

I Can Only Imagine

Bible Story: I Can Only Imagine (Heaven/All Things New) • *Revelation 21:3-5a*

Bottom Line: Following Jesus will turn out greater than you can imagine.

Key Question: What do you think heaven will be like?

Memory Verse: *God's grace has saved you because of your faith in Christ. Your salvation doesn't come from anything you do. It is God's gift. Ephesians 2:8 (NIRV)*

Life App: Faith—Trusting in what you can't see because of what you can see

Basic Truth: I can trust God no matter what.

Social: Providing Time for Fun Interaction (Small Groups, 15 minutes)

Welcome kids and spend time engaging in conversation and catching up. Get ready to experience today's story.

Before kids arrive, take some time to pray about your time together with your group today. Ask God to lead you in your discussion and to guide you in being sensitive to the needs of your students and the direction that the conversation needs to go.

1. Just for Fun

Made to Play: an activity that encourages learning through following guidelines and working as a group

What You Need: Offering container, index cards, pencils

What You Do:

- **Invite** kids to put their offering in the offering container as they arrive.
- **Give** each kid an index card and a pencil.
- **Instruct** the kids to think about their favorite place and then write down three words or phrases that describe that place.
- **Ask** kids not to write down the name of the place on the card.
- **Collect** the cards, read the statements on the cards out loud and see if the group can name the place described.

2. Get Your Head in the Game

Made to Create: an activity that explores spiritual ideas through the process of drawing, building, and designing

What You Need: Creative building supplies

What You Do:

- **Instruct** kids to get in groups of three and work together to build the greatest place a kid could ever go.
- **Encourage** them to think about what would be there, what would NOT be there, etc.
- **Suggest** that they decide on a plan as a team before they get started.
- When they finish (or after they've used up their allotted time), **let** each group explain what they created.
- **Guide** everyone to vote on which creation is best but without voting for their own.

What You Say:

"You built some really great places today. I'd like to spend a day in each of them! **[Transition]** But today we're going to talk about the best place ever. Let's head to large group to hear about what the Bible says will turn out better than we can ever imagine."

Lead your group to the Large Group area.

Groups: Creating a Safe Place to Connect (Small Groups, 25 minutes)

Create a safe place to connect and learn how the Bible story applies to real life experiences, through interactive activities and discussion questions.

1. Take a Snapshot**[Talk about God | Bible Story Review]**

Made to Move: an activity that increases the oxygen in the brain and taps into the energy in the body

What You Need: Two sets of “Heaven Game Cards” Activity Page, “Heaven Game Signs” Activity Page, painter’s tape

What You Do:

- **Hang** the “In Heaven” and “Not In Heaven” signs on the wall (or lay them on the floor next to each other.
- **Divide** the group into two teams.
- **Create** a start line (across from the wall signs, about 15 feet away) using the tape and instruct kids to line up in their teams behind the line.
- **Scatter** the two sets of cards around the room or around your small group space.
- **Assign** each team a different color of cards to collect.
- **Explain** that when you say “Go,” one person from each team run to a card of their team’s color and pick it up.
 - As a team, kids will decide if what’s written on the card is something that will be in heaven or not.
 - Then the kid who picked up the card should run down and put it in the correct column (using tape if the signs are on the wall), run back, and tag the next person on their team.
 - The two teams will be sharing one set of columns, but will each have its own set of cards.
 - Kids will continue the race until they have placed each of the 16 cards in the correct column.
 - The first group to finish putting all cards in the correct column and sit down together as a team wins!

Answers:**In Heaven**

- God’s children
- God’s word (Bible)
- Fun
- Friends
- Comfort
- Worship
- Contentment
- A place for everyone

Not in Heaven

- Skinned knees
- Medicine
- Tombstones
- Sin

- Broken arms
- Stomach bugs
- Hunger
- Mosquitos

2. Bible Story Extension

[Talk about God | Bible Story Review]

Made to Imagine: an activity that promotes empathy and facilitates biblical application through role-play and reenactment

What You Need: Mini-canvases, paint and paintbrushes, cups of water, and Bibles

What You Do:

