



**BIBLE  
FUN  
FACTORY**

**BIBLE LESSONS FOR KIDS** | Volume 11



**SPECIAL PEOPLE IN  
HEBREW HISTORY**

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# BIBLE FUN FACTORY

## BIBLE LESSONS FOR KIDS

### SPECIAL PEOPLE IN HEBREW HISTORY

Welcome to this series of Bible lessons for students age pre-school to sixth grade. You'll find these Bible lessons introduce children to characters of the Old Testament, making their lives very personal by putting their problems in a modern-day context. The characters introduce principles students can use every day in school, at home, and in the neighborhood, while growing in Christ.

These three women, three men, and twelve voices from heaven all have something wonderful in common: They made choices that can show children how to prioritize. Ruth puts family before friends. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego put God before country. Esther put her spiritual family before her flesh-and-blood family and her country. Abigail put matters of right and wrong before her family. The Minor Prophets speak sternly in God's "Parent Voice," giving words directly from the Source on how to prioritize some modern day issues.

#### Lessons Included:

- Ruth and Putting Family First
- Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego Put God First
- Queen Esther Stands up for Her People
- Abigail Stands Up for What's Right
- The Minor Prophets



# CONTENTS

## Lesson 1

<b>Ruth and Putting Family First .....</b>	<b>6</b>
Materials List .....	6
Bible Reading/Story: Ruth 1 – 4 .....	7
Lesson (Teacher Words In Bold): Putting family first.....	10
Intro Activity, Younger Children: Family First.....	12
Intro Activity, Older Children: FAMILY FIRST—Priority List .....	12
Activity, Younger Children: God Watches Over All .....	13
Activity, Older Children: Keeping Family Together! .....	14
Game, Younger Children: Keep The Family Together!.....	15
Game, Older Children: God Watches Over All — Tic-Tac-Toe.....	16
Closing Prayer .....	16

## Lesson 2

<b>Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego Put God First .....</b>	<b>17</b>
Materials List .....	17
Bible Reading/Story: Daniel 3 .....	19
Lesson (Teacher Words In Bold): Standing Up for God .....	21
Intro Activity, Younger Children: Standing Up for God—Sign to Color.....	23
Intro Activity, Older Children: Standing Up for God—Pennies Game .....	23
Activity, Younger Children: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego’s Furnace.....	23
Activity, Older Children: I will Stand Up for God— Graphic novel page .....	24
Game, Younger Children: Walking through Hard Times.....	25
Game, Older Children: God’s Will is Like the Pennies—Game .....	26
Closing Prayer .....	26

## Lesson 3

<b>Queen Esther Stands Up for Her People .....</b>	<b>27</b>
Materials List .....	27
Bible Reading / Story: Esther 3 Exerpts .....	29
Lesson (Teacher Words In Bold): Standing Up for Your Spiritual Family.....	32
Intro Activity, Younger Children: “Hopping” Up for Our Spiritual Brothers & Sisters.....	34
Intro Activity, Older Children: Links for Chain .....	35
Activity, Younger Children: Queen Esther’s Courage .....	35
Activity, Older Children: Spiritual Sibling Chain .....	36
Game, Younger Children: Stand up / Sit down .....	37
Game, Older Children: He Ain’t Heavy—Game.....	38
Closing Prayer .....	38

## Lesson 4

<b>Abigail Stands Up for What’s Right.....</b>	<b>39</b>
Materials List .....	39
Bible Reading/Story: 1 Samuel 25.....	40
Lesson (Teacher Words In Bold): Standing Up for What’s Right .....	42
Intro Activity, Younger Children: Standing Up for What’s Right— Hopping Contest .....	45
Intro Activity, Older Children: Standing up for What’s Right— Jump-Rope Contest.....	45
Activity, Younger Children: God Helps Us Create Order (Using Blocks) .....	45
Activity, Older Children: Clutter & Candy.....	47
Game, Younger Children: Learning Your Spiritual Family’s Names .....	48
Game, Older Children: Adding to the Chain .....	49
Closing Prayer .....	49

## Lesson 5

<b>Minor Prophets: Some of God the Father’s Best Kids .....</b>	<b>50</b>
Materials List .....	50
Bible Reading / Story .....	51
Lesson (Teacher Words In Bold): The Minor Prophets Stand up as God’s Voice .....	53
Intro Activity, Younger Children A Message from the Minor Prophets— God Loves a Happy Marriage .	55
Intro Activity, Older Children: My Future Husband / Wife: Wish list of Traits.....	56
Activity, Younger Children: Micah: The Right Way to Pray.....	57
Activity, Older Children: Imagining Mr. and Mrs. Right: Avoiding Israel’s Pitfalls.....	58
Game, Younger Children: Learning the Names of the Minor Prophets.....	59
Game, Older Children: Minor Prophets Popsicle Stick Memorization .....	60
Closing Prayer .....	60

# RUTH AND PUTTING FAMILY FIRST

The Book of Ruth comes right after Judges, taking place in the early history of the nation of Israel. While having attained their freedom and established a nation, the Hebrews still had some tough times. Don't we all? Ruth put family first after her husband died, refusing to leave her mother-in-law. She could have left her to chase down a second husband—or just to have some well-deserved fun! But Ruth stayed, and her reward was the husband of her dreams and a prosperous life to follow. God rewards us if we put family ahead of friends.

## MATERIALS LIST

### Lesson

- No materials needed

### Intro Activity, Younger Children

- Paper plates
- Markers

### Intro Activity, Older Children

- Writing paper
- Pencils or pens

### Activity, Younger Children

- 4x4 squares of yellow construction paper, one for each child
- Paper plates drawn on during Intro Activity

- Red, yellow, and orange markers, plus other colors
- Stick glue
- Glitter or glitter glue
- Newspaper (for working with glitter)

### Activity, Older Children

- Family and Friends Priority Lists from Intro Activity

### Game, Younger Children

- Bouncy ball
- Masking tape

### Game, Older Children

- Pencils or pens
- Writing paper

## BIBLE READING/STORY: RUTH 1 – 4

### Excerpts:

<sup>3</sup> Now Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died, and she was left with her two sons. <sup>4</sup> They married Orpah and Ruth. After about ten years, <sup>5</sup> both the sons also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband.

<sup>8</sup><sup>11</sup> Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Return home, my daughters. Why would you come with me? Am I going to have any more sons, who could become your husbands? <sup>12</sup> I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was still hope for me—even if I had a husband tonight and then gave birth to sons- <sup>13</sup> would you wait until they grew up? Would you remain unmarried for them? No, my daughters. It is more bitter for me than for you, because the LORD's hand has gone out against me!"

<sup>14</sup> At this they wept again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-bye, but Ruth clung to her.

<sup>16</sup> "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. <sup>17</sup> Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried.

<sup>22</sup> So Naomi returned from Moab accompanied by Ruth the Moabite, her daughter-in-law, arriving in Bethlehem as the barley harvest was beginning.

### Ruth 2

<sup>1</sup> Now Naomi had a relative on her husband's side, from the clan of Elimelech, a man of standing, whose name was Boaz.

<sup>2</sup> And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "Let me go to the fields and pick up the leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favor."

As it turned out, she found herself working in a field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelech.

<sup>8</sup> So Boaz said to Ruth, "My daughter, listen to me. Don't go and glean in another field and don't go away from here. Stay here with my servant girls. <sup>9</sup> Watch the field where the men are

harvesting, and follow along after the girls. I have told the men not to touch you. And whenever you are thirsty, go and get a drink from the water jars the men have filled."

10 At this, she bowed down with her face to the ground. She exclaimed, "Why have I found such favor in your eyes that you notice me—a foreigner?"

11 Boaz replied, "I've been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband—how you left your father and mother and your homeland and came to live with a people you did not know before. May you be richly rewarded by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge."

17 So Ruth gleaned in the field until evening. Then she threshed the barley she had gathered.

18 She carried it back to town, and her mother-in-law saw how much she had gathered. Ruth also brought out and gave her what she had left over after she had eaten enough.

19 Her mother-in-law asked her, "Where did you glean today? Where did you work? Blessed be the man who took notice of you!"

Then Ruth told her mother-in-law about the one at whose place she had been working. "The name of the man I worked with today is Boaz," she said.

20 "The LORD bless him!" Naomi said to her daughter-in-law. "He has not stopped showing his kindness to the living and the dead." She added, "That man is our close relative; he is one of our kinsman-redeemers."

### **Ruth 3: Ruth and Boaz at the Threshing Floor**

<sup>1</sup> One day Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, should I not try to find a home for you, where you will be well provided for? <sup>2</sup> Is not Boaz, with whose servant girls you have been, a kinsman of ours? Tonight he will be winnowing barley on the threshing floor. <sup>3</sup> Wash and perfume yourself, and put on your best clothes. Then go down to the threshing floor, but don't let him know you are there until he has finished eating and drinking. <sup>4</sup> When he lies down, note the place where he is lying. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down. He will tell you what to do."

<sup>5</sup> "I will do whatever you say," Ruth answered. <sup>6</sup> So she went down to the threshing floor and did everything her mother-in-law told her to do.

<sup>7</sup> When Boaz had finished eating and drinking and was in good spirits, he went over to lie down at the far end of the grain pile. Ruth approached quietly, uncovered his feet and lay down. <sup>8</sup> In



the middle of the night something startled the man, and he turned and discovered a woman lying at his feet.

<sup>9</sup> "Who are you?" he asked.

"I am your servant Ruth," she said. "Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a kinsman-redeemer."

<sup>10</sup> "The LORD bless you, my daughter," he replied. "This kindness is greater than that which you showed earlier: You have not run after the younger men, whether rich or poor. <sup>11</sup> And now, my daughter, don't be afraid. I will do for you all you ask. All my fellow townsmen know that you are a woman of noble character. <sup>12</sup>

## **Ruth 4:**

### **Boaz Marries Ruth**

The next day Boaz announced to the elders of the gate his intention to marry Ruth and to take care of her and Naomi for always. <sup>11</sup> Then the elders and all those at the gate said, "We are witnesses. May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel. May you have standing in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem. <sup>12</sup> Through the offspring the LORD gives you by this young woman, may your family be like that of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah."

## LESSON (TEACHER WORDS IN BOLD): PUTTING FAMILY FIRST

The old saying goes, “**You get many friends, but you only get one family. Put your family first when possible, and your rewards will be great.**” Everyone who puts their family before friends also is helping to keep our country strong.

Sometimes, putting family first is *easy*. Let’s look at some “Let’s Pretend” scenarios and see what you would do:

**#1 Your younger brother is outside playing with his skateboard in the driveway. Some bigger kids come along on bikes. They stop and begin to taunt your little brother because, truth be told, his skateboarding is not very good yet.**

**What do you do?**

The answers should be along the lines of defending your siblings when they face meanness. Defense of a sibling, especially a younger one, is a governing instinct. Remind them that defending a sibling and returning meanness for meanness are two different things. They should try as hard as possible to be at peace with all people.

