



WEEK 3

ELEMENTARY LESSON OUTLINE

BREAKING NEWS

THE BIG IDEA

When times are tough, I can count on God.

THE BIBLE

Zephaniah: Zephaniah 1:7,12-18, 3:14-17
(1 Thessalonians 5:1-11)

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

LARGE GROUP TIME

- MUSIC** | Eyewitness Praise
- ACTIVITY** | News Anchor Name Game
- ACTIVITY** | Shoe Away the Storm
- OBJECT LESSON** | Trust in the Storm
- SCRIPTURE** | Zephaniah 1:7, 12-18, 3:14-17
- THE BIG IDEA** | When times are tough, I can count on God.
- VIDEO** | Breaking News, Episode 3
- STORY** | The Terrible Day
- ACTIVITY** | Wanted Poster
- SCRIPTURE** | 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11
- ACTIVITY** | Build Up Notes
- REFLECTION** | Count On God
- MEMORY VERSE** | Memory in Motion
- PRAYER**

SMALL GROUP TIME

- DISCUSSION**
 - What can you tell me about Zephaniah?
 - What was the bad news?
 - What was the good news?
 - The Bible verses we read in 1 Thessalonians tell us to “not be like the others, who are asleep.” What do you think this means for you and me?
 - Has there ever been a time when you felt like you weren’t sure you could trust God?
 - How can we trust God in our everyday lives?
 - How will you trust God in your life this week?
- ACTIVITY** | News Clips
- MEMORY VERSE** | 1 Corinthians 16:13 (NIV)



WEEK 3

HACKS FOR PRETEENS

BREAKING
NEWS

BY STEPHEN BAY

HOW TO HACK THIS SERIES FOR PRETEENS

In children's ministry, you've got a wide range of ages you need to engage every week, but preteens tend to get overlooked, so here are a few adjustments you can make to this week in order to keep your preteens more engaged.

ACTIVITY | News Anchor Name Game

Make this an "Undercover Reporter Name Game!" Tell the kids that sometimes, news reporters go undercover to break tough stories, and they might need an alias or pseudonym to protect their true identity. First, ask the kids to come up with another name that starts with the same letter as theirs—for example, "Rowan" for "Rory." Then, have them rearrange the letters in their last names to make a new last name, like "Lee" rearranged into "Eel." Thus, Rory Lee's alias would be "Rowan Eel." Have them refer to each other by their aliases for the rest of the day!

STORY | The Terrible Day

After you or another adult share your story, ask the kids if they have any stories to share about a time when they had to trust in God to pull them through. Remember to keep it a safe space for them to share without worrying about being judged. Acknowledge their feelings, encourage them as they share, and thank them for sharing so openly.

ACTIVITY | Wanted Poster

Instead of a "Wanted Poster," make this activity a "Want Ad," like the classifieds in a newspaper. Ask the kids to create a brief job listing with a description of someone who can count on God when times are tough. What qualities should this person have? How should they live their lives? Have the kids reflect and write their want-ad with this job description on a sheet of paper.



WEEK 3

HACKS FOR KIDS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

BREAKING
NEWS

BY CHRISTIN RICKMAN

HOW TO HACK THIS SERIES FOR KIDS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

In children’s ministry, you’ve got a wide range of ages you need to engage every week, but kids with special needs tend to get overlooked, so here are a few adjustments you can make to this week in order to keep your kids with special needs more engaged.

MUSIC | Eyewitness Praise

To sustain attention, create concise and repetitive motions for the kids to engage in. For the kids that do not wish to dance, have small instruments available to engage them and for them to play along with the song. This can be turned into a mini performance for others, too!

ACTIVITY | Shoe Away the Storm

Some kids might have sensory issues with having only one shoe on. Provide a “golden” shoe and a normal shoe – you can buy a pair of inexpensive slippers and spray paint one of them. Have the kids sit in a circle and pass the shoes around like hot potato. The objective becomes getting the golden shoe. Whoever grabs the golden shoe wins but cannot continue on to the next round so that other kids can have a chance to get the golden shoe. When you get to the last kid who hasn’t gotten the golden shoe yet, throw in a volunteer to be their playmate to ensure they do. After everyone has gotten a chance to win the shoe say, “All of you trusted you’d get the golden shoe and all of you did.”

