

*We can rely on
Jesus to be with
us always.*

Matthew 28:19, 20

Joshua 1:9

SESSION SUPPLIES

- ★ Bibles
- ★ a clear drinking glass
- ★ construction paper
- ★ clear tape and glue
- ★ a spool or ball of string
- ★ paper grocery sacks
- ★ a ruler or measuring tape
- ★ scissors and markers
- ★ large index cards
- ★ duct tape or masking tape
- ★ heavy stones
- ★ photocopies of the Power Page! (page 71)

HERE AND NEAR

MIGHTY MEMORY VERSE

We have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, and especially of those who believe.
1 Timothy 4:10

SESSION OBJECTIVES

During this session, children will

- ★ understand that Jesus is our best friend
- ★ realize that Jesus promised to be with us
- ★ discover that Jesus is our eternal partner
- ★ discover what eternity means

BIBLE BACKGROUND

“Oh! I will drive this forever!” cries an excited teen over her first car. “I just know I’ll feel this way always,” promises young love on the eve of engagement. “Why, you haven’t changed a bit—you just never grow old!” exclaims a friend at your twenty-year reunion. But things and people do change, and situations alter and shift. It’s tough to place hope in an ever-changing world of people and situations. But take heart! Jesus makes a powerful promise to us in Matthew 28:20 when he assures us he will be with us even unto the end of the age! And along with this powerful Scripture goes 1 Timothy 4:10, which tells us that the best place to put our hope is in Jesus. What powerful verses that attest to the hope we have in our infinite Lord! Forever, eternal, unchanging, unending—that’s our Savior in whom

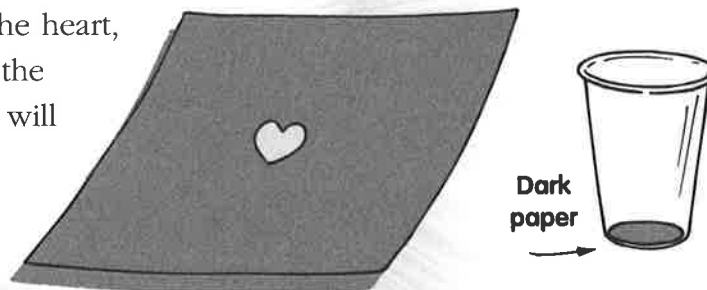
we place our hope, our love, our trust, and our very lives. Praise to Jesus for being our eternal companion!

Kids need to know that there's someone who promises to be with them always, who will never leave them alone or wanting for help. Security, trust, and hope fill young lives when they realize that Jesus promised to be with us for eternity—and beyond! Use this lesson to help kids discover that they are never alone and that Jesus is their constant companion through thick and thin—forever!

POWER FOCUS

Before class, gather construction paper, a clear drinking glass, scissors, and tape. Trace the bottom of the drinking glass on dark construction paper, then cut out the circle and tape it to the bottom of the drinking glass. Be sure kids can't see the paper base or the tape! Cut a heart from red or white paper and place the heart on a sheet of construction paper the same color as the circle on the bottom of the drinking glass.

When you place the glass on the heart, the heart will “disappear.” When the glass is slid to the side, the heart will amazingly reappear. (Hint: *Slide* the glass on and off the heart instead of picking it up so kids don't see the paper bottom on



the glass. The glass should never leave the dark paper on which it is sitting!) Practice sliding the cup on and off the heart so your presentation is smooth.

Place the sheet of construction paper on a tabletop and set the drinking glass on the paper. Set the paper heart beside the glass. Gather children by the table and say: **Let's pretend this clear glass represents us and the paper heart represents our friends. Good friends usually have a lot of love to give, and they stand beside us as much as they can. But sometimes it seems as if they disappear just when we need them most, and we're left standing alone! Slide the glass onto the paper heart and have kids peer around and inside the glass to see if they can spot their absent "friend."** (Don't let kids touch the glass!) Then ask:

- ★ **When was a time you felt alone? What did you do to feel better?**
- ★ **Why can't we expect our families and friends to be with us every moment of our lives?**

★ Why does this make relying on others difficult?

