

## Today's Suggested Schedule—January 2024, Week 4

**Today's Bible Story:** Say What You Need to Say (Use Words Wisely) • *Ephesians 4:29*

**Today's Bottom Line:** Use your words wisely.

**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, take a few moments to pray for them. Pray for those who might visit your group for the first time. Thank God for the meaningful conversations you've had all month and for the ones you will continue to have as you talk about using words wisely. Pray that your students will be willing to be real about the words they use and that they would understand the impact that they can have, both positive and negative, with their words. Pray that God will give you the right words to say so that you can be an encouragement for your kids today.*

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: Build Up
- Application Activity: Wise Words
- Memory Verse Activity: Bible Ball
- 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**

In Psalm 24:1, David wrote, “The earth belongs to the Lord. And so does everything in it.” God is the author of creation, and God has entrusted us to care for and cultivate the world we see around us. We do that by taking responsibility. From work we need to accomplish, to people we meet, to the words we use, life is filled with moments where we can decide to reflect God’s character, take responsibility, and use what we have wisely. When we follow through and do what needs to be done, we can point others to Jesus, the One who took the ultimate responsibility for us and made it possible for us to be with God forever.

Following Jesus involves living a life that aligns with His teachings and example. When we look at Ephesians 4:29, it emphasizes the importance of cultivating a Christ-like character in our speech.

- **Love and Compassion:** Jesus demonstrated love and compassion in His interactions. Following His example means expressing our thoughts and opinions with genuine care for others, avoiding hurtful or negative speech.
- **Building Up Others:** Jesus sought to build up and encourage people. Following Him involves using our words to inspire, encourage, and support those around us, rather than tearing them down.
- **Wisdom and Discernment:** Jesus spoke with wisdom and discernment. Following in His footsteps means exercising discernment in our speech, choosing words that are not only truthful but also appropriate for the situation and beneficial for the listener.
- **Reflecting Christ's Character:** Following Jesus is about reflecting His character in all aspects of our lives, including our speech. Ephesians 4:29 calls us to speak in a way that shows others that we actually spend time with Jesus and are becoming more like Him.

Verses to look up and discuss about your speech: Proverbs 18:21, James 3:5-6, Proverbs 21:23, Proverbs 15:1, James 1:19

## 1. Build Up

### [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:** “Helpful or Hurtful” Activity Page and building materials

#### What You Do:

- Help kids get into groups of two to three.
- Give each group a set of building materials.
- Instruct each group to build a foundation for their tower using three blocks, cups, or other building materials.
- Shuffle the cards from the “Helpful or Hurtful” Activity Page and stack them in a deck.
- Choose one group to go first by seeing which kid has the closest birthday.
- Instruct that team to draw a “Helpful or Hurtful” card from the deck and give it to you.
- Read the card out loud.
- Ask the group who drew the card, “Are those words HELPFUL or HURTFUL?”
  - If the words are HELPFUL, direct the kids to add the appropriate number of items to “build up” their tower.
  - If the words are HURTFUL, instruct the kids to remove the appropriate number of items to “tear down” their tower.
- If a team draws a Wild Card, direct the kids on that team to come up with their own HELPFUL words.
- Continue until every group uses all of their building materials and completes their tower.
  - If you run out of cards before kids finish, shuffle the cards and continue play.
  - At the end of the game, set the HELPFUL cards aside for use in the “What You Say” section below.

#### What You Say:

“Your words have SO MUCH power. Your words can HELP or your words can HURT. We can ask God to help us think about what we say so we can choose our words wisely. Paul said, ‘*Say only what will help to build others up and meet their needs. Then what you say will help those who listen.*’ (Ephesians 4:29b, NIV) What does it mean to ‘build others up’? (Invite responses—to say things that make them feel good, to say kind things, etc.)

**[Make It Personal]** (Tell kids about a time when the words you said built someone up. It may have been a word of encouragement for someone who was sad, a card you sent to congratulate someone, a time you chose not to complain, or a time you chose to be thankful.)

“Which helpful words will you say this week? (Show kids the HELPFUL cards, guiding each kid to pick one helpful thing they will say.) Good choices! So, remember to **[Bottom Line]** use your words wisely.”

## \*2. Wise Words

### [Live for God | Application Activity]

*Made to Create: an activity that explores spiritual ideas through the process of drawing, building, and designing*

**What You Need:** “Speech Bubble” Activity Page and markers or crayons

#### **What You Do:**

- Challenge kids to brainstorm kind and helpful words they can say to others.
- If kids are stuck for ideas, ask questions like: What’s something kind you can say to . . .
  - Your brother or sister?
  - Your grandma or grandpa?
  - Someone who’s sad?
  - A friend who needs help?
  - Someone who helps you?
- Give each kid a “Speech Bubble” Activity Page.
- Set out the markers or crayons.
- Instruct the kids to either write kind words they will say to others in their speech bubble or draw a time they will choose to say kind words in the speech bubble.
  - It’s okay for kids to use inventive spelling. The fact that your emergent spellers are using critical thinking and taking risks is a valuable part of their learning!
- **[Make It Personal] (Write or draw your own helpful words, too.)**
- When kids finish, encourage—but don’t force—they to talk about what they wrote or drew.  
**[Make It Personal] (Share your own idea, too.)**

#### **What You Say:**

“Paul wanted to remind the Ephesians what God had done for them. He wanted to remind them that as followers of Jesus, they should be kind to others. He said, ‘Say only what will help to build others up and meet their needs. Then what you say will help those who listen.’ (*Ephesians 4:29, NIRV*)

“Why is it important to say words that are helpful and kind? (*Invite responses—it shows other people that we love them, it helps other people feel good, it shows others we’re following Jesus, etc.*) Good ideas! When you **[Bottom Line] use your words wisely**, you also show people who God is and what God is like.

