was using his people to spread news about Jesus, along came Paul. Paul, who was doing his best to keep anyone from hearing about or following Jesus, was even arresting and killing Christians.

Big mistake.

God doesn't hide what he wants us to do. We have the Bible to tell us, and we have the Holy Spirit to guide us. God is clear about what he wants to do in and through us.

Paul got on the wrong side of God's will, and—as he discovered—that's *not* where you want to be.

The question is, where are you? Are you serving God, or could you be getting in your own way of doing what God wants you to do? Expect to learn some things yourself as you experience this session with your kids.

## 82 13 Very Big Mistakes People Made and What God Did about Them

### OPENING ACTIVITY-OPTION 1

#### HOWZITGOIN'

*Time: about 5 minutes, depending on attendance*

*Supplies: pencils, prepared poster*

Before kids arrive, draw a line on a poster. Write a 1 on the left end of the line, a 10 on the right, and a 5 in the middle. As kids arrive, ask them to pencil in their initials on the line.

**Say: If this past week was so awful you wish you'd slept through it, place your initials by the 1. If it was a great week you wish you could repeat, put your initials by the 10. Place your initials anywhere on the line that shows how you feel about this past week—except exactly on the 5. Because there's no such thing as a week that's exactly half good and half bad!**

After kids have signed in, give them 30 seconds each to explain why they placed their initials where they did. Be sure to include your own initials and explain your placement on the line. Kids will begin to express themselves more over time, and hearing their stories will help you adapt this lesson to make it relevant to your kids' lives.

### OPENING ACTIVITY-OPTION 2

#### KITCHEN SINK FIELD TRIP

*Time: about 10 minutes*

*Supplies: plastic comb, wool sweater (or blanket or someone's long hair), access to the kitchen sink*

**Say: Field trip! We're going to the kitchen!**

Lead kids to the kitchen sink. Turn on the faucet so there is a thin, slow, steady stream of water. Gather kids where they can see the water leave the faucet and strike the sink. Ask:

- **Water flows downhill, right? But what if we could get it to bend sideways? What might cause water to make that change?**

Allow kids to brainstorm. Options: freezing the water and tossing ice sideways; putting the water under pressure, as in a hose, and spraying it sideways; or putting water into vapor form so it can drift sideways as fog or clouds.



Affirm their answers and then say: **We'll make this water bend sideways without doing any of that—and without touching the water.**

Rub the plastic comb across the wool sweater at least 10 times to give a positive static electric charge to the comb. (Or run the comb through someone's long hair 10 times.) Then place the comb close to the water without letting the water touch the comb. The water will bend toward the comb. Let kids try; then return to your meeting area and sit on the floor. Ask:

- **What happened to move the water?**

After kids have offered explanations say: **It was all a matter of electricity. By rubbing the comb, we gave the comb a positive electrical charge, just like one end of a magnet. The water didn't have a charge, so the comb pulled on it.**

As a group, discuss:

- **It took electricity for us to change where the water landed. What does it take to change your mind when someone wants you to do something and you don't want to do it?**

Then say: **One time when I made a big change was ...** (Briefly share about a time you changed your mind or made a big change in life.)

Then say: **Your turn now. Find a partner and tell about a time you changed your mind or made a big change in your life. Tell why you changed.**

After pairs have shared, thank them and say: **Today we're going to talk about a man who made a big change in his life. And that's a good thing because he was making a big mistake, doing things God didn't want him to do. Let's make sure we're always doing what God wants!**

## **Big Mistakes Game**

### **PUSHOVER**

*Time: about 10 minutes*

*Supplies: none*

In an open area, have children get into pairs, with kids of about the same size in each pair. They'll need to stand face-to-face and toe-to-toe. Then ask kids to put their hands up, palms out.

## 84 13 Very Big Mistakes People Made and What God Did about Them

Tell kids the goal of this game is to push their partners' hands so their partners get off balance and move their feet. They can only *touch* their partners' hands to push; they can't grab hold of their partners' hands.

Say: **What's tricky is that you can shove your partner's hands and knock your partner backwards. But if you shove and he relaxes his arms, you may topple forward. (demonstrate) May the best man—or woman—stay steady. Go!**

Play several rounds, rotating partners. Kids will quickly pick up the rhythm and strategies for this game.

When you're ready, have partners shake hands and join you in a circle on the floor. Ask:

- **What made this game hard?**
- **How much would it have helped to know what the other player was thinking? Why?**

Say: **It would have been great to know what your partner was going to do, but you can't read minds. At least, I hope you can't!**

- **We want to obey God—to do what he wants. But how can we know what that is since we can't read his mind?**
- **If you could ask God one question and get a clear answer, what would you ask?**

Say: **We want to always be doing what God wants us to do. If we don't ... well, there's a guy who found out what happens then. Let's dig into that now.**

### Big Mistakes Bible Story

#### SMILEY FROWNY

*Time: about 15 minutes*

*Supplies: paper plates (1 per child), pens or markers, Bible*

Give each child a paper plate and a pen or marker. Instruct kids to quickly draw a smiley face on one side of their plates and a frowny face on the other.

After kids finish, have them sit in a circle, holding their plates. Explain that you'll read aloud an account from the Bible. As you read, they'll hold

up either a smiley or frowny face, depending on how they feel about what's happening.

They can flip their plates as often as they want, whenever they want.

Read Acts 9:1–6; 13:2–5 aloud. Then before the discussion explain that the name of the man in the story, Saul, was later changed to Paul. Since he's usually called Paul, that's what we'll call him today. As a group, discuss:

- **What happened that you thought was sad?**
- **What happened that you thought was happy?**
- **Was Paul a bad guy, a good guy, or both?**

**Sometimes people try to do the right thing—but they get it wrong. It's like someone who wants to help you with a homework problem, but he shows you the wrong answer because he doesn't know what he's doing. I remember a time ...** (Briefly share about a time you saw someone try to do the right thing or help—but it didn't turn out well.)

