

Today's Suggested Schedule—January 2024, Week 3

Today's Bible Story: Ants Marching (Ant and Sluggard) • *Proverbs 6:6-8*

Today's Bottom Line: Work hard.

Monthly Memory Verse: “One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. Luke 16:10 (ESV)

Monthly Virtue: Responsibility—Showing you can be trusted with what is expected of you

Basic Truth: I need to make the wise choice.

Before kids arrive, pray that you would have an amazing time connecting with your kids and helping them process today's lesson about working hard. Ask God for specific insight into their hearts to know how to help them see the importance of working hard no matter what.

Check out our Pinterest page here <https://bit.ly/447HSZi> for a visual on some of the activities.

LARGE GROUP (35 minutes)

STORY: Communicating God's Truth in Engaging Ways

WORSHIP: Inviting People to Respond to God

- Hang Time
- Welcome/Opener
- Worship
- Bible Story
- Bottom Line
- Prayer
- Closer

SMALL GROUP (25 minutes)

GROUPS: Creating a Safe Place to Connect

- Story Exploration
- Bible Story Review: Ant-venture
- Application Activity: Work Hard
- Memory Verse Activity: Wise Choice
- Prayer Activity: Pray and Dismiss

HOME: Prompting Action Beyond the Experience

- Parent Cue Card (Print or Email)
- Devotionals for Kids
- Parent Cue App

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Use this if kids have questions about following Jesus.

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word gospel. Clarify that the word gospel means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.

God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.

We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)

God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.

Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.

We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

If a child has expressed interest in following Jesus, please let the parents know so they can be a part of the conversation that their child is having about faith.

What Now?

If you put your trust in Jesus Christ and believe in Him as the One who forgives your sins and makes it possible for you to know God, we are so proud of you! There is no greater single decision that you could make.

We believe that baptism is an important next step for you. Baptism is your way of telling your friends and family, “Hey, I'm a follower of Jesus!” If you're interested in learning more or participating in baptism, talk to a staff member about the next steps you should take.

GROUPS: Creating a Safe Place to Connect (25 minutes)

Story Exploration

This passage uses the example of an ant to emphasize the importance of being diligent and responsible, even without someone supervising or directing. It encourages individuals to learn from the ant's work ethic and foresight in preparing for the future.

Discuss how Jesus emphasized values like responsibility and hard work. In various parables and teachings, Jesus highlighted the significance of using one's talents wisely and being faithful stewards of the resources given to them. This aligns with the idea presented in Proverbs 6:6-8, encouraging individuals to take initiative and be responsible for their actions.

Read the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30) and/or Parable of the Faithful Servant (Matthew 24:45-51) . Discuss how it relates to Proverbs 6:6-8.

Here are some themes of Proverbs 6:6-8

- **Initiative and Responsibility:**
The ant takes initiative and is responsible for its own well-being. Similarly, following Jesus involves taking responsibility for one's spiritual journey and living a life aligned with Christ. It's about actively seeking a relationship with God and making choices that reflect you follow Jesus. (Galatians 6:5; Colossians 3:23-24; 1 Corinthians 10:31)
- **Self-Motivation and Discipline:**
The ant is self-motivated to gather food and store provisions. In following Jesus, there's an emphasis on self-discipline and a motivated pursuit of spiritual growth. Discipleship involves personal commitment and discipline to follow the teachings of Jesus without being told. What are some ways you can do this? (2 Timothy 1:7)
- **Preparation for the Future:**
Both Proverbs 6:6-8 and Jesus' teachings emphasize preparation for the future. The ant stores provisions in summer, while Jesus often spoke about being prepared for the coming of the kingdom of God. Following Jesus involves living with an eternal perspective and preparing for the future in both a spiritual and practical sense. What does it mean to have an eternal perspective? (Colossians 3:2; Matthew 6:19-21)
- **Stewardship:**
Proverbs 6:6-8 indirectly touches on stewardship—managing resources wisely. Following Jesus often involves recognizing that all aspects of life, including time, talents, and possessions, are gifts from God. Stewardship is about using these gifts responsibly and for glorifying God, aligning with Jesus' teachings on loving and serving others.
- **Work Ethic and Diligence:**
The ant's diligent work ethic resonates with the principles of hard work and diligence encouraged in the Bible. Following Jesus involves applying these principles in various aspects of life, including personal growth, relationships, and service to others. How can this help you follow Jesus better?

