



Bible Storyteller



Cokesbury Kids

SNOWBALL MOUNTAIN CHALLENGE

FIND YOUR STRENGTH IN GOD



Interactive scripts, fun activities, learning style adaptations, life applications, and more!

Bible Storyteller



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Cokesbury VBS 2026
SNOWBALL MOUNTAIN CHALLENGE
FIND YOUR STRENGTH IN GOD
Bible Storyteller

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Snowball Mountain Challenge:

Find Your Strength in God

	Bible Story	Lift Lessons	Music	Crafts
Session 1	Joseph Interprets Dreams (Genesis 40:1–41:45)	I can share my gifts!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Snowball Mountain Challenge • Philippians 4:13 • I've Got a Gift • Snowball Mountain Day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mosaic Snowflake • Kaleidoscope • Chalet • Fan
Session 2	Esther Shows Courage (Esther 3:7–8:8)	I can be brave!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I've Got a Gift • Snowball Mountain Challenge • C-O-U-R-A-G-E • Snowball Mountain Day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watercolor Mountain • Seal Paper Doll • Twirl Toy
Session 3	The Widow's Offering (Mark 12:41–44)	I can give my all!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Philippians 4:13 • Anything But You • Supersized • Snowball Mountain Challenge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Air Clay Snow Challenger • Upcycle Prayer Box • Coin Charm
Session 4	Jesus Prays in the Garden (Matthew 26:36–46)	I can pray!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Philippians 4:13 • The Journey • This Is What I Pray • Jump Up! Walk a Little 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diamond Art Suncatcher • Flip Book • Ribbon Paper Wreath
Session 5	Peter and John at the Temple (Acts 3:1–10)	I can hope!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Snowball Mountain Challenge • C-O-U-R-A-G-E • Jump Up! Walk a Little • The Journey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenge Medal • Cocoa Mug Frame • Scroll Paper Art • Tissue Paper Stars

I can do all things through him who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:13, NRSV)

Science	Recreation	Snacks	Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Straw Lift • Homemade Gummy Candy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laundry Basket Bobsled Race • Freezing Dreams Tag • Icy Mountain Motto Challenge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Snowflakes • Snowflake Cupcakes • I Can Share My Gifts! 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instant Freeze • Blubber Glove 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bible Verse Snowball Fling • Winter Clothes Race • Snow Queen/King Contest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Snow-Drizzled Treats • Donut Snowman • I Can Be Brave! 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ball Bearing Ice • Notebook Tension 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Widow's Offering Hockey • Challengers' Slalom Race • Footprints in the Snow 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hot Chocolate Mix • Snowman Pudding • I Can Give My All! 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coding Journey • Instant Snow 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry-for-Others Sled • Ice Skating Spin • Crawl and Waddle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Snow Cream Dip • Ollie • I Can Pray! 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Snowshoe Mountain Challenge • Soda Explosion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ski Lift Limbo • Cross-Country Skiing • Gold or Silver? NO! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Snow-Covered Popcorn • Winter Sports • I Can Hope! 	



With Jesus, We Can Do All Things

Snowball Mountain Challenge VBS is based on Philippians 4:13, NRSV: “I can do all things through him who strengthens me.” This verse reminds us that God’s strength through Jesus can help us face challenges. Snowball Mountain Challenge invites us to an exciting winter sports event full of new challenges, friends, and ways to learn that with God’s help we can do more than we ever thought possible.

Get ready for an ice-cold summer adventure, packed with cool winter activities. The Snowball Mountain Challenge is an exciting winter sports event held every year on Snowball Mountain. Ollie the Arctic Seal, an enthusiastic vlogger with an online following, and the Activities Director or AD (Assembly Leader) explore the Challenge Companion (the Bible) every day to learn how God helps Bible heroes—and people today—face challenges. Through stories from the Old and New Testaments, Challengers will learn that with the strength God provides through Jesus, they can do more than they ever dreamed they could do. With this understanding, children will be invited to share the good news of Jesus and share the love and strength God offers with everyone, everywhere, every day.

Here’s how each session will encourage children to consider that through God’s strength, we can do all things:

- 👉 The story of Joseph’s challenges invites children to consider how they share their gifts. Just like Joseph used God’s strength to share his God-given gifts, children can accept the invitation to use their gifts to help others near and far.
- 👉 The story of Queen Esther shows children how God’s power can make people brave. Children will be encouraged to consider how being brave is not something we have to do all alone. Children will be inspired to trust in the strength God provides to help them be brave for God’s purposes.
- 👉 The story of the widow’s offering invites children to consider their ability to give and share. As they experience this interaction and hear the words of Jesus, children will be inspired to seek God’s strength to give what they have for God’s kingdom.
- 👉 The story of Jesus praying in the garden helps children to experience Jesus in one of the most challenging times in his life and ministry. As children reflect on the prayer in the garden, they will be encouraged to depend on God’s strength so they can pray in challenging times and ask for God’s strength as they pray.
- 👉 The story of Peter and John healing a man at the temple in Jesus’ name shows children that we can have hope, even in challenging circumstances. As they consider Peter’s and John’s actions toward the man, children will understand that with God’s strength, they can both receive hope themselves and offer hope to others.



About This Resource

From age-appropriate stories and conversations to energizing games and activities, each session in this guide is designed to engage multiple learning styles and encourage fun!

Setting the Scene

Immerse your Challengers in the Bible story with your stage. Decorate the stage area with the items listed on pages 6 and 7, as well as the tips for story-specific enhancements found at the beginning of each session.

Bible Background

Before you lead, spend time studying the Bible story with contextual information about each story.

Story Starter

Introduce the story to your Challengers and say the Mountain Motto together in fun and memorable ways. You can use this before the Drama or the Single Storyteller option.

Bible Story Option 1: Drama

Invite your Challengers into the Bible story action with this dramatic skit option. This can be reenacted by a team of volunteers, by Challengers reading the parts, or even by puppets. Devote time for rehearsals—don't try to wing it! You may copy the pages of this section for use in rehearsal and performance.

Bible Story Option 2: Single Storyteller

This option is perfect for smaller classrooms. Each of these scripts includes a complete telling of the Bible story with interactive enhancements to engage your Challengers' interest and encourage participation.

Life Application

Use this guided recap and discussion to help Challengers explore how they can apply the Bible story to their lives. Be patient and invite time for multiple answers to each question. Encourage children to think and wonder about what they have heard. If your church does not use the **Reflection Time Leader** in another setting, you may choose to consult this resource for additional questions.

Active Learning

Engage all of your Challengers by employing multiple learning styles to reinforce each session's story.

Closing Prayer

Close each session with suggested age-appropriate prayers, or invite Challengers to volunteer and pray their own prayer.

Mountain Motto and Lift Lesson ASL

Help children remember with the American Sign Language interpretations of the Mountain Motto and each session's Lift Lesson. Demonstration photos of the ASL signs are found in the Free Resources section of CokesburyVBS.com, along with video tutorial of each sign. See if you can memorize them all by the end of VBS!



Equipping Your Bible Story Station

Get off to a great start as the Bible Storyteller with these pro tips:

- 👉 **Attend all Snowball Mountain Challenge leader training sessions** to learn about the program and how your station fits into the overall message of the program.
- 👉 **Be prepared!** Read through this book in its entirety, and practice the scripts multiple times with your team.
- 👉 **Decorate your station** (see pages 6–7 for ideas) and dress the part. Your Storyteller costume could be typical Bible-times attire: a robe or tunic, head covering, and a cincture (belt or sash). Modern attire also may work, especially when paired with a **Snowball Mountain Challenge T-Shirt**.
- 👉 **Collect supplies** for each session well in advance. Keep a running list of borrowed items so you can easily return them. With the help of your VBS director, get your congregation involved by publicizing a list of supplies to donate.

Setting the Scene

Ready-to-Use Bible Story Station Decorating Tools!

- 👉 Bible Story Station Activity Center Sign
- 👉 Bible Story Poster Pack
- 👉 Decorating Mobiles
- 👉 Decorating Poster Pack
- 👉 Decorating and Publicity Download Files
- 👉 Decorating Transparencies (*found in the Decorating and Publicity Download folder*)
- 👉 Logo String Flags
- 👉 Ollie XL Character Poster
- 👉 Scripture Treasure Lanyards
- 👉 Snowball Mountain Challenge Complete Music CD, Student Music Take-Home CD, or MP3 tracks
- 👉 Snowball Mountain Challenge Large Logo Poster
- 👉 Wall Background



Bible Story Station Setup To-Do List

- 👉 Place the **Bible Story Station Activity Center Sign** at your entrance.
- 👉 Design a fun focal wall where the Bible story action will take place. The Bible stories for **Snowball Mountain Challenge** have both outdoor and indoor scenes. Incorporate Bible-times set pieces, such as palm trees, rocks, jars, and so forth. Your Bible Story station could also be decorated as a rustic cabin sitting room with a cozy chair, pretend fireplace, and painted imagery of the slopes on Snowball Mountain.
- 👉 Hang your Lift Lesson and Mountain Motto **Decorating Posters**, located in the **Decorating Poster Pack**.
- 👉 Hang **Decorating Mobiles** at eye-catching levels.
- 👉 Check the first page of each session for story-specific scenes and materials.
- 👉 See the **Snowball Mountain Challenge Decorating Guide** and **Decorating and Publicity Downloads** for more ideas.

Adapting Your Bible Story Station

Though we try to make the stories and activities in this resource accessible and useful to all, we understand your needs, program plans, and resources may vary. Here are some ideas that may be helpful for different settings.

- 👉 *Prepare for a variety of ages to participate in your station.* If you include your preschool Challengers in rotation, consider using the “Experience the Bible Story” section of the **Snowball Mountain Challenge Preschool/Kindergarten Leader** in addition to, or in place of, some of the activities in this book.
- 👉 *Read the story straight from the Bible.* Storytelling Options 1 and 2 offer engaging ways for Challengers to encounter the Bible story, consider reading or inviting some of your Challengers to read the story aloud from the Bible. *Note—as some biblical themes are more suited for mature audiences, pre-read each passage for content you may need to edit.
- 👉 *Make any copies that children will need in your station.* You may choose to invite Challengers to participate in the Storytelling Option 1 Drama, either with a readers’ theater approach or by acting out the story. In either case, feel free to make copies of the pages from this section or any pages that include “Permission to photocopy this page is granted for local church use. © 2026 Cokesbury. All rights reserved.”
- 👉 *Use spontaneous melodrama.* Instead of using a large cast or individual readers, try the spontaneous melodrama approach. Assign roles to Challengers and have the Storyteller read all the parts aloud. Instruct Challengers to act out or interpret what is read for the role they have been assigned.
- 👉 *Keep costume options simple and easy.* Costumes for Bible Storytelling don’t have to be difficult. In many cases, a simple piece of cardstock with a character’s name on it is all you need. Have fun with it! If one person is playing multiple parts (for example Disciples 1 and 2, Leaders 1 and 2) the character card could read “Disciples 1 and 2.”
- 👉 *Be flexible with how you use your volunteers and materials.* If you don’t have enough people to cover all of the roles in the drama, feel free to have your actors play multiple parts or combine parts. You may also choose to use the **Bible Story Adventure Video** in the Bible Storytelling station instead of Assembly Time. Be sure and coordinate with your Assembly Leader if you make this adaptation.



Bible Story

Joseph Interprets Dreams

(Genesis 40:1–41:45)

Mountain Motto

I can do all things through
him who strengthens me.
(Philippians 4:13, NRSV)

Lift Lesson

I can share my gifts!

Genesis 40:1–41:45

Preparation

Costumes, Materials, and Props

- 👉 **Snowball Mountain Challenge Complete Music CD, Student Music Take-Home CD, or MP3 tracks** and device to play music.
- 👉 Modern attire for the Storyteller, such as a **Snowball Mountain Challenge T-Shirt** and jeans or all black.
- 👉 A variety of Bible times costumes for Bible characters. Joseph, the baker, and the cupbearer should be in simple tunics or robes, head coverings, and sandals. Potiphar's costume could include an extra robe or tunic in a deeper color to communicate wealth.
- 👉 A chef's hat or apron, mixing bowl, and spoon for the baker.
- 👉 A tray with plastic glassware and a small towel for the cupbearer.
- 👉 A small stool or rustic looking chair to communicate a drab prison cell.
- 👉 A stool or comfy chair for the Storyteller, preferably just off the stage opposite from where the cast members will enter and exit.
- 👉 A Bible or large prop Bible for the Storyteller to hold.

Setting the Scene

- 👉 Set the stage with a backdrop in a plain color with a barred window depicted on the wall, or freestanding barred wall in the foreground between audience and Joseph.
- 👉 Designate one wall to be the focal point/backdrop for the action.
- 👉 The main staging area should be open.
- 👉 Provide wall space for posting each Lift Lesson daily.



Genesis 40:1-41:45

Bible Background

In the Bible, we can find stories about men and women who faced challenges and learned to rely on God's strength. The first part of the Bible, called the Old Testament, tells stories about the Jewish people. The Jewish people descend from a man named Abraham. Joseph is Abraham's great-grandson. Joseph's story may be well-known to people who are familiar with stories in the Old Testament. Joseph was a dreamer and a dream interpreter. According to Scripture, Joseph dreamed two times that he would reign over his older brothers. Not only that, but Joseph's father Jacob showed a great deal of favoritism toward him. Joseph's brothers became so jealous of him, they worked behind their father's back to sell him into slavery. The brothers sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites, who then sold him to an Egyptian high-ranking official. Joseph initially earned favor with the person he served, but Joseph was deceived by the official's wife. Joseph was thrown in prison. Despite his challenges, God was with Joseph, even in jail, and the chief jailer showed favor to Joseph.

Pharaoh throws both his cupbearer and baker into prison while Joseph is in prison. These two officials were assigned an attendant by the chief jailer due to their high status, the possibility that this imprisonment was only temporary, and the possibility they could soon be pardoned. Joseph is selected for this attendant role. Joseph has an opportunity to interpret dreams for these two officials. The cupbearer has a dream about being released from prison and restored to his position. The baker has a dream about his impending execution by Pharaoh. Seeking his own release from prison, Joseph asks the cupbearer to remember him once he is restored to freedom and status. But even after both of Joseph's interpretations come to pass, the cupbearer forgets Joseph's request for two years. When Pharaoh has a dream he wants interpreted and can find no one to interpret it, the cupbearer remembers Joseph. Joseph hears Pharaoh's dreams. Joseph tells the Pharaoh that seven years of plenty would come before seven years of famine. Joseph offers him both an interpretation of his dreams and a plan of action to prepare for the famine set to befall his kingdom. Joseph earns Pharaoh's trust, and as a result, Joseph earns release from prison and a job as Pharaoh's second-in-command.

