

SESSION 1

The Need for a Rescuer

Bible Story

Jesus Calms the Storm (Luke 8:22-25)

Bible Memory

Hebrews 10:23, 24

Tales of the Ones He Won't Let Go Story

“Forever Family: Who Will I Trust?”

Special Family Session

A special session kids and their families can participate in together. If it isn't possible in your situation to involve whole families, you can easily adapt this session to use with just kids.

Overview

Welcome to the first of six sessions that go along with the book *Tales of the Ones He Won't Let Go* by Beth Guckenberger. This session is designed for families to experience together. It will help families continue important, life-changing conversations in the weeks that follow! **Note:** The story for this session, “Forever Family: Who Will I Trust?” is a story found within the Introduction to *Tales of the Ones He Won't Let Go*.

Hopefully this series will spark an interest in your students and their families to consider their need for our Rescuer God, someone who keeps holding onto them, no matter what life brings. Kids will wonder about a world bigger than their own communities and become curious how they can connect with that world. They will begin asking questions such as these: Who will I trust? How do I pray? What can I give? Where can I go? Who will I serve? How can I love?

Special Note: Encourage each family to sit together. For children who are present without family members, arrange for them to sit with families they know and are comfortable with.



This session and each of the resources you need to print can be found on the Kids Serving Kids DVD.

Overview Chart

Intro Activities

Option 1: Cube Making

Supplies: Discuss-It Cube (DiscussItCube1 on the Kids Serving Kids DVD), card stock, scissors, tape

Option 2: Trust Fall

Supplies: chairs (or tables) stable enough for people to stand on (1 per small group)

Interactive Bible Story

Supplies: Bible; roll paper; markers (or paint pens) in blue, green, gray, purple, and black tones; scissors; extra paper (or drop cloths) to protect surface

Bible Memory

Supplies: Bibles, Bible Memory poster (use BibleMemoryLR files to project or print or customize BibleMemoryPoster to print, on DVD)
(optional: computer, projection equipment)

Tales of the Ones He Won't Let Go Story

"Forever Family: Who Will I Trust?"

Supplies: 2 copies of the the story (found at the end of this section or use ForeverFamily1 on DVD), name signs (NameSigns1), photos (from Photos1 folder to project or print)
(optional: computer, projection equipment)

Review Activity

Supplies: none

Bonus Video Option

"163 Million"

Supplies: "163 Million" video on DVD, DVD player, TV or video projection device

Inspiring Kid Story

Supplies: copy of the Inspiring Kid Story (InspiringKidStory1 on DVD)

Application Activity

Supplies: inflatable globe ball (or use a regular beach ball and draw a basic world map on it with permanent marker)

Prayer Time

Supplies: PrayerTimeCard1 on DVD, card stock, pencils or pens

Give and Serve Option

Supplies: offering container, serving hands, pens, tape, “163 Million” video on DVD, DVD player, TV or video projection device

Worship Option

Supplies: “Shine and Serve” or “Live Differently” video on DVD, DVD player, TV or video projection device

Extra Activities

For additional activities, check out ExtraActivities1 on DVD.

Bonus Service Ideas

For kid-friendly service projects students can work on at home or at the close of the session, go to the Bonus Service Ideas section for supplies and instructions.

Intro Activities

Option 1: Cube Making

Supplies: Discuss-It Cube (DiscussItCube1 on DVD), card stock, scissors, tape

Before class, print on card stock one Discuss-It Cube per family. Cut out the cubes, fold on the dotted lines, and tape the edges together.

Give a big welcome to everyone, especially families who have joined your group for the first time today. **During the next several weeks we’re going to focus on stories. Not just any stories, but stories of people around the world and from the pages of the Bible. We’ll hear stories of people’s lives that were being held by God, the Rescuer, all the time—even when they didn’t know it.**

Hold up a completed cube. **Each week your child will bring home a Discuss-It Cube like this one for you to use at a mealtime or whenever your family is together. There are questions in each square that relate to things we’ve been talking about and learning. As you toss the cube and take turns answering the questions, it will hopefully spark some great discussions.**

Distribute one cube per family. **Take the next few minutes and practice using your cube. The person tossing the cube can answer the question that lands on top.** Tell everyone that there are a few questions that will be easier to answer after the lesson.

