



# WEEK 1

## ELEMENTARY LESSON OUTLINE

# LEVEL UP

### **BIG IDEA**

Jesus trusted God.

### **THE BIBLE**

**The Garden of Gethsemane:** Matthew 26:36-46;  
(Psalm 28:7a)

### THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

## LARGE GROUP TIME

- MUSIC** | Worship
- ACTIVITY** | Trust Circle
- ACTIVITY** | Trust Race
- QUESTIONS** | All About Trust
- THE BIG IDEA** | Jesus trusted God.
- VIDEO** | Level Up, Episode 1
- BIBLE STORY** | Matthew 26:36-46
- QUESTION** | Imagine How Jesus Felt
- OBJECT LESSON** | Olive Press
- SCRIPTURE** | Psalm 28:7a
- ACTIVITY** | Input Username
- REFLECTION** | Pressed for a Purpose
- RESPONSE** | Trust
- MEMORY VERSE** | Hebrews 12:2

## SMALL GROUP TIME

- DISCUSSION**
  - With whom was Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane?
  - What was Jesus praying for?
  - How did Jesus show trust in God?
  - Read Psalm 28:7a. What does this verse say about God?
  - What are some things you know God wants you to do, but is difficult to do?
  - How can you show you trust God in those kinds of situations?
  - What are ways God can give you strength?
- ACTIVITY** | Olive Jar
- MEMORY VERSE** | Hebrews 12:2



# WEEK 1

## HACKS FOR PRETEENS

# LEVEL UP

**BY MIKE SHELEY**

### HOW TO HACK THIS SERIES FOR PRETEENS

In children's ministry, you've got a wide range of ages you need to engage every week, but preteens tend to get overlooked, so here are a few adjustments you can make to this week in order to keep your preteens more engaged.

#### **ACTIVITY | Trust Circle**

This activity has kids standing in a circle then proceeding to sit on the lap of the person behind them. For an added challenge, ask your older students to turn their circle by walking—while still seated—in a circle. Another option is to let your preteens watch the above video first and have them try to replicate it on their own. Afterward, they can demonstrate this for the younger students, and serve as coaches while the rest of the group tries.

#### **BIBLE STORY | Matthew 26:36-46**




Have preteens help create three cardboard signs for this part of the lesson. Each are two-sided. The first has "sin" on one side and the definition on the back (i.e., doing anything God doesn't want us to do). The second has "pray" on one side and the definition on the back (i.e., talking to God). The third has "At Gethsemane, Jesus prayed. . ." on the front and ". . . three times!" on the back. Have these key words written in black. Then allow preteens to color and decorate the "back" sides of the posters.

#### **RESPONSE | Trust**

Cut the sides out of grocery sacks and give them and the markers to the preteens. Have them make "take home" versions of the cardboard signs made during the Bible story by writing "I will trust God by. . ." on one side of the paper and then listing out what the one action step is they will take to model this trust on the other side of their paper.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

# MIKE SHELEY

 [facebook.com/michaelsheley](https://facebook.com/michaelsheley)  
 [instagram.com/michaelsheley](https://instagram.com/michaelsheley)  
 [twitter.com/michaelsheley](https://twitter.com/michaelsheley)



Mike Sheley is the Middle School Pastor overseeing ministries for preteen (5th-6th grade) and young adolescent (7th-8th grade) students at Mount Pleasant Christian Church in central Indiana. He has been in student ministry for over twenty years, with more than twelve of those years in his current position. In his current ministry, preteens participate alongside middle schoolers for weekly programming, but have their own lessons and special events. However, part of the health of the ministry is due to the close friendship and working relationship Mike has with the children's ministry team.

Mike is married and has three kids - one in college,

one in high school and one in middle school. Mike has had the joy and challenge of ministering to all of his kids as their youth pastor during their preteen and middle school years.

Mike's odd jobs over the years have included working at the his local Apple Store, Target, and at a couple fast-food restaurants. He has a weird fascination with presentations and fonts.

If you'd like to chat with Mike about spiritual disciplines with preteens, parent ministry or developing better presentations, reach out! He would love to connect with you!

