

5 min

LG Opener

5 min

Opening Game

What You Need

No supplies needed

HOST: "Good morning, friends! Welcome to [name of environment]! This month, we're training with a Game Plan to grow stronger every day in our friendship with God. Doesn't that sound awesome?"

"This Game Plan has four parts—talk about God, pray to God, hear from God, and live for God!"

"This week we're looking at the fourth part of that Game Plan, living for God! Our Bottom Line for today is: **[Bottom Line] Practice living for God.**"

"Let's say it together nice and strong."

KIDS: **[Bottom Line] "Practice living for God!"**

HOST: "Wow, that was good, but I think you've got louder voices than that. Let's try again, but this time say it like you're cheering for your favorite team. Ready? One, two, three ..."

KIDS: **[Bottom Line] "Practice living for God!"**

HOST: "That's it!"

HOST: "Now, in a game, a team has to follow its plays. If you don't follow the play, what happens? *(Pause for answers: 'You lose!' 'You get mixed up!')*"

"That's right, you get off track! And in our lives, God gives us His playbook in the Bible. He shows us how to live, and when we follow His plan, we grow stronger."

"So today, we're going to start with a game of 'Follow the Leader.'"

SLIDE: Follow the Leader

"Have you ever played 'Follow the Leader' before? One person leads, and everybody else copies. The trick is, don't miss when the leader changes!"

Round 1: Host Leads

HOST: "Okay, I'll go first so you get the idea. You don't have to walk behind me, just stand where you are. But everybody spread out, so you've got space. *(Pause as the kids spread out.)*"

"Ready? Here we go, march in place! *(March in place as the kids copy you.)*"

"Nice marching, team! Now let's add some big arm circles. *(Make big arm circles as the kids copy you.)* Whoa, look at those arms go!"

"Okay, switch it up, let's hop like kangaroos. Boing, boing, boing! Freeze! *(Pause dramatically.)* Did you freeze when I froze? Let me see your best frozen statue. That's awesome!"

Round 2: Kid Leaders

HOST: "Great job following me! But guess what, it's your turn. I need a volunteer to come up front and be our leader. If you want to lead the group, raise your hand!"

Choose a volunteer from someone who has their hand raised.

"Okay, everyone, copy our new leader! *(Allow the kid to lead. If they're stumped, encourage an action like jumping jacks or silly spins.)* Wow, that's a good one. Let's give our leader a round of applause! If you want to lead the group, raise your hand!"

Choose a volunteer from someone who has their hand raised. Play 2-3 more rounds with new leaders.

"Fantastic, those were some amazing moves!"

Lead Round 3.

Round 3: Think Fast

HOST: "Okay, let's play one more round. This time, I'll start us off, but be careful, you've got to pay attention. I might change moves quickly, and you've got to follow! Ready?"

"Here we go, tiptoe walk! *(Everyone tiptoes.)* And switch, slow-motion run! *(Everyone runs slowly.)* Switch again, spin in a circle! *(Everyone spins.)* And, freeze! *(Dramatic pause.)* You did it! Give yourselves a round of applause.

HOST: "Wow, you all were amazing at 'Follow the Leader!' Here's the thing: following a leader in a game is a lot like following Jesus in real life. We don't just do our own thing; we practice living the way He shows us. That's what our Bottom Line is all about: **[Bottom Line] Practice living for God.**

"When we practice living for God, we copy Jesus, like being kind, telling the truth, helping others, forgiving, and loving. And the more we practice, the stronger we get in following Him. Isn't that cool?"

"Let's say our Bottom Line one more time together so we don't forget. Our Bottom Line is: **[Bottom Line] Practice living for God!**

KIDS: **[Bottom Line] "Practice living for God!"**

HOST: "Great job, friends. I'm excited to learn more about that today as we follow Jesus!"

6 min

Worship

3 min

Worship | At the Top of My Lungs

What You Need

No supplies needed

3 min

Worship | This is Living

What You Need

No supplies needed

33 min

Bible Story (Live)

3 min

Introduction

What You Need

No supplies needed

WORSHIP LEADER:

"Hey everyone! You did such a great job in that game — give yourselves a quick clap!
(Clap with kids.)

