10 PRETEEN MINISTRY LESSONS

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Lesson: Armor of God

Movie: Here Comes the Boom

Bible Passage: Ephesians 6:10-17

Activity: Make Your Own Armor

Supplies: poster board, aluminum foil, duct tape, scissors, markers

Divide preteens into groups of 4-6. Instruct each group to choose one team member to be their armor model. Give the groups 5-10 minutes to construct their own armor using the available supplies. For help, they can look at Ephesians 6:10-17 to learn about the pieces of armor.

After teams have completed their armor, call all armor models to the stage or front of the room. Pass out awards for the armor like “Best Shield/Sword/Helmet/Etc.”, “Most Creative Armor”, and/or “Best Overall Armor.”

After the activity, say: You all did a great job creating armor for your teammate. What was the hardest piece of armor for you to create? (Pause for responses) What piece of armor were you proudest of? (Pause for responses)

We don’t typically use armor in our lives…at least not armor like this. We’re going to see a clip from the movie Here Comes the Boom. Mr. Voss is trying to save his friends job by becoming an MMA fighter. He’s not as experienced as the other fighters, but he has mastered the art of intimidation. Let’s see how the fight goes.

[Play Movie Clip]

*Note: You will have to rent the DVD on your own and cue it to the start location. Due to copyright laws, we cannot provide the clip for download.

Start @ 28:08—Begin as Mr. Voss and Marty are walking into the backstage area of the fight.

Stop @ 30:43—End as Mr. Voss is carried off on the stretcher and his theme music plays.
**Clip Description:** Mr. Voss is attempting to be an MMA fighter. He enters the octagon with booming theme music and intimidating armor. After the music stops and the armor comes off, Mr. Voss meets a real MMA fighter. His real identity is revealed as they carry him out on a stretcher.

**After the clip, say:** Things didn’t go too well for Mr. Voss. He picked some awesome theme music and came in with intimidating armor. If you didn’t know better, you’d really think that he was a real MMA fighter. Unfortunately, he had the take the armor off and face reality. When the bell rung, Mr. Voss went night-night!

Mr. Voss is a biology teacher, not an MMA fighter. Even when he put on the armor and the theme music, his identity never changed. The same is true of the armor we made earlier. We could wear it around all day, but it wouldn’t really do us much good. It might block a few paper balls thrown at us, but we’d be in big trouble in a real battle.

The Bible says that we are in the midst of a battle. It’s a battle against spiritual forces of darkness. The book of Ephesians reminds us that we can be bold in the fight because God has given us armor for the fight! This is not armor that we just put on to intimidate the enemy. As followers of Jesus, it is a part of our new identity in Him. Listen to what Paul says in Ephesians 6:10-17

**Read Ephesians 6:10-17**

As Paul mentions each piece of armor, he is reminding the people of their identity in Jesus Christ. The Armor of God is a part of our identity in Christ. We can be bold and confident in battle because of who we are in Christ.

Let’s go through the armor piece by piece, just like Paul did, to see how it helps us to face the forces of darkness with confidence.

*Describe the historical use of each armor piece, and how the piece reminds us of who we are in Christ.*
**Belt of Truth**
The belt was important because it protected the soldier’s lower abdomen, and it carried the Sword, which we’ll see represents God’s Word. Paul uses the belt to remind believer that we can trust in the Bible. God will do exactly what He says He will do.

**Breastplate of Righteousness**
The breastplate is an interesting piece of armor. It was often molded into the image of what looks like a superhero! The breastplate would have built in muscles and make the soldier appear bigger and stronger than he probably really is. This represents us being changed into the image of Christ. We are being made into His image, and this means that we have much more strength and power than we would ever have on our own.

**Shoes of Peace**
The shoes or sandals were a standard piece of the Roman soldier’s armor. The shoes signified that the soldier was prepared to go into battle. Here, Paul mentions putting on our shoes with the Gospel of peace. As we prepare to fight, we can be confident because Jesus Christ has already won the victory. The forces of darkness may still be able to harm us, but they have already been defeated! It’s a lot easier to walk into battle when you know you’re going to win!

**Shield of Faith**
The shield was very large. It would literally cover the entire body of the soldier. It was also often covered in animal hide and dipped in water. When the enemy would fling fiery arrows, the wet shield would extinguish the flames. It is our faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior that becomes our strongest defense against Satan. It is by faith that we have been saved, and it must be by faith that we fight against the forces of darkness.

**Helmet of Salvation**
The helmet was made to protect the head, even more so the brain. Paul reminds us to protect our minds from the forces of darkness by remembering the hope we have in Jesus Christ. When someone believes in Christ, there are immediate rewards given to him or her here on earth. But even more than that, we know that there will be great rewards in Heaven. Philippians 1:6 says, “**being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.**” Paul reminds us that we must
always keep our minds focused on the joy and greatness we will get to experience in Heaven as a part of our salvation.

