



PRETEEN
JANUARY 2024

FOR LEADERS ONLY

GOD VIEW: THE CONNECTION BETWEEN RESPONSIBILITY AND GOD'S CHARACTER, AS SHOWN THROUGH GOD'S BIG STORY

In Psalm 24:1, David wrote, *"The earth belongs to the Lord. And so does everything in it."* (NirV) God is the author of creation, and God has entrusted us to care for and cultivate the world we see around us. We do that by taking responsibility. From work we need to accomplish, to people we meet, to the words we use, life is filled with moments where we can decide to reflect God's character, take responsibility, and use what we have wisely. When we follow through and do what needs to be done, we can point others to Jesus, the One who took the ultimate responsibility for us and made it possible for us to be with God forever.

CORE INSIGHT: The theological foundation for RESPONSIBILITY

Transformation by the power of God's Spirit. God's Spirit is transforming my unique and imperfect life into the character of Jesus.

Taking responsibility may not come naturally to us, but God's Spirit can help us develop it in our lives as we follow Jesus and learn to live like Him.

RESPONSIBILITY is showing you can be trusted with what is expected of you.

HEADS UP: IDEAS TO KEEP IN MIND AS YOU TALK ABOUT RESPONSIBILITY WITH KIDS

Even though "fun" and "responsibility" don't seem like they'd go together, we think this could be a really great month for kids in your community. Everyone has some sort of responsibility. It could be getting homework done, or picking up after playing a board game. Other times it might look like practicing a new instrument, or caring for a hamster or puppy. For Pet Project, we hope to inspire kids to reflect God's character in the way they follow through on the work that needs to get done.

Throughout the Bible, we read a lot about how to live with responsibility. The Bible is filled with stories about people who could be trusted . . . along with others who struggled in this area. But beyond those stories, the writers of Scripture included proverbs, principles, and parables that also bring God's ideas about responsibility to life.

Sometimes these concepts are more difficult to teach because there is no story included. However, the truths we find through Solomon and Paul, along with what we discover through Jesus' parables, can be life-changing when we learn how to live them out.

It's also important to remember that we can't make promises about what will happen if we choose to put these ideas into practice. Proverbs and principles like these aren't intended to offer certainty. Instead, they demonstrate that living with wisdom creates positive natural consequences that are likely to happen when we choose to honor God and others with the responsible choices we make.



WEEK
THREE
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LARGE GROUP
PRETEEN

Communicators GUIDE

TODAY'S BIBLE STORY

Ants Marching
Ant and Sluggard
Proverbs 6:6-8

TODAY'S KEY QUESTION

When have you had
to work hard?

TODAY'S BOTTOM LINE

Work hard.

MONTHLY MEMORY VERSE

"Suppose you can be trusted
with something very little. Then
you can also be trusted with
something very large."
Luke 16:10a, NIRV

MONTHLY VIRTUE

Responsibility—Showing you
can be trusted with what is
expected of you

BASIC TRUTH

I need to make the wise choice.

WEEK 3

Key Question: **When have you had to work hard?** Kids tend to want to avoid hard work at all costs. However, when they remember how God has helped them work hard in the past, it can encourage them to work hard with whatever they're facing now. We hope they'll see that they can try their best to accomplish whatever task stands in their way.

For week three, we take a closer look at **Proverbs 6:6-8**: "Think about the ant! Consider its ways and be wise!" (NIRV) God created ants to take responsibility and work hard storing up food for the winter months. We can look to their example as we take responsibility and work hard.

Bottom Line: **Work hard.** God has created us to work, yet often we try to escape having to do the work in front of us. We pray that this simple Bottom Line will be a reminder for kids to take responsibility when they have a job to do. God can give them the strength they need to follow through and get the job done.

LANDING

COMMUNICATOR: "Today as you go to groups, think about this:

SLIDE: KEY QUESTION

"When have you had to work hard? When is the last time you remember really having to put an effort into the work you were doing? How did it go for you? You'll get the chance to chat more about ants and God's design for work. I bet you'll come up with all sorts of ways you can work hard this week. Before you head out, let's pray and ask God to help us learn what wisdom we can learn from the ant today! Let's pray!"