Then say: **Your turn. Tell about a time when someone tried to do the right thing or help, but it didn't end up helping at all.**

After several stories are shared, thank kids for sharing. Say: **Paul wanted to do what God wanted. For a while Paul thought God didn't want people to hear about Jesus. Then Jesus helped change Paul's mind.**

- **How can we really be sure we're doing what God wants us to do?**
- **What if we get it wrong?**

Say: **Paul got it wrong, but God showed him what to do. We may get things wrong sometimes too. That's okay! We aren't perfect, but we can try our best to follow God. And we can count on God to show us what to do if we get it wrong.**

Reading the Bible can help us make fewer mistakes. Psalm 119:11 says this about listening to God's Word: "I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you." That means when we find out what God wants and we pay attention, we can know what to do to please him. And Psalm 119:105 says this too: "Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path."

**Let's always make sure we're doing what God wants!**

## 86 13 Very Big Mistakes People Made and What God Did about Them

### CLOSING PRAYER

#### TURNAROUND PRAYER

*Time: about 5 minutes*

*Supplies: none*

Ask kids to stand and form a circle. Say: **We're going to pray together. And during the prayer I'll be asking you to make "a quarter turn to the right" or "to the left." Here's what I mean by that. (demonstrate) Please close your eyes and continue standing.**

Paul was just like us. He did things that didn't make God happy. If you've ever done something wrong, please take a quarter turn to the right, so you're facing away from the center of our circle. (pause)

If you've ever said something you know wouldn't please God, take another quarter turn to the right. You'll be facing away from the circle. (pause)

Sometimes when we do things people don't like, those people quit being our friends. They get angry and go away. But God isn't like that. God loves you. God wants you to love him too. And God wants to use you to do great things in the world as you serve him. If you want to be a friend of God, take a quarter turn back to the left. (pause)

Pray: **God, we want to be your friends. We want to know and love you more. Please help us grow closer to you.**

Say: **If you'd like God to forgive you for the wrong things you've done and said, take another quarter turn back to your left. You'll be facing back into the circle again. (pause)**

Pray: **God, thank you for your great love and forgiveness. We want to be like Paul—when we know what you want us to do, we want to do it. In Jesus's name, amen.**

Ask kids to open their eyes and be seated again.

### EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY-OPTION 1

#### KNOT ME!

*Time: about 5 minutes*

*Supplies: none*

Note: You'll need at least four people for this game, and an even number of players. If you have an odd number of kids, join in yourself.

Have kids join you in a circle. Ask kids to reach out with their left hands and to grasp someone else's hand—someone not next to them. Then have kids reach out with their right hands and grab another hand, but not the hand of the person they've already grabbed. Say: **Here's the challenge: without letting go of any hands, unknnot yourselves.**

When kids have finished, have them discuss:

- **What helped you get unknotted?**
- **Cooperating—working together—was important. You couldn't do what you needed to do alone. How is that like working together with God?**

Say: **Thanks for doing what I asked you to do. But even more important than that is doing what God asks you to do. We study the Bible together to learn what God wants us to do. Let's make sure we're doing what God wants!**

## **EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY—OPTION 2**

### **BRAIN CHIME**

*Time: about 10 minutes*

*Supplies: forks, spoons, thread*

Ask children to pair up to work together. Give each pair a fork, spoon, and three-foot piece of thread.

Say: **Working together with your partner, you'll create Brain Chimes—and get to try them out right here. In your pair, the person whose birthday is coming next will be the Lab Rat in this experiment. Decide now who's the Rat. The other person is the Mad Scientist.**

Instruct pairs to tie the fork in the center of their piece of thread. Each Mad Scientist will then loosely tie one end of the thread around his Lab Rat's left pointer finger and the other end around the Lab Rat's right pointer finger. With everyone standing, each Lab Rat will then place his pointer fingers in his ears, letting the fork dangle in front of him.

Ask the Mad Scientists to gently tap the forks with a spoon. The sound of ringing will travel up the thread, and the Lab Rats will hear a loud ringing in their ears.

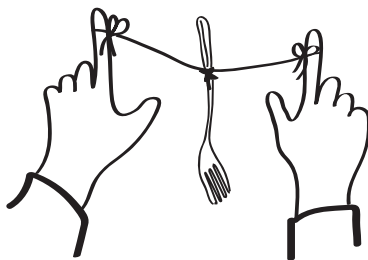
### **AGE-ALERT TIPS**

For best results with this activity, pair **younger children** with **older**.

## 88 13 Very Big Mistakes People Made and What God Did about Them

Reverse the roles in each pair so everyone can hear the chiming. Then collect the supplies and have kids sit. As a group, discuss:

- **You needed the help of your partner. What's something for which you need God's help—something you know God wants you to do?**
- **Tell about a time when you knew God was helping you do something he wanted you to do.**



Allow several kids to share their stories. Also be prepared to share one of your own. Then say: **I'm glad you let God help you follow him! Let's make sure we're always doing what God wants!**

### EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY-OPTION 3

#### INQUIRING MINDS WANT TO KNOW

*Time: about 5 minutes*

*Supplies: none*

Gather kids in a circle. Ask: **If God wants us to do what he wants us to do, why doesn't God give us a written list of things to do every day?**

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# Ananias and Sapphira's **Big Mistake**

**The Point:** God wants us to tell the truth.

**Scripture Connect:** Acts 5:1–10

**Supplies for all Session 11 activities options:** pencils, prepared poster, stopwatch, handful of coins, Bible, pennies (10 per child and 10 for yourself), metal bowl

## **The Basics for Leaders**

So what was the big deal? Ananias and Sapphira came into a little money. They gave some of it to the church and kept the rest. How is that different than what people do at church each week?

Their mistake wasn't giving money to the church.

It wasn't giving just *part* of their money to the church.

Their big mistake was lying.

God wants us to tell the truth, and Ananias and Sapphira chose to lie—to God himself.

Does that mean that if you lie you'll fall down dead? No, people lie all the time and stay upright. But notice: God takes lying very, very seriously. That he'll forgive lying doesn't mean he doesn't hate it.

