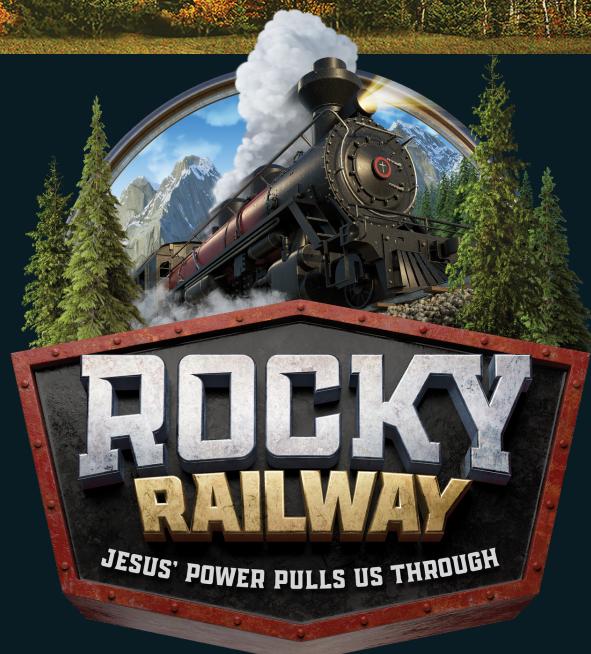




Preschool Exploration Stations

DAY 1



ROCKY
RAILWAY

JESUS' POWER PULLS US THROUGH

BIBLE POINT

— Day 1 —

Jesus' power helps us do hard things.

Bible Story: Ananias helps Saul. (Acts 9:1-19)

Bible Verse: “For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.”
(Philippians 4:13)

Consider This...

- ▶ The Bible makes it evident that God often asks his followers to do hard things. Noah built an ark. Abraham prepared to sacrifice his son. Mary bore the Son of God. Ananias had the terrifying job of reaching out to Saul.
- ▶ To understand the difficulty of Ananias' job, it's important to realize just how much Saul hated the early church. He approved the stoning of Stephen, arrested Christians in Jerusalem, and set his sights on imprisoning Christians living in Damascus. Christians ran away from Saul—not toward him!
- ▶ Ananias' name means “protected by the Lord.” It's likely that his parents didn't know the importance of such protection during this important, history-altering mission.
- ▶ In Acts 9:15, God doesn't ease Ananias' misgivings with words of comfort or empowerment. He simply shares his life-changing plan for Saul and urges Ananias to go.
- ▶ Because of his selection and obedience, Ananias got to be the first person to welcome Saul as a Christian. In spite of any misgivings or fear, Ananias warmly greeted Saul with the phrase “Brother Saul.”



Why It Matters...

Jesus still asks his followers to do hard things. Kids know it's hard to forgive when someone hurts their feelings. Kids can tell you how tough it is to make new friends, do what's unpopular, learn a new skill in school, and reach out in friendship to someone who's lonely. That's why today's activities will encourage kids with the truth that Jesus' power can fortify them through life's challenges. Just as Ananias drew strength from God's reassurance and plan, kids will come away with renewed inspiration that *they* can trust in Jesus' power to tackle the hard things they face.



SUPPLY STATION

- ▶ one piece of construction paper or cardstock cut into the shape of a wheel
- ▶ blank index card
- ▶ hole punch
- ▶ sand pail and shovel
- ▶ light scoopable material such as rice, beans, pompoms, or crumpled/torn paper
- ▶ empty container or box
- ▶ sidewalk chalk

Welcome to **Exploration Stations** at *Rocky Railway!* Here your preschooler will use their imagination to bring the railway to life. As kids play, they will reinforce their Bible learning in a fun and memorable way. All suggested activities can be modified to meet your at home materials. A few “Alternate Track” ideas are included below for this purpose. ***All aboard to Exploration Stations!***

OPTION 1: Little Locomotive

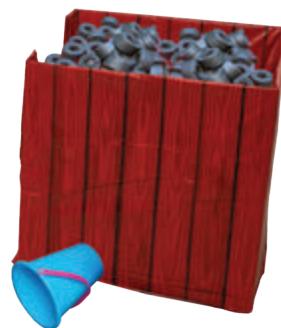
All this week we'll pretend we're riding a big, powerful train. We'll also be learning about Jesus' amazing power. Today we'll hear how **Jesus' power helps us do hard things. (Trust Jesus!)**

Chug it Out!

