



Uh Oh Topher

Elijah and the Fireball from Heaven

BIG IDEA: God can do miracles.

BIBLE BASIS: 1 Kings 18

KEY VERSE: “With people, this is impossible. But with God, all things are possible.” Matthew 19:26 (NirV)

SCHEDULE

PLAY TIME ACTIVITIES

15–20 minutes

LARGE GROUP LESSON

20–25 minutes

SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES

25–35 minutes

Scripture marked “NIV” is taken from the Holy Bible, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 Biblica. All rights reserved throughout the world. Used by permission of Biblica. Scripture marked “NirV” is taken from the Holy Bible, New International Reader’s Version™, Copyright ©1995, 1996, 1998 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. All rights reserved. All scripture references are taken from NirV unless otherwise stated.

User Agreement:

The GO! curriculum by Go Tell It, LLC is intended for download and print by subscribing entities only. It may not be transferred electronically to or duplicated by other non-subscribing entities. If the GO! curriculum is cost prohibitive for your organization, please contact us about assistance. We are awesomely generous! All use must be in accordance with the Terms of Use agreement as described on the website www.gocurriculum.com.



LEADER DEVOTIONAL

During my late teens and early twenties, I had one of the most challenging, albeit best, jobs on earth — I was a camp counselor. The pay was miniscule. (One year we calculated that the counselors earned less than a dollar an hour.) Moreover, the hours were long. And by “long,” I mean that we only got two nights off a week, for four hours each night. So when our nights off rolled around, you can imagine all of the things we needed and wanted to accomplish — laundry, shopping, relaxation, recreation. But most of all, we just wanted to spend every possible moment hanging out and building friendships with the other counselors who had the night off.

One summer, though, I felt convicted to approach my nights off differently. Although they were precious few, I was compelled to give the first of my two nights off every week to God alone. For those four hours, I would spend time praying, meditating, and reading in solitude. As I wrestled with the thought, I couldn’t imagine how I was going to accomplish everything I needed in the four remaining hours a week. Moreover, I was afraid of missing out on all of the fun that the other counselors would be having together. Nevertheless, I gave it a shot.

Predictably, my time each week with God was life-giving. I saw more spiritual growth during that summer than I ever had before. And simply put, I fell more deeply in love with God than I could have imagined. What I didn’t anticipate, though, is that by giving God the first portion of my time, the remainder of my time seemed multiplied. Not only did I have enough time to do everything I wanted and needed, I had an abundance of time. And best of all, there was a divine sweetness that permeated it all. Although I had essentially cut my time of fellowship in half, my connection with the other counselors was twice as deep. Not only was my time with God having a profound impact on me, it was also profoundly impacting those around me.

If you’re like me, you might think you’re too busy to give that much time to God. But in fact, the opposite is true. We’re too busy *not* to give that much time to God. God created us first and foremost to have fellowship with Him, and when that’s missing, everything else suffers. So try something wonderfully dangerous this week — give God the first portion of your day. And not just your spare time. Instead, be radically generous with the time you give Him. You’ll be amazed at how faithful God is when you put Him first.

David Rausch

Go Tell It Founder and Creator



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.



★ 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 kids! I'm so, so happy to see you today. Did you bring your looking eyes with you? (*Cup hands around eyes like binoculars.*) I hope so, because we're going to do a lot of looking today. We need to look for some missing pictures so we can tell the Bible story.

Say: Today's true Bible story is going to teach us that **God can do miracles**. That's our Big Idea for the day. Let's say it together. (*Repeat Big Idea with children.*) **God can do miracles.** It's true! **God can do miracles.** 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.*)

3.3 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 say "I gotcha gopher!" *(Once the Topher picture is found, remove him from his hiding spot.)*

Say: Hmm...take a look at this — Topher is holding a sign with a word on it. The word is "Miracle." Can you say that word with me? *(Repeat with children.)* A miracle is something amazing only God can do. In fact, today's true Bible story is all about a miracle that God did. 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, clap your hands 3 times. *(Children clap hands.)* 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!

(After the Bible is revealed, open the box and take it out. Hold the open Bible in front of you.)

Slide: Show the "Elijah and the Fireball from Heaven" slide

3.3 Large Group Lesson | Preschool



BIG BIBLE STORY — ELIJAH AND THE FIREBALL FROM HEAVEN

(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 a king? *(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 1 Kings, there was a bad king named Ahab. He taught the people of Israel how to worship a fake god named Baal *(pronounced BAY-uhl)*. This made the real God very sad.

Say: Let's see if we can find the next picture. Does anyone see the picture of two bulls? *(Children look for picture. Hold it up once it's found.)* There was a prophet named Elijah who loved God very much. He wanted to prove to the people of Israel that God was the one and ONLY true God. So he said to them, "Bring me two bulls. The followers of Baal can put their bull on a pile of wood and I'll put my bull on a different pile of wood. Then they'll pray to their god and I'll pray to mine. The god who burns up the bulls with fire is the one and only God."

Say: Let's see if we can find the next picture. Does anyone see the picture of a man shouting? *(Children look for picture. Hold it up once it's found.)* The followers of Baal prayed to their fake god from breakfast to lunch, but nothing happened. So they danced and shouted even louder. "Baal! Answer us!" they shouted. But still nothing happened. Their god couldn't hear them because their god wasn't real.

Say: Let's see if we can find the next picture. Does anyone see the picture of a jar of water? *(Children look for picture. Hold it up once it's found.)* Now it was Elijah's turn. Elijah said to the people, "Fill some big jars with water, then pour the water over my bull and my pile of wood." So that's what the people did. Now, everything was soaking wet and it was going to be even harder for God to burn it up with fire.

Say: Let's see if we can find the next picture. Does anyone see the picture of fire on the altar? *(Children look for picture. Hold it up once it's found.)* Elijah prayed to God, "Lord, answer me. Then these people will know that you are the one and only God." Right then, God sent fire down from the sky. It burned up the bull and EVERYTHING around it. When the people of Israel saw what happened, they cried out, "The Lord is the one and only God!"

3.3 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 our story for today, God did a miracle. A miracle is something amazing that only God can do. God made fire come down from the sky, but that's not the only miracle God can do.

Say: If you think God could make a sick person get better, wiggle your fingers. *(Children wiggle fingers.)* If you think God could split a big sea into two, wiggle your ears. *(Children wiggle ears.)* If you think God could make water come out of a rock, wiggle your toes. *(Children wiggle toes.)* If you think God could make bread rain down from the sky, wiggle your nose. *(Children wiggle nose.)* It's true, it's true! God did all of those things, but the greatest miracle God ever did was to raise Jesus from the dead. If you believe that and if you love and follow Jesus, you can live with Him forever in Heaven. You can trust that God raised Jesus from the dead because **God can do miracles.**

3.3 Large Group Lesson | Preschool



TOPHER'S BIG IDEA

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.

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 **God can do miracles**. 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: **God can do miracles.** (*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 being so powerful. (*Encourage kids to repeat the following prayer after you.*)

**Dear God,
You are so, so powerful.
You can do anything.
You made Jesus come back to life.
Help me love and follow Jesus.
Amen**