As you experience this session with your kids, ask yourself: How am I lying to others? To myself? To God?

What will you do about it?

## 90 13 Very Big Mistakes People Made and What God Did about Them

### OPENING ACTIVITY-OPTION 1

#### HOWZITGOIN'

*Time: about 5 minutes, depending on attendance*

*Supplies: pencils, prepared poster*

Before kids arrive, draw a line on a poster. Write a 1 on the left end of the line, a 10 on the right, and a 5 in the middle. As kids arrive, ask them to pencil in their initials on the line.

**Say: If this past week was so awful you wish you'd slept through it, place your initials by the 1. If it was a great week you wish you could repeat, put your initials by the 10. Place your initials anywhere on the line that shows how you feel about this past week—except exactly on the 5. Because there's no such thing as a week that's exactly half good and half bad!**

After kids have signed in, give them 30 seconds each to explain why they placed their initials where they did. Be sure to include your own initials and explain your placement on the line. Kids will begin to express themselves more over time, and hearing their stories will help you adapt this lesson to make it relevant to your kids' lives.

### OPENING ACTIVITY-OPTION 2

#### CATCH ME IF YOU CAN

*Time: about 10 minutes*

*Supplies: none*

**Say: Today we're talking about lying. If you're like me, you've told a lie at some time in your life. Maybe more than once. We tell lies for several reasons. We lie to get out of trouble, or to get someone else in trouble. We lie to get something we want. And sometimes we lie to make people think of us in a certain way.**

**Let's see how well that last one works. I'm going to tell you three things about myself. Two of the things will be true and one will be a lie. See if you can tell which is the lie.**

Share things that kids aren't likely to know about you—things from your past, hobbies, details about your pets. Ask kids to guess. Then reveal which item was a lie.



Ask kids to circle up and think of three things they'll share from their own lives: two truths and one lie. Go around the circle, letting the group guess after each child shares.

When you're finished, discuss as a group:

- **What made it hard to guess the lie? What made it easy?**
- **How do you feel when you find out someone lied to you?**
- **How do you feel when you tell a lie? Why?**

Say: **I remember a time I told a lie and got caught. Here's what happened ...** (Briefly share about a time you told a lie and were found out.)

Then say: **Now it's your turn. Everyone find a partner and share about a time you told a lie and got caught in that lie. Tell what the lie was and tell what happened.**

Allow time for kids to share their stories with partners. Then say: **My goal wasn't to help you become better liars! God wants us to tell the truth, not lies! I wanted you to see how easy it is to lie ... and how it feels when you're caught in a lie. We'll be talking today about someone who lied and why telling that lie was a big mistake. But first let's play a game.**

### AGE-ALERT TIPS

**Younger children** may need help with this. Pair them with **older children** who can help them, or appoint one **older child** as the helper to move around to help all the **younger children** in turn.

## Big Mistakes Game

### TALL TALE CIRCLE

*Time: about 10 minutes*

*Supplies: stopwatch*

Ask children to stand in a circle, with several feet of space between them. Say: **You're in the Tall Tale Circle. That means I'm going to start a story—a tall tale—and you're going to finish it by each adding a bit to the story.**

For instance, I might say, "Once a man was bitten by a dog. He ..."  
Someone else might add to the story by saying, "was bitten on the ankle, and the dog ..."  
Someone else might then add, "got sick because the man had mumps. The dog ..."

## 92 13 Very Big Mistakes People Made and What God Did about Them

The idea is to keep the story going in bits and pieces. By the time this story ends, the dog might be driving the man to the hospital!

Two rules: First, to add to the story, you have to jump into the circle, say your bit, and then jump back. Second, no one can jump in twice in a row. And third, there can't be more than four seconds of silence between bits, or we lose. Oh, that's three rules. I said there were just two rules, but ... I lied!

Our goal is to keep the story going for two minutes. Ready? Here's the start of our story: "There once was a man who lied about everything. He even lied about ..."

Keep an eye on the time and make a loud buzzer noise if four seconds pass between kids jumping in with story bits. Expect a few false starts before kids get the rhythm. When you've hit two minutes, jump in yourself and say, "And they all lived happily ever after!"

Have kids sit and, as a group, discuss:

- What's the difference between lying and making up a story for fun?
- It's lying if you tell someone something that isn't true—when you're trying to be sneaky on purpose. For example, you break the lamp, your mom asks if you did it, and you say you didn't. But how about if nothing has been said—your mom just thinks the dog broke the lamp and you don't tell her it was really you? You don't say anything. Is that lying too? Why or why not?
- Which do you think is worse: to say something that isn't true or to let someone believe a lie and not tell the person the truth?

Thank kids for sharing their thoughts. Then say: **To us, one lie may seem worse than another, but to God, a lie is a lie. He's a God of truth. God says, "I, the LORD, speak only what is true" (Isa. 45:19). So he doesn't like lying—any kind of lying. God wants us to tell the truth!**

### Big Mistakes Bible Story

#### FINAL CURTAIN

*Time: about 15 minutes*

*Supplies: handful of coins*

Read aloud Acts 5:1–10.

Then ask for volunteers to play the roles of Ananias, Sapphira, and Peter. Give Ananias the coins. If you have more than three children, have the rest play the role of church members.

**Say: I'm going to read again the account in the Bible. Act out your parts as I describe what happened.**

Read Acts 5:1–10, pausing to let kids act out their roles, including Ananias handing over some of the coins when instructed to do so. Encourage Ananias and Sapphira to play up their death scenes to the max.

After you've finished reading, applaud your actors' efforts and, as a group, discuss:

- Lies have consequences (consequences are things that happen because of what you did). Lies can hurt feelings, end friendships, and even break up families. The consequence for Ananias and Sapphira was death. Why do you think God gave such a big consequence for their lie?
- What's a consequence you've seen come from a lie?
- If someone tells a lie and there's no consequence—if nobody finds out—do you think he got away with it? Why or why not?