**Next is a tougher question you’ll have to think about. Ruth got a reward for staying with her “family,” her mother-in-law. She got a great husband who was an excellent provider, so she didn’t have to worry anymore. What is your reward for defending a sibling?** They ought to come up with the notion quickly that people will be less likely to pick on him. Guide them toward the deeper truths, such as they’re helping to create a great feeling of safety for a younger child, and their bond as a family grows tighter.

**#2 You want to go ride bikes with a friend, and the friend is waiting for you. However, as you come out of the house to ride with her, your mom pulls up in the car, and the back seat is full of grocery bags.**

**What do you do?**

Helping Mom into the house with the groceries is the answer, but add on that asking the friend to help too might be a great idea. It will get the job done quicker.

**Again, the more difficult question: What is your reward for helping Mom in the house? It sounds like you’ve just made a sacrifice, but is there a reward?**

You just made Mom feel better is an obvious answer. On top of that, it will show the other child the bond in your family, and oftentimes kids today don't feel that bond except at another household.

Also point out that "rewards" are not usually instantaneous. Actions build up over years, and in the end, helping out will prepare you to take care of a family of your own. The people who have no experience in helping out have a very difficult time becoming adults. Your reward for helping over the years will be that you get to skip all the pain and suffering of people who come into responsibility all at once as young adults.

**#3 Here is a harder scenario. Your mom is really tired because your grandmother lives with you, and Grandma can no longer walk from place to place without holding onto someone. Mom is constantly distracted from her family duties to help Grandma to the bathroom, to the table, to the window. Mom feeds Grandma lately because her hands shake too badly to hold silverware, a glass, or even a sandwich. Grandma dribbles food down her chin, and Mom has to wipe it away with a napkin. One time during one lunch, Mom looks very tired from this feeding thing. You know it would help her if you would offer to take a turn.**

### **What do you do?**

Students might come up with helpful stories of relatives living with them that exemplify this very situation. If so, let them discuss various ways they've helped out.

We understand that children often find grown-ups, especially very old ones, as kind of "icky." They're nowhere near as pretty as children, and their bodies have deteriorated. However, they need to understand that families are "icky" by nature. If someone gets the stomach flu, others see and hear it. We pass by the bathroom that doesn't always smell great. People leave dirty socks on the floor, dirty dishes on the table, and we watch each other sneeze, hear each other cough, and we clean half-eaten food off each other's plates into the garbage.

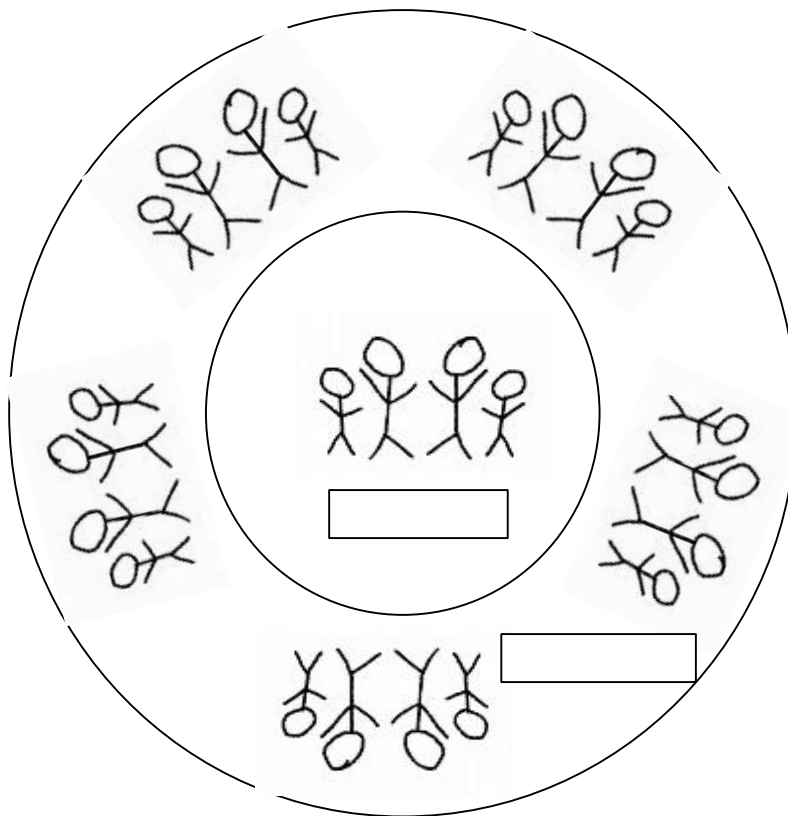
"Ickiness" is part of family, part of love. We need to accept that.

**Someday we will be "Grandma" or "Grandpa." The Bible says what good deeds we do will return to us. If we help take care of our grandparents, what will our reward be? God will make sure someone is there to take care of us when we're old.**

## INTRO ACTIVITY, YOUNGER CHILDREN: FAMILY FIRST

**Today we'll be talking about how important it is to put your family before your friends. So let's create a family-friend plate.**

Give each child a paper plate and some markers. As per below, have them draw their family in the center and friends along the outer rim



## INTRO ACTIVITY, OLDER CHILDREN: FAMILY FIRST—PRIORITY LIST

**Today we'll be talking about how important it is to put your family above your friends in your priorities. Think of times you had to do something for your family that you would rather not have done. Chores? Sacrifices? Forgiving siblings, or even parents, who did something thoughtless or hurtful? You don't have to write in complete sentences, but jot down some notes and we will discuss them after the lesson...**

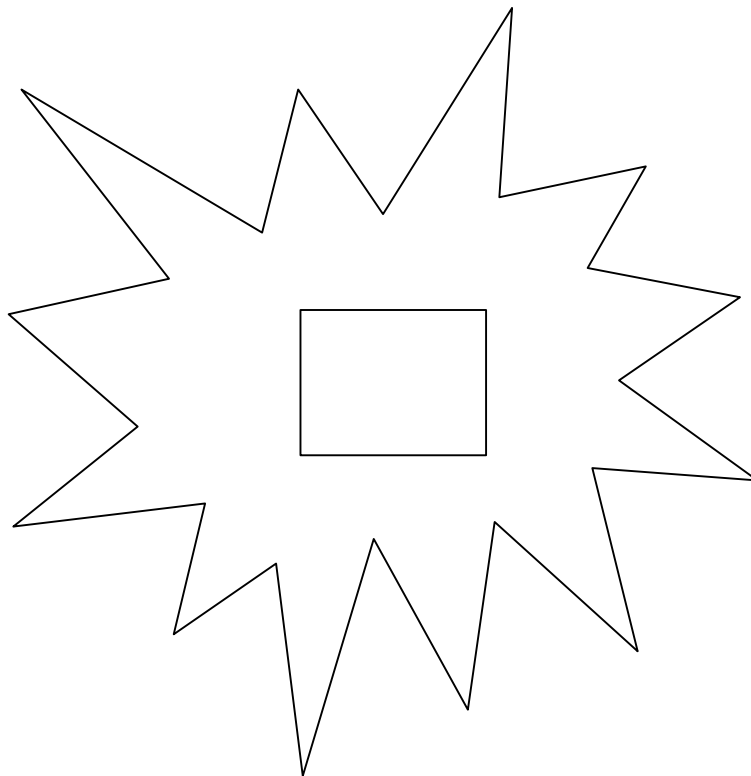
Hand out paper and pencils for kids to jot down their related memories.

## ACTIVITY, YOUNGER CHILDREN: GOD WATCHES OVER ALL

**Of your family or friends, God is in charge of all. Hence let's add that to the plates you made during the Intro Activity. We'll put God in a very special spot on the plate!**

Give out the 4"x4" squares of construction paper. Have the children draw a "starburst" like the one below. They can color it in with yellow, red, and orange, adding glitter or glitter glue. "God Watches Over All" should be written on it with a black Sharpie.

Have them cut out their shape and glue it to the paper plate so that half of it runs into the picture of the family, and half runs into the picture of the friends. Curl the edges up so that the little people underneath can still be seen.





## ACTIVITY, OLDER CHILDREN: KEEPING FAMILY TOGETHER!

Again, the saying goes, “You will have many friends in your life. Generally speaking, you only get one family.” Hence, it’s important to keep unity.

Let’s go back to where we were before the lesson, with our memories of sacrifices we had to make for our family that we would rather not have done, or times when people hurt us.

Give sheets back to students and have them take turns telling something in their family that required a tough sacrifice or forgiveness. Here are some questions to ask each child that will generate discussion:

**If the example he or she thought of required a sacrifice:**

**What were your friends doing, when you were busy making this sacrifice for the family?**

**Are you still unhappy that you had to sacrifice your time in this way?**

**How do you feel making the sacrifice helped you become a bigger or better person?**

**Ruth’s sacrifice ended up giving her security, kindness from strangers, and even love.**

**What do you feel your sacrifice will yield to you someday?**

**If the example he or she thought of required forgiveness:**

**How do you know you have forgiven this family member?** Note: Forgiveness is a tough concept for kids, and you may have to make it clear that they do not have to say “I forgive you,” even though such can be a good idea. The answer “I just went on and pretended like it never happened” is actually a great answer, as forgiveness requires putting the hurt out of your heart and mind.

**If you hadn’t forgiven that person, how would your life be worse?**

**Jesus says that if you forgive others, you will be forgiven when you do something wrong.**

**Is there a time when you acted similarly and needed forgiveness?**

**Ruth had to forgive her sister-in-law for leaving her with all the responsibility. What was her reward?**

## GAME, YOUNGER CHILDREN: KEEP THE FAMILY TOGETHER!

Tape two masking-tape lines on the floor, approximately eight feet apart. Put one child behind one line, holding the ball, facing in the same direction as the two lines. That child is Head of the Family. Then, split the rest of the children into two groups. Put one group behind the other line. Those children are The Family. Have the other children be between the two lines.

The Head of the Family throws the ball so that a Family member can catch it. The children in between should try to block the ball or catch the ball themselves.

If a Family member catches the ball, he comes to stand beside the Head of the Family and throws the ball next.

Depending on their level of ability: The ball may bounce once, and a Family member can still catch it. OR: The ball may not bounce at all for a catch by a Family member to be considered good.

The object: To get all members of The Family in line with the Head of the Family.

### Questions:

**This game is a little like real life. Often there are things that can keep the family from being together enough. There's school, there's work, there are other friends. Think of some things that have been a distraction from your family spending time together.**

(Prompts): TV, playing at a friend's house, too much arguing...

**How can you help? What can you do to make sure your family gets to spend time together?** (Prompts): Remind Mom or Dad to set a family time... turn off the TV if your brother wants to play with you... Saying you're sorry stops family arguments!

**The ball is a little like God. He floats around among all our problems, doesn't he? Sometimes the problems can keep us from "catching" him, can't they?**

## GAME, OLDER CHILDREN: GOD WATCHES OVER ALL — TIC-TAC-TOE

**We've talked about family coming first and friends second. But who's missing from this picture? God. God watches over all. The world works best in threes: God, friends, and family. Hence we're giving you a game that works in threes no matter how you hold it.**

**We'll pretend the X's are family and O's are friends. God is the grid.**

Have kids separate into pairs to play tic-tac-toe. For each game, they should switch from being family (X's) to being friends (O's). The goal is to be the first team to come with a game where X's win.

