



small group solutions for kids

13 SESSIONS

13

VERY BIG MISTAKES

and What God Did About Them





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and What God Did About Them



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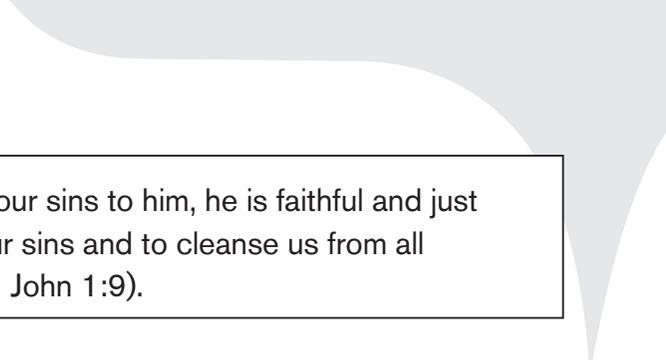
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“If we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness” (1 John 1:9).



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How to Use These Sessions

First—thanks. Thanks for caring about children and for helping your kids 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—but more surprised at how God used those people for his purposes anyway.

Welcome to Easy

These sessions make your life easy. They're light on supplies, quick to prepare, and long on fun. Because you don't have a lot of time each week to shop for supplies for crafts and object lessons, suggested supplies are common household items—things you probably already have in your kitchen, office, or garage. And because these sessions are created so beginning teachers or mature teenagers can be successful, no trained teachers are required! Because of the variety of options in each session, you can hold the attention of first graders through sixth graders. And even better, you'll help them discover truths about God!

Welcome to Simple Learning

Preparation is easy too. Each week you'll focus on one key point, one key Bible truth you want children to remember and apply in their daily lives. You'll drive home the point through Bible exploration, discussion, games, and activities that engage kids in multiple ways through multiple learning styles.

Welcome to Deep Bible Discovery

Each week your children will actually experience a Bible story in active, fun ways. Plus they'll discuss 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 the right place. You may wish to choose a kid-friendly Bible version to help your kids understand God's Word even more. And check out the extra resources on page 112 that will further help kids experience the Bible stories!

Welcome to Flexibility

Use these 45-minute sessions with kids wherever you find them. In Sunday school, during a second service, or while kids' parents are attending an adult class or small group. And if you're leading a house church, church plant, or using other building settings where Sunday school attendance is uncertain, these sessions are for you. They're . . .

- **Multi-aged**—suitable for mixed ages of elementary children
- **Easily adapted**—sessions work for 1 or 2 kids, 12 kids, or more
- **Relational**—children grow close to Jesus *and* each other
- **Stretchable**—brimming with options to fit varying time frames
- **Fun**—even easily distracted kids can engage, learn, and grow!

Use These Sessions During Adult Small Groups

Not every parent looks forward to small group as a way to get out of the house and away from the kids. For many parents, leaving kids behind is precisely what they want to avoid.

“My kids are in school all day,” says Sheila, a working mother of young children. “Why would I hire a babysitter so I can be away from them in the evening? For a church event that's supposed to make my family *stronger*? Besides, have you priced babysitters lately?”

13 Very Big Mistakes and What God Did About Them provides adult small groups with something fun, biblically solid, and purposeful for elementary-age kids to do while the adults are meeting. Some parents who do small groups instead of Sunday school may have children who don't attend Sunday school. This time would actually take the place of Sunday school for them. But even children who attend Sunday school will enjoy these active sessions. Here's how it works:

1. When the adult group begins, take children aside.

You'll need one adult or teenage leader to facilitate the Big Mistakes session. Ask adult small group members to take turns, or if you hire a babysitter anyway, consider paying a teenage volunteer leader from your children's ministry to lead the session. Have kids go to a different room than where adults meet. These sessions are fun—so they're sometimes loud!

2. Enjoy the session.

Relax! Each Big Mistakes session lasts about 45 minutes, with time-stretchers that easily fill another 15–30 minutes with on-target, Bible-point related activities. If the adult meeting goes long, you're ready!