Joseph clearly had a gift, evidenced by all of the dreams he interpreted in this story and throughout his life. But Joseph knew his gift was not his own creation—he often attributed this gift to God working through him. “Don't interpretations belong to God?” (Genesis 40:8), he asks the cupbearer and baker in the Egyptian prison. And when Pharaoh asks Joseph for an interpretation, Joseph tells him, “It's not me. God will give Pharaoh a favorable response” (41:16).

We all have gifts, too. Joseph's story tells us these gifts are given to us by God. Joseph's story also shows us the best ways for us to use our gifts: to help others. Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's dreams about a coming famine in the area and used this information to create a plan so the Egyptians could store grain for the people who would need food once the famine came. When we are faced with challenges in life, we can all share our gifts to help each other!



Bible Story
Joseph Interprets Dreams
(Genesis 40:1–41:45)

Mountain Motto
I can do all things through him who strengthens me.
(Philippians 4:13, NRSV)

Lift Lesson
I can share my gifts!

Leader Tip
This Bible Background feature is a supplemental aid provided for you, the Storyteller, to give context for each session's story before you teach on it. You may share this information with your Challengers, if desired, but it is not a recommended portion of the intended lesson.



Bible Story

Joseph Interprets Dreams

(Genesis 40:1–41:45)

Mountain Motto

I can do all things through
him who strengthens me.

(Philippians 4:13, NRSV)

Lift Lesson

I can share my gifts!

Genesis 40:1-41:45

Story Starter

SAY: Welcome Challengers! It's a beautiful winter day here at Snowball Mountain! Welcome to the Storyteller Station! I am so excited to see you and your Guides. We will meet here every day to hear a story straight out of the Challenge Companion. I'm talking about (*hold up a Bible and let Challengers respond*)... right! The Bible, a book filled with inspiring stories of people who faced challenges and found strength in God.

SAY: Each day on Snowball Mountain, we are facing challenges with the help of our Mountain Motto and our Lift Lessons.

ASK: Do you remember what our Mountain Motto is?

Encourage Challengers to say the Mountain Motto with you: I can do all things through him who strengthens me. Philippians 4:13.

SAY: Way to crush that Mountain Motto. This verse comes from the words of Paul, a man who knew a lot about taking on challenges in life. He was writing to his friends at a church in the town of Philippi. He reminds those friends to have faith, to keep doing good, and to trust Jesus who gives us strength.

SAY: The main character in today's story is Joseph. Joseph is having a hard time! But because God gives him strength, Joseph shares his gifts. Get cozy and listen.



Storytelling Option 1

Drama

Cast

Storyteller
Joseph
Potiphar
Cupbearer
Baker

Costumes & Materials

🔊 **Snowball Mountain Challenge Complete Music CD, Student Music Take-Home CD, or MP3 tracks** and device to play music.

🔊 Modern attire for the Storyteller such as a **Snowball Mountain Challenge T-Shirt** and jeans or all black.

🔊 A variety of Bible times costumes for Bible characters. Joseph, the baker, and the cupbearer should be in simple tunics or robes, head coverings, and sandals. Potiphar's costume could include an extra robe or tunic in a deeper color to communicate wealth, a headpiece, or jewelry to communicate his position as an officer.

🔊 A chef's hat or apron, mixing bowl, and spoon for the baker.

🔊 A tray with plastic glassware and a small towel for the cupbearer.

🔊 A small stool or rustic looking chair to communicate a drab prison cell.

🔊 A stool or comfy chair for the Storyteller, preferably just off the stage opposite from where the cast members will enter and exit.

🔊 A Bible or large prop Bible for the Storyteller to hold.

Storyteller: *(Joseph enters)* **This is Joseph. He used to have everything. Everybody thought he was the best. Well, everybody except his brothers. Did you ever hear about his fancy coat of many colors? Yeah? Well that's long gone. His brothers stole the coat, grabbed Joseph, and sold him to a group called the Ishmaelites. The group took Joseph to Egypt and sold him to this guy *(Potiphar enters and stares at Joseph)*. This is Potiphar. He is a super powerful person here in Egypt. He bought Joseph to be a house slave. That worked out for both of them at first. *(Someone runs on stage to whisper something to Potiphar. Potiphar turns to Joseph in shock.)***

Potiphar: **This is unbelievable! There are no words for how much you hurt my feelings. Have a good rest of your life in prison. Outta here. *(exits)***

Storyteller: **Joseph had done everything right, but Potiphar listened to lies about him. So bam! There he was. Behind bars. No freedom, no power, no hope...**

Joseph: *(to storyteller)* **Hold up, dude. There's always hope. God is with me. I know that is true because God was with my dad and mom, and my grandparents, and my great-grandparents.**



Bible Story

Joseph Interprets Dreams

(Genesis 40:1–41:45)

Mountain Motto

I can do all things through him who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:13, NRSV)

Lift Lesson

I can share my gifts!



Bible Story

Joseph Interprets Dreams

(Genesis 40:1–41:45)

Mountain Motto

I can do all things through
him who strengthens me.
(Philippians 4:13, NRSV)

Lift Lesson

I can share my gifts!

Storyteller: **Okay! Joseph was in prison, but he was not alone. God was with him. Then one day...**(Cupbearer and Baker abruptly shoved into the cell, act bewildered) **these guys showed up. Cupbearer worked for Pharaoh serving his drinks. Baker worked for Pharaoh making his daily bread. But Pharaoh was easily annoyed.**

Cupbearer: *(gloomy and remorseful)* **The orange juice had pulp. He hates pulp.**

Baker: *(remorseful and gloomy)* **I baked oatmeal raisin cookies. He wanted chocolate chip.**

Storyteller: **So off to prison for them. Joseph, still trusting God and making good choices, was in charge of the prison by this time. Well, not exactly. He was in charge of the other prisoners. But he was still in prison.**

Joseph: **Hey guys. Welcome to prison. I'm Joseph. I'll be your PIC, that stands for Prisoner in Charge. Bed is the floor, bathroom is that bucket, room service is...not a thing. Moldy bread *(offer to Baker)*? Puddle water *(offer to Cupbearer)*?**

Baker and Cupbearer: **Ew, Joseph!** *(They all fall asleep, somehow.)*

Storyteller: **Baker and Cupbearer hardly had time to settle in before they started having weird dreams.**

Baker: **I had a weird dream.**

Cupbearer: **So weird. So extra.**

Joseph: *(waking up)* **My dudes! What's up?**

Baker: **I've been dreaming.**

Cupbearer: **Same.**

Joseph: **Well you know what they say: follow your dreams. Except the ones where you show up to school with no pants on. Don't follow that dream.** *(Cupbearer and Baker look at Joseph strangely.)*

Cupbearer: **Nobody can tell us what these dreams mean.**

Joseph: **Hey! Wrong! God can. God and I work together on this stuff. Lay it on me.**

Cupbearer: *(impressed)* **Okay well... picture this: a vine with three branches, and then like this time lapse thing happens. Buds, blossoms, grapes! I made wine with the grapes, put the wine in Pharaoh's cup and handed the**



cup to Pharaoh himself.

Joseph: **That dream is amazing news for you, man. Pharaoh wants you back! You are outta here and back to your bougie job. Facts. Straight from God.**

Cupbearer: *(astonished and overjoyed)* **I'll go pack! I have nothing to pack! I'll go wait by the door!** *(rushes out)*

Joseph: *(calls after)* **Hey man, share the news! Like and subscribe! Don't forget me!**

Baker: *(very hopeful)* **Do me! Do me!**

Joseph: **Dude, chill! Let's hear it.**

Baker: **Okay, so...I'm walking with three baskets of cake on my head...**

Joseph: *(to audience)* **Awkward opening.**

Baker: **...like every kind of cake Pharaoh loves. And these birds are all swooping around having some cake.**

Joseph: **Wait, what?**

Baker: **Yeah, these friendly birds just coming down for a snack, eating all the cake from the baskets on my head. Must be good cake, right? Pharaoh's like, me and the birds, eating the cake, right?**

Joseph: **You're saying the birds ate and left no crumbs?** *(pauses)* **Not good. Oof. You will be leaving this life.**

Bake: *(now nervous)* **Um, prison life, right? I'm outta here, right?**

Joseph: **No. I mean your life—is over. Exit. Buh-bye. And those birds. They are not nice birds.**

Baker: *(horrified)* **But that is so unfair. I mean... thanks?** *(exits sadly)*

Joseph: **No problem. Sorry about the information, but at least you know it's accurate!**

Storyteller: **Not a happy ending for the baker. The cupbearer was pretty happy though! Later, when Pharaoh had bad dreams about cows and cereal, Joseph helped him too. And Joseph not only got out of jail free, he became the boss! The GOAT, Egyptian style. Joseph shared his gifts because God gave him strength even through hard times.**



Bible Story

Joseph Interprets

Dreams

(Genesis 40:1–41:45)

Mountain Motto

I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

(Philippians 4:13, NRSV)

Lift Lesson

I can share my gifts!



Bible Story

Joseph Interprets Dreams

(Genesis 40:1–41:45)

Mountain Motto

I can do all things through him who strengthens me.
(Philippians 4:13, NRSV)

Lift Lesson

I can share my gifts!

Materials

👉 Paper plates

👉 Markers

Storytelling Option 2 Single Storyteller

Give each child a paper plate and a marker. Have them draw a happy face on one side, and a sad face on the other side.

SAY: Today's story is about Joseph. The story is full of happy (*YAY!*) moments and sad (*BOO!*) moments. Use your flip face to help me tell the story.

Joseph's dad really loved him and gave him lots of nice stuff, including a beautiful coat. (*YAY!*) Joseph trusted God and prayed every day. God gave Joseph a special skill: Joseph could interpret (or explain) dreams. (*YAY!*) But Joseph's brothers were very jealous of him. (*BOO!*) They disliked him so much that one day they grabbed him, stole his beautiful coat (*BOO!*), and sold him to some traders. (*BOO!*)

Joseph was eventually taken to Egypt. An important officer named Potiphar bought Joseph and took him home as a servant! (*BOO!*) Joseph knew that God was still with him. He trusted God and worked hard. (*YAY!*) But one day, Potiphar's wife told terrible lies about Joseph. (*BOO!*) Potiphar believed those lies! (*BOO!*) Joseph had no power and Potiphar didn't trust him anymore (*BOO!*) He threw Joseph in prison (*BOO!*)

Joseph knew that God was still with him. He trusted God and worked hard. (*YAY!*) The chief jailer was impressed with Joseph and made him the boss of the prisoners! (*YAY!*) But remember: Joseph was still a prisoner and he **STILL** had no power. (*BOO!*)

Pharaoh was the king of all Egypt (*YAY! We'd better say yay. He's the pharaoh.*) Pharaoh had lots of servants, including a cupbearer who served his food and drinks, and a baker who baked his daily bread, (*YAY!*) and cookies (*YAY!*) and favorite cakes! (*YAY!*) And probably Egyptian brownies! (*YAY!*) The cupbearer and the baker had good jobs, but no power. (*BOO!*) One day, for some reason or no reason, Pharaoh got really angry at them. (*BOO!*) He threw them in jail! (*BOO!*)

In jail they met Joseph. (*YAY!*) One night, the cupbearer had a really weird dream (*BOO!*) and the baker also had a really weird dream. (*BOO!*) Joseph told them that God was with him, and that he could tell them what their dreams meant! (*YAY!*)

The cupbearer went first. In his dream there was a vine with three branches. The vine suddenly grew buds, then blossomed, then grew clusters of delicious grapes. (*YAY!*) The cupbearer squashed the dream grapes into dream wine, and served dream Pharaoh that wine. And dream Pharaoh liked it! (*YAY!*)

Joseph told the cupbearer, "This is great news!" (*YAY!*) You will get out of prison and go back to your job, serving Pharaoh. (*YAY!*) The Cupbearer was super happy. (*YAY!*) What Joseph said would happen came true! (*YAY!*)



Then, the baker told his dream. He was walking along with three baskets balanced on his head, full of delicious cakes. (YAY!) All of a sudden, birds swooped down and ate ALL the cakes. (BOO!)

Joseph told the baker, “Bad news for you!” (BOO!) Pharaoh is still mad at you. (BOO!) You are not going to get out of here alive. (BOO!) This is the end of you. (BOO!) What Joseph said would happen came true. (BOO!)

Later, when Pharaoh had even weirder dreams, the cupbearer remembered Joseph. (YAY!). The cupbearer told Pharaoh about Joseph. (YAY!) Pharaoh got Joseph out of prison and Joseph helped Pharaoh understand his dreams too! (YAY!) Joseph ended up being a leader of all of Egypt. (YAY!)

Joseph knew that God was with him. Joseph trusted God. Joseph did not have much power at the beginning of the story (BOO!), but God rewarded him with more strength and power to share his gifts! (YAY!) Joseph used his gifts to serve God by helping other people. (YAY!)



Bible Story
Joseph Interprets Dreams

(Genesis 40:1–41:45)

Mountain Motto

I can do all things through him who strengthens me.
(Philippians 4:13, NRSV)

Lift Lesson

I can share my gifts!



Bible Story

Joseph Interprets Dreams

(Genesis 40:1–41:45)

Mountain Motto

I can do all things through
him who strengthens me.
(Philippians 4:13, NRSV)

Lift Lesson

I can share my gifts!

Life Application

SAY: Wow! That Joseph! An amazing dude! What do you remember about him? *(Allow time for responses. Depending on your group dynamics, invite everyone to respond at once: think of one fact about Joseph, and everyone say it on the count of 1, 2, 3!)*

ASK: Why was Joseph in prison? Do you think Joseph had strength and power? Where did he get the strength to keep going? *(from God)*

SAY: That sounds like our Mountain Motto! Say it with me. *(Repeat the verse with the Challengers.)* Joseph kept finding strength in God. How do we know that? *(Allow response such as interpreting dreams; kept hope alive; kept choosing to work hard instead of giving up, and so forth.)* God gave Joseph the gift of being able to explain what dreams meant. Dreams can be happy and also confusing and weird. People in Joseph's time were certain that dreams had important instructions for how to live and what to expect.

