



**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  
**FOUR**  
JANUARY 2024

LARGE GROUP  
**PRETEEN**

## Communicators GUIDE

### TODAY'S BIBLE STORY

**Say What You Need to Say**  
Use Words Wisely  
Ephesians 4:29

### TODAY'S KEY QUESTION

Why do your words matter?

### TODAY'S BOTTOM LINE

Use your words wisely.

### 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, NIV

### MONTHLY VIRTUE

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

### BASIC TRUTH

**I need to make the wise choice.**

### WEEK 4

Key Question: **Why do your words matter?** Preteens are starting to be aware of the impact their actions have on their relationships—and the words they choose are a big part of that. We hope that kids will start to think about the importance of their words and how they can use them responsibly to help others.

We finish the month with something Paul wrote in **Ephesians 4:29**: *"Don't let any evil talk come out of your mouths. Say only what will help to build others up and meet their needs."* (NIV) Our words have the power to help or hurt others. We should use our words responsibly, because what we say and how we speak to others matters.

Bottom Line: **Use your words wisely.** Words are important, but even as adults, we tend to use them without thinking. We hope that as kids discover what Paul wrote in Ephesians, they'll understand that the way they use their words can show others how much God loves them.

### LANDING

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

#### SLIDE: KEY QUESTION

**"Why do your words matter?** How have you seen your words' ability to both build and tear down? How can you choose to take responsibility for the way you speak? These are some big questions. If you're not sure how you'd answer them, that's okay, too. You'll have a chance to talk more about them with your Small Groups! Before you head out, let's pray and ask God to help us make wise choices with our words! Let's pray!"

#### SLIDE: THEME BACKGROUND



WEEK  
**FOUR**  
JANUARY 2024

LARGE GROUP  
**PRETEEN**

**PRELUDE**      **SOCIAL**      **STORY**      **WORSHIP**      **GROUPS**      **HOME**

25 MINUTES

10 MINUTES

### TODAY'S BIBLE STORY

Say What You Need to Say  
Use Words Wisely  
Ephesians 4:29

### TODAY'S KEY QUESTION

Why do your words matter?

### TODAY'S BOTTOM LINE

Use your words wisely.

### 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, NIV

### MONTHLY VIRTUE

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

### BASIC TRUTH

I need to make the wise choice.

## 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, everyone! Feels like we were just wishing everyone a Happy New Year, and now we've already reached the end of January! Hopefully you've been working hard on your Pet Projects and will continue to hit the ground running in February! But let's not get ahead of ourselves. We still have a lot going on around here! I need four volunteers who really think they know their animals for a game called 'Pet Password!'"

**SLIDE: "PET PASSWORD"**

Host chooses four volunteers and puts them into teams of two.

"Alright, here's how to play. One of you will be the Clue Giver, and the other will be the Clue Guesser. When I say go, the Clue Guesser will close their eyes, and I will hold up the answer card for everyone else to see. Now, no one say the answer! The Clue Giver will give a one-word clue . . . no animal noises . . . just a single-word clue. For example, if the answer is 'duck,' the Clue Giver might say 'bill' or 'pond' or 'feathers.' Make sense? Great! The Clue Guesser will then make one guess as to what animal they think it is. If they guess



WEEK  
**FOUR**  
JANUARY 2024

LARGE GROUP  
**PRETEEN**

PRELUDE

SOCIAL

STORY

WORSHIP

GROUPS

HOME

25 MINUTES

10 MINUTES

incorrectly, it passes to the other team, where their Clue Giver will say their own one-word clue. Their Clue Guesser will get a chance to guess. The longer it takes, the more clues you end up getting, and the easier it should get. Got it? Great! Let's do it!

*Host holds up the new answer card each time. Giver and Guesser alternate on each team each round. Play several rounds as you have time.*

*(After the game) "Now that was a lot of fun! And you all did GREAT—you really DO know your animals! Now, let's stand together and worship our amazing God!"*



WEEK  
**FOUR**  
JANUARY 2024

LARGE GROUP  
**PRETEEN**

PRELUDE

SOCIAL

STORY

WORSHIP

GROUPS

HOME

10 MINUTES

## WORSHIP

*Worship Leaders enter as Host exits.*

**WORSHIP LEADER:** “Hi, everyone! I love taking this time to sing and praise God with all of you. I love focusing on God and using my words to say ‘thank You’ for all that God has done for us. Let’s stand and get ready to move. It’s time to sing and worship God. Come on!”