_Sword of Spirit (Word of God)_

The sword is the only weapon for the soldier. Every other piece of armor is about defense, but the sword is all about offense. The Word of God is our tool for fighting back against Satan. When Satan tempted Jesus, what did Jesus use to fight back? He quoted Scripture. Satan and the forces of darkness have no defense for the power and truth of God’s Word. It is our weapon in this battle.

The Armor of God is all about what Jesus has done for us and who we are in Him. As children of God, we get to share in the victory that Jesus has won. We don’t have to face the temptations of Satan without a defense because God has given us each piece of armor.

We can be bold and confident in battle because of who we are in Christ.

The book of Ephesians is all about the new creation that we are in Christ. Being a part of God’s family means that even though the battle is still going on, we have already won the war. We must be like soldier who are alert and prepared to fight. Satan can still trip us up and tempt us in a lot of ways, so we need to put on the full armor of God to defend ourselves. Remember, we can be bold and confident in battle because of who we are in Christ.

Let’s close with a prayer to ask God to make us bold and confident in this battle!

Break into small groups and discuss the following questions:

- Why do you think Paul uses the image of armor in this passage?
- How are we like soldiers preparing for war?
- What does each piece of armor (belt, breastplate, shoes, shield, helmet, sword) mean or represent for us?
- How are we being “molded into the image of Jesus Christ?” (He has “imputed—assigned, accredited, passed-on” his righteousness to us, we are applying His teaching to our lives, we are showing His love to the world through our words and actions)
What roles does the Bible play in this battle? (*helps us to be confident & helps us to fight back against Satan*)

In modern times, we see football players take hard hits and NASCAR drivers race at 200 mph. How does their confidence in their “armor” help them in their sport? How can our confidence in Jesus Christ help us in this battle?

What are some reasons that we have to be confident against Satan and forces of darkness?
Lesson: Being Thankful

Bible: 1 Thessalonians 5:18; Romans 8:28

Opening Game

Supplies:

- Empty pop cans with the tab still attached, one for every two preteens
- Pieces of yarn 20-30 feet long, one for every two preteens
- HELP CARDS to choose from (see below): Print out and put on note cards
- 4 different 2-liter bottles of pop/soda
- Bag of candy for prizes for the entire group

Directions:

Divide your preteens into pairs and have them sit in a circle across from each other. Give each team a piece of string, and each member will hold onto one end of the string.

(Yes strings will be crossing over each other)

Give each team a pop/soda can. Before giving it to them, gently bend the tab up without breaking it. Inform the preteens if they break off the tab they are out of the game. On go the teams will pull the string through the pop tab and begin to slide the pop can back and forth to each other. They get a point for each time they successfully slide the pop can back and forth to each other.

When a team feels they need help, they can ask for a help card. Each team gets one help card only. When a team decides to yell for a help card a leader will take the pre-made cards to one of them and let them choose one from the stack. They will not be able to look at the cards before choosing. The card will then be put back into the deck to be possibly used again. The team or teams will immediately have to do what the card says. Most cards are meant to help them. But there are a few cards that will hinder them and not help them. This is the chance they take asking for help.
The team with the most points after a given amount of time wins the game. Give the winning team their choice of a two-liter bottle of pop of their own to take home.

**Teach – Being Thankful**

**Supplies: Index cards and pens**

Well, that was a tangled mess of pop cans and string, wasn’t it? Everyone did amazingly well, and I want to congratulate all the teams. Here is a small prize for everyone to enjoy.

As I was watching you all play the game, the look on your faces when you took a help card was pretty awesome. Some of you looked so thankful for a card that helped you. Some of you were not so lucky and, by the look on your face, you were not very thankful for the card.

This is what we are going to be talking about today – being thankful for those people in your lives who help you. People like your parents, coaches, teachers, friends, church leaders, etc.

**Ask:**

- How hard was this game?
- Did you think you would need help when you started?
- How thankful were you when you got your card?
- If your card was not helpful, how thankful were you?
- How do your parents help you in life? How do your teachers help you? How do your coaches help you?
- Who are other people in your life who help you?
- Is it hard to be thankful when it seems like your help is no help at all?
- How thankful are you when someone helps you?

**Say:** There are so many things in our lives that we need to be thankful for. We often take for granted people in our lives who help us. If we don’t stop to think about how they help us, we’ll take them for granted.
Read 1 Thessalonians 5:18

“Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.”

Say: When we look at this verse it says to be thankful in all circumstances. ALL circumstances, not just some, but all.

The truth is that some people that SHOULD be helpful in our lives aren’t.

Sometimes your parents are out to get you. Your math teacher might be really mean. You might have a coach that yells a lot. Even though those people are put in a position of authority to help you, it doesn’t always feel like they’re being helpful.

This verse reminds us to be thankful for these people even when it seems like they’re not being helpful. What? That makes no sense!

The truth is that God may be allowing a mean coach or strict teacher in your life because he wants to teach you something. He might want you to learn perseverance, patience, or something else.

Here’s another verse that might help you out with this.

Read Romans 8:28:

“We know that God works out everything for the good of those who love Him. They are the people who are part of His plan.”

Ask:

- Talk about a time when a teacher, parent, coach, etc. was not helpful.
- What could God have been trying to teach you in that situation?

