

WEEK 1 ELEMENTARY LESSON GUIDE



THE BIG IDEA

I can be wise by not choosing sides.

THE BIBLE

Wisdom and Favoritism: Proverbs 22:1-2, 8-9, 22-23;
James 2:1-10

LARGE GROUP TIME

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

MUSIC | Worship

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *You can lead kids in worship with any songs you like best, but here are a few songs that go along with this month's theme. Make sure you have purchased any licenses required to play or perform these songs. For more information, [read this!](#)*
 - "True North" (Rend Co. Kids)
 - "Make Right Choices" (LifeKids)
 - "Wise Up" (Kidspring)
 - "My Lighthouse" (Rend Collective)

ACTIVITY | Would You Rather? (Pirate Edition)

- This month is all about choosing your own adventure! We make choices every day — some are small choices and some are big, but all of our choices matter in our adventures.
- Let's kick things off with a classic game of choice called, "Would You Rather?" . . . pirate edition!
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Play a game of "Would You Rather?" with pirate-themed questions. Have each side of the room (or ship) represent one of the choices. Instruct the kids to go to the side of the ship that goes with their choice.*
- **Would you rather . . .**
 - . . . be shot out of a cannon into a giant bowl of pudding, or be hit by a balloon filled with pudding?

- . . . walk off a plank into the sea where a shark awaits or an alligator awaits?
- . . . eat vegetables every day except on your birthday, or eat whatever you want every day, but can only eat vegetables on your birthday?
- . . . have to always talk like a parrot, or have a parrot that never stops talking?
- . . . live on a ship for one year with endless supplies, or live on an island with no supplies?

ACTIVITY | Treasure Treats

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give each kid a small box or bag for their “treasure chest.” Have four or five kinds of candy in piles at the front of the room. Tell the kids they can fill up their treasure chest with as much of their favorite candy as they would like, but only call up three kids at a time. This will inevitably lead to all of the candy being taken before everyone has a chance to come up. Remind the kids that they can only take whatever candy is their favorite.
- Sometimes, we play favorites by focusing only on what we want without thinking about how our choices affect other people.
- Before long, we’ve taken everything and left nothing for anyone else. *[Collect everyone’s treasure chests.]*
- We also play favorites when we pick one person over another by only playing with them or choosing their side only.
- When we do that, we leave some people feeling left out and it may hurt their feelings.
- You know what’s better? We can love everyone the way God loves us without playing favorites! That way, everyone feels included.
- **Now, who wants a piece of their favorite candy?** *[Give each kid a piece of their favorite candy.]*

QUESTION | How have you seen people play favorites?

- **What are some examples of how you’ve seen people play favorites before?**
 - We might see it in sports teams we play on when one person always gets to play in the best position.
 - Maybe when someone else gets a solo in the school choir that we wanted and it feels like the director is playing favorites.
 - We might feel like our brother or sister get to do more things than we get to do.
 - Sometimes, it might even feel like there are favorites in our classes at school.
- If you’re like me, it can make us sad or left out when it feels like we’re not picked as someone’s favorite. Picking favorites might make one person feel great, but can make other people feel awful.
- Today, we’re going to find out more about what God has to say about favorites and choosing sides.

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

BIBLE STORY | Wisdom and Favoritism

- Picture your favorite pirates out on the sea, seeking out treasure and adventure. They have to make choices along the way, like which direction to go, what treasure to search for, and whom to take on their crew. Those choices will determine what kind of adventure they have!
- Just like pirates choosing their adventure, we get to choose our adventures, too. Let's read today's passage.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Create two pirate planks made out of two-by-fours that the kids can walk on as they learn today's Bible story from Proverbs 22:1-2; 8-9; 22-23. Write "Wise" on one plank and "Unwise" on the other, then set them up in opposite directions. Put a [chest full of treasure](#) at the end of the "unwise" plank. Stand in the middle of the two planks. As volunteer readers come up to read one verse at a time, take one step forward on the "wise" plank, but look longingly at the treasure at the end of the "unwise" plank.*
 - ✂ **SPECIAL NEEDS HACK:** *When talking about concepts such as "wise" versus "unwise" and other contrasting ideas, clarify the language by using thumbs up/thumbs down, emojis, pictures, or other images to help kids visualize the outcomes.*
- Hmm . . . each verse that we read in today's Bible story made me move away from the treasure!
 - **Does that mean God doesn't want people to be rich?**
 - Not at all! But when we make conclusions about people and who we want to be friends with based on material things, the Bible tells us that is not wise.
- Today's Bible story talked a lot about the rich and the poor, showing that people who were rich often got treated better.
 - Doesn't this happen these days, too? Sometimes, we play favorites because of what someone has, where they live, or something that they're really good at.
 - **Let's read Proverbs 22:2 again. What do both the rich and poor have in common?**
 - That means whether someone lives in a big house or a small house, is great at soccer or can't kick a ball straight, is good at math or not, we were all made by God. And that makes us all equally important!
- The things that make us different from each other aren't bad. They can actually be things that bring us closer together because we all have cool talents to share with each other.
 - When we're choosing our adventure, we want to be with people who are good at things we're not good at. We want our adventure to be full of people who make the team better in different ways.
 - **In fact, let's read Proverbs 22:9 again, too. What happens to someone who is generous with what they have?**
 - God blesses people who give generously and fairly. Rather than showing favoritism to someone, we should choose to show God's love to everyone in the same way because that is exactly what God does for us!

