

Small Group Leader Guide

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)
- Conversation Starter
- Prayer

Small Group (25 minutes)

Groups: Creating a safe place to connect

1. Application Activity: Take a Snapshot
2. Bible Story Review: Bible Story Extension and Discussion Questions
3. Memory Verse Activity: Verses to Take with You
4. Prayer Activity: Make It Personal with Prayer

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.

THIS MONTH



Today's Bible Story

Jonah

Jonah 1-3

Conversation Starter

What keeps people from doing what's best?

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 (NirV)



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
- ☐ "Can't Be Done" Activity Page
- ☐ Bowl
- ☐ Timer
- ☐ Plastic spoons
- ☐ Plain paper
- ☐ Pencil
- ☐ Painter's tape



Inclusive Pro Tips



If your group isn't comfortable with physical challenges, you can throw in brain teasers or group "impossible" riddles.

- Count from 1 to 30, but say "bop" instead of any number with a 3 in it (3, 13, 23).
- Name every vowel in the alphabet backwards.

① What You Do

Pray for your group before they arrive → Pray for your group before they arrive. Pray for kids who will visit your group for the first time. Thank God that He never stops pursuing us, not even when we mess up or try to hide. Recall an age-appropriate story about a moment when you felt like avoiding God, but His love pulled you back in. Ask God to remind preteens that His presence doesn't leave when they make a mistake, feel ashamed, or feel like giving up. Pray that your group would know deep in their hearts they are never too far gone for God to reach and He is still calling them by name!

1. Welcome kids by name as they arrive with a high-five, fist bump, or a wave.
2. Invite any kids who brought an offering to place it in the offering container.
3. Before you begin:
 - Place the "Can't Be Done" Activity Page cards in the bowl.
 - Use painter's tape to make a bold "challenge line" across your group area.
4. As kids come in, say with energy: "Welcome to the 'Can't Be Done' Challenge!"
5. Explain: "You'll have the chance to face challenges that seem pretty tough or maybe even impossible! For each one, you get to decide to step up and try it, or hang back."
6. Read a challenge card.
7. If a kid wants to try, invite them to step over the line and try. If they're not feeling it, they can observe.
8. Cheer on every attempt, no matter the result!
9. *NOTE: For an extra challenge, let the kids suggest their own "impossible" challenges at the end!*
10. Gather the group to discuss.

② What You Say

"Wow! You all are so brave for attempting these challenges! Some of them were pretty tough, right? Sometimes, stuff just feels out of reach, like there's no way you could do it. Has there ever been a time when you felt like you couldn't do something, or you just didn't want to do what you were asked?"

"In today's true story from the Bible, we'll hear about a man named Jonah who may have felt the same way! God asked Jonah to do something that Jonah didn't want to do! But here's the thing: God always knows what's best, even when we don't understand why He's asking us to do something. Let's go discover what happens when we trust God, even when trusting Him feels impossible!"

Transition → Lead your group to the Large Group area.

GROUPS 1/5

Take a Snapshot

Application Activity

Faith Skills

Hear from God

Pray to God

Talk about God

Live for God

What You Need

- ☐ Index cards
- ☐ Pencils
- ☐ *Optional: coloring supplies*



① What You Do

1. Gather the kids together in a circle.
2. Give each kid four index cards.
3. Say, "We're going to imagine moments in life when we have a choice to make. Sometimes it's easy to do what's right, and other times it's harder to follow God's best. Let's talk about it together!"
4. Read a scenario from the list below one at a time.
5. After each scenario, ask:
 - "What might keep someone from doing what's best here?"
 - "What would it look like to trust God instead?"
 - "Why is God's way better in this scenario?"
6. Give the kids a moment to write a quick word or draw a tiny picture on a sticky note or index card to record their answer.
7. *Optional: Allow the kids to use coloring supplies for their pictures.*
8. Invite a few kids to share and set their index cards in the center of the circle.

Scenarios

1. You know you should apologize to a friend after hurting their feelings, but you're embarrassed or angry.
2. You sense God wants you to invite a friend to church, but you're scared they'll say no.
3. The Holy Spirit helps you see that you need to be honest about a bad choice you made at school or at home, even though it might get you in trouble.
4. You're at a friend's house and they're watching something on YouTube that you've never seen before. You sense God telling you to speak up and walk away.

