

Preschool Ages 3 & 4

Leader Devotions



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



Leader Devotions, Rainbow Promise, Preschool, Fall

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Group

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Thanks to our talented Buzz team!

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Group resources really work!

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



Relational

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

Experiential

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

Applicable

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

Learner-based

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

We know you care about kids...

We do, too!

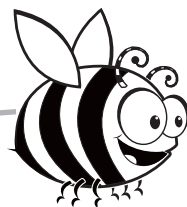
That's why we attempt to ensure that all crafts, toys, and gizmos meet or exceed national safety standards—and are produced by manufacturers that don't use child labor or abuse their labor force. You can order Group resources knowing that in addition to caring for *your* kids, you're also caring for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

Let's keep kids safe!

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

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

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Introduction to Buzz



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

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

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

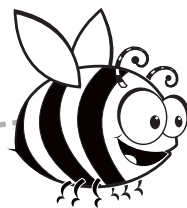
Now your Sunday school can go deeper than ever! It's about knowing, loving, and following Jesus. It's about forming a lasting friendship with God. It's about helping kids discover, explore, and *experience* God's love. They'll know God...feel his love...and cement a rock-solid friendship with him.

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

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

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

Buzz Tips







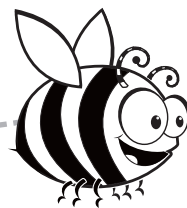
When using Buzz, follow these guidelines:





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

Smart Chart

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

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



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

Week 1

God Creates the Earth GENESIS 1:1-10, 14-19 *We thank God for our world.*

What the Bible Says

Genesis 1:1–2:3 describes a vast variety of things God created, but the focus is not so much on the creation as it is on the Creator. Nine times in this passage, we read, “God said” and then some variation of “It was so.” God spoke our universe, our planet, and humankind into existence. And what God did was good. The word translated *good* here is a common Hebrew word that means “just as it should be.” God looked at what he had done and knew that it was right. He didn’t mess up. God knew what he was doing.

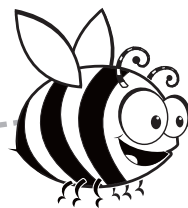
What It Means

What God was doing was creating a bountiful, beautiful home for the treasured beings that he would create last. Notice that God created many of each thing: not just one tree, but “every sort of seed-bearing plant, and trees that grow seed-bearing fruit”; not just one star, but “lights in the sky”; not just one fish, but “every living thing that scurries and swarms in the water”; not just one horse, but “livestock, small animals that scurry along the ground, and wild animals.” God prepared a marvelous earth for his crowning creation to enjoy.

And then God created humans. We are a vital part of everything good God has made.

Why It Matters

God didn’t just create the world and step out of the picture. He created the world with purpose, and he sustains it still today. God created the world in a specific order, preparing for the needs of the plants by first creating soil for them to grow in and light and water to nourish them. God provided for animals and people by first creating plants to eat, water to drink, and the sun to keep us warm. We can thank God for his provisions because he has been providing since the world was created!



God Sightings®

It can be easy to walk through our day and take creation for granted. We shower with God's water, wear clothes made from the plants he has made, and eat meals made from his plants or animals. We drive by his creation on our way to work, seeing the trees, the sky, and the birds he has made. While we may say a prayer of thanks before we eat our meals, how often do we really think about how much God's creation is a part of every step of our day? This week make a list of how many different parts of God's creation you're seeing and experiencing as you go through each day. At the end of the day, go through your list and thank God for every item on the list. Don't forget the trees that made the paper for your list!

Prayer Starter

Pray that your kids will experience God's creation in a way that will help them know God more. Pray that they'll learn to be more thankful for God's creation. Write your prayer here.

Week 2

God Creates Plants GENESIS 1:11-13 *We thank God for our world.*

What the Bible Says

After commanding the water to flow into one place and allowing the dry ground to appear, God spoke again. This time the powerful voice of God commanded the dry ground to sprout with plants. In this particular case, God doesn't create out of nothing, but uses the dry ground to bring forth vegetation. This theme continues with the emphasis on the facts that these plants are seed-bearing plants and the trees produce seed-bearing fruit. The seeds from the plants and trees will therefore produce their own kind. Just as before, God looked at what he had made and saw that it was good.

