

Preschool Ages 3 & 4



LEADER DEVOTIONS

Each week, read these leader devotions
to prepare your heart.



Leader Devotions, To the Rescue! Preschool, Spring

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Group

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Thanks to our talented Buzz team!

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Group resources really work!

This Group resource incorporates our R.E.A.L. approach to ministry. It reinforces a growing friendship with Jesus, encourages long-term learning, and results in life transformation, because it's



Relational

Learner-to-learner interaction enhances learning and builds Christian friendships.

Experiential

What learners experience through discussion and action sticks with them up to 9 times longer than what they simply hear or read.

Applicable

The aim of Christian education is to equip learners to be both hearers and doers of God's Word.

Learner-based

Learners understand and retain more when the learning process takes into consideration how they learn best.

We know you care about kids...

We do, too!

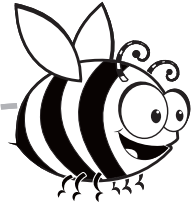
That's why we attempt to ensure that all crafts, toys, and gizmos meet or exceed national safety standards—and are produced by manufacturers that don't use child labor or abuse their labor force. You can order Group resources knowing that in addition to caring for *your* kids, you're also caring for children elsewhere.

Let's keep kids safe!

We strive to provide products that are mechanically reliable and hold together during normal, intended usage. Items are also checked for flammability, and both paint and surface coatings are checked for heavy metals—including lead.

You can help your children stay safe by seeing that toys and gizmos are used as designed, for the purposes designed, and that any broken pieces are disposed of promptly and properly. We value your feedback. If you become aware of a problem affecting the safety of any of our products, please inform us immediately.

Contents for Preschool



Introduction to Buzz.....	2
Buzz Tips.....	3
Leader Devotionals.....	6
Week 1: Jesus Washes His Friends' Feet • John 13:1-17	6
Week 2: Jesus Serves the Last Supper • Luke 22:7-20	8
Week 3: Jesus Prays for Us • John 17:20-26.....	10
Week 4: Jesus Dies on the Cross • John 19:17-42	12
Week 5: Jesus Gives His Friends Food • John 21:1-14	14
Week 6: Jesus Is Alive! • John 20:1-18	16
Week 7: Jesus Feeds 4,000 • Mark 8:1-10	18
Week 8: Jesus Is the Good Shepherd • John 10:1-16.....	20
Week 9: God Gives Good Gifts • Luke 11:9-13.....	22
Week 10: Nehemiah Gets Supplies From the King • Nehemiah 1:1–2:9.....	24
Week 11: God Helps Nehemiah Face Enemies • Nehemiah 4	26
Week 12: Nehemiah Helps People in Need • Nehemiah 5	28
Week 13: Nehemiah Finishes the Wall • Nehemiah 6:15–7:3; 12:27-30	30

Introduction to Buzz



Welcome to Buzz, the curriculum that transforms the way you do children's ministry! As you use this curriculum, you'll find that each Buzz lesson is designed like a game, so lessons are packed with fun, surprises, and kid participation. Kids even get to choose which activity comes next as the lesson unfolds. They will never be bored because they'll never quite know what's coming next!

Week after week your kids will experience refreshing, age-appropriate lessons that are

- **biblically solid**—in each lesson, kids explore one Bible truth in a fresh way!
- **surprising**—kids stay engaged and involved.
- **learner-based**—kids learn in a variety of ways, and Buzz uses them all!
- **high impact**—kids live out Bible truths, on Sunday and all week long.

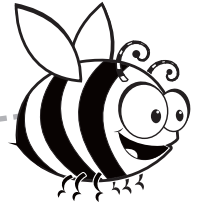
Now your Sunday school can go deeper than ever! It's about knowing, loving, and following Jesus. It's about forming a lasting friendship with God. It's about helping kids discover, explore, and *experience* God's love. They'll know God...feel his love...and cement a rock-solid friendship with him.

Buzz redefines the way you'll prepare for lessons. With the exception of classroom basics (Bibles, a CD player, scissors, glue, crayons, pencils, paper, and tape), if a supply is in the lesson, it's in the kit. Guaranteed!

Because the lessons come ready to use, you can spend your valuable prep time doing what matters most—*preparing your heart to be with kids*. With no need to run errands looking for supplies or props, you'll have time to soak in God's Word, enjoy inspirational devotions, and pray for the kids in your group.

Use these *Leader Devotions* to prepare your heart, and watch for transformation in your kids' lives—and in your life, too!

