

— The Greatest Journey —
Discipleship Leader Handbook





The Greatest Journey Kick-off Event

We believe that what sets The Greatest Journey apart is the teachers who teach and lead each week. Teacher training is a vital part of the success of discipleship, because we focus on the heart. To MAKE disciples you must first BE a disciple. Being a disciple means that you approach each week asking first what the Lord has for you to learn and then asking Him to help you teach others.

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Steps on your Journey

Kick-off Event – Start collecting empty shoeboxes for this optional, fun ‘Imaginary Shoebox Outreach Event’

The Greatest Journey’s 12 Lessons – Be amazed at how simple truth can have a profound impact

Graduation Event – Start planning for this fun night of celebration and giving



The Greatest Journey Kick-off Event

The Kick-off Event has three primary goals:

1) Build Excitement

We want the children participating in The Greatest Journey to get excited about becoming a disciple and learning to make disciples. We want to recognize them in front of the rest of the children in your ministry and their parents and, if possible, to the rest of the congregation. The positive recognition boosts accountability and helps them to participate more fully in the upcoming lessons.

2) Connect The Greatest Journey and the Shoebox Gift

We want children and families to understand that the good news of Jesus is shared with the children who receive shoebox gifts and many come to faith. They are invited to return to the church and participate in The Greatest Journey. The **Imaginary Journey** and **Shoebox Gift Distribution** activities help children understand what it is like (via their imagination) to sense the excitement and joy that children all over the world feel when they receive their shoebox gift.

3) Communicate Clear Expectations

We want the families of the children who are participating in the discipleship program to prayerfully support their child as they go through the 12 weeks ahead. By families seeing the connection of the child and the shoebox during the **Imaginary Journey** and **Shoebox Gift Distribution** activities, and by communicating the expectation of learning verses weekly, parents are primed to support the learning and growing efforts at home. This is also the time to let the children and parents know what you have decided to do as the children's fundraising portion of the program. You can tell families that the children are the ones who need to be creative and provide another child a world away the opportunity to experience The Greatest Journey.

Be sure to check out the kick-off and graduation training video to better understand how this optional event can be used to generate excitement and momentum for your church or group!

Sample Script for the Imaginary Journey

Hey kids, let's go on an imaginary journey! Can you imagine what it would be like to live on an island in the Philippines? The nation of the Philippines is made up of thousands of islands and to get to some of the most remote islands, we would have to take several airplanes, buses, boats and finally canoe and hike to get there! Well imagine that you had lived on this distant island, for all of your life. You didn't have a Walmart or any stores or even plumbing or electricity on your island and all day, when you weren't in school, you had to help your family farm and fish so that you would have enough food to eat. Nothing special ever happens for kids on



The Greatest Journey Kick-off Event

*your island... Until one day you find out a local church is having a special party just for the kids! Imagine how excited you would be! Imagine how excited you would be! Imagine that when they come back they bring big heavy boxes and they tell you and your friends a story that you had never heard before. Imagine that you had never heard this before... (Tell **Welcome Lesson** story from your **Teacher Guide** or use the **Kick-off Event PowerPoint** in your online resources).*

Sample Script for the Empty Shoebox Distribution

*(Use this script after the **Welcome Lesson** story or **Kick-off event PowerPoint**).*

Remember that as a child living on a remote island in the Philippines, you had never heard any of those things before and you were so amazed that there was a God who is real and who loved you! And then another amazing thing happened. The men open up the big heavy boxes and inside there are smaller colorful boxes and they begin to give them to some of the children.

Each of you are going to receive a box today but yours will be empty so you can fill it up! For now I want you to imagine if you were a child living on an island of the Philippines what would you want to be in your box? Would it be new shoes since yours are worn out? Would it be toys since you don't have any toys? What would you want in your shoebox? When you get your box, keep it closed, close your eyes and imagine what a child who lived in the remote island would want. Once all the children have received their boxes, we will open them together and you can turn to the child next to you and tell them what you imagined was inside of your shoebox! Everybody ready? 3-2-1- open your shoebox!

