TRUST IN GOD WHEN HARD TIMES COME
Kids often ask the question, “Why does God let bad things happen?” This can be a difficult question to answer. The truth is, the Word of God never promises to keep us out of **hard times**. What it does promise is that when the **hard times** come, God will be with us to help us through those **hard times**.

Very often when I go on visitation, I see families who are going through **hard times**. I see families devastated by poverty. I see families torn apart by divorce. I see families who are no longer talking to one another because they are so hurt. Even though some of these things are hard to watch, even though these situations break my heart, I know that I can tell them to trust in God and that God will give them hope. God will come through for them in their **hard times**. God never said that He would remove the **hard times** from them. He never said they would not face difficulties, but He does say in His Word, “**Fear not for I am with you. Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you. Yes I will help you. I will uphold you with my righteous right hand**” (Isaiah 4:10) When I go on visitation I tell those families to trust in God when hard times come. I say, “Are you going through a hard time because your husband left you? Trust in God. Are you going through a hard time because you do not have enough money - trust in God. Are you going through a hard time because you are not doing well in school? Trust in God.” Do you know what happens when these families and these children learn to trust in God when the **hard times** come? In His sovereignty and His faithfulness, God helps them get through those **hard times**.

This may be one of the most valuable lessons that our children will learn. There is nothing more important than trusting in God to pull you through those **hard times**. If they can learn this simple truth, they will make it through the **hard times** that come their way.

**Trust in God when hard times come:**

1. Trust in God to keep you from sinning
2. Trust in God to protect you
3. Trust in God to save you
PRE-OPENING ACTIVITY: Tic Tac Know

Participants: As many kids as you need to win the game.

Props: A dry-erase board and a dry-eraser marker.

Preparation: Draw a large # on the dry-erase board. Then number each square. You should have nine squares.

Playing: The girls team will be the Xs and the boys team will be the Os. Toss a coin to see which team will go first. Once that is decided, you will ask a question to that team about a previous lesson. If they answer correctly, ask them where they would like to place their X or their O. They will tell you a number between 1 and 9. If they answer incorrectly go to the other team and give them a chance to answer the same question. You will alternate from side to side until one team gets 3 of their Xs or three of their Os in a row. - either vertically, horizontally, or diagonal.

Note: If neither team gets three of their symbol is in a row, count how many Xs and Os there are. There will be a 5-4 winner. Also this is a good group game. When you are asking the child (who answered the question correctly) where they would like to put their symbol, get the crowd involved by asking them “Where do you think it should go.” They should all be shouting the number of the square they think it should go in.

OPENING

Welcome
Rules
Opening Prayer
Pledges
Songs of your Choosing
4 Reasons

GAME TIME

1. Basketball
   Props: One basketball, One basketball net, and a stopwatch.

2. Back to Back
   Props: Ten basketballs, two large garbage cans, and two helpers.
LESSON TIME

Short Overview of the Lesson
Quiet Seats Explanation
Props: 4 red balloons, 4 blue balloons, a whistle, and quiet seat prizes.

Lesson Introduction
Props: 2 signs, one says, “Good Times,” and the other says, “Hard Times.”

Power Point: Trust in God when hard times come
Sub points:
1. Trust in God to keep you from sinning
2. Trust in God to protect you
3. Trust in God to save you

Memory Verse
“Trust in the Lord with all your heart.” (Proverbs 3:5 NIV)
Props: Overhead projector, blank transparency or posterboards.

Bible Lesson: “A Friend in the Fire” (Daniel 3)
Props: Lots of actors and Bible costumes: Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, King Nebuchadnezzar, a messenger, a soldier, an angel, and people who bow down and worship the statue. You will also need some type of blazing furnace, a gold statue and music (the sound of a trumpet blowing).

Object Lesson #1: God will keep you from sinning.
Props: A mousetrap and a pencil.

Object Lesson #2: “God will protect you.”
Props: The armor of God: belt, breastplate, shoes, shield, helmet, sword, and a volunteer.

Object Lesson #3: “God will save you.”
Props: A hot dish mat, a table, and a pan.

Life Lesson: “Penny Pigeon on a Small, Thin Branch.”
Props: Illustrated Story
WELCOME

Props: Whistle

Welcome to Kids' Church! Today is going to be a great day. We have some really fun games and an important lesson about trusting in God. I want everyone to turn to the person beside you and say, “I am glad you are here.” Now turn to the person on the other side and say, “We are going to have lots of fun in Kids’ Church.”