## CLOSING PRAYER

**Father, thank you for giving us both family and friends. Help us use Ruth as an example in our lives. If we put family first, even when it involves making sacrifices, we will have a happier family and more friends.**

**Amen.**

# SHADRACH, MESHACH AND ABEDNEGO

## PUT GOD FIRST

This tale from Daniel 3 shows Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego putting God first, in spite of a frightening decree written by King Nebuchadnezzar. The king threatened to throw into the fiery furnace anyone who refused to worship his golden image. But these three brave guys refused to worship anything but God himself. **Sometimes everyone is going one way, and God tells us to go another way. If we follow God, amazing things can happen.**

### MATERIALS LIST

#### Lesson

- Blindfold

#### Intro Activity, Younger Children

- Hot! Fire! Hot! Signage (see Intro Activity)
- Yellow, red, and orange markers and crayons

#### Intro Activity, Older Children

- Large paper cup or coffee mug
- Enough pennies to fill the cup
- Bible or book of Bible stories (to lean pennies against)

#### Activity, Younger Children

- Yellow construction paper, one sheet per child. Write on the top of each “Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego stand up for God.”
- Yellow, orange, and red construction paper, one-half sheet of each color for each child
- Scissors
- Stick glue

- Hot! Fire! Hot! Signage from Intro Activity, colored in
- Images of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (see Activity)

### Activity, Older Children

- Drawing paper, one sheet for each child, divided into five sections as indicated in the Activity
- Three or more used graphic novels that they can browse for style and cut up
- Scissors
- Colored pencils
- Glue sticks

### Game, Younger Children

- No materials needed

### Game, Older Children

- Pennies from Intro Activity
- Empty & clean milk container
- Chair
- Long cardboard tube from a roll of wrapping paper



## BIBLE READING/STORY: DANIEL 3

### The Image of Gold and the Fiery Furnace

<sup>1</sup> King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, ninety feet high and nine feet wide, and set it up in the province of Babylon. <sup>2</sup> He then summoned all the people of the kingdom to come to the dedication of the image he had set up. <sup>3</sup> So they stood before it.

<sup>4</sup> Then the herald loudly proclaimed, "This is what you are commanded to do, O peoples, nations and men of every language: <sup>5</sup> As soon as you hear the sound of the music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. <sup>6</sup> Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace."

<sup>7</sup> Therefore, as soon as they heard the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp and all kinds of music, all the peoples, nations and men of every language fell down and worshiped the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

<sup>8</sup> At this time some astrologers came forward and denounced the Jews. <sup>9</sup> They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, "O king, live forever! <sup>10</sup> You have issued a decree, O king, that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music must fall down and worship the image of gold, <sup>11</sup> and that whoever does not fall down and worship will be thrown into a blazing furnace. <sup>12</sup> But there are some Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—who pay no attention to you, O king. They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up."

<sup>13</sup> Furious with rage, Nebuchadnezzar summoned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. He said to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up? <sup>15</sup> Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?"

<sup>16</sup> Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. <sup>17</sup> If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. <sup>18</sup> But

even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

<sup>19</sup> Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and his attitude toward them changed. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual <sup>20</sup> and commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. <sup>21</sup> So these men, wearing their robes, trousers, turbans and other clothes, were bound and thrown into the blazing furnace. <sup>22</sup> The king's command was so urgent and the furnace so hot that the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, <sup>23</sup> and these three men, firmly tied, fell into the blazing furnace.

<sup>24</sup> Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers, "Weren't there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?"

They replied, "Certainly, O king."

<sup>25</sup> He said, "Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods."

<sup>26</sup> Nebuchadnezzar then approached the opening of the blazing furnace and shouted, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!" So Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the fire, <sup>27</sup> and the satraps, prefects, governors and royal advisers crowded around them. They saw that the fire had not harmed their bodies, nor was a hair of their heads singed; their robes were not scorched, and there was no smell of fire on them.

<sup>28</sup> Then Nebuchadnezzar said, "Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. <sup>29</sup> Therefore I decree that the people of any nation or language who say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be cut into pieces and their houses be turned into piles of rubble, for no other god can save in this way."

<sup>30</sup> Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

## LESSON (TEACHER WORDS IN BOLD): STANDING UP FOR GOD

We can thank God that he doesn't ask us to do scary things like jump in a hot, fiery furnace to prove he can save us, right? But we live in a world where a lot of people don't know God. That's a shame, isn't it? Yes.

**1 Corinthians 2:14** says, "Only someone who has God's Spirit can understand spiritual blessings. Anyone who doesn't have God's Spirit thinks these blessings are foolish."

**When someone doesn't understand God, how can they act sometimes when we tell them we believe in him?** There are many answers to this, but being mean, making fun, and feeling confused are good ones.

**Here is an example that a girl in Sunday school told. Her name is Katie. Katie's class in school got into a discussion about what kids do on the weekend. Katie raised her hand and said, "I go to Sunday school every Sunday." Two boys, Tyler and Dylan, were sitting behind her. Tyler laughed, nudged Dylan, and said, "Those stupid religious people don't even watch cartoons on Sunday morning." Dylan laughed along with him.**

**Katie got a little uncomfortable. She had a sister who was getting open-heart surgery in a month or so. Their family relied on God a lot to keep them from being scared. She turned around and said to Tyler and Dylan, "I like Sunday school. And guess what else? God keeps me company all week long."**

**How do you think Katie felt when the boys laughed?** Mad, embarrassed.

**Did Katie do anything wrong?** No.

**Does that mean she should never announce in school again that she goes to church?** No.

**But she got made fun of anyway. Sometimes life is like that. You can do everything right and come out with a result that isn't always fun. But God can fight for you.**

**Who wants to help me out with an example?** Get one volunteer to stand up. Blindfold her. Tell her to try to stand on one foot. Have other students back away so that if she hops, she won't land on their fingers.

**[Student] is a lot like a person who stands up for God. Blindfolding and standing on one foot, she feels shaky. You never know when you'll be in a situation where you could stand up for God, and you never know quite what you're going to have to say. It's like**

**going into a situation blind. The pressure of others to simply keep your mouth shut, that's a little dizzying in our hearts. It's kind of like trying to stand on one foot.**

**Who wants to play the part of the person who doesn't know God?** Get a volunteer to stand up. Tell him to push the blindfolded, hopping volunteer—not hard, just enough to startle her, and to do it when and from a direction she is not expecting. If she falls, tell her to stand back up again.

**This second person showed us what it's like to be a little mean, like Tyler, the kid in Katie's class. As Christians, we can easily feel that we shouldn't stand up to people like Tyler because we don't really have a chance. They can "knock us over" easily, or make fun of anything we say.**

**But here's what's really going on.** Go stand behind the blindfolded child and take her firmly by both shoulders. She should be able to balance well on her one foot.

**I'm playing the role of God right now. When you stand up for God, he takes a hold of you. He protects you. He makes sure the foolish people can't knock you over.** Tell the student to do just as he did before, and try to knock the volunteer over. This time, he won't be able to because your strong arms are holding her up. Remove the volunteer's blindfold.

**When Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego went into the fiery furnace, God surrounded them, supported them, and kept them from getting burned in a really hot fire. They told King Nebuchadnezzar that their God could protect them, but even if he chose to take them up to heaven, they were ready to go.**

**Katie told her school class she went to Sunday school and that God's presence was with her all week. Her sister came through her open-heart surgery just fine, and is now an athlete. But check out the added surprise:**

**Tyler made fun of her, and his friend Dylan laughed. What Katie didn't know was that Dylan secretly felt terrible about laughing. His grandfather also had recently undergone a serious surgery, and he was scared. He'd heard about Katie's sister. He thought for a long time about Katie standing up for herself and said the first prayers of his life. She is still unaware of what a lasting impression she had on a boy in her class—who laughed.**

**You don't need to have a sister like Katie's...you don't need to be in any sort of scary situation to stand up for God. But if you do, he can bring great things your way, no matter who laughs at you.**

**Who wants to ask God this week for a chance to stand up for him?**

Pray for any that say "yes!"

## INTRO ACTIVITY, YOUNGER CHILDREN: STANDING UP FOR GOD—SIGN TO COLOR

**Today we'll be hearing about three brave men who stood up for God when they were put in a very scary situation. They were thrown into a fiery furnace!**

Write out on a piece of printer paper the words HOT! FIRE! HOT! Make the letters about two inches tall. Make them in fiery colors, such as one word in red, one in orange, and one in purple. Make some flames coming out the top. As kids come into class, give them a piece of printer paper and ask them to make their own version of what you just made by trying to copy it. Make sure little ones know what it says!

## INTRO ACTIVITY, OLDER CHILDREN: STANDING UP FOR GOD—PENNIES GAME

**Today we'll be talking about standing up for God, which isn't always easy. Sometimes it's kind of like making a penny stand on its edge. See how many pennies you can make stand up on their edges before one falls over.**

After placing the cup of pennies on the table, let the children see if they can make any stand up. They will get frustrated, wanting to brace them with something. Just before you're ready to start the lesson, put the Bible in the middle of the table. Let them rest the pennies against the Bible, and there should be plenty standing that way.

**Isn't it amazing how much easier it is to stand up for God when you use HIS WORD?**

## ACTIVITY, YOUNGER CHILDREN: SHADRACH, MESHACH, AND ABEDNEGO'S FURNACE

**Let's create a picture of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego's furnace to honor them for their strong faith in God's protection.**

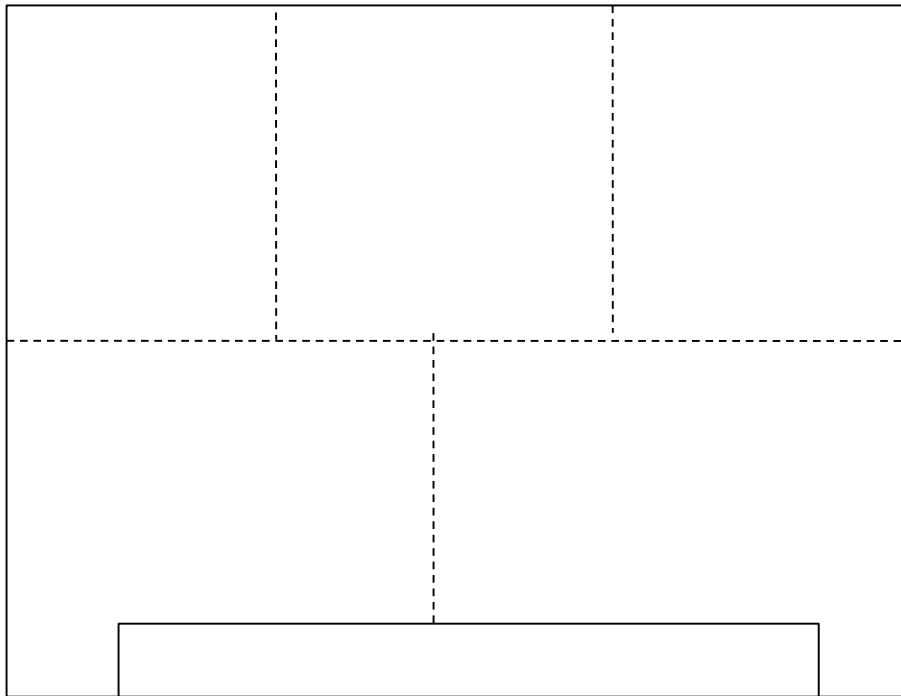
Using the yellow piece of construction paper, have them draw on three figures, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. They should leave room at the top to add their signage, FIRE! HOT!