Say: Now, let’s take a look at those people in our lives who are helpful. The times that teachers, parents and coaches help us make good decisions or bring out the best in us.

Often, we take them for granted. We don’t take time to reflect how thankful we are for them.
In fact, sometimes we resist their efforts to help us.

For example, think about when you were younger when you resisted the idea of brushing your teeth. You might have wined and complained about having to brush your teeth every morning and night. But your parents made you because they knew what was best for you. You’re now probably at the age where you’re grateful they made you brush your teeth.

Or maybe you didn’t like the idea of having to do 100 free throw shots at every basketball practice. But when you saw an improvement in your shooting ability, you realized how smart your coach was.

The same goes for other things that our parents, teachers, family members, and coaches make us do. We might resist their efforts to help us, but they have our best interest in mind. They want what’s best for us.

In fact, take some time and do that right now.

I’m going to give you some index cards and pens. On each index card, write down the name of someone in your life who is put there to help you.

Then, list all the ways they’ve helped you.

Give preteens a few minutes to complete the task. Then, break up students in small groups and have them discuss what they wrote down on the index card.

Afterwards, encourage students to be grateful for those people in their lives.

Have a leader close the prayer.

HELP CARDS:

Move your string to the top of all the other strings.

Move your string to the bottom of all the other strings.

Shorten your string by half.

Add five to your score.
Leave the circle and continue playing.

Every other team stops for 1 minute.

A leader assists your team for 1 minute by moving the can for you.

All teams switch strings.

Switch sides with your teammate.

Kneel for the rest of the game.
Lesson: Bullying

Opening Game – Unstoppable Stack

Supplies: 2-3 decks of playing cards. Enough for each student to have 3-4 cards each

Directions: Pass out 3-5 playing cards to all your students.

On go, students will have to challenge each other to a duel with a partner. They will each declare a card in the duel, and the highest card wins. (Aces are high, then King-Queen-Jack-Ten- and so on.) The winner takes both cards & puts them on the bottom of their pile of cards.

Both players move on to a new duel. You cannot challenge the same person more than two times in a row.

Once all your cards are gone, you are out of the game.

Continue playing until only two students have cards left.

These two students will go head to head until one of them wins the best 3 out of 5 times against the other.

Teach – Bullying

Say: At the start of the game, things were pretty equal. Everyone had the same chance of winning as the next person. Then, things changed.

A few of you started winning more and more cards. Those of you with only a few cards left were maybe afraid of those with all the cards. They had a ton of cards, and their chance of beating you was greater.

This reminds me of bullies.

Bullies might start out as a friend. You and them are sort of equals. As time goes on, they say and do things to you that are mean and hurtful.

It eventually gets to the point where you are afraid of them.
You feel you have no chance against them. They are stronger, smarter, prettier or funnier. They have more friends and influence than you.

Their deck is stacked against yours. Sort of like in the game we just played, right?

**Discuss the following questions:**

- In the game, how did you feel going up against someone with just a few more cards than you?
- What did you feel like when the other person had a lot more cards than you?
- Those of you that had the most cards, how did you feel going up against someone with 1 or 2 cards?
- What does it feel like to be made fun of?
- What does it feel like when someone is mean to you on purpose?
- Have you ever seen someone in school be bullied? What happened? How often does this happen at your school?

**Say:** See, there are always going to be people in your lives who think they are better than you. There will be people who are mean to you for no reason. And even if by chance it doesn’t happen to you, there will be people you know who get bullied.

There is different types of bullying too. It can be physical, where the bully actually physically pushes, hits, or hurts you in some way.

Or it can be verbal, where the bully says mean things to you over and over. Or maybe the bully spreads a rumor about you that isn’t true.

Bullies aren’t just something people have to deal with today.

**Ask:** Can anyone give me the name of a bully or bullies from the Bible?

Give them time to come up with a list, and write them down on the board or paper.
Say: There are a lot of bullies in the Bible. Many times, the people getting bullied allowed God to protect them. This doesn’t mean they were not scared, but it does mean that no matter how hard it got, they always had faith God would protect them.

Let’s look a guy that never let bullies affect him even when he was faced with being eaten alive.

Open you Bible to Daniel chapter 6

Ask: Can anyone explain the story of Daniel and the Lions' den? Allow for a few responses.

Say: Daniel was the highest advisor to the king, and the other advisers were jealous. In fact they were so jealous they began to talk about Daniel to the king. Just like in our game, they began building a stack of cards so high against Daniel that they felt it could never fall down.

They convinced the king that Daniel should pray to him and no one else. The other advisors knew Daniel would never do this, and it would give the king no choice but to punish Daniel with death. See, the bullies were using the king’s fears and Daniel’s love for the Lord against them.

Let’s read what happens: Read Daniel 6:16-23

Say: Daniel never gave in to the bullies; he had faith God was in control and would protect him. Just like when you are facing a bully, no matter how bad it gets, God will protect you and bring you out of the situation safe.

It can be scary and hard, but no matter how large the stack a bully has and is using against you, it is nothing compared to God’s.

