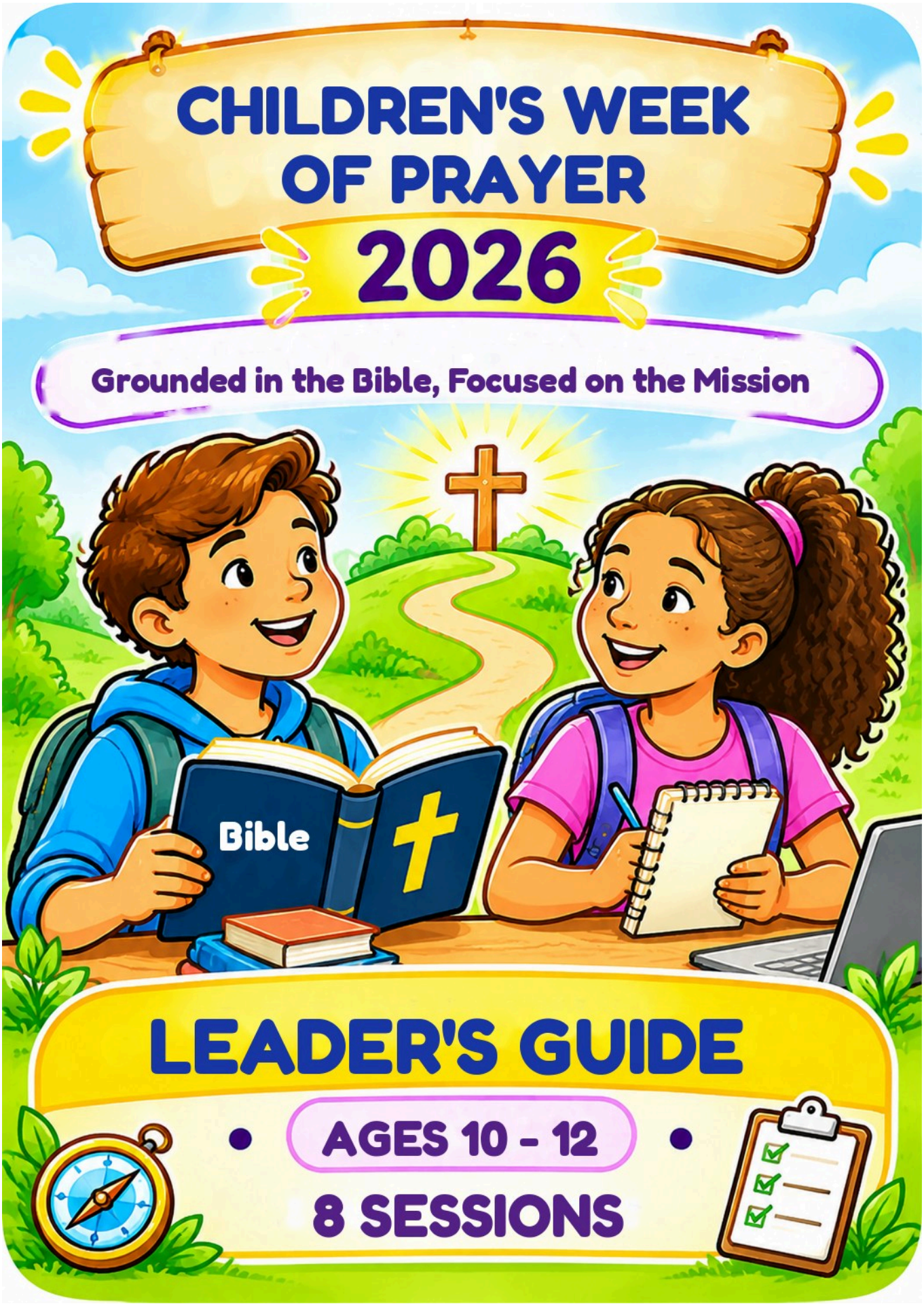

CHILDREN'S WEEK OF PRAYER
2026
Grounded in the Bible, Focused on the Mission
Bible
LEADER'S GUIDE
AGES 10 - 12
8 SESSIONS

The 8 Sessions

First Sabbath	Anchored in the Scriptures
Sunday	Walk With God
Monday	A Little Is a Lot
Tuesday	Live Your Life for Jesus
Wednesday	Listen to the Holy Spirit
Thursday	Pray and Act
Friday	Share the Message
Second Sabbath	Love Like Jesus

God's Big Story

Creation	Fall	Redemption	Restoration

HOW IT WORKS — Booklet AGES 10-12

Older children (preteens): independent reading, debate, Bible searching, personal application.

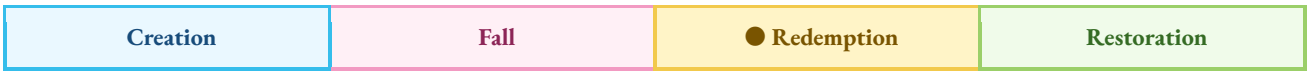
Every session follows the same path: we place the day (the "big story" timeline and verse), start with a hook, hear Today's Story where the leader names the thread of grace, check and then go deeper with the questions, marvel with "Did You Know?", reinforce with a game and its debrief, respond to God through Quiet Time, carry it on at home, respond personally to Jesus, and wrap up.

The 4 Non-Negotiable Rules

- One level at a time: this booklet is designed for AGES 10-12. Use the right booklet for each group.
- No "pray and you'll be saved from danger" theology: God is with us whether or not the danger passes (the questions in bold correct this).
- No pseudo-proofs: "Did You Know?" contains only verifiable facts (biblical, historical, literary).
- Grace before behavior: each day first says what Christ has done (the Gospel) before what the child should do.

God's Big Story

Every session follows the same path: we place the day (the "big story" timeline and verse), start with a hook, hear Today's Story where the leader names the thread of grace, check and then go deeper with the questions, marvel with "Did You Know?", reinforce with a game and its debrief, respond to God through Quiet Time, carry it on at home, respond personally to Jesus, and wrap up.



How to read the timeline: at the top of each session, this timeline shows the four great moments of the Bible story, and the day's stage lights up in color (here, as an example, Redemption). Before reading the story, show it to the children and place the lesson: "Today, we are here." It helps children see that each story is not isolated, but part of one great story that runs from Creation to the new creation, and that leads, all of it, to Jesus.

On the First Sabbath, all four stages light up together: this first session takes in the whole story at once.

Three Habits to Build

- Quiet Time is a daily habit to keep for life (speaking to God, listening to Him, acting). Encourage the child to do it every morning, even after the week.
- Verse collection: each day adds a verse to a collection of 8. Review cumulatively, and celebrate the complete collection on the Second Sabbath (a small certificate, applause, a snack).
- The invitation to respond to Jesus is offered, never imposed: leave a real silence, respect each child's freedom.

The Explorer's Notebook

Each day, the child keeps a "treasure" (the "Did You Know?" fact) in a small notebook. On the Second Sabbath, they present their collection: wonders of nature and reasons to trust the Bible. "Did You Know?" unfolds in steps: first the riddle (we search), then the wonder or the proof, then the bridge to Jesus, and finally we tell it to someone (what we can explain, we remember).

Truth challenge (once during the week): choose a fact and check its source yourself (the museum or laboratory website given). Faith is not afraid to be examined.

Keep in mind: evidence makes faith reasonable; it doesn't replace it. Archaeology confirms the world of the Bible, not the miracles; nature amazes, it doesn't prove. Creation doesn't replace faith — it fills it with wonder.