FIRE! which they should paste on next. Have students cut the yellow, red, and orange sheets of paper into small scraps. The scraps will look like flames. Using stick glue, have them post flames all around the three.

## ACTIVITY, OLDER CHILDREN: I WILL STAND UP FOR GOD— GRAPHIC NOVEL PAGE

Have two or three used graphic novels on the craft table that the children can look at as examples for their drawing. Pass out the drawing paper, and have students split it in five sections as per below:



Tell the children to draw the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and put that as a title at the bottom. The breakdown may be as follows:

Square #1: King Nebuchadnezzar makes a giant gold statue and tells everyone to bow down

Square #2: King Nebuchadnezzar becomes angry at Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego for not bowing down.

Square #3: They are thrown into the hot, fiery furnace.

Square #4: King Nebuchadnezzar sees them in there with a fourth figure, who looks like Jesus, and they're not even scorched.

Square #5: King Nebuchadnezzar's heart is changed and he rejoices in God's power.

Allow the children to look at the graphic novels to copy their styles. If you don't plan on using the novels again, allow students to cut out word bubbles and graphic styles that are appropriate to add to their own page. Provide scissors and glue sticks for them to use.

## GAME, YOUNGER CHILDREN: WALKING THROUGH HARD TIMES

**You never know when you'll find a good chance to stand up for God—or show God's love. It could be when you're outside playing and someone asks what you do on Sunday morning. It might be a chance to invite someone to church. It could be when you hear of a sick person and you can tell them you will pray for them. It could be simply doing a nice favor for someone in the neighborhood.**

**We simply don't know when it will happen. To keep us on our toes, let's play a game. We're listening for the "M" sound. When we hear it in the story I'm reading, stand up, interrupt the story, and say, "I WILL STAND UP FOR GOD." Then sit back down.**

**Once in a foreign land, there was a big lion called WindhaMMMMM.**

**He was a very good lion, and he always wanted to do the right thing. But he could be really DUMMMMMMMb.**

**He walked across a fire once without realizing until he went "Oh, MMMMMMMMY!"**

**One afternoon, he ate slop, thinking it was chocolate. He even said, YUMMMM!**

**But Windy loved God and prayed very hard: God! Help me to be sMMMMMMart!"**

**God said, "Windy, you don't have to be so very intelligent. You just have to rely on MMMMMEEE!"**

**And on that day Windy said a big prayer that God would always be there for hiMMM. And after that? Windy never walked on fire or ate slop, or did any other stupid thing again. God was his friend, his brain, his closest buddy. AMMMMMen!**

## GAME, OLDER CHILDREN: GOD'S WILL IS LIKE THE PENNIES—GAME

**When God asks us to do something—like stand up for him in school, it's not always easy. First, we're often unprepared. We don't know what the situation will be or how it will come up. Second, we often don't know what to say. It's a little like believing that pennies, which are like your attempts to stand up for God, will make it into a milk carton, which is like the other person's heart.**

Place the milk carton beside a chair. Let one child stand on the chair with five pennies. He should aim for the opening of the milk carton and try to get as many pennies in as possible. Let all students take a turn and keep their own scores. Most will not get more than a couple.

**Sometimes we want to be of service to the Lord, but as we demonstrated in the lesson, it takes his help and protection. Let's try this game again, only this time we'll add a few "crutches."**

This time have students kneel on the chair instead of standing. Using the long tube from the wrapping paper, let them cover the mouth of the carton with the tube, take aim, and drop the pennies down the tube.

**We're kneeling this time, which in this game is symbolic of praying. If we pray for God's strength, courage, protection, and direction, we can count on his help.**

**The tube is a little like God himself, guiding the way so we can have what we want. When we rely on God to help us, it's much easier to come out a winner, isn't it?**

## CLOSING PRAYER

**Father, thank you for saving three brave men from the hottest furnace on earth. Help us to know you will be with us too, as we spread the word of you among family and friends.**

**Amen.**

# QUEEN ESTHER STANDS UP FOR HER PEOPLE

Queen Esther lived in a treacherous time for Israel. It was after the Babylonian captivity. And while Israel was rebuilding its temple, it was surrounded by very violent nations. Esther was married to the King of Persia (the modern day Iran), and her husband the king had sent out a decree for all Jews to be killed. She was Jewish. **Using tremendous courage, she confronted the situation and saved her people. She is a great example for us in how to stand up for other Christians.**

## MATERIALS LIST

### Lesson

- Five sheets of light-colored construction paper
- Marker pen

### Intro Activity, Younger Children

- No materials necessary

### Intro Activity, Older Children

- Strips of construction paper, 8.5" x 2", light enough in color that kids can draw on them
- Markers
- Crayons

### Activity, Younger Children

- White construction paper, one sheet for each child.
- Pink, gold or flesh-colored construction paper. Using a frozen orange-juice or tomato-paste can, draw circles to make Queen Esther's face—one for each child.
- Marker pens or crayons

- Aluminum foil
- Construction-paper scraps of various colors, to make the pieces of Queen Esther's dress. You can cut construction paper into smaller pieces if you don't have a scrap bag. Have several squares for each child of different colors, enough to make her dress.
- Glitter
- Pink, gold, or flesh-colored hole punches
- Stick glue
- Fine-point markers, pencils, or pens.

### **Activity, Older Children**

- Finished strips of construction paper from Intro Activity
- Stapler

### **Game, Younger Children**

- List of 100 Most Common American Names available on your screen
- Pencil or pen

### **Game, Older Children**

- No materials needed

## BIBLE READING / STORY: ESTHER 3 EXERPTS

### Haman's Plot to Destroy the Jews

<sup>1</sup> King Xerxes honored Haman, elevating him and giving him a seat of honor higher than that of all the other nobles. <sup>2</sup> All the royal officials at the king's gate knelt down and paid honor to Haman, for the king had commanded this concerning him. But Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honor.

(Mordecai knew Haman was sneaky and did bad things.)

<sup>5</sup> When Haman saw that Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honor, he was enraged.

<sup>8</sup> Then Haman said to King Xerxes, "There is a certain people dispersed and scattered among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom whose customs are different from those of all other people and who do not obey the king's laws; it is not in the king's best interest to tolerate them. The king said to Haman, "and do with the people as you please."

They were Mordecai's people, the Jews.

### Esther 4: Mordecai Persuades Esther to Help

<sup>1</sup> When Mordecai learned of all that had been done, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the city, wailing loudly and bitterly.

<sup>4</sup> When Esther's maids and eunuchs came and told her about Mordecai, she was in great distress.

<sup>11</sup> She said to her maids, "All the king's officials and the people of the royal provinces know that for any man or woman who approaches the king in the inner court without being summoned by the king has but one law: that he be put to death. The only exception to this is for the king to extend the gold scepter to him and spare his life. But thirty days have passed since I was called to go to the king."

<sup>12</sup> When Esther's words were reported to Mordecai, <sup>13</sup> he sent back this answer: "Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. <sup>14</sup> For if you

remain silent, you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?"

<sup>15</sup> Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: <sup>16</sup> "Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish."

<sup>17</sup> So Mordecai went away and carried out all of Esther's instructions.

## Esther 5

### Esther's Request to the King

<sup>1</sup> On the third day Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the palace, in front of the king's hall. The king was sitting on his royal throne in the hall, facing the entrance.

<sup>2</sup> When he saw Queen Esther standing in the court, he was pleased with her and held out to her the gold scepter that was in his hand. So Esther approached and touched the tip of the scepter.

<sup>3</sup> Then the king asked, "What is it, Queen Esther? What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be given you."

<sup>4</sup> "If it pleases the king," replied Esther, "let the king, together with Haman, come today to a banquet I have prepared for him."

<sup>5</sup> "Bring Haman at once," the king said, "so that we may do what Esther asks."

So the king and Haman went to the banquet Esther had prepared. <sup>6</sup> As they were drinking wine, the king again asked Esther, "Now what is your petition? It will be given you. And what is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be granted."

<sup>7</sup> Esther replied, "My petition and my request is this: <sup>8</sup> If the king regards me with favor and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and fulfill my request, let the king and Haman come tomorrow to the banquet I will prepare for them. Then I will answer the king's question."

<sup>14</sup> His wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, "Have a gallows built, seventy-five feet high, and ask the king in the morning to have Mordecai hanged on it. Then go with the king to the dinner and be happy." This suggestion delighted Haman, and he had the gallows built.



## Esther 7: Haman Hanged

<sup>1</sup> So the king and Haman went to dine with Queen Esther, <sup>2</sup> and as they were drinking wine on that second day, the king again asked, "Queen Esther, what is your petition? It will be given you. What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be granted."

<sup>3</sup> Then Queen Esther answered, "If I have found favor with you, O king, and if it pleases your majesty, grant me my life—this is my petition. And spare my people—this is my request. <sup>4</sup> For I and my people have been sold for destruction and slaughter and annihilation. If we had merely been sold as male and female slaves, I would have kept quiet, because no such distress would justify disturbing the king."

<sup>5</sup> King Xerxes asked Queen Esther, "Who is he? Where is the man who has dared to do such a thing?"

<sup>6</sup> Esther said, "The adversary and enemy is this vile Haman."

Then Haman was terrified before the king and queen. <sup>7</sup> The king got up in a rage, left his wine and went out into the palace garden. But Haman, realizing that the king had already decided his fate, stayed behind to beg Queen Esther for his life.

<sup>8</sup> Just as the king returned from the palace garden to the banquet hall, Haman was falling on the couch where Esther was reclining.

The king exclaimed, "Will he even molest the queen while she is with me in the house?"

As soon as the word left the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face. <sup>9</sup> Then Harbona, one of the eunuchs attending the king, said, "A gallows seventy-five feet high stands by Haman's house. He had it made for Mordecai, who spoke up to help the king."

The king said, "Hang him on it!" <sup>10</sup> So they hanged Haman on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai.

## LESSON (TEACHER WORDS IN BOLD): STANDING UP FOR YOUR SPIRITUAL FAMILY

On the five sheets of light-colored construction paper, write one of these sayings on each with the marker:

1. LIKE/LOVE
2. BE THERE
3. STAND UP FOR
4. BIG PICTURE
5. REMEMBER QUEEN ESTHER!

**Look around you at the other children in this room. They are very special to you. Many people feel very loving and loyal toward their earthly family—mom and dad and brothers and sisters. But they don't think of their "spiritual family" in the same way, and the Bible says they should.**

**Esther's spiritual family was the Jewish people. Your spiritual family is your brothers and sisters in Christ. You will be spending a very long time with these people. How long will you know them?** For eternity.

