

date: **1/21/17****Bible Passage: 1 Samuel 7:3–13**  
(Ebenezer)

## God Is Help

### REMEMBER VERSE

Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, “This is the way; walk in it.”

Isaiah 30:21

### Inspire

*Shares personal stories from fellow ministry leaders about how God has worked in their lives*

They were calling to one another: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.” At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. “Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty.” Isaiah 6:3–5

“I am ruined!” Isaiah cried. To be ruined is to be in a state of disintegration or destruction. Existence, life as it has been known up until this point, ceases.

This is one of those moments, those truly holy moments, where I know that I’m in the presence of God. I cannot see Him with my eyes, but every other part of my being knows and feels His presence. I’m awestruck. I don’t need to utter the prayer “Search me, O God,” for He already has. He knows me—every part of me. I can feel it. I know it. All I can do is focus on Him and be present. I don’t want to move for fear that this will pass too quickly, and I’ll be released from the tension between the holy and the human. To know God, truly know Him, is to know and understand that He is holy. I want to remain in this place, undone. My soul lies bare before Him. I am ruined because I will never be the same. His holiness helps me because it changes me. I am changed by His presence. Ruined. Beautiful ruins.

An encounter with the holy God requires a response. We have been altered, changed. He allows us to experience glimpses of His holiness so we will know who He is. God is our only help. He is our only hope. God is holy.

*Cristi Thomas*  
Tru Team

## Equip

*Offers perspective and context to the lesson's Bible passage*

Throughout the 450-year history of Israel (the time of the judges), God's people were caught in a constant cycle of disobedience and restoration. Even so, God remained present; the Lord God was their constant help. Each time the Israelites began to fall away, another nation would engage them in battle and capture the people. The Israelites would cry out to God, repent, turn from the gods and idols they'd adopted, and return to the one true God.

During one such battle with the Philistines, the Israelites took the ark of the covenant with them, hoping it would bring victory for their army. However, God did not grant them victory. The Philistines captured the ark, and the Israelites went into mourning. The ark remained with the Philistine leaders for seven months before it was returned—along with a guilt offering—to Israelite territory. Samuel spoke to the house of Israel, saying, "If you are returning to the LORD with all your hearts ... commit yourselves to the LORD and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines" (1 Samuel 7:3).

Israel obeyed and returned to the Lord, and the Lord gave them victory over the Philistines. Samuel set a large stone in the ground and named it Ebenezer, which means "stone of help," declaring, "Thus far the LORD has helped us" (v. 12). The Ebenezer marked God's help not only in the battle, but His help to the people since they entered the Promised Land so many years before.

Each time the Israelites fell away, He intervened and was their help—their Redeemer. This is also true for us today. When we find ourselves in need of help, we cry out to God, and He intervenes. It's not only because of His holiness and mercy that God redeems, but out of His love for us.

## Support

*Provides reflection and assessment through encouragement, prayer, and time in God's Word*

As we look at all that took place in Israel for those 400 years, the marking of that time with the stone was monumental. This Ebenezer was a reminder of God's incredible goodness and help to His people, regardless of their trials. Throughout their journey as a nation and as a people, He was their help. He was and is so very holy.

While you're preparing for this week's lesson, spend time creating your own remembrance to God. Think through this past week, month, or year. As you do, what stories come to mind? Which people crossed your path? Are there any events that shaped this past season in your life? Where was God in the midst of this? How was He working? How was God your help? Even in the most difficult circumstances, God's help can be seen.

Take a handful of river rocks and a permanent marker. Mark each rock with a remembrance of God's help in your life. Spend a few minutes talking with God about each rock as you hold it in your hands. After you've created this piece of your story with God, ask Him: Who needs to hear one or more of these stories? How can I be a storyteller of Your goodness and help, for Your glory? Allow His Spirit to minister to you. May you be blessed through your time with God.

## EXPLORE:: 10 min.

### Small Group Leaders

*Children engage in fun, creative activities designed to pique their curiosity about*

*the day's portion of The Big God Story.*

## Helping Hands

Throughout their lives, God helped His people, the Israelites. God has always helped His people and will continue to do so, even today. This building activity will reinforce the concept that when we help one another toward a common goal, more can be accomplished.

### SUPPLIES (per small group)

- Building blocks
- Bins (1 for every 2–3 children)

### SET UP

Place building blocks in each bin, enough for teams of two or three to build substantial towers.

### RELATE

Welcome children to the table. Invite them to form groups of two or three and find a bin of blocks. **Friends, let's work together in groups and help each other build tall towers! Please remember to work as a team. What are the best ways to work together?** Children answer. **That's right! Sharing blocks and taking turns building will be great ways to help each other. Let's see who can build the highest tower!** As children build, encourage them to be helpful. **When we work together with our friends and help them do things like building, we can have even more fun!** Praise kids for the various ways they found to successfully work together.

