

February 24, 2013

Parable of a Fig Tree that Bears No Fruit

Luke 13:1-9, 31-35

At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. He asked them, 'Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them —do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did.'



Then he told this parable: 'A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. So he said to the gardener, "See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?" He replied, "Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig round it and put manure on it. If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down."'

At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, 'Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.' He said to them, 'Go and tell that fox for me, "Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work. Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed away from Jerusalem." Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! See, your house is left to you. And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord."'

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*Parable of a Fig Tree that
Bears No Fruit*

Luke 13:1-9,31-35

The Big Story Truth: God is merciful. Like the gardner who cares for a plant for many years in hopes that it will one day bear fruit.

About this Scripture Passage: The question being asked in this passage has to do with whether or not tragedy in life is God's way of punishing people. The tower of Siloam falling and Pilate killing people, were examples of tragedies that left some people dead and others alive. Was that because some were worse sinners than others? The answer is no and Jesus tells the parable about he fig tree to illustrate his point.

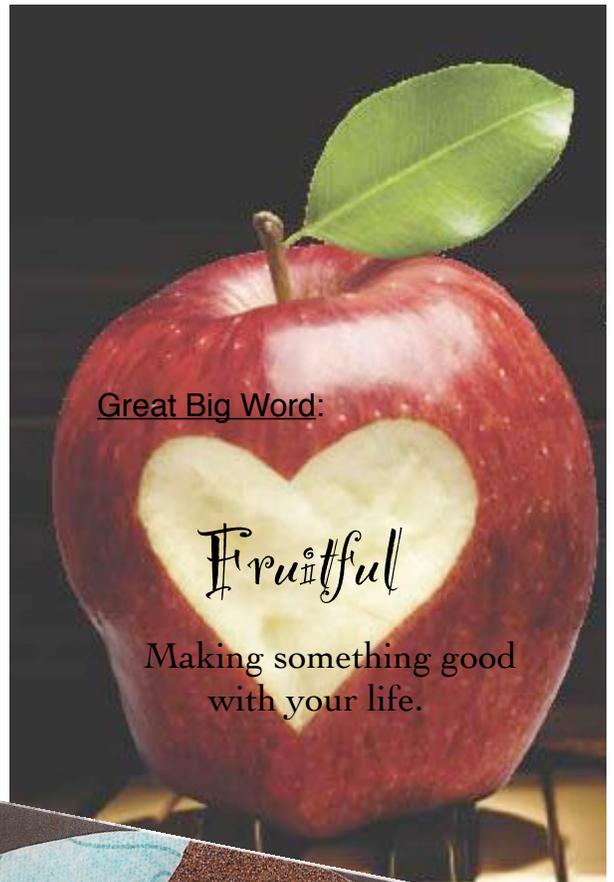
God is like the good gardner. The gardner plants and waters and tills the soil and fertilizes and does everything possible to make sure that the plan can grow and bear fruit. So God cares for people, doing everything possible to help a person to grow in faith and be able to bear good fruit which is love for God and love for each other. Even when everyone else might give up on a person, God does

not. God doesn't crush someone under a tower for not being "good." God pours love and attention on that person so that good in time can grow.



Making the Connection: Kids like to be assured that things are fair. Life is about making sure that everyone gets an equal piece or the same amount. God's love is fair in that God loves everyone equally. God's love is also fair in that everyone sins, so everyone needs God's grace. But God's love is not fair in that we do not get what we deserve. God doesn't keep score and reward or punish us based on how good or bad we are. One sin is the same as 10,000. So we all need God's mercy. This is something that upper elementary/middle school kids might be able to begin to grasp. For the younger grades, however, today's lesson focuses just on introducing them to the concept of "bearing fruit." This is an image that is used frequently in scripture as a description of living the life of faith.

