

LESSON ONE: The Day the Sun Stood Still

Memory Verse:

The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to him in song (Psalm 28:7).

*Note: Early elementary verse in **bold** type.*

Bible Basis:

Joshua 10

Bible Truth:

We pray because we trust God and depend on Him.



You Will Need:

- ☐ Bible time dress-up box
- ☐ craft pompoms – a handful
- ☐ yellow ball
- ☐ butcher paper
- ☐ 1 poster board
- ☐ treat jar
- ☐ *Use the Clues!* bag
- ☐ *On the Fast Track!* #1 take-home paper
- ☐ *StationMaster Card* #1
- ☐ (Optional) treasure box
- ☐ (Optional) Snack: small paper cups or coffee filters, popcorn
- ☐ (Optional) Activity: large plastic tablecloth, unpopped popcorn kernels, popcorn popper




When you see this icon, it means preparation will take more than five minutes.



GET SET!

(Lesson Preparation)

-  Print today's Bible memory verse on a poster board:
The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to him in song (Psalm 28:7).
Hang the poster board on the wall at the front of the classroom.
- Print "We depend on God" on the ball with black marker.
- Make a copy of *On the Fast Track* #1 take-home paper for each child.
- Make a copy of *StationMaster Card* #1 for each helper.
- Set out the treat jar, *Use the Clues!* bag, and (optional) treasure box.
- Set up snack or outside play activities if you include these items in your children's ministry.
- Tape a 10-foot length of butcher paper to a flat wall at children's eye level; set boxes of markers or crayons on the floor in front of it.



TICKETS PLEASE!

(Welcome and Bible Connection)

- **Objective:** *To excite children's interest and connect their own life experiences with the Bible Truth, children will make a mural and talk about depending on God.*

Welcome Time Activity: Make-a-Mural

■ **Materials:** Butcher paper, markers or crayons, tape

As children arrive, direct them to the wall where you have taped the butcher paper. Have your adult or teen helpers (StationMasters) invite children to work together to draw a picture of some of the things for which they depend on God (for help in trouble, for healing when sick, for parents, for food, for His presence).

When everyone has arrived, call children to the lesson area and welcome them. Offer them a treat from the treat jar. Say: **God likes it when children come and talk to Him. Whenever they do, He rewards them with His presence. The treats remind us of that reward.** Children may finish their treat now, or set it aside to take home later.

Sharing Time and Bible Connection

Introduce today's lesson by discussing these questions with your students in the large group. As you talk, give every child the opportunity to say something.

- **What kinds of things are very hard or maybe even scary for you to do?**
- **How do you feel when a friend wants to be with you and help you with those things?** (thankful, happy)
- **When you are afraid, sad, or have something hard to do, who do you depend on for help? Why?** (parents, friends)

After this sharing time, help your students connect their discussion to the Bible story they are about to hear from Joshua 10:

God wants to be your best friend. He is always there to listen to us and talk with us. But how can we talk to God? We can't even see Him! Pause to let children respond. **Yes, prayer is talking to God. We pray because we trust God and depend on Him.** In today's Bible story, a man named Joshua was in great danger. He needed help *fast*! Who do you think he talked to? Right! He talked to God! Let's learn more about it.



ALL ABOARD FOR BIBLE TRUTH!

(Bible Discover and Learn Time)

Joshua 10

- **Objective:** Children will study Joshua 10 and hear that Joshua prayed because he depended on God.
- **Materials:** Bible time dress-up box, yellow ball with "We depend on God" printed on it

I'm going to need five of you to help me tell this story. Give each person a prop and



ask them to stand across the front of the room where everyone can see them. Then say:

(Name) **wearing the beard is Joshua. When I point to Joshua, everyone should cheer, “Hooray!” Joshua, you should flex your muscles like a hero. Try that.**

(Name) **wearing the crown represents the five kings and their armies. When I point to the king, everyone should to say, “Boo!” King, you should make a mean face and shake your fist at us. Show us.** Have the children practice cheering and booing as you point to Joshua and the king. Have an older helper wear the crown. It may be too hard for younger children to have “boos” directed at them.

(Name) **holding the sword will swish his/her sword TWICE for the battle. Only twice. When I point to the battle, everyone else should punch the air twice and say, “Biff! Pow!” Try it.** Caution against punching or sword fighting other students.

(Name holding the pompoms), **show us what you’re holding. What does this look like? Those are hailstones! When I point to the hailstones, you should all slap your lap with your hands to make the hail sound. Practice that. Hail, listen carefully for your part in the story. You’ll know what to do!**

(Name) **holding the yellow ball is the sun. When I point to the sun you should all say, “Ooooo.” Sun, you should walk in very slow circles around this group of story helpers. Don’t stop until you hear your part in the story. Listen very carefully! Begin your orbit now.**

Let the children practice saying “Hooray!,” “Boo,” “Biff! Pow!,” as you point to each story helper. **Very good! Now let’s begin our story. Today’s Bible story about Joshua (point to Joshua and prompt children to say “Hooray!”) comes from the Old Testament.**

After Moses, the leader of Israel, died, God chose a new leader—Joshua (point to Joshua). Joshua was a faithful man who listened to God and obeyed Him. One day, God told Joshua to lead the people of Israel across the river to the land He had promised to give them. It was a wonderful land, full of good things. But the land was ruled by five kings (point to the king and prompt children to say “Boo”) with vast armies who did not love God or worship Him. The *bad news* was that before Israel could move into the land, God said they would have to fight a battle with the kings (point to the battle). The *good news* was that God said He would help them win.