Now we get to do something really important together — we get to worship God.

Worship isn't just something we sing about — it's something we live out every day. When we worship, we're telling God, 'I want to follow You with my whole life.'

This week, we're learning how to *practice living for God*. That means choosing to follow Jesus with our words, our actions, and our choices.

Our first song is loud and full of energy. It's a way for us to celebrate how amazing God is. So let's stand up, use our voices, and worship together!"

WORSHIP LEADER:

"Great job singing, everyone!

This next song reminds us that following Jesus isn't boring — it's the best way to live.

Let's keep worshipping together."

WORSHIP LEADER:

"Awesome job, everyone. Thank you for worshipping God so well today. You can go ahead and take a seat.

Before we move on, let's talk to God together."

Prayer:

"God, thank You for loving us and inviting us to follow You.

Help us choose to live for You in the way we talk, the way we act, and the choices we make.

Thank You that You forgive us and help us try again.

We want to practice living for You every day.

We love You. Amen."

Make sure the table is set on stage so the Storyteller can place their Bible on it and read from it.

STORYTELLER: "You guys! I'm beyond excited that you're here today! We're going to learn more about following Jesus together! I can't wait!

5 min

GOD'S BIG STORY OPENER (OPTIONAL)

What You Need

No supplies needed

"This month we've been looking at a Game Plan to grow closer to God! This Game Plan has four parts—talk about God, pray to God, hear from God, and live for God. This week, we're looking at the fourth part of that Game Plan, live for God!

"But before we get started looking at our true story from the Bible today, let me tell you about something amazing we're doing this year! We're journeying through the key stories of the Bible, cover to cover.

"Why are we going to look at the story of the entire Bible? Well, part of the reason why God gave us the Bible is so we can know who He is and what He is like. He wants us to learn about Him! So hopefully, as we go through the story of the Bible, we'll learn about God."

STORYTELLER: "We're going to go through God's Big Story in the Bible together so we can learn about God! (*Gesture to slide.*)

SLIDE: God's Big Story

"Let me catch you up on where we've been in God's Big Story so far!

"You might remember that, in the beginning, God created everything. He made the world, the animals, people ... everything! God made the first people for the same reason He made all people—to be His close, close friends. But sadly, the first people God made chose to turn away from Him and sin. God wanted people to be close to Him, but they couldn't anymore. Pain, sickness, and death entered the world too.

"But God didn't want to leave things that way. So He put His rescue plan in motion right from the start!

"God was going to rescue everything through a family! God chose a man named Abraham and promised that his family would bless the whole world. Abraham had a great-grandson named Joseph, who became a leader in Egypt and saved his family—God's people. Over time, God's people grew but were enslaved by a new Pharaoh. 'Help us!' they cried out to God. God freed His people and brought them to the super-nice home He had designed for them, the Promised Land.

"Some time after God's people were settled in the Promised Land, they asked for a king like the other nations around them. God gave them a king, and then many more kings (and one queen) followed. Sadly, after a long time of turning away from Him, God allowed His nation to be split in two—into the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. Prophets spoke for God saying, 'Come back to Me!' But the northern kingdom of Israel was destroyed, and the southern kingdom of Judah was taken captive. Oh no! After years in exile, some of God's people returned to rebuild their homeland, while others stayed in foreign lands.

"During that sad time, God kept sending messages to His people about the Rescuer He had promised long ago. 'God's Rescuer is going to come like this!' the prophets said. But for years and years, nothing happened.

5 min

SETTING UP THE STORY

What You Need

No supplies needed

5 min

MATTHEW LEAVES EVERYTHING

What You Need

No supplies needed

"And then it did! God sent Jesus, the Rescuer we needed, just like He promised! While Jesus was on earth, He showed us who God is because He is God!

"And that's where we are in God's Big Story!"

STORYTELLER: "We're continuing right along on our journey through the Bible! We're at the part of the Bible where Jesus was on Earth. Jesus came to Earth to teach us about God and His Kingdom.

