

The Story of the **Rich Fool**

The Point: Keep God first!

Scripture Connect: Luke 12:16–21

Supplies for all Session 7 activities options: pencils, prepared poster, at least 5 paper or foam cups per child, stopwatch, Bible, 1 hat, paper, 1 cooking spoon

The Basics for Leaders

A crowd had formed around Jesus, people pushing and elbowing to get near enough to hear. And a voice cried out from the crowd: “Teacher, please tell my brother to divide our father’s estate with me” (Luke 12:13).

A practical request, but one easily settled by law and custom. Jesus saw something lurking beneath the request and that’s what he addressed: greed. More specifically, how concern about wealth on earth gets in the way of being rich in a relationship with God.

Keeping God first is more than just a set of rules. It’s more than doing the right thing at the right time. It’s doing the right thing at the right time for the right reason—and that reason is a deepening love for God.

Through today’s story you’ll help children discover what a rich fool should have discovered: it’s a good idea to keep God first!

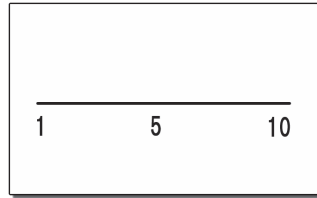
OPENING ACTIVITY—OPTION 1

HOWZITGOIN’

Time: about 5 minutes, depending on attendance

Supplies: pencils, prepared poster

Before kids arrive, draw a line on a poster. Write a 1 on the left end of the line, a 10 on the right, and a 5 in the middle. As kids arrive, ask them to pencil in their initials on the line.



Say: **If this past week was so awful you wish you'd slept through it, place your initials by the 1. If it was a great week you wish you could repeat, put your initials by the 10. Place your initials anywhere on the line that shows how you feel about this past week—except exactly on the 5. Because there's no such thing as a week that's exactly half good and half bad!**

After kids have signed in, give them 30 seconds each to explain why they placed their initials where they did. Be sure to include your own initials and explain your placement on the line. Kids will begin to express themselves more over time, and hearing their stories will help you adapt this lesson to make it relevant to your kids' lives.

OPENING ACTIVITY—OPTION 2

FIRST IN LINE

Time: about 10 minutes

Supplies: none

Have children face you, single file. Then ask them to line up again, but in alphabetical order of their first names. Have older kids help younger ones.

Applaud the effort, but tell children to move more quickly as they line up several more times. For each of the following rounds, ask kids to get lined up within 30 seconds.

Have children line up by height, exact age, alphabetical order of their middle names, distance to their homes from your meeting place, the number of buttons being worn, alphabetical order of their birthplace (city), or hair length.

Keep lineups moving quickly—it's more fun!

After playing several rounds, say: **Most people love being first in line, and it was fun in this game too. But when it comes to putting someone first in your life, who gets that spot? Is it you ... someone else ... or God?**

Today we'll dive into a story Jesus told about a rich fool and see what he learned about putting God first.

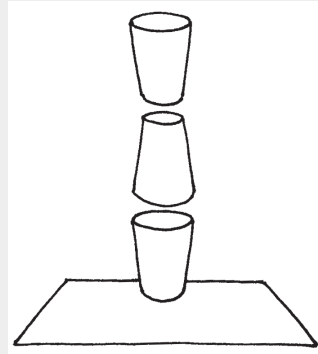
Cool Stories Game

HOW HIGH CAN YOU GO?

Time: about 10 minutes

Supplies: at least 5 paper or foam cups per child, stopwatch

Form children into even-numbered teams. (You may need to join a team to keep the numbers even.) Give each team the same number of cups and this challenge: stack cups to make



the tallest tower possible. Explain and demonstrate the following rules:

- **The first cup must be placed on the floor (or a table) right side up. The next cup is placed upside down over it. Continue this pattern to make a tall tower.**
- **Cups must be freestanding.**
- **Team members must take turns placing cups on the tower.**
- **Whichever tower is highest at the final signal wins—and I won't announce how long you have to work in each round.**

Say: A winning tower might be just one cup high, depending on when time is called. Or it might be ten cups high or more. And if your tower of eight cups is steady, maybe it's not a good idea to get greedy and go for a tower of ten cups, even if you have time to keep building. It's up to you.

Ready? Go!

Vary the times of each round (suggested: 25 to 60 seconds per round).

Collect the cups and gather children in a circle. Discuss as a group:

- **What encouraged you to keep adding cups? What encouraged you to stop adding them?**
- **How did it feel when your tower fell?**
- **How was this activity like people always wanting more?**
- **In what way, if any, did greed play a part in this activity?**

Say: Let's meet a man Jesus described in a story. He was like many people we know—he wanted more and more. He had a lot of trust in his money, but he ran into a snag.

