

# Follow the Bouncing Ball

## Leader Prep

We live in an impatient society. Perhaps you have had the experience of sitting at the computer and drumming your fingers as you wait 10 or 15 seconds for a web page to load. Never mind that just a few years ago we could not have gotten that information without leaving the house. We tend to want exactly what we want and we want it now. That poses a bit of a problem for children and adults alike in dealing with God who simply will not be rushed. God's plans are not typically straight lines. Instead, He weaves together the events of our lives to achieve His own ends. It's marvelous to see the finished product, but frustrating in the middle.

A former pastor of mine explained it this way. If I want to drive at night from here to New Orleans, I need the headlights to work. I do not, however, need the headlights to shine all the way from where I am to New Orleans. As long as the headlights will shine far enough down the road for me to drive safely, I can make it all the way to New Orleans. God's calling and direction in our life is like those headlights. We can't see all the way down the road, but we can be certain that the destination will be better than New Orleans.

Today's lesson looks at a missionary whose present assignment in South Asia did not appear to him in a clear vision when he first perceived his call to ministry. Kyle Yarwood\* proceeded through years of education and more years of church-planting experience in the United States before he found his way to South Asia. We might be tempted to call this his final ministry calling, but perhaps God has something completely different in the future for Kyle. The important thing for Kyle and for all of us is that we respond to God's calling when it comes with complete obedience, not worrying about where that obedience might take us or what the eventual destination might be. This is hard in an impatient society.

\*Name has been changed.

● **Objective:** The objective of this lesson is to help children understand that God's plans may not be as direct as we might like.

● **Scripture Focus:** Psalm 31:1-5

● **Key Verse:** Psalm 31:3

● **Materials Needed:**

- Soccer or similar ball

Psalm 31:3

“  
For You are my rock and my  
fortress; You lead and guide me  
because of Your name.  
”

## Learning Activity

Ask all of the children to stand at various points around the room. Place two chairs or other markers on opposite sides of the group so that a straight line cannot be walked without bumping into a child. Instruct the children not to move until given permission. Explain that you would like to play a game in which a person will try to roll a ball from one chair to the other. The goal is to touch the ball as few times as possible.

Begin the game by rolling the ball. When it comes to rest, roll it again, keeping count of the number of rolls you require. When you reach the chair, announce your score and select a child to be the next roller. Take the roller's place as an obstacle. Continue the game, changing rollers each time, as time permits.

## Lesson

Now I would like all of you to have a seat over here. *(Direct the children to an area to the side of the game area.)* Does anyone remember who had the lowest score in the game? *(Identify the winner.)* That's great. Now I am going to take one last turn. *(Carefully roll the ball across the floor, hopefully hitting the chair with one roll.)* My, it is certainly easier to play that game when all of you are not standing in the way. Does that mean I win? Okay, I suppose that wasn't fair. *(Acknowledge the winner.)*

What made that game difficult, it seems to me, was all of those obstacles. The ball simply could not go in a straight line from over here to over there. Instead, the ball bounced around a good deal. What, you might ask, does this game have to do with missions or God calling us to do His work? I am going to hold off on explaining that for a few minutes.

Right now, I would like to tell you a bit about Kyle Yarwood. Kyle is a missionary in South Asia. That's a part of the world where there are many, many people and not very many Christians or churches. Because of that, Kyle has the challenge of knowing what to do and which way to take his work.

Let me give you one example. In the big city where Kyle lives, lots of times he travels in a bicycle-driven rickshaw taxi. When the rickshaw comes to a stop, Kyle often finds himself surrounded by hungry people, including a lot of children, who are begging for money. What should he do? Wouldn't Jesus want Kyle to give something to these people? Unfortunately, it's not that simple. Some of the people are being forced to beg by criminals who will take whatever money they receive. Even if Kyle could identify the right people to help, he would very quickly run out of money only to find more people begging at the next stop.

Kyle sometimes buys food for these hungry people. He also gives to churches and organizations that give food directly to hungry people. It would be nice to know exactly who to give to and how much to give, but life just is not that clear and direct.

The path Kyle took to South Asia was not clear and direct, either. He knew God wanted him to be a missionary, but where? First Kyle found himself in years of school. Then he spent ten years planting churches in the United States. Only then did he make his way to South Asia. Is this God's final plan for Kyle or will he continue to bounce around? Only time can answer that question.

Just as Kyle has taken a few different bounces to get where he is today, following God's call is not a simple thing. It's sort of like that rickshaw. God does not usually show us exactly where or what He has in store for us. Instead, He asks us to go along for the ride and obey Him at each intersection.

Why did we play that game? The goal of the game was to get the ball to the other chair. The ball bounced around a little bit and we all took different routes, but eventually we all reached the destination. That's what following God's call is like.

## Challenge



Here are things you can do to respond to God's call:

- As you pray each day, take time to listen to what God might be trying to tell you.
- Memorize Psalm 31:1-5. Keep in mind that no matter how many twists and turns life brings, God is your rock and fortress.
- Pray for Kyle Yarwood as he works to bring the good news of Jesus to many people who have never heard. Pray for the people of South Asia that their hearts and minds will be opened to the gospel.

### PARENT LETTER

*(Please note that a sample parent letter is available at the end of this lesson.)*

Provide children with an information sheet to take home and share with their parents. You may want to add this to any communications you send home weekly, or create a flyer or letter just for this purpose. Customize the letter for your situation.

Dear Parent,

In today's meeting, we learned about Kyle Yarwood\*, a missionary in South Asia. When Kyle received his calling to ministry, he had no idea that God would lead him halfway around the world to very different culture. Along the way, Kyle's course seemed to twist and turn, but always God had a plan. Let me encourage you to reinforce your child's learning by discussing these questions.

1. What did Kyle spend ten years doing in the United States? (Planting churches)
2. How does Kyle often travel around the city where he lives? (In rickshaw taxis)
3. Who approaches him when his rickshaw stops? (Children and adults begging for money)
4. Why does Kyle not give the people money? (Criminals use some of the beggars to collect money for them. Plus, he would quickly run out of money.)

God works in mysterious ways. Most Christians can attest to the strange turns that life has taken when they have followed God's guidance. What we imagine to be our destiny today may very well be simply a stop along the way to something God has in store. Children appreciate stability and security. Unfortunately, God doesn't promise those things in this life. Help your child to understand that we can trust God even when things seem out of control.

Pray for and with your child. Help them realize that you are a dependable (though sometimes unpredictable) force in their life and that God is even more dependable. If you want your child to be happy, then trust in God is a key ingredient.

\*Name has been changed.