**Say: Some people are really good liars, but they don't get away with their lies. God knows, and God wants us to always tell the truth!**

### CLOSING PRAYER

#### NO LIE PRAYER

*Time: about 5 minutes*

*Supplies: Bible*

**Say: God is a God of truth. He hates lies, though he loves and is willing to forgive liars. Isn't it great that even when we do things that don't make God happy, he's still willing to love and forgive us?**

Today I'd like us to say things that are true about God. For instance, it's true that God is loving. It's true that Jesus died for our sins.

- What else is true about God?

## 94 13 Very Big Mistakes People Made and What God Did about Them

Allow kids to contribute truths about God. When they've run out of things to say, continue. Say: **Now let me tell you some things that God says are true about everyone who follows Jesus.** Say each item below and also read the verses, pausing to let the truth sink in.

- **You are God's child.** (John 1:12)
- **You are Jesus's friend.** (John 15:15)
- **You have a home in heaven.** (Phil. 3:20)
- **You've been specially designed by God.** (Eph. 2:10)

All of what we've just said—about God and about us—is true. Part of the reason we pray to God is because those things are true. Let's pray.

Pray: Thank you, God, for your truth. Help us to believe the truth about you and about ourselves. In Jesus's name, amen.

### EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY-OPTION 1

#### MATH MASTER

*Time: about 10 minutes*

*Supplies: none*

Have kids sit on the floor, in pairs, facing each other. Tell children to hold their fists in front of them.

Say: **Time for a little instant math. I'm going to count to three. When I say "three" I want you to hold up any number of fingers on your hands—perhaps three fingers on one hand and two on the other. Your job is to total up how many fingers you're holding up and how many fingers your partner is holding up. The first person in your pair to call out the total number of fingers is the Math Master for that round.**

Play several rounds, and then have partners shift so kids can play with another partner for several rounds. As a group, discuss:

- **What made this game hard or easy?**
- **Do you find it easier or harder to make decisions when you have to decide very quickly? Why?**
- **If you called out a number that was wrong, do you think that was a lie? Why or why not?**

Say: **God wants us to tell the truth, but he knows we make mistakes. And he knows our hearts. Let's tell the truth every chance we get.**

**EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY-OPTION 2****ME TOO COIN TOSS**

*Time: about 10 minutes*

*Supplies: pennies (10 per child and 10 for yourself), metal bowl*

Note: The metal bowl adds fun to the game because it will clang when a penny is tossed in.

Seat kids in a circle on the floor. Join them. Place the metal bowl in the center of the circle. Hold your 10 pennies, and give each child 10 pennies.

Explain that you'll share a true statement about yourself as you toss a penny into the bowl. Any kid for whom that statement is also true gets to throw a penny into the bowl. Explain that you'll then go around the circle with each child sharing a true statement about himself (and tossing in a penny), with everyone else about whom that statement is true also tossing a penny into the bowl. Say: **The object of the game is to be the first to get rid of all your pennies—and not to lie along the way.**

You start by naming a vacation destination you've gone to that children have likely visited too: **"I've been to \_\_\_\_\_."** That way some kids will be able to toss in a penny on the first turn. Then start around the circle. Suggest a couple of example statements for the kids, like "I have a dog" or "My favorite color is green." Continue play until someone wins. Play another round if time permits.

As a group, discuss:

- **When are you most tempted to lie? Why?**
- **When you're tempted to lie, what can you do? What should you do?**

Say: **God wants us to tell the truth, and he'll help us do it. Let's always ask for his help!**

**EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY-OPTION 3****INQUIRING MINDS WANT TO KNOW**

*Time: about 5 minutes*

*Supplies: none*

Gather kids in a circle. Ask: **People lie all the time. Why do you think God makes such a big deal about it?** (Look up Col. 3:9 and Titus 1:2.)



# The Rich Young Man's **Big Mistake**

**The Point:** God wants us to put him first.

**Scripture Connect:** Luke 18:18–30

**Supplies for all Session 12 activities options:** pencils, prepared poster, long rope or twine (enough for about 3 feet of rope per child—but don't cut the rope), aluminum foil (several feet per child), index cards (7 per child), Bible, \$1 bills (1 per child—but you'll get them back!), paper, paper money from your wallet, food item with a “best when used by” date

## **The Basics for Leaders**

The guy had it all. He was young, rich, and confident enough to ask Jesus a question. But even with all he had, he had nothing because he didn't put God first.

Having money wasn't a sin in itself. The young man's problem was in letting his money get between himself and following Jesus.

Letting *anything* get between us and following Jesus is a big mistake—one that can make it almost impossible for God to use us.

Is God first in your own life? Or is he coming in second behind your hobbies, your work or school, or your money (even just the desire for money)? As you experience this session with your kids, think about the importance God has in *your* life as well as in the lives of the kids.

## 98 13 Very Big Mistakes People Made and What God Did about Them

### OPENING ACTIVITY—OPTION 1

#### HOWZITGOIN’

*Time: about 5 minutes, depending on attendance*

*Supplies: pencils, prepared poster*

Before kids arrive, draw a line on a poster. Write a 1 on the left end of the line, a 10 on the right, and a 5 in the middle. As kids arrive, ask them to pencil in their initials on the line.

**Say: If this past week was so awful you wish you’d slept through it, place your initials by the 1. If it was a great week you wish you could repeat, put your initials by the 10. Place your initials anywhere on the line that shows how you feel about this past week—except exactly on the 5. Because there’s no such thing as a week that’s exactly half good and half bad!**

After kids have signed in, give them 30 seconds each to explain why they placed their initials where they did. Be sure to include your own initials and explain your placement on the line. Kids will begin to express themselves more over time, and hearing their stories will help you adapt this lesson to make it relevant to your kids’ lives.

### OPENING ACTIVITY—OPTION 2

#### DON’T FALL!

*Time: about 10 minutes*

*Supplies: long rope or twine (enough to allow about 3 feet of rope per child—but don’t cut the rope)*

Stretch out the length of rope on the floor in a straight line. Ask children to stand on the rope with both feet as they face you.