SCRIPTURE | Zephaniah 1:7, 12-18, 3:14-17

Provide colorful visual aids to reinforce the story while kids watch the skit. Find images of keywords that are being said throughout the skit. As the skit is occurring, have a volunteer sit near the kid and point out each image at the appropriate times.



WEEK 3

ELEMENTARY LESSON GUIDE

BREAKING
NEWS

THE BIG IDEA

When times are tough, I can count on God.

THE BIBLE

Zephaniah: Zephaniah 1:7,12-18, 3:14-17
(I Thessalonians 5:1-11)

LARGE GROUP TIME

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

MUSIC | Eyewitness Praise

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Play [What a Mighty God We Serve](#) and invite the kids to sing and dance along.
 - ✂ **SPECIAL NEEDS HACK:** Create small, concise and repetitive motions for the kids to engage in. You can also have small instruments available for them to engage and play along with the song. This can be turned into a mini performance, too!

ACTIVITY | News Anchor Name Game

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Divide the group into smaller groups. Tell everyone in each group to stand in a circle and appoint one person to be the leader. For added fun, tell the kids to introduce their names to the beat of [concentration](#) (i.e., clap, clap, snap, snap), where they say their names on the last two beats (e.g., clap, clap, Active, Adam).
 - ✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** Make this an "Undercover Reporter Name Game." Have kids come up with an alias by 1) choosing another name that starts with the same letter as theirs (e.g., "Rowan" for "Rory"), and 2) rearranging the letters in their last names to make a new last name (e.g., "Lee" can be "Eel"). Thus, Rory Lee's alias would be "Rowan Eel." Have them refer to each other by their aliases for the rest of the day!
- Today, everyone is getting a news anchor name and your leaders have the challenge of memorizing all of them!

- As you go around the circle, make up your news anchor name by saying your name and a word to go along with it using the first letter of your name. For example, Adam might be “Active Adam” or Susana might be “Susana Singer.”
- When you are finished, your leader must go around and say everyone’s news anchor name.
- That was a fun game! Now, you’re all ready to report on some news!

ACTIVITY | Shoe Away the Storm

- Did you hear the news about the weather? They said a big storm is headed our way and it’s important for everyone to have both shoes on before it arrives. But oh, no! We’re all missing one shoe and it’ll take forever to find.
- Okay, everyone. We’re going to need to work together on this. Let’s see how quickly you can get your shoe back without getting it yourself!
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell the kids to stand in a circle. Instruct them each to take one shoe off and toss all of the shoes in the middle of the circle in a pile. When you say, “Go,” everyone has to help each other find each other’s shoes. The only rule is that you cannot grab your own shoe. Everyone must pick up one shoe and return it to the rightful owner. Set your timer for thirty seconds and see if they can return all the shoes before the “storm” hits. Have them try again if they don’t make it the first time.*
 - ✂ **SPECIAL NEEDS HACK:** *Have the kiddos sit in a circle and pass around a regular shoe and a “golden” shoe like hot potato while music plays or you sing a song together. Whoever has the golden shoe when the music stops wins the round, but they cannot continue to the next round so someone else can win the golden shoe next time. Ask, “How many of you trusted you’d get the golden shoe?” or say, “All of you trusted you’d get the golden shoe and all of you did!”*
- **How many of you trusted that you would get your shoe back?** Maybe you weren’t even worried about it. You knew that somehow you would have your shoe returned to you. You trusted!

OBJECT LESSON | Trust in the Storm

- Have you ever heard the phrase, “When it rains, it pours?” I have some water in this glass. I bet I can hold it upside down over someone’s head and keep it from raining water on them.
- **Does anyone want to show they trust me by letting me try?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Ask for a volunteer who will be willing to trust you. Fill a small glass with water. The rim of the glass must be small enough for a playing card to totally cover it. Place the playing card over the rim of the glass and press down. Holding the glass in one hand and holding the card in place with the other hand, turn the glass upside down over the volunteer’s head, then slowly let go of the card. The card will stay in place. It’s a good idea to practice this ahead of time, and if you’re not sure, ask another leader to be your volunteer instead of a kid.*
- **Was it hard to trust you wouldn’t get wet?**
- **What about everyone else? Do you think you could have counted on me to keep you from getting wet?**
- **How would you have felt if I actually spilled this water on you?**
- Counting on someone means trusting that they won’t do anything to harm you or let you down.

