



Uh Oh Topher

Jehoshaphat Sings to God

BIG IDEA: I can praise God with singing.

BIBLE BASIS: 2 Chronicles 20:1–30

KEY VERSE: “Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD.” Psalm 95:1 (NirV)

SCHEDULE

PLAY TIME ACTIVITIES

15–20 minutes

LARGE GROUP LESSON

20–25 minutes

SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES

25–35 minutes

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LEADER DEVOTIONAL

I met Margie on a flight from Charlotte to St. Louis. She and Jackie, her best friend of sixty years, were on their way back from visiting Margie's daughter.

I took the aisle seat and prepared to avoid two hours of small talk by pulling out my headphones. Margie said, "Now, are you going to cause any trouble on this flight? Because this row only has enough room for one trouble-maker and I've already got that role covered."

"No," I said. "The flight attendant asked me to sit here, so I could keep you in line."

I put my headphones away.

We talked for the rest of the flight.

What I learned is that Margie hasn't had an easy life. When her first husband lost his battle to cancer, she took a job in the hotel management industry that kept her on the road and away from home most of the time. She remarried in her mid-fifties and enjoyed two decades with her second husband before he lost his battle to Parkinson's. Margie is eighty-seven now. She moved into assisted living a couple months ago. Her health is declining and the pain in her left hip has stripped her of the independence she loved.

But, she has no complaints and no regrets.

I asked her how she had cultivated such a joyful spirit despite all the heartache she had experienced.

"God has been so good to me," she said. "Even in the darkest times, He gave me reason to be grateful. You can't choose *what* God will ask you walk through, but you can choose *how* you walk through it. Oh, there's been heartache, to be sure. I've cried a lot of tears and I still deeply miss the people I've lost. It's just that I decided a long time ago I didn't want to waste a single minute of my time dwelling on what might or should have been. Cranky old people start out as cranky young people. Don't be a cranky young person, Casey."

I won't be.

Thank you, Margie. I'm glad I took my headphones off.

Casey Jordan
GO! Contributor



LARGE GROUP SKILL BUILDING

Using Kid-friendly Language

It may be true that we've been washed in the blood of Jesus for the atonement of our sins and the redemption of our souls, but you might want to pause before telling that to a kid. The Christian faith is rich with imagery and vocabulary! To a kid, though, some of it might be confusing, overwhelming, and even frightening at times. If you don't want your kids to look at you like you're speaking Klingon, consider the following advice:

Be mindful of your language. The biggest part of solving a problem is recognizing that it exists. For some of us, we don't even realize that the words we're using with kids are a little advanced.

Develop a kid-thesaurus. No — that's not a dinosaur! Begin developing kid-friendly language to replace some of the bigger words you might use. For example, instead of saying "redeemed," you might say "set free." Instead of saying, "washed in the blood," you might say "forgiven of our sins."

Be intentional with new words. Not only is it okay to introduce new words to kids, it's instrumental. Part of developing kids into functioning members of the church is helping them understand the language, but be purposeful with your new words instead of just using them haphazardly.

Don't introduce too many new words too quickly. It can take kids a little bit of time to understand and absorb new words and concepts. If you throw too many new words at them too quickly, they may not remember any of them.

Use the word, define the word, use the word. When you introduce kids to a new word, first use it in its right context. Next, define the word using simple and clear language. Finally, use the word multiple times so kids can really digest it. You may even want to have the kids repeat the word after you so they can really familiarize themselves with it.



UNIT DESCRIPTION

That mischievous little gopher has done it again! Topher the Gopher has burrowed his way into our room while we weren't looking. He got his paws on the story pictures from the true Bible story and hid them around the room. But the story must go on! It's up to the kids to find the hidden pictures so the story can be told. During the silly search, kids will learn that God is always with them and that He hears them when they talk to Him.