Naming the Thread of Grace (leader's pointer)

Under each Today's Story, a line is headed "Thread of grace to name." It is not a passage to read to the children: it is a pointer for you. In one sentence, it reminds you of the heart of the day's Gospel, that is, what Christ has done, before what the child is invited to do.

Your job is to "name" it, that is, to say it aloud, in your own words, at two moments: right after Today's Story, to give the key to the story, and again before the invitation to respond to Jesus, so that the child responds to a love already received. Put it simply, for example: "Today, above all, remember this...", then link it to the question or game of the moment.

Why this care? Because it is the most important rule of the booklet: grace before behavior. Without this reminder, the most beautiful story quickly turns into a moral lesson ("be good, be nice"). The thread of grace makes sure the child first hears what God has done for them, and only then what they can do in response.

An example. On Thursday, the thread of grace is "we pray with confidence because of the cross." You can name it like this: "If we can speak to God without fear, it's not because we pray well; it's because Jesus, on the cross, opened the door for us."

Avoid: don't recite it as a fixed formula, and never turn it into "so be nice." Name grace, then let the invitation come as a joyful response, never as a condition to meet in order to be loved by God.

The Game and Its Debrief

After each game, a "Debrief" line offers a short question linking the game to the day's lesson. Don't skip this moment: it's where the game stops being mere fun and becomes a message the child remembers.

Two Invitations, Two Moments

Today's Story ends with an invitation in bold: it is the point of the message, the call that closes the story. Further on, the "Invitation to Respond to Jesus" section is a second, quieter moment, where you invite the child to respond personally. The first concludes; the second opens a time of decision, always offered and never imposed.

What the Research Says: Two Priorities

Baptist (LifeWay) and Adventist (retention study) research agree: people almost never leave the church over a doctrinal disagreement (5%), but through drift and lack of relationship. And what best protects faith while growing up is not fine programs, but two very simple things this booklet aims at directly.

One adult for each child. Give each child a "prayer partner," an adult from the church who prays for them, asks how they're doing and greets them by name. It is the number one factor in staying faithful. Have the "prayer partner" box in the activity book filled in on the first day.

After the week. The week is pointless if the habits stop on the last evening. Launch the activity book's "30 Days With God" challenge: each child keeps up their Quiet Time (speak, listen, act) for a month, and on day 30 tells their prayer partner what has changed. Daily habits planted in childhood are the best predictor of a lasting faith.

FIRST SABBATH — Anchored in the Scriptures

Living God's Mission

● Creation	● Fall	● Redemption	● Restoration

MEMORY VERSE

"With God nothing will be impossible." Luke 1:37

Find in Ephesians 6:17 the name the Bible gives to its Word.

Memory challenge: Learn today's verse (Luke 1:37) — it's the 1st in your collection of 8!

Getting Started (the hook)

Opening at the board: "Name three things that 'rock the boat' for someone your age today." Write the answers down; we'll return to them at the end.

Today's Story

Close your eyes for a moment. You're no longer in this room; you're standing on the deck of a small boat, far out at sea, in the middle of the night. The wind is cold on your face, the waves pound against the hull, the boat rises high and drops again, and everything moves around you: the water, the sky, the deck under your feet. Yet your boat doesn't drift away. The others, farther off, are sliding toward the rocks, but not yours. Why? Lean over the side, look far down into the dark, and you'll see a chain, and at the end of the chain a heavy anchor dug into the rock on the bottom. You couldn't even see it, yet it has been holding you from the start. Open your eyes.

This restless sea is your life, for there are days when everything rocks: fear, teasing, big questions with no answers. And this morning's question is simple: what keeps you from drifting away? An anchor doesn't hold by its weight, but because it grips something more solid than itself, far below; so the boat doesn't hold on its own, it is tied to something stronger. And a sailor knows something we forget: the anchor must match the size of the boat, because an anchor that is too small won't hold in the storm. The letter to the Hebrews applies exactly this picture to our life when it calls our hope "an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast," which "enters the Presence behind the veil," where Jesus has entered for us (Hebrews 6:19-20). In other words, the strength of your anchor depends on the depth of your relationship with God, not on your own strength.

Stop on this strange word God uses: forerunner. An anchor usually drops beneath you, toward the bottom; this one did the opposite: it went up, ahead of you, into the very presence of God. For on the day Jesus died, "the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom" (Matthew 27:51), that great curtain that closed off the Most Holy Place and kept people at a distance. The way to God, blocked for so long, opened all at once. And Jesus went in first, as "the forerunner... having become High Priest forever" (Hebrews 6:20), that is, the one who goes ahead so that others can follow. So your anchor is not lost in the dark of some unknown depth; it is held, up there, in the hand of the One who is already waiting for you on the other side.

Remember this well, because one day it will save you. In the storm, the sailor doesn't see his anchor and doesn't even feel it; he simply trusts the chain. There will be nights when you feel nothing at all, when God seems far away and silent, when you pray without the slightest emotion and faith feels like a chore. That won't be a sign that the anchor has let go, only that the sea is high. Many give up in exactly those nights, thinking that when their feelings fail, God has failed, when that is the very moment the anchor is working hardest. The anchor doesn't hold because you feel it; it holds because it is fastened. So your faith doesn't rest on what you feel about God from day to day, but on what He has done, once and for all, which doesn't move when your heart changes ten times in the same day.

So how can we know if our anchor is the right size? If we worship God from a distance, never really wanting to enter His presence, or if we come to church just to show up, it will stay too small to hold us on the

day of the storm. And here is the subtlest trap: you can know everything about God, know by heart what He will do, and never live in real friendship with Him, because knowing about God is not knowing God, and an anchor admired in a catalog holds no boat. So the secret of the anchor is not an idea or your good intentions; it is Someone, Jesus, who died and rose again, set in the Rock, stronger than every storm. And the Bible is the chain that links you to Him, for page after page it speaks of Him (John 5:39). Reading it, praying, entering His presence: that is how the anchor grows and the chain tightens.

And never be afraid of being too small. David still smelled of sheep, Samuel was only a child, Mary a young girl from a forgotten village, and God chose them so that the strength would come from Him and not from them. To Mary the angel spoke a word that is for you too: "with God nothing will be impossible" (Luke 1:37). So what you need is not more strength but a deeper friendship with Him, for He doesn't call you because you are strong enough, but because Jesus has already won everything on the cross.

YOUR INVITATION

So today, grab the chain: open your Bible, talk to Jesus, hold on to Him. Will you tell Him, right now, that you cast your anchor in Him, not in your own strength?

LEADER'S NOTE · naming the thread of grace

The anchor is Christ (not our effort); the whole Bible leads to Him — John 5:39; Ephesians 2:8-9.

Questions (check)

- What is the Bible called in Ephesians 6:17? (The sword of the Spirit)
- In the wilderness, what "weapon" did Jesus use against temptation? ("It is written...", the Word)
- In John 5:39, what is the whole Bible really for? (It leads to Jesus)

Discussion Questions

- In your life, what makes you "drift": fear, teasing, screens, doubt? And what could be your anchor?
- "Grounded AND focused on the mission": do these two go together or clash? Defend your answer.
- Can we serve God without knowing Him through His Word? Why?

Did You Know?

A TREASURE FOR THE NOTEBOOK

Riddle:

If a book is copied by hand for 1,000 years, how much do you think the text changes?

The proof / the wonder:

In 1947, the Great Isaiah Scroll was found at Qumran, dated to about 125 BC — a thousand years older than the copies we had. The text is almost identical; the differences are in spelling, not meaning.

Source — Israel Museum – Dead Sea Scrolls (dss.collections.imj.org.il).

