

Winter Quarter: December • January • February 2024–2025

EXPLORERS

FAITH

Bible Studies



TEACHER'S GUIDE FOR OLDER CHILDREN

Middle and Upper Elementary (Grades 2–6)

Sunday School
Publishing Board





Explorers

Teacher's Guide for Older Children

Middle and Upper Elementary

Volume 13—Number 2

Winter 2024–2025

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Overview of the Quarter

Unit I: Jesus: God's Chosen King

Lesson 1 • December 1—Good Family Connections

Scriptures: Ruth 4:9-17; Luke 3:23, 31b-32

Key Verse: The women living there said, "Naomi has a son!" And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David. (*Ruth 4:17*)

Scripture Review

1. A widow without sons and past the age of bearing children faced a bleak future. The birth of Obed changed all of that for Naomi.
2. Jesus' family tree (see Luke 3:23-38) establishes that He was a descendant of David's. Thus, Jesus' story is humanity's story, fully inclusive of Gentiles like Ruth.

Lesson 2 • December 8—David Desires to Build a Temple

Scripture: 2 Samuel 7:4-17

Key Verse: "The LORD declares to you that the LORD himself will establish a house for you." (*2 Samuel 7:11c*)

Scripture Review

1. David's desire to build a "house" for God was prompted by gratitude (7:1-2). God's plan to build a "house" out of David was God's response to David's acknowledgment that God was the reason for David's success.
2. In 7:6, God says that He lived among His people in a tent and in a "dwelling." God's desire from the very beginning (see Genesis 3:8) has been to be with His people.

Lesson 3 • December 15—Preparing the Way

Scripture: Luke 1:67-80

Key Verses: [Zechariah prophesied to John,] "You, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins." (*Luke 1:76-77*)

Scripture Review

1. The phrase "horn of salvation" (1:69) was used in the OT to refer to strength. In this case, Zechariah is describing an influential figure whose purpose was to rescue and defend, not attack, God's people.
2. Repentance is how God's people clear away the obstacles and make a straight pathway for God to be present in/among them (see 1:76).

Lesson 4 • December 22—News from Out of This World!

Scripture: Luke 2:1-16

Key Verse: When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." (*Luke 2:15*)

Scripture Review

1. Luke's declaration of the "Savior" and "Messiah" (2:11) reminds us that God always keeps His promises.
2. A huge theme for Luke is that of being a witness (see 2:17-18). It is the natural response to seeing/experiencing God at work and is our commissioned task as His followers (see Acts 1:8-9).

Lesson 5 • December 29—A Miracle in Jericho

Scripture: Luke 18:35-43

Key Verse: Immediately [the man] received his sight and followed Jesus, praising God. When all the people saw it, they also praised God. (*Luke 18:43*)

Scripture Review

1. By naming Jesus "Son of David," the beggar also placed himself under Jesus' authority as the Davidic heir. The beggar's insistence on this drew Jesus' attention.
2. It is important to note that where Jesus says, "Your faith has healed you" (verse 42; see Luke 8:48), He refers to someone's belief in Jesus' *ability* to rescue them, not their faith that Jesus will do as they ask (see Mark 9:24).

Unit II: Songs for the King

Lesson 6 • January 5—Restoring Justice and Mercy

Scripture: Psalm 10:12-18

Key Verse: You, LORD, hear the desire of the afflicted; you encourage them, and you listen to their cry. (*Psalm 10:17*)

Scripture Review

1. David suffered for years under Saul's temper. David saw God bring justice. David learned to trust God's justice and timing.
2. "The nations" (Psalm 10:16) that David referred to would be the Philistines, who had a long history of oppressing Israel (see 1 Samuel 17).
3. Psalm 10:16 portrays God as an ancient King, present with His people—protecting and defending them, and creating a stable and secure place in which they may thrive and grow (Zechariah 14).

Lesson 7 • January 12—All Creation Gives Praise

Scripture: Psalm 93:1-5

Key Verse: Mightier than the thunder of the great waters, mightier than the breakers of the sea—the LORD on high is mighty. (*Psalm 93:4*)

Scripture Review

1. In David's time, the stability of a kingdom directly depended on the king's security on his throne. Linking God's power with the earth's endurance is a statement of the unchangeable stability and endurance of God's reign and kingdom (verses 1-2).



Overview of the Quarter

2. Holiness (93:5) is the quality of being set apart. God’s strength, power, justice, and trustworthiness are so perfect that they are set apart, far beyond our human ability—leaving us in awe at how perfect God’s ways are.

Lesson 8 • January 19—A Song of Thanksgiving

Scripture: Psalm 103:1-14

Key Verse: Praise the LORD, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. (*Psalm 103:1*)

Scripture Review

1. Forgiveness, healing, life, significance, happiness, endurance for living, and justice are major categories of God’s faithfulness to us (verses 3-5).
2. David drew proofs for his praise for God’s greatness from timeless truths about God (verses 3-6), from the experience of generations past (verses 7-9), and from personal history with God (verses 10-18).

Lesson 9 • January 26—Everlasting Kingdom and Love

Scripture: Psalm 145:8-13

Key Verse: The LORD, is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made. (*Psalm 145:9*)

Scripture Review

1. Unlike many other psalms, Psalm 145 does not focus on specific historical actions by God but, rather, on general actions that consistently flow out of who God is (see 145:8-9, 14-20).
2. David mirrors Luke in relaying that those who experience God are motivated to tell and teach others about their experience.

Unit III: Jesus Teaches about God’s Kingdom

Lesson 10 • February 2—When In Need, Ask

Scripture: Matthew 6:5-15

Key Verse: [Jesus said,] “Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” (*Matthew 6:10*)

Scripture Review

1. The focus of 6:6 is not on keeping your devotional practices secret but, rather, on asserting that your faith is focused only on God. The purpose of praying “in secret” is to avoid the temptation to put on a show for others.
2. Everything about The Lord’s Prayer announces that we are not in ultimate control of meeting our most basic needs—food (verse 11), forgiveness (verse 12), protection (verse 13)—but that God is.
3. Matthew 6:14-15 is a warning that when we harbor sin (unforgiveness, bitterness) in our hearts, we harbor something that remains an obstacle between us and God.

Lesson 11 • February 9—Stand with Conviction

Scripture: Matthew 11:1-15

Key Verse: “This is the one about whom it is written: ‘I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.’” (*Matthew 11:10*)

Scripture Review

1. Jesus’ question in 11:7-8 foreshadows that people did not go out to see something common (a common reed) but, instead, went out to witness God’s intervening in history through John, the eschatological prophet.
2. As God’s activity increases through His people (John the Baptist, Jesus, and today His church), so does opposition to His work (11:12).

Lesson 12 • February 16—Money Isn’t Everything

Scripture: Matthew 19:16-30

Key Verse: Jesus looked at [the disciples] and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” (*Matthew 19:26*)

Scripture Review

1. In first-century Palestine, wealth was viewed as a blessing and a sign of God’s favor. Jesus’ response (19:23) turns this cultural view upside down by pointing out that wealth can instead be an obstacle to one’s obedience to and reliance on God.
2. Peter’s response (19:27) demonstrates that he had missed the point. He was still concerned about what they had left behind, not about his heart’s devotion to God. At this point, the disciples were still expecting a political kingdom and a revolutionary Messiah.
3. Jesus’ response (19:28-30) is a reminder that we cannot expect our justice or reward to come in this fallen world; our hope is in the eternal God and the life that God gives us through His Son.

Lesson 13 • February 23—Living Out Our Faith

Scripture: Matthew 25:31-40

Key Verse: “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’” (*Matthew 25:40*)

Scripture Review

1. The needs Jesus describes (verses 35-36; see verses 42-43) are all material, physical needs; yet the act of meeting them also addresses the need for security, significance, and friendship/inclusion. The church is still called to minister to physical needs and, through them, to emotional and spiritual needs as well.
2. The sheep’s generosity was an attitude of the heart that overflowed into charity.
3. Generosity is merely sacrificing part of yourself—your time, resources, energy, even emotion—on behalf of someone else’s need.

Teaching Helps

TEACHER'S LESSON PLANS

The weekly plan includes the Background Scripture, Lesson Scripture, and Key Verse. The Lesson Objective is the desired outcome for the students as a result of hearing God's Word. The list of Materials Needed helps identify items to gather for lesson activities. (**Note:** You will need to have extra NIV versions available in your classroom throughout the quarter. Also, you may want to keep an offering container if you plan to collect offerings each Sunday [if applicable/feasible].)

The *Middle Elementary* and *Upper Elementary* student books include thirteen lessons. Each lesson of the *Middle Elementary* book is comprised of four pages: the Bible story (first page); the contemporary story and words from Ruby the Red Panda (second page); and activities (third and fourth pages). In the back of the book are two pages containing extra activities to use as you wish. Each lesson of the *Upper Elementary* book is comprised of three pages: the Scripture text (first page); the Bible story and words from Nicholas and Cornelius (second page); and a contemporary story and an activity section (third page).

The schedules provided below are suggested time periods for each section. Adapt the schedule to meet your particular class needs.

Middle and Upper Elementary Teacher Lesson Format

BEGINNING THE JOURNEY (10-15 minutes)

(*Consists of the Welcome and Worship time and the Opening Activity)

Welcome and Worship: This is a special time to greet your students by name as they enter the classroom, making them feel welcome and comfortable. The prayer period is a quiet, serious time to think about and communicate with God. During this time, you might also lead the students in singing songs of praise, saying the opening prayer, and collecting an offering for the support of God's work. (**Note:** You may also allow a volunteer to lead the opening prayer.) This period should be short but meaningful, and it should always include the

children as active participants. You may also want to do the following: (1) Introduce yourself as the teacher and your assistant(s) (if applicable). (2) Welcome any parents or guardians who are sitting in on the session (usually a feature of the Middle Elementary-aged class). (You may also choose to keep the parents/guardians informed on what the students are/have been learning.) (3) When guests are in attendance, have the class say, "We're glad you're here with us today." (4) Complete the roll call. (5) Engage in a weekly check-in, letting students who desire to do so give a praise report or prayer request (prior to the opening prayer).

Opening Activity: The activity serves as an introduction to the lesson. It allows the students to be active participants through discussions, games, and other activities. This time is also a wonderful time to get to know each student better. After the activity has concluded, prepare the students for the Bible story.

BIBLE VOYAGE (5-10 minutes)

(*Consists of the Bible Story)

The Bible story is the most significant segment of the Sunday morning session. It retells the Bible lesson, using age-appropriate language. Use additional teaching aids whenever possible. Since the Scripture text is not printed in the *Middle Elementary* student books, you may choose to read it from the Bible first. Then, let volunteers take turns alternating reading the different paragraphs of the Bible story aloud in their student books (during each lesson). For the *Upper Elementary* lessons, let the students take turns alternating reading the lesson Scripture and the different paragraphs of the Bible story aloud (during each lesson).

As is a good thing to practice, always encourage your students to bring Bibles (New International Version) to class (though you should have extra Bibles available for classroom use). For those who may not have a personal Bible, try to provide a checkout loan procedure whereby the students return the Bibles every so often so that they can then be rotated out to other students.

In the *Middle Elementary* teacher's lesson, there are questions provided that are to be asked and reviewed after the Bible story has been read. Lead a brief discussion

of those questions/observations. Whenever there are questions or things to ponder provided in the *Upper Elementary* teacher lesson, lead a brief discussion of those.

FUN EXPEDITIONS (10-20 minutes)

(“Consists of the Contemporary Story time, the Exploring the Story in Ruby’s Lab/Exploring the Story with Nicholas and Cornelius segment, and the Lesson Activities [including any Reproducibles]”)

This section includes activities, which are designed to reinforce the lesson and serve as independent activities for the students; however, the younger students may require assistance. Please provide guidance when necessary. The contemporary story and “Exploring the Story” are also in this section.

The **contemporary story** relates the Bible lesson to the student’s daily life and personal experiences. Read the story to the class, or let the students take turns alternating reading different paragraphs/sentences of the story aloud. (**Note:** The contemporary story in the *Upper Elementary* lessons is split into two parts to offer suspense after the first part and a way for the students to ponder how the story will or should end up.) In the *Middle Elementary* teacher’s lesson, there are questions provided that are to be asked and reviewed after the contemporary story has been read. Lead a brief discussion of those questions/observations. Whenever there are questions or things to ponder provided in the *Upper Elementary* teacher lesson related to the contemporary story, lead a brief discussion of those.