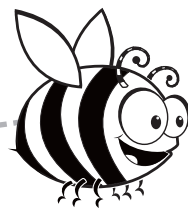
What It Means

This passage emphasizes the power and authority in the word of God. In the context of the ancient Near East, a deity who can command the land to produce is perceived as being superior to other deities that may simply represent the land or the plants. The Almighty God is just that—almighty. Second, this passage informs us that God is not creating just for the sake of creating; God is creating a world that can re-create itself. Not

only that, God is creating this special world in a specific order so its inhabitants can enjoy it to its full potential. The third day of creation is foundational for the sixth day, because it provides the environment and sustenance for life to thrive and continue to survive indefinitely.

Why It Matters

God is beyond the laws of nature and science that limit us from speaking things into existence. He is sovereign and his word has the power to command the land to produce vegetation. More importantly, this Almighty God loves us so much that he intentionally designed our world to provide us with plants and trees that produce more plants and trees. Plants and trees continuously provide us with vital oxygen, food, shelter, medicine, and clothing. God's abounding love for us is evident in how he provides for us with plants, and for that we can be truly thankful.



God Sightings®

Have you ever considered how many things you use each day that come from plants or trees? We wouldn't survive for long without plants releasing oxygen into the air. Just try to imagine enduring a cold night without warm blankets or a log in the fire. God created plants to re-create themselves, and thank goodness he did—because plants must survive for us to survive. Write down all the things plants provide, and circle the things you use every day. Choose to give up one of those circled items for the entire week (maybe not oxygen or clothing). After the week is over, make a fruit salad or fruit smoothie, and thank God for creating plants and trees and providing you with so many wonderful things.

Prayer Starter

Pray that your kids will truly understand the gift of vegetation and all the things plants provide us with. Pray that kids will be thankful for everything plants and trees offer us, and will appreciate plants as an awesome gift from God. Write your prayer here.

Week 3

God Creates Fish and Birds

GENESIS 1:20-23 *We thank God for our world.*

What the Bible Says

On the second day, God separated the waters of the heavens from the waters of the earth with a space he called sky. The creation on the second day was the foundation for his creation on the fifth day. Sky was created to house birds, and water was created to house fish. God didn't create just one kind of fish and one kind of bird. Genesis 1:21 states that God created "great sea creatures," "every living thing that scurries and swarms in the water," and "every sort of bird." The Hebrew word for "bird" is often translated as "flying creature." God created birds and fish, but he also created swimming mammals (whales, dolphins, and porpoises), swimming reptiles (crocodiles, alligators, and turtles), flying mammals like bats, and flying insects. God created birds and fish with the ability to produce offspring of their same kind. When God saw that it was good, he commanded his creation to procreate, multiply, and fill the earth.

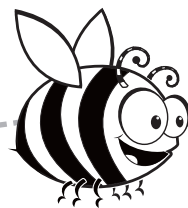
What It Means

As God's creation progressed, the complexity increased. You can see God's purpose and intent in the order of his creation. After creating a place to fly and swim, plants to eat, oxygen to breathe, and the sun to provide energy, warmth, and sustenance, God

created the first living creatures. The ever-increasing complexity of God's creation was moving toward its climactic moment. It is here that God first introduced the mandate of his creation. These creatures had a purpose of their own. Not created simply for God's amusement—or even for our amusement—they were created to multiply and fill the earth. God created creatures that could re-create themselves and fulfill the mandate assigned to them.

Why It Matters

It's important to know that God had a reason for creating everything, including fish and birds. God didn't create things on a whim, but with purpose and intent. Knowing that God provides for such relatively small and simple creatures puts our own relationship with God in perspective. When we worry about what we're going to wear or what we're going to eat, Jesus tells us to "look at the birds." Jesus says that people are far more valuable to God than birds (Matthew 6:25-27). To provide for these creatures of the fifth day, God first created sky, water, dry land, and plants. Since God takes care of the birds, we can be assured that God will take care of us.



