



# Adult Leader's Guide



## 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.





## 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!

## Icebreaker

### Sharing Our Gifts

**SAY:** Challengers, we'll be together a lot as we meet the challenges that Snowball Mountain has to offer, so let's make sure we get to know one another! Every Reflection Time, we'll start with a short get-to-know-you activity or Icebreaker.

In the story of Joseph interpreting dreams, we learn about Joseph interpreting dreams many times along his life journey. Most times Joseph shared his gift of interpreting dreams, he helped those he shared with understand their dreams and in some cases made their lives better. For this first session's Icebreaker, let's tell everyone:

1. your name;
2. if you can think of it, a gift that you have to share;
3. a story of a time you shared that gift or how you think you might be able to share your gift with others.

## Discussion

- 👤 Before Joseph interpreted the dreams of the cupbearer/wine steward and the baker, we learn about two dreams Joseph had and shared. What were those dreams and what happened?
- 👤 When Joseph heard the dreams of the cupbearer/wine steward and the baker, he had good news to share with the cupbearer and not-so-good news to share with the baker. How do you think Joseph felt when he had to share his understanding of the baker's dream?

In the story, "Joseph Interprets Dreams," we learn that Joseph knew his gift of interpreting dreams came from God.

- 👤 What do you think the people whose dreams Joseph interpreted thought about Joseph and his gift?
- 👤 What did Pharaoh do after learning Joseph's interpretation of his dreams?

In our VBS song "I've Got a Gift," we sing *"I've got a gift my God has given, and I'll share it with the world."* How can we remember to share the gifts God has given us with the world?

(Optional: play/read the words to the song "I've Got a Gift")

Listening to and singing the song "I've Got a Gift" can help us understand both the challenge and the joy of sharing our gifts. How does thinking about sharing your gifts make you feel?



## Self-Learning

### Younger Challengers

First and second graders complete the activities on pages 2–4 of the **Younger Elementary Student Book** and/or appropriate pages from this session of the **All Ages Reproducible Fun Pages**.

As Challengers are completing the self-learning activities, discuss the following questions:

👤 **According to the story, “Joseph Interprets Dreams,” whose dreams did Joseph interpret while in jail?** (*Pharaoh’s cupbearer or wine steward and the baker*)

👤 **Who’s dream meant good news?** (*the cupbearer/wine steward*)

👤 **Who’s dream meant not-so-good news?** (*the baker*)

The cupbearer/wine steward got out of jail and went back to work for Pharaoh. Two years later, when Pharaoh had two dreams he did not understand, the cupbearer/wine steward remembered Joseph and his gift. He told Pharaoh that Joseph could interpret his dreams. Pharaoh was a powerful person. So sharing his gift could have been dangerous for Joseph. But with God’s strength, Joseph went before Pharaoh and interpreted the dreams about the seven cows and seven ears of grain and their meanings of seven years of plenty and seven years of famine. Because Joseph shared his gift, Egypt was able to prepare for the famine and help Egyptians and people from other countries survive the famine.

Speaking of Joseph depending on God’s strength, who can say our Mountain Motto/**Memory Verse with me?** (*I can do all things through him who strengthens me. Philippians 4:13, NRSV*)

When we say that Mountain Motto, it reminds us that God provides us with the strength to do what God calls us to. What do you need God to provide strength for you to do?

### Older Challengers

Third through sixth graders complete the activities on pages 2–4 of the **Older Elementary Student Book** and/or appropriate pages from this session of the **All Ages Reproducible Fun Pages**.

As Challengers are completing the self-learning activities, discuss the following questions:

👤 **According to the story, “Joseph Interprets Dreams,” whose dreams did Joseph interpret while in jail?** (*Pharaoh’s cupbearer/wine steward and the baker*)

👤 **Who knows what the dreams of these two were or what they meant?** (*Both men had dreams that meant they would meet with Pharaoh in three days. The cupbearer/wine steward would get his job back; the baker would perish.*)

The cupbearer/wine steward got out of jail and went back to work for Pharaoh. Two years later, when Pharaoh had two dreams he did not understand, the cupbearer/wine steward remembered Joseph and his gift. He told Pharaoh that Joseph could interpret his dreams. Pharaoh was a powerful person. So sharing his gift could have been dangerous for Joseph. But with God’s strength, Joseph went before Pharaoh and interpreted the dreams about the seven cows and seven ears of grain and their meanings of seven years of plenty and seven years of famine. Because Joseph shared his gift, Egypt was able to prepare for the famine and help Egyptians and people from other countries survive the famine.

Speaking of Joseph depending on God’s strength, who can say our Mountain Motto/**Memory Verse with me?** (*I can do all things through him who strengthens me. Philippians 4:13, NRSV*)

When we say that Mountain Motto, it reminds us that God provides us with the strength to do what God calls us to. What do you need God to provide strength for you to do?





## Reflection

### Strength in God

SAY: Challengers, when we read or listen to the story from the Book of Genesis about Joseph interpreting dreams, we might want to take some time and imagine what it must have been like for Joseph to have such a gift and know that it comes from God.

- 👉 When you think about this story like this, does it seem like sharing gifts that come from God with others was easy or not so easy back then?
- 👉 How does knowing this story encourage us to know God provides us with gifts to share and the strength and opportunities to share them?

SAY: Our Lift Lesson for this session is "I can share my gifts!" As we think about the story, "Joseph Interprets Dreams," we can see that God took care of Joseph, even when it seemed times were not so good. Then, as Joseph used his God-given gift of interpreting dreams to help others, God blessed and cared for many people through the gifts Joseph shared.

- 👉 What are some ways God has given you strength to share your gift(s)?
- 👉 What are some ways God can bless and care for others through the gifts God has given us?

Say: I hope we will all remember that God has given each of us special gifts and that we are invited to share those gifts with others with the strength God provides.

## Prayer and Worship

Say: We will close each of our Reflection Times with worship and prayer. Sometimes this will be a written prayer with words. Other times, we will try a spiritual practice.

In this session, we have encountered the story of Joseph interpreting dreams in many different ways. For our prayer and worship time during this session, we are going to listen to Pharaoh's dream one more time, but with our eyes closed and experiencing it like it is our own dream. I'm going to read through the dream a few times. As you are listening, see if you can picture the dream and try to experience it with your five senses; what do you see, what do you hear, what do you smell, what do you taste, and what do you feel? Let's try it.