3. Each week, the Howzitgoin'? activity guarantees that you'll connect with kids.

It only takes a few minutes, but having children check in at the beginning of the session gives you valuable insights into what's happening in the lives of your kids. (Younger children will begin to open up after a few meetings and grow as they learn to express themselves and their feelings.)

4. Return children to their parents for prayer.

Most adult small groups and classes end with prayer. Consider bringing children back to their parents before the prayer time begins so kids can see their parents pray, watch other Christian adults turn to God, and hear how God answers prayers. Check with the adult group before bringing kids to join in!

Notice that parents get their “grown-up time” to meet with peers, yet they can still bring their kids to small group or class. And while parents are engaged in age-appropriate activities and study, so are the kids.

Even better: while the adults are forming closer relationships with each other and Jesus, so are the children!

Use These Sessions in Your Children's Ministry

All the same benefits already mentioned still apply—Big Mistakes sessions are easy to prepare, easy to teach, and connect with children in ways that make learning stick—which makes these 13 sessions perfect for a second service, a Sunday school class, or any other setting where leaders look to help children grow in their faith!

So dive in—and help your kids discover that even when they make mistakes, God loves them.

Adam and Eve's Big Mistake

The Point: We honor God when we obey him.

Scripture Connect: Genesis 2:15-18, 22; 3:1-19

Supplies for all Session 1 activities options: pencils, prepared poster, paper, plastic or paper cups (1 per child), water, towels, Bible, clean socks (1 per child), markers (that won't bleed through) or colored pencils, 10-foot clothesline (or heavy twine)

The Basics for Leaders

It's easy to criticize Adam and Eve. They had just one rule to obey. Just one—to not eat the fruit from a specific tree—and yet they disobeyed. Big mistake.

But are we all that different?

Jesus said that, to please God, we should love him with all our hearts, souls, and minds—and to love our neighbors as ourselves (Matthew 22:35-40).

Two rules. Just two.

And how have we done with obeying those two rules?

As you prepare for this session with your kids, if you feel a tug of conviction about your own disobedience to God, pause. Let that conviction do what it needs to do: call you to change and repentance. And to freedom.

In what ways can you honor him today?

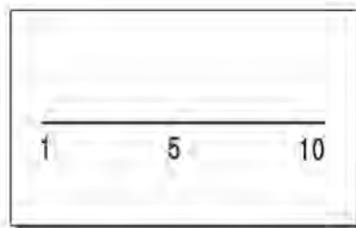
OPENING ACTIVITY—OPTION 1

HOWZITGOIN'

Time: about 5 minutes, depending on attendance

Supplies: pencils, prepared poster

Before kids arrive, draw a line on a poster. Place 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. That's 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

TV FAMILIES

Time: about 10 minutes

Supplies: none

Say: Think of a family you've seen on TV—any TV family will do—but don't tell which family you're thinking of! (pause) OK—now let's take turns, and we'll each pretend to be someone in the TV family we were thinking of. You can use words or actions, but you can't say the name of the family member or the family. I'll go first.

Act out the character you've chosen. Encourage kids to guess who you're impersonating. Then let kids take turns acting out the characters they've chosen.

Note: While *you* should choose a G-rated TV show, you might find that some of your kids watch shows you consider off limits. Avoid giving a lecture. Keep conversation going. As you dig deeper into the discussion, your kids

may discover for themselves that they could choose better shows.

Have children circle up and discuss:

- **How does the family you acted out compare to your real family? What's alike—and what's different?**
- **Compared to the kids in the TV family you chose, do you obey your parents more or less than those kids? Why?**
- **Why do you think it's important to obey parents . . . or isn't it?**
- **What helps you obey? What makes it difficult?**

Say: **Today we're talking about honoring (respecting) God in one special way: obeying him. We honor God when we obey him.**

Big Mistake Game

Water Pour

Time: 10 minutes or more, as desired

Supplies: plastic or paper cups (1 per child), water, towels, Bible

Note: Cups don't all have to be the same size, but each *pair* of kids must have the same size cups. This game is best played on a non-carpeted floor; either way, you'll need to place towels under kids' heads.