“Exploring the Story” includes characters Ruby the Red Panda (*Middle Elementary*), and Nicholas and Cornelius (*Upper Elementary*), who will discuss the lesson and provide questions, comments, insights, and/or activities for the students. As the questions, observations, or comments are presented, help the students to be good listeners by instructing them to give their attention to the other students who have something to share with the class. Give everyone a chance to speak. Remind the students that everyone’s questions, insights, or comments will be different and everyone’s response(s) should be respected. **Things specific to the *Middle Elementary* lessons:** (1) At the start of this section, say, “It is now time to explore today’s lesson with Ruby. As you listen to Ruby, think about what she says. After we read this section, we will go

back and discuss her questions and observations.” (2) Let one or two students read Ruby’s words aloud. (3) Then discuss Ruby’s words with the students and, if applicable, explain any take-home projects Ruby has assigned. (4) If a take-home assignment was extended in a previous lesson, take the time at the start of the section to allow the students to share any findings or work; then continue with the lesson. **Things specific to the *Upper Elementary* lessons:** (1) For the first section, let students volunteer to read the information in this section of the student book aloud. Allow time for the students to respond to any questions that are posed. (2) For the second section, let students volunteer to read the information in this section aloud. Allow time for the students to respond to any questions that are posed, offering insight as deemed necessary.

Selected lessons include **Reproducible pages** (craft/puzzle activities) to supplement your teaching.

ENDING THE JOURNEY (5-10 minutes)

Keep these guidelines in mind for closing out the session: (1) Use this time to review the lesson (including the Key Verse(s)) with the students; you may reflect on the main points of the lesson by focusing on the central characters, places, conflicts, etc. (2) Take the time to answer any remaining questions that the students might have. If there are any questions or observations posed in the teacher lesson, pause for a brief discussion of them. (3) Prepare for closing by playing soft music or having the students sing a quiet song. (4) Ask for a volunteer to end the class session with a prayer, encouraging him or her to include in the prayer some aspect related to the lesson. (Use a variety of praying styles—including prayer songs, sentence prayers, the Lord’s Prayer (in unison), and individual prayers. Saying the Key Verse(s) at this time will reinforce the meaning of the lesson.) (5) Dismiss the children in a quiet and orderly manner.

ICONS

In addition to section headings, there are icons to assist you in identifying special instructions or activities that may appear in a lesson. The icons found on the next page will help you locate these special items easily.

✂ **Special Preparation:** In addition to the standard study preparation, this icon indicates that the lesson requires additional preparation.

- ☺ **Optional Activity:** This activity is one that you can include if you desire to do so, or if time permits.
- 📄 **Reproducible Activity:** An activity page appears in the back of this book that requires making photocopies.
- 📖 **Looking Ahead:** Provides special instructions and plans for future lessons.

EVALUATE THE SESSION

Check on the effectiveness of your teaching: Did you use your time wisely? Were the students attentive? What could have been done differently? Plan ahead prayerfully for next Sunday. Study the lesson and read the Background Scripture.

Preparing to Teach

Teaching Tips

You will want to skim each lesson at the beginning of the quarter to list materials you will need and note ideas you want to try. Each week, prayerfully plan and prepare the lesson. Become familiar with each step of the lesson plan. Gather the materials needed and have them easily accessible. Provide an offering container, name tags, and space for the children's personal belongings. Make sure the room is safe for the children. Ask God for the presence of His Holy Spirit and expect Him to help you think of and plan unique and creative ways to teach.

Listed below are a few age-level characteristics:

Middle Elementary Children (Grades 2–3) (1) have a rigid sense of justice (a frequent cry from the playground is, “That’s not fair!”); (2) are becoming more aware of rules and what happens when they disobey them; (3) are quick to say, “I’m sorry”; (4) seek independence and like having more responsibility; (5) are curious and eager to learn new skills; (6) may be sensitive and have their feelings hurt easily; (7) may want to be first or be the leader; and (8) enjoy expressing their opinions and showing their knowledge.

Upper Elementary Children (Grades 4–6) (1) ask meaningful questions; (2) have attention spans of at least thirty minutes; (3) are beginning to grasp abstract concepts and are quickly developing reasoning skills; (4) need less adult approval, but lots of encouragement; (5) can understand biblical facts and principles; (6) enjoy

role-playing, memory work, Bible research, and group projects; and (7) understand the concepts of time and space.

The ABCs of Salvation

The *ABCs of Salvation* are listed below to help you discuss with your students questions or concerns they may have about the free gift of salvation that Jesus offers to everyone.

A. Say, “Admit you have sinned (see Psalm 32:5), or done wrong.” Go through just a few of the Ten Commandments—stealing or lying and so forth. Tell how our sins separate us from God (see Isaiah 59:2 and Romans 3:23).

B. Say, “Believe Jesus is God’s Son. He took the punishment for our sins by dying on the cross (see Romans 5:8). We must believe that Jesus is God’s Son and that God raised Him from the dead.”

C. Say, “Call on God to forgive you (see Acts 2:21). When we are sorry for our sins and want to stop doing wrong, we can ask God to forgive us” (see Acts 16:31).

Basic Classroom Supplies

If your church does not have some of these recommended materials, use this list to prioritize the items you need. Then, as resources permit, add to the materials in your Sunday school room.

1. **Art**—crayons, watercolor markers, pencils, scissors, tape, glue/paste, construction paper, stapler, paper punch, yarn, chalk, paper cups/plates, paper bags, and paper towels.
2. **Books**—Extra Bibles, general and Bible reference books (dictionaries, concordances, atlases), children’s books and magazines, catalogs, and newspapers.
3. **Music**—CD/DVD player, CDs of worship/praise and instrumental music.

Good Family Connections

December 1, 2024—Lesson 1

Background Scriptures: Ruth 1–4; Luke 3:23–28 • **Lesson Scriptures:** Ruth 4:9–17; Luke 3:23, 31b–32

Key Verse: The women living there said, “Naomi has a son!” And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David. (*Ruth 4:17*)

Lesson Objective: The students will discover that Jesus’ family tree includes a marriage between Ruth and Boaz and their son, Obed.

Materials Needed: *Upper Elementary* student books, Bibles, pencils, markers, crayons, a CD of instrumental praise music and CD player, art supplies, safety scissors, a hole puncher, yarn, a blank family tree template, white card stock. (**Optional:** whiteboard)

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BEGINNING THE JOURNEY

Refer to page 6 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

✂️ Prior to class, (1) create or download a blank family tree from the internet on 8 x 11 ½ copy paper (one per student). (2) Make copies of the reproducible bookmark template.

Welcome and Worship

Refer to page 6 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

Opening Activity

Refer to page 6 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

The students will perform an activity as a reminder of today’s lesson.

Give each student a family tree handout. Instruct the students to enter family members’ names as far as they remember. Assist as needed. Ask each student to present their family tree to the class and share the connection of their family members. Also, have them share their favorite family activity. (For example, celebration dinners, trips, reunions, sports, movie nights, etc.) After each student shares their family tree and favorite family activity, pray as a class for the students and their families.

Say: Today, you will hear that King David and Jesus’ family tree contains an unlikely marriage between two people. God loves everyone and welcomes all into His family. Let’s listen to today’s Bible story to hear who this unlikely couple was.

BIBLE VOYAGE

The Bible Story

Refer to pages 6–7 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

Good Family Connections

In today’s background Scripture, Naomi and her daughter-in-law Ruth have returned to Bethlehem. Naomi’s husband, Elimelek, and her two sons, Kilion and Mahlon, died in Moab. Her dead sons owned property in Bethlehem. Naomi’s nearest relative had the right to buy the property, but he decided against it. He gave Boaz, a distant relative of Naomi’s, permission to buy the property. Boaz cared for Ruth and wanted to marry her.

In the Bible verses for today, Boaz announced to the elders that he was buying the property of Naomi’s dead husband, Elimelek, and her two sons. He also announced that he would marry Ruth. This would ensure that Elimelek’s name would be remembered.

The people were happy for Boaz and Ruth. They gave their blessings and hoped that they would have many children and be famous in Bethlehem. So, Boaz and Ruth were married. And they had a son named Obed. Obed was the father of Jesse and the grandfather of David, who were all ancestors of Jesus.

The women praised the Lord for Naomi’s grandson. They were happy for Naomi. The Lord had provided a guardian-redeemer—a relative who would care for Naomi in her old age. Then Naomi took the child in her arms and cared for him. They had good family connections because the lineage (family line) of David and Jesus came through Ruth and Boaz.

Ask: Who came back with Naomi when she returned to Bethlehem? (*Ruth, her daughter-in-law.*) Who was Naomi’s and Ruth’s kinsman-redeemer, and what does it mean? (*Boaz was Naomi’s and Ruth’s kinsman-redeemer. Boaz bought Naomi’s family’s property. He also married Ruth and saved or redeemed her family.*) Who is Obed? (*Ruth*

and Boaz's son, David's grandfather; he is in the family line of Jesus.)

FUN EXPEDITIONS

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

The Contemporary Story (Part 1)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

Welcome to the Family! (Part 1)

At school, Mrs. Elton said, "We have two new students joining our class: Elaina and Maria. Please welcome them."

During recess, Elizabeth asked the new girls, "Elaina and Maria, would you like to play kickball?"

Elaina said, "Yes, I want to play."

Maria replied, "I don't play kickball, but I'll watch."

While Maria was watching the game, Elizabeth said, "I know you just started school, but our church is having a Family Fun celebration next weekend. I hope you can come. It is so much fun. And it is all about families."

Maria said, "I do not want to celebrate. My dad did not move with us."

Elizabeth hugged Maria and said, "I am sorry. I will pray for you."

Exploring the Story with Nicholas and Cornelius (first section)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

Allow the students to answer the question and share unique stories of how their parents or grandparents met or other unusual family connection stories.

The Contemporary Story (Part 2)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

Welcome to the Family! (Part 2)

The next day, Elizabeth said, "Maria, have you thought more about coming to my church's Family Fun celebration?"

Maria said, "My family believes in Jesus, but everything feels different without my dad."

As Elaina approached them, Elizabeth said, "God does not want you to be sad. You will meet people who love you. And my Sunday school teacher makes the best cookies!"

Elaina said, "My dad does not live with us, either. But my mom is coming!"

Elizabeth said, "I cannot wait to meet your mom and welcome you to our family, Elaina."

Maria said, "Okay. You convinced me. I will talk to my mom about it."

Elizabeth said, "I pray you both come. Then we can welcome you to our family, too!"

Ask: How did Elizabeth show God's love to the two new students, Elaina and Maria? (*She invited them to play kickball. She also invited them to her church's Family Fun celebration.*) How did Elizabeth respond to Maria's news about her dad? (*She said she was sorry and would pray for her.*) How did Elizabeth encourage Maria? (*She told her that God didn't want her to be sad. She would meet people at the celebration who love her.*) What did Elaina and Maria have in common? (*Their fathers did not live with them.*) Do you think this helped Maria? How? (*Responses will vary.*) Are you happy that you are a part of God's family? Why or why not? (*Responses will vary.*) How can you share God's love and help others feel welcome? (*Responses will vary.*)

Exploring the Story with Nicholas and Cornelius (second section)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

Ask: To what family will you always belong? (*God's family.*)

Lead the class in a discussion about the benefits of being connected to God's family.

A "Name" Matching Activity

Provide pencils and allow the students to match the terms from today's lesson. Assist as needed. When they finish, review the answers aloud.

Answers: (1) f, h; (2) d, g; (3) a; (4) b; (5) c, e; (6) b, i

Make an "I Belong to God's Family" Bookmark

Refer to the reproducible activity (*page 65*) and, using sturdy white card stock, make a copy of the page for each student in your class. Distribute the copies and art supplies. Allow the students to color and decorate the bookmark. Once they are done, give them scissors and instruct them to cut out the bookmark, punch a small hole at the top (where indicated), and then thread the yarn through the holes—tying the ends into a knot.

ENDING THE JOURNEY

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

Have a volunteer end the class session with prayer, thanking God they are connected to God's family.

David Desires to Build a Temple

December 8, 2024—Lesson 2

Background Scripture: 2 Samuel 7:1-17 • **Lesson Scripture:** 2 Samuel 7:4-17

Key Verse: “The LORD declares to you that the LORD himself will establish a house for you.” (2 Samuel 7:11c)

Lesson Objective: The students will discover that David made plans to build a house for God, but his plans were changed.