Now, the truth is that you might trust God’s protection against the bully, but the bullying still persists. In that case it is really important to talk to your parents or teacher about the situation. Oftentimes, adults need to step into the situation to help out.

Break your students into groups with a leader in each group. Remind them that this is a safe place and they can talk about anything.
Ask:

- Does anyone want to talk about a time they may have been bullied?
- What was the outcome?

Give them time to talk, and then give them these final thoughts before praying together.

Say: Dealing with a bully can be one of the scariest things you do, just like Daniel being thrown into a lion’s den. But when we have faith in God and ask Him for His help in those situations, He will be there for us always. Have the groups pray for each other and for any bullies they have encountered.
Lesson: Character

Movie: Captain America: The First Avenger


Activity: Charades

Before the activity, make a list of occupations. Be sure to choose some common occupations and some more adventurous occupations. Some examples that you might choose are: painter, cook, racecar driver, hunter, pastor, teacher, nurse, scuba diver, golfer, and aerobics instructor.

Select a preteen to begin the game of charades by selecting an occupation. Explain that they must perform the actions of their selected occupation without using words. The other preteens will guess what occupation the actions represent. The preteen with the correct guess selects the next occupation and the game continues.

After the activity, say: Have any of you ever played charades before? The whole game is played without using words, which can be rather difficult. This game is fun, but it is also really similar to real life. We learn a lot about other people when we watch their actions. Actions show us the character, the inside, of a person.

We’re going to watch a clip from the movie Captain America. In this clip, Dr. Abraham and Colonel Phillips are trying to decide the best candidate for a special military experiment. Colonel Phillips wants a big, strong soldier, but Dr. Abraham is looking for something different. Let’s watch the clip and see who they decide to choose for the experiment.

[Play Movie Clip]

Start @ 23:07—Dr. Abraham and Colonel Phillips are standing at the truck and discussing the special project.

Stop @ 24:19—Scene ends after Steve Rogers (Captain America) dives on a grenade. Colonel Phillips says, “He’s still skinny,” and Dr. Abraham smiles at Rogers.

Clip Description: Dr. Abraham is grooming Steve Rogers for a special military experiment. Dr. Abraham has a serum to make a super soldier, but it must be the right person—a good person.
Colonel Phillips attempts to prove that another soldier has more strength and courage by throwing a dummy grenade into their formation. Everyone runs except for Steve Rogers. He dives on the grenade to save others. This action reveals his character.

**After the clip, say:** Dr. Abraham has a special serum that will turn that person into a super soldier. He is looking for the perfect person to be a part of his experiment. The only thing is that it needs to be a good person.

Dr. Abraham believes Steve Rogers is a good person, but his actions in this clip prove it. When the grenade hits the ground, everyone runs except Steve. He dives on the grenade to save others. He was willing to give up his life to save the lives of others. His actions revealed his character.

Just like Steve Rogers, our actions reveal our character. What happens on the outside shows what we have on the inside. So, what do your actions say about you? If we are followers of Christ, then our actions should show that to be true.

Let's look at what Jesus has to say on this subject. Open your Bibles to Luke 6.

**Read Luke 6:43-49**

Jesus uses the image of a fruit tree to show what we’ve been talking about today. He says that a bad tree will not produce good fruit, and a good tree will not produce bad fruit.

Jesus is saying that our actions, or fruit, will be very closely related to who we are on the inside. If we have His Word in our hearts, then it will guide our actions and thoughts. If we have stored selfish things or evil things in our hearts, then those things will unfortunately guide our actions.

As Christians, people should be able to detect our faith by our actions. This means that we need to hear the teachings of Jesus and do them! In the last part of this passage, Jesus compares this to building a house.

Jesus says that those who hear His teaching and don’t do it are like those that build a house on sand. You can imagine what kind of house that would be. Have you ever built a sand castle
at the beach and then watched the waves destroy it? It will never last because it has not foundation.

In the same way, if we don’t use the Bible as our guide for living, we are like a house without a foundation that will be destroyed. Jesus says those that hear His teaching and apply it to their lives are like houses that are built with deep foundations. They will stand firm and not be destroyed.

Jesus wanted his audience (and us) to understand how we are to live. He wants us to live in a way that agrees with His teachings, the Bible. When we live in obedience to the Bible, others are able to see Jesus in us and know more about Him. Our actions are showing that we belong to Him.

Let’s move to small groups to talk more about how our actions can point others to Jesus.

**Discussion the following questions as a small group:**

1. How do you know the difference between an orange tree and an apple tree?
2. How is this similar to our actions showing who we are on the inside?
3. What are some actions that you would consider “Christ-like”?
4. What are some actions that might confuse others about your faith? (not Christ-like)
5. How do we know the way God wants us to act? What resource has He given us?
6. Think of a person that you would say is a strong Christian. Explain what it is about them and their actions that make you think that way about them.
7. Make a list of the Christ-like qualities you want to display in your school, home, or extra curriculum activities. Keep the list to remind you who God has called you to be.
Lesson: Christmas

Bible Passage: Proverbs 27:17, Philippians 2:1-11

Game: Pass the Present

Supplies:

- 10-20 wrapped presents
- Elf Hat

Directions:

Have your preteens sit in chairs in a circle and put all the presents in the middle of the circle. Once all of your preteens are seated choose one preteen to be the elf. Give the elf the elf hat to wear and remove their seat from the circle.

