

God Promises to Restore Israel After the Exile

Jeremiah 29:4-14



Worship Theme:



God has good plans for us.

Weaving Faith Into Life:



Children will worship God for his good plans in their lives.

Session Sequence	What Children Will Do	Supplies
<p>1 Let's Praise God! (up to 25 minutes)</p>	<p>Sing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "The Lord's Plans" (Jeremiah 29:11) • "Forever God, Forever Love" • "Hope in the Lord" • "Won't Worry 'Bout a Thing" • "Stand Together" • "Love the Lord" (Deuteronomy 6:4-9) 	<p>KidsOwn Worship Kit: <i>KidsOwn Worship DVD</i></p> <p>Classroom Supplies: Video equipment, world map, city map, tape, stick-on dots</p>

Preschool

Session Sequence	What Children Will Do	Supplies
<p>2 Let's Learn the Point! (up to 25 minutes)</p>	<p>Pack Your Bags! Draw pictures of things they would take on a trip.</p>	<p>Classroom Supplies: Photocopies of "A Traveling We Will Go!" handout (at the end of this session), markers</p>
	<p>Going Back to Israel Sing songs about God's good plans.</p>	<p>Classroom Supplies: "A Traveling We Will Go!" suitcases from "Pack Your Bags!"</p>
	<p>* God's Plans Are Good! Respond to statements with "God's plans are good!"</p>	

Session Sequence	What Children Will Do	Supplies
2 Let's Learn the Point! <i>(up to 25 minutes)</i>	Building Plans Draw parts of a building without plans and with plans and compare them.	Classroom Supplies: Photocopies of "Building Plans 1" and "Building Plans 2" (at the end of this session), scissors, markers
	* "Max's Story" Watch a video segment a boy who knows his purpose.	KidsOwn Worship Kit: <i>KidsOwn Worship DVD</i> Classroom Supplies: Bible, video equipment
	* Map Out Your Life Compare their plans to God's plans.	Classroom Supplies: Paper, markers, Bible

Session Sequence	What Children Will Do	Supplies
3 Let's Pray! <i>(up to 10 minutes)</i>	The Offering Give their offering, and pray for one another.	Classroom Supplies: Offering bowls
	I Trust Your Plans Respond to Jeremiah 29:11 with "I trust your plans for me!"	
	Good Plans Sing "The Lord's Plans" and pray that they will trust in God's plans for them.	KidsOwn Worship Kit: <i>KidsOwn Worship DVD</i> Classroom Supplies: Video equipment

* Starred activities can be used successfully with preschool and elementary children together.

Customize your session to fit your needs. You can separate preschoolers and elementary children for Section 2.

Or, if you keep the children all together for the entire worship session, we suggest you choose from the starred activities.

God Promises to Restore Israel After the Exile

Jeremiah 29:4-14

Jeremiah was called to prophesy in Judah during the time of King Josiah's reforms. Jeremiah's ministry outlasted five Judean kings, and he witnessed numerous political wranglings as leaders who ignored God attempted to save Judah from destruction through alliances with Egypt and Babylon. Eventually he witnessed the fall of Judah to Babylon in 587 B.C. and died in Egypt a few years later.

While Daniel was rising to leadership in Babylon, Jeremiah was prophesying that doom would befall Judah if the people didn't return to the Lord. He was persecuted because he spoke words from the Lord that people didn't want to hear. But he was faithful to God's call in spite of his increasingly difficult circumstances. At one point he suggested that lives would be saved if the people would give up their fight and surrender to Babylon. As a result, he was branded a traitor. The people of Judah cared more about nationalistic pride than serving the Lord.

Jeremiah 29:4-14 is part of a letter to the people of Judah who had been taken into exile in Babylon. Even in the face of Judah's nationalism, Jeremiah instructed the exiles to work toward the good of their captors' city and even to pray for Babylon! This was likely greeted as another unwelcome message from the unpopular prophet.

The "prophets and diviners" Jeremiah mentions were probably false prophets who had been turning Judeans away from the Lord before the exile. Jeremiah viewed this time of exile in Babylon as a time for the people of Judah to return to the Lord, and he didn't want to see them distracted by those who promoted false religion.