"So Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'In my dream I was standing on the bank of the Nile. In front of me, seven fattened, stout cows climbed up out of the Nile and grazed on the reeds. Just then, seven other cows, weak and frail and thin, climbed up after them. I've never seen such awful cows in all the land of Egypt. Then the thin, frail cows devoured the first seven, fattened cows. But after they swallowed them whole, no one would have known it. They looked just as bad as they had before. Then I woke up. I went to sleep again and saw in my dream seven full and healthy ears of grain growing on one stalk. Just then, seven hard and thin ears of grain, scorched by the east wind, sprouted after them, and the thin ears swallowed up the healthy ears. I told the religious experts, but they couldn't explain it to me.'" (Genesis 41:17-24)

- 👉 Slowly read the passage above 2-3 times. When you've read the passage through for the last time, pause for a few minutes of silence, then say, "Amen."
- 👉 Invite your student to share what they saw, heard, smelled, tasted, or felt. If time permits, follow up with, "If this were your dream, what would you think it was about?"

Close by saying: **Thank you, God, for gifts to share and strength you give to share them. Amen.**

**Snowball Mountain Challenge: Find Your Strength in God**



## 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.



## Session 1: Joseph Interprets Dreams

### Let's Go

Each participant will create their own Challenger Journal to document their journey throughout "Snowball Mountain Challenge!" This can include reflections, prayers, drawings, and memorable moments from each session. As the group works to start the journals, encourage the Challengers to introduce themselves and share their work.

Give every Challenger a journal and ask them to write about what the word "challenge" means to them. They can decorate their journals with markers, stickers, and so forth as time allows. Have the Challengers introduce themselves and share their designs.

### Bible Story Genesis 40:1-41:45

#### Overview

In this Old Testament story, we see only some of the challenges Joseph faces throughout his life. Initially, God's gift of dream interpretation reveals Joseph's future importance. Joseph's story starts in Genesis 37 where we learn two things: Joseph is favored by God—and his father—and this favor often leads to big challenges for Joseph when others get jealous. Genesis 40 begins with Joseph in prison after being framed. In jail, he's serves an attendant for two of Pharaoh's imprisoned high-ranking servants. The servants have dreams that Joseph interprets and even though one promises to help Joseph, he is forgotten in prison for another two years. Pharaoh has strange dreams. Finally, Joseph is remembered, summoned, and ultimately given favor by Pharaoh. Joseph's original dream is slowly being fulfilled as he continues to use his gifts.

#### Main Idea

Joseph never stopped using his gifts, even when the challenges he faced were unimaginable. When the servants and Pharaoh asked Joseph for help, he told them the interpretations were from God. He never allowed his challenges to become bigger than his faith in God. Joseph knew God was always there to give him strength, even in the middle of his biggest challenge.

#### Experience the Story

Choose among the following ways to experience the Bible Story.

- 📖 Read the story Genesis 40:1-41:45 from a CEB Bible.
- 📺 Watch the **Snowball Mountain Challenge Bible Adventure DVD**.
- 🎧 Listen to the **Snowball Mountain Challenge Bible Storyteller Leader Guide**. Story Drama (pp. 11-13) or Single Storyteller (pp. 14-15).

#### Group Discussion

- 🗣️ We all have gifts from God, what are some gifts or talents you have? What ways can you share these gifts?
- 🗣️ If Challengers are unsure of their gifts and how to use them, share what we see in each other. We often see more in others than in ourselves.
- 🗣️ We only see the parts of the story where Joseph overcomes his challenges with his faith in God; we don't see him when he's feeling low and needing help. What are some ways we can overcome our own challenges, with God's help and the help of one another?



#### Bible Story

##### Joseph Interprets Dreams

Genesis 40:1–41:45

#### Mountain Motto

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Philippians 4:13 (NRSV)

#### Lift Lesson

I can share my gifts!

#### Supplies

- 📄 Paper or notebooks
- 🖍️ Markers
- 📄 Stickers
- 🎨 Decorative materials (optional)

You can find the full Bible Background in the **Snowball Mountain Challenge Bible Storyteller Leader Guide** on p. 9 or download them at

[CokesburyVBS.com](http://CokesburyVBS.com) in the Free Resources tab.

Access a printable Challenge Journal in the Free Resources on [CokesburyVBS.com](http://CokesburyVBS.com).



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## 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.





## Reflection

**SAY:** Joseph's story is dramatic and exciting. It can feel like we could never live up to stories like these. But God gives us exactly what we need, even when it doesn't look like it. I'm sure it looked like Joseph had lost God's favor as he faced challenge after challenge. What use is a dreamer in jail? But when we have faith in God's strength to see us through, we can learn how to use our gifts to help ourselves and others along the way. Take time to pray silently and write in your journal about what gifts you have to share and what we learned from Joseph's story.

## Additional Activities

- 👉 **Snowball Mountain Challenge Reflection Leader Guide** pp. 6-8
- 👉 "Freezing Dreams Tag" **Snowball Mountain Challenge Recreation Guide** p. 7
- 👉 "Straw Lift" **Snowball Mountain Challenge Science Guide** p. 6
- 👉 "Chalet" **Snowball Mountain Challenge Science Guide** p. 8
- 👉 "Winter Sky Luminary" **Preschool/Kindergarten Leader Guide** p. 18: modify with glass jars and different shapes to create a winter scene.

## Prayer

Take time to share prayer requests and write requests in the Challenge Journals. Close with the following prayer.

Dear God, thank you for always being with us no matter what challenges we face. Thank you for giving us gifts so we can live our lives to reflect your goodness here on Earth. Help us to see our gifts clearly. Help us to share our gifts with others so they can see you clearly. And when the challenges look too hard, help us to see your strength clearly so we know you are always reaching out to help us every step of the way. Amen.



## 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

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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.





## 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:

Slips of paper or card deck with “Would you rather?” questions like:

- 📄 Ride the ski lift or walk up the hill
- 📄 Bobsled or snow tube
- 📄 Play in the rain or the snow
- 📄 Ski or snowshoe
- 📄 Drink hot cocoa or hot cider
- 📄 Wear a beanie/toboggan hat or ski mask
- 📄 Figure skate or speed skate
- 📄 Wear gloves or mittens
- 📄 Feed a fish to a seal or see a polar bear from a safe distance
- 📄 Take an ice-sculpting class or build a snow person

## Icebreaker

### Brave Choices

SAY: Challengers, in this session, we’ve learned from the story of Esther showing courage that with God, we can be brave, even when facing a situation that may seem scary to us.

Like with Esther, sometimes showing courage comes down to a choice. In Esther’s case, the choice was to keep living and act as if nothing is wrong or speak up and take the chance to protect her people and possibly herself. To help us think about making choices, let’s play a wintry game of “Would you rather”!

Use the list of “Would you rather” questions or questions of your own to make a card deck or slips of paper. Invite each Challenger to draw a card or slip of paper and respond.