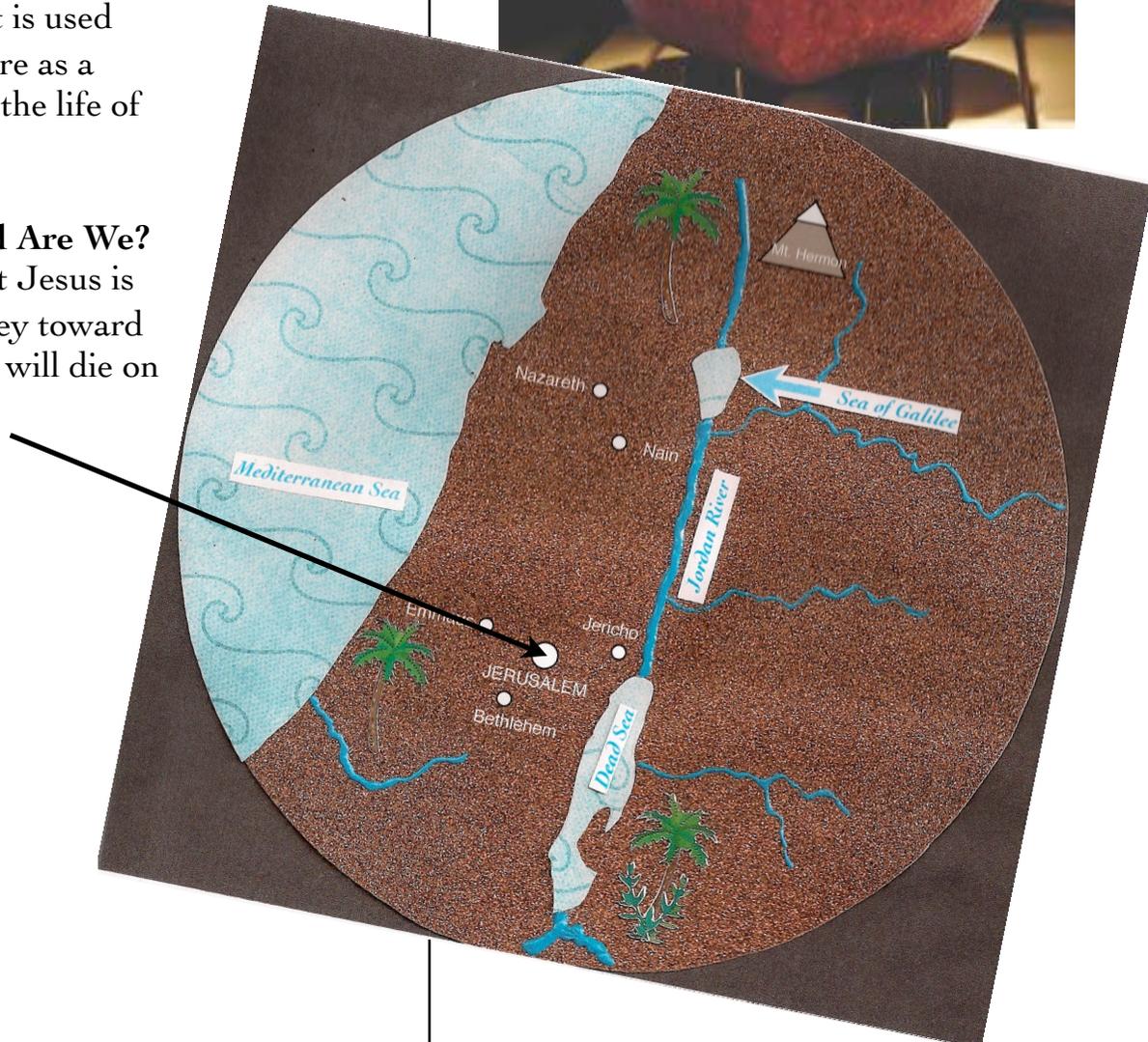
Where in the World Are We?
Remind the kids that Jesus is continuing his journey toward Jerusalem where he will die on the cross.



Great Big Word:

Fruitful

Making something good with your life.



Preschool/Lower Elementary

Materials Needed:

- Spark Story Bible
- Fruit to eat and pictures of that fruit as it is growing (include figs!)
- Soft, colorful balls or balloons
- Copies of tree trunk page (1 per child)
- Finger Paint (Mostly green, some other fruity colors too)
- Wax paper or lid to spread green paint out on
- Fruit/Gardening Stickers (1 page per child plus teacher)
- Sticks (2 approx. 12" long sticks per child)
- Fruit Shapes printed on colorful paper (or white paper to be colored)
- Hole punch
- String
- Crayons/markers/colored pencils
- Hot glue gun

Before the Children Arrive:

Consider preparing in advance the sticks to be the base for the fruit mobile each child will make during the lesson. Also, it may be helpful to pre-punch holes in the top of each piece of fruit for the mobile and even to attach a string to each ahead of time. If you are using balloons for the game, make sure they are inflated before children arrive and any deflated remaining balloons stored safely away. Also, be sure that any fruit that you will be snacking on during class is washed and prepared. Set this out in the center of the table so that children see it upon entering the classroom.