**Therefore it's very important that you treat them in similar ways to your own family. Here are some things to remember about your spiritual family:**

Bring out your little signs with the words in quotes on them. You can give one to each child, who can hold it up as you present each of the five ideas:

**#1 You don't always have to "like" the members of your spiritual family; you're always supposed to "love" them.** (Your sign should read "LIKE / LOVE").

Questions to generate discussion:

**What's the difference between "like" and "love?"** Like means you enjoy them as friends. Love is a commitment.

**Do you always feel that you "like" the brothers and sisters in your family?** They should admit to finding their siblings often the most annoying people under the sun and

arguments being a part of regular life. However, they always love them and would hate to lose one. You should work on feeling no less about your spiritual brothers and sisters.

## **#2 You should always “be there” for your spiritual family members.**

Questions:

**What does it mean to “be there?”** They should not have to feel shy to call you to talk about a problem or to ask for a play date. You should support them in school. If someone picks on one of your Christian brothers or sisters, you should try to diffuse it. You *definitely* should not join in.

**What are some important things you can do for your brothers and sisters in Christ?** *Listen to them!* is most important. Remember their birthdays; invite them to your parties whenever possible. Do things together. Include them in your rounds of texting and IMs.

## **#3 When necessary you should “stand up for” your brothers and sisters in Christ.**

Questions:

**If you see someone in school or the neighborhood either gossiping or getting ugly with your brother or sister in Christ, what might you do?** Try to diffuse it. If it’s gossip, say it’s probably not true. If it’s something that could get violent, try to pull your sister or brother away.

**What would you do if it were your family brother or sister? Try to think of your spiritual family in those terms. What would you do for your own brother or sister if someone was picking on them?**

**Regardless: You should *never* join in!**

## **#4 Try to think of the “big picture” when thinking of your brothers or sisters in Christ.**

Questions:

**Say it again: How long are you going to know these people?** Forever.

**What if you have the thought, while looking around this room, “Well, So-And-So is not really a Christian, I don’t think. He’s just here because his parents make him come.”**

**How do you treat that person?** The same as you would someone whose Christianity seems more apparent. We’re not supposed to judge others, and if you question another kid’s spiritual commitment, try not to. Always assume that someone in Sunday school is in your spiritual family.

**What if someone in this room has done some not-so-good things? What if he or she has been known to be mean or has been in some trouble? How do you treat the person?** The same as you would your own sister or brother who had been in trouble. You always love them. Remember: God doesn't accept us based on what we do. He accepts us based on his love. Some people's lives are a lot harder than others. Some people are given more grace to be good than others. Be thankful if you have a lot of grace, but don't judge others who don't. We don't know why that is. But the Bible says, for whom more is given, more is required. Use the grace God gave you and don't question others'.

#### #5 “Keep Queen Esther in your Heart!”

Questions:

**What did Queen Esther do that required so much nerve?** She stood up for her people in a culture known for violence and bloodshed. She wasn't afraid.

**If Queen Esther can have that much nerve, can you have enough nerve to stand up for your brothers and sisters in Christ?** School can often be a high-anxiety place. Kids can become anxious and say and do hurtful things. You can help your brothers and sisters in Christ by standing by them like Queen Esther stood by her people.

**God brings great rewards to those who do his will. What rewards can he bring you if you are a worthy spiritual sister and brother?** A surprising number of friends who like you... diplomacy skills and patience that will last your entire life... more birthday-party invitations, etc.!

## INTRO ACTIVITY, YOUNGER CHILDREN: “HOPPING” UP FOR OUR SPIRITUAL BROTHERS & SISTERS

**Today we'll be talking about standing up for our spiritual brothers and sisters, and how that's a top priority. It isn't always easy. It's kind of like standing on one foot when the going gets tough. We'll talk about that later, but for now let's practice...standing on one foot and hopping.**

Let each child take turns hopping on one foot and see how many hops they can get in before their other foot touches the ground or they fall over. (They may not switch feet in the middle!)

## INTRO ACTIVITY, OLDER CHILDREN: LINKS FOR CHAIN

Give each student a strip of paper that is 8.5 inches long and about 2 inches wide. They should decorate the strip with their name, using markers, crayons, and glitter glue. Tell them to make the link show a couple things about themselves (i.e. they can put their favorite book or TV show on it, and they can color with their favorite color marker.)

These will be used for links in the chain the in the Activity, but you don't have to tell them that part yet.

## ACTIVITY, YOUNGER CHILDREN: QUEEN ESTHER'S COURAGE

**Let's create a picture of Queen Esther that we can take home with us. It will remind us to have the courage to stand up for our own spiritual family members.**

1. Give children the components to make up Queen Esther.
2. The pink, gold, or flesh circles will be her face. They can draw on her eyes, nose, mouth, and hair.
3. Aluminum-foil squares can be cut to make her crown.
4. The construction-paper squares can be used to make her dress. They can use the different colors of paper to design the dress that they want.
5. Glitter can be used to decorate her crown and give her a necklace.
6. At the top they should put, QUEEN ESTHER STOOD UP.
7. Fill in around her with the hole punches, which are the faces of the many Jews she saved by her courage. Have the children glue on hole punches, perhaps 25 on each page, then draw little faces with a fine-point marker, pencil, or pen.

## ACTIVITY, OLDER CHILDREN: SPIRITUAL SIBLING CHAIN

Have children split up into pairs. If there is an odd number of students, make one a group of three. Tell them to take turns. Each child should pick one of the following questions and use it to tell a story about themselves to their partner:

- What was the scariest moment of your life?
- What is the funniest moment of your life?
- What is the most embarrassing moment of your life?

Just one story...sharing a personal story can be bonding.

Have the children take up the strips they designed in the Intro Activity.

Each pair should take a turn coming to the front of the class with the strip belonging to the child they were paired up with. One should tell *the other child's story*, though corrections are allowed when the teller gets the facts wrong. Then the second child should tell the first child's story.

Ask them: **Do you feel you know [student's name] a little better, now that you've heard that story?** Most should say yes—unless they're already good friends, which is fine.

Have each one repeat after you:

**I [child #1's name]**

**Do take you [child #2's name]**

**To be my spiritual [sister in Christ / brother in Christ]**

**I will try not to be shy around you and to trust you.**

**I know that God accepts you, and I do too.**

Have them add their links to the chain one at a time and you can staple for them.

## GAME, YOUNGER CHILDREN: STAND UP / SIT DOWN

**If we're going to be spiritual brothers and sisters, we should start by making sure we all know each other's names immediately when we hear them.**

Put on your screen the list of the 100 most common names among American kids that is below. If you have a name of a kid in class that is not on the list, add it to the spot where it would go alphabetically

Have everyone sit down. You're going to start saying names on this list. When you come to a name that belongs to a kid in the class everyone should jump up, run and touch the opposite wall, and then return to their spot.

- |              |                 |              |              |
|--------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------|
| 1. Abby      | 18. Brianna     | 35. Emily    | 52. John     |
| 2. Abigail   | 19. Brittany    | 36. Emma     | 53. Jonathan |
| 3. Alana     | 20. Chloe       | 37. Erma     | 54. Joseph   |
| 4. Alex      | 21. Chrissie    | 38. Ethan    | 55. Joshua   |
| 5. Alexander | 22. Christina   | 39. Evan     | 56. Juan     |
| 6. Alexis    | 23. Christopher | 40. Hannah   | 57. Jose     |
| 7. Alice     | 24. Chris       | 41. Harley   | 58. Justin   |
| 8. Amy       | 25. Corey       | 42. Iesha    | 59. Keysha   |
| 9. Andree    | 26. Cobe        | 43. Isabella | 60. Kim      |
| 10. Andrew   | 27. Daniel      | 44. Jack     | 61. Kimberly |
| 11. Angela   | 28. Danielle    | 45. Jacob    | 62. Kyle     |
| 12. Anthony  | 29. Darla       | 46. James    | 63. Lee      |
| 13. Ashley   | 30. David       | 47. Jane     | 64. Lisa     |
| 14. Austin   | 31. Eli         | 48. Jason    | 65. Madison  |
| 15. Ava      | 32. Elizabeth   | 49. Jena     | 66. Mandy    |
| 16. Brandon  | 33. Ellen       | 50. Jennifer | 67. Maria    |
| 17. Brian    | 34. Emile       | 51. Jessica  | 68. Mariah   |



69. Mark	77. Merlin	85. Rene	93. Taylor
70. Marley	78. Michael	86. Richard	94. Tiffany
71. Mary	79. Miley	87. Robert	95. Tory
72. Mason	80. Michelle	88. Samantha	96. Tracy
73. Matthew	81. Mick	89. Sandy	97. Tyler
74. Max	82. Nicholas	90. Sarah	98. Tyrone
75. Meagan	83. Olivia	91. Sophia	99. William
76. Melissa	84. Ovid	92. Stacy	

The student at the end with the most first-place finishes and the least number of false starts wins. Prize: at your discretion.

## GAME, OLDER CHILDREN: HE AIN'T HEAVY—GAME

**The Bible says that we should support each other through tough times. Sometimes we need a little more than a helping hand. Let's pretend that time is now.**

Divide the group up into different pairs than in the Activity (for a chance to get close to someone else). Have piggy-back races across the room and back. If there is an odd student, have him come back on the back of one person, while the partner jumps off.

**Sometimes two go slower when they're in the race of life together. But they are a lot stronger! Remember to rely on your spiritual family!**

## CLOSING PRAYER

**Father, thank you for our spiritual family. Someday we'll get married, and we'll be with our partners until death do us part. But these people, we'll know forever.**

**Amen.**

# ABIGAIL STANDS UP FOR WHAT'S RIGHT

Abigail, one of King David's wives, doesn't get a lot of airplay. She's not beautiful like Bathsheba, the mother of Solomon and a key player in King David's only scandal. Some people think, however, that Abigail had the most wisdom and helped David the most. She stood against her own family when her first husband came against David, and God rewarded her in her widowhood by making her David's Queen. **There comes a time when we may have to stand up for what's right—even against our own family members. God not only gives us the strength and wisdom, but his rewards can be beyond our dreams.**

## MATERIALS LIST

### Lesson

- No materials needed

### Intro Activity, Younger Children

- No materials needed

### Intro Activity, Older Children

- One or two jump ropes

### Activity, Younger Children

- Building blocks
- Snack

### Activity, Older Children

- Styrofoam packing popcorn, a sizeable bagful
- Big bag of candy, pieces individually wrapped

- Craft-store plastic kid's sewing needles to thread a piece of yarn
- Yarn strands for necklaces, 18" long, one for each child
- Markers

### Game, Younger Children

- Mtrips of paper
- Pencil
- Hat

### Game, Older Children

- Paper chain created in last week's game
- Marker pens

## BIBLE READING/STORY:

# 1 SAMUEL 25

<sup>4</sup> While David was in the desert, he heard that Nabal was shearing sheep. <sup>5</sup> So he sent ten young men and said to them, "Go up to Nabal at Carmel and greet him in my name. <sup>6</sup> Say to him: 'Long life to you! Good health to you and your household! And good health to all that is yours! <sup>7</sup> 'Now I hear that it is sheep-shearing time. When your shepherds were with us, we did not mistreat them, and the whole time they were at Carmel nothing of theirs was missing. <sup>8</sup> Ask your own servants and they will tell you. Therefore be favorable toward my young men, since we come at a festive time. Please give your servants and your son David whatever you can find for them.' "

<sup>9</sup> When David's men arrived, they gave Nabal this message in David's name. Then they waited. <sup>10</sup> Nabal answered David's servants, "Who is this David? Who is this son of Jesse? Many servants are breaking away from their masters these days. <sup>11</sup> Why should I take my bread and water, and the meat I have slaughtered for my shearers, and give it to men coming from who knows where?"

