

# Small Group Leader Guide



THIS MONTH



## Today's Suggested Schedule

### Prelude: Setting the tone for the experience

See the Getting Ready pages at the end of this document for a detailed description of what you'll need for today. In the Prelude folder of your curriculum, you'll find a variety of other resources to help you prepare. Check out our Pinterest page here <https://bit.ly/447HSZi> for a visual on some of the activities.

### Small Group (15 minutes)

#### Social: Providing time for fun interaction

1. Opening Activity

### Large Group (35 minutes)

#### Worship: Inviting people to respond to God

#### Story: Communicating God's truth in engaging ways

- Opener
- Worship
- Bible Story (sections about God's Big Story are listed as optional)
- Prayer

### Small Group (25 minutes)

#### Groups: Creating a safe place to connect

1. Bible Story Review: Which Way Will I Go?
2. Application Activity: God Our Compass
3. Memory Verse Activity: Memory at Sea
4. Prayer Activity: Pray and Dismiss

#### Home: Prompting action beyond the experience

- Devotionals for Kids
- Parent Cue Card (print or email)
- [Parent Cue App](#) and [ParentCue.org](#)

✦ Need activities for a K-5th group? Check out the 2nd-3rd grade guide.

## Today's Bible Story

### Jonah

Jonah 1-3

#### Bottom Line

**God knows what's best.**

#### Memory Verse

**Those who trust in the LORD will receive new strength. They will fly as high as eagles. They will run and not get tired. They will walk and not grow weak.**

Isaiah 40:31 NIV



#### Inclusive Pro Tips

This leader guide is designed to be inclusive of children with a special need, learning difference, or disability who attend a group with their peers. See highlighted sections below for additional inclusive pro tips.

## SOCIAL

# Opening Activity



## What You Need

- ☐ Offering container
- ☐ Index cards
- ☐ Pencils

## ① What You Do

**Pray for your group before they arrive** → Pray for kids who will visit your group for the first time. Thank God for never giving up on you, even when you've tried to run or hide. Recall an age-appropriate story about a time when you felt like you were far from God, but He kept reaching for you! Ask God to remind each kid that His love isn't based on our performance. Pray that kids would be confident that He is with them at school, at home, on hard days, and on good days. Pray they would feel God's love chasing after them, even when they make bad choices.

1. Greet each kid by name with a fist bump, high-five, smile, or wave as they arrive!
2. Invite any kids who brought an offering to place it in the offering container.
3. Give each kid one index card and a pencil.
4. Say, "Think of a place you love to go to or something fun you love to do! You're going to write or draw it on your card. Just one idea per card!"
  - Provide examples to get them started, like "The beach," "a cousin's house," "playing on the playground," or "reading a book."
5. Collect all the cards, place them in a pile, and mix them up.

## Imagine Together

1. Instruct the kids to sit in a circle.
2. Mix up the index cards face down, and put them in a pile in the middle of the circle.
3. Explain how to play:
  - One kid will draw a card.
  - Without speaking, they'll act out what they think is on the card.
  - Everyone else will try to guess what they're doing or where they are!
4. Continue until everyone who wants to act has had a turn, or as time allows.

**Continued on the next page.** →

## Inclusive Pro Tips



Instead of writing, invite kids to quietly tell a leader their idea to write or draw it for them.

Give kids the option to pair up and act out the cards together.

## SOCIAL

# Opening Activity

**What You Need**

- ☐ Offering container
- ☐ Index cards
- ☐ Pencils

**Inclusive Pro Tips**

Instead of writing, invite kids to quietly tell a leader their idea to write or draw it for them.

Give kids the option to pair up and act out the cards together.

## ② What You Say

"It's fun to imagine all the places we can go and things we can do. Was it tricky acting out something that wasn't your idea? Some of the things we acted out might have felt easy, or even tricky! Especially when you're acting out something someone else came up with. Some of you had to guess, get creative, or just give it your best shot.

"Today, in our true story from the Bible, we'll learn about a guy named Jonah who didn't want to do what God asked him to do. He had his own idea of what was best. But guess what? God always knows what's best! Not just for Jonah, but for the people around him—and for us too! Let's go find out more!"

**Transition →** Lead your group to the Large Group area.

GROUPS 1/4

# Which Way Will I Go?

## Bible Story Review

### Faith Skills

Hear from God

Pray to God

Talk about God

Live for God

### What You Need

- ☐ "Pick a Door" Activity Page
- ☐ "God's Way Q&A" Activity Page
- ☐ Floor tape



## ① What You Do

### Before you begin:

1. Use floor tape to mark a start line.
2. A few feet from the start line, tape down Set 1 of the "Pick a Door" Activity Page cards side by side like doorways. (There will be three doors, and all will be numbered 1 for Set 1. Mix the door with the correct answer randomly in the arrangement.)
3. Repeat this for Sets 2-7, placing each set a few feet away from the last to form a straight line.
4. Mark a finish line at the end of all seven sets of three doors.