Say: **Our friends can't be with us every moment of our lives even if we wish they could, and sometimes we end up feeling lost and alone.**

But there is a best friend who does stay with us all the time! Slide the glass away from the heart and say: **Jesus is that friend! Jesus never leaves us alone and is with us all the time to help, care for, and love us. In fact, Jesus promised to be with us all the time. And even when we're tempted to think he's left us** (slide the glass over the heart), **we can be assured he hasn't gone anywhere!** (Expose the heart once more.) **Jesus stays with us all the time—no matter what, no matter where!**

Today we'll be learning about Jesus as our best friend who promises to be with us always. We'll discover what eternity means and how long it is. And we'll begin a new Mighty Memory Verse that tells us where we can put our hope. Before we learn more about Jesus' special promise, let me show you how this neat disappearing trick is done so you can share it with your family to remind them that Jesus is our best friend who will never disappear and leave us alone!

Show kids how to prepare the clear drinking glass and how to slide the glass on and off the paper heart. Point out that they must use the same color paper for the glass bottom and for the "place mat."

POWER POINTERS

Have older kids get a grip on eternity by figuring out the number of minutes since they were born. Then compare those numbers to 100 years, 1000 years—then forever. Wow!

THE MIGHTY MESSAGE

Seat kids in a circle and hand one child a large spool or ball of string. Say: **In Old Testament days, God's people were sure God was present when they had a special box with them. This box was called the ark of the covenant, and it stood for God being in the midst of his people. Whenever the people had this special box near, they knew God was near, too. Even when God's warriors were at battle, they wanted the ark nearby to encourage and help them. But when Jesus came to love us, forgive us, and die for our sins, we suddenly had God with us all of the time! We no longer needed a box to remind us of the Lord's presence—we had Jesus! And we know that Jesus is with us today, too.**

Our Bible passage today comes from the book of Matthew in the New Testament. It takes place after Jesus' death and resurrection and just before Jesus rises to heaven to live with God. You can help tell parts of the passage. As I read, we'll pass the ball of string and unwind it as it's being passed. When I stop reading, the person holding the string can repeat or summarize what I just said. Then we'll continue passing the string.

Begin passing and unwinding the string around the circle and read the following verses and portions of verses from Matthew 28:19, 20: **Therefore go and make disciples of all nations** (pause and have the child holding the string repeat this portion of the verse, then continue passing the string), **baptizing them** (pause) **in the name of the Father** (pause) **and of the Son** (pause) **and of the Holy Spirit** (pause), **and teaching them** (pause) **to obey everything** (pause) **I have commanded you** (pause). **And surely I am with you always** (pause), **to the very end of the age.**

Have kids stop unwinding the string and say: **We've unwound a lot of string while we read this Scripture passage. How much string do you think we unwound?** Let kids tell their guesses, then say: **In a bit we'll measure the string and see whose guess is closest. But right now, I have a few questions.** Ask:

- ★ **What did Jesus tell us to do for others?**
- ★ **How long did Jesus say he would be with us?**
- ★ **What does it mean when we read "to the very end of the age"?**
- ★ **Why do you think Jesus wants to be with us for eternity?**
- ★ **How does it help to know that Jesus is with us always?**

Say: **Jesus made a very powerful promise when we said he would be with us forever. But how long is forever? How long is the end of the age? How long is eternity? Well, let's start by finding out how much string we unwound.**

Have kids use a ruler or tape measure to measure how much string was unwound around the circle, then say: **We have several feet of string here even though it seemed like we had miles! If we put this string and all the string in the world end to end, the feet wouldn't begin to match the years in forever! In fact, forever is immeasurable! When Jesus promised to be with us always and forever, he meant there would never be a time when we would be alone again! Wow—Jesus will be with us, absolute and always!**

We have a friend to love and care for us no matter what, no matter when. And we have a friend and partner who will be here to help

whenever we need it—forever! Let's play an unusual game to remind us that we can rely on Jesus to be with us and help us forever.

