

VIRTUAL SMALL GROUP GENERAL INFO

TIPS & TRICKS

- Watching the Bible story video: use your meeting app's "share my screen" option to play the video yourself. (Be sure to click "share computer audio" so kids can hear the video.)
 - We recommend watching the video together as a group, so your few can have a shared experience and you'll know that the follow-up activity will make sense to all of your kids.
- Navigating a virtual conversation:
 - Make "eye contact" as much as possible. The more "locked in" and engaged you are, the most your few will be as well.
 - Use the "host" functionalities of your meeting software to your advantage! Turn kids' mute buttons on and off as needed instead of leaving it to them to regulate.
 - At the beginning of every small group time, remind kids of the "house rules": try not to talk when someone else is talking, make sure you're listening to your friends and giving "eye contact" when they're talking.
 - If kids are talking over each other, let them know you're trying to get their attention and then wait for them to settle down. Don't try to talk over them in order to regain control of the conversation.
- Keep Small Group time short. Thirty minutes is about the maximum amount of time kids can be expected to sit in one place and focus on one thing. Expect about a 2-minute attention span for every year of your kids' lives. For a 7-year-old, that's about 14-18 minutes! Keep them engaged by doing that day's suggested activity (in the Leader Guide) along with the suggested conversation, instead of separating them.
- Your shy or more introverted kids might be used to participating in a virtual group setting by now, but if they still seem reluctant to share or fully engage, look for easy, low-impact ways to let them join in.
- Say their names! It sounds simple, but say their names so each kid knows you want to hear from them.
- Hope for a great time of connection, but don't expect it to be revolutionary! Simply by showing up virtually and spending time focusing on your few, you're communicating that you're there for them and they're important to you.

GAMES & ICE BREAKERS

Here's a list of games and icebreakers you can have on hand for when you need them.

WHERE'S THE WIDGET?

- Pretend like you're holding something small in your hand.
- Tell kids that they get pretend to hide it from you and you get to guess who's got it!
- Close your eyes or turn around while the kids silently decide who is going to be the one "holding" the widget.
- Slowly count to 10 and then open your eyes or turn around and face the computer.
- Based on facial expressions, overheard conversations, and general giddiness, take a guess as to who is holding the widget.
- (If you play this game enough, eventually your few will become rather adept at deception!)

WOULD YOU RATHER:

- Ask a few "would you rather" questions and lead kids to take turns quickly responding with their choice.
- Let them take turns asking their own "would you rather" questions of the group.
- This website has a huge list of "this or that" type questions for kids: <https://bit.ly/2Y0gg8q>
- You can also get really silly and random with what you ask, like,
 - "Would you rather eat dessert whenever you want to, but you can only have the same type for the rest of your life; OR only be allowed to eat dessert once a week, but you can choose whichever dessert you want?"
 - "Would you rather touch an alligator or hug a panda bear, if you knew neither one would bite you?"

TWENTY QUESTIONS:

- Choose one person to start, or ask for a volunteer.
- This person must think of an object. It can be any object, (as long as it's appropriate) and would be something everyone in the group would know.
- The rest of the group then takes turns asking yes or no questions about the object.
- The person who has the object in mind should answer

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the question with a simple yes or no, avoiding giving any other details.

- After hearing the answer, the kid asking the question is allowed one guess at what the object is.
- If a total of 20 questions gets asked with no one guessing what the object is, the kid who thought of the object wins and gets to reveal what the object was.
- If someone does guess correctly, they now get to think of a new object.

HIDE AND SEEK

- Choose three or four kids to be “hidiers” and one kid to be the “seeker.”
- The kids who will be hiding get to choose if they’ll move left or right of their device’s camera, or down below so they can’t be seen.
- When you say “Go,” the seeker closes their eyes while you count to 10.
- The “hidiers” will then hide by moving left, right, or down. Instruct the hidiers to stay put until you tell them to move.
- After counting to 10, let the seeker open their eyes and guess which direction each kid moved.
- If the seeker gets them all right, they get to be the seeker again.
- If they get any of them wrong, they choose the next seeker.
- The game is basically a game of chance, unless any kids accidentally reveal themselves by moving part of their bodies back into the range of their device’s camera!