SET-UP INSTRUCTIONS

- Print the "Uh Oh Topher" story illustrations on 8½ x 11 cardstock paper. Hide the pictures around the room in locations that are at least partially visible from where the children will be seated. You can make some of the pictures a little harder to find than others.
- Create a "Super Duper Bible Box" and place your storytelling Bible inside. This box will be used every week. See the Resource Folder for details on how to make the "Super Duper Bible Box."
- If using the non-video options for the Topher segments of the lesson, print the Topher's Storytime Rules signs and Topher's Big Idea signs on 8½ x 11 cardstock paper and place in the story time area. See "Getting Started" in the Resource Folder for the printable signs and for more instructions on how to perform the non-video options.
- Note: Any media repeated throughout the unit, such as the Topher videos and the title slide, is located in the Lesson 1 Resource Folder only.

3.2 Large Group Lesson | Preschool



★ LARGE GROUP LESSON

WELCOME AND MUSIC

As children enter the story time area, give them a high-energy welcome — smile, wave, give high fives, and tell them you're glad to see them. For added energy during the transition, play a fun song that the children are familiar with. When the children have all arrived, play one or two upbeat worship songs of your choosing and lead the kids in singing.

Music: Play one or two upbeat worship songs

BIG IDEA AND BIBLE VERSE

Large Group Leader: Hello everybody, I'm so glad you're here today because I REALLY need your help. Our Bible story pictures are missing and I think I know who took them. I'll give you a hint: he's a furry little rascal with two big front teeth! (*Children respond.*) That's right — it's Topher the Gopher! In just a little bit, we'll search for the missing pictures and tell our Bible story.

Say: Today's true Bible story is going to teach us that **I can praise God with music**. That's our Big Idea for the day. Let's say it together. (*Repeat Big Idea with children.*) **I can praise God with music**. It's true! **I can praise God with music**. In fact, that's what today's memory verse is all about. Let me teach it to you.

“With people (*point to self with thumbs*),
this is impossible (*make big “X” with arms*).
But with God (*point up*),
all things are possible (*two thumbs up*).”
Matthew 19:26 (*extend hands like you're holding a book*).

Say: Let's do that together. (*Repeat Memory Verse with children 2 or 3 times.*)

STORY TIME RULES

Say: Wow — nice job! I think you are ready for the Bible story. Before we get started, though, I think we should go over our three story time rules.

Video: Play “Topher the Gopher Story Time Rules” video

(*Note: Play the “Topher the Gopher Story Time Rules” video or use the Story Time Rules script found in the Resource Folder.*)

3.2 Large Group Lesson | Preschool



UH OH TOPHER INTRO

(Note: Ahead of time, hide the picture of Topher the Gopher somewhere in the room that is at least partially visible from the seating area.)

Say: Let's get started by looking for Topher the Gopher. If you see Topher hiding somewhere in the room, point to him and sing "la, la, la" in your prettiest voice. *(Once the Topher picture is found, remove him from his hiding spot.)*

Say: Wow! I heard some very pretty singing voices. In today's true Bible story, we're going to hear all about some people who sang to God in their prettiest voices. *(Hold up Topher picture.)* Unfortunately, this silly little gopher took our Bible story pictures and hid them all around the room. If we're going to hear the story, we have to find the missing pictures first.

Say: If you're ready to find the missing pictures, let me hear you sing "la, la, la" again. *(Children sing.)* Great! First, let's get our Bible out of the Super Duper Bible Box. *(Move to the Super Duper Bible Box.)* I need your help getting the Bible out, though. We need to say our special Bible words together. Repeat these special words after me: It's true, it's true, the Bible is true!

Slide: Show the "Jehoshaphat Sings to God" slide

3.2 Large Group Lesson | Preschool



BIG BIBLE STORY — JEHOSEPHAT SINGS TO GOD

(Note: Ahead of time, hide the story pictures around the room in locations that are at least partially visible from where the children will be seated. You can make some of the pictures a little harder to find than others.)

Say: I think it's time to find our first missing picture. Does anyone see the picture of angry soldiers? *(Allow children time to look for the picture. Give clues if needed. Once found, remove the picture from its hiding place and hold it up for children to see.)* In the Bible, in the Book of 2nd Chronicles, a BIG army of soldiers marched to attack King Jehoshaphat (*pronounced: ji-hosh-uh-fat*) and the people of Israel. Can you say "King Jehoshaphat" with me? *(Repeat with children.)* Great job! King Jehoshaphat and the people of Israel felt very afraid of the angry soldiers.