*1. Ant-venture

[Talk about God | Bible Story Review]

Made to Imagine: an activity that promotes empathy and facilitates biblical application through role-play and reenactment

What You Need: “We’re Going on a Food Hunt” Activity Page

What You Do:

- Direct the kids to stand in a circle with you.
- Invite them to join you in pretending to be ants for this activity.
- Instruct the kids stay in their spot and follow your motions and repeat after you as described on the “We’re Going on a Food Hunt” Activity Page.
 - The ant-venture is based on “We’re Going on a Bear Hunt.”

What You Say:

“That was fun! You did a great job, little ants! You found and gathered food for your colony. In today’s story, we learned that Solomon knew ants could teach us important things. He wrote, ‘*You people who don’t want to work, think about the ant! Consider its ways and be wise! It has no commander. It has no leader or ruler. But it stores up its food in the summer. It gathers its food at harvest time.*’ (Proverbs 6:6-8, NIV)

“Ants are SO amazing! No one has to tell them to **[Bottom Line] work hard**. They know what to do, and they do it! Every day, we can be like ants. When we know what we need to do, we can take responsibility and DO IT!

[Make It Personal] (Tell kids about a time you knew what needed to be done and you did it. You may have picked up trash at work, helped someone carry a heavy load, taken food to a sick friend, or helped an elderly neighbor with a task.)

“How can you **[Bottom Line] work hard** and do what YOU need to do? (Pause for responses—pick up my toys, make my bed, brush my teeth, do my homework, etc.) Great ideas! How can your hard work to help others? (Invite responses—help clean up at home, feed my pet, help my teacher in the classroom, etc.) You guys really know how to be responsible and **[Bottom Line] work hard**! And you know what? Hard work isn’t something to be upset about. God created us to work—it’s GOOD for us! So remember, little ants, **[Bottom Line] work hard**!”

2. Work Hard

[Live for God | Application Activity]

Made to Connect: an activity that invites kids to share with others and build on their understanding

What You Need: “Ways to Work” and “Ant!” Activity Pages, dice

What You Do:

- Help kids get into groups of two or three.
- Show kids each card from the “Ways to Work” Activity Page.
- As you show each card, ask, “What is happening in this picture?” then “What do the pictures have in common?” (*They’re all ways we can **[Bottom Line]** work hard.*)
- Say, “Hard work isn’t something to be upset about. God created us to work!”
- For each team, place the “Ways to Work” cards in a pile facedown.
- For each team, set out the “Ant!” Activity Page puzzle pieces with the picture side down so the number side is face up. (Arrange them so kids can see each number.)
- Give each team a die.
- Instruct the kids to take turns drawing a card from the “Ways to Work” Activity Page, pantomiming the action, rolling the die, and collecting the matching puzzle piece from the “Ant!” Activity Page for their team.
- Explain to the kids that if they roll #1, they pick up the puzzle piece labeled “1,” etc.
 - If a kid rolls a number that has already been rolled, their turn is up.
 - Direct them to hand the die to the next kid to roll.
- When a team has all its pieces, direct the team to work together to put them in order, picture side up.
 - If a team runs out of cards from the “Ways to Work” Activity Page, instruct the kids to shuffle the cards and continue playing.
 - This time have their teammates guess the action they are acting out before rolling the die.
- Continue until every team finishes.

What You Say:

“Just like ants, you can take responsibility and **[Bottom Line]** work hard. You can feed your pet, make your bed, do your homework, clean, take out the trash, or put away your things. How else can you work hard? (*Invite responses—do my chores, pick up at school, etc.*) Great ideas!

[Make It Personal] (*Tell kids about a time you were a kid and did something that needed doing, whether it was putting dirty dishes in the sink, picking up toys, or doing a chore.*)

“And you know what? Jesus worked hard, too. He taught people, He healed people, and He served people. Even more, Jesus knew what He had to do for us on the cross, and He did it. He loves us SO much that He took responsibility for our sins and died on the cross so we can live FOREVER with God. WOW!

“So when you see something that needs doing, make the wise choice—take responsibility and do it. Your hard work is a way to love others and honor God!”