In spite of his persistent theme of judgment for sin, Jeremiah's message also contains an element of hope, a promise of restoration. And Jeremiah 29:10-14 is the heart of that promise. Why did the Judeans have to remain captive

in Babylon for 70 years before experiencing this restoration? Perhaps it was because an average life spanned 70 years, and an entire generation had to live and die in exile because of the sins of its ancestors. Or maybe it was because 70 years equaled the number of Sabbath years that the people had disobeyed God by not letting the land rest (see 2 Chronicles 36:21).

The return promised in 70 years was based on God's plan, but only as it related to the people's return to worshipping him. If the people would call upon God and seek him with all their hearts, turning from the evils of idol worship, then the Lord would restore them to their land. Even as his people were dragged off to Babylon, God had marvelous plans for them, plans that included hope and a future. All they had to do was return to him, and he would bless them.

Devotion for Leaders

If we live in a growing relationship with Jesus, he provides us with direction and correction for our lives. When we respond to his leading, we enjoy the peace and security that only God can give.

Weaving Faith Into Your Life: Sometimes God takes us to strange places we don't like or even recognize! Can you describe the landscape of your spiritual life right now? Is God saying anything to you about your future? Reflect on these questions, and write your thoughts on paper. Do this for a week, looking for themes and guidance from the Holy Spirit.

Why We Worship for Leaders

Because of their persistent rebellion and continual disobedience, God's people had been taken captive and were living in exile. They deserved to be punished for their wrongs. However, God's love for his people is so perfect and so deep that he planned to restore them and to give them good things.

God's love for us is just as perfect, just as deep. Despite our rebellion and disobedience, we can be assured that God wants to restore us and give us good things, too. God has good plans for us, just as he had good plans for the Jews. We can rejoice in knowing that God's plans will give us hope and a future. Let's worship God for the wonderful promise he's given us!

Easy Prep for Leaders

Let's Praise God!

- Make sure your video equipment is ready.
- Get a world map and a map of your city. Display both where kids will be able to reach them.

Building Plans—Make copies of the "Building Plans 1" and "Building Plans 2" handouts (at the end of this session), and cut each into thirds. You'll need one section of each handout for each child.

"Max's Story"—Watch "Max's Story" at least once before the session so you'll be familiar with it.

Preschool Activities—Refer to the preschool pages for preparations.

1 Let's Praise God!

Play KidsOwn Worship music videos as children arrive. Greet everyone by name and say, "God has something special planned for you today!" Direct kids to the map of the world and the map of your city on the wall. Have each child place a dot on the map to show where they think they will be on a date in the future that you specify. Be sure to specify a date several years in the future. Tell kids that they can put their dots anywhere they want, either in your city or anywhere else in the world. Have older children help the younger children place their dots on the map.

When you're ready to begin, welcome everyone warmly.

Say **Hello, everyone! Welcome to children's church! Today, we're going to praise God for the good plans he has for us.**

As you came in today, you placed a dot on one of the maps to show where you think you'll be on [date].

Ask for volunteers to say where they think they'll be.

Ask

- **Is there any way to know for sure where you'll be on [date]?** (Yes, I already know where I'm going to college; yes, we can plan for our future; no, God has plans for our lives.)
- **How do you plan to get there?** (I'll have a job there; my family's moving there.)

Ask • **What do you think God's plans are for you?** (To have a good job; to be a teacher; to tell others about God's love.)

Say ▶ **Let's sing a song about God's plans.**

▶ Sing "The Lord's Plans" (Jeremiah 29:11).

Say ▶ **Isn't it exciting to know that God has such good plans for you? Not only does God have plans, but his plans are good plans! God's plans are good because God is good and because God loves us. Let's sing about God's love.**

▶ Sing "Forever God, Forever Love."

Ask ▶ • **How is God good to you?** (He provides for me; he forgives me.)
• **What plans do you hope God has for you?** (I hope I have a family; I hope God wants me to go to a lot of fun places.)

Say ▶ **We can look at what God has done for people in the past and trust him to take care of us the same way. Let's sing about having hope in the Lord.**

▶ Sing "My Hope Is in the Lord."

Say ▶ **God is always doing great things because he has good plans for us.**

Ask ▶ • **What are some things you've seen God do in your life?** (He helped my dad find a job; he made me feel better when I was in the hospital; he helped me find friends when we moved here.)

Say ▶ **Because God loves us, we can take our cares and worries to God. God helps us because he wants us to have the good life he planned for us, so we don't need to worry.**

▶ Sing "Won't Worry 'Bout A Thing."