Invite your child to pretend he or she is driving a train engine with their precut wheel. If desired, draw a track outside with sidewalk chalk or create a designated track path in your home. Kids can pretend to shovel coal (light scoopable material) out of the coal car (empty container) into the bucket using a shovel. They can also pretend to be a conductor punching tickets with the index card. Use your imagination to bring Rocky Railway to life. All aboard the Little Locomotive!

Alternate Track

Cut the bottom out of a large empty box and allow your little conductor to wear it as a train. Decorate the box with markers or paints. Don't have a sand pail or shovel? Use any household container and a spoon. You can also make a train by putting chairs in a line. Pretend you are the conductor and have some family members climb aboard as you chug along.



OPTION 2: On the Track

Going up a steep hill might be hard, even for a powerful train. Sometimes a train engine might need help from another engine to pull a heavy train over a big mountain. We need help to do hard things too. **Jesus' power helps us do hard things. (*Trust Jesus!*)**

Chug it Out!

Attach two lines of track with masking tape from the top to the bottom of each piece of cardboard. Secure the cardboard with tape to two sides of a table or chair. Place the remaining track and trains nearby to play with. Let your preschooler drive the trains up the “hill” to the table.

Alternate Track

Don't have a train set? Use a little toy car or anything with wheels to represent the train. Set up a ramp with a piece of cardboard, books, pillows, or even a baking sheet. If you have a swing set, use a sliding board to represent the “hill”. Drive your movable object uphill as you pretend you are climbing a big mountain.



SUPPLY STATION

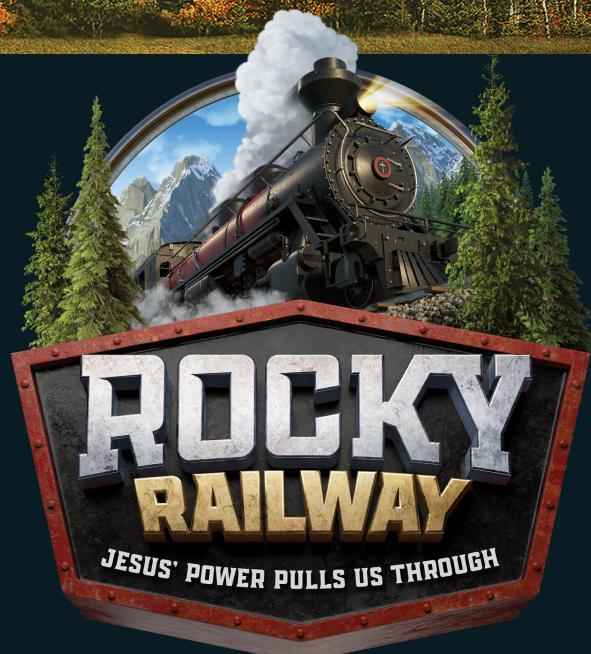
- ▶ children's train set with buildable track and multiple train cars
- ▶ 2 large pieces of cardboard
- ▶ masking tape or painter's tape





Preschool Exploration Stations

DAY 2



BIBLE POINT

— Day 2 —

Jesus' power gives us hope.

Bible Story: Paul encourages others in a storm and shipwreck. (Acts 27)

Bible Verse: “So be strong and courageous, all you who put your hope in the Lord!” (Psalm 31:24)

Consider This...

