

## Today's Suggested Schedule—January 2024, Week 3

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

**Today's Key Question:** When have you had to work hard?

**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 (Communicator Script)

Key Question

Prayer

### **SMALL GROUP (25 minutes)**

**GROUPS:** Creating a Safe Place to Connect

Story Exploration

Application Activity: Take a Snapshot

Bible Story Review: Bible Story Extension and Discussion Questions

Memory Verse Activity: Verses to Take with You

Prayer Activity: Make It Personal with Prayer

**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 also 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. Take a Snapshot

### [Live for God | Application Activity]

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

**What You Need:** Oven mitts, individually wrapped pieces of candy, bowl, stopwatch (or phone timer);

*Optional: individually wrapped sticky hands or similar prizes for a non-food version*

\*NOTE: Beware of food allergies

### What You Do:

- Fill a bowl with pieces of individually wrapped candy.
- Place the bowl where everyone can see it.
- Ask a volunteer to sit or stand by the bowl of candy.
- Hand the volunteer the two oven mitts.
- Instruct the volunteer to put the oven mitts on.
- Recruit a timekeeper.
- Give the timekeeper the stopwatch or your phone to use the timer app.
- Direct the kid with the oven mitts to try to successfully unwrap as many pieces of candy as they can in 60 seconds while keeping the oven mitts on their hands.
- Instruct the timekeeper to start the clock, say, “Go!” and announce when the 60 seconds is up.
- Allow several kids to attempt this candy unwrapping challenge—keeping track of how many pieces kids were able to unwrap.
- Choose a different kid to unwrap candies *without* oven mitts.
- Give several kids a turn to try to unwrap the candies *without* oven mitts.
- Allow the kids to eat the candy together.
- While the kids are eating, ask:
  - Was it easier to unwrap the candy with or without the oven mitts on?
  - Why did the oven mitts make unwrapping the candy more challenging?
  - What are some examples of things that can sometimes prevent you from working hard or doing your best job?
  - Do the oven mitts serve a purpose otherwise?
- Say: “Just like the oven mitts held us back from unwrapping more candy, we all have distractions or hold ups that can sometimes prevent us from working hard. Also, just because something may prevent us from working hard, doesn’t mean it’s always bad. The oven mitt is super useful when you need to get something out of the oven but not when you’re unwrapping candy.”
- Ask: “How can you be more responsible in recognizing when something in your life is either useful or not helpful when you’re trying to get something done?”

## 2. Bible Story Extension

### [Talk about God | Bible Story Review]

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

**What You Need:** White board, dry-erase marker, dry eraser, prepared cards from the “Ant Farm Art” Activity Page

#### What You Do:

- Ask kids to raise their hands if anyone has ever had pet ants that live in an ant farm.
  - If anyone raises their hand, choose that kid to be the artist for this activity.
  - If no one raises their hand, choose a kid to be the artist.
- Ask the artist to stand or sit by the white board.
- Give the artist the marker and eraser.
- Set out the artist cards from the “Ant Farm Art” Activity Page in one pile.
- Set out the narrator cards from the “Ant Farm Art” Activity Page in a separate pile.
- Choose another kid to be your narrator.
- Draw the first card from the artist pile, then draw one from the narrator pile.
- Show the artist their card and the narrator their card.
- Instruct the kids to follow the directions they were given on their cards—the artist to draw and the narrator to read out loud.
- Give them both their second cards when the artist has finished drawing.
- Continue until all five cards have been read and drawn.
- Say to the artist and the narrator: “You guys both did a fantastic job carrying out the tasks you were asked to perform!”
- Say: “It took the teamwork effort of the artist and the narrator to use their individual skills for the purpose of retelling this story from the Bible. God gives us all different gifts that we can use in order to work hard. And like the ant, we shouldn’t just wait around for others to tell us what to do. We should take the initiative to do what’s expected of us, without being asked.”
- Ask:
  - How can you use your skills and talents to work hard at something?
  - How can your skills and talents point people to Jesus?
  - What are some ways you can help yourself remember to do things without being asked?
  - How do you like to rest?
- **[Make It Personal] (Share a story about a time when you worked together with others in order to get something done. Include how you may have rested after getting the job done.)**

### 3. Discussion Questions

#### [Talk about God | Bible Story Review]

*Made to Connect: an activity that invites kids to share and collaborate with others while growing their understanding*

**What You Need:** No supplies needed

**What You Do:**

**Ask:**

- When have you had to work hard?
- When can it be challenging to work hard?
- Is there a certain kind of work you enjoy doing?
- How do you react when no one notices your hard work?
- How does our hard work show love to God and others?
- How can we work hard on our relationship with God?

