

Hometown Huddle

Leader Manual

Group

LOVELAND, COLORADO
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Welcome to Hometown Nazareth!



We're glad you're a part of this exciting Holy Land Adventure. During this event, families will explore the culture of ancient Nazareth—Jesus' hometown! As a Hometown Huddle Tribe Leader, you'll direct a group of up to 10 children and adults (your Tribe) through experiences that have an authentic, traditional Bible-times feel. As Tribes explore the culture of ancient Nazareth, you'll help them understand that while Jesus *is* God's Son, he also had many of the same emotions and experiences that we do today. Kids and adults will walk away with the comfort of knowing that God understands them, cares for them, and loves them enough to give his only Son.



Did You Know?

Nazareth most likely gets its name from the Hebrew word *netser*, meaning "a shoot" or "to blossom." Scholars have called Nazareth "the Flower of Galilee," in reference to the way the city sits in a high, hollow plateau encircled by rounded hills. The result looks like the petals of a flower.

Notes From **Nazareth**

There are lots of ways to display the iGrow Chart. After taping the two sections together, you can mount it on cardboard (or not!), then tape it to a wall, pin it to a curtain, hold it high, or even place it on the ground.

What's a Tribe Leader?



Tribe Leaders are the heart and soul of Hometown Nazareth VBS. The time children and adults spend with their Tribes in their Hometown Huddle will be memorable, life-changing, and thought-provoking! While you don't have to plan or prepare materials, this manual contains the information you need to lead a successful Hometown Huddle. Your leadership is a vital element to the success of this program. Here are a few tips to get you started.

- ➔ **Attend scheduled staff training.** Your Hometown Nazareth VBS Director will likely set up training for all staff who will serve. Plan to attend this important meeting so you can get the big picture of how your role fits into this exciting and unique program.
- ➔ **Familiarize yourself with this manual.** Read each day's Bible background, Scripture, and activities. That way you'll be prepared to give your Tribe members accurate information and not have to refer to the instructions as you're leading each activity.
- ➔ **Use your Bible.** It's important for Tribe members to see you looking up Scripture passages and reading them directly from the Bible. This reminds everyone that the stories they are learning come from God's Word. It's a good idea to mark each day's Bible passage ahead of time so you can turn to it quickly.
- ➔ **Check out the iGrow™ Chart.** Tribe members mark the chart as they begin each day of their Hometown Nazareth adventure. The iGrow Chart helps connect what everyone learns in ancient Nazareth to everyday life.
- ➔ **Smile!** Be a friendly face that Nazareth Tribe members look forward to seeing. It's likely that you'll have Tribe members who are new to your church, so be sure to welcome everyone with friendliness and warmth.
- ➔ **Call each person by name.** This is one of the easiest ways to affirm and encourage the people in your Tribe. Make sure each member feels valued and welcomed.
- ➔ **Get to know your Hometown Nazareth Tribe members.** Ask about their families, hobbies, and kids' favorite subjects in school. Where have they been on vacation? What movies have they recently seen? What pets do they have? What would they pack on a trip to the moon? Take a real interest in your Tribe members' lives.



➔ **Keep children safe.** Keep your Tribe together as much as possible so children are never alone. If a child needs to use the restroom, take a few kids with you and leave the rest with your Assistant Tribe Leader. Release kids only to a parent or authorized caregiver.

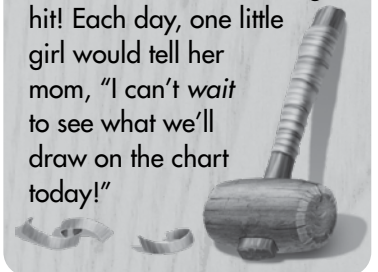
➔ **Encourage adults to join in the fun!** If your VBS is for families, reassure adults that shopkeepers have plenty of supplies and that you want them to participate, too. The more involved everyone gets, the more meaningful the program will be for all ages.

A Tribe Leader is a friend and a helper who

- ✓ draws others into discussions as much as possible.
- ✓ offers choices and asks questions.
- ✓ encourages Tribe members.
- ✓ participates in all of the Holy Land Adventure activities with their Tribe.
- ✓ helps and encourages other staff members.