Option 2: Trust Fall

Supplies: chairs (or tables) stable enough for people to stand on (1 chair per small group)

Give a big welcome to everyone, especially families who have joined your group for the first time today. **During the next several weeks we're going to focus on stories. Not just any stories, but stories of people around the world and from the pages of the Bible. We'll hear stories of people's lives that were being held by God, the Rescuer, all the time—even when they didn't know it.**

Right now we are going to practice feeling what it means to be held onto, to not be let go. Divide the group into smaller groups, as needed. Each group should have at least 6 people in it. Either divide by families, or if families are not there for everyone, just divide into smaller groups by counting off numbers.

Place a sturdy chair in front of each group. **I want each group to line up in 2 roughly equal lines facing each other, about an arm's length apart. Also make sure your lines start less than an arm's length from the chair. Then one volunteer from each group must come up and stand on the chair in front of your group.** Allow the volunteers to come forward and get on the chairs. **If you are on a chair, you must turn your back to your group, cross your arms over your chest, and close your eyes. While the volunteers are standing on the chairs, I need the 2 lines of each group to stretch their arms out toward one another and grab onto the facing persons' arms.**

Now people in the lines, get ready! On the count of 3, the person on the chair is going to fall straight backwards, with straight legs. It's our job in the groups to not let them go!

1 . . . 2 . . . 3!

Interactive Bible Story

Jesus Calms the Storm (Luke 8:22-25)

Supplies: Bible; roll paper; markers (or paint pens) in blue, green, gray, purple, and black tones; scissors; extra paper (or drop cloths) to protect surface

Before class, cover the floor or tables with extra paper to protect the surfaces and set out the markers. Cut one long piece (at least 5') of roll paper for each participant. Families may work together on one piece of paper.

Pass out the papers and markers for all the participants. **God made us many promises in the Bible, but he never promised us smooth sailing every day. As we listen to this Bible story, track the path of the story with your marker on the paper. Start your line on the left short side of your long paper, in the middle of that side. Then draw your line up or down or straight as the story indicates directions. Let's listen to the Bible story from Luke 8:22-25.** (Read the story slowly, emphasizing all the directional words to make sure everyone hears the ups and downs of the story.)

Jesus got into a boat with his disciples and said to them: "Let's go over to the other side of the lake! *Far, far away.*" As they sailed, the waves went *up*, the waves went *down*. The waves went *up* and *up . . .* and then *down*. Jesus fell asleep. *Deep, deep, asleep.*

The storm came *down*. *Down, down, down* on the lake. The water rose *up, up, up* inside the boat. They were in danger! *Deep, deep, danger!* The disciples came to Jesus, and woke him *up, up, up!* And they said, "Master, Master! We're going to drown in the *deep, deep* water!"

Then Jesus got *up, up, up*. And he calmed the wind *down*. He calmed the raging water *down*. *Down, down, down.*

"Where is your faith?" Jesus asked. And the disciples were amazed. They asked one another, "Who is this man? Even the winds and the water obey him!"

After the story is finished, ask a volunteer to read the actual Bible account as everyone looks at their pictures. Then talk about the story and drawings together. **Look at how your lines go up and down and all over the place! That's often how the stories of our lives look. No one walks a smooth, straight path for all their days. The disciples definitely had their ups and downs! Just think about how it might have felt to be in that boat in the middle of a big storm. Would you have been scared? How would you have felt?**

The disciples were afraid, but Jesus was holding them all along—they just didn't know it. Jesus had the situation under control. As we continue with our lesson, think about the times in your life when you've felt afraid or like things were out of control. Even in your deepest downs, God is there. And in your highest ups, God is there. Our Rescuer God always has the situation under control. We need to remember that, and to get to know him better, so we can see him working in our lives even more.

Bible Memory

Supplies: Bibles, Bible Memory poster (use BibleMemoryLR files to project or print or customize BibleMemoryPoster to print, on DVD)
(optional: computer, projection equipment)

Before class, decide how you will show the Bible Memory poster. You can project it or print it out.

We all have a need for a Rescuer, someone who will hold onto us through hard times when we can't hang on by ourselves. Ask everyone to turn to Hebrews 10:23, 24, the Bible Memory verses. Have a volunteer read aloud the verses. **We can hold tight to our hope and faith in God because we know he is faithful. He will never let us go. And since we know that, we can encourage each other to live lives of love, doing good things for each other.**

Then teach everyone the following signs based on American Sign Language that will help them remember these important verses. (If you aren't familiar with these signs, there are several good websites that demonstrate how to do them.)

Project or show the Bible Memory poster and ask everyone to stand. Invite a family to volunteer to come to the front to lead everyone in saying the Bible Memory verses together while doing the signs.

Hold: Make a grasping motion in the air with your hand, ending in a tight fist that you shake a little from side to side, with palm side facing you.

