

WEEK 1 LESSON GUIDE



BIG IDEA

I won't give up — God is with me!

BIBLE

Babylonian Captivity:

Daniel 1; Lamentations 3:19-26

LARGE GROUP TIME

Welcome to our new series, *Hear Me Roar!* We're going to spend some time over the next few weeks at the Babylon Zoo, where we'll meet some courageous . . . and some not so courageous . . . creatures! Coincidentally, Babylon is the city where all our Bible stories this month take place! Are you ready? If so, let me hear you roar!

WHAT? What are we talking about today?

MUSIC | Worship

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** You can lead kids in worship with any songs of your choice, but here are some suggestions 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!](#)
 - "Echo" (Elevation Worship)
 - "God Is Always With Us" (Lifetree Kids)
 - "I'm Trusting You" (Lifetree Kids)
 - "Not Afraid" (Rend Co. Kids)
 - "Journey of a Lifetime" (Kids on the Move)

ACTIVITY | Penguin Soccer

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** For this activity, divide the kids into two even teams. Set soccer goals or cones on both sides of the room. Tie a bandana or piece of fabric around each player's knees (but don't tie the players together), so they have to waddle as they play. We recommend showing a picture like [this](#) of a penguin prior to playing. For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#)
 - ✂ **SPECIAL NEEDS HACK:** Instead of tying bandanas around friends' knees, demonstrate waddling and encourage that as an alternative to walking for getting from one end to the other.
 - ✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** Consider using six-foot tables, unfolded with the flat side facing game play, as goals.

- I'm so happy you're here visiting the Babylon Zoo today! I'm the zookeeper here, and I'm going to show you around. Let's start our tour with those fancy birds who wear tuxedos! **Do you know which ones I mean?** That's right! We're headed to the penguin exhibit! *[Show picture of penguins.]*
- Looks like they're getting ready for a game of soccer. Let's join them! *[Divide kids into two teams and play as described.]*
- **Was it difficult to play with your knees tied together? Since it was different than what you're used to, did you ever want to give up?**

ACTIVITY | Lions and Hyenas

- I'm so excited to introduce you to my favorite animals here at the zoo. Let's leave the chilly Antarctic and head to the grasslands of Africa!
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Keep the kids in the same teams they were in for Penguin Soccer, and keep the goals in place too. Choose one kid from each team to be the wild hyena, who is "it." The goals will act as "dens" and each team will begin across the room from their den. The goal is for your whole team to cross to the other side and end up in their den. The catch is, they'll have to watch out for the wild hyena! If they're tagged by the other team's wild hyena, they must lay on the ground and freeze. Another player from their team must come and "unfreeze" them. The first team to have all of their pride together in their team's den wins! For an added challenge, have kids play on all fours like lions and hyenas. Before playing, show kids a picture of a lion next to a hyena, like [this](#) one. For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#)*
- **Can you guess what animals we'll see next?** Here's a hint *[show picture of lion next to hyena]*. Yes, the lions and the hyenas! They're playing a game of tag. Come on, let's play!

POLL | Petting Zoo Possibilities

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Invite the kids to sit together and talk about the following scenarios. Have kids raise their hands in response to the statements with which they agree.*
 - ✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** *In addition to having preteens answer the poll, have them share a story about a funny zoo or animal encounter.*
- Here at the Babylon Zoo, we're thinking about putting in a new petting zoo. I need your help thinking about what animals we should include.
- **Raise your hand if you would . . .**
 - **Cuddle with a koala.**
 - **Ride a camel.**
 - **Touch an octopus.**
 - **Kiss a frog.**
 - **Let a parakeet sit on your arm.**
 - **Let a bearded dragon sleep on your bed.**
 - **Drape a python around your shoulders.**
 - **Hold a baby crocodile.**
 - **Pet an ADULT crocodile.**
 - **Spend a night at the zoo inside the cheetah exhibit.**
- Most of you raised your hands at the beginning, but then many of you said, "No way!" when it came to some of the animals. **What made you decide to say no?**