## Discussion

- 📖 Mordecai, Esther’s cousin, was part of King Ahasuerus’ royal guard. When Haman came into power as the king’s second-in-command, he expected Mordecai and everyone else to bow to him. Why do you think Mordecai would not bow to Haman? How do you think Mordecai felt when he was asked to bow?
- 📖 When Mordecai learned of Haman’s decree to harm the Jewish people, he got word to Esther, asking her to seek King Ahasuerus’ help for their people. Why do you think Esther was afraid to do this?
- 📖 In the story, “Esther Shows Courage,” Mordecai’s words about the possibility she was made queen for a “moment like this” inspired her to choose seeking King Ahasuerus’ help for her people. When she made this choice, she sent word to Mordecai to gather the Jews in Susa and tell them to give up eating to help her be brave. Giving up eating in this situation is sometimes called fasting, a spiritual practice that might be seen as a form of prayer. Why do you think Esther made this request of Mordecai and their people?

In our VBS song “C-O-U-R-A-G-E,” we sing “*You make me brave! I know you’ll make a way when it seems there’s no way! You make me brave!*”  
*Who is the “You” who makes us brave?*

(Optional: play/read the words to the song “C-O-U-R-A-G-E”)

Listening to and singing the song “C-O-U-R-A-G-E” can help us understand that we don’t have to face our challenges alone and that God can give us strength to be brave and do what is needed even when we are afraid. If you were facing something like Esther, who might you ask for help? Who are some people you would ask to pray with you and for you?

**Snowball Mountain Challenge: Find Your Strength in God**



## Self-Learning

### Younger Travelers

First and second graders complete the activities on pages 5–7 of the **Younger Elementary Student Book** and/or appropriate pages from this session of the **All Ages Reproducible Fun Pages**.

As Travelers are completing the self-learning activities, discuss the following questions:

- 1 According to the story, “**Esther Shows Courage**,” who sent word to Esther about Haman’s decree? (*Mordecai, her cousin*)
- 2 Who did Esther invite to join in the dinner with the king? (*Haman, the king’s second-in-command*)
- 3 How many dinners did Esther have with King Ahasuerus before telling him that Haman’s decree was putting her and her people in danger? (*Two*)

With the support of the Jewish people in Susa, the encouragement of Mordecai, and the strength God gave her, Esther found the courage to ask King Ahasuerus to dine with her two times and the courage to speak up about Haman’s plans to harm her people through his decree. Through God’s strength, Esther made a big difference for herself, Mordecai, and all of their people living in Susa.

Speaking of God’s strength, who can say our **Mountain Motto/Memory Verse** with me? (*I can do all things through him who strengthens me. Philippians 4:13, NRSV*)

When we say that **Mountain Motto**, it reminds us that God provides us with the strength to meet challenges we may be afraid to face. Do you have challenges that you are afraid to face? How might you ask God to help you with them?

### Older Travelers

Third through sixth graders complete the activities on pages 5–7 of the **Older Elementary Student Book** and/or appropriate pages from this session of the **All Ages Reproducible Fun Pages**.

As Travelers are completing the self-learning activities, discuss the following questions:

- 1 According to the story, “**Esther Shows Courage**,” why did Mordecai reach out to Queen Esther? (*Because a decree Haman made on behalf of the king meant harm and danger for their people, the Jews of Susa*)
- 2 What did Mordecai ask Esther to do? (*Seek help from King Ahasuerus*)
- 3 How many dinners did Esther have with King Ahasuerus before telling him that Haman’s decree was putting her and her people in danger? (*Two*)

With the support of the Jewish people in Susa, the encouragement of Mordecai, and the strength God gave her, Esther found the courage to ask King Ahasuerus to dine with her two times and the courage to speak up about Haman’s plans to harm her people through his decree. Through God’s strength, Esther made a big difference for herself, Mordecai, and all of their people living in Susa.

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## Reflection

### Strength in God

**SAY:** Challengers, when we read or listen to the story from the Book of Esther about Queen Esther showing courage, we might want to take some time and imagine what it must have been like for Esther to have to face the challenge she did, the way she did, even including Haman in the dinners.

- 👉 When you think about this story like this, does it seem like being brave in the face of such danger was easy or not so easy back then?
- 👉 How does knowing this story encourage us to be brave in scary times and to face the challenges that might seem bigger than we can handle? Does this story give you any ideas of what you could do when you face a challenge that seems frightening?

**SAY:** Our Lift Lesson for this session is “I can be brave!” As we think about the story, “Esther Shows Courage,” we can see that God took care of Esther and her people, even when it seemed times were not so good. Then, as Esther bravely faced her challenges, God saved and protected her people because she spoke up.

- 👉 What are some ways God has given you strength to be brave or show courage?
- 👉 What are some ways God can help and protect others through the strength God has given us to be brave?

**Say:** I hope we will all remember that God and God's people will be with us when we are afraid to face challenges in life and help us move forward bravely.

## Prayer and Worship

**Say:** Sometimes being brave is not easy. Sometimes we feel afraid and alone. We are going to do a prayer exercise that will help us be brave by using our imaginations to remember we are not alone. Please close your eyes and try to imagine:

- 👉 You are in a place that helps you feel safe, loved, and cared for (maybe it's your room at home, in the worship area at church, somewhere in nature, or some other place).
- 👉 You are with a person or people who help you feel safe, loved, and cared for. Picture this person or these people standing or sitting with you. Notice the looks on their faces.
- 👉 You hear sounds that relax you and help you feel safe, loved, and cared for. Maybe you hear music, maybe you hear the sound of water running, maybe it's just silence.
- 👉 You feel feelings that you are safe, loved, and cared for.

Now remember that the God who helped Queen Esther is the God who created you. Focus on the place, people, sounds, and feelings that help you feel safe, loved, and cared for as we pray:

God who created and loves us all, thank you for the gift of your strength that helps us be brave to face our challenges and to know we are always safe inside your love.

Amen.

**Snowball Mountain Challenge: Find Your Strength in God**



**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!

**Snowball Mountain Challenge: Find Your Strength in God**



## Session 2: Esther Shows Courage

### Let's Go

As Challengers join the group, encourage them to work in their journals. Ask them to think about what the word "brave" means to them and write down a way they were brave or when they saw someone be brave. Allow them to draw and decorate their journals as time permits.

### Bible Story Esther 3:7-8:8

#### Overview

You know someone must have done something incredible when a book of the Bible is named after them. Esther went through a lot of preparations to become queen, but that didn't mean she helped rule. King Ahasuerus was the sole power in the Persian Empire. When the plot by his wicked advisor Haman to annihilate all the Jews was uncovered, Esther's cousin Mordecai begged her to help their people. Esther knew she could not do it alone. She asked her people to pray and fast with her. She knew being supported by the faith of the Jews would help her to remember God's strength. Mordecai told her that God had placed her in the palace for "such a time as this." With the strength of God, and the faith of her family and her people supporting her, Esther was incredibly bold and brave. She risked her life to speak to the king. She had a plan and used kindness and truth to gain favor and save the Jews from destruction.

