

the
Jesus 
Storybook
Bible
Curriculum

The Friend of little children

Jesus and the children, from Matthew 18, 19; Mark 10; Luke 18

☉ Please see the curriculum Introduction .pdf for more guidance on praying with your group and on Scripture memory.

☉ The total allotted time per lesson is 45 minutes. This is the minimum amount of time it would take to complete the whole lesson. The time can easily be extended to increase the lesson to as much as 1.5 hours. If you have more than the allocated 45 minutes, please use the extra time to extend the time for activities, to learn the memory verse, and to pray.

☉ The “Notes for Teachers on the Text” section is intended as explanation of the Bible text and advance preparation for you only; it is not expressed in terms or language the children could understand.

The Jesus Storybook Bible Curriculum
By Sally Lloyd-Jones and Sam Shammas

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Recap of the Previous Story

3 min. 

☉ Welcome the children and ask them to sit in a circle.

☉ Briefly recap the main point of the previous story: “Last time we discovered that being in the kingdom of God is as wonderful as finding hidden treasure. It is worth anything you have to give up, because God is the real treasure. We also memorized a verse about God.”

☉ Ask them to recite together the verse they learned at home about the story. “Matthew 19:26 — ‘With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.’”

☉ To lead into the theme of today’s story, ask: “What does it mean to trust somebody? Correct, it means to believe them, or to depend on them.”

Activity Introducing the Story

10 min. 

Aim: To expend energy and experience trusting others.

Materials: 3 blindfolds; a chair with the sign “Home – God’s Kingdom” on it.

1. Say: “Let’s play a game about trust. We’ve played this game before. I need three volunteers to be blindfolded.”

2. Ask the three volunteers to be the travelers. Blindfold them and position them by a wall. Put the chair on the opposite side of the room and announce that it is “Home.”

3. Ask one person to stand beside each traveler as the guide. Ask everybody else to find a place to stand in the room with their arms and legs spread out. Explain that they are obstacles between the traveler and getting home. The obstacles should find a place to stand and then remain still. If an obstacle deliberately moves, then they are out.

4. Explain the game: The travelers need to get home without bumping into any of the obstacles or one another. The guides walk beside their blindfolded travelers and can call out any instructions they like to get the travelers home; e.g., “Take four steps forward, stop; take one step right, stop”; etc. If a traveler bumps into an obstacle or into another traveler, they have to go back to the wall and start again.

5. Make sure the obstacles are staggered around the room so it is actually possible for the travelers to get home.

6. Play the game for 2 minutes or until someone gets home. Ask the children to remove their blindfolds and ask them what it felt like to have to trust the guides. Get a few answers.

7. Play again, allowing new children to be the travelers and guides. Once the new travelers are blindfolded, give the obstacles 5 seconds to run and find a new place to stand. Again, after 2 minutes or once someone gets home, ask the children who were blindfolded what it felt like to have to trust the guides.

8. Play as many times as you can in the allotted time so that as many children as possible experience being blindfolded.

9. Toward the end of the allocated time, ask everyone to sit back down in the circle. Collect and put away the blindfolds.

10. Say: “In order for you to get home, you had to trust and depend on your guides. If you’d tried to do it on your own, you would not have made it. If your guides were not trustworthy, you would not have made it. If you decided not to trust what your guides said, then you would not have made it. You had to trust. In today’s story we are going to meet a group of people who found it easy to trust. Ready?”

Story Time

7 min. 

Join the children in the circle and announce the title of the story. Read aloud pages 256–263 from *The Jesus Storybook Bible* or listen to CD3 track 4.

Notes for Teachers on the Text

The disciples are arguing over who would be greatest and have the highest status. Jesus teaches his disciples that they need to receive the kingdom of God as a little child. We read in Matthew 18:1–4: “At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, ‘Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?’ He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. And he said: ‘Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.’” Again in Matthew 19:14 we read: “Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these’” (see also Mark 10:14 and Luke 18:16).