Buzz Tips







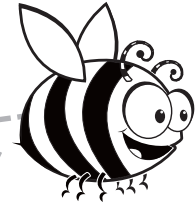
When using Buzz, follow these guidelines:





- Prepare your heart before the lesson using these *Leader Devotions*. That's the only preparation you'll need!
- Follow the *Directions* to know how to use the components of the game.
- When reading the *Bible Buzz Cards*, remember that anything in **bold** is meant to be spoken aloud to the kids and that any items in *italics* can be found in your kit.
- There's one point that you want your kids to take home each week—the ➡ Point. You'll find that each lesson gives you many opportunities to repeat the Point so kids remember it.
- Be open to the Holy Spirit as you teach. If God provides a "teachable moment," don't be afraid to stop and really delve into the subject with kids. If you run short on time as a result, skip ahead to the Buzz in Action and Let's Pray sections after completing the Bible story card.

Smart Chart

Buzz seeks to engage children of all different learning styles by using different “smarts.” On each *Bible Buzz Card*, you’ll find an icon indicating the primary smart the activity will use. Use the chart below to see the kinds of activities each smart involves.

Icon	Examples of Activities
	Discussing, reading, writing, listening, debating
	Sculpting, drawing, making crafts
	Singing, creating songs, learning rhymes
	Solving problems, thinking abstractly



Icon	Examples of Activities
	Playing physical games, acting
	Studying environments, comparing things with nature
	Reflecting, sharing feelings
	Sharing in interactive games, getting acquainted

Week 1

Jesus Washes His Friends' Feet JOHN 13:1-17 *We believe Jesus is alive.*

What the Bible Says

Before Passover (an annual celebration commemorating God's rescue of his people from captivity in Egypt), Jesus and his disciples gathered for dinner. When it was time to eat, Jesus got up from the table, removed his robe, and wrapped a towel around himself. Then he humbled himself and washed the feet of each of his disciples. Peter resisted at first, refusing to let Jesus wash his feet. But when Jesus said, "Unless I wash you, you won't belong to me," Peter wholeheartedly agreed to take part. Afterward, Jesus explained to his disciples that this act of service was a challenge to them: As his followers they, too, "ought to wash each other's feet."

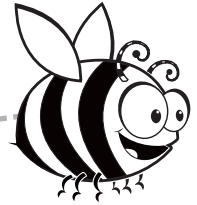
What It Means

When Jesus changed his clothing from a robe to a towel around his waist, he dressed himself in the garb of a servant. This act, in and of itself, would have been shocking to the disciples. He was their *teacher*—their honored leader! Why would he demean himself in this way? But then Jesus took things further...*much* further. It was the norm in this culture for the host of a meal to arrange for his guests' feet to be washed. But the task itself was

viewed as so debasing that it was reserved for slaves. It was so degrading, in fact, that Jewish slaves wouldn't do it; only the lowliest of the low, the non-Jewish slaves, would be called upon to perform this task.

Why It Matters

As he often does in his teachings, here Jesus turns human logic upside down by linking honor with humiliation. Jesus didn't lose his power or his position as the Son of God when he knelt down and cleaned dirt and dung off the feet of his weary disciples. Instead, he *demonstrated* his power. It was power expressed in service: world-changing love, the courage to put others first, the audacity to choose the role of slave over the position of leader. Jesus is ready to humbly serve us, too. And he invites us to treat others the same way. Just as he challenged the disciples, Jesus calls us to exhibit his upside-down brand of power: the strength to squelch self-interest and put the needs of others first.



God Sightings®

We don't have slaves, and we don't wash other people's feet in our culture. But we *are* served daily. As you go through your week, look for "foot-washers" in our society; people you may not normally notice who are often taken for granted or who perform unenviable jobs. Imagine Jesus willingly taking on those roles; see his upside-down power as it might look if he were here in our times in the flesh. How does his willingness to serve and help others challenge you? Listen to what God is telling you about servanthood as you observe service in action this week.

Prayer Starter

Pray that kids will see how they can help others and will show others how God has helped them. Write your prayer here.

Week 2

Jesus Serves the Last Supper LUKE 22:7-20 *We believe Jesus is alive.*

What the Bible Says

Jesus and his friends gathered together in Jerusalem to celebrate the Jewish Passover. Jesus told the disciples he'd been looking forward to sharing this Passover with them because it would be the last one before his "suffering" began. As part of the traditional meal, Jesus took bread, broke it apart, and passed the pieces around for his disciples to eat. As he did this, Jesus said, "This is my body, which is given for you." Then he took a cup of wine and said it was "the new covenant between God and his people—an agreement confirmed with my blood." Jesus said something else that must have seemed very cryptic to the disciples: He claimed that he wouldn't eat a Passover meal again "until its meaning is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God."

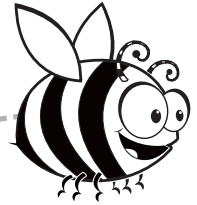
What It Means

Passover was (and still is) a traditional celebration in which Jewish people remembered how God saved his people from captivity in Egypt. For the first Passover meal (recorded in Exodus 11–12), each Jewish family killed a lamb or goat to eat—but they also smeared its blood on the doorframes of their homes. When God enacted his final plague against Egypt—the death of the firstborn—he "passed over" each home marked with blood. That blood ensured that God would protect the firstborn of his

people. The symbolic meaning of the Passover celebration would ultimately be fulfilled in Jesus' sacrifice of his own life to save his people. When Jesus told his disciples that pieces of the Passover meal represented his body and blood, he was telling them that he was to be the new Passover sacrifice. He would die to save us.