Say ▶ **God loves us and wants us to share his love with others. That's part of God's plan. Let's sing about how we can stand together to show God's love.**

▶ Sing "Stand Together."

Say ▶ **Let's sing one more song—a song that describes how fully we should love God.**

▶ Sing "Love the Lord" (Deuteronomy 6:4-9).

Say ▶ **God will help you do well for him. You can serve God and trust his plans for you.**

Pray ▶ **Dear God, we praise you for having such wonderful plans for our lives! Thank you for being faithful in leading those who follow you in ways that give them hope. Help us to always trust you and the good plans you have for us. In Jesus' name, amen.**

Preschool Activities, pages 115-116

At this time, have the preschool leader invite the preschoolers to go to their own room for this section of activities. Tear out the Preschool Activities page, and give it to the preschool leader. Have the preschool leader bring the preschoolers back to participate in Let's Pray! with the older children. If you prefer to keep all the children together, do the starred (*) activities. They will work well with both elementary and preschool children.

Elementary Activities

Building Plans

Give each child one section cut from the "Building Plans 1" photocopies. Make sure you hand out an equal number of each section. Provide markers.

Say ▶ **Your job is to make a building. Each of you is responsible for a part of the building. Work by yourself to complete your part. After you've finished, you'll get together with two other "builders" to see how your building turned out.**

Give kids time to draw. They will not have a plan or instructions on this handout, and you shouldn't provide instruction to them. If they ask what they're supposed to do, just tell them that they have to draw their part of the building.

Give kids five minutes or so to complete their drawings, and then have them form groups by finding kids with the other sections. For example, someone who drew the middle section of the building will look for someone who drew a top part and someone else who drew a bottom part. Have kids put their pictures together to see what their buildings look like.

- Ask** ▶
- **How did your drawings of buildings turn out?** (They don't match; they aren't even connected; we didn't do very well.)
 - **Would you want to live or work in a building like that? Why or why not?** (No, I'd be afraid to fall out; yes, it would be cool to dodge the holes in the floor.)
 - **What would have helped you draw better buildings?** (If we had building plans; knowing what everyone else was doing.)

Say ▶ **Let's try this again.**

Give each person one section of the "Building Plans 2" handout. Have kids follow the instructions written on their sections. When they have finished, have kids form groups again to put their new buildings together.

- Ask** ▶
- **Why do you think your buildings looked better this time?** (We had building plans; we knew they'd connect.)
 - **What helped you know what to do to make them?** (We had instructions; the outline was already there.)

Say In today's Bible story, we learn about a time the Israelites were captives in Babylon. God told them to build homes and plant vineyards. He told them to marry and have families. They were to plan on being in Babylon for 70 years! That's a long time! But the Israelites had a promise from God about a plan he had for them, and that gave them hope. God told them that after 70 years, they would go home to Jerusalem and they would have everything they had before. Having a plan gave the Israelites hope. In Jeremiah 29:11, God told the Israelites that he had good plans for them, plans to give them hope and a future.

Having a plan makes a difference, doesn't it? Just look at your drawings of buildings. In the first drawing, you had no plans to help you, and your buildings look kind of strange. But the second time, you had plans to help you draw, and the buildings turned out much better. That's the way God's plans are for us. They give us hope for a future that's good! Let's find out about a boy who knows God has plans for him.

* "Max's Story"



Show the "Max's Story" video.



• **Max draws out plans for his creations. How do you think that's like what God does?** (He figures out how to make people; he makes plans.)

• **Based on what you now know about Max, what are some plans God might have for him?** (Becoming an engineer; making life-saving inventions.)

• **What are some plans God might have for you?** (I get bored, because I have to sit in timeout; I feel bad for doing stuff wrong.)



We don't know what God has planned for Max or for us, but we know his plans are good. God has good plans for us!

* Map Out Your Life



• **How many of you know what you want to be when you grow up?** (I want to be an astronaut; I want to be a pastor; I'm going to be a teacher.)

• **How do you think you'll get there?** (I'll join the Air Force; I'll learn a lot about the Bible; I'll go to college.)

Give kids blank paper and markers, and ask them to make plans for their lives. Tell them they should list all the places they will live, where they will go to school, what they'll do when they grow up, and maybe even what they think they'll look like. Give them several minutes to finish.

(continued on page 117)

God Promises to Restore Israel After the Exile

Jeremiah 29:4-14

Worship Theme:



God has good plans for us.