Experiencing the Story:

As children arrive, invite them to snack on the fruit. Ask them question about which fruit is their favorite. Have they ever seen that kind of fruit growing (for example an apple growing on a tree or grapes on a vine?) Show some pictures of the types of fruits you are eating as it was growing. Introduce the kids to figs as a type of fruit that were the kind of fruit that would have grown where Jesus lived.

Tell the kids that what we are going to hear today is a story that Jesus told about a fig tree that was supposed to grow fruit (figs), but didn't. Ask the kids if they

can imagine planting an apple tree in their yard and taking really good care of it, but it not ever getting any apples on it. How would they feel about that?

Tell the kids that in this story, God is like the gardner who wanted to the tree to grow lots of fruit!

Read the “Parable of the Fig Tree” Spark Story Bible pages 372-373.

Tell the kids that the Bible often compares people and trees. Just like trees are supposed to grow fruit, people are supposed to live in a way that our lives help others. When we live lives that are good and kind and loving, its like a tree that grows good fruit! That’s what we’re meant to be!

Activities (Choose any of the following that will best fit your class and time)

As your class works/plays today, keep your fruit stickers handy. Each time you see a child doing something “fruit” worthy like taking turns, being kind, helping out, give the child a fruit sticker and tell them that you saw some good fruit in them today. Find a reason to give each child a fruit sticker before the class is over.

Fruit Mobile (Craft):

Make a mobile by hanging fruit cut out shapes from some small sticks. On each piece of fruit have students draw a picture of themselves bearing good fruit. Remind the kids as they are deciding what to draw that the good fruit of our lives is what we do for others.

Blender (Game):

Have children stand in a circle. Take turns throwing a colorful ball around the circle. As each child catches the ball, ask them to name one way that we can live fruitful lives. After the kids have done one ball for a few turns, add in another ball and keep going. Turn the game up high speed for extra challenge!

Tree Handprints (Art):

Give each child a copy of the tree trunk page. Show children how to make handprints to be leaves for the tree and then use their finger tips in colorful paint to make fruit on their tree. As you work, talk about the meaning of the verse on the page.

Good Gardner (Active Learning):

In the story we read today, God is like the good gardner who gives the tree everything that it needs to grow. Before you start playing, make a list of things that a seed needs to grow into a tree that will grow good fruit. Some things you might list include water, sun, good soil, etc. Have the children make up actions to represent each of those things. Then have the kids around the room pretend that they are seeds. Show the kids how to crouch down low to the ground like a seed. Choose one child to be the gardner. The gardener must run to each see child and give them what they need to grow. As the gardner cares for the seeds, have the children start to get a little taller and a little taller. Finally, when they are standing on their tip-toes and arms are outstretched so they can't grow any more let them twirl and shout "Fruit!" When you are all done and dizzy have the kids sit down on the floor and talk about ways that God gives them things to help them grow. Just like the gardner waters and cares for the tree, God cares for us too. What are some of the ways God cares for us? List a few together a class and then pray a prayer thanking God for that extra special care!