<sup>12</sup> David's men turned around and went back. When they arrived, they reported every word. <sup>13</sup> David said to his men, "Put on your swords!" So they put on their swords, and David put on his. About four hundred men went up with David, while two hundred stayed with the supplies.

<sup>14</sup> One of the servants told Nabal's wife Abigail: "David sent messengers from the desert to give our master his greetings, but he hurled insults at them. <sup>15</sup> Yet these men were very good to us. They did not mistreat us, and the whole time we were out in the fields near them nothing was missing. <sup>16</sup> Night and day they were a wall around us all the time we were herding our sheep near them. <sup>17</sup> Now think it over and see what you can do, because disaster is hanging over our master and his whole household. He is such a wicked man that no one can talk to him."

<sup>18</sup> Abigail lost no time. She took two hundred loaves of bread, two skins of wine, five dressed sheep, five seahs of roasted grain, a hundred cakes of raisins and two hundred cakes of pressed figs, and loaded them on donkeys. <sup>19</sup> Then she told her servants, "Go on ahead; I'll follow you." But she did not tell her husband Nabal.

<sup>20</sup> As she came riding her donkey into a mountain ravine, there were David and his men descending toward her, and she met them. <sup>21</sup> David had just said, "It's been useless—all my watching over this fellow's property in the desert so that nothing of his was missing. He has paid me back evil for good. <sup>22</sup> May God deal with David, be it ever so severely, if by morning I leave alive one male of all who belong to him!"

## Abigail Intercedes for Nabal (New Living Version)

<sup>23</sup> When Abigail saw David, she quickly got off her donkey and bowed low before him. <sup>24</sup> She fell at his feet and said, “I accept all blame in this matter, my lord. Please listen to what I have to say. <sup>25</sup> I know Nabal is a wicked and ill-tempered man; please don’t pay any attention to him. He is a fool, just as his name suggests. But I never even saw the young men you sent.

<sup>26</sup> “Now, my lord, as surely as the Lord lives and you yourself live, since the Lord has kept you from murdering and taking vengeance into your own hands, let all your enemies and those who try to harm you be as cursed as Nabal is. <sup>27</sup> And here is a present that I, your servant, have brought to you and your young men. <sup>28</sup> Please forgive me if I have offended you in any way. The Lord will surely reward you with a lasting dynasty, for you are fighting the Lord’s battles. And you have not done wrong throughout your entire life.

<sup>29</sup> “Even when you are chased by those who seek to kill you, your life is safe in the care of the Lord your God, secure in his treasure pouch! But the lives of your enemies will disappear like stones shot from a sling! <sup>30</sup> When the Lord has done all he promised and has made you leader of Israel, <sup>31</sup> don’t let this be a blemish on your record. Then your conscience won’t have to bear the staggering burden of needless bloodshed and vengeance. And when the Lord has done these great things for you, please remember me, your servant!”

<sup>32</sup> David replied to Abigail, “Praise the Lord, the God of Israel, who has sent you to meet me today! <sup>33</sup> Thank God for your good sense! Bless you for keeping me from murder and from carrying out vengeance with my own hands. <sup>34</sup> For I swear by the Lord, the God of Israel, who has kept me from hurting you, that if you had not hurried out to meet me, not one of Nabal’s men would still be alive tomorrow morning.” <sup>35</sup> Then David accepted her present and told her, “Return home in peace. I have heard what you said. We will not kill your husband.”

<sup>36</sup> When Abigail arrived home, she found that Nabal was throwing a big party and was celebrating like a king. He was very drunk, so she didn’t tell him anything about her meeting with David until dawn the next day. <sup>37</sup> In the morning when Nabal was sober, his wife told him what had happened. As a result he had a stroke, and he lay paralyzed on his bed like a stone. <sup>38</sup> About ten days later, the Lord struck him, and he died.

## David Marries Abigail

<sup>39</sup> When David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, “Praise the Lord, who has avenged the insult I received from Nabal and has kept me from doing it myself. Nabal has received the punishment for his sin.”

Then David sent messengers to Abigail to ask her to become his wife.

## LESSON (TEACHER WORDS IN BOLD): STANDING UP FOR WHAT'S RIGHT

We've talked a lot in the past few lessons about the importance of your earthly family and the importance of your spiritual family. However there are times when even your family members can get involved in wrong things. That's the time when, as a Christian, you need to stand up for what's right. God rewarded Abigail for going against her husband to do what's right. He will reward you also.

Let's look at some examples and see what we can do in these situations.

**Situation #1: You have two Christian friends. One says this about the other one: "Last time she was over at my house, she was in the snack drawer every half-hour. And look at the size of her! She just keeps getting bigger and bigger. In a year, nobody will want to hang out with her. I think we should give her up now while the going is good."**

**What do you say back?**

Obviously, the listener should defend her Christian sister. Some examples:

- The listener could simply remind the teller that she's gossiping.
- The listener could acknowledge that their third friend's chronic eating is not fun and might even be dangerous to her health, but maybe they could work on it with her.
- If the listener knows of a problem in the overeating friend's house that might be causing her to overeat, she could mention that problem and remind the teller to have some sympathy.
- *She should not join in, no matter how annoying the problem is or how tempting it is!*

**Situation #2: Your big brother, who is a teenager, has gotten kind of mouthy with Mom and Dad lately. Yesterday when Mom asked him to do chores, his response was, "I'm not the parent! When I'm the parent, I'll do the work!" On the one hand, you're tempted to stay out of it, because you realize that you may eventually get away with the same things he gets away with now, and doing chores is no fun. On the other hand, you see Mom and Dad working long hours in what Dad calls "this bad economy" and they are very tired—too tired, you feel sometimes, to even argue with your brother.**

## How do you stand up for what's right in this situation?

Children may be reminded that parents are not perfect, and there are actually two parties at fault here: The parents AND the brother. The parents are not correcting him. That's not the younger child's fault, but he or she can still stand up for what's right. Some examples:

- Point out to the big brother that it's not fair for *you* to do all the work, and that's what will happen if he doesn't get moving.
- Sometimes when teenagers say one thing, they really mean something else. Maybe the brother is mad about Mom's and Dad's busy schedules and not getting rides to things like his friends do. You might ask him if something is bothering him and, if so, encourage him to talk about it rather than act out and mouth off.
- Be very frank with the teenager that you are *not* doing his chores. Some families get into situations where one child fills in for another. This is called "enabling," and it never works out well for anyone. The teenager should do his work or suffer his own consequences.
- You can also point out to the parents what the teenager said if they're pretending to have missed it. It's okay to point a parent's shortcomings out to the parent, so long as it's said with respect.

**Situation #3: You have seen your neighbor leave her dog tied up in the yard for five days now. The dog pants and pants and has no water. You tell your mom. You ask her to speak to the neighbor for the sake of the dog. Mom says, "That's a shame about the dog, but I don't believe in getting involved. We should just stay out of it." But she's a single mom who is overworked, and she's also always been shy with the neighbors. Still, you're afraid the dog will get sick and die.**

## How can you stand up for right in this situation?

- One answer is to take matters into your own hands and bring a dish of water to the dog every day. However, be careful the dog is not a biter!
- Another answer is to speak to the neighbor yourself. Ask if you can bring the dog water (though she might have a streak of pride and deny abusing the animal).
- Finally, you can make a call to the Humane Society. They don't really care if the caller is young or old. See if they will issue the neighbor a citation or have the animal police pay her a visit.

## **Finally, let's talk about the rewards in all of this!**

### **What are some possible rewards for standing up for your Christian friend?**

Some possible answers:

- You could help a friend over a rough time and redirect her bad habits so she doesn't have them anymore. You could change someone's life, and she might thank you into adulthood.
- You could end up losing the friend whom you refuse to gossip with, surely. But when God closes a door, he always opens a window. You could end up with three great, new loyal friends instead of one whose annoying sin is gossiping meanly.
- Kindness comes back to you. While you may feel like the invisible person in a crowd of gossips, they will trust you more. You'll be the one they come to with a real secret.

### **What are some rewards for standing up for right when your big brother won't do his chores?**

- He could snap out of it and become a contributing member of the family again.
- The brother is obviously wrong in his assessment that the real work starts with parenthood. People who haven't done much work are not prepared for parenthood, and are very likely to fail at it. Getting him to work now may prevent a bad marriage in his future.
- You'll be the one in the family who has the reputation for doing what's right, and everyone will trust you and look up to you—even if you're the youngest.

### **What are the rewards for coming to the pet's rescue?**

- The neighbor could realize she's wrong, and the pet's life could change dramatically for the better.
- The dog could get taken away from her and given to a family who truly loves it. In that case, you've given the dog a second life!
- A wise parent can be inspired by their kids. You standing up for right could inspire Mom to get over her "let's not get involved" attitude.



## INTRO ACTIVITY, YOUNGER CHILDREN: STANDING UP FOR WHAT'S RIGHT— HOPPING CONTEST

**Today we'll be talking about standing up what's right, even if our family or spiritual family members are wrong. Sometimes that's a hard thing to do because it takes courage, and we'll talk about that later. For now, let's say it's about as hard as hopping on one foot without falling over.**

Let students try hopping on one foot as many times as they can without putting the other foot down. See who can do it the most hops without the other foot touching the ground—and *without changing feet!*

## INTRO ACTIVITY, OLDER CHILDREN: STANDING UP FOR WHAT'S RIGHT— JUMP-ROPE CONTEST

**Today we'll be talking about standing up for what's right. That isn't always easy, because sometimes our friends are wrong, and they can't see it, and it's up to us to tell them the truth about what they're doing. It can feel very awkward sometimes—like skipping rope with one foot can feel awkward. Let's try it.**

Let the kids pass the jump rope around. Each should take turns jumping double time with one foot in the air. They should count how many jumps they can do without missing—or switching feet!