The kings were afraid! “We cannot fight (point to Joshua) Joshua alone,” they said. “He is too strong.” So the five kings (point to the king) joined together and sent their armies of soldiers against Joshua in battle.

Imagine . . . five armies! But God told Joshua, “Do not be afraid of the five kings or their armies. Not one of them will be able to beat you in battle (point to battle). Joshua depended on God to help him win.

All night Joshua and his army marched. The next morning, he came upon the five kings by surprise. The Lord made the five armies confused and afraid. What do you think those (point to the king) five armies did? Pause for children to respond. Yes, they ran away!

Joshua (point to Joshua) **and the army of Israel** **chased them down the road. As they ran, the Lord** **threw large hailstones** (point to hailstones) **down on them from the sky.** Pause for hail to fall on king. **The Lord was fighting for Israel.**

But the battle (point to battle) **was not over yet! Joshua needed more time. So he prayed, “Lord, please make the sun** (point to the sun) **stand still until we finish fighting with our enemies.”** And do you know what happened? Pause for children to respond. **The** (point to the sun) **sun . . . stood . . . STILL.** Wait for the sun to stop walking. **It stopped in the middle of the sky for a whole day while Israel battled** (point to battle). **The sun** (point to the sun) **stood still until Israel had won. It was a miracle from God! There has never been a day like it before or since.** Thank the volunteers for their help and have them sit down again.

***Story Option:** In place of the dress-ups, you may elect to have volunteers hold up large picture posters of Joshua, the kings, the battle, the hail, and the sun. Note that you would need to draw these large pictures ahead of time. Stick figures are fine.*



Use the Clues!

(Bible Review)

Okay, let's see what you remember.

- **What did God tell Joshua to do?** (move into the promised land, fight the people who lived there)
- **How do you think Joshua felt when he saw the five armies against him?** (afraid, nervous)
- **How did Joshua show he trusted God?** (Joshua prayed and asked God for help)
- **What did Joshua ask God to do?** (He asked God to make the sun stand still so he could finish the battle)
- **How can we show that we trust God and need Him for everything?** (We can talk to Him about things that trouble us, too)
- **Do we need God to help us fight armies?** (No, of course not) **What do we depend on God for?**

When Joshua needed help, he talked to God. Joshua prayed and asked God for an amazing long day. God wants us to talk to Him too, because it shows that we trust Him and need Him for everything. Take the ball out of the bag and say: **Here's a yellow ball that reminds us of the sun in our Bible story today. The words on it say, “We depend on God.”** I am going to toss it to someone and when you catch it, you should say, “We depend on God.” Then I want you to gently toss it to someone else who will say, “We depend on God.” Once everyone has had a chance to catch the ball, put it in the *Use the Clues!* bag. Say: **The yellow ball will remind us how Joshua asked God to stop the sun. Joshua needed God for everything. We depend on God too.**

Show the *Use the Clues!* bag. **Every week after our story we will put an object in the bag to help us remember what we have learned that week.** Put the ball in the bag.



BIBLE MEMORY WAYPOINT!

(Scripture Memory)

Psalm 28:7

- **Objective:** Children will hide God's Word in their hearts for guidance, protection, and encouragement.

Read this week's memory verse from the poster. Point to each word as you read it:

The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to him in song (Psalm 28:7).

To help children memorize the Bible verse, have them act it out with you:

The LORD (*bow down to a king*)

is my strength (*show your muscles*)

and my shield; (*place both hands in front of you to form a shield*)

my heart trusts in him, (*pat your hand on your chest to sound like a heartbeat*)

and I am helped. (*grasp one hand with the other and shake it*)

My heart leaps for joy (*jump into the air*)

and I will give thanks (*kiss your fingers and fling the kiss to heaven*)

to him in song. (*sing "la-la-la"*)

(Psalm 28:7)

Act out the memory verse with them several times so they become familiar with it. If time allows, have the group turn around and say the verse again *without* looking at the poster. *Be sure to include the Bible reference too!*



PRAYER STATION

- **Objective:** Children will explore and practice prayer for themselves in small groups.
- **Materials:** Copies of StationMaster Card #1 for each adult or teen helper

Break the large group into smaller groups of three to five children. Assign a teen or adult helper to each small group and give each helper a copy of *StationMaster Card #1* (see Resources) with ideas for group discussion and prayer.



SNACK STOP: HEAVENLY HAILSTONES (Optional)

If you plan to provide a snack, this is an ideal time to serve it.

■ **Materials:** a small paper cup or coffee filter for each child, popped popcorn

Fill paper cups with popcorn. As children snack, talk with them about the hailstorm in today's Bible story.

Note: Always be aware of children with food allergies and have another option on hand if necessary.



APPLICATION

■ **Objective:** Children will have opportunities to show how the lesson works in their own lives through activities and take-home papers.

Some children's ministries may allow children to play outside at this point. If yours does not, choose one of the following activities.



Freeze

Today we learned that Joshua depended on God to make the sun stand still. Tell the children that they are like the sun, which is constantly moving. They should walk around the room until you say "Freeze!"

When you say "Freeze!" everyone should stand still. If someone moves, touch that child on the shoulder and he can help you find others who are moving the next time you say "Freeze!" Continue playing until only one person is left. You can proclaim that person the winner and then start the game over.



Hailstorm!

■ **Materials:** plastic tablecloth, popcorn popper, unpopped kernels

Cover the floor with a plastic tablecloth and sit the children on the floor around the perimeter. Set a popcorn popper in the middle of the tablecloth on something firm like a board. Pop some popcorn kernels but leave the lid off the popper. As the popcorn flies in the air, let children eat any kernels that fall in front of them. Caution them to remain seated and wait until kernels are cool.