SLIDE: THEME BACKGROUND



WEEK
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LARGE GROUP
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PRELUDE **SOCIAL** **STORY** **WORSHIP** **GROUPS** **HOME**

25 MINUTES

10 MINUTES

TODAY'S BIBLE STORY

Ants Marching
Ant and Sluggard
Proverbs 6:6-8

TODAY'S KEY QUESTION

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MONTHLY VIRTUE

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LARGE GROUP

ENGAGE KIDS' HEARTS THROUGH A DYNAMIC AND INTERACTIVE BIBLE STORY, WORSHIP, AND PRAYER EXPERIENCE IN A LARGE GROUP SETTING.

AUDIO: PLAY HIGH-ENERGY MUSIC AS STUDENTS ENTER.

SLIDE: THEME

OPTIONAL VIDEO (MEDIA PACKAGE): THEME LOOP

Host enters . . .

OPTIONAL VIDEO (MEDIA PACKAGE): COUNTDOWN

OPTIONAL VIDEO (MEDIA PACKAGE): THEME

WELCOME

Host has lots of energy as he or she welcomes everyone to [Name of Environment]. Host is relatable and inviting. Host can talk about something that happened culturally throughout the week like a big sports game, movie opening, a viral video on YouTube, etc. Host tells them how excited he or she is that they're there and briefly runs through what they can expect. This is especially helpful for first-time guests to make them feel like they know what's happening.

OPENER

HOST: "Hey, friends! How's everyone doing with their pet projects? Hope you're getting to work and making the most of this year. We're so glad you've come today! We have a great time planned, and to kick us off, I need SIX volunteers for a fast-paced race to get us started today! We call it, 'Fill Fido's Bowl!'"

SLIDE: "FILL FIDO'S BOWL"

Host chooses six volunteers and divides them into two teams of three.

"And speaking of pets, here's how you play. I know some of you are responsible for taking care of a pet dog at home. Sometimes that dog needs some water! When I say go, you each will grab one of these tiny cups, run down to your team's water bucket, fill your cup, run back down, and empty it into your dog's dish. All three of you will be doing this for your team all at once, so just be careful you don't bump each other. Then run back and fill up again. Repeat this until the dog dish water is completely full . . . let's say . . . overflowing! Pretty easy, right? Then let's do it. (Volunteers in position) Ready, set, fill those dog bowls!"



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25 MINUTES

10 MINUTES

AUDIO: FUN GAME MUSIC

“(After the game) That was amazing! You all worked hard for that, and I’m pretty sure Fido will have enough water for the foreseeable future! Now, let’s stand together and worship our awesome God!”



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10 MINUTES

WORSHIP

Worship Leaders enter as Host exits.

WORSHIP LEADER: “We’re already having so much fun today, and now we get to step it up even more! This is your time. It’s your moment to worship God from your heart. This song is called ‘Ready, Set, Move!’ and it’s about how we can follow Jesus each day and put our faith into action. Sing it with me.

AUDIO: “*READY, SET, MOVE!*” / **TRACK 1 FROM READY, SET, MOVE!**

OPTIONAL VIDEO: “*READY, SET, MOVE!*” **LIVE LYRICS OR DANCE MOVES MUSIC VIDEO**

“That was fun! Nice job, everyone. It’s not always easy to live out our faith and live God’s way. But God gives us the power to do all the things we need to do. God gives us the strength we need to follow through. Let’s sing and thank God for working in us and through us. Come on!

AUDIO: “*THE POWER*” / **TRACK 3 FROM EVERYTHING TO ME**

OPTIONAL VIDEO: “*THE POWER*” **LIVE LYRICS OR DANCE MOVES MUSIC VIDEO**

“Yeah, I love that! I’m thankful for the way worship helps us put our focus on God. In Jeremiah 29:13, we can read what God said to the Israelites: ‘*When you look for me with all your heart, you will find me.*’ (NirV) That’s true for us too. Worship helps choose to give God everything we have, because God is worthy of all the praise we could ever give. Let’s sing this together.”