- ▶ After Paul became a follower of Jesus, he fervently shared the news of Jesus everywhere he went. In Jerusalem, Paul encountered a group of men who opposed his teachings. These men began a riot, accusing Paul of spreading false doctrine and of defiling the Temple. Guards arrested Paul and threw him in prison. The following years included trials, death threats, secret transfers to other prisons, and finally a trip to Rome where Paul could plead his case before Caesar.
- ▶ In Acts 27:9, Paul notes the sailing season in connection with Jewish observances. Sailors typically only sailed from Pentecost (May–June) through Tabernacles (after the Day of Atonement in late September or early October). Roman sailors resisted sailing in November, as it typically proved dangerous.
- ▶ The sailors battled the fierce storm for at least three days, using every trick they knew to secure the ship and survive hurricane-force winds and waves. Finally, the weary seamen lost hope of ever being saved. At this low point, Paul shares the hopeful news given by God.
- ▶ God’s message of hope, conveyed through Paul, rang true for the soldiers, the sailors, and the prisoners. God’s angel assured Paul that “none of you will lose your lives” (Acts 27:22). However, after the shipwreck, the soldiers planned to kill the prisoners so they wouldn’t escape. (Roman law mandated that a soldier who lost a prisoner had to take that prisoner’s place!) “But the commanding officer wanted to spare Paul, so he didn’t let them carry out their plan” (Acts 27:43). And, just as the angel said, not even a prisoner died.

Why It Matters...

In many ways, Paul was powerless in the stormy sea. He didn’t have experience as a sailor. Guards held him prisoner. And, of course, he couldn’t stop the crashing waves and howling winds. But Paul *did* have Jesus’ power on his side!

In the same way, kids may feel powerless through life’s storms. The world can seem turbulent, dark, and confusing. Bad news crashes over us. Fear blows relentlessly, leaving kids feeling hopeless. Yet God promises to strengthen us with *his* power! And we can trust that God’s promises are true. Like Paul, we have Jesus’ power on our side. Today, celebrate that truth and give kids the hope of victory and comfort during life’s uncertainties.





SUPPLY STATION

- ▶ children's train cars
- ▶ large piece of construction paper/cardstock
- ▶ painter's tape
- ▶ 2-inch-wide strips of construction paper
- ▶ tape/glue
- ▶ flashlight

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OPTION 1: On the Track

Trains often have to travel through dark tunnels. Sometimes we feel like we're going through dark times. It can be hard to see that there is light at the end of the tunnel. But Jesus is always with us, even in hard times. **Jesus' power gives us hope. (*Trust Jesus!*)** Let's make some tunnels for our trains to go through.

Chug it Out!

Help your child glue or tape ends of the construction paper strips in an arch to the large piece of construction paper. This will make a tunnel for trains to pass through. Shine a flashlight at one end of the tunnel. Move your train through the dark of the tunnel to the light!

Alternate Track

A little car or any toy with wheels can be used in place of a train. Use a paper towel tube as the tunnel and push a small car through to the other side. Need a different idea? Turn any table into a tunnel with a blanket. Push your train or toy car under the table or pretend you are the train and crawl through.



OPTION 2: Little Locomotive

Let's pretend we're on a train in a dark tunnel. People in a dark tunnel watch for light ahead. That gives them hope that the tunnel will end. **Jesus' power gives us hope (*Trust Jesus!*)**

Chug it Out!

Invite your child to pretend that he or she is driving a train engine in a tunnel with their precut wheel. If desired, draw a track outside with sidewalk chalk or create a designated track path in your home. Place a lit flashlight nearby and chug along to find the light. Kids can pretend to shovel coal (light scoopable material) out of the coal car (empty container) into the bucket using a shovel. They can also pretend to be a conductor punching tickets with the index card. Use your imagination to bring Rocky Railway to life. All aboard the Little Locomotive!

SUPPLY STATION

- ▶ one piece of construction paper or cardstock cut into the shape of a wheel
- ▶ blank index card
- ▶ hole punch
- ▶ sand pail and shovel
- ▶ light scoopable material such as rice, beans, pompoms, or crumpled/torn paper
- ▶ empty container or box
- ▶ sidewalk chalk
- ▶ flashlight

Alternate Track

Pretend that you are the train in a tunnel and chug around the house to find a shining hidden flashlight. Cut the bottom out of a large empty box and allow your little conductor to wear it as a train. Decorate the box with markers or paints. If you don't have a sand pail or shovel, use any household container and a spoon to move the "coal".