#### Main Idea

Esther did not have power or influence, but she did have her faith in God and people willing to support her. It was a huge risk for her to approach King Ahasuerus without being summoned. She could have lost her life, but in the face of injustice and oppression, she decided to be brave. Esther leaned on God and others for strength. Being brave doesn't mean doing something alone, it's knowing you can do something important when you trust God to give you strength.

#### Experience the Story

Choose among the following ways to experience the Bible Story.

📖 Read selections from the Book of Esther from a CEB Bible. Suggested: Esther 3:7-12; 4:6-17; 7:1-7; 8:1-8

📺 Watch the **Snowball Mountain Challenge Bible Adventure DVD**

🎧 Listen to the **Snowball Mountain Challenge Bible Storyteller Leader Guide** Story Drama (pp. 22-25) or Single Storyteller (pp. 26-27).

#### Group Discussion

🗣️ Being brave can look really different depending on the situation. Share a time you were brave or saw someone do something brave. It can be the same as what you wrote in your journal or something else.

🗣️ How does knowing God gives you strength make you feel? How does it feel knowing you have the support of others?



#### 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!

#### Supplies

- 📖 Challenge Journals
- 🖋️ Pens
- 🖍️ Crayons

You can find the full Bible Background in the **Snowball Mountain Challenge Bible Storyteller Leader Guide** on p. 20 or download them at [CokesburyVBS.com](http://CokesburyVBS.com) in the Free Resources tab.



### 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 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.*





## Reflection

**SAY:** Esther's story is another epic moment in history that might make you feel like you could never do anything as big or important. But Esther didn't do it alone. When she was faced with a challenge, the first thing she did was ask for help. Her community of faith stood behind her as she connected with God for strength and guidance. She knew she needed more strength than she had alone and did not hesitate to seek it out. God's strength is always one prayer away. And imagine what you can do if you have a friend or two helping you. Take time to pray silently and write in your journal about how you could be brave and what we learned from Esther's story.

## Additional Activities

- 📖 **Snowball Mountain Challenge Reflection Leader Guide** pp. 10-12
- 📖 "Bible Verse Snowball Fling" **Snowball Mountain Challenge Recreation Guide** p. 10
- 📖 "Instant Freeze" and "Blubber Glove" **Snowball Mountain Challenge Science Guide** pp. 10-13
- 📖 "Twirl Toy" **Snowball Mountain Challenge Craft Guide** pp. 15-16

## Prayer

Take time to share prayer requests and write requests in the Challenge Journals. Close with the following prayer.

God, thank you for reminding us that being brave doesn't mean doing everything ourselves. As we learn from Esther, help us to remember that she asked for help before facing the challenge ahead of her. Give us your strength so we can be brave in the face of challenges. Give us your strength so we can be brave as we help ourselves and others. And give us your strength so we can ask for support when we need it. Thank you for everyone here and the prayers we hold in our hearts. Thank you for your strength to be brave. Amen.



## 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

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.





## 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

- Print-out or screen images of Ebbinghaus Illusion or Titchener Circles (find in Free Resources at CokesburyVBS.com or in an online image search)
- Small ruler or tape measure (optional)

## Icebreaker

### Size Seeing

SAY: Challengers, in this session, we've learned from the story of the Widow's Offering that when we give our all, we don't need to compare our offerings to those of others, because God sees them as big and important—supersized, you might say.

Show Challengers examples of the Ebbinghaus Illusion/Titchener Circles and ask them to tell you which middle circle is larger. In truth, both circles are the same size. But, the surroundings of each circle make one appear larger and one appear smaller.

SAY: One of these middle circles may look larger than the other at first glance, but if we look at it a little closer, with a different perspective, maybe with a ruler in hand, we can see that they are really the same size. God also has a different perspective when looking at us as we give of ourselves and our resources.

## Discussion

- Jesus and the disciples saw many people giving significant amounts of money compared to the two small coins the widow gave, but Jesus noticed how big an offering this was for the widow to make from her limited resources; it was all she had. What do you think the widow had on her mind when she made this offering? How do you think she felt?
- Do you think any of the other people in the temple, making offerings, noticed the widow's offering? Can you guess what they might have thought?
- I wonder what the disciples thought when they heard Jesus say, "I assure you that this poor widow has put in more than everyone who's been putting money in the treasury." What would you think if you heard Jesus say this about someone who gave what looked like so little?

In our VBS song "Supersized" we sing *"He looks at the heart and he sees what's deep inside. In God's eyes what we give is supersized!"* What do you think this means?

(Optional: play/read the words to the song "Supersized")

Listening to and singing the song "Supersized" can help us understand that our gifts of time, talents, and money, no matter how small, can be quite large in God's hands and eyes.



## Self-Learning

### Younger Challengers

First and second graders complete the activities on pages 8–10 of the **Younger Elementary Student Book** and/or appropriate pages from this session of the **All Ages Reproducible Fun Pages**.

As Challengers are completing the self-learning activities, discuss the following questions:

- 1 In the beginning of the story, “The Widow’s Offering,” we learn that many rich people were throwing in lots of money. How much money do you think is lots of money? *(Invite Challengers to answer.)*
- 2 Where are the widow and others making their offerings? *(The temple)*
- 3 What was the offering the widow made? *(Two small copper coins worth about a penny)*

According to Jesus, “this poor widow has put in more than everyone who’s been putting money in the treasury.” She gave everything she had, even what she needed to live on. It must have taken a deep faith in God to find the strength to give like this.

Speaking of finding strength in God, who can say our **Mountain Motto/Memory Verse** with me? *(I can do all things through him who strengthens me. Philippians 4:13, NRSV)*

When we say that Mountain Motto, it reminds us that the strength to do challenging things, like what the widow did in the story, comes from God. How does it make you feel to think about giving your all for God’s work? What can you do to find strength in God to give your all?

### Older Challengers

Third through sixth graders complete the activities on pages 8–10 of the **Older Elementary Student Book** and/or appropriate pages from this session of the **All Ages Reproducible Fun Pages**.

As Challengers are completing the self-learning activities, discuss the following questions:

- 1 In the beginning of the story, “The Widow’s Offering,” we learn that many rich people were throwing in lots of money. How much money do you think is lots of money? *(Invite Challengers to answer.)*
- 2 What was the offering the widow made? *(Two small copper coins worth about a penny)*
- 3 Where does Jesus say the money all the others in the temple were giving came from? *(Their spare change)*

According to Jesus, “this poor widow has put in more than everyone who’s been putting money in the treasury.” She gave everything she had, even what she needed to live on. It must have taken a deep faith in God to find the strength to give like this.

