

EASTER BONUS SESSION 2

JESUS SAVES US TO FOLLOW HIM

MATTHEW 27-28; MARK 15-16; LUKE 23-24; JOHN 19-20



CHRIST CONNECTION: Jesus came to earth to rescue sinners by dying on the cross. Jesus rose from the dead and is alive! Everyone who repents and trusts in Jesus is His follower and is welcomed into God's family 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: Jesus rose from the dead and is alive.



PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

LEADER Bible Study

The resurrection reveals the astounding nature of God's mercy and grace: that sinners like us can receive forgiveness through faith in His Son—forgiveness that leads to new life. The torment Jesus endured on the cross was not the end of the story. On the third day after His crucifixion, Jesus rose to make the way for fallen people to be reunited to God by faith.

In Luke 23:34, Jesus prays some of His last words before His death: "Father, forgive them, because they do not know what they are doing." Though the scoffers and mockers were in control of their hateful words and actions, they did not know the one and only Son of God was hanging on the cross on their behalf.

Jesus, who is fully God and fully man, knew the depths of the people's sins and the lengths He needed to endure to satisfy the wrath of God their sin deserved. Only Jesus has the power to forgive His transgressors, and only Jesus would take to the cross on our behalf for the joy set before Him (Hebrews 12:2). The evil that the people planned against Jesus would be used by God to bring about our eternal good: the salvation of all who would believe in Him by faith.

This gift of salvation is for anyone who repents of their sin and turns toward Christ in faith. Lead boys and girls to see that there is not a single person in this story, or in all the Scriptures, or anywhere in the world who is too far lost to receive God's grace. Lead them to understand what Christ was willing to endure so that they might be saved. May we continually find ourselves in awe of the gracious forgiveness God extends to His followers through faith in His Son.



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

- ☐ "The Tomb Is Empty" Activity Page, 1 per child

Set up a scissor station

- ☐ metal baking pans or trays
- ☐ decorative-edged scissors

Transition

- ☐ countdown video (optional)



LOVE

Snack and talk

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

Design a class quilt

- ☐ decorative tape
- ☐ washable dot markers (optional)
- ☐ rubber stamps (optional)
- ☐ washable stamp pads (optional)



LEARN

Introduce the Bible story

- ☐ small, opaque plastic containers
- ☐ quiet and noisy items to shake (cotton balls, shredded paper, coins, paper clips)

Learn about the Bible

- ☐ bookmark
- ☐ Giant Timeline or Small Group Timeline

Tell the Bible story

- ☐ Bible Story Picture Poster
- ☐ "Jesus Saves Us to Follow Him" video (optional)
- ☐ storytelling tips props (optional)

Review the Bible story

- ☐ foam ball

Practice the key passage

- ☐ Key Passage Marker
- ☐ Key Passage Poster
- ☐ "God Loved the World (John 3:16)" song
- ☐ rocks
- ☐ permanent marker

Learn the Big Picture Question

- ☐ Big Picture Question Poster



LIVE

Match lids

- ☐ plastic food storage containers with lids
- ☐ index cards

Sing "Jesus Is Alive!" songs

- ☐ rhythm instruments

Wrap crosses

- ☐ cardboard, cut into cross shapes
- ☐ yarn cut into 24-inch pieces, 1 per child
- ☐ tape

Transition

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



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 "The Tomb Is Empty" on the Activity Page.

SAY "After Jesus died on the cross, soldiers put His body in a cave-like tomb and covered the opening with a large stone. On the third day, something wonderful happened. Listen closely to today's Bible story to learn about the amazing thing that happened!"

2 SESSION STARTER

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

WALK AND BALANCE



Tape a straight line on the floor from one end of the room to the other. Scatter pieces of red paper along the path. Choose a child to carefully walk heel-to-toe along the path while avoiding the red paper. Invite children to take turns walking along the path, adding a variety of challenges each time.

SAY "Do you think it was more difficult to walk backward, hop over items, or stop to pick up a piece of paper? [Allow responses.] The red paper on the path reminds me how in today's Bible story, some soldiers put a scarlet red robe on Jesus, not to honor Him, but to make fun of Him."

SET UP A SCISSOR STATION

Place strips of different-colored paper along with several pairs of blunt-tipped and decorative-edged scissors in metal baking pans or trays on a table. Invite preschoolers to sit at the table and cut paper. Remind kids that they should only cut paper. Assist a child who is having trouble manipulating the scissors if needed. (Note: If possible, include loop scissors and left-handed scissors to help all children be successful.)

SAY "Scissors can be challenging to use. You have to remember to get your fingers in the correct holes, and then open and close them to cut the paper from one side to the other. In today's Bible story, there was a big curtain in the temple. At the moment that Jesus died on the cross, that curtain was torn in two from the top to the bottom, and the earth shook."