Jesus is not referring to the supposed “innocence” of children. This would not square with the strong things that Jesus has said about the sinful human heart. See, for example, Mark 7. Also compare biblical teachings such as Romans 3:10–18, 23; Romans 5:12; and Psalm 51:5. Nowhere in the Bible are children referred to as “innocent” people who only develop sin and evil later in life.

Rather than the “innocence” of children, Jesus is referring to their weakness. Children are vulnerable, dependent, and cannot do things for themselves. Also, children are not good at hiding their flaws and feelings. They trust and are not suspicious.

Therefore, to receive the kingdom “as a little child” means to approach God with qualities such as dependency and trust. Thus we must come to God seeking his favor as a gift. We cannot merit his grace. Entrance to the kingdom is not on the basis of attainment and morality, but acknowledgment of helplessness and need.

The people who enter the kingdom are not the “worthy” and accomplished, but those who are willing to admit their helplessness and simply depend. Jesus rebukes the disciples, who still don’t see that acknowledged weakness and dependence are the real qualifications for the kingdom.

Understanding the Story

15 min. 

Aim: To understand grace.

Materials: A ribbon for each child; child-safe glue; decorating items, e.g., stickers, pieces of colored paper, tin foil, etc.; crayons; copies of the handout (the last page of this document).

1. At the end of the story, say: “Jesus wanted the disciples to trust him the way the children trusted him. I’m going to say some things about the disciples and about the children. Some of the things I say will be true and some will not be true. I will then say ‘Go!’ If what I say is true, stand up and raise both your hands in the air. If what I say is not true, then curl up into a ball. Ready?”
2. Read aloud the statements in the table below, saying “Go!” after each one. After the children have either stood up or curled up, announce the correct answer. Ask them to sit down or uncurl. Say “Ready?” and announce the next statement.

STATEMENT	ANSWER
The disciples argued about who had the best beard.	NOT TRUE
The disciples argued about who was the most important.	TRUE
The disciples had to do something special for Jesus to love them.	NOT TRUE
The disciples understood that God’s love is a gift.	NOT TRUE
God’s love is a gift.	TRUE
The disciples welcomed the children who came to see Jesus.	NOT TRUE
Jesus always had time for the children.	TRUE
The children knew they did not have to do anything special for Jesus to love them.	TRUE

3. At the end of the activity, give each child a copy of the handout and a crayon. Place the decorating items in the center of the circle.
4. Say: “The disciples had forgotten that how clever, or how good, or how important you are makes no difference, because God’s love is a gift. Raise your hand if you have ever been given a gift. Thank you, hands down. Raise your hand if you had to pay for the gift. No, the point about a gift is that it’s free. On your paper you can see a picture of a gift. You have 3 minutes to decorate it so that it looks like the best gift ever.”

5. Give them 3 minutes, helping the children during the time. Then hand each child a ribbon. Ask them to roll the handout up and tie it with the ribbon. Say: "Now your paper is a gift for someone else."

6. Say: "I am going to recite the verse we are going to memorize. As I do so, pass the gifts around the circle. Pass them to the person on your right and keep passing until I finish the verse. Ready?"

7. Recite the verse to learn at home, allowing the children to pass the handouts around the circle.

8. At the end of the verse, say: "Stop passing! You should now all have a gift from someone else. Go ahead and open your gift. Did you have to pay anything to get the gift? Call out yes or no. Did you have to do anything special to get the gift? Call out yes or no. Was the gift free? Call out yes or no. Correct, the whole point about a gift is that it is free. All you had to do is to reach out your hands and take it."

For larger groups: You may want to divide the group into smaller circles, each with a teacher. Each teacher can then work with their circle on understanding what is true and not true.

Drawing the Story to a Close

1 min. 

Say: "God's love is a gift and, like all gifts, it is free. You don't have to do anything special to get it."

Say: "The children in the story knew they did not have to do anything special for Jesus to love them. They trusted Jesus. We can trust Jesus just like they did."