Cool Bible Story

LAST INTERVIEW

Time: about 15 minutes

Supplies: Bible, 1 hat, 1 pencil

Gather children in a circle. Say: **Good news! A newspaper reporter is coming any minute to interview you for an article. Word has gotten out about how you're going to put up some new barns on your farm. Wait, you don't know anything about this, do you?**

Explain to kids that they'll play the part of a successful farmer, and you'll play the part of a newspaper reporter. They've got to become very familiar with the details, so read aloud Luke 12:16–19. Explain that any details they're asked about will have to fit with the larger story—that they grow wheat and probably some other crops, and they're building bigger barns. In other words, they're rich! But other details? Those they can make up.

Pull on your reporter hat and pretend a pencil is a microphone. Then ask:

- **How long have you been in farming?**
- **Why do you think your fields have such large harvests?**
- **How many people do you hire to work on your farm?**
- **What crops do you grow?**
- **How large will your new barns be?**
- **Now that you're rich, what will you do?**
- **Were you surprised about the announcement?**

Your children won't know quite how to respond to the last question. You may hear, "What announcement?" Say: **Oh, you thought I was from the *business page* of the paper. I'm not. I write the obituaries. I write about people who've just died. Or in your case, people who are about to die. I guess you didn't hear the rest of Jesus's story. Let's hear it now!**

Read aloud verses 20–21. Say: **So, Mr. Rich Farmer, how would you answer these questions?**

- **What do you think your bigger barns will do for you now?**
- **What matters more: your riches or your friendship with God?**
- **Is it ever too late to put God first? Explain.**

Pull off your hat. Thank your kids for playing the part of the rich farmer. Then say: **Our farmer friend discovered—too late—that riches don't take**

the place of loving and serving God. You can't trust money to get to Heaven! For that you have to put God first!

CLOSING PRAYER

GIVE-TO-GOD PRAYER

Time: about 5 minutes

Supplies: none

Gather kids and ask: **Is it okay to have stuff and to have money?** Give children time to respond. Say: **Money isn't good or bad. It is just ... money. What matters most is the *place* money has in your life and what you do with the money you have. Let's thank God for the money he's given to us and to our families. And let's tell him that when it comes to money, we'll put God first.**

Ask children to pray with their palms open and up, as a symbol of their willingness to give all they have to God. Ask children to briefly pray aloud, mentioning one thing they have they consider valuable and offering it to God. Close the prayer time by doing the same yourself.

EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY—OPTION 1

INSTANT MILLIONAIRE-10 TIMES OVER!

Time: about 5 minutes

Supplies: 1 sheet of paper and 1 pencil per child

Woo-hoo! Every child in your group has just received 10 million dollars from an unknown donor. But there's a catch: the money must be spent on themselves or others, or given away, in the next five minutes.

Give each child a sheet of paper and a pencil for taking notes. Then give them this challenge: **How will you get rid of your 10 million dollars? Be ready to report back in five minutes!**

Ask children to report back to the larger group. Then ask:

- **How many of you will need a bigger house to keep your stuff?**
- **How did you decide where to give money?**
- **If you could change your plan, how would you change it?**

Say: **How much is enough? How much is too much? The rich fool had too much—not because he had to build bigger barns, but because he**

quit putting God first. Instead, he put money first. Are you putting God first in your life—before anything or anyone else?

EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY—OPTION 2

YOUNG AND OLD

Time: about 5 minutes

Supplies: 1 cooking spoon

Ask children to sit in a circle on the floor, all within range of leaning forward and picking up the spoon. Explain that you're about to call out the name of an animal. Kids who know the correct name for the animal's young will grab for the spoon. For example, if you say "cat," the first person to grab for the spoon should say "kitten!" Whoever nabs the spoon first can offer a guess. If it's correct—great! If not, you'll replace the spoon and ask again. *Adapt the game as necessary to give younger children an equal chance.*

Here are pairings—the grown-up animal's name followed by the name of the animal when young.

- Chicken (chick)
- Alligator (hatchling)
- Kangaroo (joey)
- Bat (pup)
- Sea lion (pup)
- Deer (fawn)
- Frog (pollywog)
- Goose (gosling)

Say: In nature the young come first and then they turn into adults. It doesn't work the other way. In the kingdom of God, we have to put God first or things don't work either. It doesn't work any other way. Let's do what the rich man should have done: keep God first!

EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY—OPTION 3

INQUIRING MINDS WANT TO KNOW

Time: 5 minutes

Supplies: none

Gather kids in a circle. Ask: **If you really put God first, what might change in your life?**