Why It Matters

"Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed for us," wrote the Apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 5:7). Jesus was—and is—the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies and God's enduring promise to save and forgive his people. Through Jesus' sacrifice, the punishment of death "passes over" us. When we observe the Lord's Supper (also called Eucharist or Communion) in our churches, we are celebrating the forgiveness that Jesus offers through his death. We are doing what Jesus asked of his disciples during that Passover meal: "Do this to remember me."



God Sightings®

This week, pray in an unusual spot: right in your doorway. If you want, place your hands on the doorframe. As you pray, imagine God's people in Egypt marking their doorways with the protective blood of a lamb. Listen for God to reveal the symbolism this has in your life: the blood that Jesus, as the Passover Lamb, shed for you, the blood that protects you from the punishment for your sin. Ask God to reveal other ways he has protected and saved you.

Prayer Starter

Pray that your kids will begin to develop a meaningful understanding of Jesus' love for them. Write your prayer here.

Week 3

Jesus Prays for Us JOHN 17:20-26 *We believe Jesus is alive.*

What the Bible Says

During the final day with his disciples, just before the prayer in today's Bible passage, Jesus spoke with his friends about many important truths. He spoke about salvation, the Holy Spirit, Christian discipleship, their own coming persecution, and more (see John 14–17). In today's account, Jesus spent the last moments before his arrest praying for his followers. But he didn't just pray for the 12 who were with him. Jesus also prayed specifically for *us*—"for all who will ever believe in me through [the disciples'] message." Jesus' prayer for the future church was all about unity. He passionately asked God that the church be "one" just as he and the Father are one. "May they experience such perfect unity," Jesus prayed, "that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me."

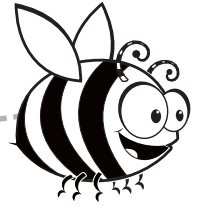
What It Means

Jesus directly connected our Christian unity with our message to the world about Jesus' identity and his love. His statement leads us to ask, What if we *don't* have unity? Will that mean the world *won't* see Jesus and his love through us? Will our disunity have the indirect result of people *not* knowing God loves them?

Jesus' prayer here isn't a warm, fuzzy sentiment about getting along—inherent within his prayer is a warning to us. Yes, unity among Christian believers can be a huge glowing signpost that will direct others to Jesus. But disunity may do just the opposite. We help others believe Jesus is alive when they see him living in us in peace and unity.

Why It Matters

Last words command our attention. Jesus' final prayer for his church demands that we take his passion for unity to heart. So if unity was so important to Jesus, why can't we Christians seem to get along? Even though goodwill may exist among Christians, there are major differences that divide us. There may be people within our own church we struggle to be at peace with. Jesus prayed for God's help for us in all these relationships; he wants us to get along so that the world might see God's love in and through us.



God Sightings®

This week, look for how God is at work building unity and strengthening relationships within your church—in friendly greetings, in acts of compassion and care, and even in people resolving conflicts. See how this unity demonstrates God’s love and reveals him to you in new ways. Listen for how Jesus is calling *you* to be even more united with other Jesus-followers in your community.

Prayer Starter

Pray that there will be a sense of unity within your Buzz group as kids develop friendships with each other. Write your prayer here.

Week 4

Jesus Dies on the Cross JOHN 19:17-42 *We believe Jesus is alive.*

What the Bible Says

After a sham of a trial and a brutal beating and scourging (John 18:19–19:16), Jesus—whom Pilate condemned to death by crucifixion—was forced to carry his own cross to the place of his execution. There he was crucified, and Pilate posted a sign on the cross reading, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” Jesus’ executioners divided up his clothing and gambled for his robe. Among the crowd watching the crucifixion were Jesus’ mother, Mary; his disciple John; and two other women who were Jesus’ friends. Eventually Jesus died on that cross. A soldier pierced Jesus’ side with a spear, and the blood and water that flowed from the wound confirmed that Jesus was indeed dead.