Sample Script for Building Excitement and Communicating Expectations

Excitement can be built simply by demonstrating excitement yourself as you briefly tell about what will be happening in the following weeks, what is happening globally with the Greatest Journey and how discipleship has impacted your life! As you build the excitement you can also set expectations.

You can say something like:

'The Greatest Journey discipleship program is happening in over 100 countries around the world and there are millions of children who will be memorizing the same verses and completing the same re-tell challenges that our children will be completing in order to graduate.'" "As these children go through The Greatest Journey discipleship program they will not only learn and grow into a disciple of Jesus themselves, but will have the opportunity to 'pay-it-forward' for another child. They will be challenged to find a way to provide The Greatest Journey for, and pack the shoebox that they received today for, another child. Each week they will have the opportunity to add items to their shoebox and bring \$.50 a week to class. Then, in 12 weeks at their graduation ceremony, they will be able to carry their packed shoebox to the front and hand it in as they become a graduate of The Greatest Journey.



The Greatest Journey Kick-off Event

Time	Sample Kick-Off Event Agenda	Volunteer
	<p style="text-align: center;">Welcome</p> <p>The event should include all children and parents but focus on children who will be participating in The Greatest Journey.</p>	
	<p style="text-align: center;">Prayer</p>	
	<p style="text-align: center;">Music, Operation Christmas Child Video, Story or Skit</p> <p style="text-align: center;">There are lots of great stories and videos online at Samaritanspurse.org/OCC.</p>	
	<p style="text-align: center;">Imaginary Journey</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Help children embark on an imaginary journey into the life of another child somewhere around the world.</p>	
	<p style="text-align: center;">Gospel Presentation</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Use the Welcome Lesson from the Teacher Guide and, if you have a large group, the Kick-off Event PowerPoint available in your online resources for larger images.</p>	
	<p style="text-align: center;">Shoebox Gift Distribution</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Countdown '3-2-1' for the children to open their empty boxes together after they have imagined what they should have inside.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Be sure to give out the Greatest Gift Booklets with the shoeboxes – just like at a real outreach event!</p>	
	<p style="text-align: center;">Build Excitement and Communicate Expectations</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Remember your enthusiasm is the key to helping others get excited!</p>	
	<p style="text-align: center;">Optional Classroom Time</p> <p style="text-align: center;">If time allows, have the children go to their classrooms for the activities in the Welcome Lesson.</p>	



The Greatest Journey Supply List

LESSON	Supplies Needed
Kick-off Event (Welcome Lesson)	<input type="checkbox"/> Empty Shoeboxes or Pre-printed Shoeboxes (order at Samaritanspurse.org) <input type="checkbox"/> Greatest Gift Booklets (bonus item with your order) <input type="checkbox"/> Kick-off PowerPoint (for larger groups) <input type="checkbox"/> Pencils and Crayons <input type="checkbox"/> Paper (for each child) <input type="checkbox"/> A Gift Box (with three Items for the 'Get to Know Me' activity)
Lesson 1	<input type="checkbox"/> Pencils and Crayons
Lesson 2	<input type="checkbox"/> Pencils and Crayons Sheets of <input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper or Paper (one for each pair of children)
Lesson 3	<input type="checkbox"/> Pencils and Crayons <input type="checkbox"/> A Blindfold <input type="checkbox"/> Keys, Rattle or Bell
Lesson 4	<input type="checkbox"/> Pencils and Crayons <input type="checkbox"/> Large Piece of Paper (with Jesus' name or picture drawn on it)
Lesson 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Pencils and Crayons <input type="checkbox"/> Paper (for each child)
Lesson 6	<input type="checkbox"/> Pencils and Crayons <input type="checkbox"/> Something special to swap/give away to a child
Lesson 7	<input type="checkbox"/> Pencils and Crayons <input type="checkbox"/> Paper (large enough to tear into pieces) <input type="checkbox"/> Large Objects (for groups to carry)
Lesson 8	<input type="checkbox"/> Pencils and Crayons <input type="checkbox"/> Large Area (to run in teams) <input type="checkbox"/> Talk to God Signs (Praise, Sorry, Please, Thanks)
Lesson 9	<input type="checkbox"/> Pencils and Crayons <input type="checkbox"/> Paper Scraps and a Container <input type="checkbox"/> Tall and heavy items (similar to Goliath's height, Saul's and David's armor)
Lesson 10	<input type="checkbox"/> Pencils and Crayons <input type="checkbox"/> Paper (for each child)