God Sightings®

It's easy sometimes to get caught up in the hustle and bustle of our everyday lives. We've got kids to raise, mortgages to pay, and groceries to buy. Quite often we find ourselves losing hope and worrying about whether we're going to make ends meet. Jesus tells us that when we worry, we need to "look at the birds." This week, do exactly what Jesus says. Go for a walk, and intentionally watch the birds for at least 10 minutes. Think about how much God loves and cares for these creatures, and then think about how much more God loves and cares for you. Thank God for loving you so much and for creating you with a purpose.

Prayer Starter

Pray that God will help your kids appreciate birds and fish as wonderful creatures in their own right. Ask God to provide for your kids in the same way he provides for birds and fish. Write your prayer here.

Week 4

God Creates Animals GENESIS 1:24-25 *We thank God for our world.*

What the Bible Says

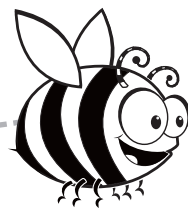
God created the land and plants on the third day as a foundation for creating the animals on the sixth day. God didn't create animals out of nothing, but rather commanded the earth to produce every sort of animal. Scripture divides these animals up into three categories: livestock, small animals that scurry along the ground, and wild animals. Once again, God commanded the animals to produce offspring of their own kind, and he saw that it was good.

What It Means

The animals were God's last creation before creating human beings. Land animals were, in general, more complex than anything God had created up to this point. God was moving toward creating his ultimate masterpiece. The fact that these animals were commanded to procreate suggests that God had a specific purpose in mind for them as well. The animals were divided into three groups: livestock, small animals, and wild animals. Livestock, eventually, became an important element to human survival—serving as a food source, as a source of clothing, and as beasts of burden.

Why It Matters

It's clear that as God's creation continued to become more and more complex, God was setting everything up for the creation of human beings. Animals were the final element before God presented his creation to its caretaker. God created animals on the same day he created human beings, and animals are our responsibility. God commanded man and woman to care for these creatures, and many of them love humans in return. Take, for example, the love we have for pets. We feed them, provide them with shelter, and love them, and they offer us love and companionship in return. It isn't farfetched to compare the relationship we have with a loving pet to our relationship with Jesus. Jesus refers to himself as the good shepherd because he sacrificially loves and provides for his people—the sheep (John 10:11-16). Jesus then hopes for his flock to be grateful and to respond to his provision and love with devotion. God entrusts us with the guardianship of and provision for the animals he created, and he expects us to rule over these beasts with love and care. This caring relationship with animals can teach us valuable lessons about our own relationship with our Master.



God Sightings®

Do you remember that dog, cat, or horse from your childhood you loved with all your being? Even if you didn't have a household pet, imagine having a furry companion that protected you, loved you unconditionally, and followed you wherever you went. The love you had for this pet—and vice versa—doesn't even compare to the love God has for you. Consider the love and dedication this pet had for you, and bring those thoughts to God in prayer. Tell God how much you love him and recognize him as your shepherd.

Prayer Starter

Pray that God will help your kids realize how special animals are and what they offer us each and every day. Pray that kids will learn more about God as they interact with animals. Write your prayer here.

Week 5

God Creates People GENESIS 1:26-27; 2:18-23 *We thank God for our world.*

What the Bible Says

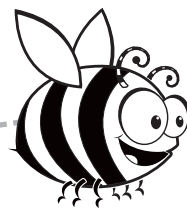
Genesis 2:7 tells us that humans were the only creation not simply spoken into being. This account speaks of God personally forming Adam out of the earth. And then one more difference appears: God breathed life into Adam, and the first man became a living being. Many here translate “being” as “soul.” No other creature was given that designation. Genesis 1:27 tells us that humans were created in God’s image. And after the creation of humans, God saw that his creation was good. In fact, according to Genesis 1:31, he saw that it was very good.

What It Means

We definitely are God’s very special creation. We’re set apart from the rest of creation because we’re the only thing God made in his image. What does our place in creation mean for us? David wrote in Psalm 8:3-6, “When I look at the night sky and see the work of your fingers—the moon and the stars you set in place—what are people that you should think about them, mere mortals that you should care for them? Yet you made them only a little lower than God and crowned them with glory and honor. You gave them charge of everything you made, putting all things under their authority.” God placed people in a pretty high position, and we are very special to him.