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 move to the Bible story area. Greet them by saying, "He is risen!" Prompt children to reply, "He is risen, indeed!" 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

Gather several opaque containers. Place quiet items like cotton balls and paper into a few containers. Add small, noisy objects like paper clips or coins into others. Leave one empty. Invite kids to shake the containers to try to guess which is empty.

SAY “ Which container is empty? [Allow kids to shake containers and decide before opening.] Even though we listened when we shook the containers, it was hard to tell until the lid was removed. In today’s Bible story, after Jesus died, His body was placed inside a tomb that was covered with a large stone. Keep listening to hear what some women discovered after the stone was moved. ”

2 LEARN ABOUT THE BIBLE

Place a bookmark at Matthew 27 in your Bible. Invite a preschooler to open it. Reverently display the open Bible.

SAY “ The first four books of the New Testament—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—are called the Gospels because they tell the good news of Jesus. The word gospel means ‘good news’. Today’s Bible story is found in all four of the Gospels. ”

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 SAVES US TO FOLLOW HIM

“ A big crowd of people had welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem as King, but not everyone was happy about Jesus. The religious leaders did not like that Jesus said He is the Son of God. They did not want people to listen to Jesus instead of them. So, they made a plan to stop Jesus.

First, Jesus was arrested and taken to a leader named Pilate. Pilate told the people they could take Jesus away to be killed on a cross.

The soldiers made a crown out of thorns and put it on Jesus’ head. They put a scarlet robe on Him and made fun of Him. They did not believe that Jesus is King. Jesus never did anything wrong, but the people were mean to Him. Yet, Jesus asked God to forgive them.

The soldiers put Jesus on one cross, and they put two criminals on crosses next to Him. Some people who passed by said, “If he were really God’s Son, he would save Himself. He would come down from the cross.”

But Jesus stayed on the cross because that was how He was going to save people from sin. This was part of God’s plan.



LEARN

THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

Suddenly, the sky was dark. Jesus cried out, and then He died. The big curtain in the temple tore from top to bottom, and the ground shook. One of the guards saw what was happening and said, “This really was the Son of God!”

Jesus’ body was taken down and put it in a special cave called a tomb. A big stone was rolled in front of the tomb, and soldiers stood guard. Pilate wanted to make sure no one took Jesus’ body.

On the third day, some women went to the tomb. But guess what? The big stone was moved, and an angel was there! The angel said, “Don’t be afraid! Jesus is alive!”

The women were so happy! They ran to tell Jesus’ friends the good news. ”

STORYTELLING TIPS

Dim the lights: Enlist a leader to dim the lights during the part of the Bible story when you mention that the sky was dark and Jesus died. Turn the lights on again when the stone was rolled away and the angel spoke to the women.

Tell the story inside a tomb: Place a couple of tables together and cover them with a large sheet. Encourage children to sit beneath the table. Tell the story while sitting on the floor near the table. Lead boys and girls to imagine they are sitting inside the empty tomb.

4 CHRIST CONNECTION

SAY “ Jesus came to earth to rescue sinners by dying on the cross. Jesus rose from the dead and is alive! Everyone who repents and trusts in Jesus is His follower and is welcomed into God’s family forever. ”

5 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

Invite boys and girls to sit in a circle. Roll a ball to a child. Invite that child to answer one of the following questions:

1. What group of people made a plan to stop Jesus? (some of the religious leaders)
2. What kind of crown did they put on Jesus’ head? (a crown made of thorns)
3. Where did the soldiers put Jesus’ body after He died on the cross? (a tomb)
4. Who talked to the women at the tomb on the third day? (an angel)
5. What did the angel tell the women? (Jesus is alive!)

SAY “ Jesus died on the cross, but the best news of all is that **JESUS ROSE FROM THE DEAD AND IS ALIVE!** Whenever someone repents and trusts in Jesus, she is welcomed into God’s family forever. ”



LEARN

THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

6 PRACTICE THE KEY PASSAGE

Gather several smooth rocks. Use a permanent marker to write the words of the key passage onto the rocks. Lead children to compare the words on the Key Passage Poster to the words on the rocks. Assist kids as they arrange the rocks to reveal the passage. Ask kids to say the verse with you. Remove a few of the rocks and challenge kids to say the verse again. Continue removing rocks and repeating the passage until kids have committed it to memory.

SAY “Our key passage teaches us how God showed His love for us by sending Jesus to the earth to die so that we can live with God forever. That’s the message of the gospel. Because Jesus rose from the dead and is alive today, we can have life with God forever when we trust in Jesus.”

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

7 LEARN THE BIG PICTURE QUESTION AND ANSWER

SAY “Jesus is God’s only Son. Jesus is the only One who could come to earth to save us from our sin. So **who is Jesus? Jesus is the Son of God who came to earth to save us.** Jesus rescued us when He died on the cross and rose from the dead. Jesus is alive! Everyone who repents and trusts in Jesus becomes His follower and is welcomed into God’s family 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 “God, thank You for the greatest gift of all, Your Son, Jesus. I pray that Your Spirit will work in the lives of these children and their families so they will one day trust in Jesus and repent so they will have life with You forever. 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 amazing thing did Jesus do on the third day?”