Field Test Findings

The field test Tribes were super creative with the iGrow Charts. Some held it high as others drew on it. Other Tribes placed it on the ground, measured people or drew pictures on it, then rolled it up and put it back in their Tribe basket. No matter which way Tribes used the iGrow Chart, it was a huge hit! Each day, one little girl would tell her mom, "I can't wait to see what we'll draw on the chart today!"



Remember that you are the voice of truth!

In Matthew 13:55, people in Nazareth had listened to Jesus teach. Their response? “Then they scoffed, ‘He’s just the carpenter’s son, and we know Mary, his mother, and his brothers—James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas. All his sisters live right here among us. Where did he learn all these things?’ And they were deeply offended and refused to believe in him.” It seems as if the people who knew Jesus and watched him grow up had seen *only* his humanity. To them, he was just the kid next door. Most of the people in Nazareth missed out on the astonishing discovery that Jesus truly is God’s Son! Everyone except Mary—and you! You *know* Jesus’ “true identity.”



- ➔ Keep drawing your Tribe members back to the truth of what we believe by saying things like “You know what? Mary isn’t the only one in Nazareth who believes that Jesus is God’s Son. We do too!” or “Let’s always be ready to share our belief that Jesus is our Savior.”
- ➔ As you lead your Tribe in conversation during each Hometown Huddle, use child-friendly language to point out that although Jesus grew up just like us, Jesus is the Son of God!
- ➔ Lead your Tribe members in sharing with shopkeepers the things you believe about Jesus.
 - ➔ Encourage your Tribe members to invite Marketplace shopkeepers and others they meet to join them in the opening and closing Celebrations. Their guests can learn about Jesus—the Son of God—and join in worshipping and praising him.

Here's What You'll Do



Before Participants Arrive...

- ➔ Plan to arrive *at least* 20 minutes early (especially on the first day of the program), and let the Director know you're there. He or she might have specific instructions or hold a Tribe Leader meeting.
- ➔ Find your Tribe "home base" (blankets where you'll gather for each Hometown Huddle), and locate your basket of supplies. Check through your supply basket, and be sure it has been stocked (or restocked) with all the necessary supplies for that day.
- ➔ Make sure your Tribe name poster is taped to the wall next to your home base.
- ➔ Get a list of your Tribe members from the registrar or Director. (This list may change as participants arrive, since some will not have preregistered, so be flexible!)
- ➔ Look over your daily schedule to see what's in store for your Tribe today and find out which lettered group you'll travel with.

When Participants Arrive...

- ➔ After participants register or sign in each day, they'll join you at your home base.
- ➔ Introduce yourself, and be sure your Tribe members know each other's names. Introduce any newcomers to the group. Help each Tribe member feel welcome.
- ➔ Help everyone put on their colorful Banduras. Tell them this designated color represents their Nazareth Tribe for the week. Participants can choose how they want to wear their Banduras, such as on their heads or as an armband.
- ➔ Use the iGrow Chart. It's a great way to introduce each day's theme, and it gives everyone something to talk about as everyone arrives.

Opening Celebration (15 minutes)

- ➔ When the Celebration Leader begins, gather with the other Tribes for opening singing and worship.
- ➔ Participate in singing and getting to know everyone.
- ➔ When the opening Celebration time is finished, lead your Tribe back to your home base.



Notes From **Nazareth**

When you hear a Shepherd's Bell attention-getter, you will know it's time to rotate to your next activity.

Opening Hometown Huddle (15 minutes)

- ➔ Prepare Tribe members for their trip to Nazareth—where Jesus was a kid!
- ➔ Help Tribe members get to know each other as they complete the iGrow Chart activities and discuss what life must have been like in ancient Nazareth.
- ➔ Lead activities like learning Bible verses, choose Marketplace shops to visit, and give Tribe members a daily “mission” to accomplish, such as inviting others to the Celebrations.