Why It Matters

We can choose how we’ll respond to our place in creation. It can be tempting to respond with pride, considering ourselves “superior beings.” David had a different response. He was humbled that among all the beautiful things God created, God cares for humans. David viewed the place of humans in creation not merely as one of high status, but one of awesome responsibility, recognizing that we must care for the things God has created.



God Sightings®

Read Genesis 1:28. Consider the mandate God gave people to care for his creation. One part of thanking God for his creation is responding to this call. As you consider your role in interacting with God's creation, write a couple of sentences about the things that leave you in awe and the responsibilities you have for this creation. Then set a goal for the week that will bring you closer to a more humble and responsible attitude regarding the role God has given you in his creation.

Prayer Starter

Pray that your kids will be challenged to live as beings made in God's image. Pray that they will learn to be more caring of God's creation. Write your prayer here.

Week 6

Noah Builds the Ark GENESIS 6:9-16 *We can trust God.*

What the Bible Says

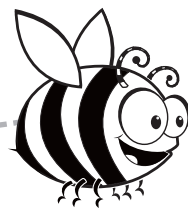
Consider the immensity of the task Noah undertook. We know from Genesis 6:14-16 that the ark was longer than a football field, almost as wide as a basketball court is long, and as tall as a five-story building. There were to be three decks inside and many rooms to house all the different animals. All of this was to be built of a particular kind of wood (which we can't identify precisely) in an arid area where wood most likely was not plentiful. And Noah had probably never seen more water than that found in a small stream.

What It Means

No one had ever built a floating zoo of that size before. And as far as we know, Noah wasn't an architect or a builder prior to his construction of the ark. He was "a righteous man, the only blameless person living on earth at that time, and he walked in close fellowship with God" (Genesis 6:9). On his own, he may not have known how to build an ark, but he trusted that God would guide him. Sure enough, modern shipbuilding experts have confirmed that the dimensions given in the Bible would be ideal to ensure that a large wooden vessel would remain intact and upright while adrift in heavy seas. Noah trusted that God knew what he was doing, and it paid off!

Why It Matters

God's commands aren't always easy, and we don't always understand them. For someone who had likely never seen much water, who presumably had no construction experience, building an ark might have seemed an odd and difficult task. We don't know how often Noah was discouraged. We don't know if his neighbors ridiculed him, but we may assume they did. We don't know if Noah's family thought he had lost his mind. But we do know that he "did everything exactly as God had commanded him." And that's a great example of faithful obedience and unwavering trust.



God Sightings®

God has given each of us a purpose. We don't know what Noah did for the first 500 years of his life other than walk with God and live a righteous life. That was all he needed to qualify him for a job that would save the world. Noah had trusted God his whole life, so it was no surprise that he trusted God when a great task loomed ahead of him. Think of God's calling in your life. What does it mean for you to walk with God righteously and trust him while you do what he has called you to do? What parts of God's calling don't you understand? Surrender your doubts to God, and pray that you'll be able to trust him.

Prayer Starter

Preschoolers are naturally trusting. Pray that your kids build a trust in God that will last even as they grow and their faith is tested. Write your prayer here.

Week 7

God Sends the Animals GENESIS 6:17–7:9 *We can trust God.*

What the Bible Says

When God gave Noah the directions for building the ark, he also gave him directions for bringing animals on the ark. God gave Noah the responsibility of housing and feeding two of every kind of animal in the ark (Genesis 6:19, 21). In an amazing miracle, God led all those animals to the ark at just the right time. God even sent seven pairs of certain animals so Noah would have animals to eat and to sacrifice in worship without wiping out a species (Genesis 7:2-3).

What It Means

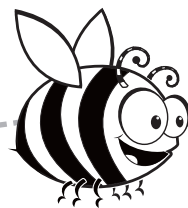
God showed his love and provision by caring not only for Noah and his family, but also for the animals. He wanted to protect these creatures, so he made sure Noah brought a male and a female of every species so they could repopulate after the flood. God also made sure that Noah knew he needed to bring food for his family and the animals, another act of provision.