Inclusive Pro Tips



If the kids aren't comfortable sharing out loud, let them place their index cards in the center of the circle.

GROUPS 2/5

Bible Story Extension

Bible Story Review

Faith Skills

Hear from God

Pray to God

Talk about God

Live for God

What You Need

- ☐ Index cards
- ☐ Pencils
- ☐ Floor tape
- ☐ Timer

Inclusive Pro Tips

For a version with less movement, encourage the teams to write and create a design with their index cards seated at a table or on the floor.



① What You Do

1. Divide the kids into two teams.
2. Use the floor tape to mark a start line for each team on one side of your group area.
3. Mark a 'build zone' on the other side.
4. Give each team a stack of index cards and several pencils.

Move Together:

1. Explain how to play:
 - Say, "When I say 'Go!', your team will brainstorm people or sources you listen to or take advice from. Write one person or thing per index card, like 'teacher' or even 'myself.'"
 - "After writing a card, one kid from your team can run to the 'build zone' and add that card to start a flat structure, in any design!"
 - The teams will keep writing and running until the time is up (3 to 5 minutes).
2. Once the time is up, have each team show off their structure and read their cards aloud without disturbing the structure.
3. **NOTE:** If "God" is missing from their structure, don't worry! You'll talk about it in the next section.

Talk Together:

1. Ask: "Which of these voices do you think really knows you best?"
 - **NOTE:** Affirm that parents and trusted adults love us and know us, and that's great!
2. Explain: "We all listen to many voices every day (friends, teachers, parents, the internet, and even ourselves). Only one voice ALWAYS knows what's best, and it's God!"
3. Say, "Even Jonah knew all about God, and still chose to listen to his own ideas instead of following God's way at first. Jonah didn't want to show kindness to the Ninevites, and God wanted to."
4. **NOTE:** If the kids didn't write "God," invite them to write "God" on an index card and stick it at the very top of their structure.
5. Say: "God is good, His ways are good, and He is always working for good! When you're honest, people can trust you. When you're kind, people see that God values them. When you forgive someone who has hurt you, you help get out the poison from your heart. Truthfulness, kindness, and forgiveness are all God's ways, and they build good things! You can trust God and obey Him because He always knows what's best! Good is all He ever knows to do!"

Make It Personal → Share about a time you had to decide whose advice to follow, and what happened when you chose God's way. Why was God's way better?

Preteen

Small Group

November — Week 2

GROUPS 3/5

Discussion Questions

Bible Story Review

Faith Skills

Hear from God

Pray to God

Talk about God

Live for God

What You Need

→ No Supplies Needed



① What You Do

1. Why do you think Jonah ran from God's instructions?
2. What are some ways you've seen following God's ways grow goodness in your life or in the world?
3. God is always, always working for good in your life. How can you remember that when you don't want to do something He wants you to do?
4. Jonah didn't get it right the first time, and God gave him a second chance. What does that teach you about who God is?
5. Do you think it means more to God if you obey Him out of love or if you just obey Him?

Inclusive Pro Tips



Be sensitive to kids who may need extra time to process their thoughts and respond. Be patient and create a safe space where everyone has a chance to share when they're ready.

Frequently check for understanding during discussion by asking questions like, "Can someone share in their own words what we're talking about?"

GROUPS 4/5

Verses to Take with You



Memory Verse Activity

Faith Skills

Hear from God

Pray to God

Talk about God

Live for God

What You Need

- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ "Mine the Verse" Activity Page
- ☐ Pencils
- ☐ Coloring supplies



Inclusive Pro Tips

Let the kids doodle or create symbols for each phrase if you have visual learners in your group.

Read the questions aloud and walk through the activity page as a group if that works better for your few.

① What You Do

1. Give every kid a Bible.
2. Invite them to find Isaiah 40:31 using the Bible Navigation Tips.
3. Ask if there are any words that are unfamiliar to them in the verse.
4. Repeat the verse together.