SCAVENGER HUNT

- Make sure you have everyone’s attention.
- Tell them you’re going to give them an object to find and the first person who returns and shows you the object first wins!
- Think of an object all kids would have in their homes. (Ideas and suggestions are below.)
- Tell kids what the object is and give them a second or two to think of where that object might be.
- Count to three and call out, “GO!”
- Kids should go find that object as fast as they (safely) can.
- You are the judge of who makes it back first. To keep it fair, you can make the stipulation that the winner

must be back in their seat in front of their device and you must be able to clearly see the object they’re holding.

- You can play a few rounds of this game and keep score. The kid who won the most rounds is the overall winner!
- Scavenger hunt object suggestions:
 - A spoon
 - A sock
 - Something fuzzy
 - Something orange (or any other color)
 - A sibling (only use this one if all kids have at least one sibling at home)
 - A grownup
 - A remote control
 - A ball
 - A shoe
 - A crayon/marker (for safety, no pencils)
 - Tape
 - Something edible
 - Something you can drink from (cup, water bottle, etc.)
 - A Bible or devotional book
 - A regular book
 - A pillow
 - Something artsy
 - A pet
 - Something electronic

SHOW AND TELL

- Kids love sharing about themselves and what they like! Give them a chance to do that in this virtual twist on an old classic.
- If you’re doing show and tell, you may want to let families know ahead of time so kids can pick out that perfect show and tell item!
- As kids share about their item, encourage their peers to stay quiet and listen.
- Limit sharing to two minutes for each kid, and give them a countdown when their time is almost over. (You can hold up 10 fingers and lower them one at a time to show kids how much time is left.)
- If your group likes doing show and tell, you can do it often and choose a different theme each time!

ICEBREAKER CONVERSATION STARTERS:

- What’s your favorite thing you ate this week?

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- What or who do you play with when you're outside?
- Who has a family pet that they can show on camera?
- What was the best part of yesterday?
- What's the longest you've gone (during social distancing) without showering?
- If you could BE any famous person, who would you be and why?
- How many stuffed animals are on your bed right now?
- What's one thing you don't miss when school is out for summer or holiday breaks?
- What's one thing you DO miss when school is out for summer or holiday breaks?
- If you could add one thing to your bedroom, what would it be?

SOCIAL DISTANCE ADAPTATIONS

STEPS FOR ADAPTING CURRICULUM

Disclaimer: These are suggestions. Your local government offices will publish unique policies and procedures for how groups should start gathering again in your area. Be sure to contact the Center for Disease Control for the most up-to-date information.

1. START WITH THE OFFICIAL GUIDELINES

for reopening and gathering. You'll want to consider your staff and volunteers, as well as, the kids and families that will attend. The CDC has published documents that address both. The CDC also provides capacity and ratio guidelines to consider.

- Drop-off and Pick-up procedures
- Screening procedures
- Diapering and toilet procedures
- Water fountain procedures

2. CONSIDER HOW YOU CAN SOCIAL DISTANCE

with these new capacity and ratio guidelines. For younger kids, be sure to space out carpet squares or chairs at tables for small group distancing. Have kids sit farther apart during large group. Questions to think through:

- Do you need to add services to accommodate the families that want to come?
- How will you turn families away when you've reached capacity?
- How will you continue to provide online experiences for families who are at a higher risk and can't yet return to the building?
- Will kids and volunteers need to wear masks throughout programming? Will you provide masks for families who don't have them?
- How will you communicate new/changing expectations to parents and kids?

3. ADAPTING YOUR ENVIRONMENT

- Simplify your entrances and exit to limit personal contact.

- Limit the amount of extra toys and games, especially those that are hard to sanitize between services and/or are prone to carry germs.
- Limit small group size to ensure social distancing.
- Put tape on the floor to show kids where they should sit so they don't get too close to each other
- Space kids out during large group to keep social distancing guidelines.
- Discontinue providing snacks.
- Create a list of items for your families to prepare (Bible, mask, blanket to sit on, etc.)