Noah must have found so many events in this story extraordinarily strange and unfamiliar. He watched as hundreds of pairs of animals—many of them creatures he'd never seen before—advanced toward the ark. But we don't read about Noah showing fear of the wild animals or lacking trust in God to take

care of him and all these strange creatures. Noah was willing to trust that God's instructions to build the ark were good, and he never questioned God while preparing for the massive flood to come. He trusted God by following instructions exactly, and we can trust God in the same way.

Why It Matters

God shows his love for us in many ways. We see it over and over in the story of Noah, and we can see it in our lives, too. God constantly proves himself trustworthy. Noah responded with trust, even taking enough animals so that he could worship God after the flood. Although he was beginning a potentially scary adventure, he was ready to trust God.



God Sightings®

Think about the past year of your life. Make a list, mental or written, of some of the ways God has been loving and trustworthy in your life. Think about how you can respond to God's acts with trust and worship as Noah did.

Don't keep God's works in your life to yourself! There are people in our world who are just as lost as Noah's contemporaries. Think of one person this week who could benefit from hearing about the ways God has been loving and trustworthy to you. Talk to that person, sharing some of the things on the list you created, and encourage him or her to trust in the Lord.

Prayer Starter

Pray that the animals in this week's story will be a good connecting point for your kids. Pray that the story of Noah's ark will encourage them to trust God more fully. Write your prayer here.

Week 8

The Flood Covers the Earth

GENESIS 7:10-24 *We can trust God.*

What the Bible Says

When the flood came, it wasn't caused only by rain. We read also that "all the underground waters erupted from the earth" (Genesis 7:11). Water came shooting upward from under the earth's surface as rain deluged the earth from above. There was so much water that it covered the highest mountains by more than 20 feet (Genesis 7:19-20)! Some scientists believe that this event involved the sliding of continents and the creation of mountain ranges as subterranean plates slid and crashed together. It was likely a very scary time for those inside the ark. Once the rain stopped, it took almost a year for the water to recede sufficiently for Noah and his family to leave the ark.

It's interesting that one of the birds sent by Noah to check on the state of the flood waters returned with an olive leaf. The olive branch has come to symbolize peace. Perhaps for Noah and his family, it symbolized peace between God and his creation.

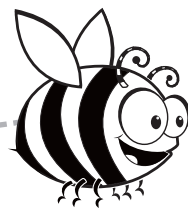
What It Means

Notice that Noah had a method for testing to see if the earth was dry, but that God told him when it was safe to come out (Genesis 8:15-16). God was taking care of Noah and his family. When the family came out of the ark, no one had to tell Noah to worship

God. Noah knew that by saving them through the ark, God had kept his promise, just as Noah had trusted he would. Noah was grateful, and he responded in worship.

Why It Matters

Trusting God is a balance between taking steps of faith and waiting for God's direction. Noah took steps of faith to see whether it was safe to exit the ark, but it wasn't until God gave him clear direction that he left the boat and released the animals. Noah demonstrated trust in God with his willingness to actively seek God's timing, his patience to wait on God, and his worship of God when he saw God keep his promises.



God Sightings®

Nothing tests our trust in God more than having to make a difficult decision. Some people respond by simply not deciding at all, waiting instead for God to give them a clear sign. The satirical website larknews.com presented the fictional account of a man who died at the age of 91, still waiting for God's will for his life to be made clear. The article reported that although he prayed a lot, the man was never sure he heard God's voice telling him what to do. So he never took action. It's an exaggeration, but it illustrates a tendency that we often have.

Other people have the opposite reaction when making a difficult decision. Rather than seeking God's will, they jump in with both feet and hope it turns out OK. Neither end of the spectrum shows complete trust in God. Think about a decision you're making. Pray that God will give you wisdom in making the decision, and think about what steps you need to take to actively pursue God's will.

Prayer Starter

Little storms can be just as scary to a preschooler as the flood might have been for Noah and his family. Pray that your preschoolers will trust God when they're afraid. Write your prayer here.

