

Small Group Leader Guide

Supplies NOT Included in the Activity Bags

1. Bible Story Review: Let's Go Fishing
2. Application Activity: Jump If You ...
3. Memory Verse Activity: Jumping Verse
 - floor tape
4. Prayer Activity: Pray and Dismiss

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 presence 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 mistakes.



THIS MONTH



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 (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.

Let's Go Fishing!

Bible Story Review

MADE TO
Imagine

Faith Skills

Hear from God

Pray to God

Talk about God

Live for God

What You Need

- ☐ Prepared "Jonah Story Cards" Activity Page with paperclips
- ☐ fishing pole
- ☐ Optional: blue paper

Inclusive Pro Tips



To support the fine motor skills of kids in your group, let them select a card without using the fishing pole.

What You Do

1. Spread the "Jonah Story Cards" Activity Pages on the floor.
 - Optional: Place the blue paper on the floor and then scatter the cards on top!
2. Explain that the kids will take turns using the prepared fishing pole to "fish" for one card from the pond.
3. After all the cards have been "caught," turn them face-up and work together to put them in Bible Story order. (The Bible Story order is included in the prompts below.)
4. Review each card using the prompts below.

Make It Personal -> Tell your few about an age-appropriate time as a kid when you thought you knew what was best, but like Jonah, you learned that God's way was better. How was God's way better?

Jonah Story Card Prompts:

1. GO to NINEVEH sign:
 - God told Jonah to go to Nineveh. Why?
 - *GOD WANTED JONAH TO TELL THE PEOPLE TO STOP DOING WRONG THINGS.*
2. BOAT:
 - What did Jonah do instead?
 - *HE GOT ON A BOAT GOING THE OPPOSITE WAY*
3. PILLOW:
 - What happened while Jonah was below deck and fell asleep?
 - *GOD SENT A BIG STORM!*
4. CALM SEA:
 - How did the storm stop?
 - *JONAH WAS THROWN OVERBOARD, AND GOD CALMED THE SEA.*
5. BIG FISH:
 - How long was Jonah inside the fish?
 - *3 DAYS AND 3 NIGHTS*
6. PRAYER HANDS:
 - What did Jonah do in the fish?
 - *HE PRAYED TO GOD FOR HELP*
7. SANDY BEACH:
 - What happened next?
 - *GOD MADE THE FISH SPIT JONAH OUT*
8. NINEVEH with THUMBS-UP:
 - What did Jonah do now?
 - *GOD ASKED HIM AGAIN TO GO TO NINEVEH AND JONAH WENT. THE PEOPLE OF NINEVEH LISTENED!*

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Let's Go Fishing!

Bible Story Review

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What You Need

- ☐ Prepared "Jonah Story Cards"
Activity Page with paperclips
- ☐ fishing pole
- ☐ *Optional: blue paper*

What You Say

"Wow, Jonah went through A LOT—from running away to being swallowed by a big fish! Jonah didn't trust God at first. He thought he knew better than God! Instead of trusting and putting his confidence in God and in God's ways, Jonah decided he was going to go his own way.

"God wanted Jonah to go to Nineveh and tell the people there to follow God's ways! 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 Jonah didn't want to do that. He thought the Ninevites were too mean to receive God's kindness.

"We can be like Jonah too. Sometimes, we think we know better than God. But God never gave up on Jonah. God gave Jonah a second chance, and Jonah decided to follow God's ways! And because Jonah did what God wanted, an entire city of people lived better lives! "Sometimes we don't understand why God wants us to do something. Maybe it feels scary or hard—like talking to someone new, telling the truth, or choosing to be kind. But here's what we can always remember: God knows what's best. Do you know why? Because God is GOOD. He is kind, He is loving, He is truthful. God is good, and that means His ways are good!

"When we tell the truth, it shows that we are honest people. When we are kind to someone, it shows them God's love. When we follow God's ways, it is good and it spreads goodness! That's why God wants us to follow Him and His ways—even when it's hard.

"Sometimes we might feel unsure about following God and His ways like Jonah, but remember, friends, God knows what's best. He is always working for something good! We can trust Him every time!"



Inclusive Pro Tips



To support the fine motor skills of kids in your group, let them select a card without using the fishing pole.

Jump If You ...

Application
Activity



Faith Skills

Hear from God

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What You Need

→ No Supplies Needed

What You Do

1. Invite the kids to stand in a big circle.
2. Explain how to play:
 - Say, "I'm going to say a sentence that starts with, 'Jump in the middle if you ...' If the sentence is true for you, take a big jump into the middle of the circle, then jump back to your spot."
3. Demonstrate by reading the first statement.
4. Read the statements slowly, one by one, and give the kids time to respond.
5. After the final statement, invite the kids to sit down, and discuss.

Jump in the Middle If You ...

- Have brown eyes
- Like broccoli
- Have a brother
- Like chocolate ice cream
- Like roller coasters
- Love to read
- Like to eat tacos
- Don't like sour candy
- Have a younger sister
- Love math the most
- Are wearing red
- Are at church today

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Inclusive Pro Tips



To adjust to the mobility of your group, instead of instructing the kids to "jump," lead them to raise their hand, nod their head, or spin in place.

Jump If You ...

Application Activity

Faith Skills

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What You Need

→ No Supplies Needed



What You Say

"Some of these things—like what you're wearing or what ice cream you like—are things people can see or hear about you. But other things about you are more personal, like how you feel when you're nervous, or who you pray for at night.

"We have to ask each other to find out those things about each other. BUT God knows it all! He knows every little thing about you—even the number of hairs on your head! (LUKE 12:7)

"God knows every little thing about you! And there's something else God knows about you—He knows every little thing that is going on in your life!