Mary's House (15 minutes)

- ➔ Lead your Tribe to Mary's House, and wait outside for Mary to greet you.
- ➔ Sit with your Tribe, and encourage everyone to listen and participate.
- ➔ Visit with Mary, and learn about Jesus when he was a baby, a boy, and a young man. Your Tribe members will experience the comfort of knowing that God understands them, cares for them, and loves them enough to give his only Son.



Fun & Games (15 minutes)

- ➔ Lead your Tribe to the Fun & Games area, and wait for the leader to begin.
- ➔ Encourage everyone to listen to the Fun & Games Leader's instructions.
- ➔ Join in the fun, and help younger children, if necessary. Participate in the games wholeheartedly. Your participation will speak volumes to your Tribe members!



Marketplace Time (30 minutes)

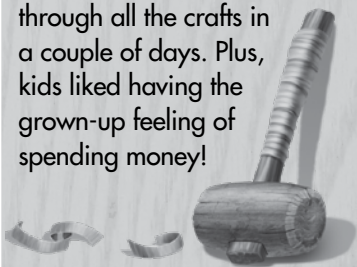
- ➔ Before heading into the Marketplace, divide your Tribe into two groups for “exploring.” One group will stay with you, and the other will go with the Assistant Tribe Leader. Let Tribe members work together to determine which shops they’ll visit each day.
- ➔ Become apprentices at things like designing beads or making wooden Tzedakah (charity) Boxes. Enjoy Bible-times snacks such as fruit, nuts, veggies, and bread. Be sure to visit the Operation Kid-to-Kid Tent early in your VBS week; in that shop, each Tribe member will create a project to provide water for children in Honduras.
- ➔ Encourage everyone to listen to the shopkeepers and ask questions about how projects or tasks might be done in ancient Nazareth.
- ➔ Assist young children with any projects they choose to do. Tribes will have 30 minutes, so encourage everyone to take their time and work at a comfortable pace.
- ➔ Once Tribe members are working on their own, feel free to become an apprentice yourself! Keep an eye on kids who might need a hand with a certain element of a project. And encourage adults to participate and create their own projects, too.

Closing Hometown Huddle (15 minutes)

- ➔ Gather Tribe members for a closing Hometown Huddle. Help Tribe members connect what they’ve learned in ancient Nazareth to real life through simple object lessons, discussions, and experiences.
- ➔ Distribute a Bible Memory Maker each day. Bible Memory Makers are special tokens with the day’s Bible verse printed on them. Participants will put their Bible Memory Makers in their coin pouches. At the end of the week, they can take these home as lasting keepsakes, reminding them of their time in ancient Nazareth.

Field Test Findings

Each day, every Tribe member will have three shekels to spend in the Marketplace. At our field test, we discovered that this helped kids pace themselves and not rush through all the crafts in a couple of days. Plus, kids liked having the grown-up feeling of spending money!



- ➔ Gather Banduras, coin pouches, and leftover shekels that were not spent in the Marketplace so you can use them the next day.
- ➔ Give the leftover shekels to the Director, who will redistribute three shekels for each coin pouch every day.
- ➔ When you hear the Shepherd's Bell, you will know it's time to lead your Tribe members to the closing Celebration.

Closing Celebration (15 minutes)

- ➔ Participate in singing or other activities as directed by the Celebration Leader.
- ➔ Keep your Tribe together until parents or caregivers come for kids. *Do not* let kids wander off on their own! Remember, you're responsible for their safety.
- ➔ Let Tribe members know you're looking forward to seeing them tomorrow.
- ➔ Be sure participants take home their Marketplace projects.



Notes From Nazareth

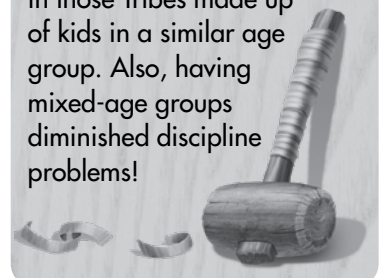
The shops in the Marketplace will be open all week. If your group goes to a shop but discovers it's already full, remind them that they can go another day. Tribes should have the opportunity to visit each shop at some point during their experience in ancient Nazareth.