SUPPLY STATION

- ▶ wading pool or empty container
- ▶ water
- ▶ 6 inch piece of pool noodle
- ▶ drinking straw
- ▶ packing tape
- ▶ scissors
- ▶ spray bottle
- ▶ craft foam or small piece of construction paper

OPTION 3: Sail Away

In the Bible today we hear about some men who were stuck in a storm that pushed them where they didn't want to go. It would be scary to be out on a boat in a big storm. But Jesus gave the sailors hope that they would be okay. **Jesus' power gives us hope. (*Trust Jesus!*)** Let's make a storm for some boats and push them around.

Chug it Out!

Cut about 3 inches off the long end of the straw. Create a boat by sticking the cut end of a drinking straw through a section of the pool noodle, about $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches from one end of the noodle. The bendable portion of the straw should be at a right angle, and the straw should stick up about 2 inches, with the remaining straw sticking out the bottom. You may need to try different positions to find the right balance. For the sail, tape a 2 inch triangle of craft foam or construction paper to the bended upper part of the straw. Fill a wading pool or container with water. Set your boat afloat in the water and use a spray bottle on the stream setting to move the boat around.

Alternate Track

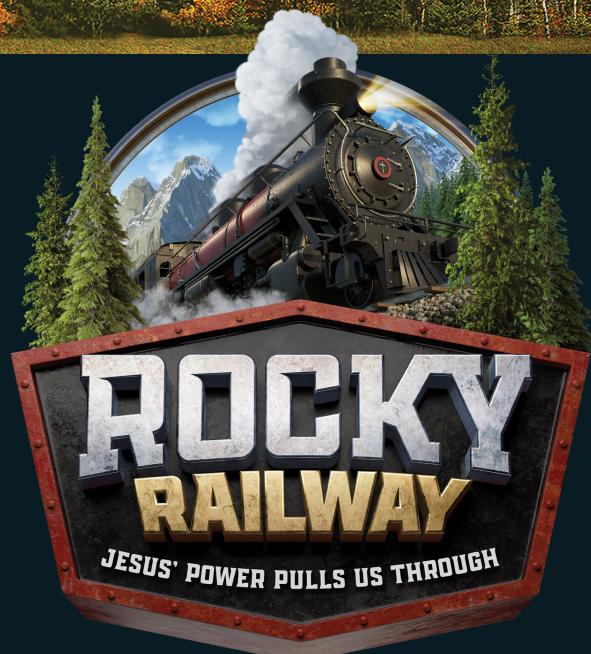
Cut a section of an empty egg carton to use as your boat. Experiment with light objects to represent people and see if they can float in your boat. Instead of a spray bottle, create a gentle wave with your hand in the water or blow on the boat to create wind and make it move. Have a toy boat to play with? Get it out to Sail Away!





Preschool Exploration Stations

DAY 3



BIBLE POINT

— Day 3 —

Jesus' power helps us be bold.

Bible Story: Peter and John teach about Jesus. (Acts 3:1–4:31)

Bible Verse: “He gives power to the weak and strength to the powerless.”
(Isaiah 40:29)

Consider This...

- ▶ In the name of Jesus, Peter and John healed a lame man at the Temple gate. The man celebrated the miracle so loudly that a crowd gathered. Peter, making the most of this instant audience, stood up and boldly shared the good news of Jesus.
- ▶ The priests who heard Peter’s message were most likely Sadducees. Sadducees didn’t believe in the resurrection, nor did they believe in the existence of angels or spirits. These leaders also maintained loyalty to the Roman government and sought to maintain the status quo.
- ▶ At the time, most Jews could read and write, but few—if any—received rabbinical training. Such an education would have made them skilled at lengthy theological discussions. So when Peter and John boldly preached before the Sanhedrin (a crowd of highly trained priests), the judges marveled at their ability and noted that they must have been with Jesus.
- ▶ After Peter and John’s release from prison, the church gathered around them for prayer and praise. It’s interesting to note that they don’t pray for the persecution to stop but that God would give them the boldness to continue sharing the news of Jesus *in spite* of their suffering.



