

WHO

Do I Need to Know From the Bible?
Judges Through the Birth of Christ



Book 2



WHO

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Judges Through the Birth of Christ



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WHO Do I Need to Know From the Bible?

Judges Through the Birth of Christ

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WHAT ARE THE WHYS OF THE WHO BOOK?

How do I use the *WHO* book?

This *WHO* book is a resource for your Sparks® Large Group Time. This second *WHO* book corresponds with the *WingRunner*® handbook. We also have a *WHO* book corresponding to the *HangGlider*® handbook and the *SkyStormer*® handbook.

What do you mean that it corresponds with the specific books?

The *WingRunner* handbook talks about events that happened from Judges through the birth of Christ. The second *WHO* book includes Bible biographies from that same time period.

So I have to teach these lessons in order?

No, not necessarily. At any given time, you will have Sparkies in different parts of all three books, so it would be impossible to teach a lesson that would correspond with the exact sections that ALL Sparkies are on. The lessons are stand alone — although we do have multiple lessons about a few of the characters such as Gideon and Esther. But you can use them any way you want.

What if I don't have all that much time for Large Group Time lessons?

Don't feel as if you have to teach the entire lesson in a week. Feel free to spend two or three weeks on a lesson to make sure you get the point across. No one is rushing you.

Are all the lessons in the *WHO* books Bible biographies?

No, not all of them. We include a few other lessons.

What are the different segments in the *WHO* book?

To help YOU, the leader, understand the lesson, we've divided each one into segments as shown on the next page.

Reading

Where you'll find the lesson in the Bible

Thinking

Some thoughts for you, the leader. These include background information on the biography and also some considerations as you teach it to the Sparkies.

LookingItUp

This is a verse(s) for the children to find in their Bibles. (Have Sparkies turn to the passage before you begin teaching since many children will need help.) Asking the children to find the verse encourages them to bring their Bibles and to learn how to use their Bibles. Often we suggest you have either a leader or Sparkie read the verse during the lesson. Although many Sparkies can't read, they still enjoy having their Bibles open to the verse.

GettingItReady

A list of what you need to prepare the lesson

Showing

An object lesson or skit will catch the children's attention and also help explain the lesson theme.

Telling

The actual lesson or biography

Challenging

The application to life. A few of our lessons have more than one challenge. You can use all the challenges or you can use the one that best meets the needs of your group.

There are some lessons that will necessitate extra prep time. Consider looking ahead a week or two to see if you need to bring extra materials or seek out the assistance of another leader or clubber.

FamilyFollowUp

This section gives suggestions of activities, discussion starters or other ideas for parents and children to do together in the home.

TeachingIdeas

These are additional ideas for you to use as you present your lesson.

SparksActivity

A puzzle or other activity that the Sparkies can do in relationship to the lesson

We pray that you will use this book as a tool to teach young children about the men and women whom God included in His Word, the Bible.

LESSON TIME 101

Have you thought about the Large Group Time lesson for Sparks beyond, “Oh, no, what will I talk about this week?” Have you ever really contemplated the awesome opportunity you have of presenting a Bible lesson to children?

Think about it like this.

PRAYER + PREPARATION + OPPORTUNITY

Prayer seems like a no-brainer, but many fail to include this vital component. Whether it’s praying for the children who will hear or asking God to give you peace and wisdom as you prepare and share, Philippians 4:6-7 is an instruction and a comfort: *Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

Preparation also seems like an obvious point, but too often we don’t set aside enough time to prepare for the lesson. Think about it: How thoroughly would you prepare if you were asked to speak before a large gathering of adults in church or elsewhere? The opportunity to share Christ with children is equally valuable in God’s eyes (see Mark 10:13-16).

Here are a few thoughts on preparation:

Remember, it’s God’s Word and the Holy Spirit that change lives. Always put more emphasis on the Scripture than on the illustration — both in your preparation and in your lesson.

It’s difficult to prepare an effective Bible lesson the night before club or after work on club night. Read your lesson well ahead of time, making notes about what preparations are needed. Of course, you can use the written lesson, but always be prepared enough so that you don’t read the lesson to the children.

Some of the lesson concepts are difficult. Be open to splitting a lesson into two or even three parts so you get the point across. It is better to take a couple of weeks to teach a lesson than to hurry it up for the sake of getting through it in one night.

Opportunity can be summed up with one thrilling/sobering thought — this may be the first time some of your visitors have ever heard the gospel. How exciting! What a privilege to share Christ with them! Yet the entire concept of sitting and listening to a Bible lesson is something that may be new to them. We need to be serious about teaching the children in our clubs.

1. Environment

If your group is small enough or your room big enough, arrange the chairs in a circle. Not only does this formation put EVERYONE in the front row, but it also gives more of a “sitting-around-the-campfire” feel rather than a structured “school” feel. (We understand, of course, that many of you present the lesson in an area where Sparkies sit in stationary pews or chairs and you can’t change the formation.)

Ask the Sparkies to sit so that they’re facing a blank or uncluttered wall. If they face an open door or window (with people walking by) or have a variety of pictures to look at, you’ll be competing for their attention.

Ask your leaders to sit among the Sparkies (especially if your leaders tend to gather in the back of the room to drink coffee or chat during the lesson). Tell them this is especially important because you want them available to help Sparkies find verses in their Bibles. Also, be sure your leaders are prepared to meet with Sparkies who indicate they want to trust Christ as Savior.

2. Introduction

Start your lesson by SIMPLY STARTING. Often leaders waste valuable time by telling the Sparkies to “settle down” or “listen up.” If you want to introduce the lesson before you actually start teaching, do so in a positive, rather than a negative, way.

Negative lesson starters:

OK, you’ve had your fun in Game Time, now you need to sit still and listen. **(In other words — this WON’T be fun, so be prepared to be bored.)**

If you don’t sit still and listen, we won’t have time for games (or snacks or awards). **(In other words — the lesson is something to suffer through so we can get to the good stuff.)**

Positive lesson starters:

I am SO excited to tell you about _____. The more I learn about _____, the more I’ve wanted to tell you about him/her/it. **(In other words, you’re excited! Wow! Sparkies watch adults closely; they notice our excitement. Shouldn’t they see us excited about God’s Word? However, beware of stretching the facts in an attempt to be funny or entertaining. Remember, your visitors may know nothing about the Bible ... they are learning from what you say.)**

How many of you have ever _____? That was hard/exciting/scary/fun, wasn’t it? Tonight we’ll talk about _____ and how God worked in his/her/their life through a situation that was a lot like that. **(In other words, you’re interested in the Sparkies as people and can relate their real life experiences to Bible accounts. When asking**

a question to open a lesson, however, limit the responses and move on with the lesson in order to create some momentum and establish yourself — not the Sparkies — as the main speaker of the lesson.)

3. Conclusion

Make sure you close your lesson as clearly and decisively as you opened it. While it’s tempting to go on and on in an effort to make sure you’ve covered everything, a clear and energetic closing — restating your lesson’s main point and inviting Sparkies to ask leaders any questions — is more memorable and effective. Of course, presenting the gospel to children in any setting requires us to be clear in our approach and terminology. The *Awana Ministry Catalog* offers resources to help you. Of all the things you want to get right in your lesson, the gospel must be at the top of the list.

ALLERGY WARNING

Peanut allergies and lactose intolerance are on the rise and schools are going gluten free. Please be very careful when you incorporate food of any kind into your Theme Night, Game Time or Large Group Time. At the start of the club year, ask parents/guardians to fill out a form listing any allergies/medical conditions that their Sparkies have. Do not allow any Sparkie to participate in a food-related game or event (even candy – diabetic children could have a reaction) until you know for certain that the child can handle it. A good rule of thumb is better safe than sorry.

Reading

Romans 3:23; Romans 6:23; 1 John 4:14;
Romans 5:8; John 3:16

Thinking

Sparkies are at the age where they love to soak up facts. They want to know everything about everything. Take advantage of this phase in their lives to make sure they have a clear understanding of the gospel. Don't be afraid to tell them over and over again.

Another thing about children at this age — they still don't think they're all that bad. They hit their brother or tell a lie, but they don't think of themselves as sinners. They think, "Everyone else is a sinner, but not me!" In this lesson, you'll help these precious ones understand that EVERYONE is a sinner. You'll tell them why Jesus had to die on the cross and why they need to trust Jesus as their Savior.

Keep in mind that the more animated and passionate you are as you teach, the more the Sparkies will listen. This is a serious lesson — the eternal lives of Sparkies are at stake. Don't make light of the situation, but show enthusiasm and passion as you tell Sparkies this life-changing message.

Looking It Up

1 John 4:14. *(Ask Sparkies to look up the verse before you begin the lesson.)*

Getting It Ready

You will need:

- A picture of either a stoplight or an intersection with a stoplight for the first part of the lesson



Showing

How many of you came here tonight in a car? (*Allow Sparkies to raise hands, say yes, etc.*) OK, most of you came in a car. What's in this picture? (*Point to stoplight and allow for answers.*) Did you see a stoplight on your drive here? (*Allow Sparkies to answer.*) It looks like most of you saw at least one stoplight as you drove here. Why are there stoplights on the roads? (*Keep us from getting in a car accident, keep us safe, etc.*) What would happen if there were no stoplights? (*There would be car accidents.*) Right, there would be a lot of car accidents. People would drive right through intersections and might get hit by another car! What if you came to a stoplight and it was green? What would you do? (*You go through it.*) What if you were to stop at the light when it's green? (*Someone might run into the back of your car or honk the horn at you.*) What if the light was red? Would you go through it? (*No!*) No, you would stop ... otherwise a car might hit you! Stoplights will save us from accidents, but you must believe that the light is working and do what it says so that you can be saved from an accident.

Telling

Let's think about something else now. In a while, I'll tell you how believing in stoplights is kind of like believing in Jesus. What do you think life would be like if Jesus never died on the cross? What do you think would happen? **(Allow a few answers: We couldn't be saved, couldn't go to heaven, etc.)**

But why did Jesus have to die on the cross? Can't we just be really good and be nice to everyone? Isn't that enough? Let's talk a little about why Jesus had to die on the cross.

Jesus' death on the cross saves us from our sins. If there was no Jesus, we could never be saved! Jesus is perfect. That means He has never done anything wrong. He's the only perfect person to ever walk on the earth — EVER. Because He is perfect, He could take the punishment for our sins. First John 4:14 tells us that God sent His Son, Jesus, to be the Savior of the world. Look at your Bibles, and let's read that verse together. **(Use your Bible to read the verse.)**

Do you want to know another reason Jesus Christ died for our sins? Because He loves us! He loves you! He loves you so much that He chose to die on the cross so that you can live with Him forever. Romans 5:8 says that God showed His love for us when He sent Jesus Christ to die for us — even though we were sinners. I'll read the verse for you. **(Read the verse.)** Remember, God can't allow sin in heaven because heaven is a perfect place (nothing bad EVER happens in heaven) and God is perfect. So, when Jesus died on the cross and came alive again, He took the penalty of our sins so we can go to heaven if we trust Jesus as our Savior.

So now we know why Jesus had to die on the cross ... because it's the only way we can go to heaven. Now let's talk about why YOU need to trust Jesus as your Savior.



You're probably a pretty good kid. You listen to your mom and dad — most of the time. You obey your teacher — most of the time. You try not to tell lies and you try to be nice to your brother or sister. But even if you're a really good kid, you make wrong choices and you sin. That means you're not perfect. That means you're a sinner. You need someone to save you from your sins. Sin is anything you say, think or do that goes against what God says in the Bible.

But we've all sinned — everyone ... even your leaders have sinned. That's what Romans 3:23 tells us. Romans 3:23 says that everyone has sinned. We are all born sinners. No one had to teach us how to sin.

Think about this with me — heaven is where God lives. It's a perfect place, and God can't allow sin into heaven because then it wouldn't be perfect anymore. Romans 6:23 says that the punishment for sin is death. But Jesus Christ died for our sins and came alive again. If we believe that He took the punishment for us, our sins will be forgiven and we can live with God forever in heaven. Another way of saying that we will live with God forever is to say we have eternal life. *Eternal* means "going on and on and never stopping."

Do you want to know how you can trust Jesus as your Savior? Trusting Jesus Christ as your Savior is the most important decision you will ever make. Now that you know why Jesus had to die on the cross and why you need to trust Jesus as your Savior, it's time to take the next step. You need to trust Jesus as your Savior. You do that when you believe that Jesus died on the cross and came alive again to save you from your sins.

Remember the stoplights? We said that stoplights can save you from accidents, but you have to believe what they are telling you. When the light is green, you need to believe it is safe to keep going and drive through the intersection to be saved from an accident. When the light is red, you have to believe that you need to stop and be saved from an accident. It's kind of like that with Jesus. You have to believe Jesus died on the cross and came alive again and trust Him as your Savior to be saved.

Once you believe that Jesus died on the cross to save you from your sins, you'll want to talk to God and thank Him. You can talk to Him anytime, anywhere, about anything. Talking to God is called prayer. But remember, it isn't prayer that saves you. You are saved when you trust Jesus as your Savior.

Let's look at John 3:16. I'll read it for you. **(Read the verse.)** Based on what the verse says, WHO will have everlasting life?

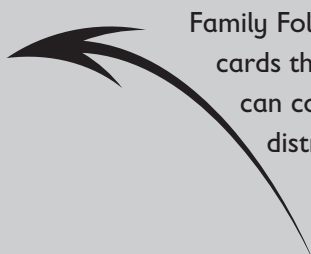
Challenging

Have you trusted Jesus as your Savior? Talk to one of your leaders about it today. Remember, this is the most important decision you will ever make!

Family Follow Up

Next time you're in the car and come to a stoplight, rehash the lesson. Stoplights save us from accidents when we believe what they show us. Ask questions like: Should I go if the light is red? What should I do if the light is green? What do I have to do in order to be saved by Jesus? **(You have to believe Jesus died on the cross and came alive again and trust Him as your Savior to be saved.)**

Turn to page 175 for Family Follow-Up cards that you can copy and distribute!



Teaching Ideas

Theme Ideas

- **Birthday Night** — Everyone celebrates their spiritual birthday ... the day they trusted Christ as Savior. For those who haven't trusted Christ yet, the gospel lesson will allow them the opportunity to make this club night their spiritual birthday.
- **Bring a Friend Night** — All Sparkies have sections in their handbooks that involve bringing friends to Awana®. In general, Sparkies should be encouraged to bring friends every club night! But occasionally, it's fun to make a special night of it. Announce the week before that the following week will be Bring a Friend Night. Create colorful invitations. Provide large, full-size candy bars (or other incentives that you know your Sparkies like) for Sparkies who bring friends. The gospel message is the perfect lesson to teach on a night like this.

Game Ideas

- **Gone Fishing** — Make six construction-paper fish of the same color and attach a small magnet to each. Write a number (one to six) on the flip side of the fish. Assign different prizes to each number. Make a fishing pole (out of a stick or something else long and thin) and attach string and the other side of a magnet to the end. Allow Sparkies to go fishing in a plastic wading pool. They get one turn to catch a fish and then receive the corresponding prize. Lesson correlation — we are to be like a fisherman and tell others the gospel so that they can know Jesus too; Jesus draws us to Himself like a magnet and He wants us to come to know, love and serve Him.

Teaching Options

- In addition to having pictures of a stoplight or intersection, bring in someone who is a security guard or police officer and interview him or her about road safety. Ask why it's important to understand and believe that stoplights work in order for us to be safe. Ask if this person has seen the effects of people not doing what the lights say (accidents, injuries, etc.). What happens when people do what the lights say? Bringing in another person provides a great visual for the Sparkies. It'll help them to hear an expert. Then when you follow up with more examples and the correlation in the lesson, it'll drive the point home (pun intended) for the Sparkies.
- At the beginning of club, place an appealingly-wrapped gift in front of the room. As you proceed in the lesson, occasionally pause and ask a leader to open the gift. Leaders should come back with excuses such as "I'm too busy, I'll do it later, I'll do it when I'm older, I'm not good enough to open it or I have everything I need already."

The gift should look inviting to Sparkies and make them want to know what's inside.

At the completion of your lesson, talk to your Sparkies and explain that some people give those kinds of excuses instead of accepting God's gift.

After your lesson is done, ask a leader to open the gift. Inside, have candy or another treat for everyone.

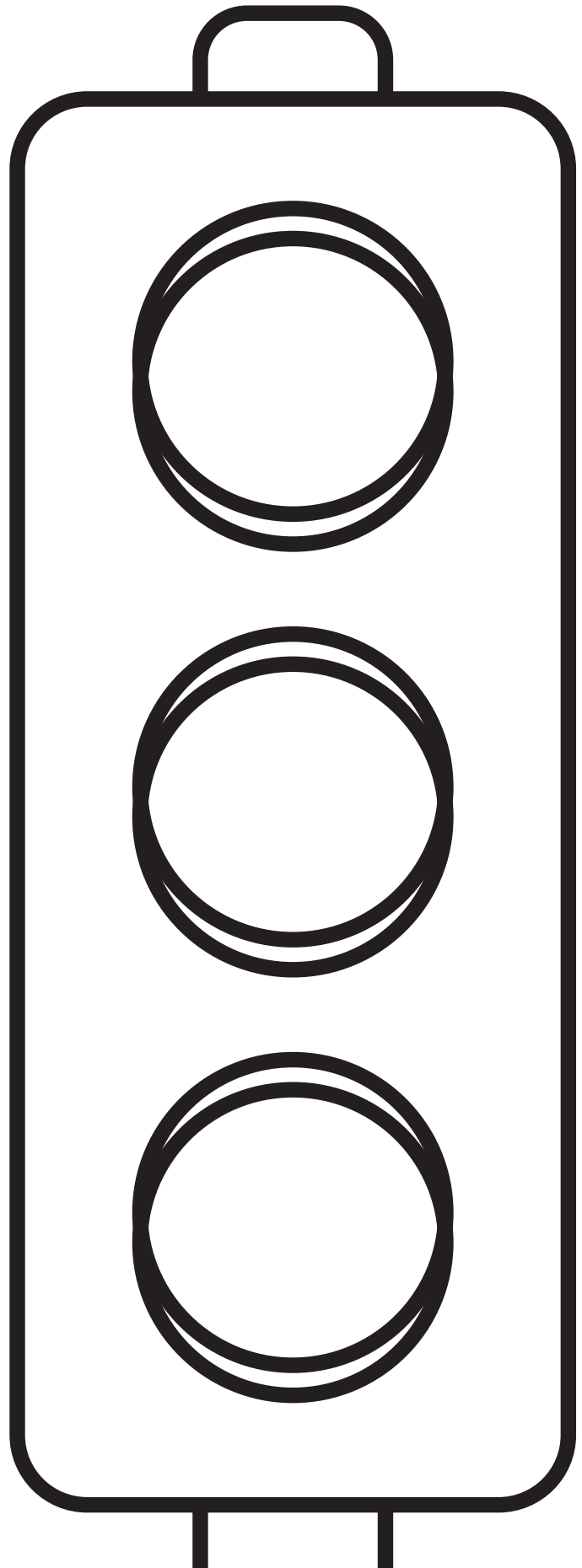
SparksActivity

What are you supposed to do when you come to a stoplight and the light is green?

What do you do when the light is red?

First John 4:14 says that God sent Jesus to be the Savior of the world.

Color the picture of the stoplight. Put it somewhere where you can see it to remind you that you are saved when you BELIEVE that Jesus died and came alive again to save you from your sins. You gotta BELIEVE!



Reading

John 3:16; 1 John 4:14; Psalm 147:5;
1 Corinthians 15:3-4; James 2:10;
Acts 16:31

Thinking

All the verses in the above section are from the SPARKS acronym. S — Savior, P — Power, A — According to the Scriptures, R — Rose (Raised) Again, K — Keep, S — Saved. This lesson focuses on the power of God. He is mighty and powerful.

The lesson calls for another adult to play the part of Professor Spark. Professor Spark will teach the Sparkies about some things that are powerful. Anyone can play this part. Everything that Professor Spark needs to know is right here in the lesson.

Looking It Up

Psalm 147:5 (*Ask Sparkies to look up the verse before you begin the lesson.*)

Getting It Ready

You will need:

- Lab coat and goggles for the professor to wear
- Pictures of a tornado, a calm stream, a raging river, Niagara Falls, a hurricane and a fire (fireplace, forest fire, etc.). Or if you have the setup for it, show the pictures using a computer and projector.

Showing

Hi, everyone! Are you ready for the lesson? We're going to talk about power. First, I want you all to shut your eyes and think of a nice, summer day that has a little bit of a breeze. Imagine the breeze on your face. Does it feel nice? **(Hold up picture of a tornado.)** Now open your eyes and look at this picture of a tornado. Which one has more power — the breeze or the tornado? Yes, the tornado definitely has more power than the nice breeze on a summer day. **(Hold up picture of a stream.)** Now, let's look at this picture of a stream and let's look at this other picture of a river. Which one has more power — the stream or the river? Yes, a river has a lot more power than a stream!



Telling

(Professor Spark can begin making his or her way to the front of the room.) I've decided to have someone help me with this lesson. I'm bringing in Professor Spark to teach us about power.

YOU: Hi, Professor Spark!

PROFESSOR: Hi there! Thanks for inviting me.

YOU: We're so glad that you were able to leave your lab and join us for a while. I need your help with the lesson.

PROFESSOR: I'd be happy to help. What's the lesson about?

YOU: It's about power.

PROFESSOR: What kind of power?

YOU: Well, that's where you come in, professor. I want you to tell us about things that are powerful.

PROFESSOR: Oh, that's easy. I can tell you about all kinds of powerful things!

YOU: Great! Go right ahead.

PROFESSOR: Well, let's see *(scratching chin as if thinking)*, there's water, wind, fire ...

YOU: Whoa, hang on professor! That's a lot of power! Can you talk a bit about each one?

PROFESSOR: Sure. Let's start with water. Water can be a very powerful thing. Did you know that we can use water to make electricity? And when it moves really hard and really fast *(move hands hard and fast for visual example)*, water can move houses and cars. Then there's wind. From these pictures you have here, it looks like you talked a little bit about wind, right?



YOU: Yes, we did. I was showing everyone how a tornado is more powerful than a summer breeze.

PROFESSOR: That's very true. We can use wind to make electricity too. And wind can also move buildings and trees when it blows and moves fast — like it does in a tornado or hurricane. Now let's talk about fire. Fire is also very powerful. It can burn down a whole forest very quickly — especially if the wind is blowing hard. It's also powerful enough to keep homes warm. Before we had electricity, people only had fire to heat their homes. They had stoves and fireplaces. Many of you have fireplaces, I'm sure.

YOU: This is all great to know, professor. Thanks for helping us understand about water, wind and fire and how powerful they can be.

PROFESSOR: But wait — there's something even more powerful for me to tell you about!

YOU: Really? What's more powerful than water, wind and fire?

PROFESSOR: God is!

YOU: You're right! God IS more powerful than anything and everything else!

PROFESSOR: Yes, He is. God is the one who made water, wind and fire in the first place! **(Hold up picture of Niagara Falls.)** See this picture of Niagara Falls? Isn't it beautiful? Waterfalls are very powerful, and God created them.

YOU: And look at this picture of a hurricane. **(Hold up picture of a hurricane.)** Doesn't it look powerful? God created wind.

PROFESSOR: Yes, and God created fire too! **(Hold up picture of fire.)** Look at this picture of a fire. God made it. God is SO powerful!

YOU: Thanks, professor, for helping us understand how powerful God is.

PROFESSOR: You're very welcome. Well, I'd better get back to my lab. I have a lot of work to do. Bye, everyone!

YOU: Bye, professor!

Wow ... water, wind and fire are SO powerful, aren't they? Water and wind can move buildings and make electricity! Fire can burn just about anything and can keep us warm. But you know what? As powerful as these things are, God is more powerful. God is more powerful than water, wind and fire. He's more powerful than anything and anyone! How many of you have learned the Sparks very important verses? Do you remember what each letter in the word SPARKS stands for? Let's go over them together! S — Savior, P — Power, A — According to the Scriptures, R — Rose (Raised) Again, K — Keep, S — Saved.

Tell me one more time ... what does the P stand for? That's right! Power. God is very powerful. Before the lesson began, I asked you all to look up Psalm 147:5 in your Bibles. Look at the verse while I read it aloud. **(Read the verse.)**

Challenging



This verse is saying that God is powerful, and that He knows and understands everything.

(Spread your arms out when you say “everything” to add emphasis.) That means that He can take care of you, love you, hear you, see you, help you ... the list goes on and on. Because God is powerful, you can know that once you trust Him as your Savior, you are saved — forever. You will go to heaven. If you haven’t trusted Jesus as your Savior, talk to one of your leaders. They’ll be happy to answer your questions and talk to you about how you can trust Jesus as your Savior.

Tell me again, what does the P stand for? Yep, POWER! God is very powerful. Let’s take a moment to thank God for showing us His power in the water, wind and fire. **(Pray.)**

Family Follow Up

Look up Psalm 147:5 and read it together. Have each person name something that is powerful. After each thing is named, add, "But God is even more powerful."

Pray and thank God for His power and for all that He has created.

Turn to page 175 for
Family Follow-Up
cards that you
can copy and
distribute!



Teaching Ideas

Theme Ideas

- **Power Night** — Emphasize all different kinds of power during the night: physical power, authoritative power and fictional, superhero power. Show how none of these are equal to God's power.
- **Superhero Night** — This theme night is similar to the one above except you could have Sparkies dress as superheroes.

Game Ideas

- **Musical Relay** — Play music from a CD player for a musical relay. (You could use the Sparks *Sing It, Tell It, Whisper It, Yell It!* CD.) Sparkies run around the circle, but every time the music stops, they also need to stop their running. Once the music begins again, they continue running. The music plays because of the power coming through the electric cord (or battery).
- **Superhero Game** — Sparkies put on capes before running around the circle. (Use old blankets as capes.) You could also make an obstacle course with tables, chairs, other people, etc.

Teaching Options

- Do you have a leader or someone in your church who lifts weights? Ask him to visit club and demonstrate some of his weight-lifting skills to the Sparkies. (Be sure Sparkies are not put in a dangerous position by being too close to the action.) Afterwards, discuss with your Sparkies how your guest had power, but God has more power than anyone. God's power is not limited to weight lifting. God is powerful enough to create the entire world! (If your guest is experienced at teaching the Bible to children, you may want to ask him or her to do your large group lesson.)

- Bring in several small appliances. Set the appliances in a row in front of the Sparkies.

Tell the Sparkies that to begin the lesson, the mixer will begin to mix, the radio will begin to play, the popcorn popper will begin to pop, etc.

Then say, "So, let's begin the lesson ..." (Turn on the appliances, but don't plug them in.) Of course, the Sparkies will tell you what you are doing wrong.)

Plug in the appliances. (You could have them all going at once so there's a lot of noise for a few minutes. Sparkies love noise! Also, you could pop corn for the entire group. You might have to have some pre-popped so you have enough for everyone.)

Say, "When I first began the lesson, the appliances wouldn't start. Why not?" (Allow Sparkies to volunteer answers. See if you can guide the discussion toward one of them talking about power.) Did you know only God has the power to create the whole, entire world? Yet, a lot of people don't understand all the ways we see God's power every day. (Start the lesson.)

SparksActivity

Write your own song/psalm that talks about how powerful God is. Make it your prayer to Him. It doesn't have to be really long — try to write four sentences.

Ask your leader or dad or mom to help you with the words.

Reading

Judges 6 and 7

Thinking

The book of Judges describes a morally dark time in Israel's history. The Israelites had finally made it to the Promised Land. But instead of living as a holy nation, God's children allowed themselves to be dragged down into the pagan practices of their foreign neighbors. They were caught in a continual cycle of rebelling against God, becoming oppressed by other nations, crying out to God, and being rescued by various deliverers. Gideon was one such deliverer.

Gideon, however, was not someone you would think of as a deliverer. He was an insecure, somewhat wimpy farmer from an insignificant family. Yet the Bible calls him a man of faith (Hebrews 11:32-34). Gideon's weakness was turned into strength as he allowed God to use him to rout the Midianites.

Has God ever called you to do something which you felt completely powerless to do? Did you think that maybe God had picked the wrong person for the job? What were some of the fears you had? What are some of the ways God strengthened you and encouraged you? Gideon's life teaches us that when God calls us to do something, He will give us the strength and encouragement we need to do it.

Looking It Up

Judges 6:12b (*Ask Sparkies to look up the verse before you begin the lesson.*)

Getting It Ready

You will need:

- (For Option 1) — Object that represents something that you don't do well. For instance, if you're not athletic, bring in a soccer ball. If you're not musical, bring in an instrument.
- Stick (which can later be used as a torch)
- Robes for role-players
- Horn/shofar
- Two small, identical hand towels
- Bowl of water



Showing

Show your object and describe the activity you are not skilled at. Then ask the kids to share things they do not feel good at (e.g., spelling, playing piano, telling others about Jesus, etc.). Tell them that sometimes we might be asked to do something for God that we don't feel very good at. We might even feel afraid to do it. However, God will give us the strength to do this thing if we obey Him and believe in Him. This is what Gideon found out when God asked him to do something he did not feel very good at.

Telling

(Begin to tell the story of Gideon to Sparkies.) Our story begins in the Promised Land. God told the Israelites that as long as they obeyed Him, everything would go well in this new land. But they decided not to obey God. And because they didn't obey, things started to go very badly for them.

Now Gideon was an Israelite man that was living in the land. He and his Israelite friends and family were being bullied by a big group of mean people called the Midianites. The Midianites were so mean that they would come into town and steal the Israelites' food and destroy all the farmers' crops. The Israelites were very scared of the Midianites.

After a while, the Israelites cried out to the Lord for help. The Lord told them that the reason they were being bullied was because they disobeyed and worshiped other gods besides Him. But God helped Israel because He loved them. He used a man named Gideon to save Israel from the Midianites.

(Now involve the Sparkies in acting out parts of the story. Clear a big space for acting at the front of the group, making sure everyone can see. It would be helpful if another adult leader could help you prepare/distribute the props and tell volunteers what to do in each scene.)



SCENE 1: *(Ask for two volunteers. One volunteer will play the Angel of the Lord. The other will play Gideon. Give Gideon a stick. Tell Gideon to pound the ground with the stick as if he is threshing grain. He should look fearful. The Angel of the Lord should wait to enter the scene until you tell him to. The characters should repeat their lines after you say them in your narration.)*

NARRATOR (yourself): One day, Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress. You might be wondering why he was threshing wheat in a winepress. A winepress was a place to make wine, not a place to thresh wheat! He was separating the part of the grain that is eaten from the part that is thrown away, but he needed wind to do it well. There's no wind in a winepress. Gideon did it in a winepress because he was afraid of the Midianites, and he didn't want them to see what he was doing. Just then the Angel of the Lord came and sat down under a tree. *(Motion for the other volunteer to enter the scene and sit down.)*

The Angel of the Lord, who was really the Lord Himself, said to Gideon: *The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valor.* *(Ask the angel and the class to repeat this key verse, Judges 6:12b, and have them follow along in their Bibles. Explain that God was calling Gideon a "mighty warrior.")*

Then the Lord said to Gideon, "Go in the strength you have and save Israel from the Midianites. I am sending you."

Then Gideon replied, "But sir, how can I save Israel? My family is weak, and I am the least important person in my family."

The Lord answered, "I will be with you, and you will beat the Midianites."

(Ask the following questions after the scene is over.)

- What did God call Gideon when He first appeared to him?
- How do you think Gideon felt when God called him a mighty man of valor? Was Gideon acting like a mighty warrior? Why or why not?
- What did God say to Gideon to encourage him?