Notes From Nazareth

Be sure to distribute the Bible Memory Makers in the special way outlined in this manual. Tribe members will not only walk away with a keepsake but will also have a lasting memory of a meaningful affirmation or blessing.

Field Test Findings

We were delighted at how easily kids and adults joined together to form one large Tribe. Our Tribe Leaders found that the dynamics were better in groups that had a larger age span than in those Tribes made up of kids in a similar age group. Also, having mixed-age groups diminished discipline problems!



DAY 1



Bible Point: Jesus had a family...we do too.

Why It Matters

You'll likely have a mix of two-parent families, single-parent families, blended families, foster families, adoptive families, and more at your VBS. God cares about every family—he placed his precious Son into one long, long ago. Use today's activities to help kids and adults realize that Jesus was part of an earthly family and that we can *all* belong to God's wonderful family.

Bible Verse:
"For nothing is impossible with God."
(Luke 1:37)

Bible Story: Mary is chosen to be Jesus' mother. (Luke 1:26-38)

Read the Passage With This in Mind...

- ➔ The marriage betrothal in Bible times was more binding than an engagement today. Engaged couples took public vows and acted in many ways as a married couple except that they didn't live together as man and wife. But they *did* call each other husband and wife!
- ➔ In Bible times, girls could get engaged as young as age 12.
- ➔ The angel Gabriel told Mary five things about her son: Jesus would be great, be called the Son of the Most High, be given the throne of David, and reign over Israel forever, and his Kingdom would never end.
- ➔ Mary apparently trusted God completely. She didn't ask for a sign from the angel but merely asked how she could be with child, since she was a virgin.



For Day 1 you'll need...

- ➔ iGrow™ Chart
- ➔ Day 1 schedule
- ➔ map (see page 26)
- ➔ Bible marked at Luke 1:37
- ➔ shekels (3 per Tribe member)
- ➔ coin pouches (1 per Tribe member)
- ➔ Surprise Box (in the Hometown Huddle Teaching Kit)
- ➔ penny
- ➔ Day 1 Bible Memory Makers® (1 per Tribe member)
- ➔ sample God Sightings Sheep (will be used on Day 2)

Notes From Nazareth

Make sure you can work the Surprise Box smoothly for the closing Hometown Huddle. Before your Tribe arrives, take a moment to practice making a penny disappear and reappear in the Surprise Box. Take the tray out of the box, and then reinsert it in the reverse direction. Practice makes perfect!

Day 1 Opening Hometown Huddle



1. As Tribe members arrive...

Gather the Tribe members on your home base blanket, and introduce yourself.

Say: **Welcome to Hometown Nazareth—where Jesus was a kid! We're going to have so much fun this week as we pretend to go on a trip back to Bible times! We'll get to visit with Jesus' mother, Mary, and hear stories about Jesus growing up.**

Unroll the iGrow Chart, and say: **This is a growth chart. Sometimes people measure how much they are growing by marking a chart like this. Let's mark each Tribe member's height on this chart as we start our week.** Have someone help you mark everyone's height on the chart. Let each person sign their name or initial next to their mark.

When the Celebration Leader begins, gather with other Tribes for the opening time of singing and worship.





2. After the opening Celebration, gather Tribe members again on the home base blanket.

Let Tribe members add to the iGrow Chart if they haven't already. Make sure each person has a name badge and a colorful Bandura with your Tribe name on it.

Let everyone share their first and last names. Say: **Our last names show that we're related to people with that last name. In Bible times, a Tribe name was kind of like a family name.**

Point to the Tribe name poster, and tell kids and adults their Tribe name for the week.