The Greatest Journey Supply List

	<input type="checkbox"/> Party Supplies (game, decorations, snacks etc.)
Lesson 11	<input type="checkbox"/> Pencils and Crayons <input type="checkbox"/> Paper (for each child) <input type="checkbox"/> Ball
Lesson 12	<input type="checkbox"/> Pencils and Crayons <input type="checkbox"/> Paper for each child
Graduation	<input type="checkbox"/> Bibles (For each graduate – received with your order) <input type="checkbox"/> Certificates (for each graduate – from student book or editable template) <input type="checkbox"/> Decorations and Food (For optional celebration after graduation)

To reinforce that The Greatest Journey is taught around the world and, many times in communities where children don't always have the basic necessities for school, consider having children share pencils or using smaller pieces of paper for some activities.



FAQ About the 12 Weeks of TGJ

When Should We Start?

The Greatest Journey is a 12-lesson program typically implemented with one lesson per week. You can start your discipleship program any time that works best for your church or group. One good option is starting in the fall, leading up to the Graduation Celebration during Operation Christmas Child National Collection Week, the third week of November. Be sure to include the **Kick-off Event** week and teacher training in your plans.

How many teachers will I need?

Our suggested student to teacher ratio is 10:1 maximum so that teachers can focus on engaging with each child. Having smaller class sizes can deepen the quality of your program and being a teacher for The Greatest Journey is a huge blessing for those who participate.

What age range is best?

We have found that the age range receiving the most benefit is from 5 to 12 years old, although the material can be used for any age.

Who should participate this year?

Just like a shoebox gift, The Greatest Journey discipleship program is a one-time per child, per lifetime program. This means the same children should not repeat the program and re-graduate every year. There are many options for how to implement The Greatest Journey. Here are some examples.

- Select an age range and repeat every few years (for example 3rd-5th graders only repeat every 3 years)
- Select one age and repeat every year. Consider using this discipleship program as a transition from one age group to the next. For example, disciple 5th graders only, every fall as they move up to middle school.
- Have kids who have been through the program participate as 'TGJ Guides' for a second year – they should not re-graduate but can be recognized as previous graduates at the graduation celebration.



FAQ About the 12 Weeks of TGJ

What is the Greatest Journey App?

Greatest Journey is a fun, exciting way for kids to explore the Bible and learn how to follow Jesus!

Aboard a time-traveling spaceship that players captain, Greatest Journey gives kids a bird's-eye view of the Old and New Testaments, introducing them to major events in the Bible and focusing on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Greatest Journey is based on the international discipleship course created by Samaritan's Purse for children who receive Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes and is FREE, with no in-app purchases or advertisements. It's now available (English only) on the Apple App Store and Google Play in more than 140 countries.

How can we incorporate the Greatest Journey App?

There are many ways to incorporate the Greatest Journey children's game app in your TGJ program! We know that children learn by repetition and so the app is a great way to encourage kids to repeat the lessons at home and share what they are learning with others. Here are just a few of the many ways the Greatest Journey app can be used.

- Use the game on a few devices in class as a teaching tool to help teach the main lesson
- Use the game on a few devices in class as a fun activity at the end of class
- Encourage families to download the app and play together at home
- If your timeframe is limited, use the app to assign lessons to kids that you won't have time to cover in class.

