



Use Week of:

Easter • Session 2

Jesus' Crucifixion and Resurrection

BIBLE PASSAGE:

Matthew 26–28; John 20

STORY POINT:

Jesus died on the cross and is alive.

KEY PASSAGE:

1 Chronicles 16:31

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

What is the gospel? The gospel is the good news that God sent His Son, Jesus, into the world to rescue sinners.

INTRODUCE THE STORY
(15–20 MINUTES)
PAGE 58



TEACH THE STORY
(10–15 MINUTES)
PAGE 60



EXPERIENCE THE STORY
(20–25 MINUTES)
PAGE 62



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LEADER Bible Study

Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection are essential to the Christian faith. If we teach Jesus as a respected teacher and miracle-worker who claimed to be the Messiah and who was crucified on the cross—but who was not resurrected—then we are teaching the Jesus of Judaism. If we teach Jesus as a wise teacher and prophet who ascended into heaven—but who was not crucified—then we are teaching the Jesus of Islam.

Jesus came to earth to save us from our sins. (Matt. 1:21) He died to show God's love to us (Rom. 5:7-8) so that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16) Jesus died so that we would be forgiven. (Eph. 1:7) Jesus died to bring us to God. (1 Pet. 3:18)

The time between Friday afternoon and Sunday morning must have been dark hours for Jesus' disciples. Fear, doubt, and confusion certainly overwhelmed their thoughts. Jesus, their Lord, was dead. He had been unjustly arrested, falsely accused, and severely beaten. Even worse, He had been killed in a horrible manner: by crucifixion.

The story doesn't end there. Jesus' body was laid in a tomb. The tomb was sealed and guards watched over it. The Jews remembered Jesus' claim that He would rise from the dead (John 2:19-21), and they made sure no one could steal His body and insist He had risen. Imagine their surprise when Jesus did rise from the dead!

Jesus' resurrection gives us joy and hope for our own resurrection. The same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead will raise our bodies to life. (Rom. 8:11)

As you teach preschoolers this Bible story, emphasize the gospel: the good news of who Jesus is and what He has done. We do not worship a dead Savior. Jesus is alive! Sadness turns to joy. There is hope for sinners.

The BIBLE Story

Jesus' Crucifixion and Resurrection

Matthew 26–28; John 20

Jesus had been arrested and taken to Pilate, the governor. Pilate's soldiers put a purple robe around Jesus and made a crown of thorns and put it on Jesus' head. They pretended to bow down to Him. Then they led Jesus away.

Jesus was put on a cross. They put a sign above Jesus' head that said: THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

Two criminals were put on crosses next to Jesus.

Darkness covered the land. Jesus cried out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" **Jesus died and was buried in a tomb. A large stone was rolled in front of the tomb, and Pilate's soldiers guarded the tomb** so that no one would steal Jesus' body.

On the third day, two of Jesus' friends, both named Mary, went to the tomb. They were very sad. **Suddenly there was a big earthquake as an angel came down from heaven. The angel rolled away the stone and sat on it. The guards fainted.**

The angel spoke to the women, "Do not be afraid! Jesus is not here! He has risen from the dead, just as He said He would."

The women were so happy! Jesus was alive! They left the tomb to



tell Jesus' friends the good news. Just then, Jesus greeted them. The women worshiped Him. Jesus said, "Do not be afraid. Tell My friends to go to Galilee. I will meet them there."

Christ Connection: The most important thing that ever happened is that Jesus died and was raised from the dead. Jesus is alive! When we trust in Jesus, we have true joy. Jesus brings forgiveness and life with God forever.

Bible Storytelling Tips

- **Use a play dough tomb:** Form an empty tomb with play dough and roll a ball to serve as the stone. Display the play dough tomb on a flat surface. Roll the stone in front of and away from the opening at the appropriate moments in the Bible story.
- **Show emotions:** Invite preschoolers to make facial expressions to show how they think the people in the Bible story are feeling as you tell it. Demonstrate sadness, joy, and so forth.

INTRODUCE the Story



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BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What is the gospel? The gospel is the good news that God sent His Son, Jesus, into the world to rescue sinners.

Welcome time

- "The Gospel Is for Everyone" song
- offering basket
- Allergy Alert
- favorite toys related to the Bible story theme

Play a theme song in the background as you greet preschoolers and follow your church's security procedures. Set an offering basket near the door to collect at an appropriate time. Post an allergy alert, if necessary. Set out a few favorite theme-related toys, such as puzzles and blocks.

Activity page

- "Connect the Dots" activity page, 1 per child
- crayons or markers

Guide preschoolers to connect the dots to reveal the cross.

SAY • The dots made a cross. Today's Bible story is about the most important thing that ever happened—**Jesus died on the cross and is alive.** Listen to the story to learn how we can have forgiveness for our sins and life with God forever.