ON THE FAST TRACK! (Take-Home Papers)

(Optional) Introduce the treasure box by asking: **Who would like to choose a prize from the treasure box?** Anticipate excited responses. **Today I'm going to give every child an On the Fast Track! paper to take home. There are activities to do and a Bible verse to memorize on each sheet. To earn a prize, you must complete all the activities at home this week and learn your verse. When you are finished, ask your parents or another adult to sign the ticket on the front and bring it with you next week when you come. If you do, you'll get to choose a prize from the treasure box!**

Distribute the take-home papers just before children leave.

LESSON TWO: A Shepherd Sings Prayers to God

Memory Verse:

Blessed is the man . . . [whose] delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night (Psalm 1:1-2).

Bible Basis:

1 Samuel 16 and
Psalm 29

Bible Truth:

We pray because God
delighted to talk with us.






You Will Need:

- ☐ 1 poster board
- ☐ any and all puppets available or paper bags
- ☐ 1 small stuffed lamb
- ☐ white adhesive labels marked with 11 different colors
- ☐ each verse of Psalm 29 printed out on a separate piece of paper
- ☐ treat jar
- ☐ *Use the Clues!* bag and previous item
- ☐ *On the Fast Track!* #2 take-home paper
- ☐ *StationMaster Card* #2
- ☐ (Optional) treasure box
- ☐ (Optional) Snack: round sugar cookies or bread slices; white frosting or whipped cream cheese; choice of raisins, dried cranberries, chocolate chips, or M&Ms; plastic knives
- ☐ (Optional) Activity: balloons



GET SET!

(Lesson Preparation)

-  Print today's Bible memory verse on a poster board:
Blessed is the man whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night (Psalm 1:1-2).
Hang the poster board on the wall at the front of the classroom.
- Print "Prayer makes God happy" on an index card and tape it to the stuffed lamb.
-  Color adhesive labels with 11 different colors. Make sure you have one label for each child in your class.
-  Type each verse of Psalm 29 on a separate piece of paper, including the reference at the bottom (e.g. Psalm 29:1, Psalm 29:2, etc.).
- Make a copy of *On the Fast Track* #2 take-home paper for each child.
- Make a copy of *StationMaster Card* #2 for each helper.
- Set out the treat jar, *Use the Clues!* bag, and (optional) treasure box.
- Set up snack or outside play activities if you include these items in your children's ministry.



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TICKETS PLEASE!

(Welcome and Bible Connection)

- **Objective:** To excite children's interest and connect their own experiences with the Bible Truth, children will do puppet play and talk about things that make them happy.

Welcome Time Activity: Puppet Play

- **Materials:** any and all puppets available OR paper bags and markers for children to create a bag puppet

As children arrive, let them choose a puppet to play with. Have them talk to the puppet or interact with another child's puppet. Encourage them to talk about things that make them happy. Alternately, children can create a simple puppet by drawing a face, hair, and clothes on a lunch-size paper bag.

When everyone has arrived, go around the room and stick an adhesive label marked with color to each child's upper body. Ask them to leave the label in place for an activity later. Welcome the children and offer them a treat from the treat jar. Say: **Be happy about eating this candy because God is happy when you come to learn about Him and talk to Him.** Children may finish their treat now, or set it aside to take home later.

(Optional) If children hand you a *Fast Track!* ticket, they may pick a prize from the treasure box.

Sharing Time and Bible Connection

Introduce today's lesson by discussing these questions with your students in the large group. As you talk, give every child the opportunity to respond.

- **How do you feel when a friend calls you or sends you a message?** (happy, glad)
- **Why do you feel that way when you hear from a good friend?** (it shows they care about you)
- **When someone you like doesn't talk to you, how do you feel?** (sad, hurt, lonely)

After discussion time, help your students connect their ideas to the Bible story they're about to hear from 1 Samuel 16 and Psalm 29:

God feels happy when we talk to Him. When we pray to Him, He is so pleased! He loves to hear from us, any time and anywhere. When we don't pray, God misses hearing from us. That's another reason we pray—because God is delighted to talk with us. In today's Bible story, a shepherd had lots of time to talk to God. He even wrote songs and sang them to God. How do you think God felt about that? (delighted, pleased, loved) **Let's find out more.**





ALL ABOARD FOR BIBLE TRUTH!

(Bible Discover and Learn Time)

1 Samuel 16 and Psalm 29

- **Objective:** Children will study 1 Samuel 16 and Psalm 29 and hear that David prayed because God delights in hearing from His people.
- **Materials:** white adhesive labels marked with 11 different colors, enough for every child to have one, 1 small stuffed lamb with the “Prayer makes God happy” card taped to it

Have you heard of a shepherd named David? Let children answer. **He was going to be the king of Israel. But first, God had other work for him—being a shepherd. What does a shepherd do?** Wait for response. **He takes care of sheep and protects them from wild animals. He herds them to where they can find food and water.**

You may not know this, but sheep don’t move too fast, especially when they’re eating. Show me how you think sheep would move. Wait while children demonstrate. Affirm their actions. **While the sheep are grazing and eating grass, what do you think the shepherd does?** Wait for children to answer.

That’s right. He sits and watches them for hours and hours and hours. Show me by making a face how you would feel about that job. Because David had so much time watching the sheep eat, he talked to God a lot. He listened to God too. He liked to sing, so he made up songs and sang them to God. They were like musical prayers.