In today’s lesson, we are going to learn that it is important to trust in God when hard times come. We are going to learn about some young men who were actually thrown into a fire, but they still kept trusting in God, and God helped them through this hard time.

Let us get started. Everybody put 10 fingers up in the air and count down with me. 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1.

RULES

Kids’ Church always works best when we work together. When we follow rules, things run smoothly. There are many children here today. In order for us all to have fun and learn, we all have to follow the same rules. We do not play favorites in Kids’ Church and we do not allow bullies either. We all follow the same rules. Today we have a shortcut to help us remember the rules. The shortcut is the word “SOW.” Let us sow a good seed today by obeying the rules. (Keep the rules posted or write them on the chalkboard or on poster board.)

Let us review the rules:
S- Stay in your seat.
O- Obey your leaders.
W- Whistle means quiet.
OPENING

OPENING PRAYER

Dear God,
Thank you for bringing us to Kids’ Church today. Thank you for loving us. We invite You to be here with us. Help us to learn more about You today; help us to learn to trust You to be with us when hard times come, and help us to have lots of fun today. We love You.
In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.

PLEDGES

Graphics are included in the power point presentation.

SONGS OF YOUR CHOOSING

If you have a Praise and Worship team, it would be great to implement them for this part of your service. If you do not have a Praise and Worship team, then use CDs. Try to play songs that the kids will know. Have the songs written on transparencies or posterboards so the entire audience can see the words and participate in your Praise and Worship time.
THE FOUR REASONS WHY WE COME TO KIDS’ CHURCH

Props: Posterboard or overhead projector so everyone can see the “Four Reasons.”

Every week, always take time to teach the kids why they come to Kids’ Church. “Spaced Repetition” is the name of the teaching technique that we employ at this point in the lesson. The concept is simple; by reinforcing and repeating these four key truths every week, it becomes ingrained in our children. Have the kids repeat “The Four Reasons Why We Come to Kids’ Church.” You can even give rewards to kids who can say them correctly without help. Pick two boys and two girls, and have them say the “Four Reasons” without looking at them. Doing this every week can be a great start for your kids to always know why they are doing the things we tell them to do every week.

1. To love God first
2. To learn His word
3. To lead others to Jesus
4. To live right every day

Graphics are included in the Powerpoint Presentation.

Before you pick the two boys and girls to say the four reasons, teach them to everyone as a group. You can start off by saying to the kids, “If you are in school and someone asks you why you go to church, what will you say?”
Lesson 4

1. Use your game time as a review time.
2. Make sure you have two opposing teams.
3. Assign runners.
4. Assign someone to operate your CD player.
5. Put someone in charge of organizing and cleaning up games.
6. Put someone in charge of giving out prizes.
7. Ask simple questions.
8. Explain the game well.
10. Make sure you rehearse the games with your workers.

**Leader's Notes**

Games are fun and exciting. I do not know one single kid who does not like to play games. I do not know one single kid who does not like to win cool prizes after playing a game. Let's face it, kids are bored at church. They want to laugh, play, and have fun. Teachers want them to learn the Word of God. Is it not possible to have both? Who says Sunday School has to be dry and boring? There is a middle ground. Include games in your Sunday School.

**Game Time should be:**

- A review of last week’s lesson
- Fun
- Organized

**A review of last week’s lesson**
The only way that kids can play a game, is if they answer a question from last week’s lesson. Instantaneously, kids are going to start listening to your teaching every week because they want to play a game.

**Fun**
Game time must be fun! Make sure your games are exciting and unpredictable not get in a rut with your games. You need to keep the kids guessing as to what will happen next.

**Organized**
We call game time, “controlled chaos.” We want the kids to have the most fun they can have in a controlled environment. There is a lot of organization required for game time. For instance, someone has to:

- **Set-up and clean-up the game**
- **Pick kids to answer the review question**
- **Operate the CD player**
- **Help the kids pick a prize**

For other game ideas, click here.
GAME TIME

REVIEW QUESTIONS
Select one child from each team who can answer their review question correctly to play in this first game.