SO WHAT? Why does it matter to God and to us?

SCRIPTURE | Zephaniah 1:7, 12-18, 3:14-17

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Recruit the same or different adult volunteers to help with the skits, or play both parts yourself. Provide a handheld microphone – real or pretend – for the characters to use.
 - ✂ **SPECIAL NEEDS HACK:** Consider providing visual aids that are colorful and visually reinforcing for kids as they watch the skit.
- We've been hearing all about prophets in the Bible this month. Today, we're going to learn about the prophet, Zephaniah. **Can someone remind us what a prophet is?**
- Prophets were people who shared breaking news from God to the people around them. The prophets in the Bible brought news from God that showed what was really going on. Sometimes, that made them really unpopular with the people, but they had to be truthful about what God had to say.
- Zephaniah was a Hebrew prophet who lived in a place called, Judah. At that time, the people were paying more attention to – or worshipping – idols and not God. The king at that time, King Josiah, tried very hard to get the people to stop worshipping idols and turn to God.
- **Do you know what an idol is?** An idol is anything we treat as more important than God.
- Let's turn to our favorite reporter who is on the air with Zephaniah, who has some breaking news from God!
 - **Reporter:** Hi, there! I'm [volunteer name] and I'm back with more breaking news. This time I am here with Zephaniah, who is eager to share with us his breaking news from God. So, what has God told you to share with us, Zephaniah?
 - **Zephaniah:** Hello, [name of reporter]. Thanks for having me. God has sent me to tell everyone this: Everyone get ready – the day of the Lord approaches!
 - **Reporter:** That day of the Lord? Isn't that every Sunday? What's different about *this* day of the Lord?
 - **Zephaniah:** It's very different. I'm talking about some difficult times that are up ahead for my people. And on this day, not-so-great things await people who just sit back and enjoy all the things they have without listening to God. People like this who have been selfish their whole lives will soon learn what it's like to have to work for others. They have been given many chances to obey God, but in those final days when God comes, they will be all out of chances, and their money won't be able to save them!
 - **Reporter:** That sounds terrible. But God is so good . . . isn't there any good news?
 - **Zephaniah:** Affirmative! The day of the Lord is not here yet so, guess what? We. Have. Time. We don't have to worry about any of these awful things happening to us when we have a relationship with God. God is just waiting to welcome us with love and – get this – God will actually rejoice over us with singing! God sings!
 - **Reporter:** That's one concert I don't want to miss! Thank you, Zephaniah, for that message from God. I'm sure all our viewers know what to do now to get ready for the day of the Lord. Until next time, this is [volunteer name] signing off.
- This sounds a lot like the breaking news from the stories we heard before! God used a prophet

to warn everyone about what could happen because of their actions. Zephaniah urged people to turn to God before destruction came.

- But even when we lose our way or face some difficult times in our lives, God doesn't go anywhere! God patiently waits for us to turn to God, then welcomes us with love and rejoicing.
- **What can we learn from Zephaniah's breaking news?**

THE BIG IDEA | When times are tough, I can count on God.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Ask two volunteers to run across the front carrying a banner that says, "Breaking News" and play the sound effects from [this video](#). Ask another volunteer to play the role of the breaking news reporter every week.
- We interrupt these activities to bring you some breaking news. This is [name of volunteer] with today's Big Idea: **When times are tough, I can count on God!**
- We now return to your regularly scheduled programming.

VIDEO | Breaking News, Episode 3

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Play this week's [teaching video](#).

STORY | The Terrible Day

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Share (or have another adult share) about a time in your life when things seemed to be chaotic or troubling around you. Maybe you felt pressured by a group of friends to make some poor decisions. Or some other situation where you felt helpless to do anything about. Share how you decided to trust in God and do the right thing.
 - ✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** After you or another adult share your story, ask the kids if they have any stories to share about having to trust God in a difficult situation. Create a safe space for them to share without worrying about being judged. Acknowledge their feelings, encourage them as they share, and thank them for sharing so openly.
- That reminds me of what Zephaniah told the people of Israel. They were about to live through some very tough times. But in the end, God was with them and they realized they could always count on God.
- So, the next time you have a really terrible day, remember **when times are tough, I can count on God.**

ACTIVITY | Wanted Poster

- Let's make Wanted Posters of ourselves and remind ourselves to be the kind of people God is looking for – people who always count on God!
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give each kid a copy of the Wanted Poster printable. Tell them to draw a picture of themselves in the space provided. Then have them write, "counting on God" in the space provided.
 - ✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** Instead of a "Wanted Poster," make this activity a "Want Ad," like the classifieds in a newspaper. Ask the kids to create a brief job listing with a description of someone who can count on God when times are tough. What qualities should this person have? How should they live their lives? Have the kids reflect and write their want-ad with this job description on a sheet of paper.

