

EASTER BONUS SESSION 1

JESUS' TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

MATTHEW 21; MARK 11; LUKE 19; JOHN 12



CHRIST CONNECTION: Jesus wanted the people to believe that He is the King and Savior of the world. God wants all people to turn away from their sin, trust in Jesus, and receive life with God forever.

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Who is Jesus? Jesus is the Son of God who came to earth to save us.

KEY PASSAGE: John 3:16

STORY POINT: People welcomed Jesus as their King.



PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

LEADER Bible Study

The triumphal entry presents two contrasting images: the people's celebration as Christ entered Jerusalem and Jesus' heartbroken lamentation as He wept over a city full of people He desired to save. Though God's people seemed overjoyed by the arrival of the Messiah, they did not understand what He would soon endure to pay the price for their sins.

Thousands had gathered in Jerusalem for Passover, one of the largest festivals of the Jewish calendar. Throughout this special week, Israelites came together for special rituals, feasts, and readings of Scripture. But this year was different; the people had received word of a miracle-performing prophet who could perhaps free them from the rule of the Romans. The Israelites expected the long-awaited Messiah to be a conquering king; they were not anticipating a Suffering Servant—the sacrificial Passover Lamb—who would lay down His life for their sins.

Yet, the all-knowing Christ was aware of the torment He would endure at the hands of the Pharisees and Roman authorities, and He received the crowds' praise even though He knew the masses would soon be calling for His execution. He knew the people of Jerusalem would betray Him, yet He wept for their lost state, nonetheless.

Jesus celebrated Scripture's promises of "Hosanna"—the salvation of God's people—and wept for those who would refuse to see God's love and receive His provision. Thankfully, Christ's once-and-for-all sacrifice wasn't just for His followers in the city of Jerusalem at that time; it is for everyone who places true faith in His finished work on the cross.

Lead boys and girls to see that Jesus created all people and cares deeply for them. Pray for their hearts to receive His truth and that they will celebrate the King who has secured eternal salvation for all who repent and believe in Him!



Scan the QR code to listen to The Gospel Project for Kids Weekly Leader Training Podcast.



PREPARE

THE WEEK PRIOR

Prepare your heart to teach; plan the session



WELCOME

10–15 MINUTES

Greet preschoolers and open the session



LEARN

25–30 MINUTES

Teach preschoolers the story of the gospel



LOVE

15–20 MINUTES

Lead preschoolers to love the God of the gospel



LIVE

15–20 MINUTES

Lead preschoolers to live the mission of the gospel



PREPARE

PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

GATHER Supplies

Keep a regular supply of the following items available at all times: Bibles, Allergy Alert, construction paper, copy paper, washable markers, crayons, blunt-tipped scissors, glue sticks, glue, tape, blocks, baby dolls, play dough, world map, snacks, paper cups, napkins.



WELCOME

Welcome

- ☐ "God Loved the World (John 3:16)" song

Activity Page

- ☐ "Celebrate Jesus" Activity Page, 1 per child

Wash rocks

- ☐ large river stones
- ☐ plastic tub
- ☐ water
- ☐ scrub brushes
- ☐ towels

Transition

- ☐ countdown video (optional)



LOVE

Snack and talk

- ☐ hand sanitizer (optional)
- ☐ Bible Story Picture Poster
- ☐ Big Picture Question Poster

Collage on sandpaper

- ☐ large pieces of sandpaper
- ☐ leaves (or leaf shapes cut from green paper)
- ☐ fabric pieces cut into small pieces



LIVE

Welcome a special guest

- ☐ child-friendly cleaning supplies
- ☐ toy dishes
- ☐ toy food

Decorate story figures

- ☐ "Story Figures" printable, 1 per child
- ☐ envelopes

Explore greenery

- ☐ artificial greenery
- ☐ real greenery (optional)
- ☐ non-breakable vases
- ☐ unwrapped crayons
- ☐ trays
- ☐ nonbreakable magnifying glasses (optional)

Transition

- ☐ coloring page, 1 per child
- ☐ "God Loved the World (John 3:16)" song
- ☐ Big Picture Cards for Families



LEARN

Learn about the Bible

- ☐ bookmark
- ☐ Giant Timeline or Small Group Timeline

Tell the Bible story

- ☐ Bible Story Picture Poster
- ☐ "Jesus' Triumphal Entry" video (optional)
- ☐ storytelling tips props (optional)

Review the Bible story

- ☐ "Story Figures" printable, 1 set

Practice the key passage

- ☐ Key Passage Marker
- ☐ Key Passage Poster
- ☐ "God Loved the World (John 3:16)" song
- ☐ fabric, cut into one long strip
- ☐ permanent marker

Learn the Big Picture Question

- ☐ Big Picture Question Poster



WELCOME Preschoolers

Post an Allergy Alert, if needed. Set out supplies to engage preschoolers as they arrive. Play music as you welcome preschoolers. Greet children by name at eye level. Follow your church's security procedures.