Onto: Place the right hand palm down onto the back of the left hand, also palm down.

Faith/Hope: (Faith) Touch forehead with index finger; then form an “OK” sign with both hands, bringing down the right O on top of the left O.

(Hope) Bring both hands up slightly to the left side of the body and with palms facing each other, with the right hand slightly higher than the other (right hand at forehead level). As soon as you bring them up, bend the fingers of each hand forward together quickly twice, as if the hands are simultaneously waving at each other.

Because: Bring L hand-shape in right hand up to forehead (palm facing forehead), placing tip of index finger on forehead and then quickly bending the index finger and pulling it away in the air.

God: In one smooth motion, raise right hand up to the heavens with fingers pointing up and palm facing the left side of body and then bring hand downward past chin, following center line of face.

Faithful: Same sign as *faith*, but repeating the action of bringing the right O down on top of the left O once.

Love: Cross arms in an X shape over chest.

Good Deeds/Works: Make sign for *good* by touching tips of fingers of one hand to chin (palm facing chin), and then bringing that hand back away from you down onto the palm of the other hand. Then quickly turn both hands around in fists, palms facing out, with one fist behind the other, and move both hands around in little circles a few times.

Tales of the Ones He Won't Let Go Story

"Forever Family: Who Will I Trust?"

Supplies: 2 copies of the story (found at the end of this section or use ForeverFamily1 on DVD), name signs (NameSigns1), photos (from Photos1 folder to project or print, on DVD) (optional: computer, projection equipment)
Note: The story for this session is s a story found within the Introduction to the book *Tales of the Ones He Won't Let Go*.

Before class, decide how you will show the photos. You can project them or print them out. Reading the short story will be more effective if two good readers read the story script. Give them each a copy. One person will read Beth's story; the other person will read the parts of the girls. If desired, you can print the two name signs and display them close to where each reader stands.

Cue the readers to begin. Show the photos as prompted in the story. When the story is finished, thank the readers.

Review Activity

Supplies: none

Have each family sit together. As you ask the following questions, tell families to come up with their best answer. They should join hands together and raise them as one unit when they want to answer. Call on different families to answer.

1. **In the story, what needs did the twin girls have?** (They needed a family, a new home, someone to rescue them from their situation, etc.)
2. **When Beth was facing her big decision about the girls, she wanted to be in the driver's seat. Why?** (She wanted control, and to see the way to go.)
3. **That was what she *wanted*, but what did Beth *need*?** (She needed to remember God was in control. She needed to trust God.)
4. **What is a missionary? Do you have to go to another country to be a missionary?** (A missionary is a person sent out to spread the gospel message to others. Usually missionaries do travel to a different country, but you don't have to travel to another country to spread the message of God's love.)

5. **In what ways do you think missionaries have to trust in God?** (For their decisions of where to go, how to get there, how to talk to people, what words to say, for the provision needed to take them where they need to go, for encouragement, faith, etc.)
6. **Who did the girls have to trust, and for what reasons?** (They had to trust Beth and Todd to provide them with a good, loving home. They had to trust their siblings to let them be part of the family. They had to trust in God to be their Rescuer.)
7. **When was a time you had to trust God for something?**

Bonus Video Option

Supplies: “163 Million” video on DVD, DVD player, TV or video projection device

Show students the “163 Million” video, in which Beth Guckenberger talks about meeting the needs of orphans around the world.

Inspiring Kid Story

Supplies: copy of the Inspiring Kid Story (InspiringKidStory1 on DVD)

Before class, print a copy of the Inspiring Kid Story document. Give the story to a student who is willing to read it aloud.

It’s time to listen to an Inspiring Kid Story. This is a true story of some kids who saw a need and figured out what they could do. Invite the student who is reading this to begin.

A boy named Leo grew up in an orphanage in Monterrey, Mexico. At age twenty, he wanted to go to another state and serve for the summer in an orphanage in Mazatlan, Mexico. The only problem was that he needed money for the plane ticket and for his meals during the month he was going to serve. Meanwhile, a youth pastor named Chris Cox was speaking at a summer

youth camp. He told the youth about Leo—about how God had healed Leo's heart so much that it overflowed and he wanted to offer that hope to other children growing up in an orphanage. The youth decided to fast for lunch every day during the week of their camp, and the camp wrote a check for \$1000 for Leo's month in Mazatlan! Together the youth and Leo sent a powerful message to the fatherless in Mazatlan that God sees them and won't let them go!