Ask children to pair up. Give each pair two cups: one empty and one $\frac{2}{3}$ full of water. Ask pairs to position themselves around the room so there's space between pairs.

Say: **Those of you holding cups of water, keep standing. Your partner will now lie down with his or her head near your feet.** Pause while kids do as you ask. Note: Make adjustments if girls are wearing skirts.

Those of you lying down, put a towel under your head. Now place your empty cup on your forehead and hold it steady. Those of you standing, when I give the signal, you'll hold your cup at the height of your waist and pour the water from your cup into your partner's cup—without splashing any water on your partner. Be kind—you will be trading places in a minute!

After children take turns pouring the water, collect cups and help everyone

dry off. Have kids circle up and discuss:

- **Which was harder: pouring the water or being the target? Why?**
- **When I told you what I wanted you to do, did you want to obey? Why or why not?**
- **Even if you were trying hard to obey, it was easy to fail. How is that like or unlike trying to obey God?**

Say: **Adam and Eve disobeyed God—and that was a big mistake. When we obey God, we honor him. That means we show him respect because he's so important. The good news is that even when we fail to obey God—that's called sin, by the way—God doesn't just throw us away.**

Read 1 John 1:9, 10.

But even though God is willing to forgive us, there are still consequences that come from not obeying God. Consequences are more bad things that might happen because of the one bad thing we did. There were consequences for Adam and Eve too. Let's find out more about that!

No Mistake BIBLE STORY

FAULT FINDERS

Time: about 15 minutes

Supplies: clean socks (1 per child), Bible

Note: If you're meeting in a home and plan to raid your host's sock drawer, call ahead. This isn't the time to discover that all the socks are in the dirty laundry hamper!

Ask kids to join you in sitting in a circle on the floor. Read aloud Genesis 2:15-18, 22; 3:1-19. Then give each child a sock and ask the child to roll it up.

Say: **Let's play a game I call Fault Finder. A fault is a mistake or a failure. I'll read again the Bible's account of Adam and Eve disobeying God. When you hear anything that sounds like someone isn't obeying God (is at fault), throw your sock into the center of the circle as quickly as you can. Speed counts!**

Read Genesis 2:15-18, 22; 3:1-19. This time you'll pause often to keep kids on high alert as they decide whether to toss socks. And after each sock tossing, pause to congratulate the fastest Fault Finder. As kids are retrieving their socks each time, ask them about the fault—to explain why they thought an action was being disobedient. Also ask who wasn't being obeyed and what consequences might happen.

After you've finished reading, collect all the socks and, as a group, discuss:

- **Why do you think Eve disobeyed God's instructions?**
- **Why do you think Adam disobeyed God's instructions?**
- **When do you find it hard to obey God—or even to obey somebody else? Why do you think obeying is hard?**

Thank kids for sharing. Then say: **In a minute I'll ask you to tell about a time you disobeyed God by disobeying your parents. But to be fair, I'll go first.**

Tell about a time you disobeyed God when you disobeyed your parents. Explain why you disobeyed. Keep the story lighthearted but true—you'll build rapport with your kids and also give them permission to tell their stories.

Say: **OK, your turn. Tell about a time you disobeyed God when you disobeyed your parents. Tell what you did and why you disobeyed.**

Allow time for several children to tell their stories. Then say: **Thanks for sharing! It's not always easy to obey, is it? But when we obey our parents, we honor them. And we honor God when we obey him too.**

CLOSING PRAYER

STAND-UP PRAYER

Time: about 5 minutes

Supplies: none

Say: **If the president of our country walked into the room, we'd stand up. That's a sign of respect given to people we want to honor, so let's stand in respect to God as we pray.** Have everyone stand. Continue: **I'll start our prayer time and wrap up at the end. In between I'll leave time for us all to tell God we're sorry about the times we**

haven't obeyed him. You don't have to say anything out loud—God is with you and knows what you're thinking.