4. ADAPTING THE CURRICULUM

- Small Group:
 - Adapt activities to reduce or limit shared items and touching.
 - Prepare all supplies in advance to limit the amount of people touching the items.
 - For shared supplies like markers, pencils, etc., have kids pick out a few colors and keep those in their individual spot for the day. Have a place they can drop them off at the end for sanitizing.
 - Have kids bring their own Bibles rather than use church ones that may not be easily sanitized.
 - Use disposable items when possible.
 - If you can't socially distance during small group, consider having kids and leaders wear face masks.
 - Include hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes in small group supplies.
- Large Group:
 - Adapt games where kids would be close together to play.
 - Spread out people who are on stage (Host,

SOCIAL DISTANCE ADAPTATIONS

Storyteller, Worship Team)

- Adapt storytelling conventions where kids are on stage and touching each other.
- Limit use of props that would be used by multiple kids each morning.
- Limit costumes and masks that would be used by multiple kids each morning.
- Use disposable items when possible

Small Group Leader Guide

March 7, 2021 Week 1

4/5

Today's Bible Story: Wait for It (Simeon Waits for the Messiah) • *Luke 2:25-35*

Today's Key Question: When is it hard to have patience?

Today's Bottom Line: When you have to wait, remember God is with you.

Monthly Memory Verse: *Wait for the LORD. Be strong and don't lose hope. Wait for the LORD. Psalm 27:14 (NIV)*

Monthly Life App: Patience—Waiting until later for what you want now

Basic Truth: I can trust God no matter what.

What You Need:

- Sheet of paper, marker

What You Do:

- As kids join the meeting and get settled, engage them in conversation about the past week.
- If you choose, consider using one of the ice breakers or games on the “Virtual Small Group General Info” page.
- After the Bible story video, transition into the activity below.

Activity:

What You Do:

- Ask kids to draw on one side of their paper, the face of Simeon that shows his expression as he waited for the Messiah to come.
- On the other side of the paper, tell kids to draw Simeon's expression when he saw Jesus for the first time.
- Challenge kids to hold their papers at arm's length, straight in front of them as you read Luke 2:25-35 to them. (Prompt them to stand up if they need to.)
 - When they hear something in the story that is evidence that God was with Simeon as he waited for the Savior tell them to wave their plate but not lower their arms.
- Tell kids they can lower their arms when they hear you say, “THE END” as you finish reading the passage.

What You Say:

- Ask:
 - When your arms started to get tired and you wanted to put your paper down, what helped you hang in there?
 - In a frustrating situation, how can you tell when you're about to lose your patience?
 - What can you do to avoid losing your cool when it's not easy to be patient or when waiting feels like forever?
 - If Simeon could share his “recipe” for patience, what might the ingredients be?
 - Steer the discussion of the question above away from actual food items. Turn kids' ideas toward “ingredients” such as trusting the promises God has made, focusing on what they know to be true about God's character,

remembering ways He has helped them or others in the past, reading verses and stories in the Bible of those who, like Simeon, waited patiently trusting God's plan and timing.

Close your group in prayer:

"Dear God, we have learned a lot about patience today. Now it's time to put what we've learned into practice. Give us the strength to wait the way Simeon did and to know You are always with us. We know that patience is fueled by faith, so help us trust You as we wait. In Jesus' name we pray, amen."

Wait For It

Simeon Waits for the Messiah - Luke 2:25-35

(Elementary / March Week 1)



Life App: Patience - waiting until later for what you want now.

Bottom Line: When you have to wait, remember God is with you.

Basic Truth: I can trust God no matter what.

Memory Verse: Psalm 27:14 NIrV

Small Group Leader Guide

March 14, 2021 Week 2

4/5

Today's Bible Story: Sitting, Wishing, Waiting (Golden Calf) • *Exodus 32:1-35*

Today's Bottom Line: When you think you can't wait, remember what's true.

Today's Key Question: What can you think about when it's hard to wait?

Monthly Memory Verse: *Wait for the LORD. Be strong and don't lose hope. Wait for the LORD. Psalm 27:14 (NIV)*

Monthly Life App: Patience—Waiting until later for what you want now

Basic Truth: I can trust God no matter what.

What You Need:

- Bibles, paper and pens.

What You Do:

- As kids join the meeting and get settled, engage them in conversation about the past week.
- If you choose, consider using one of the ice breakers or games on the "Virtual Small Group General Info" page.
- After the Bible story video, transition into the activity below.

Activity:

What You Do:

- Tell kids that they get to review the story today by coming up with the review questions for each other!
- Ask each kid to write one question about the story and one truth they can remember when it's hard to wait.
- Kids can look up Exodus 32:1-35 in their Bibles for help with review questions.
- Give the group 3-5 minutes to write down their responses.
- When they finished, let kids volunteer to read their question to the group and choose someone to answer it.
- Then, as they share their "truths to remember," encourage kids to write down what each of their peers shares.
- At the end, they'll each have a list of truths they can go to when they're having a hard time waiting.

