

Today's Suggested Schedule—February 2024, Week 3

Today's Bible Story: One More Time (Go the Extra Mile) • *Matthew 5:41*

Today's Bottom Line: Be kinder than you have to be.

Monthly Memory Verse: *Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.* Colossians 3:12 (ESV)

Monthly Virtue: Kindness—Showing others they are valuable by how you treat them

Basic Truth: I should treat others the way I want to be treated.

Before kids arrive, take a few moments to pray for them. Pray for those who might visit your group for the first time. Ask God to give kids opportunities to do more than they have to. Pray that kids would recognize those opportunities to be kind and do something even kinder. Pray that as you and your few encounter unfair situations, that you'd stand strong by choosing kindness so others can see God at work.

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: Your Choice
Application Activity: Extra, Extra
Memory Verse Activity: Rhythm Verse
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 Jesus' time, Roman soldiers had the authority to compel civilians to carry their gear for one mile. This practice was likely viewed as mean and embarrassing by those who were forced to comply.

- **Relating it to Kindness:**
Jesus' instruction to go the extra mile goes beyond mere compliance; it's an invitation to respond to hostility with kindness and generosity. Instead of begrudgingly fulfilling the minimum requirement, we're called to exceed expectations and willingly offer additional assistance.
- **Demonstrating Kindness in Action:**
Imagine being in the shoes of someone who is asked to carry a Roman soldier's gear. Going the extra mile might involve not only carrying the gear but doing so with a cheerful attitude, offering to carry it farther than required, or providing additional help or support along the way. (Proverbs 17:22)
- **Reflecting Jesus' Character:**
By going the extra mile in acts of kindness, we reflect the character of Jesus himself. Throughout his ministry, Jesus consistently demonstrated kindness and compassion towards others, even in the face of opposition or mistreatment. (Luke 6:35)
- **Going Beyond Self-Interest:**
Kindness, as demonstrated in Matthew 5:41, challenges us to look beyond our own self-interests and consider the needs and well-being of others. It's about being willing to inconvenience ourselves for the sake of someone else's benefit. (Matthew 16:24, Philippians 2:3-4)
- **Inspiring Others:**
When we go the extra mile in kindness, we not only bless the recipient of our actions but also inspire others to do the same. Our acts of kindness can have a ripple effect, spreading love and compassion throughout our communities. (Proverbs 15:13, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, Matthew 5:16)

In essence, Matthew 5:41 teaches us that true kindness is proactive, generous, and sacrificial. It's about more than just meeting expectations; it's about surpassing them with a heart full of love and compassion, following the example of Jesus Christ. And by following Jesus' example, we may have the opportunity to share with someone else about what God has done for us. But for people to see something different about you, they have to see it in you. If people don't see anything different about you than any other person, ask yourself about your relationship with God and how it is impacting your life.

*1. Your Choice

[Talk about God | Bible Story Review]

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

What You Need: Painter's tape; boxes, pillows, or Bibles

What You Do:

- Create a winding trail using painter's tape that loops around so that the starting line is close to the finish line.
 - Make the trail long enough for about 30 kid-sized steps.
- Instruct the kids to stand in a line behind the beginning of the trail.
- Share that you will be playing the role of a Roman soldier and you will give each of them commands through the winding trail.
- Direct the kids to listen carefully to your instructions.
- Call the first kid in line by name in a direct tone.
- Instruct them to hold their arms out, palms up.
- Place the boxes, Bibles, or pillows in their arms, making a big pile until the kid disappears behind them.
- Command the kid to walk halfway down the trail, holding the contents in their hands, making sure you walk with them. This is their initial task.
- After the kid walks halfway, ask if they want to go the extra mile or stop.
 - Going the extra mile means they need to carry what is in their arms all the way to the finish line.
- Allow the kid to decide and make their choice.
- Continue playing, commanding each kid in line.
- Give each kid different prompts for how to walk down the trail—for example: walk 20 steps, hop 15 steps, take 10 giant steps, carry the items on their head, etc.
- After each kid completes their initial action, ask the kid if they want to go the extra mile or not.
- Play until every kid in line has had a turn and made their choices.

What You Say:

"Wow! You did a super-awesome job not just doing what I asked, but also going even farther—even though it may have been harder and took more time! Imagine how surprised Jesus' friends were when He told them to walk an extra mile. They might have thought it sounded weak or that it would be giving in to the Romans. But actually, it was a powerful way for God's people to stand up. A Roman soldier could **MAKE** someone walk one mile, but a Jewish person could **CHOOSE** to walk a second mile, just like you chose to do more than I asked you to do.

"When we're kinder than we have to be, it shows we trust in God. Jesus asked His friends to be different from others. Instead of being angry and upset for having to do more, He wanted them to show God's kindness and love by going the extra mile. That means not just doing the bare minimum and then being upset about it, but showing kindness even when things are unfair or mean. So, remember to **[Bottom Line]** be kinder than you have to be! Keep spreading kindness and love like Jesus taught us!"