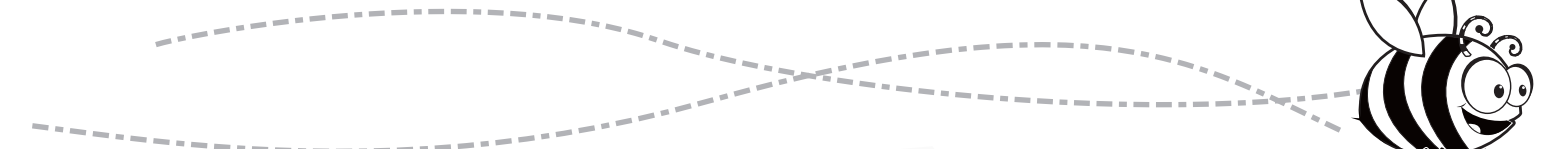
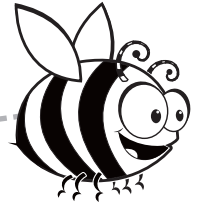
What It Means

A detailed description of the torturous pain Jesus went through as he was crucified would be agonizing to write and excruciating to read. What he endured goes far beyond what we can imagine. He suffered the unbearable pain of being nailed through the hands and feet and of slow, inevitable suffocation, since hanging on the cross ultimately made it too difficult to breathe. And far worse than the physical pain Jesus endured was the immense,

anguishing burden he carried of all the sin in human history. Yet John records that even as Jesus went through this unbelievable suffering, his focus remained on his mission.

Why It Matters

The cross is a symbol that’s become very commonplace in our culture—but if we really understand it, it will shake us to our very bones. Jesus didn’t die on the cross because Pilate sentenced him to death; after all, he had all the power in the world at his disposal to get off the cross at any moment. Instead, Jesus suffered and died on the cross because he chose to. He willingly put his miracle-working power aside to suffer and die like a criminal. During this time—which to the world looked like a period of weakness—Jesus showed an immense power: the power of his love, the power that overcomes sin and death. The powerful love that held Jesus to the cross is for *you*. Think about that for a moment. Picture the cross; try to imagine that unimaginable pain. It was for *you*. It’s hard to swallow, isn’t it? But it’s true.



God Sightings®
Pay attention to the crosses you see this week. You may see a cross mounted in the sanctuary at church or hanging on a necklace. Or you may spot a cross shape in an unusual place, such as in a tree branch, a fence post, or even a streetlight. Allow God to speak to you about the true meaning of this symbol; let him impress the significance of the cross deep into your heart. Experience the powerful love God has for you, the love exemplified in Jesus' willingness to suffer and die.

Prayer Starter

Pray that your kids will begin to understand the powerful love Jesus demonstrated in his death on the cross. Write your prayer here.

Week 5

Jesus Gives His Friends Food JOHN 21:1-14 *We believe Jesus is alive.*

What the Bible Says

After Jesus rose from the dead, he appeared to his disciples two different times when the disciples were together. Later on, seven of Jesus' disciples went fishing together. After working all night on the Sea of Galilee, they still hadn't caught a thing. But as they neared the shore, they saw a man who called out to them and told them to throw the net out one more time. They followed his advice and hauled in a *huge* catch—they later counted 153 big fish! John and Peter quickly realized the man on the beach was Jesus. Peter, often spontaneous and impulsive, jumped out of the boat and swam to shore. Once the boat was brought in, Jesus called out to the rest of the disciples and invited them to eat breakfast with him. Jesus served them bread and fish, and they ate.

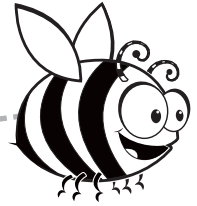
What It Means

John 20:24-29 describes Jesus' second appearance to the disciples; in that instance, Thomas physically touched the wounds in Jesus' hands and side. In that account and in this description of the shore breakfast, John heavily emphasized that Jesus had a real, tangible body: The resurrected Jesus isn't some ghost or spirit or airy presence. He's literally *alive*—with a body that can be touched, and a mouth and stomach that can eat and digest food

(also see Luke 24:42-43). Jesus not only provided his disciples with food to eat, he provided them (again) with solid proof, right before their eyes, that he was indeed back from the dead.

Why It Matters

Resurrection isn't merely a feel-good idea. As Christians, we don't just "imagine" Jesus rose from the dead as if it were some magical ending in a fairy tale. John, and the other eyewitnesses to the resurrected Jesus, clearly claims that Jesus was unarguably dead and then undeniably alive again, breathing, walking, eating, talking. This is a pivotal aspect of Christian faith. In fact, the Apostle Paul wrote, "If Christ has not been raised, then...your faith is useless" (1 Corinthians 15:14). Believing that a dead man came back to life *is* outrageous—but it's that outrageous fact of history that can change everything about our lives. Jesus' victory over death shows us that he *won*; he is the victor over sin who can truly offer us forgiveness, hope, and new life.



God Sightings®

Just as he did for the disciples by serving them bread and fish, Jesus offers you eyewitness “proof,” in both big and small ways, of his presence in your life. What evidences of his love and provision do you see and experience in your everyday life? Look for him! He’s showing up in your world in so many ways—in an inner sense of his guidance, in the encouraging words of a friend, in a powerfully answered prayer, in the wonder of a starry night. Reflect on his provision in your life; strive to stay tuned in to his presence.