- Now, it's time to make our first choice in our adventure! You can choose from two planks to walk on today:
 1. The wise plank: Loving everyone like God does and treating them fairly and kindly.
 2. The unwise plank: Thinking only of your favorites.
- **Which plank should we walk across based on what we learned today?**

BIG IDEA | I can be wise by not choosing sides.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Build a [pirate ship mast and sail](#) at the front of your room. Replace the sail each week with each week's Big Idea. Ask a volunteer to play the part of Captain Solly each week. This fun pirate gets to teach the Big Idea each week, so make sure they know ahead of time what they're sharing. Add a puppet parrot to Captain Solly if you'd like. Reveal the Big Idea each week by either raising or unfurling the sail.
- Ahoy, mateys! I'm Cap'n Solly, the wise pirate! Methinks I learned something really important today.
- A couple of weeks ago, I was out on the briny deep — that's what us pirates call the ocean — and me hearties were rustlin' over some doubloons. Me mateys started askin' me who gets these valuable doubloons and I thinks, "Blimey! What am I supposed to do?"
- On me one hand, I have me best buccaneer, and on me other hand, there's a new buccaneer I don't know. Hm. . .what would a wise pirate do, aye? I need me a Big Idea!
- **Can I have a deckhand come help me set sail?** [Choose a volunteer to help reveal the Big Idea on the sail.]
- Our Big Idea today is: **I can be wise by not choosing sides.**

VIDEO | Choose Your Own Adventure, Episode 1

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Play this week's episode of Grow TV.

VIDEO | God Doesn't Pick Favorites

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Show this video, "[God Doesn't Pick Favorites](#)," by PursueGOD Kids or a similar one.
- No matter our differences, God loves each of us the same way. How do we know this? The Bible tells us Jesus gave the ultimate sacrifice for us all because Jesus loves us that much. And as followers of Jesus, we are called to love everyone just as Jesus loves us!
- Playing with a kid at school who might not have as many friends, hanging out with people who look different than us, or being nice to all our siblings are ways **we can be wise by not choosing sides.**
- So many good things can happen when we don't choose sides. People feel special and important, our friends feel like they all matter to us, and we get to see how cool and different God made each of us.
- When we make the wise choice to love everyone as God does, we are showing a great example of how awesome and loving God is!

OBJECT LESSON | Pirate Prizes

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Get a crisp \$20 bill from a local bank and an old, crumpled \$20 bill. Take the old bill and make it even dirtier by rubbing it in dirt or mud. Be sure not to rip the old bill. Make the old bill dirty enough that you can't tell how much the bill is worth.
- I have these two bills with me today. One of them is clean, crisp, and new. The other is old, dirty, and even smells a little bit.
- **Which one of these bills would you prefer to take to the store and go shopping with?**
- **Why did you choose that one?**
- Many of you may prefer to take the new, clean bill to go shopping with, but if you chose the old, dirty, smelly bill, you would find that it's worth the same as the new one.
- **Can you think of anything else we make decisions about just by looking at it?**
- **How is this an example of choosing sides?**
- **Why is it wise to not choose sides?**

BIBLE | James 2:1-10

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Have a volunteer wear fancy clothes and a gold ring and another volunteer wearing a garbage bag with holes in it. As you read the passage, ask the two volunteers to walk in. Instruct a kid to seat the fancy volunteer in the front row, and another kid to seat the other volunteer in the corner on the floor.
 - ✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** Make this activity more relatable by having one volunteer dressed in brand name or trendy "swag" that might exude the image of popularity or status among preteens, and the other in something more outrageous and not at all something preteens would wear. You could even have the two volunteers dressed in opposing sports team jerseys to show polarity, also.
- This Bible passage tells us not to choose favorites.
 - **How did I show favorites just now?**
 - **What should I do to make this right?**
- **When we treat people differently based on their status** – like how much money they have or how popular they are – we are not loving everyone the way God wants us to. When the Bible tells us to love our neighbor as ourselves, it means to love others just the way they are!
- Jesus taught the people this while he was on earth, but more than that, that's exactly what he did. He chose to be friends with people who were not particularly cool and he cared for those who were largely outcasts.
- We can do the same. This is how **I can be wise . . . by not choosing sides!**