Bridge to Jesus:

The Word that anchors us has come through the centuries without being distorted — we can trust it, and trust the Jesus it reveals.

Tell it — Explain to your neighbor in one sentence: why is this scroll good news for anyone who reads the Bible?

Have Fun!

Bible treasure hunt in teams: find in your Bibles 3 people God called when they were young (David, Samuel, Mary, Josiah, Jeremiah...) and a reference for each. The first team to finish wins.

→ Debrief: After the game: "The boat holds thanks to the anchor, not its own efforts. And who is our anchor?" (Jesus.)

QUIET TIME — my personal time with God

SPEAK · LISTEN · DO

I speak to God: "Lord, show me the mission You have prepared for me."

I listen: Write in a notebook one thing that makes me "drift," and one concrete step to stay anchored this week. I do (my challenge): Open your Bible every morning this week (even for 5 minutes) and spot where it speaks of Jesus.

AT HOME (for families)

As a family: each look for your "anchor" and tell of a time when faith held you. Pray the verse together.

INVITATION TO RESPOND TO JESUS

"Would you like to say yes to Jesus and begin this adventure with Him? You can talk to Him right now, simply." (Leave a time of silence; don't force anyone.)

Wrap-up

You're not too small. If you're breathing, God is calling you. Hold on to His Word, and go on mission with Him.

SUNDAY — Walk With God

And Let Him Lead You!

Creation	● Fall	Redemption	Restoration

MEMORY VERSE

"Trust in the LORD with all your heart... And He shall direct your paths." Proverbs 3:5-6. Find who, in Genesis 5:24, "walked with God."

Memory challenge: Recite the Sabbath verse, then learn today's (2/8).

Getting Started (the hook)

Opening question: "Where's the line between 'growing up and being independent' (good) and 'doing without God' (risky)?" Each gives an example first.

Today's Story

From the very beginning, God doesn't first call us to do great things for Him, but to walk with Him. Of Enoch, the Bible simply says that he "walked with God" (Genesis 5:24), and the prophet Micah sums up the whole life of faith in one phrase: "walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8). Walking with God means neither lagging far behind nor rushing ahead, but moving forward at His side. And on this path the real danger is not the length of the road or its climbs; it is our posture. The worst posture of all, pride, takes two forms, and both make us fall out of step with God.

The first is walking ahead of God. This walker goes his own way, eager to prove something to God, to others, to himself, and his prayer is like the Pharisee's: a performance report handed to God rather than a heart surrendered to Him (Luke 18:11). He soon wears out, because he carries the weight of the road alone instead of entrusting it to Jesus, "the author and finisher of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2), forgetting that it is not he who opens the way but the One who calls him to follow. The second form is quieter: walking with your eyes fixed on others. This walker no longer looks at his Guide; he keeps comparing himself with others to see where he stands, which is exactly the pride C.S. Lewis called "essentially competitive." Again the Pharisee's prayer gives him away: "I am not like other men" (Luke 18:11). And by looking sideways instead of ahead, you always end up tripping on your own path.

Against these two kinds of pride, humility is not the false modesty of someone who refuses to set out, saying "I can't do it." It is the right posture of someone who knows three things at once: that the path is real and demanding, that he can't walk it alone, and that the One who calls him can also carry him. Moses is its picture: he willingly gave up being called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, a real, high and comfortable rank, to join a people of slaves and walk with their God (Hebrews 11:24-26). This is not weakness but a brave choice, made from strength and not from fear. That is humility on the move: giving up going forward for yourself in order to go forward with God.

A little girl learned this truth on a bike. Abby was the youngest in her family, always behind, always "too small to," until the day, on a church bike ride, she found herself in front on a downhill, hair in the wind, no one ahead of her. For once she was first, and she loved it, so when the leader announced it was time to turn back, she begged her mother to let her ride ahead. Her mother agreed on one condition: stay where I can see you. But Abby heard only the yes and took off. One bend, two bends, the sound of the others faded behind her, and at first she felt free; then the joy slowly drained away like air from a balloon. The path looked like nothing she knew: no more voices, no more bells, just her, the tall trees and the silence. Not fear of a monster, but a great emptiness in her stomach, because by going ahead she could no longer hear anyone who loved her, and she was alone. See how both kinds of pride live in this child: wanting

to be first of all is walking with your eyes on others, and doing it your own way without listening is walking ahead of God. Either way, the result is the same: she had fallen out of step with the one who loved her and ended up alone.

But the story doesn't end there. When Abby finally stopped, she saw someone running toward her in the distance: her mother, who hadn't waited for her to sort it out but had set off at once to find her. That evening, her mother read her the words of Jesus about the shepherd who leaves ninety-nine sheep for the one that is lost, and the father who sees his son a great way off and runs to meet him (Luke 15). That is the turnaround Abby understood that day, something huge: we are called to walk with God, but when we wander off, He is the one who runs toward us. At the very minute she thought she was lost, God was already looking for her.

So don't walk ahead of God, eager to prove your worth, and don't walk with your eyes glued on others, busy comparing yourself, but walk at His side, humbly, your hand in His. For He has promised: if you trust in Him with all your heart, He shall direct your paths (Proverbs 3:5-6). The path won't always be easy; there will be climbs and scary stretches, but as long as you hold His hand, you are never really lost.

YOUR INVITATION

So today, will you stop racing, take Jesus' hand and walk at His pace?
Tell Him right now: Jesus, today I walk with You, not ahead, not far behind, but at Your side.

LEADER'S NOTE · naming the thread of grace

God seeks us first; we respond to a love that comes first — Luke 15; Romans 8:32.

Questions (check)

- In the two stories of Luke 15, who takes the first step: sheep or shepherd? son or father? (the shepherd; the father)
- Who "walked with God" in Genesis 5:24? (Enoch)

Discussion Questions

- Where's the line between "becoming independent" (good) and "running ahead of God" (risky)?
- When we feel lost or afraid, is God still there, even if He doesn't take the problem away right away? Explain.
- Abby understood that God was looking for her "before she even thought of it." How does that change the way we picture God?

Did You Know?

A TREASURE FOR THE NOTEBOOK

Riddle:

Can a butterfly lighter than a paper clip find, on its own, a forest 4,000 km away that it has never seen? **The proof / the wonder:**

Yes — the monarch migrates to Mexico, steering by the sun, and by a magnetic compass when the sky is cloudy. None has made the trip before: the "map" is built in.

Source — Nature Communications; Monarch Joint Venture.

Bridge to Jesus:

God put a "compass" in a butterfly; He can guide you, too, on a path you don't know yet.

Tell it — Tell: what "compass" does God give us to find our way? (His Word, His voice.)

Have Fun!

Blind course in pairs: one guides the other (blindfolded) by voice alone to a "treasure." Swap, then debrief: what made trust possible?

→ Debrief: After the game: "What made trust possible? Listening to the guide. Our Guide is God."

QUIET TIME — my personal time with God

SPEAK · LISTEN · DO

I speak to God: "Lord, where I want to run everything by myself, teach me to walk at Your pace."
I listen: Name an area where you "run ahead of God." What might He want to tell you?
I do (my challenge): This week, hand ONE decision over to Him before making it (prayer + advice from a trusted adult).

AT HOME (for families)

Parents: tell of a time you "rushed ahead" of God and what you learned. Then take a short walk, hand in hand.

INVITATION TO RESPOND TO JESUS

"Will you let Jesus lead you today, instead of rushing ahead alone? Tell Him in your heart."

Wrap-up

God knows the way. Stay at His side, let Him lead — even through hard stretches, He won't let go of you.

