

13

VERY BIG MISTAKES PEOPLE MADE

and What God Did
about Them



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**“If we confess our sins to him,
he is faithful and just to forgive
us our sins and to cleanse
us from all wickedness.”**

1 John 1:9

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How to Use These Sessions

First, thanks. Thanks for caring about children and for helping them dig up 13 mistakes—big mistakes!—that people in the pages of the Bible made. You'll explore the mistakes, figure out what went wrong, and show kids how to avoid those mistakes themselves. Your kids might be surprised at all the ways people got themselves in trouble, and even more surprised at how God used those people for his purposes anyway.

Welcome to Easy

These sessions for elementary kids are carefully designed to make your life easy. They're light on supplies, quick to prepare, and long on fun. You'll find most supplies in the church's supply closet or kitchen or at home in your garage, pantry, or junk drawer—no need to spend time ordering materials online.

Because these sessions are created so beginning teachers or mature teenagers can lead them confidently, you won't need highly trained teachers. And the variety of options in each session will snag the attention—and hold it—of first-grade through six-grade children, including the boys!

Best of all, you'll see kids grow in their faith as they open their hearts to what God shares with them through these 13 sessions.

Welcome to Simple Learning

Preparation is easy too. Each week you'll focus on one key Bible truth, which children will explore and apply. You'll drive that point home through Bible exploration, fun discussion, giggle-worthy games, and "Oh, wow!" activities that engage kids in multiple ways through multiple learning styles.

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Welcome to Deep Bible Discovery

Each week, your children will actually *experience* a Bible story. They'll discover it, ponder it, talk about it, pray about it, and apply what they learn. If that's what you're looking for—for your children to *do* God's Word instead of just hear it—you're in exactly the right place. And here's a tip: supersize the learning by using a kid-friendly version of the Bible to make sure the stories are understood by children.

Welcome to Flexibility

We get it: sometimes you have to punt. A sermon goes long ... or short. Kids are quick to dive into a lesson or need some time to warm up to being together. Older kids might zip through an activity while their younger friends take longer.

Relax. We've got you covered.

You can use these sessions with kids in practically any setting: in Sunday school, children's church, evening programs, or while kids' parents are attending an adult class or small group. There's maximum flexibility because each session is written to last 45 minutes and then provides enough extras to fill a full hour. These sessions stretch to fit exactly what you need, when you need it. They're ...

- **multi-aged**—suitable for mixed ages of elementary children;
- **easily adapted**—sessions work for just a couple kids or a packed classroom;
- **relational**—children grow close to Jesus *and* one another
- **flexible**—brimming with options to fit varying time frames; and
- **fun**—even easily distracted kids can engage, learn, and grow!

So are you ready for some fun? Let's dive in!

Jonah's Big Mistake

The Point: We can't hide from God, and we don't need to.

Scripture Connect: Jonah 1:1–5, 15–17

Supplies for all Session 7 activities options: pencils, prepared poster, blindfold (a clean pillowcase or bandanna will do), plastic straws (1 per child), 2 cups, 12 dried beans, stopwatch, Bible, large bowl of ice water plus extra ice, paper towels, cloth towel

The Basics for Leaders

In life, one mistake often leads to another. Just ask Jonah.

He didn't obey God and that was big mistake number one.

But big mistake number two was just as bad: Jonah tried to run away from God to go to a place where God couldn't see him. Jonah found there was no such place. That was true in Jonah's time, and it's true now.

We may not jump on ships to sail away from what God wants us to do, but we sometimes draw lines, set limits. We tell God, "Yes, I will do this, but I won't do that." We may live one way at church and another way at work, school, or home.

Here's the truth: there's no running away from God. No matter where we go, God can see us, and he knows our hearts. And here's the rest of the truth: no matter where we go, God loves us. He calls us to know and love him. To return to him if we've wandered away like Jonah wandered away.

As you experience this session with your kids, reconsider whether you have been running *toward* God or *away from* him.

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OPENING ACTIVITY-OPTION 1

HOWZITGOIN'

Time: about 5 minutes, depending on attendance

Supplies: pencils, prepared poster

Before kids arrive, draw a line on a poster. Write a 1 on the left end of the line, a 10 on the right, and a 5 in the middle. As kids arrive, ask them to pencil in their initials on the line.

