

The Trust Test



3

LESSON AIM

To help kids understand that ★ God will always take care of us.

YOU'LL NEED

OBJECTIVES

Kids will

- catch unknown objects while blindfolded,
- learn how Jesus helped in Peter's moment of need,
- identify life events that are scary, and
- make a commitment to trust God during life's storms.

- blindfolds
- soft foam balls
- small pillows
- marshmallows
- rolled-up newspapers
- coins
- a mop or broom
- a spray bottle filled with water
- photocopies of the "In God's Hands" handout (p. 34)
- scissors

BIBLE BASIS

Matthew 14:22-33

After feeding the 5,000, Jesus ordered his disciples to get into a boat and cross the Sea of Galilee. Then he went up into the hills to pray. Sometime in the wee hours of the night, a fierce storm struck the disciples' boat. When Jesus came to them, walking on the water, the disciples were frightened, fearing he was a ghost. Immediately Jesus reassured them, saying, "Have courage! It is I. Do not be afraid."

Peter jumped at the chance to do something extraordinary: He asked permission to walk to Jesus on the water. Jesus said, "Come." The venture began successfully, but soon the wind and waves distracted Peter, and he began to sink. Matthew's description of Jesus' reaction is one of the most beautiful lines in Scripture. "Immediately Jesus reached out

his hand and caught Peter.”

Jesus will always come to us in the storms of life. He offers his loving hand and catches us before the wind and waves completely overwhelm us. Peter began to sink but didn't drown because he trusted the one who offered to save him.

John 14:1

Chapters 13–17 of John paint an intimate picture of Jesus' interaction with his disciples just before his arrest and crucifixion. In this passage, Jesus prepares his followers for the trauma ahead. Listen carefully to what he says: “Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust in me.”

Choice is clearly implied. We can let ourselves be troubled, or we can choose to trust.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR KIDS

Because of the mixed messages kids hear, it's difficult for them to know where to put their trust. Humanistic thinkers say, “You can do anything you set your mind to,” which is really another way of saying, “Trust in yourself.” Gangs have great appeal to kids. Their message is “Trust in the group—we'll take care of everything.” You'd like to tell your students that they can always trust in their parents and friends, but that's not always the case because there's no such thing as a perfect parent or a perfect friend. But Jesus is a friend who never fails. He is all-knowing, all-loving, and all-powerful.

As much as you'd like to protect your students, they will be battered by life's storms. Some will be caught in divorce; some will move and lose their base of friends; some will experience learning disabilities; some will face hostile cliques at school. How wonderful to be able to reassure kids that Jesus will always be there, always ready to stretch his hand through the storm and bring them safely through.



The Lesson

ATTENTION GRABBER

Coming Your Way

Help kids form pairs. It's a good idea to pair older children

with younger ones. Distribute blindfolds and have one partner in each pair blindfold the other. Have each seeing partner guide his or her blindfolded partner to stand against a wall of the classroom. Then ask the seeing partners to stand five or six feet away.

Put a pile of tossable objects on the floor near the seeing partners. Include items such as soft foam balls, small pillows, marshmallows, rolled-up newspapers, and coins.

Say: We're going to play a game called Coming Your Way. Here's how it works. Partners who can see will choose any of the items in this pile on the floor to toss very gently to their blindfolded partners. They won't give any clues about what they're tossing. Just before they toss, they'll say, "Coming your way!" and their partner's name. Toss carefully—you want your partner to catch as many items as possible. Ready? Go!

After each toss, have the seeing partners retrieve the items and place them in the pile for other students to toss. After four or five tosses, have partners change roles. After four or five more tosses, call time. Have kids place all the items and the blindfolds in a corner of the room where they won't be a distraction. Then call everyone together and ask:

- **Who was able to catch one item? two items? three items? four items?**
- **What was it like to try to catch something that you couldn't see?** (Scary; hard; fun.)
- **What would've made it easier?** (Being able to see; knowing what was coming.)
- **How was this game like what happens in real life when problems and scary things come our way?** (We can't see what's coming; we never know what's going to happen.)
- **When you were the tosser, what did you do to help your blindfolded partner?** (Tried to warn her; tossed carefully so he could catch it.)
- **How is that like what Jesus does for us when scary things come our way?** (Jesus takes care of us; Jesus tries to help us.)

Say: Today we're going to learn that ★ God will always take care of us. Let's see how Jesus took care of his disciples in a really scary situation.

TEACHER TIP

Let the size of your class determine how many students you appoint to be disciples and parts of the boat. If you have a very large class, you might want to have several kids be waves that surround the boat.

BIBLE STUDY

The Water Walker (Matthew 14:22-33)

Say: **The first thing we need to do is get in position for our Bible story. First, I need some people to be disciples and sit close together in the middle of the floor.** Select a few students and place them together as if they are in a boat. Then hold up a mop or broom, handle down. **This represents Peter. You disciples hold up Peter right here in the center of the boat. Good.**

Now I need people to be the boat. Let's make the pointed ends of the boat be here and here. Put children in position at the points. **Now the rest of the boat people join hands and surround Peter and the disciples.** Great! Now we're ready for the story. **This story took place right after Jesus fed more than 5,000 people with five loaves of bread and two fish. Jesus and his disciples were tired, and they wanted to rest. Listen carefully and act out what happens as I tell this story from Matthew 14:22-33.**

As you read the Bible passage, pause to coach students with appropriate actions.