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

3 DESIGN A CLASS QUILT



Write Jesus Is Alive on a sheet of paper for each child before the session. Encourage older preschoolers to copy the words onto their own papers. Offer crayons or washable markers for kids to decorate their papers. Provide additional art supplies such as dot paint markers or rubber stamps with washable ink pads, if available. Tape the completed pages together to form a quilt-like pattern. Display the quilt in a prominent area of the room. Review the Bible story as children work.

SAY “When the women went to the tomb on the third day, they found a big surprise. The big stone had been moved, and an angel was there! **JESUS ROSE FROM THE DEAD AND IS ALIVE!** God loves you and me. God loves every person so much that He sent Jesus to rescue sinners by dying on the cross and coming back to life. When people repent and trust in Jesus, they are welcomed into God’s family forever.”

Transition from **LOVE** to **LIVE**





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.

DISCOVER OPPOSITES



Gather children and explain that you will begin a sentence, and they should complete it by guessing the opposite. Use the following prompts:

Ice is cold, but a fire is _____. (hot)
A mouse is little, but an elephant is _____. (big)
Summer is hot, but winter is _____. (cold)
A whisper is quiet, but a yell is _____. (loud)
Daytime is light, but nighttime is _____. (dark)
A pillow is soft, but a rock is _____. (hard)

SAY “ We heard about a rock in today’s Bible story. After Jesus’ body was put in the tomb, soldiers put a large rock in front of its opening. Let’s guess some more opposites from today’s story. Jesus was dead, and then He was _____. (alive) The women had been sad, but when they heard that Jesus was alive, they were _____. (happy) The women ran to tell Jesus’ followers the good news that **JESUS ROSE FROM THE DEAD AND IS ALIVE!** Whenever people repent and trust in Jesus, they become followers of Jesus and are welcomed into God’s family forever. ”

MATCH THE LIDS

Gather a variety of plastic storage containers with lids. Write the big picture question and answer on two index cards. Tape one card to the inside of a container and the other to the lid. Label additional containers and lids with the story point and key passage. Place containers in a pile on the floor along with a Bible marked at the key passage. Engage boys and girls by removing lids and encouraging them to match the lids to the containers. Read the big picture question and answer or story point as a child discovers them. Open the Bible and show a child John 3:16, where the key passage is found.

SAY “ You found each container’s matching lid! Let’s read what the paper says that’s inside the container. **JESUS ROSE FROM THE DEAD AND IS ALIVE.** Jesus’ body was placed inside a tomb, but on the third day, Jesus rose from the dead. And like many of these containers, the tomb was empty! Because Jesus is alive, anyone who trusts in Him and repents becomes a follower of Jesus and part of God’s forever family. ”



THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

SING “JESUS IS ALIVE!” SONGS

Distribute a rhythm instrument to each child. Lead kids to walk in a circle while they play their instruments to a steady beat. To the tune of “Ring Around the Rosie,” sing:

“The stone was moved away;
The angel came to say,
‘Jesus, Jesus is alive!’”

Invite kids to sit down and trade instruments before leading them to play and sing another resurrection song. Lead preschoolers in singing the following song to the tune of “The Farmer in the Dell:”

“Jesus is alive;
Oh, Jesus is alive!
The angel said, ‘He isn’t here!’
‘Cause Jesus is alive.”

SAY “Thank You, Jesus, for coming back to life. Singing is one way we can thank Jesus for coming to earth to save people from their sins. **Who is Jesus? Jesus is the Son of God who came to earth to save us.** Whenever anyone repents and trusts in Jesus, they become His follower and are welcomed into God’s family.”

WRAP CROSSES

Prior to the session, cut heavy cardboard into cross shapes, one per child. Cut small notches in several places around the cross’s perimeter. Cut 24-inch lengths of yarn, and tape one end to the cross. Demonstrate how to wrap the yarn around the cross. Utilize the notches to help hold yarn in place. Tie additional yarn lengths to extend the strands if desired. Assist kids as needed as they wrap their crosses.

SAY “What shape are you holding? [Allow responses.] That cross shape reminds me that after Jesus was arrested, soldiers put Jesus on a cross where He died. His body was placed inside a cave-like tomb, and it was sealed with a large stone. But something amazing happened on the third day. When some women went to the tomb, they saw that the stone was moved. An angel was there, and he told them that Jesus was alive! The women ran to tell Jesus’ friends the good news that **JESUS ROSE FROM THE DEAD AND IS ALIVE!** Because Jesus is alive, everyone can be welcomed into God’s forever family by turning away from their sin and trusting in Jesus.”

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.