Materials Needed: Upper Elementary student books, Bibles, pencils, coloring pencils, markers, crayons, a CD of instrumental praise music and CD player or electronic mobile device with Wi-Fi access, 8.5x11-inch copy paper.

(**Optional:** whiteboard)

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BEGINNING THE JOURNEY

Refer to page 6 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

Welcome and Worship

Refer to page 6 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

Opening Activity

Refer to page 6 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

The students will perform an activity as a reminder of today’s lesson.

Give each student several sheets of copy paper, pencils, and coloring markers. Ask the students to discuss times when they have seen God’s faithfulness. For example, God has answered their prayers or helped, healed, provided for, or protected them. Instruct the students to write or draw three examples of God’s faithfulness in their lives. Allow time for each student to write or draw their examples. After the students are finished, allow them to share their examples with the class.

Say: Today’s lesson is about God’s response to David’s desire to build a house for God. Let’s listen to today’s Bible story to hear about God’s changing David’s plans and His promises for David.

BIBLE VOYAGE

The Bible Story

Refer to pages 6–7 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

David Desires to Build a Temple

When David brought the Ark of the Covenant back to Jerusalem, it remained in a tent. David wanted to build a permanent home for the ark. After hearing David’s desire, God spoke to the prophet Nathan one night. God gave Nathan a message for David.

God told Nathan to ask David, “Are you the one to build Me a house to dwell in?” The ark had not had a house since God brought the Israelites out of Egypt. God had never asked for a house to be built for the ark. God reminded David that He had taken him from the sheep pasture and had placed him as ruler over His people. God had been with David and conquered David’s enemies. Now, God would make David’s name great. David would have a rest from his enemies. God would provide a home and rest for the Israelite people. Wicked people would not rule over them anymore.

Nathan told David that God promised to build a dynasty of kings for David. Whenever David died, God would raise one of his sons and make David’s kingdom strong. That son would build God’s house, and his throne would last forever. God would correct him if he sinned, but he would always love him. God promised that the house of David and his kingdom would last forever.

Ask: For whom did David want to build a house? (*For God and the Ark of the Covenant.*) Whom did God speak to with instructions for David? (*Nathan.*) Who is it that God told David would build a house for God? (*David’s child.*) What did God promise the people of Israel? (*Wicked people would not rule and harm them anymore. He would give them a home of their own.*) What did God promise David and his lineage or family? (*David’s name would be great. David’s family would have a kingdom that would last forever.*)

FUN EXPEDITIONS

Refer to page 7 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

The Contemporary Story (Part 1)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

God Is with Us (Part 1)

As the fourth graders practiced for their annual musical, Mr. Kelton, the music teacher, said, "Everyone is doing great. You are ready for tomorrow's musical. Just take your time when you play your instrument and when you sing."

Dawn whispered in Ethan's ear, "I am so excited. My aunt and cousins are coming to the musical tomorrow. They want to hear my solo."

Ethan said, "I'm excited for you. Your rehearsals have been great."

"I pray that everything goes as planned," Dawn said encouragingly.

"I pray that God will be with us," Ethan added, making prayer hands.

Exploring the Story with Nicholas and Cornelius (first section)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

Allow the students to answer the questions. In addition, ask them how they would feel if they were King David.

The Contemporary Story (Part 2)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

God Is with Us (Part 2)

The next morning, Dawn woke up excited. This was the day of the musical! Dawn had spent all her free time preparing for her solo. She couldn't wait for this evening! But her happy thoughts were soon interrupted by Mom's voice.

"Good morning, Dawn. I have some bad news. Your musical has been postponed due to last night's unexpected snowstorm," Mom explained.

Dawn jumped out of bed and ran to the window. There was snow everywhere!

Dawn cried, "Oh no! Not today! Why did God let this happen today?"

Mom replied, "Sometimes God changes our plans. But God is always with us. And His plans always work out better for us. Mr. Kelton texted us that the rescheduled date will be on your birthday! What a way to celebrate your special day!"

Dawn smiled and said, "God is with us!"

Ask: Why was Dawn excited? (*Her fourth-grade class was presenting a musical, and she had a solo.*) What was Dawn's prayer? (*That everything would go as planned.*) What bad news did Mom share with Dawn on the morning of the musical? (*There was an unexpected snowstorm during the night, and the musical was postponed.*) How did Dawn respond to the news? (*She was very disappointed and cried. She asked why God would allow this to happen.*) How did Mom encourage Dawn? (*She told her that sometimes God changes our plans. But God is always with us. And God's plans are always better.*) Do you think God is happy when we believe or trust His plans and promises? Why or why not? (*Yes. God is happy when we trust Him. Responses will vary.*) Do you believe that God will always be with you? Why or why not? (*Responses may vary, but encourage the students that God has promised to be with them always.*)

Exploring the Story with Nicholas and Cornelius (second section)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

Allow the students to discuss the questions. Encourage them to trust that God always knows what's best for us.

A "David Makes Plans" Crossword Puzzle

Provide pencils and allow students to complete the crossword puzzle. Assist the students as needed. After the students complete the activity, review the answers aloud.



ENDING THE JOURNEY

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

Have a volunteer end the class session with prayer, asking God to help them trust and follow His plans for their lives.

Preparing the Way

December 15, 2024—Lesson 3

Background Scripture: Luke 1:5-23, 57-80 • **Lesson Scripture:** Luke 1:67-80

Key Verses: [Zechariah prophesied to John,] “You, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins.” (Luke 1:76-77)

Lesson Objective: The students will discover that God appointed Zechariah’s son, John, to prepare the way for Jesus.

Materials Needed: *Upper Elementary* student books, Bibles, pencils, markers, crayons, a CD of instrumental praise music and CD player or electronic mobile device with Wi-Fi access, a 22x28-inch poster board, yellow construction paper, art supplies, double-stick tape, glue sticks. (**Optional:** whiteboard)

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BEGINNING THE JOURNEY

Refer to page 6 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

✂ Prior to class, (1) make four-inch circle cutouts on yellow construction paper (at least two per student); (2) label a poster board “Let God Use You!” along the top and display it where the students can see it.

Welcome and Worship

Refer to page 6 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

Opening Activity

Refer to page 6 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

The students will perform an activity as a reminder of today’s lesson.

Briefly share with the students how God’s creation has a purpose—that there is something special that each of them is meant to do. Then, lead them in a discussion regarding what they enjoy doing. Encourage them to identify whatever activity gives them joy. Then, give each student two four-inch circle cutouts. Instruct the students to write what they enjoy doing on one of the circles. On the second circle, have them write what they would like to do when they grow up. Allow the students to compare the two circles and share with the class. Then, post their circles to the “Let God Use You!” poster board. After everyone has shared and posted, play a praise song and encourage the students to praise God for the beautiful things they will do in the future.

Say: Today’s lesson is about Zechariah, who praised God. Let’s listen to today’s Bible story to hear why Zechariah praised God.

BIBLE VOYAGE

The Bible Story

Refer to pages 6–7 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

Preparing the Way

God blessed Elizabeth and Zechariah with a son. They named him John. After months of silence, Zechariah spoke—praising God!

Zechariah, filled with the Holy Spirit, spoke about the coming of the Savior. Zechariah, a priest, announced that God would redeem or save his people from sin with a “horn of salvation” (verse 69), who was Jesus. The prophets in the Old Testament foretold the birth of Jesus through the family line of David. God would remember His covenant agreement with Abraham and the Israelite people. God would rescue His people so that they could serve God without fear and live right.

Zechariah announced that his child, John, would be a *prophet* (preacher) of God. John would go before Jesus to prepare the way for Him. John would tell the people about *salvation*—the forgiveness of their sins. God’s mercy and kindness would bring light to those living in darkness and guide them to peace.

John grew and became stronger as he lived for God. He stayed in the wilderness until he appeared to the people of Israel.

Ask: What did Zechariah do when he spoke after a long silence? (*He praised God and, full of the Holy Spirit, prophesied [preached] God’s Word.*) Who was Zechariah’s prophecy about? (*It was about the coming Savior, Jesus, who would save His people from sin.*) What did Zechariah

announce concerning his son? (*His son, John, would be God's prophet, prepare the way for Jesus, and tell the people about salvation.*)

FUN EXPEDITIONS

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

The Contemporary Story (Part 1)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

What Will I Be? (Part 1)

In Carolina and Simone's school, students in the fifth grade had choir, music, or art as their last class.

During lunch, Simone said, "I really like my art class. Drawing is my special talent from God. I think I'm going to grow up to be a famous artist."

Carolina said, "I love to sing, especially when we sing about God. Maybe I will be a famous gospel singer when I grow up."

Mia laughed, saying, "Stop kidding yourselves. You won't be famous for anything. You're not special."

Carolina and Simone didn't respond to Mia. They sat in silence and looked at each other in tears.

Exploring the Story with Nicholas and Cornelius (first section)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

Allow the students to discuss the questions posed. In addition, have them share if the singing preparation helps them to focus on and listen to the preached Word.

The Contemporary Story (Part 2)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

What Will I Be? (Part 2)

Later at home, Carolina asked, "Dad, I love singing for God . . . I love the way it makes people smile and praise God; is it possible for me to become a famous gospel singer?"

Carolina's dad said, "Yes, I believe it is possible. You have a beautiful voice, and God has given you the gift of encouraging others through your singing. Continue praying and perfecting your singing. God will bless you."

Carolina hugged her dad and said, "Thanks, Dad."

The next day, Carolina told Simone what her dad said. She added, "Simone, you can be whatever God blesses you to be."

Simone said, "I believe it! Let's tell Mia."

"Yes, and let's pray that she will discover what God wants for her life," Carolina replied.

Ask: What did Simone and Carolina love to do? (*Simone loved art and drawing. Carolina loved singing—especially songs about God.*) What did Mia say to Simone and Carolina? (*They would never be famous, and they were not special.*) What did Carolina's dad tell her? (*That it is possible for her to become a famous gospel singer. He encouraged her to continue praying and perfecting her singing.*) Did Simone agree with Carolina's dad? (*Yes.*) What do you think happened when the girls told Mia that they could be whatever God blessed them to be? (*Responses will vary.*)

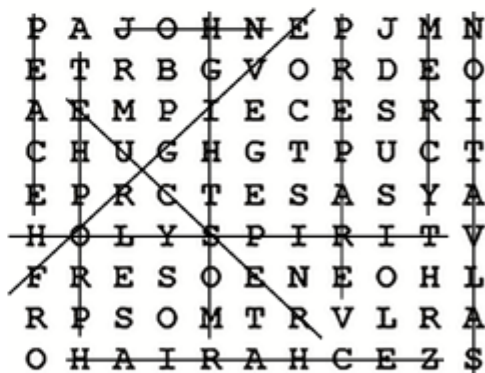
Exploring the Story with Nicholas and Cornelius (second section)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

Allow the students to discuss the questions posed. In addition, have them share how others are blessed by their talents and abilities.

Searching for Words: "Zechariah's Prophecy"

Provide pencils and allow time for the students to complete the word search in their student books. When they finish, review the answers.



ENDING THE JOURNEY

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

Have a volunteer end the class session with prayer, praising God for John's work in preparing the way for Jesus to bring salvation to the world.

News from Out of This World!

December 22, 2024—Lesson 4

Background Scripture: Luke 2:1-20 • **Lesson Scripture:** Luke 2:1-16

Key Verse: When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.” (Luke 2:15)

Lesson Objective: The students will describe the Good News concerning the birth of God’s Son, Jesus Christ.

Materials Needed: *Upper Elementary* student books, Bibles, pencils, coloring pencils, markers, blank Christmas or note cards, a CD of instrumental praise music, a CD player or electronic mobile device with Wi-Fi access, items for the gift shoeboxes (shoeboxes with lids [one for each student]; gift tissue paper; wrapping paper; fun toys; school supplies; personal care items). (**Optional:** whiteboard)

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BEGINNING THE JOURNEY

Refer to page 6 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

✂️ Prior to class, (1) review the *Samaritan’s Purse Operation Christmas Child* Web site (the URL is <https://www.samaritanaspurse.org/operation-christmas-child/pack-a-shoe-box/>). (*Note:* If you cannot donate to Operation Christmas Child, find an organization or needy families in your local area or church.) (2) Gift wrap the shoeboxes and the lids. (3) Arrange to give shoebox gifts to the organization or family before Christmas day.

Welcome and Worship

Refer to page 6 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

Opening Activity

Refer to page 6 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

The students will perform an activity as a reminder of today’s lesson.