Prayer Starter

Pray that your kids will experience the hope that comes from belief in Jesus’ resurrection. Write your prayer here.

Week 6

Jesus Is Alive! JOHN 20:1-18 *We believe Jesus is alive.*

What the Bible Says

Early on the Sunday morning after Jesus' crucifixion, Jesus' friend Mary Magdalene went to the tomb where Jesus' body had been placed. When she got there, she saw that the stone had been removed and the tomb was empty. Mary ran and found two of Jesus' closest friends, Peter and John, and told them that Jesus' body was missing. Peter and John ran to the tomb and found the cloths that Jesus' body had been wrapped in...but no Jesus. John realized that Jesus had come back to life, just as he said he would.

After Peter and John left, Mary stood outside the tomb, weeping. She looked inside and saw angels. Then she saw a man outside the tomb and at first thought he was the gardener. But when he said her name, she realized the man was Jesus himself. With great joy, she hurried to find the rest of the disciples and told them, "I have seen the Lord!"

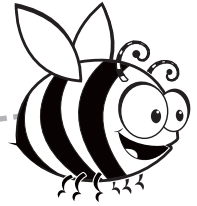
What It Means

When Mary first saw the empty tomb, it appears that the possibility of resurrection never crossed her mind. Right off the bat, she assumed that someone had stolen Jesus' body. Though she loved Jesus dearly and had witnessed his miracle-working power, she'd also witnessed his death firsthand

(John 19:25; Mark 15:40). She'd been up close when he breathed his last and when a spear pierced the side of his battered and bruised body. Her experience assured her that Jesus was dead and there was no other possibility. But God had the impossible in mind.

Why It Matters

We can only imagine the complete shock, the utter joy, the mind-blowing relief that must have surged through Mary when she heard her name spoken by that wonderfully familiar voice. All her wildest hopes—and even what she didn't *dare* to hope—came true in that moment. It was, and still is, an extraordinary event. But it can be so easy for us to take the wonder of Jesus' resurrection for granted. We hear about it, sing about it, and casually talk about it so often that we may tend to consider the extraordinary ordinary. But as Mary learned—hope was made real. The impossible was made possible. Our Savior is alive.



God Sightings®

Rediscover the extraordinary in your ordinary life this week; literally take some time to smell the roses (or hyacinths or lilacs!). Pause and appreciate the things you take for granted. Experience the wonder of cloud watching; smile at the shimmer of a shiny penny; stop and enjoy the music of a bird's sweet song. Listen to what God is telling you about his extraordinary miracle as you enjoy these things. Let the impossible truth of Jesus' resurrection stun you.

Prayer Starter

Pray that your kids will always hold on to the wonder of this most amazing truth of all time: Jesus is alive. Write your prayer here.

Week 7

Jesus Feeds 4,000 MARK 8:1-10 *We ask Jesus to help us.*

What the Bible Says

As Jesus and his disciples traveled in a Gentile (non-Jewish) region, a large crowd of about 4,000 people gathered to hear him teach. The people—many of whom had traveled from far away and over rough terrain to listen to Jesus—had run out of food and were very hungry. The disciples were baffled about what to do...but Jesus wasn't. He gathered seven loaves of bread and a few small fish from the disciples, thanked God for the food, and then had the disciples distribute it. It multiplied into enough food to feed all the people! In fact, when everyone was finished eating, there were seven baskets of leftovers!

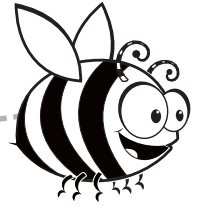
What It Means

Earlier in their travels with Jesus, the disciples personally witnessed Jesus multiplying food to feed a massive crowd that was even bigger than this one (see Mark 6:30-44). But as we can see here, the disciples still didn't seem to get it. Even though they'd watched him do it before, they didn't automatically have confidence that Jesus could and would provide in this situation. Instead, the disciples focused on the massive problem looming before them and the seemingly impossible logistics of finding

food (and lots of it) in a wilderness area. Rather than wondering "How are we supposed to find enough food?" perhaps they should have been asking, "Who can we turn to, to provide for this need?" The answer isn't a logistical solution; it's a person: Jesus.

Why It Matters

The disciples focused on the facts, and—realistically speaking—they were right. The problem was gigantic and had no apparent solution. When we face big problems, it's so easy for us, just like the disciples, to forget at least momentarily all that Jesus has already provided for us. It's easy to fixate on the details of the problem rather than turn to Jesus. Jesus is ready to help us. He can provide the answer—he can *be* the answer.



God Sightings®

Huge problems pale in comparison with the vast power of God. This week, be on the lookout for ways God is reaching into your world, providing for you and protecting you just as Jesus provided for the crowd. God is powerfully at work in your life, even when you don't notice it. He's constantly nurturing you, caring for your needs, guiding you. And if you come face to face with a seemingly impossible problem this week, invite God to buoy up your faith and trust by bringing to your mind those instances in which he's come through for you in the past. In those moments when you feel bewildered or confused, he is present and ready to act.