**AUDIO:** “THANK YOU GOD” / TRACK 1 FROM EVERYTHING TO ME

**OPTIONAL VIDEO:** “THANK YOU GOD” LIVE LYRICS OR DANCE MOVES MUSIC VIDEO

“Yeah—as loud as you can, on the count of three, say ‘thank You God.’ One, two, three! (Get a reaction.) So good. Before we continue in worship, check this out.

**OPTIONAL VIDEO (MEDIA PACKAGE):** LIVE LOUD VIDEO FROM GET REEL

“God can help us to be responsible and trustworthy and do what we’re expected to do. Let’s go ‘all in’ on this next song. Don’t hold anything back. Let’s sing about how we want to give our all to follow God. Here we go!”

**AUDIO:** “ALL TO YOU” / TRACK 1 FROM MY LIFE FOR YOU

**OPTIONAL VIDEO:** “ALL TO YOU” LIVE LYRICS OR DANCE MOVES MUSIC VIDEO

“Right now, we get to offer up our gratitude to God. As we read in Psalm 147:7: ‘Sing to the Lord and give him grateful praise.’ (NirV) We can lift our voices and show our love to our God Who is always good. Sing this with me.”

**AUDIO:** “I’M SO GRATEFUL” / TRACK 3 FROM MY LIFE FOR YOU

**OPTIONAL VIDEO:** “I’M SO GRATEFUL” LIVE LYRICS OR DANCE MOVES MUSIC VIDEO



WEEK  
**FOUR**  
JANUARY 2024

LARGE GROUP  
**PRETEEN**

PRELUDE

SOCIAL

STORY

WORSHIP

GROUPS

HOME

25 MINUTES

## COMMUNICATOR SCRIPT (STORY)

SLIDE: THEME BACKGROUND

*Communicator enters as Worship Leaders exit.*

### INTRODUCTION

**COMMUNICATOR:** "Well, here we are at the end of the month, but it's so good to be together once again. You know, speaking of Pet Projects . . . I have a bit of a project. Does anyone like to build?"

*Allow responses.*

"I need a few volunteers to help me with a project as we get started.

*Communicator chooses a few volunteers, depending on how many birdhouse kits you are building. You may want to have a few adult leaders to help as well.*

"So, I have this birdhouse here that I built (*hold up completed birdhouse*). Pretty nice, right? Well, it turns out they are pretty popular with the local birds, and word on the street is that they've requested a few more. I have all the kits and supplies right here. I'm wondering if you could help me build a few more of these?"

*Leaders help volunteers get started.*

"Now, while they're working away, I have a question for you. Has someone ever used their words to encourage you? Maybe to cheer you up, to help you make a decision, or maybe to pay you a compliment that meant a lot at the time? (*Get responses.*) Yeah, me too!"

*Communicator shares a personal story of a time someone used their words in a positive way to build them up. Don't make the "building" connection strong yet. Just tell the story. Use the following example as inspiration for your own or use this as a hypothetical situation.*

"I remember this one time in sixth grade when it seemed like no one in my class was getting along. Kids were trying to act cool and were being mean to each other to make themselves look good. Their words were super hurtful, and you never knew when it was your turn to get the brunt of it. Well, soon enough it was my turn. I didn't do anything to deserve it, but some kids just started picking on me and saying all these hurtful things to me and leaving me out of games at recess. I was pretty upset. Then two friends who noticed I was upset, came over to me, invited to me work with them on a project, and told me how great I was doing. We ended up hanging out at recess. They encouraged me to talk to a teacher about what was happening and to get help. They really encouraged me that day. Thankfully, the teacher stepped in and used her words to fix what was broken and help everyone start to get along again."