**ADDITIONAL DEVELOPMENT:** Elle Campbell, Brooklyn Lindsey, Amber Stephens, Linda Moon, Lauren Wierzba.

**TEACHING VIDEOS:** Elle Campbell, Brooklyn Lindsey, Linda Moon, Jared Callahan.

**PRETEEN HACKS:** Mike Sheley.

**SPECIAL NEEDS HACKS:** Eugenia Lee.

**MEMORY VERSE SIGN LANGUAGE:** Sunny Brown.

**GRAPHIC DESIGN:** Josh Gosney, Jules Gray, Elle Campbell.

**LAYOUT DESIGN:** Jules Gray, Elle Campbell.

**ADDITIONAL SUPPORT:** Kenny Campbell, Tash McGill, Stephen Switzer, Ali Anne, Eddie Irvin, Ari Raines, Kellee Gentry, Tim Synan, Josh McLemore, Amber Gaddis.



# WEEK 1

## HACKS FOR KIDS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

# LEVEL UP

**BY EUGENIA LEE**

### *HOW TO HACK THIS SERIES FOR KIDS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS*

In children's ministry, you've got a wide range of ages you need to engage every week, but kids with special needs tend to get overlooked, so here are a few adjustments you can make to this week in order to keep your kids with special needs more engaged.

#### **GENERAL TIP | Salvation Message**

The stories in this series are the heart of the gospel. Talk to kids with special needs about the gospel every chance you get. Thank Jesus for what He did for us. Share with students how much Jesus loves them. Be ready every week to usher your student with special needs to salvation in Jesus. Even for students who cannot talk or hear, who may not be able to tell you if they believe in Jesus, share about Jesus. Be Jesus to them by showing God's love to them. We may not be able to hear their responses, but the Holy Spirit testifies with our students' spirits that they are God's children!

#### **GENERAL TIP | Reading the Bible**




Teaching our students to read the Bible is one of the precious parts of our work in children's ministry. Examine the needs of your students with special needs and have different Bibles ready that accommodates them (e.g., large print, audio, Braille, children's, illustrated, etc.) It may be as simple as printing the scripture with extra large font size each week or playing dramatized audio version of the bible on your phone using bible app.

As you get to know each student, find their preference on reading the bible. Do they want to be read? Do they want to read on their own? Do they want to talk about illustrations? Engage students in ways that foster interest in reading the bible and build a routine of reading and talking about the bible.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

# EUGENIA LEE



 [SPEDeugenia@gmail.com](mailto:SPEDeugenia@gmail.com)  
 [facebook.com/SPEDeugenia](https://facebook.com/SPEDeugenia)  
 [instagram.com/SPEDeugenia](https://instagram.com/SPEDeugenia)

Eugenia Lee currently serves as a volunteer leader at Newsong Church in Santa Ana, CA. Having children of her own with special needs, she started leading a support group of parents with special needs children and collaborating with children’s ministry. In time, she learned that she loved working with children with special needs and realized it was her calling. She has worked on accommodating and modifying curriculum for students with different needs as well as training 1:1 buddies for many years. Helping children with special needs gave her so much joy that she decided to pursue a teaching career in special education. In a few short weeks, she will be ready to have her own classroom at a public school!

She is also working on a volunteer training manual specifically geared toward layperson volunteers working with children with disabilities in any setting.

Eugenia and her husband live in Orange county, CA with their four amazing children. Home is her favorite place on earth: spending time with her family, cooking up some BBQ, and sharing good conversation with close friends.

If you have any questions about curriculum accommodations and modifications, engaging with parents of special needs children, training volunteers, and so on, feel free to get in contact with her via email, Instagram, or Facebook!