LOW PREP

- "The Lord Reigns (1 Chronicles 16:31)" song (optional)
- "The Gospel Is for Everyone" song (optional)

Dance with joy

Guide preschoolers to sit and frown. Then invite them to jump up and do a happy dance. Repeat, emphasizing the dramatic emotional changes.

SAY • In our Bible story today, some people were very sad because the worst thing ever had happened. But then they were very happy because the best thing ever happened! Listen to our Bible story today to find out what these very important events were.

Make scratch art

Give each preschooler a scratch art page and a chopstick. Invite children to draw with the chopstick on the page to create designs of their choosing. If chopsticks are not available, use craft sticks instead.

- scratch art pages
- chopsticks or craft sticks

SAY • Was it hard to decide how to make beautiful art on a pitch black page? Were you surprised to see such beautiful colors shine through it? Sometimes understanding how good can come from the really sad things that happen in life is hard. But underneath the sad things, God is creating something surprisingly beautiful. Today's Bible story proves it! God turned the worst thing ever into the best thing ever. If He can do that, we can trust Him to turn all the other sad things into good things someday, too!

Transition to teach the story

To gain the attention of all the preschoolers to move them to Bible study, show the countdown video, turn the lights off and on, or clap a simple rhythm for the children to copy. Invite preschoolers to walk slowly and quietly with your heads hung as if very sad as they move to Bible study.

- countdown video (optional)

TEACH the Story



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Introduce the Bible story

- Bible
- bookmark
- Giant Timeline

Place a bookmark at Matthew 26 in your Bible. Invite a preschooler to open it. Reverently display the open Bible.

SAY • For Easter, we are going back to the Gospels of Matthew and John as we celebrate the most important thing that ever happened! We know this story from the Bible is true because the Bible is God's Word.

Point to the Bible story picture on the giant 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.

Watch or tell the Bible story

- Story Point Poster
- "Jesus' Crucifixion and Resurrection" video (optional)
- Bible Story Picture Poster

Show the video or tell the Bible story using the provided storytelling tips. Use the bolded version of the Bible story for young preschoolers.

SAY • The Jewish and Roman leaders did not like that so many people were following Jesus, so they put Him on a cross to die. But this was God's plan to rescue sinners! On the third day, Jesus rose back to life just as He said He would. The most important thing that ever happened is that **Jesus died on the cross and is alive!** Jesus brings forgiveness and life with God forever. When we trust in Jesus, we have true joy!

Practice the key passage

Place the key passage marker at 1 Chronicles 16:31. Invite a child to open your Bible to the key passage. Read the key passage aloud. Make a tomb with play dough and roll a play dough stone to go in front of it. Explain that when you roll away the stone, children will say the key passage. But when you close the tomb, they will pause. Open and close the tomb at varying speeds as children say the verse and stop.

SAY • We can be glad and rejoice, like our key passage says, because Jesus rose from the dead as king over everything! When we trust in Jesus, we have true joy. Let's sing to Him with joy now!

Sing the key passage song, "The Lord Reigns," and the theme song, "The Gospel Is for Everyone."

- play dough
- hard surface
- tape
- Bible
- Key Passage Marker
- Key Passage Poster
- "The Lord Reigns (1 Chronicles 16:31)" song
- "The Gospel Is for Everyone" song

Learn the big picture question

SAY • The most important thing that ever happened is that **Jesus died on the cross and is alive!** Jesus brings forgiveness and life with God forever. That is the message of the gospel! ***What is the gospel? The gospel is the good news that God sent His Son, Jesus, into the world to rescue sinners.***

- Big Picture Question Poster



Missions moment

SAY • The Wiltons know **Jesus died on the cross and is alive!** They want to spread this joy to others, and they believe preschoolers can do that too! They know that you all have a special job in God's mission. Ask volunteers to hold each photo while you read the requests, pausing after each one to voice a short prayer.

- "Wilton Family Prayer Requests" printable

Pray and transition to experience the story

EXPERIENCE the Story



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LOW PREP

- The Gospel: God's Plan for Preschoolers Poster

Suggestions:

- *God is King:* hands on head like a crown
- *We sinned:* hands over downward face as if ashamed
- *God sent Jesus:* arms extended straight out to sides
- *Jesus loves:* hands over heart

Practice the gospel

Create simple motions to help children remember each part of *The Gospel: God's Plan for Preschoolers*. Explain each statement and practice the hand motions several times. Use the suggested motions or create your own.

SAY • You are learning the basics of the gospel! ***What is the gospel? The gospel is the good news that God sent His Son, Jesus, into the world to rescue sinners.*** God is the perfect King over everything. But we all sin, or disobey God. God must punish sin, yet He wants to save the people He loves. So He sent Jesus to rescue us. Jesus never sinned, but He died to take our punishment because He loves us. Then God brought Jesus back to life to prove that He defeated sin and death once for all!

Play "What's missing?"