Say: If this past week was so awful you wish you'd slept through it, place your initials by the 1. If it was a great week you wish you could repeat, put your initials by the 10. Place your initials anywhere on the line that shows how you feel about this past week—except exactly on the 5. Because there's no such thing as a week that's exactly half good and half bad!

After kids have signed in, give them 30 seconds each to explain why they placed their initials where they did. Be sure to include your own initials and explain your placement on the line. Kids will begin to express themselves more over time, and hearing their stories will help you adapt this lesson to make it relevant to your kids' lives.

OPENING ACTIVITY-OPTION 2

HUMAN RADAR

Time: about 10 minutes

Supplies: blindfold (a clean pillowcase or bandanna will do)

Gather children to the center of the area, outside if possible. With all of them watching, number all four corners, clearly identifying which corner is one, two, three, and four. Select a volunteer to be the Human Radar.

Say: After I blindfold our Human Radar, the rest of you will have 10 seconds to go stand in one of the four corners. Move quietly, in stealth mode, because after 10 seconds the Human Radar from here in the center will try to sense where people are and will call out a number. If you're in that corner, you're cooked—you're out of the game and will need to come sit here in the center for the rest of the game.

Each time the Human Radar calls out a corner, the people who were caught there will come to the center. At the same time, the rest of you in

the other corners will have 10 seconds to change corners. Or not. It's up to you to move or stay. Your goal is to be the last person standing.

Blindfold the Human Radar and play until only one person is left standing or until three minutes pass. If that happens, declare all survivors the winners and have them join you and the rest of the kids in the center of the area.

As a group, discuss:

- **Those who survived—what tricks did you use to stay alive? Or was this all luck?**
- **Human Radar, how did you decide what number to call?**
- **How would this game have been different if we hadn't blindfolded the Human Radar?**

Say: **Sooner or later, none of you would be able to hide from our Human Radar. There's someone else you can't hide from either; we'll be talking about who that is today. And we'll be talking about why it's not a problem that we can't keep from being found!**

Big Mistakes Game

BEAN RESCUE

Time: about 10 minutes

Supplies: plastic straws (1 per child), 2 cups, 12 dried beans, stopwatch

Cautions: Only use beans large enough that they can't be sucked up into the straws. And don't let any child age three or younger play this game.

Divide the group into two groups of equal size. Odd number of children? Join in yourself to even out the teams.

Have kids sit on the floor in two lines, facing each other. Give all children a straw. At the end of each line, place a cup. Hand both children seated at the other end of each line six dried beans.

To the two children holding the beans say: **Beans aren't happy when they're out in the open—they could get eaten! They want to be safe in the cups at the other end of the lines. Your job is to rescue them by using your straw to suck a bean from your hand and then lean over and drop it in the hand of the person next to you—who'll do the same thing with the person next to him. You must lift the bean using the straw. Go as fast as you can until, at the end of your line, the last person drops the last bean into the cup. Ready?**

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Signal go, and then cheer on the teams. Time their progress. Play two rounds, seeing if each team can improve its time.

Gather up beans and straws and discuss together:

- **You were hurrying. Did that help or hurt your bean-rescue efforts? Why?**
- **Tell about a time you hurried while doing something and hurrying didn't help.**
- **Let's say you were hurrying to hide from someone while playing a game or hurrying to escape a tornado. If you needed to get someplace safe, where would that be?**

Say: Today we'll meet someone who hurried to get someplace safe—somewhere he could hide. The problem was, he wanted to hide from God! Let's find out what happened.

Big Mistakes Bible Story

COLD TOOTSIES FIELD TRIP

Time: about 15 minutes

Supplies: Bible, large bowl of ice water plus extra ice, paper towels, cloth towel

Note: This activity is best done outside or on a non-carpeted floor, since water might spill. If you're inside, place a towel under the bowl. Fill the bowl only two-thirds full to allow for water to be displaced by feet.

Ask kids to join you in forming a circle, seated on the floor. Have them remove their shoes and socks.