**Say: Let’s pretend you’re tightrope walkers. The rope isn’t really on the floor. It’s stretched between two buildings, five floors up from the ground. And the guys with the nets forgot to come in today, so if you step off the rope, you’ll break every bone in your body!**

**Here’s what I need you to do: work together to line up from tallest to shortest, but don’t step off the rope!**

Pause as kids work together to line up. Then say: **Wait! I meant line up in alphabetical order by first name. If you’re named Aaron you’ll be on the left. Zebediah will be on the other end. Do that, please.**

Pause as kids line up again. Then say: **I’m sorry! This is so embarrassing! I meant line up by birthday, from January 1 to December 31.**



Pause as kids line up one more time. Then drop this zinger: **Uh-oh. I got one more thing wrong. The rope wasn't really strung up from roof to roof. It's on the floor, so it's safe to step off and join me over here in a circle.** After kids join you, discuss as a group:

- **What made this game hard or easy?**
- **How did it feel to have other people in your way?**

Say: **I remember a time I needed to get somewhere and someone got in my way. It was ...** (Briefly tell about a time this happened to you. Model the sort of story you want kids to share.)

Then say: **Your turn now. Find a partner and tell about a time someone was in your way when you needed to get somewhere. Tell what happened and how you felt.**

After kids have had time to share with their partners, get their attention. Say: **Thanks for sharing. When someone or something gets in our way, we usually don't like it. I don't want anything between me and the hospital if I have to get there. And when you have to go to the bathroom, it's no fun to find a line of people waiting ahead of you! When we want to do something but someone or something is in our way, it can even be dangerous.**

Today we're going to dig into a time when a person learned there was something between him and where he needed to be. But first, let's do some sculpting!

### **Big Mistakes Game**

#### **CROWN ME**

*Time: about 10 minutes*

*Supplies: aluminum foil (several feet per child)*

Give each child a length of aluminum foil. Say: **News flash! We've just discovered that you are all crown princes and princesses of the tiny nation of Limmelock. The royal crowns—which are covered with jewels—are being sent, but for now you'll have to make your own. Take a few minutes and make the coolest crown you can with the precious silver I've just given you. Extra points for pointy tops and fake diamonds!**

Allow several minutes for kids to craft crowns. Encourage them to wear their crowns while they circle up. Discuss:

- **How would it change your life if you found out you were rich and famous?**

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- Many of people want to be rich and famous. Why do you think they do?
- What do you think you'd have to give up if you were rich and famous?
- Would you rather be rich or happy? Why?

Say: Thanks for sharing your thoughts. I have another news flash, by the way. Yes, as a royal person you're totally rich now, but it seems that being rich is a problem for you. Ask:

- What problems might you have if you were rich?

Say: Thanks for sharing your thoughts. Put your crowns aside, and let's find out why being rich was a problem for a guy who met Jesus.

### Big Mistakes Bible Story

#### PRICE TAGS

*Time: about 15 minutes*

*Supplies: index cards (2 per child), pencils, Bible*

Ask kids to join you in a circle, seated on the floor. Give each child two index cards and a pencil.

Instruct kids to write on the front of one card how much all their stuff is worth. If they have a bike worth 100 dollars, figure that in. Plus their clothes are worth some money, and then there's sports equipment or musical instruments. Tell them it's not important they get an exact number; close is close enough.

When they've finished, continue. Say: **Now on the back of that card, do the math to double that amount, because you probably forgot something.** (pause) **Now double that amount again because you forgot something else, that's why.** (pause) **Now add one million dollars to your number.** (pause) **Now go back to the front of the card, cross out what you first wrote, and write the new, bigger number there.** (pause)

It's nice to have lots of money. It means you don't have to depend on others to give you things. It means you can get the stuff you want without having to wait. It's fun! But it also means you're sort of like a rich guy who came to Jesus with a question. Listen to this ...

#### AGE-ALERT TIPS

If you have equal numbers of **younger and older children**, pair the **older** with the **younger**. If the group is mostly **younger children**, you can guide them as a group.

Read aloud Luke 18:18–23. Then discuss as a group:

- **What would you say if I told you to give away all that money on your card? Why?**
- **What would you say if Jesus told you to do it? Why?**
- **Do you think Jesus means for all rich people to give away all their money? Why or why not?**

Say: **Jesus never said that all rich people have to give away everything they own. But that's what he told this man to do and the man wouldn't do it. On your other card write: treasure in heaven.** After they've done so, read again Luke 18:22 and ask:

- **What do you think Jesus meant by “treasure” in heaven?**

Help kids conclude that heavenly treasures aren't material things but things like real happiness, real safety, being forgiven, and living forever with Jesus in heaven. Thank kids for sharing their answers. Then say: **Now pick up your two cards.**

- **Which of those cards is worth the most: your big amount of money or treasure in heaven?**

After kids share their answers, continue. Say: **Please tear up the card that's worth the least.** (pause) **If you tore up the money card, I think you made a good choice. Pleasing God and being with him forever is something you can't buy. It's worth more than all the money in the world!**

**The rich young man loved money more than Jesus. He hung onto his money instead of trusting Jesus and following him—and that was a big mistake. You see, money is something that doesn't last. Even if we have millions of dollars, when we die it goes away. We can't take it with us. But eternal life in heaven is something we can't lose—it's forever.**

**It's hard to give up something we have now so God can bless us later. Even Jesus's followers didn't quite understand how that worked.**

Read aloud Luke 18:24–30.

- **What's something you've given up or you've seen someone else give up to better follow Jesus? Maybe it was giving up doing something with your friends that seemed fun but**

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was wrong. Or maybe you've given up buying something for yourself so you could give the money to help someone.

Allow kids to think about this and share. Then say: **God wants us to put him first—because that lasts forever. Don't let money or anything get in the way of following Jesus!**

### CLOSING PRAYER

#### **BETCHA CAN'T PRAYER**

*Time: about 5 minutes*

*Supplies: \$1 bills (1 per child—but you'll get them back!)*

Ask kids to stand against a wall, their heels tight against the wall. Place a one-dollar bill on the floor in front of each child. Ask the kids to lean down and pick up the dollar bills without bending their knees or moving their feet. They won't be able to do it.