SCENE 2: *(Ask another volunteer to be Gideon this time. Give your volunteer a horn and one towel or blanket. Do not ask Gideon to repeat his lines for this scene.)*

NARRATOR: A little while later the Midianites and their friends were coming to bully Israel again. But this time would be different! The Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon and gave him great power. *(Ask your volunteer playing Gideon to flex his muscles.)* Gideon blew a trumpet *(direct Gideon to sound the horn or make motions like he is playing the horn)* and called his family and other Israelites to join him in battle. *(Gideon should make motions with his hands beckoning others to come and follow.)*

Telling continued

But right after this, Gideon started to be afraid again, even though he had no reason to be afraid. Remember what God had said to him? God told him that He would give him the strength to beat the Midianites. All Gideon had to do was believe God's promise. But Gideon had a hard time believing God; he needed some encouragement. So Gideon asked God to give him a sign. ***(Ask your volunteer to hold up the towel or blanket. Explain that this item will represent a fleece, which was made from sheep's wool.)***

Gideon said to God, "I will put this fleece on the floor, and tomorrow morning, if only the fleece is wet and the floor is dry around it, then I will know you will really use me to save Israel." ***(Gideon should put the fleece on the floor. Ask Gideon and all the Sparkies to close their eyes and pretend they are going to sleep for the night. While their eyes are closed, dip the towel or blanket in your bowl of water and place it on the floor. Then ask children to open their eyes. Gideon should pick up the towel and wring it out in the bowl.)***

This was amazing! God did a miracle with the fleece. But Gideon was still feeling afraid and unsure. He asked God to do one more thing for him. He said, "Tomorrow morning please make the fleece dry but the ground wet all around it." ***(Ask all the Sparkies to close their eyes again. Put the dry towel on the floor, and, if practical, sprinkle water on the ground around it. Ask children to open their eyes. Gideon should pick up the towel and let everyone see it.)***

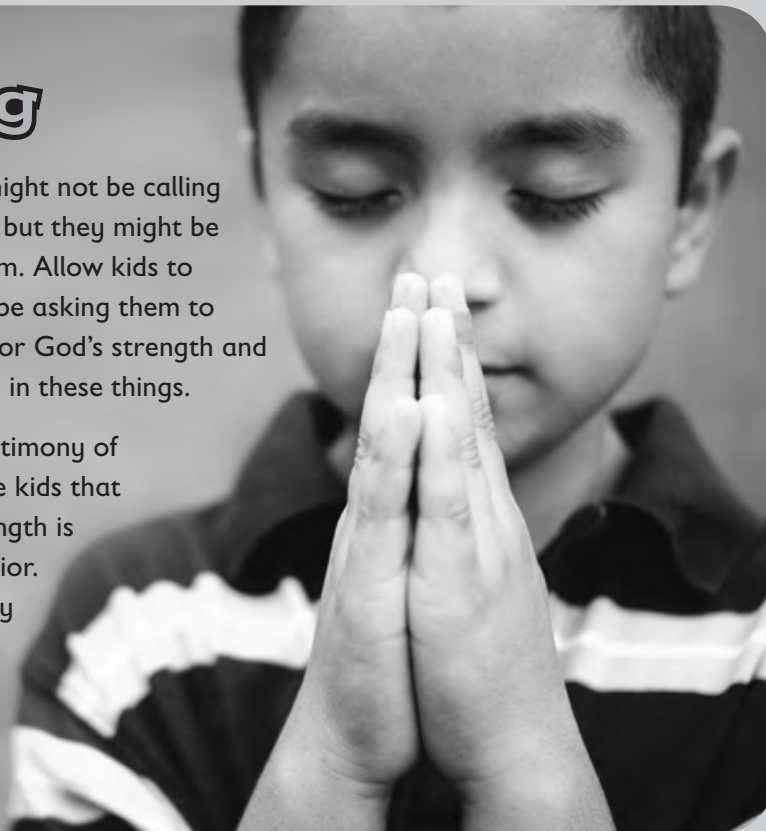
God did another amazing miracle for Gideon! Now Gideon was sure that God would use him to defeat the Midianites just as He had promised.



Challenging

Option 1: Tell the kids that God might not be calling them to be a warrior like Gideon, but they might be asked to do something else for Him. Allow kids to share any hard things God might be asking them to do. Take several minutes to pray for God's strength and encouragement as they obey God in these things.

Option 2: Share your personal testimony of God's strength in your life. Tell the kids that the first step to having God's strength is to ask Jesus Christ to be their Savior. Invite kids to trust Him now, if they have not already done so.



Family Follow Up

Fear is normal. All of us get nervous at times. Your child might be nervous before a test or on the first day at a new school. Don't tell her not to be afraid. Instead, talk with her about what she is afraid of, then pray with her, asking God to give her peace of mind. Remind your child that, if she has trusted Jesus Christ, He has promised to never let her be alone.

Turn to page 175 for
Family Follow-Up
cards that you
can copy and
distribute!

Teaching Ideas

Theme Ideas

- **Hideout Night** — Gideon was in the winepress, hiding from his enemies. Hide coins or candy around the room for the Sparkies to find.
- **Toss It Night** — In Bible times, threshing required tossing grain in the air to separate the part you eat from the chaff. This is a good theme to emphasize during game time.

Game Ideas

- Play any kind of ball/beanbag tossing game.
- **Crawling Game** — Does anyone have a crawl tunnel (or more than one) that you could borrow for the Sparkies? Lay the tunnels around the circle at different points (depending on how many you have). As Sparkies take turns running around the circle, they must crawl through the tunnels.
- **Fleece Game** — Provide a bag of fabric samples/washcloths for each team. One Sparkie from each team stands on the starting line. When the whistle blows, the Sparkie must lay out all the cloths in his color triangle before running around the circle.

Teaching Options

- As you begin the lesson, dim the lights and attempt to continue teaching. This could be reading a verse, writing something on a piece of paper or pointing out a visual to the Sparkies. Of course, you can't see and neither can your audience. Explain how Gideon was not doing his threshing job out in the open, but hiding in the winepress so that people wouldn't see him. He was afraid of his enemy.
- Explain threshing to the Sparkies. You can find pictures on the Web.



SparksActivity

Gideon was often afraid, but with God's help he became a mighty warrior.
Color these pictures of Gideon.





Reading

Judges 6 and 7

Thinking

As we study the life of Gideon, we see that he felt completely powerless to do what he was asked to do. Don't you think he sometimes felt as if God had chosen the wrong person for the job?

How about you? Maybe sometimes you don't feel capable of teaching these young Sparkies with their multitudes of questions. Maybe you feel someone else could do a much better job. Or maybe you have fears in other areas of your life. What are some of the ways God has strengthened you and encouraged you? Gideon's life teaches us that when God calls us to do something, He will give us the strength and the encouragement to do it.

One important note: Sometimes there is a misunderstanding about Gideon's actions with the fleece. Warren Wiersbe points out that Gideon was not using the fleece to determine the will of God; rather he was asking God to reaffirm promises He had already made. The Bible doesn't condemn Gideon's actions as a sinful testing of God, and his actions do not necessarily show a weak faith. Another Bible scholar, Larry Richards, said that Gideon had already demonstrated his faith by his obedience in tearing down the altar and calling out the Israelite armies; he only needed reassurance to calm his fears and doubts. God honored Gideon's faith by graciously giving this reassurance.

Looking It Up

Judges 8:28 (*Ask Sparkies to look up the verse before you begin the lesson.*)

Getting It Ready

You will need:

- Something heavy that the Sparkies couldn't possibly begin to lift. (You don't want something they might be able to lift for a second or two then drop and injure themselves.)
- Torch — stick with rags wrapped around it
- Horn (from last week)
- Opaque pitcher or jug
- Robes

Showing

Ask several Sparkies to come up front and attempt to lift the unmovable object.

Ask the Sparkies to share how they felt when they couldn't do the task (e.g., frustrated, weak, embarrassed). Ask them if there are some things at school, home or church that they find hard to do. What are some things they are afraid to try? (***Offer a few examples.***) Then say that sometimes we might be asked to do something we think is really scary and hard. But God is with us, and He can give us courage and strength to do difficult things. Remember what we learned last week? God was using Gideon, a man who didn't think he could do the job that God asked him to do.

Telling

Let's review what's happened so far.

What was Gideon doing in the winepress? (***Threshing wheat.***)

Why was that a hard place to do the job? (***Because he needed the wind to separate the grain from the stalks.***)

Who visited him? (***The Angel of the Lord.***)

What did the Angel say to him? (***The Lord is with you.***)

What did Gideon say? (***My family isn't important, and I am the least important person in my family.***)

Whom did Gideon call to help him? (***His family and other Israelites.***)

Gideon had a hard time believing, so what did he do? (***Put a fleece on the floor. He wanted the fleece to be wet and everything around it dry and then the fleece dry and everything around it wet.***)

This was amazing! God did a miracle with the fleece. But Gideon was still feeling afraid and unsure. He asked God to do one more thing for him. Remember, he said, "Tomorrow morning please make the fleece dry but the ground around it wet." What did God do for Gideon that night? (***God did another amazing miracle for Gideon! He made the ground wet but kept the fleece dry.***) Now Gideon was sure that God would use him to defeat the Midianites, just as God said.

(***Ask two volunteers to come up. One will be Gideon; the other will be his servant, Phurah. Since the scene takes place at night, dim the lights, if possible, making sure everyone can still see the action.***)



NARRATOR: One night, Gideon and his army were camping out waiting to attack. Can you guess how Gideon was feeling that night? **(Allow Sparkies to respond.)** Gideon was feeling afraid again! His army only had a few men and the enemy's army had more men than he could even count.

The Lord said to Gideon, "Get up and go attack the Midianites. I will help you win. But if you are still feeling afraid, go down into the enemy's camp to listen to what they say. Then you will be encouraged."

So Gideon and his servant, Phurah, went to hide and listen. **(Direct your two volunteers to crouch down and cup their hands to their ears as if they are listening.)** Gideon and his servant heard two Midianite men talking about a dream. They heard one man say, "God has given Gideon victory over the Midianites."

When Gideon heard this, he worshiped God. **(Direct volunteer playing Gideon to lift up his hands and sing or bow down and worship God.)**

Then Gideon returned to the Israelite camp, and he called out to everyone, "Get up! The Lord has given us victory over the Midianites." **(Ask Gideon to stand and face the group, shouting this confidently after you.)**

(If you have time, ask the group to play Gideon's army. Divide them into three groups. Tell them each to pretend they are holding a horn and a torch covered inside a pitcher. Show the horn, torch, and pitcher or jar you have brought as visuals. Give these items to Gideon. Gideon can lead the groups in tiptoeing quietly down into the enemy camp, blowing the trumpets, lifting up the torches and shouting, "The sword of the LORD and of Gideon." Otherwise, end the story as described below.)

Then Gideon and his army snuck quietly down into the enemy camp. All of a sudden, they blew their trumpets **(make trumpet sound)**, broke the pitchers they were carrying **(make a crashing sound)**, raised their torches **(turn on lights)**, and shouted. Then do you know what happened? The Midianite army was so scared and confused by the loud sounds and the light that they started running away and killing each other. Gideon and his men were able to win the battle easily. Then Israel had peace in the land for as long as Gideon lived. **(Read Judges 8:28.)**

(Close with the following questions.) Remember the fearful Gideon from the beginning of last week's story? How has he changed? How can you tell he is a mighty man of valor now? **(Allow Sparkies to answer.)** God made Gideon into a mighty warrior. God was with Him and gave him power. God encouraged him by His Word and by giving him the sign of the fleece and letting him hear the dream. Gideon knew that it was only by God's strength that he could do such an impossible task!

Challenging

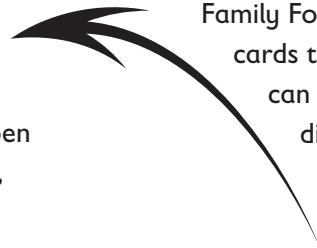
Share your personal testimony of God's strength in your life. Tell the kids that the first step to having God's strength is to trust Jesus Christ to be their Savior. Explain in detail the importance of accepting God's gift of salvation. Encourage them to talk with a leader if they would like to trust Christ or have any questions.



Family Follow Up

Talk about situations that are difficult for your child to cope with. Maybe your child is afraid of thunderstorms or something at school. Talk about courage and how we can put our trust in the Lord. Make sure your child knows, however, that trusting God doesn't mean that bad things won't ever happen again, but that we can talk to God and know that He is with us, helping us, no matter what happens.

Turn to page 175 for
Family Follow-Up
cards that you
can copy and
distribute!



Teaching Ideas

Theme Ideas

- **Bravery Night** — You could have pictures of lions, tigers and other wild animals around the room. Or you could glue these pictures on cardboard boxes and use them as props in your games. (Sparkies have to run around the lion, the tiger and the bear to get around the circle.)

Game Ideas

- **Here and There** — Tell Sparkies to stand in the center square. Point out the red line and the green line on the sides of the game square. Call out a statement such as: “If you have a sister, run to the green line.” All Sparkies with a sister must run to the green line and all Sparkies without a sister must run to the red line. The winning team is the one whose people are lined up first on the designated line. Sparkies move back to the center square as you call out another statement.

Teaching Options

- Talk about a time when you were a child and you didn’t feel very brave or when courage got you through a tough situation. Again, make sure your story is age-appropriate. Talk about courage. At first Gideon was not courageous, but as his trust in God grew, Gideon grew in courage.
- Bring a laptop or iPad® to club and look up Ma’ayan Harod National Park. This is the authenticated site of Gideon’s stream.

SparksActivity

Last week, the Sparkies colored two pictures of Gideon, one showing him looking fearful and weak. The second picture showed him as a mighty warrior. Now this week, on the other side of the paper or on another piece of paper, have your kids draw a picture of themselves when they feel weak or afraid and a picture of them being strong in God’s strength.

Reading

Ruth

Thinking

Genealogies aren't the most exciting parts of the Bible, but they are important. The genealogy of Jesus Christ, which includes Ruth and Boaz, establishes His hereditary right to be the king of Israel. The book of Ruth also connects David, and through him, Jesus Christ, with the tribe of Judah.

In addition, the fact that Ruth, a Moabite, is an ancestor of Jesus Christ proves that He is not only the God of Israel but of all people who have faith in Him.

Ruth didn't have to return to Israel with her mother-in-law Naomi after their husbands died. In fact, Naomi encouraged Ruth to stay in Moab and find another husband. But Ruth was faithful and made the right choice to go to Israel where the people worshiped the one true God.

Boaz didn't have to marry Ruth. There was a closer relative whose responsibility it was to purchase Naomi's land and marry the widow Ruth. But Boaz was faithful and made the right choice to marry Ruth. (If you read between the lines, it appears that Boaz didn't find this a very difficult choice to make.)

Ruth and Boaz are fantastic examples of obedience and faith, and we'll touch on that in this lesson, but the central point that you will be teaching your Sparkies is that Ruth was the great-grandmother of King David and an ancestor of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Looking It Up

Ruth 1:16 (*Ask Sparkies to look up the verse before you begin the lesson.*)

Getting It Ready

You will need:

- A photograph of your own grandmother or great-grandmother large enough for everyone to see
- An older woman (or any woman dressed as an older woman) to play the part of Ruth as David's great-grandmother

Showing

(Hold up the photograph of your grandmother or great-grandmother so all the Sparkies can see it.) How many of you have seen your grandmother in the past month? *(Have the Sparkies raise their hands.)* Do any of you have great-grandmothers who are still living? *(Have the Sparkies raise their hands.)* Grandmothers and great-grandmothers are pretty neat, aren't they? They always give us hugs and sometimes candy or cookies. And they tell us stories about when they were younger. Isn't it strange to think that your grandmother and great-grandmother were once your age?

My grandmother is great. *(Hold up the photo again.)* She once told me a story about when she was a kid. *(Tell a short story about something that happened to your grandmother when she was young.)*

You've got a great-grandmother and I've got a great-grandmother. You know who else had a great-grandmother? King David. His great-grandmother's name was Ruth. We know a lot about David's great-grandmother because there's a whole book in the Bible that tells all about her. Can anybody guess what book tells us about Ruth? *(Allow a few Sparkies to answer.)* That's right — the book of Ruth. It was named for her!

The Bible doesn't tell us if King David ever met his great-grandmother, but if he did, she probably told him about something exciting that happened to her when she was younger. It might have sounded something like this: *(Have an older woman — or a younger woman dressed to look like a grandmother — enter and tell the rest of the lesson.)*

Telling

Hi, boys and girls. I've got something exciting to tell you. It's about me and what happened when I was younger, probably about the age of most of your moms. I lived in a country called Moab. The people in that country worshiped statues and fake gods. There was another country nearby called Israel where the people worshiped the true God of the Bible. One day I met a young man from Israel who was living in my country. We got married, and for 10 years I lived with him and his family. From my husband and his family, I learned about the true God and decided to worship Him myself instead of the fake gods my family worshiped.

And then something horrible happened. My husband's father died and then my husband died too. There were no men left in the house, just women. Today, a lot of your mothers have jobs, but back then, women weren't allowed to work. So when all the men in our home died, we had very little money for food.

My husband's mother decided to go back to Israel, the country she was from, because she had some relatives there who might be able to take care of her. She told me I didn't have to come along, but I loved her and her God, and I told her I would go with her. What I told her is written in the Bible **(Open a Bible and read this verse so the kids understand you're reading Scripture. Have the Sparkies follow along with you.)** ... *"Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God"* (Ruth 1:16).

When we got to Israel, life was hard. We didn't have very much money and couldn't even buy the food we needed. It was grain harvesting season. That means that men and women were out in the fields picking grain to make bread. Have any of you ever seen a wheat or corn field? **(Let Sparkies raise their hands.)** It was like that, except that there were no tractors or machines to pick the grain. Men would walk through the fields cutting down the plants with knives and then women would walk behind them and gather what they cut. As they did this, small bits of grain would fall to the ground. I walked along behind the workers and picked up any little bits of grain that I found on the ground. Farmers allowed poor people to do this so that the poor would have something to eat. It was hard work. I had to spend all day in the field, bent over, carrying a jar into which I put the grain. **(Demonstrate this action so the Sparkies can understand.)** I was very tired.

Now it just so happened that I picked a field owned by a man named Boaz. He was a kind man who owned a lot of fields. He saw me in his field, picking up grain. He could have yelled at me to get off his property, but he didn't. He came up to me and started talking with me. He said he knew who I was

and that I had come from Moab with my husband's mother. He told me I could gather grain in his fields every day and even offered me some food and cool water to drink. By the end of the day, I had gathered an entire big jar of grain.

When I went home and told my mother-in-law what had happened, she asked me whose field I had been in. I told her about Boaz. She knew who Boaz was! In fact, she told me that Boaz was a relative of her dead husband! That made him a relative of mine too!

In Israel, they had a law that if a man died, his brothers and other relatives should take care of the man's wife and even marry her! My mother-in-law thought it would be a good idea if I married Boaz since he had been so nice to me. She told me to go to where Boaz was resting. She said I should ask Boaz to protect me.

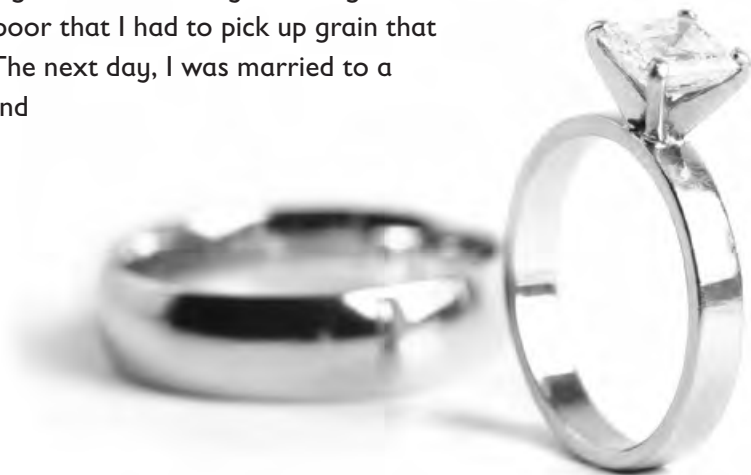
This was something I never would have done back in my home in Moab, but I had decided to live in Israel, so I did what the people of Israel do. I went to Boaz and asked him to take care of me. He immediately agreed. I think he might have already been in love with me a little because the very next morning, he went to the city rulers and talked with them about me.

There was one small problem. There was another man who was an even closer relative of mine than Boaz was. If this other man had wanted to marry me, I would have had to become his wife. But he wasn't interested. I was so happy. That meant I could marry Boaz. That very same day, we were married.

We were very happy together. It wasn't long before we had a baby boy. We named him Obed. When Obed grew up, he got married and had a son named Jesse.

And when Jesse grew up, he got married and had a son named David.

That's right — King David. Imagine that! One day I was a girl from a faraway country who was so poor that I had to pick up grain that fell to the ground just to eat. The next day, I was married to a wonderful guy named Boaz. And years later, I became the great-grandmother of a king!



Challenging

Pretty amazing, isn't it? But my story gets even more interesting. David had a son who had a son who had a son. Many years later, one of those sons had a daughter named Mary who had a very special son. Can anybody tell me who Mary's Son was? (**Allow Sparkies to answer.**) That's right — Mary's Son was Jesus! That means that Jesus was my great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-grandson! That's 30 greats. I had been dead a long time when Jesus was born, so I never met Him on earth. But because I trusted the God of Israel, I get to spend forever in heaven with Jesus.



Family Follow Up

(Scripture: the book of Ruth.) Boaz was related to Ruth, so he was able to step up and help her and her mother-in-law. His role is known as the kinsman-redeemer. He was able to redeem Naomi's land and save Naomi and Ruth from poverty.

Ruth was also an ancestor of Jesus Christ. It's important that your children understand that Jesus was God but that He was also a man through Mary. As a man, He is our kinsman and is able to save us from our sin. Both Boaz and Jesus Christ had the necessary payment, both were willing to help, and both were free to act.

Remind your child that, just as Boaz stepped in and helped Ruth when she needed it, Jesus Christ stepped down to earth and helped us by dying on the cross in our place. Ruth was a poor foreigner who had to forage for food, but because of her faith in the one true God, she became the ancestor of King David and of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Turn to page 176 for
Family Follow-Up
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Teaching Ideas

Theme Ideas

- **Travel Night** — Naomi and Ruth walked from Moab to Bethlehem; a trip that probably took around seven days. Send fliers home with Sparkies the previous week, asking them to come to club with a note/picture explaining the longest distance they've traveled. (Parents will have to help them with this.)
- **Farming Night** — Take your Sparkies on a field trip to a farm. If one of your Sparkies lives on a farm, maybe you could host a parent/child event at the farm.
- **Harvest Night** — Ask Sparkies to bring a non-perishable food item for a community/church food bank.

Game Ideas

- **Traveling On** — Provide an empty (old) suitcase, a pretend ticket, a water bottle, etc., for each team. Sparkies run around the circle carrying all the items. Make it challenging, but not impossible for them to carry everything.
- **Throwing Out** — Crumple up newspaper into balls. This is the grain. Explain that some well-to-do farmers would leave grain in the fields for needy people to gather. Give one Sparkie from each team a medium-sized grocery bag. At the whistle, they must fill up their bag with "grain" as quickly as they can.

Teaching Options

- Discuss gleanings. You can find information on the Web or in Bible dictionaries as to how this was done.
- Make a family tree showing how Christ was from the line of David and thus, the line of Obed (Ruth's son). To help explain this, use the example of someone in your club or church whom many of the Sparkies might know. ("Johnny is the son, or in the line, of Leader Max and Leader Max is the son, or in the line, of Pastor Bruce.")
- Talk about moving. Do you have any Sparkies who have just moved from another town? Ask what they miss about their other house. Or you could talk about a time when you had to move. Did it take you awhile to get adjusted?

SparksActivity

Have a few of your leaders bring some old family photos of relatives with interesting histories. Explain to the Sparkies who the people are and how they are related to you. Bring in the story of Ruth, Naomi, Boaz, David and Jesus Christ and explain their relationship with each other.

Reading

1 Samuel 16

Thinking

Many Sparkies know that David fought Goliath and became king of Israel. But many of them probably aren't aware of how David was chosen to be king, or how he got to the palace after Samuel anointed him.

First Samuel 16 tells how Samuel came to choose David and how Saul brought him to the palace to play his harp. It's important for Sparkies to hear David's whole life story — not just the seemingly cool parts about his fight against Goliath or being king. David was a real kid just like these Sparkies. He was probably a young teenager when Saul summoned him to play music. He had to leave his flocks and fields for the palace. The Bible doesn't tell us how David felt, but one must wonder if he was scared. But he didn't run away or dig his heels in the ground when his father, Jesse, told him to pack his bags for the palace. David just obeyed. That's an important lesson to bring home — David obeyed his father. To disobey when the king calls for you would undoubtedly mean trouble for the whole family. The reason Saul was distressed was because he disobeyed the Lord when he didn't destroy ALL the Amalekites and their sheep and cattle. He brought back King Agag alive and kept some of the sheep and cattle. Thus, the Lord rejected him as king. Little did Saul know that he was inviting the next king to come play music for him!



Looking It Up

1 Samuel 16:11-13 *(Have the Sparkies turn to this passage before you begin the lesson.)*

Showing

(To add to the biography, you may want to have harp music playing in the background — some Sparkies probably don't know what harps are.)

(Talk with a leader beforehand and ask him or her to bring several glasses of water, or one BIG glass of water, and start drinking it in front of everyone so that all the Sparkies notice. For the sake of ease, we're going to call our leader Mr. Ken.)

YOU: Hello everyone! I'm so glad you're all here tonight. *(Mr. Ken is drinking a lot of water, distracting everyone. He could use a straw, so he's not drinking quite as much as it looks like he's drinking.)*

YOU: Ahhhhm, Mr. Ken, I wouldn't drink all that water if I were you!

MR. KEN: Why not? I'm soooooo thirsty!

YOU: Because drinking so much water that fast will make your stomach hurt.

MR. KEN: Oh, I'll be fine. I'm just so thirsty. *(He keeps drinking lots and lots of water.)*

YOU: OK, well, I hope your stomach ... *(interrupted)*

MR. KEN (grasping stomach): Ouch! My stomach hurts!

YOU: Hmm, didn't I just tell Mr. Ken that if he drank too much water, his stomach would hurt? If he had listened to what I said, this wouldn't have happened. It's important to listen when people tell us something, isn't it? OK, let's start our lesson!

(You'll come back to this skit towards the end of the lesson to bring home a point.)



Telling

How many of you have heard of the town of Bethlehem? Who was born there? (**Jesus.**) Yes, Jesus was born there! But there's someone else you know who lived there when he was a young boy. Does anyone know? (**Allow a few guesses.**) His name is King David. David grew up in Bethlehem with his family. A lot of you probably go to school during the day. What do you think David did during the day? (**Allow Sparkies to answer.**) David took care of sheep. He spent most of his time in the fields watching over his father's sheep.

Do you ever wonder how David was chosen to be king or how he got to the palace after he was chosen? It's an interesting story — but it's not like a fairy-tale story that isn't true. This is true because it comes straight from the Bible. When David was still young, maybe an early teenager, he was chosen to be king! God told the prophet Samuel to pick David to be the next king. The Bible says that Samuel went to Jesse, David's father, and told him that one of Jesse's sons was to be the next king. Jesse brought all of his sons to Samuel, except for David. David was working in the fields, keeping watch over the sheep. Samuel looked at each son, but the Lord told him that he still hadn't seen the right one. Now let's read the next part of the story from our Bibles. You should have your Bibles open to 1 Samuel 16:11-13. Let's read it together. (**Read the verses.**)

That's how David was chosen to be the next king. The Lord told Samuel to anoint David with oil. God didn't want the handsomest, strongest or coolest son of Jesse — although there's nothing wrong with being handsome, strong or cool. But God was looking for the son who would follow and

obey Him. You see, the king at the time, Saul, disobeyed God. God told him to destroy a city where the Amalekites lived. He was supposed to destroy everything. But Saul let the king of the Amalekites live, and he took some of the sheep and cattle. He didn't obey God. So God told Samuel to choose David because David would follow and obey God.

Some time after this, King Saul was very distressed. *Distressed* means “troubled.” One of Saul's servants told him about David. He said that David played the harp and was strong and brave. So Saul sent a message to Jesse, David's father, and told Jesse to have David come to him. So Jesse sent David to Saul. David played the harp for Saul when Saul felt distressed. David's music helped Saul to feel better. At this point, Saul didn't know that David was going to be the next king.

Here's something important to remember in this story about David — David obeyed his father, Jesse. When King Saul sent for David, David did as he was told. The Bible doesn't tell us whether or not David was scared, but he might have been nervous about leaving his family and flocks of sheep. But David obeyed. If David had disobeyed his father and the king, it would have meant big trouble for them all.

We've all disobeyed our parents at one time or another. Maybe your mom asked you to pick up your backpack, but you didn't. Maybe your dad told you to stop bothering your brother, but you kept on bothering him anyway. It's important to obey our parents. They know what's best for us. Sending David to King Saul was probably hard for Jesse, but Jesse knew that it was the best thing for David to do since he was eventually going to be king.



Challenging

It's important to listen to your parents and obey them just like David obeyed his father. Before we started the lesson, Mr. Ken didn't listen to me and he wound up with a stomachache. If he had listened to me when I told him that drinking all that water would make his stomach hurt, he wouldn't be hurting! We need to listen to, and obey, our parents. It honors them and it honors God.

There are so many wonderful things we can learn from the Bible. Let's thank God for giving us the Bible so that we can learn about Him and about what happened in the past. ***(Pray. This is also a good time to present the gospel and ask Sparkies to trust in Jesus as their Savior if they haven't done so.)***





Family Follow Up

Play a game of telephone. Whisper something into the ear of one of your children. Make it a complex phrase so it'll be hard to repeat to the next person. Go down the line of the family and see what phrase the last person hears. Is it totally different than what you first whispered? Probably! Use it as a teaching moment — it's important to listen!

Affirm and encourage your kids for when they've obeyed you in the past.

Turn to page 176 for Family Follow-Up cards that you can copy and distribute!

Teaching Ideas

Theme Ideas

- **Dress Like David Night** — Sparkies can dress like David by carrying a harp (a toy or a harp made of cardboard, etc.), a shepherd's rod and a stuffed sheep or by wearing a crown (since he became a king).
- **Wool Night** — Everyone wears a wool sweater, brings a wool blanket, or something else made of wool. David was a shepherd for his father's sheep. Sheep give us wool to keep us warm.
- **Target Night** — One of David's skills was using a slingshot. No, we don't want slingshots in Sparks, but you could play target games such as throwing beanbags in the bucket.

Game Ideas

- **Shepherds and Sheep** — This is simply another name for Dodge Ball or Rabbit Hunt. Shepherds stand around the edge of the circle. Sheep are inside the circle. Shepherds attempt to hit the sheep with a ball. Once a sheep is hit, he becomes a shepherd.

Teaching Options

- Blindfold a volunteer and have someone stand on the opposite corner of the room and say "Here I am." The caller can say it loud or soft. The volunteer needs to find the caller. When the volunteer finds the caller, give him or her a reward. This visual will reinforce that it's important to listen — it's important to listen and obey.
- Do you have someone in your church who knows about raising sheep? Have him or her come in and talk to the kids.



SparksActivity

Draw a circle around the things that show you being obedient to your parents.

1. You clean your room when your mom asks you to.
2. You tell your dad, “Just one more show!” when he tells you it’s time for bed.
3. Your mom tells you to stay close, but you run ahead in the parking lot of the grocery store.
4. Dad says, “Eat your broccoli.” You feed it to the dog.
5. Mom asks you to feed the dog and you do it right away.
6. Now write one way you can obey your parents today.

Reading

1 Samuel 18:1-4; 1 Samuel 19;
Philippians 2:4

Thinking

Everyone wants friends. Sparkies are at the age where their friends change depending on the day, or on what their friends bring to school for lunchtime trading. Kids are fickle. That's why it's important to start teaching them what it means to be a good friend. Jonathan was a good friend to David. Jonathan knew that his father, King Saul, was jealous of David and planned to kill him. Jonathan went to his father to talk him out of killing David. The main point of this lesson is not to go on and on about how Saul tried to kill David. We'll bring it up, but not dwell on it. The point we want to make is that friends love each other and stick by each other. David's wife, Michal, also warned David and helped him escape the night Saul tried to kill him.

Friends stick by each other. They love, help and think of others first. That's a good place to start as you teach your Sparkies about what it means to be a friend ... a good friend, not just a fickle friend.

Be mindful that when you're enthusiastic about the lesson, your Sparkies will be enthusiastic and will listen more intently. You don't have to be loud to be enthusiastic. Your eyes, the tone of your voice and your body language will all show the Sparkies that you have something important to say.

Looking It Up

Philippians 2:4 (*Ask Sparkies to look up the verse before you begin the lesson.*)



Showing

Who wants to play a game? **(Choose a leader.)** OK, we're going to play a game called I Spy. I'm going to spy something around the room and you have to guess what it is. Everyone else needs to be very quiet — don't shout out the answer. **(Choose a leader you've talked to before the lesson. You're not going to give any clues to this leader and he or she isn't going to be able to guess what you're spying.)** OK, _____, I spy something, _____. **(Make this one clue hard or random such as "I spy something in this room." And even if the leader can guess what it is, he or she shouldn't answer correctly. We want this to appear difficult because you're not helping your friend.)**

Sorry, _____, you didn't guess what I was spying. You can have a seat now. Why do you think _____ couldn't figure out what I was spying? **(Hopefully someone will answer that you didn't give any clues to help.)** Clues? Why should I give clues to help? **(That's the way the game is played.)**

OK, let's try this again. I need a Sparkie this time. **(Select a Sparkie.)** Let's see ... I spy something _____. **(Fill in the blank with a color, etc. Choose something and allow the Sparkie to guess what it is. Give a few clues along the way to help the Sparkie guess correctly. This time you want it to be answered correctly.)** Yes, that's it! You guessed what I was spying!