1. Who is the one that has to make a choice to forgive the person that hurt you? Answer-You.

2. In last week’s Bible Lesson, did David kill King Saul? Answer-No.

GAME #1
Basketball
Participants: One boy and One girl
Props: One basketball, One basketball net and a stopwatch.

Preparation: Set up the basketball goal in a location where the participants can easily shoot baskets and the audience can see clearly.

Playing: Give the first participant 60 seconds to shoot the basketball. (You will need a helper to return the ball to the child as quickly as possible after each shot.) Then time the second child for 60 seconds while he/she shoots. The one who makes the most baskets in the allotted time is the winner.

Leader’s Notes
Use your voice to build up excitement while asking the question. As soon as you have finished asking the question several things should happen at the same time.

1. Upbeat music starts to fill in dead time.

2. A preassigned “runner” runs out into the audience and finds a kid who knows the answer to the question. “The runner” always asks the kid the answer to the questions before the music stops. If the kid does not know the answer, the “runner” should find another kid.

3. Once the runner signals to the game leaders they have found a kid who knows the answer to the question, the game leader blows the whistle to stop the music.

4. Ask the kid his/her name.

5. Ask the question again allowing the kid to give the answer on the mic. The runner helps kid pick the right amount of partners needed to play the game.

6. Game leaders ask a second question for the opposite side repeat steps (1-5).

7. One game leader explains the game to the audience. The other game leader explains the game the kids on stage making sure everyone understand how to play WIN the game.

8. Make sure there is a clear start

9. As soon as the game leader says the word “Go”, the person operating your CD Player plays upbeat music.

10. As soon as there is a clear winner, game leader will blow the whistle, the music will stop, game leader will announce the winning team.

11. Helpers on the stage will:
• clean up game
• help winning team pick a prize
• give losing team consolation prize.
• set up the next game.
**Lesson 4**

1. Use your game time as a review time.
2. Make sure you have two opposing teams.
3. Assign runners.
4. Assign someone to operate your CD player.
5. Put someone in charge of organizing and cleaning up games.
6. Put someone in charge of giving out prizes.
7. Ask simple questions.
8. Explain the game well.
10. Make sure you rehearse the games with your workers.

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**Leader’s Notes**

**REVIEW QUESTIONS**

Select one child from each team who can answer their review question correctly to play in this second game. Allow each child to choose one partner of the same sex to play this game with them.

1. Who can help us learn how to forgive other people.
   Answer: Jesus.

2. We said that unforgiveness can tie you up in what?
   Answer: Knots

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**GAME #2**

**Back to Back**

**Participants:** Two boys, two girls, and two helpers.

**Props:** Ten basketballs and Two large garbage cans

**Preparation:** Arrange Two groups of five basketballs at one end of the stage. Place the garbage cans at the other end of the stage, one opposite each group of basketballs.

**Playing:** The two boys and the two girls stand back to back with their arms locked, next to their respective group of basketballs. The helper for each team will place a basketball between the backs of the kids. Then, when you say “Go,” the teams will race toward the garbage can, drop the basketball into the can, and race back without unlocking their arms. Another ball is placed between their backs, and the process continues until one team has put all of their basketballs into their garbage can. The first team to successfully transfer their 5 basketballs is the winner.
Lesson 4
Leader's Notes

1. This is what we are teaching.
2. This is why we are teaching what we are teaching.
3. This is our supporting verse.
4. This is how we will support the powerpoint.

Lesson Time

SHORT OVERVIEW OF THE LESSON

Power Point
Trust in God

Direction
When hard times come

Memory Verse
“Trust in the Lord with all your heart,” (Proverbs 3:5, NIV)

Sub Points
- Trust in God to keep you from sinning
- Trust in God to protect you
- Trust in God to save you

KEY WORDS AND KEY PHRASES

Key words and Key phrases that should be used throughout the lesson.

Trust in God
when hard times come
Keep you from sinning (Object Lesson #1)
Protect you (Object Lesson #2)
Save you (Object Lesson #3)


**Quiet Seat**

*Props*: You will need a loud whistle, four blue balloons for the boys’ side, and four red balloons for the girls’ side. You will also need helpers on the boys’ side and helpers on the girls’ side to pass out the “Quiet Seat” prizes. Prizes like candy, snacks, or Bibles are all effective prizes. The prizes are given only to the kids who are the quietest during the teaching time. The “Quiet Seat” time officially starts after the whistle has been blown.