Prayer Starter

Pray that your kids will ask for God's help and see the many ways he lovingly provides for them. Write your prayer here.

Week 8

Jesus Is the Good Shepherd JOHN 10:1-16 *We ask Jesus to help us.*

What the Bible Says

Jesus uses two powerful word pictures to illustrate his relationship with his followers. First, he describes himself as the good shepherd and his followers as a flock of sheep. Jesus explained that he, like a shepherd, leads his flock; he calls his sheep by name, and the sheep recognize his voice and follow him. He points out that sheep won't follow a stranger since they don't know his voice. Jesus finishes this word picture by saying that, as the good shepherd, he would even sacrifice his life for his sheep.

Jesus next describes himself as a gate, drawing upon the idea of a doorway or opening in a wall that sheep go through to enter their sheepfolds at night. In this word picture, Jesus says that those "who come in through me will be saved."

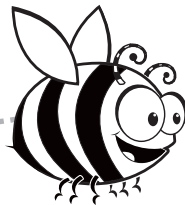
What It Means

In the west, a shepherd usually guides from behind, driving his flock forward with the assistance of sheepdogs. But in the Middle East during Jesus' time (and still today), a shepherd walked up front, calling out repeatedly, and his sheep followed him, literally by listening to him. Jesus, like a shepherd, provides direction and clear guidance for us in our lives. By saying the shepherd

calls the sheep by name, Jesus gives us—his sheep—individual significance. In verse 14, Jesus says that he knows us intimately. He refers to his coming death on the cross for our sake and likens it to a shepherd sacrificing his life to protect his flock from a predator.

Why It Matters

If there's one word to describe the tone of Jesus' shepherd illustration, it's *intimacy*. The shepherd doesn't sit at a distance—he's hands-on and up close. He knows his sheep; he notices when they're hurt or sick or lagging behind. The relationship Jesus portrays isn't aloof or robotic or authoritarian. Instead, it's the close, familiar care of a shepherd who not only leads the flock but also feeds them and protects them and tends to their wounds. This is the kind of intimate relationship Jesus desires to have with you. He knows you. He calls your name. He's ready to guide and protect you.



God Sightings®

As the shepherd calls to his sheep, God calls to you to guide and help you. Listen today for God's voice. He may speak through a circumstance, through the words of a friend, through Scripture, or through feelings in your heart. Be attentive to his voice. Respond to his leading.

Prayer Starter

Pray that your kids will get to know God as the loving, caring shepherd who's ready to protect them. Write your prayer here.

Week 9

God Gives Good Gifts LUKE 11:9-13 *We ask Jesus to help us.*

What the Bible Says

As Jesus teaches about prayer, he emphasizes that if we are persistent in our asking, we will receive an answer; if we are relentless in our seeking, we will find what we are looking for; if we are determined in our knocking, the door will be opened. Jesus then takes his teaching to a very personal level. As parents, how do we respond to our children's needs? If a child asks for food such as fish or an egg, obviously no human father would instead give that child something dangerous like a snake or a scorpion. Jesus enlarges this idea and applies it to God, teaching that since God's love is much greater than human love, God not only will give good gifts to his children, but also will give the ultimate gift—the Holy Spirit—to those who ask.

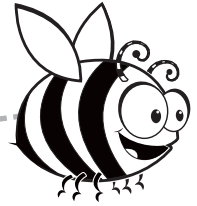
What It Means

Jesus doesn't suggest that we ask or seek or knock as a one-time action; rather, Jesus urges us to "keep on" asking, seeking, and knocking. When Jesus tells his followers to *ask*, it's a command to pray—to come to God with requests and questions and dreams and longings. But praying is also much more than just presenting a list of requests. *Seeking* implies pursuing God—determinedly

trying to find God's will and desiring his presence. *Knocking* conveys the image of resolutely desiring to enter into God's presence and then actually entering God's presence as the "door" is opened.

Why It Matters

Kids will learn that "God is powerful, so we ask Jesus to help us." Jesus' emphasis in this passage isn't so much on God's power or on Jesus' ability to help—it's on the *asking*. It's on *our* part of the deal. This image of prayer is deeply challenging: it's prayer with gusto and determination and persistence. It's prayer that won't give up! Let's be honest: Prayer, as Jesus defines it, isn't easy. But it's so worth it to ask, seek, and knock because we're coming to a God who's abundantly more loving and powerful than any human parent, and his desire is to love us and comfort us and bless us with his presence.



God Sightings®

Every time you open a door this week, think for a moment about Jesus' description of praying: knocking on a door that God will open for you so that you can enter into his presence. Let God transform you into a pray-er who prays confidently and persistently. And look attentively for God's good answers to your prayers, for the many gifts he's blessed you with, and especially for the good gift of the presence of God's Holy Spirit in your life.