Thanks, _____ and _____, for playing our game!



Telling

OK, how many of you have heard about King David? He was chosen by the prophet Samuel to be king. But before he was king, he fought and defeated Goliath and he played music for the man who was king before him — King Saul. Saul had not been happy for a very long time. He liked to have David play his harp because the music made Saul feel better. But Saul got jealous of David and gave him a different job in the palace so he wouldn't have to see him. But David did really well in that job. That made King Saul even MORE jealous. So what did King Saul want to do? He wanted to kill David!



Fortunately, David had some good friends in the palace. One was his wife, Michal. Michal was King Saul's daughter. The other friend was Jonathan. He was Saul's son. When Michal and Jonathan found out that their dad wanted to kill David, they both helped David. First, Jonathan went to talk to the king. He told his father that David had been a big help to Saul — David had killed Goliath and had served Saul very faithfully. King Saul took an oath and told Jonathan that he wouldn't hurt David. An oath is like a promise. But then Saul got jealous again because David fought the Philistines in a war and fought so well that the Philistines ran away from him. This time, Michal heard that her father, the king, was going to try to hurt David. So she told David about what she had heard and helped him escape out a window during the night. David was able to get away from Saul. Saul wasn't able to hurt him.

Michal and Jonathan were good friends to David. Friends are important, aren't they? It's fun to play with our friends, see them at school and church and to learn verses together at Awana. What else do friends do? **(Allow Sparkies to answer.)** Friends also love each other, help each other and put others first. You can love your friends by telling them about Jesus if they don't know Him. You can also love your friends when you give them a birthday card. You help your friends by helping them learn their Awana verses or bringing them some cookies if they're sick. You put your friends first when you don't take a second piece of birthday cake before everyone else gets a piece. You also put your brothers and sisters first (yes, your brothers and sisters can be your friends too!) when you let them watch what they want on TV instead of making them watch what you want to watch.

David had some really good friends. Michal and Jonathan helped him out when he really needed it. Let's read Philippians 2:4 together. **(Read the verse.)** This verse tells us that we need to think of other people first. We need to be good friends to others. Michal and Jonathan showed David that they loved him when they helped him escape. Jonathan put David first when he went to talk to King Saul. Michal helped David when she told him that the king was coming after him to hurt him.

Remember how I didn't give leader's name any clues when we played I Spy? It was impossible to figure out what I was spying! It wasn't very friendly of me to do that. But then I was a good friend when I gave Sparkie's name clues. Being a good friend means that we love, help and put others before ourselves.

Challenging

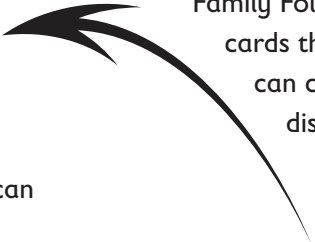
I want everyone to turn to the person sitting to your left and say, "I want to be a good friend to you." Now turn to the person sitting to your right and say it again. OK, now look back at me. I need a couple of Sparkies to tell me how you're going to be a friend this week. **(Allow for several Sparkies to answer. It'll be helpful for them to hear ideas from other Sparkies.)** Those are great ways to be a friend to others! Remember, we need to be good friends ALL the time ... not just tonight or tomorrow.

Let's pray and thank Jesus for giving us friends and ask Him to help us be a good friend to others. **(Pray.)**

Family Follow Up

Ask your kids what it means to be a good friend. You should hear answers like: loving each other, helping each other and putting others first. Encourage your kids in the fact that their siblings are their friends too. Have them specify one way they can show someone else in the family what it means to be a friend.

Turn to page 176 for Family Follow-Up cards that you can copy and distribute!



Teaching Ideas

Theme Ideas

- **Friend Night** — Sparkies are encouraged to bring friends to club. Games could also center around activities Sparkies do together.
- **Crazy Hat Night** — David wore many “hats.” He was a shepherd, a soldier and a king.

Game Ideas

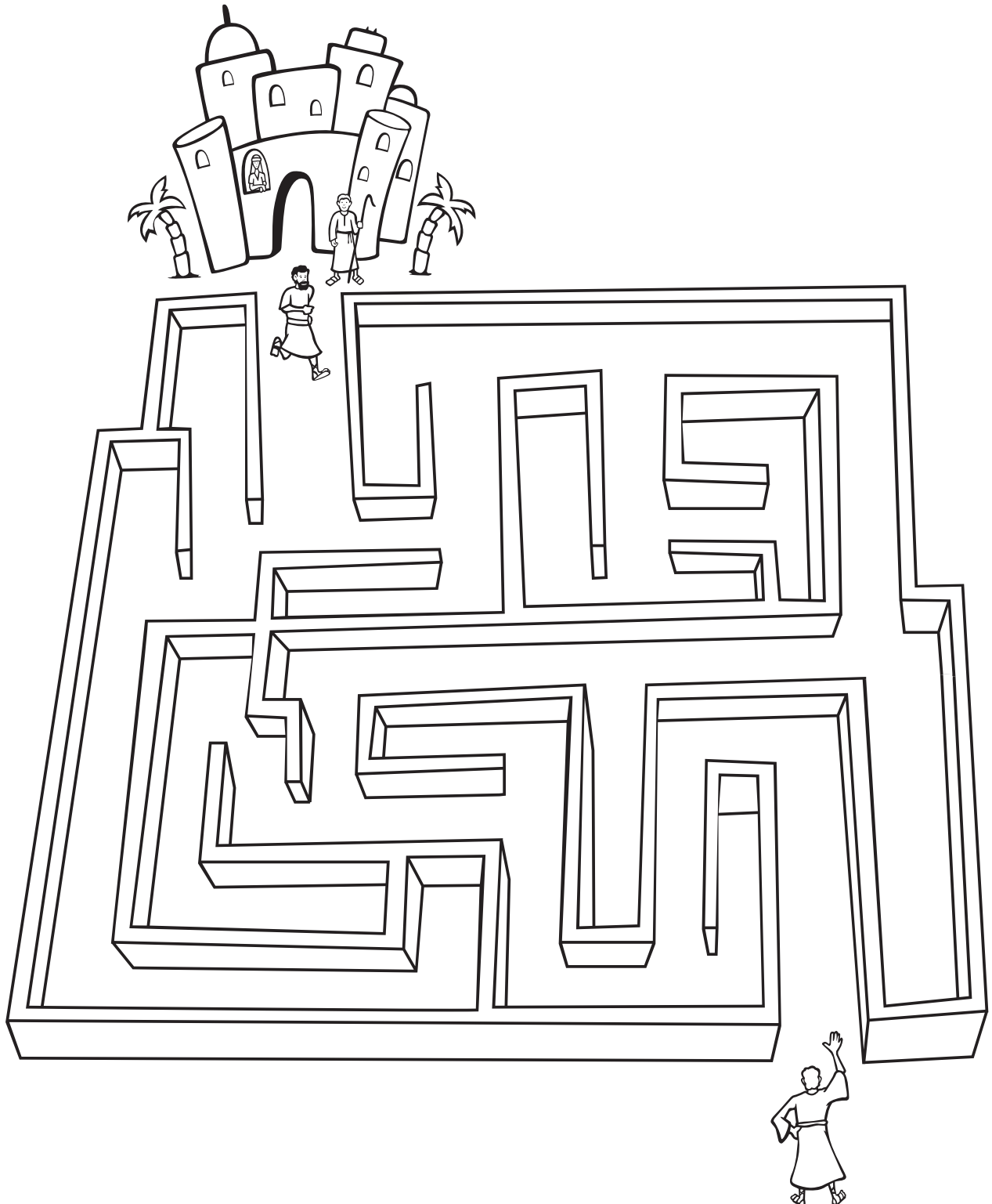
- **Play Friendship Ball** — Sparkies stand in a circle with a tennis ball. You need a CD player and some music too. The Sparkies start bouncing the ball to each other as you play the music. When the music stops, whoever has the ball has to give an example of what it means to be a good friend.
- **Friendship Race** — Teams of two put a balloon between their backs — they must walk a specified distance without dropping the balloon. (If they do drop it — they must put it back in position before continuing.)

Teaching Options

- Play some harp music and talk about how soothing it is. Saul had David play harp music for him because it was soothing to him. Explain that harps in David’s time were handheld instruments, not the large instruments we think of today.
- Show a DVD about David. Make sure he is presented accurately according to the Bible.

SparksActivity

David needs to leave the palace and go to Ramah, where Samuel is staying. Michal and Jonathan helped him leave the palace, now you need to help him find his way through the maze!



Reading

1 Kings 15:8-24; 1 Chronicles 3:10;
2 Chronicles 14-16

Thinking

Many Christians know a lot about Abraham and David and other early patriarchs, but once they pass the life of Solomon, their understanding of the rest of the prophets, kings and leaders gets blurry. Take time to visit the Old Testament this week. Familiarize yourself with the order of the prophets, kings and general progression of history. The next few lessons will cover key characters in the Old Testament, so it will be good for you to be prepared!

Getting It Ready

You will need:

- Map of Israel and Africa
- Adhesive or clip to mount the map on an easel or wall
- Two men to play the parts of the kings
- Robes for the kings
- Copies of the lesson
- Piece of wood or clay for the false idol



Telling

Who can tell me what a king is? **(Allow Sparkies to answer.)** Who can tell me what a bad king does? **(Allow Sparkies to answer.)** Who can tell me what a good king does? **(Allow Sparkies to answer.)** How do you know that is what a good king does? **(Allow Sparkies to answer.)**

Today we will look at a good king in the Old Testament named Asa. **(Asa waves his hand humbly as he walks in the room. Asa stands in place on stage.)** However, Asa's father, Abijah, was not such a good king. **(Abijah comes forward looking very prideful, using no words, only motions, to try to get the crowd to bow to him. He then stands next to Asa.)**

(Leader standing by Abijah, resting hand on Abijah's shoulder) Abijah did not do what the Lord asked him to do. In fact, Abijah did the exact opposite. Instead of worshiping the Lord, he and the people worshiped fake gods that they made themselves **(hold up a carved or clay image)**. Instead of trusting in God, they trusted in their own strength and abilities. Instead of seeking God, they sought money and friendships with God's enemies.

Telling continued

(Leader standing by Asa now, resting hand on Asa's shoulder) In order for Asa to serve and honor the Lord while he was king, he had to clean up a lot of Abijah's mistakes. Asa tore down and smashed the idols that Abijah built **(take idol and break it)**. Asa helped the people understand how to worship God all over again. Asa reminded the people that God was the one who helped them win battles, not their armies or strength. Asa also got rid of many places to worship idols and discovered that seeking God was the best way to be king.

Finally, under Asa's reign as king, there was peace in the land for 10 years! During this time, Asa, with God's help, was able to help build the city and make it stronger.

It takes a lot of courage to stand up for what is right sometimes. Asa had to trust God to take care of him. The armies that surrounded his country, Judah, were a lot bigger and a lot stronger than his own army. They even had new, expensive weapons. But Asa asked God to take care of him and protect them from the big armies.

Guess what! God answered his prayer because Asa was trying to do what was right in God's eyes. **(Have Asa read 2 Chronicles 14:11.)**

(Leader looking at Asa) Asa, this part of the story is so great! Can you finish it for us?

(Asa smiling) I'd be honored! **(Leader and Abijah sit as Asa comes close to the Sparkies. In a whisper, loud enough for the room to hear, Asa says,)** The army that day was from Ethiopia in Africa **(show on a map)**. Their leader, Zerah, and I met in the middle and both armies watched and listened as I prayed that prayer you just heard. **(Asa reads it again loudly.)**

After that prayer, it was as if we didn't have to fight at all. The Lord went before us and took care of our enemies. You should have seen their faces! Wow, were they scared! They left in a big hurry. We went around the battlefield and gathered up all the stuff they left behind. Gold, silver, animals — we got it all!

God gave me more encouragement by sending Azariah, a prophet, to me. He told me that God told him that as long as I sought after God, God would be with my people and me. But if I forgot God and did what I wanted to do, God wouldn't help the people or me.

After that, I went out and destroyed more idols in my country, even the ones my father made. I also told my own grandmother that she could no longer help lead the people because she kept making new idols and statues while I was burning and breaking the old ones. Let me tell you, this did not make me very popular with my family. They thought I was some crazy man. But I knew that it was what God wanted me to do, so I had courage to do it.

After I did all this, the people made a sacrifice, or offering, to the Lord. We used seven hundred cattle and seven thousand sheep and goats from all that we took when we defeated Zerah. That's so many animals! In fact, they couldn't even fit in this room **(or church, if you have a small church)**! After the sacrifice the people prayed to God, telling Him that they were sorry for not obeying in the past and promising that they would now serve the Lord.



Challenging

(Leader returns.) Asa, thank you so much for sharing your life's story with us. **(Asa leaves, waving to the room.)**

Sometimes standing up for what is right is hard. Asa had to trust God in order to have courage. He even had to stand up to his own family!

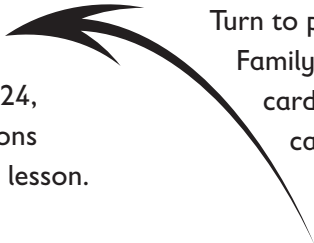
Can you think of ways that you can stand up for what is right? **(Allow Sparkies to answer before giving them ideas listed below.)**

- You can tell the truth even when it is easier to lie.
- You can tell your friends you won't cheat even if they want to show you the right answers or ask you for the answers.
- You can honor your parents even if your friends don't honor their parents.
- You can tell other people about Jesus, even when it seems uncool.

Family Follow Up

Tonight the Sparkies learned about King Asa from 1 Kings 15:8-24, 1 Chronicles 3:10 and 2 Chronicles 14-16. Here are some questions for you to consider to help your son or daughter remember the lesson.

1. What made Asa a good king? (1 Kings 15:11-15 — during the lesson no mention of the word prostitute was mentioned, as included in some Bible versions. Instead, the lesson concentrated on destroying idols.)
2. What was the difference between Abijah and Asa?



Turn to page 177 for Family Follow-Up cards that you can copy and distribute!

Teaching Ideas

Theme Ideas

- **King Night** — Sparkies dress as kings and queens. Asa was a good king who wanted to destroy what the bad kings had done.
- **“A” Night** — A is the focus because the good king and the bad king have names that start with A. Ask Sparkies to bring something to club that starts with the letter A.

Game Ideas

- **Crown Race** — Sparkies must run around the circle balancing a paper crown on their heads.
- **Call Out Game** — As Sparkies stand on the line ready to run around the circle, call out an object such as a fruit, vegetable, Sparkie’s name, etc. Leaders must come up with something in the category that starts with the letter A. The Sparkie runs around the circle and into the center where the game director is standing and tells the game director the A word. (You could have second-graders come up with their own words.)

Teaching Options

- Use masking tape to spell out ASA in huge letters on your game floor. Sparkies line up and walk on the outlines of the letters to help them learn the name. You could have them say the word Asa over and over as they walk.
- Asa did what was right even though doing right was difficult. Talk about a time when you were a child when you had difficulty standing up for what was right. What happened? Let the Sparkies know you were glad you obeyed the Lord.

SparksActivity

Read the following statements to the child. Ask them to draw a happy face if the statement is true about the good king Asa and a sad face if it is true about the bad king Abijah.

A. Did what pleased the Lord.

B. Burned and smashed the idols.

C. Did the same as his father by building idols.

D. Worshiped other gods.

E. Told his family they could no longer lead because they worshiped idols.

F. There was peace for 10 years under his reign as king.

Would you rather be like Asa or Abijah? Why?

Reading

1 Kings 17:1-20:43; Psalm 104;
Psalm 114-115; 2 Kings 1:1-2:25

Thinking

This lesson is about Elijah, God's prophet who remained faithful through difficult circumstances. He trusted God in drought and the death of a widow's son (who came back to life after his prayerful intervention). He also trusted God to light a wet altar on fire and when angry King Ahab wanted to kill him.

Elijah trusted God in the big, life-altering things, so it goes without saying that he was found faithful in the little things earlier in his life. Although we don't know much about Elijah's early life, we can assume that God prepared him then for bigger steps of faith.

Learning to trust God with the little things is really important. Those little things help people grow and depend on God and that expands their faith. Scripture teaches in Matthew 25:21 that when we are faithful with the little things that God gives us now, He will be faithful to give us more later. *His lord said unto him, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."*

You may think that teaching at a weekly Awana club is not quite as important as the job God gave Elijah to light wet altars on fire. But every small life you influence is of priceless value in God's sight. But sometimes God uses these steps along the way for something greater. Be encouraged with Elijah's life and be faithful to teach God's Word.

Looking It Up

1 Kings 18:36-39 (*Ask Sparkies to look up the verses before you begin the lesson.*)



Getting It Ready

You will need:

- 12 good-sized rocks (make sure you can easily lift them)
- 15 pieces of wood (branches or finished, sanded wood is fine) placed around the room
- Bucket of water
- Towels (just in case)

Telling

Has anyone heard about Elijah before? (**Allow Sparkies to raise hands.**) Who can tell me who Elijah was? (**Allow Sparkies to answer.**) Elijah was a prophet. God sent him at a time in history when people worshiped Baal, a made-up god. But Baal didn't seem made-up to the people. He had worshipers, altars and a place for people to worship him.

In those days God caused a famine (lack of food and water) in the land because the people were worshiping Baal. However, God provided for Elijah by giving him a safe place to stay near a small river and sending ravens (birds) to bring him food every day. When God told Elijah to leave this safe place to find a widow (a woman whose husband has died),

Telling continued

Elijah obeyed. When Elijah asked the woman for water and food, the woman was doubtful at first, but eventually let Elijah in. God gave that woman just enough flour and oil each day to make bread. She was able to feed not only her son and herself, but also Elijah. God used her faith to keep her family and one of God's own prophets alive.

One day, while Elijah was staying with the widow, God told Elijah that he needed to find King Ahab. Ahab was an evil king who wanted Elijah dead. Ahab wanted to kill Elijah because Elijah said that Ahab and his people would experience a bad famine because they were not following the Lord but worshipping Baal.

Because God protected Elijah in the past, Elijah knew God would continue to help him. So bravely, Elijah went out to find the king who wanted to kill him.

Obadiah (different from the writer of the book in the Bible), one of Ahab's servants, was out looking for grass or food he could feed to Ahab's animals. He met Elijah and asked him, "Is that you, Elijah?" Elijah told Obadiah, "Yes, it's me! Tell Ahab that I want to talk to him."

"What? You do know this is the man who wants to kill you, right? And if you are lying, and try to escape now, Ahab will kill me too! If I tell him you want to talk and he knows I've seen you, then he will blame me for letting you get away! Elijah, I've served the Lord well. I've hidden 100 of the Lord's servants in caves so that Ahab wouldn't kill them. Please don't make me do this. Ahab will kill me!"

Elijah calmed Obadiah down, "Don't worry, I'll stay here and you will live. Please get Ahab."

So Obadiah told Ahab that Elijah wanted to see him. Ahab came out to meet Elijah. He asked him what he wanted and Elijah told him he wanted to talk to the people. At Ahab's command, all the people gathered, and Elijah told them to stop worshipping Baal.

"Let's see whose God is the real God!" Elijah continued, "Baal has 450 prophets and I am the last of the Lord's prophets left. The rest are gone. I have an idea. Get two bulls, one for Baal and one for the Lord. We will sacrifice them. Arrange one on Baal's altar, and I will prepare the other. Then you will call on your god and I will call on my God, and whichever God answers by fire, He is the one true God."

The people liked this idea and agreed. So the priests who worshiped Baal put their sacrifice on the altar and called out to Baal for a long time. Elijah started to tease them because it was taking such a long time. Elijah said, "Maybe Baal is busy! Maybe he's taking a nap! Maybe you should shout louder. Maybe he's deaf!" The people continued to cry out to Baal, but there was no response. Their god didn't show up.

When they gave up, Elijah gathered twelve stones. They represented the twelve tribes that made up God's people. **(Show the Sparkies the stones you brought in as you arrange them in a circle. After you have finished putting the stones in a circle, begin picking up the pieces of wood you placed around the room. Arrange the wood while you continue the story.)**



Because the Lord's altar was broken and barely used, Elijah had to repair it.

(Arrange the wood and build an altar the best you can.)

After Elijah built the altar, he dug a hole around it. Elijah told the people, "Fill it with water. Wet the sacrifice." **(Show your bucket of water, pretending to pour it on the altar.)** They used four buckets even bigger than this to wet the sacrifice.

Who knows what water does to fire? **(Allow Sparkies to answer.)** Yes, it puts it out. Actually, if you have wet wood, it's very difficult to light on fire. So why would Elijah want to wet the sacrifice just before he asked God to set fire to it? **(Allow Sparkies to answer.)** Elijah wanted to prove that it was God who was doing it. This way they couldn't make excuses. Not only did Elijah ask them to soak it with water once, but he asked them to do it another time. They must have thought he was crazy. Finally Elijah said, "Drench it with water one more time!" There was so much water it was spilling out everywhere. Without God, this altar would be impossible to start on fire.

At last, the time came to ask God to work. **(Read 1 Kings 18:36-39 out loud.)**

After that, the prophets that defended Baal were killed. The people began worshipping the one true God again and so God sent rain on the land. The famine was over! The Lord's people asked God for forgiveness.

God used Elijah's faith to show His own power. God showed up! Will God use your faith to display His power?

Challenging

You might think Elijah's life is pretty cool. You may also be thinking, why doesn't God show up like that anymore?

He won't use you to start wet altars on fire, but He still wants to use you. When you tell your friends about Jesus, your faith is used by God to help others know God. When you obey your parents because you know that is what God wants you to do, your faith is used by God to glorify God.

If you are faithful to God by obeying Him in the little, everyday things, God may use your life in the future for bigger things. He wants to grow your faith little by little. Elijah didn't start off being used by God to light wet altars. First he had to trust God for food. Then he had to trust God to keep him safe in a widow's house. Then he had to trust God to keep him alive while talking to Ahab. It took a long time before God used him to show the people God's power.

Elijah had to trust God in his early life before God would use him. Be patient.

Stay faithful to God now and someday you will see God use you in even bigger ways!





Family Follow Up

Elijah was a man whom God used for big things! Tonight's lesson was from 1 Kings 18. Discuss with your children what it means to be faithful to God. Allow them to tell you how Elijah had faith in God and then ask them how they can have faith in God.

Turn to page 177 for
Family Follow-Up
cards that you
can copy and
distribute!

Teaching Ideas

Theme Ideas

- **Bird Night** — Ravens helped Elijah.
- **Good Servant Night** — Obadiah hid 100 people who believed in God.

Game Ideas

- **Bird Flight** — Sparkies run around the circle with arms out as if they are birds.
- **Direction Game** — Choose one Sparkie on each team. Give the Sparkies five directions and then challenge them to follow the directions without asking for further clarification. A set of directions could be: walk 10 steps, jump six times, shake hands with another Sparkie, turn around, say a verse to your leader. (You can give more or less directions depending on the abilities of your Sparkies.)
- **Tag** — If possible, take the Sparkies outside for a game of tag. (Ahab chasing Elijah.)

Teaching Options

- Every time you say Elijah's name during the lesson, Sparkies call out "God is faithful."
- As you tell the biography, have the Sparkies do motions according to what is happening. Tell them to put their arms out as if they're flying birds, to pretend they're eating cakes that the widow baked, to pretend they're talking to Obadiah, etc.
- Tell the biography in the kitchen. Bring in pancake mix; add the necessary water and oil. As you stir the ingredients, emphasize the part of the biography where Elijah helps the widow.



SparksActivity

God can use you RIGHT NOW even though you are a kid.

God can use you as a grown-up too.

Have you ever thought about what you want to be when you grow up? Draw a picture of you as an adult doing the job you would like to do. How can God use you in that job?

Reading

1 Kings 21:1-29

Thinking

Naboth was a God-fearing man who owned a vineyard King Ahab wanted. Even though Ahab owned as much land as one could possibly need, he still wanted more. Because Naboth's land was a family inheritance, Naboth would not trade or sell the land to Ahab.

This lesson will primarily teach the Sparkies about selfishness. Take time this week to prepare your heart and ask God to show you any of your own selfishness.



Getting It Ready

You will need:

- Picture of a wealthy king
- Package of cream-filled cookies

Showing

This lesson is primarily a skit about greed. Ask a male in your church (who feels comfortable acting) to be Bill, a greedy, cookie-loving man. The skit requires Bill to eat a lot of cookies in about five minutes.

Practice until you have your lines memorized. If there's not time to do so, consider using a podium to hold the script while you and Bill stand on either side. But as much as possible, learn your lines. Reading the script will take away from the humor. Remember, the lines don't need to be said word-perfect.

Vocabulary note: Tell the Sparkies before you start that a vineyard is a large garden where people grow grapes.

Who can tell me what a king owns?

(Show them the picture of the king you brought. Allow Sparkies to answer. Help them get to answers such as:

Riches

Big house(s)/Palace

Animals

Jewels/Gold

Servants

The best foods

The best clothes

The nicest couches and other furniture

The biggest land

Protection/Soldiers)



That's a pretty good list. Kings usually have everything they need and most of what they want. Tonight we will learn about a king who was so selfish that he took things that didn't belong to him, even though he had everything! Our guest leader, Bill, will be our biographer.

(Bill enters holding a package of cookies.)

Showing continued

BILL (*in a whiney voice, holding a cookie and stamping a foot like a child*): Man! I broke it again. Doesn't anything go right? My life is horrible!

LEADER (*trying to distract him from the cookie*): Um, Bill. Yoo-hoo! Over here. (*Bill finally looks at leader. Annoyed and rolling eyes as if to say, "What now?" with his expression.*) It's too bad your cookie broke, but I was wondering if you could come over here and tell us today's lesson.

BILL: Lesson? (*Trying to twist another cookie, distracted, salivating, and not looking at the leader anymore*) I'm having a little situation with my cookie. Could this wait until next week? (*Bill, still concentrating on his cookie, twists the cookie and licks the cream. Big eyed, he looks like this is the best thing he's ever tasted.*)

LEADER (*gently takes the cookie from Bill and puts it back in the package Bill is holding*): Actually these Sparkies would really love the lesson TONIGHT! Could you start already?

BILL (*carefully trying to pull apart another cookie, only glancing up occasionally*): OK, OK. I guess I can tell them. (*Sits down, and takes a bite of a cookie, talking and chewing with his mouth open.*) You see, Naboth owned a vineyard, and it was right up against King Ahab's property. (*Bill continues to eat a cookie but gets distracted by the pen the leader is holding.*) Ohhh. That's a really nice pen. (*Grabs it from the leader.*) It's so shiny. (*Tests the ink on a piece of paper.*) And it writes really nice. Can I have this? (*Holds pen up while eating yet another cookie, chews with mouth open.*) I REALLY want it. Hey, do you have any milk?

LEADER: I'm sorry, Bill. My grandmother gave me this pen and it's special to me. But I'd be happy to buy you a nice, new pen. And no, I don't have any milk.

BILL (*stamps foot like a child*): NO! It's just not the same. I like that pen! (*Shoves a few cookies in mouth.*)

LEADER: Sorry. But could you please tell us about Naboth and Ahab now?

BILL (*distracted, squinting, looking into bag of cookies as if it is a deep well. Holds up bag toward face, trying to drop the last few crumbs in his mouth*): WHAT? NOOOO! (*Looks up at leader and says, in the most serious of tones.*) This will have to wait. My cookies are all gone! I have to go get more. (*Throws bag of cookies on the ground and leaves in a hurry.*)

LEADER: Well, that was odd. I'll finish what Bill planned to tell you.



Telling

Ahab was a bad king who hated the worship of God. He even tried to kill Elijah because Elijah was God's prophet. Remember last week's lesson?

Well, Ahab hadn't changed a bit after God used Elijah to start a totally wet altar on fire.

Ahab was looking out his palace window one day and saw a vineyard that Naboth owned. It was right up against Ahab's property. Ahab really wanted it, so he went up to Naboth and asked if he could buy the vineyard from him or exchange it for another vineyard in another part of the city.

Naboth told Ahab that he couldn't sell him the vineyard because it was a family inheritance. In other words, it wasn't his to sell. It belonged to God's people. If Naboth sold it, he would be betraying his family by selling land God wanted his family to have.

Ahab lived in Samaria and owned miles of land. He couldn't even walk across all the land he owned in a week's time. Ahab was greedy for more land he didn't need.

When Naboth told Ahab he couldn't sell the land to him, Ahab was upset. He came home and told his wife, Jezebel, what happened. Jezebel told Ahab not to worry because she would take care of it for him. And when Jezebel said "don't worry, I'll take care of it," it wasn't good news for Naboth. Jezebel was just as wicked, if not more wicked, than Ahab. She would do anything to get what she wanted.

Telling continued

Jezebel wrote a letter (signing Ahab's name at the bottom instead of hers — making people think it was the king) telling some leaders to throw a party for Naboth. There, Naboth would be accused or blamed for betraying God and King Ahab. The two men she hired agreed to do so at the party.

At the party, Naboth sat down for the big meal, not knowing what Jezebel planned. The two men Jezebel hired to lie about Naboth stood up and accused him of breaking the law. Since two of them had the same story, they arrested Naboth and put him to death.

When Naboth died, Ahab went immediately to the vineyard and made it his.

God sent Elijah (we learned about him last week, remember?) to Ahab soon after Ahab took over Naboth's vineyard. Elijah told Ahab, "God is going to take your life. Dogs will lick up your blood at the place you will die!" ***(Do not explain this in a way that would frighten the Sparkies.)***

Ahab took Elijah seriously and was sorry for what he did. He humbled himself before God. God spared Ahab's life for a little while, but eventually Ahab's life ended when he was fighting in a battle. Ahab died from a weapon that went between his armor. And just as God said would happen, dogs came and licked up Ahab's blood where he died.



Challenging

Do you see what greed did to Ahab? Ahab had everything — huge houses, lots of servants and more money than he needed. But he still wanted more. He wanted “stuff” so much that someone was killed to get it.

We can learn a lot from Ahab. Well, we can learn a lot about what NOT to do from Ahab. Imagine having everything you need and then taking something that doesn’t belong to you just because you want it.

Sometimes we can get that way, though. Think about everything you have. You probably have a bed, a house, parents, food — even stuff you don’t need like a gaming system or toys. Can you think of any time this week you whined like Ahab? Or you acted like Bill with the cookies? Bill had that whole package of cookies and he didn’t offer to share it with us once. Ahab had a whole kingdom and Naboth was killed just to get a little vineyard near his palace.

Instead of whining when you don’t get what you want or what you ask for, thank God and your family for what they give or provide for you.

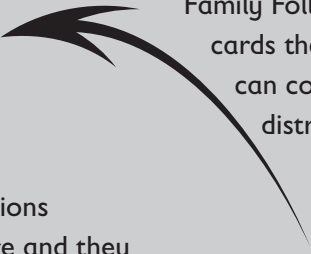
Family Follow Up

Tonight’s lesson was from 1 Kings 21. Naboth was a God-fearing man who owned a vineyard King Ahab wanted. Even though Ahab owned as much land as one could want, he still wanted more. Because Naboth’s land was a family inheritance, Naboth would not trade or sell the land to Ahab. It would have been a disgrace to Naboth’s family and lack of thankfulness to God if he had sold it.

Tonight’s lesson was primarily a skit about being greedy. Bill made a guest appearance where part of the point (being thankful/not whining) was made by him devouring a bunch of cookies without offering any to anyone.

After the skit humorously pointed out what greed is, the Sparkies learned what greed did to Ahab.

Talk to your children about greed. During the week, look for situations where they act greedy. For instance, you’re walking through a store and they beg for you to buy a toy they don’t need and probably won’t even play with once they get it. Talk about ways to be thankful for what they do have.



Turn to page 177 for Family Follow-Up cards that you can copy and distribute!



Teaching Ideas

Theme Ideas

- **The Grass Isn't Greener Night** — Ahab wanted what Naboth had.
- **Purple Night** (representing Naboth's vineyard) — Sparkies wear purple to club.