Easy Prep for Leaders

Pack Your Bags!—Photocopy the “A Traveling We Will Go!” handout (at the end of this session).

Using Theo

Consider using Theophilus the FaithRetriever puppet today in these ways:

- Have Theo lead the preschoolers from the main worship area to the preschool room.
- Have Theo lead the “Going Back to Israel” songs.
- See the KidsOwn Worship Kit for a puppet skit written for today’s session.



Pack Your Bags!

Give a copy of the handout to each child. Have children “pack” the suitcases by drawing pictures of everything they would take on a trip away from home.

- Ask**
- How would you plan what to take on a trip?
 - What things would be important for you to know about your trip?
 - What would you change if you knew you were going to be gone a long time?

Say Today’s Bible story is about God’s people, the Jews. They went on a trip, too, but they were sorry they had to go on their trip. Listen to this story from the Bible, and see if you can figure out why they were sad to go on a trip. Here’s what happened.

God had given the Jews special rules to follow.

- Ask**
- Do you have rules that you follow? What are they?
- Say** The Jews broke the rules. God told them to follow him, but they decided they wanted to do things their own way. They disobeyed God.
- Ask**
- Have you ever disobeyed?
 - What happened when you disobeyed?
- Say** God warned the Jews many times. He said, “You need to obey me. If you keep disobeying me, I’ll have to punish you.”

God gave the Jews many chances to say they were sorry and to start obeying, but they still chose to disobey God.

Eventually the Jews were punished. Another country captured them and took them to a place called Babylon. They didn’t want to leave their homes, but they had to. So they packed their bags and went. They lived in Babylon for more than 70 years!

That’s a long time to be away from your home! But you know what? God had special plans for them. Even though they had disobeyed, God still loved them, just as he loves you.

God has special plans for you, too! The Bible tells us that God told the Jews that he had good plans for them and that they would have a future and hope. God said the Jews would get to go home. And God said he would give them back everything they had before!

- Ask**
- How many of you have ever been away from home for a long time? What happened?
 - How did you feel when you got back home?

Say Imagine how the Jews must have felt being able to go home after living more than 70 years in a place where they were captives. This time, they were excited to pack their bags and go back home!

Going Back to Israel

Have kids sing the following song to the tune of "Camptown Races."

Sing ▶ We're going back to Israel.
Hooray, hooray!
God has promised we will go;
God's plans for us are good!
His plans for us are good!
His plans for us are good!
We're goin' back to Israel;
C'mon, pack your bags!

- Ask** ▶
- Why were God's people so excited about going to Jerusalem?
 - How did they know God had good plans for them?
 - How do you know God has good plans for you?

Say ▶ Just as God promised the people of Israel that his plans for them were good, his plans for us are good, too! Let's sing again about his plans for us!

Have children carry their suitcase pictures and march in a circle as they sing the following words to the tune of "Camptown Races."

Sing ▶ God has got good plans for me!
I'm glad! I'm glad!
I will trust him to lead me
Everywhere I go!
His plans for me are good!
His plans for me are good!
I will trust him to lead me
Everywhere I go!

Say ▶ Wow! I'm so glad God has good plans for you and me! Let's thank him now for those plans.

* God's Plans Are Good!

Have children sit in a circle on the floor. Sit in the middle of the circle, and say the following statements. Have children stand with each statement and shout, "God's plans are good!"

- Say** ▶ **God gave me a family that loves me.** Help children shout, "God's plans are good!"
- God gave me a teacher who loves me.** Help children shout, "God's plans are good!"
- God gave me friends.** Help children shout, "God's plans are good!"

God gave me a nice place to live. Help children shout, "God's plans are good!"

God gave me Jesus. Help children shout, "God's plans are good!"

Have children sit down.

Say ▶ **God's plans for us are good! Let's pray and thank him for those plans!**

Pray ▶ **Dear God, thank you for loving us and giving us good plans for our lives. We love you for loving us! In Jesus' name, amen.**

(continued from page 114)

- Ask** • **Was creating your plan easy or hard? Why?** (It was easy, because I know what I want to do; it was hard to figure out where I'm going to be all my life.)
- **How are our plans different from God's plans?** (God's plans are perfect; he knows what's best for us; God knows where we should be and when we should be there.)

Say **Let's look at Jeremiah 29:11 again to see what it says about God's plans.**

Have a volunteer read the verse aloud.