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

SCRIPTURE | Daniel 1 (Babylonian Captivity)

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Dressed as a zookeeper, tell the story of Daniel 1 as though you're guiding kids through an exhibit at the Babylon Zoo. Remain in the zookeeper character.*
- You know, the variety of fascinating animals here at Babylon Zoo brings visitors from all over! As the zookeeper, it's my job to get to know some of them, and the other day I met four friends who were just as interesting as the animals we keep here.
- One of the guys, Daniel, told me they were new in town. He and three of his friends just arrived here from Jerusalem. It's kind of a sad story.
 - You see, they were brought to Babylon by our king, a man named Nebuchadnezzar. He took these friends from their homes and families to make them come work for him. They've been through a rough time, and are trying to acclimate — a fancy word for adjust — to their new "home."
 - Their names were even changed when they arrived here. Daniel's name got changed to Belteshazzar, and his friends are Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. *[Invite kids to say these names with you to help them remember.]*
- I can tell that there is something special about these guys. Listen to what Daniel told me.
 - *[Read Daniel 1:8–20.]*
- Isn't that amazing?! I mean, these guys were hand-picked and brought here to become special workers for the king. He even gave them his very own food, and trust me, the guy eats GOOD!
 - But apparently, those guys refused to eat the kind of food that the king eats — they wanted to eat the way they used to back home because they wanted to honor God. So instead they asked for vegetables and water only.
 - The really crazy thing is after ten days they were healthier, stronger, and wiser than everyone else! I mean, if you need any more reasons for why you should eat your veggies, here's a good one!
- But in all seriousness, because they kept their faith in God even though they were in a brand new place with unfamiliar rules and traditions, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are standing out in a good way. King Nebuchadnezzar has started calling them in to give him advice. That's pretty cool, right?
- I'm sure we'll hear more about these guys soon. For now, let's keep moving.

BIG IDEA | I won't give up — God is with me!

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Create a [coconut tree](#) to be used to reveal the Big Idea each week of the series. Insert papers with the Big Ideas into the coconuts and close them. Attach the plastic coconut cups to the tree with twine. Place a stuffed lion at the base of the tree or show a picture of a sleeping lion like [this one](#). Decorate the space with flamingo yard decorations to create a flamingo exhibit. Play the song, "[The Lion Sleeps Tonight](#)," as you gather the kids. After the Big Idea reveal, play a [sound bite of a lion's roar](#). For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#)
 - ✂ **SPECIAL NEEDS HACK:** To reduce auditory stimuli, consider leaving out the lion's roar or providing friends with noise-canceling headphones.
- It sounds like our biggest lion, Ari, is sleeping right now. We will try to wake him up in a bit, but for now, let's stay here and let him nap. While he's sleeping, we're going to talk about our Big Idea . . . but I wonder where we can find it. *[Look around for a few seconds and then grab a coconut off the tree.]* Let's crack this open and see what we find.
- *[Remove paper containing the Big Idea and read it out loud.]*

- **I won't give up — God is with me!** I think it's time for Ari, the lion, to wake up! Let's shout — or should I say, *roar* — the Big Idea! Stand up and roar that **I won't give up — God is with me!** [Play a [sound bite of a lion's roar!](#)]

VIDEO | Hear Me Roar, Episode 1

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Play this week's episode of [Grow TV](#).