MONDAY — A Little Is a Lot

Nothing Is Too Small to Give to Jesus

Creation	Fall	● Redemption	Restoration

MEMORY VERSE

He said, "Bring them here to Me." Matthew 14:18 In John 6:9, who brings the loaves? (surprise: a child).

Memory challenge: Review the 2 previous verses, then add today's (3/8).

Getting Started (the hook)

Ask: "What is the smallest thing you own that you think 'would be no use' to God?" Keep the answers for the end.

Today's Story

It all begins with hunger. Five thousand men have followed Jesus all day, and evening falls on a hillside with no bread. But before speaking of empty stomachs, John slips in words we read too quickly: "Now the Passover... was near" (John 6:4). This is no detail. Passover is the night when a lamb is sacrificed so that a slave people may be fed and come out of death. From the first line, John warns us: beneath this crowd's hunger lies an older hunger, one that an evening's bread never satisfies.

Jesus tests His disciples. Philip calculates and reaches the conclusion our calculations always reach before God: it's impossible. And into that emptiness comes a child holding five barley loaves, the bread of the poor. Even Andrew doesn't believe: "but what are they among so many?" (John 6:9). Remember that question, because the whole Bible contradicts it: God rarely chooses what is enough. A slave people, a shepherd against a giant, a girl from Nazareth, and now five loaves in the hands of a hesitant child. Nothing is no obstacle for God; it is His favorite material, so that the glory goes to Him.

The child holds out his hands without understanding, and understanding comes after: that is the order of faith. Jesus gives thanks and hands out the food; everyone eats their fill, and twelve baskets of leftovers are gathered. The little basket went off empty; twelve came back full. But let's beware of a false lesson: it wasn't the loaves that changed anything, it was the hands that took them. Our little becomes a lot in only one way: when it passes through His hands. The crowd only half understands. They want a new Moses, a giver of manna. Jesus turns everything around: "My Father gives you the true bread from heaven" (John 6:32), and He adds: "Your fathers ate the manna... and are dead" (John 6:49). The manna filled the stomach but did not defeat the grave. Then comes the decisive word: "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35). Those two words, "I am," echo the Name revealed to Moses in the bush (Exodus 3:14). Jesus doesn't just say "I feed you"; He says "I bear the Name of God, and this Name gives itself to be eaten."

But to feed anyone, bread must be broken. Here is the weightiest sentence of the chapter: "the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world" (John 6:51). The miracle on the hillside was only a miniature promise of Calvary. The child had offered his bread; the Son would offer His body: a child gives a snack, God gives God. And four times the refrain returns: "I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:39, 40, 44, 54). This Bread doesn't feed for one evening; it feeds against death.

Notice also what happens to the leftovers, for nothing is said by chance. Exactly twelve baskets are gathered, as many as the twelve tribes of Israel and soon the twelve disciples, as if God wanted to show there is enough to satisfy all His people, and far beyond. Where our hands count and always fall short, His give and there is still some left. And if a fear still holds you back, the fear of not being worthy to come near, listen to this promise, because it is made for you in particular. Jesus said: "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out" (John 6:37). Look closely: He doesn't say "the one who comes with full hands," or "the one

who comes good enough"; He says the one who comes, full stop. The child on the hillside wasn't sent away because his bread was too small, and you won't be sent away either because you think you are too little. The only way to stay outside is not to come at all.

One question remains. Many wanted the bread without wanting the Bread, and they went away (John 6:66). Jesus asks the twelve: "Do you also want to go away?" Peter answers what I would love each of our children to be able to say one day: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:68). And even his outstretched hand was not first his own merit, for "No one can come to Me unless the Father... draws him" (John 6:44). Grace doesn't reward your offering; it makes it possible. So don't ask what you can give Jesus; ask whether you want Him. Put your almost empty hand in the hand of the One who let Himself be broken for you. The child on the hillside had brought only his almost empty hands. He went home with a full heart, because that day God had set before his eyes a picture of the cross.

YOUR INVITATION

So today, open your almost empty hands and hold them out to Jesus. Will you offer Him your little bit, and let Him do with it what only He can do? Say yes to Him, now.

LEADER'S NOTE · naming the thread of grace

the true Bread is Jesus, given for us; we come with empty hands — John 6:35.

Questions (check)

- In Matthew 14:21, who was not counted among the 5,000? (the women and children)
- In how many Gospels is this miracle told? (all four)
- After the miracle, who does Jesus say He is (John 6:35)? (the bread of life)

Discussion Questions

- Name something of yours (a talent, time, a little money) that you think is "too small" for God.
- Who does the miracle, Nathan or Jesus? So what is our "little" for?
- "I am the bread of life": how is what Jesus gives greater than a meal?

Did You Know?

A TREASURE FOR THE NOTEBOOK

Riddle:

What is the smallest seed that becomes the largest living thing in the world?

The proof / the wonder:

The giant sequoia seed, the size of an oat flake (~4 mm). It can become the "General Sherman": about 84 m tall, estimated at over 1,000 tonnes.

Source — U.S. National Park Service (nps.gov).

Bridge to Jesus:

The smallest start, the biggest result — that's exactly Jesus' mustard seed. Your "little" in His hands can become huge.

Tell it — In one sentence: what is your own "little bit" that Jesus could make grow?

Have Fun!

"5 loaves and 2 fish" challenge: each one secretly writes their "little bit" on a card; it all goes into a shared basket, the team guesses whose gift is whose, then we pray for God to multiply them.

→ Debrief: After the game: "Where did all that bread come from? Not us: Jesus. Our 'little' in His hands becomes a lot."

QUIET TIME — my personal time with God

SPEAK · LISTEN · DO

I speak to God: "Lord, I come with empty hands; fill them and use me."

I listen: Write down a "loaf and fish" (time, money, gift) you hold back for fear it's useless. I do (my challenge): This week, put this "little" to work for someone, and watch what God does with it.

AT HOME (for families)

As a family: prepare a "sharing" meal and each name one small thing you can offer Jesus this week.

INVITATION TO RESPOND TO JESUS

"Will you offer Him your little 'bit' today? Open your hands and say yes to Him."

Wrap-up

Nothing you give Jesus is too small. You are the vessel; Jesus is the treasure.

TUESDAY — Live Your Life for Jesus

And Be His Witness

Creation	Fall	● Redemption	Restoration

MEMORY VERSE

"Be doers of the word, and not hearers only." James 1:22 Compare with Matthew 7:24-27: who puts it into practice?

Memory challenge: Chain the 3 verses you know, then learn the 4th (4/8).

Getting Started (the hook)

Quick debate: "Can you know everything about the Bible and still live very badly? A concrete example?" before going into Tim's story.

Today's Story

"He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked" (1 John 2:6).

John was writing to a church where many said "I abide in Him" though their lives looked nothing like His, and it is for them, as for us, that he set a simple and searching rule: knowing Christ is not proven by the words we recite, but by the way we walk. And that is exactly where everything is decided, for it is entirely possible to know everything and live none of it, as the story of a boy who knew everything is about to show us.

No one at school knew as much as Tim about fires: how a fire starts, how to smother it, what to do if your clothes catch fire. His mother had made him recite the rules a hundred times and promise just one thing, never to play with matches, and Tim promised gladly. Yet deep inside him a little ember was smoldering: the wish to see, just once, a flame spring up between his fingers. So one morning he slipped a box of matches into his pocket, where it stayed like a burning secret. The afternoon came when, in an empty field near an old barn, he finally struck a match. The flame leapt up, tiny and beautiful, until it bit his fingers, and when he dropped it, it fell into the dry grass. From then on everything happened too fast: no matter how he stamped, blew and pleaded, the fire was stronger than he was, and when the firefighters finally put it out, the field was a black carpet and the barn a heap of ashes. Tim was unhurt, but facing the disaster, he wanted only one thing: to disappear.