AUDIO: “*WHAT I CHOOSE*” / **TRACK 8 FROM MAKE A MOVE**

OPTIONAL VIDEO: “*WHAT I CHOOSE*” **LIVE LYRICS OR DANCE MOVES MUSIC VIDEO**



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COMMUNICATOR SCRIPT (STORY)

SLIDE: THEME BACKGROUND

Communicator enters as Worship Leaders exit. If the whiteboard isn't already preset on stage, wheel it out or display it as the Communicator is coming on stage.

INTRODUCTION

COMMUNICATOR: "What's up, friends? Good to be together today. Not sure if you were here at the end of last month, but we took some time to chat about New Year's Resolutions. You know, those goals and promises we make for ourselves to get better at something or improve something about our lives. Well, here we are a few weeks into January, and I'm wondering: How are those New Year's Resolutions coming along? Take a moment and chat with someone near you about your resolutions. What were they? How are you doing at keeping them? Or if you didn't make resolutions, why not? Is there any sort of goal you can still make and get started on?"

"Alright, take the next couple of minutes and chat! AAAAAAND go!"

AUDIO: QUIET BACKGROUND MUSIC

Kids turn and talk with each other. After a few minutes, bring them back together. Allow for them to respond with their answers. Chat through them as you have time.

"Wow. Great work, everyone! It's good to hear that you're starting 2024 off by taking responsibility. Which is great because all month long that's what we've been talking about."

SLIDE: VIRTUE

"Responsibility is **showing you can be trusted with what is expected of you**—even when you put those expectations upon yourself, like those New Year's Resolutions."

TENSION

COMMUNICATOR: "But let's be honest. It doesn't really matter if we make the expectations or someone else—like a parent or teacher—gives us the expectations, some of those take work, right? And it's work that we might not always want to do. We know that taking responsibility and following through on what's expected of us is important. We might even know that we can trust God to help us follow through. Yet, we face these moments where sometimes it seems easier NOT to follow through."

"When we face those moments, what should we do? What can motivate us to keep going when it's difficult? Is it easier just to give up? Or is there something else we should be thinking about when it comes to this idea of working hard and following through? And what is that?"

"These are all great questions to ask, especially at this time of year. When we have big questions like this, it's important we find some big answers. We can find all sorts of big answers in the Bible! Remember, the people who wrote the Bible had personal experiences with God, and God inspired them to write down what they experienced and learned along the way so others could learn and grow in their own relationship with God. Let's check out some of that wisdom today!"



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TRUTH

COMMUNICATOR: “Today we head to the book of Proverbs. If you’re not familiar with Proverbs, it’s an entire book in the Old Testament of our Bible, and it includes a collection of wise sayings and teachings. Many of them were written by a king of Israel named Solomon who lived thousands of years ago. King Solomon had quite the experience with God!

“At the beginning of King Solomon’s reign, God came to him and said that he could ask for anything. Amazing, right?! Now, in that situation, many people might ask for fame or fortune, but Solomon didn’t do that. Instead, Solomon asked God for wisdom so he could be a great ruler over God’s people. God was so impressed by Solomon’s humble request and gave him wisdom well beyond his years. Not only that, but God also blessed Solomon with great power and wealth. Solomon is often described as one of the wisest men who ever lived. Now, Solomon didn’t always get it right. In fact, he messed up quite a bit, but Solomon did have incredible wisdom from God, which led Solomon to write down many of these amazing ideas in this collection of proverbs that can give us wisdom for how to live well.

“Let’s jump in to one of those Proverbs right now. Check it out.

Open the Bible to Proverbs 6:6-8 (NirV) and read.

“You people who don’t want to work, think about the ant!

Consider its ways and be wise!

It has no commander.

It has no leader or ruler.

But it stores up its food in summer.

It gathers its food at harvest time.’

Communicator stares blankly.

“Some of you might be thinking, ‘How is Solomon one of the wisest guys ever? He wrote about ANTS?’ Well, let’s unpack this a little bit and see if we can figure out what’s happening here.

“So I have several close-up shots of ants working. And I also have a whiteboard. As we click through these pics, I want you to share with me some observations you can make about the way that ants work. What can you learn from the ants in these pictures?