Create Together:

1. Divide the kids into pairs. (It's okay if there's a group of three!)
2. Give every kid a "Mine the Verse" Activity Page.
3. Make pencils and coloring supplies available for the groups to share.
4. Say, "Today we're going to 'mine' through Isaiah 40:31 to understand what it means for us! Your group will read the verse together and follow the prompts on the page."
5. Invite the kids to use the coloring supplies and pencils to complete the page.

Talk Together:

1. Gather the kids together and review the "Mine the Verse" Activity Page.
2. Ask: Who do you think "those" and "they" refer to in Isaiah 40:31? Use the points below to spark conversation about what it means to follow Jesus.
 - "Those" or "They" in this verse refer to anyone who chooses to trust in the Lord! That includes people who were living in Isaiah's time, and it includes us today!
 - Jesus is the ultimate way we can trust God, because He died and rose again for our sins, making a way for us to be in relationship with God forever!
 - When we follow Jesus, He gives us strength daily through the Holy Spirit.
3. Ask: "How do you think trusting in Jesus can help you keep going, even when things are tough?"

→ *NOTE: Look for opportunities to have conversations about what it means to make a decision to follow Jesus! (If you need help with what to say, ask your ministry leader.)*

Finding verses with 4th-5th graders

- ① Ask kids to tell you if the book of the Bible they're looking for is in the Old Testament or New Testament. If it's in the Old, instruct kids to flip slowly, starting at the front of the Bible and heading toward the back, until they find the book they're looking for. If it's in the New, instruct kids to start flipping from the back, going forward to find the book they're looking for.
- ② When they find the book, explain that the big numbers on the page are the chapter numbers.
- ③ Once they find the chapter, explain that the small numbers are verse numbers. Tell kids to find the verse within the chapter they've already found.

GROUPS 5/5

Make It Personal with Prayer

Prayer Activity

Faith Skills

Hear from God

Pray to God

Talk about God

Live for God

What You Need

- ☐ Index cards
- ☐ Pencils



① What You Do

1. Invite the kids to find their own quiet spot in your group area (encourage them to spread out, away from friends and distractions).
2. Encourage the kids to close their eyes or look down to help focus.
3. Explain that prayer is a conversation they can have with God at anytime, anywhere, about anything!
4. Say, "As you pray, ask God: 'Are there places in my life where I'm not really trusting that You know what's best?'"
5. Share some examples as the Holy Spirit speaks to every kid.
 - Is there a fight you keep having with your sibling, and do you care more about winning than making things right?
 - Are you afraid to stick up for someone in your class even though you know it's what God wants you to do?
 - Are you playing a game or watching something you know you probably shouldn't?
 - Do you sometimes say mean things before stopping to ask God to help you use words that point others to Him?
6. After two minutes of reflection, encourage the kids to use an index card and a pencil to write or draw about their prayer time.
7. Close in prayer. Thank God for always knowing what's best and for helping them trust Him more!

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.

Social

Opening Activity

- ☐ Offering container
- ☐ Print "Can't Be Done" Activity Page on paper and cut apart, one set for each Small Group
- ☐ Bowl, one for each Small Group
- ☐ Timer, one for each Small Group
- ☐ Plastic spoons, one for every kid
- ☐ Plain paper, one sheet for each Small Group
- ☐ Pencil, one for each Small Group
- ☐ Painter's tape, one roll for each Small Group

Groups

Take a Snapshot

- ☐ Index cards, four for every kid
- ☐ Pencils, one for every kid
- ☐ Optional: Coloring supplies, enough for each Small Group to share

Bible Story Extension

- ☐ Index cards or pieces of paper, at least 40 for each Small Group
- ☐ Pencils, five for each Small Group
- ☐ Floor tape, one roll for each Small Group
- ☐ Timer, one for each Small Group

Discussion Questions

→ No Supplies Needed

Verses to Take with You

- ☐ Bibles, one for every kid
- ☐ Print "Mine the Verse" Activity Page on cardstock and cut apart, one half-sheet for every kid
- ☐ Pencils, one for every kid
- ☐ Coloring supplies, enough for each Small Group to share

Make It Personal with Prayer

- ☐ Index cards, one for every kid
- ☐ Pencils, one for every kid

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**