Explain to the group that the elf is one of the major reason we all get presents and without the elf Santa cannot possibly deliver all the presents. This elf will begin to pass out presents, but once you get a present you cannot keep it. You must be passing the presents around the circle.

The elf will pass out more presents as we listen to some awesome Christmas music. (Feel free to sing along with the song almost like caroling)

When the music stops anyone with a present must immediately get up and switch places with someone else who has a present. But don’t get caught without a seat, the elf is trying to find a seat too.

The person left without a seat is the new elf and the game continues. Return the gifts to the middle and have the new elf put on the elf hat. Play as many rounds as you want.
Teach – Christmas Lesson

Supplies:

- Note Cards and Pens

Say: I always thought elves loved to work and never stopped working. I guess this game may make elves look at taking breaks a little differently. But really, there is a point to this game and it has nothing to do with elves or Santa.

During the game, some of you were listening to the music, or maybe you were focused on if you were going to get a gift. Maybe you were the elf and trying to pass out as many gifts as you could. Whatever you were doing, there was a ton of things going on!

Similar to the game being busy, during Christmas there are numerous things going on that can distract us from what the real reason for this time of year is all about. Today we are going to break this down to help you stay focused, even when it seems impossible.

Ask:

- What is your favorite Christmas Song?
- Who like getting presents?
- Who likes shopping for presents?
- Do you ever get tired of all craziness of Christmas time?
- Why do you think this happens?

Say: We all know that the reason for the season is what? JESUS. I want to say that there is nothing wrong with enjoying the fun stuff of Christmas time. But, we need to make that sure we don’t allow the fun stuff to be the focus of the season.

So how do we NOT let the craziness of the season distract us from the real reason for Christmas? During the game there was a lot of everyone running around looking for a seat all at the same time. Christmas time can be the same, everyone running around not able to focus
on Jesus so know that you are not alone. All those who love Jesus are dealing with similar distractions. It can help to take time to be around others that love Him like you do.

**Read: Proverbs 27:17**

As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend.

Being around other Christians during this time can help and reenergize us when we are feeling like the craziness of the season is getting to be too much.

Another way we can stay focused on Jesus is to try and love others as Christ did through service. Remember that Jesus came here to serve and set the example of what serving is all about. What better time of the year to serve others to show Jesus’ love?

**Read: Philippians 2:1-11**

Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate? 2 Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose. 3 Don’t be selfish; don’t try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. 4 Don’t look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. 5 You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. 6 Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. 7 Instead, he gave up his divine privileges he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, 8 he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal’s death on a cross. 9 Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor and gave him the name above all other names, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

**Say:** The craziness of the holiday season can become overwhelming. But remember that living for Jesus was not meant to be easy. If during this time of the year we live as Christ did, as the verses we just read tell us too, the season will no longer be just the holiday season. It will be CHRISTMAS; it will be about the birth of God's son and what he has done for everyone.
Pass out note cards and pens to each of your preteens.

On this note card I want you to write one thing down you love about Christmas.

Then write down one of the crazy things about the season you don’t like.

Finally write down one way you can serve others during this time of year.

Once everyone is done have them put their cards all in a pile and sit back down. Then pass back the cards to your preteens and make sure they do not get the card they wrote.

Once everyone has a new card, have him or her read the cards to themselves and pray over them.

Close in prayer
Lesson: Courage

Bible Passage: David and Goliath—1 Samuel 17

Opening Activity: “20 Seconds”

This activity can be done in small groups or as individuals in a larger group. Create a list of physical activities such as running in place, jumping jacks, singing a nursery rhyme, or whistling. Think of as many crazy activities as possible.

Call out the physical activities one at a time and instruct preteens to perform the physical activity for exactly 20 seconds. At the end of the 20 seconds, move to another activity. Move through several activities and allow preteens to burn off some energy.

To make this activity a competition, have small groups compete to do the most sit-ups, jumping jacks, and/or verses of the nursery rhyme in a 20 second time limit.

After the activity, say: Each of those activities lasted 20 seconds. Does that seem like a long or short amount of time to you? If I said you had to stand on one leg for 20 seconds, would that be easy? What if you had to get into the wrestling ring with an 800 lb Grizzly Bear for 20 seconds? Would that be easy? Most of the time, 20 seconds flies by like nothing, but there are certain things that can make 20 seconds feel like an eternity.

God often calls us to have courage and take risks to build up His Kingdom. Look through the Bible at Abraham, Moses, Daniel, the Disciples—the all took risks for God and God used them in great ways. Taking risks starts with that first 20 seconds of courage.

One of the great examples of courage is seen in the life of David. David knew God and did his best to be obedient to God. When it came time to take a risk for God, David had courage. 20 seconds of courage turned a lowly shepherd boy into a hero to an entire nation.