Now we must understand what happened, because God did not light that fire to punish Tim; dry grass burns whether God is angry or not. Yet there is something more serious than the blackened field, and Tim feels it deep inside: he knew what was right better than anyone, could recite it with his eyes closed, and did not live it. So, without meaning to, he became the very man John warned about, the one who says "I abide in Him" but does not walk as He walked, and his misadventure reminds us that knowledge alone has never been enough for anyone.

But if knowledge isn't enough, let's beware of the opposite trap, more dangerous still because it looks like the truth, the one that whispers, "Grit your teeth, do better next time, and then God will love you." That is the exact opposite of the Gospel, for "by grace you have been saved... and that not of yourselves... not of works" (Ephesians 2:8-9). The truth, which Tim will have to discover just as we do, is that no child and no adult manages to live well by willpower alone, because we all carry deep down that same smoldering ember, and gritting our teeth doesn't put it out; it only hides it until the next empty field. So what we need is not a tougher will but a new heart, and that is exactly what God promises when He says: "I will give you a new heart... I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 36:26).

Then John's words, which seemed a burden, become good news, because we don't walk as Christ walked by stiffening up, but by abiding in Him, as He Himself explained: "Abide in Me... As

the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me... for without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:4-5). The branch doesn't produce grapes by gritting its teeth, but because the sap of the vine flows through it; in the same way, the walk grows out of abiding, not the other way around.

Finally, the heart of it all: on the evening of the fire, while Tim expected shouting, his mother held him in her arms for a long time, crying with relief that he was alive, and that is exactly where we see what grace is. It never pretends that wrong doesn't exist (the field really did burn), but it loves us before we deserve it, and it is this love received, not the fear of punishment, that finally changes a heart, until we can say with Paul: "it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20). So if you too carry a smoldering ember, and we all carry one, don't start by gritting your teeth, for living for Jesus is not becoming good enough for Him to love you, since He already loves you, but letting Him live in you. Bring Him your heart of stone, ask Him for the heart of flesh He promised, stay joined to Him like the branch to the vine, and you will discover that living your life for Jesus was not a weight to carry, but a fruit to receive.

YOUR INVITATION

So today, don't grit your teeth: open your heart. Will you ask Jesus for the new heart He promised, and let Him live in you? Just say yes to Him.

LEADER'S NOTE · naming the thread of grace

we obey because we are saved, not to be saved; Christ lives in us — Ephesians 2:8-9; Galatians 2:20.

Questions (check)

- In Matthew 7, what does the doer build on? (the rock)
- According to Ephesians 2:8-9, what are we saved by? (grace, not works)
- What does Galatians 2:20 mean: "Christ lives in me"?

Discussion Questions

- Can you know the Bible very well and still live badly? Give an example.
- Is the fire a punishment from God or a consequence of Tim's choice? Why is it important not to mix them up?
- "We obey because we are saved, not to be saved." Explain the difference in your own words.

Did You Know?

A TREASURE FOR THE NOTEBOOK

Riddle:

What happens to a muscle that is never used — even in a very fit astronaut?

The proof / the wonder:

In space, without gravity, astronauts lose 1 to 1.5% of bone per month and a lot of muscle. They must exercise about 2 hours a day to stay strong.

Source — NASA (nasa.gov).

Bridge to Jesus:

What we don't "live" grows weak. A faith we know but don't practice wastes away, like a muscle.

Tell it — Explain: why isn't "knowing" a verse enough? What else is needed?

Have Fun!

Witness charades: in teams, act out (no talking!) 3 ways to be a witness for Jesus in everyday life; the others guess. Quick debate: "Do our actions really speak louder than our words?"

→ Debrief: After the game: "Is talking about a good deed doing it? Today, we LIVE it."

QUIET TIME — my personal time with God

SPEAK · LISTEN · DO

I speak to God: "Lord, I can't do it on my own; live in me and change my heart."

I listen: Write down one "smoldering ember" in you (a desire you hide). Honestly hand it over to God.

I do (my challenge): Pick one area where your life doesn't match what you believe, and ask Christ every day to live it out through you.

AT HOME (for families)

As a family: choose ONE Bible teaching to put into practice together this week, and encourage one another.

INVITATION TO RESPOND TO JESUS

"Will you let Jesus live in you, instead of trying to be good on your own?"

Wrap-up

The way you live speaks of God louder than your words. You have only one life: live it for Jesus — not to be loved, but because you already are.

WEDNESDAY — Listen to the Holy Spirit

A Guide Who Draws Us to Jesus

Creation	Fall	● Redemption	Restoration

MEMORY VERSE

"He will guide you into all truth." (John 16:13)

The Holy Spirit never contradicts the Bible: how does that help us recognize Him? *Memory challenge: Review the first 4 verses, add the 5th (5/8). Tip: link a gesture to each verse.*

Getting Started (the hook)

Opening question: "How can I tell if an 'idea' in my head comes from God, from me, or from somewhere else?" We'll answer it after the poem.

Today's Story

There is something you have never seen in your whole life, and yet you know it very well: the wind. No one has ever seen the wind itself; we only see what it does, leaves dancing, tall trees bending, cool air on your cheek. And yet, invisible as it is, no one doubts it is there. That is exactly the picture Jesus chose one evening, talking to a man named Nicodemus: "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). It is no accident that the Bible speaks of the Holy Spirit as a breath: in its languages, one single word means both wind and Spirit, ruach in Hebrew, pneuma in Greek.

But watch out for a trap, because this is where many people go wrong. The Holy Spirit is not an energy, an impersonal force, a kind of divine electricity you plug into to feel stronger. He is Someone. You can't grieve a force, but you can grieve Him: "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God" (Ephesians 4:30). You can only grieve someone who loves. The Holy Spirit is God Himself, a Person, who comes to live in you and who cares about you.

Jesus announced Him to His friends with words full of tenderness: "I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever" (John 14:16). Stop on two words. First, "another": the Holy Spirit is another like Jesus, of the same kind, not a thing but Someone who comforts, who walks with you, who stays. And "forever": He doesn't visit on your good days and leave as soon as you fall; He comes to live in you, for good. Jesus also calls Him "the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him" (John 14:17). The world does not receive Him, not because He hides, but because you only get to know a Person by opening your door to Him, never by watching from far away.

What does He do? People often think He is mainly there to watch us and warn us when we do wrong. He does that, it's true, but it isn't His greatest work. Jesus told us what His greatest work is: "He will testify of Me" (John 15:26). He never draws attention to Himself; He takes you by the hand and shows you Jesus. And He does even more: when you doubt that God really loves you, He is the one who whispers it deep in your heart, for "the Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Romans 8:16). That certainty of belonging to God is not something you make up; He is the one who gives it to you.

One real question remains, one you will surely ask as you grow up: how can I know if a thought comes from the Holy Spirit, or just from me, from what I want, from my mood? Don't mistake everything you feel for the voice of God. The test is solid: the Holy Spirit never contradicts the Bible, since He inspired it and does not contradict Himself. A strong feeling that pushes you toward something God's Word forbids does not come from Him, however intense it is. The better you know the voice of Jesus in Scripture, the better you recognize His voice above the noise of your own desires.