**ADDITIONAL DEVELOPMENT:** Elle Campbell, Brooklyn Lindsey, Amber Stephens, Linda Moon, Lauren Wierzba.

**TEACHING VIDEOS:** Elle Campbell, Brooklyn Lindsey, Linda Moon, Jared Callahan.

**PRETEEN HACKS:** Mike Sheley.

**SPECIAL NEEDS HACKS:** Eugenia Lee.

**MEMORY VERSE SIGN LANGUAGE:** Sunny Brown.

**GRAPHIC DESIGN:** Josh Gosney, Jules Gray, Elle Campbell.

**LAYOUT DESIGN:** Jules Gray, Elle Campbell.

**ADDITIONAL SUPPORT:** Kenny Campbell, Tash McGill, Stephen Switzer, Ali Anne, Eddie Irvin, Ari Raines, Kellee Gentry, Tim Synan, Josh McLemore, Amber Gaddis.

**ACTIVITY | Trust Circle**

Instead of the proposed activity, try this modified version for your kids with special needs. Challenge kids to form a circle as quickly as they can on the count of three. They have to trust one another to join the circle in sync!

**ACTIVITY | TRUST RACE**

Many students with special needs like routines and familiarity. So when a new activity is introduced, their automatic response is often “no, thank you”. Encourage students by modeling the activity to them. “Look, I am going to go first. **FIRST my turn, THEN your turn.**” Ask your student to help you blindfold and move the ping pong ball. Show the student that it is fun and safe. It is often anxiety of trying out something new that is keeping our students from trying new things. They’re learning to trust you.

**ACTIVITY | Input Username**

This activity is to personalize Psalm 28:7a, “The Lord is my strength and shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.” Depending on the students’ writing and reading skills, we can make it easier if we need to. The expectation would be writing “The Lord is **Eugenia’s** strength and shield; **Eugenia’s** heart trusts in him, and he helps **Eugenia.**” If this seems too challenging, write down some parts of it, for example, the harder words like strength, shield, and so on. If a student needs more modification, write down all the words except for leaving where the name should go. Many students know how to write their names, even if they cannot read or write other words.



# WEEK 1

## ELEMENTARY LESSON GUIDE

# LEVEL UP

### BIG IDEA

Jesus trusted God.

### THE BIBLE

**The Garden of Gethsemane:** Matthew 26:36-46;  
(Psalm 28:7a)

## LARGE GROUP TIME

**WHAT?** *What are we talking about today?*

### MUSIC | Worship

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Spend some time singing to God as we enter into Passion Week. You can use a live band, if available, or play songs from YouTube. One song we recommend is "[Little Life](#)" by Hillsong Kids.

### ACTIVITY | Trust Circle

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Everyone can play this activity! (Depending on the size of your group, have kids get in circles of 8-14 kids.) In order to absolutely CRUSH this challenge, the kids have to trust each other. The object is to have the kids stand in a very tight circle with everyone facing the same direction. Next, the kids will place their hands on the shoulders of the person in front of them. On the count of three, they'll all sit down on each others' laps. (See [this video](#) to see how it's done!).
- **Did you think at any point you would fall over?** Trust is a very hard thing to do, especially when you're not sure what's going to happen next!
  - ✂ **SPECIAL NEEDS HACK:** Challenge kids to form a circle as quickly as they can on the count of three. They have to trust one another to join the circle in sync!
  - ✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** For an added challenge, ask your older students to turn their circle by walking—while still seated—in a circle. Another option is to let your preteens watch the above video first and have them try to replicate it on their own. Afterward, they can demonstrate this for the younger students, and serve as coaches while the rest of the group tries.

**ACTIVITY | Trust Race**

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *This activity is for ten kids at a time. Split kids into two teams of five, and give them thirty seconds to come up with a team name and pick a team leader. Have each team line up and place a bucket at the other side of the room across from their line. One kid at a time from each team has to get their ping pong ball into their team’s bucket. The catch is they have to be blindfolded, and they have to listen for their team leader’s voice for instructions. Once they reach the bucket, have them remove their blindfold and race back to tag the next teammate. The first team to have everyone get their ping pong balls in their bucket wins [Be on alert for potential hazards as kids walk blindfolded]!*
- Sometimes, it’s easy to trust someone’s directions and sometimes, it can be hard. **Why did wearing a blindfold make trusting your leader more difficult?**
  - ✂ **SPECIAL NEEDS HACK:** *Encourage students by modeling the activity to them. “Look, I am going to go first. FIRST my turn, THEN your turn.” Ask your student to help you blindfold and move the ping pong ball. Show the student that it is fun and safe. It is often anxiety of trying out something new that is keeping our students from trying new things. They’re learning to trust you.*