VIDEO | Winter the Dolphin

- As you know, the lion is my favorite animal — but I do love most other animals. **Do you have a favorite animal?** Shout it out!
- One of my friends works with animals in another zoo in Florida, and she told me about this amazing dolphin that she used to know. Let's check it out.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Ahead of time, prepare to show a [video of Winter the Dolphin](#), as well as pictures or a video clip of an athlete that has overcome a physical challenge to do exceptional things, such as pro-surfer Bethany Hamilton. For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#)
 - ✂ **SPECIAL NEEDS HACK:** Prepare coloring pages of a variety of animals and have kids color them in. Once their picture is completed, have kids point out what is most important to each animal. For example, an elephant does everything with its trunk, an eagle needs its wings, and turtles need their shell. Talk with kids about how difficult it would be for each animal if something went wrong with these necessary parts of them. Then tell kids you know about one animal who didn't give up even though this very thing happened to her, then show the video of Winter the Dolphin.
- Wasn't that an amazing story? Winter didn't give up! After losing her tail, she learned to swim with a new, prosthetic tail. Winter was courageous to learn something new when it would have been easy to give up.
- **Do you know anyone that wears a prosthesis or has experienced other physical challenges?** [Show a picture or video clip of an athlete that has overcome a physical challenge to do exceptional things.]
- Even when our circumstances aren't the most ideal, when we don't give up and keep trusting in God, we can rise above our difficult situations!
- You and I can do the same. Remember our Big Idea? Let's say it together: **I won't give up — God is with me!**

ACTIVITY | Locomotion Commotion Relay Race

- We're going to play a game where you're going to adapt and learn to move like other animals.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Divide the kids into teams. Players will race to their team's cone at the end of the room and come back. Each player will do a different animal movement to get to the cone, like crab walk, squirrel jog (walk along a line on the floor like a tightrope), armadillo roll (roll across the room), and kangaroo bounce (jump with two feet together). Once a player reaches the cone, they can run back without doing the animal movement and tag the next player. The first team to get all their team members to finish the race wins!
- **What was the most challenging "animal movement" for you in the relay race?** The armadillo roll seems the hardest to me! I'd get so dizzy!
- **What made you not want to give up?**
- **Did the encouragement from your friends help?**
- You didn't give up, and part of that was because you could hear your teammates cheering you on! In a similar way, when we realize that God is cheering for us, we're motivated to not give up, even when we are stepping out of our comfort zone!

- Let's say our Big Idea together: **I won't give up — God is with me!**
- Great job! Hmmm . . . What direction should we go now? *[Place a finger on your ear, pretending to listen to someone in an earpiece.]* Oh! My boss just let me know we're needed back at the flamingo exhibit. Let's go!

SCRIPTURE | Lamentations 3:19–26

- Sometimes I get flustered on days we have a lot of guests here at the zoo. Thankfully, I'm not alone. I have a friend who watches over me and talks with me. She's my mentor here at the zoo — and in all of my life, actually. Her name is Professor Sahara.
- **Do you know what a mentor is?** Mentors are people who have gone before you. They believe in you and train you to follow in their footsteps!
- *[Put your finger on your earpiece again and pretend to listen.]* Oh, that's a great idea! Let's read Lamentations 3:19–26.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read Lamentations 3:19–26.
- This passage tells us what to do in moments when we feel like giving up. The writer of Lamentations said there are lots of things that brought them down, like hardship, wandering, and bitterness. But they didn't give up trusting in God because God never gives up on us! God continues to watch over us, every morning, every day. That's what it means to say that God is faithful.
- That Scripture also reminds me of Jesus! Jesus' love never fails. He loves us no matter what. Every morning, without fail, Jesus watches over us, talks with us, and helps us to follow in his footsteps.
- Does that sound familiar? Remember we just talked about the word "mentor"? Jesus is the greatest mentor there is! Jesus helps each of us to grow and to follow him, even in hard situations. He is always with us, and reminds us not to give up!

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

REFLECTION | I Won't Give Up

- **Have you ever faced something so difficult that you decided to give up?**
- Sometimes, we want to give up when things are too hard! Sometimes, we may even want to give up on following God when things are difficult. I bet Daniel and his friends felt that way too when they found themselves far away from home, in Babylon, being forced to work for King Nebuchadnezzar! But they didn't give up because they knew God was with them.
- **Who are the people in your life who help you feel brave and give you the courage to keep going?**
- God doesn't often hold up a megaphone and give us instructions or encouragement that we can hear. But, God does speak to us through other people, through the Bible, and by providing us wisdom as we make important decisions. God is with us and gives us the courage to persevere, even when we feel discouraged.
- **How do you know that God is with you?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Show the [video](#) of the song, "Try Everything," from Zootopia. For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#)
- This theme song from the movie "Zootopia" is called "Try Everything." **Do you think that it means we should literally try everything?** Probably not, right? We could get ourselves into a lot of trouble or danger if we did that! What this song tells us is what we've learned all along today — to not give up and to give everything we do our best shot.
- Just like the song says, we can say it, too: "I won't give up, no I won't give in, 'til I reach the end . . . and then I'll start again."
- **What's something you won't give up on because God is with you?**