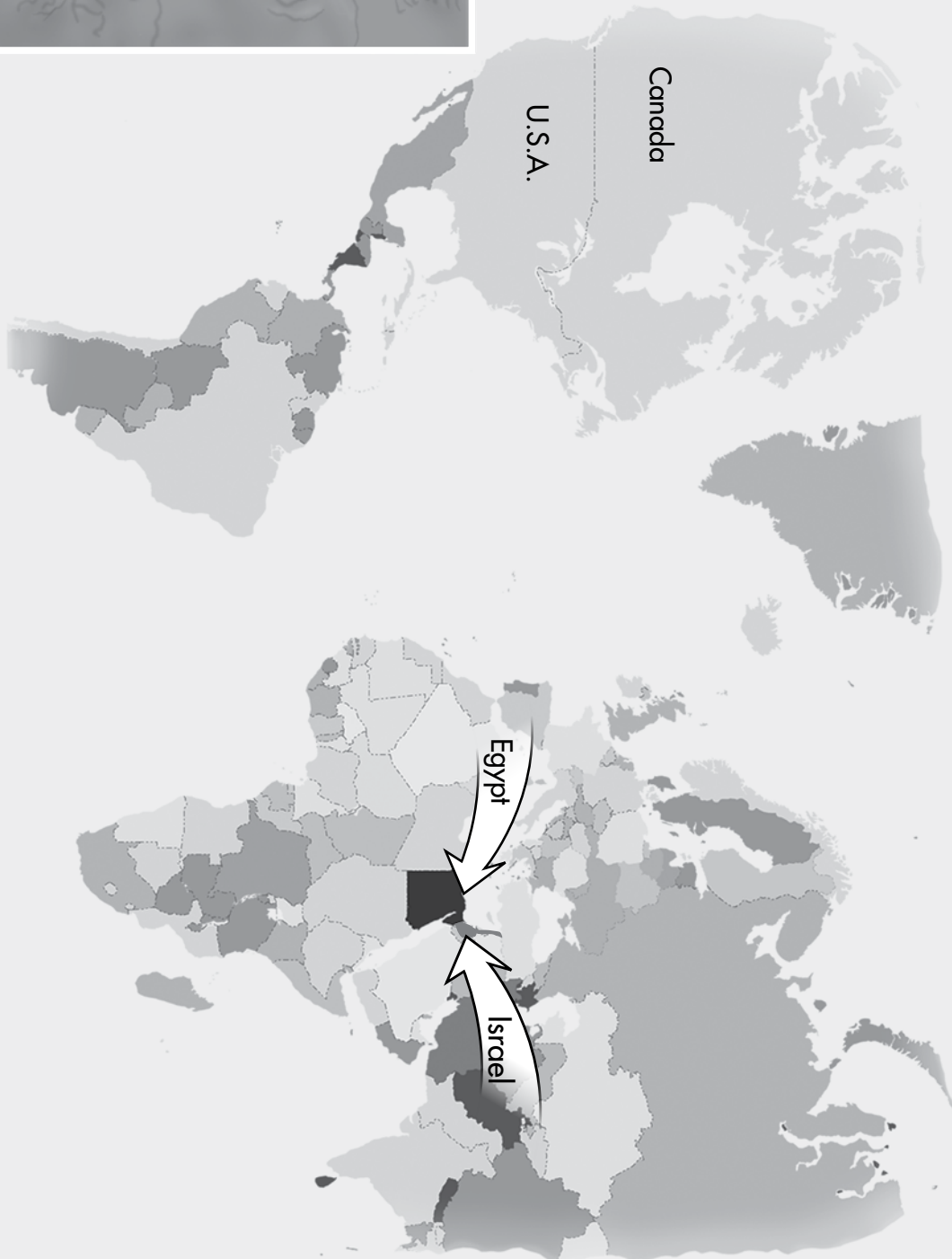
Say: **Instead of being [child's first and last name], you would be [child's first name] from the Tribe of [your Tribe name]. These fun Banduras match the color of our Tribe name poster. Every time you see a Bandura this color, you'll know that's one of our Nazareth Tribe members!**