Jesus in the Story

2 min. 

Ask: "What did we discover about Jesus from today's story?"

Get a few children to share their answers aloud, commenting appropriately; then ask everyone to write an answer in the space on their handout.

Praying about the Story

5 min. 

Pray aloud, thanking God that his love is a gift and asking that you and the children would trust him, just like the little children in today's story.

Ask the children to think about a time when they find it hard to trust Jesus and to pray that God would help them to trust.

A Verse from the Story to Learn at Home

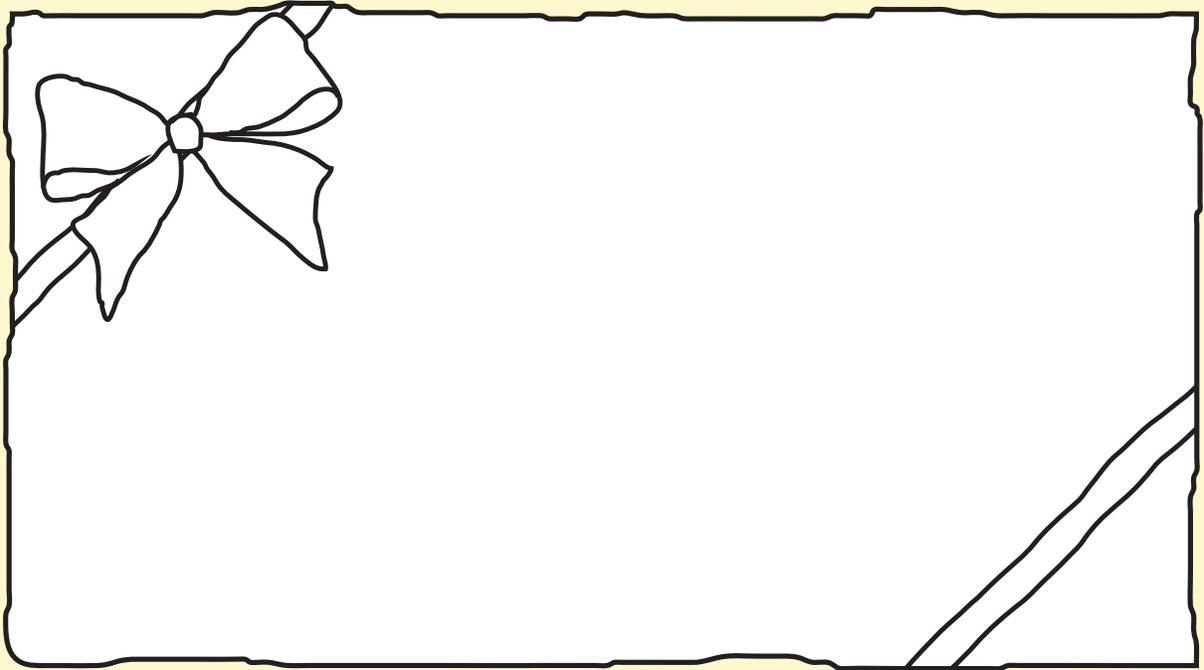
2 min. 

☉ Introduce the verse: "I've already recited the verse we are going to memorize. It is all about how God's love is a gift. The word 'grace' is another word for gift."

☉ Announce the verse: "So, your verse to learn at home is Ephesians 2:8-9 — 'For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast.'"

☉ Read the verse out loud together as a group. Explain any unfamiliar words.

☉ Remind the children to give the handout to their parents and to memorize the verse for next time.



☺ Jesus in the Story



What did you discover about Jesus from this story?



Jesus

☺ A Verse from the Story to Learn at Home

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast. (Ephesians 2:8–9)



Notes for parents: From the story we learned that God's love is a gift and, like all gifts, it is free. Please help your child to memorize the verse and the Scripture reference for next time. Please review with them the place of the book of Ephesians, using the diagram above. www.jesusstorybookbible.com