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!”

#### 4. Verses to Take with You

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

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

**What You Need:** “Work Hard Words” Activity Page, “Work Hard Words Answer Key” Activity Page, pencils, Bibles

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

- Invite kids to choose a partner.
- Instruct the partners to sit together.
- Give each pair of kids a Bible.
- Give each kid a copy of the “Work Hard Words” Activity Page and a pencil.
- Instruct the kids to work together to look up the Bible verse references to fill in the answers to the crossword puzzle.
- After everyone has completed their crossword, go over the answers together as a group.
- Refer to the “Work Hard Words Answer Key” Activity Page as needed.
- Ask:
  - What do you think it means in Colossians 3:23 when the verse says we should work with all our heart, like we’re working for God?
  - Did any of these verses stand out to you? If so, why?
  - How can God’s Word help us work hard?
- Say: “We have the Bible to help us learn who God is and help guide us through life. When we know what God says, we can trust those words to help us when we’re struggling with something or when we’re not sure how to handle a situation.”
- Encourage kids to take the crossword home and choose a verse to focus on this week.

## 5. Make It Personal with Prayer

### [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?
- How does this story help me to live on mission?

#### What You Need:

"Pet Project Prayers: 3" Activity Page, pens (or pencils)

#### What You Do:

- Give each kid a copy of the "Pet Project Prayers: 3" Activity Page and a pen (or pencil).
- Encourage kids to decorate their pages however they would like. (They can draw pictures of their favorite animal or a pet they have at home.)
- After each kid has had a chance to decorate their page, instruct them to use the spaces provided to list prayers they may have.
- Instruct the kids to write prayers that are focused on asking God to help them work hard. (These should be brief reminders that will help guide them when they pray at home.)
- Encourage the kids to think of specific jobs or responsibilities they're expected to do.
- Examples of prayers might include:
  - Remember to clean my room without being asked.
  - Avoid letting video games distract me from doing my homework.
  - Finish my chores even when I don't want to.
- Encourage kids to take their page home and place it somewhere they will see it.
- Challenge them to set time aside in the week ahead to pray each day.
- Say: "Praying doesn't have to be complicated or take a long time. Just taking a little time talking to God each day is a great way to spend time with God and also to stay focused on how we can work hard."
- Encourage the group to sit in a circle.
- Invite each kid to share with the group something that they're working on.
- Instruct the kids to pray around the circle.
- Ask each kid to say a prayer for the kid sitting to their left.



## 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.)**

#### **\*1. Take a Snapshot**

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

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

**What You Need:**

- Oven mitts, two for each Small Group
- Individually wrapped pieces of candy, one large bag for each Small Group
  - *Optional: Use individually wrapped sticky hands or similar prizes for a non-food version.*
- Large bowl, one for each Small Group
- Stopwatch or phone timer, one for each Small Group

\*NOTE: Beware of food allergies

#### **2. Bible Story Extension**

**[Talk about God | Bible Story Review]**

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

**What You Need:**

- White board, one for each Small Group
- Dry-erase marker, one for each Small Group
- Dry eraser, one for each Small Group
- Print “Ant Farm Art” Activity Page on paper and cut out, one set for each Small Group
  - Keep the “artist cards” together, in order, in one pile and the “narrator cards” together, in order, in another pile.

#### **3. Discussion Questions**

**[Talk about God | Bible Story Review]**

*Made to Connect: an activity that invites kids to share and collaborate with others while growing their understanding*

**What You Need:**

- No supplies needed

#### **4. Verses to Take with You**

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

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

**What You Need:**

- Print “Work Hard Words” Activity Page on paper, one for each kid
- Print “Work Hard Words Answer Key” Activity Page on paper, one for each Small Group
- Pencils, one for each kid
- Bibles, one for every two kids

## 5. Make it Personal with Prayer

### [Pray to God | Prayer Activity]

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

#### What You Need:

- Print “Pet Project Prayers: 3” Activity Page on cardstock, one for each kid
- Pens (or pencils), one for each kid

### 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**