- **Pass** out the painting supplies and instruct kids to spread out.
- **Explain** that John saw a vision from God and had the challenge of putting it into words.
 - **Ask** kids to imagine what it would've been like to try to find words to describe a vision from God!
- **Tell** them that they now have the job of hearing John's words and painting a picture of what they think John is describing.
- **Encourage** kids to paint whatever comes to mind as you read the Scripture. (NIRV is quoted below for your convenience.)
- **Read** the verses aloud slowly.
- **Repeat** the verses every two or three minutes as kids paint.
 - I heard a loud voice from the throne. It said, "Look! God now makes his home with the people. He will live with them. They will be his people. And God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death.' And there will be no more sadness. There will be no more crying or pain. Things are no longer the way they used to be. He who was sitting on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Revelation 21:3-5a
- **Remind** kids that just like we don't know exactly what John is describing or what his vision looked like, we don't know exactly what heaven will be like.
 - But we do know that following Jesus will turn out greater than we can imagine.

3. Discussion Questions

[Live for God | Application Activity]

Made to Connect: an activity that invites kids to share with others and build on their understanding

What You Need: No supplies needed

What You Do:

Ask:

- What would it be like to not have any sadness, pain, or anything bad happening to you?
- What else do you think heaven will have or not have?
- What part of heaven do you hope for the most? What are you really hoping is true of heaven or what would you be most excited about?
- Is there anything about heaven that makes you nervous? What would that be?

4. Verse to Take with You

[Hear from God | Memory Verse Activity]

Made to Play: an activity that encourages learning through following guidelines and working as a group

What You Need: Two brown bags or pillow cases containing with one of each of the following items: a placemat, cup, utensils, centerpiece/s, plate, play food, play drink, and napkin

What You Do:

- **Ask** someone to open the Bible and read John 14:2-4 aloud. Ask a second person to read the verses again.
- **Discuss:** What is Jesus talking about in this passage? What is He preparing?
 - When someone prepares for you—maybe prepares for you to visit or to have dinner or prepares for a party on your behalf, what does it tell you about your relationship with that person? (When you prepare you communicate worth, value, and importance.)
- **Emphasize** that Jesus is doing that for us—He wants to be with us forever, so He has gone to prepare a place for us!
- **Divide** the group into two teams, and explain that they will be racing to set up a dinner party for someone special, using the stuff that's in their brown bag.
 - Hand each group a brown bag of supplies.
 - Line the teams up and pick out an area about 15 feet away where they can each set a "place" at the table. (If you have an actual table you can use, even better!)
 - When you say "go," each team should dump out all of them items and then take turns running each item down to the table/place setting, one item at a time.
 - They can take the items in whatever order they choose, but their final setup must have all the items in the "correct" spot like you would see at a nice restaurant.
 - The first group that uses all their items and has them NEATLY set up and prepared for their guest wins!

5. Make it Personal with Prayer

[Pray to God | Prayer Activity]

Made to Reflect: an activity that creates space for personal understanding and application

What You Need: No supplies needed

What You Do:

- **Gather** your group together and have them sit close.
- **Encourage** them to put their arms around each other if they'd like or fold their hands and close their eyes.
- **Take** a moment to point out that God always hears us when we pray—whether it's with a group or alone, out loud or in silence, heads bowed or eyes wide open as you walk.
 - There's no one particular way you have to pray, but we often bow our heads and close our eyes to help us focus.
- **Explain** that you're going to pray aloud for your whole group and that you'll be pausing for them to think or to pray silently along the way.
- "Thank you, LORD, for loving us so much that You made a way for us to be with You forever."
(Pause)
"Thank You for Jesus and thank You for heaven. We know that You have gone to get heaven ready for us, Your Word tells us so."
(Pause)
"We know that if we trust You God, we will get to spend forever in heaven with You."
(Pause)
"We look forward to heaven even though we don't know what it's like and don't know what to expect."
(Pause)
"Sometimes the unknown is almost scary, but we know that in heaven everything will be made perfect and we will never have to be separated from You."
(Pause)
"Thank you for the Bible that tells us Your story—and thank You for keeping Your promises."
(Pause)
"We need You! It's in Your Son's name that we pray, amen!"