Application Activity

Supplies: inflatable globe ball (or use a regular beach ball and draw a basic world map on it with permanent marker)

Does anyone here know the song “He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands”? (Take a minute to teach the song to children and their parents. You can search online for the song lyrics and tune.) **Let’s sing the song’s chorus once through.**

After singing, ask the kids: **If God has the whole world in his hands, what countries does that mean?** Listen for answers and then show them the countries they will be learning about in the following sessions (Mexico, China, USA, Haiti, and Nigeria). Pick one and sing the song through, replacing the phrase *the whole world* with the country of your choice.

If he has the whole world in his hands, what does that mean for those who have lost their biological families? Does he have them in his hands? Listen to the discussion, talking about how it looks for God to have orphans in his hands. Sing the song through again, replacing the phrase *the whole world* with the phrase *orphans and their families*.

If he has the whole world in his hands, what does that mean for all of us, whether we are adopted or foster kids or living with our biological families? Listen to the discussion. Sing the song through again, replacing the phrase *the whole world* with the phrase *you and me*. Meanwhile, depending on the age of the kids in the classroom, bounce the globe around the room while you are singing. If

the song stops while someone is holding the ball, that person can choose what else God has in his hands.

Prayer Time

Supplies: PrayerTimeCard1 on DVD, card stock, pencils or pens

Before the session, print out on card stock one Prayer Time Card for each family or small group you think you will have, or one for each participant, as needed. Pass these out along with pencils or pens. **Each session we will craft a prayer together as a class and then take it home and use it for family prayer times. Look at your Prayer Time Card. Can you help me fill in these blanks?** Let people have time to fill in the blanks on the card. Then pray together.

Give and Serve Option

Supplies: offering container, serving hands, pens, tape, "163 Million" video on DVD, DVD player, TV or video projection device

If you did not view it already, show your group the "163 Million" video from the Kids Serving Kids DVD. Then draw everyone's attention to the Serving Hands Wall (see instructions at the beginning of the Give and Serve Option section) and tell the group about their ongoing opportunity to get involved in Back2Back's ministry to orphans (as described in the Give and Serve Option section). Describe the orphan needs you'll be focusing on and the giving goals you've set. Pass out serving hands and pens and, based on the option you've selected, explain how kids can add hands to the wall.

Worship Option

Supplies: “Shine and Serve” or “Live Differently” video on DVD, DVD player, TV or video projection device

Wrap up with an upbeat time of worship! Play Yancy’s “Shine and Serve” or “Live Differently” video and invite families to sing along.

Send Home or E-mail

- Family Connect (FamilyConnect1 on DVD)
- Conversation Cards (ConversationCards1 on DVD)

Extra Activities

If you need extra activities, check out ExtraActivities1 on DVD. Included are lots of fun activities that students will enjoy, such as making a pretend aquarium and baking pumpkin empanadas (*empanadas de calabazas*).

Bonus Service Ideas

Share ideas for how kids can serve in your community during the week (found in the Bonus Service Ideas section). Optionally, set out take-home supplies or set up a “Serve Others” table where kids can work on service projects before or after each session.

Session 1

Tales of the Ones He Won't Let Go Story

Here's the text of the story participants will read and discuss during this lesson. You can find and print all the scripts and stories you'll need for each of these sessions on the **Kids Serving Kids DVD**.



Tales of the Ones He Won't Let Go Story

Session 1

“Forever Family: Who Will I Trust?”

Marilyn and Marlene's Story

What is going to happen to us? wondered Marilyn. It wasn't the first time in her young life that she'd asked such a question, but this time it felt more urgent. Perhaps because she knew more. When she was very little she didn't think about ever being separated from her sister. They were twins. They had been together since birth. They would always be together. Right?

Marlene stared off in the distance at some kids playing soccer. She was worried too, but she was trying not to show it. She heard Marilyn's deep sigh and she reached for her sister's hand. “Something will work out,” she said. Silently she prayed, *God, please work something out.*

Fifteen was supposed to be a happy milestone in the life of a Mexican girl. Both of

these newly-turned-fifteen-year-olds hoped this time wouldn't turn into a bad memory.

Beth's Story

[Show MapOfMexico1.]

So young. Beth found herself looking back at some old photos of the time when she had first met the twins. It was just four years ago, but it felt like a lifetime. So much had happened since then. She saw herself in the photos—a twenty-something mom of three little ones, a missionary living and learning on the field in Monterrey, Mexico, a wife, a daughter, a sister. And also the adopted *tía*, or auntie, of two beautiful girls that she and Todd had fallen in love with.