Speaking of finding strength in God, who can say our **Mountain Motto/Memory Verse** with me? *(I can do all things through him who strengthens me. Philippians 4:13, NRSV)*

When we say that Mountain Motto, it reminds us that the strength to do challenging things, like what the widow did in the story, comes from God. How does it make you feel to think about giving your all for God’s work? What can you do to find strength in God to give your 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.

**Snowball Mountain Challenge: Find Your Strength in God**

**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!





## Reflection

### Strength in God

SAY: Challengers, when we read or listen to the story from the Gospel of Mark about the widow giving her all, we might want to take some time and imagine what it must have been like for her to face the challenge of giving to the temple, the way she did, with so few resources of her own.

- 👉 When you think about this story like this, does it seem like giving your all with no more than this widow had was easy or not so easy back then?
- 👉 How does knowing this story encourage us to give our all even when we feel we have little or nothing to give? Who provides the strength for us to give our all?

SAY: Our Lift Lesson for this session is “I can give my all!” As we think about the story, “The Widow’s Offering,” we can see that this widow must have had strong faith in God and a strong belief in the strength God would provide her.

- 👉 What are some ways God has given you strength or encouragement to give your all?
- 👉 What are some ways or places we can give our all?

Say: Sometimes giving our all may look like showing up empty-handed but willing to participate in whatever God puts in front of us with all we have. This could be saying hello to a person who seems alone and being open to becoming their friend. Or it could be showing up to help a family member clean out a closet or garage, and being willing to stay until the job is complete.

## Prayer and Worship

Say: For our Prayer and Worship, we’re going to participate in a prayer with open hands. To start, I’m going to ask you to close your eyes and open your hands with your palms facing up, when I say the words “Let us pray.” As we are in this position, I’m going to invite you to imagine or picture receiving God’s strength and giving your all. To help better focus, you may wish to breathe slowly in through your nose and out through your mouth as you listen and participate.

Let us pray. God, as we begin this prayer, please help us see the way you see and show us what we need as we strive to follow you.

- 👉 First, imagine God’s strength. What comes to mind when you hear the words “God’s strength”? Now imagine God’s strength coming down to you, resting in your hands, and filling you completely, as you feel God’s strength in every part of you, from the top of your head, all the way down to the bottom of your feet.
- 👉 Now, imagine an area in your life where you feel you need to give your all. Maybe it’s a friendship, maybe it’s school work, or maybe it’s a sport you play or a hobby you have. Now imagine giving your all in this area as a swirling ball of images and energy, resting in your hands. Try to imagine how this ball feels in your hands. Is it heavy, light, or somewhere in between? Can you feel it moving?
- 👉 Now, try to notice God’s strength in you, encouraging you, moving into your arms and hands, and at last, pushing your arms up and your hands open as you feel God’s strength helping you to let go and give your all. Release the ball into the air and picture what might happen as you give your all.
- 👉 Finally, imagine Jesus in front of you, smiling, and shining his love on you and in your life and walking beside you as you give your all.

Amen.

**Snowball Mountain Challenge: Find Your Strength in God**



## Session 3: The Widow's Offering

### Let's Go

As Challengers arrive, encourage them to work in their journals. Today, ask them to write about a time they did their very best. It can be at work or home, a project or hobby. Any situation where they really gave their all. Allow time to write and work on their journals.

### Bible Story Mark 12:41-44

#### Overview

Today's story takes us to the New Testament and focuses on a passage toward the end of a whole day of Jesus teaching in the temple. That day Jesus had answered many questions from legal experts and teachers. They wanted to know who had given Jesus his authority to teach. They had questions about taxes and inheritance. Jesus taught that the leaders and wealthy people have a responsibility to serve and give to those in need. In the lesson for today Jesus points out a woman who gave only two small coins worth a single penny to the temple. It might have looked like nothing compared to the wealthy people tossing money in the boxes, letting their many coins clatter for all to hear. Jesus said this woman's gift was greater than those who gave out of abundance because through her faith in God's strength, she gave everything she had.

#### Main Idea

Part of living in God's kingdom is giving to others. The rich people could have given more to the church and more people could have been helped as a result. But a woman with only a penny gave everything she had, knowing that her penny can go farther when she gives to her church. When we give our money, time, and talents out of our love for God we are able to help more people. Our offerings are stronger together as God strengthens us.

#### Experience the Story

Choose among the following ways to experience the Bible Story.

- 👉 Read Mark 12:41-44 from a CEB Bible. Suggested context: Jesus's teaching in the temple begins in Mark 11:27
- 👉 Watch the **Snowball Mountain Challenge Bible Adventure DVD**
- 👉 Listen to the **Snowball Mountain Challenge Bible Storyteller Leader Guide** Story Drama (pp. 34-36) or Single Storyteller (pp. 37-38)

#### Group Discussion

- 👉 What are some different ways we can "give our all" to God and to help others?
- 👉 Can you think of ways our church helps the community? What are other ways the church can help?



#### 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!

#### Supplies

- 👉 Challenge Journals
- 👉 Pens

You can find the full Bible Background in the **Snowball Mountain Challenge Bible Storyteller Leader Guide** on p. 32 or download them at [CokesburyVBS.com](http://CokesburyVBS.com) in the Free Resources tab.





## Reflection

**SAY:** This story of the widow's offering gives us a lot to think about. The widow only had two copper coins. She is one of the people the temple is supposed to be helping, yet she never stopped giving. The church and the wealthy people, who are living with more than enough, have a responsibility to care and serve for those in need. God gives us his strength so we can do our best for the people around us. Take time to pray silently and write in your journal about how you can give faithfully and what we learned from the story of the widow.

## Additional Activities

- 👤 **Snowball Mountain Challenge Reflection Leader Guide** pp. 14-16
- 👤 "Challengers Slalom Race" **Snowball Mountain Challenge Recreation Guide** pp. 15
- 👤 "Notebook Tension" **Snowball Mountain Challenge Science Guide** pp. 15-17
- 👤 "Upcycle Prayer Box" **Snowball Mountain Challenge Craft Guide** p. 18

## Prayer

Take time to share prayer requests and write requests in the Challenge Journals. Close with the following prayer.

Thank you, God, for all the things you do for us and give to us. Thank you for hearing our silent prayers. We may never know or see all the good you do around us, but show us where we can help. Give us the strength to reach out to others in need. Make our hearts willing to give when we are able. Make our hands your hands and our feet your feet so we can go into our community and meet the needs in your name. 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 (NRSV)

## Lift Lesson

I can give my all!