Jesus told his followers to get into the boat and go ahead of him across the lake. He stayed there to send the people home. Have the disciples and the boat rock gently as the journey across the lake begins. **After he had sent them away, he went by himself up into the hills to pray. It was late, and Jesus was there alone. By this time, the boat was already far away from land.** Have the disciples shield their eyes and peer into the distance. **It was being hit by waves, because the wind was blowing against it.** Have everyone rock from side to side in unison as the boat lurches in the storm. Gently squirt the students with water from a spray bottle.

Between 3 and 6 o'clock in the morning, Jesus came to them, walking on the water. Have the disciples peer into the distance. **When his followers saw him walking on the water, they were afraid. They said, "It's a ghost!" and cried out in fear.** Have the disciples gasp.

But Jesus quickly spoke to them, "Have courage! It is I. Do not be afraid." Have the disciples give a deep sigh of relief.

Peter said, "Lord, if it is really you, then command me to come to you on the water."

Jesus said, "Come."

Peter left the boat and walked on the water to Jesus.

Have the disciples and boat people move the mop toward you. Remind everyone to keep rocking with the storm. **But when Peter saw the wind and the waves, he became afraid and began to sink.** Have the person holding the mop let it tilt over. **He shouted, “Lord, save me!”** Have the person holding the mop bounce it up and down.

Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught Peter. Pick up the mop. **Jesus said, “Your faith is small. Why did you doubt?”**

After they got into the boat, the wind became calm. Pass the mop back into the boat. Have everyone stop rocking. **Then those who were in the boat worshiped Jesus and said, “Truly you are the Son of God!”** Have all the disciples and the mop bow.

Have kids give themselves a round of applause and gather in a circle. Ask:

● **What’s surprising to you about this story?** (That Jesus could walk on the water; that Peter wanted to get out of the boat.)

● **Why do you think Peter wanted to walk on the water to Jesus?** (Because he was a showoff; because he wanted to see if he could do it; because he knew Jesus would save him if he got in trouble.)

● **Why do you think Peter started to sink?** (Because he got scared; because he looked at the storm instead of looking at Jesus.)

● **How did the disciples feel about Jesus when he saved Peter and calmed the storm?** (They wanted to worship him; they knew he was God’s Son.)

● **How do you feel about Jesus after hearing this story?** (I’m glad he’s my friend; I believe Jesus can do anything; I’m not sure what I think.)

Say: **Peter knew he could count on Jesus’ help. We can trust Jesus, too. When we face scary things in our lives, it’s important to remember that ★ God will always take care of us.**

LIFE APPLICATION

Waves

Say: **The wind and the waves frightened the disciples in our story. Now we’re going to make some waves of our own and tell about things that frighten us.**

Arrange chairs in a circle.

Say: I'm going to start by telling about a really scary thing that happened to me and how God took care of me. Then I'll start a wave by standing up, throwing my arms up in the air, then sitting down. The next person will stand up, then the next person, and so on 'til the wave comes all the way back to me. Then (name of person on your left) will tell about a scary situation and how God took care of (him or her) and start another wave.

Begin with your own story and have kids share their stories around the circle, with a wave after each story. If kids are unsure about what to share, invite them to tell about something they were scared about when they were really little.

Then say: ★ God will always take care of us. We'll have storms in our lives, that's for sure. And we may not know when they're coming or what they'll be. But when we see how God has taken care of us in the past and how he's taken care of all our friends, we can trust him to take care of us in the future.

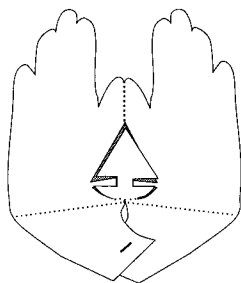
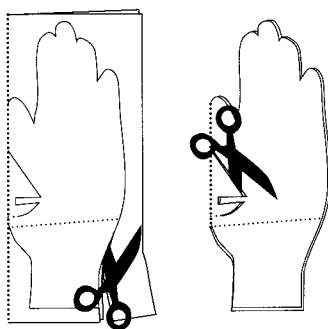
COMMITMENT

Scare Shares

Have kids find their partners from the opening activity. Distribute scissors and photocopies of the "In God's Hands" handout (p. 34). Show kids how to cut and fold the handout to create a paper sculpture of hands holding a sailboat. It's helpful to have a finished model of the paper sculpture so kids can see how it works. Remind older kids to help their young partners who may have difficulty cutting and folding the sculpture.

Say: After you've finished your paper sculpture, sit knee to knee with your partner and tell about a scary situation you're facing now or may face in the future. You might tell about a class in school that's hard for you, about a bully in your neighborhood, or about a big ballgame that's coming up.

After you've both shared, tell how you'll trust God in those scary situations. Then shake hands and say, ★ "God will always take care of you."



CLOSING

In God's Hands

After partners have shared, have everyone stand in a circle, linking elbows and holding the paper sculptures. Rock the circle from side to side a bit and say: **We've all talked about scary things we're facing right now or that we'll face in the future. Talking about those things can make us feel a little unsteady. Stop the rocking motion. The good news is that ★ God will always take care of us. Let's read together the words of Jesus printed on our paper sculptures.**

Read the verse more than once so that nonreaders have a chance to learn to "read" it. Then close in prayer.

Pray: **Lord Jesus, thank you for the way you rescued Peter and calmed the storm. Help us to trust you to be with us in the storms we face in our lives. We put ourselves in your hands. In Jesus' name, amen.**



IN GOD'S HANDS

Fold on the dotted center line, then cut on the solid lines. Fold on the bottom dotted line, overlap the bottom pieces, and tape or staple them together to make the sculpture stand up.