*Presentation*: Boys, I have four balloons on your side. If I see you talking to your friends or playing with your neighbor, I am going to pop a balloon. If I pop all four of your balloons, I am going to give all of the candy to the girls. Girls, you also have four balloons. If I see any type of distraction on the girls’ side, I am going to pop a balloon. If I pop all four of your balloons, I am going to give all of the candy to the boys. I have quiet seat watchers walking around looking for the perfect kids. A perfect kid is a kid who is sitting up straight, feet on the floor, hands in your laps, and whose eyes are on the teachers. If the quiet seat watchers see a perfect kid, they will slip a piece of candy into your hand. You are not to eat that candy until you are outside of the building. Everyone should be sitting up straight with your feet flat on the floor. No one should be moving around at this time. The bathrooms are now closed. The only ones who will be moving around in here are the quiet seat watchers. Their job is to watch you, not us. If I see anyone talking, I will pop a balloon. You know what happens if we pop all of your balloons; you go home today with nothing. We are now ready for the most important time of the day. It is now time for the preaching of the Word of God. On the count of three, I will blow my whistle, and quiet seat time will officially began. One, two, and three. (Blow the whistle.)

**Leader’s Notes**

When explaining the “quiet seat rule” teachers should be sure to communicate well. You are communicating your expectations to the kids. Kids need to know what the rules are, and the consequences for breaking them.

**Tips**

1. Use pauses
2. Look at the kids when you are talking to them.
3. Do not pace. (Stand strong and make purposeful movements.)
4. Make sure you speak with authority. (This does not mean yelling; it means having a clear, strong and stern voice.)
5. “Quiet Seat” time does not officially begin until you blow the whistle. (You can not pop a balloon until you blow the whistle.)
**Props:** Make two signs. One should say ‘Good Times”, and the other should say “Hard Times”.

**Preparation:** Illustration 1—Place the signs on different sides of the stage.

**Trusting in God** is very easy when you are experiencing “Good” Times (Illustration 2—Walk over to the sign that says Good Times). It is easy to trust in God when you are surrounded by friends who encourage you. It is easy to trust in God when you have 10 pairs of shoes. It is easy to trust in God when your family has enough food to eat. Anyone can trust in God when the times in their lives are “Good”.

In today's lesson, we are going to talk about trusting in God in different times—the hard times. (Illustration 3—Walk over to the sign that says Hard Times). I want you to learn to trust in God when you only have one pair of shoes. I want you to trust in God when you do not have friends to encourage you. I want you to trust in God when your family does not have plenty of food to eat. Trust in God when hard times come.
I want to tell you a secret. Everyone goes through hard times! Hard times are a perfect time for God to produce the miracle you need. God has promised that He will always be there for you. He will provide everything you need. He will take care of you. Our memory verse for today is “Trust God with all your heart.” That means to believe with everything in you and never doubt that God will take of you. Trust that God will work out every situation for the good. Situations in your life may change from good to bad, but God will never change. He is there for you in the good times. He is there for you in the hard times. He never changes. It is us who change. We stop trusting in Him when things get hard. Today, we want to encourage you to trust in God when hard times come.

- Trust in God to keep you from sinning.
- Trust in God to protect you.
- Trust in God to save you.
“Trust in the Lord with all your heart.”
Proverbs 3:5 (NIV)

Props: Overhead projector and a transparency with the scripture verse written on it. If you do not have an overhead projector then use posterboard with the verse written in markers large enough so everyone can read it.

Preparation: Set the overhead before the lesson begins so all you have to do is turn the projector on. Or if you have a poster board with the verse written on it, make sure it is ready to be carried out.

Presentation: The memory verse was included in the lesson introduction.

Leader’s Notes

To prepare this lesson, meditate on these scriptures;

Psalms 37:3-5 (NLT)
Trust in the Lord and do good. Then you will live safely in the land and prosper. Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you your heart’s desires. Commit everything you do to the Lord. Trust him, and he will help you.

Psalms 62:8 (NLT)
O my people, trust in him at all times. Pour out your heart to him, for God is our refuge.

Proverbs 3:5 (NLT)
Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding.

Jeremiah 17:7 (NLT)
But blessed are those who trust in the Lord and have made the Lord their hope and confidence.