The Bible says God was delighted whenever David talked to Him. God loved the time that David spent with Him so much that He called David a man after His own heart. That means David knew God very well because he talked to God so often. The musical prayers David wrote are called psalms. Have you heard of those before? Let children respond. **We’re going to play a game using one of David’s psalms to God.**

Use the color-coded adhesive labels to divide the children into groups. The reds will be one group, the blues another group, etc. Adjust groups if there are too many young children in one group. Make sure that there is a strong reader in each group. Hand each group a sheet of paper printed with one verse from Psalm 29.

Each group will have one reader. The rest of the group will become statues. Tell children: **Read the verse on your sheet of paper and then arrange yourselves so that**

your statue demonstrates that verse. Give the students four to five minutes to decide how their human statue will look. Helpers should go from group to group helping children refine their ideas and understand their Bible verse.

When groups are ready, have the group with verse one begin the psalm. While the group forms a statue, their reader should read the verse. As the rest of the children clap for the group, the group with the next verse should come forward. They can then form their statue and read their verse. Continue until all eleven verses are completed.

After hearing Psalm 29, how do you think David felt about God?

Pass around the stuffed lamb with the card, “Prayer makes God happy.” Each



child should repeat this sentence before passing it on to the next child. When every child has touched the lamb and said the words, place the lamb in the *Use the Clues!* bag.

The lamb is our reminder of how David was a shepherd. David made God happy by talking to Him. We also make God happy whenever we talk to Him.

Collect all adhesive labels and have children return to the lesson area. Return these to the children at the end of your lesson time.



Use the Clues! (Bible Review)

Bring out the *Use the Clues!* bag. **Okay, let's see what you**

remember. Pull the yellow ball out of bag.

Think back to our Bible story from last week. What does this clue remind us of?

Have children raise their hands. Call on volunteers to name the story. **Yes, our Bible lesson was about Joshua and the day the sun stood still. What did we learn about prayer last week?** (we depend on God)

- **Did you depend on God this week by talking to Him about a problem?** (allow responses)
- **In today's lesson, why did David have so much time?** (shepherd, watched sheep while they ate)
- **What was the best way David used his time?** (talked to God, made up musical prayers)

- **If you follow David's example of talking often to God, how will God feel?** (delighted, happy, pleased to talk with you).
- **Why should you talk to God and listen to Him?** (He's our Lord, a friend, we love Him, we need Him, it delights Him)

David could have used his free time to carve wood or to daydream. He probably did those things too, but he gave God the best of his free time. And because he did, God blessed him and was so happy to have all that time with David. God wants to have time with you, too. **When you pray, you make God happy!** He is so ready to hear what's on your mind every day.

Today's reminder in the *Use the Clues!* bag is (long dramatic pause, then pull out the lamb with the words "Prayer makes God happy"). **This lamb reminds us that David, the shepherd, talked to God often and that delighted God. God is just as delighted when you talk to Him.** Put the lamb and ball back in the bag.



BIBLE MEMORY WAYPOINT! (Scripture Memory)

Psalm 1:1-2

- **Objective:** Children will hide God's Word in their hearts for guidance, protection, and encouragement.

Read this week's memory verse from the poster. Point to each word as you read it:

Blessed is the man whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night (Psalm 1:1-2).

To help children memorize the Bible verse, have them say it with you using different voices:

Blessed is the man (*start "blessed" on a low note and raise your voice higher with each word*)

whose delight is in the law of the LORD, (*clap as you say each syllable*)

and on his law (*start with a low voice and get higher with each word*)

he meditates day and night. (*clap as you say each syllable*)

Psalm 1:1-2

Repeat the memory verse with the different voices a few more times so children become familiar with it.



PRAYER STATION

- **Objective:** Children will explore and practice prayer for themselves.
- **Materials:** copies of StationMaster Card #2 for each adult or teen helper

Break into small groups of three to five children. Assign a teen or adult helper to each small group and give each helper a copy of *StationMaster Card #2* (see Resources Section) with ideas for group discussion and prayer.



SNACK STOP: DELIGHTED SMILES (Optional)

If you plan to provide a snack, this is an ideal time to serve it.

- **Materials:** round sugar cookies or bread slices cut into circles with cookie cutter or wide drinking cup; white frosting or whipped cream cheese; choice of raisins; dried cranberries, chocolate chips or round chocolate candies; plastic knives

Children can take turns spreading a thin layer of frosting or cream cheese on their cookie or bread circle. Then make a smiley face with the dried fruit or candy pieces. Discuss what kinds of things children can tell God, reinforcing the truth that prayer makes Him happy.

Note: Always be aware of children with food allergies and have another option on hand if necessary.



APPLICATION

- **Objective:** *Children will have opportunities to show how the lesson works in their own lives through activities and take-home papers.*

Some children's ministries may allow children to play outside at this point. If yours does not, choose one of the following activities.



Lamb Tag

David watched a flock of sheep. Have all the children get down on their hands and knees like lambs except for one who is the shepherd. The lambs may go in any direction. The shepherd must try to get the lambs to reach the other side of the room. The lambs must obey the shepherd. Once a lamb successfully reaches the other side of the room, s/he becomes a shepherd and helps to herd the other sheep. The last lamb to reach the other side of the room becomes the shepherd and the game starts over.



Sheep-herding Practice

Blow up enough balloons for each child to have one, with a few extras in case of popping. Make a "sheep pen" by grouping some chairs or other objects in a corner of the room. The goal is to herd the sheep (balloons) into the sheep pen by batting the balloon into the enclosure. Children should try to bat only their balloon, though happy chaos may follow. When all the sheep are safely in the pen, shepherds can congratulate each other for a job well done, then play again.