- classroom items
- towel

Display several classroom items on a table. Allow children a minute or so to memorize the items. Then cover the items with a towel and ask preschoolers to close their eyes. Remove one of the items and hide it out of sight. Invite preschoolers to open their eyes and guess what is missing. Once they guess correctly, replace the item and play again.

SAY • You figured out what was missing! When the women

went to Jesus' tomb on the third day, they found something missing as well. Do you know what—or who—it was? Jesus! He wasn't in the tomb anymore because He rose back to life. The women were so happy! The most important thing that ever happened is that **Jesus died on the cross and is alive.** When we trust in Jesus, we have true joy.

Play out the Bible story

Drape a large blanket over a table to create a tomb. Use a large exercise ball as the stone covering the tomb's opening. Select preschoolers to play the roles of Jesus, Pilate's soldiers, the two Marys, and the angel. The rest of the group will be Jesus' disciples hiding out in another part of the room.

- large blanket
- table
- large exercise ball

The child playing Jesus will lie down under the table, and the guards will roll the ball in front of the opening and stand by. Count *one sad day, two sad days, three sad days*, while the child playing Jesus slips out through the back of the table covering and crouches out of sight. Then invite the Marys to walk slowly towards the tomb and invite the angel to roll the ball away. The guards will lay down, the women will peek in the tomb in surprise, and the angel will announce *Jesus is alive!* As the Marys turn towards the other friends, the child playing Jesus will greet them. Everyone will shout *Oh, happy day!* Then assign new roles and repeat.

SAY • Jesus' friends were so sad when Jesus died. They didn't understand that this was part of God's plan to rescue sinners. But when Jesus rose back to life, they were so happy! The most important thing that ever happened is that **Jesus died on the cross and is alive.** When we trust in Jesus, we have true joy. Jesus brings forgiveness and life with God forever.

Make a resurrection garden

- large, shallow dish or plant saucer
- play shovels
- potting soil
- cup
- a flat rock
- smaller rocks
- small sticks
- twine
- moss or other small plants

Option: Make a garden before the session to use while you tell the Bible story.

Work together to fill a large, shallow dish or plant saucer with potting soil. Place a cup on its side near the center, and place a flat rock upright just beside the opening. Scoop more soil on top of and around the sides and back of the cup to form a hill. Place smaller rocks in front of the cup's opening like a pathway. Add moss and any other small plants desired in the soil. Tie twine around a couple sticks to make a cross. Stick it in the hill behind the tomb. Make two more crosses, if desired. If weather permits and you have access to a natural area, allow preschoolers to gather the rocks, dirt, sticks, and moss or other small plants.

SAY • You made a beautiful garden! Normally tombs are sad places. But this one makes me happy because it reminds me that Jesus is alive! When we trust in Jesus, we have true joy. The most important thing that ever happened is that **Jesus died on the cross and is alive**. Jesus brings forgiveness and life with God forever.



Spread Easter joy

- walking rope
- artificial flowers
- tape
- sticky notes (optional)

Walk around your church building as a group. Invite preschoolers to take turns taping an artificial flower to the doors of rooms where groups are meeting. You may also add a sticky note saying the flower is from your group.

SAY • When we trust in Jesus, we want to spread joy to everyone! These flowers will remind people that we have joy in Jesus. The Wilton family moved to Pittsburgh to spread the joy of Jesus. On Easter, they invite people to come to church to hear that **Jesus died on the cross and is alive** and worship Him.

Snack and review

Play the countdown video to signal the end of activities. Wash hands and gather preschoolers for snack time. Pray, thanking God for the snack.

Serve meringue cookies for snack. Talk about how when you bite into the cookie, it is empty like Jesus' tomb! The most important thing that ever happened is that **Jesus died on the cross and is alive**. When we trust in Jesus, we have forgiveness and life with God forever.

Show the Bible story picture as you ask the following questions. Retell parts of the Bible story as needed.

1. Where was Jesus buried? (*in a tomb with a large stone rolled in front*)
2. When did Jesus rise from the dead? (*on the third day*)
3. To whom did the angel first tell the good news? (*two women named Mary*)
4. Why is this the most important thing that ever happened? (*Jesus brings forgiveness and life with God forever to sinners*)
5. ***What is the gospel? The gospel is the good news that God sent His Son, Jesus, into the world to rescue sinners.***

Transition

When preschoolers finish their snack, they may color the Bible story coloring page, play a simple game to practice the key passage or big picture question, or sing along to the key passage or theme song.

If parents are picking up their children at this time, tell them something that their child enjoyed doing or did well during the session. Distribute the preschool big picture cards for families.

- countdown video (optional)
- Allergy Alert
- paper cups and napkins
- snack food
- Bible Story Picture Poster
- Big Picture Question Poster
- meringue cookies (optional)

- Bible Story Coloring Page
- crayons
- Key Passage Poster
- Big Picture Question Poster
- "The Lord Reigns (1 Chronicles 16:31)" song
- "The Gospel Is for Everyone" song
- Big Picture Cards for Families: Babies, Toddlers, and Preschoolers