3. Where is Nazareth?


Say: **All week, we'll pretend to go on a trip back to Bible times. Nazareth was Jesus' hometown—where Jesus was a kid! Show everyone the map (p. 26). Point to the approximate area of your town, and then point to Nazareth. We'll visit with Jesus' mother, Mary, and listen to her tell stories about Jesus as a baby, a small child, and a young man. Most people in Nazareth knew Jesus just as a regular boy—the son of Mary and Joseph. To them, he was just a kid down the street—not the Son of God! I can't wait to hear Mary tell us all about Jesus, the *true* Son of God!**

Notes From **Nazareth**

The Tribe name poster contains information about your Tribe's history. You can read histories of the other Tribes on page 12. Some Tribes have a fairly negative or barbaric history. Rather than focus on the shortcomings of Jacob's sons, talk about how we don't have to repeat the wrong things our families do. Point out that God loves us and forgives us, and we can have a fresh, new start when we choose to follow God.



4. Learn the Bible verse.

Say: Today we'll learn that  **Jesus had a family...we do too. God chose Mary to be Jesus' mother. Mary must have thought, "How can God have chosen me to be Jesus' mother? How is that possible?"** Open the Bible to today's verse. **An angel told Mary, "For nothing is impossible with God."** That's our Bible verse for today—Luke 1:37. We sang these same words in a song during the opening Celebration; we sang our Bible verse!

Teach Tribe members these actions to help them remember the Bible verse: Have everyone shake their heads "no" and spread their hands out for "For nothing is impossible." Have everyone point both pointer fingers up for "with God."



"For nothing is impossible..." "...with God."

5. Look at the schedule.

Bring out the schedule.

Say: **Each day in Nazareth, we'll play Bible-times games, explore the Marketplace shops, eat Bible-times food, and visit Jesus' mother, Mary.** Tell your Tribe members where you will be going first today. The shopkeepers, the Fun & Games Leader, and Mary will repeat their activities several times each day, with a different group of Tribes each time. Look at the list of Marketplace shops you'll get to visit throughout the week (see margin). Remind everyone that the shops are open all week long; there will be plenty of time to visit them all!

Say: **When we go to another country, their money is different from ours. Since we'll be going to Nazareth, we'll need some coins to spend. We'll get to use these coins, called shekels, when we visit the Marketplace shops today.** Give each Tribe member three shekels and a pouch to put them in.

Marketplace Shops

- ➔ **Carpentry Shop**—make a wooden toy sheep.
- ➔ **Bead Bazaar**—make clay beads and string them on a necklace, bracelet, or anklet.
- ➔ **Synagogue School**—make a Tzedakah (charity) Box. (The word *tzedakah* can be pronounced as "tsuh-daw-KAW," "tsuh-DAW-kuh," or "tsi-DUH-kuh." Just choose one way to say it, and be consistent!)
- ➔ **Olive Oil Shop**—make a scented olive oil and sea salt hand scrub.
- ➔ **Farmer's Field**—plant seeds in a pot.
- ➔ **Dye Shop**—dye a fabric coin pouch and other cloths in cool colors.
- ➔ **Operation Kid-to-Kid™ Tent**—make banks for collecting donations for clean water in Honduras.
- ➔ **Rock Quarry**—dig for a special "stone," and use it to make a necklace.
- ➔ **Barnyard**—visit farm animals and pets.
- ➔ **Food Market**—eat Bible-times food.

Notes From **Nazareth**

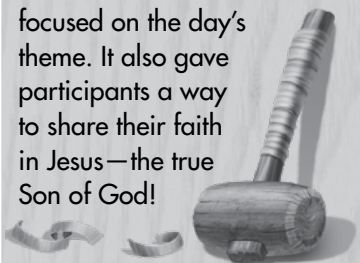
Have the Tribe members write their names on their coin pouches and Banduras. They'll use them throughout the week.

Notes From **Nazareth**

Before your Tribe experiences the Marketplace, form two smaller groups (you can take one group, while the Assistant Tribe Leader takes the other) and go to the shops you chose to visit. Remind Tribe members to stick together with their adult leader. It's easier to help kids interact with the shopkeepers and much easier to pull your Tribe back together for the next activity.

Field Test **Findings**

We gave Tribes a mission to accomplish in the Marketplace each day. This gave everyone the opportunity to play their role and kept much of the conversation focused on the day's theme. It also gave participants a way to share their faith in Jesus—the true Son of God!