Game Ideas

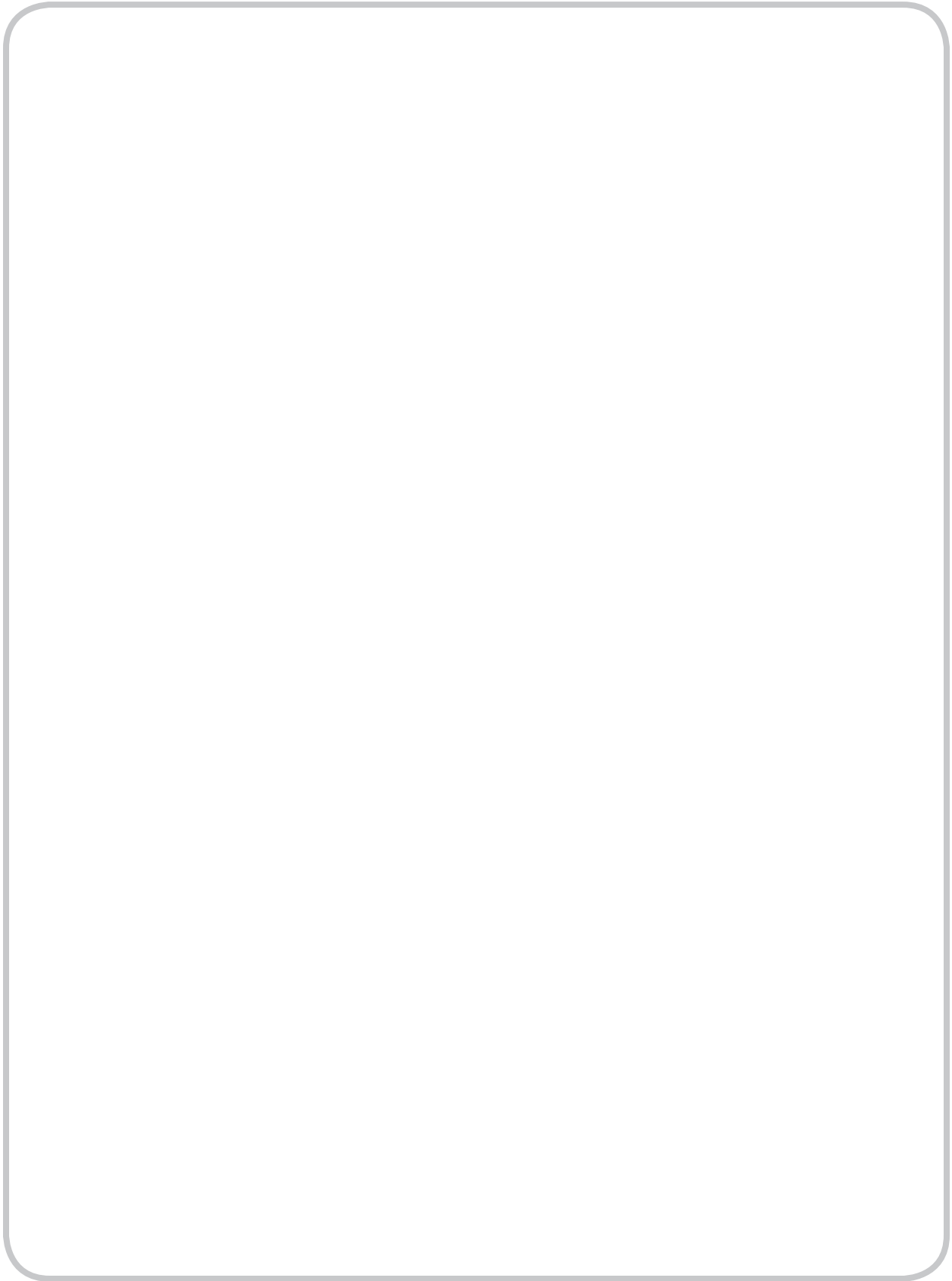
- **Grape Game** — Sparkies must walk around the circle, balancing three grapes on a teaspoon. If a grape drops, they must stop and put it back on the spoon.
- **Grape Roll Off** — Sparkies kneel behind the starting line and roll their grapes across the floor. Whoever gets their grape the furthest wins.
- **Grape Toss** — Sparkies pair off. Line them up so they're standing about five feet (1.5 meters) from each other. The first Sparkie throws the grape to his partner. His partner tosses it back. Sparkies back up a step and throw the grape again. Once a team drops their grape, they are out.

Teaching Options

- This night is about greed, but instead of emphasizing greed, emphasize sharing. Ask Sparkies to bring specific items: canned food for a food bank, toiletries for a shelter or school supplies for a mission. Explain that as people who love the Lord, we need to have an attitude of giving.
- Give an illustration from your own young life when you wanted something that someone else had. Perhaps this was a toy, a video game, a bike or even a better grade. What did you do to get it? Did you steal money from your mom's purse or cheat to get a better grade? Make the story age appropriate to Sparkies.

SparksActivity

Draw a picture of what you think Naboth's vineyard looked like.



Reading

1 Kings 19:16-21;
2 Kings 2:1-17

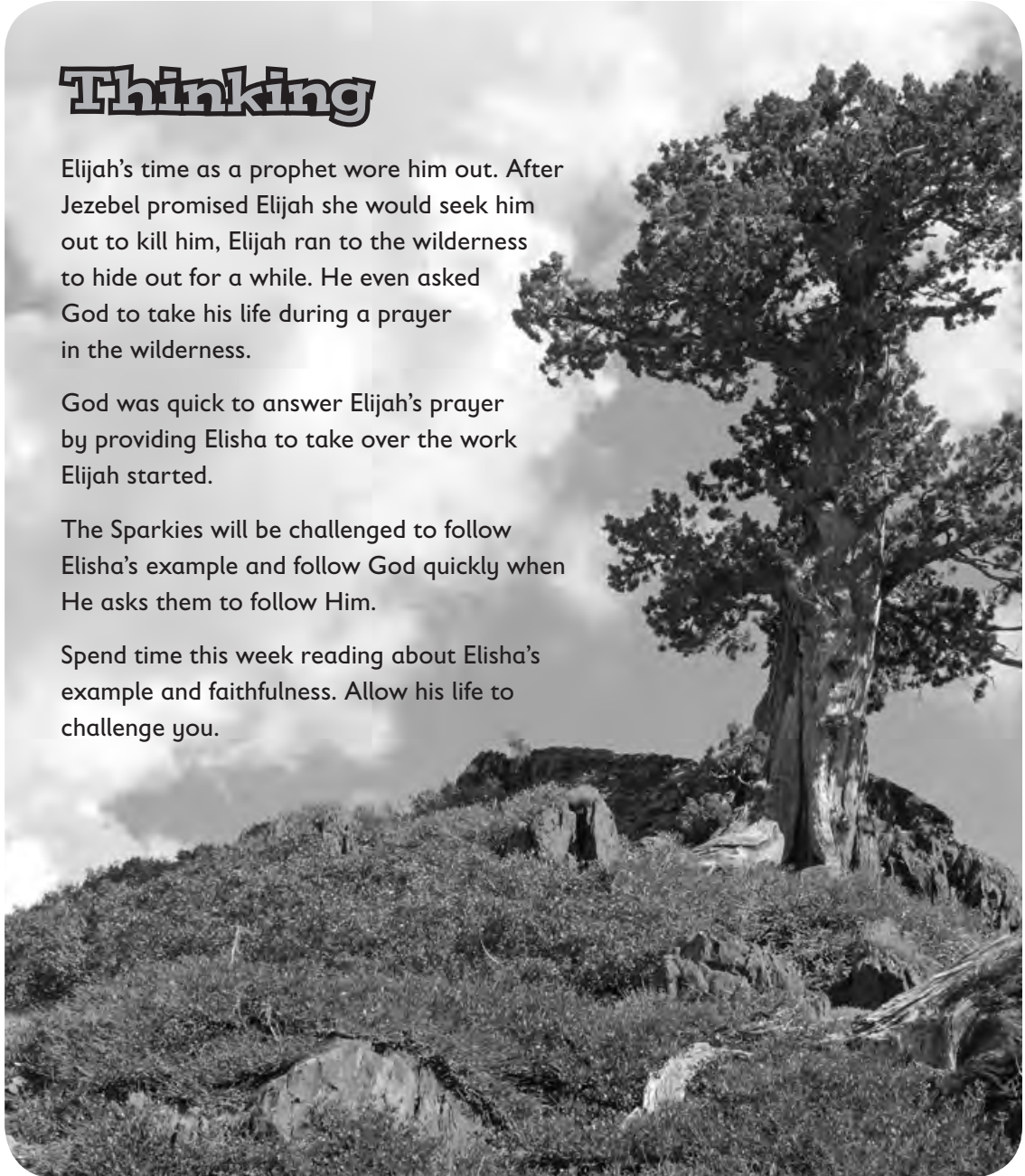
Thinking

Elijah's time as a prophet wore him out. After Jezebel promised Elijah she would seek him out to kill him, Elijah ran to the wilderness to hide out for a while. He even asked God to take his life during a prayer in the wilderness.

God was quick to answer Elijah's prayer by providing Elisha to take over the work Elijah started.

The Sparkies will be challenged to follow Elisha's example and follow God quickly when He asks them to follow Him.

Spend time this week reading about Elisha's example and faithfulness. Allow his life to challenge you.



Getting It Ready

You will need:

- A coat
- Large picture of a chariot (or if you can only find several small pictures, make copies and pass them around to your Sparkies).

Option: You could have two leaders lead. Have the first leader speak until the lesson talks about Elijah placing his cloak on Elisha, symbolizing a passing of the prophetic responsibilities. When the first leader shows what Elijah did by placing the cloak onto the second leader, then the second leader would take over for the rest of the lesson. This will illustrate to the Sparkies the passing of responsibility as Elijah did to Elisha. The transition, if you should use this idea, will be indicated in the lesson with an “*”.

Showing

(Ask your Sparkies if they know what a chariot is. If possible, place the picture of the chariot on a wall where they can all see. If you found a few pictures, pass them around so they can look at them up close.)

In a little while, you will find out who rode in a flaming chariot! Listen closely so you don't miss it!





Telling

Who can tell me what they remember about Elijah? (**Allow a few Sparkies to sum up what they learned.**) That's very good! Tonight's lesson is about a man with a similar name, but with a very different way of helping people. His name is Elisha. Elisha took over Elijah's job as prophet.

Remembering the difference between Elijah and Elisha can be confusing. If you ever get confused, just remember that Elijah has a J in his name and Elisha has an S in his. If you ever forget who came first, just remember that J comes before S in the alphabet, so Elijah, J, came before Elisha, S.

You may be wondering what happened to Elijah. Where did he have to go? Why did Elisha take over for him? Elijah probably had the same questions. Today's lesson will help us find out why.

Remember when Elijah showed the people that Baal was not really a god? And God used Elijah to make a totally wet sacrifice start on fire? After that, the people began worshiping the true God. King Ahab and Jezebel (Ahab's wife), were not happy because they did not worship the one true God. They were especially mad when Elijah had all the prophets of Baal killed.

Jezebel found Elijah and told him that she would find a way to kill Elijah the same way that the prophets of Baal died.

Frightened, Elijah ran into the wilderness. He was afraid that Jezebel would do what she said. God reminded Elijah in the wilderness that He was with him and would take care of him. God made food appear for Elijah to eat and He gave him rest that night.

When Elijah woke up, God told him that He had another plan for him. Elijah needed to go find Elisha to take his place.

Elijah didn't ask any questions; he left the wilderness and went out to find Elisha.

Elijah found Elisha doing some farming. He approached Elisha and put his coat on him. In Bible times, when someone gave someone else responsibility, it was common to put an article of clothing (**show your cloak/coat prop and perhaps put it on one of the leaders**) over the person's shoulders to show them that they now carried the responsibility. It also showed the person receiving the coat that they were under the care of the person who put it on them. Elisha knew exactly what Elijah was doing.

Elijah was telling Elisha that he was his replacement. **(Show the Sparkies this by taking your coat and putting it around the shoulders of a few of them.)** See, if I were to do this to you, you would know that you needed to follow me and just as you are under my coat, you would be under my care. I would need to teach you to take over for me. * **(See Getting Ready.)**

Elisha immediately kissed his parents goodbye and followed Elijah.

As Elijah and Elisha realized or understood that God was calling Elijah to be taken to heaven, Elijah asked Elisha a very important question. Elijah asked, “Elisha, is there anything you need before God takes me away?”

Elisha answered very boldly. Elisha said, “Yes, I want God to use me the same way He used you, only more!”

Elijah probably stood there stunned at this request. He told Elisha, “Well, that’s up to God. If God allows you to see me taken from you, then you will get what you asked for.”

All of a sudden a rumble came and the heat from fire warmed them. A fiery chariot with horses came down from heaven and separated Elijah from Elisha. Elisha screamed out, “My Father!” And immediately Elijah was gone. God came and took him to heaven.

We don’t know if Elijah actually died or if God took him, still living, to heaven. But we do know that Elisha saw Elijah go. So Elisha was given what he asked for. God would use him in a mighty way! Next week we’ll learn a few ways God used Elisha.

Challenging

Did you notice in the lesson how quickly Elisha followed Elijah? As soon as Elijah came and put his coat on Elisha, Elisha ran inside, kissed his parents and left with Elijah. Elisha knew that God had sent Elijah to come and get him.

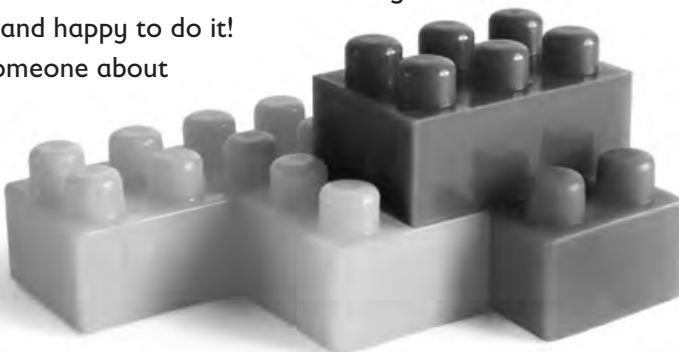
Elisha trusted what God was doing without even debating or questioning God. That kind of faith is what we all should desire. When God says come here or go there, our first response should be “Yes!” Do you ever feel God telling you to talk to your friend about Jesus? Do you ever feel God telling you to share your toys with your brother or sister?

Remember how Elisha responded when God asked him to do something.

He went right away! He was obedient and happy to do it!

Be happy when God asks you to tell someone about

Jesus or share. God may be using you to lead someone else to Himself.

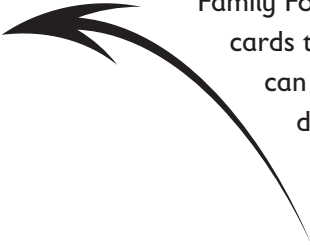


Family Follow Up

Today's lesson was on Elijah passing the prophet torch to Elisha.

Spend a few minutes in 1 Kings 19 and 2 Kings 2 and ask your kids what they remember from the story.

A couple of questions to consider: What did Elisha ask Elijah for? Did Elisha get what he asked for? Did Elisha wonder if he should trust Elijah?



Turn to page 178 for
Family Follow-Up
cards that you
can copy and
distribute!

Teaching Ideas

Theme Ideas

- **Chariot Night** — A chariot appeared to take Elijah to heaven.
- **Whirlwind Night** — Elijah went to heaven in a whirlwind.

Game Ideas

- **Chariot Races** — You will need four tricycles of similar size. (If you have tricycles of different sizes, rotate them after each turn so all teams have the disadvantage of a small bike or the advantage of a larger one.) One person from each team positions the tricycle at the color line. When the whistle blows, Sparkies bike around the circle. When they get back to their line, they get off the tricycle before running into the middle for the pin.
- **Whirlwind Game** — Sparkies have to spin around a specified number of times before walking across the room to pick up a pin. Most children this age enjoy spinning around and getting dizzy, but some children don't enjoy it. Ask for volunteers and don't require too many spins.

Teaching Options

- Remember (as stated in the lesson itself) that Elijah came before Elisha. Even adults get confused with the order. Emphasize to the Sparkies that J comes before S. Quiz the Sparkies on which comes first.
- Describe a whirlwind to the Sparkies. Find pictures of whirlwinds (check out images on the Web.) Many Sparkies have seen pictures of tornadoes. A tornado is a type of whirlwind.



SparksActivity

Elijah or EliSha?

(Leaders read the statements and tell the kids to answer by jumping up if it's Elijah or hopping on one foot if it's Elisha.)

Was used by God to set a wet altar on fire.

Wanted to be used by God even more than the man before him.

Went up to heaven in a fiery chariot.

Was fed by God when he was running for his life.

Kissed his parents goodbye.

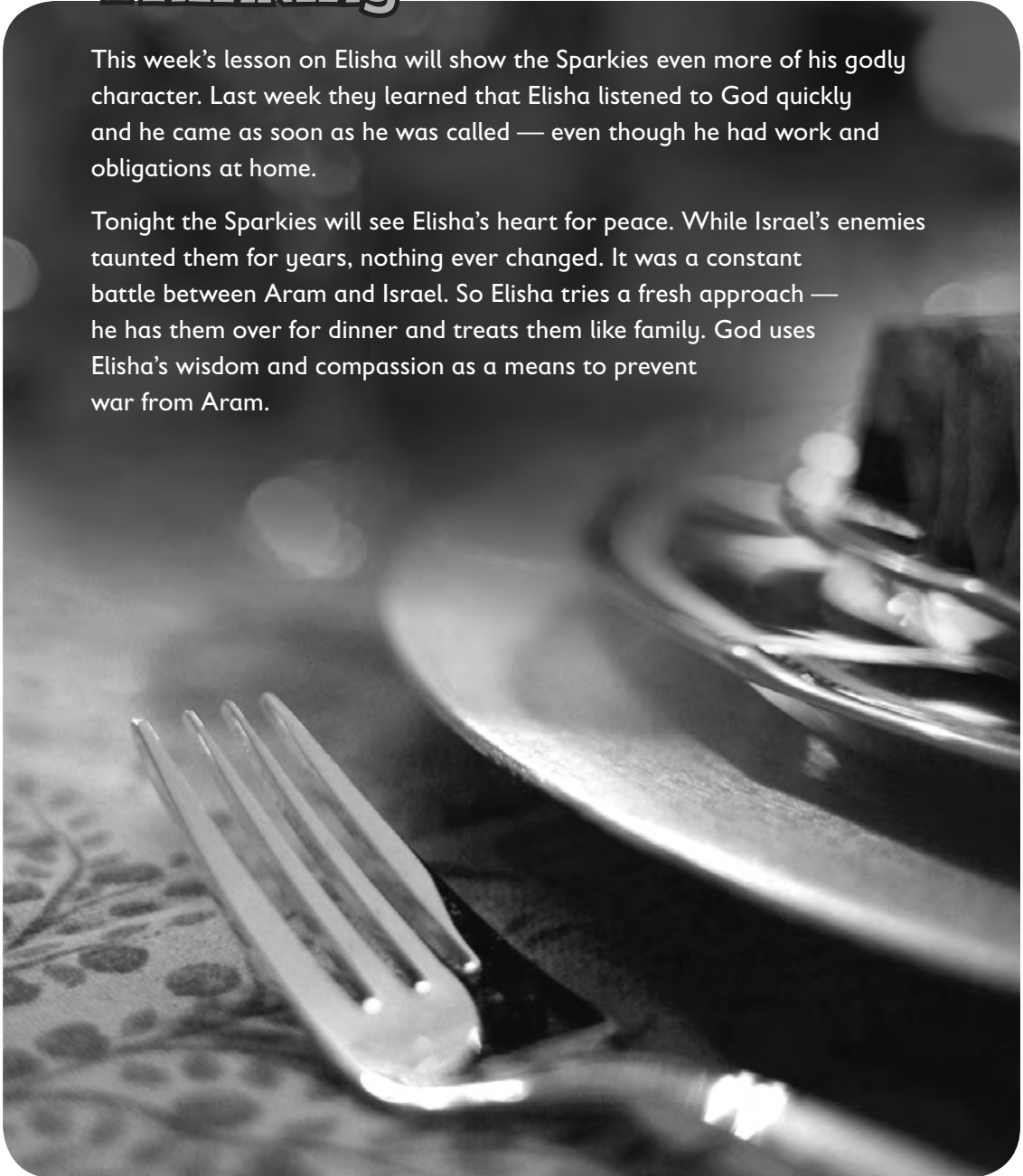
Reading

2 Kings 6

Thinking

This week's lesson on Elisha will show the Sparkies even more of his godly character. Last week they learned that Elisha listened to God quickly and he came as soon as he was called — even though he had work and obligations at home.

Tonight the Sparkies will see Elisha's heart for peace. While Israel's enemies taunted them for years, nothing ever changed. It was a constant battle between Aram and Israel. So Elisha tries a fresh approach — he has them over for dinner and treats them like family. God uses Elisha's wisdom and compassion as a means to prevent war from Aram.



Looking It Up

Romans 12:14-21 (*Ask Sparkies to look up the verses before you begin the lesson.*)

Getting It Ready

You will need:

- Find (or draw) a very small picture of a fly (about life-size) and cut it out so there is no border around it. Put it somewhere in the room where you teach and put it in a place where it is hard to see.
- Two Sparkie volunteers. Explain what you would like them to do beforehand.

Showing

Today I want you to look around the room and see if you can find a fly. It isn't a real one, just a picture of one. (*Give the Sparkies 1-2 minutes to find it. If they do not find the fly, have them take a seat and show them where you put it.*)

Telling

Do you know what the saying “I wish I could be a fly on the wall” means? Basically, it means that you want to be as small as a fly so no one notices you in a room. That way you can hear what is going on, but no one knows you are there. Can you imagine being a fly on the wall in a president’s house or a queen’s castle — listening to all the plans the leader makes? Or maybe being a fly on the wall in your parents’ bedroom as they talk about what to get you for Christmas? Think how cool it would be to be in a room without anyone knowing you are there!

Did you know that God allowed Elisha to be a fly on the wall in the enemy king’s bedroom? Yes, God allowed Elisha to hear what the enemy king was talking about when he was making his plans! Elisha didn’t really turn into a fly. But God allowed him to know what the king was planning before it happened. The Bible doesn’t tell us how Elisha knew; we just know that God allowed Elisha to hear the king’s plans.

(Ask two Sparkies to volunteer to help you illustrate what was happening. Tell Sparkie number 1 that he is Elisha. Sparkie number 2 is the enemy. You, the leader, will be the one giving information to warn Elisha what is happening. Have both Elisha and the enemy facing you. The enemy should be five feet (1.5 meters) behind Elisha. Elisha should be about a foot (30 cm) away from you.

Tell the enemy to hold up fingers in the air, as many as they want. Now tell Elisha that he has to guess how many fingers the enemy is holding up. Only you, the leader, will tell him so he never loses. For example, if the enemy is holding up four fingers, tell Elisha, “The enemy is holding up four fingers.” Then Elisha will guess four fingers. You can do this a few times, every time telling Elisha how many fingers the enemy chose.)

The enemy king was frustrated and thought one of his own men was giving his plans of attack to Israel’s army. But the men told their king that it was Elisha the prophet who was telling Israel’s king. This made the enemy king angry. He said, “How would he know! Find out where he is so I can kill him!” So they found out where Elisha was and sent men to get him. But because Elisha knew what the king was going to do ahead of time, he was ready and waited in Dothan, a town not far from Israel’s capital city, Samaria.

As the enemy’s army approached Elisha in Dothan, Elisha’s servant began to panic when he saw how many soldiers were in the enemy’s army. “What are we going to do, Elisha? Look how many people there are!”

Elisha told his servant not to worry and then he prayed, “God, allow him to see what You are doing.” Immediately Elisha’s servant’s eyes could see all of the angels that God was using to protect him and Israel. Then Elisha prayed, “God, please close our enemy’s eyes.” Immediately every person in the enemy’s army lost their sight. God blinded them for a time so they could not see.

Do you see how this puts Elisha in the perfect spot? The enemy’s army could not see anything, so Elisha could run away. But guess what! Elisha did not run away. He stayed right there and went up to the enemy’s army.

Elisha told the army, “This isn’t the city you want. Follow me and I’ll show you what you want.”

Because they could not see anything, they had to trust Elisha. (They didn’t even know it was Elisha they were speaking to!) Elisha took them to Samaria and led them inside the city walls. Elisha then asked God to open the enemy’s eyes. The enemy army was surrounded by the army of Israel now. The enemy soldiers knew if they tried to fight the army of Israel in its own city, they would lose. They were outnumbered.

When Elisha’s king — the king of Israel — saw them, he asked Elisha if he wanted them killed.

Elisha told the king, “No, invite them in and feed them.”

Did you know that in Bible times inviting people into your house and feeding them was the same as wanting peace with them? In a time when wars were used to show power, the Israelite army and people showed love by eating together. Guess what! Israel’s enemies did not attack again for a very, very long time! Elisha won them over with love and respect!



Challenging

Elisha was very wise in knowing what to do with the enemy. He could have easily called on the Lord to kill them all. But he didn't. He wanted to bring peace by being peaceful. Do you ever get picked on at school or by an older brother or sister? If you do, you can learn how to handle the hurt from Elisha. Instead of trying to hurt someone you don't like or get along with, you can show them love by saying something nice to that person. You can invite them to your birthday party. You can even tell them you like their shoes. Try to show love to people it is hard to show love to. Pray for those who hurt you. The Bible tells us this. **(Read Romans 12:14-21 with your Sparkies.)**





Family Follow Up

This week's lesson from 2 Kings 6 showed the Sparkies the way God used Elisha for peace. When the enemies came to get Elisha because he knew the enemy king's plans, Elisha asked God to blind the army so they could not see him. He then led them on a 12 mile (19.3 km) excursion to Samaria. Imagine walking 12 miles (19.3 km) blindly following a man whom you never saw!

Once inside the city walls of Samaria, Elisha asks God to restore the sight of the enemy army and God grants his request. Of course, now that the enemy is surrounded by the entire city of Samaria, they are at the mercy of Israel's king. Elisha tells his king — the king of Israel — to have the enemies over for dinner. A huge feast was made and peace was restored (inviting people under your roof was an unspoken peace covenant in Bible times) for a very long time. Elisha won the enemy over with kindness!

Talk with your son or daughter about winning people over with kindness. As a family, you may want to discuss ways to show kindness to someone in need. Perhaps even do as Elisha and have an unlikely guest over for dinner.

Turn to page 178 for
Family Follow-Up
cards that you
can copy and
distribute!

Teaching Ideas

Theme Ideas

- **Follow the Leader Night** — Leader directs as many activities as possible by showing rather than talking.

Game Ideas

- **Follow Me Race** — One child from each team is blindfolded. A second child from each team holds the hand of the first child and leads him around the circle and in for the pin. Depending on the Sparkies in your club, you could also have the second child explain to the first child where to walk, without holding his hand. Or you could have a leader explain to the child where to walk.
- **Beanbag in the Bucket** — Line Sparkies up in four straight lines parallel to one another. Place four buckets across from the start of each line, but not too great a distance away. Blindfold one Sparkie from each team and give him a beanbag. At the whistle, the blindfolded Sparkies must walk to the bucket and put the beanbag inside the bucket.
- **Who am I?** — Sit a Sparkie on a chair and blindfold her. Then choose another Sparkie to come up to the first Sparkie and ask “Who am I?” The blindfolded Sparkie must guess.

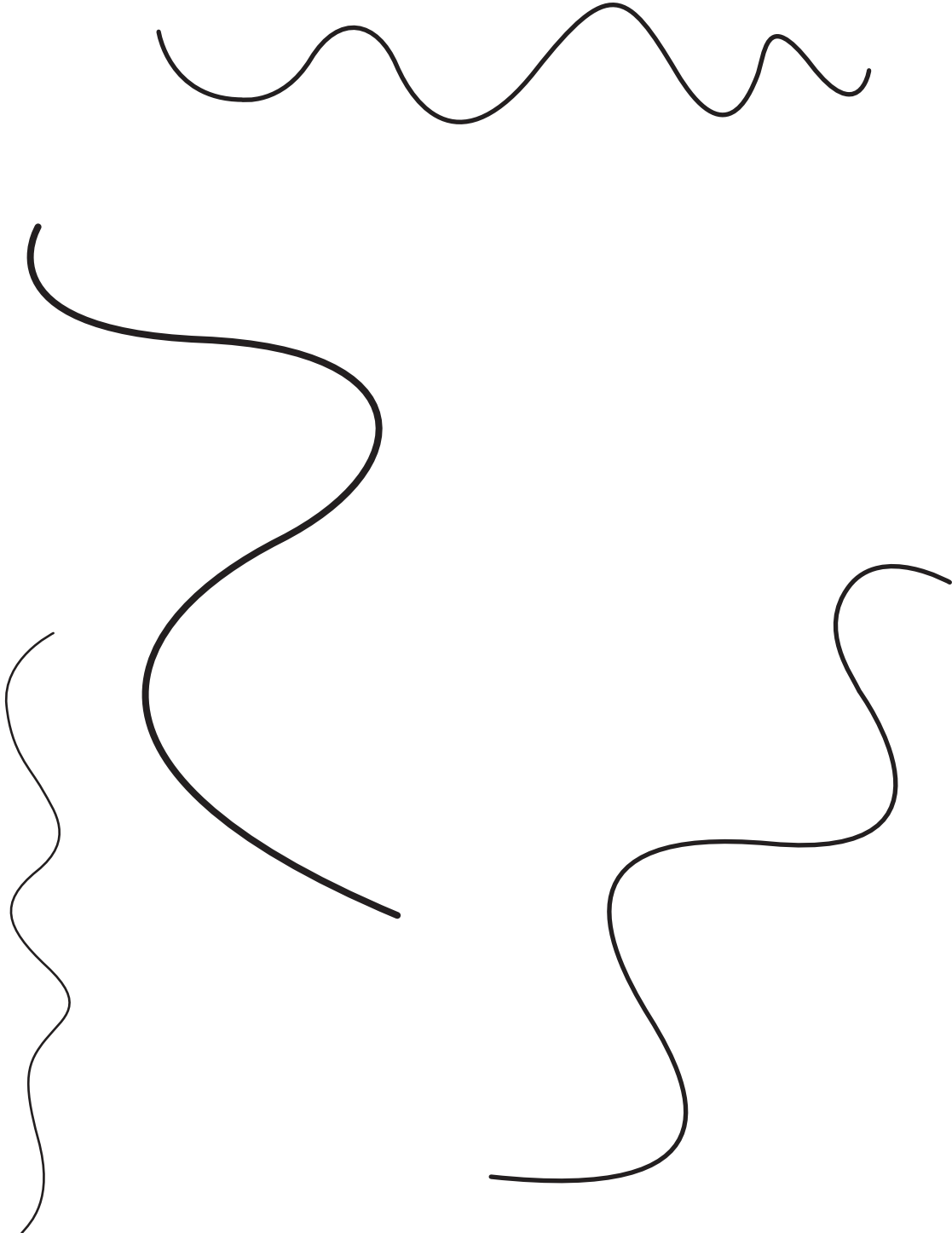
Teaching Options

- Choose a messy food such as chocolate pudding. Ask a leader to sit down in a chair. Blindfold a second leader. Have the blindfolded leader feed the pudding to the leader in the chair. Talk about the difficulty of not being able to see, especially when you’re not used to it. (You might want to mention that people who are truly blind often know how to get around well and are very sensitive to sound, touch, etc., to determine which direction to go. The king’s army didn’t know how to navigate without their sight.)
- Go around the room and give each child a sincere compliment — to show kindness.



SparksActivity

What picture can you draw, using the squiggles on this page?
When you are done, show kindness to someone by giving him the picture.



Reading

2 Kings 5

Thinking

The biography of Naaman is one of those biblical events that cause commentators to point out that God has a sense of humor. Obviously, God could have healed Naaman any way He wanted to, but He chose to have this proud army captain dip in the Jordan River — a muddy, dirty, unappealing stream of water.

Naaman was a man of pride and yes, he HAD accomplished many great things, at least in the eyes of the Syrian king. He was proud of his position, his friendship with the king and of the many battles he'd won.

Pride is something God talks about over and over again in His Word. Pride gets all of us in a lot of trouble because it is at the root of many sins: greed, lying, stealing, anger, etc. In Proverbs 6:16-19, we read a list of things God hates, and first on that list is pride. In fact, was it not pride that got Adam and Eve into trouble in the first place?

Watch your Sparkies — you'll see pride in their lives too. Pride is what makes them seek attention. They want you to notice them, not the other kids. Pride causes them to get upset when another Sparkie wins the race or gets the last piece of red paper or brings a new stuffed animal to club.