1 Samuel 17 tells us the story of this epic battle. The Israelite army was facing a mighty opponent, the Philistines. The Bible tells us that both armies were all prepared for battle. The
Israelites were camped atop one hill, and the Philistines were camped atop another hill with a battlefield between them.

There was a practice in those times that started with the Greeks to do a special type of battle. Rather than having every man fight, the two armies would settle the war by sending their best fighter out for a one-on-one battle. For the Philistines, that fighter was Goliath. Listen to the description of this warrior from 1 Samuel 17.

**Read 1 Samuel 17:4-7**

Goliath was no joke. He was big, mean, and nasty. For forty straight days, Goliath would come out and taunt the Israelites. He would dare anyone to come out and fight him, but no one would take the challenge. Every time Goliath spoke, the Israelites were terrified and hid.

Long before David was King of Israel, he was just a lowly shepherd boy. David's older brothers were all part of the Israelite army, and were camped out on the hill in front of Goliath. One day, David visited the camp to deliver some food and check on his brothers. While he was visiting, Goliath came out just like he did every day.

David heard Goliath challenge the Israelites and mock their God. David saw everyone tremble with fear and hide from this beast of a man, but David didn't flinch. This was David's 20 seconds to run or have courage. What do you think David said?

Before we look at what David said, I want you to write down what you would've said and done in that moment. If you had 20 seconds to respond to Goliath, what would you say and do?

*Give kids a chance to write down what they would've done in that situation. Ask a few preteens to share their responses.*

David displays insane courage. After hearing Goliath's challenge, David responds. Listen to what David says.

**Read 1 Samuel 17:32-37**

Courage comes by knowing God and trusting Him. The more we know Him, the more understand and accept the things that He promises us. David knew God, and He knew the
protection that God had promised. When we understand all that God has promised us, it makes it easier for us to take risks and face challenges to build His Kingdom!

So what happened next? Remember the quote from the movie clip? It said that 20 seconds of courage would lead to something great. This was true for David.

David took his staff, his sling, and 5 smooth stones to the battlefield to face Goliath. Let’s look at what happened next.

**Read 1 Samuel 17:41-51**

David had courage. He took a risk for God. We may not be asked to face a 9-foot tall man, but there are some giants in our lives. Maybe it’s sharing your faith, or maybe it’s befriending someone at your school. When God asks you to take risks and have courage, remember all the He has promised you. When you know Him and what He has promised, you can be confident that He will do something great in you and through you.

**Break into small groups for the following activity: – Facing the Giants**

Give each small group a sheet of butcher paper of 9-10 feet in length. Instruct the group to draw a silhouette of a person on the sheet. Next, have the group list some ways they can show courage and take risks for God. Give guidance to groups that may be struggling to think of ideas. Possible ideas are go on mission trip, serve their neighbors, share their faith, give time or money to the church for ministry, etc.
Lesson: Faith

Bible Passage: Hebrews 11:1

Activity: Action News Report

Have kids divide into small groups. Give each group the name and information on a mythological creature, such as unicorns, Godzilla, werewolves, Bigfoot, mermaid, leprechaun, etc. Explain to each group that they will be creating a news report that must include every member of their group. They can be reporters, eyewitnesses, cameramen, etc. Their story should be about several eyewitnesses describing a "sighting" of the mythological creature. Encourage them to be humorous with their news reports. When groups have finished, allow a few groups to share their news report with other groups.

After the activity, say: Have any of you ever seen one of these creatures? When you can't see something, you have a really hard time believing that it really exists or that it really happened. We all want evidence or proof to help us believe.

Open your Bibles to the book of Hebrews, chapter 11. The writer of Hebrews opens this chapter with a great definition of faith, so let's read that together. Hebrews 11:1-3 says,

“Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for. By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.”

Faith is believing without seeing. This is essential for the Christian life. You cannot see God. You were not present when Jesus was crucified or resurrected. And you were not in the room with the writers who wrote down God’s words that formed the Bible. So, how can you believe in all of these things that you did not see or experience? This is faith.

But our faith is not completely blind. Although we cannot directly see or experience these things, God chose to gives us testimonies and evidence that believe that they really happened. Here’s what I mean…

The Bible is composed of 66 books by over 40 authors over a span of 1500 years!
In all that time and with all those different authors, there is not one line in the Bible that contradicts another. Only God could do something that amazing.

Following Jesus’ resurrection, He spent a span of 40 days on earth and more than 500 people saw him alive. On one occasion, Thomas put his finger in the nail holes of Jesus and felt the scars of the crucifixion. If Jesus wasn’t dead and resurrected, how could any of this have happened?

God is not visible. In fact, the Bible tells us that we cannot see Him because His glory would be too magnificent for our eyes. Even though we can’t see Him, we can see all that he created and the order with which he created it. Did you know that the earth is 93 million miles from the Sun? This is the perfect distance. If we were a few degrees closer, we would burn up. If we were a few degrees further, the planet would freeze. Did you know that the stars rotate in the sky with such precision that if you set your clocks by them, the time would only be off 3 seconds every 1,000 years! I wish I had a clock that accurate. All of this is the testimony of creation that there is a creator. The creator is God.