ASK: What was the cupbearer's dream? the baker's? Have you ever had an interesting or confusing dream? What did you do? *(Allow Challengers to respond.)*

SAY: In good times and in hard times, we can always find strength in God. We each have ways we can help others. Our Lift Lesson for today is: I can share my gifts. Sometimes we can share our gifts in small ways.

Encourage children to fold their bodies into a small shape, such as curling up in a ball.

SAY: Let's whisper our Mountain Motto so that only you hear it. Say it again as you grow and stretch into the biggest shape you can make.



Active Learning Dream Scape

Preparation: Roll the paper out on the floor or on a table. Draw bubble or cloud images spaced on the page, leaving enough space for children to write or draw within the bubbles/clouds.

SAY: We all have dreams. Imagine if our best dreams came true!

ASK: What is a dream you have for yourself? for the world?
(Encourage responses like peace in the world, everyone with enough to eat, love for one another, safe water, safe animals, you using your gifts to help someone, and so forth.)

SAY: Let's create a dream scape poster. Add your own dreams or words to our dream scape poster.

👉 Give Challengers time to draw or write their responses on the paper.

Hieroglyphics

Preparation: Print several copies of the "Hieroglyphics" chart. Have some phrases or words written in hieroglyphics. Choose simple words like God, Jesus, strength, or words from today's Bible story. Have copies of a hieroglyphics translation page available. Have paper and pencils/pens ready.

SAY: Joseph was taken to Egypt. In Potiphar's house and in the prison, he would have seen and maybe written and read hieroglyphics: the picture alphabet of ancient Egypt. This is my name in hieroglyphics.

👉 Show children how each hieroglyphic letter represents your name.

👉 Show children the words written in hieroglyphics.

SAY: Let's figure out what these words are.

ASK: Can you write your name in hieroglyphics? Let's try.

👉 Give Challengers time and space to write their names and other phrases in hieroglyphics.

👉 For younger Challengers (or Challengers who may get frustrated trying to draw), modify this activity by working together as a group to write names or short phrases using the chart. Give Challengers a turn to draw a hieroglyphic, or draw them all yourself based on their suggestions. Older Challengers make like a chance to write longer words or phrases, lyrics from a song, or today's Lift Lesson.



Bible Story Joseph Interprets Dreams

(Genesis 40:1–41:45)

Mountain Motto

I can do all things through him who strengthens me.
(Philippians 4:13, NRSV)

Lift Lesson

I can share my gifts!

Materials

- 👉 Large craft roll paper
- 👉 Markers or colored pencils
- 👉 Hieroglyphics chart
- 👉 Plain paper
- 👉 Pens or pencils

Leader Tip

A Hieroglyphics chart is included in the FREE RESOURCE section of CokesburyVBS.com



Bible Story

Joseph Interprets Dreams

(Genesis 40:1–41:45)

Mountain Motto

I can do all things through him who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:13, NRSV)

Lift Lesson

I can share my gifts!

Leader Tip

If Challengers have different mobility abilities, choose the movements in the prayer that best fit your group and that everyone can do.

Closing Prayer

God Give Me Strength

Say this prayer each day to conclude your station time. The text of the prayer could be on a poster or otherwise displayed. The prayer could be spoken by everyone, all the way through. Or it could be a call and response prayer, with a chosen leader (or leaders) speaking the “God be in my...” lines and the group responding with the other lines.

Invite the Challengers to gather in a circle, standing as they are able.

ASK: Here on Snowball Mountain, what might go on our hands? (*gloves—demonstrate putting on gloves*) our feet? (*boots or snow boots—demonstrate putting on boots*)

SAY: We can also protect our eyes by putting our goggles or sunglasses in place. We can protect our brains by putting on our helmets.

We are going to say a prayer and the word “strength” is in every line. Show me strength. Show me your strength motion or strength position. On the last line we will all get in “ready” position, and as we say the last words and Amen, we will spring forward like we’re skiing, snowboarding, tubing or sledding. Ready? Let’s pray!

God be in my hands (*put on gloves*)
Give me strength to act with kindness.

God be in my body (*step into skis or settle into a sled*)
Give me strength to move forward.

God be in my eyes (*goggles down*)
Give me strength to notice needs.

God be in my mind (*helmet snapped in place*)
Give me strength to believe you will always be with me.

God be in my heart (*crouch into jump position*)
Give me strength to share your love. (*On “your love,” spring up and forward, like a ski jumper. Or push off, as if starting a sled run.*)
Amen.

Esther 3:7–8:8

Preparation

Costumes & Materials

- ▶ **Snowball Mountain Challenge Complete Music CD** and device to play music.
- ▶ Modern attire for the Storyteller, such as a **Snowball Mountain Challenge T-Shirt** and jeans or all black.
- ▶ A variety of Bible times costumes for Bible characters. Esther and the king should be in royal attire, robes and tunics in purples or deep blues. The king and Esther could wear crowns. Haman and Mordecai can be in simple tunics with sandals.
- ▶ Fancy jewelry and or a silky headdress for Esther.
- ▶ A staff for Mordecai.
- ▶ A chair that can be a throne.
- ▶ A small table and two or three chairs.
- ▶ Plates and goblets for the dinner table (optional).
- ▶ A strip of burlap fabric or an actual burlap sack for Mordecai.
- ▶ Torn up pieces of black or gray paper to be used as ashes (The actor playing Mordecai could use a black marker or apply makeup to represent ashes.)
- ▶ A Bible or large prop Bible for the Storyteller to hold.

Setting the Scene

- ▶ Designate one wall to be the focal point as the backdrop for the action.
- ▶ The wall can be decorated to give the feel of a royal palace.
- ▶ Place a chair that will serve as a throne upstage.
- ▶ Have the tables and chairs off-stage but easily accessible. Designate who will bring the table and chairs on-stage.
- ▶ Provide wall space for posting each Lift Lesson daily.



Bible Story

Esther Shows Courage
(Esther 3:7–8:8)

Mountain Motto

I can do all things through
him who strengthens me.
(Philippians 4:13, NRSV)

Lift Lesson

I can be brave!



Bible Story

Esther Shows Courage

(Esther 3:7–8:8)

Mountain Motto

I can do all things through him who strengthens me.
(Philippians 4:13, NRSV)

Lift Lesson

I can be brave!

Leader Tip

This Bible Background feature is a supplemental aid provided for you, the Storyteller, to give context for each session's story before you teach on it. You may share this information with your Challengers, if desired, but it is not a recommended portion of the intended lesson.

Esther 3:7-8:8

Bible Background

The Old Testament of the Bible features another story about someone facing a great, potentially dangerous challenge in the story of Esther. Esther lived in Persia during the reign of Xerxes I (written as Ahasuerus in some translations of the Book of Esther). She was an orphan who was raised by her cousin, a royal guard named Mordecai. Through a series of remarkable events, Esther became a queen. Although the queens held no power of their own, she had as great an impact on her people as any king or queen in history. Eight years after Esther's remarkable rise to Queen, Ahasuerus appointed an evil man named Haman as his second-in-command. Haman hated the Jewish people in general and Mordecai in particular. Mordecai refused to bow down to Haman. As a result, Haman persuaded Ahasuerus to issue a decree allowing all the Jewish people to be destroyed, disguising his intent by referring to them only as "a certain group of people" (Esther 3:8) who refused to obey the king's laws. When Mordecai learned of the challenge facing the Jewish people because of Ahasuerus' decree, he told Esther that she was the Jews' only hope. He asked her to appeal to the king.

Queen Esther initially responds to Mordecai's request with hesitation, because the king could kill her for approaching him without being summoned. Mordecai responds, "If you don't speak up at this very important time, relief and rescue will appear for the Jews from another place, but you and your family will die. But who knows? Maybe it was for a moment like this that you came to be part of the royal family" (4:14). Esther sees the wisdom in Mordecai's words and decides to rise to meet this challenge set before her. She sends back word to Mordecai, "Go, gather all the Jews who are in Susa and tell them to give up eating to help me be brave" (4:16), instructing him to have the people fast with her for three days. After that, she would approach the king with boldness and accept the consequences. When the moment of truth arrives, Ahasuerus receives her without punishment! Queen Esther requests the king's and Haman's presence at a feast she had prepared for them. At this feast, she invites them to a second feast. At the second feast, Esther finally faces her challenge directly. She uncovers to King Ahasuerus the plot Haman had enacted, which would have included the killing of both Mordecai and Esther. Ahasuerus is upset about what he had allowed to happen. Unable to undo the initial decree, he decides to empower the Jews to fight back against any who would harm them and to have Haman killed for his evil deeds. Mordecai and the Jews could now defend themselves and their people could live on in peace.

Queen Esther's powerlessness to Haman's plot and King Ahasuerus' decree was not an insurmountable challenge to face. However, the circumstances surrounding her necessitated a great deal of bravery. Esther acknowledged her need for bravery through her response to Mordecai in which she requested that all the other Jewish people fast along with her. Although God is never mentioned outright in Esther's story, God's power is at work as Mordecai and Esther pushed back against injustice and oppression. Through God's power, Esther knew she could be brave enough to do what her people needed her to do. And through God's power, we too can be brave enough to face the challenges before us!



Esther 3:7-8:8

Story Starter

SAY: Hey Challengers, how's your day on Snowball Mountain going? Perfect snow conditions, am I right?

SAY: Welcome back to Storytelling. Here's where we get some cozy indoor time while exploring a story about a great Challenger of the past! I've got the Challenge Companion already open to the story of Esther.

ASK: What's the Mountain Motto again? (*say it together*).

SAY: Esther lived way before Paul wrote those words. Maybe he was thinking of Esther's story when he wrote them! Esther was strong and determined to do what needed to be done. Esther is one of the bravest people in history! Let's say our Mountain Motto one more time: I can do all things through him who strengthens me. Philippians 4:13. Way to go!

SAY: Let's hear the story of Esther, the queen who was kind of a superhero! As you listen to the story today, be thinking about our Mountain Motto.



Bible Story
Esther Shows Courage
(Esther 3:7-8:8)

Mountain Motto
I can do all things through
him who strengthens me.
(Philippians 4:13, NRSV)

Lift Lesson
I can be brave!



Bible Story
Esther Shows Courage
(Esther 3:7–8:8)

Mountain Motto
I can do all things through
him who strengthens me.
(Philippians 4:13, NRSV)

Lift Lesson
I can be brave!

Storytelling Option 1

Drama

Cast

Storyteller
Esther
King Ahasuerus (King A-Ha)
Haman
Mordecai
Audience Voice (pre-arranged, 1 line)

Costumes & Materials

- 🔊 **Snowball Mountain Challenge Complete Music CD** and device to play music.
- 🔊 Modern attire for the Storyteller, such as a **Snowball Mountain Challenge T-Shirt** and jeans or all black.
- 🔊 A variety of Bible times costumes for Bible characters. Esther and the King should be in royal attire, robes and tunics in purples or deep blues. The King could wear a crown. Haman and Mordecai can be in simple tunics with sandals.
- 🔊 Fancy jewelry and or a silky headdress for Esther.
- 🔊 A staff for Mordecai.
- 🔊 A chair that can be a throne.
- 🔊 A small table and two or three chairs.
- 🔊 Plates and goblets for the dinner table (optional).
- 🔊 A strip of burlap fabric or an actual burlap sack for Mordecai.
- 🔊 Torn up pieces of black or gray paper to be used as ashes (The actor playing Mordecai could use a black marker or apply makeup to represent ashes.)
- 🔊 A Bible or large prop Bible for the Storyteller to hold.

(When the story opens, Esther and Mordecai center stage looking triumphant, bowing as though it's the end of a successful show. A chair is on stage set up as a throne.)

Storyteller: **Esther and Mordecai! Congratulations! You did it! You saved the people! Let's have a Purim party!**

Voice from audience: *(planned ahead)* **Wait! What's going on? What did they do? Who are they? What's a Purim party?**

Esther: **Hey, they're right. We've got to tell the story first. Reverse, people!** *(She and Mordecai back out of the scene to the side. King Ahasuerus comes in and sits on the throne, Haman enters and stands off to the side.)*
(to Storyteller and other actors) **Start with me becoming queen.** *(King Ahasuerus and Haman are very impressed, looking at Esther; Mordecai is off to one side praying.)*

Storyteller: **Got it. Good idea. So...this is Esther.**



Esther: **Hi, y'all!**

Storyteller: **That guy on the throne** (*King Ahasuerus waves.*) is **King Ahasuerus.**

Esther: **Gesundheit!**

Ahasuerus: **Rude!**

Storyteller: **That's his name. Some people call him Xerxes.**

Esther: **Bless you! Are you getting a cold?**

Storyteller: **Okay. Let's just call him King A-Ha! He is the biggest, baddest king in the world. At the time. He's the King of Persia.**

King A-Ha: **Oh yeah.**

Esther: (*strong*) **Anyway, my family is Jewish. We are exiles in Susa—that means we come from another place. People here treat us badly. They don't trust us, they don't do business with us, they want us to leave. Just ask my cousin Mordecai over there. (Mordecai nods.) Life is so hard that we have decided to keep a secret: nobody in the palace knows I'm Jewish. Not even my husband the king.**

Storyteller: **There's another guy on stage. Who are you?**

Haman: (*moving forward*) **What?? You don't know? I am THE MOST IMPORTANT person here. (others all look at him, then pause) I mean, next to you, sire. And the queen.**

Mordecai: **And God.**

Haman: (*whiny*) **You see? You see what I have to put up with? But I know something about Mordecai! Sources tell me he is Jewish. I'll show him! (walks to King A-Ha) Listen King A-Ha, there are certain groups of people that don't respect our rules or ways of living. I am so done with them. I've got an idea: let's get rid of them! And take their stuff!**

King A-Ha: **Sounds goods to me. (yawns) Tell the chefs I'm ready for my meal.**

Storyteller: **When word of Haman's evil plot got out, the Jewish community panicked! Mordecai put on sackcloth and ashes and stood outside the palace (Mordecai puts on sackcloth, dumps the ashes on himself, and boo-hoos loudly.)**

Esther: **Mordecai! Sackcloth! Ashes?! That means you are really upset!**

Mordecai: **You should be too! All the Jews are doomed. It's that nasty Haman! (Mordecai and Esther hug and cry.)**



Bible Story
Esther Shows Courage
(Esther 3:7–8:8)

Mountain Motto
I can do all things through
him who strengthens me.
(Philippians 4:13, NRSV)

Lift Lesson
I can be brave!