3. Wise Choice

[Hear from God | Memory Verse Activity]

Made to Explore: an activity that extends learning through hands on experimentation and discovery

What You Need: “Memory Verse Cards” Activity Page, tablecloth, straws, and Bible marked at Luke 16:10

What You Do:

- Give a kid the Bible.
- Invite that kid to open the Bible where marked.
- Read the verse aloud, encouraging kids to either say it with you or repeat after you.
- Help kids get into groups of three or four.
- Say, “Each group that we just made is an ant colony, and each of you is a worker ant!”
- Lead each “colony” to line up near one corner or edge of your environment.
- Spread the tablecloth in the center of your space.
- Scatter the cards from the “Memory Verse Cards” Activity Page on top of the tablecloth.
 - Scatter one color of cards for each colony.
- Assign each colony a color.
- Give each ant (kid) a straw.
- To start the relay, direct the first worker ant from each colony to ant-crawl to the tablecloth, put their straw close to one of their group’s cards, suck on the straw to pick up the card, and ant-crawl back to their colony—while keeping suction on the straw to carry the card.
 - If an ant drops a card, instruct them to pick it up with the straw.
- When a colony collects all its cards, direct the ants to work together to put them in order.
 - Be sure to point out the numbers on the cards to help the kids put the verse in order.
- After every colony finishes, read the verse aloud for the kids.

What You Say:

“You guys worked so hard in that relay, just like ants! Great job!

“God made you to do good things. One of those good things is doing what’s expected of you. When you make the wise choice and do what you know you need to do, you show God—and others—that you can be trusted. And that’s a GREAT thing! Showing responsibility with what God has given you now will help you continue to be responsible as you grow. So remember to **[Bottom Line] work hard!**”

4. Pray and Dismiss

[Pray to God | Prayer Activity]

Made to Reflect: an activity that creates space for personal understanding and application

What You Say:

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Are there any commands in this story to obey? How are they for God's glory and my good?
- Are there any promises in this story to remember?
- How do they help me trust and love God?

What You Need: No supplies needed.

What You Do:

- Instruct the kids to gather around you.
- Use the conversation and activity below as a guide to lead kids in prayer.

What You Say:

"Solomon told us to pay attention to the ant. Ants show us how to **[Bottom Line] work hard**. They also teach us WHEN to **[Bottom Line] work hard**. In the summer and fall, there's lots of food! Ants gather plenty to eat for themselves and take it back to the nest. Then in the winter, the ants can cozy up and rest, staying warm together safely below ground.

"That's a great picture for us! When it's time to work, **[Bottom Line] work hard**. And when it's time to rest, rest well. God designed us for both rest and work. They go together! So, little ants, you've worked hard today. Now it's time to rest. *(Instruct the kids to curl up on the floor and rest as you pray over them.)*

"Dear God, thank You so much for ants and the amazing way You made them to **[Bottom Line] work hard**. They do everything that needs doing—without being told. Help us be like ants and do what's expected of us. Help us **[Bottom Line] work hard** and honor You in everything we do. We love You SO MUCH, and we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen."

As adults arrive to pick up, encourage kids to share today's Bottom Line. **[Bottom Line] work hard.**

GETTING READY

Here's everything you need to know to get ready for this week.

GROUPS: Creating a Safe Place to Connect (25 minutes)

Create a safe place to connect and learn how the Bible story applies to real life experiences, through interactive activities and discussion questions.

(Choose as many of these activities as you like.)

**If you don't have time to do all these activities, be sure to do activity #1.*

Story Exploration (No supplies)

***1. Ant-venture**

[Talk about God | Bible Story Review]

Made to Imagine: an activity that promotes empathy and facilitates biblical application through role-play and reenactment

What You Need:

- Print "We're Going on a Food Hunt" Activity Page on paper, one for each Small Group
 - NOTE: If needed, familiarize yourself with the general chant pattern from, "We're Going on a Bear Hunt" before the activity: <https://bit.ly/3ZcLLLj>

2. Work Hard

[Live for God | Application Activity]

Made to Connect: an activity that invites kids to share with others and build on their understanding

What You Need:

- Print "Ways to Work" Activity Page on cardstock and cut apart, one set for every two to three kids
- Print "Ant!" Activity Page double-sided on cardstock and cut apart, one set for every two to three kids
- Dice, one for every two to three kids

3. Wise Choice

[Hear from God | Memory Verse Activity]

Made to Explore: an activity that extends learning through hands on experimentation and discovery

What You Need:

- Print "Memory Verse Cards" Activity Page on different-colored paper, one color set for every three to four kids
- Bible marked at Luke 16:10
- Vinyl tablecloth (one with a picnic pattern is ideal!), one for each Small Group
- Straight straws, one for each kid

4. Pray and Dismiss

[Pray to God | Prayer Activity]

Made to Reflect: an activity that creates space for personal understanding and application

What You Need:

- No supplies needed.

HOME: Prompting Action Beyond the Experience

- Print on cardstock or email this week's devotionals and Parent Cue cards.
- Tell parents about our additional family resources: **Parent Cue app**