

Connecting with the Biblical Text

At the end of the previous text, David is a fugitive running away from King Saul. David takes up arms, and by 2 Samuel 9, David has obliterated the family of Saul and has finally taken his place as king. David asks if any of Saul's family are alive, only to discover that Jonathan's son, Mephibosheth, is alive and hidden in the palace because he is lame in both feet. Mephibosheth's presence brings back the covenant made by Jonathan and David: "Go in peace because the two of us made a solemn pledge in the LORD's name when we said, 'The LORD is witness between us and between our descendants forever'" (1 Samuel 20:42, CEB). Although Jonathan is now dead, David remains faithful to his promise to Jonathan. King David does this by returning Saul's property to Mephibosheth, assuring him that he will sit at David's table forever. On a less altruistic note, the latter could also be a way to keep Mephibosheth close so that he has no chance to try to overthrow King David.

Connecting with the World

- By keeping his covenant with Jonathan through his care and protection of Mephibosheth, King David brought reconciliation to a broken relationship. Oftentimes, we break our promises to God, but God never breaks God's promises to us, even if we don't quite see them. Watch the YouTube video "JJ Heller—You Keep Your Promises (Official Lyric Video)" (bit.ly/GLKeepYourPromises, 4:17).
- Sometimes we dismiss a promise without ever thinking about the effect it will have on the person we made it to. Because I Said I Would is a nonprofit and social movement dedicated to the

- Goal:** To explore what it means to keep a promise.

betterment of humanity through promises kept and made. To learn more, watch the YouTube video "Because I Said I Would—Alex Sheen—TEDxUtica" (bit.ly/GLBecauseISaidIWould, 16:52).

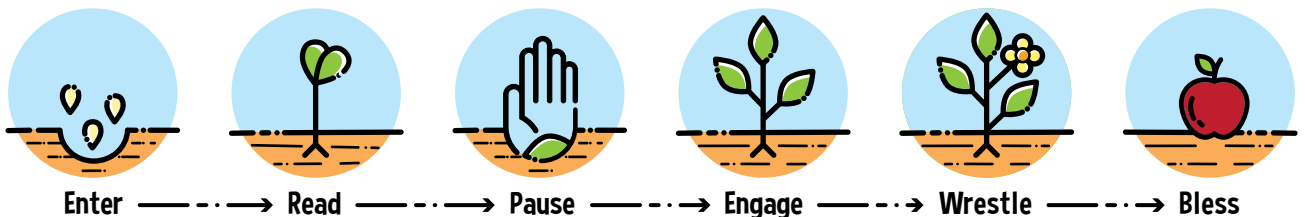
Connecting with the Spiritual Lives of Children

Children may have questions about Mephibosheth's crippled feet and how he is unable to walk and support himself on both feet. This is all we know about Mephibosheth, but it may provide an opportunity to talk about how a disability doesn't define the whole person and how God cares more about our hearts than how we look. The children are not likely to suspect David's desire to keep Mephibosheth under his surveillance and will look on the restoration of Saul's property to his grandson as a positive act, fulfilling the promise made to Jonathan. There is no need to raise this suspicion, since it seems to be the desired effect of the storyteller to show that David kept the promise and was a man of faithful love, something for all children to admire.

Connecting with the Spiritual Lives of Adults

- A lot happens to David between his escape and when he becomes king. For much of that time, David is running from Saul and his soldiers. Psalm 63 is attributed to David during that period. Read it and think about David's fears and how this psalm might bring you a sense of security and comfort during difficult times.
- What vows or promises that you made to a partner, parent, child, or longtime friend come to mind when you read this text? Pray for God's help to make good on them.

God of faithful love, hold us tightly in your arms as we seek to love faithfully too. Amen.



Enter — — — —> Read — — — —> Pause — — — —> Engage — — — —> Wrestle — — — —> Bless

Gathering Supplies

Based on your choices, you will need:

- ✓ *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*
- ✓ Carpet squares or cushions
- ✓ Battery-operated candle
- ✓ Cards cut apart from Resource Page 1
- ✓ Newsprint, marker
- ✓ Posterboard
- ✓ *We Move Together* by Kelly Fritsch and Anne McGuire (AK Press, 2021) or internet-connected device

Preparing to Lead

Begin by exhaling deeply, and release any worries you are carrying with you. Take three deep, slow breaths, and focus on each exhale. Imagine the warmth of God's love washing over you. Pray, "Faithful God, open my heart so that I can hear your Spirit speaking through today's story. Spark my imagination and inspire my creativity as I prepare to teach this story to others. Amen."