Bible Story

Esther Shows Courage

(Esther 3:7–8:8)

Mountain Motto

I can do all things through
him who strengthens me.
(Philippians 4:13, NRSV)

Lift Lesson

I can be brave!

Esther: **But wait! I'm the queen! Maybe I could help?**

Mordecai: **Good point. Maybe you became queen for this very situation. What do you need from me?**

Esther: **Well... you are good at praying. So pray! And get everybody to pray, all the Jews in Susa. I think I need to get ready for dinner. (She exits.)**

Storyteller: **Remember what I told you about old King A-Ha? Yeah, not an easy guy to get along with. One of his rules—nobody comes to see him without an invitation. Nobody.**

Esther enters wearing extra-nice clothes and jewels.

King A-Ha: **My queen! You look extra lovely today. What can I do for you?**

Esther: **Oh A-Ha, sweetie, please come to dinner! I've made it specially for you. And (with slight disgust) bring Haman.**

Haman: *(gasp)* **Goody! Look at me. I'm so important.**

Move table, chairs, and dishes on stage for dinner setup.

Storyteller: **Esther made a delicious dinner. All of King A-Ha's favorites. They ate delicious food and even had dessert! They were having a wonderful evening when King A-Ha said...**

King A-Ha: **Queen Esther you're the Best-er (They all laugh.) But seriously... what do you want, because I want you to have it!**

Esther: *(stands, suddenly serious and strong)* **I want you to save my life!**

King A-Ha: **Well..what?**

Esther: **And my people. Save them, A-Ha! I'm Jewish.**

Haman: **What?! No way!**

Esther: **One man has plotted against me and against all my family and my friends. Save us!**

King A-Ha: *(outraged)* **Who? Wait till I get my hands on him!! (Haman begins sneaking out.)**

Esther: *(points)* **It's Haman! He hates us all! He wants us killed. (aside, slightly sarcastic) Of course you should have known better when you signed off on the order, but since you're the king, let's focus our blame on...(points) Haman!**

King A-Ha: *(furious)* **Haman! (follows Haman out of the room)**



Storyteller: **Haman did not last long after that.** (*Esther and Mordecai walk to the center.*) **The Jewish people in Susa were saved!**

Esther: **I used my secret, my prayers, my people's prayers, and my power at the right time, to help all of us. I was afraid, but I was brave.**

Mordecai: **I'm quite proud of her.**

Esther: **I can do all things through the one who gives me strength! And now it's time to party! Let's make some noise!** (*They all dance.*)



Bible Story
Esther Shows Courage
(Esther 3:7–8:8)

Mountain Motto
I can do all things through
him who strengthens me.
(Philippians 4:13, NRSV)

Lift Lesson
I can be brave!



Bible Story
Esther Shows Courage
(Esther 3:7–8:8)

Mountain Motto
I can do all things through
him who strengthens me.
(Philippians 4:13, NRSV)

Lift Lesson
I can be brave!

Storytelling Option 2

Single Storyteller

SAY: The hero of today’s story is Esther, a powerful, amazing woman! The bad guy in the story is named Haman. When you hear his name, make some negative noise! Let’s practice: Haman (*noise*). Queen Esther took down Haman (*noise*) even though Haman (*noise*) seemed to have all the power. Great! Let’s hear the story.

Queen Esther was married to King Ahasuerus of Persia, a very powerful and sometimes scary man. Esther grew up in a Jewish family, and was raised by her cousin, Mordecai. Esther and Mordecai were part of the Jewish community in the city of Susa, where King Ahasuerus had his throne and palace. The Jews in Susa were foreigners. They had been forced out of their homeland. They lived in Susa and other towns, but they were never very safe because they were not welcomed or accepted.

Queen Esther was so beautiful and smart that King Ahasuerus had fallen in love with her and married her. But she and Mordecai had agreed to keep her identity a secret. No one knew that Esther was Jewish.

A man named Haman (*noise*) was in charge of all the king’s officials. Haman (*noise*) hated all the Jewish people in Susa, especially Mordecai. Everybody else bowed to Haman (*noise*). But Mordecai wouldn’t do it. Ever. Mordecai’s faith kept him focused on God. Haman (*noise*) was not God, and Mordecai was not going to bow to him. This made Haman (*noise*) so angry that he came up with an evil scheme: he made up all kinds of stories about how the Jewish people disrespected Ahasuerus’ authority. He said, “These people live among us and don’t act the way real citizens of our country should act.” And then Haman (*noise*) said, “I know! Let’s get rid of them all and take their stuff!” Ahasuerus said, “Hmmm...I’m not so sure.” Then Haman (*noise*) said, “Plus I’ll pay you 10,000 silver pieces. How about Adar the 13th? Good for you?” (That was an upcoming date they both had free.) Ahasuerus said, “Sounds like a plan.”

Queen Esther looked out her window and saw her cousin Mordecai in the street, crying and dumping ashes on his head. People only did that when they were really upset. She found a way to talk to Mordecai secretly (Remember, nobody knew she was Jewish.) and he told her about Haman’s (*noise*) horrible plan. Esther was pretty upset too! Mordecai said, “Pull yourself together. This is no time to melt down. The date is coming soon! You are the queen. Maybe God wanted you to be in the palace so that you could help when the time came! This is your time to act!” Queen Esther started making plans: she was queen but she could only talk to the king if he invited her to meet up. How would she get him to listen?

Meanwhile, Ahasuerus called in his trusted advisor, Haman (*noise*). He said, “Haman (*noise*), what would you do to honor a really great guy?” Haman (*noise*) of course thought the king meant him. So he said, “Well give me, I mean him, a royal robe, parade him on a royal horse, and announce his name in the streets.”



And the king said, “Perfect! Do all that for this guy...what’s his name...oh yeah: Mordecai!” So there was Haman (*noise*) leading Mordecai on a horse and having to say a bunch of great things about him. Haman (*noise*) was so mad he could scream! But at least he had a special dinner with Queen Esther to look forward to!

Queen Esther worked out a plan. A really risky plan. She wore her finest clothes and fanciest jewelry. She told Mordecai to tell all the Jewish people of Susa to pray, and then she went to see the king—without being asked, which was a huge no-no. The woman who had been queen before her (Yeah, she wasn’t the first.) had been banished for this kind of behavior. But Esther was desperate, and also really brave.

When she walked into the throne room, King Ahasuerus was very happy to see her and said, “I’ll do anything for you!” She said, “Come have dinner. You and Haman.” (*noise*) Ahasuerus was so surprised that she would risk her life to invite him for dinner, but he was also impressed. It was a really good dinner! Afterward, Esther invited them to dinner again!

Haman (*noise*) was so proud he couldn’t see straight. Ahasuerus let him do what he wanted, Queen Esther (the most beautiful woman in the land!) treated him like a special friend. He felt unstoppable!

But then, after the delicious second dinner, when Ahasuerus told Esther to ask him for whatever she wanted, she said, “Save me! Save my people!” And it all came out—that she was a Jew, that the Jewish community was going to be destroyed, and that Haman (*noise*) was behind it all. Not a good look for Haman (*noise*) to be plotting against the queen. Haman (*noise*) fell at Queen Esther’s feet, begging her to forgive him, but she wasn’t having it. The king’s guards dragged a kicking and crying Haman (*noise*) away for his punishment. And to make it even more special, it was the same punishment Haman (*noise*) had planned for Mordecai.

Ahasuerus gave orders that made the Jewish community safe, at least for a while. Esther used her brains, strong prayers—from herself and her community—and courage to save her people! Hooray! Mordecai was given a place in the palace. And Haman (*noise*) was never heard from again.



Bible Story
Esther Shows Courage
(Esther 3:7–8:8)

Mountain Motto
I can do all things through
him who strengthens me.
(Philippians 4:13, NRSV)

Lift Lesson
I can be brave!



Bible Story
Esther Shows Courage
(Esther 3:7–8:8)

Mountain Motto
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Lift Lesson
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Esther 3:7-8:8
Life Application

ASK: What was your favorite part of the story? (*responses*)

ASK: Why do you think Esther kept her identity as a Jewish person secret?
(*responses, discussion*)

SAY: Eventually Esther revealed her secret in a way that gave her power in the moment. But it was a risky move! She was so brave, she must have relied on God's strength. Say the Mountain Motto with me: I can do all things through him who strengthens me. Philippians 4:13.

SAY: Right! God give us strength to do all things, even tough times like Esther faced. Our Lift Lesson today is: I can be brave! Say it with me. Show me how brave you are as you are saying it. (*Say the Lift Lesson again bravely.*)

SAY: There are places and times in your life and my life when things are hard. Things like weather delays that mean you miss out on a fun event. Sometimes friends get sick or you have an unexpected test. You might lose a pet, or a family member may be being unkind. (*Ask for more examples if desired.*)

SAY: When plans don't work out or when there is a task to do that makes us anxious, we might not have a choice about the situation, but we do have a choice about how we respond, and often there is more than one way to respond. We have the choice to ask God for strength and to be with us as we go through the task. Remember the story of Esther! And remember our Mountain Motto. Let's stand up together in our bravest pose and say it together.

Encourage Challengers to strike a brave pose as they say the Mountain Motto together. Repeat as many times with as many different poses as desired.



Active Learning

Write a Scroll

Preparation

- 👉 Print copies of the Hebrew Lift Lesson.
- 👉 Pour paint into cups or bowls.
- 👉 Display the Session 2 Lift Lesson.
- 👉 Cut ribbon into 6-inch strips for each Challenger.

SAY: Queen Esther commanded that the whole story of how Haman was defeated and the Jewish people were saved, be written down in a scroll (a type of ancient book). The scroll of Esther’s story is called “the Megillah of Esther” (which means Book of Esther), and it is read each year at Purim, the joyous Jewish festival. A genuine Megillah must be written by a scribe on parchment.

SAY: Let’s use that idea and, in honor of Esther, write our Lift Lesson on a scroll. We can write it in Hebrew (Esther’s language) and in English.

- 👉 Give children the Hebrew Lift Lesson Template to copy.
- 👉 Have Challengers copy the Lift Lesson onto their paper. Encourage Challengers to use the paint to write, just as a scribe would have done. If desired, Challengers may also write their scroll with markers or pens.
- 👉 Show children how to roll their paper into scrolls. Roll the paper towards the middle from each end.

Esther, Super Hero Queen

ASK: Do you have a favorite super hero movie? Do you think the Bible story of Esther is kind of like a super hero story?

SAY: Esther was the queen of Persia but she had a secret identity—she was Jewish! She stayed undercover until the moment when her secret identity could save the day, and then POW! She took out Haman and saved her people! Mordecai was another undercover agent, ready to stand up for the good, and rally the people around him. And the evil Haman was like a super villain!

SAY: The Jewish holiday of Purim is a celebration of this story. It’s traditional on Purim to dress up in costume and masquerade with hidden identities! Let’s act out the story of Esther like it’s a super hero movie or comic.

- 👉 Show Challengers the costumes you have provided.
- 👉 Encourage them to retell a simplified version of the story, focusing on the hidden identities that are revealed. Make sure the bad guy gets thwarted and the people are saved.



Bible Story
Esther Shows Courage
(Esther 3:7–8:8)

Mountain Motto
I can do all things through
him who strengthens me.
(Philippians 4:13, NRSV)

Lift Lesson
I can be brave!

- Materials**
- 👉 Snowball Mountain Challenge Decorating Posters
 - 👉 Hebrew Lift Lesson Template p. 63
 - 👉 Markers or pens
 - 👉 Fine-tipped paint brushes
 - 👉 Washable black paint
 - 👉 Small cups or bowls
 - 👉 Thick paper or cardstock
 - 👉 Ribbon
 - 👉 Scissors
 - 👉 Smocks for younger Challengers (optional)
 - 👉 Various costumes (superhero and Bible)

Leader Tip
If Challengers are hesitant about acting and wearing costumes, ask them to write or draw Esther’s story in comic book form.



Bible Story

Esther Shows Courage

(Esther 3:7–8:8)

Mountain Motto

I can do all things through him who strengthens me.
(Philippians 4:13, NRSV)

Lift Lesson

I can be brave!

Leader Tip

If Challengers have different mobility abilities, choose the movements in the prayer that best fit your group and that everyone can do.

Closing Prayer

God Give Me Strength

Say this prayer each day to close out your station time. The text of the prayer could be on a poster or otherwise displayed. The prayer could be spoken by everyone, all the way through. Or it could be a call and response prayer, with a chosen leader (or leaders) speaking the “God be in my...” lines and the group responding with the other lines.

Invite the Challengers to gather in a circle, standing as they are able.

SAY: Challengers, let’s make a circle before you head out for more fun in the snow. Imagine how brave Esther must have been! Haman was coming down on her people like an avalanche, but Esther used brains and bravery to outwit his evil scheme. Like Esther, let’s ask God to be with us and give us strength. Let’s pray!

God be in my hands (*put on gloves*)
Give me strength to act with kindness.

God be in my body (*step into skis or settle into a sled*)
Give me strength to move forward.

God be in my eyes (*goggles down*)
Give me strength to notice needs.

God be in my mind (*helmet snapped in place*)
Give me strength to believe you will always be with me.

God be in my heart (*crouch into jump position*)
Give me strength to share your love. (*On “your love,” spring up and forward, like a ski jumper. Or push off, as if starting a sled run.*)
Amen.

Mark 12:41-44

Preparation

Costumes & Materials

- ▶ **Snowball Mountain Challenge Complete Music CD** and device to play music.
- ▶ Modern attire for the Storyteller, such as a **Snowball Mountain Challenge T-Shirt** and jeans or all black.
- ▶ A variety of Bible times costumes for Bible characters. Jesus should be in a simple tunic in tan or brown (avoid white if possible) with sandals. The Pharisees and Sadducees can also be in plain tunics and sandals, but should have a striped tunic overlay or head piece. The poor widow should be in a simple neutral color tunic with a head covering and sandals.
- ▶ A simple pouch or bag for the widow; add two pennies for her pouch.
- ▶ A collection box and a small table or stand. Make sure the opening in the box is large enough for the pouches/money you are using.
- ▶ A bench or other similar type of seating area for Jesus to sit on and observe the activities of the temple.
- ▶ A larger money pouch that is visibly full of money for the Storyteller.
- ▶ A Bible or large prop Bible for the Storyteller to hold.