Say: We're going to hear about someone who ended up getting his feet wet, so we'll do the same ... but not quite yet.

Place the bowl of ice water in the center of the circle. Be sure ice is still visible and drop more ice into the water. You'll have every child's attention!

Read aloud Jonah 1:1–5.

Say: Jonah ran away because he didn't want to obey God. Big mistake. Have you ever tried to get out of obeying someone by hiding or by trying to not be noticed? For me ... (Briefly share about a time in your childhood when you tried to avoid doing something you were supposed to do, by hiding or trying to not be noticed.)

Then say: **Your turn! Tell about a time you tried to get out of something by hiding or by trying not be noticed. And tell how that worked out for you.** If the group is very large, you can save time by having kids share a story with a partner rather than going around the entire group.

Afterward say: **Thanks for sharing your stories. Let's talk more about this together:**

- **God threw a storm at Jonah's ship. Do you think God was angry, or could the storm have been for another reason? What do you think?**

After kids share their thoughts, thank them. Then give each child one paper towel and encourage them to, one at a time, scoot forward and dip one foot into the bowl. Expect wide eyes. Ask them to place their wet feet on their paper towels, but not to dry their feet.

Say: **The water in the sea was cold and dangerous. If the ship sank, even sailors who could swim would die from the cold. No wonder the sailors threw whatever they could overboard to stay afloat! And finally, this happened ...**

Read aloud Jonah 1:15–17.

This is a familiar event to many kids. Ask if they know how the story ends. If so, ask them to share with the group what happened. Be sure that these key points are brought out: Jonah was vomited up onto the beach and then went where God had told him to go in the first place.

Thank kids for sharing. Say: **Jonah discovered that he couldn't hide from God, and neither can we. But what do you think?**

- **Does the idea that God can see you no matter where you are make you feel good ... or not?**
- **Why do you think God cares what we do or where we go?**
- **If God knows we're doing something bad, why doesn't he stop us?**

Say: **It's okay that God knows what we do and say. God wants us to choose to obey him, although he still loves us even when we do wrong things because Jesus took our punishment. God wants us to choose to do what he asks. That's because he loves us, and God wants us to love him too.**

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We can't hide from God, but we don't need to hide from God! Let's thank him for loving us so much that he chooses to know us inside and out. Let's give ourselves to him so we can be like Jonah—that is, after Jonah landed on the beach!

Ask kids to dry their feet and pull their shoes and socks back on.

CLOSING PRAYER

RUN FOR IT PRAYER

Time: about 5 minutes

Supplies: none

Ask kids to stand. Say: **Before we pray, let's all see how fast and how far we can run ... without moving. When I give the signal, run in place as hard as you can for 30 seconds. Ready? Go!**

Count 30 seconds and then have kids stop.

Say: **All that running—and you went nowhere. It's sort of like that when we try to run away and hide from God. We can't go anyplace he won't see us, because he sees everything! But sometimes we still try to run away from what he tells us to do. Let's pray together and ask him to forgive us for those times we've run away. I'll pray something and then pause so you can talk with God. Please pray silently.**

Pray: **God, please forgive us for the times we try to run away from you. (pause) Thank you for inviting us to know you. (pause) We know we're the safest when we run toward you. Help us turn toward you with our whole hearts. (pause) We love you, God. We'll listen to your words in the Bible that tell us what to do. (pause) In Jesus's name, amen.**

EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY-OPTION 1

ITCH GLITCH

Time: about 10 minutes

Supplies: none

Say: **Here's a challenge for you: see if you can place your left hand where your right hand can't reach it.**

Allow kids up to 30 seconds to see what position they can find where that's true, and then give the solution: **your right elbow!** Ask:

- Where's someplace you go where nobody can get to you?
- Tell about a time you got lost and someone came to look for you. What happened and how did it turn out?
- Where's someplace you could go where God couldn't find you?

Say: Here's the truth: God loves us all, and he sent Jesus to help us know him better. When we do wrong things, those wrong things keep us away from God. But through Jesus we can be forgiven for wrong things we've done.

We can't hide from God and we don't need to. Jesus didn't come to punish us for doing wrong things; Jesus came to help us be friends with God forever!

EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY-OPTION 2

RUN AWAY ... SORTA

Time: about 10 minutes

Supplies: none

Note: This game is best played in an open area with boundaries—a yard or large open room. If you're meeting in a small area, have children play while seated on the floor. They'll scoot away rather than run away!

Ask children to spread out around the area. Explain that you'll choose two kids to be the Gatherers. Their job is to join hands and then chase other kids while keeping their hands joined. When they tag another child, that child will join the chain of Gatherers. Continue playing until all children have been tagged.

Then ask kids to sit in a circle and discuss:

- What helped keep you from being tagged?
- Was it more fun to run away or to chase others? Why?
- Name some scary things people might run away from.

Say: Jonah ran away from God so he wouldn't have to go someplace scary—a big city where the people were disobeying God and Jonah was supposed to them to stop! Sometimes we run away from God too. Maybe we don't want to obey him, or we're afraid he'll punish us. But God loves you and wants you to be his friend. We don't have to run away from God!

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EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY-OPTION 3

INQUIRING MINDS WANT TO KNOW

Time: about 5 minutes

Supplies: none

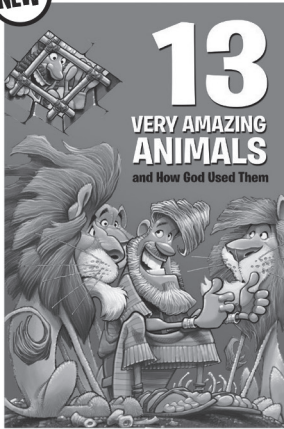
Gather kids in a circle. Ask: **Jonah didn't do what God said to do, so God smacked him with a storm, had him swallowed by a fish, and then watched the fish vomit Jonah up on a beach. Was God being a bully? What do you think and why?**

WE SERVE A BIG GOD. Show kids how big!

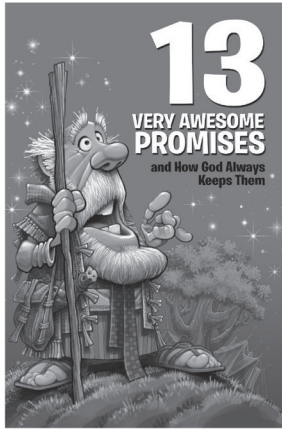
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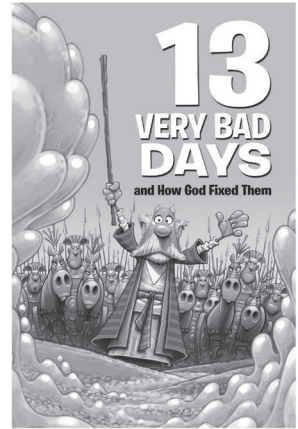
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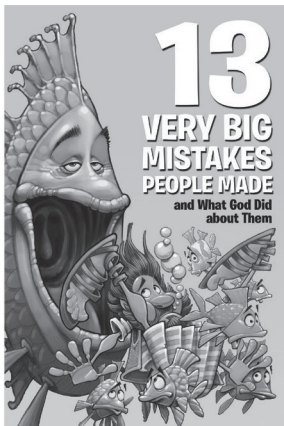
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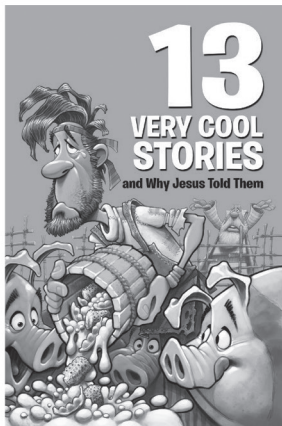
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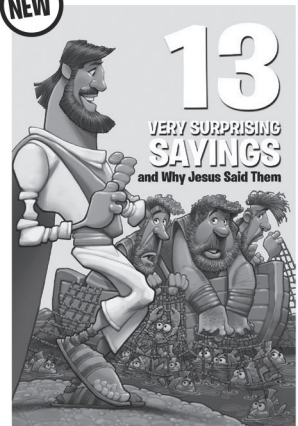


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