### Play Together:

1. Gather the kids behind the start line.
2. Say, "This game is called Pick a Door! At each set of doors, I will ask a question about Jonah's story, and you have to decide which door he chose in the Bible Story to move forward."
3. As the kids get to each set of three doors, first read the question, and then read the three door choices from the "God's Way Q&A" Activity Page. Be sure to follow the order of the door choices that you placed the doors on the floor so the correct answer is included randomly.
4. Invite the kids to point to the door of their choice.
5. Once the kids agree on the correct door, invite everyone to step over that set of doors and move to the next set.  
→ NOTE: Encourage discussion by asking, "Why do you think that's the right door?"
6. Once you reach the finish line, celebrate the kids and gather them to discuss!

Continued on the next page. →

### Inclusive Pro Tips



For an option with less movement, perform this activity seated and have kids point to their door choice instead of walking.

GROUPS 1/4

# Which Way Will I Go?

## Bible Story Review

### Faith Skills

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### What You Need

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- ☐ Floor tape



## ② What You Say

"What an adventure! Jonah's journey to Nineveh was one wild ride. God gave Jonah a mission to go to the city of Nineveh and tell them to turn from their sins, but Jonah went the opposite way. LITERALLY! He jumped on a boat, and God brought a giant storm. When Jonah was thrown into the sea by the people on the boat, God sent a big fish to rescue him! And after three days, Jonah finally listened to God. He traveled to Nineveh and shared God's message. And the people of Nineveh actually listened and changed!"

"Why did Jonah not want to tell the Ninevites to turn from their sins? Well, the Bible tells us. Jonah said this to God:

*"I knew that you are gracious. You are tender and kind. You are slow to get angry. You are full of love. You are a God who takes pity on people."*  
(JONAH 4:2 NIRV)

"Jonah knew that God is kind. He knew that God would forgive the Ninevites if they turned from their sins. And that's exactly what happened!"

"Do you know what Jonah's journey tells us about God? Well, God knows what's best! We should always follow God's direction. God wanted to give an entire group of people the chance to live better if they just turned from their ways! And God wanted to give Jonah a chance to share that message with them.

"But even when Jonah decided he himself didn't want to follow God's ways, God didn't give up on him—and God won't give up on you either! Even when Jonah wasn't listening, God was still patient and kind in saving him and redirecting him.

"Even when things feel confusing or you feel like you don't understand what God is asking you to do, you can always be confident that God knows what's best! You might not see the full picture, but you can take a deep breath and trust God. He is good. His ways are good. He is always working for your good. So even if you don't understand, you can always hold His hand and trust His heart. He is doing something good, that is the only thing He can do! Remember: God knows what's best. Always!"

### Inclusive Pro Tips



For an option with less movement, perform this activity seated and have kids point to their door choice instead of walking.

## GROUPS 2/4

# God Our Compass



## Application Review

### Faith Skills

Hear from God

Pray to God

Talk about God

Live for God

### What You Need

- ☐ Compasses
- ☐ "Confidence Prompts" Activity Page
- ☐ Device for Playing Worship Music

## ① What You Do

1. Give each kid a compass.
2. Teach them how to find North, South, East, and West in your group area.

### Explore Together:

1. Explain how to play:
  - Say, "Each direction in the room represents a different choice. Like Jonah, we sometimes follow other things or our feelings, but we want to grow in confidence by following God's way! God's ways are best because God knows what's best."
2. Play upbeat worship music and invite the kids to dance around as they hear the music.
3. At random, stop the music and call out "Freeze!"
4. Read a scenario from the "Confidence Prompts" Activity Page and discuss it.
  - Ask: "Would this be tough for you to do?"
5. Tell the kids to move in the direction you share for that prompt.
6. Once the kids have moved in the direction of the prompt, start the music again.
7. Stop the music randomly, direct the kids to "freeze!," call out the next scenario from the "Confidence Prompts" Activity Page, and discuss it.
8. Continue in the same manner until you've read all of the "Confidence Prompts" on the Activity Page.

### After the game:

**Make It Personal** → Share an age-appropriate time you had to trust God's way instead of your own. Did you apologize to a friend even when you didn't want to? Were you honest when it was hard? How was God's way better than what you wanted to do?

Continued on the next page. →

### Inclusive Pro Tips



For a version with less movement, invite the kids to point to the direction seated in a chair or on the floor.

## GROUPS 2/4

# God Our Compass



## Application Review

### Faith Skills

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### What You Need

- ☐ Compasses
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### Inclusive Pro Tips



For a version with less movement, invite the kids to point to the direction seated in a chair or on the floor.