ON THE FAST TRACK! (*Take-Home Papers*)

(Optional) Treasure box: **Who would like to choose a prize from the treasure box?** Remind children about the *On the Fast Track!* take-home papers. **Today I'm going to give every child an *On the Fast Track!* paper to take home. You can do activities and memorize the Bible verse. To earn a prize, you need to finish all the activities at home this week and learn your verse. When you're finished, ask your parents or another adult to sign the *Fast Track!* ticket. Bring it with you next week. Then you'll get to choose a prize from the treasure box!**

Distribute the take-home papers just before children leave.

LESSON THREE: Queen Esther Saves the Jews

Memory Verse:

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do (Ephesians 2:10).

Note: Early elementary verse in **bold** type.

Bible Basis:

Book of Esther

Bible Truth:

We pray because God allows us to be involved in His work.




You Will Need:

- ☐ Bible time dress-up box
- ☐ flower seeds
- ☐ 1 poster board
- ☐ 1 flowerpot with dirt
- ☐ 1 photograph of your family
- ☐ 1 watering can
- ☐ small trowel or craft stick
- ☐ an adult who has had prayer change his/her family
- ☐ treat jar
- ☐ *Use the Clues!* bag and previous objects
- ☐ *On the Fast Track!* #3 take-home paper
- ☐ *StationMaster Card* #3
- ☐ (Optional) treasure box
- ☐ (Optional) Snack: flour tortillas, kitchen scissors or knife, spreadable jam or jelly, napkins
- ☐ (Optional) Activity: large whiteboard or several sheets of poster board, markers



GET SET!

(Lesson Preparation)

-  Print today's Bible memory verse on a poster board:
For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do (Ephesians 2:10).
Hang the poster board on the wall at the front of the classroom.
- Print "God lets me be part of His plan" on an index card and tape it to the family photograph.
- Make a copy of *On the Fast Track* #3 take-home paper for each child.
- Make a copy of *StationMaster Card* #3 for each helper.
- Set out the treat jar, *Use the Clues!* bag, and (optional) treasure box.
- Set up snack or outside play activities if you include these items in your children's ministry.



TICKETS PLEASE!

(Welcome and Bible Connection)

- **Objective:** To excite children's interest and connect their own experiences with the Bible Truth, children will play a game, "The King/Queen Says."



When you see this icon, it means preparation will take more than five minutes.

Welcome Time Activity: The King/Queen Says

As children arrive, start them playing “The King/Queen Says.” Adapt “Simon Says” by substituting “The King says . . .” or “The Queen says . . .” Children should take turns commanding other players what actions to make. If they say “The King/Queen Says” first, players should do the action. If they don’t say those words, players shouldn’t do the action. When players are “caught,” they must sit out until the King or Queen changes. Actions can be anything active, such as jumping, clapping, arm swinging, tummy rubbing, etc. Let a King or Queen give five or six commands, then choose another child to take the lead.

When everyone has arrived, welcome the children and offer them a treat from the treat jar. **When you take a treat today, you’re letting God know you want to be part of His plan.** Children may finish their treat now, or set it aside to take home later.

(Optional) If children returned a signed *Fast Track!* ticket, they may choose a prize from the treasure box also.

Sharing Time and Bible Connection

■ **Materials:** 1 flowerpot with dirt, trowel or craft stick, flower seeds, 1 watering can

Use this object lesson to introduce today’s lesson on prayer. Choose a volunteer and ask: **Would you help me plant flowers?** Act like you’re going to let the child plant the seeds, but do all the work yourself. When the task is finished, say: **Wasn’t that fun?** As the child sits down, ask the group, **Do you think (child’s name) liked planting flowers?** Allow children to answer or protest. **How would (child) have felt if I let him help?** Allow responses.

- **Tell us about a time when a parent or other adult asked you to help them do a job.**
- **How did you feel to be involved in their work?**
- **Did you ever think that God might want you to be part of His work too?**

After sharing time, help your students connect their discussion to the Bible story from Esther they are about to hear:

God can do everything by Himself. But He allows us to be involved in working out some of His plans. Can you imagine that? The God who created everything lets us be part of His work on Earth. He created us to want to help. Isn’t that cool? Let’s find out about someone God used in His plan in the Old Testament.





ALL ABOARD FOR BIBLE TRUTH!

(Bible Discover and Learn Time)

Esther

- **Objective:** Children will study Esther and hear that Esther prayed because God wanted to use her in His plan to save the Jews.
- **Materials:** Bible time dress-up box, Use the Clues! bag and previous items, your family photograph

Ask three children to help tell the story. Choose one girl and two boys if possible. Have the girl find a fancy dress from the dress-up box. One boy will be Haman and wear a fancy shirt. The other boy is Mordecai and should wear a robe. Tell the three children that when you point to them, they'll repeat the last line you say.

One whole book of the Bible is about a woman who was allowed to help God in a huge way.

This is Queen Esther. Point to the girl with the dress. **Queen Esther's family was in big trouble.**

This is Haman. Point to the boy in fancy shirt. **Haman is an evil man who is very powerful. He made a rule to kill all the Jews within one year. Haman laughed and said, "I want them all dead!"** Have child laugh and repeat the last line.

This is Mordecai. Point to the boy in the robe. **Mordecai is Queen Esther's uncle. He didn't like Haman's law. It meant his people would all die. So he stood at the king's gate and cried loudly.** Have child cry loudly.

When Queen Esther saw her uncle Mordecai crying, she asked him, "Why are you crying?" Point to Esther and have her repeat the last line.

Mordecai stopped crying and said, "Haman wants to kill our whole family!" Have child repeat the line.