Why It Matters...

Like Peter and John, most kids are ordinary and “untrained.” Speaking out about their faith can be intimidating. Many kids feel shy about praying before a restaurant meal, inviting a friend to church, or even mentioning Jesus in regular conversation. Other kids may feel unsure when it comes to showing Jesus’ love, playing with a new friend, or reaching out to someone who’s lonely. Give kids the chance to practice speaking about Jesus with ease and confidence. Provide opportunities for kids to daringly step out of their comfort zones. Bolster their bravery and cultivate a courageous faith, encouraging kids to rely on Jesus’ power to help them be bold.



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Chug it Out!

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Alternate Track

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G DDWEHOB

- ▶ modeling dough or play dough
- ▶ small toy people

SUPPLY STATION

- ▶ children's train set with buildable track and multiple trains
- ▶ 2 large pieces of cardboard
- ▶ masking tape or painter's tape
- ▶ cup
- ▶ tissue paper
- ▶ rubber band

OPTION 2: Break Through

Today we hear that Peter boldly and bravely told people about Jesus' love. Being bold means breaking through our fears. **Jesus' power helps us be bold.** (*Trust Jesus!*) Let's make our trains break through paper!

Chug it Out!

Use a rubber band to secure a tissue paper square tightly over the top of a plastic cup. (If the tissue paper isn't tight, the train will just sit on top and won't break through.) Attach pieces of track in two lines with masking tape from the top to the bottom of each piece of cardboard. Use tape to secure one end of each piece of cardboard to a chair so the tracks are at a 45-degree angle and the bottom is about 2 feet off the ground. Have your preschooler line up a train at the top of the track and then release the train down the hill. Have an adult or other family member hold the cup covered in tissue paper at the end of the track to catch the train. Once a train has broken through the tissue paper into the cup, replace the tissue paper cover and try again or switch roles.

Alternate Track

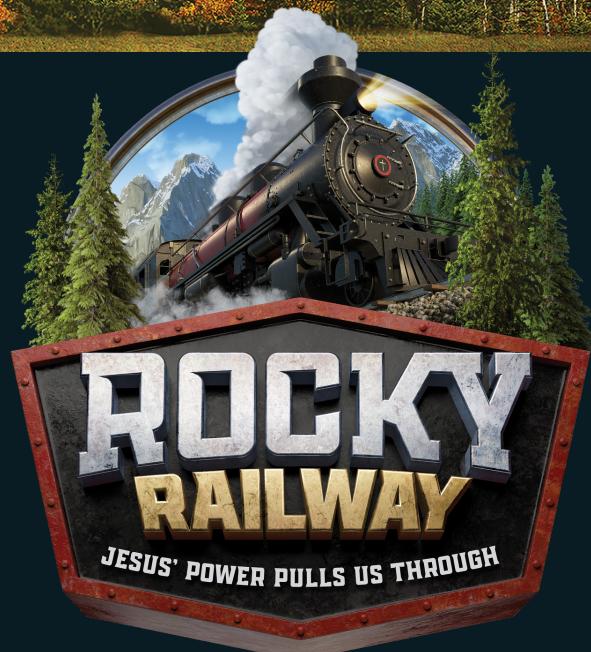
Use any other kind of track system with a little car or toy with wheels. Don't have a train set or track system? Make a ramp with a book, baking sheet, or box. If you have a swing set, use a sliding board to complete the same concept. Or securely cover a bucket with tissue paper and drop "coal" through the paper. Your "coal" could be a rock or other weighted object. Watch it break through and be bold!





Preschool Exploration Stations

DAY 4



BIBLE POINT

— Day 4 —

Jesus' power lets us live forever.

Bible Story: Jesus' death and resurrection. (Matthew 26:17–28:10)

Bible Verse: “The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you.”
(Romans 8:11)

Consider This...