Read 2 Samuel 9:1–13. Note anything that stands out or surprises you in the text. Make a list of questions this passage raises for you. Then read "David Keeps a Promise" in *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible* (p. 118). Reflect on the following questions:

- ✓ Why do you think David honors the promise he made to Jonathan?
- ✓ How do you think David felt when he kept his promise to Jonathan?
- ✓ How do you think it made Mephibosheth feel when David kept his promise to his father?
- ✓ What promises have you made to friends, family members, or others? What promises have they made to you?

This story has some names we might not be used to hearing. Practice saying them so that you feel comfortable while reading the story to the children. Use the following pronunciation guides or listen to the following YouTube videos:

- ✓ Ziba (ZEE-bah)—"How to Pronounce Ziba (Bible)" (bit.ly/GLZiba, 0:20)
- ✓ Mephibosheth (meh-FEE-boh-sheth)—"How to Pronounce Mephibosheth" (bit.ly/GLMephibosheth, 0:24)
- ✓ Machir (may-KEER)—"How to Pronounce Machir (Bible)" (bit.ly/GLMachir, 0:44)

Recall the names and faces of the children you will lead. Are there upcoming birthdays or other joys to celebrate? Are any of the children experiencing an especially hard time? Pray for them and yourself as you prepare to learn together.

Before the children arrive, arrange a comfortable seating area with carpet squares or cushions in a circle. Have the battery-operated candle and *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible* nearby.



Enter into sacred space together.

Greeting children by name, or asking their name if you do not know it, shows that you are interested in them as individuals and that you are glad to see them. Talking with children at eye level, if possible, communicates that a child is important to you, engages them in the conversation, and gives you a perspective you might not otherwise have.

As the children arrive, greet them by name. Invite them to join the circle. When everyone has arrived and settled into the circle, welcome them again. Draw attention to the candle and turn it on. Tell them the candle reminds us that God is present as we learn together. Go around the circle, inviting each participant to share their name, one "Wow!" (a good thing), and one "Pow!" (a challenging thing) from their week. Go first as a way of demonstrating this practice.

Invite the children to close their eyes and take a deep breath out. Invite them to take three deep, slow breaths. Open with this prayer or one of your choosing:

Faithful God, thank you for loving us and always being with us. Help us to learn about your love and to share it with others. Amen.



Read a story of God's people.

Ask the children if they have ever made a promise, and invite them to share one if they would like to. Tell them that today's story is about the importance of keeping promises. Set the scene for the story by telling the children that it is about a promise

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David wanted to keep his friend Jonathan. Ask children who were at the last session to share what they remember about David and Jonathan. Tell the children that there are some names in this story that we may not be used to hearing and one of them is Mephibosheth (meh-FEE-boh-sheth). Invite the children to practice saying the name with you. Read aloud “David Keeps His Promise” in *Growing in God’s Love: A Story Bible* (p. 118).



Pause to let God’s Word enter into hearts and minds.

Invite the children to a time of quiet reflection. Tell them that you will watch the clock for one minute as they quietly reflect on this story. Encourage the children to think about what they heard about promises in this story. After a minute has passed, tell the children that you are going to continue reflecting on this story together.



Engage curiosity and imagination with God’s story.

Remind the children that David kept his promise to Jonathan by caring for Mephibosheth. Through his actions, David demonstrated loyalty and integrity. Reflect on the story together with the following wondering prompts:

- ✦ I wonder how long you should remember a promise to a friend.
- ✦ I wonder why King David kept his promise to Jonathan even though Jonathan had died.
- ✦ I wonder how King David felt when he saw Mephibosheth.
- ✦ I wonder how Mephibosheth felt when he ate dinner with King David.
- ✦ I wonder what Mephibosheth and David ate for dinner.
- ✦ I wonder what they talked about.
- ✦ I wonder what good news Mephibosheth heard.

Invite the children to share other questions or wonderings they have about the story.

- Acting Out the Story
 - ✦ Tell the children that they are going to act out the story of David’s promise. Invite them to form groups of two or three people. Give one or more of the cards cut apart from Resource Page 1 to

each group. Each scene has two actors. If there are three children in a group, encourage them to add a third character, such as another servant, a friend of Mephibosheth, Machir (who owned the house where Mephibosheth was living), and so forth. Tell the children to prepare their scene using their own ideas for the words and actions in the scene. Have the children perform their scenes in order.



