

# How Jesus Loved

## James the Less

**The Point:** Jesus gives us a mission.

**Scripture Connect:** Luke 6:12–16

**Supplies for all session 5 activities and options:** Bible, index cards, markers, inflated balloons (2 colors), paper, timer

### The Basics for Leaders

James the Less: What do we really know about him?

Next to nothing, that's what. We know his dad's name was Alphaeus and that he's listed among Jesus's first disciples.

And that for some reason, he got tagged with that name: James *the* Less.

"The Less" appears in only a few translations of the Bible. Sometimes James is referred to as "the younger," and sometimes he's just listed. But in every translation of the Gospels, we don't see much of him other than his name.

He's just ... there. Sort of like he was on the disciples' junior varsity team.

But don't be mistaken.

He was a friend of Jesus. He was chosen by Jesus. Jesus had a mission for him. And there's nothing "the Less" about being on a mission for Jesus.

As you and your kids consider James the Less, you'll consider what makes him—or anyone else—*more*: and that's a friendship with Jesus.

### OPENING ACTIVITY-OPTION 1

#### FRIENDLY FINGERS

*Time: about 5 minutes, depending on attendance*

## Gung-Ho Game

### MISSION: AIRBORNE

*Time: about 15 minutes, depending on attendance*

*Supplies: several inflated balloons (2 colors)*

Ask kids to count off by twos, 1-2-1-2 style. Have kids stand and spread out, 1s and 2s interspersed in the center of the room. Assign one balloon color to the 1s and the other color to 2s.

Explain that the goal of the game is to keep your team's balloons in the air by batting them up and to let the balloons of the other team hit the floor. The rules:

- No smacking the other team's balloons to the floor.
- Kids can't move their feet; they must stay stationary.
- Once a balloon hits the floor, that's where it stays unless you as the leader reintroduce it into play.

Say: **Your mission is to keep your team's balloons airborne. Ready?**

Start with a few balloons but quickly introduce more to keep the pace of the game galloping along quickly!

After a few minutes, have kids sit down. Remove balloons to avoid distractions. Better: have teams sit on their team's balloons and pop them!

Discuss this as a group:

- **You worked hard to fulfill your balloon mission. Turn to a partner and tell that person about another mission you took on in life and whether you fulfilled it.**

**For instance ...**

Briefly tell about a mission you had, maybe to make a team or pass a class or get into an event.

Say: **That's me, but how about you? What's a personal mission you've had? And were you able to fulfill it or not?**

After kids talk together, ask if anyone's willing to share with the whole group what was shared with a partner.

Say: **If that's your mission too, how might it look if you do it this week? What might you do or say if you love God with your whole heart?**

**As for me ...**

Briefly share how you can love God with your whole heart in the coming week.

Say: **Your turn. With your partner, talk about this:**

- **How might it look this week if you love God with your whole heart?**

After kids have a chance to talk, ask:

- **How might it look this week if you love your neighbor as yourself?**

After kids talk, have the whole group form a circle. Ask a willing reader to read aloud Matthew 28:18–20. Remind kids this was part of James the Less's mission and it's part of our mission too. We're to make disciples, or followers, of Jesus and to help launch those disciples in a life of faith.

As a group, discuss this:

- **How can we tackle that part of our mission? What might it look like?**

Thank kids for sharing their thoughts and then say: **James the Less was a friend of Jesus, so there was nothing "less" about him. Jesus made him "more" as Jesus worked in and through him. Jesus trusted him with a life-changing mission, and it's the same one he's asking us to take on.**

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

### **MISSION ACCEPTED?**

*Time: about 3 minutes*

*Supplies: none*

Say: **Jesus loved James the Less enough to trust him with a mission that gave James's life a focus, a purpose, and adventure.**

### EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY-OPTION 1

#### EYE ON THE PRIZE

*Time: about 5 minutes*

*Supplies: paper, Bible*

Give each child a sheet of paper and ask them each to roll up their paper like they're making a telescope big enough to see through with one eye. Have kids hold their telescopes in one hand and place their other hands a few inches in front of their faces, blocking their vision.

**Say: It's easy to drift off mission when life gets busy. But Jesus doesn't just want us to do stuff for him; he's after a friendship with us so when things get in the way, he's there with us to deal with the distractions. Stay focused on your friendship with him and you'll stay on mission. Plus you'll have the purpose you want and need in life.**

**Jesus said something about that.** Read aloud Matthew 6:33.

**Let's pretend that seeing me is the mission. Right now, you can't see me because something's in the way. But when you focus on Jesus, when you give God's kingdom first place in your life, that changes.**

Have kids put their telescopes up to their right eyes and keep both eyes open as they look at you. Then have them place their left hands, fingers pointing up, against the left side of the tube and about halfway out.

With both eyes open, it will look as if there's a hole in their left hands, and they'll see you.

**Say: That's what it's like when you focus on Jesus. No matter what the world throws at you, your friendship with Jesus lets you do what's he's asked you to do!**

**A quick question: What's in the way of your accomplishing your mission? Tell a partner about that.**

After kids talk for a few minutes, pray: **Jesus, help us keep our eyes on our mission. But even more, help us keep our eyes on you, our friend. Amen.**

### EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY-OPTION 2

#### 60-SECOND KINDNESS MINI-MISSION

*Time: about 10 minutes*

*Supplies: timer*