2. Extra, Extra

[Live for God | Application Activity]

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

What You Need: “Scenarios” Activity Page, and painter’s tape; *Optional: three sheets of paper, tape, and a marker instead of painter’s tape.*

What You Do:

- Use the painter’s tape (or the papers, tape, and marker) to label different areas in the small group space.
 - Label one area “A,” another “B,” and the third one “C.”
 - Kids should be able to easily identify each area.
- In a different part of the environment, direct the kids to gather, facing you.
- Read a scenario from the “Scenarios” Activity Page and the three options that go with each scenario.
- Instruct the kids to choose their response to each scenario by going to the area with the corresponding letter.
 - For example, if they choose option “A,” they are to go to the area labeled “A.”
- After each scenario, pause to discuss the choices.
 - Ask: “Which option is like going ‘a mile’ and which one is like going the ‘extra mile’?”
- Before moving on to the next scenario, direct the kids to gather again facing you.

What You Say:

“Great job choosing kindness! Going the extra mile is not always easy. Today’s story helps us understand that when we have an ‘extra mile’ attitude in everything we do at school, in sports, in friendships, with strangers, in unfair situations, and at home, others get to see God at work in our lives. That’s why it’s important to ask God to help you show kindness in tough or frustrating situations.

“This doesn’t mean you have to let someone bully you or take advantage of you. You can respond with kindness, but still talk to a trusted adult about what’s happening. This week, let’s remember to **[Bottom Line] be kinder than you have to be** so others can experience God’s kindness through you.”

[Make It Personal] *(Tell kids a story about a time when you chose to go the extra mile for someone even though they were not kind to you. Maybe it was a stranger in a one-off scenario, but if it was with a friend or family member, how did it change your relationship with them?)*

3. Rhythm Verse

[Hear from God | Memory Verse Activity]

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

What You Need: Bibles

What You Do:

- Make sure every kid has a Bible.
- Together, look up Colossians 3:12 using the Bible Navigation Tips below.

Finding verses with 2nd and 3rd graders: Guide them 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 the kids find the table of contents, lead them to find Colossians in the list under “New Testament.” When the kids find Colossians, lead them to look at the page number beside the word. Explain that the number tells them on what page they can find Colossians. Help the kids find the page. When they find Colossians, explain that the big numbers on the page are the chapter numbers. Help them find chapter 3. Explain that the small numbers are verse numbers. Help them find verse 3 in chapter 12.

- Say the verse as a group.
- Make up a clapping rhythm that goes along with the verse.
- Say the verse with the clapping rhythm several times.
- Clap the rhythm without saying the words and see if the kids can recite the verse to your clapping.
- Instruct the kids to sit in a circle.
- Choose one kid to start the clapping rhythm and saying the first word of the verse.
- Instruct the next kid to follow with the next word, and so on until the entire verse has been said.
- Challenge kids to try to get faster and faster without messing up a clap or a word.

What You Say:

“The first part of this verse lets us know we are special people who God truly loves. In the second half of this verse, the author was encouraging the people who love God to wear a special outfit every day, but it’s not something you can see with your eyes. It’s like wearing something inside your heart. When we put on tender mercy (*or compassion in the NIV*) and kindness, it means we should try to be really kind to others by showing them love and care.

“We also need to avoid being proud, which means we need to be humble or not think that we are better than others or show off. Being gentle and patient is like how we would handle a delicate flower with care so we don’t harm it. God wants us to treat others gently and patiently by not being rough with our words or actions.

“When we do these things and choose to **[Bottom Line] be kinder than you have to be**, we show people the kindness God has towards all of us.”

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

What You Need: Binoculars

What You Do:

- Instruct the kids to sit in a circle.
- Show the group the binoculars.
- Ask: "What are some ways these binoculars are used?"
- If time allows, allow each of the kids to use the binoculars to see something far away.
- Instruct the kids to close their eyes and try to picture the last time they saw someone who needed something.
 - It could be someone they know, like a little brother needing help tying his shoes.
 - Or it could be someone they don't know, like a new kid in school on their first day.
- Invite the kids to picture what it would be like to give that person what was needed, plus go an extra mile.
- Close your group time in prayer.

What You Say:

"Often, hikers use binoculars to help them see things that are far away, like birds flying in the sky or animals in the distance. When you use binoculars, it's like bringing those far-away things closer to you, so you can see them much better! As we discovered today, God wants you to **[Bottom Line] be kinder than you have to be**, but that's not always easy. It's like we need to put on our imaginary binoculars to help us to look for those who need help and find ways to go the extra mile. When we choose to go the extra mile, we share God's kindness to those who matter to God. Let's pray."

"Dear God, thank You for being with us every day and for always showing us Your kindness. Help us to look for ways to be kind and helpful to others. Sometimes things may be tough or unfair, but with Your strength, we know we can do it. Help us remember that to **[Bottom Line] be kinder than you have to be** means finding ways to go the extra mile and when we do that, we are spreading Your kindness to others. We love You and we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen."

As adults arrive to pick up, ask kids to say **[Bottom Line] be kinder than you have to be** and describe what going the extra mile means.

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. Your Choice**

[Talk about God | Bible Story Review]

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

What You Need:

- Boxes, pillows, or Bibles, enough to pile high in a kid's arms
- Painter's tape, one roll for each Small Group

2. Extra, Extra

[Live for God | Application Activity]

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

What You Need:

- Print "Scenarios" Activity Page on paper, one for each Small Group
- Painter's tape, one roll for each Small Group
- *Optional: Use three sheets of paper, tape, and a marker instead of painter's tape.*

3. Rhythm Verse

[Hear from God | Memory Verse Activity]

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

What You Need:

- Bibles, 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:

- Binoculars, one for each Small Group

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**