Pray: **Dear God, you are so good to us. Please forgive me for the times I've known what you wanted me to do—and I didn't do it. And forgive me for those times I knew what you *didn't* want me to do—and I did it anyway. Please hear us all as we silently tell you about the times we didn't obey you.**

Pause for 45 to 60 seconds. Then continue with: **Thank you for hearing us, God. Please forgive us when we make a big mistake and disobey you. We want to honor you by obeying you. In Jesus' name, amen.**

EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY—OPTION 1

WRAPPING PAPER

Time: about 10 minutes

Supplies: paper, markers (that won't bleed through) or colored pencils

Give each child a sheet of paper and a marker or colored pencil. Explain that children will have just a few minutes to create wrapping paper in which they'll place a present—for God.

Ask kids to create a design on their papers that they think will honor God. Allow several minutes for children to work. As they work, ask them to discuss:

- **What sort of design do you think will show honor for God?**
- **If you could wrap up anything you wanted to give God as a gift, what would you give? Why?**

When kids have finished, have them turn over their sheets and write their own names on the other side. Ask them to fold their papers over so their names are on the inside and their designs are on the outside.

Say: **That's the present God wants most: you. Your heart. Your love. All of you. And part of giving yourself to God is obeying him.**

Have kids discuss:

- **What's one way you'll obey—and honor—God this coming week?**

Make a mental note of what each child says—and ask how it went when you see your kids next time!

EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY—OPTION 2

SLIPPERY SNAKE

Time: about 10 minutes

Supplies: 10-foot clothesline (or heavy twine)

Note: You don't have to cut the clothesline! Free up the 10-foot portion you need and leave the rest wrapped up.

Place the clothesline on the floor. Position one child to hold each end so they can each move their ends back and forth to make the clothesline look like a wiggling snake. Gather the rest of the kids on one side of the snake. Their goal: to get over the moving snake to the other side of the room.

Say: **It would have been good for Eve to stay away from the serpent in the garden. Let's see how well you can avoid this serpent. Don't let it touch you!**

Play several times and then have kids discuss:

- ***The serpent in the garden tempted Eve. That means it gave her reasons to disobey God. What tempts you to disobey God?***
- ***What can you do to stay away from temptation?***

EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY—OPTION 3

INQUIRING MINDS WANT TO KNOW

Time: about 5 minutes

Supplies: none

Gather kids in a circle. Ask: ***If God wants us to honor him, why doesn't he just make us obey?***

Allow kids time to process and discuss this—don't jump in with an answer. Something to suggest, if your kids don't, is that if God forced us to know or obey him, that wouldn't be a friendship. We would be like slaves or robots. God loves us enough to let us choose to obey him!

THE ADULTS ARE HERE FOR SMALL GROUP. BUT WHAT DO WE DO WITH THE KIDS?

Relax—we've got you covered. Just add one adult or teenage leader to these easy-to-lead sessions to keep kids engaged, entertained, and growing in their faith! While parents are meeting, gather elementary-age kids together and dive in. Each session is

- **Flexible**—adaptable for 2 to 12 children
- **Multi-aged**—because you're never sure who'll show up
- **Low-prep**—using supplies from your kitchen, office, or garage
- **45 minutes of fun**—with time-stretchers to fill an hour



small group solutions for kids series is perfect for

Adult small groups

House church

Sunday school

Evening programs in smaller churches

Help your kids explore 13 very big mistakes and discover how to avoid making those same mistakes themselves! Your kids will see how Adam & Eve, Jonah, King Saul, the rich young man, and other Bible characters stepped away from God and straight into big trouble. Along the way, your kids will grow closer to the God who loves them—no matter what!

Also available:

13 Very Awesome Promises and How God Always Keeps Them

13 Very Bad Days and How God Fixed Them

13 Very Cool Stories and Why Jesus Told Them

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