### TENSION

**COMMUNICATOR:** "When I think about and remember situations like this, it makes me think that how we use our words might be more important than we think. Which makes me wonder about what responsibility has to do with our words. Like if our words have the power to hurt or to help, how do we make sure we're choosing the best words when it comes to the everyday conversations we have with people in our lives? What does it mean to take responsibility for our words? And how can God help us do that? After all, sometimes it's REALLY hard to choose the right words to say when we're experiencing a difficult situation."



WEEK  
**FOUR**  
JANUARY 2024

LARGE GROUP  
**PRETEEN**

PRELUDE

SOCIAL

STORY

WORSHIP

GROUPS

HOME

25 MINUTES

"Thankfully, when it comes to needing wisdom to help us figure out these sorts of questions, we have a great place to start: the Bible! Throughout the Bible we can read from people who experienced God and were inspired to write about their experiences so other people could learn from them and apply them in their own relationships with God. And the writers of the Bible actually have a lot of wisdom to share about taking responsibility for our words."

## TRUTH

**COMMUNICATOR:** (*Checking on volunteers*) "Before we jump into the Bible, let's check in on our builders. Oh wow! It looks like our birdhouses are all done. Would you give them all a hand? These look amazing! Well done!"

*Volunteers grab a seat. The birdhouses are displayed on the table in front with the tools on the table still. Make sure a hammer is one of those tools.*

"Wow. These birdhouses turned out really nice. Okay, so this one here is the original one I built. We build things like birdhouses or actual houses with tools like this hammer. It's pretty amazing how this hammer (*picking up hammer*) if used properly can be used as a tool to build so many amazing things. But you know what else is true about this hammer?"

*Communicator takes a single hard whack at the birdhouse they made, causing damage.*

"It can also be used to destroy a birdhouse. (*Looking at the damaged birdhouse.*) Oof. That's not good. There should really only be one way into the birdhouse. Now it has a skylight. Now, why did I do that? Well, hopefully it can teach us something about our words. Let's start by checking out the book of Ephesians, one of the 21 letters included in New Testament of the Bible. Ephesians was written by Paul. Paul had started a church in a place called Ephesus, and after he left, he sent a letter back to the followers of Jesus living there and encouraged them about the responsibility they had to live as God's dear children. But you might be wondering, what's that have to do with birdhouses and hammers? Or why am I up here randomly breaking things? Great question. Let's read.

*Open the Bible to Ephesians 4:29 (NirV) and read.*

*"Don't let any evil talk come out of your mouths. Say only what will help to build others up and meet their needs. Then what you say will help those who listen."*

"Okay, so did anyone hear Paul talking about anything that could be related to a hammer? Anyone?"

*Allow responses.*

"Right! Paul was talking about the words we speak. And he started by saying that some pretty evil stuff can come out of our mouths. I'm sure I don't need to convince you of that. That's why he also told these followers of Jesus to say only what would help . . . BUILD others up!"

"A few moments ago, some of our volunteers used a hammer to BUILD up these birdhouses. And look how they turned out. Great, right? They used the hammer in a positive way to help others. I already hear there's a waiting list of ten birds planning to move into these condos!"

"Let's think about this for a moment: what are some ways we can use our words to build up? Let me hear it!"

*Share examples and ideas together.*



WEEK  
**FOUR**  
JANUARY 2024

LARGE GROUP  
**PRETEEN**

PRELUDE

SOCIAL

STORY

WORSHIP

GROUPS

HOME

25 MINUTES

*Ideas might include to encourage, say kind things, compliment each other, cheer for someone, tell the truth, warn people of danger, etc.*

"Can you imagine if we actually used our words to do everything you all just said? This world would be a different place. But what did I do with the hammer?"

*Allow responses.*

"Yeah, I destroyed. I tore down what had already been built up. Our words sometimes work like this, too, don't they? Let me show you . . ."

*Communicator pulls out hammer cardboard cutouts.*

"What does the first hammer say? (*Kids read out*) 'Complaining.' (*Act out complaining*) But that's not fair! I don't want to do that! I never get to . . . she always goes first . . . why don't we ever . . . you never let me . . . complain, complain, complain! Does complaining build up or tear down? (*Allow for responses*) Right. Complaining tears down."

