

The Story of the **Two Builders**

The Point: Obey Jesus.

Scripture Connect: Matthew 7:24–27

Supplies for all Session 8 activities options: pencils, prepared poster, 2 or more sofa cushions, popped popcorn, blankets (if needed), Bible, 1 cooking spoon

The Basics for Leaders

For much of his ministry, Jesus was the biggest show in town. Thousands of people would come to hear him teach. They hoped to see him heal a man with leprosy or feed an entire crowd with just a few fish sandwiches.

It's one thing to hear Jesus teach. It's another to take his teaching to heart and obey him.

That's the heart of the story you'll share with children today—that when we obey Jesus, we build our lives on something solid and unmovable, something steady, something that won't shift or fall apart. Ever.

Help your kids discover that truth today: it's wise to obey Jesus!

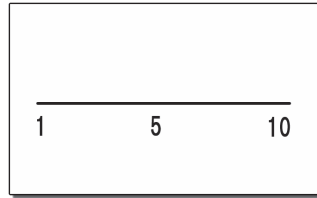
OPENING ACTIVITY—OPTION 1

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

SOLID FOUNDATION

Time: about 10 minutes

Supplies: 2 or more sofa cushions

Ask children to remove their shoes and socks. Place cushions on the floor.

Say: **You're about to do something difficult: stand on these cushions. Trust me, it's harder than it looks.**

Form children into two teams and then have a child from Team One stand on the cushions opposite a child on Team Two who is standing on the floor.

Ask both children to do the following:

1. **Stand on both feet, arms outstretched to the side, eyes open.**
2. **The same as step one, but standing on only one foot.**
3. **The same as step two, but with eyes closed.**
4. **The same as step three, but with arms at the child's sides.**

Children on the cushions will start wobbling at step three, so stand close so you can spot them. If you have lots of children (and lots of cushions), have

more than one child stand on cushions at a time, but make sure you have adequate, responsible spotters.

After kids have finished, have teams switch locations so everyone can feel what it's like to follow the instructions while standing on the cushions and the floor. Then discuss:

- **How tempted were you to open your eyes? Did you open your eyes?**
- **Why couldn't you stand firm?**
- **How would it have changed things if you'd been able to open your eyes?**

Say: **Your brain didn't have the information you needed to keep your balance. That's why you wanted to open your eyes.**

When you don't have a steady, solid foundation, it's easy to fall over. When you don't have the information you need to stay steady, it's easy to tip in the wrong direction.

That's true about your life too. Today we'll dive into a story Jesus told about two builders who chose to place houses on two very different foundations!

Cool Stories Game

BLOW HARD

Time: about 10 minutes

Supplies: 1 popped kernel of popcorn per child, blankets (if needed)

Before children arrive, identify at least two different surfaces for the Blow Hard game. Look for varying amounts of friction such as a hardwood or tile floor and a carpeted floor. No way to leave your room? Use the floor you have and place several thick blankets on it to provide more friction.

Give each child a kernel of popped popcorn. Ask children to put their kernels in a line on the floor and about eight feet from a wall. Have children propel their popcorn forward by blowing on it. The goal: to reach the wall first.

Give a three, two, one countdown, and then start the race. Step quickly to the wall to be the judge for the big finish.

Repeat the race several times on different surfaces.

Applaud all efforts, collect the kernels, and say: **Great job! Maybe you noticed that how hard you had to work depended on how smooth the surface was where you raced.**

The foundation you pick makes a difference! That's what two builders discovered in a story Jesus told. Let's dive into it and see what happened to them.

Cool Bible Story

BEACH HOUSE BONANZA

Time: about 15 minutes

Supplies: Bible

Gather children in a circle and have them number off one, two, one, two around the circle. You'll be the reader, so you won't take a number.

Say: **Congratulations! Each of you has just won a new beach house, one that you can have built any way you want! Turn to a partner and tell that person what you want to be a part of your new home. For instance, I want a full-size basketball court just off my bedroom** (substitute any great big dream or wish).

Allow several moments to share. Then ask kids to report back how they'd create their new houses. Applaud their ideas.

Say: **Here's the thing: you number one builders will have your house built on a hill overlooking the beach. It has a nice view and is just a five-minute walk down to the water. The hill is solid rock, so it's a sturdy foundation.**

The number two builders will have your house built right on the beach. If you were any closer to the water, you could fish right off your porch. Your beach house is built on soft sand. So when the wind and waves are high, the sand under your house moves around.

Let's see how that turns out for you as we consider a story Jesus told about two builders. One builder put a new house on rock—that's you number one builders. The other builder put his house on sand—that's you number two builders.