Share briefly with the students that when we love like Jesus, we are happy to give to others. Share the name and mission of Operation Christmas Child or the organization that you plan to use. Explain that giving shoebox gifts is an opportunity to share the love of Jesus and spread the Good News. Share the shoebox packing instructions below.

Shoebox Packing Instructions: Lay out the wrapped shoebox, the gifts for each box, blank cards, pencils, and art supplies in front of each student. The students will layer

the bottom of each box with tissue paper and place the gift items on top. Next, cover the gifts with more tissue paper. Then, the students will write a message for each child on blank note cards, decorate the cards, and place them in the box. As a class, pray for each child and their family that will receive a shoebox.

Say: Today’s lesson is about the angels who announced the Messiah’s birth to the shepherds. Let’s listen to today’s Bible story to hear about the Good News they shared.

BIBLE VOYAGE

The Bible Story

Refer to pages 6–7 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

News from Out of This World!

Caesar Augustus ordered a *census* (or count) of the number of people in the Roman empire. Everyone had to return to their hometown to register. Joseph belonged to the family of David. His hometown was Bethlehem, the same as David. So, Joseph and Mary (who was pregnant) traveled from Nazareth to Bethlehem.

When Joseph and Mary arrived, the time came for the Baby to be born. Mary gave birth to her first child, a Son. She wrapped Him in strips of cloth and laid Him in a manger—because there was no room for them in the inn.

That night, some shepherds were in the fields caring for their flocks. Suddenly, an angel from God appeared! A great light shone, and the shepherds were afraid.

The angel said, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all people.” The angel announced the birth of the Messiah, the Savior, in David’s hometown. As a sign that they had found the Messiah, the Baby would be wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.

Suddenly, many angels appeared, and they praised God. When the angels left, the shepherds quickly went to Bethlehem. There, they found Mary, Joseph, and the Baby (in a manger).

Ask: Why did Joseph and Mary travel to Bethlehem? (*There was a census, and Joseph had to return to his hometown.*) What happened after Mary and Joseph arrived in Bethlehem? (*Mary gave birth to her firstborn Son.*) What did the angels tell the shepherds as they cared for their flocks? (*They brought Good News: The Messiah, the Lord, was born in Bethlehem, and they would find Him lying in a manger.*)

FUN EXPEDITIONS

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

The Contemporary Story (Part 1)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

God's Act of Love (Part 1)

As the fifth-grade class traveled to the *A Night in Bethlehem* play, Ariana said, "This play is my favorite. It reminds me of how much God loves me."

Sabrina commented, "I love the manger scene. The animals are real. And when the shepherds and animals look at the baby Jesus, I feel God's love, too."

Alex asked, "How can a bunch of dirty animals remind you of God's love? I'd rather be home playing my Xbox. That's what I love."

Jeremy told Alex, "Listen to the Good News shared during the play. Then you will understand what Ariana and Sabrina are talking about."

Exploring the Story with Nicholas and Cornelius (first section)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

Allow the students to discuss the questions posed. Then, encourage them to share the Good News about Jesus.

The Contemporary Story (Part 2)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

God's Act of Love (Part 2)

On the ride home, everyone discussed what they liked about the play.

Sabrina explained, "It was amazing how quiet the live animals were. It's like they were worshipping the newborn Savior, Jesus Christ."

Ariana responded, "I noticed that, too. I think they understood the Good News."

Jeremy said, "The message was loud and clear. God sent Jesus into the world to forgive our sins and offer us eternal life."

"What did you think about the play?" Ariana asked Alex.

Smiling, Alex said, "I listened. Now, I believe Jesus was sent into the world as a baby to save me from sin. Jesus was God's act of love! I felt God's love tonight!"

Ask: What did the play remind Ariana about God? (*It reminded her of God's love.*) What did Jeremy tell Alex to do? (*To listen to the Good News shared during the play.*) What message did Jeremy say was shared during the play? (*God sent Jesus into the world to forgive our sins and offer us eternal life.*) What did Alex learn after he really listened to the play? (*That Jesus was sent into the world to save him from sin. Jesus was God's act of love.*) Does knowing that God loves you make you happy? (*Responses will vary.*)

Exploring the Story with Nicholas and Cornelius (second section)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

Ask: Who can share the Good News that God loves them and sent Jesus to save us? (*Everyone who believes.*)

Point the Way: Good News Message

Provide pencils and allow time for the students to complete the activity in their student books by locating a letter and then following the arrows. Assist as needed. When they finish, review the answers aloud.

Answers: (1) S; (2) A; (3) V; (4) I; (5) O; (6) R; (7) H; (8) A; (9) S; (10) B; (11) E; (12) E; (13) N; (14) B; (15) O; (16) R; (17) N

Completed Message: The angels told the shepherds the Good News: A Savior has been born!

ENDING THE JOURNEY

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

Have a volunteer end the class session with prayer, praising God that Christ the Savior was born.

A Miracle in Jericho

December 29, 2024—Lesson 5

Background Scripture: Luke 18:31–43 • **Lesson Scripture:** Luke 18:35–43

Key Verse: Immediately [the man] received his sight and followed Jesus, praising God. When all the people saw it, they also praised God. (*Luke 18:43*)

Lesson Objective: The students will discover that Jesus hears them and helps them when they call.

Materials Needed: *Upper Elementary* student books, Bibles, pencils, coloring pencils, markers, crayons, a CD of instrumental praise music and CD player, an electronic device with a large screen and Wi-Fi access (laptop, tablet), 4x6-inch thank-you note cards that are blank inside (two per student), white card stock, scissors, art supplies, map of Jericho. (**Optional:** whiteboard)

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BEGINNING THE JOURNEY

Refer to page 6 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

Welcome and Worship

Refer to page 6 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

Opening Activity

Refer to page 6 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

The students will perform an activity as a reminder of today’s lesson.

Give each student at least one of the 4x6-inch white note cards. Instruct the students to write the name of someone to whom they want to say “Thank you.” (Assist as needed.) Allow the students to write a message of thanks to the person. Give the students time to decorate the note card. Allow the students to have additional note cards if they request them. Have them share the reason why they want to thank someone. As a class, pray for those who help them and encourage the students to be thankful for those who help.

Say: Today’s lesson is about a blind man calling Jesus for help. Let’s listen to today’s Bible story.

BIBLE VOYAGE

The Bible Story

Refer to pages 6–7 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

A Miracle in Jericho

After Jesus crossed the Jordan River near the border of Galilee and Samaria, He then walked west to enter Jericho. As Jesus came to Jericho, there was a blind man on the side of the road begging. The blind man heard the crowd talking and asked what was happening. The people told the blind man that Jesus was passing by.

The blind man called out, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” The title “Son of David” was the title for the *Messiah* (Savior).

The people in the crowd told the blind man to be quiet. But the blind man shouted even louder as he called out to Jesus.

The blind man called out again: “Son of David, have mercy on me!”

Jesus stopped and told the disciples to bring the blind man to Him. When the blind man was closer, Jesus asked, “What do you want Me to do for you?”

The blind man told Jesus that he wanted to see. The blind man believed that Jesus would give him sight. Jesus knew that the man had faith, so He healed him.

When the man received his sight, he followed Jesus as he praised God. Other people who saw the man praised God, too. It was a miracle in Jericho!

Ask: Who called to Jesus for help when he entered Jericho? (*A blind man.*) What name did the blind man call Jesus? (*Son of David, which is a title for the Messiah.*) Did the blind man give up when the people told him to be quiet? (*No.*) Why did Jesus heal the man? (*Jesus knew that the blind man had faith and believed that Jesus was the Messiah who could heal him.*) What did the man do after Jesus healed him? (*He followed Jesus and praised God.*) What did other people who witnessed the miracle do? (*They praised God, too.*)

FUN EXPEDITIONS

Refer to page 7 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

The Contemporary Story (Part 1)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

Just Ask for Help (Part 1)

When Abby’s family went to the Festival in the Park, Sasha, Abby’s best friend, was there with her family. They saw Garrett, too. They walked around for a few minutes. Then Garrett suggested that they play ring toss.

At the ring toss, Sasha said, “I can’t stay because I need to learn my words for the spelling test tomorrow.”

Abby said, “Come on, girl, you already know the words.”

Sasha said, “I do, but then I get nervous and forget them. My mom has been helping me.”

Abby suggested, “Just pray and ask God for help.”

“Sasha, we will pray for you, too,” Garrett added.

Exploring the Story with Nicholas and Cornelius (first section)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

Access and show the students the map of Jericho at the following URL: <https://stephenmillerbooks.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Luke-19-Jericho-to-Jerusalem-copyright-Stephen-M-Miller.jpg>. After viewing the map, discuss the location of Jericho to Jerusalem and the path that Jesus traveled.

The Contemporary Story (Part 2)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

Just Ask for Help (Part 2)

The next morning at school, Garrett said, “Sasha, I prayed for you, and I know God will help you remember the words.”

Sasha said, “Thank you, Garrett. I reviewed the words with my mom and dad. I also prayed, and my family prayed for me, too. I know that God will help me pass the spelling test today.”

Garrett said, “I know that God can help you because God has helped me with my spelling test as well.”

After recess, Mrs. Winston handed out the graded spelling tests.

With a big smile, Sasha said, “Thank You, God! You helped me!”

During the break, Abby said, “I knew that you would learn the words.”

Sasha said, “I studied and memorized the words, but God took away my nervousness and helped me remember them.”

Ask: Why couldn’t Sasha stay at the festival? (*She needed to learn her words for the spelling test.*) What did Abby tell Sasha to do? (*To pray and ask God for help.*) What did Garrett do to help Sasha? (*He prayed for her.*) What did Sasha learn? (*She could ask God for help, and God would help her.*) Do you believe that your prayers will help someone who needs help? (*Responses will vary.*)

Exploring the Story with Nicholas and Cornelius (second section)

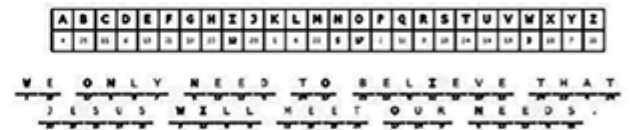
Refer to page 7 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

Ask: God helps us when we ask—but how can you be helpful to others? (*Responses may vary. Encourage the students to be helpful by praying daily for others.*)

Decode the Message

Provide pencils and allow time for the students to complete the activity in their student books. Assist as needed. When they finish, review the answers aloud.

Answer:



Make a “Jesus Heals!” Door Hanger

Refer to the reproducible activity (*page 66*) and, using sturdy white card stock, make a copy of the page for each student in your class. Distribute the template copies and art supplies. Allow the students to color and decorate the door hanger, using the art supplies. Once they are done, give them scissors and instruct them to cut out the door hanger and then cut out the large hole.

ENDING THE JOURNEY

Refer to page 7 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

Have a volunteer close the session in prayer, thanking God for helping them when they ask.

Restoring Justice and Mercy

January 5, 2025—Lesson 6

Background Scriptures: Psalms 9–10 • **Lesson Scripture:** Psalm 10:12–18

Key Verse: You, LORD, hear the desire of the afflicted; you encourage them, and you listen to their cry. (*Psalm 10:17*)

Lesson Objective: The students will discover that God is our King who will restore what is right.

Materials Needed: *Upper Elementary* student books, Bibles, pencils, markers, coloring pencils, crayons, a CD of instrumental praise music and CD player, an electronic device with Wi-Fi access, a large screen (laptop, tablet, smart TV), index cards. (**Optional:** whiteboard)

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BEGINNING THE JOURNEY

Refer to page 6 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

✂ Prior to class, (1) review the video “Bullying Is NEVER OK!” and prepare questions for discussion on the content. (For example, What is bullying? What are the types of bullying?) It is found at https://youtu.be/F6r0B78GQgg?si=-bPXJJiROrZZR_Cq. (2) Prepare age-relevant bullying and unfair treatment scenarios. (For example, Gary is not a good basketball player, but the coach puts him on the team anyway. Players tease Gary and push him around. What should Gary do?) Write each scenario on individual index cards.

Welcome and Worship

Refer to page 6 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

Opening Activity

Refer to page 6 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

The students will watch the video “Bullying Is NEVER OK!” and perform an activity as a reminder of today’s lesson. The animated video defines bullying and includes steps to take if you are bullied or witness someone else being bullied.

Gather the students around the electronic device and access and view the video as a class. After the video, review the contents and ask the students to answer questions (prepared before class). Ensure that the students understand bullying and how to respond to bullying and unfair treatment effectively. Share that the video does not include a critical response to bullying—it is prayer. Always pray and ask God for help. Next, lay the scenario cards on the

table facedown. Have the students form small groups. Each group must pull a card and read it. Then, they must act out the scenario and the response. Discuss the group’s dramatic response together as a class.