SCRIPTURE | I Thessalonians 5:1-11

- Zephaniah was calling for people to be different from everyone else around them by doing what God wanted them to do, instead of what they wanted to do. There are other places in the Bible that talk about being different from the crowd, too.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Find I Thessalonians 5:1-11 in a kid-friendly Bible and encourage the kids to find it, too. Try NIV or NLT translations. Read it together.
- Look at verse 6 again. It says, “Let us not be like others . . .” **How do you think followers of God stand out from the crowd?**
- Followers of God do the very things we’ve been talking about this month. They worship God with their actions in church and out of church. They choose to do what’s right even when it’s hard. And they know that even if they make a mistake, they can still count on God to love them and take care of them when things are difficult.
- Let’s read verses 9-11 together. The day of the Lord Zephaniah was talking about sounded intense, right? But look what the Bible says – God doesn’t want to be angry with us. God gave people warnings back then so they can quickly turn away from the wrong things and return to God. So just like Zephaniah did, we can also help each other stay on the right path by being kind, forgiving, and truthful.

NOW WHAT? What does God want us to do about it?

ACTIVITY | Build Up Notes

- The verses we just heard from I Thessalonians tells us to encourage each other and to build each other up. Let’s take some time to do that right now.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give each kid about five sticky notes and a pencil. Tell them to find five friends to share notes of encouragement with. Ask them to write a note encouraging each other or describing how they know that person can count on God. Tell them to stick the sticky note on that person’s clothing (maybe their back), but place one note on top of another so that they are stacked. Encourage them to remember to notice if someone does not have a note and include them.

REFLECTION | Count On God

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Invite the kids to spend a few moments in prayer. You can play some soft music in the background.
- Right now, I want us to take a few moments to pray. This week, how will you stand out from the crowd and trust God? Maybe you will tell someone about God and invite them to church. Maybe you will show kindness to someone who has been mistreated. Let’s take a few seconds to pray and ask God to help us do that.

MEMORY VERSE | Memory in Motion

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Pair the kids for this activity. Share the memory verse with the kids. Then, tell them to turn to their partner and make up their own movements to go along with the memory verse. Ask a few kids to share their movements!

- Have you ever noticed that it's easier to remember something when you move to it? Let's do that with our memory verse!
- After I say the memory verse, turn to your partner and together, make up movements to go with the verse.
- The memory verse is, **"Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong." I Corinthians 16:13 (NIV)**
- **Does anyone want to show us the movements you came up with?**

PRAYER

- Dear God, please help us to remember your message through the prophet Zephaniah. Help us to trust you no matter what is happening around us. Help us also to remember that when times are tough, we can count on You . . . but we don't want to wait until times are tough – help us to count on you always!

SMALL GROUP TIME

DISCUSSION

- **What can you tell me about Zephaniah?**
- **What was the bad news?**
- **What was the good news?**
- **The Bible verses we read in I Thessalonians tell us to "not be like the others, who are asleep." What do you think this means for you and me?**
- **Has there ever been a time when you felt like you weren't sure you could trust God?**
- **How can we trust God in our everyday lives?**
- **How will you trust God in your life this week?**

ACTIVITY | News Clips

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give each kid a copy of the News Clips printable and a stack of newspapers or magazines. Have kids cut out letters and glue them to the printable to spell "I can count on God."
- A lot of newspapers are called "the Times" because they tell us of what has happened at specific times. Keep your "newspaper" with you to remember that God is there for you at ALL times. And of course, **when times are tough, you can count on God!**

MEMORY VERSE | I Corinthians 16:13 (NIV)

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Practice this month's memory verse with the signs (a combination of SEE and ASL) we've provided.