You see, Queen Esther was a Jew. All her family and friends—almost everyone she knew—were Jews. Hearing this news was awful. She asked Mordecai, "What can I do about it?" Have child repeat the line.

Speak strongly. **Mordecai said, "You have to tell the king."** Have child repeat the line.

Queen Esther shook her head. That wouldn't work! She said, "If I go to the king without being invited, I could be killed." Have child repeat the line.

Mordecai knew that Queen Esther was a Jew, and her life was in danger too. But he believed that God could save the Jewish people in any way He wanted. Mordecai told Esther, "Maybe God made you the queen so you could help your family." Have child repeat the line.

Esther knew that Mordecai was right. But she couldn't do this alone. Going to the king without an invitation was very serious. So she told Mordecai, "Tell everyone to fast and pray for me." Have child repeat the line. **What does it mean to fast?** (go without food for a time)

So Mordecai asked their whole family and all their friends to fast and pray for three days for Esther. Mordecai prayed too. "Please help Esther do what you want her to do." Have child repeat the line.



Esther prayed for three days too. Then it was time to go talk to the king. How do you think she felt? Let children share. Instead of killing her, the king listened to her. The king was angry when he heard about Haman's evil plan, and he ordered that Haman and his family be killed instead of the Jewish people. Then he wrote a new law that saved the Jews! Enthusiastically say: Esther and Mordecai cheered, "Praise God! He saved our people! God saved us!" Esther and Mordecai repeat the line.

God could have saved the Jews without Queen Esther and Mordecai. But He let them be a part of the plan. God wanted them to be part of His work.

Thank the volunteers, put away their dress-up clothes, and have them sit down.



Use the Clues!

(Bible Review)

Okay, let's see what else you remember about prayer.

Bring out the *Use the Clues!* bag. Pull the yellow ball out of bag. **Think back to our Bible story from the first week. What does this clue remind us about prayer?** Call on volunteers to name the story and the Bible Truth. (Refer to page 84 for a list of the clues, stories, and prayer truths they represent.) Pull the stuffed lamb out of the bag. **Here is the clue from last week. What does this clue remind us about prayer?**

- In today's story, what was Queen Esther's problem? (evil Haman made a law

to kill her people, the Jews)

- **What was God's plan?** (to save the Jews)
- **How did Esther become part of God's plan?** (by praying and asking God what He wanted her to do)
- **How can you be involved with the plan God wants to do?** (pray and tell Him we want to be involved, be ready to do what God says)
- Hold up the photograph with the card "God lets me be part of His plan." **This picture of my family is a reminder that God wants us to be part of His plan. We don't know what God's plans are. But when we tell God we want to work with Him, He'll use us when He wants to, like He did with Esther.** Pass the photo around so each child can read the card out loud and pass it on. Then put it in the *Use the Clues!* bag.



BIBLE MEMORY WAYPOINT!

(Scripture Memory)

Ephesians 2:10

- **Objective:** Children will hide God's Word in their hearts for guidance, protection, and encouragement.

Read this week's memory verse from the poster, pausing at the end of each phrase:

For we are God's workmanship, // created in Christ Jesus // to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do (Ephesians 2:10).

To memorize this week's Bible verse, have children sit in chairs set in a circle. You should say the first phrase of the verse, then children will stand up, repeat the phrase, and scoot to the next chair. Once everyone is seated, say the next phrase and children will stand, repeat, and move. Continue through the verse and reference. Do it again, going in the opposite direction. Then try it with kids walking around the circle, saying the verse, then sitting down when done.



PRAYER STATION

- **Objective:** Children will explore and practice prayer for themselves.
- **Materials:** Copies of StationMaster Card #3 for each helper

Break into groups of three to five children. Assign a teen or adult helper to each small group and give each helper a copy of *StationMaster Card #3* (see Resources) with topics for group discussion and prayer.



SNACK STOP: ROYAL ROLL-UPS (Optional)

If you plan to provide a snack, this is an ideal time to serve it.

- **Materials:** flour tortillas, kitchen scissors or knife, spreadable jam or jelly, napkins

Cut tortillas in half. Spread a thin smear of jam or jelly, then let children roll them up. As they eat, chat about what might have happened if Esther hadn't prayed and been willing to be part of God's plan to save the Jews.

Note: Always be aware of children with food allergies and have another option on hand if necessary.



APPLICATION

- **Objective:** Children will have opportunities to show how the lesson works in their own lives through activities and take-home papers.

Some children's ministries may allow children to play outside at this point. If yours does not, choose one of the following activities.



Draw-a-Queen Relay

Use a large whiteboard or several sheets of poster board for this game. Divide children into several teams and line them up about 10 feet away from the drawing boards. Give the first person in each line a marker. Write a list of the items to be drawn: body, head, crown, pretty clothes, royal robe, shoes, fancy jewelry, scepter (explain this item). At “GO,” the first player in each team runs to the board to draw the first thing on the list. Then they race back and hand off the marker to the next player, who runs up to draw the next item. Give points for detail in drawing as well as finishing first. Replay with a king if desired.



Bible Story Replay

As a group, the children will retell the story of Esther. Have children stand in a circle. Give the three dress-ups to three of the children. Have them start retelling the story based on their characters. At your signal, the three should give their outfits to three others, who continue the story. Let those not using an outfit fill in the gaps or correct the story as needed. When done, the group should give a cheer for themselves!



ON THE FAST TRACK! (*Take-Home Papers*)

(Optional) Treasure box: **Who can remind us how to earn a prize from the treasure box? Yes! By taking this *On the Fast Track!* paper home, doing the activities, and memorizing the Bible verse. When you bring back the *Fast Track!* ticket signed next week, you'll get to choose a prize from the treasure box!** Show students the ticket.