Week 9

God Puts a Rainbow in the Sky

GENESIS 9:8-17 *We can trust God.*

What the Bible Says

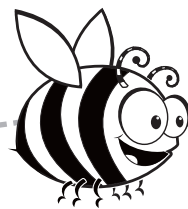
Throughout the story of Noah, we've seen time after time where God provided for Noah, demonstrated his love, and proved himself trustworthy. In Genesis 9:12-17, God again demonstrated his love for Noah. God made a promise to Noah, signified by the rainbow. The rainbow will always remind us of God's promise and the fact that God always keeps his promises!

What It Means

The statistics of evil in the world today are staggering. We don't know exactly what was going on in Noah's time that made God decide to flood the earth, but one might wonder if the times we live in now are any better. Without God's promise to never flood the earth again, we might fear another flood might come to eradicate evil men from the world. But God promised that he would "never again destroy all living things" (Genesis 8:21). Because God is loving and faithful, we can trust this promise.

Why It Matters

When God sent Jesus to die on the cross, he was solving the problem of Noah's day in a whole new way. It grieved God to destroy his creation, but he wanted to give a second chance to Noah, his family, and the animals. Likewise, it grieved God to see his Son die on the cross, but he was giving the world a second chance. After the flood, evil came back. We read about sin throughout the Old Testament, but God was faithful to his promise not to flood the earth again. Instead he provided a new way for us to get a second chance.



God Sightings®

Noah had to trust that the ark would save him from the flood waters. He had to trust that the directions God had given him for building the ark were good directions and that the ark would withstand torrential flooding. In the same way, we have to trust in salvation through Jesus. Noah chose to trust God and step onto the ark, just as we can choose to trust God and believe in Jesus.

When we believe in Jesus, we discover a whole new world of promises that we can trust. Read some of the promises in the verses below; choose one that means the most to you right now, and meditate on it throughout the week. Know that you can trust God's promises!

Psalm 18:30; Jeremiah 29:12; Matthew 11:28; John 8:36; Romans 8:28; Philippians 4:19; Hebrews 13:5

Prayer Starter

Pray that your kids will be encouraged to trust God's promises. Pray that they will see God fulfill his promises in their lives and that their trust in him will grow as a result. Write your prayer here.

Week 10

Joseph Gets a Special Coat GENESIS 37:2-11 *We love others.*

What the Bible Says

Jacob loved Joseph more than his other sons because Joseph had been born to him in his old age and because he was the child of Rachel, Jacob's most beloved wife. Joseph's "bad report" about his brothers (Genesis 37:2) only made things worse, fueling Jacob's preference for Joseph and the brothers' resentment. The richly ornamented robe Jacob presented to Joseph further intensified the brothers' feelings. This robe was designed to stand out from the work clothes the other brothers wore, and it likely relieved Joseph from doing unpleasant tasks that could have soiled it. Joseph's brothers hated him because he was so clearly their father's favorite.

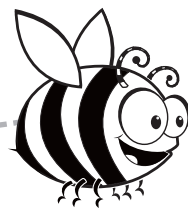
The relationship between Joseph and his brothers was bad enough at this point, but then Joseph began having dreams indicating that he would rule over his brothers. Joseph was the second youngest of 12 brothers. The eldest son would naturally and culturally have held the role of family leader. For the 11th son in line to claim such a position surely infuriated the other brothers.

What It Means

From our vantage point, we know what Joseph's dreams foretold. But Joseph's brothers didn't have our perspective. Their hatred of Joseph probably caused them to suspect that he was inventing these dreams to put them down and flaunt his father's favoritism. When it's tempting to withhold love from others, we must remember that we, like Joseph's brothers, lack the big-picture perspective that God possesses.

Why It Matters

Although God ultimately reconciled the members of this family, the story serves as a model of how *not* to treat family members. None of the members of this family really loved the others as they should have. Joseph, his brothers, and their father all contributed to the rift between Joseph and the brothers. To honor God, family members must show God's love to one another. For Jacob, that might have meant showing love equally to all his sons. For Joseph, that might have meant keeping his dreams to himself, even if the dreams truly were messages from God. And for the brothers, it might have meant loving Joseph in spite of their father's favoritism and Joseph's attitude.