- Ask** • **What does this verse say about God's plans for us?** (They're good; they give us hope.)
- **How can the Bible help us know those plans?** (We can get to know God better when we read the Bible; we can learn how other people followed God's plans.)

Say **God does have good plans for us. He says he wants to give us hope and a future. That means that we can trust him to lead us. We may not know everything about our future, but God does. By following God, we will go the right way.**

3 Let's Pray!

The Offering

Have kids form one large circle.

Say **God's plans for us are good. His plans for us will always give us hope and a future. As we pass the offering bowl around the circle to take the offering, ask God to help the person sitting next to you know what God's plans are for him or her.**

Take the offering.

I Trust Your Plans

Say **I'm going to read Jeremiah 29:11 aloud. When I pause, I want you to say, "I trust your plans for me!" as loud as you can. Are you ready?**

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord (pause),
"Plans to prosper you and not to harm you (pause),
Plans to give you hope and a future." (Pause.)

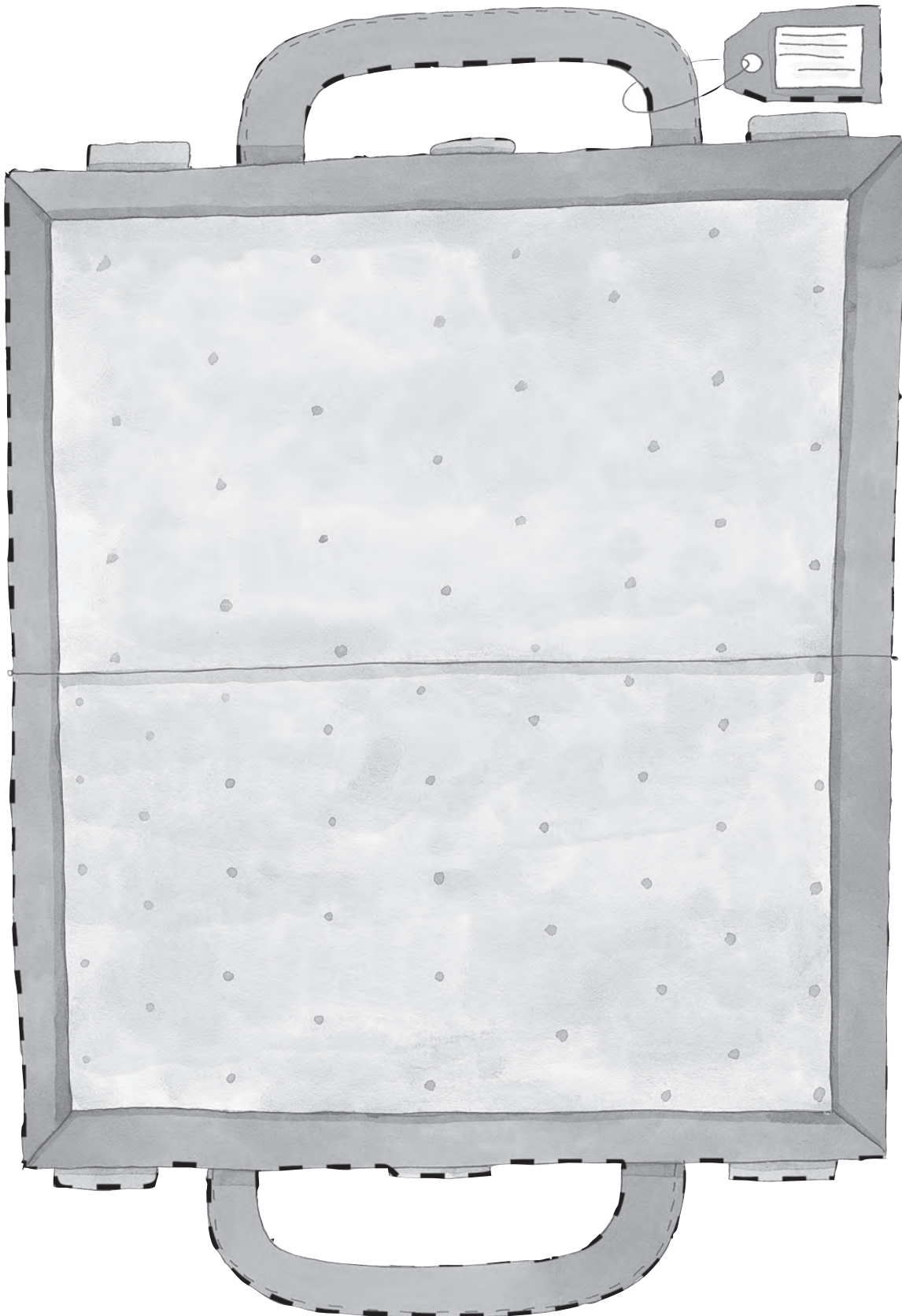
Good Plans

Say ▶ We're going to close today by singing "The Lord's Plans." The song is from the verse we learned today, Jeremiah 29:11. It tells us that God's plans are good. As you sing the song, tell God that you will trust in his good plans for you.

 Sing "The Lord's Plans" (Jeremiah 29:11).

Pray ▶ Dear God, we thank you because you not only had good plans for the Jews to get out of Babylon and go back home, but you have good plans for us, too. We love you and praise you for loving us so much that you want us to have hope and a future. In Jesus' name, amen.

A Traveling We Will Go!



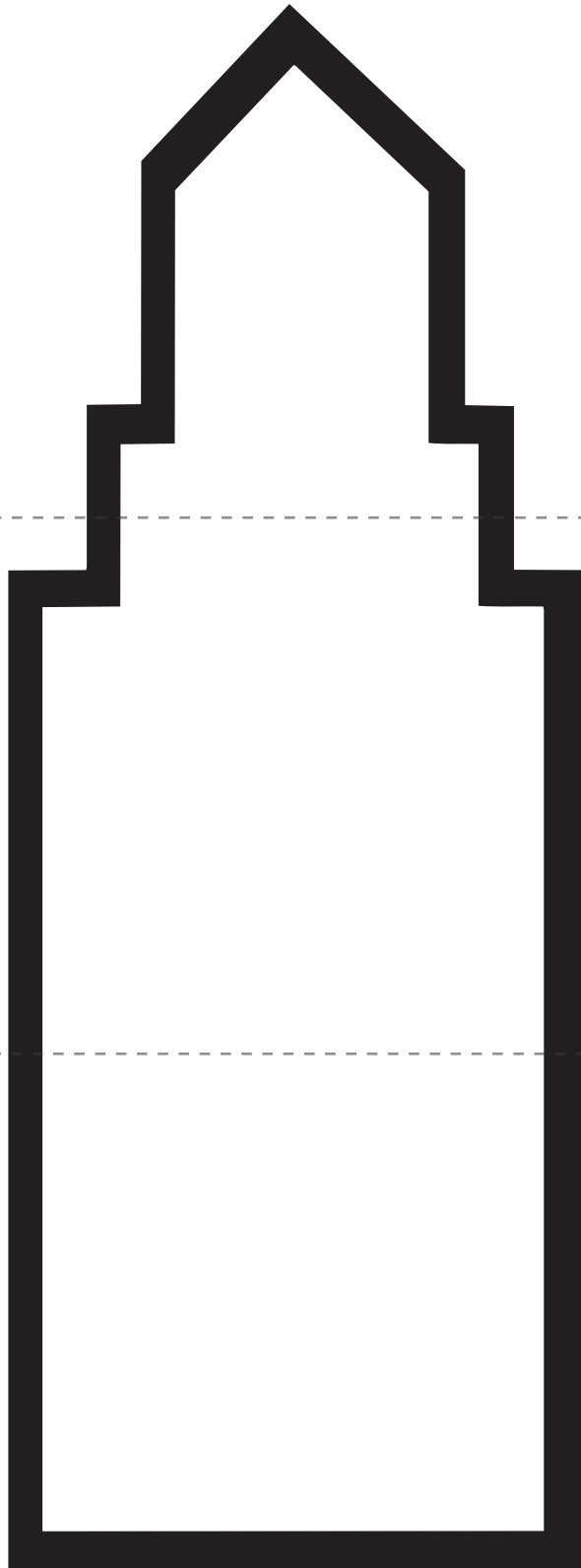
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Building Plans 1: Top

Building Plans 1: Middle

Building Plans 1: Bottom



Building Plans 2:
Add a roof to the
skyscraper.

Building Plans 2:
Include lots of windows
in this middle section
of the skyscraper.

Building Plans 2:
Add bricks and an en-
trance to this bottom
part of the skyscraper.