## Large Group

SECTION

## DISCOVER:: 25 min.

Host/Worship Leader/Storyteller

*Children participate in discovering God's Word through Bible verse memorization, interactive storytelling techniques, and worship as response.*

### Ponder Point

## God Is Help

## Chloe's Rules

Host/Worship Leader

### SUPPLIES

- [Chloe's Rules videos](#)
- Worship music (suggestions: "Everybody, Everywhere" and "Thank You," TruWorship *Sincerely Yours*)
- Optional: countdown video

**RELATE**

Welcome children as they're entering the large group meeting area. *Tech: Cue Chloe's Rules video.* The theme song will play as the Worship Leader/Host enters and makes his way up front, welcoming and greeting children along the way. This should be a high-energy entrance. *Tech: Cue preschool program theme song.* Choose and play two upbeat worship songs of your choice from a worship album that complements the theme and focus of the lesson.

## Mail Time

**Host/Worship Leader****SUPPLIES**

- [Mail Time intro clip and image \(see Resources\)](#)
- [Remember Verse image \(see Resources\)](#)
- [Remember Verse cards \(see Resources\)](#)
- [Mail Time envelope](#)
- Bibles (your personal and large children's)
- Mailbox

**PREPARE AHEAD**

Print or copy the Mail Time envelope art and attach to a large envelope. Print or copy one Remember Verse card and put it inside the envelope.

**RELATE**

*Tech: Cue the Mail Time intro clip and image.* Choose one volunteer to hide the mail and another to find the mail. Have the "Seeker" close her eyes while the "Hider" finds a good place to hide the Remember Verse. Once the mail has been hidden, the Seeker will begin to look for the mail while the children give clues to its whereabouts by calling out "hot" and "cold."

Once the Seeker finds the mail, the Host invites her to pull out the enclosed Remember Verse. Next, the Host should find the Remember Verse in his Bible and read the words aloud. Talk about the meaning of the verse while interacting with the children.

Lead the children in reciting the Remember Verse several times together using a variety of engaging methods. Hand motions, different voices, various speeds, and character integration are all great ways to help commit the Scripture to memory. For longer verses, approach the verse one section at a time, increasing what the children repeat back each week.

**REMEMBER VERSE**

**Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it."**

**Isaiah 30:21**

**REMEMBER VERSE MOTIONS**

**Whether you turn to the right:** Hold an imaginary steering wheel. Turn it to the right.

**or to the left:** Then turn it to the left.

**your ears will hear:** Point index fingers to ears.

**a voice behind you, saying:** With right hand, form index and middle fingers in shape of a V. Start V at throat and move up to chin.

**This is the way:** Point index finger out to right, away from body.

**walk in it:** With right hand, index and middle fingers "walk" back and forth as hand moves forward.

## Wardrobe of Wonder

**Storyteller/Host/Worship Leader**

### SUPPLIES

- [Wardrobe of Wonder intro clip and image \(see Resources\)](#)
- [Wardrobe of Wonder sound effect \(see Resources\)](#)
- [What'slit: Large Rock \(see optional image in Resources\)](#)
- Wardrobe of Wonder
- Small stools or chairs (2)

### What'slit: Large Rock

In 1 Samuel 7:12, we see Samuel placing a rock firmly in the ground as an altar of remembrance. This rock was to remind the people of Israel of the help God had given. A large rock as our What'slit reminds us of God's help in our lives today.

### RELATE

*Tech:* Cue the *Wardrobe of Wonder intro clip and image*. Invite a child volunteer to "spy" on the What'slit by peeking into the wardrobe. Each time the wardrobe door opens, cue the *Wardrobe of Wonder sound effect*. Have him whisper the identity of the What'slit in your ear to ensure he knows what it is.

Invite your assistant to sit on the stools with you. Then lead the group in asking the assistant yes-or-no questions about the What'slit. Once the children have guessed correctly, ask your assistant to retrieve the What'slit from the wardrobe and bring it to you. Thank your volunteer and encourage him to sit with his small group.

### ASK

Dialogue is spoken as the Host removes the rock from the wardrobe—seemingly with great effort—and pulls it to the center of the stage. **I ... just ... can't ... imagine ... why we would have a great big rock in the Wardrobe of Wonder. Can you?** Addressing children. **Why do you think a rock is in the wardrobe?** Take suggestions from kids. **Those are good thoughts. Hmmm ... where do we usually find rocks, other than in the wardrobe?** Pause for responses. **Outside, yes. In the park, in the mountains, at the beach, in our front yard or backyard ... There are lots of places outside that have rocks. What could it possibly be telling us about this part of The Big God Story? Well, let's find out. Do you know what time it is?**

# The Big God Story

**1 Samuel 7:3–13**

**God Is Help**

**Storytelling Technique: Hand Motions**

### SUPPLIES

- [The Big God Story intro clip and image \(see Resources\)](#)
- [What'slit: Large Rock \(see optional image in Resources\)](#)
- [Samuel Placing Stone image \(see Resources\)](#)

• Optional: **Storytelling video** (see Resources)

### SET UP

To engage the children during storytelling, use hand motions to accompany the major action scenes. Suggested motions for wording: *fought different countries*: punch at air at an angle just above shoulder; *lost to another army*: throw arms to sides, hands open and palms up (defeat); *captured and had to do what the other kings said*: hands in fists, crossed over each other, and held out in front of body; *cried out to God*: clasp hands together and look up. Use these motions as cued with each occurrence of the wording. Before you begin, run through the motions and phrases with children.

