

Small Group Leader Guide

THIS MONTH
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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.

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

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



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 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

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- ☐ "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!