## 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!

# Icebreaker

## Important Relationships

**SAY:** Challengers, in this session, we are able to learn from the example of Jesus praying in the garden that prayer is not just making our requests to God but also connecting with God in relationship. Jesus calling God "Father" demonstrates how important and close his relationship with God is, and this is the kind of relationship that we can have with God as well, through Jesus who gives us strength.

Through this story and others, we know Jesus' relationship with God, his Father, is important in so many ways. Today, let's share about one relationship we have that is important and why. Each of us will have a chance to share:

1. your name,
2. the name of someone you have an important relationship with, and
3. why your relationship with this person is so important.

Make sure each Challenger in your group has a chance to share.

## Discussion

- 🔦 When Jesus took some disciples into the garden of Gethsemane, he told them he felt sad, as if he were going to die. What do you think the disciples thought or felt when they heard this? How would you feel if you heard someone you are close to say something like this?
- 🔦 Jesus asked his disciples three times to stay alert while he was praying. Each time, they fell asleep. I wonder why they couldn't stay awake. Why do you think they fell asleep?

In our VBS song "This Is What I Pray" we sing *"I pray all the time 'cause I know you're listening. I don't have to worry because you're here with me."* How does it make you feel to know God is listening to your prayers and that God is always with you?

(Optional: play/read the words to the song "This Is What I Pray")

Listening to and singing the song "This Is What I Pray" can help us understand that prayer has a lot to do with our relationship and connection with God. It is also a prayer that we can sing to God.



## Self-Learning

### Younger Challengers

First and second graders complete the activities on pages 11–13 of the **Younger Elementary Student Book** and/or appropriate pages from this session of the **All Ages Reproducible Fun Pages**.

As Challengers are completing the self-learning activities, discuss the following questions:

- 👤 **In the beginning of the story, “Jesus Prays in the Garden,” we learn that Jesus is sad. Why do you think Jesus was sad?** *(Invite Challengers to answer.)*
- 👤 **Who did Jesus take into the garden with him?** *(Some disciples, Peter, and the two sons of Zebedee or James and John)*
- 👤 **What did Jesus ask his disciples to do to help them stay alert after finding them asleep the first time?** *(Stay alert and pray.)*

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus prays these words: “My Father, if it’s possible, take this cup of suffering away from me. However not what I want, but what you want.” It must have taken lots of trust in God and God’s strength for Jesus to pray these words.

Speaking of God’s strength, who can say our **Mountain Motto/Memory Verse** with me? *(I can do all things through him who strengthens me. Philippians 4:13, NRSV)*

When we say that Mountain Motto, it reminds us that the strength to do challenging things, even praying so honestly during challenging times, comes from God. Do you ever need God’s strength to help you pray?



### Older Challengers

Third through sixth graders complete the activities on pages 11–13 of the **Older Elementary Student Book** and/or appropriate pages from this session of the **All Ages Reproducible Fun Pages**.

As Challengers are completing the self-learning activities, discuss the following questions:

- 👤 **Why do you think Jesus was sad and needed to go to the garden to pray?** *(Invite Challengers to answer.)*
- 👤 **How many disciples does the Gospel of Matthew tell us Jesus took with him to the garden of Gethsemane?** *(Three, Peter and the two sons of Zebedee)*
- 👤 **The disciples fell asleep three times when Jesus had asked them to stay alert. How do you think Jesus felt about those disciples?** *(Invite Challengers to answer.)*

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus prays these words: “My Father, if it’s possible, take this cup of suffering away from me. However not what I want, but what you want.” It must have taken lots of trust in God and God’s strength for Jesus to pray these words.

Speaking of God’s strength, who can say our **Mountain Motto/Memory Verse** with me? *(I can do all things through him who strengthens me. Philippians 4:13, NRSV)*

When we say that Mountain Motto, it reminds us that the strength to do challenging things, even praying so honestly during challenging times, comes from God. Do you ever need God’s strength to help you pray?



## 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.



## Reflection

### Strength in God

SAY: Challengers, when we read or listen to the story from the Gospel of Matthew about Jesus praying in the garden, we might want to take some time and imagine what it must have been like for him to face the challenge that was before him.

- 👉 When you think about this story like this, does it seem like praying and connecting with God was easy or not so easy on that night in the garden?
- 👉 How does knowing this story encourage us to pray to and connect with God during challenging times?

SAY: Our Lift Lesson for this session is "I can pray!" As we think about the story, "Jesus Prays in the Garden," we can see that this was not an easy moment in Jesus' life. But it was one of the most important moments in his life. And in this time of prayer, Jesus showed us several important things about facing challenges: (1) You may need to step away from your regular surroundings, (2) Even though you may be praying alone, it's helpful to bring along others to be near and support us, and (3) God provides the strength we need to pray in challenging times.

- 👉 What might help you focus and stay connected with God when you are praying?
- 👉 If you were facing a challenge and needed to take some people along to pray with you, whom would you invite?

Say: Sometimes praying during tough times can seem as challenging as the situations we need to pray about. Observing all Jesus did in this story can help us learn some ways to approach prayer when facing challenges. Another thing that may help is to understand that there is not just one way to pray, there are many.

## Prayer and Worship

Say: For our Prayer and Worship, we are going to try a way of praying that you may not even think of as prayer. We are going to listen to or quietly sing along with our Snowball Mountain Challenge song, "This Is What I Pray." Let's try closing our eyes as we begin this prayer. (Play the song "This Is What I Pray.")

This is What I Pray Copyright © 2025 Andy Wilson, Crosskid Nation

I pray in the morning, thankful for each day. I pray in the evening, for the many ways

(Pre-Chorus)

You give me grace, fill me with peace. Here is what I say, this is what I pray:

(Chorus)

Not my will, but yours be done, I am yours. Make my life an offering for your glory  
God, I want to honor you in all I do and say, I need you every day, this is what I pray.  
Oo-oo-oo-oo, Oo-oo-oo

I pray all the time 'cause I know you're listening. I don't have to worry because you're here with me.

Repeat Pre-Chorus

Repeat Chorus 2X

Oh, I need you every day, This is what I pray. This is what I pray.  
**Amen.**

**Snowball Mountain Challenge: Find Your Strength in God**



## Session 4: Jesus Prays in the Garden

### Let's Go

Encourage Challengers to work in their journals as they come in. Have them make a list of different ways they communicate with others, such as texting promptly, sending emojis, responding to emails, nonverbal communication, having conversations, phone calls, and so forth. Have them circle their favorite/best ways of communicating and underline the ways of communication they could improve.