Have kids kneel, pick up the dollar bills, and remain kneeling while you say: **It's easy to get excited about money and what it can buy. That's why money is dangerous; we can stay so excited about money that we start loving money more than Jesus. Then the money gets between us and God. It scoots God out of the way. Please hold the dollar bills you've picked up, and let's pray while we're still kneeling.**

Pray: **God, thank you for taking care of us. Help us to look to you for what we need and never trust money more than you. Help us always to put you first in our lives. In Jesus's name, amen.**

Ask kids to stand and pass the dollar bills back to you. Say: **Yes, you have to give the money back. I don't want you to be tempted like that rich young man!**

### EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY-OPTION 1

#### **MAKING MONEY**

*Time: about 10 minutes*

*Supplies: paper, pencils, paper money from your wallet*

Give kids each a sheet of paper and ask them to draw a one-million-dollar bill on one side of the paper. Show them paper money from your wallet as a sample, but tell them they can make any changes they'd like to their bills. Give them two minutes to complete their bills.

When time is up, have kids trade their papers with someone else and then, on the back of those one-million-dollar bills, write (or draw) how they'd spend the money.

Say: **This time you'll have just one minute. Write (or draw) clearly—someone else will read what you've written.**

After a minute has passed, ask kids to trade bills back with the person who drew the front of the bill. Say: **Quickly look at what your partners wrote and then say to each other: "Looking at your paper, I think you like \_\_\_\_\_."**

After kids talk together, draw their attention to you.

- **Here's a question for all of us: what did you find on your list that might show that your partner loves and follows Jesus?**

After kids share, say: **How we spend our money says a lot about what we think is important. That's true for grown-ups, and that's true for kids too. If you spend all your money on yourself, maybe your money is getting between you and Jesus.**

**Don't feel bad if your list didn't have "give money to the church" or "take care of hungry people" on it—lots of grown-ups wouldn't write those things either. But let's never make the same mistake as the rich young man: letting money become more important than Jesus. God wants us to put him first.**

Collect your money and the pencils. Encourage kids to take their one-million-dollar bills home and place them somewhere as a reminder that Jesus is more important than money.

## EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY-OPTION 2

### PERISHABLE

*Time: about 10 minutes*

*Supplies: index cards (5 per child), pencils, food item with a "best when used by" date on it*

### AGE-ALERT TIPS

**Younger children** can simply put a big X on each card to show that the item won't last.

Hold up the food item and point out the "best when used by" date. Say: **The food in this container is perishable. That means it will someday spoil and have to be thrown out. It's not meant to last forever.**

**And neither are other things we have. Someday you'll outgrow your favorite clothes. That giant TV you love to watch will someday quit working. The bike you saved and saved to buy will someday be a pile of rust.**

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What lasts forever are people—not things. God created us to last so that even when our bodies die, we can still be with him someday in heaven. **But our stuff? That’s all perishable; it won’t last forever.**

Give each kid five index cards to make “perishable” tags and then place the tags on perishable items in the room: chairs, tables, even walls.

Then take kids on a quick tour of the room. If time permits, the group can chat about how long some items might last. Then say: **See? It’s all perishable. Even this building will one day be gone.**

- **How does it feel knowing that nothing is made to last forever?**
- **How does it feel to know that you were made to last forever?** (Be sure kids understand that our bodies are perishable but that we’ll get new ones.)
- **The rich young man had a lot of perishable stuff. He hung onto that instead of letting it go and hanging onto Jesus. What can you do now to help you not make that mistake when you’re a grown-up?** (Steer the discussion toward the idea of being happy with few things rather than asking for more.)

After kids have answered, say: **The rich young man made a big mistake, and we don’t know if he ever changed his mind and decided to put Jesus first. I hope so, and I hope with all my heart that you all decide to put Jesus first too.**

### EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY–OPTION 3

#### INQUIRING MINDS WANT TO KNOW

*Time: about 5 minutes*

*Supplies: none*

Gather kids in a circle. Ask: **The rich young man put money first. Money got in the way of his following Jesus. What other things might we let get in the way? What things might we start loving more than Jesus?**

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# The Disciples' **Big Mistake**

**The Point:** Jesus loves children.

**Scripture Connect:** Luke 18:15–17

**Supplies for all Session 13 activities options:** pencils, prepared poster, apples (1 per child), access to kitchen sink, paper towels, sheets of card stock or cardboard (1 per child), tape, Bible, 6-foot length of rope (or twine), paper, markers, crayons

## **The Basics for Leaders**

The disciples had a full-access pass to the best show in town.

They were there when Jesus did miracles, when he taught, when he connected with the crowds. And they decided they'd keep Jesus from being bothered by unimportant people, people like ... children.

But keeping kids from Jesus was a big mistake. Jesus loves children. He did then—and he does now! Jesus even pointed to kids as an example of what it means to have faith.

During all these sessions you've led, you've *not* made the mistake Jesus's disciples made. You've let God use you to draw children closer to him.

Thanks for being faithful!

Thanks for loving kids as Jesus does!

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### OPENING ACTIVITY—OPTION 1

#### HOWZITGOIN’

*Time: about 5 minutes, depending on attendance*

*Supplies: pencils, prepared poster*

Before kids arrive, draw a line on a poster. Write a 1 on the left end of the line, a 10 on the right, and a 5 in the middle. As kids arrive, ask them to pencil in their initials on the line.

**Say: If this past week was so awful you wish you’d slept through it, place your initials by the 1. If it was a great week you wish you could repeat, put your initials by the 10. Place your initials anywhere on the line that shows how you feel about this past week—except exactly on the 5. Because there’s no such thing as a week that’s exactly half good and half bad!**

After kids have signed in, give them 30 seconds each to explain why they placed their initials where they did. Be sure to include your own initials and explain your placement on the line. Kids will begin to express themselves more over time, and hearing their stories will help you adapt this lesson to make it relevant to your kids’ lives.