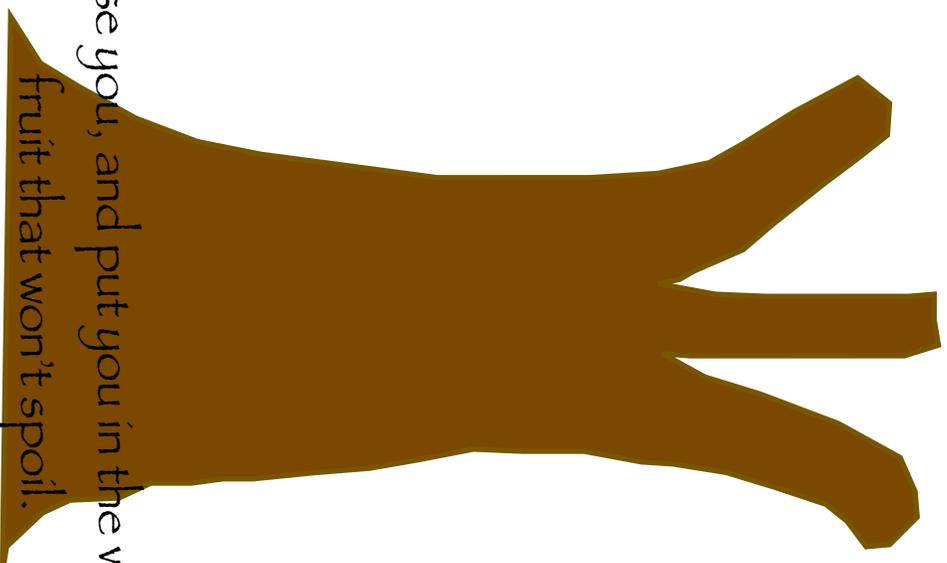
Smash Book Collage (Lower Elementary):

Give the class some time to create a collage in their Smash books. Have them open their books to a place that is blank on both the left and right sides of the page. On the left side of the page, have the kids draw, write, or cut out magazine pictures of ways that God is like the gardner caring for us and giving us all the things that we need to grow. (An example might be giving us a caring family, etc.) Give kids the sticker sheet representing the things that plants need to grow and let them stick those stickers on amidst the things that God does to care for us. On the other side of the page, have kids draw, write, or cut out magazine pictures of ways that because of God's care, our lives can be fruitful. (Remind kids that good fruit in our lives isn't like an apple sprouting out of our ear but rather living in a way that is good for others.) Give kids the sticker sheet with fruit on it and let them stick those stickers on amidst the ways that our lives bear fruit.

Growing Fruit







Remember, I chose you, and put you in the world to bear fruit;
fruit that won't spoil.

(The Message- John 15:16)

Upper Elementary

Materials Needed:

- Tower of Siloam game board & playing cards
- Green and Yellow card stock paper
- JENGA blocks or other blocks that can be made into a tower
- Dice
- Small figurines (one per child) for game piece & markers for decorating
- Stop watch or timer
- Some kind of treat/reward (one per child)
- NRSV Bible
- Scoreboard (could be a chalkboard or piece of paper)
- Fruit/Gardening stickers (1 sheet per student)

Before the Students Arrive:

Set out the Tower of Siloam game board so that it is ready for the students to play when they come into the room. The board should be set up so that the tower is in the center of the board. Yellow cards should be printed on yellow card stock; green on green card stock. Each color should be put into their own stack face down on the board. If you want kids to decorate their own pawns for the game, make sure to have found or made some small figures ahead of class time. Prepare the scoreboard with the names of the kids in the class (being sure to leave some extra space for any visitors). Make as big of deal as possible of the scoreboard.

Experiencing the Story:

As students arrive, have them pick out or make their own pawn for playing the Tower of Siloam game. If you have people looking figurines, have them decorate the figurines so that their pawn looks like themselves. When all students have arrived, begin playing "Tower of Siloam." The game goes like this:

1. Each player picks a spot on the board to begin play. Any kids in the class who aren't in attendance today get an automatic 10,000 score on the board and their pieces automatically move to the center of the game board.
2. A timer is set for 10 minutes and begins counting down now. (You can adjust this time up or down depending on the amount of time you have for your class time. Just make sure that the timer is set for a defined amount of time before play begins.)

3. The person with the next birthday rolls the dice. He/She moves their pawn forward that many spaces. He/She picks a card according to the color of square the pawn lands on. The resulting score is added or subtracted on the scoreboard.
4. When a person reaches the score of 10,000 their figurine moves to the center of the board and do not take any more turns.
5. Play continues until the timer rings. When the 10 minutes are up, the tower of Siloam is knocked down. All those with figurines in the center of the board are symbolically crushed. Those on the board whose pieces survive the calamity are rewarded with a treat.

After playing, while those who survived eat their treat in front of those who were crushed, talk about the experience of playing this game. Did those in the center expect the tower to fall or did they think they had won? Do those who “survived” think the game was fair or not?