## ② What You Say

"Do you remember what Jonah did when God told him to go to Nineveh? He went in the *complete opposite direction!* God gave Jonah a very clear direction, and Jonah didn't want to go. He ran away on a boat, tried to hide, and ended up in the belly of a big fish! But even then, God gave Jonah another chance. That's how patient and loving God is.

"Today, we pretended to travel with our compasses to wherever God was leading us. Not running away, but choosing to have confidence in God's way!

"Remember, God's way is always best. It's always best to be honest because you show you're a trustworthy person. It's always best to be kind because God loves and values everyone, and they'll feel that love and value when you are kind. It's always best to forgive others, because unforgiveness does bad stuff to your heart.

"And when we live out God's ways, we're doing something even more amazing—we are being like Him! God is kind! God is truthful! God is loving! And God is fair. When we follow God's ways, not only does our life go better, and the world around us is better, but the people in our lives see Jesus!

"You don't have to get it right every time. But remember, you don't have to do it alone. When you choose to follow Jesus, His very Spirit moves inside of you to help you follow His ways. Pause and ask God to help you follow His ways and do what's right! Remember, God knows what's best!"

## GROUPS 3/4

# Memory at Sea



## Memory Verse Activity

### Faith Skills

Hear from God

Pray to God

Talk about God

Live for God

### What You Need

- ☐ Bibles marked at Isaiah 40:31
- ☐ "Memory at Sea" Activity Page
- ☐ Plastic cups
- ☐ Blue plastic tablecloth
- ☐ Floor tape
- ☐ *Optional: Timer*
- ☐ *Optional: Swedish Fish®*



### Inclusive Pro Tips

For a seated option with less movement:

- Set up the activity on a table.
- Let the kids take turns selecting a cup and assembling the verse from their seats.

## ① What You Do

1. Lay the blue tablecloth flat on a table or the floor.
2. Place each "Memory at Sea" Activity Page card in a cup. Place each cup upside down, on the tablecloth.
3. Place several empty cups upside down on the tablecloth.  
→ *Optional: Hide a few Swedish Fish® under random cups for added ocean fun!*
4. Mark a starting line with floor tape a few feet away from the tablecloth.

### Move Together:

1. Divide the kids into two teams.
2. Give each team a Bible marked at Isaiah 40:31.
3. Before you begin the game, instruct the kids to read the verse together several times.
4. Pick a team to go first.
5. Instruct that team to stand behind the starting line.
6. Explain how to play:
  - At your signal, one kid from the team runs to the "ocean," lifts a cup, and returns it to their team.
  - If a cup has a verse card, they keep the verse card. (The can leave the Swedish Fish® there too!) If it's empty, they leave it and try again next turn.
  - Once all the cards with the pieces of the verse are collected, instruct the team that went to work together to assemble the verse in the correct order.
7. Reset the cards and cups (and the Swedish Fish®) randomly, and repeat with the second team.
8. *Optional: Set a timer and let the groups race to see who gets the best time!*
9. *Optional: Collect the Swedish Fish® that were used during the game and dispose of them. Hand out an individual package of Swedish Fish® for kids to take home!*

### Talk Together:

1. What does Isaiah 40:31 tell us about God?
  - Possible answers: God gives us new strength! When we trust God, He lifts us up like an eagle and He helps us run and not get tired.
2. What do you know about eagles?
  - Possible answers: Eagles fly over 100 miles a day without flapping their wings. Eagles can fly above storms!
3. Why do you think God compares trusting Him to flying like an eagle?
  - Possible answers: God's strength helps us to have confidence no matter what's going on around us!
4. How do you think God gives us strength today?
  - Possible answers: Through the Holy Spirit, through people who help us, through prayer, and through God's Word.

Continued on the next page. →



## GROUPS 3/4

# Memory at Sea



## Memory Verse Activity

### Faith Skills

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### What You Need

- ☐ Bibles marked at Isaiah 40:31
- ☐ "Memory at Sea" Activity Page
- ☐ Plastic cups
- ☐ Blue plastic tablecloth
- ☐ Floor tape
- ☐ Optional: Timer
- ☐ Optional: Swedish Fish®



### Inclusive Pro Tips

For a seated option with less movement:

- Set up the activity on a table.
- Let the kids take turns selecting a cup and assembling the verse from their seats.

## ② What You Say

"Our verse comes from the book of Isaiah. God's people were feeling tired, confused, and unsure of what would happen next. But God gave them **(AND US!)** a BIG promise: when we trust Him, He gives us new strength.

*Read, from the NIV:*

*But those who trust in the LORD*

*will receive new strength.*

*They will fly as high as eagles. —Isaiah 40:31a*

*Read, from the NIV:*

*But those who hope in the LORD*

*will renew their strength.*

*They will soar on wings like eagles. —Isaiah 40:31a*

"Did you know eagles can fly over 100 miles in one day without flapping their wings? They soar super-high in the sky by catching wind currents and letting the wind do the work! They go way above storms instead of flying through them! How incredible is that?"