## ACTIVITY, YOUNGER CHILDREN: GOD HELPS US CREATE ORDER (USING BLOCKS)

**If nobody stood up for right, this world would be a real mess. Think of the world as our table. Let's pretend these blocks are like our sins. Here's some gossip when nobody stood up for the person being talked about.** Throw some blocks onto the table. **Here are some excuses when nobody wants to help Mom and Dad clean the house.** Throw more blocks onto the table. **Here's some laziness that resulted in the kids who refused to help.** Throw more blocks onto the table. **Here's some cruelty to animals for the neighbors who**

**didn't care to tell their parents about it.** Throw more blocks onto the table. **Here's the feeling that stealing is okay by the kids who got away with it because nobody told.** Look at all the block covering the table.

**Our world is kind of a mess, isn't it? But when we stand up for right, God makes everything good again. He can help us make a castle out of our mess.**

**Let's start with the gossip. Somebody said something mean to you about one of your Christian friends. I'll be the gossiper. You take turns standing up for that person. "Ew, did you see Tyler's clothes? He dressed like a dork. What a loser."**

Let kids stand up for Tyler with their various statements. As they do, they can take three blocks and put them in the shape of a foundation.

**Now here are the excuses. I'm your brother or sister who doesn't want to help clean up the house. You guys take turns saying things to make me want to help. "I have to win this video game! I'll do my part later!"**

Let the kids try to inspire their sibling. As they do, they can take the pillar blocks and make another level.

**Here's the laziness. Your sister or brother has not been helping for years because he realizes he can get away with it. Tell him what his future will be like if he doesn't learn to be responsible. "Why should I help? I'm not the parent. When I'm a parent, I'll do the work!"**

Let the kids try to inspire their lazy sibling. As they do, they can take the square blocks and put them on top of the foundation blocks.

**Now let's work on neighbors getting away with bad things because you don't tell. You see your neighbor leave his dog out in the heat without water for the second day in a row. Poor doggie. I'm the neighbor and not only am I a bad pet owner, but I don't mind lying to kids! Let's practice telling our parents and trying to get them to call the Humane Society. "Oh! My dog drinks water in the house just before she goes out! She doesn't like to drink water outside." (Yeah right).**

Let the kids try to inspire their parents to make that call. As they do, they can take any other blocks and arrange them creatively to make their castle.

When the castle is completed: **We no longer have a mess, do we? We have something beautiful. When we stand up for what's right, it takes some work. It takes some creative thinking. But God loves to reward those with the courage.**

## ACTIVITY, OLDER CHILDREN: CLUTTER & CANDY

Have one big bag of mailing or packing popcorn and another big bag of wrapped pieces of candy. There should be about the same number of pieces of each.

Take the bag of packing popcorn first.

**Sometimes our world can seem like a big mess, can't it? We have the gossipers.** Throw a handful of popcorn all over the room. **They can tear apart friendships. They can turn on you! If they do it to one friend, they can do it to you next! Getting friends to stop gossiping is really hard.** Throw a handful of popcorn all over the room. **Then we have sisters and brothers who make bad choices, and it feels like it's up to us to make everything right. What a mess!** Throw a handful of popcorn all over the room. **Then there's neighbors who don't take care of their yard or don't take care of their pets.** Throw a handful of popcorn all over the room. **How are we supposed to stand up for what's right when there are grown-ups around us who can't even do it?** Throw a handful of popcorn all over the room.

**God expects us to stand up for what's right, no matter who's involved—young, old, friend, not-so-close friend, Christian, or non-Christian. If we do it, he is quick to reward us.**

Take the bag of individually wrapped pieces of candy

Throw a handful of candy over the room. **God expects us to do the work. He expects us to stand up for what's right.** Throw a handful of candy over the room. **When we do, he gives us great rewards.** Throw a handful of candy over the room.

**You guys didn't make the mess in this room. You often don't make the messes that are going on around you. Clean up the mess, and you can have the candy, too. It's a gift. You have to pick up three pieces of packing corn for every piece of candy you pick up. Then, when there's no more packing corn, you can pick up whatever candy is left.**

While eating, they can make necklaces out of the packing corn, using plastic craft-store needles for yarn and a ball of twine. They can string the pieces together them (carefully! They can split!), then color them with markers.

## GAME, YOUNGER CHILDREN: LEARNING YOUR SPIRITUAL FAMILY'S NAMES

**Last week, we played a game to remember the first names of the kids in our spiritual family. Today, we're going to learn their last names and something about them.**

First introduce any child who was not there last week, as their first name will be new. Help everyone say it a few times, then go around to the children who were present and have them repeat the first names of everyone. Help where necessary.

Give out strips of paper. Tell everyone to write their last name on the strip of paper. Have each child hold up his last name so everyone can see and say the name out loud. Put the strips into a hat.

Have students take turns coming to the front and pulling a strip out of the hat. If they are old enough to read the last name, ask them to say it. If they aren't old enough to read, you say the last name for them. Have that child point out the child in the room that goes with that last name.

Once they identify that child, have that child come to the front of the room. Ask him the following questions which will help other children get to know him:

- What is your favorite color?
- What is your favorite cartoon?
- What's your favorite thing for dinner?
- What's your favorite ice cream?
- What city do you live in?
- Do you have any pets? If so, what?

Carry on with the next child after saying this child's first and last name altogether.

## GAME, OLDER CHILDREN: ADDING TO THE CHAIN

**Last week we made and hung a chain of most of the members of our spiritual family who are in this Sunday-school class. Today, we're going to add something special to it.**

Last week the kids broke into pairs and exchanged bonding information: What was the scariest / funniest / most embarrassing moment of your life? Then, they made their chain.

This exercise is also bonding.

Have each person go around the room and say one nice thing about each person present. Try to get them to be sincere and thoughtful and not simply think of things like "he's funny."

Then, have them pass the chain around, and without breaking it, use a marker to add a comment about that person on his link.

Any person who wasn't there last week can also use the time to add their link to the chain.

## CLOSING PRAYER

**Father, thank you again for our spiritual family. Help us to know when to stand up for them and when to stand up for *you*...when to stand up for what's right.**

**Amen.**

# MINOR PROPHETS:

## SOME OF GOD THE FATHER'S BEST KIDS

Very few studies for children are done on the Minor Prophets; hence we thought it was important to include them. They're often skimmed over because their words are sad as they recount Israel's wrongdoings as a nation. And there isn't much story to go along with them (except for Jonah, who was already included in previous lessons). But in this set of five lessons on setting priorities when establishing God's ways, these twelve men come into play. **The Minor Prophets voice God's opinion on what priorities should be. We can learn a lot from them.**

### MATERIALS LIST

#### Lesson

- No materials needed

#### Intro Activity, Younger Children

- Coloring paper, one sheet for each child
- Markers and crayons

#### Intro Activity, Older Children

- Lined paper, one sheet for each child
- Pens or markers

#### Activity, Younger Children

- Coloring paper, one sheet for each child
- Markers and crayons

#### Activity, Older Children

- No materials needed

#### Game, Younger Children

- List of names of Minor Prophets
- Prizes, at your discretion

#### Game, Older Children

- 12 Popsicle sticks
- Marker pen
- Magazine picture of any person that can be cut to the width of half a Popsicle stick by the length of 12 Popsicle sticks, about 3 inches by 5 inches
- Stick glue
- Scissors
- Sharp knife or razor
- List of Minor Prophets' names

## BIBLE READING / STORY

Below are excerpts from the Minor Prophets addressing some wrong attitudes that are quite common in our country right now. Though the Minor Prophets were addressing Israel, we can see that some problems are common to all nations, and we can use their words of caution for our own nation and our own lives.

### **From Hosea 2 (New Living Translation) About Godly Dating and Marriage**

- <sup>5</sup> She said, ‘I’ll run after other lovers  
and sell myself to them for food and water,  
for clothing of wool and linen,  
and for olive oil and drinks.’
- <sup>6</sup> “For this reason I will fence her in with thornbushes.  
I will block her path with a wall  
to make her lose her way.
- <sup>7</sup> When she runs after her lovers,  
she won’t be able to catch them.  
She will search for them  
but not find them.
- <sup>8</sup> She doesn’t realize it was I who gave her everything she has—  
the grain, the new wine, the olive oil;  
I even gave her silver and gold.  
But she gave all my gifts to Baal.
- <sup>9</sup> “But now I will take back the ripened grain and new wine  
I generously provided each harvest season.  
I will take away the wool and linen clothing

### **Micah 6:6-8 (New Living Translation) About Obedience & Not Striking Deals with God**

- <sup>6</sup> What can we bring to the Lord?  
What kind of offerings should we give him?  
Should we bow before God



with offerings of yearling calves?

7 Should we offer him thousands of rams  
and ten thousand rivers of olive oil?  
Should we sacrifice our firstborn children  
to pay for our sins?

<sup>8</sup> No, O people, the Lord has told you what is good,  
and this is what he requires of you:  
to do what is right, to love mercy,  
and to walk humbly with your God.

## Haggai 1 (New Living Version)

### Being a Part of the Church

<sup>2</sup> “This is what the Lord of Heaven’s Armies says: The people are saying, ‘The time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the Lord.’”

<sup>3</sup> Then the Lord sent this message through the prophet Haggai: <sup>4</sup> “Why are you living in luxurious houses while my house lies in ruins? <sup>5</sup> This is what the Lord of Heaven’s Armies says: Look at what’s happening to you! <sup>6</sup> You have planted much but harvest little. You eat but are not satisfied. You drink but are still thirsty. You put on clothes but cannot keep warm. Your wages disappear as though you were putting them in pockets filled with holes!

<sup>7</sup> “This is what the Lord of Heaven’s Armies says: Look at what’s happening to you! <sup>8</sup> Now go up into the hills, bring down timber, and rebuild my house. Then I will take pleasure in it and be honored, says the Lord. <sup>9</sup> You hoped for rich harvests, but they were poor. And when you brought your harvest home, I blew it away. Why? Because my house lies in ruins, says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies, while all of you are busy building your own fine houses. <sup>10</sup> It’s because of you that the heavens withhold the dew and the earth produces no crops. <sup>11</sup> I have called for a drought on your fields and hills—a drought to wither the grain and grapes and olive trees and all your other crops, a drought to starve you and your livestock and to ruin everything you have worked so hard to get.”

# LESSON (TEACHER WORDS IN BOLD): THE MINOR PROPHETS STAND UP AS GOD'S VOICE

**The Minor Prophets are the last 12 speakers presented in the Old Testament. They stood up for what was right, even though their situations were very scary and they lived in hard times.**

**They wrote down their prophecies for the people of Israel. A prophecy is “God’s Inside Scoop;” God’s way of seeing man’s behavior, and special secrets about what God plans to do about it when men are behaving badly.**

**The Minor Prophets often spoke in God’s angry voice. It’s important to understand that God gets angry, just like our parents get angry.**

**How many of you have heard your parents say, “Clean up this room! It’s a mess, and we didn’t raise you to be slob!”?**

**God is like that when we make spiritual messes. It’s like he says, “Clean this mess up! I’m not your father so you can be sloppy on me!” He wants you to behave in the ways he gave you, which keep you safe.**

**In the reading, we heard from three Minor Prophets, Hosea, Micah, and Haggai, about three issues that still are a problem today.**

**Hosea’s words were about girls liking boys, and boys liking girls. Bad habits can start at very young ages. Let’s look at this:**

<sup>5</sup>She said, ‘I’ll run after other lovers  
and sell myself to them for food and water,  
for clothing of wool and linen,  
and for olive oil and drinks.’