### Bible Story Matthew 26:36-46

#### Overview

In this short passage, we see Jesus take three of his disciples to a secluded garden to pray and talk with God. To prepare for his biggest challenge—the ultimate sacrifice—Jesus sought out the connection with God that he had taught others about. Jesus' messages of hope and justice for the poor and powerless angered many people. The powerful and wealthy were plotting to stop him. Even though Jesus knew what he had to do, he still wanted to talk to God and be with his friends. The friends were human and failed by sleeping again and again. But Jesus did not abandon them, he kept calling to them. When human friends fail us, God is always one prayer away.

#### Main Idea

Jesus was both God and human. We see both sides of him in this story. As a human, Jesus wanted comfort and companionship as he prepared for his sacrifice. He asked his friends for help, but they could not understand what was about to happen and fell asleep. But as the divine, he forgave his friends and continued to connect with God. Jesus helps teach us that we can pray in challenging times too.

#### Experience the Story

Choose among the following ways to experience the Bible Story.

- 👤 Read Matthew 26:36-46 from a CEB Bible.
- 👤 Watch the **Snowball Mountain Challenge Bible Adventure DVD**
- 👤 Listen to the **Snowball Mountain Challenge Bible Storyteller Leader Guide** Story Drama (pp. 45-47) or Single Storyteller (pp. 48-49)

#### Group Discussion

- 👤 How do you think Jesus felt when his friends couldn't stay awake?
- 👤 Have you ever had trouble communicating that you were disappointed with a friend?
- 👤 When do you pray? How can we add more prayer into each day?



#### 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!

#### Supplies

- 👤 Challenge Journal
- 👤 Pens

You can find the full Bible Background in the **Snowball Mountain Challenge Bible Storyteller Leader Guide** on p. 43 or download them at [CokesburyVBS.com](http://CokesburyVBS.com) in the Free Resources tab.



## Reflection

**SAY:** Joseph, Esther, Jesus, and us—we all pray to God. Jesus taught us to connect to God and rely on him all the time. We can pray when things are good or bad, when we're grateful or scared, when we did our best, or when we missed an opportunity to help. Prayer is the way we communicate with God. And just like we often need to work on our communication with each other, we also need to work with our communication with God. Spend time with God in prayer each day. You don't have to be in a secluded garden. You don't even have to close your eyes or put your hands together. Any time you talk to God, you're praying. And when you're praying, God can give you the strength you need to keep going. Take time to pray silently and write in your journal about how you understand and use prayer and what you learned in this story.

## Additional Activities

- 📌 **Snowball Mountain Challenge Reflection Leader Guide** pp. 18-20
- 📌 "Carry-For-Others Sled" **Snowball Mountain Challenge Recreation Guide** p. 18
- 📌 "Coding Journey" **Snowball Mountain Challenge Science Guide** p. 18
- 📌 "Flip Book" **Snowball Mountain Challenge Craft Guide** pp. 22-23
- 📌 "Ribbon Wreath" **Snowball Mountain Challenge Craft Guide** p. 24

## Prayer

Take time to share prayer requests and write requests in the Challenge Journals. Close with the following prayer.

As we join in prayer, we know you hear us, God. You hear each unspoken need we hold in our hearts. We know you are always there for us, waiting for us to talk to you. It is our hope that we connect with you more each day. When the days are easy or when times are hard and the challenges seem impossible: we can pray and you give us your strength. Thank you for this gift of constant connection through prayer. May we use the strength you give us to face each day knowing we are never alone. 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!





## 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!

# Icebreaker

## Snowy Hope

SAY: Challengers, we've made it to this last session of the Snowball Mountain Challenge. And today's session is all about hope. So let's all try answering some questions about hope.

1. your name;
2. something you hope to remember from Snowball Mountain Challenge VBS; and
3. if you were in a "real" snowy setting, what is something you'd hope to try or experience?

Make sure each Traveler in your group has an opportunity to share.

## Discussion

👉 In the story, "Peter and John at the Temple," the two disciples encounter a man who could not get around on his own and had to be carried to the temple gate so he could ask passersby for money or assistance. It must have been difficult for this man to live this way. How do you think the man felt about needing this kind of help every day?

👉 When the man asked Peter and John for money, Peter and John stared at him and then Peter told him to look at them. What would you think if you had been the man at that moment, facing Peter and John?

👉 After the man was healed, you may have missed it, but he went into the temple with Peter and John, walking, leaping, and praising God. If you'd been in the temple that day and saw a man you thought could not walk, who was now walking in, leaping, and praising God, what would you think?

In our VBS song "Philippians 4:13" we sing *"When I'm tearful, he hears me pray, gives me hope in all I face. Won't matter if I win or lose, I know he will see me through."* How does it make you feel to know God gives us hope in all we face?

(Optional: play/read the words to the song "Philippians 4:13")

Listening to and singing the song "Philippians 4:13" can help us understand that through Jesus, like Peter and John, we can do all things, including hope when what we face doesn't seem so hopeful. What do you need Jesus' strength to hope for?



## Self-Learning

### Younger Challengers

First and second graders complete the activities on pages 14–16 of the **Younger Elementary Student Book** and/or appropriate pages from this session of the **All Ages Reproducible Fun Pages**.

As Challengers are completing the self-learning activities, discuss the following questions:

👤 In the beginning of the story, “Peter and John at the Temple,” we learn that people would carry the man to the gate of the temple every day. What do you think the people who carried the man to the temple hoped for this man?  
*(Invite Challengers to answer.)*

👤 When the man approached Peter and John, what did Peter tell the man he did not have?  
*(Money)*

👤 What do you think the people in the temple did when they saw the man come in walking, leaping, and praising God?  
*(Invite Challengers to answer.)*

In this story, a man who spent all of his life unable to walk was suddenly, through the strength and power of the name of Jesus, made whole, able to walk and even leap. That Peter and John initiated this healing in Jesus’ name can give us hope that we can also do amazing things through the strength God provides through Jesus.

Speaking of doing amazing things through the strength God provides through Jesus, who can say our Mountain Motto/Memory Verse with me?  
*(I can do all things through him who strengthens me. Philippians 4:13, NRSV)*

When we say that Mountain Motto, it reminds us that the strength to do challenging things helps us have hope that the good news we share can be life-changing for us and for others. How do you think having the strength to hope through Jesus can be life-changing for you?

### Older Challengers

Third through sixth graders complete the activities on pages 14–16 of the **Older Elementary Student Book** and/or appropriate pages from this session of the **All Ages Reproducible Fun Pages**.