Tell the kids that this game is based on our Bible reading for today. In our Bible reading today people were asking Jesus about some disasters that had happened. One of those disasters was that a tower (called the Tower of Siloam) had collapsed and killed 18 people. The people wanted to know why some people got crushed under the tower and others didn't. They wanted to know if some people were more sinful than others and if that was why they died.

Ask the students what they think. Does life work like the game we just played? Is God keeping score and when we reach a certain level of sinfulness does God make something bad happen to us? Have some conversation about that. What in their experience would make them think yes. What would make them think no.

Read Luke 13:1-9 in the Spark NRSV Bibles to hear Jesus' answer. Help kids to understand in this passage that Jesus is saying that those who had tragedy happen weren't more sinful or worse than those who survived. If things were about keeping score, we all would be lost. None of us is good enough on our own. That's why Jesus came into the world and will die on the cross for us.

The passage contains a parable to talk about how God does think about those who are sinful. Rather than dropping a tower on us, God takes care of us like a good gardner who keeps taking care of a tree even though its not doing what it is supposed to be doing (bearing fruit) in hopes that some day it will.

The Bible uses trees as a metaphor for people often. Ask the kids if they know what a metaphor is. If people are like trees, fruit is the things that we do that benefit others. Fruit is the good that we are meant to be able to be to others around us. When we are growing the way that God intends for us to, our lives will bear “good fruit” for others around us.

Give the class the remainder of the class time to work in their Smash books. Have them open their books to a place that is blank on both the left and right sides of the page. On the left side of the page, have the kids draw, write, or cut out magazine pictures of ways that God is like the gardner caring for us and giving us all the things that we need to grow. (An example might be giving us a caring family, etc.) Give kids the sticker sheet representing the things that plants need to grow and let them stick those stickers on amidst the things that God does to care for us. On the other side of the page, have kids draw, write, or cut out magazine pictures of ways that our lives can be fruitful. (Examples might be ways we care for others, etc.) Give kids the sticker sheet with fruit on it and let them stick those stickers on amidst the ways that our lives bear fruit.

Green Tower of Siloam Cards

<p>You were kind to your little sister this morning.</p> <p>Subtract 500 points from your score.</p>	<p>You saw someone fall down and helped them up.</p> <p>Subtract 1,000 points from your score.</p>	<p>You were friendly to a new kid at school.</p> <p>Subtract 1,000 points from your score</p>
<p>You read a book to a preschooler.</p> <p>Subtract 300 points from your score.</p>	<p>You helped your mom open a jar lid.</p> <p>Subtract 50 points from your score.</p>	<p>Your teacher asked for a volunteer. You raised your hand.</p> <p>Subtract 5 points from your score.</p>
<p>A friend of yours was waiting outside for a ride. His big sister forgot to pick him up. You let him use your cell phone to call home.</p> <p>Subtract 10 points from your score.</p>	<p>You donated a kidney to a brother who would have died without it.</p> <p>Subtract 9,000 points from your score.</p>	<p>You did the dishes without being asked.</p> <p>Subtract 100 points from your score.</p>

Green Tower of Siloam Cards

<p>You climbed a tree to rescue a stranded kitty.</p> <p>Subtract 300 points from your score.</p>	<p>You got help for a friend who was planning to hurt themselves.</p> <p>Subtract 5,000 points from your score.</p>	<p>You saw a big kid taking a kindergartener's milk money. You stopped him.</p> <p>Subtract 1,000 points from your score.</p>
<p>You wrote a national best seller teaching kids and their parents how to live healthy lives.</p> <p>Subtract 3,000 points from your score.</p>	<p>You raised a thousand dollars to fight against cancer.</p> <p>Subtract 1,000 points from your score.</p>	<p>Your Sunday School class made blankets for kids who had to stay in a shelter.</p> <p>Subtract 700 points from your score.</p>
<p>You helped clean up the church after Sunday School.</p> <p>Subtract 500 points from your score.</p>	<p>You shoveled a neighbor's driveway.</p> <p>Subtract 800 points from your score.</p>	<p>You carried groceries to the car for an elderly woman.</p> <p>Subtract 500 points from your score.</p>