Psalms 32:10 (NLT)
Many sorrows come to the wicked, but unfailing love surrounds those who trust the Lord.

Proverbs 28:25 (NLT)
Greed causes fighting; trusting the Lord leads to prosperity.

Proverbs 29:25 (NLT)
Fearing people is a dangerous trap, but trusting the Lord means safety.

Romans 10:11 (NLT)
As the Scriptures tell us, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced.”

Jeremiah 39:18 (NLT)
Because you trusted me, I will give you your life as a reward. I will rescue you and keep you safe. I, the Lord, have spoken!”
BIBLE LESSON

FINDING A FRIEND IN THE FIRE

Daniel 3

Props: Bible costumes, Actors: Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, King Nebuchadnezzar, a messenger, a soldier, an angel, and people who bow down and worship the statue. You will also need some type of ‘fake’ blazing furnace, a gold statue and music—the sound of a trumpet blowing.

Point: Trust in God when hard times come.

Preparation: Prepare props and rehearse with the actors.

Point: Satan wants you to sin against God.

Presentation: I am going to ask you a question, and I want you to answer honestly. Do your friends know that you are a Christian? One of the hard times you will face in your life is letting others know you love God. Some people will think it is great, and follow you. But some people will not be happy you serve God. This is what happened to three teenage boys in the Bible.

Their names were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. (They enter the stage.) Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were Israelites who had become slaves in another country named Babylon. Even though they were in another country where the people worshipped other gods, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego would not worship anyone but the One True and Living God.

One day the King of Babylon, King Nebuchadnezzar (King Nebuchadnezzar walks onto the stage), made a statue of himself (Illustration 4—King Nebuchadnezzar walks over to the statue). It was ninety feet high and made of solid gold. Then the king had his messenger deliver this message to the people of Babylon.
**Lesson 4**

As a teacher, you are leaving a legacy. The focus needs to change from leading followers to developing leaders. The greatest compliment a leader can receive is when those he leads outgrows him.

Your ability as a leader will not be judged by what you achieved personally, or even what your team accomplished. You will be judged by how well they do after you were gone.

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**BIBLE LESSON**

**Messenger**: Listen you people who come from every nation! Here is what the king commands you to do. You will soon hear the sounds of the trumpets. When you do, you must fall down and worship the gold statue that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. If you do not, you will be thrown into a blazing furnace right away."

**Teacher**: One day, when the music sounded *(play music)*, everyone fell down to worship the statue *(Illustration 5—people fall down to worship)*. Everyone, that is, except for three young men; Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They refused to bow down to the statue. The king heard about this and he was furious! He sent for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and this is what he said to them.

**King Nebuchadnezzar**: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, is what I heard true? Do you not worship the gold statue I set up? You will hear the trumpet again; when you do, fall down and worship the statue I made. If you will, that is very good; but if you will not, you will be thrown at once into a blazing furnace.

**Shadrach**: We might be thrown into the blazing furnace, but the God we serve is able to bring us out of it alive.

**Meshach**: Even if we knew that our God would not save us, we still would not worship the golden statue you set up.”

**Teacher**: King Nebuchadnezzar was so angry that he ordered the furnace to be heated seven times hotter than usual. Then he ordered his soldiers to tie them up. They tied them up and threw Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego into the blazing furnace. *(Illustration 6—Soldier grabs the three men and throws them in the blazing furnace.)*
Would you say this was a good time or a hard time for them? It is definitely a hard time in their lives! The king is trying to kill them. You too, will go through hard times. People will make fun of you for being a Christian. Your friends may turn their backs on you. Someone in your family may leave you. Everyone will go through hard times. You need to trust in God when hard times come. You need to trust that God will take care of you and help you get through the hard times in your life.

This was probably the hardest thing Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had ever gone through. In spite of this hard time, they trusted in their God. Do you know what happened? When the king looked in to the furnace, he did not see three people in the fire, he saw four! The Angel of the Lord was in the fire with them. They had found a friend in the fire to save them and protect them from the flames. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego survived the fiery furnace because they trusted in God!

Trust in God when hard times come!
OBJECT LESSON 1

God, I Trust You to Help Me Stop Sinning

Props: A mousetrap and a pencil

Point: Trust in God to keep you from sinning.