*Communicator pulls out second hammer cardboard cutout.*

"The second hammer I have says what? (*Kids read out*) 'Unkind words.' Making fun of other people. Name calling. Talking down to someone or using hurtful words. We know it. We've all felt it. Do unkind words build up or tear down? (*Allow for responses*) They absolutely tear down."

*Communicator pulls out third hammer cardboard cutout.*

"The third hammer I have says . . . (*Kids read out*) 'Gossip.' Does anyone know what gossip is?"

*Allow responses.*

"Exactly. Gossip is when you share those details about someone else behind their backs—usually not positive details about someone who isn't there and can't defend themselves. (*Act out gossip*) Did you hear what Bethany did? Can you even believe her face? I would never do that . . ."

"So, does gossip build up or tear down? (*Allow for responses*) Tear down . . . for sure."

*Communicator pulls out fourth hammer cardboard cutout.*

"The fourth hammer I have says . . . (*stop kids quickly*). Actually, I'll take this one. The fourth hammer (@%#\*!) represents curse (*cuss, swear, etc.*) words. These are unkind words, for sure, but also are ones that are completely out of bounds or words we know we aren't supposed to say. They shouldn't even come out of our mouths, especially aimed at another person who God created. Do curse (*cuss, swear, etc.*) words build up or tear down? (*Allow for responses*) They definitely tear others down."

*Communicator pulls out fifth hammer cardboard cutout.*





WEEK  
**FOUR**  
JANUARY 2024

LARGE GROUP  
**PRETEEN**

PRELUDE

SOCIAL

STORY

WORSHIP

GROUPS

HOME

25 MINUTES

"Our final hammer says . . . *(Kids read out)* 'Lying.' What is interesting about this one is that the words themselves might be fine. They might actually be good and positive words. But what's the problem when you lie?

*Allow responses.*

"Exactly. You're actually using words to deceive or fool another person, most of the time to help yourself out or make yourself look good. So, in the end, are you building up or tearing down? *(Allow for responses)* You are STILL tearing down.

*Host picks up a real hammer and one of the good birdhouses.*

"Our words are powerful. When we use them wisely, they have the ability to build in amazing ways!

*Host puts down the good birdhouse and picks up the broken one.*

"But our words, if we're not careful, sadly can do damage. Sometimes damage that is really hard to fix *(surveying the broken birdhouse)*. Same tool . . . two very different outcomes. The responsibility is ours to use our words wisely."

## APPLICATION

**COMMUNICATOR:** "I'm guessing when we were reviewing those five hammers with the different types of words on them, one or two of them might have stood out to you. Maybe you don't struggle with lying, but the complaining was a little too close to home! Or you are not really a complainer, but you would be a bit embarrassed if we overheard the way you talk with your friends in the hallway at school. Today is an amazing day to make a choice to start using your words more responsibly . . . to build others up and help them with your words rather than tear them down. The hammer is in your hands . . . or should I say in your words!

"So instead of complaining, try using words of gratitude for what you do have.

"Instead of using unkind words, find something nice to say, or just keep your thoughts to yourself.

"Instead of gossiping, choose to encourage people and find out how you can help them.

"Instead of using curse words, try to figure out why you feel you need to say them in the first place.

"Or instead of lying, well . . . tell the truth, even if it's hard. It's truth that builds trust with the people around you."

## LANDING

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

### SLIDE: KEY QUESTION

**"Why do your words matter?"** How have you seen your words' ability to both build and tear down? How can you choose to take responsibility for the way you speak? These are some big questions. If you're not sure how you'd answer them, that's okay, too. You'll have a chance to talk more about them with your Small Groups! Before you head out, let's pray and ask God to help us make wise choices with our words! Let's pray!"

### SLIDE: THEME BACKGROUND



WEEK  
**FOUR**  
JANUARY 2024

LARGE GROUP  
**PRETEEN**

**PRELUDE**      **SOCIAL**      **STORY**      **WORSHIP**      **GROUPS**      **HOME**

25 MINUTES

*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**