Help kids mark Matthew 28:19, 20 in their Bibles with the blue bookmark ribbons they've been using for several weeks. If anyone has lost or has not made a bookmark, let that child make one now using an 8-inch length of blue ribbon and the Bible icon from page 123. Remind kids to bring their Bibles and bookmark ribbons next week.



THE MESSAGE IN MOTION

Have kids form trios and hand each group two large stones. (You'll use these stones later in the lesson and will need one for each child.) Invite children to tell about times a friend helped them and how they felt when they received that help.

Then explain that this is a game about helping. Have each group choose a player to be the holder. The other partners will be helpers. Have the holders each hold two stones out to their sides for as long as they can. When holders feel as if they need help to hold their arms up, have them ask their helpers to each support an arm. See if all groups can make it to the five-minute mark, then call time.

At the end of the time, have everyone shake out their arms and give each other a round of applause. Then ask:

- ★ **What was it like before you asked for help?**
- ★ **In what ways did your helpers support you? help you? give you encouragement?**
- ★ **What might have happened if your friends or helpers hadn't been there to help?**
- ★ **When are times you've called upon Jesus to help you?**
- ★ **How does it feel to know that Jesus is here all the time to help us?**

Say: **It probably felt like an eternity as you held those heavy stones, didn't it? But eternity is much, much longer! And Jesus promised to be with us to the very ends of the earth and for eternity. In other words, Jesus will never leave us alone—anywhere or anytime. Just as you relied on your friends to help you through the game, we can rely on Jesus to help us through life and beyond!** Ask:

- ★ **What does Jesus do for us?**
- ★ **Why is Jesus the best partner and friend we could ever have?**

Read aloud Joshua 1:9, then say: **That's a neat verse, isn't it? When we know Jesus will be with us and help us, we can have hope in our lives! And that feels wonderful, doesn't it? Let's learn a new Mighty Memory Verse about the best place to put our hope.** Save the stones to use in the Powerful Promise activity.

SUPER SCRIPTURE

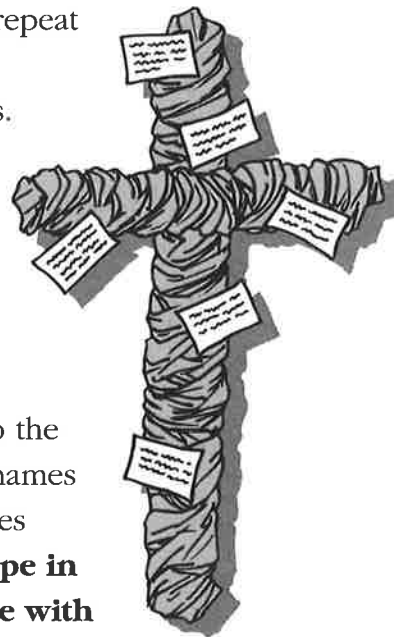
Before class, make a large cross by loosely twisting ten paper grocery sacks into "logs." Use duct tape or masking tape to attach seven of the logs end to end up the wall and three of the logs as a crossbeam to make a large wooden-looking cross. Write the words "Jesus," "living God," and "Savior" on index cards or paper and add them to the display.

Have kids find and bookmark 1 Timothy 4:10 with the Bible bookmarks they made several weeks ago. If kids have lost their bookmarks, make new ones using yellow ribbon and the Mighty Memory Verse icons from page 123.

Read the first portion of the Mighty Memory Verse aloud two times: **We have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all men.** Then say: **This is a wonderful verse about hope and where we can place it. Who do you think this verse is talking about?** Encourage kids to tell their ideas, then say: **This is a verse about placing our hope in Jesus. But in this verse, there are two other names we call Jesus. What are those names?** Lead kids to tell that "living God" and "Savior" are other names for Jesus, then point out these names in the display. Finally, repeat the first portion of the verse two more times.

