



Where Did Everyone Go?

By Deborah Wassenberg

Introduction:

When life feels scary and overwhelming, we don't have to hide in a hole. God gives courage, strength, and victory when we trust Him.

Bible Story: War with the Philistines/Jonathan's Victory

Bible Reference: 1 Samuel 13:1-23 & 14:1-23

Visuals You Will Need:

1. Blacksmith
2. King Saul and Jonathan
3. Philistine army
4. Holes to hide in
5. Jonathan and his armour-bearer
6. Philistines looking down
7. Jonathan and armour-bearer climbing
8. Saul and his army
9. Israelites out of hiding

Words:

1. The Philistines had the Israelites under their complete control — weak, scared, and totally defenceless.
There wasn't a single blacksmith anywhere in Israel.
The Philistines had banned blacksmiths so the Israelites couldn't make swords or spears.
If an Israelite needed something sharpened — an axe, a mattock, or a ploughshare — they had to go to a Philistine blacksmith and pay money to get it sharpened.
But the Philistines made sure never to sharpen the tools properly.
They wanted Israel to stay weak.
In the whole nation of Israel, there were only two swords.
One belonged to King Saul, and the other belonged to his son, Jonathan.
2. King Saul gathered an army of 3000 men.
His son, Jonathan, gathered 1000.
Then King Saul blew a trumpet throughout the land.
'Let the Hebrews hear!'
They were not going to be conquered any more.

Jonathan attacked a Philistine garrison.

3. So the Philistines gathered 30,000 chariots and 6000 horsemen.
They had a multitude of people to fight Israel.
The men of Israel were scared.
4. So they hid anywhere they could.
They hid in caves.
They hid in thickets.
They hid in rocks.
They hid in holes.
And they hid in pits.
King Saul now only had 600 men because his soldiers had scattered.
Those loyal to the king followed him, trembling.
The Philistines sent out raiding parties.
5. Israel was hopelessly outnumbered and demoralised.
But Jonathan had a bold plan.
He did not mention it to his father, the King.
He said to his armour-bearer, 'Come on, let's go over to the Philistine garrison. Perhaps the Lord will intervene for us.
Nothing can prevent the Lord from saving, whether by many or by few!'
His armour-bearer said, 'Do everything that is in your heart; I am with you.'
The Philistine garrison was positioned on top of a sheer, rocky cliff.
A strategic place for them to guard the deep pass of Michmash below.
Jonathan said to his armour-bearer, 'All right. We'll go over to these men and fight them.
If they say to us, 'Stay put until we approach you,' we will stay right there and not go up to them.
But if they say, 'Come up against us,' we will go up.
For in that case the Lord has given them into our hand, it will be a sign to us.'
6. When they made themselves known to the Philistine garrison, the Philistines said, 'Look! The Hebrews are coming out of the holes in which they hid themselves.'
Then the men of the garrison said to Jonathan and his armour-bearer, 'Come on up to us so we can teach you a thing or two!'
Then Jonathan said to his armour-bearer, 'Come up behind me, for the Lord has given them into the hand of Israel!'
7. Jonathan crawled up the sheer rocky cliff on his hands and feet, with his armour-bearer following behind him.
Jonathan struck down the Philistines, while his armour-bearer came along behind him and killed them.
In this initial skirmish, Jonathan and his armour-bearer struck down about twenty men in an area that measured half an acre.
Then fear overwhelmed the Philistines who were in the camp, those who were in the field, all the army in the garrison, and the raiding parties.
They trembled, and the ground shook.
God caused this fear.

8. Saul's watchmen saw that the enemy Philistine soldiers seemed to melt away, first in one direction and then another.
So he gathered his soldiers and saw that Jonathan and his armour-bearer were missing.
Saul and his army marched into battle, where they found the Philistines in total panic, killing one another with their own swords.
Then the Philistines ran away.
All the Israelites who had hidden themselves in caves, thickets, rocks, holes and pits came out and chased them!
The Lord delivered Israel that day.
9. Fear made the Israelites hide anywhere they could.
Their fear grew when they forgot God.
They looked at the size of the enemy instead of God's power.
Jonathan didn't pretend the enemy wasn't big; he simply knew God was bigger.
He knew the Lord could save them.
God didn't need perfect conditions; He needed willing hearts like those of Jonathan and his armour-bearer.
When Jonathan stepped out, everyone else came out of hiding, too!

Ministry to the Children:

People hide in holes when life feels scary. What kind of things make people hide inside their 'hole'? Fear of bullies. Fear of failing. Fear of trying new things. Fear of being laughed at. God will give you courage when you trust in Him. Courage that will help you step out. Courage that helps others be brave, too.

Remember: The Holy Spirit is the best helper of all!