"Today, we're going to hear a story from Jesus' life that involves a man named Levi. You might know Levi as another name, Matthew!

"Before we read about this story from the Bible, let me ask you a question. Have you ever had to make a choice? Like what to eat for lunch, or what game to play at recess? (*Pause for responses.*) Choices can be fun, but sometimes they're hard!

"Here's the thing: when we say YES to something, we usually have to say NO to something else. If you say YES to going to the park, you might have to say NO to playing video games. If you say YES to eating pizza, you might have to say NO to tacos. You can't do both at the same time. Here, let me show you!

"I'll give you two choices. If you choose the first one, stand up. If you choose the second one, sit down. Ready?

"Would you rather have a pet dog (*stand up*) or a pet cat (*sit down*)?" (*Pause as the kids respond.*)

"Would you rather go to Disney World (*stand up*) or the beach (*sit down*)?" (*Pause as the kids respond.*)

"Would you rather eat pizza (*stand up*) or tacos (*sit down*)?" (*Pause as the kids respond.*)

"Great job! Did you notice? When you said YES to one choice, you had to say NO to the other. You couldn't stand up and sit down at the same time.

"In our Bible Story today, a man named Levi, or Matthew, had to make a BIG choice. And Jesus was the One who gave Matthew that big choice. Let's see what happened."

STORYTELLER: "The Bible says:

Open the Bible to Luke 5:28 (NIRV) and read.

Levi got up, left everything and followed him.

"Matthew didn't wait to follow Jesus. He didn't make excuses. He didn't say, 'Maybe later.' He left it all behind, right away.

5 min

MATTHEW'S BANQUET

What You Need

No supplies needed

"Everyone say, 'WOW!'"

KIDS: "WOW!"

STORYTELLER: "Let's pretend together and act this out. Imagine you're Matthew, sitting at your table with piles of money in front of you. (*Pretend you are Matthew, moving coins around your tax collector's booth. Invite the kids to copy you.*) You worked hard to get it. But then Jesus says, 'Follow Me.' What do you do?"

"Let me act out what Matthew did.

Motion as if you are pushing your chair back and leaving behind your tax-collecting booth.

"Matthew made his choice. He let go. He walked away. He chose Jesus.

"Friends, sometimes following Jesus means we have to leave things behind too—like lying, being unkind, or making selfish choices. We can't hold on to everything and still follow Jesus."

STORYTELLER: "Let me tell you what happened next in our true story from the Bible:

Open the Bible to Luke 5:29-30 (NirV) and read.

Then Levi gave a huge banquet for Jesus at his house. A large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them. But the Pharisees and their teachers of the law complained to Jesus' disciples.

"Matthew was so excited that he threw a big banquet for Jesus at his house. He wanted all his friends to meet Jesus too. But some religious leaders didn't like it. They asked Jesus why He ate with tax collectors and sinners.

"Jesus answered them:

Open the Bible to Luke 5:31-32 (NirV) and read.

"Healthy people don't need a doctor. Sick people do. I have not come to get those who think they are right with God to follow me. I have come to get sinners to turn away from their sins."

"Jesus told them that healthy people don't need a doctor, sick people do. Jesus said He came for sinners, not people who think they're already perfect. That means Jesus came for all of us.

"Do you remember way back in the Garden of Eden? Adam and Eve ushered in a curse of sin, and we all have sin-sick hearts. No one can be close friends with God anymore. We need someone to break that curse of sin so we can be close friends with God again! We are the sick people who need a doctor, like Jesus talked about. We need Jesus.

5 min

WRAPPING UP THE STORY

What You Need

No supplies needed

"Stand up and let's pretend you are one of Matthew's friends coming to the banquet. Now let's sit down to pretend you are already seated at the table waiting for Jesus to arrive. Great! Now let me see you act out being at Matthew's banquet! *(Pause as the kids act out eating food and drinking drink.)*

STORYTELLER: "So let's remember. Jesus saw Matthew. Jesus said, 'Follow Me.' Matthew left everything and followed Jesus. Then he invited his friends to meet Jesus too.