As you teach this biography, emphasize two things: the pride of Naaman, and the influence one young, servant girl had on an important man (who then influenced many others).

Encourage your Sparkies to live their own lives in obedience to the Lord — they, too, can make a difference.

Showing

After you conclude your lesson, invite the Sparkies to act out the biography of Elisha and Naaman. Kids this age enjoy role-playing, and this is a particularly fun story to act out because of its multitude of characters and actions. You can walk them through the actions, read the biography straight from the Bible or have them do it on their own and see how much they remember (gently correcting them when they make a mistake).



Telling

Way back in Old Testament times, there lived a VERY IMPORTANT MAN named Naaman. Naaman was a hero in Syria because he was captain of the army, an army that had won battles against enemy nations. His boss, the king, liked Naaman because of the honor Naaman had brought to Syria.

During one of the battles, the Syrians brought back children to be servants to the Syrian people. One of those children was a young girl from Israel whom Naaman chose to serve his wife.

We don't know much about the little girl except that she was young — maybe as young as 10. But we do know she must have been good, obedient and a hard worker, too, because of what happened ...

See, Naaman had a problem — he had a skin disease called leprosy. Leprosy is a horrible disease that causes a lot of pain.

The servant girl said to Naaman's wife, "If my lord [Naaman] visited the prophet back in Samaria, he would be cured from his leprosy." (The girl was talking about Elisha, a prophet who loved and served the true God.)

I think the servant girl was a good worker and obedient to Naaman's wife — otherwise, I don't think Mrs. Naaman would've listened to her. Why would you listen to a servant girl if you knew a lot of wise leaders? I think Mrs. Naaman liked the girl and had learned to trust her. That's why she paid attention to what the servant said.

Now the king of Syria was Naaman's friend, and when he heard there was a prophet in Israel that could heal him, he got all excited. He gave Naaman silver and gold and beautiful clothes to give to the king of Israel so that the king would look on Naaman with favor and help him get to Elisha. The king of Syria also wrote a letter to the king of Israel, asking for his help.

Telling continued

But think about it! The Syrians had raided Israel and robbed them and brought back young Israeli children as slaves! Why would the king of Israel want to help Naaman? He was the captain of the Syrian army! Why would the king even TRUST Naaman?

Guess what? He didn't trust him. When he read the letter and saw all the gold and silver and expensive gifts, he tore his clothes. (That's what they did back then to show how angry or sad or upset they were.) Yes, the king was very upset. He had no idea how anyone in Israel could cure Naaman and decided that the king of Syria was trying to start a fight.

But Elisha, the prophet, heard about what was happening and he told the king to allow Naaman to visit him.

So Naaman got into his chariot and went to Elisha's house. Remember, Naaman was a VERY IMPORTANT MAN. He probably expected Elisha to run out of the house and welcome him. Maybe he expected Elisha to serve a big meal and offer him a bed for a rest. But NONE of that happened.

Elisha sent a messenger outside who told Naaman to go dip seven times in the Jordan River.

The Jordan River is not a very pretty river. It is narrow and dirty, and dipping in the river would not be something anyone would WANT to do.

You can imagine Naaman was angry. He thought Elisha would call on God's name, wave his arm over him and instantly Naaman would be cured. But NONE of that happened. Naaman said that if he DID have to dip himself in a river, why couldn't it be a beautiful river? Why the muddy Jordan?

Naaman was a proud man. He didn't want to do something as awful as dipping himself in a dirty river.

In fact, Naaman was so angry that he started home. But a couple of his servants stopped him. "If Elisha had told you to do some great thing to be cured, you would've done it. So why not do this simple thing of dipping in the Jordan?"

Well, that made sense to Naaman, so he went to the Jordan and did what Elisha said and, of course, he was cured. The Bible tells us that his skin became as smooth as a little child's.

Naaman went back to Elisha and said "I now know that your God is the only God. Please take these gifts from me."

Elisha said he didn't want the gifts. Elisha knew that he was able to help Naaman only because of the Lord. Elisha couldn't heal a man of leprosy without the Lord's help.

So Naaman started home again, happy that he had listened to his wife's servant girl and that now he was cured.

Gehazi, a servant of Elisha, saw what had happened and heard Naaman offer Elisha beautiful and valuable gifts. Gehazi got an idea. He ran after Naaman. When Naaman saw him coming, he stopped and asked, "Is all well?"

"Oh, sir," Gehazi said, "after you left, two men stopped by. They are in need. Elisha asked me to run after you and get a little money and some clothes for them." Of course, Naaman was glad to do so. He gave Gehazi even more money than he had asked for.

Gehazi hurried back and hid the gifts. Then he went in to see Elisha. Elisha asked where he had been. Gehazi lied and said, "Nowhere." But Elisha knew what his servant had done. Because Gehazi disobeyed, he became sick with leprosy and had the disease for the rest of his life.

Challenging

The young servant girl did what she was told to do. Mrs. Naaman liked her and was willing to listen to her suggestion to talk to the prophet of God.

(You can also emphasize the pride of Naaman. He did not want to lower himself to dipping in a dirty river. Talk about how pride also affects the Sparkies.)

Do you know the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior? People are watching you too. What do they see — someone who truly wants to live the way God wants you to live, or someone who argues and complains and whines? Even though you're a kid, God can use you to show His love to others.

If you don't know Christ as Savior, talk to your parent or one of the leaders. They will help you and answer any questions you might have.

(If you don't have time to role-play the event, do so next week, reviewing the lesson and the teaching points.)



Family Follow Up

Read the biography of Naaman from the Bible — 2 Kings 5. Talk about Naaman's pride. How does pride sometimes cause trouble in your home? (Sometimes kids lie to avoid embarrassment or refuse to be kind to a kid at school that others tease.) Even adults can be victims of pride by wanting what other families have (whether it's a new car or the latest technology) or by desiring a job that pays as much money as someone else's job.

Explain that pride is a sin and that humbleness is the opposite of pride.

Turn to page 178 for Family Follow-Up cards that you can copy and distribute!

Teaching Ideas

Theme Ideas

- **Helping Night** — The servant girl helped Naaman's wife.

Game Ideas

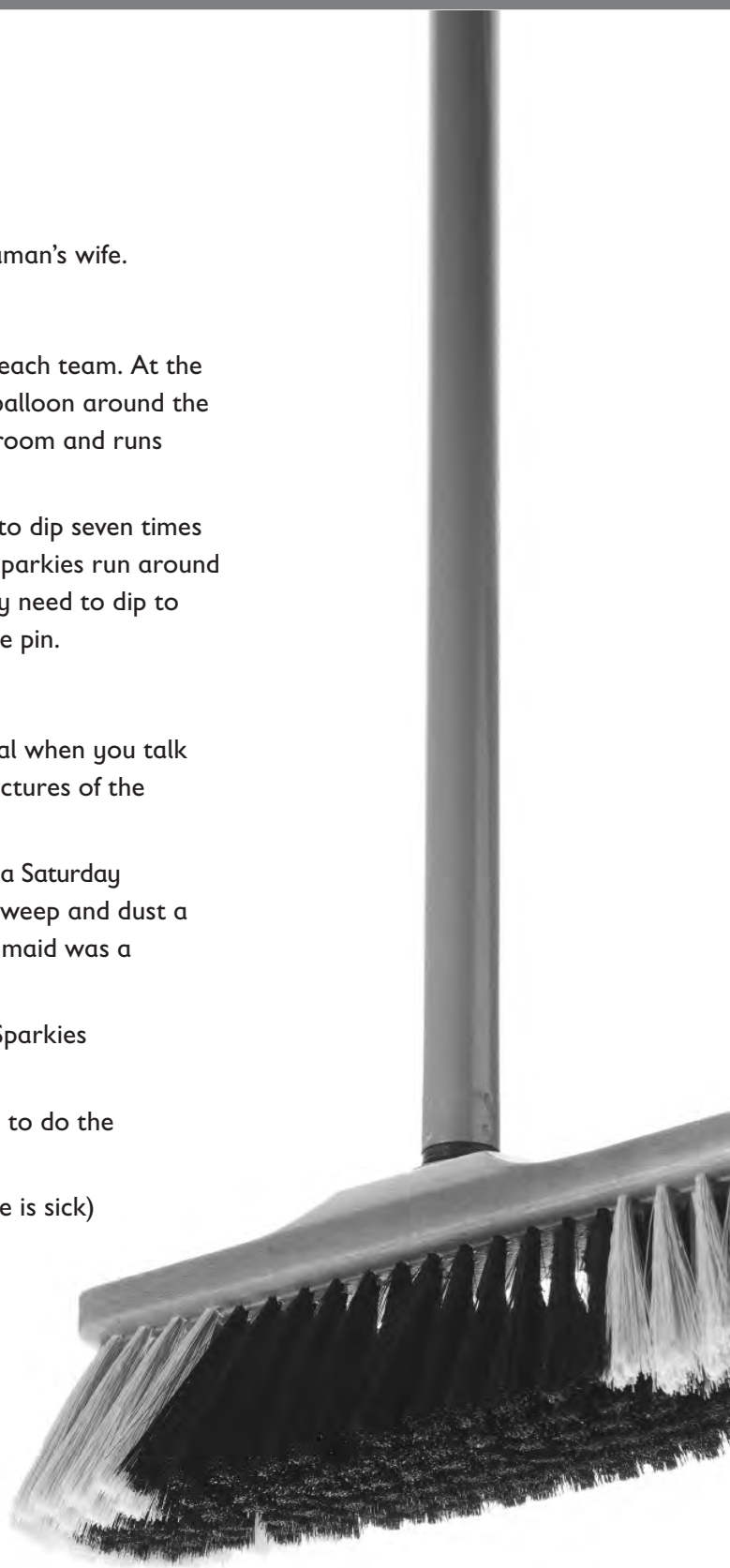
- **Balloon Sweep** — Provide a short broom for each team. At the whistle, one Sparkie from each team sweeps a balloon around the circle. Back at the starting line, she drops the broom and runs into the center for a pin.
- **Seven Dips** — To reinforce that Naaman had to dip seven times in the Jordan River, play a game of seven dips. Sparkies run around the circle. When they get back to their line, they need to dip to their leader seven times before running in for the pin.

Teaching Options

- Bring in a jar of muddy water to show as a visual when you talk about dipping in the Jordan River. Or bring in pictures of the Jordan River. You can find them on the Web.
- Plan a Sparkie service project. You could meet on a Saturday morning and pick up trash in the church yard or sweep and dust a classroom. Remind the Sparkies that Naaman's maid was a good helper.
- This is a good role-play biography in which all Sparkies can participate.

Ask the Sparkies to stand and then ask them all to do the following motions.

- Bend over as if in pain. (Naaman realizing he is sick)
- Sweep the floor. (Servant girl working)
- Move hands as if attempting to explain something to someone. (Servant girl talking to Mrs. Naaman)
- Bounce up and down as if riding in a chariot. (Naaman journeys to find Elisha.)
- Walk in place angrily. (Naaman is angry about the instructions.)
- Dip seven times and then cheer. (Naaman is healed.)



SparksActivity

Have fun finding words from this lesson in the puzzle below.
If you need help, ask your mom or dad to look with you.

NAAMAN
ELISHA

JORDAN
ISRAEL

MAID
KING

X	M	E	U	Q	K	T
V	K	L	O	E	N	D
H	B	I	S	I	A	J
Y	B	S	N	V	A	M
I	J	H	F	G	M	D
B	S	A	C	L	A	Z
J	O	R	D	A	N	K
R	Q	C	A	I	A	K
G	A	E	U	E	Y	A
K	M	A	I	D	L	L

Reading

Daniel 3

Thinking

You might have seen this biography in other Awana large group lesson books. We think it's fun to tell AND has a great lesson. These three friends stuck together. We don't know if they would've made the same choice on their own, but we do know the Bible tells us that three can do more than one (Ecclesiastes 4:12). Learning the importance of choosing the right friends is vital to a child's life.

You can make this lesson exciting! One of the keys is to memorize the list passages of Daniel 3. The first list is people: the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counselors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces. The second list is musical instruments: the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer and all kinds of music. Recite the lists rapidly when you come to them in the lesson. Also, emphasize the words Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and burning, fiery furnace. Practice saying, "burrrrning, fiiiery furnace." Develop a fierce growl for the king.



Getting It Ready

Bring instruments (cymbals, tambourines, etc.) for the Sparkies in your group. When you recite the list of instruments, the children could play their own instruments. Or if you think the kids will have too much trouble quietly holding their instruments, have your leaders be your instrumentalists.

Telling

(Before telling this lesson, read Daniel 3. The lists and verse quotes are taken from the KJV. If you use another version, simply substitute the titles from that version.)

Have you ever heard of Nebuchadnezzar, the famous king of Babylon? He did a lot of crazy things. One night he had a bad dream. He was so scared that he called together all his magicians, astrologers and sorcerers and asked them what the dream meant.

They said, “Just tell us the dream, and we’ll try to figure it out!”

“I can’t remember the dream,” Nebuchadnezzar told them.

The wise men wondered, “How in the world can we interpret your dream if you can’t even remember what it is?”

Nebuchadnezzar was mad because they couldn’t tell him the meaning of his dream. He threatened to kill them all. Then God told Daniel what the dream meant, so Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar that his dream was about a big statue. Nebuchadnezzar was so happy with Daniel that he gave him some great gifts.

Well, Nebuchadnezzar was feeling so good because Daniel interpreted his dream that he decided to show his power by building a huge golden statue. Imagine!

This statue was 90 feet (27.4 meters) high and nine feet (2.7 meters) wide. Nebuchadnezzar thought his statue was magnificent, so he decided everyone should worship it. We know from the Bible that God does not want us to worship statues! God says in the Ten Commandments: *Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image ... Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them ... (Exodus 20:4-5).*

Nebuchadnezzar did not listen to God. Guess what he did? *Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent to gather together the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counselors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. Then the princes, the governors, and captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counselors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, were gathered together unto the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up (Daniel 3:2-3).*

Telling continued

Nebuchadnezzar's big dedication was about to begin. A messenger announced the king's wishes to all the people: **(play instruments)** "... O people, nations, and languages, that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up: and whoso falleth not down and worshipeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace" (Daniel 3:4-6).

Sure enough! Soon they heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music.

All the people fell down and worshiped Nebuchadnezzar's golden statue. Almost all of them, that is. Three of the Jews who lived in Babylon worshiped God, so, of course, they would not bow down to a statue. So the Babylonians went before the king to complain. First they flattered him and said, "O king, live forever." Then they reminded him, "O king, you made a law that every man who hears the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the golden image. Remember, you said that anyone who doesn't do that will be thrown into the burning, fiery furnace?"

"Yes," the king answered. "I do remember that!"

"Then," said the Babylonians, (don't you think the Babylonians rather enjoyed tattling?) "you should know that there are three Jews named Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego who would not fall down and worship your golden statue!"

The king growled. It was a very loud growl. "GR-R-R-R-R! I'm mad! Bring Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to me right now!"

So Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were brought before King Nebuchadnezzar. "You don't worship my statue? I'll give you one more chance. When you hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music, you'd better fall down and worship!"

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego answered the king, and what they said is very important. ... *our God ... is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image ...* (Daniel 3:17-18).

Nebuchadnezzar did not like their answer. He said, "GR-R-R-R-R! Now I am really angry. In fact, I'm so angry I'm going to heat the furnace seven times hotter than it's ever been before!"

This is faith. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego knew that God didn't have to deliver them from every bad thing, yet they understood that God's way is best.

The mad king commanded the strongest men in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Then they cast them into the middle of the burning, fiery furnace. Imagine this! The furnace was so hot that the mighty men who threw Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego into the furnace burned up just from being close to the heat. Do you think Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego burned up too? Well, they didn't!



Nebuchadnezzar was looking into the furnace to see what would happen. Suddenly he turned to his counselors, “Didn’t we just throw three men into the middle of the burning, fiery furnace?”

“Yes, we did.”

He answered and said, “Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt ... ”
(Daniel 3:25).

So Nebuchadnezzar commanded Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to come out of the fire, and they did.

Everyone gathered around them in awe! Not a hair on their heads was singed, and their bodies and clothes weren’t even touched by the fire.

Nebuchadnezzar looked at them in amazement and said: ... *“Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who hath sent His Angel, and delivered His servants that trusted in Him, and have changed the king’s word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God”*
(Daniel 3:28).

The king made another law. No one was ever to say anything against the Lord God. None of the statue gods could do anything!

Think about those big, strong soldiers who threw Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego into the burning, fiery furnace. They instantly burned! But God delivered Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego from the fire. Why the difference? The king’s men worshiped statues. Those men, like all men, were created by God, but they weren’t His children like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

Challenging

A lot of people ignore the fact that they are created by God. They say that people evolved from animals or that life started by chance millions of years ago. We know that's not true. But people are afraid to acknowledge a creator because they don't want to think about God.

God is our Creator. If you have trusted Christ as your Savior, then God is also your heavenly Father. We read this in 2 Corinthians 6:18: *And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.* When you believe in Christ as your Savior, you become a son or daughter of God. We are part of God's family (Galatians 3:26).

As a child of God, you have countless benefits. The Lord Jesus Christ paid the penalty for your sins at the cross. You have the assurance that God loves and cares for you. You can talk to Him at anytime and anywhere about anything. You are promised a future home in heaven.

Are you a child of God? If you aren't sure, why not talk with me or one of the other leaders tonight? If you have trusted Christ as your Savior, thank Him that He is both your Creator and your heavenly Father.

(Take this opportunity to explain salvation in detail.)





Family Follow Up

Provide each of your children with an instrument — a wooden spoon on a pan works well — and then read Daniel 3. Each time you get to an instrument part, have the children play their instruments.

Talk about the courage the three men gave each other. Talk about the importance of choosing good friends. How do they help their friends? How do their friends help them?

Turn to page 179 for
Family Follow-Up
cards that you
can copy and
distribute!

Teaching Ideas

Theme Ideas

- **Sticking Together Night** — The three friends stuck together to do what was right.

Game Ideas

- **Tape Game** — Purchase eight rolls of cellophane tape. (You can usually find fairly cheap ones at dollar stores, etc. You can donate leftover tape to your supply cabinet so it won't be wasted.) Give each team a stack of scrap paper. (Churches usually have stacks of leftover fliers, etc.) At the whistle, one Sparkie from each line must tape together five pieces of paper before running around the circle. Have Sparkies do this inside the circle so they aren't in the way if other kids are running.
- **Sticky Tag** — Choose two Sparkies to be the chasers. The other Sparkies are runners. At the whistle, the chasers begin trying to catch the runners. When a chaser tags a runner, they join hands. Then that chaser and runner try to catch another Sparkie, who when caught, also joins hands. Eventually long lines of children will be chasing the remaining runners. The goal is to be the last runner not caught. This would be an excellent outdoor game if you have the space available.

Teaching Options

- Serve a sticky snack such as honey on crackers.
- Does your church have a fireplace? If so, see if you can teach your lesson in that room with a fire burning. Or, if your church is in a rural area, you may be able to have an outside bonfire. (Of course, you will need lots of adults to help — why not invite the parents?)
- At the beginning of your lesson ask for a leader to help you move the podium, table or other piece of furniture. (You may need to set this up beforehand.) But have the leader refuse. They could say things like, "My back hurts," or "I'm too tired," or "I think it looks nice where it is." (You will probably have Sparkies who will offer to help; assure them that it's too heavy for them and tell them to continue sitting in their seats.)

Finally, a leader helps, and with his help, you find it easy to move the furniture.

Then discuss how much easier it is to do something when people stick together. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego stuck together to do what was right.

- Have fun parading around the room, down the hall and around the church, playing the instruments.
- Do you have a temple with idols in your area? Look it up on the Web and print out some pictures of the idols. (Some are fairly scary, so choose ones appropriate to the age group.) Talk about the foolishness of worshipping something so unappealing and made of stone/wood/metal. Pray together for the people who worship at the temple. (One Sparkie whose leader did this prayed for the people every time her family passed the temple while they were driving through town.)

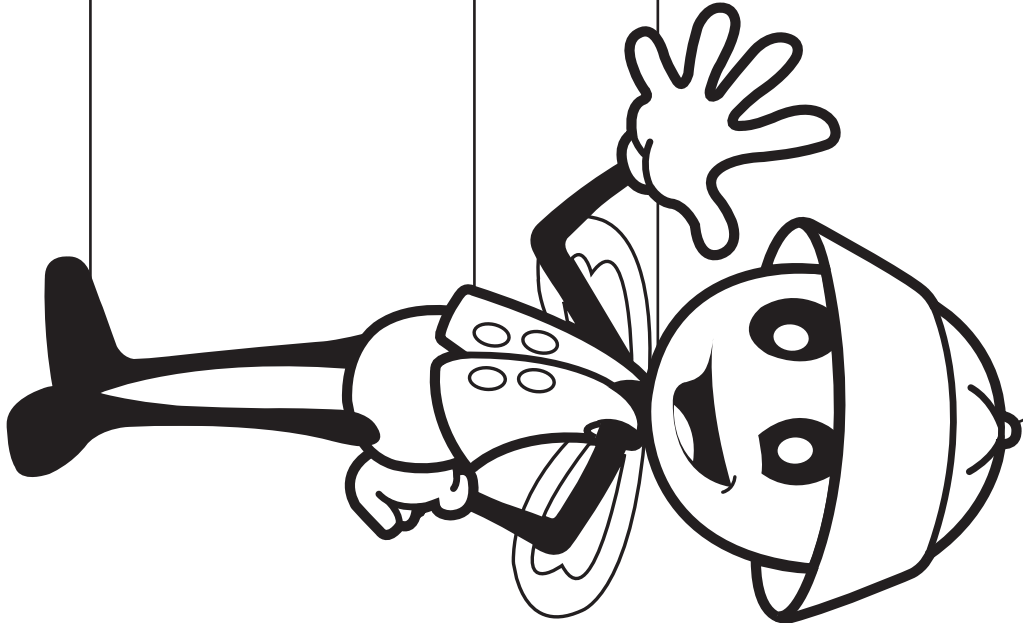


to Sparks!

Day and Time

Place

Phone Number



Reading

Esther

Thinking

Imagine the publicity if the events of Esther took place in our day of televisions and computers. Think about the amount of media focus that would've been on the country of Persia at the time of King Ahasuerus (Xerxes).

The book of Esther opens with a spectacular banquet given by the king for his military leaders, his nobles, his princes — everyone that was a part of the Ahasuerus leadership staff. These people had already spent 180 days viewing the king's wealth and grandeur. (Can't you just imagine day trips out to his fields or past his vast landholdings?)

Now after six months (that was some party) of viewing the king's majesty, the men were being honored at a seven-day party in the king's private garden. The garden was decorated with beautiful linens of the finest weave and color and festooned with precious stones. Gold and silver couches were available for reclining and wine was available in individualized goblets. The king ordered that each man could drink as much of the king's wine as he desired. Stewards granted every wish.

Meanwhile, Queen Vashti was giving her own banquet for the ladies of the kingdom. But after feasting and drinking for seven days, the king decided that Vashti should come to the men's party and display her beauty. (This could not have been a good thing no matter how you looked at it.) Queen Vashti refused. Immediately, Ahasuerus received counsel to divorce her and had her sent away.

But after the party was over and the guests departed, it seems as if Ahasuerus had a change of heart. He remembered his beautiful wife and his hasty decision. Yet, the law of the Medes and Persians declared he could not take back his decree.

The beautiful and godly Esther was placed *for such a time as this*.

As you teach your Sparkies the biography of this remarkable lady, emphasize that God can use each one of us *for such a time as this*.

That includes you:

- As a leader of these young, impressionable children who watch and observe and listen to you
- As a leader who shows enthusiasm for her relationship with the Lord and in doing so, is a testimony to other leaders — especially to those who are newer Christians

That includes your Sparkies:

- As they grow in their knowledge of God's Word
- As they share Christ with nonbelievers in their families
- As they build friendships with other Sparkies

(The emphasis of this first lesson should be that God is not surprised at any event, person or circumstance. The emphasis of the second lesson is that God can use us in any circumstance.)

Looking It Up

Esther 4:14 ***(Ask Sparkies to look up the verse before you begin the lesson.)***

Getting It Ready

You will need:

- A few fairy tale books such as *Cinderella* and *Sleeping Beauty*
- An atlas or globe to point out the extent of Ahasuerus' kingdom

Showing

(Hold up the Cinderella book and ask someone to tell you what happens in the story. Do the same with another fairy tale book. Tell the child to relate the story in two or three sentences. You don't need a long, drawn out, every-detail description which kids this age sometimes enjoy giving you.)

Telling

Do you like stories about wicked kings and good kings and wicked queens and good queens and about bad guys and good guys? **(If you are talking to all girls, you might want to emphasize the queen part during the introduction. If you are talking to all boys, you might want to emphasize the bad guys/good guys part during the introduction.)** Are stories like *Cinderella* and *Sleeping Beauty* true stories? Are they made up? How do we know the difference between what is true and what is not true?

Tonight I have an exciting biography to tell you from God's Word, the Bible. Do you think this biography is true or not true? How do you know that? **(Allow Sparkies to answer.)** That's right. If we read about a person in the Bible, we know that the person really lived and we know everything we read about that person is true.

(Tell the biography of Esther with excitement and suspense. You will also be repeating the phrase "for such a time as this" several times until the Sparkies can repeat the words back to you. The king is called Ahasuerus and Xerxes in the Bible. Choose which name you prefer using and then be consistent.)

Once upon a time, hundreds and hundreds of years ago, there lived a powerful king named Ahasuerus. The king was in charge of all the people who lived in all the land between what is now Ethiopia and India. **(Point out this area on the globe or map.)**

Ahasuerus was soooooo rich that he had a party that lasted six months. **(Relate a six-month time frame in some concrete way — "Remember our Awards night last year when we sang for our parents? That was six months ago.")** Can you imagine a party that lasts that long? He spent all that time showing his party guests his riches. Wow! That's a lot of stuff! Then when he got done with his six-month-long party, he decided to have another party just for the men. This party lasted seven days. Now Ahasuerus didn't love God and some of the things he did at his party weren't good things to do. He sent for his wife, Queen Vashti, to come from where she was having a party with the ladies. But she didn't want to go to the men's party and she told him no. Now rich and powerful Ahasuerus didn't like anyone telling him no, even if it was his wife. He sent her away and said he didn't want to ever see her again.

Oh, my. The king now wanted a new queen. He sent his men to all the different parts of his empire and told them to find beautiful young girls to come to the palace. He would choose which one he wanted as his next queen.

Esther was a beautiful, Jewish girl who had been raised by her cousin, Mordecai, after her parents died. The king's men saw her and chose her as one who would go to the palace to maybe be the next queen.

For an entire year, they made Esther (and the other girls) ready to meet the king. Can you imagine a whole year of putting on perfume and makeup and lotions? That doesn't sound like much fun to you boys, does it?

Finally, the time came and out of all the beautiful girls in the kingdom, Esther was chosen **for such a time as this. (Read Esther 4:14 as the Sparkies follow along.)** But the king DID NOT know she was a Jew.



Esther's cousin, Mordecai, cared about her very much. He spent a lot of time in the courtyard outside the palace, waiting to hear news of Esther.

One day, he heard something quite different. **(Talk quietly and with suspense.)** While he was walking by the palace, he heard two of the king's officials, Bigthan and Teresh, plotting to kill the king. Mordecai immediately sent word to Esther that she should warn the king about the men's evil plan. Esther told the king what Mordecai had told her. The men were punished, and the king wrote down what had happened in his journal. Obviously, Esther was in this place **for such a time as this.** **(Emphasize.)** We need to remember what happened here because this event is important later in Esther's time as queen.

Haman was another man in the kingdom, a man that Ahasuerus honored with a lot of power and riches. All the people at the palace gate would bow down when Haman came by — except Mordecai. (Mordecai worshiped the true God.) Day after day, the officials told Mordecai to bow down, asked Mordecai why he wouldn't bow down, but Mordecai still wouldn't do it.

Haman grew angry. He didn't like Mordecai and wanted to destroy him. When he found out Mordecai was a Jew, he decided to destroy ALL the Jews. Oh no, there was a BIG problem — because who else was a Jew? **(Allow Sparkies to answer.)** That's right. Esther was a Jew.

Can you imagine Haman storming into the king? "King, there is a group of people who do not obey you. We need to destroy them. You need to write a law that these people will be destroyed. We need to fight against them and get rid of them all. We should do this on the 13th day of the 12th month."

The king didn't even ask that many questions. He just made a law, sealed it and told Haman he would do what he wanted. Haman immediately sent messengers to all parts of the kingdom telling them that on the 13th day of the 12th month, they would destroy the Jewish people.

Telling continued

Of course, Mordecai was very sad. These were HIS people. His cousin Esther, THE QUEEN, was a Jew — but then Esther had been placed in the palace **for such a time as this.** (*Allow the Sparkies to say the phrase.*)

Mordecai sent a messenger to Esther and told her of the plan. She had to do something and she had to do it quickly!

But what could she do? (*Show distress in your voice as you talk about Esther's helplessness.*)

Haman had a lot of power and riches and the king honored him. Ahasuerus did not know Esther was a Jew. Esther could not just walk into the king's office. She had to be called. If she walked in and he didn't want her there — he would put her to death.

But Esther DID have someone powerful on her side.

Who was that? (*Allow Sparkies to answer.*) Right. God was on Esther's side. Still, it all was very frightening.

What do you think Esther did?

Challenging

The Jews were God's special people. He had promised that they would be a great nation. Now Haman wanted to destroy them. How do you think God would save His people?

Remember, Esther was in the palace **for such a time as this.** (*Sparkies repeat the phrase.*) God was not surprised about Haman's plan to destroy His people, the Jews. God is never surprised.

No matter what happens, God is not surprised, even today. Maybe something bad has happened in your town or in your family, and you're wondering why such a thing happened. Remember, God is NOT surprised. He knows about everything that happens in your life, just as He knew about everything that happened in Esther's life. (*If something recently happened in your area — a tornado, flood, etc., you could personalize your application to your club.*)

God does not promise that everything will always go right, but He does promise that He will help us through anything that happens to us — and He promises that He knows absolutely EVERYTHING. Nothing is a surprise.

Mordecai understood the importance of trusting God.

Esther understood the importance of trusting God.

We, too, need to trust God. We need to understand that He is in control.



Family Follow Up

(Scripture: the book of Esther.) Your child is studying the biography of Queen Esther. God was not surprised at Haman's plot to destroy the Jews. God knew Haman's heart, and He was ready to block Haman's plot.

This week remind your child that God is not surprised at anything that happens. Remind them to trust in God, no matter what the circumstances are. (This is good for you to remember also.)

Turn to page 179 for Family Follow-Up cards that you can copy and distribute!

Teaching Ideas

Theme Ideas

- **Feast Night** — Have a party with some yummy treats.

Game Ideas

- **Castle Building** — Provide an equal number of building blocks for each team. Choose one person from each team to be the “castle builder.” At the whistle, he must run to the blocks and stack them in a tower. The winning team is the one whose “builder” stacks the blocks in the least amount of time. If the blocks tumble, the builder must start again. Continue until all Sparkies have had a turn at building the castle.
- **The King Says** — Instead of “Simon Says,” play “The King or Queen Says.”