1 ACTIVITY PAGE

Lead preschoolers to complete "Celebrate Jesus" on the Activity Page.

SAY 🗨️ When you're super happy, do you shout out any words or phrases? **[Allow responses.]** I've heard people yell, 'Awesome!' 'Woohoo!' or 'Hurray!' In today's Bible story, the people were happy to see Jesus come to their town, and they celebrated by shouting, 'Hosanna!' when they saw Him. 🗨️

2 SESSION STARTER

Use one or both of the following options to engage curiosity about today's Bible story.

GUESS ANIMAL SOUNDS



Gather preschoolers and talk about animal sounds. Instruct children to listen closely as you call out an animal sound. Lead kids to try to guess the animal that makes the sound. (Examples: Moo like a cow, tweet like a bird, or bray like a donkey.)

SAY 🗨️ What does a donkey sound like? **[Allow responses.]** In today's Bible story, while Jesus and His disciples were walking toward Jerusalem, Jesus asked His friends to go ahead of Him and get a young donkey for Him to ride. The disciples put their coats on the donkey's back, and Jesus rode the donkey the rest of the way into the city. Would you want to ride a donkey? **[Allow responses.]** 🗨️

WASH ROCKS

Add an inch or two of water to a plastic tub and place it on a table. Set a few towels nearby to catch spills. Offer a few preschoolers some dish scrub brushes and smooth river rocks. Lead kids to set the rocks in the water to wash them. Instruct kids to dry the rocks with the towels.

SAY 🗨️ In today's Bible story, we will hear that Jesus rode into the city on a donkey. The people were so happy to see Him that they shouted, 'Hosanna!' But some people did not understand why people were cheering for Jesus, and they told everyone to be quiet. Jesus was happy to hear the people praising God. He said that if the people were quiet, then the rocks would start talking. 🗨️

3 TRANSITION TO LEARN

Gain preschoolers' attention by showing the countdown video, turning the lights off and on, or clapping a simple rhythm for children to copy. Invite preschoolers to greet each other with a handshake and a kind word as they transition to Learn.

Transition from **WELCOME** to **LEARN**





LEARN

THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

LEARN the Bible Story

1 INTRODUCE THE BIBLE STORY

Hold up your Bible. Talk about the differences and similarities between the Old Testament and the New Testament. Help boys and girls understand that the things that happened in today's Bible story were prophesied in the Old Testament long before they happened.

SAY “Who remembers the two main parts of the Bible? [Allow responses.] The Old Testament tells about the things that happened before Jesus was on the earth, and the New Testament tells about the things that happened after Jesus was born. When I open my Bible to the Old Testament book of Zechariah, around 400 years before Jesus was born, I read that when the Messiah travels into Jerusalem, He will be riding on the back of a donkey. Remember that as we hear today's Bible story.”

2 LEARN ABOUT THE BIBLE

Place a bookmark at Matthew 21 in your Bible. Invite a preschooler to open it. Reverently display the open Bible.

SAY “Today's Bible story is from the New Testament. All the words of the Bible are true and we can trust them because the Bible is the Word of God.”

Point to the Bible story picture on the Giant Timeline or Small Group timeline. Remind children that all the stories in the Bible fit together to tell an even bigger story. The Bible tells us the big story of how God rescues sinners through His Son, Jesus.

3 TELL THE BIBLE STORY

Tell the following Bible story using the provided storytelling tips or show the video. Use the bold version of the Bible story for younger preschoolers.

JESUS' TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

“Jesus and His disciples were walking to the city of Jerusalem. Crowds were gathering there to celebrate the Passover. Jesus asked two of His followers to go ahead to one of the villages and find a young donkey. Jesus told them, ‘Untie the donkey and bring it to me. If someone asks why, just say, ‘The Lord needs it.’”

This was all happening because a long time ago, the prophet Zechariah wrote that this would happen, saying: “See, your King is coming to you, gentle, and mounted on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” Jesus made these words come true!

Jesus' followers went and found the donkey, just like Jesus said they would. They brought the donkey and its colt to Jesus, and they put some of their clothes on its back. A large crowd of people came and put their coats and palm branches on the road for Jesus to walk on. Everyone was happy and shouting, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna!”