Green Tower of Siloam Cards

<p>You took a care package to a sick neighbor.</p> <p>Subtract 300 points from your score.</p>	<p>You raked the yard- and only had to be asked once!</p> <p>Subtract 500 points from your score.</p>	<p>You did your homework on time, without complaining, and even helped your friend figure out how to do the hardest math problems.</p> <p>Subtract 1,000 points from your score.</p>
<p>Your grandma needed some help changing the lightbulb in her stairway. You did and even helped with some extra fixing up around the house too.</p> <p>Subtract 1,000 points from your score.</p>	<p>You babysat your little brother and sister while your mom finished some work she needed to get done.</p> <p>Subtract 700 points from your score.</p>	<p>You returned your library books on time.</p> <p>Subtract 5 points from your score.</p>
<p>You figured out a way to help save an endangered species of birds.</p> <p>Subtract 8,000 points from your score.</p>	<p>You started a recycling program in your school.</p> <p>Subtract 2,000 points from your score.</p>	<p>You solved the problem of world hunger.</p> <p>Subtract 10,000 points from your score.</p>

Yellow Tower of Siloam Cards

<p>You “borrowed” your brother’s basketball and never gave it back.</p> <p>Add 3,000 points to your score.</p>	<p>Your mom told you to give your sister a hug, and you did.... but you squeezed her so tight she started to cry.</p> <p>Add 5,000 points to your score.</p>	<p>Your mom asked you to water the plants. You did, but you spilled water all over the floor and didn’t wipe it up.</p> <p>Add 500 points to your score.</p>
<p>You saw a kid getting picked on, but you were late for practice so you didn’t do anything about it.</p> <p>Add 2,500 points to your score.</p>	<p>You didn’t mean to lie, but you weren’t exactly honest either.</p> <p>Add 1,500 points to your score.</p>	<p>You killed someone.</p> <p>Add 10,000 points to your score.</p>
<p>You thought your classmate’s phone was cool so you said, “Oh my God!” which is taking the Lord’s name in vain.</p> <p>Add 7,000 points to your score.</p>	<p>You called a kid “fatty.” You didn’t see her start to cry.</p> <p>Add 5,000 points to your score.</p>	<p>You left a dirty plate on the table for someone else to pick up.</p> <p>Add 50 points to your score.</p>

Yellow Tower of Siloam Cards

<p>You ate the last cookie without sharing.</p> <p>Add 5 points to your score.</p>	<p>You threw your candy bar wrapper down on the ground rather than putting it in the trash can.</p> <p>Add 50 points to your score.</p>	<p>You took candy from a baby.</p> <p>Add 300 points to your score.</p>
<p>You forgot to say thank you for the scarf your grandmother knit for you by hand.</p> <p>Add 500 points to your score.</p>	<p>You gave your mom "that look."</p> <p>Add 1,000 points to your score.</p>	<p>You left your shoes in front of the door so when your dad walked in he tripped and fell.</p> <p>Add 2,000 points to your score.</p>
<p>You laughed when your little sister lost her voice and could only squeak for a whole week.</p> <p>Add 1,000 points to your score.</p>	<p>You stuck gum under the desk in your history class.</p> <p>Add 1,500 points to your score.</p>	<p>You put your sweaty gym sock in someone else's locker... on purpose!</p> <p>Add 5,000 points to your score.</p>

Yellow Tower of Siloam Cards

<p>You kicked over your little brothers lego tower.</p> <p>Add 800 points to your score.</p>	<p>You pretended to be sick in order to get out of a big math test.</p> <p>Add 4,000 points to your score.</p>	<p>You were supposed to write a paper on the civil war. You found one on the internet and copied it.</p> <p>Add 7,000 points to your score.</p>
<p>You drank directly out of the milk carton rather than using a glass. Your parents have must have told you at least 50 times not to do that.</p> <p>Add 50 points to your score.</p>	<p>You were playing cards with your cousin. When he was distracted, you peaked at his cards.</p> <p>Add 700 points to your score.</p>	<p>You were walking through a gas station when your friends dared you to steal a beef jerky. You did.</p> <p>Add 5,000 points to your score.</p>
<p>You posted a picture of a classmate changing clothes in gym class on facebook.</p> <p>Add 9,900 points to your score.</p>	<p>During the high school band concert, you threw spit balls into the tubas.</p> <p>Add 4,000 points to your score.</p>	<p>You wrote on the door of the bathroom stall.</p> <p>Add 6,000 points to your score.</p>

Fruit for Preschool/Early Elementary Mobile