Her mind snapped back to the present. She could hear Todd's words he had spoken on the phone just that afternoon echoing in her mind: “Do we lose the girls forever, or do they come home with us—today—forever? We have to decide now.”

A critical situation had suddenly arose. There was no time to make plans and gather loads of wise counsel. They had to decide *today*.

Marilyn and Marlene's Story

Marilyn and Marlene already felt like Beth and Todd were family. For the last four years they had spent a lot of time with the Guckenbergers—weekends, holidays, and many family events. Beth and Todd were always there for them—celebrating school victories, birthdays, and even just little moments that would have seemed trivial to an outsider, but meant everything to them.

“Do you think . . .” Marilyn started to ask, but her voice trailed off.

“I don’t know,” Marlene replied, knowing what her sister was thinking. “We can’t expect that. I don’t know what to expect.”

She went back to staring at the soccer game for a while, but felt too distracted and anxious to focus on anything. “C’mon,” she said to her twin, “let’s go for a walk.”

Beth's Story

I wanted to be in the driver’s seat. This road was getting out of control, and I wanted to be in the front, able to watch for every turn and plan accordingly. I wanted to be certain.

But all I could be certain of that morning was that the best stories happen not when I’m in the driver’s seat, trying to wrestle

with control, but when I take the back seat—when I let go and close my eyes and trust the driver.

So I sat down on the couch and asked God to talk to me. *I am listening*, I told him. As I listened, I could feel the fear subside. Once the fear stopped clouding my brain, I heard his direction. *Go. Go get them.*

Once you hear God, you have two choices, to obey or disobey. I went over to the orphanage where the girls were living and said to Todd what I knew God was steering us toward. Together, we said yes, and immediately I was the mom of twin teenage girls.

Marilyn and Marlene's Story

[Show HappyTwins1.]

“We were so happy,” Marilyn remembered later. “And so relieved. We wouldn’t have to move; we wouldn’t have to be separated. It was weird, for Beth and Todd to all of a sudden be our parents and to instantly have a family. But it was good.”

The very next day they all piled into the family car and went to the local pet shop. The girls wondered what Beth/Mama was up to.

“Each of you can pick out a fish,” their new mom said. Without much explanation, she bought a tank and all the accessories for an aquarium. Each of them took time to find just the right fish. Marlene picked out one that was a little smaller than the others, but

it had a beautiful tail and pretty colors. Both girls were excited to have their own pets.

Beth's Story

When we got back to the house and the fish were settled in their new home too, I sat all the kids down and talked to them about the changes in our family life—changes that had already happened and ones that we couldn't even imagine yet.

"It's like the fish," I said. "We all look different and are different sizes, but we have to share the same space. We have to work to see how we are more alike than different, because we are family now."

It was a beautiful moment that ended with hugs and promises to swim well in the same tank together.

This is going to work out just fine, I thought.

That lasted about three days.

Marilyn and Marlene's Story

Marilyn made it into the door first after school that day. She was tired and plopped down on the couch. Marlene followed close behind.

"Did you feed the fish yet?" she asked Marilyn.

"No—you saw me. I just got here. I'm tired. It's your turn anyway." Marilyn was feeling grumpy. It had been a long day and her

new little brothers had been getting on her nerves that week. But her moment of quiet was not going to last.

"Oh, no! No! Marilyn!! Marilyn, come!!!" Marilyn ran to see what Marlene was screaming about.

"My fish!" she wailed. "My fish is gone!"

Beth's Story

I knew something was wrong when I pulled up to the house. Marilyn came running out before I had even gotten out of the car.

"Josh's fish ate Marlene's!" she blurted out.

Oh, Lord, I prayed. *Help!*

Inside I found a crying Marlene and a pitiful little brother who felt bad somehow for what was no fault of his own. I talked to them and confessed that my analogy of the fish in the tank to the hopes of our family broke down in some places. There were tears, but there was also laughter. It's still a story we tell and laugh about today.

In many ways, we all grew up together, through the girls' high school and college years and the little ones' toddler and elementary years. It took a lot of eye-closing in those years, a lot of trusting the driver, to make it through. It took me believing that our God the Rescuer had a story for us all.

I told them all many times that there was a cost and a benefit to our family makeup (which changed and grew significantly over the years), and they needed to focus on the benefit and not pout over the cost. That's how this would work. That was fourteen years ago, and now no one can imagine our family any other way. God-directed paths lead to stories we tell long after the events have passed. It might be scary when you first close your eyes or let go of the handlebars, but we can always trust our driver. He will never let us go.

[Show BethWithGirls1.]