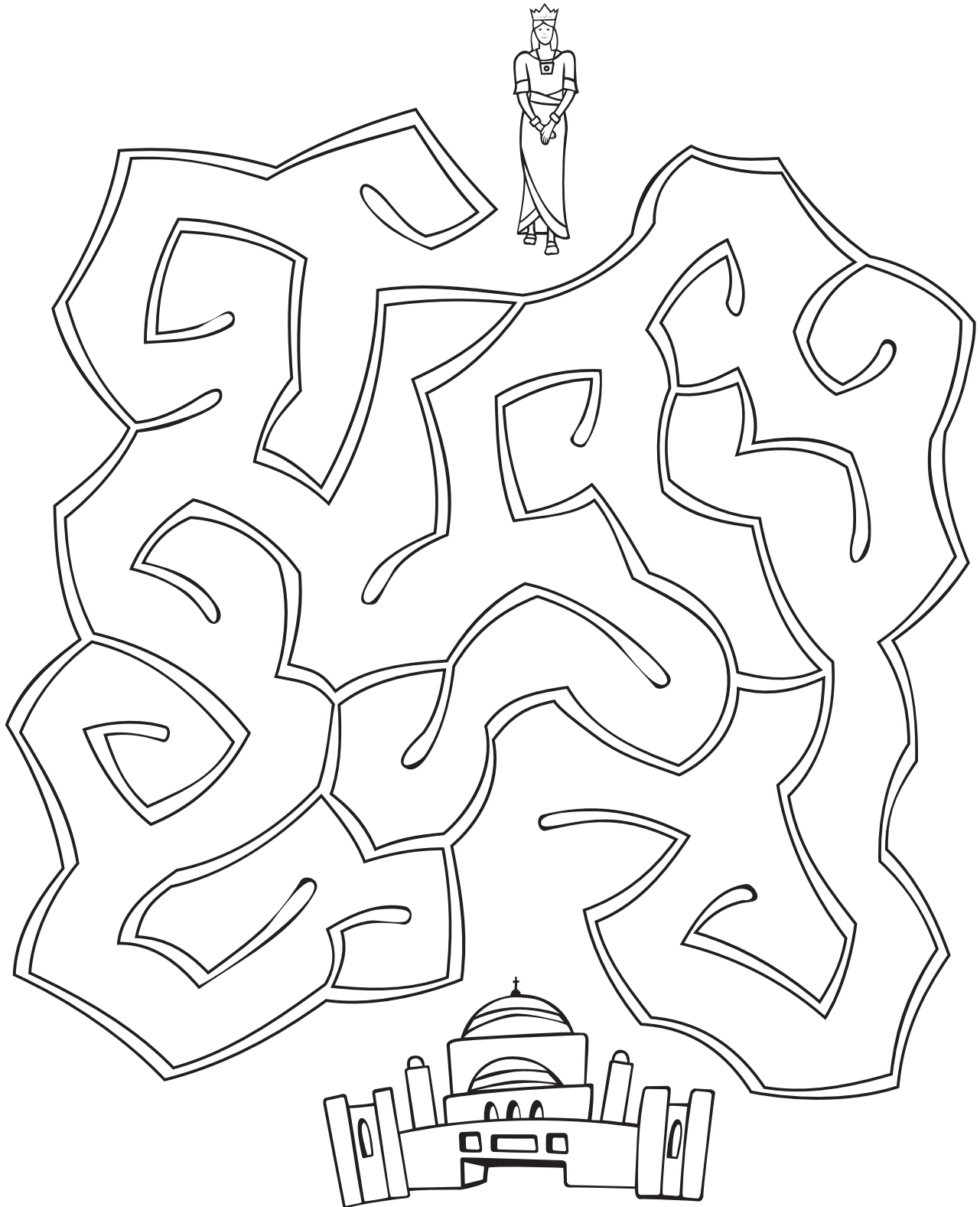
Teaching Options

- As each Sparkie comes to club, announce their arrival, “We now present _____” and crown them with a paper crown.
- Decorate the room for a festive atmosphere. Put balloons everywhere — but inside each balloon put a strip of paper with a question about Esther. After the lesson, allow Sparkies the opportunity to pop a balloon and answer the question. If they get the answer correct, they receive a small prize (perhaps a jewel on their crown — check out a hobby store for a supply of craft jewels).
- Bring smelly oils and lotions for the Sparkies to smell as you talk about Esther being prepared to meet the king.



SparksActivity

Draw a line to help Esther find her way to the palace.



Reading

Esther

Thinking

Do you know that the existence of the Jewish people is an indication of a sovereign, all-knowing and all-powerful God?

Think about this:

1. Other civilizations — such as the Persians and the Romans — established powerful and dominant civilizations and then faded into oblivion. The Jewish civilization has remained.
2. Other civilizations have consistently attempted to annihilate the Jews. Way back in Bible times, Haman did what he could to rid the world of the Jews. More recently, Hitler attempted to do the same thing — resulting not in the extinguishing of the Jewish nationality but in them establishing their own country.
3. The Jews have never known peace. Their entire existence has been one of struggling for survival — and they have survived.

Most people don't think about the Jewish people as being a miraculous sign of God's sovereignty — that by looking at Israel we can see God's power and understand that God obviously is in control.

Esther, a young orphan girl, was a BIG part of Israel's survival. Yet, as Mordecai told her, even if she didn't go to the king and work against the plan — God would find another way to protect the Jewish people (Esther 4:14). Nothing can get in the way of God's plans.

Esther, indeed, was in the palace **for such a time as this**.

Looking It Up

Esther 4:14 (*Ask a leader to read this verse before you begin the lesson.*)

Getting It Ready

Bake or have a parent bake Haman's hat cookies. (If everyone is too busy — you may be able to find similar-looking cookies at your local grocery store.)

Showing

Serve hamantaschen (often called Haman's pockets or Haman's hats) and milk or juice. Review the biography as you enjoy the snack.

Haman's Hats

Makes about 5 dozen cookies.

1 cup (229.5 g) butter or margarine
2 cups (383.3 g) sugar
1 teaspoon (5 mL) vanilla
3 eggs
4 cups (397.5 g) flour
Cherry jam, lemon pie filling
or other kind of fruit filling

Combine the butter, sugar, eggs and vanilla and beat well. Add the flour and continue mixing.

Roll into 3" (7.6 cm) logs. Wrap in wax paper and freeze. When you're ready to bake, remove from the freezer and allow them to slightly thaw. Cut into $\frac{1}{4}$ " (6 mm) slices and place on cookie sheets. Put a spoonful of jam or pie filling in the center of the dough. Pinch the sides into three corners.

Bake at 350°F (180° C) until done, about 20 minutes.



Telling

Remember what has happened in Esther's life so far? (**Allow Sparkies an opportunity to review last week's lesson.**)

Esther was in a bad situation. She **HAD** to save her people, but the king didn't know she was a Jew — **AND** she could **NOT** talk to the king unless he invited her to. If she went to the king and he **DIDN'T** want to see her, he could have her put to death. But, if she went to the king and he **DID** want to see her, he would hold out his golden scepter.

She would have to go.

Esther put on her best robes and went to the king's court. When he looked up and saw her, he was pleased. He held out his scepter and said he would give her up to half the kingdom!



"I would like you and Haman to come today to a banquet that I have prepared," she explained.

Can you imagine how thrilled Haman was to be invited to the queen's banquet? Of course, he went and of course, he and the king feasted on good food.

"And now," said the king to Esther, "What is it that you want?" Again he told her that he would give her up to half the kingdom. (Remember, God had Esther where He wanted her **for such a time as this.**)

"I would like you both to come to another banquet tomorrow," Esther answered.

Well, Haman was so very excited that he headed home to share the good news with his family. But as he passed the palace gate, he noticed that Mordecai still wouldn't bow down to him.

When he arrived home, he told his family all about the honor the king had given him — "And" he added, "I am the **ONLY** one who's invited to the queen's banquet along with the king. "But" he continued, "I am so angry that Mordecai is **NOT** giving me the honor that is due me."

Mrs. Haman, who was not much nicer than Mr. Haman, told him to build a gallows, 75 feet (22.9 meters) high, to hang Mordecai because he wouldn't bow down. And that's just what Haman did.

Meanwhile, the king was having trouble sleeping. So he decided to read some of his old journals — and found the part where Mordecai had saved his life by sending a message that Bigthan and Teresh were out to kill him. Remember when we talked about that last week? (**Review that part of the biography if the Sparkies seem puzzled.**)

Suddenly, the king got an idea. He should HONOR Mordecai! After all, this man had saved the king's life!

The king called Haman to court. "How should I honor someone who has been so good to me?"

Haman thought the king wanted to honor HIM! He was so excited that he thought of the biggest honor possible! "Put a royal robe on him and then call for your servants to bring one of the royal horses from the royal stables. Instruct a noble prince to guide the honored person as he rides the horse through the city. Tell the noble prince to cry out, "This is what happens to the one the king wishes to honor."

"Good idea," said the king. "Go get Mordecai, put a royal robe on him and lead him through the city on one of my royal horses."

Haman was SOOOOO angry. Why was the king honoring that no-good Mordecai instead of him? But Haman had to do what the king told him to do. He then went home to complain about it all to his friends and family.

Well, Haman still had to go to Queen Esther's second banquet. And so the king and the queen and Haman were sitting around the table eating and talking. Once again the king asked Esther what she wanted.

This was Esther's opportunity. "Please, if I have found favor with you, save my people. You have made a decree that we are to be destroyed on the 13th day of the 12th month. Please stop the destruction."

The king listened to Esther, but sadly, once he made a decree, he could not change it. "Who thought up this evil plan?" he asked.

"Haman," answered Queen Esther. (Remember, God had her where He wanted her **for such a time as this.**)

I think Haman was kind of squirming in his seat, don't you? He should've been. The king was ANGRY! That was the end of Haman!

Still, how could the king stop the destruction of the Jewish people?

This was the plan. The king told Mordecai to write out another decree and to see that it was written in the languages of each of the areas of the kingdom. The decree said that the Jews had the right to get together and form armies to fight against anyone that attacked them on the 13th day of the 12th month.

Yes, the Jews were ready for the battle and because God was on their side, they won and had a great, big celebration. Everyone was happy and ate a big feast. And every year since, the Jewish people have celebrated the victory called Purim.

Esther did the right thing. God had her in a special place **for such a time as this.**

Challenging

No, you probably won't be the queen of a country who needs to be brave enough to risk your life to save your people. But God does have you where He wants you and He can use you, just as He used Esther.

Think about the difficult things in Esther's life. What were some of them? You might have difficult things in your life. Maybe someone you love is in the hospital, maybe Dad or Mom lost his or her job, maybe you've had to move and don't have many friends — God can use you.

Or maybe you have a good life. Still, God can use you. Tell Him you are willing to serve Him.

Wait a minute. Maybe you don't know Christ as Savior. **(Explain salvation. If you need some guidance in how to do so, look in the FlightPlan.)** Maybe God isn't your heavenly Father. Please talk to one of us leaders so we can answer your questions.

(Close in prayer.)





Family Follow Up

Bake Haman's hats cookies together. As you work, ask your child to tell you about Esther.

Haman's Hats

Makes about 5 dozen cookies.

1 cup (229.5 g) butter or margarine

2 cups (383.3 g) sugar

1 teaspoon (5 mL) vanilla

3 eggs

4 cups (397.5 g) flour

Cherry jam, lemon pie filling or other kind of fruit filling

Combine the butter, sugar, eggs and vanilla and beat well. Add the flour and continue mixing.

Roll into 3" (7.6 cm) logs. Wrap in wax paper and freeze. When you're ready to bake, remove from the freezer and allow them to slightly thaw. Cut into ¼" (6 mm) slices and place on cookie sheets. Put a spoonful of jam or pie filling in the center of the dough. Pinch the sides into three corners.

Bake at 350°F (180° C) until done, about 20 minutes.

Turn to page 179 for
Family Follow-Up
cards that you
can copy and
distribute!



Teaching Ideas

Theme Ideas

- **King and Queen Night** — Esther was the queen.

Game Ideas

- **Treasure Hunt** — Buy fake coins from a party supply store or make yellow, construction paper coins. (Or you could use pennies.) Hide them around the room before club. Sparkies go on a treasure hunt for the king's gold.

Teaching Options

- Discuss Purim with your Sparkies. If you have a person of Jewish background in your church, perhaps she could talk about Purim.
- Invite parents to participate in snack time — juice and Haman's Hat cookies.

SparksActivity

How can you serve God right where you are?
Draw a picture of you helping someone learn about the Lord.

Reading

Ezra 7-10

Thinking

The people of Israel repeatedly failed to obey God. He had promised them great things if they would simply do as He asked, but they determined to go their own way. As a result, God allowed the Babylonians, under Nebuchadnezzar, to conquer Israel and carry off all the people to Babylon. The temple where the Israelites worshiped God in Jerusalem was destroyed and all the gold and silver ornaments from the temple were stolen.

God's promises hold firm, even when people fail to obey Him. The Babylonians were conquered by the Persians. After the Israelites were captives in Babylon for 70 years, God worked in the heart of the Persian king, Cyrus. Cyrus wasn't a believer in the God of the Bible — he believed in many gods. But he thought it would be a good idea to make the God of Israel happy. He allowed any Israelites who wanted to return to their own land to do so. He even gave them back all the gold and silver from the temple. Under the leadership of a man named Zerubbabel, the Israelites rebuilt their temple and began worshiping God and offering sacrifices again.

About 60 years went by. There were still a lot of Israelites living in Babylon. One of these, a man named Ezra, was moved by God to return to Jerusalem to encourage the people to follow God more closely.

There was one big problem. The Israelites who had returned to their land had been marrying women from the surrounding tribes. This might not seem like an awful thing — after all, Boaz married Ruth and she was a Moabite. But there is a big difference. Ruth had already decided to worship the true God. In the case of the Israelites in Ezra's time, the foreign women that were being brought into the city still worshiped the false gods of their people. Some of these women were having children and raising them to worship the false gods too. If this continued, it wouldn't be long before everyone stopped worshiping the true God. That's where Ezra fits in.

Getting It Ready

You will need:

- A bag of small, bite-size candy (something not very exciting, like peppermint or cinnamon)
- A package of larger candy bars
- A middle-school or high-school student willing to help for a few moments at the beginning of the lesson
- A piece of paper and a crayon

Showing

I've got a really exciting lesson for you today, but before we start there's something I need to go get from another room. While I'm gone, I want you all to stay in your seats and wait for me, OK? Don't get up to go anywhere in the room until I come back. If you stay in your seats, I'll give you something you'll really enjoy.

(Walk out of the room. After 30 seconds or so, have an outgoing, persuasive middle-school or high-school student enter the room. This person should NOT be a junior leader or a person in authority over your Sparkies in any way. Have the student go up to the front of the room and greet everybody. Have him introduce himself and ask the Sparkies how they're doing. The student should announce that he has a treat for everyone. He should open the bag of bite-size candy and offer it to anybody who comes up. If nobody moves, the student can hand a piece of candy to a Sparkie who is still seated, but then make any other Sparkies get up to receive the candy. Other leaders in the room should remain passive and not get involved. It shouldn't be long before all or most of the Sparkies are leaving their seats for candy. If a Sparkie asks a leader what to do, the leader should just shrug and say, "You heard what the leader said, but you can see what everyone else is doing ...")

(Walk back into the room and head up to the front when many of the Sparkies are out of their seats.) What's going on here? I thought I asked you all to stay in your seats until I returned. Do you remember me saying that? Why did you leave your seats? **(Allow Sparkies to answer.)** Are you telling me that you left your seats for a small piece of candy even though I told you to stay seated? Didn't you hear me say that I would give you something you would really enjoy if you stayed in your chairs? **(Pull out the package of larger candy bars.)** Here's what I had for you if you obeyed me. Were there any of you who stayed in your seats? If you did, you can come up for one of these big candy bars. **(The other leaders in the room should help you determine what kids stayed in their seats. If none did, you can still make the point by showing everyone the candy bars they would have received and handing them out to the leaders.)**

Telling

You remind me of the Israelites in the Bible book of Ezra. They were a group of people who lived a long time ago. They disobeyed God and were captured by another army. They were taken a long way away from their homes to a place called Babylon. But after they lived in Babylon for many, many years, God told them they could go back to their own homes in a city called Jerusalem. God provided them with gold and silver and everything they needed. All they had to do in return was obey God and do what He wanted them to do.

One of the things that God told them to do was to only marry people who believed in Him. See, there's only one real, true God. He's the God who made the whole world and everything in it. He's the God we read about in the Bible. But sometimes, people don't want to believe in the God of the Bible. Instead, they make up their own gods.

Imagine drawing a picture of a face on a piece of paper. (***Draw a quick picture of a face on a piece of paper with a crayon, large enough for everyone to see.***) Do you think I should worship this picture and ask this face to help me when I'm sad or scared? That doesn't make much sense, does it? Can the face on this paper help me? Of course not. Only the true God that we read about in the Bible can help me.

But the people who lived near the Israelites in Jerusalem did just that. They made up their own gods out of wood and worshiped them instead of the true God. But here's where the really bad part comes in. The men of Israel who believed in the real God (***hold up your Bible***) were marrying girls who worshiped the fake gods (***hold up the paper with the face***). This was something God had told them never to do. But they did it anyway.

Remember at the beginning of the lesson I told you to stay in your seats until I returned? You didn't listen to me. Instead you listened to somebody else who offered you something that looked good — a tiny piece of candy. You got out of your seats and took the tiny candy, and so you missed out on getting a much larger candy bar.

The people of Israel had been promised great things by God if they would just obey Him. But instead they chose what looked good to them and married women who didn't love God.

That's where Ezra comes in. He still lived in Babylon, but he loved the true God of the Bible. He returned to Israel and warned the people of the danger they were in. He said that their fathers had disobeyed God and ended up captives in Babylon for many years. God had allowed them to return to

their own homes in Jerusalem, but now they were disobeying God again. Ezra told the people that they needed to start obeying God right away or they wouldn't receive God's promises to take care of them.

It must have been hard for Ezra. Everybody around him was doing what they wanted to do. Ezra was one of the few people who kept doing the right thing. He was like _____.

(Name a few of the Sparkies who stayed in their seats, if there were any. If not, say, "He would have stayed in his seat if he were here tonight instead of coming up for a tiny piece of candy.") He obeyed what God told him to do.


Ezra was so upset that the men were marrying wives who didn't believe in the true God that he tore his clothes and pulled out some of his hair. Imagine how much that hurt! But Ezra knew that believing in and worshipping the true God was the most important thing to do. He knew that worshipping fake gods ***(hold up the paper with the face)*** was wrong.

Fortunately, the people listened to Ezra. They stopped marrying girls who didn't believe in the true God. God kept his promises and protected the people of Israel from their enemies. Ezra listened to God and made the right choice.



Challenging

God has a lot to say to us too. One thing He tells us is to obey our parents and others who are in charge of us, like your school teachers and your Sparks leaders. Will you make the wrong choice and do what you want to do, or will you be like Ezra and obey even when everybody else around you is doing wrong?

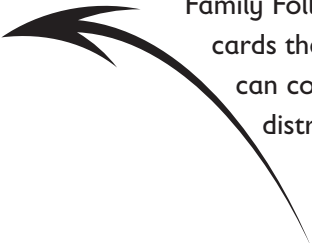


*Honor your father
and your mother.*

Family Follow Up

(Scripture: Ezra 7-10.) This is a rather confusing portion of Scripture, with a lot of names of people and a lot of information about priests and the temple. If you try to explain it all to your Sparks-aged children, they'll quickly get confused and stop paying attention. That's why we've simplified the lesson a little. We didn't get into the details of how the Israelites sent their foreign wives and children away, and we didn't discuss some of the disgusting practices these women were introducing to Israel.

Our lesson is basically on peer pressure. Ezra followed God and convinced the people that they should too. It couldn't have been easy for him, but he knew what was right and stuck up for what he believed. Your children are getting to the age where peer pressure is an issue. They might have friends who are allowed to watch TV shows and movies that you think are unacceptable. They might have friends who are disobedient and disrespectful to their parents. You can use the example of Ezra to show them how to stand up when everyone around them is doing wrong.



Turn to page 180 for
Family Follow-Up
cards that you
can copy and
distribute!

Teaching Ideas

Theme Ideas

- **Obedience Night** — Obeying God is important.

Game Ideas

- **Mother, May I?** — Play the old-fashioned game of Mother, May I?
- **Write your Name** — Ezra was a scribe. Teach Sparkies that a scribe was someone who wrote words in books before there were computers. Give each line leader a piece of paper and a pencil. Choose a Sparkie from each team. At the whistle, the Sparkie runs around the circle. When she arrives back at her line, she must write her name on the paper before going in for the pin.

Teaching Options

- Save some time at the end of the lesson for each Sparkie to write the words “Obey God” on a long sheet of paper. Explain that scribes often wrote on scrolls. Show them how to roll up the ends of the paper to make a scroll. Tie the scrolls with a ribbon.
- As you talk about the Jews who went back to Jerusalem, ask the Sparkies to line up single file. Walk around the room (or church) if possible. Put a sign that says “Babylon” at the starting point and a sign that says “Jerusalem” at the ending point.

SparksActivity

Make a statue out of clay and place it on a table in front of the room. Ask the statue to get you a drink of water. Make it a joke. The purpose is to show how silly and pointless it is to expect any help from a fake god. Explain how some people do just that — they make up their own gods and expect them to help instead of trusting in the true God of the Bible.

Reading

Jonah 1-4

Thinking



Tonight's lesson is on Jonah, a Hebrew prophet sent to Nineveh, the land of Gentiles. Nineveh was one of the most pagan cities during that time. In addition to idol worship and general disregard for the things of God, the people of Nineveh were some of Israel's worst enemies.

When Jonah found out God wanted him to go to Nineveh, he literally ran in the opposite direction. After a storm resulted in Jonah being thrown overboard by recently-converted sailors, God got Jonah's attention by sending a fish to swallow him. Finally, after three days, Jonah repented for running away. God made the fish vomit Jonah onto dry land. This was a demonstration of God's control over nature.

Jonah went (hopefully after a shower) to Nineveh, where he planned to stay for just three days to tell the people a very short message. He seemed to have no genuine care for the people and didn't even try to win the people over. He simply told them that God would punish them if they didn't wise up.

In His sovereignty and power, God used Jonah's message to turn the hearts of the people toward Him. This biography is an amazing nugget of truth in the Bible. Here we see lots of themes: God's love for all peoples, God's control over nature, God's control over people's hearts and God's control over whole people groups. Take some time to thank God for softening your heart and calling you to faith in Him. He did "whatever it takes" (by sending His Son to die for you) to love you.

Getting It Ready

You will need:

- A huge fish made out of flattened cardboard boxes

Telling

How many of you have heard about Jonah and the big fish? (*Allow Sparkies to raise hands.*) Today we will talk about Jonah in a way you may not have heard before. We will see from this story how God saves people and how He is in control of people's hearts — and even controls the weather!

It all started when God told Jonah to go to Nineveh. "GO TO NINEVEH!" cried Jonah. "God, don't You know those people hate people like me! They have killed Your people and they certainly don't want to know You!" So Jonah got on a boat that was headed as far away from Nineveh as he could get.

It started to rain on the sailors. Drop, drop, splash! The wind picked up and lightning hit the sea. The wind began blowing so hard that the sailors got scared. They were in storms before, but not a storm like this.

They seemed to be wise sailors though. This storm was so fierce that they knew it wasn't normal. Each sailor cried out to his own god. Their gods did not respond because their gods were not real. Then they remembered a man who was sleeping on the lower level of the boat. "Jonah! Wake up! This storm is so terrible. We have prayed to our gods, now pray to yours."

Jonah told the sailors, "I worship the Lord, the God who made the sea and the land." The sailors were scared and asked Jonah, "What did you do? What was so bad that God caused this great storm?"

Did you hear that question the sailors asked? The sailors admitted that God, the God of Jonah, was the one in charge of the weather. God was getting Jonah's attention by using the wind and waves. God used the weather to get the sailors' attention. Sometimes God uses the things that He made in order to show us who He is or to get our attention.

Telling continued

Jonah knew his disobedience was causing the storm. Jonah told the sailors, “If you throw me off the ship, you’ll be fine. The wind will slow down and you’ll be safe.” The men tried to row back to land, but the wind was too powerful! So the sailors prayed to Jonah’s God and asked for forgiveness if throwing Jonah off the boat was not the right thing to do. They grabbed Jonah and threw him in the sea. SPLASH! As soon as Jonah hit the water the sea calmed, the rain stopped and they were safe. They praised God and said thank you to Him.

In the meantime, Jonah was in the sea. God sent a HUGE fish to swallow him. (**Show Sparkies the cardboard fish.**) Jonah now had nowhere to go. He was in the belly of a fish. God had his full attention.

Again we see that God was using His creation to get Jonah’s attention. God made a huge fish obey Him by having it swallow Jonah.

I want you all to imagine that you are Jonah. Think about being the reason a huge storm came and almost killed the sailors on your boat. Then think about what you would do if the sailors threw you off the ship, only to have a big fish swallow you whole! Would you be scared? Would you be sorry that you did not listen to God when He told you to go to Nineveh?

After three days of sitting in the fish’s stomach — imagine what else was in there with him! — Jonah finally came to know how wrong he was. “God, you kept me safe and brought me here to teach me a lesson and get my attention. Now I’m praying to you to show you that I do trust you. I will show you how thankful I am for rescuing me. Salvation is from You.”

After Jonah finished praying, God had the fish spit him onto land! God then told Jonah to go to Nineveh again. This time Jonah listened.

Nineveh was a big city, and Jonah thought the visit would require three days. When he got there he didn’t have a long message to tell the people. Actually it was less than 10 words! Jonah told the people, “Forty days until God brings down the city.” Jonah didn’t give the people a lot of information. In fact, it looks like he was trying to make it hard for these people to believe. Prophets usually spent years with people. But Jonah seemed to want to get in and get out of the city quickly. After everything Jonah had been through, he still didn’t really want to see these people come to know and love God.

Because God was definitely going to save the people of Nineveh, God used Jonah’s message even though it wasn’t very convincing. Since God is the one who changes hearts, He used Jonah’s simple message, even though Jonah didn’t seem to care.

After Jonah's short word to Nineveh, the people were sorry for their sin! They begged God to forgive them. Even the king showed he was sorry for his sin by putting on special clothes. (In those days people could put on special clothes to let people know that they were sorry.)

Who thinks they know how Jonah responded after the people of Nineveh turned to God? (**Allow Sparkies to answer.**)

Guess what!?! Jonah was angry with God! Can you believe it? He barely said anything, thousands of people turned from their sin — even the king of Nineveh — and Jonah was angry with God. He told God, "I knew You would do this! I knew You were full of grace and mercy! That's why I didn't want to come."

It sounds like Jonah was crazy doesn't it? It would have been any other prophet's dream to see people trust God so quickly.

We don't know exactly what happened to Jonah. The book of Jonah in the Bible ends with him still angry and cranky.



Challenging

If you want to remember one thing about today's lesson, remember this: God loves people and He will do anything to save people. Even if you don't think someone else deserves God's love, remember that if God loves them, you should love them too.

Because of His love, God allowed His own Son, Jesus, to die on the cross and give people eternal life. If God loved us that much, as God's children, we should love people too.





Family Follow Up

Tonight's lesson was on Jonah. The familiar biography took a different angle. This lesson showed the Sparkies that God loves people, and He will use anyone to get that message across, even a cranky prophet.

Read through Jonah with your children, one chapter each day for the next four days (Jonah has 4 chapters), and discuss with them how God's love is relentless for the Ninevites. Then share with them how God's love was relentless in finding you. Perhaps make it testimony week at your house. Share with your kids the circumstances of when you trusted Christ.

Turn to page 180 for Family Follow-Up cards that you can copy and distribute!

TeachingIdeas

Theme Ideas

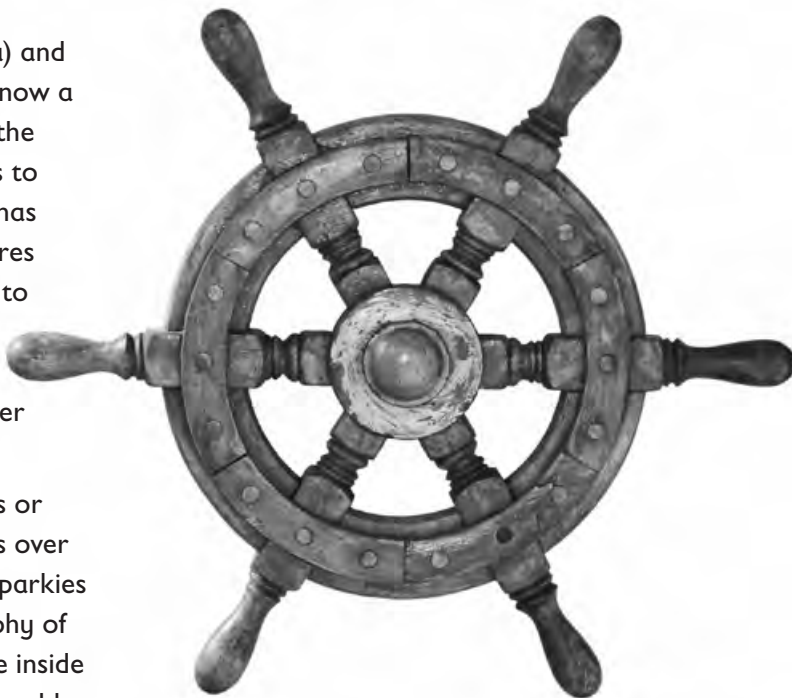
- **Fish Night** — Jonah was swallowed by a fish.
- **Boat Night** — Jonah was in the boat when the storm came.

Game/Activity Ideas

- Design a mural. Make a large mural for your classroom wall. Before club, paint the mural blue (for the sea). As Sparkies arrive, allow them to make fish for the water. Supply them with colorful paper, scissors, glitter, etc. You may want to have a few cardboard fish patterns on hand too.
- **Go Fish Game** — Make fishing poles by tying strings to the end of sticks. Tie a magnet to the other end of the string. Put various-shaped paper fish in an empty child's wading pool with paper clips attached to each fish. Children fish by connecting the magnet at the end of their pole with the paper clip on a fish in the pool.
- **Shark, Shark, Whale** — Instead of playing duck, duck, goose, instruct the kids to substitute shark, shark, whale.

Teaching Options

- Bring in pictures of Joppa (now Jaffa) and the Mediterranean Sea. (Nineveh is now a ruin and scholars aren't sure about the location of Tarshish.) Allow Sparkies to see that this was a real place. Jaffa has a statue of a fish (you can find pictures of it on the Web) which is supposed to depict the fish that swallowed Jonah. However, the fish that swallowed Jonah was probably bigger and not smiling, but who knows?
- Make a tent of blue or gray blankets or sheets. You could drape the blankets over two partitions or tables. Have the Sparkies sit in the tent as you tell the biography of Jonah. Tell them to imagine they are inside a great fish. What do they think it would be like? What would it smell like? How would they feel? Remind them that Jonah prayed.
- Bring fish crackers for a snack.



SparksActivity

Color the picture of the person who is thankful that God saves people.

Draw an X over the other picture that shows someone whining.



Reading

2 Chronicles 29-31

Thinking

Sandwiched between two wicked kings, Hezekiah was a king who feared the Lord. While there are many scenes from Hezekiah's tenure as king in 2 Kings, this lesson focuses on the reinstatement of the Passover during his reign. The topic of Passover will lead your discussion to Jesus, the ultimate Passover Lamb. Spend some time this week learning about Passover in the text above, as well as in Exodus 11-12 and Hebrews 9.

Before you begin, define sin for your Sparkies: Sin is anything we think, say or do that goes against what God tells us to think, say or do.



Looking It Up

Hebrews 9:22 (*Ask Sparkies to look up the verse before you begin the lesson.*)

Getting It Ready

You will need:

- A prop of a door (or if your room has a door, you can use that)



Telling

Who can tell me some names of some of the people we have studied during Large Group Time? (*Allow Sparkies to answer. For example, Asa, Saul, David, etc.*) What did those people do? (*When a child volunteers a name, ask a follow-up question. For example, if a Sparkie says “Elijah,” ask the Sparkie, “Was Elijah a king or a prophet?”*)

Thanks for your help! Today we will study the life of Hezekiah. Can you all say Hezekiah? Say it with me Hez-eh-ky-ah. (*Allow Sparkies to say it with you a couple of times.*) Good! Can you say it a few more times? Let’s pretend we are chanting Hezekiah. Hez-e-ki-ah ... Hez-e-ki-ah ... Hezekiah!

HEZEKIAH (*walks in*): Is someone calling me? I was just in the royal chambers.

LEADER: Hezekiah! So nice to have you here! What a great surprise! We were just going to talk about you and how God used you. Would you mind answering a few questions for us?

HEZEKIAH: I'd be honored.

LEADER: The Bible says you were a great king. Is this true?

HEZEKIAH: Well, yes. Everything the Bible says is true. *(Smiles.)* I think the reason the Bible calls me a great king is because I wanted to bring the worship of God back to the people of God. I didn't want them to serve fake gods or be involved in the sin of worshiping many gods. God said He alone could have our worship, so I showed the people how to do it.

LEADER: Was it hard to be king in those days?

HEZEKIAH: Yes, it was very hard. My father was Ahaz, one of the most wicked kings there ever was. I had a lot of things to fix. First, the temple of the Lord was in bad shape. Even the doors were falling off. After those were fixed, I had to find the priests who used to help in the temple and tell them they needed to serve again. They began repairing the temple inside and fixed and cleaned everything that was messed up. After all that was done, I called the people together and asked the priests to offer a sacrifice to the Lord.

LEADER: Were you the reason everybody started worshiping the Lord again?

HEZEKIAH: Not so much. Even though I was a good king, I had my sins. God was the one working. I was blessed to be used by God. I didn't deserve to be used by God or even have my prayers answered, but God is a God of grace and used me anyway.