- ▶ The Passover meal shared between Jesus and his disciples commemorated God's miraculous provision for his people centuries earlier. In this traditional celebration, Jews remembered the sacrificial lamb, whose blood (marked on their doorposts in Egypt) saved them. How appropriate that Jesus—our sacrificial lamb—completes his work on earth with such a symbolic event.
- ▶ In Jesus' culture—and in some Middle Eastern cultures today—eating together equaled friendship. Scholars equate sharing a meal with trust and intimacy, adding weight to Jesus' comment to Judas: “One of you who has just eaten from this bowl with me will betray me” (Matthew 26:23).
- ▶ The Roman government had deprived the Sanhedrin of the right to carry out most capital punishments. Therefore, even though the chief priests and elders found Jesus guilty, they had to turn him over to Pilate for execution.
- ▶ At Jesus' death, Matthew 27:51 records that “the curtain in the sanctuary of the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.” There were actually two curtains in the Temple. One divided the Most Holy Place from the Holy Place; the other separated the Holy Place from the court. Matthew doesn't specify which curtain tore, but a rending of either one would symbolize changes between God, ritual law, and humanity.
- ▶ Even Jesus' followers found his resurrection hard to believe! Matthew 28:17 tells us, “but some of them doubted!” Yet Jesus eased their doubts by appearing to them repeatedly over 40 days (Acts 1:3; 10:40-41).

Why It Matters...

Death is an uncomfortable—and even scary—topic for children and adults. Even though we don't like to talk or think about it, it's likely that most kids will experience the death of a pet, friend, or relative. That's why it's critical that we help children understand the hope we have through Jesus. Even though death may mean the end of *this* life, kids can celebrate the astonishing promise of eternal life with Jesus. Use today's lesson to help children understand their need for Jesus. Guide them as they discover that through Jesus' miraculous power, we can live forever in heaven.



SUPPLY STATION

- ▶ children's train set with buildable track and multiple trains



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All aboard to Exploration Stations!

OPTION % On the Track

On the track today, the trains can keep going around and around and never get to the end. That's what forever is like. It never has an end. Today we'll learn that **Jesus' power lets us live forever. (Trust Jesus!)**

Chug it Out!

Invite your preschooler to create a circular track that never ends.. Remind them that the trains can keep going on the track forever.

Alternate Track

Make your own circular track outside with sidewalk chalk and drive any toy with wheels around it. Pretend you are the train and walk around the track circle. Or set up chairs in a line. Walk around the chairs in a circle and chug like a train.



OPTION %Hop Around

In a circle track we could keep going and going and never get to the end. This kind of track goes on forever! Today we are learning that Jesus' power lets us live forever. (*Trust Jesus!*)

SUPPLY STATION

- ▶ sidewalk chalk or painter's tape
- ▶ music and player

Chug it Out!

Use tape or sidewalk chalk to create a circular train track on the ground. Make the spaces between "railroad ties" just right for a preschooler to stand in. Have your little conductor pretend he or she is a train running along a track. Play music for your preschooler to move to. If you have the VBS Music CD play "This Train is Bound for Glory" (track 5). Stop the music periodically. When you do, encourage your child to freeze in whatever position they are in.

Alternate Track

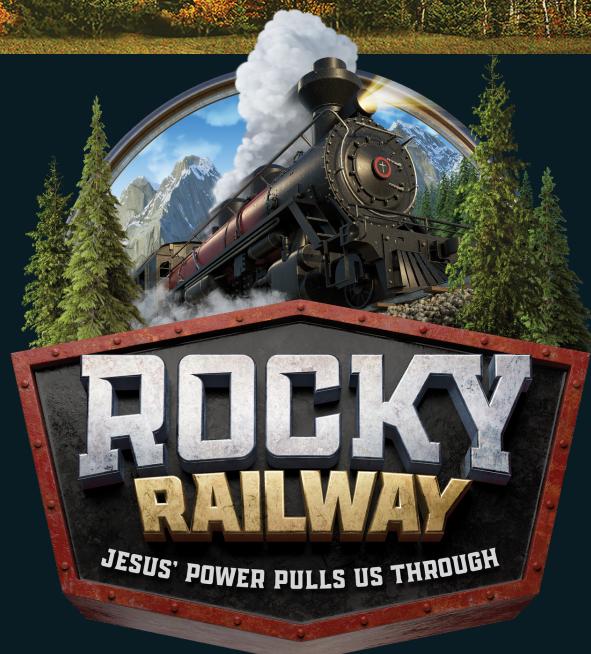
Create a designated circular path to follow instead of one marked on the ground. Play musical chairs using the same concept of following a circular path around the chairs and stopping to sit when the music stops. If you don't have the VBS CD you can find the music on our VBS website.