Setting the Scene

- ▶ Designate one wall to be the focal point/backdrop for the action.
- ▶ Decorate the wall to create the feel of daytime at the temple. Use drapes, pillars and other decor.
- ▶ Place the offering box at center stage.
- ▶ Place the bench or other seating item on stage left or stage right.
- ▶ Provide wall space for posting each Lift Lesson daily.



Bible Story

The Widow's Offering
(Mark 12:41-44)

Mountain Motto

I can do all things through
him who strengthens me.
(Philippians 4:13, NRSV)

Lift Lesson

I can give my all!



Bible Story

The Widow's Offering

(Mark 12:41-44)

Mountain Motto

I can do all things through him who strengthens me.
(Philippians 4:13, NRSV)

Lift Lesson

I can be brave!

Leader Tip

This Bible Background feature is a supplemental aid provided for you, the Storyteller, to give context for each session's story before you teach on it. You may share this information with your Challengers, if desired, but it is not a recommended portion of the intended lesson.

Mark 12:41-44

Bible Background

Centuries after the challenging events depicted in the stories of Joseph and Esther, a man named Jesus taught about the kingdom of God. Like Joseph and Esther, Jesus was Jewish. Jesus would have grown up learning their stories—just like Challengers at VBS! Jesus is also the Son of God. Jesus taught his disciples and followers about God in unique ways. Writings about Jesus' life and teachings are collected in the Bible as the New Testament and Session 3's story is from the New Testament Book of Mark. Jesus was with his disciples at the temple in Jerusalem. Many stories about Jesus' life took place in the temple. In the temple, religious leaders and legal experts would ask him questions about the things he was teaching. Sometimes, these religious leaders and legal experts had genuine questions for Jesus, while other times they were trying to trick Jesus into saying something untrue about God. By the time this story takes place, it seems their time of questioning had ended. Jesus was speaking to his disciples about the relationship between the leaders and experts and the Jewish people they were supposed to be serving.

In the temple court, Jesus and the disciples sit in a crowd of people. Jesus points to one of the collection boxes placed around the outer court of the temple. Together, Jesus and the disciples observe the differences in the ways people contribute to the temple treasury. They watch as wealthy people toss money in the collection box—presumably in a manner that reflects both a desire to be seen by others in the vicinity and the flippancy with which they handle the money. The money is likely income left over from their opulent spending. At one point, a widow with very little money walks discreetly to the collection box and places two small copper coins inside. These coins are worth such a small amount of money—a small fraction of a day's wage for an unskilled laborer—but Jesus tells his disciples this is all the money she has.

The difference between the widow's offering and the offerings from the wealthy donors reflects a drastic discrepancy between the gifts of these two parties. The wealthy donors could give much more, but instead they gave what was left over after lavish spending for themselves. While their giving is of great monetary value, Jesus says it is of less value to God than the widow's offering, which is all she has. He teaches the disciples that by giving her all, this widow is showing them that she is part of God's kingdom. Jesus' admonition of the legal experts who cheat widows out of their homes is a charge to both the temple at the time of his teaching, as well as churches today. Jesus is saying the temple is responsible for this woman's situation: they should be supporting her, not the other way around. When we give our all like this widow did—whether we're giving our money, our time, or our gifts—we are participating in God's kingdom and can help people who need it. In challenging times, we can give our all.



Mark 12:41-44

Story Starter

SAY: Wow, it's a cold one today! Am I right? I hope you have your hats, gloves, and scarves. And lip balm. Mmm (*applies some*). That feels great. Oh, sorry. Story time! Jesus is in this story and there is money involved. Not enough to buy a burger at the lodge. Not even enough for a soda. Not even enough for a single Airhead. It's like two pennies. And Jesus says this is a huge gift! How can that be?

SAY: The pennies belong to a woman, and she gives them away. This woman is nothing like Queen Esther. She doesn't live in a palace. We don't know where she lives, but we know it's not fancy. It's possible that she doesn't even have a place to live, she is so poor. And yet she gives away money.

SAY: Say the Mountain Motto with me: I can do all things through him who strengthens me. Philippians 4:13.

ASK: How can the story of a woman who gives away her two pennies help us learn that?

SAY: Let's find out. Here's the Challenge Companion. The story has Jesus in it, so that means we are in the New Testament. The story is found in the Gospel of Mark, chapter 12, verses 41-44. It's such an important story, it's also included in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 21, verses 1-4.



Bible Story
The Widow's Offering
(Mark 12:41-44)

Mountain Motto
I can do all things through
him who strengthens me.
(Philippians 4:13, NRSV)

Lift Lesson
I can give my all!

Materials
👉 Lip balm



Bible Story

The Widow's Offering

(Mark 12:41-44)

Mountain Motto

I can do all things through him who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:13, NRSV)

Lift Lesson

I can be brave!

Storytelling Option 1

Drama

Cast

Storyteller

Jesus

Pharisees (2-3 people, not all speaking)

Sadducees (2-3 people, not all speaking)

The Poor Widow

Costumes & Materials

👉 **Snowball Mountain Challenge Complete Music CD** and device to play music.

👉 Modern attire for the Storyteller, such as a **Snowball Mountain Challenge T-Shirt** and jeans or all black.

👉 A variety of Bible times costumes for Bible characters. Jesus should be in a simple tunic in tan or brown (avoid white if possible) with sandals. The Pharisees and Sadducees can also be in plain tunics and sandals, but should have a striped tunic overlay or head piece that can be worn. The poor widow should be in a simple neutral color tunic with a head covering and sandals.

👉 A simple pouch or bag for the widow to carry; add two pennies for her pouch.

👉 A collection box and a small table or stand for the box to be placed on.

👉 A larger money pouch that is visibly full of money for the Storyteller.

👉 A Bible or large prop Bible for the Storyteller to hold.

Jesus is sitting off on one side of the stage, calmly looking around; Pharisees and Sadducees are mid-stage looking grouchy and important, muttering to each other.

Storyteller: **Welcome to the temple in Jerusalem. This is a really important place! People learn things from each other and often they argue. Especially those guys back there. Those are the Pharisees (Pharisees wave "Hey!") and the Sadducees (Sadducees say, "Sup?") They are the people in charge.**

Pharisee 1: *(sarcastically)* **Not today we aren't.**

Sadducee 1: *(irritated)* **Not since Jesus showed up.**

Pharisee 2: **He rides into town on his donkey...**

Sadducee 1: **And people all like (fake swoony voice) Ooh Jesus! You are so great! Hosanna! Have a palm branch!**

Pharisee 1: **And then he thinks he owns the place!**

Sadducee 2: *(whiny)* **We were just selling stuff people needed and wanted to buy, right here! And he's all like, "This isn't a mall! You can't set up shop in my house you bunch of crooks!" I mean...HIS house?? Who does he think he is?**



Pharisee 2: **I think he’s offensive ... smelling. Pee-yew!** (*holds nose, looks at Jesus*)

Sadducee 2: (*increasingly blubbery, like a toddler melting down*) **He had this tantrum and threw things around, and the chickens got loose, and I tripped over a chicken...and I bumped my elbow!!** (*shows elbow*) **Jesus could make it better but he doesn’t have any time for me. He only wants to talk to the wrong people.**

Pharisee 2: **Badly dressed people.**

Sadducee 1: **Hungry people.**

Pharisee 1: **Poor people.**

Sadducee 2: **It’s so unfair. We are God’s favorites! We have told everyone that for years and they’ve always paid attention to us before.**

Pharisee 1: **They’ve always paid before, the people with lots of money. That’s who we want around here! Not some smelly guy with ugly clothes and bad hair.**

Sadducee 2: **Oooh. Bit harsh. He’s got great hair.** (*others nod*)

Storyteller: **Jesus went to the temple every day. He was teaching about God and about how people need to love God and love each other. Jesus taught that people need to help one another. When we have something to share, we should share it! You have food? Share a meal! You have time? Give an hour. You have money? Donate it so it can be helpful to someone.**

(The poor woman enters.)

Pharisee 2: **Look. It’s that woman who lives in that tiny old shack outside the temple wall.**

Storyteller: **The poor, lonely woman didn’t have a place to live. She didn’t have family. She didn’t have much of anything! But she showed up at the temple and headed for the collection box.**

Sadducee 1: **Watch out and make sure she doesn’t steal anything! What is she even doing here?**

Jesus: (*addressing the audience, and pointing to the Pharisees and Sadducees*) **Do you see those guys over there? The temple bosses. They think they’re experts on what God wants. They think you should admire them in their fancy clothes. But what do they actually do? Stand around pretending to pray.**

Pharisee 2: **Wait... I think he’s talking about us!**

Sadducee 1: **It does sound like us.** (*others react confused and incredulous*)



Bible Story
The Widow’s Offering
(Mark 12:41-44)

Mountain Motto
I can do all things through him who strengthens me.
(Philippians 4:13, NRSV)

Lift Lesson
I can give my all!



Bible Story

The Widow's Offering

(Mark 12:41-44)

Mountain Motto

I can do all things through
him who strengthens me.
(Philippians 4:13, NRSV)

Lift Lesson

I can give my all!

Jesus: **Look at the poor woman.**

Everyone watches—the woman carefully searches in her bag or pouch and finds one penny. She keeps searching, then finally and obviously shows that the bag is empty except for one more penny, which falls out.

Storyteller: *(walks to the collection box and drops in a lot of coins, or a bag of money)* **Other people coming to the collection box were putting in lots of money. The box was a place to donate money that would be used for the temple. The temple was important to the people, so they gave money to keep it running.**

Jesus: *(with compassion)* **Look at that poor woman.**

Pharisee 1: *(to the woman)* **Hey! People are trying to get past, to give money to the temple. You are in the way!**

Woman reaches out and drops two pennies into the collection box.

Sadducee 1: *(laughing)* **She put in her two cents.**

Pharisee 2: **What are we supposed to do with that? We can't buy anything with two cents! A mango shaved ice costs way more than that.**

Jesus: *(to the audience)* **Did you see that? She put two cents into the treasury. That was what she had in her bag, and she gave it all! What a gift! People usually give because they have extra. She gave everything she had. That woman has put in the most generous gift I've seen all day.**

Sadducee 1: *(outraged)* **I've had it with him. Always the crazy talk.**

Pharisee 1: **Most generous gift.** *(snort, bah, sound of disgust)* **She gave almost nothing.** *Pharisees and Sadducees walk off stage, annoyed)*

Storyteller: *(shocked face, reacts to Pharisee 1)* **We know THAT guy's wrong! Jesus wanted the temple leaders and all the people to see the point—it is not the amount you give that's important, it's that you give what you can give. That woman showed amazing strength and trust in God when she chose to give everything she had.**

Storytelling Option 2

Single Storyteller

ASK: Challengers, if you were in charge of raising money for a project, like new grass for your soccer field, or a new climber for your school playground, who would be more important to you: someone who can donate \$100 each week, or someone who can donate 10 cents each week? (*listen for responses*)

SAY: You'd probably take whatever people can give. But you want those \$100 donations! That gets you to your new grass, new climber, or whatever it is faster, right?

SAY: In the Bible story today, Jesus gives us a different take. What if the ten cents is all they have, and they give it anyway? Whoa! That sounds like our lift lesson. **Say it with me: I can give my all!**

So here's the scene: Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, and everybody yelled and whistled and shouted, "Hosanna!" because they were so glad to see him.

Almost everybody was happy to see Jesus. The people in charge, not so much. Jesus was popular because he got people thinking about God and themselves in new ways. The Pharisees and the Sadducees (That's what the people in charge were called.) had always bossed everyone else around. They said, "We will tell you what God wants you to hear. And if you don't listen to us, and don't give us lots of attention and presents, God will get you." But Jesus kept saying to the people, "God loves you. God created you as you are, and you are wonderful. God wants you to talk to God and praise God and love God back."

Say it with me: I can give my all!

The people were listening to Jesus and learning that being important doesn't matter. Wearing fancy clothes to go to church doesn't matter. Having lots of money to spend doesn't matter. What matters is loving God and loving other people! **Say it again: I can give my all!**

Jesus was teaching in the temple because that was where people came to talk and listen and learn. People brought along money to put in the temple collection box. The money collected was used to pay for the things needed for the temple. The temple was God's house, like our church is God's house. God is everywhere, but temples and churches are special buildings where God's people gather to focus on God and God's love. So the temple was really important! **Let's say it again: I can give my all!**

Jesus watched as a woman came to give a gift of money. It was obvious to everyone that this woman was very poor. I don't know what people saw—maybe her clothing looked worn out, maybe she looked sick and hungry and tired. And everyone watching knew she was alone. No other person was with her. She was a lonely, poor woman.



Bible Story
The Widow's Offering
(Mark 12:41-44)

Mountain Motto
I can do all things through
him who strengthens me.
(Philippians 4:13, NRSV)

Lift Lesson
I can give my all!



Bible Story
The Widow's Offering
(Mark 12:41-44)

Mountain Motto
I can do all things through
him who strengthens me.
(Philippians 4:13, NRSV)

Lift Lesson
I can give my all!

Jesus said to the people, "The Pharisees and the Sadducees want you to think that they give and give, but really they take and take. They are greedy for attention. They think God loves them better than other people. They give very little of their money, their time or their love to anyone but themselves. And they are the ones who make life hard for people like that poor woman over there."
But we know that—I can give my all!

The poor, lonely woman drew out a small, worn bag. She felt around and found one coin. She turned the bag inside out and shook it. A second tiny coin fell out, and that was it. The bag was now empty. She held those two small coins in her hand. As she shuffled towards the collection box, other people hurried past her. They dropped big bags of coins that thumped and rattled in the box.

They were giving something. **And we know that, I can give my all!**

The woman stretched out her hand and let the two coins drop into the box. The coins were so small, they were hard to see from a distance. They fell with a tiny "plink, plink" onto the piles of other coins in the collection box. The woman closed her eyes for a moment, perhaps to rest or perhaps to give thanks to God. And then she slowly turned to go. She didn't have anything else to give.
But, I can give my all!