And there is something deeper still than showing you Jesus or reassuring you. What you cannot give yourself, a heart that truly loves, only He can create. God had promised it long before, through the prophet Ezekiel: "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you" (Ezekiel 36:26-27). Notice the order of things, because it changes everything: first God replaces the heart, and only then comes obedience, like a fruit that grows, not like a weight you lift. No one ever ripened an apple by pulling on it.

And when this wind passes through a heart that listens, it makes something grow there, not by force but gently, the way spring ripens fruit without a sound. The Bible calls it the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). Notice the word: one fruit, not nine rewards to earn, but one new life with nine flavors. You don't make it by sweating with willpower; you let it grow by staying connected to Him.

So today's question is not "Do you know things about the Holy Spirit?" but "Do you really let Him work, or do you grieve Him by ignoring Him?" Don't treat Him like a force you use when it suits you, but as the Friend who lives in you.

YOUR INVITATION

Challenge of the week: spot one time you mistook your own wish for God's voice, then write how the Bible could have helped you tell the difference. And every morning, first thing, tell Him: "Holy Spirit, show me Jesus today, and grow in me what

I can't do on my own."

LEADER'S NOTE · naming the thread of grace

The Holy Spirit's first work: to show us Jesus and make us like Him — John 15:26; Romans 8:16.

Questions (check)

- Which verse quoted in the poem says the Holy Spirit testifies of Jesus? (John 15:26)
- How many "flavors" has the fruit of the Spirit? Name three (Galatians 5:22-23)
- What test lets you check a "feeling"? (does it agree with the Bible?)

Discussion Questions

- Do all the thoughts in our heads come from God? How can we sort them without getting it wrong?
- The poem says the Holy Spirit's first work is to show us Jesus. Do you agree? Why?
- Name one "fruit of the Spirit" you are missing right now — then ask God for it.

Did You Know?

A TREASURE FOR THE NOTEBOOK

Riddle:

Can something invisible weigh tons and uproot a tree?

The proof / The Wonder:

Yes: air. It presses on every cm^2 of your body with about 1 kg (tons in all, but balanced, so you feel nothing). Wind is that invisible air on the move.

Source — NOAA (noaa.gov).

Bridge to Jesus:

Invisible, yet real and powerful — like the Holy Spirit: we don't see Him, we see what He does.

Tell it — Give an example: where have you "seen" the Holy Spirit at work, unseen?

Have Fun!

Discernment game: the leader reads out "feelings" (some against the Bible, some good); in teams, raise a GREEN card ("from God") or a RED one ("check it / no"), quoting a verse.

→ Debrief: Afterward: "We didn't see the wind, but we saw what it does. Where do you want the Holy Spirit to work in you?"

QUIET TIME — my personal time with God

SPEAK · LISTEN · DO

I speak to God: "Spirit of God, show me Jesus and make me like Him."
I listen: Reread a verse slowly; note the "good thought" the Holy Spirit brings from it.
I do (my challenge): This week, test every strong feeling against the Bible before you act.

AT HOME (for families)

In the evening: ask your child, "Where did you feel God at work today?" and share your own answer.

INVITATION TO RESPOND TO JESUS

"Will you invite the Holy Spirit to show you Jesus, every day?"

Wrap-up

The Holy Spirit is our guide. He draws us closer to Jesus — and His voice never contradicts the Bible.

THURSDAY — Pray and Act

Prayer Moves Us to Act

Creation	Fall	Redemption	● Restoration

MEMORY VERSE

"We made our prayer to our God, and ... we set a watch." Nehemiah 4:9. See Nehemiah 4:17: they built with one hand and held a weapon in the other.

Memory challenge: Recite the 5 verses in a row, then learn the 6th (6/8).

Getting Started (the hook)

Tough opening question: "If we have to act anyway, what's the point of praying?" Hold on to that tension for the story.

Today's Story

When the radio announced a violent storm and told everyone to stay home, Bryce, the oldest son, was still on the road, alone at the wheel behind a wall of rain. At home, his mother paced the room, and his father did what so many people save for last, when everything else has failed: he suggested they pray. Here is a truth we often forget: prayer is not the last resort of people with nothing left to do; it is the first move of people who know Who they are dealing with. The Bible never treats prayer as a polite murmur we recite just in case, but as a power that truly works: "The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (James 5:16). Praying is not giving up; it is calling on the strongest One of all before you even lift a finger. So they knelt in the middle of the living room while the wind tore branches from the trees.

Then came a detail you might hardly notice, yet it says it all. As she prayed, not even knowing what to ask for, the mother felt an urgent thought rise up: call him now. The Bible says that in such moments "the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought" (Romans 8:26), and perhaps it was the Holy Spirit who, that night, turned a trembling prayer into a precise action. The father dialed at once, and far away Bryce's phone rang at the very moment a tree came crashing down in front of his car with a sound like the end of the world. See how God answered that prayer: not with lightning from the sky, but by stirring the heart of a mother on her knees, for that is almost always how He works, through ordinary hands. That is why praying never excuses us from acting; it pushes us to act. Living faith doesn't sit with folded arms waiting for a miracle, nor does it rely on its own strength as if God didn't exist. As for Bryce, he kept a cool head, drove around the tree, and came home, soaking wet, to throw himself into his mother's arms.

But the father was honest, and this is where many stories lie to children. He didn't say, "You see, we prayed, so nothing bad could happen to us." He said the opposite: there are nights when we pray with all our heart and the tree falls anyway, when sincere believers go through sickness and grief, and that never means God was absent. How can we be sure? Because of another night, in another garden.

In Gethsemane, the night before the cross, Jesus Himself, so troubled that "His sweat became like great drops of blood" (Luke 22:44), begged for the cup to pass from Him. It did not pass. The Father said no to the prayer of His own Son, and yet that prayer was neither lonely nor useless, because Jesus had sealed it with a few words: "Your will be done" (Matthew 26:42). That is the high point of prayer: not bending God to our will, but bringing our will in tune with His. Then He rose and acted, all the way to the cross. See what God does with suffering: He doesn't explain it from far away; He steps into it. "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all" (Romans 8:32) did not spare His Child the storm; He went through it with Him. And above all, Jesus came out alive on the third day, so the storm never has the last word again, and Jesus could tell His friends: "In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). So when our own tree comes crashing down, we are never alone in the storm, and we know the storm will not win.

There was another stormy night, this time on a lake, when Jesus' friends thought they were going to die while He slept in the back of the boat. They woke Him in a panic, and He got up, "rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, 'Peace, be still!' And the wind ceased and there was a great calm" (Mark 4:39). Then He asked them, "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?" (Mark 4:40). Remember the two lessons of that night. Sometimes Jesus calms the storm around you, and sometimes He calms you in the middle of a storm that keeps raging. But either way, one thing never changes: He is in the boat with you, and He is never really asleep.

Nehemiah had already understood this while rebuilding his threatened wall: "We made our prayer to our God, and ... we set a watch" (Nehemiah 4:9). Prayer and action, never one without the other. So when your sky grows dark, remember the two moves that faith never separates. Pray, then get up and act.

YOUR INVITATION

So today, hand over to God whatever worries you, then get up and do your part.
Will you give Him your storm and follow Him into action? Tell Him yes.

LEADER'S NOTE · naming the thread of grace

we pray with confidence because of the cross; the great "pray and act" is Gethsemane — Hebrews 10:19.

Questions (check)

- In how many days was the wall of Jerusalem rebuilt? (52, Nehemiah 6:15)
- What lets us pray with confidence (Hebrews 10:19)? (the blood of Jesus, the cross)
- In which garden did Jesus pray before the cross? (Gethsemane)

Discussion Questions

- When should we mainly pray, and when mainly act? Can we do both at once?
- Sometimes we pray with all our heart and the tree falls anyway. Was God absent? What does He really promise?
- In Gethsemane, Jesus prayed THEN acted. What does that teach us about our own trials?