### OPENING ACTIVITY—OPTION 2

#### WHAT’S STOPPING YOU?

*Time: about 10 minutes*

*Supplies: pencils, apples (1 per child), access to kitchen sink, paper towels*

Ask children to sit in a row against one wall of your room. Clear out the obstacles between them and where you want them to go—a finish line.

Explain that you were going to set up an obstacle course—a course where you put things in their way—but you didn’t have time to string ropes and dig ditches in the floor. So instead, you’ll just toss a few pencils on the floor to be obstacles. Do so, making sure that the pencils are parallel with the finish line.

**Say: That doesn’t look like a very difficult obstacle course. I think you could get around those. But ... you’re not running the course. Your apples are!**



Give each child an apple. Ask that, on your signal, children push the apples across the floor to the goal, going around the obstacles—with their noses. Note: If girls are wearing skirts, adapt this activity.

Play several rounds. Then collect the pencils and apples. As kids gather together on the floor in a circle, you (or a helper) can wash the apples at the kitchen sink and dry them with the paper towels. Hand out the clean apples. As kids eat their apples, discuss as a group:

- **What made this obstacle course easy or hard?**
- **When you're trying to do something and you run into obstacles, how do you get around them? Or how quickly do you usually give up?**

Say: **I remember a time that I ran into obstacles when I was trying to do something, and I decided not to give up. That was when ...** (Briefly tell about a time you ran into obstacles and overcame them.)

Then say: **Your turn! Find a partner and tell about a time you ran into obstacles when you wanted to do something. Tell your partner how you got around the obstacles—or how quickly you gave up.** (Give ideas to get kids started, if needed.)

Allow time for kids to share, and then draw their attention back to you. Say: **We're going to hear today about some parents who ran into obstacles. But first let's play a game.**

## Big Mistakes Game

### I'M SO LOVABLE

*Time: about 10 minutes*

*Supplies: sheets of card stock or cardboard (1 per child) pencils, tape*

Give each child a sheet of card stock and a pencil. Ask kids to write their first names at the top of their cards. As you go around the room, taping each child's card to his or her back, explain the rules: **On my signal, you'll write on the back of others what you think**

### AGE-ALERT TIPS

Though **younger children** can draw pictures in some cases, you or **older children** who finish first can help **younger children** write any words they need to write. **Younger children** will also need help reading what's been written about themselves.

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is lovable about them. (Provide a few examples.) All comments must be nice. This isn't a time to be funny. We'll take about two minutes to do this, so keep your notes short. You want to write on everyone's back if you can.

After two minutes, have kids reach around and grab their cards from their backs and read what's written. Ask kids to join you in a circle and, as a group, discuss:

- Which did you enjoy most: writing about others or reading what they wrote about you? Why?
- What, if anything, did you find surprising about this activity?
- How often do people tell you that you're lovable?
- Some people get embarrassed when others give them a compliment (tell them something nice). How do you feel when someone gives you a compliment? Why?

Say: It's nice to know we're loved. One way we know is when people tell us. Another way people let us know they love us is by how they treat us and whether they want to be our friends. Let's see who Jesus wanted to be friends with.

### Big Mistakes Bible Story

#### BODYGUARDS

*Time: about 15 minutes*

*Supplies: Bible*

Ask the two largest kids to join you standing. The rest of the children will sit on the floor in a circle some distance away.

Say: I'm deputizing the two of you who are standing to be bodyguards. Famous singers who get bothered by fans sometimes have bodyguards to keep the fans away. World leaders like kings and presidents have bodyguards too, and so does anyone who doesn't want to be bothered.

When Jesus was on earth, he didn't have bodyguards. He wanted people to come to him—even people who were sick or poor. But then his closest followers, the disciples, decided they'd be his bodyguards. Let's see how that worked out.

Those of you who are seated, you'll play the part of Jesus. You bodyguards, you'll play the part of the disciples. As I read, I'll play the part of some parents who brought their kids to see Jesus. Everyone, act out your parts as you hear them.

Read aloud Luke 18:15. Move to your left or right trying to get to Jesus. Encourage the bodyguards to block you. Play it up, but let them win, and encourage them to scold you for trying to bother Jesus.

Continue reading verse 16 and pause so kids can act out what you've read. When you've finished reading, join the rest of the circle. Have the bodyguards do the same. Say: **Let's talk about what just happened.**

- **Bodyguards, how did you feel about what happened?**
- **Those of you playing the part of Jesus, how did you feel about what happened?**

Say: **Jesus's followers made a big mistake. But Jesus showed his followers that he loved children, and then he said something about children.**

Read verse 17 aloud. Say: **Jesus says kids can receive the kingdom of God. Lots of Bible teachers think he meant that kids can fully trust God and have a strong faith in him.**

- **What do you think it means to fully trust God and have a strong faith in God?**

Say: **When we have faith, we believe in something. But believing in something doesn't make it true. When we're little kids we believe things that we don't believe later. For instance, when I was a little child I believed ...** (Briefly share something you once believed that you don't believe now. Warning: Don't reveal anything about Santa Claus! Stick with something like the world being flat or that a monster lived under your bed!)

- **What's something you used to believe that you don't believe now?** (Warn older kids not to talk about Santa!)

After kids share their stories, say: **We change what we believe about some things as we grow older because we learn that some things we believed aren't true. But we never have to change what we believe**

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about Jesus—he’s God’s Son and the only one who can save us from our sins. Those things are true.

And we don’t have to change what we believe about this either: Jesus loves children. He loves you with his whole heart. Jesus wants to be your friend—forever.

### CLOSING PRAYER

#### ME TOO PRAYER

*Time: about 5 minutes*

*Supplies: Bible*

Ask kids to sit on the floor with a bit of space between them.

Say: **It’s easy to forget how much Jesus loves us. We start thinking that he’ll love us just when we do the right things. Or maybe that he loves us because he has to, but he doesn’t really like us.**

Here’s the truth: Jesus loves you just as you are. He wants the best for you, and one thing that’s best for you is for you to love him and follow him so that you can live with him forever. There’s a verse in the Bible that reminds us of that truth.