LEADER: What happened next?

HEZEKIAH: After the temple was fixed, we did something that God's people had not done for a long time. Does anyone know what we did? *(Allow Sparkies to answer.)*

Those are all very good guesses. But what we did was celebrate the Passover! The Passover was a feast that God wanted us to have to remember God's grace to the people of Israel, even when they were slaves in Egypt.

The people asked God for help, and God told them to put the blood of a lamb on the doors of their houses on a particular night. *(At this point use the door to show the Sparkies where the blood was placed over the top and on the sides.)* If they did that, God would protect them. But in the houses where there was no blood on the door, the oldest son died. In the morning, God's people gathered food and left Egypt in a hurry, before Pharaoh's army was able to leave. The Egyptians were shocked by the number of young men that died. But it didn't take them long before they tried to catch God's people — and they almost did.

When God's people got to the Red Sea, Pharaoh's army was close behind. But, God brought the Israelites to safety by parting the water just long enough to get His people through. Pharaoh's army didn't make it. The path in the water closed up on them and all of them drowned.

Once a year, on Passover, God's people were to remember how God saved them so many years before by preparing a special meal and sacrificing a lamb.



God was faithful to His people during that first Passover. He was also faithful to the people I served in my day. And I know God is still faithful today!

LEADER: Wow. Thank you so much for telling us about Passover, Hezekiah! Let's thank Hezekiah for coming today! **(Clap as Hezekiah leaves.)**

LEADER: Passover reminds me of something similar in the New Testament. Can anyone think of another place in the Bible where blood protected or saved God's people? **(Allow Sparkies to answer.)**

LEADER: When Jesus died on the cross for our sins, His blood was spilled. In the Bible book of Hebrews, it tells us that because Jesus' blood was shed, there can be forgiveness for sins. **(Read Hebrews 9:22 as Sparkies follow along.)** In order for us to go to heaven, Jesus had to die. He was the only one who never sinned. He lived a perfect life. His blood and death protect His people from separation from God. If you trust in Jesus, you can live with Him in heaven after you die.

Challenging

Even though Hezekiah was a good king, he wasn't perfect. The Bible tells us that he was one of the better kings that God's people ever had, but he wasn't the true king they needed.

A king would have to be absolutely perfect to be the king they needed. They needed a king who would save them from their sin.

Who knows which king did that for them? **(Allow Sparkies to answer.)** Yes, Jesus was the answer to their need!

If any of you want to talk to me or one of the leaders tonight about Jesus, please do so! We'd love to show you how Jesus can take care of your sins. Just come up here after I pray for us.

(Close in prayer.)

Family Follow Up

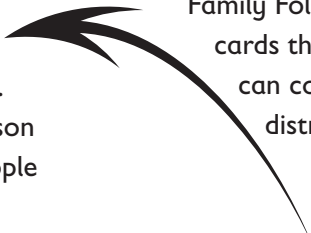
Tonight the Sparkies learned about King Hezekiah, one of the better kings Israel had. As a good king, one of the things Hezekiah did was reinstate the Passover among God's people. While Hezekiah was a good king and did good things, the lesson explains that Hezekiah was not the ultimate king that the people needed.

After briefly covering the Passover and what it meant, the Sparkies fast-forwarded to the New Testament book of Hebrews. Chapter 9 (specifically verse 22) tells us why Jesus' blood is needed for the total forgiveness of sins.

Discuss with your child the seriousness of sin. In order for sin to be forgiven, Jesus' life was taken and His blood was shed. But, because of this, we can be forgiven!

If possible, prepare a food that is served at a Passover meal. Talk about the symbolism of the food.

Turn to page 180 for Family Follow-Up cards that you can copy and distribute!



Teaching Ideas

Theme Ideas

- **Shining Sun Night** — God caused the shadow on the sundial to go backwards which was the opposite direction from where it should've gone. You could have the Sparkies dress in yellow.

Game Ideas

- **Beach Ball Bounce** — Sparkies bounce the ball around the circle.
- **Frisbee® Balance** — Sparkies walk around the circle balancing a Frisbee (rather than a beanbag) on their head.

Teaching Options

- Do you have someone in your church who could explain the Passover to your Sparkies? Ask him or her to come to club. Perhaps the person could fix a Passover food for the Sparkies too.
- The Bible tells us more about Hezekiah than we had time for in this lesson. Read the rest of his biography to the Sparkies from the Bible (2 Kings 18-20) or from a detailed, accurate Bible storybook.

SparksActivity

Sparkies, connect the dot-to-dot. Draw more people listening to Hezekiah.

12 ●

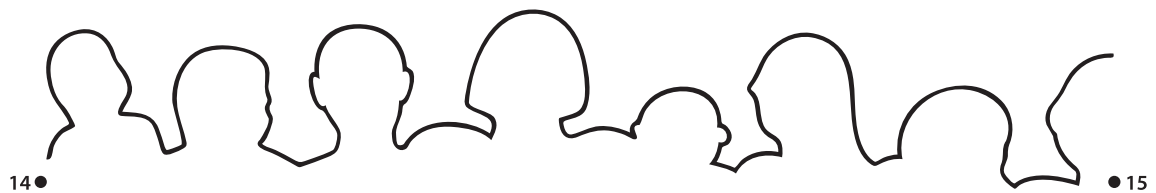
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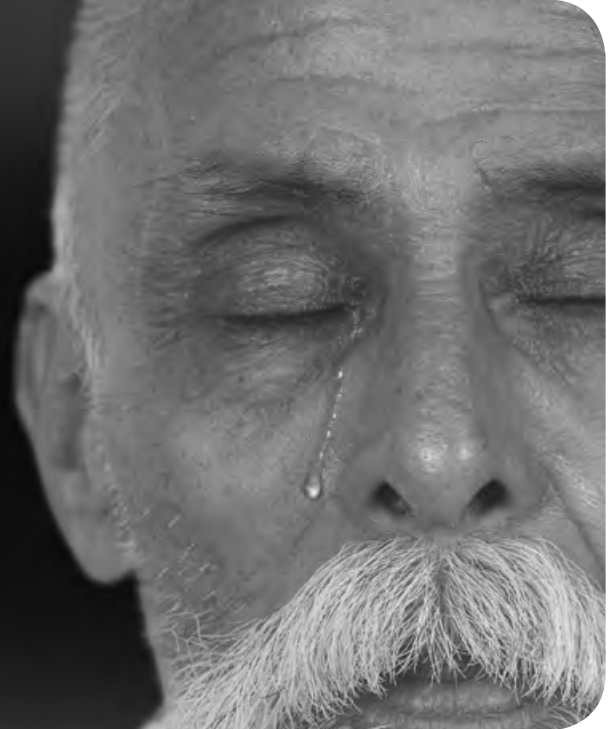
Reading

All of Jeremiah, focusing on Chapters 1-3 and 25-34

Thinking

Jeremiah is commonly known as the weeping prophet. At a sad time in Israel's history, Jeremiah told Israel that the time to repent had passed and judgment was imminent. The people continually disobeyed and where hope can be found at the end of most prophetic books, Jeremiah doesn't give the same ending. He gave hope, but it was a hope that wouldn't be fulfilled until the future.

Keep in mind as you read through Jeremiah that the book is actually written out of chronological order and the main chapter that promises the Messiah is Chapter 33.



Getting It Ready

You will need:

- Five actors for the skit: Narrator, Jeremiah, Person 1, Person 2 and someone (a leader) who can read what God says. This last person should be out of sight with a mic so Sparkies can hear him.
- Robes and sandals for Jeremiah and two other people. Jeremiah's feet should be dirty because he's been walking around telling people to repent.
- Someone to dim the lights or to turn off several of the lights (if you don't have the ability to dim them). Don't turn the lights the entire way off — you could easily scare the Sparkies.
- A temple backdrop — if your church has access to set construction, have a construction crew member set up a small area for the actors to be in front of a temple building. If your church has no set crew you can ask the clubbers to use their imagination as they are transported over 3,000 years in time and should try to picture a large temple building. Before you begin, show them pictures of what the Old Testament temple may have looked like so they get a good idea of what you will be talking about. You can find some pictures on the Web from Google images or on Bible commentary websites.* Your church library may also have books with colorful temple pictures.

In most *WHO* book skits, the character talks directly to the Sparkies. For this particular skit, Jeremiah and the others should act as if they were in their time period and in their element.

* References to websites and resources not created by Awana are for your information and are not necessarily an endorsement of content.

Telling

If one had to say what the Bible book of Jeremiah is about in one word, it would be sadness. Jeremiah is called the weeping (crying) prophet because he comes to God's people during a hard time.

We know from reading other parts of the Bible that God's people are always far from perfect. They hear God's Word, they promise to follow Him, but they always end up sinning by breaking God's law. The people in the Bible weren't really all that different than us today. We can read God's Word, the Bible, and say that we want to follow Him, but every single person in this room sins. No one is perfect.

The people during Jeremiah's time were no different. *(Open up to Jeremiah and show the clubbers how long the book of Jeremiah is by flipping through the pages.)* For the most part, Jeremiah is a sad book. I wonder what it would have been like to be Jeremiah ...

(Lights dim and Sparks leader steps to the side — remaining unseen.)

(Shine a spotlight or single light on Jeremiah as he comes to the front. You can use a powerful flashlight if you do not have a spotlight.)

JEREMIAH: Lord! What should I do?

GOD'S VOICE: Jeremiah, this is what I want you to tell My people. They have constantly disobeyed Me. Not only do they not obey Me, but they go on living as if they had nothing to be sorry for. They keep sinning. They do not worship Me, but they worship whatever they want to. One day they want a fake god more than Me, the next day they would rather have money. The next day they want power more than Me. They worship stuff, but not Me.

Don't they remember? I took care of them. I created them. I saved them from their enemies. I love them more than they could ever understand.

I can't do it anymore. They have to be punished. I will take away everything they have. Then they will say they are sorry, but they really won't be sorry. They will just say they are because they think they can get what they want by trying to make Me happy. But I know their hearts. I know they don't really love Me.

NARRATOR: So Jeremiah told the people what God said.

(Show Jeremiah walking all over town acting as if he were telling the people by the temple, using hand gestures. Jeremiah walks all over the stage area pretending to talk to people, anyone he comes in contact with, only to get shoved out of the way. Because he is working so hard, Jeremiah grabs his sleeve and pretends to wipe the sweat away from his face.)

(Lights dim.)

(Lights come back on and focus on Person 1 and Person 2 near the temple.)

PERSON 1: Have you heard what Jeremiah said?

PERSON 2: Jeremiah the prophet?

PERSON 1: Yeah. That guy who's been saying the same thing for years.



Telling continued

PERSON 2: I didn't hear what he said. Is he causing trouble again?

PERSON 1: Yes! He keeps telling us that we are in great danger and that we need to start obeying the Lord. I don't care! We have been fine all these years.

PERSON 2: Yeah, I don't care either. I like the way life is. I don't need to listen to God. I've been doing just fine without Him!

(Lights dim. Lights focus on Jeremiah, who is kneeling on the ground.)

JEREMIAH: Lord! There is nothing too hard for You to do! All the things that You told me to say, I have said. The people didn't care at all! They started to worship fake gods like Baal. Will there ever be any more hope? Is there good news, God?

VOICE OF GOD: The people have constantly disobeyed Me and not cared. They have to be punished. But, there will be good news for those who trust Me to take care of them. Even though this city will be ruined, I will build it again. There will be a small amount of people, called a remnant, who will be saved. I will help this city be rebuilt. I will reveal my plan to save them. Someday soon I will send my Son to take the punishment for their sin. If they trust My Son, I will look at them and no longer see their sin. I will only see My Son.

But until that time, sin must be punished.

JEREMIAH: Oh, God! What you have said is true. Nothing is too hard for You!

(Lights dim. Leader comes back to finish the lesson.)

Challenging

Jeremiah had a tough job! The people hated him, he went to prison and no one ever listened to him. He told the people of Israel the same thing for over 40 years, but it was as if the people couldn't hear with their ears.

Jeremiah knew it was what God wanted him to do, so he kept telling the people to listen to God. What a hard job Jeremiah had! No wonder people call him the crying prophet!

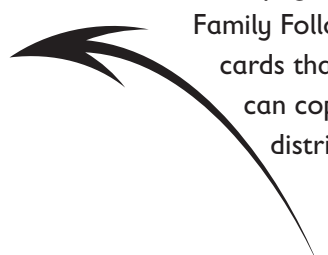
Sometimes God tells us things in the Bible, and we act as if we have no ears either. When you learn your verses for Awana, God is speaking to you. God speaks to people through His Word, the Bible. It's never good to ignore or not care about what God says. When you learn your verses or hear the Bible read to you, you should do what it says! Don't be like the people Jeremiah was sad for. Listen to what God says to you in the Bible.

Family Follow Up

Tonight's lesson was on Jeremiah, the crying (weeping) prophet. Jeremiah preached to a people who didn't listen. They didn't listen to him for over 40 years! Unlike the other prophets in the Old Testament who offered hope in the future Messiah in many chapters of their books, Jeremiah only had one chapter on that kind of hope (Chapter 33).

The Sparkies were encouraged to not be like the people that Jeremiah was preaching to.

Talk to your child about listening to God and doing what He says. A good way they can do this is by understanding their verses for Awana. Ask them if they understand what the verse they are working on is saying.



Turn to page 181 for
Family Follow-Up
cards that you
can copy and
distribute!

Teaching Ideas

Theme Ideas

- **Play-Doh® Night**

Game Ideas

- **Guess?** — Give one Sparkie on each team a ball of Play-Doh or clay. The four Sparkies with the Play-Doh go to the center of the circle, where the game director gives them the name of an object. Sparkies must then go back to their team line and form that object out of the dough. Sparkies are not allowed to talk to their team while they're working. Assign simple objects that Sparkies could make: beach ball, caterpillar, rabbit, bowl, pizza, etc. You could have the leaders take a turn. Their object, of course, would be more difficult to form.
- **Telephone Game** — Have the Sparkies sit in a circle. Whisper in the first Sparkie's ear "Jeremiah was faithful to God." That Sparkie whispers the phrase to the next Sparkie, etc. When the whispering once again gets around to the first child, have her say it out loud. See how different it is from the starting phrase. You could play again with a more complicated phrase such as "Jeremiah was a prophet and Jeremiah is a book in the Bible."

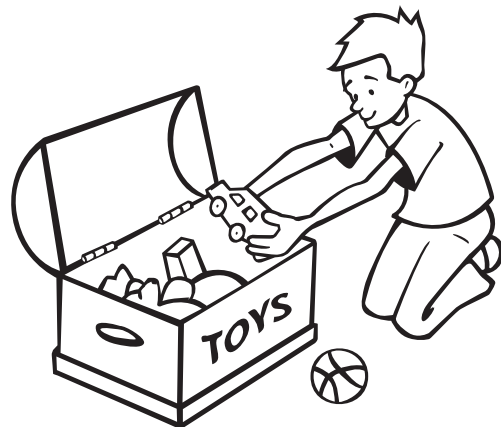
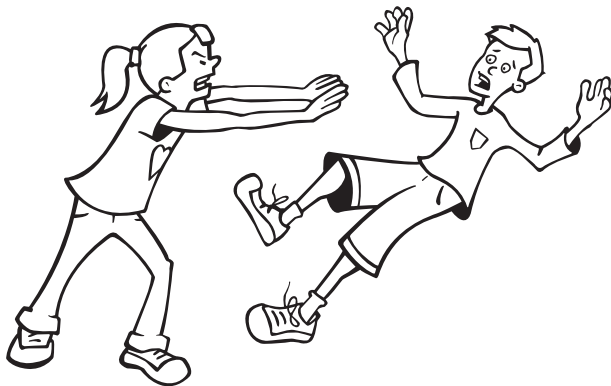


Teaching Options

- **Moldable People** — Although the lesson doesn't specifically talk about Jeremiah 18, one of the messages Jeremiah was preaching to the people is that God is the potter and we are the clay. Show the children how you, "the potter," can mold something out of clay. Explain that the Lord is the potter and we are the clay.
- **Potter Visit** — Do you have someone in your church who works with pottery? Ask if she would come to club and put on a demonstration for your Sparkies. If the person is comfortable doing so, you could ask if she would also talk about the verses in Jeremiah as she demonstrates the pottery making.
- **Books of the Bible** — Often it is the Bible books about the major and minor prophets that confuse children who are memorizing the books. Give each child a card with a Bible book written on it. (If you have 20 Sparkies, do 20 cards, etc.) If a Sparkie can't read, tell him which book is written on his card. Blow the whistle and see how quickly the Sparkies can put themselves in order. You can have leaders help the first time around. You can continue playing this other weeks. Once the Sparkies can put themselves in order, time them. You can also change the cards around so they have different cards each time.

SparksActivity

In His Word, God tells us how to live our lives. Circle the pictures below which show something God DOES tell us to do. Are you listening?



Reading

Philippians 3; Ephesians 2

Thinking

Sometimes we focus on our earthly home to the point that we forget that our true citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20). Yes, we can appreciate our country for its beauty and for the freedoms we enjoy, but we need to remember that our home here is temporary — our permanent home is with the Lord Jesus Christ.

As you talk to your Sparkies, remind them that their forever home is in heaven — but the “passport” to getting there is faith in Christ.

Looking It Up

Philippians 3:20 (*Ask Sparkies to look up the verse before you begin the lesson.*)

Getting It Ready

You will need:

- World map. Make sure you have a place to display it so all the Sparkies can get a good view.
- Passport. (If you don't have one, borrow one from another leader or make one out of construction paper and your picture.)

Showing

Before we get started today, we need to learn some new words. One is *citizen*. A citizen is a person who was born in a country and promises to obey the laws of that country. Everyone is a citizen of somewhere. If you were born in the United States, you are probably a citizen of the United States. If you were born in Australia, you are probably a citizen of Australia.

The next word is *citizenship*. If you are a citizen of the United States, your citizenship is in the United States. Citizenship is a way to tell someone what country you are a citizen of.

Did you know that kids like you all over the world are having an Awana club meeting like ours sometime this week? Maybe even right now! Just think about it — somewhere in Montreal **(if you live in Montreal use Florida as an example)**, kids just like you are learning about Jesus, memorizing verses and playing the same games! And not just in the United States and Canada, either. Kids go to Awana in South Africa, India, Russia, Brazil, and dozens and dozens of other countries.

Who can help me find Montreal on a map? **(If they struggle, help the volunteer find it. Again, if you live in Montreal, use Florida.)** Thank you so much for finding Montreal! Look how far away it is from us! Who can now help me find the place on a map where your family went on vacation?

Ask them:

- Where did you go on your vacation?
- Can you find that on the map now? **(Help them if they cannot.)**
- Is ____ (place he/she went) ____ just like home? **(For example if you live in Florida where it is warm all year and your Sparkie visited North Dakota in the winter, he probably saw snow or felt very cold temperatures for the first time.)**
- What was the land like where you went? Was it flat? Were there mountains? Was there a lot of sun? Did you see waterfalls? Or an ocean? **(Allow the Sparkies to answer.)**

(Point to the map and go region by region discussing the differences in climates and seasons.)

As you can see, our country has a lot of different weather and kinds of land. God is so creative! Did you know that He made all this for us to enjoy? We can praise and thank God that He has given us so much to explore and see! In our country, we have farms, all kinds of fruit trees, wonderful vegetables that are good for us, lots of animals to have as pets, snow to build snowmen or the sandy beach to build sand castles. God knew that we would enjoy all these things. Now it's our job to thank Him for it!

Have any of you ever gone to another country? **(Allow Sparkies to raise their hands.)** When you go to other countries, you need a passport to get into the country. **(Show your passport to them.)** When people come to the United States **(or where you are teaching from)** they need to show a passport to visit too! A passport shows a picture of the person and the name of the country where he or she is a citizen.

(Show the Sparkies your passport.)

Telling

We have a lot to be thankful for in this country. But we have something even better than citizenship in our country. It is our heavenly citizenship.

Paul wrote Philippians (a book in the New Testament) while he was in prison for telling people about Jesus. One of the things Paul wanted to remind the Philippians of was that they weren't just citizens of Philippi (where the Philippians lived), but even more they were citizens of heaven, where Christ lives.

Sometimes when you ask a person where his citizenship is, he will tell you the name of his town. Sometimes he will tell you the country he lives in. Paul wanted to remind the Philippians that while they lived in a country with other people, the person they really belonged to was Jesus Christ. No matter what else happened to them, they could be happy that they belonged to Jesus.

Read Philippians 3:20. ***(Sparkies can follow along in the Bible. If you use KJV, you may also want to explain that conversation means citizenship in this context. You may want to use either the NKJV or NIV for this verse to help explain what conversation means to the Sparkies.)***

Sometimes countries and their rulers (presidents, kings, prime ministers) can make bad decisions. The place where we are citizens is not perfect. But our Christian citizenship is in heaven, where Jesus Christ is. The Lord Jesus Christ rules there, and He is good and perfect.

Paul knew this very well. When he was in prison he remembered that even though the government had punished him for telling people about Jesus, he had the best citizenship in heaven. He could have hope and confidence in God who knew what he was going through. He knew that the pain of being in prison wouldn't last forever. Someday he would have the best home in heaven, and all the pain and trouble on earth would be worth it.

Challenging

Do you ever feel like Paul? He had a lot of people trying to hurt him because he was telling people about Jesus Christ. Maybe there is someone at school who doesn't like you because they know you love Jesus Christ. Maybe you didn't get your way when you lost a game. Some days on the playground when everyone is having fun, you might feel left out. You might feel all alone. But if you know Jesus, you are never alone and you always have a home. He used Paul to show us that no matter how hard things get, God still knows where you are, and He still loves you. He used Paul to let you know that you always have citizenship in heaven with Jesus.



Family Follow Up

Tonight the Sparkies learned about citizenship. But not just any citizenship. While the country where you live is full of resources and beauty and gives you earthly advantages, one's ultimate citizenship is in heaven, and for that we can be very thankful.

The Sparkies learned about Paul's thankfulness for his heavenly citizenship in the midst of his suffering. Then they colored their own passport to show that they have citizenship with Christ.

Use the passport your child colored as a way to start up a conversation about heavenly citizenship. Use things in your child's life that he is going through (a bully on the playground, a hard test at school, things just not going the way he wants) to remind him that while things are real and hard, he should get ultimate joy from knowing that Jesus Christ loves him and has a better home waiting for him.

Turn to page 181 for Family Follow-Up cards that you can copy and distribute!

Teaching Ideas

Theme Ideas

- **Good Things Night** — Heaven is a perfect place. As kids come in, greet them with a phrase with the word *good* in it. “Good evening, it’s good to have you here.”

Game Ideas

- **Good & Plenty®** — Teams stand on their team line. (Make sure there are an equal number of team members. If you have odd numbers, you may need to have someone go twice.) Give each team member a cup and a plastic spoon. Put five pieces of candy in the first person’s cup. At the whistle, the first person spoons out one piece of candy and puts it in the second person’s cup, and so on down the line. Sparkies can only spoon one piece at a time. The winning team is the one whose last player has five pieces of candy in his cup.
- **Good Morning Game** — Sparkies sit in a circle. One Sparkie (or a leader) is “it.” She chooses a Sparkie, kneels down in front of her and says, “Good morning, _____.” The goal is to get the Sparkie sitting on the chair to smile. The person who is “it” can make funny faces, funny voices, etc., to cause the Sparkie to smile. If “it” can’t get the Sparkie to smile, he moves on to another one. If the Sparkie does smile, he gets to be the next “it.”

Teaching Options

- Bring a bag of objects. One by one take an object out of the bag and ask whether or not that object will be in heaven. You can include things such as a key, a pillow, fruit, police car, etc.
- Ask the Sparkies to tell you about the prettiest place they’ve ever been. Discuss with them that heaven is even prettier. Heaven is perfect.
- Explain to Sparkies what it means to be a citizen. Ask them to tell you some of the privileges we have as a citizen. List what they say on a blackboard or whiteboard. You may need to help them get started: we have libraries, schools, safety laws, etc.

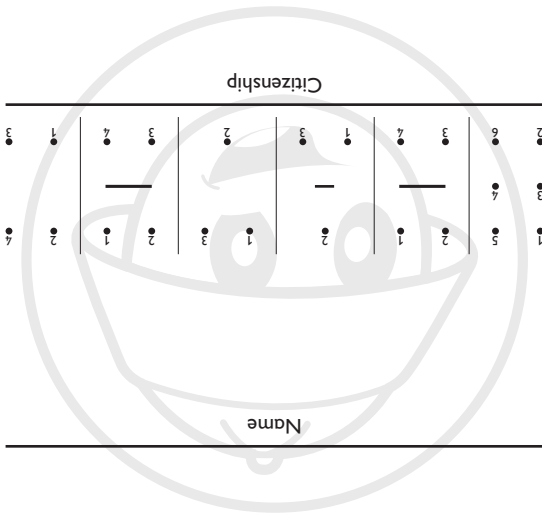
SparksActivity

(The Sparkies will color their own passport to take home. Have a lot of markers or crayons ready for the activity. If you have access to a digital camera and printer, bring it in with enough paper to print out a picture of each child. Make sure you know your church’s policy on taking pictures of children before you use this idea. If your church has a no picture policy or if you don’t have access to a camera, allow the Sparkies to draw pictures of themselves in the picture portion of the passport.)

SparksActivity

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Tonight you will make your very own passport. But this isn't any passport. This one won't let you into other countries. This passport will remind you where your citizenship is from — heaven! Connect the dots and have fun coloring it! Cut on solid line and fold into a booklet.



For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. (Philippians 3:20)



Reading

Acts 13 will be covered in the lesson.
Also read Acts 14-28 to get the full scope of Paul's missionary journeys.

Thinking

When you hear the word *missionary*, what is the first thing that pops into your head? Many people have ideas of what a missionary does based on the missionaries they know as well as any experiences they've had on mission trips.

This lesson will help the Sparkies understand that while all Christians are missionaries (sharing the gospel with friends and neighbors), there are people who spend their lives telling other people about Jesus Christ in (usually) cross-cultural settings.





Getting It Ready

You will need:

- Leader to play the apostle Paul for the skit. Make sure you find someone comfortable with a lot of lines. They don't need to be said word-perfect, but the person playing Paul should be familiar with how to answer the interview-style questions. Also, have him dress in robes and sandals so the Sparkies understand that this is a person acting as a Bible character.
- Pictures of missionaries your church supports. Email the missionaries this week to get an update from them so you'll be able to tell the Sparkies what they are doing and how to pray for them. (Or check with your church office to get recent emails and letters.) You'll use these during the "Showing" and "Telling" portions of the lesson.

Showing

(Hold up the pictures of the missionaries your church supports.) Who can tell me what these are? ***(Allow Sparkies to answer.)*** These are pictures of the missionaries that the people in this church pray for and help with money and supplies. ***(You will come back to these later in the lesson, so keep them close.)***



Telling

Today we are going to talk about missions and missionaries. You may hear a lot of people in churches talk about missionaries, but maybe you're not sure what a missionary is or what a missionary does. Some questions you might have are, "What is a missionary?", "Why do they need money?", "Where do they go?" and "How do you know if you should be a missionary?"

So, instead of telling you about one, I thought it would be better to bring one in! You may have heard of him. His name is Paul, and he was one of the first missionaries! He wrote 13 books in the Bible, and we get to ask him a few questions today!

LEADER: First of all, Paul, thank you so much for stopping by. It's a privilege to have you here. I know your time is short, so we'll start right in. What exactly is a missionary?

PAUL: I'm honored to be here! Thank you for having me. I do have limited time here with you, so starting right in will help me out!

A missionary is someone that God uses to tell other people about Jesus. In a way, everyone who is a Christian is a missionary. God wanted me to get out the message that His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, died on the cross and rose again. So I left everything that seemed familiar to me — my house, my friends, even my old job to tell people about Christ. Many missionaries have to leave their homes to do their jobs.

LEADER: What do you mean?

PAUL: Well, everyone here has a home. We all live in **(name of country and state/city where you are teaching from)**. So, if God asks you to be a missionary, He might be asking you to talk about Jesus to people who are different from you — people who don't live like you here in **(name of country and state/city where you are teaching from)**. Maybe they don't even speak the same language.

LEADER: So you only told people about Jesus for work? How did you make money to live?

PAUL: I had a pretty good job before God told me to go and tell people about Him. But when I left to travel and talk to people all day, I had to leave my job. People at the churches I visited and friends in some other churches helped me out by sending me money. Some of that money was used to help start other churches, and I used some of it for food and travel. Many people in the churches really helped me with money. But I also made money by making tents for people to buy.

LEADER: Is that the way all missionaries do it?

PAUL: Some missionaries get all the money they need from friends and people in churches. Other missionaries get their money, like I did, from churches *and* by working at a job. There are many different ways for missionaries to get the money they need to live.

LEADER: How did you know you wanted to be a missionary?

PAUL: It's kind of a neat story. After I became a Christian, there was a group of men who met to pray and ask God what we should do about telling other people about Him. While we were praying, the Holy Spirit told us that Barnabas and I needed to go to other places and tell people about Jesus. The others at the prayer meeting prayed for us and off we went! It all happened very fast!

LEADER: Tell us about one of your missionary trips.

PAUL: One of our adventures is written down in Acts Chapter 13. Just after the prayer meeting I told you about, Barnabas and I left. But we were barely able to get across town before God gave us the time and ability to talk to people about who Jesus is. I got to talk for a long time. I explained everything the people needed to know to trust Jesus. They even asked us to come back the next week and talk some more.

LEADER: So did you get to come back?

PAUL: Yes! We came back the next week, and huge crowds came to hear what we were saying. But the religious leaders (who did not believe Jesus to be God) did not like it. They got jealous that people began to believe what we were saying. So they asked us to leave. We knew God was telling us to go anyway, so after we finished talking to the religious leaders we left.

LEADER: Where did you go?

PAUL: Well ... back then, in the part of the world I lived in, there were Jews and there were non-Jews, who were called Gentiles. I am Jewish, and God told me to help the Gentiles understand who Jesus Christ is. They were people who were very different from me. But that is what missionaries usually do. They go to a people who live differently in hopes to share the good news about Jesus' love with them. **(To the leader)** Do you have missionaries that this church prays for?

LEADER: Yes, we do! Here are their pictures. ***(Tell the Sparkies where your missionaries are from and where they live now and what they are doing. Tell them about the weather there, different foods, animals and any other fun information for young children.)***

LEADER: Paul, thank you so much for sharing your story with us!

PAUL: It was my pleasure! If you ever want to read more about me, you can start in the New Testament book of Acts in Chapter 13. The rest of the book is about how God used me to help show a lot of people who Jesus is.



Challenging

Missionaries are normal people just like you and me. Some people become missionaries and tell other people about Jesus Christ the way Paul did. Other people work regular jobs. But, no matter what you do, every Christian should tell other people about Jesus whenever they can.

If you feel like you want to serve God as a missionary, you can pray about it now. And you don't have to wait until you are grown-up to tell people about Jesus. You can start right now by telling your friends and getting in some missionary practice right away!

Family Follow Up

Today the Sparkies learned about missions and what a missionary does. In a skit, the apostle Paul made a guest appearance to talk about his experiences as a missionary from Acts 13. This week, read a chapter in Acts every day to your child, starting in Acts 13. Show them on the map they colored of the second missionary journey where Paul went as you read through the book. After seven days you will be in Acts 19. If you decide to continue reading a chapter a day, after nine more days you will have finished Acts!

Encourage your child to start telling their friends about Jesus even now. The earlier they start, the easier it will be later in life.

Turn to page 181 for Family Follow-Up cards that you can copy and distribute!



Teaching Ideas

Theme Ideas

- **Missions Night**
- **Awana Missionary Night**
- **Music Night**

Game Ideas

- **Flag Game** — Make flags of different countries that have Awana clubs. (You can find out what they are on the Awana websites: awana.org. You have more than 100 to choose from.) If you don't want to provide pictures of flags, simply write the country's name on a strip of paper. Position a globe in the center of the circle. Choose one child from each team to run around the circle. Give each child a flag. When they get back to the line, the child and leader go into the center of the circle to locate the country on the globe. (You might want to choose fairly easy countries; you don't want to embarrass your leaders.)
- **Games From Other Nations** — Play games from other countries. You could ask people in your church of various ethnic backgrounds if they would like to teach a game to the children. Or you could look on the Web. Several sites list games from various countries. Jumping rope is one game that is popular in many places.