**QUESTIONS | All About Trust**

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Ask these questions and have kids respond and engage in discussion.*
- **Who is someone you trust? (such as a teacher, a parent, a friend)**
- **Has that person ever given you directions you really didn’t want to do? What was it? (such as be nice to someone at school, share with someone, help someone out)**
- Sometimes, it can be easy to trust others, but not always. Especially if they are asking us to do something we don’t fully understand. Today, we are going to see what Jesus did when in a similar situation!

**THE BIG IDEA | Jesus trusted God.**

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *After you tell the kids what today’s Big Idea is, ask them to repeat it after you. Then, prompt them with questions they can yell the answer to: “Jesus trusted whom? Who trusted God? Jesus what God? Who trusted whom?”*
- Today, we are going to talk about a time in history when Jesus trusted God. Jesus knew it was going to be the hardest thing ever to do. But Jesus trusted God. That is this week’s Big Idea: Jesus trusted God!

**SO WHAT?** *Why does it matter to God and to us?*

**VIDEO | Level Up, Episode 1**

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Play this week’s [teaching video](#).

**BIBLE STORY | Matthew 26:36-46**

- We are going to be reading and learning together about a very important moment when Jesus



was being asked to do something really hard. Jesus was with friends, called the disciples. They walked to a place called Gethsemane to rest for the night. Let's read together what happened next.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Matthew 26:36-46.*
- Jesus knew what God was asking Jesus to do, and that some men were coming to arrest Jesus. These men were going to hurt Jesus and nail Jesus to a cross, and Jesus would die. This was going to be the hardest thing Jesus would have to do, but Jesus trusted God. Jesus knew when this happened, everyone could be forgiven of their sins and have a relationship with God forever.
- **Do you know what a sin is?** A sin is when we do something, anything, that God doesn't want us to do. We all sin from time to time and we all make mistakes.
- So, Jesus prayed to God. **Who knows what the word "pray" means?** It simply means to talk to God. Jesus asked God, "If there is any other way to do this, then let's do that instead. But if not, I will do what You ask." In other words, Jesus trusted God so much, Jesus was willing to do what God asked, even though it was hard. And it's a good thing Jesus did because that's what saved us!

✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** *Have preteens help create three cardboard signs for this part of the lesson. Each are two-sided. The first has "sin" on one side and the definition on the back. The second has "pray" on one side and the definition on the back. The third has "At Gethsemane, Jesus prayed. . ." on the front and ". . . three times!" on the back. Have these key words written in black. Then allow preteens to color and decorate the "back" sides of the posters.*

### QUESTION | Imagine How Jesus Felt

- **INSTRUCTION:** *Ask the kids to close their eyes as they ponder this question.*
- **How do you think Jesus felt knowing how hard this was going to be?**
- Jesus trusted God with everything. Even though this was going to be hard, Jesus knew God could be trusted. Sometimes, God will ask us to do something that is hard or even a little bit scary. But we can trust God will be with us and help us.

### OBJECT LESSON | Olive Press

- Did you know the word "Gethsemane" roughly translates to "olive press" in Hebrew?
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Hold up some olives, or ask volunteers to try to press the olives to make olive oil. It's not easy, is it? Show [this video](#) (or a similar one) that explains the significance of pressing olives and its connection to Gethsemane.*
- Olives have very special meanings throughout the Bible, especially the way they need to be crushed and pressed so something good can come out of them. This reminds us of what Jesus had to go through. If you think about it, the fact that Jesus was praying in a place surrounded by olives cannot be coincidence! It shows us God really had a plan for Jesus, and Jesus trusted God with that plan.
- **What do you think God's goal was when Jesus was being "pressed" in the Garden of Gethsemane?**

### SCRIPTURE | Psalm 28:7a

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read Psalm 28:7a together.
- This passage says God is both our strength and our shield. To remember this, let's try adding some motions: Strength (*flex your biceps with both arms*) and shield (*fold in fist ed arms in front of you so they are parallel to each other and cover you*).
- **What is strength?** It means power to help you overcome challenges.
- **What is a shield?** It is something that protects you and defends you from harm.
- In the story we heard today, Jesus prayed, asking if there was another way, but Jesus also prayed each time for God's will to be done. Jesus knew God would give Him strength. Jesus also knew God would be like a shield. Jesus trusted God and knew God would help Him face this difficult challenge.