What You Say:

Ask:

- If you had been on the scene when the Israelites started planning the golden calf construction project, what could you have said to help them go back to what was true and do the right thing?
- What do you think are some of the best reasons to be patient?
- When you're in a tough situation and you have to wait for answers—like when a family member is sick or when a parent loses a job—how does it help you to know that God keeps His promises, loves you, has a plan for you, etc.?

Close your group in prayer:

“Dear God, You are our rock, refuge, and hope. We can trust in You and pour out our hearts to You. Please help us turn our attitude around when we begin to feel our patience growing thin. Help us remember what is true about You and that You will give us what we need to follow You in the things we say and do. Amen.”

Sitting, Waiting, Wishing

Golden Calf - Exodus 32:1-35

(Elementary / March Week 2)



Life App: Patience - waiting until later for what you want now.

Bottom Line: When you have to wait, remember what's true.

Basic Truth: I can trust God no matter what.

Memory Verse: Psalm 27:14 NIrV

Small Group Leader Guide

March 21, 2021 Week 3

4/5

Today's Bible Story: Can't Hardly Wait (Esau's Impatience) • *Genesis 25:24-34*

Today's Bottom Line: If you don't wait, it could cost you.

Today's Key Question: What could you miss out on by not waiting?

Monthly Memory Verse: *Wait for the LORD. Be strong and don't lose hope. Wait for the LORD. Psalm 27:14 (NIV)*

Monthly Life App: Patience—Waiting until later for what you want now

Basic Truth: I need to make the wise choice.

What You Need:

- "Spoon Drop Story" Activity Page

What You Do:

- As kids join the meeting and get settled, engage them in conversation about the past week.
- If you choose, consider using one of the ice breakers or games on the "Virtual Small Group General Info" page.
- After the Bible story video, transition into the activity below.

Activity:

What You Do:

- Explain that you'll read a version of Genesis 25:24-34 that contains mistakes.
- As soon as they hear one of the mistakes, they should jump up and stand.
- The goal is to be the first one to jump up. (If you have kids in your group who are unable to stand, change "jump up" to something like "wave your arms around in a crazy way," or anything other crazy movement that you can easily see on camera.)
- Read the "Spoon Drop Story" from the Activity Page.
- The mistakes are in bold, but read them as casually as you read the rest of the story. If you get to the next sentence and no one has noticed the mistake, pause and wait for them to think about what you just said.
- Ask kids to keep track of how many times they're the first to catch the mistake. The kid with the most at the end of the story wins!

What You Say:

- Discuss the story with the kids, using some of the questions below.
 - What are some things kids your age are willing to give up or compromise in order to get what they want instead of waiting?
 - What are some reasons God might want us to wait for something instead of giving us everything when we think we should have it?
 - In what ways can you relate to Esau? How about Jacob?
 - How does patience—waiting until later for what you want now—show trust in God?
- Challenge kids to consider the cost of forcing our will to get what we want. Remind them that God's timing is always best and that by following Him we allow Him to lead us through His plan for our lives.

- Why do you think waiting is SO hard for everybody, adults included?
- What are some situations you really want to do better at when it comes to waiting with a good attitude?

Close your group in prayer:

“Dear God, we need Your help. Waiting isn’t always easy, but we know the benefits of waiting on You are much better than the consequences of losing our cool. Let us learn a lesson from Esau’s foolish and impatient choice. When we think we can’t wait, help us stop and remember what it might cost us if we don’t listen and follow You. In Jesus’ name, amen.”

Story taken from Genesis 25:24-34

(Mistakes are in **BOLD** print and corrections in parenthesis.)

Finally, the time came for **Rosemary** (Rebekah) to have her babies. She was going to have **triplets**, (twins.) When the **girls** (boys) were born, the first one was very red. His whole body was covered with hair. They named him **Harry** (Esau).

When his brother was born, he came out with his hand holding on to his brother's **nose** (heel). They named him Jacob which means, "deceiver."

The boy's father, Isaac, was **25** (60) years old when Jacob and Esau were born.

As the boys grew up, Esau became a skilled **opera singer** (hunter). He liked to be out in the open country but his brother, Jacob, was happy to stay at home.