<sup>6</sup>“For this reason I will fence her in with thornbushes.  
I will block her path with a wall  
to make her lose her way.

**It’s very common for us to believe that God has a special someone out there that we’re going to marry. Beyond that, how many boyfriends or girlfriends do you think God wants**

**you to have?** Answer: Not many. As few as it takes you to know whom you should fall in love with.

**Ideally, how many times does God want you to fall in love?** They should come up with once—and easily enough that it might surprise adults.

**A wise man once said, “The human heart is like the human leg bone. It is not mean to be broken over and over again.”**

**What happens to a human leg bone that breaks three or four times?** The person becomes crippled and it’s harder to walk without pain. The person walks funny.

**We don’t walk on our hearts, but they can break, and if we have our heart broken three or four times, we can start to act funny. We can start to tell ourselves that love doesn’t matter. We could even end up being mean because of our pain.**

**When a boy and girl starts dating in middle school do they usually end up getting married?** The answer is no, but nearly always someone has a story about a distant family member who began dating her husband in eighth grade, etc. *Emphasis on “usually”.*

**So if they don’t get married, somebody breaks it off. And what happens to the other person’s heart?** It gets hurt.

**And the same in high school, only those people are older, and so the feeling gets stronger, and somebody gets hurt. And when people get to be adults, they can end up doing the very type of thing Hosea was talking about—jumping from boyfriend to boyfriend just to have someone to pay her bills for her. A union between a man and a woman is one of the greatest gifts God gives—for love, friendship, safety, having kids, for your whole life. Hence, when people get together for other reasons—just so you won’t be different in high school or middle school, or just so you don’t have to work so hard as an adult--that’s when he can put on his parent’s voice and say, “I can block you! I don’t want you acting like that!”**

**The Prophet Haggai puts on God’s angry parent voice over another problem we can still have today. He said,**

<sup>4</sup> “Why are you living in luxurious houses while my house lies in ruins? <sup>5</sup> This is what the Lord of Heaven’s Armies says: Look at what’s happening to you! <sup>6</sup> You have planted much but harvest little. You eat but are not satisfied. You drink but are still thirsty. You put on clothes but cannot keep warm. Your wages disappear as though you were putting them in pockets filled with holes!

<sup>7</sup> “This is what the Lord of Heaven’s Armies says: Look at what’s happening to you! <sup>8</sup> Now go up into the hills, bring down timber, and rebuild my house. Then I will take pleasure in it and be honored, says the Lord.

**Why was God mad in this case?** Men were ignoring their place of worship while they were out trying to get rich.

**What did God do about it?** He prevented them from getting rich.

**How many of us can forget about God during the week, especially when there are things that seem so much more important? Like a sports game? Or a party?** Many should confess.

**Do you think that God doesn’t want us to have any fun?** God wants us to have plenty of fun. He just wants *to be part of* the fun. He doesn’t want to be separated from the fun or thought of as unfun.

**When men put making money before God, he arranged it so they didn’t make as much as they hoped. When Christian kids go around putting sports and parties before God, what might he do?** You could end up having less fun than you hoped.

**If we really want to have fun, we should keep our priorities straight. We should invite him in to every area of our lives—the fun parts as well as the parts where we figure we need him. If we put him first, what might happen?** We’ll have fun in ways we never thought of ourselves. He’ll provide plenty of fun if we put him first.

**What are some of the ways we can put him first?** Come to church. Pray several times a day. Pray in thanks for what we have as well as for what we want. Do unto others. Make an effort every day.

INTRO ACTIVITY, YOUNGER CHILDREN  
A MESSAGE FROM THE MINOR PROPHETS—  
GOD LOVES A HAPPY MARRIAGE

**Today we’ll be talking about the Minor Prophets and two of the messages they gave that still speak loudly today. The first is about the greatness of a happy marriage. To help you find the right person—without going through too many wrong persons—it’s never too soon to start. Draw a picture of your future husband (wife). Draw in some things you would like that person to do or to be.**

Have students draw a picture of their future spouse. Have them be prepared to list some traits they would like that person to have. Remind them that marrying someone who doesn't love Jesus can make life very difficult. Get them thinking at a young age of the importance of keeping your family unity in your belief in Jesus.

**Obviously, as you grow older, your list might change a little. But if you keep your list in mind, it will distract you from dating people you shouldn't. Part of God's plan in marriage is remembering who he wants you to become!**

## INTRO ACTIVITY, OLDER CHILDREN: MY FUTURE HUSBAND / WIFE: WISH LIST OF TRAITS

**Today we'll be talking about the Minor Prophets and two of the messages they gave that still speak loudly today. The first is about the greatness of a happy marriage. To help you find the right person—without going through too many wrong persons—it's never too soon to start.**

**Make a list of traits you would like in your future husband (wife). Include some personality traits, some talents or hobbies, even some beliefs.**

Have the students be prepared to read off the list before the lesson starts. They may need to be reminded that it's easier to have a happy marriage with someone else who loves Jesus.

**If you love Jesus and the person you love most in the world does not love the person you love most in heaven, that can cause tension and even heartbreak. Does everyone have on their list that their future husband or wife should love Jesus, too?**

**Your list may change slightly as the years progress, but that one thing should never change. If you keep in mind always what's on your list, it can help you from getting sidetracked with wrong boyfriends or wrong girlfriends, especially when you get to an age where so many people are dating, and God might be telling you it's best to hold off.**

## ACTIVITY, YOUNGER CHILDREN: MICAH: THE RIGHT WAY TO PRAY

**The prophet Micah tries to get us to pray in the right ways. He talks about obedience and not striking deals with God.**

**How many of you have prayed a prayer like this: “God, if you just let my team win this game, I will be good for the rest of the week!” “God, if you just let me have this toy, I will help my mom with all the chores!”** Some should confess.

**Again, here is what Micah says, put into language we all can understand:**

<sup>6</sup> What can we bring to the Lord?

What kind of offerings should we give him?

Should we bow before God

with offerings of [chores]?

<sup>7</sup> Should we offer him [goods and promises

Of good behavior]?

Should we [give away our favorite toys

to pay for our sins?]

<sup>8</sup> No, O people, the Lord has told you what is good,

and this is what he requires of you:

to do what is right, to love mercy,

and to walk humbly with your God.

**God doesn't mind you asking things of him at all. But he is more than a wish list. He is your Heavenly Father. He wants your love. He wants you to be kind to your neighbors. He wants to you not get all vain and snooty. Let's draw three promises: We will thank God when we pray. We will be kind to everyone we can. We will remember not to get snooty.**

Give out construction paper. Help each child divide it into three sections and put at the top of each one: I will thank God. I will be kind. I will walk with God and with a good attitude.

In the very center at the top, write, Micah 6:6-8

They can then color in their own pictures to go with each.

ACTIVITY, OLDER CHILDREN:  
IMAGINING MR. AND MRS. RIGHT:  
AVOIDING ISRAEL'S PITFALLS

This game of imagining can give children some needed background to prevent them from running wild in middle school and high school and getting distracted from their spirituality with too many boyfriends or girlfriends. Boys may be very resistant to this game, but keep reminding them how quickly they will change. Some Christians are known to do this with their children often:

**Close your eyes. Imagine that there's a person standing in front of you. But there's a great deal of light around the person... You cannot see him or her clearly.**

**This is the person God designed especially for you to marry. The person is still a shadow in your mind because you're young. Girls, you're not thinking of him yet. Boys, it's likely that you have not met her yet.**

**But guess what? This person is alive. This person is walking around on planet earth right now. This person is about your age, maybe a few years older or younger.**

**God knows where this person is... God knows what he or she is doing right now. He knows that person's flaws. He knows that person's strengths. He knows that *you* were also designed for that person.**

**Once you get in middle school, you will find that just about everyone in your class is talking about who goes out with whom. Let's prepare for that now. What happens every time you go out with somebody other than that person? You're taking something from that person. You're giving it to someone else.**

**When you finally meet up, and the person starts falling in love with you, how is he or she supposed to feel, finding out that you gave half your love away to a series of random boyfriends or girlfriends? Bad**

**Once you get married, how long will you live with that person? Maybe sixty years.**

**That's a long time. Is it worth it to give part of your relationship to someone whom you might be with for nine months? Or even nine weeks? No.**

**Open your eyes. Let's think together of ways to keep ourselves out of trouble, out of too many middle-school situations, and out from under God's angry voice if we're looking with wrong motives or at wrong people?**

Some prompts: Spend time becoming good at something like a sport or music that keeps you busy on weekends, so you're not always tempted to go to dances and hang out. Then, you'll not only use your time well, but you'll be good at something that could be life-long.

Keep your Christian friends close, as you're in the same boat together. Do a lot of church activities, camp-outs, get-togethers.

Seek God before you plan your social life every week. Think of that list you just drew up. Think of that person that God has for you being alive and well and "out there" right now.

## GAME, YOUNGER CHILDREN: LEARNING THE NAMES OF THE MINOR PROPHETS

Make a big list of the names of the Minor Prophets, such as a poster. You don't have to put the pronunciations. They are for you:

HOSEA (Hose-AY)

JOEL (JOLE)

AMOS (A-muss)

OBADIAH (O-buh-DIE-uh)

JONAH (JOE-nuh)

MICAH (MY-kuh)

NAHUM (NAY-hum)

HABAKKUK (HAB-uh-kuk)

ZEPHANIAH (Zeff-uh-NUY-uh)

HAGGAI (HAG-eye)

ZECHARIAH (Zeck-uh-RYE-uh)

MALACHI (MAL-uh-kye)

Have children say the names together two or three times. Then, call one child to the front of the room. Just say the first syllable of one name at random. See if the child can finish the name. If so, do another. He or she doesn't have to sit down until missing. Then, call up the next child.

Prizes awarded at discretion.



## GAME, OLDER CHILDREN: MINOR PROPHETS POPSICLE STICK MEMORIZATION

You can have the children involved in making the Popsicle stick game, or you can make it yourself before class. Line up 12 Popsicle sticks, one right beneath the other. On the left-hand side cut, fit, and paste on the picture. On the right-hand side, write the names of the Minor Prophets, one on each stick. Using the sharp edge of the knife or razor, cut the sticks apart so that a small piece of the picture remains on each stick, like the parts of a puzzle. Mix the pieces up.

Have students combine efforts to make the puzzle pieces look right, and they will have the order of the Minor Prophets. Have them say the order as they go along.

## CLOSING PRAYER

**Father, thank you for the Minor Prophets, who speak to us like stern parents when we need to hear it. Help us to remember our future husband or wife when we get tempted to go out with random people. Help us to remember to put church before the world.**

**Amen.**