But some people didn't like all the cheering. They told Jesus to make everyone be quiet. Jesus



LEARN

THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

said, “If they’re quiet, even the rocks will start talking!”

As Jesus got closer to the city, He felt sad. Jesus cried. He knew that because the people didn’t understand who He really was, something bad would happen to the city.

The religious leaders saw how everyone loved Jesus, and they were worried they couldn’t stop it. They said, “Everyone is following Jesus!” ”

STORYTELLING TIPS

Lay it down: Invite kids to sit on fabric pieces and large leaves on the floor during the story.

Draw the story: Draw stick figures on a dry erase board as you tell the story to represent Jesus, His disciples, and the donkey. Draw leaves and coats on the path and add crowds of people celebrating.

4 CHRIST CONNECTION

SAY “ Jesus wanted the people to believe that He is the King and Savior of the world. God wants all people to turn away from their sin, trust in Jesus, and receive life with God forever. ”

5 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

Before the session, print one copy of the “Story Figure” printable and cut it apart. Ask a review question with an answer that matches one of the figures. Hold up two possible figures and invite children to point to the one they believe is correct. Retell segments of the story as needed and refer to the Bible Story Picture Poster when appropriate. Possible questions:

1. What did Jesus ask His disciples to get for Him? (a donkey)
2. Who rode a donkey into Jerusalem? (Jesus)
3. Who laid coats and palm branches on the road for the donkey to walk on? (the people)
4. Who shouted “Hosanna!” as Jesus passed by? (the people)

SAY “ **THE PEOPLE WELCOMED JESUS AS THEIR KING.** Jesus is our King and the Savior of the world. When people trust in Jesus and turn away from their sin, they will receive life with God forever. ”

6 PRACTICE THE KEY PASSAGE

Before the session, cut fabric into a long strip. Write the key passage along the length of the fabric. Tie the strip into several loose knots. Place the Key Passage Marker at John 3:16. Invite a child to open your Bible to the key passage. Read the key passage aloud. Invite a child to help you untie the knots to reveal the key passage on the fabric. Point to the words as you read them. Invite children to repeat the verse after you.

SAY “ We untied the fabric. The disciples untied a donkey and brought it to Jesus. God loved the world so much that He sent Jesus. When people turn from their sin and trust in Jesus, they will have life with God forever. ”

Sing the key passage song, “God Loved the World (John 3:16)” You may also choose to sing a worship song of your choice.



LEARN

THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

7 LEARN THE BIG PICTURE QUESTION AND ANSWER

SAY “ Jesus wanted the people in today’s story to believe that He is the King and Savior of the world. Do you think they did? **[Allow responses.]** The people worshiped Jesus like He was a king.

Who is Jesus? Jesus is the Son of God who came to earth to save us. God wants all people to trust in Jesus and turn away from their sin. When they do this, they will receive life with God forever. ”

Transition from **LEARN** to **LOVE**





LOVE

THE GOD OF THE GOSPEL

LOVE God because of what we learned

1 PRAY

Invite preschoolers to close their eyes and think about God as they talk with Him.

SAY “Dear God, thank You that we can read true stories from the Bible about people who showed their love to You. Help us and our families believe that Jesus is our King and Savior. Thank You that when we turn from our sin and trust in Jesus, we will receive the gift of life forever with You. Amen.”

2 SNACK AND TALK



Post an Allergy Alert. Wash hands or use hand sanitizer. Serve a snack. Show the Bible Story Picture Poster as you ask the following questions. Retell parts of the Bible story as needed.

SAY “What was your favorite part of today’s Bible story?”

SAY “What did you learn about God in today’s Bible story?”

SAY “What did the people shout as Jesus rode into Jerusalem?”

SAY “Who is Jesus? Jesus is the Son of God who came to earth to save us.”

3 COLLAGE ON SANDPAPER

Offer each child a large piece of fine-grit sandpaper. Help kids squeeze several drops of liquid glue onto the sandpaper. Invite them to press leaves and fabric pieces onto the glue. Open a Bible to one of the Gospel accounts of Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem (Matthew 21; Mark 11; Luke 19; or John 12). Retell parts of the story while children work on their projects.

SAY “Why do you think the people laid their robes and big leaves on the ground? [Allow responses.] **THE PEOPLE WELCOMED JESUS AS THEIR KING** by covering the dirty path with big leaves and their robes. They showed their love for Him. How can we show Jesus that we love Him? [Allow responses.] Jesus wants everyone to believe that He is the Savior of the world. People receive the gift of life with God forever when they turn away from their sin and trust in Jesus.”





THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

LIVE for God out of love

- 1 Choose the activities that best fit your group, space, available resources, and time constraints. Set up activities in one of these ways: 1) as a group, all at the same time, 2) in small groups that rotate through each activity, or 3) set up as centers, allowing preschoolers to browse and choose.

CHEER “HOSANNA!”



Cut a sheet of paper into half-inch strips. Help the kids gather the ends of several strips together and secure with tape to create a pom-pom to shake. Lead kids to cheer to the rhythm of the nursery rhyme “Hey, Diddle Diddle:”

“Hosanna! Hosanna! They all said, Hosanna!
And laid their coats on the road.
Hosanna! Hosanna! They all said, Hosanna!
He comes in the name of the Lord.”

Give pom-poms to children and say the rhyme again while they shake them. Invite the kids to make up cheers for Jesus because He is our forever King.

SAY “ The people in today’s Bible story were happy when they saw Jesus. They showed Him honor by laying their robes and branches on the ground. **THE PEOPLE WELCOMED JESUS AS THEIR KING.** They even shouted ‘Hosanna!’ to honor Him. **Who is Jesus? Jesus is the Son of God who came to earth to save us.** Jesus is the King and Savior of the world. When people trust in Jesus and turn from their sin, they will receive the gift of life with God forever. ”

WELCOME A SPECIAL GUEST

Offer child-friendly cleaning supplies like child-sized brooms, feather dusters, and wet wipes. Encourage children to play out preparing for the arrival of a special guest by cleaning up the room. Invite other children to play out preparing a special meal or setting a table.

SAY “ We pretended to get the room ready for a special guest. When you welcome someone, what would you say to that person? **[Allow responses.]** You could say, ‘Welcome to our home,’ or ‘I’m so glad you’re here.’ In today’s Bible story, **THE PEOPLE WELCOMED JESUS AS THEIR KING** by shouting ‘Hosanna!’ Jesus is the King and Savior of the world. When people turn away from their sin and trust in Jesus, they will receive the gift of life forever with God. ”



THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

DECORATE STORY FIGURES

Print copies of the “Story Figures” printable on heavyweight paper before the session. Cut apart the figures along the dotted lines. Give each child a set of figures and some crayons or washable markers. Encourage children to decorate and personalize their figures. Use your own set of figures to retell the Bible story as children work. Tape the figures to blocks for added support, if desired. Provide each child with an envelope to store their figures inside. Suggest children take the figures home and use them to retell the story with a family member or friend.

SAY “ Today’s Bible story was so exciting! The people had been waiting for the one who would save them. When Jesus’ disciples got the donkey for Him to ride into the city, the people met Jesus by laying their robes and leaves on the road to welcome Him. They shouted, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!’ **THE PEOPLE WELCOMED JESUS AS THEIR KING** that day. Anyone who believes that Jesus is the King and Savior of the world and turns away from his sins will receive life with God forever. ”



EXPLORE GREENERY

Consider providing both real and artificial leaves and greenery for children to explore. Post an Allergy Alert if using real greenery. Set up three greenery stations. At the first station, place a vase and invite a child to create a leaf arrangement. At the second station, lay leaves on a table and cover them with copy paper. Encourage a child to rub the paper with unwrapped crayons to reveal the leaf’s impression. At the third station, place several leaves on a tray and set up a cutting area. Provide safety scissors and guide children to cut the leaves into pieces to explore what the inside of a leaf looks like. Consider offering nonbreakable magnifying glasses for further examination.

SAY “ In today’s Bible story, a large crowd of people came to see Jesus as He rode a donkey into Jerusalem. **THE PEOPLE WELCOMED JESUS AS THEIR KING** by shouting words of praise to Him. They also cut palm branches and leaves and laid them on the road for Jesus to walk on. Some people did not like all the cheering for Jesus, but Jesus wanted the people to believe that He is the Savior and King. God wants all people to receive life with God forever by trusting in Jesus and turning away from their sin. ”

2 TRANSITION

Invite preschoolers to complete their coloring pages. Consider leading preschoolers to sing the key passage song or involving them in a simple game to practice the key passage or big picture question. If parents are picking up children at this time, tell them something that their child enjoyed doing or did well during the session. Give parents the completed Activity Page. Distribute the Big Picture Cards for Families. Encourage parents to review the Bible story and engage with the family discussion starters during the week.