Say: Today’s lesson is about a psalm writer’s prayer to God to restore justice and fairness to God’s helpless people whom wicked people were mistreating. Let’s listen to today’s Bible story to hear more.

BIBLE VOYAGE

The Bible Story

Refer to pages 6–7 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

Restoring Justice and Mercy

In the background Scripture, the *psalmist* (psalm writer) asked God to punish his terrible and wicked enemies. These wicked enemies bragged about harming God’s helpless people. They gave no thought to God and had no “room for God” (verse 4). They believed that God was not watching their evil acts, and that they could get away with their wrongdoing (verse 11).

In the Print Passage, the psalmist prayed to God, “Arise, LORD! Lift up your hand, O God” (verse 12). The psalmist wanted God to re-member those who needed help and could not defend themselves. He wondered why wicked people got away with wrongdoing. Why do they think that God will not hold them responsible?

God does see those who are hurt. God sees their sadness and pain. The helpless commit and give themselves to God. God is their helper. The psalmist asked God to hold the wicked people responsible for their wrongdoing. God is King forever. The wicked will not last. The psalmist asked God to hear, encourage, and listen to the call of the hurt people.

Because God is King, He will restore *justice* (fairness) and *mercy* (kindness and relief) by defending those who do not have

a father and are oppressed, tormented, and bullied. Then, no one will ever terrify God's people again.

Ask: Whom did the psalmist ask God to punish? (*His terrible and wicked enemies.*) What did the psalmist ask God to do? (*To remember those who needed help.*) What did the psalmist say about God? (*God sees hurting people. God sees their sadness and pain. God is their helper. God is King forever. God will restore justice and mercy.*) Who will defend the fatherless, the oppressed, the tormented, and bullied people? (*God.*)

FUN EXPEDITIONS

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

The Contemporary Story (Part 1)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

It's Not Fair! (Part 1)

On Philip's first day at Wilton Elementary School, he was happy to see Jamal in his class. Philip and Jamal became friends when Philip's family moved into the neighborhood.

During lunch, Philip went to sit at Jamal's table, but Jamal said, "The seats are taken."

Surprised and feeling hurt, Philip said, "Okay, I'll sit at another table."

Seeing what happened, Evan, a student in Philip's class, said, "Philip, you can sit with us."

Philip said, "Thanks, Evan."

Evan introduced his friends, and Philip had a great first day.

At home, Philip told his dad what Jamal did, and he said, "It's not fair!"

Philip's dad said, "You're right. That wasn't fair. But let's pray and ask God to help us understand what's happening with Jamal."

Exploring the Story with Nicholas and Cornelius (first section)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

Ask the students to share interactions with people who enjoy hurting others. And who believe there are no consequences for their wrong actions. Encourage the students to pray for these people.

The Contemporary Story (Part 2)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

It's Not Fair! (Part 2)

Philip played soccer with Evan and his friends the next day at school.

When Philip saw Jamal, Philip said, "Hi, Jamal"—but Jamal only nodded his head as he passed by.

When Philip got home, his dad asked, "How was school today? Did you and Jamal have a chance to talk?"

Philip said, "I spoke to him. But he only nodded his head."

Philip's dad said, "Well, I believe that God will work it out."

After dinner, there was a knock at the door. When Philip's dad opened the door, Jamal was standing there.

Jamal asked, "Philip, can we talk? I'm sorry I haven't been a good friend at school."

Ask: Who wouldn't let Philip sit with him at lunch? (*Jamal.*) How do you think Philip felt about that? (*He was surprised and hurt. He also thought it was unfair.*) What advice did Dad give Philip? (*To pray and ask God to help Philip understand what's happening.*) What happened when Philip saw Jamal the next day at school? (*He spoke to Jamal, but Jamal just nodded his head.*) Do you think God heard Philip and his dad's prayer? Why or why not? (*Responses will vary.*) How should Philip respond to Jamal's apology? (*Responses will vary.*)

Exploring the Story with Nicholas and Cornelius (second section)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

Ask: Do you trust and believe that God will hear your prayers? (*Responses will vary.*)

A "God Restores" Fallen Phrase

Provide pencils and allow time for the students to complete the activity in their student books. Suggest that they solve the small words first and then the larger ones. Assist as needed. When they finish, review the answers aloud and read the message together.

G	O	D	W	I	L	L	R	E	S	T	O	R	E
J	U	S	T	I	C	E	A	N	D	H	E	L	P
T	H	O	S	E	I	N	N	E	E	D	I		

Completed Message: God will restore justice and help those in need!

ENDING THE JOURNEY

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

Have a volunteer to close the session in prayer, thanking God for defending and helping them.

All Creation Gives Praise

January 12, 2025—Lesson 7

Background Scriptures: Psalms 47; 93 • **Lesson Scripture:** Psalm 93:1-5

Key Verse: Mightier than the thunder of the great waters, mightier than the breakers of the sea—the LORD on high is mighty. (*Psalm 93:4*)

Lesson Objective: The students will discover that creation praises God, the Creator of all and King forever.

Materials Needed: *Upper Elementary* student books, Bibles, pencils, coloring pencils, markers, crayons, a CD of instrumental praise music, a CD player, an electronic mobile device with Wi-Fi access, a large screen (laptop, tablet, or smart TV monitor), scissors, a stapler, art supplies, self-adhesive craft jewels, tacky glue, white copy or art paper, white card stock. (**Optional:** whiteboard)

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BEGINNING THE JOURNEY

Refer to page 6 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

✂️ Prior to class, (1) search the Internet for a short video of powerful waves crashing on the rocky shore; (2) copy the reproducible template for each student.

Welcome and Worship

Refer to page 6 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

Opening Activity

Refer to page 6 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

The students will perform an activity as a reminder of today's lesson.

Gather the students around the electronic device. Give them art or copy paper, pencils, and coloring pencils. Play the video you found of powerful waves crashing against the rocky shore. Have the students view it and then close their eyes and listen to it. Next, share how God is mightier than the roaring ocean waves. Discuss how the video makes them feel about God and God's power. Then, have them draw a picture of something that God created that they find amazing and for which they are thankful. Have the students share their pictures with the class.

Say: Today's lesson is about how God is King over all creation. Let's listen to today's Bible story to find reasons to be thankful to God.

BIBLE VOYAGE

The Bible Story

Refer to pages 6–7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

All Creation Gives Praise

Psalm 93 is a royal psalm that celebrates God as King. The *psalmist* (psalm writer) focuses on God's reign or rule over the earth. The psalm boldly announces that God rules. God is King over all the earth. God is clothed or robed as a mighty King. His clothing reveals His majesty and greatness. God is mighty and strong as He wears the clothing of victory. God is the Creator of the universe. He is all-powerful; no one can take control of the earth from God. The psalmist recognized that God is eternal. His throne was created long ago and will last forever.

The world will not be moved because God created it. The world is on a solid foundation. The psalmist stated that it is "firm and secure" (verse 1c). The psalmist reminds us that God is committed to His creation, and all creation praise Him.

The psalmist reminds us that God is mightier than the roaring sound of crashing waves. God is mightier than the pounding sound of the raging sea. No power in the universe can compete with God. God is almighty! God's royal laws and commands cannot be changed. God is faithful to do what His Word says. God is holy, or set apart from everything that is not perfect and not right. God's holiness rules forever.

Ask: What does God rule over? (*All the earth.*) What is God clothed or robed as? (*God is clothed as a mighty King.*) Is God eternal? (*Yes.*) Who gives praise to God? (*All creation.*) God is mightier than what? (*God is mightier than the roaring sound of crashing waves and the pounding sound of the raging sea. God is almighty.*) Is God set apart from everything that is not perfect and not good? (*Yes.*)

FUN EXPEDITIONS

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

The Contemporary Story (Part 1)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

We Need Order! (Part 1)

When Mrs. Raven, the fourth-grade teacher, was sick, there was a different substitute teacher each day during the first week.

On Friday at lunch, Taylor said, "I hope Mrs. Raven gets better and returns. The substitute teachers are nice, but each one teaches differently. Mrs. Raven makes learning fun and makes sure to follow our classroom rules and schedule."

Brian said, "I miss her, too. When she's not here, every day is different. And there's too much talking and laughing. I'm not learning very much."

Emily said, "It's chaos! I never thought I would miss our class rules and routines. I'm praying that God will heal Mrs. Raven. We need her to bring back order!"

Exploring the Story with Nicholas and Cornelius (first section)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

Give the students pencils so they may complete the matching activity. After they complete the activity, review the answers aloud.

Answers: (1) d; (2) a; (3) f; (4) e; (5) b; (6) c

The Contemporary Story (Part 2)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

We Need Order! (Part 2)

As Taylor went into class on Monday, she asked, "Emily, is Mrs. Raven back?"

Emily said, "No, but I still believe that God will bring Mrs. Raven back to our class soon."

Brian asked, "Do you think God is concerned about providing the order we need in class?"

As Brian finished asking his question, Mrs. Raven walked into the classroom!

Mrs. Raven said, "Good morning, class. I'm so happy to be back! Let's review our schedule. Then, we will begin with our morning learning activities."

Raising her hand, Emily said, "Welcome back, Mrs. Raven. We missed you!"

As Emily walked past Brian, he whispered, "God brought back Mrs. Raven. God provided what we needed."

Ask: What were Taylor, Brian, and Emily concerned about? (*They were concerned about the chaos in their classroom during Mrs. Raven's absence.*) What did Emily do? (*She prayed for Mrs. Raven's healing and return to class. She wanted order in their class.*) Who was back at school on Monday? (*Mrs. Raven.*) Do you believe that God has power to bring peace to any chaos? Give an example. (*Responses will vary.*)

Exploring the Story with Nicholas and Cornelius (second section)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

After discussing the questions posed, encourage the students to trust God to handle all their problems. God is almighty and all-powerful. God will rule forever!

Searching for Words: "God Is Mighty"

Provide pencils and allow time for the students to complete the activity in their student books. Assist as needed. When they finish, review the answers. (As a bonus, see if they can find two more words from the lesson in the puzzle that are not listed [FIRM and REIGNS].)

D	\$	N	E	R	T	\$	I	J	#
I	T	F	I	L	G	N	L	D	O
Y	R	E	I	T	H	C	I	M	L
T	E	K	I	M	G	I	F	T	I
\$	N	B	O	R	O	E	T	D	N
E	G	Y	T	I	N	R	E	T	E
J	T	A	T	F	A	B	D	H	\$
A	H	R	E	I	O	P	U	O	\$
M	A	D	O	R	N	S	P	L	E

Make a "God Is King Forever!" Crown

Refer to the reproducible activity (*page 67*) and, using white card stock, make a copy of the page for each student in your class. Distribute the template copies and art supplies. Allow the students to cut out the crown and headbands, then color and decorate the crowns with craft jewels. After measuring to fit, staple the headbands to each crown side.

ENDING THE JOURNEY

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

Have a volunteer to end the class session in prayer, praising God our Creator and King for His might and power.

A Song of Thanksgiving

January 19, 2025—Lesson 8

Background Scripture: Psalm 103 • **Lesson Scripture:** Psalm 103:1-14

Key Verse: Praise the LORD, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. (*Psalm 103:1*)

Lesson Objective: The students will discover that they can thank God for His love, fairness, and goodness.

Materials Needed: *Upper Elementary* student books, Bibles, pencils, coloring pencils, crayons, markers, a CD of instrumental praise music and CD player, an electronic mobile device with Wi-Fi access with a large screen (laptop, tablet, smart TV monitor), scissors, white copy paper. (**Optional:** whiteboard)

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BEGINNING THE JOURNEY



Refer to page 6 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

✂ Prior to class, create or draw 5x5-inch heart shapes on white copy paper. (Make one per student.)

Welcome and Worship

Refer to page 6 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

Opening Activity

Refer to page 6 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

The students will perform an activity as a reminder of today's lesson.

Give each student a heart cutout. Instruct the students to list on their heart qualities that describe God (for example, love) in the allotted time. Have them share their lists. The student with the most accurate qualities listed wins the game. Next, have the students share one of the qualities listed with the class, explaining why it is a reason to thank God. Encourage the students to take their heart cutouts home as a reminder of God's goodness. At the end of the activity, pray as a class, thanking God for who God is and what He does for His children. Encourage the students always to thank God.