Preparation: You will use the pencil to set off the mousetrap. The mousetrap will snap the pencil in two. Use extreme caution when setting the trap. You might want to have a helper operate the mousetrap while you preach.

Presentation: (Illustration 7—Show the mousetrap.)
Most of you have probably seen one of these before. It is a trap used for catching mice. You see, what happens is you put something that the mouse likes to eat on this part, and then you pull this part back (Illustration 8—set mousetrap). Then you put it somewhere that mice will be. The mouse is attracted to the food on the trap. When it gets close and tries to get the food (Illustration 9—set off the mousetrap) the trap goes off and catches it.

The devil has a trap. Just like the food you put on the mousetrap tempts the mouse to come close, the devil puts temptations in front of you to draw you close to his trap. He will tempt you to steal a candy bar when you do not have enough money to buy one. He will tempt you to cheat on a test when you do not feel like studying for it. He will tempt you to lie to your mom so you will not get in trouble. The problem is, when you start doing those kinds of things, they become a habit. Habits are hard to break. Bad habits turn you away from God, and that’s when the devil has you in his trap.

When you are tempted to sin, is that a good time or a hard time? It is a hard time, but you can trust in God to keep you from sinning. Just like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, God will give you the strength to not sin. He will give you strength to make the right choice and to stay out of the devil's trap. Boys and girls, trust in God to keep you from sinning.
OBJECT LESSON 2
God, I Trust in You to Protect Me

Props: The armor of God—belt, breastplate, shoes, shield, helmet, sword, and a volunteer.

Preparation: Be ready to put the armor on the volunteer as you teach. It might be easier to have another volunteer do this so that you can focus on your teaching.

Point: Trust in God to protect you.

Presentation: The Bible tells us to put on the whole armor of God (Ephesians 6:11). I am sure many of you have looked in your history books and seen pictures from the days when knights dressed in shining armor. Before they went out into battle they would put a special piece of metal on their chest, a helmet on their head, metal plates on their legs, and arms, and metal shoes to protect their feet. They put on special armor for protection.

God has given us a special armor for protection. We have to put His armor on every day and trust in God to protect us. The Bible says first put on the belt of truth (Illustration 10—put belt on volunteer). When you tell the truth in every situation, you can trust in God to protect you. The next part of the armor is the breastplate of righteousness (Illustration 11—put breastplate on volunteer). Righteousness means living right in God’s sight. When God sees that you are living a life that is pleasing to Him, you can trust in God to protect you. Another part of the armor is the shoes of the Gospel of peace (put shoes on volunteer). When you are bringing peace wherever you go, you can trust in God to protect you. The next part of the armor is the shield of faith (Illustration 12—put shield on volunteer).
To have faith means that you believe in God, you trust in Him to protect you. Finally the Bible says let God’s saving power be like a helmet to protect you (put the helmet on the volunteer). You must trust and have no doubt in your mind that God is powerful enough to save you. God has given you His armor of protection, and his armor is all you need when you face hard times. Whenever hard times come, you can relax and know you are protected. The last part of the armor is the Word of God. (Pull out the sword.) The Word of God says, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart.” When you stand on the Word of God, you can trust in God to protect you.

So when you face a hard time, always speak the truth (point to the belt), put on righteousness (point to the breastplate), walk in peace (point at the shoes), trust and believe that God will protect you (point to the shield and the helmet), and stand on His Word (point to the sword). Trust in God when hard times come. He will protect you.

OBJECT LESSON 3
God I Trust in You to Save Me

Props: A hot dish mat, table, and a pan.

Point: Trust in God to save you.

Presentation: You have learned that you can trust in God to keep you from sinning, and you have learned that you can trust in God to protect you; but, most importantly, you need to trust in God to save you.

(Illustration 13—hold the dish over the table.) If I were to set a very hot pan or dish on a nice table, what do you think would happen? The heat from the dish would damage the table. It would destroy the finish on the table - it would ruin it. That is what this hot dish mat is for.
(Illustration 14 & 15—take the dish mat and put it under the dish.) If you put the mat on the table and then put the dish on the mat, the table will be saved. The heat from the dish cannot go through the mat and destroy the table.