SLIDES: ANTS WORKING 1-5

Kids share observations about the images. Communicator writes them down on the whiteboard.

Ideas might be: work hard, lift heavy objects, work together, move in sync with each other, etc.

“Wow! Those are some great observations. I think we might be onto something here. You know, when we hear the word ‘work,’ we often talk about it like it’s a bad word. But think about the very beginning—the VERY beginning, back in Genesis at the start of the Old Testament. You might remember how we can read about how God created the world and placed Adam and Eve into a beautiful garden paradise. And do you know one of the first things God asked them to do? (Get response.) That’s right! Work. Work the ground. Care for the earth. Rule over the animals. And this was all before we read about sin entering the world. Work was from God, and it was good.



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“With that in mind, think about how Solomon started out his proverb.

Open the Bible to Proverbs 6:6 (NIRV) and read.

“*You people who don't want to work, think about the ant!
Consider its ways and be wise!*”

“In the proverb, Solomon assumed that some people don't see work as good and DON'T want to do it. That's why he encouraged them to look at the ant. Now, based on some of the observations you all made, what do you think the ants can teach us about HOW to work?

Allow for responses. Interact and share as a group.

Ideas might include: They don't give up and work until they're finished. They work with the other ants. They follow directions from the queen who's in charge, etc.

“Those are some amazing responses. I think we are really catching onto why Solomon used the ant as an example. But more than just HOW to work, the ant can also teach us WHEN to work, right? Let's read that last part again.

Open the Bible to Proverbs 6:8 (NIRV) and read.

“*But it stores up its food in summer.
It gathers its food at harvest time.*”

“Based on the observations you all mentioned, what can ants teach us about WHEN to work? Why do you think Solomon included that part? Why would ants gather during harvest time in the summer and not in the winter?”

Allow for responses and interact with them.

Ideas might include: You can't harvest what hasn't grown yet. Winter is cold in many places. Summer is when the best crops grow, etc.

“Those are some great thoughts. How about we read through the verses one more time.

Open the Bible to Proverbs 6:6-8 (NIRV) and read.

“*You people who don't want to work, think about the ant!
Consider its ways and be wise!
It has no commander.
It has no leader or ruler.
But it stores up its food in summer.
It gathers its food at harvest time.*”

APPLICATION

COMMUNICATOR: “You know, it can often feel like the goal of life for many people is to avoid doing work at all costs . . . or to get away with the least possible amount of work. But the more we understand what God was doing at the beginning



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of time, along with Solomon's wisdom, we can start to see that you and I—and everyone actually—were made to work hard.

"Think about it, there are times when someone else might tell you what to do . . . like someone at home asking you to clean up a mess or finish your homework. You might want to do ANYTHING else but clean or do homework, but in those moments, think about those ants . . . how might they respond? How can Solomon's teaching about them motivate us to do our own work?"

"We can also work hard without someone asking us first. We can take responsibility for HOW we work and make sure we are putting our best effort in every time. If we see something that needs to be done like a dishwasher that needs to get emptied or laundry that needs to be folded, we can step in and take care of it without being asked."

"Remember, the ants also teach us WHEN to work. Because they are willing to work hard during harvest time, they can rest well in the winter and stay warm together below ground. We were made to work hard and work well, but God also made us to rest. But don't just stare at a screen. Find people you love and enjoy and spend time with them. Get outside. Discover something new. Work hard AND rest well!"

LANDING

COMMUNICATOR: "Today as you go to groups, think about this:

SLIDE: KEY QUESTION

"When have you had to work hard?" When is the last time you remember really having to put an effort into the work you were doing? How did it go for you? You'll get the chance to chat more about ants and God's design for work. I bet you'll come up with all sorts of ways you can work hard this week. Before you head out, let's pray and ask God to help us learn what wisdom we can learn from the ant today! Let's pray!"

SLIDE: THEME BACKGROUND

Communicator leads group in a prayer related to what they just heard. After prayer, Communicator dismisses kids to Small Group.

AUDIO: PLAY HIGH-ENERGY MUSIC AS THE KIDS EXIT.

SLIDE: THEME

OPTIONAL VIDEO (MEDIA PACKAGE): THEME LOOP