As Challengers are completing the self-learning activities, discuss the following questions:

👤 In the beginning of the story, “Peter and John at the Temple,” we learn that people would carry the man to the gate of the temple every day. What do you think the people who carried the man to the temple hoped for this man?  
*(Invite Challengers to answer.)*

👤 When the man approached Peter and John, what did Peter say to him? *(See Acts 3:4-6)*

👤 I wonder what the man who was healed and/or the people in the temple who saw him healed did the day after the healing. What do you think? *(Invite Challengers to answer.)*

In this story, a man who spent all of his life unable to walk was suddenly, through the strength and power of the name of Jesus, made whole, able to walk and even leap. That Peter and John initiated this healing in Jesus’ name can give us hope that we can also do amazing things through the strength God provides through Jesus.

Speaking of doing amazing things through the strength God provides through Jesus, who can say our Mountain Motto/Memory Verse with me?  
*(I can do all things through him who strengthens me. Philippians 4:13, NRSV)*

When we say that Mountain Motto, it reminds us that the strength to do challenging things helps us have hope that the good news we share can be life-changing for us and for others. How do you think having the strength to hope through Jesus can be life-changing for you?



## 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.



## Reflection

### Strength in God

SAY: Challengers, when we read or listen to the story from the Book of Acts about Peter and John at the temple, we might want to take some time and imagine what it must have been like for him to face the challenge that was before him.

- 📌 When you think about this story like this, does it seem like having hope was easy or not so easy for the man who could not walk before he met Peter and John?
- 📌 How does knowing this story encourage us to have hope during challenging times?

SAY: Our Lift Lesson for this session is “I can hope!” Thinking about the story, “Peter and John at the Temple,” we see an example of what it might look like for the work of Jesus and spreading his good news of hope for God’s love to continue in our lives.

- 📌 What might help you remember that the work of Jesus and sharing hope in God’s love can continue as part of your life?
- 📌 As we are wrapping up our time at Snowball Mountain VBS, what do you hope you can remember to share with others in the next few days?

Say: Sometimes having hope isn’t easy because all we can see is what is happening right now or what happened yesterday. The man whom Jesus healed through Peter and John probably had no idea how much his life would change in just one day. Challengers, that just shows us that even when we are in the middle of the most challenging times, as long as there’s a tomorrow, and the strength God provides through Jesus, we can hope.

## Prayer and Worship

Say: For our last Prayer and Worship at Snowball Mountain Challenge VBS, we are going to join together in a simple call-and-response prayer. I will read a sentence and when I finish, we’ll all say together, “I can hope!” Let’s pray:

Leader: When I face a challenge and I’m not sure what to do,

All: I can hope!

Leader: When my path is blocked and it seems there’s no way through,

All: I can hope!

Leader: When I think of God’s love, given freely to me and you,

All: I can hope!

Leader: And I think of my friend, Jesus, and all the ways he makes my life new,

All: I can hope!

Amen.





**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

### 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 lept 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*)

**Snowball Mountain Challenge: Find Your Strength in God**

## Session 5: Peter and John at the Temple

### Let's Go

Have Challengers start working on their journals as they come in. Ask them to write about how they feel when they hear the word "hope." They can write about something they hope to do, see, or experience.

### Bible Story Acts 3:1-10

#### Overview

Before Jesus left to join God in heaven, he gave his followers two things: God's constant guidance through the Holy Spirit and instructions to go out and preach the good news of Jesus to the world. In this account, Peter and John are going to the temple to pray. On their way, they meet a man who cannot walk. Every day this man is carried to the gate in front of the temple to beg for money. Because of his disability, he cannot enter the temple to pray or worship. Seeing that the man needed more than money, Peter proclaimed Jesus' name and told the man to get up and walk. Peter pulled the man to his feet which were instantly made strong. The man started leaping and praising God for all to see. The people recognized the man, realizing he had been healed and were amazed by what they saw.

#### Main Idea

Jesus gave us the gift of the Holy Spirit to be with us and guide us. Through our hope in God, we can be made new and strong through hearing and believing the good news of Jesus. Once we have received God's blessings for ourselves, it is our turn to share our new hope with others.

#### Experience the Story

Choose among the following ways to experience the Bible Story.

- 📖 Read Acts 3:1-10 from a CEB Bible.
- 📺 Watch the **Snowball Mountain Challenge Bible Adventure DVD**
- 🎧 Listen to the **Snowball Mountain Challenge Bible Storyteller Leader Guide** Story Drama pp. 55-57 or Single Storyteller pp. 58-59

#### Group Discussion

- 🗣️ In what ways are we like Peter and John in the story? In what ways are we like the man who could not walk?
- 🗣️ How can we share our hope in God with others?



#### 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!

#### Supplies

- 📖 Challenge Journal
- 🖋️ Pens

You can find the full Bible Background in the **Snowball Mountain Challenge Bible Storyteller Leader Guide** on p. 53 or download them at [CokesburyVBS.com](http://CokesburyVBS.com) in the Free Resources tab.





## Reflection

**SAY:** As believers of Jesus, having hope is a huge part of our faith journey. Hope is that thing that keeps us going in the face of a challenge. Hebrews 11:1 says "faith is the reality of what we hope for, the proof of what we don't see." Hope was with Joseph in prison, with Esther in the throne room, with the widow in the temple, with Jesus in the garden, and with Peter and John and the man by the gate. Hope kept them all from giving up, even in the middle of the challenges they were facing. And hope is with us every time we choose to believe that God is with us. Hope is the building block of faith. Faith allows us to share our gifts, love bravely, give freely, and to pray openly to a God we know is always there. Take time to pray silently and write in your journal about how you've seen hope in your life and what we learned from the story of Peter, John, and the man by the gate.

## Additional Activities

**Snowball Mountain Challenge Reflection Leader Guide** pp. 22-24

"Cross Country Skiing" **Snowball Mountain Challenge Recreation Guide** p. 23

"Soda Explosion" **Snowball Mountain Challenge Science Guide** pp. 24-27

"Scroll Paper Art" **Snowball Mountain Challenge Craft Guide** pp. 29-30

"Tissue Paper Stars" **Snowball Mountain Challenge Craft Guide** pp. 31-32

## Prayer

Take time to share prayer requests and write requests in the Challenge Journals. Close with the following prayer.

Thank you, God for your son Jesus and your Holy Spirit as a constant presence and reminder of your love for us. Through the hope you give us, we are strengthened daily. Through the hope we share, we are blessed by witnessing your goodness and grace. May we carry your hope to add light to bright days and lend light to dark ones. Let us remember that sometimes we are the ones carrying the good news like Peter and John. And sometimes we are like the man at the gate waiting for someone to come and lift us up in the name of Jesus. Thank you for always being one prayer away; we know you hear the whispers of our hearts. Amen.



## 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!



### 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

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.





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