**NOW WHAT?** What does God want us to do about it?

### ACTIVITY | Input Username

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Hand out a half sheet of paper and pencil or pen to each kid. Display the modified version of Psalm 28:7a (below) either on a larger poster board or as a PowerPoint slide. Ask the kids to write out the verse and fill in the blank with their own name.
- You know how when you play a video game, you have to input a username for your character? Just like that, we have to personalize the part we play when it comes to trusting God. Let's try that with the verse we just read, except instead of "my" and "me," you're going to put in your name!
- **[Input username]: The Lord is \_\_\_\_'s strength and \_\_\_\_'s shield; \_\_\_'s heart trusts in God, and God helps \_\_\_\_.**
- You can trust God to always help you and be with you. Even when you are facing a really hard challenge, you don't have to be scared because God is right there with you.
  - ✂ **SPECIAL NEEDS HACK:** If this seems too challenging, write down some or all the words except for where the name should go. Many students know how to write their names, even if they cannot read or write other words.

### REFLECTION | Pressed for a Purpose

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Ask the kids to pause and reflect on what they learned so far.
- Let's think back to Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus was "pressed," meaning Jesus was pushed to the limit of how much He could handle. It was during this time that Jesus became more and more determined to carry out God's plan, even though it was going to cost Jesus everything.
- **What are some ways we are also "pressed"?** They can be anything, from having to practice an instrument or a sport over and over again, or finding a way to be kind to someone who annoys you or is mean to you. When you are in the middle of it, it's hard to see where you're headed – like when you had to walk with a blindfold. But when you trust God just like Jesus did, God will show you how to understand the challenging things. And we will find out we were pressed for a purpose.

### RESPONSE | Trust

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Take out a large poster board with the word TRUST written boldly in the center. With the help of the kids, write down some things God might challenge us to do.
- **Is God asking you to do something hard or out of your comfort zone?** Maybe to be friends with a new kid at school, share your video game with your little sister, or to learn your memory verse this week? What are some other things God may be asking you to do?
- There are a lot of things God asks each of us to do. These are just a few examples. But all of us have a chance to listen to and trust God. We can trust God just like Jesus did!
  - ✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** Cut the sides out of the grocery sacks and give them and the markers to the preteens. Have them make “take home” versions of the cardboard signs made during the Bible story time above. Have them write “I will trust God by. . .” on one side of the paper and then list what the one action step is they will take to model this trust on the other side of their paper.

### MEMORY VERSE | Hebrews 12:2

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Kids can work in groups (group size would depend on the amount of kids you have and what works best for your environment) and come up with their own motions to go with the verse. Then, have each group show the motions to the entire group.

## SMALL GROUP TIME

### DISCUSSION

- **With whom was Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane?**
- **What was Jesus praying for?**
- **How did Jesus show trust in God?**
- **Read Psalm 28:7a. What does this verse say about God?**
- **What are some things you know God wants you to do, but is difficult to do?**
- **How can you show you trust God in those kinds of situations?**
- **What are ways God can give you strength?**

### ACTIVITY | Olive Jar

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Ask the kids to think back to “Pressed for a Purpose” reflection time. Ask them to write down a few ways God is “pressing” them or challenging them to do something for God. You could prompt them with examples such as, spending less time playing games and more time reading the Bible, being kind to someone who isn’t kind back, working harder on schoolwork, practicing an instrument or sport, etc.
- No matter what the challenges, let’s do our best and let God handle everything else. Remember, we can always trust God just like Jesus trusted God!

**MEMORY VERSE | Hebrews 12:2**

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Introduce kids to this month's memory verse, teaching them the signs (a combination of SEE and ASL) we've provided.*