Say: Today's lesson is a song of thanksgiving to God. Let's listen to today's Bible story to hear why we should be thankful.

BIBLE VOYAGE



The Bible Story

Refer to pages 6–7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

A Song of Thanksgiving

Psalm 103 offers praise and thanksgiving to God. The psalmist did not want to forget God's benefits. The psalmist praised God for forgiving our sins and healing our sicknesses. He thanked God for saving us with His amazing love and kindness. God *redeemed* (or saved) us by paying the price for our sins through Jesus Christ, who died for our sins on the Cross. God renews our strength "like the eagle's" (verse 5). The psalmist thanked God because God makes everything right and fair for those who are harmed by others.

The psalmist reminds us that God made His ways (and plans) known to Moses and His people, the Israelites, when they traveled through the wilderness to the Promised Land. God is kind and good, and He does not quickly become angered. Instead, God is full of love. "For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is [God's] love for those who fear him" (verse 11). God does not blame us or hold a grudge forever. God does not treat us according to our *sins* (disobedience). Instead, God removes our sins entirely and cares for us as our heavenly Father.

The song of thanksgiving reminds us to be thankful because God shows His love for us when He remembers that we were created from dust. God remembers because He is our Creator, and He formed us. Praise God's holy name!

Ask: Who does Psalm 103 praise or thank? (*God.*) What are the reasons for why the psalmist thanked God? (*For forgiving sins and healing from sickness; saving us; renewing our strength; working justice and fairness for those harmed by others; for God's love and compassion; because God does not hold a grudge or treat us according to the sins we have done.*) What does God do with our sins? (*God removes them completely; God forgets them.*)

FUN EXPEDITIONS

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

The Contemporary Story (Part 1)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

Sharing God's Love (Part 1)

On Family Celebration Day at Elle's dad's company, there was always a full day of food, games, and fun at the park. As Elle and her family made their way to the park, Elle said, "I love the swings and slides."

Donavan, Elle's brother, said, "I like play-ing cornhole and running the sack race."

Elle and Donavan's dad said, "Just remember to share God's love and invite other kids to play with you."

When Elle and her mom were walking toward the swings, Elle saw Simone, a girl in her fourth-grade class, standing alone by the three-legged race section.

On the way to swing, Elle asked Simone, "Do you want to come swing?"

Simone said, "No. I need a partner for the three-legged race."

Exploring the Story with Nicholas and Cornelius (first section)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

After the students discuss the benefits of being God's child, encourage them to praise and thank God daily for these benefits.

The Contemporary Story (Part 2)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

Sharing God's Love (Part 2)

As Elle and her mom walked to the swings, Elle's mom asked, "Is that girl in your class?"

Elle said, "Yes. Simone doesn't have a lot of friends at school."

Suddenly, Elle stopped.

Elle's mom asked, "What's wrong?"

Elle said, "I wasn't kind to Simone. She needs a three-legged race partner. I will do the three-legged race with her instead of going to the swings."

Elle's mom said, "That's great you are thinking of others. I know God is smiling."

As Elle rushed back to Simone, she asked, "Can I run the race with you?"

Smiling, Simone said, "Yes, let's go!"

Ask: What was Elle excited to do at the park? (*Ride the swings and slides.*) What did Elle's dad remind Elle and her brother, Donavan, to do? (*Share God's love with others and invite them to play.*) What did Elle not do when she first saw Simone? (*She did not show Simone kindness and love.*) What did Elle do later to show God's love to Simone? (*She returned to where Simone was to do the three-legged race with her.*) Is God pleased when we show kindness to others? Why or why not? (*Yes, God is pleased. Just as God shows kindness and love to us, we should do the same to others.*)

Exploring the Story with Nicholas and Cornelius (second section)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

Lead the students to discuss how to show God's love to others.

Ask: Is it easy to share God's love with someone you do not know? Why or why not? (*Responses will vary. Encourage students to pray and ask God for courage and wisdom as they share God's love with others.*)

Wall of Words

Provide pencils and allow time for the students to complete the activity in their student books. Assist as needed. When they finish, review the answers aloud.

Revealed Message: Always remember to thank God for His love and goodness!

☺Praise Break

If time permits, have the students gather around the media device. Instruct them to think of something wonderful that God has done for them. Then, access and play the 2:08-minute video praise song "Kids Worship—Psalm 103." Encourage the students to learn, sing the lyrics, and thank and praise God for all His benefits! The URL is <https://youtu.be/CWmCEfH8TmA?si=jkMGN8vH00LbyIs6>.

ENDING THE JOURNEY

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

Have a volunteer end the class session with prayer, praising God for all the benefits of being God's child.

Everlasting Kingdom and Love

January 26, 2025—Lesson 9

Background Scripture: Psalm 145 • **Lesson Scripture:** Psalm 145:8-13

Key Verse: The LORD is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made. (*Psalm 145:9*)

Lesson Objective: The students will appreciate that God’s kingdom is forever, and that God’s love and goodness are for everyone.

Materials Needed: *Upper Elementary* student books, Bibles, pencils, coloring pencils, markers, a CD of instrumental praise music and CD player, an electronic mobile device with Wi-Fi access, 3x5-inch index cards. (**Optional:** whiteboard)

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BEGINNING THE JOURNEY

Refer to page 6 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

✂️ Prior to class, think of God’s attributes and write the first letter of each attribute on individual index cards (for example, E for everlasting, G for good, K for kind).

Welcome and Worship

Refer to page 6 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

Opening Activity

Refer to page 6 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

The students will perform an activity as a reminder of today’s lesson.

Place the “Attribute Letter Cards” prepared before class on the table facedown. Instruct the students to take turns selecting a card. They must name an attribute or quality of God that starts with the letter. Give the students time to think and help each other with a word that describes who God is or what God does. If time allows, give each student another letter to share another word that describes God. As a class, thank God for who He is and what He does for His children.

Say: Today’s lesson is about God’s everlasting kingdom and His love. Listen to today’s Scripture to learn more about who God is and what He does.

BIBLE VOYAGE

The Bible Story

Refer to pages 6–7 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

Everlasting Kingdom and Love

Psalm 145 is a praise psalm written by David that praises or thanks God for His kingship, His forgiveness, His care for us, and His perfect attributes or qualities. David committed to worshipping and praising God daily (see Psalm 145:2).

With excitement, David thanked God for who God is and what God does. David reminds us that God is giving and full of kindness. God is not quickly angered; instead, God is rich in love. God is good and reveals His love and kindness to everyone.

All creation praises God. And God’s children worship God. The faithful children of God talk about God’s goodness. They tell others about God’s power and might so everyone will know how great and mighty God is. They also tell others about the majesty or greatness of God’s kingdom, which is everlasting. God’s kingdom and rule will last through all generations.

David reminds us that God is trustworthy and faithful. God keeps all His promises. And everything God promises, He will do. God’s children can always trust and depend on God.

Ask: Why did David praise God? (*David thanked God for who God is and what God does.*) What should all creation do? (*Praise God, our Creator, and give thanks to God.*) What should faithful children of God talk about? (*They should talk about God’s everlasting kingdom, and God’s greatness, power, and might.*) Why can we always trust God? (*We can always trust God because God is faithful.*)

FUN EXPEDITIONS

Refer to page 7 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

The Contemporary Story (Part 1)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

God's Got It! (Part 1)

It was Friday, and Cecilia and her sister, Elaina, were happy to stay at Nana's on Friday. They made cookies and loved it when Nana talked about God's kingdom and God's love and goodness.

When their dad picked them up from school, he said, "You'll be home tonight. Nana is in the hospital. She's sick."

Cecilia said, "I know that Nana will be okay. She loves God. She always talks about God's kingdom and how good God is to her. I believe that God is taking care of Nana."

Cecilia's dad said, "That's right. The doctors are caring for her, but God is with her as well."

Cecilia commented, "I'll pray for God to help Nana."

As tears ran down Elaina's cheeks, she asked, "What if Nana doesn't get better?"

Exploring the Story with Nicholas and Cornelius (first section)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

Provide pencils and allow the students to create an acrostic with the word PSALM. Assist as needed. When they finish, let the students share their acrostics (which will vary).

The Contemporary Story (Part 2)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

God's Got It! (Part 2)

Cecilia said, "Don't cry, Elaina. I believe that God will heal Nana because God is kind and giving. Just pray and believe that God will help Nana."

Elaina said, "I love Nana. I don't want anything bad to happen to her."

When they were home, their dad said, "You may not remember that Nana was very sick five years ago . . . and God healed her. Let's pray and ask God to heal Nana again. Remember, God is always good. God promised to help us. We can trust God's promises."

After they prayed, Elaina smiled and said, "I believe that Nana will be home soon!"

Ask: What did Cecilia and Elaina's Nana talk to them about when they visited? (*God's kingdom, love, and goodness.*) What was Elaina upset about? (*Her Nana was sick and in the hospital. She didn't know if her Nana would get better.*) What did Cecilia believe that God would do? (*God would heal her Nana because He is kind and giving.*) When was Elaina convinced that God would heal Nana? (*After she and her family prayed together.*) Is it helpful to pray with others? Why or why not? (*Responses will vary.*) Do you believe that God will help those from whom you pray? Why or why not? (*Responses will vary.*)

Exploring the Story with Nicholas and Cornelius (second section)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

Ask: What should we remember about God? (*God is good, and he loves us. He also does what he promises; God is faithful.*)

Solve the Picture Puzzle

Provide pencils and allow time for the students to complete the activity in their student books. Assist as needed. When they finish, review the answers aloud.

Answers:

- (1) BE (Bee – E)
- (2) THANKFUL (Three – REE + Ankle – LE + Four – OR + L)
- (3) GOD (Goat – AT + Door – OOR)
- (4) IS (Dish – DH)
- (5) GOOD (Goose – SE + D)

Decoded Message: Be thankful; God is good!

ENDING THE JOURNEY

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

Have a volunteer to end the class session with prayer, praising and thanking God for showing goodness and love to them and for keeping all His promises.

When in Need, Ask

February 2, 2025—Lesson 10

Background Scripture: Matthew 6:5-15 • **Lesson Scripture:** Matthew 6:5-15

Key Verse: [Jesus said,] “Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” (*Matthew 6:10*)

Lesson Objective: The students will discover that they can pray to God, who will hear and answer their prayers.

Materials Needed: *Upper Elementary* student books, Bibles, pencils, coloring pencils, crayons, markers, a CD of instrumental praise music, a CD player, an electronic mobile device with Wi-Fi access, double-stick tape, a 22x28-inch poster board, small envelopes, index cards, scissors, yarn, white card stock, glue. (**Optional:** a whiteboard)

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BEGINNING THE JOURNEY

Refer to page 6 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

✂ Prior to class, (1) create Lord’s Prayer verse cards by writing each word of The Lord’s Prayer on separate 3x5-inch index cards. Organize the cards by their verse number (verses 9, 10, 11, 12, 13) and place them in separate envelopes. Write the verse number on each envelope. (2) Label a poster board “The Lord’s Prayer.”

Welcome and Worship

Refer to page 6 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

Opening Activity

Refer to page 6 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

The students will perform an activity as a reminder of today’s lesson.

Divide the class into five groups. Assign a verse of The Lord’s Prayer to each group. (Make adjustments if you do not have enough students to form five groups.) Give each group a Bible or have them refer to the Print Passage in their student books. Shuffle The Lord’s Prayer verse cards for each group and place them facedown on each table. Instruct each group to work together to place their Lord’s Prayer verse in order. Allow each group to take turns and place the note cards (starting with verse 9) on the poster board with double-stick tape in the correct order. As a class, read The Lord’s Prayer.

Say: Prayer is communicating with God. The Lord’s Prayer is a model prayer to help us learn how to pray

to God. It is a good prayer to memorize. Let’s listen to today’s Bible story to hear more about prayer.

BIBLE VOYAGE

The Bible Story

Refer to pages 6–7 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

When in Need, Ask

When Jesus taught the disciples how to pray, He told them to pray to be heard by God. They should not pray to impress and be seen by people. That is what phony-acting people and *hypocrites*—people whose actions do not match their words—do. That is all the reward they will ever receive. Instead, Jesus encouraged His disciples to pray to God privately, and not to repeat words that do not mean anything. God knows what is needed before His disciples pray.

Jesus taught His disciples to pray like this:

*“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.”*

Jesus’ Model Prayer begins with acknowledging God as our heavenly Father and as holy and set apart from all others. God’s name is *sacred* [say-cred] (holy) and blessed. Then, we ask that God’s will be done on the earth. Next, we ask God to provide for our daily needs. We also ask for forgiveness for *sins* (disobedience) and strength to stand against temptations that may lead us to make the wrong kind of choices.