Jesus said, "This poor woman has put in more than anyone else. More than them all." **Because—I can give my all!**

Jesus said, "Other people give from their extra money. This woman gave everything she has."

One last time—I can give my all!



Mark 12:41:44

Life Application

SAY: The woman in the story is poor and lonely, and most likely no one helped her.

ASK: Do you think Jesus was okay with that? *(Allow for responses.)*

SAY: Part of the message in the story is that people who say they know and love God and people in charge should do a better job of helping other people. Instead they were making this woman's life harder. Let's say that Mountain Motto: I can do all things through him who strengthens me. Philippians 4:13.

SAY: This woman came to the temple because she loved God and trusted God. So even though her life was hard, she gave everything she had. Jesus is saying: Pay attention! Give what you can give! Love God and help people! And don't look down on people you consider less than you.

ASK: Are these things easy or difficult to do? *(Allow for responses.)*

SAY: Some people have extra and they give that away.

ASK: Have you ever given away something you really wanted to keep, but knew it might make someone else happy or make their life better? Like what? *(toys, a cookie, an extra dollar, and so forth.)*

SAY: That's great because those things helped someone or made someone feel good. But Jesus says, don't stop there. Sometimes you need to keep giving because the situation needs your all.

ASK: Are any of you on a team *(soccer, basketball)*? Have you ever shown up to practice or to a game feeling tired? Or did you ever want to stop doing your homework? ? Have you ever had to keep going even when you wanted to give up? *(Allow for responses.)*

SAY: The poor, lonely woman gave a tiny amount of money, because that's what she had to give! If she'd had more, she would have given more. She gave what she had, so she gave ALL. And that's our Lift Lesson.

ASK: Can you say it with me? I can give my all.



Bible Story
The Widow's Offering
(Mark 12:41-44)

Mountain Motto
I can do all things through
him who strengthens me.
(Philippians 4:13, NRSV)

Lift Lesson
I can give my all!



Bible Story

The Widow's Offering

(Mark 12:41-44)

Mountain Motto

I can do all things through him who strengthens me.
(Philippians 4:13, NRSV)

Lift Lesson

I can give my all!

Materials

- 👉 Bible Verse Coins Template p. 64
- 👉 Envelopes
- 👉 Marker
- 👉 CEB Kids' Bibles
- 👉 Timer (optional)
- 👉 Pennies or play money

Tip

To modify the Bible Verse Coins activity for younger Challengers/pre-readers, glue one set of coins to a large sheet of construction paper. Have the Challengers work together to match the coins to the correct words.

Active Learning Bible Verse Coins

Preparation: Print several sets of coins using the Bible Verse Coins Template. Cut out the coins and put a set of coins in each envelope. Write "Mark 12:43" on each envelope. Make sure you have at least two to three sets for all groups of Challengers coming through your station. You might choose to laminate the coin sets for repeated use.

- 👉 Divide Challengers into two or three groups (no more than 5 people each) and give each group an envelope. If your group is larger, create more teams, but be sure to make enough Bible Verse Coin sets.
- 👉 Instruct the Challengers to work together as a team to pull out the coins and put the words from the Bible Verse in order. You may choose to have teams pull out the words one at a time and guess the order, or you could have a timed competition to see which team figures out the verse the fastest or in the allotted amount of time.
- 👉 For an easier variation, allow children to look up the reference in a CEB Kids' Bible.
- 👉 For very young Challengers, focus on cooperation. Work on reading the coins together as a large group, then work together to place the words in order.

Penny Pick Up

SAY: The widow in the story gave all she had, which was only two coins.

- 👉 Have Challengers pair up.
- 👉 Give each pair ten pennies (either real or play coins).
- 👉 Instruct the Challengers to place the pennies on the floor between the two people.
- 👉 Have the Challengers take turns either picking up one penny or two pennies.
- 👉 The child who picks up the last penny wins.
- 👉 Repeat the game as many times as desired. Make the game more challenging by increasing the number of pennies or number of people picking up pennies. They may always only pick up one or two pennies.



Closing Prayer

God Be My Strength

Say this prayer each day to close out your station time. The text of the prayer could be on a poster or otherwise displayed. The prayer could be spoken by everyone, all the way through. Or it could be a call and response prayer, with a chosen leader (or leaders) speaking the “God be in my...” lines and the group responding with the other lines.

SAY: Challengers, circle up. You are heading on to your next activity. Remember to love God and love other people. Giving all is everything! Let’s pray!

God be in my hands (*put on gloves*)
Give me strength to act with kindness.

God be in my body (*step into skis or settle into a sled*)
Give me strength to move forward.

God be in my eyes (*goggles down*)
Give me strength to notice needs.

God be in my mind (*helmet snapped in place*)
Give me strength to believe you will always be with me.

God be in my heart (*crouch into jump position*)
Give me strength to share your love. (*On “your love,” spring up and forward, like a ski jumper. Or push off, as if starting a sled run.*)
Amen.



Bible Story
The Widow’s Offering
(Mark 12:41-44)

Mountain Motto
I can do all things through
him who strengthens me.
Philippians 4:13

Mountain Motto
I can do all things through
him who strengthens me.
(Philippians 4:13, NRSV)

Lift Lesson
I can give my all!



Bible Story

Jesus Prays in the Garden

(Matthew 26:36-46)

Mountain Motto

I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

(Philippians 4:13, NRSV)

Lift Lesson

I can pray!

Matthew 26:36-46

Preparation

Costumes & Materials

- 👉 **Snowball Mountain Challenge Complete Music CD** and device to play music.
- 👉 Modern attire for the Storyteller, such as a **Snowball Mountain Challenge T-Shirt** and jeans or all black.
- 👉 A variety of Bible times costumes for Bible characters. Jesus should be in a simple tan or beige tunic and sandals. The disciples should also be in simple tunics and sandals, but could be in a variety of muted or natural colors and some could be wearing head coverings.
- 👉 Blankets or sleeping bags and pillows for the disciples to use when sleeping.
- 👉 Fake plants or trees to give the feel of a garden.
- 👉 Other items that might appear in a garden like a bench or stone.
- 👉 A Bible or large prop Bible for the Storyteller to hold.

Setting the Scene

- 👉 Designate one wall to be the focal point/backdrop for the action.
- 👉 Decorate the wall to give the feel of nighttime in the Garden of Olives; include a night sky, drawings of olive trees and other plants.
- 👉 The main staging area should be open, but use fake plants, trees, and other items to give the stage a garden feel.
- 👉 Place the sleeping bags, blankets, and/or pillows off to one side of the stage where the disciples will sleep.
- 👉 Provide wall space for posting each Lift Lesson daily.



Matthew 26:36-46

Bible Background

Jesus taught his disciples and followers about God and God’s relationship with humanity. Jesus taught them about God’s concern for the widow in the temple and God’s expectation for people with power and wealth to help the people who have none. However, many people with power and wealth did not like these messages Jesus was teaching and plotted to have him arrested and killed. Jesus knew these people were plotting these things and began preparing for the final days of his ministry. After teaching in the temple and sharing the Passover meal with his disciples, Jesus went to a place called Gethsemane—literally translated as “oil press.” Gethsemane was an olive oil press located within a grove of olive trees on the Mount of Olives, just outside Jerusalem.

Jesus tells the larger group of disciples that he is going to pray. He brings Peter, James, and John along with him. These are the same three disciples who witnessed Jesus’ miraculous transformation as depicted in Matthew 17. This time, in Matthew 26, Jesus asks the three disciples to stay alert as he prays. He asks God to spare him from the suffering he knows is approaching. Then, Jesus prays he will align his desires with what God wants. When he returns to the three disciples, he finds them asleep! Jesus admonishes them, this time asking them to stay alert and pray as he returns to prayer himself. Again, Jesus prays to be spared this expected suffering, and again he seeks to align his wants with God’s. Jesus goes back to the disciples, who have fallen asleep once more, but returns without waking them so he can pray a third time. Finally, Jesus wakes his disciples, and after admonishing them once again for falling asleep, he notes the arrival of the person who will hand him over to be arrested.

Throughout Snowball Mountain Challenge VBS, Challengers have looked to stories in the Bible for strength and encouragement as they faced various obstacles. We should be careful to not reduce this moment in Jesus’ life to a mere “challenge”—he was in the midst of an aloneness that no one else has ever experienced. Jesus knew the importance of reaching out to God in moments of challenge, especially as the disciples abandoned him by falling asleep instead of praying with him like he had asked.

The account of Jesus praying in the garden in Matthew directly follows the account of Peter proudly proclaiming, “If everyone else stumbles because of you, I’ll never stumble” (Matthew 26:33). Peter immediately stumbles when he fails to pray with Jesus. The disciples have, in a way, already begun deserting Jesus, but Jesus does not desert the disciples. Jesus shows the disciples he will not abandon them by calling them to come with him: “Get up. Let’s go” (26:46). Jesus promises us that he will not abandon us, even when we may feel like we have abandoned him. We can follow Jesus’ example and reach out to God in moments of challenge—we can pray! And when we rely on Jesus’s strength, we can face whatever challenges come our way.



Bible Story
Jesus Prays in the Garden
(Matthew 26:36-46)

Mountain Motto
I can do all things through him who strengthens me.
(Philippians 4:13, NRSV)

Lift Lesson
I can pray!

Leader Tip
This Bible Background feature is a supplemental aid provided for you, the Storyteller, to give context for each session’s story before you teach on it. You may share this information with your Challengers, if desired, but it is not a recommended portion of the intended lesson.



Bible Story

Jesus Prays in the Garden

(Matthew 26:36-46)

Mountain Motto

I can do all things through him who strengthens me.
(Philippians 4:13, NRSV)

Lift Lesson

I can pray!

Tip

Ask a leader or helper from each group to participate with you before the session begins.

Matthew 26:36-46

Story Starter

Have a Bible open on your lap when Challengers arrive in your space.

SAY: Whew. I'm glad to see you, Challengers. But wow! I'm tired today! I didn't get my coffee before my first ski run on the mountain this morning, and I wiped out on a jump. I've got bruises on my... well, let's just say I need a pillow to sit comfortably.

ASK: How are you feeling? Super excited? Not everyone? (*Arrange for a leader or helper to be put on the spot.*) What's up? You look a little down. (*person says something appropriate like I'm sad/scared today or I'm having a tough time because...*)

SAY: Yeah. Some days are tougher than others. I was reading in the Challenge Companion just before you came in. There are lots of stories about people doing great things and being happy, but there are also stories of people going through hard times. There's a time in Jesus' life, for example, where he really felt weak and unhappy. He was sad so he told God about it. There's a special word for that, talking to God.

ASK: What is it called? (*prayer, praying*)

SAY: Jesus prayed and that gave him strength to go on. Which reminds me, let's say our Mountain Motto together (*say it, but say it weakly or tiredly*). Oh wow. I really could use some strength today. And Jesus needed strength, too. Let's explore the story.



Storytelling Option 1

Drama

Cast

Storyteller

Jesus

Disciples (3-5 people, not all speaking)

Costumes & Materials

- 🔊 **Snowball Mountain Challenge Complete Music CD** and device to play music.
- 🔊 Modern attire for the Storyteller, such as a **Snowball Mountain Challenge T-Shirt** and jeans or all black.
- 🔊 A variety of Bible times attire costumes for Bible characters. Jesus should be in a simple tan or beige tunic and sandals. The disciples should also be in simple tunics and sandals, but could be in a variety of muted or natural colors and some could be wearing head coverings.
- 🔊 Blankets or sleeping bags and pillows for the disciples to use when sleeping.
- 🔊 Fake plants or trees to give the feel of a garden.
- 🔊 Other items that might appear in a garden like a bench or stone.
- 🔊 A Bible or large prop Bible for the Storyteller to hold.

Jesus and disciples enter and talk quietly.

Storyteller: **Jesus often spent long days in the temple. He talked a lot, and made people think about ideas in new ways. He took time with people, and made friends with people no one wanted to be friends with. He even shared meals with people. On the Passover, he met with his disciples to share a very special dinner. They ate and Jesus shared many important ideas. Have you ever had a busy day, and then a special dinner where people talked about serious things. Exhausting, right? After dinner Jesus and the disciples headed back to their campsite on the Mount of Olives.**

Jesus: **I am really tired.**

Disciple 1: **I am really full. All that lamb and unleavened bread is sitting right here.** (*taps gut, slight belch*)

Disciple 2: **I am really confused. You got us thinking about so many things tonight, Jesus. Why do you keep talking about leaving?**

Disciple 1: **It was Judas who left, remember? I thought he would get back here in time to make a campfire for the s'mores. But I think he's run off.**

Disciple 2: **S'mores? You were just complaining about being full.**

Disciple 1: **Full from dinner. I have room for dessert.**



Bible Story

Jesus Prays in the Garden

(Matthew 26:36-46)

Mountain Motto

I can do all things through him who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:13, NRSV)

Lift Lesson

I can pray!



Bible Story

Jesus Prays in the Garden

(Matthew 26:36-46)

Mountain Motto

I can do all things through him who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:13, NRSV)

Lift Lesson

I can pray!

Jesus: *(solemnly)* I need some time to think. *(to the disciples)* Stay here. I've got to talk to my dad.

Disciple 2: Your dad? Oh right. God, you mean.

Disciple 1: Jesus, you are going to pray? *(yawns)* I am going to bed.

Jesus: Stay awake. Stay here, but don't go to sleep. *(He walks to center stage.)*

Storyteller: Jesus was exhausted. And he knew that really hard times were coming. Have you ever been so tired that all you wanted to do was sleep in a comfortable bed, but all you could think about was something sad or hard or scary that was going to happen the next day? Well, Jesus was feeling those emotions, and thinking those thoughts.

Jesus: *(quiet and serious)* Abba, Dad, please. I do not want to do this. I am so scared. My body is tired. My mind is upset. My stomach aches. My shoulders and my neck are all tight and sore because I'm so worried. Help. *(continues to pray silently)*

Disciples are on one side of the stage area. They have sunk down and are trying to keep their heads up and eyes open.

Disciple 1: *(yawns)* Well, what do you wanna talk about? What's your favorite dessert? Mine is s'mores.