6. Give Tribe members a “mission” to accomplish in the Marketplace.

Say: Pretty soon we will hear the Shepherd's Bell that lets us know that the Marketplace is open. When it's our turn to visit the shops, let's have a special mission. Get to know the shopkeepers, and greet them with a friendly smile or handshake. We want to get to know the shopkeepers because throughout the week, we'll share with them all we learn about Jesus.

When you hear the Shepherd's Bell, lead your Tribe on a fun adventure in ancient Nazareth!



Day 1

Closing Hometown Huddle



1. Circle up and review.

Gather your Tribe members on the home base blanket to talk about the day's events.

Say: **Today we met Jesus' mother, Mary, for the first time! She was so surprised when the angel Gabriel told her that God chose her to be Jesus' mother. Mary thought, "I'm nobody special. I'm just an average girl from a town in the hills of Galilee. And God chose *me* to care for his Son? Wow, caring for a tiny baby! What a *huge* responsibility!" The angel told her that "nothing is impossible with God."** Ask:

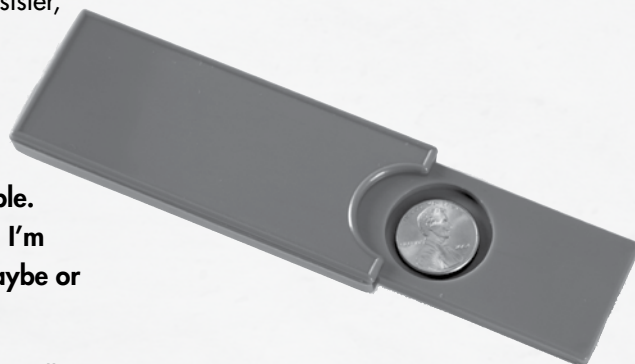
❓ **What is something hard you need to do?**

Share an idea first, such as meeting new friends because you just moved or worrying about your sick child. Then let everyone share. Tribe members might say "obeying my parents," "getting along with my sister," "telling people about Jesus," and so on.

2. Surprise Tribe members with the Surprise Box!

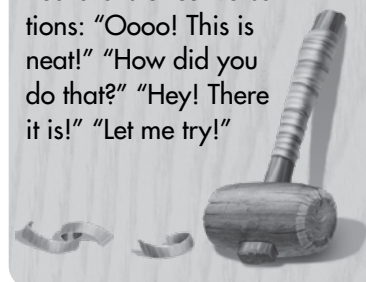
Say: **All of those things sound hard to do. Some of them sound almost impossible! Let's look at something right now that seems impossible. Bring out the Surprise Box and penny, and show them to everyone. I'm going to make this penny disappear. Hard to do? Impossible? Maybe or maybe not! Let's see.**

Slide the tray in and out a couple of times, and show that the penny is still there. **Hmmm...This *is* hard to do. Maybe it *is* impossible.** Try it again, this time pulling the tray all the way out, turning it around, then inserting the opposite end first. The penny disappears inside the box. Look surprised! **I did it! I made the penny disappear!** Pause. **Actually, here's how I did it...**Show everyone how the penny disappears when you reverse the tray. Shake the box so they hear the penny rattle inside.



Field Test Findings

Have fun with the Surprise Box. Ham it up! Everyone loved this activity and wanted a chance to figure it out. All around the room, we heard bits of conversations: "Oooo! This is neat!" "How did you do that?" "Hey! There it is!" "Let me try!"



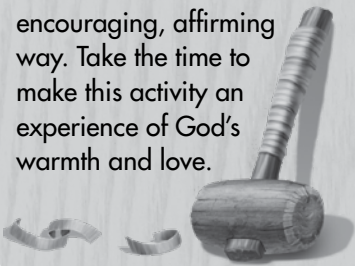
Say: **Actually, I couldn't do it on my own. I needed this special little Surprise Box to make the penny disappear. Remember those hard things we mentioned earlier, those things that seem impossible to do? Mention the difficult jobs Tribe members shared. During those hard times, we might think, "This is impossible. How can I do this?" Well, we can't do it on our own. We need God to help us. We need to remember what the angel told Mary: "Nothing is impossible with God."**

Let each Tribe member "work" the Surprise Box. Each time they make the penny disappear, have them say, "Nothing is impossible with God!"