Jesus also encourages His disciples to forgive others who sin against them. Our heavenly Father will not forgive our sins when we do not forgive.

Ask: How did Jesus encourage the believers to pray to God? (*Pray in a private place and do not use repetitive words.*) What does God know before we pray? (*God knows what we need.*) How does Jesus begin The Lord's Prayer? (*Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name.*) For what can we pray and ask God? (*For God's will to be done, to meet our daily need, forgiveness, and strength not to sin.*)

FUN EXPEDITIONS

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

The Contemporary Story (Part 1)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

Ask for What You Need (Part 1)

When Hope returned home from school, her mom and dad were home. They worked for the same company, so Hope thought nothing of it. But her parents were whispering, and her mom looked concerned.

Hope said, "Hi, Mom and Dad. You are home early. Is it a holiday?"

Dad responded, "No, Hope, it's not a holiday. Come and sit with us. We have something to tell you."

"Okay," Hope said as she headed to the dining room table to sit with her parents. "What's up?"

Mom said, "Your dad and I were laid off from work today."

Exploring the Story with Nicholas and Cornelius (first section)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

After discussing the questions posed, encourage the children to pray daily as Jesus did.

The Contemporary Story (Part 2)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

Ask for What You Need (Part 2)

"Oh no! *Both* of you?" Hope asked.

Dad said, "Yes, both of us. We weren't expecting this to happen. So, we must be careful with our spending. We must pay for your brother Cameron's college tuition next month."

Hope asked, "If you pay Cameron's tuition, will you have money for food and mortgage and other important things? Will we be homeless?"

Mom interrupted Hope, saying, "Let's stop there. We are concerned, but we always take our concerns to God. God has been good to us. He has always provided for our needs. And we believe that God will continue to provide for us."

Dad added, "That's right. What do we do when things get tough in this family?"

Hope said, "We pray."

"That's right. Let's bow our heads and ask God for what we need," Dad said.

Ask: What news did Hope's parents share with her? (*Her parents were laid off from their jobs.*) How did Hope's parents reassure her? (*Mom reminded her that they take their concerns to God. And God always supply their needs. Dad assured her that during tough times, they always pray.*) What do you think happened with Hope's family? (*Responses will vary.*) Have you ever received bad news that worried you? What did you do? (*Responses will vary.*)

Exploring the Story with Nicholas and Cornelius (second section)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

Encourage the students to not only ask God to supply their physical needs like food, clothing, and shelter but also to remember to ask God to forgive them, help them forgive others, help them to say "no" to wrong choices, and ask that God's will be done on the earth.

Fill in the Blanks

Allow the students to use their pencils and keywords to fill in the blanks and complete the sentences. Review the answers with the class.

Answers: (1) hypocrites; (2) room; (3) words; (4) God; (5) give; (6) forgive; (7) save

Make a "The Lord's Prayer" Mat

Refer to the reproducible activity (*page 68*) and, using sturdy white card stock, make a copy of the page for each student in your class. Distribute the template copies and art supplies. Allow the students to decorate the prayer mat, using the art supplies. Once they are done, give them scissors and instruct them to cut out the prayer mat. Next, have them glue lengths of yarn on the right and left sides of the prayer mat (they may arrange in patterns).

ENDING THE JOURNEY

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

Have a volunteer to end the class session with prayer, thanking God for being their heavenly Father who forgives them and provides for their needs.

Stand with Conviction

February 9, 2025—Lesson 11

Background Scripture: Matthew 11 • **Lesson Scripture:** Matthew 11:1-15

Key Verse: “This is the one about whom it is written: ‘I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.’” (*Matthew 11:10*)

Lesson Objective: The students will be encouraged by John the Baptist, who prepared the way for Jesus and stood with conviction.

Materials Needed: *Upper Elementary* student books, Bibles, pencils, coloring pencils, crayons, markers, a CD of instrumental praise music and CD player, an electronic mobile device with Wi-Fi access with a large screen (laptop, tablet, smart TV). (**Optional:** whiteboard)

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BEGINNING THE JOURNEY

Refer to page 6 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

Welcome and Worship

Refer to page 6 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

Opening Activity

Refer to page 6 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

The students will perform an activity as a reminder of today’s lesson.

Gather the students around the multimedia device and access the 6.51-minute animated video “Standing Up for Your Faith” by Douglas Talks (May 30, 2014). You can find the video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mReO06YM2ds>. View the video as a class and let the students think about why we believe in God and Jesus. After viewing the video, review the content and answer questions emphasizing how believers should use love when standing with conviction (standing up for their faith). Allow the students to partner up and answer the following questions: (1) Why do you believe in God? (2) Why do you believe that God loves you? (3) Why do you love Jesus? (4) How should you stand up for what you believe? Allow the students to share their answers. As a class, pray for the students to stand up for their faith lovingly and share God’s love with others.

Say: Today’s lesson is about John the Baptist, who stood with conviction (strong belief and certainty) for God. Let’s listen to today’s Bible story to hear what John did.

BIBLE VOYAGE

The Bible Story

Refer to pages 6–7 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

Stand with Conviction

When Jesus was finished giving His disciples instructions, He then went to Galilee to teach and preach.

John the Baptist was in prison for standing up for his faith. When John heard about everything that Jesus was doing, he sent his disciples to ask Jesus if He was “the one who is to come” (verse 3).

Jesus said to John’s disciples, “Report to John what you hear and see. Blind people receive sight; lame people walk; people with *leprosy* (a skin disease) are cleansed; the dead are raised to life, and the good news of God’s kingdom is preached to the poor” (verses 4-5).

When John’s disciples left, Jesus told the crowd about John the Baptist. He asked who went to the wilderness to see a man dressed in nice clothes like the clothing worn in the palace. John was a prophet from God who announced the coming of the Messiah, Jesus. He encouraged the people to turn from their sins and live for God. The prophets wrote long ago that John would be sent to prepare the way for the Messiah. There was no one greater than John. John stood up for God’s kingdom.

Jesus further explained that from the time John began preaching, the kingdom of God has been moving forward. But violent people fight against it. John was the Elijah who everyone expected to come when the kingdom began. Everyone willing to listen must listen.

Ask: Who was John the Baptist? (*A prophet from God who told the people that Jesus would be coming and encouraged people to turn from their sins and live for God.*) How did Jesus respond to John’s question—“Are you the one who

is to come”? (*Jesus told the disciples to tell John about the miracles He revealed and his announcing the Good News of God’s kingdom to the poor.*) What did Jesus tell the people about John? (*John was more than a prophet; he was a messenger who prepared the way.*) Do you believe that people are fighting against our faith in Jesus? (*Responses may vary but assure the students that people are fighting against the kingdom of God. Give them an example so that they will understand.*)

FUN EXPEDITIONS

Refer to page 7 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

The Contemporary Story (Part 1)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

Stand Up for Jesus (Part 1)

Alex helped Mr. Thomas, their Sunday school teacher, set up posters for Sunday School Day. Alex liked the poster about John the Baptist because John was bold for Jesus.

Mr. Thomas said, “John obeyed God. He told the people to turn from their sins and live for God.”

As Myles ran into the gym, he said, “Let’s go, Alex. I’m going to miss my game. Dad’s waiting for us.”

Alex said, “I love talking about God’s Word. Myles, you always put your game first. Take a moment to look at the Bible posters. They are amazing.”

Myles said, “I’m not interested.”

Exploring the Story with Nicholas and Cornelius (first section)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

After the students discuss the questions posed, let them know that standing up for your faith in Jesus is always right. Sometimes, people will listen and believe us; sometimes, they will not. We must not allow that to discourage us. Continue to stand up for what is right.

The Contemporary Story (Part 2)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

Stand Up for Jesus (Part 2)

In the car, Alex said, “Myles, God loves and protects you, and gives you the ability to play ball.”

Myles said, “Do you mind? I need to focus on my game.”

During the game, Myles was tackled and landed on his head. He was unconscious for a moment. After Myles was checked and cleared by the doctors, Alex was allowed to see him.

Myles said, “Alex, you are right. God does love and protect me. My team always prays before each game. Today, the coach said, ‘We trust God to protect us.’ I thank God for my miracle today. I want to put God first. I want to stand up for Jesus like you do!”

“I hear that!” Alex said excitedly, giving Myles a fist bump.

Ask: Which posters of people from the Bible did Alex like? Why? (*John the Baptist—because he was bold for Jesus.*) Was Myles interested in the Bible posters? Why? (*No. He wanted to play his game.*) How did Myles respond to Alex’s statements about God’s love and protection? (*He wasn’t interested.*) What did Myles realize after his miracle? (*That God loves and protects him.*) What did Myles decide to do? (*He decided to put God first and stand up for Jesus.*) Do you put something else before God? Why or why not? (*Responses will vary.*)

Exploring the Story with Nicholas and Cornelius (second section)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

Ask: How can you obey and stand with conviction (firm belief) for God? (*Obey God, read your Bible to learn more about God, attend church/Sunday school, and share God’s love with others; other answers are possible.*)

A “Stand Up” Fallen Phrase

Provide pencils and allow time for the students to complete the activity in their student books. Assist as needed. When they finish, review the answers aloud.

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	W	A	Y		F	O	R		J	E	S	U	S	,		
	T	H	E		M	E	S	S	I	A	H	.				

Completed Message: John prepared the way for Jesus, the Messiah.

ENDING THE JOURNEY

Refer to page 7 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

Have a volunteer to close the class session with prayer, asking God to help them stand up for their faith in Jesus.

Money Isn't Everything

February 16, 2025—Lesson 12

Background Scripture: Matthew 19:16-30 • **Lesson Scripture:** Matthew 19:16-30

Key Verse: Jesus looked at [the disciples] and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” (Matthew 19:26)

Lesson Objective: The students will begin to understand why a desire for stuff might interfere with a desire to love God.

Materials Needed: *Upper Elementary* student books, Bibles, pencils, coloring pencils, crayons, markers, a CD of instrumental praise music and CD player, an electronic mobile device with Wi-Fi access, scissors, affirmation stickers, white card stock, fake \$100 bills. (**Optional:** whiteboard)

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BEGINNING THE JOURNEY

Refer to page 6 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

✂️ Prior to class, use white cardstock to create a 3x9-inch affirmation bookmark labeled “_____ will trust and love God!”

Welcome and Worship

Refer to page 6 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

Opening Activity

Refer to page 6 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

The students will perform an activity as a reminder of today's lesson.

Give students several fake \$100 bills. Discuss what they would do if they were millionaires. Would they spend it on trivial things or donate any of the money to charity? Discuss that how we manage our money is an indicator or sign of how much we trust and love God.

Provide the students with the affirmation bookmark labeled “_____ will trust and love God!” Allow each student to personalize his/her bookmark by writing his/her name in the blank. Give the students time to decorate the bookmark. When the students are finished, state the affirmation as a class, then pray for the students to trust and love God. Tell the students that when we trust and love God, we put God first before anything and unselfishly share what God has given us with others.

Say: Today's lesson is about a rich man who asked Jesus a question. Let's listen to today's Bible story to hear how he responded to Jesus' answer.

BIBLE VOYAGE

The Bible Story

Refer to pages 6–7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

Money Isn't Everything

A rich man asked Jesus what good things he could do to have eternal life. Jesus explained, “There is only One who is good”; he was talking about God. Then Jesus told the man to keep God's commandments to receive eternal life. The man asked which commandments. Jesus responded with the commandments on how to treat others. The man told Jesus that he had obeyed those commandments and asked what else he needed to do. Jesus told the man that to be perfect, he needed to sell everything and give it to the poor. Because the man was very rich, he went away saddened, not wanting to part with his possessions.

Jesus told His disciples that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter heaven. The man valued money, but money isn't everything. The disciples asked, “Who then can be saved?” Jesus explained that no man can save himself; only God saves because nothing is impossible with God.

Peter reminded Jesus that the disciples had given up everything to follow Him and asked what they would receive. Jesus told them that in the coming kingdom, the twelve disciples would sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Everyone who has given up much will be rewarded and receive eternal life. But many who are first now will be last then. And those who are last now will be the first then.