As I read, I'd like you all to make sound effects. Ready?

Read aloud Matthew 7:24–27. Encourage kids to add sound effects at these points:

- verse 25: rain
- verse 25: floodwaters rising
- verse 25: winds howling
- verse 27: rain
- verse 27: floodwaters rising
- verse 27: winds howling

Say: **Number one builders, how did your house do?** Pause for answers.
You're rock solid because you're built on rock, a firm foundation.

Number two builders, how did your house do? Encourage these kids to fall over onto the floor, like their house fell over.

Ask kids to form pairs and discuss:

- **What made one builder foolish and the other wise?**
- **How can you tell if your life is built on rock or sand?**
- **What's a storm—a tough thing—that's happened to you? Did knowing Jesus help you stay strong? If so, how?**

Say: **When we listen to Jesus and follow his teaching, he helps us make good decisions. We build our lives on a solid foundation. It's wise to obey Jesus!**

CLOSING PRAYER

FIRM FOUNDATIONS PRAYER

Time: about 5 minutes

Supplies: none

Ask children to start their prayer time on all fours—with both knees and hands on the floor. Explain that you'll ask them to change positions three times as you pray together.

Pray: **God, thank you for the firm foundation of your love and your Word. We want to be wise in where we build our lives, so we ask your help building our lives on you.**

Ask children to raise one arm so they're touching the floor with just one hand and both of their knees.

Pray: **We pray for those who aren't strong or sturdy in their faith. Sometimes it's us, God. Help us to know and love you more.**

Ask children to shift so they're touching the floor with just one hand and one knee.

Pray: **We pray for those times we forget to obey you, God. When that happens we lose our firm foundation. Forgive us for those times.**

Ask children to shift so they're touching the floor with just one hand or knee. (Of course, they will probably topple over.)

Pray: **We know that, when we don't obey, we lose our firm foundation, God, and fall without you. Have kids kneel or stand in a steady position. Say: Thank you for loving us even then, and for giving us the chance to come back to you through love and obedience. Amen.**

Ask children to sit on the floor and discuss:

- **When was it easiest to pray: when you had a firm foundation or a shaky one? Why?**

After your discussion, ask children to offer one-sentence prayers thanking God for being a solid rock they can count on.

EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY—OPTION 1

DO AS I SAY, NOT AS I DO

Time: about 10 minutes

Supplies: none

This will take some practice on your part, but it's worth the effort.

In this version of Simon Says, you say one thing but do another. For instance, you may say "touch your knee" while you touch your elbow.

Tell children to obey what you say, not what you actually do. Then lead kids in a fast-paced game of Simon Says that involves various actions, such as: standing on one foot, touching various body parts, leaning in different directions, or jumping.

When you've finished, expect kids to be thoroughly confused. Discuss:

- **What made it hard to obey in this game?**
- **How do you feel when someone says to do something that he or she doesn't do? Why?**

Say: **Good news! Jesus asks us to obey him and to do what he wants. And he shows us how to be obedient. He did exactly what God wanted him to do. We can obey Jesus!**

EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY—OPTION 2

FOUNDATION QUIZ

Time: about 10 minutes

Supplies: 1 cooking spoon

Place a cooking spoon on the floor and have children sit in a circle within range of leaning forward and picking up the spoon.

Explain that you'll call out the name of a famous building or landmark. You want to know where the "foundation" for that building or landmark is—the city or the country where the landmark is found. Whoever knows the answer can grab the spoon and offer a guess. If it's correct, go to the next item on your list! If not, replace the spoon and ask again.

If you have at least two older and two younger children, pair them up to make the contest more equal.

Here are buildings or landmarks and the answers!

- **The Eiffel Tower** (Paris, France)
- **The Great Pyramids** (Egypt)
- **The London Bridge** (Lake Havasu City, Arizona)
- **Lincoln's Tomb** (Springfield, Illinois)
- **Great Wall of China** (China)
- **The Taj Mahal** (Agra, India)

Say: **These buildings and landmarks have firm foundations, so they've lasted. Is your foundation as solid because it's based on your friendship with God through Jesus?**

AGE-ALERT TIPS

If you have **younger children**, use these easier landmarks:

- Their own houses
- Their schools
- A park they enjoy

We build a solid foundation for our lives when we love and obey Jesus. That's a rock-solid foundation that lasts forever!

EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY—OPTION 3

INQUIRING MINDS WANT TO KNOW

Time: 5 minutes

Supplies: none

Gather kids in a circle. Ask: **What rules at home do you find hardest to obey? Why? What do you think Jesus wants you to do about that?**