Distribute the take-home papers just before children leave.

LESSON FOUR: The Talking Donkey

Memory Verse:

If you love me, you will obey what I command
(John 14:15).

Bible Basis:

Numbers 22—23

Bible Truth:

We obey God
when we pray.



You Will Need:

- ☐ 1 zip-bag of sugar cubes
- ☐ craft sticks
- ☐ play dough
- ☐ 1 poster board
- ☐ stick puppets of Balaam, donkey, messengers, and angel (Resources, 86-87)
- ☐ treat jar
- ☐ *Use the Clues!* bag and previous objects
- ☐ *On the Fast Track! #4* take-home paper
- ☐ *StationMaster Card #4*
- ☐ (Optional) treasure box
- ☐ (Optional) Snack: graham crackers, halved, or graham cracker stix, granola, napkins
- ☐ (Optional) Activity: craft sticks, pictures, markers, glue sticks





When you see this icon, it means preparation will take more than five minutes.



GET SET!

(Lesson Preparation)

-  Print today's Bible memory verse on a poster board:
If you love me, you will obey what I command (John 14:15).
Hang the poster board at the front of the classroom.
- Print "We obey God when we pray" on an index card and tape it to the zip-bag of sugar cubes.
-  Enlarge the pictures of Balaam, donkey, messengers, and angel (see Resource Section) to full-page size. Color them, and glue them on craft sticks.
- Make a copy of *On the Fast Track! #4* take-home paper for each child.
- Make a copy of *StationMaster Card #4* for each helper.
- Set out the treat jar, *Use the Clues!* bag and previous objects, and (optional) treasure box.
- Set up snack or outside play activities if you use these in your children's ministry.

Play Dough Recipe

- 2 c. flour
- 1 c. salt
- 4 T. cream of tartar
- 1 pkg. unsweetened dry drink mix for scent and color
- 2 c. warm water
- 2 T. cooking oil

Stir over medium heat until mixture pulls away from sides to form a ball. Store in airtight container.
(for 8 to 10 children)





TICKETS PLEASE!

(Welcome and Bible Connection)

- **Objective:** To excite children's interest and connect their own experiences with the Bible Truth, children make play dough figures of Bible story characters.

Welcome Time Activity: Play Dough

- **Materials:** purchased or homemade play dough

As children arrive, give them a glob of play dough. Challenge them to make a donkey, a king, or angel first, then they may make what they choose. Ask if they know any stories that have a donkey, a king, and an angel. You can let the creations remain until after class, or have children put the play dough away when class begins.

Welcome the children and offer them a treat from the treat jar. Say: **Obeying God brings rewards. God rewards obedience with blessings. You're here today to learn how praying is obeying God. So take a sweet treat as a reward.** Children may finish their treat now, or set it aside to take home later.

(Optional) If children returned a signed *Fast Track!* ticket, they may choose a prize from the treasure box also.

Sharing Time and Bible Connection

Introduce the lesson by discussing the following questions with your students in the large group. As you talk, give every child the opportunity to say something.

- **What does it mean to obey?** (do what you're told, follow someone's instructions)
- **What happened the last time you obeyed a parent or teacher?** Let children share experiences.
- **What happened when you didn't do what you should have done?**
Allow sharing.

After sharing time, help your students connect their experiences to the Bible story from Numbers 22 and 23:

God wants us to obey and He rewards us when we do. Sometimes He has to discipline us for not obeying. In today's Bible story, you'll meet someone who wasn't sure he wanted to obey God, and learn what happened when he prayed about his choice. He found out that praying is part of obeying God. Let's get the whole story right now.





ALL ABOARD FOR BIBLE TRUTH!

(Bible Discover and Learn Time)

Numbers 22–23

- **Objective:** Children will study Numbers 22 and 23 and hear that Balaam prayed and obeyed God.
- **Materials:** Stick puppets of Balaam, donkey, messengers, and angel

Hold up the donkey puppet. **Hi, do you know what kind of animal I am?** Allow responses. **Yes, I'm a donkey, and this is my master, Balaam.** Hold up Balaam puppet. **Our story takes place long, long ago—before Jesus was even born.**

When Joshua led God's people into the promised land, my master was already there. Show Balaam again. **He was not one of God's people, but he knew God's voice.**

Many of the kings in the land were very afraid of Joshua and God's people, Israel, because God had done incredible things for them. Put Balaam and the donkey in one hand and the messengers in the other. **One of the kings was so afraid that he sent messengers to Balaam and asked him to put a curse on Israel.** Move messengers to Balaam. **Balaam asked God about that and God told him not to do it because the Israelites were blessed.**

The messengers returned to the king (move messengers to the king) **but the king did not like that answer. So, he sent the messengers to Balaam again** (move messengers back to Balaam) **and promised him a lot of presents and money.**

What would Balaam do, I wondered. Let children speculate briefly. **I'm sorry to say that the next morning, Balaam saddled me up and we went with the king's people.** Move Balaam and donkey to one hand; “walk” them together. **Bump, bump, bump. It was a long walk. Suddenly, I saw a terrifying sight! It was the angel of the Lord standing in the road with his sword drawn.** Hold up angel. **I was so frightened that I ran off the road into a field.** Put down angel. **Balaam couldn't see the angel so he beat me** (have Balaam “hit” the donkey) **for running away, and made me go back on the road. On we went.**

After a while, we came to a narrow path with rock walls on both sides. Uh-oh! There was the angel again! Hold up angel. **I was scared silly! I tried to get out of his way and squeezed up against the rocks.** Put down angel. **I was sorry that I crushed Balaam's foot, but he beat me again anyway.** Have Balaam hit the donkey. **I was not having a good day. But we kept going.**

Suddenly the angel was back in the road. Hold up angel. **We were in such a tight place I couldn't turn to the right or left. What should I do—obey my master and get us both killed? Or run away from the angel and make my master even angrier at me?** Put angel down.