More questions? Email us at thegreatestjourney@samaritanspurse.org



Your Graduation Event

We believe there is nothing as rewarding as seeing the next generation rise up and live for the glory of God, learn to be courageous and choose to give selflessly so others might have hope. The Greatest Journey Graduation Ceremony is the perfect opportunity for the entire church to encourage children who have completed the program and be encouraged by graduates as they share what they have learned.

Millions of children all over the world have graduated from The Greatest Journey. For many of them this might be the only graduation event that they ever experience. These graduations are fun, culturally rich expressions of the joy that the Gospel brings. As you plan your event, there are some helpful ideas on page 7 of your **Teacher Guide** to facilitate discussions with your teachers about what would be best for your church or group. Included with the online resources, you will find an **Editable Graduation Certificate**. This certificate and the **New Testament Bibles** that come in your child packs should be given out at the graduation event.

As children come forward to Graduate, they can each carry the shoebox that they packed with them as a symbol of the multiplying work of discipleship. These shoeboxes represent other children who will have the opportunity to hear the Gospel and engage in discipleship. Consider asking the adults in the audience to cover the cost of the shipping and evangelism materials for these boxes in a special offering during the graduation.



Fundraising Ideas

For our teams all over the world, six dollars covers the cost of a Student Booklet, Graduation Certificate, Bible Memory Cards and a New Testament Bible for one child as well as the Teacher Training and Teacher Guide. Please prayerfully consider providing six dollars for each set of materials you receive so that we can print more for other children around the world. In addition, we would love for you to teach your kids about giving by helping them become disciple-makers so that other kids all over the world can experience discipleship also.

Six Dollars per Child – Have each child bring \$.50 a week for each of the 12 weeks. Almost any child can find a way to earn \$.50 a week. Earning the money and giving the money themselves creates a powerful foundation of generosity in kids.

Six Dollars per Week Sponsorship – Children find a sponsor for each of the 12 weeks who will be willing to contribute six dollars so that another child can experience The Greatest Journey overseas. As kids talk to grandparents, neighbors and family friends about their discipleship program and how they want other children to experience the good news of Jesus, they are raising accountability and prayer support as well as providing for another child each week!

Kick-off and Graduation – When children receive their empty shoebox at the graduation event, they are encouraged to keep the box and take personal responsibility for filling it over the next 12 weeks of The Greatest Journey. At graduation they can carry the now full box to the front of the room as they enter to graduate. Students can also share about their fundraising efforts at the **Graduation Event** and challenge the adults to match or double their efforts.

Bonus idea: You can build excitement by creating a special 'shoebox bank' for your class to collect their money or you can have a boys-against-girls competition.

When your fundraising is over, you can donate online at:

Samaritanspurse.org/TGJ-Disciple-Makers

Or send a check with 'TGJ-Disciple-Makers' in the memo line to:

Samaritan's Purse
PO Box 3000
Boone, NC 28607

We would love to hear what was effective and fun for your project! Let us know online by posting on our Facebook wall at [@Operation Christmas Child](https://www.facebook.com/OperationChristmasChild) or emailing thgreatestjourney@samaritan.org



Record Your Journey

We want to celebrate with you and we want to hear your amazing stories. As you go through the discipleship program be sure to collect stories of how God is at work in and through your children and families. We love videos, photos, stories and art! Share them with us at OCCinfo@samaritan.org or post on our Facebook wall at @Operation Christmas Child. *Please include your shirt size in the email and we will send you a t-shirt to thank you for your participation.*

Fill out the attendance sheet that comes with your **Teacher Guide** each week. After graduation, send us an email with your **Teacher's Report** totals (from the front of your Teacher Guide) to thegreatestjourney@samaritan.org *Please include your shirt size and mailing address in the email and we will send you a t-shirt to thank you for your participation.*