"He knows if there is a mean kid whom you are trying to be kind to. He knows that you're nervous about your spelling test. He knows that you're trying to do your math work instead of playing video games. God knows when you're happy or sad, when you need help, or when you're trying really hard to make a good choice.

"God is your closest, closest friend. He knows everything about you, and He loves you so much! And He goes through every bit of life with you. So talk to Him about everything!

"In everything you are facing in your life, He wants to guide you to goodness. God is good and His ways are good.

"That means He's the best One to lead us. When you're not sure what to do, or when things feel too big or confusing, you can stop and pray to your friend who is right with you, 'God, I trust You. Show me what's best.' God is with you, so take a deep breath and follow Him wherever He leads you! Do whatever He tells you to do. Because God is always guiding you to goodness. God knows what's best."

Inclusive Pro Tips



To adjust to the mobility of your group, instead of instructing the kids to "jump," lead them to raise their hand, nod their head, or spin in place.

Jumping Verse

Memory Verse
Activity



Faith Skills

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What You Need

- ☐ Bibles marked at Isaiah 40:31
- ☐ Floor tape



Inclusive Pro Tips

Adjust to the mobility needs of your group by trying various motions (like clapping, tapping a knee, or raising both arms).

If the group is large or high-energy, split them into two groups to give everyone space to move.

What You Do

1. Invite the kids to get into pairs.
2. Give every pair a Bible.
3. Direct them to turn to the marked page at Isaiah 40:31 and read the verse aloud together.
4. Review any words that might be unfamiliar to the kids.

Finding verses with Kindergarteners

1. Guide children to open their Bibles to the marked page.
2. Point to the book name at the top of the page as you say it aloud.
3. Guide them to find the big number on the page—this is the chapter number.
4. Guide them to look under the big number for the little number; this is the verse number. Tell them to leave their finger on the verse as you read it aloud.
5. Lead everyone to say the verse together.

Finding verses with 1st Graders

1. Guide them to open their Bibles to the front and find the table of contents. *Hold up a Bible opened to the table of contents to show the kids what the page looks like.*
2. *When the kids find the table of contents, lead them to find the name of the book in the list. You can help by pointing out the first few letters of the book's name.*
3. *When the kids find the book, lead them to look at the page number beside it. Explain that the number tells them on what page they can find that book. Help the kids find the page.*
4. *When they find the book, explain that the big numbers on the page are the chapter numbers. Help them find the right chapter.*
5. *When they find the chapter, explain that the small numbers are verse numbers. Help them find the correct verse in that chapter.*

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Jumping Verse

Memory Verse
Activity



Faith Skills

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What You Need

- ☐ Bibles marked at Isaiah 40:31
- ☐ Floor tape

Move Together:

1. Use the floor tape to make a line on the floor.
2. Instruct the kids to line up single file behind the line.
3. Explain that you will say the verse together as a group, jumping after each phrase.

This is the Memory Verse in the NIV:

- But those who trust in the LORD (**JUMP**)
- will receive new strength. (**JUMP**)
- They will fly as high as eagles (**JUMP**)
- They will run and not get tired. (**JUMP**)
- They will walk and not grow weak. (**JUMP**)
- Isaiah 40:31 (**NIRV**)

Optional: Repeat the activity with various motions (clap, spin, tiptoe, stomp, or pretend to fly).

4. Gather the group together to discuss.

What You Say

"Whew! That jumping took a lot of energy. But you know what? Even when we get tired, God NEVER does. He's strong enough to carry us through any situation. This verse tells us that when we trust in God, He gives us strength—not just once, but over and over again.

"And that strength God gives us will help us go through life well! We will soar on wings like eagles and run and not get tired!

"Do you need more strength to love your brother well? God can give it to you! Do you need more strength to obey your grown-up? God can give it to you! Do you need more strength to keep trying something hard—like learning to tie your shoe or learning how to read? God can give it to you!

"Trust in God, that He is good, and His ways are good, and He will give you new strength! God wants you to go through life stronger! So trust Him because God knows what's best!"

Inclusive Pro Tips



Adjust to the mobility needs of your group by trying various motions (like clapping, tapping a knee, or raising both arms).

If the group is large or high-energy, split them into two groups to give everyone space to move.

Pray and Dismiss

Prayer Activity

Faith Skills

Hear from God

Pray to God

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Live for God

What You Need

→ No Supplies Needed

Inclusive Supplies

- ☐ Index cards
- ☐ Coloring Supplies



Inclusive Pro Tips

Offer index cards and coloring supplies for kids who may prefer to draw or write their prayers to God instead of praying silently! This gives visual and kinesthetic learners a hands-on way to reflect and connect with God.

What You Do

1. Gather the kids together in a circle.
2. Invite kids to close their eyes and think about something they might not want to do, even though they know it's the right thing and God's way.
 - Share examples like being kind to someone who isn't kind, telling the truth, helping a sibling, doing something that feels scary.
3. Say, "Now let's all take a quiet moment to talk to God about it! You can ask God to help you trust Him."
4. Give the kids 30 seconds of silent prayer time.
5. Close in prayer.

Prayer

"Dear God, we are so grateful that You are always good and we can trust You and follow Your ways no matter what! Sometimes it's hard to do what's right. Sometimes we want to run away from things we don't like or don't understand. Help us to trust that You are good, and You know what's best. Help us to stop and pray when we feel afraid or unsure. Help us to trust You and obey. We love You, and we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen!"

Transition → As adults arrive to pick up, encourage the kids to talk to their parents about how Jonah finally chose to trust God after some crazy circumstances because God knows what's best. If you optionally want to send the kids home with an individual-size package of Swedish Fish®, don't forget to give those to the kids too!