“Since it’s important to **[Bottom Line] use your words wisely**, what can you do to help yourself say helpful words instead of hurtful words? (*Invite responses—ask God to help me, stop and think before I speak, etc.*) Good thinking! You can **[Bottom Line] use your words wisely!**”

### 3. Bible Ball

#### [Hear from God | Memory Verse Activity]

*Made to Move: an activity that increases the oxygen in the brain and taps into the energy in the body*

**What You Need:** Bibles and a ball

#### **What You Do:**

- Give each kid a Bible.
- Together, instruct the kids look up and “read” the verse using the Bible navigation tips below.

***Finding verses with kindergartners:*** Guide kids to open the Bibles to the marked page. Point to “Luke” at the top of the page as you say, “Luke.” Then guide kids to find the big number 16 on the page. Explain that this is the chapter number. Finally, guide them to look under the big 16 for the little 10. This is the verse number. Tell them to leave their finger on the verse as you read the verse aloud. Then lead everyone to say the verse together.

***Finding verses with 1<sup>st</sup> graders:*** Guide kids to open their Bibles to the front and find the table of contents. Hold up a Bible opened to the table of contents to show the kids what the page looks like. When they find the table of contents, lead them to find “Luke” in the list under “New Testament.” You can help by telling them that Luke starts with the letters L-U. When the kids find Luke, lead them to look at the page number beside the word. Explain that the number tells them on what page they can find Luke. Help the kids find the page. When they find Luke, explain that the big numbers on the page are the chapter numbers. Help them find chapter 16. Explain that the small numbers are verse numbers. Help them find verse 10 in chapter 16. Tell them to leave their finger on the verse as you read the verse aloud. Then lead everyone to say the verse together.

- Guide kids to sit in a circle.
- Give one kid the ball.
- Help kids say the verse one word at a time as they pass the ball around the circle.
  - Once kids get the hang of the game—and the verse—add interest by guiding them to speak in different pet voices: cat, dog, mouse, parrot, etc.

#### **What You Say:**

“When you **[Bottom Line] use your words wisely**, you show God that you can be trusted with your words. So how can you **[Bottom Line] use your words wisely**? (*Invite responses—say things that make people feel good, say kind things, tell the truth, etc.*) Yes! You can encourage someone and say, ‘I’m sorry you’re sad. It’ll be okay.’ You can celebrate someone and say, ‘That was amazing! You worked hard!’ Or you can show gratitude and say, ‘Thank you for helping me.’ So, remember to **[Bottom Line] use your words wisely.**”

## 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:** Finished speech bubbles from "Wise Words" activity

#### What You Do:

- Use the conversation below as a guide to lead kids in prayer and keep the kids' speech bubbles near you.

#### What You Say:

"Sometimes, it can be hard to say kind and helpful words. We can be quick to yell, complain, or say mean things. That's why we need Jesus. When we follow Jesus, God gives us the Holy Spirit to help us. Let's pray and ask God to help us **[Bottom Line] use your words wisely.**

"Dear God, thank You so much that all Your words are trustworthy and true. Your words are GOOD! Please help us show others what You're like by saying kind and helpful words. Help us say words like *(restate what kids wrote on their speech bubbles in the "Wise Words" activity)*. When we make mistakes with our words, please help us be quick to say, 'I'm sorry.' Thank You for loving us so much, God. We love You, too. Amen."

As adults arrive to pick up, encourage kids to show them their "Speech Bubble" and tell the kind words they can say this week.

## 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 #2.*

### **Story Exploration – no supplies**

#### **1. Build Up**

**[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 “Helpful or Hurtful” Activity Page on cardstock and cut apart, one set for each Small Group
- Blocks, cups, DUPLO® blocks, or similar items kids can build with—about 15 for every two to three kids

#### **\*2. Wise Words**

**[Live for God | Application Activity]**

*Made to Create: an activity that explores spiritual ideas through the process of drawing, building, and designing*

**What You Need:**

- Print “Speech Bubble” Activity Page on paper, one for each kid
- Markers or crayons

#### **3. Bible Ball**

**[Hear from God | Memory Verse Activity]**

*Made to Move: an activity that increases the oxygen in the brain and taps into the energy in the body*

**What You Need:**

- Bibles (marked at Luke 16:10 for kindergarteners)
- Medium to large ball, one for each Small Group

#### **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:**

- Finished speech bubbles from “Wise Words” activity

### **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**