Disciple 2: Um... shouldn't we pray? Or something. I mean Jesus seems so sad.

Disciple 1: Sure... good idea. You pray first. *(yawn)* I'll just close my eyes and listen to you.

Disciples start to pray, but sort of drift off. Jesus, sad and distracted, walks towards the disciples.

Jesus: Really? Not even a few minutes? C'mon. *(prods them)*

Disciple 1: *(startles awake)* I'm up! I'm up! What's for breakfast?

Disciple 2: *(groggy)* Oh wow. I was praying in my dream. Or dreaming in my prayer maybe?

Jesus: *(sad)* A little support is all I'm asking. Stay awake. Pray with me. *(returns to praying spot)*

Storyteller: Jesus prayed a long time. Praying is talking to God. When you feel really sad and don't know what to do, who can you talk to? Who do you trust with your feelings and your secrets? Jesus knew that God heard all his prayers.



Jesus: **God, Abba, please take away my pain if that is possible. I know that you hear me. I know that you love me. If I have to do hard things, I will do them. You will give me strength.** *(keeps praying quietly)*

Disciples have fallen asleep again. Snoring, muttering in their sleep.

Jesus: *(stands, looks at the disciples)* **Okay, they are out. Are they going to sleep all night? I know they are my friends, but I wish they were awake to support me.** *(prays again)* **Abba, God, I know you hear me. I feel you near me. I will do what I need to do. Amen.** *(Jesus acts like he's heard a noise; he speaks loudly to the disciples.)* **Wake up!** *(Disciples startle awake.)* **Someone's coming, and it's not going to be good.** *(looks off stage, towards the noise, then stands up)* **Judas? Is that you?** *(Jesus bows head, slightly resigned, and lights dim slightly.)*

Storyteller: **The hard times were about to start. Jesus had taken these hours in the garden to get his mind ready. He felt weak and tired. But he found his strength in God. Yes! He could do all the things through God, who gave him strength. He reached out to God in his hour of need.**



Bible Story
Jesus Prays in the Garden
(Matthew 26:36-46)

Mountain Motto
I can do all things through him who strengthens me.
(Philippians 4:13, NRSV)

Lift Lesson
I can pray!



Bible Story

Jesus Prays in the Garden

(Matthew 26:36-46)

Mountain Motto

I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

(Philippians 4:13, NRSV)

Lift Lesson

I can pray!

Storytelling Option 2 Single Storyteller

SAY: Today's story starts after dinner. When you have just eaten a special meal, how do you feel? (*happy, satisfied*) It had been a long week for Jesus and his disciples. They were exhausted. But they couldn't go to sleep now! Maybe you can help me with this story. I need you to say:

Hey guys, wake up! Say it with me.

It's kind of a sad story. When you are sad, how do you look? I see you looking sad, but don't go to sleep! Say it with me: **Hey guys, wake up!**

After dinner, Jesus and the disciples headed back to their campsite on the Mount of Olives. They were so sleepy! **Hey guys, wake up!**

But when they got to the Mount of Olives, Jesus told the disciples that he had a lot to think about (*act it out*). He told them, "Stay awake. I'm going to pray."

Hey guys, wake up!

Jesus was unhappy. He talked to God, saying, "Abba, Father, I need help! I feel sad and lonely. My body hurts."

Jesus knew that there were some very hard times coming. He was scared, but still depended on God, his father.

Jesus prayed for a while and then he went back to his disciples. They were his friends, and he counted on them to be waiting for him and praying too. Instead, they had fallen asleep. **Hey guys, wake up!**

Jesus was really disappointed. He woke them up and said, "Can't you stay awake for an hour? I need a little support. I feel really bad." The disciples felt embarrassed.

Jesus went back to praying. He said, "Abba, Father, I do not want to do the hard things. Please. But if I have to, I will." Even though nothing ahead was easy, Jesus was determined to do what he had to do.

Jesus went back to his disciples and, guess what? They were asleep again. **Hey guys, wake up!**

Jesus felt sad and probably annoyed. He said, "Are you going to just lie around all night? Bad things are about to happen!" The disciples felt worried. But they were very sleepy. Then Jesus said: **Hey guys, wake up!** People are coming to arrest me. It's started."

The disciples jumped up. They were alarmed and panicked. But Jesus was calm. He had prayed for strength to do the hard things. God was with him. Jesus was still a little afraid, but he felt comforted. Jesus knew that he could do anything through the one who gives us strength.



Matthew 26:36-46

Life Application

SAY: Jesus found comfort and hope and strength from God when he prayed. Our Mountain Motto tells us that we can get that same strength from Jesus. Let's say it together. I can do all things through him who strengthens me. Philippians 4:13.

SAY: Remember the story of Esther? She was brave. Jesus was brave, too. The hard times ahead were scary, but he was going to face them.

ASK: How did he find the strength to move forward and face hard things? He talked to God. What's that called? (*praying/prayer*)

SAY: Jesus took the time to speak to God, to tell God exactly how he was feeling, and to ask God for help. The help Jesus needed was a sense of comfort—after he had prayed, Jesus knew he was not alone. Even when his friends, his disciples, kept falling asleep instead of staying awake to support him, Jesus was not alone.

ASK: Who was with Jesus?

SAY: That's right. God was there. In one version of this story (Gospel of Luke) Jesus feels an angel of God present with him, to comfort him. That's how much strength and hope Jesus found, when he prayed! God was right there, with him, in that garden.

Jesus is God's son and Jesus was also a human being, like us. Jesus lived on earth so that stories could be written about him, so that we could learn how to make choices and live lives the way God wants us to live. Jesus is our example. From Jesus we know that God listens to us and God cares about us.

When we are confused or lonely or scared, we can talk to God. God listens. Talking to God is called praying. When I pray God hears me. I know that God is listening to me. That is a comforting idea!

ASK: How can I face hard things?

SAY: I can pray. That is our Lift Lesson today, Challengers. When I need strength, when I need someone to hear me, I can pray. Say it with me: I can pray.



Bible Story

Jesus Prays in the Garden

(Matthew 26:36-46)

Mountain Motto

I can do all things through him who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:13, NRSV)

Lift Lesson

I can pray!



Bible Story

Jesus Prays in the Garden

(Matthew 26:36-46)

Mountain Motto

I can do all things through him who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:13, NRSV)

Lift Lesson

I can pray!

Materials

- Scrap paper in a variety of colors, torn into pieces
- Construction paper or cardstock
- Glue

Active Learning

Torn Up

SAY: Have you ever heard the phrase, “They were really torn up” about something? What does that mean? (*emotional, not focused, really unhappy*) Jesus in the garden feels so much sadness and desperation. He is all torn up. When he prays that helps him feel calmer and determined, more *put together*, the opposite of torn up.

SAY: Think about a situation in your life where you feel really unhappy, all torn up. Maybe you are worried about something or angry about something or sad about something. Like Jesus, we can pray about hard things.

👉 Show Challengers the scrap paper.

SAY: Use this torn up paper and make a picture with it. While you work, you might choose to say a prayer, asking God to help you with the hard time you thought of. Let’s go from torn up to put together.

👉 After the Challengers have made their pictures, encourage them to glue the pieces down and to take them home.

Up, Down, Start, Go

SAY: Jesus told his disciples to stay awake but they kept falling asleep. Let’s see if you can follow instructions better than that.

👉 Have the Challengers find a space in the room.

👉 Tell the Challengers the following commands and demonstrate the actions.

SAY: You will hear a command. When I say UP, you stand, sit up tall, or jump. When I say DOWN, get as low as you can. When I say GO, move around the room in a creative way (like hopping, jogging, twisting, move without touching anyone else, and so forth). When I say STOP, freeze exactly where you are. Let’s play.

👉 Start slowly, then decrease time between commands. You could add a penalty. A wrong move means you have to do five jumping jacks, give the leader a high five, or something similar.

SAY: Now that you’ve got the motions down, you are going to move opposite! UP means low as you can. DOWN means to stand/sit up tall or jump up high. GO means freeze. STOP means to move around.

👉 This is a brain challenge! Start slowly, then pick up speed of commands.



Closing Prayer

God Be My Strength

Say this prayer each day to close out your station time. The text of the prayer could be on a poster or otherwise displayed. The prayer could be spoken by everyone, all the way through. Or it could be a call and response prayer, with a chosen leader (or leaders) speaking the “God be in my...” lines and the group responding with the other lines.

SAY: You have the rest of a great day ahead of you, Challengers! Remember that whatever comes, God is with you and God loves you. To find the strength you need, you can pray! Let’s do that now.

God be in my hands (*put on gloves*)
Give me strength to act with kindness.

God be in my body (*step into skis or settle into a sled*)
Give me strength to move forward.

God be in my eyes (*goggles down*)
Give me strength to notice needs.

God be in my mind (*helmet snapped in place*)
Give me strength to believe you will always be with me

God be in my heart (*crouch into jump position*)
Give me strength to share your love. (*On “your love,” spring up and forward, like a ski jumper. Or push off, as if starting a sled run.*)
Amen.



Bible Story
Jesus Prays in the Garden
(Matthew 26:36-46)

Mountain Motto
I can do all things through him who strengthens me.
(Philippians 4:13, NRSV)

Lift Lesson
I can pray!

Leader Tip
If Challengers have different mobility abilities, choose the movements in the prayer that best fit your group and that everyone can do.



Bible Story

Peter and John at the Temple

(Acts 3:1-10)

Mountain Motto

I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

(Philippians 4:13, NRSV)

Lift Lesson

I can hope!

Acts 3:1-10

Preparation

Costumes & Materials

- 👉 **Snowball Mountain Challenge Complete Music CD** and device to play music.
- 👉 Modern attire for the Storyteller, such as a **Snowball Mountain Challenge T-Shirt** and jeans or all black.
- 👉 A variety of Bible times costumes for Bible characters. Peter and John could be in simple tunics and sandals, similar to the costumes used for the disciples in Session 4. The man at the temple should have a simple tunic that could be dirtier or more disheveled. The man could be barefoot.
- 👉 A yoga mat or towel in a natural color for the man to sit on.
- 👉 A simple bowl or plate with a raised rim for the man to hold.
- 👉 Fake trees or plants.
- 👉 A Bible or large prop Bible for the Storyteller to hold.

Setting the Scene

- 👉 Designate one wall to be the focal point/backdrop for the action.
- 👉 Decorate the wall to give the feel of daytime at the temple. The background for Session 3 could be reused, with the addition of a gate, indicating that the story is taking place outside the temple. Add trees to give the feeling of outside.
- 👉 The main staging area should be open. Leave space for the celebration dance at the end.
- 👉 Provide wall space for posting each Lift Lesson daily.



Acts 3:1-10

Bible Background

Jesus was arrested and killed, but God raised him from the dead on the third day. Jesus' resurrection remains the climactic event in history for Christians around the world—but the ministry Jesus began is far from over. Before he left, he told his disciples, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you" (Acts 1:8). The Holy Spirit was God's presence with the disciples, just as Jesus had been. The Holy Spirit equipped the disciples to continue the work Jesus began with them in Galilee years earlier. The disciples and other followers of Jesus remained in Jerusalem for some time after this and continued to faithfully worship God in the temple with the other Jewish people. Early in the Book of Acts, a book in the New Testament that is full of the earliest stories of the church, we are told an account of Peter and John going to the temple around three o'clock in the afternoon to participate in the temple's evening prayer time.

As they approach one of the temple gates, they encounter a man who is being carried up to the gate. Every day, he would sit at the gate and ask people for money—people like Peter and John who were entering into the temple to pray and be among the presence of God. This man, however, could not enter the temple. It was assumed, he could not be among the presence of God because, according to custom, his inability to walk made him unclean. The account says this gate was called "Beautiful" (v. 2), but this man's reality was anything but beautiful. The man sees Peter and John and asks them for money. Peter says "Look at us!" (v. 4) and the disciples make eye contact with this man. Peter tells him he has no money, but in Jesus' name commands the man to rise up and walk. Through God's power—just as we see from Jesus throughout the Gospels that precede the Book of Acts—this man grabs Peter's hand and stands, walks, and leaps around, praising God all the while. He goes into the temple with Peter and John, finally able to enter the gates. The people in the temple recognize him from his place outside the gate and were filled with amazement at what the power of Jesus had done for this man.

The charge to Christians who experience this story is twofold. First, we should understand that we share the disciples' call to act and speak in Jesus' name in ways that restore people to wholeness, both spiritually and physically. The good news of salvation in Jesus is for all, but especially the marginalized and excluded like this man who once begged outside the temple. Though the man was once formally excluded from God's presence, the power of Jesus shows the crowd at the temple just how wide God's mercy can be. The task of sharing the wideness of God's mercy in Jesus' name continues today. Second, Christians should see themselves not only in the role of the disciples in this story but also in the role of the man who was made to walk. The hope this man expressed toward the disciples was not empty or toothless. "The man gazed at them, expecting to receive something from them" (v. 5). Hope can be a challenge, but we have learned at VBS that we can rise to meet challenges. We can hope. When we hope in Jesus, his power can do things that exceed our wildest expectations.



Bible Story
Peter and John at the Temple
(Acts 3:1-10)

Mountain Motto
I can do all things through him who strengthens me.
(Philippians 4:13, NRSV)

Lift Lesson
I can hope!

Leader Tip
This Bible Background feature is a supplemental aid provided for you, the Storyteller, to give context for each session's story before you teach on it. You may share this information with your Challengers, if desired, but it is not a recommended portion of the intended lesson.



Bible Story

Peter and John at the Temple

(Acts 3:1-10)

Mountain Motto

I can do all things through him who strengthens me.
(Philippians 4:13, NRSV)

Lift Lesson

I can hope!

Acts 3:1-10

Story Starter

SAY: Welcome back, Challengers! I hope you've had a great week at our Snowball Mountain Challenge! I hope you are feeling full of energy today. I hope you have fun facing challenges with your friend. I hope you get a warm cup of hot chocolate!

ASK: What's that word I keep using? Hope. What do you think that word means? (*wait patiently for responses*)

SAY: Hope can mean that in the middle of whatever and however things are right now, we are thinking about the good things we want to have happen for us. Hope means good things are coming, we just know it.