Did You Know?

A TREASURE FOR THE NOTEBOOK

Riddle:

What lies at the very center of the most violent storm in the world?

The proof / The Wonder:

The eye of the hurricane: a calm circle 30 to 65 km wide, sometimes with blue sky, while around it winds blow over 250 km/h.

Source — NOAA – National Hurricane Center.

Bridge to Jesus:

There can be peace at the very heart of the storm. Prayer doesn't remove the storm — but God can be your "eye" of calm in the middle.

Tell it — Describe a "storm" in your life where you need that calm. Whom could you ask for it?

Have Fun!

Lightning mission: in teams, choose a real need around you (a neighbor, the room...), pray for 1 minute, then plan ONE concrete action to carry out this week.

→ Debrief: After the game: "We prayed AND acted. This week, where do you need to do both?"

QUIET TIME — my personal time with God

SPEAK · LISTEN · DO

I speak to God: "Father, I trust You in the storm; show me how to act wisely." I listen: Write down a situation that worries you: one line "I pray," one line "I act."

I do (my challenge): Take action on your part this week, and trust God with the rest.

AT HOME (for families)

As a family: go on a "prayer walk" — walk around the neighborhood praying out loud for what you see.

INVITATION TO RESPOND TO JESUS

"Will you give God whatever worries you, and follow Him into action?"

Wrap-up

Pray AND act. Prayer doesn't replace action: often, it moves us to act. And whatever happens, God stays with us in the storm.

FRIDAY — Share the Message

The Joy and Courage to Share Jesus

Creation	Fall	● Redemption	Restoration

MEMORY VERSE

"... tell them what great things the Lord has done for you." Mark 5:19. Compare Acts 22:15: "you will be His witness ... of what you have seen and heard." *Memory challenge: Review the 6 verses, add the 7th (7/8) — the set is almost complete!*

Getting Started (the hook)

Question: "What really keeps young people from talking about their faith today?" List the answers on the board before reading the letter.

Today's Story

(Today we read a letter. Marguerite, eleven, lives in a big, cheerful city by a river. She is writing to her friend Sofia, who moved far away.)

Dear Sofia,

I have to tell you, or I'll burst with happiness.

Remember how, before, I didn't really feel like laughing anymore? There was this weight on my chest at night, and I didn't even know where it came from. It still comes back some nights, I won't lie to you, but something has changed forever, and I want you to know what.

My neighbor took me to a meeting, and honestly I went mostly to get out. But there, someone opened the Bible and copied out for me the words the very first Christians were already passing on, and I'm giving them to you word for word: "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and ... He was buried, and ... He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3 and 4).

And do you know what gave me goosebumps? That little "according to the Scriptures." It means it had all been foretold long before Jesus came. A prophet named Isaiah wrote it nearly seven hundred years earlier; my neighbor showed me in the book: "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him" (Isaiah 53:5). Upon Him, Sofia, so that it wouldn't fall on me. My nighttime weight, He carried it in my place, on the cross. And they explained something I'll never forget: God didn't pretend evil didn't exist, because that wouldn't have been fair, but He didn't crush me either, because He loves me. He did both at once: He punished evil and took the punishment Himself. The cross is the place where His justice and His love meet without either one giving way. And it's not a pretty legend people tell to comfort themselves, because the same passage says that after His resurrection Jesus was seen alive "by over five hundred brethren at once" (1 Corinthians 15:6), people you could go and ask. He really came out of the tomb, stronger than fear, stronger than death. This story doesn't end on a cross; it ends standing up, alive.

But do you know what moved me most? That He loved me, me, exactly as I was that night, before I changed a single thing. It was like a window finally opening in a room shut up for years, and light pouring in all at once. I talked to Jesus for the first time, very simply, because He had said: "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). The weight didn't vanish like magic, but I don't carry it alone anymore. And they showed me a verse that says what I feel better than I can: "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). So it's not just that I feel better, Sofia; it's that I have become someone new. And even on the nights when the weight comes back and laughter is slow to come, what Jesus did doesn't change, because it doesn't depend on my mood but on His cross.

Since then, I can't stop talking about it, to the girls in my neighborhood, to the lady at the market. Some people make fun of me, and it takes courage, I won't hide it. But others listen, and yesterday two whole families came to the meeting because of me. Me, Marguerite, with no diploma, who doesn't know the whole Bible yet. I was afraid I wasn't good enough, until I read about a man Jesus had set free from a terrible misery. He wanted to leave everything and follow Jesus everywhere, but Jesus asked him for something simpler: "Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you" (Mark 5:19). That's all we are asked to do: not a big speech, not knowledge learned by heart, just sharing what we have received.

So I'm writing to you, because a verse I learned won't leave me in peace until I've told it to you: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). The world, Sofia, includes you, exactly as you are. Write back soon.

Your friend who laughs again, Marguerite

(And you, reading this letter: who will you share the message with? What if you wrote a little letter of your own to tell someone something Jesus has done for you?)

YOUR INVITATION

So today, it's your turn: whom will you tell what Jesus has done for you? Choose one person, and ask Jesus for the courage to share the good news with them this week.

LEADER'S NOTE · naming the thread of grace

the message is Christ, who died and rose — received by grace, shared with joy — 1 Corinthians 15:3-4.

Questions (check)

- According to 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, what is the heart of the good news? (Christ died and rose)
- In Mark 5, where did the healed man go to testify? (the Decapolis, ten cities)
- Must you know all of the Bible to witness? (no — telling what Jesus did for you is enough)

Discussion Questions

- What exactly is "the message" — being good, or the death and resurrection of Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:3-4)?
- What holds you back from talking about your faith? Be honest.
- Can we share the message without words, just by the way we live? How?

Did You Know?

A TREASURE FOR THE NOTEBOOK

Riddle — Without speaking, how does a bee tell her sisters where to find flowers kilometers away?

The proof / The Wonder — With a dance: the direction of her waggle shows the angle to the sun, and its length shows the distance. Her sisters "read" it and fly straight to the spot.

Source — NC State Extension; discovered by Karl von Frisch (Nobel 1973).

Bridge to Jesus — Even a bee passes on good news clearly enough for others to find it. You too can share the Good News simply.

Tell it — Put YOUR "dance" into words: in one sentence, how would you tell a friend what Jesus did for you?

Have Fun!

Testimony workshop: each one prepares "what Jesus has done for me" in 3 sentences, practices with a partner, then takes on the challenges ("what if someone asks a hard question?").

→ Debrief: After the game: "Did the message travel well? Now it's your turn to pass it on — with joy."

QUIET TIME — my personal time with God

SPEAK · LISTEN · DO

I speak to God: "Lord, fill me with a joy that overflows to others."
I listen: Write your testimony in 3 sentences: before / meeting Him / after.
I do (my challenge): This week, share it with at least one person — and pray for them.

AT HOME (for families)

As a family: each person tells "one thing Jesus has done for me," then together give a verse card to a neighbor.

INVITATION TO RESPOND TO JESUS

"Will you be someone who shares the good news? Ask Jesus for courage."

Wrap-up

When you find a treasure, you want to share it. You have good news: Jesus loves you. Dare to tell it.

SUMMARY OF THE WEEK

To reread before the Second Sabbath message

Before starting the last session, take a moment to connect everything the children have experienced. This summary helps you remind them of the road traveled, from Sunday to Friday, so they see the week as one whole and not eight separate lessons.