When Jonathan stepped out to face the Philistines, he wasn't relying on his own strength. He trusted that God was with him, helping him every step of the way. Today, God gives us that same help through the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is God's presence living inside every believer. He doesn't just help grown-ups — He helps children too. He is the best Helper because:

- He gives courage when we feel afraid
- He gives peace when our hearts feel wobbly
- He gives wisdom when we don't know what to do
- He gives strength when things feel too hard
- He reminds us of God's promises so we don't forget
- He guides us like a gentle voice saying, "This is the way — walk in it"
- He stays with us always, even when we feel alone or scared

The Holy Spirit never pushes us or shouts at us. He is gentle, kind, and strong. He helps us step out of our 'hole'. When we ask Him for help, He answers. When we listen, He leads. When we obey, He strengthens us. You don't have to face fear alone. God Himself — the Holy Spirit — is with you, helping you every moment!

Salvation:

Today we talked about people hiding in holes because they were afraid. Sometimes our hearts feel like that too. Sin is like a pit — a deep hole inside us where we feel stuck doing wrong things, stuck with wrong attitudes, stuck with fear, anger, or selfishness. We might try to climb out by ourselves, but the walls are too steep. We can't rescue ourselves. But Jesus doesn't stand at the top of the hole and shout, 'Try harder!' He climbs right down into the darkness with us.

He came into our world, lived without sin, and then died on the Cross to take away our sin. When He rose again, He made a way for us to be lifted out of the pit and brought into God's light and life. Jesus is the Rescuer who reaches down His hand and says, 'Come with Me. I'll pull you out.'

When we trust Him, He forgives us, cleans our hearts, and sets our feet on solid ground. We don't have to hide anymore. We don't have to stay stuck. We can walk with Him in the open, in His light, with courage and joy.

If you feel like you're in a hole — stuck doing wrong things, stuck with wrong feelings, stuck trying to fix yourself — Jesus wants to rescue you today.

You can pray:

'Jesus, I know I've sinned, and I can't rescue myself. Please forgive me and pull me out of the pit. I want to follow You. Thank You for dying for me and rising again. Make my heart clean and help me walk with You.'

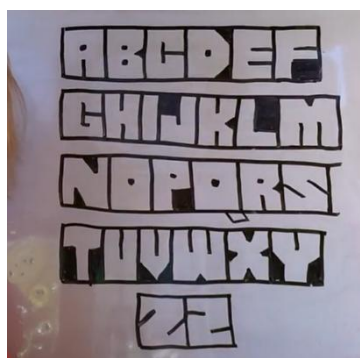
Memory Verse: Psalm 56:3

When I am afraid, I will trust in You.

Hide the Memory Verse inside 'Magic Box Lettering'.

Watch the tutorial here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=crOdZoHqW-8>

Or make up your own picture puzzle, code or cipher that the children can bring the Memory Verse 'out into the open' for everyone to learn.



Game: In a Hole

A fast, funny, courage-building outdoor game for 10–40 kids. Kids ‘hide in a hole’ (safe zones), but to score they must step out, grab courage, and make a basketball shot before diving back to safety.

Setup:

- 1 basketball
- 1 hoop (portable or fixed)
- 5–8 ‘holes’ (use hoops, cones, rope circles, or chalk circles)
- Spread the holes around the playing area, not too close together.

How to Play:

1. Everyone starts “in a hole.”

They crouch down or stand inside their circle.

2. The Leader calls:

‘IN A HOLE!’ → Kids must be inside a hole. **“OUT OF THE HOLE!”** → Kids must run out into the open.

3. The Basketball Challenge

When the leader calls **“SHOT!”**

- The basketball is placed in the centre.
- Kids must **run out**, grab the ball, and attempt **one quick shot** at the hoop.
- **Only one child shoots at a time**—first to reach the ball gets the turn.

Craft: Courage Climber

You’ll find examples of paper climbers on the internet.

Materials:

- Heavyweight cardstock paper
- Scissors
- Wool
- Plastic drinking straw
- Coin
- 2 pony beads
- Sticky tape
- Felt pens, coloured pencils, crayons, etc.

Instructions:

1. Print a black-and-white illustration of Jonathan and cut it out.
2. Colour.
3. Cut two short lengths of plastic drinking straw and tape each vertically (parallel to each other) onto the back of Jonathan's body.
4. Under it, tape the coin for weight.
5. Now cut a long length of wool. Thread it through one length of the straw and down through the other.
6. Tie a pony bead on each end of the wool. This will prevent the wool from slipping back through the straws.
7. Now place the loop above the head of Jonathan over a door handle.
8. With each end of the wool in one hand, pull the wool apart and watch Jonathan climb up toward the door handle.
9. Bring your hands and the wool strands back toward each other and watch Jonathan descend now that you've reduced friction.