The devil is always throwing fiery darts at us. The devil wants to ruin your life. He wants to keep you away from God. He wants to destroy you. The Bible says that Jesus has not come to destroy lives but to save them. He wants to be like the hot dish mat between you and the devil. If you will trust in God, He will save you from the devil’s fiery darts. He will save you from the devil’s plan to steal you away from God. Boys and girls, trust in God when hard times come. Let Jesus be your Savior. Trust in God to save you.
Prop suggestion: To add creativity to the story, you could play sound effects of birds chirping.

It is very important that you include keywords and key phrases throughout the Life Lesson.

The Life Lesson is the last part of the teaching. You must keep the focus on what was taught earlier in the lesson. Your preaching points must also focus on what was taught earlier in the lesson.

Frame 1
Pete Pigeon was a happy father with two daughters and one son. He was very excited and very proud of his family. As they all sat in their nest on top of the tree that was next to the big, white house, Pete told all of his children that he was proud of them and that God had a plan for their lives. He told them that if they would put their trust in God they would have an amazing life. He told all of them that one day they would learn how to fly, but, he told them that since they were young they did not have enough feathers to fly, so they would need to stay in the nest and not try to fly away while he was gone to get food.

Frame 2
Instead of listening to her father, Penny Pigeon began to get excited. She began to jump up, and down, scream, and yell, “I can do anything I want now that dad is gone.” She started to bounce around and to jump up and down in the nest. Her brother and sister told her to calm down and remember what their dad said. They told her not to try to get out of the nest. Just as they told her that, she jumped so high she fell right out of the nest. It looked as though she was going to hit the ground and die. But instead of hitting the ground she landed on a small thin branch that could barely hold her. She could barely hold on. She began to shake as she realized how much trouble she was really in.
Frame 3
As Pete returned back to the nest, he immediately saw Penny. He flew right to where Penny was to try and calm her down. He had to land on a branch next to the one she was sitting on so that her branch would not break. He told her she should have listened to him because now she was in serious trouble. He began to talk to his little girl. He told her, “Do not look down; just look at me.” He repeated it, “Do not look down; just look at me. Now listen Penny, look at me, and just take one step towards me. You can do it, Penny.”

Frame 4
Just as Penny began to step forward, the branch began to sway and move and she started to lose her balance. One wrong step and it would all be over for Penny the Pigeon. All she had to do is look down, take her eyes off of her father, and stop listening to him, and she would fall. Penny is going through a hard time. We will all go through hard times, but it is in those hard times that we must trust in God.

Vision - One of the most important things you can leave a child with is a vision. With it they will restrain themselves from the things that will stop them.

Identity - People will always live out who they believe they are.

Who do your children think they are?
You can tell people what you know, but you import to people who you are.

Frame 5
Then all of a sudden a cat rushed up to a different branch on the same tree. He told Penny to come over to where he was. The cat said, “I know that you are in trouble and I am here to save you. Do not worry, trust me. Besides I am closer to you. All you have to do is come to me. I will save you. I will not hurt you. Come to me, little birdie. As Penny turned her head to look at the cat she nearly fell. Her father yelled, “Penny do not look at the cat; look at me.”

Preaching Point
The cat keeps saying he’s going to save Penny, but he cannot save her. When hard times come you need to trust in God to save you. The Bible says in Proverbs 20:22, “Wait for the Lord, and He will save you.” When you are doubting that you can live for God you need to trust in God that He has saved you. When the devil tries to bring up your past failures, you need to trust in God that He has saved you. Trust in God when hard times come.

Frame 6
Even more danger came for Penny the Pigeon when a snake came crawling up the side of the fence next to the tree. The snake told Penny to look at him. “I am a big snake, and you are not going to make it! You are going to fall and die. If the fall does not kill you I will. You are going to be my lunch now. Fall, little birdie, fall. You can do it. Look down at me and fall! Trust me,” the snake said. Penny was so afraid. She needed someone to protect her.
**Preaching Point**

Just like Penny needs someone to **protect** her in this **hard time**, you need to **trust in God to protect you**. When someone is picking on you at school, you need to trust in God to protect you. When you are walking down the street you need to **trust in God to protect you**.

**Trust in God when hard times come.**

**Frame 7**

The enemy kept coming at Penny the Pigeon. Right below her in the grass was a mean dog and all he wanted was for Penny to fall. So he began to call her names. He told her that she was so ugly that she made the ugly duckling look beautiful. All he did was yell insults at her; the dog was just plain mean! All he wanted was for Penny to fall off the branch. Penny was so tempted to yell back at him and call him names. She wanted to say, “Shut up! You’re ugly!” She was tempted to **sin**. Her father began to yell once again, “Look at me Penny. I know that you are in trouble; look at me; **trust** in me,” he said. “Do not look down, do not look around, just look to me and **trust in me**.”