Ask: What did the rich man ask Jesus? (*He asked what he could do to have eternal life.*) What did Jesus tell him

to do? (*Keep God's commandments, give away or sell all his possessions, and give to the poor.*) Why was the man saddened? (*He could not give up his riches, which were more important than eternal life with God.*) Who has the power to save? (*God.*)

FUN EXPEDITIONS

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

The Contemporary Story (Part 1)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

Giving to Others (Part 1)

When Susanna and Erik went home, their dad said, "My company is collecting toys for the children's hospital. It would be great if you both could give gently used toys to the children."

Susanna asked, "Do we *have* to give away our toys?"

Erik said, "Susanna, we both have a lot of toys. We can give some away. Getting a toy will help a child feel better."

Susanna said, "I play with all my toys. I don't want to give up anything."

Susanna's mom said, "Let's pray and ask God to help us do what is right."

After the family prayed, Susanna said, "I'll wait for God to tell me to give."

Exploring the Story with Nicholas and Cornelius (first section)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

After discussing the questions posed, remind the students to put God before money and riches.

The Contemporary Story (Part 2)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

Giving to Others (Part 2)

The following day, Erik said, "Dad, I have a box of toys to give. I'll ask my teacher if our class can give as well."

Susanna said, "I haven't heard from God, so I'm not giving my toys."

Erik asked, "Are your toys more important than giving to others?"

Before Susanna could answer, their mom said, "God will show Susanna why giving to others is important."

After school, Susanna said, "Dad, I'm sorry. God showed me that I should give my toys to the kids. The children's hospital director visited our class today. She talked about the children's needs and showed us pictures."

"God answered," Susanna's mom commented.

Susanna asked, "Can I give at home and at school?"

Ask: What did Susanna not want to do? (*Give away her toys to the children at the children's hospital.*) What did the family do to help Susanna? (*Prayed and asked God to help her do what is right.*) When did Susanna hear from God? (*At school, when a spokesperson from the children's hospital spoke about the children's needs and shared pictures of them.*) What did Susanna decide to do? (*To give at home and school.*) Do you know that you show God's love when you give to others? (*Responses will vary.*) What do you value that you are willing to give to someone? (*Responses will vary.*)

Exploring the Story with Nicholas and Cornelius (second section)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

Ask: What happens when God's children have given up much to live for God? (*They will be rewarded with an eternal reward—life with God.*)

A "Trust God" Unscrambler

Provide pencils and allow time for the students to complete the activity to find out what each believer must do to receive eternal life. Assist as needed. When they finish, review the answers as a class.

Answers: (1) teacher; (2) good; (3) eternal life; (4) treasure; (5) camel; (6) poor; (7) eye

Decoded Message: Put your trust in God.

ENDING THE JOURNEY

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

Have a volunteer to close the class session in prayer, asking God to help them love and trust Him and put Him before all things.

Living Out Our Faith

February 23, 2025—Lesson 13

Background Scripture: Matthew 25 • **Lesson Scripture:** Matthew 25:31-40

Key Verse: “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’” (Matthew 25:40)

Lesson Objective: The students will discover that they show God’s love when they help others in need.

Materials Needed: Upper Elementary student books, Bibles, pencils, coloring pencils, crayons, markers, a CD of instrumental praise music and CD player, an electronic mobile device with Wi-Fi access, thank-you cards with blank inside pages and envelopes, encouragement and inspirational stickers. (**Optional:** whiteboard)

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BEGINNING THE JOURNEY

Refer to page 6 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

Welcome and Worship

Refer to page 6 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

Opening Activity

Refer to page 6 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

The students will perform an activity as a reminder of today’s lesson.

Give each student a card labeled “Thank You” and an envelope. Instruct the students to write a message on the card that will be given to the church staff and local hospital staff to thank them for all that they do to help and care for others. Allow the students time to write a kind message and decorate the card with encouragement and inspirational stickers. Allow the students to share what they wrote and how they decorated their cards. (If time permits, allow them to complete additional cards.) As a class, pray for the staff receiving the cards.

Say: Today’s lesson is about showing our love for God by encouraging and helping others in need. Let’s listen to today’s Bible story to hear more.

BIBLE VOYAGE

The Bible Story

Refer to pages 6–7 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

Living Out Our Faith

In today’s Scripture, Jesus described the final judgment when the “Son of Man” sits on His throne as King. Jesus, the Son of Man, explained that all people will stand before Him when this happens. Jesus will judge all people based on how they cared for others. Jesus will separate the people as “a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.” The sheep are placed on the right. The goats are placed on the left.

Then Jesus will say to those on His right, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.” Jesus explained that the *righteous people* (people who obeyed God and lived right) were blessed by His Father because when Jesus was hungry and thirsty, they fed Him and gave Him something to drink. When Jesus was a stranger, they gave Him a place to stay. When Jesus needed clothes, they gave Him clothing. When Jesus was sick, they cared for Him. When Jesus was in prison, they visited Him.

The righteous people will ask, “When were You hungry, thirsty, a stranger, without clothing, sick, or in prison, and we cared for You?” Jesus will reply, “When you cared for your brother or sister, you cared for Me.”

Ask: When the Son of Man separates His sheep, who will be on the left and the right? (*The sheep are on the right; the goats are on the left.*) Who are the sheep in today’s Bible story? (*The sheep are the righteous, who lived right and obeyed God.*) What did the sheep receive? (*They received God’s goodness and eternal life in God’s kingdom.*) What did the righteous people do for others? (*They helped and served those in need—the hungry, thirsty, homeless, sick, and those in need of clothing and who were in prison.*) When did the righteous people help Jesus? (*When they helped those in need, they showed their love for and commitment to Jesus.*)

FUN EXPEDITIONS

Refer to page 7 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

The Contemporary Story (Part 1)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

Helping Others (Part 1)

After Susanna gave toys to the children's hospital, she wanted to keep helping others.

Susanna asked, "Dad, can we help someone so that person can feel God's love?"

Erik, her brother, said, "You're right. We show God's love when we help others."

Susanna said, "It makes me happy when I help, and I know it makes God happy, too."

Smiling, her dad said, "We can help by giving our time this weekend to help set up at the shelter before they serve breakfast."

Susanna said, "Thanks, Dad. I will ask my teacher if our class can do something to help out others."

Erik said, "Well, Susanna, some people don't like helping others."

Exploring the Story with Nicholas and Cornelius (first section)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

As the students discuss the question posed, encourage them to compare the qualities of sheep to the qualities of righteous people who trust and follow God.

The Contemporary Story (Part 2)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

Helping Others (Part 2)

Susanna asked Mrs. Smith, her fourth-grade teacher, "Can our class do something to help others, so they feel God's love?"

Mrs. Smith said, "Susanna, that's a wonderful idea! We can help by writing letters or drawing pictures for kids in the hospital or grandparents in nursing facilities."

Smiling, Susanna said, "Great!"

Everyone went to recess after Mrs. Smith told her class about the project.

At recess, Benji told Eli, "I don't want to write letters or draw pictures for people I don't know."

When Susanna heard him, she said, "Benji, remember

when we wrote letters to your grandmother while she was in the hospital? It made her feel better."

Benji said, "You're right. It did. Maybe I *will* help."

Ask: What did Susanna want to continue doing? (*Helping others.*) What did Susanna's dad plan for them? (*To give their time by helping set up breakfast at the shelter.*) What did Susanna ask her teacher to do? (*She asked for her class to do something to help others.*) Do you think Benji will want to help others because he remembers what his class did for his grandmother? Why or why not? (*Responses will vary.*) Do you like to help others even if you do not know them? Why or why not? (*Responses will vary.*)

Exploring the Story with Nicholas and Cornelius (second section)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

Work with the students to create ideas for a project to collect clothes for a shelter, help with a church ministry, or make plans with their families to help a needy family or an organization that helps those in need.

Decode the Message

Provide pencils and allow the students to complete the activity in their student books. Assist as needed. When they finish, review the answers aloud.

Decoded Words: you; show; God's; love; when; you; help; someone; in; need

Decoded Message: You show God's love when you help someone in need!

ENDING THE JOURNEY

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

Have a volunteer to close the class session in prayer, asking God to help them be of help to those in need.

Lesson 1

Make an “I Belong to God’s Family” Bookmark



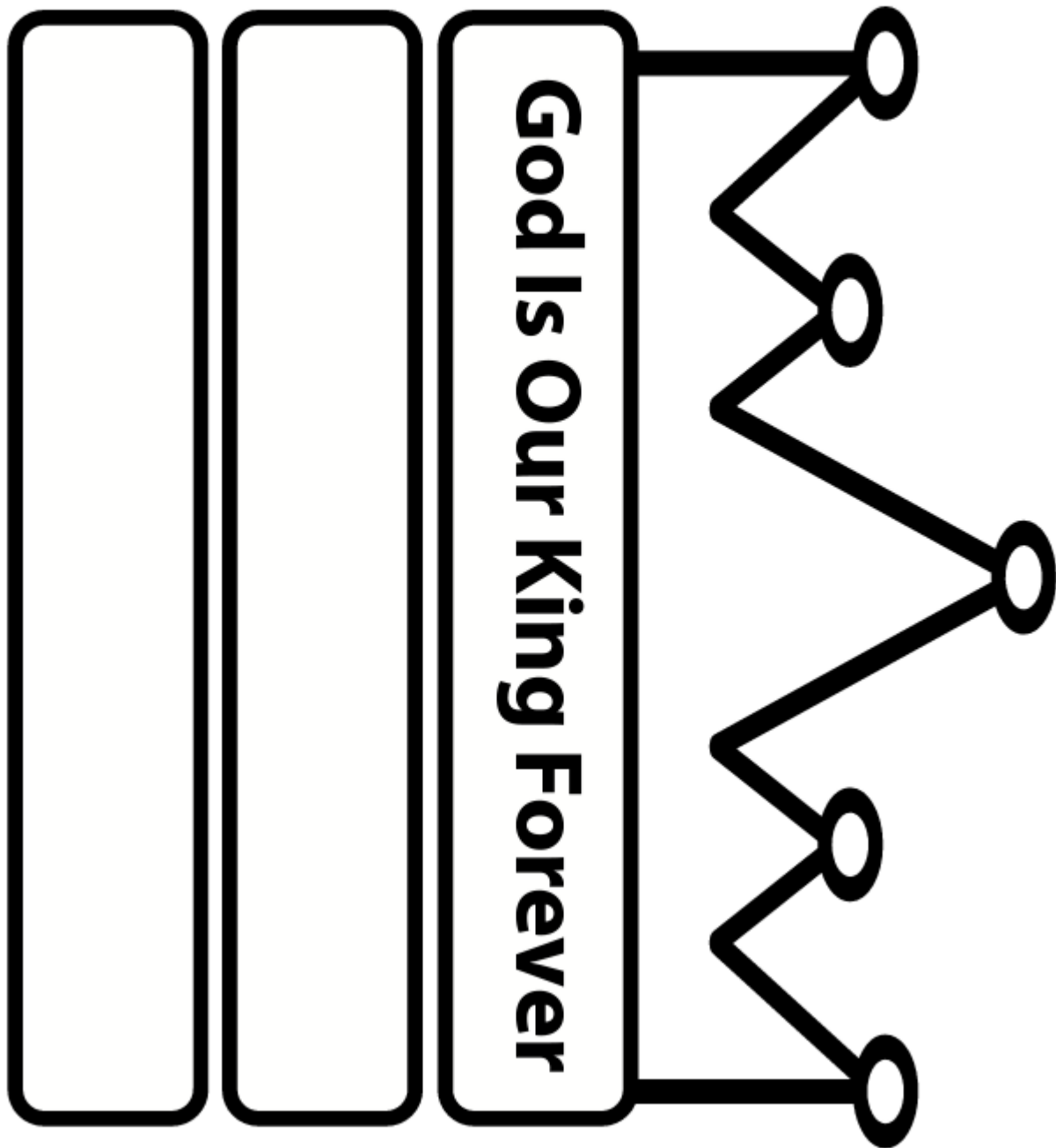
Lesson 5

Make a “Jesus Heals!” Door Hanger



Upper Elementary Reproducible
Lesson 7

Make a “God Is King Forever!” Crown



Upper Elementary Reproducible
Lesson 10

Make a “The Lord’s Prayer” Mat

THE LORD’S PRAYER

“OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN, HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME,
YOUR KINGDOM COME, YOUR WILL BE DONE,
ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN.
GIVE US TODAY OUR DAILY BREAD.
AND FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS,
AS WE ALSO HAVE FORGIVEN OUR DEBTORS.
AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION,
BUT DELIVER US FROM THE EVIL ONE.”

(Matthew 6:9b-13, NIV)