### RELATE

**Before we begin, whom do we need to teach us today?** Wait for children to respond. **God! Let's ask God to lead us in everything we do.** Lead children in a Prayer of Release to pause, be still, and ask the Holy Spirit to quiet their hearts and minds.

**Many years ago, God's people moved into the new land God had promised to give them more than four hundred years earlier. Four hundred years! That's a really long time to wait for that land! But God helped His people all those years. First, He freed them from slavery in Egypt. Then God led the people through the desert and into this wonderful new Promised Land. He helped them every step of their journey. God didn't leave them, not even once!**

**Here's the sad news. Every time things were going really well for the people, they forgot about God. They forgot everything God did for them. They acted like they didn't know Him at all! The Israelites ignored God's words and did whatever they wanted. This wasn't good. Each time the people stopped following God, people from different lands came in, fought them in a battle** (lead kids in motion: punch at air at an angle just above shoulder), **and the army of Israel lost** (lead motion: throw arms to sides, hands open and palms up). **After each battle, the kings from these different lands captured the people and told the Israelites what to do** (lead motion: hands in fists, crossed over each other, and held out in front of body). **And the Israelites had to do everything they said!**

**After some time passed, the Israelites missed God. Their hearts were sad and they knew they hadn't obeyed His words. Can you show me your saddest face?** Lead kids in making sad face. **So, they cried out to God** (lead kids in motion: clasp hands together and look up), **telling Him they were sorry and asking for His forgiveness. Let's do that together. Make a very sad face. Now let's use a big voice and say, "God, please help us!" Ready, on the count of three, let's try it together. Sad face and a big voice: one, two, three ... "God, please help us!" What do you think God did?** Wait for children to respond. **He forgave them every single time! Not only that, but He helped them to be freed from the people who were telling them what to do!**

**The people remembered who God was for a while, and then ... it happened again! They fought with another country** (punch at air at an angle just above shoulder), **lost** (throw arms to sides, hands open and palms up), **and had to do everything the kings from the different lands told them** (hands in fists, crossed over each other, and held out in front of body). **What do you think the people did?** Children respond. **Yes! They cried out to God** (clasp hands together and look up). **Ready, on the count of three, sad faces and big voices: one, two, three ... "God, please help us!" What do you think God did?** Children answer. **He forgave them again! And He freed them from the people who were telling them what to do, again!**

**God knew the people needed even more help! So, He gave the Israelites a man named Samuel to lead them. Does that name sound familiar? This is the same Samuel who heard God's voice as a boy. He remained a**

faithful servant of God as he grew up, and now years later, he was still serving God. Samuel shared with the people all the things God told him. Samuel also talked to God for the people. Samuel had a pretty big job. He loved God *and* the people of Israel.

Samuel knew all the ways God had helped the Israelites and he wanted everyone to remember God's help. So, Samuel took a very large stone and placed it in the ground. Lift the What'sIt and place it in the middle of the stage. *Tech: Cue Samuel Placing Stone image.* Samuel named the stone Ebenezer. That may sound like a strange name, but listen to what it means ... Ebenezer means "stone of help." Who always helped the people of Israel? Children respond. God did! God had helped the people, and the stone helped them to never forget.

Whom do we know who is mighty and able to help us? Children respond. God! When you're sad and hurting, whom do you know can help you? Kids answer. God will! He is always near you. And He will always help you when you call out to Him. Samuel wanted people to see the stone. He wanted the stone to remind everyone who passed by of the story of God's faithfulness and how He saved His people. You know what? We can tell people about the good things God has done too! We can tell people about the parts of The Big God Story we read in the Bible, *and* we can tell them about *all* the things God does to help us in our lives!

## Wonder Questions

Small Group Enhancements, coloring pages, and discussion questions help your group go deeper into today's portion of The Big God Story.

**SUPPLIES** (per small group)

- [Wonder Questions coloring pages \(see Resources\)](#)
- [TruWonder Small Group Enhancements timeline and images \(see Resources\)](#)
- Crayons

### RELATE

In this part of The Big God Story, Samuel placed a large stone and called it Ebenezer. Its purpose was to remind God's people of His faithfulness in always being with them and being their help. God will always help us when we call out to Him.

I wonder ... How do I need God's help?

I wonder ... How can I remember God's help?

I wonder ... How can I say thank You to God for His help?

I wonder ... How can I show God that I worship Him?

## BLESS:: 5 min.

Small Group Leaders

*Children receive a blessing from their leaders and sometimes one another. A blessing may be a prayer of commission, a portion of Scripture, or words to encourage and guide.*

**SUPPLIES** (per small group)

- [Remember Verse cards \(see Resources\)](#)

**RELATE**

Invite kids to come together in a circle, then break into twos or threes. Ask them to speak words of encouragement to each other by repeating after you: (Name of friend), **God is your help**. Then have the other child repeat the blessing to his friend: (Name of friend), **God is your help**. Then ask children to face you for a group blessing.

**Children, may you see all the ways God is helping you and your family this week.**