Wrestle with our place in God’s story.

Promises are important to children. When parents and adults keep their promises to children, they model integrity. This teaches children that they can trust and rely on others. Children also learn by making promises of their own. For example, children may promise to always be friends with another person or to walk and care for a new pet. Through promises, children learn to follow through with their commitments to others and act with integrity, even when it is hard.

Choose one or both options:

- Promise Keeping
 - ✦ Write the word *promise* on a sheet of newsprint. Ask the children what *promise* means. Write their suggestions on the newsprint. Then discuss these questions:
 - Have you ever made a promise to someone else?
 - How does it feel when you keep your promise to someone?
 - How does it feel when you do not keep your promise?
 - What promises does God make to us?
 - What promises do we make to God?
 - Why is it important to keep our promises?
- Group Covenant
 - ✦ Tell the children that a covenant is an agreement—or a set of promises—that people make with one another. Wonder what kind of covenants the children know about. Tell the children that in the Bible, God makes a covenant with Israel. In the covenant, God promises to love and care for the Israelites, and the Israelites promise to love and honor God. Comment that when two people get married, they make a

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covenant too. They promise to love and care for each other.

- ✦ Explain that a group covenant is an agreement between people in a certain group where everyone promises to follow the rules or guidelines set forth by the group. Brainstorm together what kind of rules or guidelines they would want to have as a group that cares for and respects one another. Write, or have volunteers write, suggestions on a sheet of newsprint. Go over the list and decide which ones everyone can agree on and promise to try and keep.
- ✦ Have volunteers write the agreed-upon rules or guidelines on a piece of posterboard and title it “Our Covenant.” Invite everyone to sign their names as a way of promising to abide by these guidelines. Display the posterboard in your space so that it can be seen in the coming weeks.



Bless one another with God’s grace.

Form a circle. Invite the children to repeat your words and actions as you lead them in prayer:

Loving God, help us (*hold hands out, palms up*) /
to think kind thoughts, (*touch head*) /
to speak loving words, (*touch lips*) /
to act with compassion, (*reach arms out to sides*) /
remembering that you are always with us. (*hug yourself*) /
Amen. /

As you conclude, turn off the candle.



Grow with more.

- Caring for People with Disabilities
 - ✦ Comment that throughout the Bible, there are stories about God and Jesus loving and caring for people with disabilities. Remind the children that in this story, David keeps his promise to Jonathan by loving and caring for Mephibosheth, Jonathan’s son who is unable to walk. Ask the children if they know anyone in their family, church, or school who has a disability. Invite them to share their names and a little bit about these people, including how they know them. Some children may want to share their own experiences of having a disability.
 - ✦ Read aloud *We Move Together* by Kelly Fritsch and Anne McGuire, or show the YouTube video “We Move Together: Storytime—Disability, Accessibility, Social Justice, Community Building” (bit.ly/GLWeMoveTogether, 14:00). After the story, invite the children to reflect on it with the following questions:
 - What is one thing you learned from this story?
 - What are some of the gifts that people with disabilities bring to our community?
 - How can you show love to someone with a disability?
 - Is how we show love to someone with a disability similar to or different from how we show love and care for people without disabilities?

David Keeps a Promise
Resource Page 1

Scene



Two actors: David and Jonathan

David and Jonathan were best friends. As best friends, David promised to care for Jonathan and any children he had.

Scene



Two actors: King David and a servant

David wanted to keep his promise to Jonathan even though Jonathan had died. So David asked one of his servants if anyone in Jonathan's family was still alive

Scene



Two actors: King David and Ziba

Ziba was a servant who worked for Jonathan's family. Ziba came to King David and told him that Jonathan's son Mephibosheth was still alive.

Scene



Two actors: King David and Ziba

Ziba also told King David that Mephibosheth was disabled and unable to walk. David asked for Mephibosheth to be brought to him.

Scene



Two actors: King David and Mephibosheth

When Mephibosheth came before King David, Mephibosheth bowed so low that his head touched the ground.

Scene



Two actors: King David and Mephibosheth

When Mephibosheth told King David that he would serve King David, Mephibosheth bowed again.

Scene



Two actors: King David and Mephibosheth

King David told Mephibosheth about his promise to his friend Jonathan saying that he would always take care of Jonathan's family.

Scene



Two actors: King David and Mephibosheth

King David kept his promise. He gave all the lands that belonged to Jonathan's family to Mephibosheth and invited him to eat dinner with him, just like the king's sons.