God Sightings®

No matter what or who the problem is in our relationships with our family, friends, or co-workers, God wants us to love others with the same love he shows toward us. Consider the way each person in Joseph's story showed a lack of love. Whom do you most identify with? How have you been withholding love in a similar way? Make a challenge for yourself this week to start showing love in that area, and pray for God's help.

Prayer Starter

Pray that your kids will think of ways they can show God's love to others. Pray that children will learn from Joseph's story how bragging can hurt relationships. Write your prayer here.

Week II

Joseph's Brothers Are Jealous GENESIS 37:18-36 *We love others.*

What the Bible Says

Reuben, the oldest brother, was the first to show concern for Joseph's life. As the oldest brother and leader of the family, Reuben was in some ways responsible for his brother's safety. He would likely be the one to bring the deceitful report of his brother's death to their aging father.

Later, when the traders came along, Genesis 37:29 indicates that Reuben wasn't present. Possibly it was his turn to check on distant flocks; in any case, he didn't witness his brothers' next act. Judah suddenly suggested that they spare Joseph's life. Reuben and Judah were the only two of the brothers to suggest a plan that wouldn't result in Joseph's death.

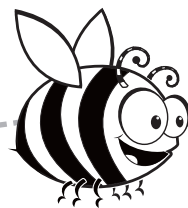
What It Means

Genesis 37:22 tells us that Reuben's plan was to put Joseph in a cistern (probably a dry well) in the desert and rescue him later. We don't know whether his motivation was to spare his father's feelings or to help Joseph. Reuben's plan may have been suspected by some of the other brothers. Scripture doesn't say that the brothers enthusiastically supported his plan; they just did what the eldest brother suggested, as younger brothers would be expected to do.

As far as Judah's suggestion, we don't know if he was prompted by pangs of guilt, the appeal of money, or a desire to punish Joseph even more severely by making a slave of him. Whatever the motive, Joseph's brothers made the decision, and Joseph was gone before Reuben returned. When he found that Joseph was gone, Reuben was grief-stricken, anguishing over what to do next and, no doubt, what to tell his father.

Why It Matters

Whatever their motives, Reuben and Judah tried to save Joseph's life, and God used their efforts to bring about his own plan. What the other brothers intended for evil, God turned to enormous good, using Joseph to save Jacob's family and much of the region from starvation.



God Sightings®

It's sad that the most loving acts in this story were Reuben's suggestion to throw Joseph in a well and Judah's to sell him into slavery. In contrast to the other brothers' plans to kill Joseph, these suggestions were loving. But by God's standards, they're far from loving.

Often, we have a tendency to measure our standards by how those around us are acting. If co-workers are gossiping about someone in the office, our just listening and not saying anything may seem loving. But by God's standards, speaking up for the victim of the gossip would be the truly loving act.

Consider ways you've been measuring your love by the standards of those around you. Choose one way this week that you'll measure your love by God's standards instead.

Prayer Starter

Pray that the your kids will show love to others, even when they're jealous of them or mad at them. Write your prayer here.

Week 12

Joseph Becomes Ruler of Egypt GENESIS 41:1-57 *We love others.*

What the Bible Says

God had a plan for Joseph and continued to fulfill that plan even when Joseph was in prison for something he hadn't done. It was with God's help that Joseph interpreted the dreams that eventually gained his release.

Pharaoh's "wise men" were people he paid to advise him, and they often claimed supernatural powers. However, they had no idea how to interpret Pharaoh's dreams. Only God can truly interpret dreams, and Joseph was God's instrument.

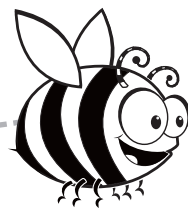
What It Means

It must have been quite evident that God was working through Joseph. Remember that Joseph was a foreigner. Furthermore, he was only 30 years old and, as far as we know, had correctly interpreted only two other dreams. Yet the ruler of Egypt chose this young Hebrew to become second in command, placing the welfare of all of Egypt in Joseph's hands.