ASK: What is something you hope for? (*give time for responses and listen intently*)

SAY: The story today takes place after Jesus is not living on earth anymore. Jesus' friends, his disciples, were traveling around and telling people about Jesus. They were telling people how Jesus showed God's love to everyone.

Peter and John were two of Jesus' disciples. They wanted everyone they met to know that Jesus had lived on earth in order to show us how much we are loved, and how we can love other people. Think about that word *hope* as you listen to this story, about Peter and John and their visit to the temple.



Storytelling Option 1

Drama

Cast

Storyteller
Peter
John
Man at the Gate

Costumes & Materials

- 🔊 **Snowball Mountain Challenge Complete Music CD** and device to play music.
- 🔊 Modern attire for the Storyteller, such as a **Snowball Mountain Challenge T-Shirt** and jeans or all black.
- 🔊 A variety of Bible times costumes for Bible characters. Peter and John could be in simple tunics and sandals, similar to the costumes used for the disciples in Session 4. The man at the temple should have a simple tunic that could be dirtier or more disheveled. The man could be barefoot.
- 🔊 A yoga mat or towel in a natural color for the man to sit on.
- 🔊 A simple bowl or plate with a raised rim for the man to hold.
- 🔊 A Bible or large prop Bible for the Storyteller to hold.

The scene begins at the entrance to the temple, called the Beautiful Gate. A man is lying on a mat on the ground by the gate, gesturing occasionally, with hands or a bowl to indicate that he wants people to give him money.

Storyteller: **We are back in the temple in Jerusalem, the same place Jesus watched the poor woman put all her money into the collection box. Jesus spent a lot of time at this temple, teaching and preaching. The temple was an important place for the people in Jerusalem. People came there every day to pray.** *(Peter and John enter and stand by the gate, looking around, gesturing, talking to each other.)* **Among those praying people were some who had a little extra. Extra money or food or clothing. So people who didn't have much of anything came to the temple too, hoping that someone would help them.**

Man at Gate: **That's me! My friends plunk me down here every day at this time.**

Storyteller: **Your friends put you there?**

Man at Gate: **Well I couldn't get here myself now, could I? My legs aren't made for walking. My ankles are floppy and my knees don't bend and my leg bones are weak.**

Storyteller: **Oh! So your friends help you?**

Man at Gate: **You could say that. This is a prime spot. Lots of people come to the temple at 3 in the afternoon, because they've got to get their daily prayers in before they head home.**



Bible Story

Peter and John at the Temple
(Acts 3:1-10)

Mountain Motto

I can do all things through him who strengthens me.
(Philippians 4:13, NRSV)

Lift Lesson

I can hope!



Bible Story

Peter and John at the Temple

(Acts 3:1-10)

Mountain Motto

I can do all things through him who strengthens me.
(Philippians 4:13, NRSV)

Lift Lesson

I can hope!

Storyteller: **Do people stop to help?**

Man at Gate: **Sure, now and then. They give me a sandwich or something. Maybe a little cash. I know that God loves me but I don't have an easy life, and people sometimes feel God nudging them to help me.**

Storyteller: **Is that all you do every day?**

Man at Gate: **No! No, I get to sit out here and look at the scenery. All the people selling stuff. The donkeys and camels. Man, I love a camel all loaded up with fancy gear! They don't smell so great, but they are so cool to watch. God's world is amazing!**

Storyteller: **I don't really understand how you can be okay with your situation.**

Man at Gate: **It's all about attitude, man. Even though I can't walk, which means I can't work or move around by myself, I know God loves me. That gives me hope! My life means something. I don't know what to expect, but God is with me and God gives me strength.**

Peter and John enter the stage area.

Storyteller: (to audience) **See those two guys? That's Peter and John. They are two of Jesus' disciples. Peter and John and the other disciples have been telling everyone about Jesus. They spend a lot of time praying too, because that was what Jesus told them to do. That's why they've come to the temple—it's prayer hour!**

Peter: **Let's head in for prayers.**

John: **I'm going to pray the prayer that Jesus taught us.**

Peter: **Oh yeah! The "Our Father who art in heaven" prayer?**

John: **That's the one. I love how that prayer sums up all the important bits we need to remember. God is in heaven, God has a plan for our earth and we are a part of it, God wants us to have food...**

Peter: **God wants us to forgive and God forgives us. I'm really grateful for those words in the prayer! Whenever I pray the Lord's Prayer, I remember what I'm supposed to do. It gives me so much energy, and that builds my hope that things will be okay.**

John: **Hey. Look at that guy.** (Both look at Man at Gate.)

Man at Gate: **Hey. Look at those guys.** (Looks at Peter and John.)

Peter, John, Man at Gate: (at the same time) **Hey. Are you watching me?**

Man at Gate: (excited, to audience) **They are going to give me something! Wahoo!** (He waves his begging bowl, extends his hand.)



Peter: **You are looking for cash. We have no money. But I'll give you what I have.**

Man at Gate: **Okay. Bring it!**

Peter: (grabs Man at Gate's hand) **In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth...get up and walk!**

Man at Gate stands and immediately feels strong; begins jumping, bouncing, high stepping, flossing, break dancing... whatever dance moves are energetic and excited.

John: **Whoa! In Jesus' name! You just performed a miracle, mate.**

Peter: (a little stunned) **Wow!**

Man: **Wahooo!** (keeps dancing)

Peter and John dance with him. They grab the Storyteller, and she/he dances too!

Peter: (a little out of breath) **This happened because Jesus is really alive! This man had faith and hope in God! This man trusted God! This man could not walk and now he can walk! Let's all rejoice! God is showing us great things, including giving this man strong, healthy legs.**

Man at Gate: (so excited) **Thank you God! Thank you! I hoped for good things, but this is amazing! Come on everyone, dance with me!**

Storyteller: **And we all had a dance party because God loves us! We can do all things through the one who gives us strength!**



Bible Story
Peter and John at the Temple
(Acts 3:1-10)

Mountain Motto
I can do all things through him who strengthens me.
(Philippians 4:13, NRSV)

Lift Lesson
I can hope!



Bible Story

Peter and John at the Temple

(Acts 3:1-10)

Mountain Motto

I can do all things through him who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:13, NRSV)

Lift Lesson

I can hope!

Leader Tip

Practice reading the story and doing the motions at the same time before sharing the Bible story with your Challengers.

Storytelling Option 2 Single Storyteller

Tell the group that this is a “Got to move it, move it” story time. Listen for the action words in the story, and act those out. You could encourage them to stand and move or stay seated and move, depending on your space and the dynamics of the group.

SAY: We are heading to pray at the temple. It’s an uphill climb! (*act out climbing*) Here is the temple gate. Look how beautiful it is! (*ooh aah*) Every day crowds of people arrive for the 3 o’clock prayer time (*pray*)

As we walk through the gate we stop and look around. There on the ground by the gate is a man lying on a mat. (*Point to the man or act out lying down.*) His legs don’t work, so he can’t walk or run or jump or do deep knee bends or kick. (*make kicking motion*) Some friends bring him to this place every day at this time. The man hopes that someone will help him. He reaches out (*reach and stretch out arms*) and asks for food and money. Some people give, some people hurry past.

Look! (*cup hands to eyes as though looking*) There are two men coming to the temple. Do you recognize them? They were with Jesus. That’s Peter and that’s John. They are coming to pray at the temple. Maybe they are coming to preach too!

The man lying on the ground sees Peter and John. He thinks they might give him some money. He looks very hopeful! (*look hopeful*)

Peter and John see the man on the ground. They stop and watch him. They know that God created this man in God’s image. That means the man is perfect and beautiful. But they know that the man’s life is extra hard because of his legs.

The man says, “Please give me some money.” (*make begging hands*)

Peter says, “We do not have any money to give.”

The man turns away to look for someone else to ask.

Peter says, “What I have, I will give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, get up and walk!” Peter grabs the man’s hand. (*extend hands*) Peter gently pulls the man to his feet!

Immediately the man’s ankles get strong. The bones and muscles in his legs feel strong and healthy! His knees bend and flex.

The man takes a step. Then another step! The man balances on one foot. Then the other foot. The man tries a tiny jump. Then a bigger jump! Then he leaps in the air! (*stand up and jump*) The man dances and whirls! He laughs out loud!



Peter and John laugh with him, and they all begin to dance around together.

The man shouts, “Praise to God! Thank you God! I asked for money and what I got was this incredible gift! My legs work! It is the answer to all my prayers and hopes!”

We have all stopped walking to watch. Our mouths hang open! We are so surprised and amazed! (*make surprised faces*) We have seen this man, just lying on the ground with legs that didn’t work properly, and now he is dancing and jumping for joy! What has happened?

Peter says to all of us, “What you see is a gift from God. This man can now walk because of the power that Jesus told you about. Jesus died, but now he is alive in heaven.

“This man has been healed because that is a good thing for him, and it is also a hopeful sign for everyone here! We can all dance and leap and praise God because of the blessing we see today!”

So let’s do that! Dance and leap! (*Encourage challengers to dance and jump around as they are able.*) Alleluia!



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(Acts 3:1-10)

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Lift Lesson
I can hope!



Bible Story

Peter and John at the Temple

(Acts 3:1-10)

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Lift Lesson

I can hope!

Acts 3:1-10

Life Application

SAY: What an amazing story! When the man could walk and jump and dance, everyone knew they had seen a miracle. A miracle is a surprising and happy event that can't be explained except by saying, "God made that happen!" The man had never been able to walk. He was born that way. He hoped for something from the people passing by.

ASK: What did he hope for? (*Allow time for responses.*) Right: money, food, shelter, other support from kind people.

SAY: The man did not expect that he would ever be able to walk. He was living the best life he could live. He had friends who helped him, and he counted on the kindness of people passing by to provide him with food and other necessities.

SAY: At that time in history, people thought that disability was caused by bad choices. They thought that if a child was born with a disability, it was because the parents had done something wrong. Some people in the crowd that day gave the man money, but some people certainly believed that the man was bad news! That man would have experienced bullying and mean treatment all his life.

SAY: That was not what God wanted! The man was made in God's image, just like each person is. Jesus taught that we need to love everyone, include everyone, and look for ways to be kind to everyone. Peter used the power of God to give the man working legs. The man was so excited that he danced and leapt and praised God in his joy! His life was transformed with this amazing, unexpected miracle, and he continued to have hope.

ASK: What do you think of the people you see who ask for food today? Do you feel the need to help?

SAY: Let's say the Mountain Motto together: I can do all things through him who strengthens me. Philippians 4:13.

SAY: And one way we get that strength is the hope we have in God's love. God is with us and God can use us for good in the world. That's our Lift Lesson: I can hope! Let's say that together. As you say it, maybe you want to leap in the air, or wave your arms, or any other expression of praising God, just like the man did in the story. One, two, three: I can hope! (*praise motions*)



Active Learning

Good/Better/Best

Preparation: Using the plastic hula-hoops, identify and label three sections in your space—Good, Better, and Best. Write the group headings on paper or posterboard and place one in or near each hoop.

SAY: Having hope means that we believe God gives us what is best for us.

ASK: But what is best?

SAY: Sometimes it's hard to tell, especially when we face challenges. Sometimes we have different opinions.

👉 With the whole group (or in small groups), work together to compare three things and decide which one is good, which one is better, and which one is best. For example, if the set is: Cookie, Cake, Ice Cream. Together decide (debate) which of the three is good, which is better, which is best. When you say the three words, the Challengers will go and stand in the hoop that represents what they think.

👉 Read the words aloud and allow challengers to answer the question by moving to the hula-hoop of their choice. Use the following examples or come up with your own:

Money, Food, Health
Soccer, Basketball, Football
Soda, Juice, Water
Sleeping, Watching a show, Playing outside
Monday, Friday, Sunday
Hamster, Cat, Dog

Friends Carry Relay

Preparation: Designate a start and finish line in your area. Make sure the area is safe and free of any dangerous obstacles. If doing an obstacle course, have the course set up and ready to go.

👉 Divide Challengers into groups of five. Have the groups line up behind the starting line.

SAY: You've got to get your friend to the temple! It's prayer hour and she/he can't get there without your help.

👉 Instruct Challengers that four people will carry a fifth person in a sturdy blanket or hammock to the finish line.

👉 You can have the groups race against each other or just time each group or let them retry the activity.

👉 For younger children, consider making groups of four and carrying a stuffed animal.



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(Acts 3:1-10)

Mountain Motto
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(Philippians 4:13, NRSV)

Lift Lesson
I can hope!

Materials
👉 Plastic hula-hoops
👉 Paper or posterboard
👉 Marker
👉 Sturdy blankets or hammocks
👉 Stuffed animals (optional)
👉 Items to make an obstacle course (optional)

Caution/Leader Tip
The person being carried needs to feel and be safe. Keep the blanket low to the ground without banging into anything that might hurt.



Bible Story

Peter and John at the Temple

(Acts 3:1-10)

Mountain Motto

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(Philippians 4:13, NRSV)

Lift Lesson

I can hope!

Leader Tip

If Challengers have different mobility abilities, choose the movements in the prayer that best fit your group and that everyone can do.

Closing Prayer

God Be My Strength

Say this prayer each day to close out your station time. The text of the prayer could be on a poster or otherwise displayed. The prayer could be spoken by everyone, all the way through. Or it could be a call and response prayer, with a chosen leader (or leaders) speaking the “God be in my...” lines and the group responding with the other lines.

SAY: Challengers, it’s been a great week! As you gear up to head back out to Snowball Mountain, remember that God loves you and that God is always with you. Our Mountain Motto tells us, I can do all things through him who strengthens me. That idea is full of hope! Good things are coming for you, and for all of us. Let’s remember to hope, to pray, to give everything, to be brave, and to share our gifts. Let’s say our prayer together.

God be in my hands (*put on gloves*)
Give me strength to act with kindness.

God be in my body (*step into skis or settle into a sled*)
Give me strength to move forward.

God be in my eyes (*goggles down*)
Give me strength to notice needs.

God be in my mind (*helmet snapped in place*)
Give me strength to believe you will always be with me.

God be in my heart (*crouch into jump position*)
Give me strength to share your love. (*On “your love,” spring up and forward, like a ski jumper. Or push off, as if starting a sled run.*)
Amen.



I can be brave.



אני יכול להיות אמיץ

**Jesus
said,**

“I

assure

you

that

this

poor

widow

has

put

in

more

than

everyone.”

**Mark
12:43**



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