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

ACTIVITY | Captain Catch

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Choose one person to be the captain. They are "it." The rest of the group are sailors. Sailors can only crawl like they're swabbing the deck. When they get tagged once by the captain, they become first mates. First mates hop around on one leg, and once they get tagged

by the captain a second time, they become captains and can walk normally and help the captain tag people. The job of every captain is to get as many people to captain rank in the time allotted. Repeat the game with a new captain.

✂ **SPECIAL NEEDS HACK:** Some of these movements might be challenging for kids with gross motor needs. Consider using alternative motions such as clapping or nodding their heads.

- The more captains there were the easier it became to make more captains!
- Did you know that not all pirates are bad pirates? Good pirates had a well-maintained ship with a pirate code that helped everyone get along.
- When we are wise and see that we are all loved by God, it can be easy to work together toward showing God's love to everyone around us!

REFLECTION | Playing Favorites

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Ask the kids to think of a time when they sensed they were showing favoritism. Invite them to ask God for help to choose to include everyone.
 - ✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** Have preteens first reflect on a time that they themselves were shown (or weren't shown) favoritism. This might lead them to better connect to a time when they intentionally picked someone or didn't pick someone for something. Challenge them to own this and remind them we are all here to grow, not to dwell on past choices.
- Think of a time when you might have shown favoritism to someone. Or think of a time when you had to pick a side in an argument.
- **What made you pick someone as your favorite or choose someone's side?**
- **How can you tell when you are picking favorites?**
- **What are some ways we can show everyone we care about them?**

MEMORY VERSE | Verse Quest

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Print or project the memory verse graphic (available in your Programming folder). Make sure everyone has a Bible or pass out some that a pair of kids can share.
 - ✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** Have preteens draw their own graphic of the memory verse. Challenge them to set it as their phone wallpaper or put it up somewhere at home where it can be easily seen for the entire month to remind them to make wise choices.
- All month long, we are going to be choosing our own adventure! All adventures require a map, and we have the best one right here . . . our Bibles! The Bible helps us choose an adventure full of wisdom and life.
- The reference to our memory verse, Ephesians 5:15, is like a map to help us find it in the Bible.
- The directions to our destination are:
 - Ephesians - the book of the Bible
 - 5 - the chapter
 - 15 - the verse
- **Can someone tell us where the map took us today by reading Ephesians 5:15 out loud?**
- Our map tells us to live wisely.
- **What wise choice did we hear about today?** That's right! **I can be wise by not choosing sides.**

PRAYER

- Dear God, help us to choose wisely in our lives to love everyone the way you do. Help us not to play favorites, thinking only of ourselves or the people we like best. Help us to be good examples of your love for others. Amen.

SMALL GROUP TIME

DISCUSSION

- What is better to have than riches?
- What were the two types of people that the Bible story from Proverbs 22 talked about?
- Whether we are rich or poor, what do all of us have in common?
- Read James 2:9. What does this verse say about favoritism?
- What are some ways you might be tempted to show favoritism?
- What can you do to remind yourself to choose wisely and not choose sides?
- What do you show when you don't show favoritism?

ACTIVITY | Spin a Yarn

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Hold a ball of yarn and begin a story that would fit into our theme for today (e.g., "There was once a pirate named Sam who lived on her ship. One day, Sam chose to dive into the ocean while sharks were swimming nearby. Was that wise?") Then, toss the ball of yarn to another kid (while still holding onto the end of the string) and have them build on your story with another action, and have the group decide if that was wise or unwise. Have the kid toss the ball of yarn to another kid while still holding onto a piece of string that now connects you with them.
- "Spinning yarn" is an old sailing expression for telling stories. Look at the yarn we spun — literally!
- Every choice we make leads to another, like how we are all connected by this yarn. That's why it's important that we make wise choices to build on rather than unwise ones! Remind yourself to make good choices this week, and remember our Big Idea for this week: **I can be wise by not choosing sides!**

MEMORY VERSE | Ephesians 5:15 (NIV)

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Practice this month's memory verse with the signs (a combination of SEE and ASL) available in your Programming folder or at growcurriculum.org/Ephesians5-15.
- Let's practice this month's memory verse together!
- **"Be very careful, then, how you live — not as unwise but as wise."**