"God wants to lift us up and give us confidence, no matter what we face. Jonah had a hard time trusting that God knew best. In fact, he ran in the exact opposite direction that God told him to go! Pray and ask God to give you confidence through the Holy Spirit to always follow His way. Isaiah 40:31 reminds us to TRUST God no matter what. God knows what's best, and He'll help you soar just like an eagle!"

GROUPS 4/4

# Pray and Dismiss

## Prayer Activity

### Faith Skills

Hear from God

Pray to God

Talk about God

Live for God

### What You Need

- ☐ Markers or pencils
- ☐ Large bowl or basket
- ☐ Index cards
- ☐ Bible marked at John 14:6



## ① What You Do

1. Gather the kids together in a circle.
2. Give each kid:
  - One index card
  - A marker or pencil
3. Place the large bowl or basket in the center of the circle.

### Reflect Together:

1. Say, "Jonah had a tough time trusting that God knew best. Sometimes we do too but God invites us to trust Him anyway! God promises to give us strength even when it's hard."
2. Invite kids to write or draw one thing that's been hard to trust God with lately.
  - Maybe they are feeling anxious about schoolwork or a decision they have to make. Or maybe they're struggling to feel confident around their friends.
3. Take a moment to discuss what it means to make a decision to follow Jesus! If you need help with what to say, ask your ministry leader or use the talking points below.

*"Did you know the biggest way we can trust God is by choosing to follow Jesus? (Read John 14:6 from the Bible.) Jesus came to make a way for us to be close friends with God, FOREVER! We don't have to earn it, we just have to believe that God's Son, Jesus, gave His life for us! If you've never made the decision to follow Jesus and you want to, you can write that on your card too. If you do, I'd love to talk with you and help you know what that means."*

4. Once everyone is finished, direct the kids to fold their paper once and drop it in the bowl.
5. As they drop it in the bowl, encourage them to say, "God, I trust You. You know what's best!"
6. Close in prayer.

## ② Prayer

"God, we are so thankful that You know what's best even when we don't understand. Help each of us to trust You and follow Your ways no matter what. Thank You for sending Jesus so we can be close to You forever! Fill us with confidence through the Holy Spirit so that we can soar like eagles this week! We love You so much, God, and we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen!"

**Transition** → As adults arrive to pick up, invite them to show their grown-ups their compasses and encourage them to share no matter where He leads us, or what He asks us to do, God's way is the best way!

# Getting Ready

## Social

Welcome the kids and spend time engaging in conversation and catching up. Use this time to create space for them to connect with you and with each other by playing age-appropriate games, asking fun questions, and encouraging friendly interactions. This is a great moment to help kids feel seen, known, and ready to experience today's story.

## Groups

Create a safe place to connect and learn how the Bible story applies to real life experiences, through interactive activities and discussion questions.

**Choose as many of these activities as you like.**

## Home

- Print on cardstock or email this week's devotionals and Parent Cue cards.
- Tell parents about our additional family resources: **Parent Cue app** and **ParentCue.org**

## Social

### Opening Activity

- ☐ Offering container
- ☐ Index cards, one for every kid
- ☐ Pens, one for every kid

## Groups

### 1. Which Way Will I Go?

- ☐ Print "Pick a Door" Activity Pages on cardstock and cut apart, one set for each Small Group
- ☐ Print "God's Way Q&A" Activity Page on paper, one for each Small Group Leader
- ☐ Floor tape, one roll for each Small Group

### 2. God Our Compass\*

- ☐ Compass (like these: [bit.ly/4jRaIET](http://bit.ly/4jRaIET)), one for every kid
- ☐ Print "Confidence Prompts" Activity Page on paper, one for each Small Group Leader
- ☐ Device for playing worship music, one for each Small Group

### 3. Memory at Sea

- ☐ Bibles marked at Isaiah 40:31, two for each Small Group
- ☐ Print "Memory at Sea" Activity Page on paper and cut apart, one set for each Small Group
- ☐ Plastic cups, twelve (one for each section of the verse) and a few empty ones
- ☐ Blue plastic tablecloth ("the ocean"), one for each Small Group
- ☐ Floor tape, one roll for each Small Group
- ☐ Optional: Timer
- ☐ Optional: Package of small bags of Swedish Fish®, a few fish to use during the game, one individual bag for each kid

### 4. Pray and Dismiss

- ☐ Markers or pencils, one for every kid
- ☐ Large bowl or basket, one for each Small Group
- ☐ Index cards, one for every kid
- ☐ Bible marked at John 14:6, one for each Small Group

\*If you don't have time to do all, be sure to do the starred activity.