Even though we cannot see or experience any of these things on our own, we can have faith that they are all true because God has given us evidence to rely on. Faith is not easy, and doubts will be common. But by His Word and by the teaching of His Word, we can all increase our faith. We can live by faith, and not by sight.

Discuss the following questions:

1. What do the following verse teach us about faith:

   - Romans 10:14-17
   - Hebrews 11:1
   - Hebrews 11:6
   - 2 Corinthians 5:7
   - Proverbs 3:5
   - Hebrews 11:13-16
2. Read Hebrews 11:5-8; 29-30

How did the following people practice faith?

- Enoch
- Noah
- Abraham
- Israelites in the Exodus
- Israelites in the Battle of Jericho

3. What can we do to strengthen our faith?

4. What is the hardest part about having faith? When do you struggle the most?

5. What are some promises of God that He has already fulfilled?

6. How can the fulfillment of those promises help you to have faith in all His promises?

7. Read John 20:30-31. According to this verse, how do the miracles of Jesus affect our faith?

8. Read James 2:14-19. According to this verse, how does faith begin? What are we to do with faith after hearing the Word?
Lesson: Forgiveness

BIBLE: Mark 11:25

ACTIVITY: A BIG MESS

Supplies: 3 blank sheets of white paper, red cones (or masking tape), and one pencil or pen per preteen. Beforehand, use the red cones or masking tape to make a line down the middle of the room splitting it in half.

How to play: Give three sheets of white paper to each player and tell them to write one mean action on each sheet of paper. Examples: brother hits sister, friend gossips about classmate, or kid calls someone a nerd. Next, have preteens make a paper airplane out of each sheet of paper. If someone doesn’t know how to make one, have those that do help. Divide the group in half. On GO, preteens throw their airplanes on the other side of the masking tape or red cones. They keep throwing until time is called. Stop the game after 2-3 minutes.

The point: When we fight mean actions with mean actions, all we do is make a big mess. Just like you see here on the ground – a big mess of mean actions all over the place.

Instead of getting revenge or holding on to our anger towards them, God has a different way.

Read Mark 11:25

“When you are praying, if you are angry with someone, forgive him so that your Father in heaven will also forgive your sins.” – Mark 11:25 (NCV)

Say: When somebody is mean to you it is always best to forgive. Most ignore it, get even, or stay mad. Ignoring the situation or your feelings about what happened won’t solve the problem. It’s okay to feel mad, sad, or embarrassed. Just don’t stay that way because your anger will come out sooner or later. Bring it to God and ask him to help you forgive the person. If you get even, then it just makes the problem worse. Just like when you pour gasoline on a fire – the fire gets even bigger. And staying mad won’t help either because you’re the one who pays in the long run. Your anger will eventually spill over into other areas of your life. Before you know it you’ll be screaming at your friends, kicking your cat, and having an attitude with your parents. Forgiveness is always the best road to take.
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Talk about a time when somebody was mean to you or hurt your feelings. How did it make you feel?

2. When somebody is mean to you, do you want to get even? Why or why not?

3. Why is it hard to forgive? Explain.

4. Why is it better to forgive rather than get even? Explain.

More Bible verses on Forgiveness:

Lesson: God’s Love

Bible: Luke 15

Activity: God is…

Give each small group of preteens a large sheet of butcher paper with the phrase, “God is…” written at the top. Instruct each group to think of words or phrases that describe the character of God and write them on the paper. Be sure to give the groups a few examples of God’s attributes (peace, just, love, all-knowing, all-powerful) to get them headed in the right direction. Allow time for groups to share some of their answers at the end of the activity.

After the activity, say:

God is so awesome. Even with all these characteristics we just listed, He is still so much more! When I think about God, the characteristic that really stands out to me is “love.” I think of John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” I also think of 1 John 4:8, “Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.” These verses remind me that our God does everything out of love. He provides for us because He loves us. He speaks to us because He loves us. He punishes us because He loves us.

God the Father loves us as His children, and He wants to be in a relationship with us. As a Father, He will do anything to bring us to a relationship with Him.

God is our Father, and the Bible makes it clear that He will do anything to bring His children home.

In Luke 15, the Pharisees and those that opposed Jesus were asking why he spent his time with tax collectors and sinners. Jesus responds by telling them three stories. Listen to how Jesus responds to their questioning.

Read Luke 15 (if time is limited, read Luke 15:1-10)
Each of these stories tells us why Jesus came to earth. He came to give His life so that those who are lost can be found. God loves us so much that He is willing to do anything and everything for His children. That includes sending His Son to die for them.

Max Lucado, a pastor and author, tells the following story in one of his books (*A Love Worth Giving*):

How did Christ endure treatment like that? At any point he could have said, “I quit. I’ve had enough.” Why didn’t he? What kept him from giving up?

I wonder if Lee Ielpi understands the answer? He is a retired firefighter, a New York City firefighter. He gave twenty-six years to the city. But on September 11, 2001, he gave much more. He gave his son. Jonathan Ielpi was a fireman as well. When the Twin Towers fell, he was there.

