

How Jesus Loved Faithful Followers

The Point: Jesus gives us hope.

Scripture Connect: Matthew 7:1–3, 12, 15, 21–29

Supplies for all session 8 activities and options: Bible, paper lunch bags, markers, 2 paper plates, 8 empty soda cans (with pull tabs removed), glasses, water, vegetable oil, food coloring, effervescent antacid tablets, paper towels, stale marshmallows from session 7, trash can

The Basics for Leaders

Amazed, that's what they were.

Plenty of teachers picked up the Law and Prophets and then blathered on about what the words might mean. Such teachers twisted the message and inserted things the Lord never intended. The crowds were used to that.

But Jesus spoke with authority, almost as if he was the author of the message. The crowds hadn't heard *that* before.

Were these faithful followers always faithful? No, like us they sometimes wandered away. And friend that he is, Jesus invited them back.

Back to life. Back to freedom. Back to hope.

OPENING ACTIVITY-OPTION 1

FRIENDLY FINGERS

Time: about 5 minutes, depending on attendance

Supplies: none

After the puppet discussion, have kids carefully set their puppets aside. They'll need them again.

Say: **Today we'll talk about some people who needed hope—and found it when they met Jesus!**

Gung-Ho Game

CAN-DO RELAY

Time: about 20 minutes, depending on attendance

Supplies: paper plates (1 per team), empty soda cans (1 per kid, with pull tabs removed)

Separate kids into teams of four each. Explain that this relay will involve carrying the paper plate with one can on it to a far wall and back, where the next team member will stack an additional can on the first can and repeat the trip to the far wall and back. Cans will keep being added to the tower until there are four. If a can falls while someone's walking, it can be picked up and restacked, and the walker then continues.

Switch up whether kids carry plates in their left or right hands, whether they can walk or run, and whether they walk forward or backward. Play several rounds, switching up who's in each team.

When you're done playing, have kids sit and, as a whole group, discuss:

- **What gave you hope that you could complete this relay?**

Thank kids for sharing their responses. Then have kids find partners.

Say: **This was a game, but I know that life throws some real-world challenges at you too.**

- **Tell your partner something hard happening in your life now and what gives you hope that you can get through it.**

As for me ...

Briefly share a challenge you're facing and what gives you hope you'll come out the other side okay.

Say: **Your turn. Talk with your partners now.**

After pairs talk, say: **Thanks for sharing together. We're going to meet people who desperately needed the hope they found—in Jesus.**

CLOSING PRAYER

HOPEFUL PRAYER

Time: about 2 minutes, depending on attendance

Supplies: none

Gather kids in a circle and ask them to cup their hands in front of them. Explain that they'll participate in a responsive prayer; you'll say something and then pause, and they'll respond, "Jesus, give us hope."

Pray: **Jesus, we live in a world that's sometimes hard to understand. When we hear about bad things happening, be with us.** (Jesus, give us hope.) **When we face disappointments, be with us.** (Jesus, give us hope.) **When we find ourselves scared or sad, be with us.** (Jesus, give us hope.) **When people we love are sick or hurt, be with them—and us.** (Jesus, give us hope.) **In all ways, on all days, be with us, Jesus.** (Jesus, give us hope.) **Amen.**

BECOMING A BETTER FRIEND OF JESUS

Time: about 5 minutes

Supplies: Bible

Say: **Friends trust one another. Jesus has said that if you love and follow him, you can trust him for eternal life.**

Listen to what he said. Read aloud John 10:28–30.

Say: **A question for you: What can your friend Jesus trust you for? In your friendship, what have you told Jesus he can expect from you? Remember to talk with Jesus about that.**

EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY-OPTION 1

HOPE BUBBLE-UP LAVA LAMP

Time: about 10 minutes

Supplies: glasses, water, vegetable oil, food coloring, effervescent antacid tablets, paper towels

Do this activity on an easily cleaned tabletop or non-carpeted floor, just in case.

TIP

Practice making a lava lamp before you get together with your kids. You'll feel more confident and be better able to coach kids as they put together their lamps.

- What's the difference between making a wish and having hope?

After kids talk, say: A wish is a desire without much confidence it'll come true. But hope in Jesus is real. He can and will deliver what he promises! You can hope for heaven with certainty because, if you're following him, he promises to see you there!