"And what about us? Matthew's story reminds us that Jesus didn't just call Matthew to follow Him. He calls me. He calls you.

"Jesus has said, 'Follow me' to you too!

"And as we follow Jesus, something awesome will happen—we will spread His Kingdom. He is a King of a Kingdom. And we can spread that Kingdom anytime we live out the ways of the King. God is kind, so when we are kind, we spread His Kingdom. God is joyful, so when we are joyful, we spread His Kingdom. God is trustworthy, so when we are honest, we spread His Kingdom!

"If you are a Jesus follower, He's called you right where you are to follow Him. In your life, with what is in front of you that day. And as you choose to follow Him, you make the world look more like His Kingdom!

"So, every day, let's make the choice to live for God! We can follow Him by saying YES to Him and things He would choose and NO to things that don't please Him. That's how we **[Bottom Line] practice living for God.**"

"That's our Bottom Line for today: **[Bottom Line] practice living for God!**"

SLIDE: Bottom Line

"Say that Bottom Line with me!

Host enters and joins in.

KIDS, STORYTELLER, AND HOST: [Bottom Line] "Practice living for God."

5 min

GOD'S BIG STORY CLOSER (OPTIONAL)

What You Need

No supplies needed

HOST: "Let's take a look at the progress we made in God's Big Story this week!

SLIDE: God's Big Story

"This week, we're up here in the part of this picture of God's Big Story—the picture that says, 'Jesus' Life.' In our story today, we saw when Jesus called Matthew to follow Him.

"As we saw this week, we're all like Matthew. Jesus has said to all of us: 'I want you as My friend.' God wanted us close to Him, but we had the curse of sin in the way. But God didn't let that stop Him. Jesus loves us so much that He gave His life to pay for the sin that was keeping us from being close to God. The God of the universe has picked you to be His Friend—that's been His key motivation throughout His Big Story. God worked for years and years to send us Jesus. The Jesus who wants us to be His friend would give His life to rescue us all. Our friendship means so much to Him.

"Let's put the next image on our timeline!

SLIDE: Week 4 Timeline Image

If you're making a timeline of printed images on your wall, take this moment to place today's Timeline Image on the clothesline.

"This week, we learned about when Jesus called Matthew to follow Him!"

8 min

Closing

5 min

WHAT'S OUR PART IN THE STORY?

What You Need

No supplies needed

HOST: "What an amazing story from Jesus' life today!

"Jesus saw Matthew. Jesus called Matthew. And Matthew got up and followed Him. Our part in the story is to do the same, to follow Jesus with our whole lives.

"That means sometimes we have to say NO to things that don't honor God, and YES to practicing living for Him.

3 min

PRAYER**What You Need**

No supplies needed

"If someone needs help cleaning up a mess, Jesus would say, 'yes' to helping them. If you are going through something where it would be easier to tell a lie, Jesus would say 'no' to lying. If someone needs to use your purple marker for coloring, Jesus would say 'yes' to sharing!

"Throughout your day, say 'yes' to what Jesus would say yes to. And say 'no,' to what He would say no to.

[Bottom Line] "Practice living for God!

"And kids, if you want to choose to follow Jesus today, if you want to say YES to Jesus, and you haven't done that before, talk to a leader or parent about this. They would love to help you take that step."

STORYTELLER or HOST: "Let's pray together. Bow your heads and close your eyes. Take a moment and think to yourself. 'Do I follow Jesus?'

(Pause for 15-30 seconds.)

"You can choose to follow Jesus today. Just like Matthew got up and left everything to follow Jesus, you can do the same. Maybe there are some things you need to leave behind. Let's pray.

"Dear Jesus, thank You for seeing us, just like You saw Matthew. Thank You for saying, 'Follow Me.' We want to follow You with our lives. Help us say YES to You and the things You love and NO to the things that don't please You.

"And Jesus, if there's someone here today who wants to follow You for the very first time, please give them the courage to talk to a leader or a parent. We know You love it when people take that step. You want to be their friend!

"Thank You that You forgive us when we mess up, and You help us try again. We want to keep practicing living for You every day. We love You, and we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen."

Dismiss kids to their small groups.