The whole week tells one single story, a grace received that ends up overflowing, and it moves from the inside out, from hands that receive to lips that share.

It all begins on Sunday, when the child discovers that Jesus is the true Bread of Life and that he has nothing to offer Him but nearly empty hands, since it is Jesus, not his own merit, who satisfies. From this discovery comes Monday's question at once: if we have received, how do we live? Not by gritting our teeth, since knowing what is good is not enough, but by receiving a new heart and abiding in Him as the branch holds to the vine. Yet the child cannot produce this abiding on his own, and that is why Tuesday introduces the Holy Spirit, the invisible wind who shows him Jesus and ripens in him a fruit no effort could ever make.

Once rooted like this, the child can turn toward trials and toward others. So Wednesday puts his faith to the test of the storm, where it learns to pray and then to get up, and where, even when the tree falls despite prayer, the cross assures him that God is never absent. This grace, now strong enough to stand in the storm, overflows on Thursday even to enemies, for someone who remembers being loved first while still an enemy can no longer keep that love to himself. And this overflow at last reaches its full measure on Friday, when the child, unable to keep quiet any longer, simply tells others what Jesus has done for him.

So the week runs from the Bread received on Sunday to the message shared on Friday. The first three days root, the last three send, and everything turns on Wednesday, when grace tested in the storm becomes strong enough to give itself. First grounded in the Bible, then focused on the mission.

SECOND SABBATH — Love Like Jesus

A Funeral Called Off

Creation	Fall	Redemption	● Restoration

MEMORY VERSE

"Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you." Luke 6:27 Compare with John 13:34-35: how do people recognize Jesus' disciples?

Memory challenge: Final challenge: recite all 8 verses of the week — then we celebrate (certificate, applause, snack)! (8/8)

Getting Started (the hook)

Provocation: "Loving your enemies: is it weak and naive, or the strongest thing in the world?" 2-minute debate before the story.

Today's Story

Tembo loved Jesus, and you could see it in the way he lived. Ever since he had tasted the beauty of God's Word, he walked like someone carrying a joyful secret, helpful, gentle, always ready to lend a hand, so that almost everyone in the village loved him. Almost everyone, because there was Juma. Juma had hated him from day one, for no real reason; he mocked him, made up stories, dragged his name through the mud, and every cruel act lodged in Tembo like a splinter. Tembo could have struck back blow for blow, and some evenings he wanted to, but each time he thought of Someone who, nailed to a cross by His own enemies, still found the strength to pray: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Luke 23:34). So Tembo prayed and stayed kind, not because it was easy, but because he didn't want to love any differently from the One who had loved him first, having understood this simple verse: "We love Him because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

One day, terrible news spread through the village. Juma was seriously ill; a wound had become infected, and the smell, people said, filled the whole house. Little by little everyone drew away, the neighbors, the friends, and in the end his own family, who waited in silence for him to die. No one wanted to go near Juma. No one, except Tembo, who heard a small voice deep inside him: go. At the door, Tembo hesitated, for the smell was already turning his stomach, and a voice within him whispered: why would you go? That man has hurt you so much. But another, deeper voice answered: and what were you on the day God came looking for you? The Bible doesn't hide it: "when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son" (Romans 5:10). That is what Tembo understood on that doorstep: he too had been God's enemy, and God had not loved him once he became lovable; He had loved him while he was still against Him. So how could he keep to himself a love he had received for free? A love truly received cannot stay locked up; it overflows, and if it doesn't overflow, it was never truly received. He pushed the door open and went in.

What Tembo was about to do, the Bible had commanded word for word, long before him. "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink," writes the apostle Paul, before summing up a Christian's whole battle in one sentence: "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:20-21). Understand what kind of battle this is. Repaying evil with evil is not defeating evil; it is being defeated by it, because the other person's hatred has then managed to plant hatred in you. The only way to truly win is to answer with a good so unexpected that it disarms the enemy. That is not weakness; it is the highest form of courage, and it is exactly the path Tembo chose as he pushed open that door.

He cleaned the wound with his own hands, paid for the care and the hospital out of his own pocket, and came back day after day without tiring. Notice that this love cost him something: his heaving stomach, his money, his time, for grace is free to receive but costly to give, just as it had cost the very life of the Son of God. And under this stubborn care, two things began to heal: Juma's body and his heart. One morning, in a broken voice, Juma whispered: "My own family was waiting for me to die. And you, my enemy, risked coming to save me. Why?" Tembo smiled gently: "Because Someone did that for me first." The funeral

they had been preparing never took place. Instead, there was a man healed and two enemies turned brothers. Look closely at what had just happened, for it is the whole Gospel in miniature: an enemy loved to the very end, a death called off, a new family born where there had only been hatred.

And if you wonder why Jesus cares so much that we love even our enemies, listen to the reason He gives Himself: "Love your enemies ... that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good" (Matthew 5:44-45). So loving your enemy is not one more rule to tick off; it is a family likeness: when you do it, you look like your Father, who gives His sun and rain even to those who reject Him. But make no mistake, this is not willpower; no one can force himself to love like that. It is grace received, then given back. That is why Jesus could ask what seems impossible: "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you" (Luke 6:27). It is possible on one condition only: to have first been the enemy whom God loved first.

YOUR INVITATION

So today, think of the person you find it hardest to love. Will you ask Jesus, who loved you first, to come and love that person through you? Tell Him yes, and take a step toward them this week.

LEADER'S NOTE · naming the thread of grace

we love our enemy because God loved us when we were His enemies — Romans 5:8-10; 1 John 4:19.

Questions (check)

- Which verse says to love our enemies? (Luke 6:27)
- According to Romans 5:8-10, what were we when Christ died for us? (sinners, enemies)
- According to John 13:35, how are Jesus' disciples recognized? (by their love)

Discussion Questions

- Does "love your enemies" mean putting up with anything, even mistreatment? Where's the line?
- Tembo says, "Because Someone did that for me first." How does the cross make this love possible?
- Is there someone you find hard to love? What small step of love could you take?

Did You Know?

A TREASURE FOR THE NOTEBOOK

Riddle:

What most amazed a Roman emperor who HATED Christians?

The proof / The Wonder:

Around 362, Emperor Julian complained in writing: "these Galileans feed not only their own poor, but ours as well." Their love went beyond their own group.

Source — Julian's Letter to Arsacius; Loeb Classical Library; Christian History Institute.

Bridge to Jesus:

Even an enemy recognized Christian love for "outsiders" — like Tembo's love for Juma, and Jesus' love for us when we were His enemies.

Tell it — Explain: how does the world recognize a true disciple of Jesus? (by their love — John 13:35.)

Have Fun!

"Enemy → friend" mission: secretly write the first name of someone hard to love and ONE concrete act of love for this week. No one reads it; it's between God and you.

→ Debrief: After the game: "To whom will you offer this act of love this week — especially if it's hard?"

QUIET TIME — my personal time with God

SPEAK · LISTEN · DO

I speak to God: "Lord, You loved me when I was Your enemy; love this person through me."
I listen: Write (in secret) a hard name, and ask God to change the way you see them first.
I do (my challenge): Do one concrete act of love for this person this week, expecting nothing in return.

AT HOME (for families)

As a family: name someone hard to love, and decide on a concrete act of love to do together this week.

INVITATION TO RESPOND TO JESUS

"Maybe Jesus is calling you to follow Him for real. Will you give Him your life? You can tell Him yes right now, in your own words." (Allow real time; offer to pray with those who wish, without pressure.)

Wrap-up

Loving like Jesus means being kind even to those who hurt us. We can't do it alone — we let Jesus love through us. That is how the world recognizes Him.