Hand each child a large index card and several markers. Invite kids to write or draw a picture of one hope they have. Suggestions might include the hope of finding a new friend, of someone getting well after an illness, of help in school, or of people learning about Jesus. As kids work, encourage them to discuss why Jesus is a good place to put our hopes, fears, praise, and thanks.

When the cards are finished, invite kids to tape them to the large paper cross on the wall. Then ask kids to read the names for Jesus and point out again that these names are the ones included in 1 Timothy 4:10. Say: **When we place our hope in Jesus, we're never disappointed. Jesus promised to be with**



us always, even to the ends of the earth. And that's a lot of hope to go on! Let's share a prayer thanking Jesus for his special promise, then we can make a promise of our own.

A POWERFUL PROMISE

Have kids sit in a circle and ask for a moment of silence, then say: **We've learned today that Jesus promised to be with us and help us forever so we never have to feel alone. We discovered that eternity means forever—and that's not even measurable in years. And we've also worked on the Mighty Memory Verse that tells us the best place to put our hope. First Timothy 4:10 says** (point to the display you made earlier and encourage kids to repeat the verse with you), **"We have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all men."**

Hold up the Bible and say: **Jesus made a special and powerful promise when he said he would be with us forever. Let's demonstrate our joy over Jesus' promise by making a special promise of our own. We can commit to relying on Jesus' help this week and placing our hope in him—even when things might seem hard or impossible. As we pass the Bible around the circle, we can make our own special promises. We can say, "I want to place my hope in Jesus."** Pass the Bible until everyone has had a chance to make the promise. End by sharing a prayer thanking Jesus for the trust, faith, and hope we find in him.

Hand each child a stone from the Message in Motion activity. You'll also need brown markers. Say: **When something is supposed to last forever, we say that it is written in stone. That's because stones last a long time. But Jesus promised to be with us even longer! Let's write "I will be with you" on your stones to remind us that Jesus will be with us wherever we go for all eternity. Then you can use your stones for paperweights, doorstops, or centerpieces on your dinner table.**

After kids have finished writing on their stones, have them glue a bit of brown felt to the bottoms so the stones won't scratch tabletops or desks. Then end with this responsive good-bye:

Leader: **May Jesus' love be with you.**

Children: **And also with you!**

Distribute the Power Page! take-home papers as kids are leaving. Thank kids for coming and encourage them to keep their promises to Jesus this week.

POWER PAGE!

What a FRIEND we have in Jesus!

Read what our best friend promises to do for us. Use your NIV Bible to fill in the spaces.

- * “And surely I am _____ you _____ ” (Matthew 28:20).
- * “My Father will _____ you whatever you _____ in my _____ ” (John 16:23).
- * “No one _____ to the _____ except through _____ ” (John 14:6).
- * “If you _____ my commands, you will remain in my _____ ” (John 15:10).

SHADOW COOKIES

These delicious treats will remind you that Jesus stays closer to you than a shadow!

You'll need:

- ★ 2 eggs
- ★ 1/3 cup milk
- ★ 1/2 cup shortening
- ★ 2 tsp. baking powder
- ★ 2 oz. melted unsweetened chocolate
- ★ gingerbread man cookie cutter
- ★ 2 cups flour
- ★ 1 1/2 cup sugar

Directions:

Cream shortening and sugar. Beat in 2 eggs, then stir in chocolate and milk. Mix flour and baking powder, then add to the chocolate mixture and mix well. Chill 3 hours, then roll out dough on floured surface. Cut out cookies and bake on ungreased cookie sheet at 375 degrees for 10 to 12 minutes. Cool and enjoy!



High & Low

Use 1 Timothy 4:10 to fill in the high and low letters to the verse.

W _____ , _____ , _____ , _____ , _____ , _____ , _____ .

_____ , _____ , _____ , _____ , _____ , _____ , _____ .

_____ , _____ , _____ , _____ , _____ , _____ , _____ .

_____ , _____ , _____ , _____ , _____ .

1 Timothy 4:10