**Preaching Point**

Penny was having a **hard time**, and during this **hard time** she was tempted to **sin**. When you go through **hard time** you will be tempted to **sin**. When someone calls you names you will be tempted to fight back and call them names. When you’re angry you will be tempted to curse. **Hard time** will tempt you to **sin**, that is why you need to **trust in God to keep you from sinning**.
As the branch that Penny was sitting on began to swing, and as the wind began to pick up, all the animals that wanted the bird to fall kept yelling, “Trust us; look down!” The cat hated birds. All he wanted to do was paw at her. The snake wanted to eat her, and the dog on the ground was just plain mean. All he wanted was for her to hurt herself. They are all just like our enemy, the devil. As her father began to nudge himself closer to where she was, he begun to yell, “Trust in me! Trust in me! Trust in me! I am right here. I will protect you. I will save you. Just jump.” Finally Penny took the biggest leap of her life; she jumped.

As Penny leaped through the air she landed right in the arms of her father. She began to cry and she told him that she was sorry for not listening to him. Her father wrapped his wings around her and forgave her; he told her that she was now safe, that he was glad that she trusted in him. Today I want to ask you will you trust in God when hard times come?
POINT OF DECISION
Kids, will you trust in God to be with you in hard times, to keep you from sinning, to protect you, and to save you from the enemy. He is calling to you right now and He is saying, “Jump! Trust in me, just jump.” If you do that, then one day you will be in heaven with Him, and He is going to put his arms around you, because you will be with Him forever. If you are ready to take that jump today, I want you to stand to your feet. I want to pray for you...

CLOSING PRAYER
Let us pray:
Dear Jesus, today I make a decision that when the hard times come, I will put my trust in You to protect me, to save me and to keep me from sinning. I give you my heart and my life. Today, I jump into your arms. Help me to never look back. In Jesus’ name, Amen.
Puppet presentations need to be as professional as possible. The poor ones are real time wasters; however, a well-presented puppet segment becomes an effective teaching tool. Our media-saturated kids are too sophisticated to focus in on shabby presentations, they will miss the point and make fun of it.

Use the following checklist. If you are just beginning, it will provide helpful tips. If you are a seasoned pro, use it as a review.

1. Position your hand correctly in the puppet’s mouth. Make sure your hand is all the way in the puppet’s mouth. Adding double-sided tape to the area where your fingers rest inside the puppet’s mouth will make it easier. Practice opening the puppet’s mouth by moving your thumb downward. Never move your fingers upward.

2. Practice lip synchronization. Synchronize opening the puppet’s mouth with the spoken word. Face a mirror, holding a puppet. Speak a sentence, then have the puppet repeat it, utilizing the same mouth action. Avoid moving the mouth at random during a sentence. Do not open the mouth all the way on each word. Save the wide openings for exaggerated or loud expressions.

3. Use correct entrances and exits. Imagine four or five-stair steps for the puppet to use when entering or exiting. Never have a puppet appear or disappear suddenly. With a fluid motion, the puppet should move forward as he “bounces” to full view. Use the stage’s depth. Use variety.

4. Concentrate on the puppet’s position with respect to the audience and the stage. Position the puppet so it establishes and holds eye contact with the audience. Know the sight boundaries. Do not lift the puppet too high or allow it to be barely visible. Do not let your arm sink as you get tired. Do not lean on the stage.

5. Concentrate on the puppet’s position with respect to other puppets. Help the audience focus on the speaker or soloist puppet by facing other puppets toward that one. Make your puppet look alive! Work on his personality. Have him react to what is going on. Do not let other puppets block the audience’s view of the action. Keep the puppet’s movements somewhat exaggerated but not ridiculous.

PRACTICE! Constantly work with the puppet to develop professionalism. Have the puppet do the following in a mirror to improve: Yawn. Sneeze. Think. Express sorrow. Rub tummy. Look for a lost item. Cough. Express fear, happiness, sleepiness, hard of hearing, doing a double-take, being shy, throwing a kiss, and taking a bow.