Joseph's name change and his marriage to an Egyptian woman signaled Joseph's acceptance into the ruling class of Egypt. It also served to remind him that Egypt was now his home and he owed allegiance to Pharaoh. However, Joseph remained true to God, and God blessed his efforts by producing abundance in Egypt. Joseph even honored God in the naming of his two sons (Genesis 41:50-52). God didn't forget Joseph, and Joseph didn't forget God!

Why It Matters

Think about Joseph's opportunities to reject God. It would have been easy to give up on God when his brothers sold him into slavery. When God allowed him to be unjustly imprisoned, again Joseph could have given up on God. And when Joseph was elevated to second in command in the kingdom of Egypt, Joseph could have felt he no longer needed God. But because Joseph remained true to God, God was able to use him in mighty ways. And when we remain true to that same God, he can use us, too, to bring blessings to people wherever he leads us.



God Sightings®

Our ➡ Point for Joseph's story is, "we love others." Our acts of love toward others are an outpouring of God's love for us. Joseph was able to show love no matter what position he was in because he remained close to God through it all. Without allowing ourselves to experience God's love, it becomes very difficult to show love to others.

Spend some time in prayer, asking God to help you draw closer to him and remain close to him no matter what happens in your life. Praise God for ways he's shown love to you, and ask him to help you reflect that love in the way you treat others.

Prayer Starter

Pray that your children will clearly see ways that God loves them and that they will love others as a result. Write your prayer here.

Week 13

Joseph Forgives His Brothers GENESIS 42:1-6; 45:1-15 *We love others.*

What the Bible Says

When Joseph's brothers came to Egypt, they didn't recognize him. It had been over 20 years since they'd seen him. Besides the maturity he'd gained, he was also no doubt dressed as Egyptian royalty. And even if the brothers had noticed a resemblance, they would have quickly rejected any notion that the slave they'd sold to the Midianites could have become a ruler in Egypt.

Joseph, on the other hand, recognized his brothers immediately and put them through a series of tests before revealing his identity (Genesis 42-44). He accused them of being spies, imprisoned them, framed them for stealing on two occasions, and threatened to make Benjamin his slave.

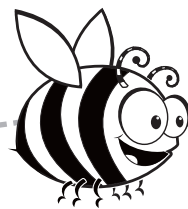
What It Means

Why did Joseph put his brothers through so much testing and struggle? To do it out of revenge would have been out of character for the Joseph described elsewhere in Scripture. Instead, he likely did it to help his brothers come to terms with their guilt for what they'd done to him. He may also have wanted to see if they'd changed their way of treating others. After Benjamin went to Egypt with his brothers, Judah offered himself

to Joseph as a slave in Benjamin's place to protect Benjamin and save his father from further grief. At this, Joseph apparently saw that he'd accomplished his purpose. The brothers clearly regretted what they'd done and truly cared about Benjamin and their father.

Why It Matters

When Joseph revealed his identity to his brothers, their terror was justified. They remembered all too vividly what they'd done to their brother. They saw the power Joseph wielded throughout Egypt. However, Joseph's message was one of forgiveness, not revenge. In spite of the difficulties Joseph had undergone, he realized that God had sent him to Egypt for a purpose. Joseph knew that his dreams were coming true as his brothers bowed to him, but instead of lording his power over them or taking on an "I told you so" attitude, he saved their lives from the famine that would have killed them and arranged for the whole family to come to Egypt.



God Sightings®

God's sending of Christ to die on the cross for us and forgive us is the ultimate demonstration of his love for us. If we desire to reflect God's love, forgiveness needs to be a top priority.

When we think of all that Joseph forgave in his brothers, it may make it easier for us to forgive others for the things they've done to us. And if we remember, as Joseph did, that God works through all that happens to us, it will make it easier for us to forgive.

Are you suffering from an offense or struggling to forgive someone? Consider the trial that Joseph endured. Reread his story, and ask God to give you the same strength and wisdom he gave Joseph. Then make an effort this week to make amends with the person you are having difficulty with.

Prayer Starter

Pray that your children will be slow to become angry and quick to forgive others. Pray that they will seek reconciliation in broken relationships. Write your prayer here.