Preschool Exploration Stations

DAY 5



BIBLE POINT

— Day 5 —

Jesus' power helps us be good friends.

Bible Story: The church is united. (Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-35)

Bible Verse: “Love each other in the same way I have loved you.”
(John 15:12)

Consider This...

- ▶ The book of Psalms mentions prayer more than 60 times—more than any other section of Scripture. The book of Acts comes in second, recording the importance and occurrence of prayer about 34 times. Clearly, the early church relied on prayer for hope, communion, healing, provision, and unity. Communication with God became a critical part of their community.
- ▶ Scholars believe that the early church probably met in Solomon's Colonnade, a porch along the inner side of the Temple wall.
- ▶ Many of the first Christians came from Jewish backgrounds, meaning they probably already followed God's command to give to the poor (Deuteronomy 15:4-8). Uniting and caring for others may have been a natural connection with their faith family.
- ▶ Acts 4:33 records the great power with which the apostles testified about Jesus' resurrection. It's likely this refers to a boldness given by the Holy Spirit but might also indicate that their life of unity and joy became a powerful witness to those around them.
- ▶ While Acts shines a light on the rapid growth of the early church (Acts 2:47; 4:4; 6:7; 9:31; 21:20), in a city of around 200,000 people, they still represented a minority of the population. This small band of believers needed to stick together and support each other!



Why It Matters...

Is your child like or unlike the early Christians? Why? Do they have a heart to serve, share, and bear one another's heartaches? What would happen if kids today had the same spirit of that first faith family? What would the church of tomorrow look like? You have the opportunity to create in your child a passion for sharing Jesus' love in powerful and practical ways! With Jesus' power, we can transform tomorrow's faith community into an environment of belonging, sharing, caring, and community. Today, help your child discover how Jesus' power can help them be faithful friends who truly care for each other.

DAY 5

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SUPPLY STATION

- ▶ modeling dough or play dough
- ▶ people-shaped cookie cutters

OPTION % Play Clay Friends

Today we are talking about how Jesus' power helps us be good friends. (*Trust Jesus!*) Let's use our dough to make some special friends.

Chug it Out!

Use cookie cutters to make a variety of dough people. Make your new people talk and play together just like good friends do.

Alternate Track

Create your own people without cookie cutters by shaping the dough. Add other materials to your dough like yarn or pipe cleaners to make your people even more creative. If you don't have play dough, find any toy people and make them play together like good friends.



SUPPLY STATION

- ▶ one piece of construction paper or cardstock cut into the shape of a wheel
- ▶ blank index card
- ▶ hole punch
- ▶ sand pail and shovel
- ▶ light scoopable material such as rice, beans, pom-poms, or crumpled/torn paper
- ▶ empty container or box
- ▶ sidewalk chalk

OPTION 2: Little Locomotive

We can be a good friend to others every day. Let's play in our Little Kids Depot one last time and remember that **Jesus' power helps us be good friends.** (*Trust Jesus!*)

Chug it Out!

Invite your child to pretend he or she is driving a train engine along the track with their precut wheel. If desired, draw a track outside with sidewalk chalk or create a designated track path in your home. Kids can pretend to shovel coal (light scoopable material) out of the coal car (empty container) into the bucket using a shovel. They can also pretend to be a conductor punching tickets with the index card. Use your imagination to bring Rocky Railway to life. All aboard the Little Locomotive!

Alternate Track

Cut the bottom out of a large empty box and allow your little conductor to wear it as a train. Decorate the box with markers or paints. Don't have a sand pail or shovel? Use any household container and a spoon.