RESPONSE | The Open Door

- At the Babylon Zoo, we do our best to provide each animal a lovely space in their enclosure. We try to replicate their natural environment in the wild, so they feel right at home here.
- Every once in a while, though, I see animals pacing back and forth. I think they get antsy and may start to feel trapped. They may want to run free in wide-open spaces, and they're looking for a way out.
- **Do you think Daniel and his friends may have felt trapped when they arrived in Babylon?** They were used to the freedom they had at home in Jerusalem, and even as they carried out their duties for King Nebuchadnezzar, I would imagine they were praying for a way out.
- There may be times in our lives when we're tempted to give up because we feel "trapped," much like Daniel and his friends did. But then, we can remember that God is with us and that God can open any door! **I won't give up — God is with me!**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Provide each kid with some art supplies like crayons or markers, as well as the printable of a zoo cage with an open door.*
- Draw a picture of a time you were reminded that God was with you. Maybe God comforted you when you moved to a new school, or God gave you the courage to apologize to your sibling after an argument, or God helped you keep practicing something that was difficult.
- I'm grateful that God opens doors in our lives and reminds us that we're not stuck. I'm so thankful that God is with us!

MEMORY VERSE | Nahum 1:7 (NIV)

- **"The Lord is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him."**
- *[Hold your finger up to your ear again, as if listening to the earpiece.]* Professor Sahara just notified me that some of the combinations for the locks on the animal exhibits have been mixed up. The zoo needs our help finding them!
- Let's find the lockbox with our group's color and the combination. They are hidden somewhere in the room! Once we find it, let's unscramble the numbers to open the cage!
- Once you open the lockbox, say the memory verse out loud with your group.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Hide a box or a cage in the room for each small group to find. Assign each small group a specific color to find. They need to find the lockbox marked with their assigned color, and a combination clue in their color. Once they find the clue, they must unscramble the combination numbers (which are out of order), to open their lockbox and find the memory verse — Nahum 1:7. (Don't forget to also check out the memory verse signs — a combination of SEE and ASL — available in your Programming folder or at growcurriculum.org/Nahum1-7.)*

PRAYER

- God, thank you that you are with me. Even when things are difficult, you encourage me and remind me that I can do it! Even when it seems like a door is locked in my life, you help me open it or find a new way out. This gives me strength, courage, and hope! Your compassion never fails. I won't give up, because you are with me! Amen.

SMALL GROUP TIME

DISCUSSION

- **How did Daniel and his friends end up in Babylon?**
- **What did the four of them do differently from others who were brought to Babylon?**

- What happened because of this choice they made?
- Read Lamentations 3:21–22. What does the writer of this Scripture say is our reason for hope?
- What are some things you put your hope in? Winning? Attention? Friendships?
- Was there a time you made a different choice than those around you because it was the right one? Was it difficult?
- What helped you to not give up?

ACTIVITY | Tiny Zoo

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Lay out a large piece of butcher paper on a table for each group and give them a box of supplies for the day. Show the kids a picture of the [sample zoo](#).
✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** Create a station for preteens to use Minecraft or Roblox to design their zoo digitally.
- We're going to work on building a zoo together. It sounds a little overwhelming, right? How are we going to do it? Just a few steps at a time! Each week this month, we're going to add a few pieces here and there, until we have a totally wild tiny zoo! Today, we're just going to create an overall map for our zoo.
- Just like we're making a map for the zoo, I know God is watching over me and has a plan for me. That's why, say it with me, **I won't give up — God is with me!**