Prayer Starter

Pray that your kids will learn to ask God for good gifts and seek his will for their lives. Write your prayer here.

Week 10

Nehemiah Gets Supplies From the King

NEHEMIAH 1:1–2:9 *We trust God to give us what we need.*

What the Bible Says

Because of their disobedience, God allowed the Israelites to be conquered by several enemy nations (see Jeremiah 25:7-14). Many Israelites went into exile, and Jerusalem fell into ruins. Today's passage tells about Nehemiah, who served as a cupbearer for the Persian king, Artaxerxes. When Nehemiah heard about how bad things were for the Jews who had returned to Jerusalem, he broke down in tears and cried out to God. For four months Nehemiah mourned. The king noticed his sorrow and asked him what was wrong. Nehemiah told him he was sad because Jerusalem was in ruins. Then Nehemiah took a chance: He asked for permission to go and rebuild the city. He pushed it further by asking for letters from the king that would guarantee safe passage. Then Nehemiah took it further still and requested that he be given permission to get timber from the king's own forest to use in rebuilding the city's walls. (Talk about audacious!) Rather than punish Nehemiah for daring to ask such a thing, the king granted *all* of Nehemiah's requests.

What It Means

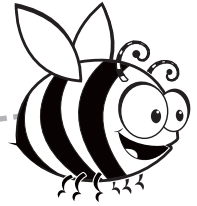
There's a tiny little detail in Nehemiah's retelling of these events that's worth sitting up and paying attention to. Before talking to the king about his desire to rebuild Jerusalem and before making

his requests, Nehemiah spoke "a prayer to the God of heaven." Even though he was standing in front of a powerful human king, Nehemiah knew who really had all the power: God. And when the king granted Nehemiah's requests, Nehemiah gave credit where it was due, clearly stating that it all happened because of God.

Why It Matters

This passage illustrates the part we play and the part God plays in doing his will in this world. Nehemiah didn't just sit around moaning and crying, passively waiting for God to do a miracle. Nehemiah got involved and took action—action that required guts! But Nehemiah also didn't rely solely on his own gumption to get the job done; here—and throughout the book of Nehemiah—we see Nehemiah repeatedly turning to God in prayer. Nehemiah took action that was prompted by God; he depended totally on God in prayer; he knew, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that it was God who ultimately would be the provider for all of his needs.

How about you? Do you rely on God to provide for your needs? Take a lesson from Nehemiah: Trust God to give you what you need and be in constant prayer to ask for it.



Prayer Starter

Pray that your kids will trust God to meet all their needs. Write your prayer here.

God Sightings®

This week, get in the habit of saying quick prayers to start out each new activity you do. See how God helps you and provides for you as you rely on him for every need.

Week II

God Helps Nehemiah Face Enemies NEHEMIAH 4 *We trust God to give us what we need.*

What the Bible Says

Nehemiah had a lot on his plate as he coordinated the effort to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem. The last thing he needed was to be mocked, provoked, and attacked by enemies. But that's just what happened. Sanballat and Tobiah, Persian officials, were ticked off as soon as they heard about Nehemiah's plans (Nehemiah 2:10). When Nehemiah began recruiting workers among the returned exiles, Sanballat and Tobiah cruelly mocked Nehemiah. When the rebuilding was actually underway, Sanballat began to organize armed forces to defeat the Jews and stop the rebuilding. Each step of the way, though, Nehemiah "prayed to our God and guarded the city." Working under the constant threat of attack, God's people persevered in their efforts to rebuild Jerusalem.

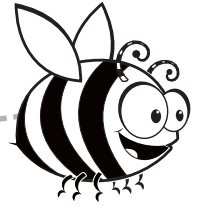
What It Means

Nehemiah and his people were viciously ridiculed by Sanballat and company, who called them a "bunch of poor, feeble Jews." Along with this repeated assault on their egos was the literal danger of physical attack. With powerful enemies like these facing off against him, why did Nehemiah persist? How did he make it through? We get a clue from verse 14, in the words

Nehemiah spoke to embolden his people: "Don't be afraid of the enemy! Remember the Lord, who is great and glorious!" If they were attacked, Nehemiah believed, "our God will fight for us!"

Why It Matters

The cruelty and danger Nehemiah faced were very real; similarly, we may have "enemies" in our lives: people who dislike us, people who gossip about us or stereotype us, or people who work hard to prevent us from boldly living for God. When Nehemiah faced enemies, God didn't snap his divine fingers and make Nehemiah's enemies instantly disappear—Nehemiah still had to deal with them, over and over again. But God was present with him, protected him, and helped him through it. Nehemiah put his focus squarely on God, and we can do the same. As we keep our attention on God's greatness and glory, on his power and love and faithfulness, the danger our enemies seem to pose will fade away. When we remember we've got God on our side, it puts everything else in perspective. God may not make the challenging people in our lives disappear or suddenly become kind and friendly. But he'll be with us as we face them!