Say: Let's see if we can find the next picture. Does anyone see the picture of people praying? *(Children look for picture. Hold it up once it's found.)* King Jehoshaphat and the people came together to pray to God. King Jehoshaphat prayed, "Dear God, You are strong and powerful. No one can fight against you and win. We don't have the power to defeat this army, but we know you will help us."

Say: Let's see if we can find the next picture. Does anyone see the picture of a scared face? *(Children look for picture. Hold it up once it's found.)* God sent a messenger to King Jehoshaphat and the people of Israel. The messenger said, "Listen! The Lord says to you, 'Do not be afraid. You will not have to fight this army. I will be with you.'"

Say: Let's see if we can find the next picture. Does anyone see the picture of people singing? *(Children look for picture. Hold it up once it's found.)* Early in the morning, King Jehoshaphat and the people of Israel marched out towards the battlefield. As they marched, the people sang songs of praise to God. They shouted, "Give thanks to the Lord. His faithful love continues forever."

Say: Let's see if we can find the next picture. Does anyone see the picture of a soldier running away? *(Children look for picture. Hold it up once it's found.)* As the people of Israel marched and sang, God caused the enemy soldiers to start fighting each other. By the time the people of Israel reached the battlefield, the entire army of enemy soldiers had been defeated. When the people saw what had happened, they were so filled with joy! And once again, they sang songs of praise to God.

Say: Hey — I have an idea! Let's sing a song of praise to God just like the people of Israel did.

3.2 Large Group Lesson | Preschool



MUSIC AND CLOSING

(Encourage the children to stand up. Lead them in a worship song of your choice. Following the song, use the rhyme from earlier to help the children sit down again.)

Music: Play one worship song

Say: In today's true Bible story, God protected the people of Israel from the angry soldiers. The people were so happy that they sang songs of praise to God. Did you know that God loves when we sing songs to Him? It's true! When we sing songs of praise to God, it shows Him that we love Him and we think He's wonderful.

Say: Hey — I've got an idea! We can make up our own songs of praise to God. Hmm...let me think of something to sing. I know! Let's sing *(say in a sing-song-y voice)*, "God I think you're wonderful." *(Repeat with children.)* What else could we sing to God? *(Take suggestions, then lead the children in singing together. Sing 2–3 "sing-songs" to God.)*

Say: God is so wonderful and He loves us SO much. In fact, God loves us so much that He gave us His Son, Jesus, so that we could live forever in Heaven with Him. That's one of the best reasons **we can praise God with singing!**

3.2 Large Group Lesson | Preschool



TOPHER'S BIG IDEA

Say: Hey — that's our Big Idea for today! I think we should tell it to our parents when we see them. Maybe we should practice first. (*Appear to be thinking.*) Hmm...who could we practice telling? I know! We could tell our friend, Topher the Gopher. Let's see if we can find him.

(*Play "Topher's Big Idea Video 1" or, for a non-video option, print out the "Topher's Big Idea Cards" ahead of time and hold up card #1. See the "Topher's Big Idea" document in the Resource Folder for more suggestions on how to perform the non-video option.*)

Video: Play "Topher's Big Idea Video 1"

Say: (*Whisper.*) Uh-oh. It looks like Topher is asleep. I think we should wake him up. When he wakes up, we can all tell him that **I can praise God with music**. On the count of 3, let's all yell, "Topher the Gopher, wake up, wake up!" (*Count to 3 and yell with kids. Then play "Topher's Big Idea Video 2" or hold up card #2.*)

Topher: Hey, what's the Big Idea?

Children and Large Group Leader: **I can praise God with music.** (*Repeat the Big Idea several times. When finished, play "Topher's Big Idea Video 3" or hold up card #3.*)

Topher: Wow! That is a Big Idea! Thanks for telling me! Goodbye kids. (*Encourage kids to wave goodbye to Topher as he disappears back into his hole.*)

Large Group Leader: Let's say a prayer together and praise God for loving us so much. (*Encourage kids to repeat the following prayer after you.*)

**Dear God,
You are so wonderful.
I love you so much.
Thank you for giving us Jesus.
We praise you for Him.
Amen**