Teaching Options

- **Penny Drive** — Collect pennies (and other change) for your Awana missionary. (You might want to make this a month-long drive.) Take the change to the bank and have it changed into bills and present it to your area missionary.
- **Missionary Speaker** — Invite your Awana missionary to speak at your club. They are usually scheduled ahead, so invite him or her well in advance of the date.

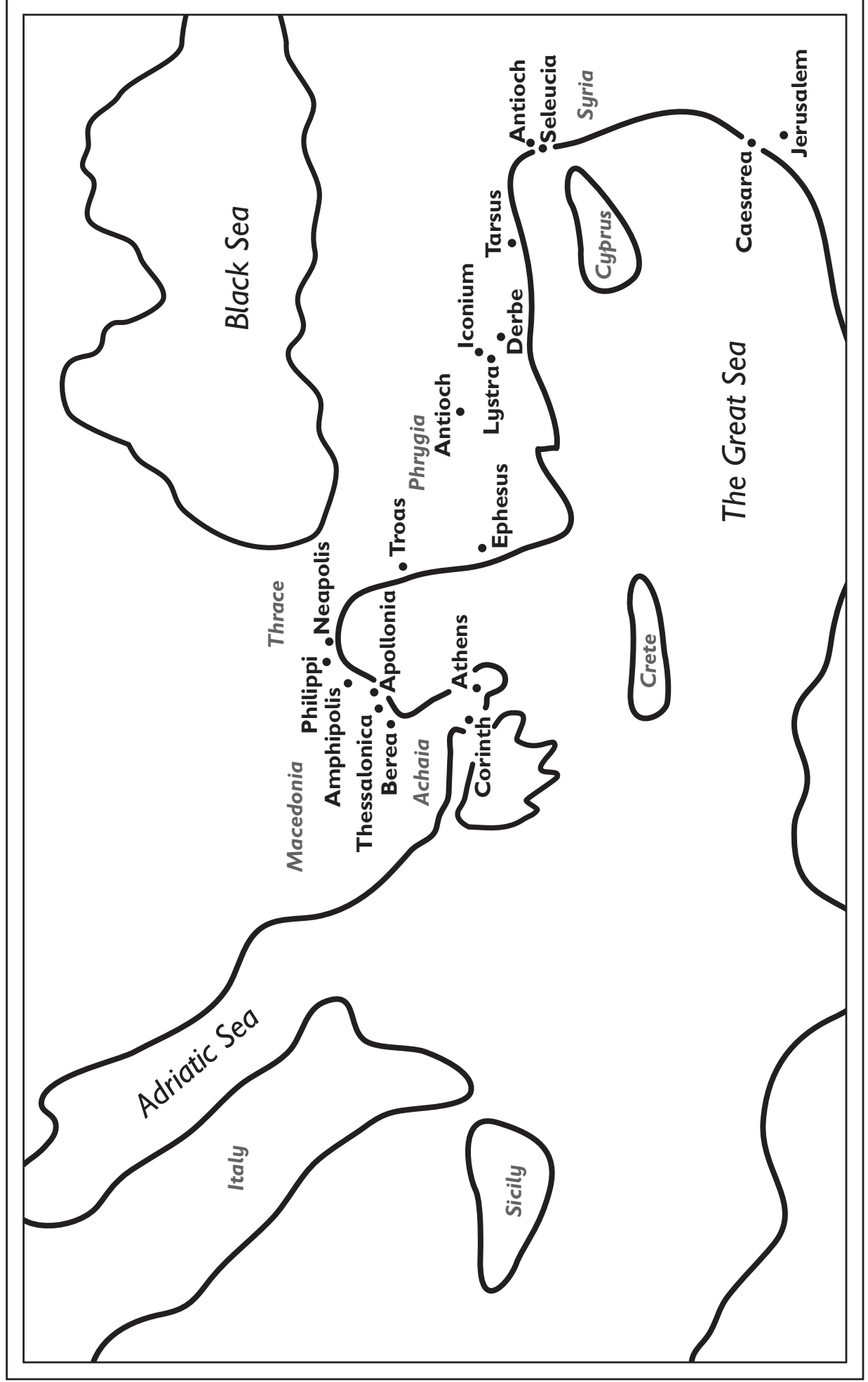


SparksActivity

This is a map of some of the places Paul went when he told people about Jesus. Have fun coloring it!



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Reading

Luke 2:36-38

Thinking

When you read the Luke passage the first time, it appears that Anna is 84 years old. Some scholars suggest that since Anna was probably married at 14 and married for 7 years before becoming a widow for 84 years; she probably was 105 when Christ came.

Waiting can be a hard discipline. We are used to the Internet moving at monumental speeds and fast food being ready as soon as we pull up to the window. When we have to wait, it sometimes feels like a chore. But God makes His people wait most of the time.

Moses and the Israelites had to wander the desert for 40 years. Jeremiah had to preach to deaf ears for over 40 years without a single convert. Simeon and Anna had to wait for Christ's coming. When God makes His people wait, it is always for His glory and for our best.

As you teach this lesson to your Sparkies, be encouraged that although they may not respond immediately, God knows and has much more patience than you do. In your lifetime you may never see the results. But God's Word is living and active, and He knows the best timing.





Getting It Ready & Showing

- Bring a calendar for the next year, a large clock, an egg timer, a picture of a red traffic light, a picture of a pregnant woman and seeds of any kind. (If you think the parents of your Sparkies might be sensitive to you showing a picture of a pregnant woman, substitute something else.)
- Define words repeated in lesson:
Sin: anything we think, say or do that God does not want us to do
Savior: Someone who saves someone else. Jesus saves us from being separated from God forever.

Telling

Who can tell me how many days there are until Christmas? **(Allow Sparkies to give a few guesses. Then let them know how many days there actually are.)** Is it hard to wait for Christmas? Why? **(Allow Sparkies to answer.)** Well, imagine waiting 105 years!

Think about your grandparents or great-grandparents and how old they are. Imagine someone even older than them living their whole life never having a Christmas until this year!

In Luke 2 we read about a woman named Anna who waited 105 years for Christmas!

(Read Luke 2:36-38. If your version uses the word virginity, you may want to paraphrase the passage or use the word marriage, as some translations do, to avoid having to define virginity to your Sparkies.)

Luke 2 tells us that there was a prophetess named Anna who waited. But she wasn't waiting for Christmas presents — she was waiting for Jesus!

A prophetess is a woman prophet. Prophets were people whom God used to tell His Word to His people. In the Old Testament God used prophets, like Isaiah and Jonah, to talk to His people. Many times, prophets would say that a Savior was coming to make a way to God by taking away the sins of the people.

When Anna saw Jesus at the temple, do you know what she said to the people? She said something different from the prophets in the Old Testament. She said, "Jesus is here, Jesus has come!" Anna waited a long time for Christmas! When Jesus was born and she saw Him in the temple, she praised and thanked God.

Who can tell me why we need Christmas? **(Allow the Sparkies to give some answers. Continue after three or four Sparkies give reasons.)** We need Christmas because it reminds us of when God sent Jesus into the world. And Jesus needed to come into the world to be our Savior. Now that's something worth waiting for and something we can celebrate ALL year!

(Show the Sparkies the items you brought in for props; a calendar for next year, a large clock, an egg timer, a picture of a red traffic light (not yellow or green), a picture of a pregnant woman and seeds of any kind.) What do all these things have in common? **(Allow Sparkies time to guess.)**

All of these items have *waiting* in common. A calendar shows you dates in the future. You *wait* 52 weeks for a year to pass by! A clock shows you what time it is, and sometimes you have to *wait* for time on the clock to pass before you go to Awana or go to school or eat dinner. An egg timer is used to help you time how long it takes to cook food — food you have to *wait* to eat. A red traffic light tells you to stop and *wait* for a green light. A pregnant woman knows she will have a baby. She has to *wait* nine months before her baby is born because it needs to get bigger and stronger before it can live outside of its mom. Seeds look really insignificant but they can become anything from trees to flowers to tomato plants! But before they do, you have to *wait* for them to grow.

A lot of life requires waiting, and the very first Christmas was no different.

What are some things you have to wait for? (**Allow Sparkies to answer.**) Are they worth the wait?

This time of year when Christmas is coming you may have to wait until you open presents. You may have to wait until your mom and dad cook a big meal for the family. You may even have trouble falling asleep on Christmas Eve because you are so excited about Christmas the next morning that you can't wait.

Be thankful you don't have to wait for a Savior!
Jesus has come and lived here on earth. He died so we could be with God. He rose from the dead just as He promised. We don't have to wait to celebrate our Savior! He has already come!



Challenging

Sometimes God makes us wait, and sometimes we have to wait a very long time.

On Christmas morning, think about Anna and how many years she had to wait. She wasn't waiting for presents or warm cookies from the oven. She was waiting for God's Savior to come to earth. Thank God that you already know who that Savior is! The waiting is over. Jesus has come!

Did you know you can be just like Anna? You don't have to wait for Christmas to come like she did, but you can tell everyone that He came. As soon as Anna found out, she went out and told all the people. You can be like Anna and tell all your friends that Jesus has come!





Family Follow Up

Anna had to wait up to 105 years to be able to meet Jesus Christ. Talk with your child about how God uses waiting to make us thankful. Jesus is the best gift of all. And, even though He was the perfect gift, and a good gift, God made men, women and children — everyone — wait. Sometimes we don't understand why God makes us wait for good things, but we do know that He is love and He is in control. When He says, "wait" it is always for our best.

Turn to page 182 for
Family Follow-Up
cards that you
can copy and
distribute!

Teaching Ideas



Theme Ideas

- **Prophet/Prophetess Night** — Sparkies dress like a person would have in the days during Jesus' life on earth: togas, sandals, rods, etc.
- **Christmas in July** — Celebrate Christmas with palm trees, sunshine, sunscreen and beach balls. Sparkies wear Christmas colors in warm-weather clothing — green shorts, red T-shirts, etc.

Game Ideas

- Sometimes things take time. Decorating a Christmas tree takes time if you want it to look just right. In this game, Sparkies will “decorate” a Christmas tree by using six or eight plastic cups. Find green plastic cups if possible. The cups need to be placed upside down in a pyramid. That creates the look of a tree. Divide Sparkies into two teams. Sparkies stand at one end of the room while the cups are on a table at the other end. When you start the game, Sparkies go to the table one at a time and put one cup in place. They go back to the line and tag the next Sparkie. That Sparkie goes to the table and places another cup, and goes back and tags the next Sparkie. This is repeated until one team has “decorated” its tree.

Teaching Options

- Since waiting is the theme of the lesson, promise something to the Sparkies at the beginning of the night, as soon as they get to club ... something they will want and be excited about. Then wait until the very end of the night to follow through with what you promised. They'll pick up on what you're doing when you teach the lesson and refer to your promise.
- Do some research and find pictures of what the temple courts might have looked like in Jerusalem. This is where Simeon and Anna met Mary, Joseph and Jesus. Providing a visual of where this meeting actually took place helps to make it more real for Sparkies.

SparksActivity

Sparkies, have fun finding some of the words from this lesson in the puzzle below.
If you have trouble, ask your mom or dad for help.

ANNA
CHRISTMAS

MANGER
TEMPLE

SAVIOR

S	J	V	W	F	Z	C
D	J	M	C	I	V	H
G	S	A	V	I	O	R
T	B	N	U	Y	E	I
E	R	G	A	K	T	S
M	Q	E	A	N	P	T
P	C	R	G	K	N	M
L	G	X	Q	B	B	A
E	S	R	X	C	H	S
Q	K	P	L	Y	M	C

Reading

Romans 6:1-14; Romans 8:1-17;
2 Corinthians 5:11-21

Thinking

Easter is a great time of year to introduce the gospel to people, and children are no exception. With cards and candy proclaiming another holiday is here, it's an easy "in" to talk to people about the death and resurrection of Jesus — the true reason to celebrate Easter.

This lesson will explore the newness Christ brings to the lives of people who trust Him. Spend time this week meditating on the passages in the reading section. Spend time praising God for the new life He has given you.



Looking It Up

2 Corinthians 5:17 (*Ask Sparkies to look up the verse before you begin the lesson.*)

Getting It Ready

You will need:

- Picture of a dead fish floating on top of a tank (if you can't find one, you may need to draw one). Consider that you're talking to Sparkies — you don't want it too graphic.
- Live fish in a bowl/tank or a picture of an active fish. If you are having trouble finding a picture, go to the Google website* ([google.com](https://www.google.com)) and click on the images link. Type in "fish" or "jumping fish" and you will find pages of results from which to choose.

* References to websites and resources not created by Awana are for your information and are not necessarily an endorsement of content.

Showing

Who can tell me the difference between these two fish? (*Allow Sparkies to give many answers.*) Thank you for your help! I'm going to put these two fish over here for a little bit later. But now I want to talk to you about Easter.

What are some things you do for Easter every year? (*Allow Sparkies to answer.*)

Telling

Who can tell me what Easter is about? (**Allow Sparkies to answer.**) Easter is about Jesus. Jesus is God's Son who came to earth to show us a way to God the Father. Even though Jesus came and lived and died and rose from the dead a long, long, long time ago, He knows who we are and He cares about what happens to us today.

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John (Bible books in the New Testament) describe Jesus' time on earth. Near the end of each book the writers tell about Jesus' death and resurrection (His coming back to life).

We usually think of the chapters in each of the four books that explain Jesus' death and resurrection as the "Easter story."

If I asked you to tell me the Easter story, you might say that Jesus, God's Son, came to earth. He lived a perfect life and never disobeyed any of God's laws. Because humans sin (disobey God), and God cannot accept sin, people must trust Jesus to get them to God — to get to heaven.

When people trust Jesus to save them from their sin, God looks on the perfect life of Jesus instead of the sinful person. In other words, the punishment you should get for your sin, Jesus took care of. (That doesn't mean that Dad and Mom shouldn't punish you for something you've done. You need to learn to make right choices.) Jesus died for you. But Jesus didn't just die. He came back to life three days later, just as He promised. And that is the Easter story.

Let's look back at the pictures of the fish I have. (**Adjust the following descriptions depending on your actual pictures.**) One is dead. He isn't moving and has no signs of life. He doesn't eat or breathe. He doesn't swim. He doesn't get hungry. He is dead. But the (picture of the) fish that is alive seems very happy to be a fish. He is swimming around his bowl. He blinks his eyes and eats his food. He can feel the water swoosh past his scaly body. He is alive.

Let's say this picture of the dead fish is a picture of our lives before Christ changes them, before we trust Jesus to take care of our sin. And the picture of the fish very full of life looks like our lives after we trust Christ and He takes care of the punishment for our sin.

So before you trusted Jesus, you were much like the dead fish. You had no life. But once you trusted Jesus you became like the live fish. You were given real life — eternal life. People who trust Jesus have eternal life — they get to go to heaven when they die.

I'm going to read you a verse that shows the difference between life *before* someone knows Jesus Christ and *after* that person knows Jesus Christ. (**Read 2 Corinthians 5:17.**)

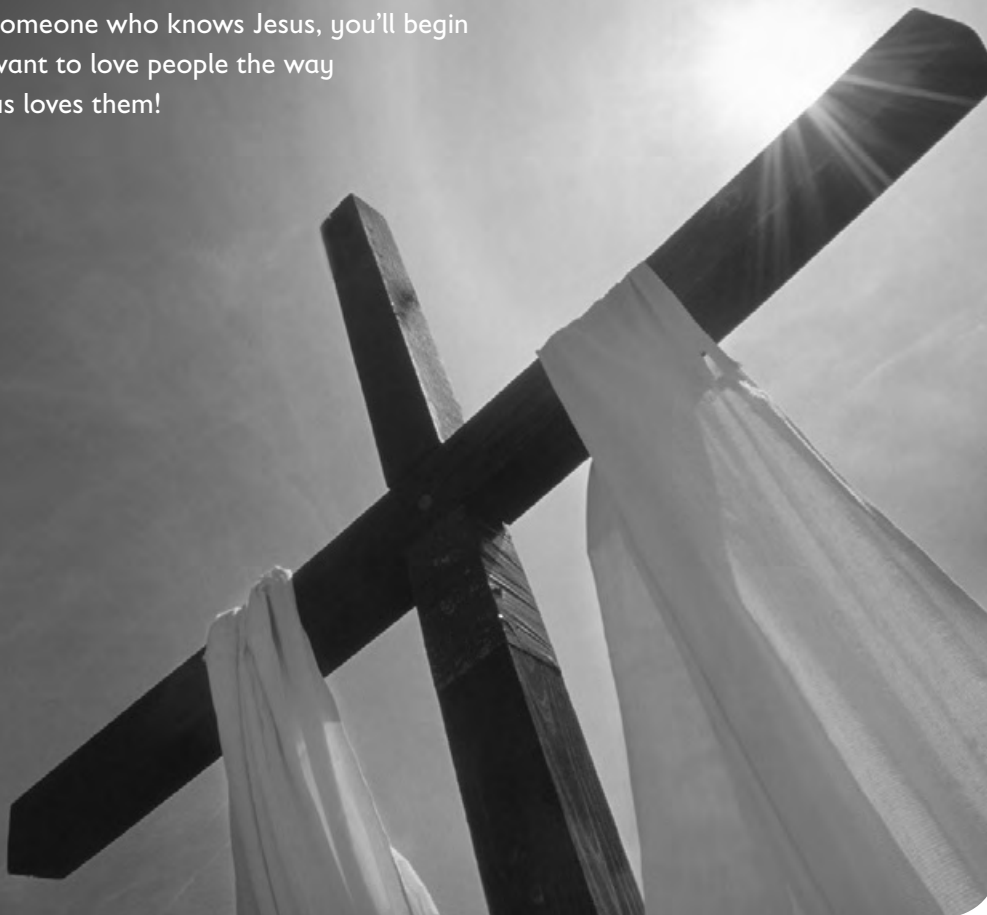
If you trust Jesus, you are a new person. You start to want to do what God wants you to do.

Challenging

Because Jesus Christ has given you eternal life, you can thank Him for it by using your life right now for Him. You can't ever repay Jesus for what He's done by dying for you on a cross and giving you eternal life. But you can say thank you by serving Him.

How can you serve Jesus? How can you be like the fish that is full of life? Since God is the one who gave you life, you should trust what He says. God speaks to His children through the Bible. When you learn your Awana verses, did you know you are learning the very words of God? You are learning about Him and how much He loves you. You are learning what God is like. If you are someone who is alive or someone who knows Jesus, you should trust what He says in the Bible.

When you read the Bible and when you memorize your verses you'll begin to see how much Jesus loves people. If you are someone who is alive or someone who knows Jesus, you'll begin to want to love people the way Jesus loves them!



Family Follow Up

As Easter approaches, it is easy for kids to associate Easter with spring break or Easter eggs. Tonight they learned that the reality of Easter can be seen every day. A person brought back to life doesn't live as if he were dead.

Because Christ died to give us life, we can walk in that new life daily as new creatures. Read 2 Corinthians 5:17 with your child and talk about ways to live as a new creation.

Turn to page 182 for Family Follow-Up cards that you can copy and distribute!





Teaching Ideas

Theme Ideas

- **Spring Night** — Decorate the room with pastel-colored streamers, have the kids make butterflies, etc.
- **Baby Animal Night** — Decorate the room with pictures of baby animals.

Game/Activity Ideas

- Have the children make handprints out of plaster or clay. (You can usually find materials to do this at a hobby or craft store.) You can find cute poems on the Web about small fingerprints that you can include with the handprint when giving them to parents. Write a note to the parents thanking them for the privilege of working alongside them as they spiritually train their children.
- Bring a baby animal to club. Most young children love animals. (Make sure none of your Sparkies are allergic to the animal and that the animal isn't dangerous. You will probably also want to protect the animal against all the children.)

Teaching Options

- Show a DVD about the events of history.
- Emphasize that Christ died for each of the Sparkies. Ask a couple of your leaders to give short testimonies of the circumstances surrounding them coming to Christ. If possible, choose at least one leader who was saved as a child (perhaps even in Sparks).

SparksActivity

Put a cross (†) next to the true things about Easter.

☐

Jesus died for you on a cross.

☐

Jesus came back to life, just as He promised.

☐

Jesus is God's Son.

☐

If you trust Jesus to take the punishment for your sin, you are a new person.

☐

Easter is the only day of the year you can celebrate Jesus dying for your sins.

☐

God loved you enough to send Jesus to take care of the punishment for your sins.

FamilyFollowUp

The Gospel

Next time you're in the car and come to a stoplight, rehash the lesson. Stoplights save us from accidents when we believe what they show us. Ask questions like: Should I go if the light is red? What should I do if the light is green? What do I have to do in order to be saved by Jesus? (***You have to believe Jesus died on the cross and came alive again and trust Him as your Savior to be saved.***)

FamilyFollowUp

P Is for Power!

Look up Psalm 147:5 and read it together. Have each person name something that is powerful. After each thing is named, add, "But God is even more powerful."

Pray and thank God for His power and for all that He has created.

FamilyFollowUp

Gideon — God's Mighty Warrior

Lesson 1

Fear is normal. All of us get nervous at times. Your child might be nervous before a test or on the first day at a new school. Don't tell her not to be afraid. Instead, talk with her about what she is afraid of, then pray with her, asking God to give her peace of mind. Remind your child that, if she has trusted Jesus Christ, He has promised to never let her be alone.

FamilyFollowUp

Gideon — God's Mighty Warrior

Lesson 2

Talk about situations that are difficult for your child to cope with. Maybe your child is afraid of thunderstorms or something at school. Talk about courage and how we can put our trust in the Lord. Make sure your child knows, however, that trusting God doesn't mean that bad things won't ever happen again, but that we can talk to God and know that He is with us, helping us, no matter what happens.

FamilyFollowUp

Ruth — Courageous Grandma

(Scripture: the book of Ruth.) Boaz was related to Ruth, so he was able to step up and help her and her mother-in-law. His role is known as the kinsman-redeemer. He was able to redeem Naomi's land and save Naomi and Ruth from poverty.

Ruth was also an ancestor of Jesus Christ. It's important that your children understand that Jesus was God but that He was also a man through Mary. As a man, He is our kinsman and is able to save us from our sin. Both Boaz and Jesus Christ had the necessary payment, both were willing to help, and both were free to act.

Remind your child that, just as Boaz stepped in and helped Ruth when she needed it, Jesus Christ stepped down to earth and helped us by dying on the cross in our place. Ruth was a poor foreigner who had to forage for food, but because of her faith in the one true God, she became the ancestor of King David and of the Lord Jesus Christ!

FamilyFollowUp

David — David Obeys

Lesson 1

Play a game of telephone. Whisper something into the ear of one of your children. Make it a complex phrase so it'll be hard to repeat to the next person. Go down the line of the family and see what phrase the last person hears. Is it totally different than what you first whispered? Probably! Use it as a teaching moment — it's important to listen!

Affirm and encourage your kids for when they've obeyed you in the past.

FamilyFollowUp

David — What it Means to Be a Friend

Lesson 2

Ask your kids what it means to be a good friend. You should hear answers like: loving each other, helping each other and putting others first. Encourage your kids in the fact that their siblings are their friends too. Have them specify one way they can show someone else in the family what it means to be a friend.

FamilyFollowUp

Asa

Tonight the Sparkies learned about King Asa from 1 Kings 15:8-24, 1 Chronicles 3:10 and 2 Chronicles 14-16. Here are some questions for you to consider to help your son or daughter remember the lesson.

1. What made Asa a good king? (1 Kings 15:11-15 — during the lesson no mention of the word prostitute was mentioned, as included in some Bible versions. Instead, the lesson concentrated on destroying idols.)
2. What was the difference between Abijah and Asa?

FamilyFollowUp

Elijah

Elijah was a man whom God used for big things! Tonight's lesson was from 1 Kings 18. Discuss with your children what it means to be faithful to God. Allow them to tell you how Elijah had faith in God and then ask them how they can have faith in God.

FamilyFollowUp

Naboth

Tonight's lesson was from 1 Kings 21. Naboth was a God-fearing man who owned a vineyard King Ahab wanted. Even though Ahab owned as much land as one could want, he still wanted more. Because Naboth's land was a family inheritance, Naboth would not trade or sell the land to Ahab. It would have been a disgrace to Naboth's family and lack of thankfulness to God if he had sold it.

Tonight's lesson was primarily a skit about being greedy. Bill made a guest appearance where part of the point (being thankful/not whining) was made by him devouring a bunch of cookies without offering any to anyone.

After the skit humorously pointed out what greed is, the Sparkies learned what greed did to Ahab.

Talk to your children about greed. During the week, look for situations where they act greedy. For instance, you're walking through a store and they beg for you to buy a toy that they don't need and probably won't even play with once they get it. Talk about ways to be thankful for what they do have.

FamilyFollowUp

Elisha — Lesson 1

Today's lesson was on Elijah passing the prophet torch to Elisha.

Spend a few minutes in 1 Kings 19 and 2 Kings 2 and ask your kids what they remember from the story.

A couple of questions to consider: What did Elisha ask Elijah for? Did Elisha get what he asked for? Did Elisha wonder if he should trust Elijah?

FamilyFollowUp

Elisha — Lesson 2

This week's lesson from 2 Kings 6 showed the Sparkies the way God used Elisha for peace. When the enemies came to get Elisha because he knew the enemy king's plans, Elisha asked God to blind the army so they could not see him. He then led them on a 12 mile (19.3 km) excursion to Samaria. Imagine walking 12 miles (19.3 km) blindly following a man whom you never saw!

Once inside the city walls of Samaria, Elisha asks God to restore the sight of the enemy army and God grants his request. Of course, now that the enemy is surrounded by the entire city of Samaria, they are at the mercy of Israel's king. Elisha tells his king — the king of Israel — to have the enemies over for dinner. A huge feast was made and peace was restored (inviting people under your roof was an unspoken peace covenant in Bible times) for a very long time. Elisha won the enemy over with kindness!

Talk with your son or daughter about winning people over with kindness. As a family, you may want to discuss ways to show kindness to someone in need. Perhaps even do as Elisha and have an unlikely guest over for dinner.

FamilyFollowUp

Naaman — A Young Girl With a Big Message

Read the biography of Naaman from the Bible — 2 Kings 5. Talk about Naaman's pride. How does pride sometimes cause trouble in your home? (Sometimes kids lie to avoid embarrassment or refuse to be kind to a kid at school that others tease.) Even adults can be victims of pride by wanting what other families have (whether it's a new car or the latest technology) or by desiring a job that pays as much money as someone else's job.

Explain that pride is a sin and that humbleness is the opposite of pride.

FamilyFollowUp

Three Men in a Furance

Provide each of your children with an instrument — a wooden spoon on a pan works well — and then read Daniel 3. Each time you get to an instrument part, have the children play their instruments.

Talk about the courage the three men gave each other. Talk about the importance of choosing good friends. How do they help their friends? How do their friends help them?

FamilyFollowUp

Esther — The Beautiful and Brave Queen

Lesson 1

(Scripture: the book of Esther.) Your child is studying the biography of Queen Esther. God was not surprised at Haman's plot to destroy the Jews. God knew Haman's heart, and He was ready to block Haman's plot.

This week remind your child that God is not surprised at anything that happens. Remind them to trust in God, no matter what the circumstances are. (This is good for you to remember also.)

FamilyFollowUp

Esther — The Beautiful and Brave Queen

Lesson 2

Bake hamantaschen (Haman's hats) cookies together. As you work, ask your child to tell you about Esther.

Haman's Hats

Makes about 5 dozen cookies.

1 cup (229.5 g) butter or margarine

2 cups (383.3 g) sugar

1 teaspoon (5 mL) vanilla

3 eggs

4 cups (397.5 g) flour

Cherry jam, lemon pie filling or other kind of fruit filling

Combine the butter, sugar, eggs and vanilla and beat well. Add the flour and continue mixing.

Roll into 3" (7.6 cm) logs. Wrap in wax paper and freeze. When you're ready to bake, remove from the freezer and allow them to slightly thaw. Cut into ¼" (6 mm) slices and place on cookie sheets. Put a spoonful of jam or pie filling in the center of the dough. Pinch the sides into three corners.

Bake at 350°F (180° C) until done, about 20 minutes.

FamilyFollowUp

Ezra

(Scripture: Ezra 7-10). This is a rather confusing portion of Scripture, with a lot of names of people and a lot of information about priests and the temple. If you try to explain it all to your Sparks-aged children, they'll quickly get confused and stop paying attention. That's why we've simplified the lesson a little. We didn't get into the details of how the Israelites sent their foreign wives and children away, and we didn't discuss some of the disgusting practices these women were introducing to Israel.

Our lesson is basically on peer pressure. Ezra followed God and convinced the people that they should too. It couldn't have been easy for him, but he knew what was right and stuck up for what he believed. Your children are getting to the age where peer pressure is an issue. They might have friends who are allowed to watch TV shows and movies that you think are unacceptable. They might have friends who are disobedient and disrespectful to their parents. You can use the example of Ezra to show them how to stand up when everyone around them is doing wrong.

FamilyFollowUp

Jonah

Tonight's lesson was on Jonah. The familiar biography took a different angle. This lesson showed the Sparkies that God loves people, and He will use anyone to get that message across, even a cranky prophet.

Read through Jonah with your children, one chapter each day for the next four days (Jonah has 4 chapters), and discuss with them how God's love is relentless for the Ninevites. Then share with them how God's love was relentless in finding you. Perhaps make it testimony week at your house. Share with your kids the circumstances of when you trusted Christ.

FamilyFollowUp

Hezekiah — A King Who Feared God

Tonight the Sparkies learned about King Hezekiah, one of the better kings Israel had. As a good king, one of the things Hezekiah did was reinstate the Passover among God's people. While Hezekiah was a good king and did good things, the lesson explains that Hezekiah was not the ultimate king that the people needed.

After briefly covering the Passover and what it meant, the Sparkies fast-forwarded to the New Testament book of Hebrews. Chapter 9 (specifically verse 22) tells us why Jesus' blood is needed for the total forgiveness of sins.

Discuss with your child the seriousness of sin. In order for sin to be forgiven, Jesus' life was taken and His blood was shed. But, because of this, we can be forgiven!

If possible, prepare a food that is served at a Passover meal. Talk about the symbolism of the food.

FamilyFollowUp Jeremiah — The Weeping Prophet

Tonight's lesson was on Jeremiah, the crying (weeping) prophet. Jeremiah preached to a people who didn't listen. They didn't listen to him for over 40 years! Unlike the other prophets in the Old Testament who offered hope in the future Messiah in many chapters of their books, Jeremiah only had one chapter on that kind of hope (Chapter 33).

The Sparkies were encouraged to not be like the people that Jeremiah was preaching to.

Talk to your child about listening to God and doing what He says. A good way they can do this is by understanding their verses for Awana. Ask them if they understand what the verse they are working on is saying.

FamilyFollowUp

My Home in Heaven

Tonight the Sparkies learned about citizenship. But not just any citizenship. While the country where you live is full of resources and beauty and gives you earthly advantages, one's ultimate citizenship is in heaven, and for that we can be very thankful.

The Sparkies learned about Paul's thankfulness for his heavenly citizenship in the midst of his suffering. Then they colored their own passport to show that they have citizenship with Christ.

Use the passport your child colored as a way to start up a conversation about heavenly citizenship. Use things in your child's life that he is going through (a bully on the playground, a hard test at school, things just not going the way he wants) to remind him that while things are real and hard, he should get ultimate joy from knowing that Jesus Christ loves him and has a better home waiting for him.

FamilyFollowUp

Missions

Today the Sparkies learned about missions and what a missionary does. In a skit, the apostle Paul made a guest appearance to talk about his experiences as a missionary from Acts 13. This week, read a chapter in Acts every day to your child, starting in Acts 13. Show them on the map they colored where Paul went as you read through the book. After seven days you will be in Acts 19. If you decide to continue reading a chapter a day, after nine more days you will have finished Acts!

Encourage your child to start telling their friends about Jesus even now. The earlier they start, the easier it will be later in life.

Family Follow Up

Christmas

Anna had to wait up to 105 years to be able to meet Jesus Christ. Talk with your child about how God uses waiting to make us thankful. Jesus is the best gift of all. And, even though He was the perfect gift, and a good gift, God made men, women and children — everyone — wait. Sometimes we don't understand why God makes us wait for good things, but we do know that He is love and He is in control. When He says, "wait" it is always for our best.

Family Follow Up

Easter

As Easter approaches, it is easy for kids to associate Easter with spring break or Easter eggs. Tonight they learned that the reality of Easter can be seen every day. A person brought back to life doesn't live as if he were dead.

Because Christ died to give us life, we can walk in that new life daily as new creatures. Read 2 Corinthians 5:17 with your child and talk about ways to live as a new creation.