God Sightings®

This week, whenever you see, speak to, or interact with someone who's generally unkind to you, picture in your mind's eye Jesus standing right there with you. Sense his powerful presence and protection in your life. As you do, rest in the peace of knowing that—just as he helped Nehemiah—God will give you what you need to deal with your “enemies.”

Prayer Starter

Pray that your kids will feel safe and secure in the knowledge that God will protect them. Write your prayer here.

Week 12

Nehemiah Helps People in Need

NEHEMIAH 5 *We trust God to give us what we need.*

What the Bible Says

At the same time as they labored to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem, many of God's people were being crushed by the burden of intense poverty. Families had to mortgage their property to buy food; some even had to sell children into indentured servitude to prevent the rest of the family from starving. The worst part of it all was that they were in debt to (and being oppressed by) fellow Jews.

When Nehemiah became aware of how bad the situation was, he was infuriated. He immediately decided to stop charging interest on the money and grain he himself had loaned to others. He then challenged the wealthy Jewish people in his community to show their fear of God by stopping all interest charges, restoring the mortgaged properties to their original owners, and repaying all the interest they had charged.

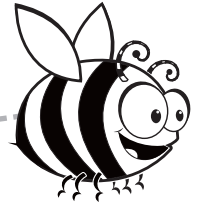
What It Means

Nehemiah responded to the injustice and need he saw in two ways. First, he worked on a large scale by addressing the social structures that led to the problems. Next, he addressed the issues on a smaller scale by making changes and sacrifices in his own personal life. Not only did he stop charging interest on loans

he'd made, but he also chose not to tax the people to provide his food (which was his right as governor). Further, he used his own money to pay for the daily food for his 150 government officials and for visitors.

Why It Matters

This account isn't about Nehemiah helping the people—it's actually about God helping the people *through* Nehemiah. Nehemiah was a conduit through which God's compassion, generosity, and justice flowed. Similarly, God desires to help others *through you*. He wants to work through you to address large-scale injustices in this world and to make small-scale changes in your own life that will enable you to help those in need.



God Sightings®

As you routinely turn on lights this week, take a moment to reflect on what's happening as you flip that switch: Electricity flows through the wire and into the bulb, which then shines brightly in the room. Like a wire through which electricity flows, you can be the conduit through which God's compassion and justice and love flow. You can provide God's light to those in need in your world. Pray and invite God to work through you. Pay attention to ways he's trying to use you to help others with what they need. Listen for God's call.

Prayer Starter

Pray that your kids will let God use them to help others who are in need. Write your prayer here.

Week 13

Nehemiah Finishes the Wall

NEHEMIAH 6:15–7:3; 12:27-30 *We trust God to give us what we need.*

What the Bible Says

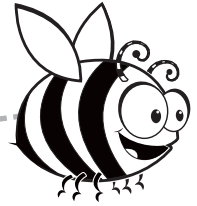
By all appearances, the task was impossible. Jerusalem and its walls had been lying in ruins for about 140 years! Yet somehow, against all odds, Nehemiah was able to lead God's people in rebuilding the city's massive walls in just 52 days! When the walls were completed, Nehemiah invited the priests from throughout the land of Judah to come and be part of a dedication ceremony. People traveled from near and far to celebrate together through singing, playing instruments, and praising God.

What It Means

When the job was done, Nehemiah and his workers didn't sit around patting themselves on the back or handing out "Wall-Builder of the Year" awards. They all knew that it was *God* who had made the impossible possible. They deeply believed that "this work had been done with the help of our God." So rather than congratulate themselves for this accomplishment, they gave the credit right where it was due.

Why It Matters

It's not a bad thing to be proud of our accomplishments or to have a proper degree of self-confidence, but it can be really, really easy to let that confidence mess up our perspective in life. We can very easily lose sight of the fact that it's God who provides us with our talents, our gumption, our strength, and even the health required to work. Nehemiah's response to his gigantic accomplishment was to worship God; he knew the job could never have been completed without God's help. His example compels us to do the same, to keep our eyes on God as the provider of all that we need and the one who works through us to accomplish great things.



God Sightings®

This week, notice some of the things you do—both big and small—that you feel proud of. But rather than giving yourself a pat on the back, see how God was at work in those accomplishments. Consider how he enabled you to do those things. How is your accomplishment really a God Sighting? What strength and motivation did he provide? What talent or skill did he give you? How did he grow your ability to be determined and persistent? What creative ideas did he bring to mind? Then take time to do what Nehemiah did: Praise God for what he's done!

Prayer Starter

Pray that when your kids accomplish something they can be proud of, they'll give credit to God and recognize how he supplied what they needed for the task. Write your prayer here.