I didn't know what to do, so I lay down, right there in the road. Boy, was Balaam mad! He began to hit me with his staff. Have Balaam hit the donkey.

That was enough! God gave me a voice like a human and I said (wiggle the donkey puppet), **“Why are you hitting me? What have I done wrong?”**



Balaam answered (wiggle the Balaam puppet), “You have made me so angry that if I had a sword I would kill you right now!”

I replied (wiggle the donkey puppet), “Haven’t I always been a good, obedient donkey to you? Have I ever done anything like this to you before?”

Balaam said, “No.” But then God opened his eyes (put Balaam and the donkey in one hand) and he was able to see the angel of the Lord too. Hold up angel. Balaam fell down, frightened, just like me. God said, “If your donkey hadn’t turned away, the angel would have killed you.” I was proud. From then on, Balaam promised to do only what God wanted. Put all figures down.

Balaam learned the hard way that God wanted him to obey, didn’t he? God wants you to obey Him too. Hold up Balaam. Did Balaam want to obey God? (no) But when Balaam talked to God, God used a donkey (hold up donkey) to make him obey. Put down all figures.

God has told us to pray to Him. That’s one reason why we pray. We obey God when we pray.



Use the Clues!

(Bible Review)

Okay, let’s see what you remember about prayer.

Bring out the *Use the Clues!* bag. Pull the yellow ball out of bag. **Think back to our Bible story from the first week. What does this clue remind us about prayer?** Have children raise their hands. Call on volunteers to name the story and the Bible Truth. (Refer to page 84 for a list of the clues, stories, and prayer truths they represent.) In the same way, review all the other objects from previous lessons.

- **In today’s story, what was Balaam’s problem?** (a king wanted him to curse the Israelites, but God said no)
- **What happened when Balaam thought about not obeying God?** (God got his

attention by sending an angel with a sword)

- **How did Balaam learn that praying would help him obey?** (God used his donkey to talk to him)
- **What should you do when you’re not sure if you will obey?** (talk to God and remember that He blesses us when we pray and obey)

When you’re deciding whether you’ll obey, you can talk to God about it. He helps us obey when we pray and listen to Him. That’s what Balaam found out.

Show the bag of sugar cubes. **Donkeys like to eat sugar cubes, so these sugar cubes will remind us that we obey God when we pray.** Have children turn to a friend and say, “We obey God when we pray.” Put the bag of sugar in the *Use the Clues!* bag.



BIBLE MEMORY WAYPOINT!

(Scripture Memory)

John 14:15

- **Objective:** Children will hide God's Word in their hearts for guidance, protection, and encouragement.

Read the memory verse from the poster. Point to each word as you read it:

If you love me, you will obey what I command (John 14:15).

To help children memorize this week's Bible verse, have everyone hold up a hand like a puppet. They should open and close their thumbs to "say" the words:

If you love me, (have the hand puppet kiss your cheek)

you will obey (have the hand puppet nod)

what I command. (have the hand puppet move like it's walking in front of you)

(John 14:15)

Repeat the memory verse with puppetlike actions to help the children become familiar with the memory verse. Do it as a whole group, then children can work in pairs or small groups to say the verse to each other with the motions.



PRAYER STATION

- **Objective:** Children will explore and practice prayer for themselves.
- **Materials:** Copies of StationMaster Card #4 for each helper

Break into groups of three to five children. Assign a teen or adult helper to each group and give each helper a copy of *StationMaster Card #4* (see Resources).



SNACK STOP: ROCKY ROADS (Optional)

If you plan to provide a snack, this is an ideal time to serve it.

- **Materials:** graham crackers, halved, or graham cracker stix, granola, napkins

Let children create a rocky road hemmed in with walls like Balaam and his donkey traveled. On a napkin, each child should lay strips of graham crackers end to end in two rows to be the rocky walls along the road. Add granola between the "walls" as the rocky road. Then eat. Talk about Balaam, his donkey, and how we obey when we pray.

Note: Always be aware of children with food allergies and have another option on hand if necessary.



APPLICATION

- **Objective:** Children will have opportunities to show how the lesson works in their own lives through activities and take-home papers.

Some children's ministries may allow children to play outside at this point. If yours does not, choose one of the following activities.



Obstacle Course

Balaam and his donkey had a rough trip. Create an obstacle course for children to navigate. Use chairs to walk around, tables to crawl under, a narrow path between chair backs, and objects to step over. Have children go through the course in different modes, such as walking backward, in pairs, and skipping.



Puppet Productions

Provide craft sticks and smaller pictures of Balaam, the donkey, the messengers, and the angel for the children to color and cut out. These can be glued to the ends of the craft sticks and then used as puppets. Have children retell the story of Balaam and his donkey.



ON THE FAST TRACK! (*Take-Home Papers*)

(Optional) Treasure box: **Who can remind us how to earn a prize from the treasure box? Yes! By taking this *On the Fast Track!* paper home, doing the activities, and memorizing the Bible verse. When you bring back the *Fast Track!* ticket signed by a parent or another adult next week, you'll get to choose a prize from the treasure box!** Show students the ticket.

Distribute the take-home papers just before children leave.