One day, Jacob was cooking some **pizza** (stew) and it smelled delicious, Esau came in from being out in the woods hunting for a long time. He was super hungry. He said to Jacob, "Hey, I'm going to fall down dead here if I don't get something to eat right now! **Make me a pastrami on rye!**" (Give me some of that stew!)

Jacob replied, "First I want you to give me **those cool shoes you're wearing!**" (His birthright; all the rights that belong to him as the oldest son in the family)

Esau answered, "Look I'm dying here of hunger. What good are those rights to me anyway if I'm going to die?"

So, Esau promised to give his birthright to Jacob. He gave him all the rights that belong to him as the oldest son.

Jacob gave Esau some bread and stew. Esau ate it, **left Jacob a generous tip**, (no tip) then got up and left. It seemed that he didn't value the rights that belong to him as the oldest son very much.

What to Do:

Print one for each small group.

"Spoon Drop Story" Activity Page

March 2021, Week 3, Preteen Virtual Small Group
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Can't Hardly Wait

Esau's Impatience - Genesis 25:24-34

(Elementary / March Week 3)



Life App: Patience - waiting until later for what you want now.

Bottom Line: If you don't wait, it could cost you.

Basic Truth: I need to make the wise choice.

Memory Verse: Psalm 27:14 NIrV

Small Group Leader Guide

March 28, 2021 Week 4

4/5

Today's Bible Story: I Will Wait (Palm Sunday) • *Matthew 21:1-11 (supporting: Luke 19:28-44, John 12:12-19)*

Today's Bottom Line: You can celebrate even when you're waiting.

Today's Key Question: What are you waiting for right now?

Monthly Memory Verse: *Wait for the LORD. Be strong and don't lose hope. Wait for the LORD.* Psalm 27:14 (NIV)

Monthly Life App: Patience—Waiting until later for what you want now

Basic Truth: I can trust God no matter what.

What You Need:

- Paper, pen.

What You Do:

- As kids join the meeting and get settled, engage them in conversation about the past week.
- If you choose, consider using one of the ice breakers or games on the "Virtual Small Group General Info" page.
- After the Bible story video, transition into the activity below.

Activity:

What You Do:

- Review today's story by asking kids to share two things they remember about it.
- Explain that the event of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem was actually a fulfillment of a promise God made in the Old Testament.
- Ask if anyone remembers what the people shouted when they saw Jesus coming.
- Let one of the kids read John 12:13 in the New Testament then have someone else read Psalm 118:26a in the Old Testament.
- Explain (if necessary) that "Hosanna" is a Hebrew expression meaning, "Save us!"
 - The crowd was shouting out their praises to the One Who came to save.
- Ask some or all of the following questions, engaging kids in a discussion that helps them process today's story and what it means for their lives:
 - For hundreds of years Israel had been waiting for their Messiah to come. What's the longest you've had to wait for something?
 - What are you waiting for right now?
 - What can you celebrate today even as you wait?
 - How can you keep in mind that God is still working while you're waiting for something big to happen?
 - When the religious leaders told Jesus to make his followers be quiet and stop celebrating Him, Jesus said that if the people were silent, the rocks would have to speak. What does that tell you about the importance of the events that were happening?
- After some discussion, ask kids to write down what they can celebrate right now, while they wait. It can be anything from being excited that they still have leftover Christmas

stocking candy, to celebrating that God has made their family bonds stronger during the pandemic.

What You Say:

- Instruct kids to put their paper somewhere private, like in a book or under their pillow, and let it remind them to celebrate what God has done.

Close your group in prayer:

“Dear God, thank You that we can have patience because we know You’ll always come through for us. We can celebrate Your goodness every day even as we wait to see Your kingdom come on Earth. We love You, and we pray these things in Jesus’ name. Amen.”

I Will Wait

Palm Sunday - Matthew 21:1-11

(Elementary / March Week 4)



Life App: Patience - waiting until later for what you want now.

Bottom Line: You can celebrate even when you're waiting.

Basic Truth: I can trust God no matter what.

Memory Verse: Psalm 27:14 NIrV

March Memory Verse

Psalm 27:14 (NirV)

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
3	15	2	19	20	24	10	18	13	9	17	7	5	16	26	1	4	23	6	25	8	22	11	21	12	14

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