Read aloud John 3:16. Say: **That proves Jesus loves the world, but he also loves me. Let me read that again.**

Read: **For God loved (your own name) so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that (your own name) who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.**

I’ll read that again. Please say your name out loud when I pause. We can all talk at the same time.

Read: **For God loved (pause) so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that (pause) who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.**

Jesus didn’t just love kids back in Bible times. He loves you now.

Pray: **God, thank you for your love. Thank you that you love each of us so much that you sent Jesus. Jesus, thank you for showing your disciples that you love kids just as much as you love grown-ups. And that kids can show grown-ups what it is to have faith. In Jesus’s name, amen.**

## EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY-OPTION 1

### HOW LOW CAN YOU GO?

*Time: about 10 minutes*

*Supplies: 6-foot length of rope (or twine)*

Ask two kids to each hold one end of the rope, stretch it out to its full length, and hold it at about waist height. Gather the other kids on one side of the rope and ask them to walk, wiggle, or crawl under the rope without touching it. Note: Not many kids? Tape one end of the rope to a doorframe and hold the other end yourself.

Play several rounds, lowering the rope each time. Eventually kids will be crawling beneath the rope. When you've lowered it so low they can't possibly clear it, gather kids together in a group. Say: **Jesus loves children. He came to earth to bring everyone closer to God—and that includes kids!**

- **You had to work really hard to get from one side of the rope to the other. How hard do you have to work to get to know Jesus?**
- **What might help you get even closer to Jesus?**
- **Who is someone in your family or circle of friends who needs to get to know Jesus? How can you help that person find out that Jesus loves him or her?**

Thank kids for sharing their thoughts.

## EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY-OPTION 2

### POSTER PEOPLE

*Time: about 10 minutes*

*Supplies: paper, pencils, markers, and crayons*

Set out the pencils, markers, and crayons. Give each child a sheet of paper.

Say: **Suppose Jesus was going to be here the next time we meet. We know Jesus wants to get to know everybody. What would you put on**

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a poster that might be hung up to get your friends to come and meet Jesus?

Tell kids they'll have three minutes to create their posters. When time is up, have kids circle up and discuss together:

- **Why did you put what you put on your posters?**
- **Why is it a good idea for kids to get to know Jesus—or does it not matter matter?**
- **Tell about how you got to know Jesus.**

Thank kids for sharing and then continue. Say: **Good news—Jesus will be here when we meet next time! I know that's true because Jesus said, "Where two or three gather together as my followers, I am there among them" (Matt. 18:20).**

So if Jesus loves kids (and he does!) and we know some kids who should meet Jesus, why not use our posters to invite them? I don't mean for you to hang your poster up at a store. I mean show it to a friend who should know Jesus. Say, "I was thinking about who I could invite. That's you. Will you come with me to our next meeting?"

**Who knows? God might help your friend want to come!**

Tell kids to take their posters home with them. Tell kids you'll pray for them to invite their friends.

### EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY—OPTION 3

#### INQUIRING MINDS WANT TO KNOW

*Time: about 5 minutes*

*Supplies: none*

Gather kids in a circle. Ask: **Does God love us because of who we are or does he love us despite who we are? What do you think?**

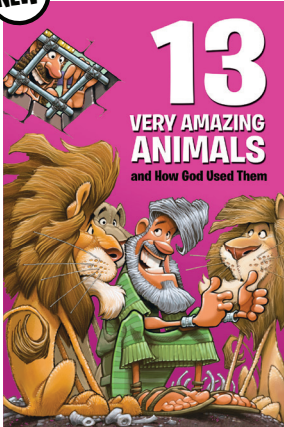
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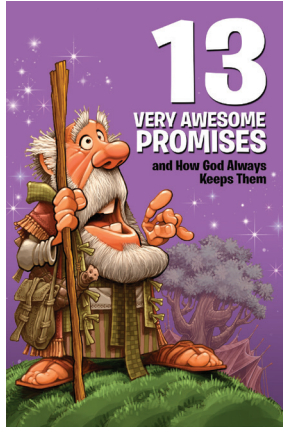
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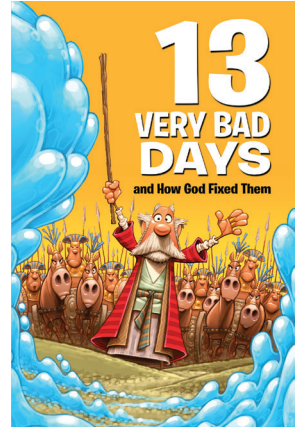
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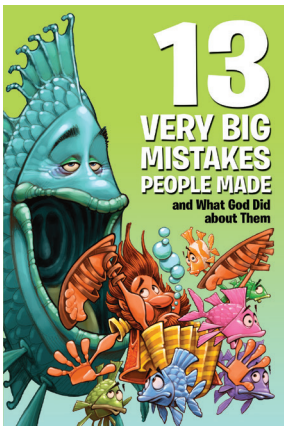
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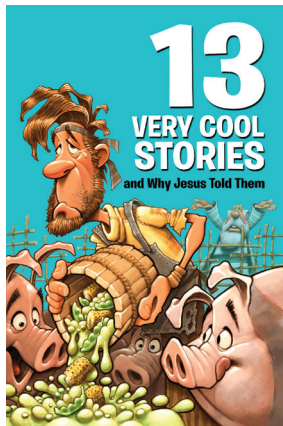
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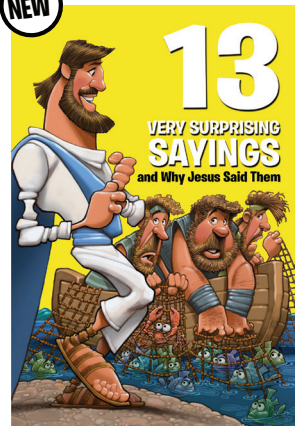
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