Firefighters are a loyal clan. When one perishes in the line of duty, the body is left where it is until a firefighter who knows the person can come and quite literally pick it up. Lee made the discovery of his son’s body his personal mission. He dug daily with dozens of others at the sixteen-acre graveyard. One Tuesday, December 11, three months after the disaster, his son was found. And Lee was there to carry him out.

He didn’t give up. The father didn’t quit. He refused to turn and leave. Why? Because his love for his son was greater than the pain of the search. Can’t the same be said about Christ? Why didn’t he quit? Because the love for his children was greater than the pain of the journey. He came to pull you out. Your world had collapsed. That’s why he came. You were dead, dead to sin. That’s why he came. He loves you. That’s why he came.

This love that God has for us is why He sent Jesus Christ to die for us. Romans 5:8 tells us, “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” God did not wait for us to act right before He would love us. He chased after us and showed us His love while we were still sinners. God is determined to save the lost. He will never give up. He will always pursue His children, and He will welcome them home.
As a small group, discuss the following questions:

1. Why do you think there was a celebration for the 1 and not the 99 in all 3 stories Jesus told?

2. Read 1 John 3:1. What feelings do you have knowing that you have been called a “child of God?”

3. Read 1 John 4:9-11. According to these verses, how should we respond to the love God has shown us?

4. Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. Look up the following words in the dictionary and discuss examples of how each represents Godly love: patient, kind, envy, boast, proud, rude, self-seeking, angered, truth, protects, trusts, hopes, perseveres, fails.
Lesson: Greed

Bible: Philippians 4:11-13

Activity: Whipped Marshmallow Grab

Supplies:

- Marshmallow (medium or large sized)
- Whipped cream
- If you want to go with a less messy version, then substitute the whip cream and marshmallows with individually wrapped pieces of candy (ex: Jolly Ranchers, etc).
- Something to mark a dividing line, diving the group in half (ex: masking tape, orange cones or swimming noodles)

Directions:

Mark a line dividing the playing area in half.

Divide the group into two even teams.

Throw on the ground an even amount of marshmallows on each side.

Top the marshmallows off with whipped cream.

(Note: for a less messier version, use inexpensive individually wrapped candies)

On GO, players run to the opposing team’s side, grabbing up to two marshmallows at a time and bringing the marshmallows back to their side of the playing area.

If tagged while on the opposing team’s side, players drop the marshmallows in their hands and travel back to their side empty handed.

Once back on their side, players can continue to grab more marshmallows.

The team with the most marshmallows on their side at the end of the game wins.
Play for as long as you want, then end the game when time is up.

(Note: Some players might attempt to grab more than two marshmallows at a time. If that happens, it's okay. You're actually setting up that opportunity as a teachable moment.)

**Break It On Down**

**Say:** The goal of the game was to be greedy and grab as much marshmallows as possible.

Some of you were accused of grabbing more than two marshmallows at a time.

And if you played by the rules, you were probably at least tempted to grab more.

Others were accused of not going back to your team’s side when tagged.

Chances are almost everybody was tempted not to go back when tagged.

This game is a picture of what happens when you’re greedy.

When you’re greedy, you are mean, you fight and you argue.

Instead of being greedy, learn to be happy with what you do have.

Learn to rely on God’s power to be content.

Not just in a game you play at church, but in everyday life.

**Teach – Greed**

Greed is when you have a strong desire to have more of something that you really don't need.

Greed is a selfish desire.

Being greedy isn't healthy because you’re always chasing after the next bigger or better thing.

You’re never happy with what you have.

You’re only thinking of what you want, regardless of how your desire or actions affect others.

You don't care if you hurt others to get what you want.
You’re irritable, rude and impatient.

You want it all and you want it right now.

The interesting thing about greed is the more you get, the more you want.

Your desire for bigger and better is never satisfied!

God has a different way for us to live.

Instead of being greedy God wants us to be content, which means to be happy with what we do have.

**Read Philippians 4:11-13**

“I am not telling you this because I need anything. I have learned to be satisfied with the things I have and with everything that happens. I know how to live when I am poor, and I know how to live when I have plenty. I have learned the secret of being happy at any time in everything that happens, when I have enough to eat and when I go hungry, when I have more than I need and when I do not have enough. I can do all things through Christ, because he gives me strength.”

**Say:** In this passage, Paul says he learned the secret of being content.

We can do anything with God’s help, who gives us strength.

Instead of thinking that the next bigger and better thing will satisfy you, realize the key to happiness is to be content with what you do have.

Ask God to give you the power to be content and He will.

Focus on what you do have, not what you want.

(Feel free to elaborate on this point in your own words.)

(Use a personal example of when you struggled with greed. Talk about how it affected you and those around you. Then share what you learned through the experience.)
Small Group Discussion

Discuss the following questions in small groups:

- Why do you think it is easier to be greedy rather than content?
- Talk about a time when you (or someone else you know) was greedy?
- How can being greedy be bad for you?
- What are the benefits of being content (being happy with what you do have)?