Afterward, put the Surprise Box away so it's not a distraction. If you have time at the end of the day, kids can take turns playing with it.


Field Test Findings

We've discovered that it's incredibly powerful for each Tribe member to hear his or her name in an encouraging, affirming way. Take the time to make this activity an experience of God's warmth and love.



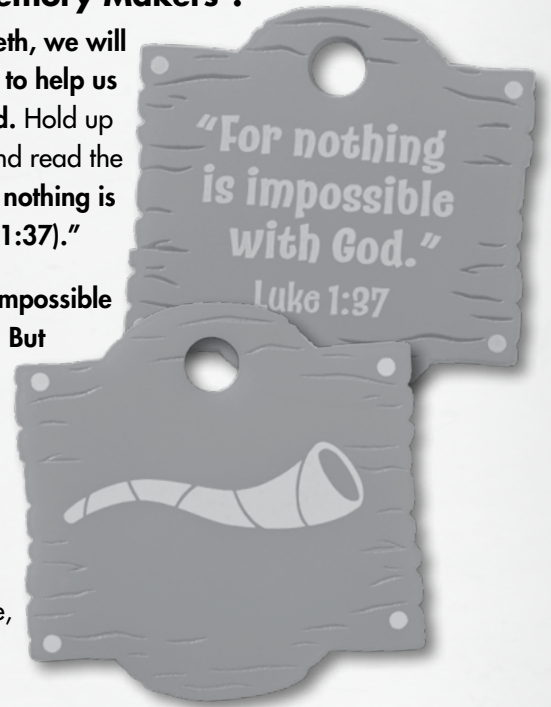
3. Bring out the Bible Memory Makers®.

Say: **Each day in ancient Nazareth, we will get a Bible Memory Maker to help us remember what we learned. Hold up the Bible Memory Maker, and read the day's Bible verse on it: "For nothing is impossible with God (Luke 1:37)."**

Mary thought it would be impossible for her to be Jesus' mother. But God wanted his Son to have an earthly family.  Jesus had a family...we do too.

Because of Jesus, we all belong to God's wonderful family. Go around the circle, give each person a Bible Memory Maker, and say: [Name], because of Jesus, you are a part of God's family.

After Tribe members receive the affirmation, have them link arms with the people on either side of them. Once everyone is linked in a circle, say a prayer thanking God for Jesus and that we are a part of his wonderful family.



4. Explain God Sightings.

Say: We have such an awesome God. Nothing is impossible with God! Look at all the wonderful things God has created: our families, you, me, stars, sun, moon, animals, birds, and everything! All week long we are going to look for ways we see God active in our lives. Those things are called God Sightings.

Show the sample God Sightings Sheep. This is a God Sightings Sheep. When we gather again tomorrow, we'll write our God Sightings on one of these. A God Sighting might be a hug, a beautiful sunrise or sunset, or a person being kind to you. You'll be like detectives, looking for clues or evidence of God. Ask:

❓ Where do you think you might see God after you leave ancient Nazareth?

Share an idea first, such as a family member surprising you with a gift. Then let everyone share.

Say: I can't wait to hear how—and where—you see God. In fact, you are God Sightings to me! God gave me a fun, wonderful Tribe of people to be with all week! I enjoyed my first day in Nazareth with you!

5. Prepare for the closing Celebration.

- ➔ Say a prayer asking God to help Tribe members learn about Jesus and share his love with others.
- ➔ Have everyone place their Bible Memory Makers in their coin pouches. Collect all the Banduras, coin pouches, and leftover shekels, and put them in the basket.
- ➔ Have participants leave their craft projects from the Marketplace on the home base blanket until after the Celebration time. Make sure everyone comes back to the home base blanket to get those before leaving.

