

THE BIGGEST STORY CURRICULUM



VOLUME 5
ACTS, EPISTLES & REVELATION

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The Biggest Story Curriculum, Volume 5

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How to Use This Curriculum

The Biggest Story Curriculum includes 104 lessons designed to help children understand God’s plan to redeem the world through his Son, Jesus, by leading them through the overarching story of the Bible over the course of roughly two years. Created from the ground up by a team of pastors, children’s ministry workers, and content creators, the curriculum features guided lessons that can be used in Sunday school, children’s church, or homeschooling contexts.

A major strength of *The Biggest Story Curriculum* is its modular design, allowing teachers to pick and choose which components to use based on the age of the students, specific educational goals, or available time.

The chart below shows suggested components for 30-, 45-, and 60-minute class times. For a complete set of sample lesson plans for Sunday school, children’s church, and homeschooling contexts, see Sample Lesson Plans on page x.

Available Time for Lesson				
Lesson Components		30 minutes	45 minutes	60 minutes
Teach	The Big Picture (5 minutes)		✓	✓
	Tell the Story (5–10 minutes)	✓	✓	✓
	Teach the Story (10 minutes)		✓	✓
	Gospel Connection (5 minutes)	✓	✓	✓
Engage	Discuss the Story (10 minutes)			✓
	Activities (10–15 minutes)	✓	✓	✓
	Crafts (10–15 minutes)			✓

Lesson Components

The lesson components are grouped into three major lesson phases: Read, Teach, and Engage. The Read phase includes a brief set of prelesson prompts including the most important step—reading and meditating on the Bible passage itself. The Teach phase includes all the tools needed to help kids understand the story and how it fits into the grand narrative of the Bible. The Engage phase includes multiple components to help kids thoughtfully, creatively, and physically engage with the story in memorable ways. Below is a description of each component within these three phases.

1 **Read**

BEFORE THE LESSON

This section highlights the Bible passage that teachers should read and meditate on before teaching the lesson. For a few lessons that cover longer passages, this section offers a focus passage to review within that larger context. It also includes a simple checklist designed to guide teachers as they review the lesson and prepare to teach.

2 **Teach**

THE BIG PICTURE

5 minutes

This section helps the teacher understand and summarize how the lesson connects with previous lessons and the overarching story of the Bible. Teachers are encouraged to review this section ahead of time, summarizing it in their own words at the beginning of the class.

TELL THE STORY

5–10 minutes

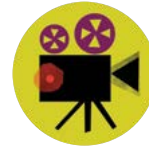
After reviewing how the lesson fits into the preceding lessons and the overarching story of the Bible, teachers progress to telling the current week's story. This can be done in one of three ways: (1) reading the relevant Bible passage out loud to the class, (2) reading the relevant story from *The Biggest Story Bible Storybook*, or (3) watching the relevant animated video for that particular story (found at TheBiggestStory.com). In each lesson, these options will be presented to you in the following way:



Read the
Bible passage
together



Read from
The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook



Play *The*
Biggest Story
video

TEACH THE STORY

10 minutes

This section provides some suggested teaching points to emphasize as teachers seek to reiterate the key themes from the story. While this section is written as a script, it can also be used as a launching pad for teachers to unpack the story for their class in ways that will serve their specific students. Don't miss the Big Truth. In the margin next to this section, teachers will find the Big Truth—a short sentence summarizing the main point of the lesson. Consider emphasizing the Big Truth throughout the lesson by saying it together as a class, incorporating it into an activity, or writing it on a craft.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

5 minutes

Similar to the Teach the Story section, this section can be used as a script or as a guide to help teachers show their kids how the lesson connects to the Bible's big story of redemption through Christ. Teachers are encouraged to close the teaching portion of the lesson by emphasizing how the story points to Jesus—the Snake Crusher—and his plan to save people from their sin.

DISCUSS THE STORY

10 minutes

Designed for use in smaller groups, the discussion questions listed in this section are a great way to help kids go deeper in their understanding of the story and why it matters. The questions listed here are intended to foster interactive group conversation between teachers and students.

3

Engage

Don't miss the Memory Verse. In the margin next to this section, teachers will find a Memory Verse for the lesson. These verses reinforce the main point of the lesson and are short enough for kids to memorize in a week. Consider handing out a Biggest Story Verse Card to each child as a fun tool to take home as they seek to memorize the verse. Learn more about the Verse Cards at TheBiggestStory.com.

ACTIVITIES

10–15 minutes

Each lesson includes a number of suggested activities that are designed to pair well with the story. These activities are broken up into two age ranges (K–2nd and 3rd–5th) and include simple instructions along with a list of necessary supplies. Teachers can also download and print a coloring page and an activity page for each lesson for each student to work on in class or take home.

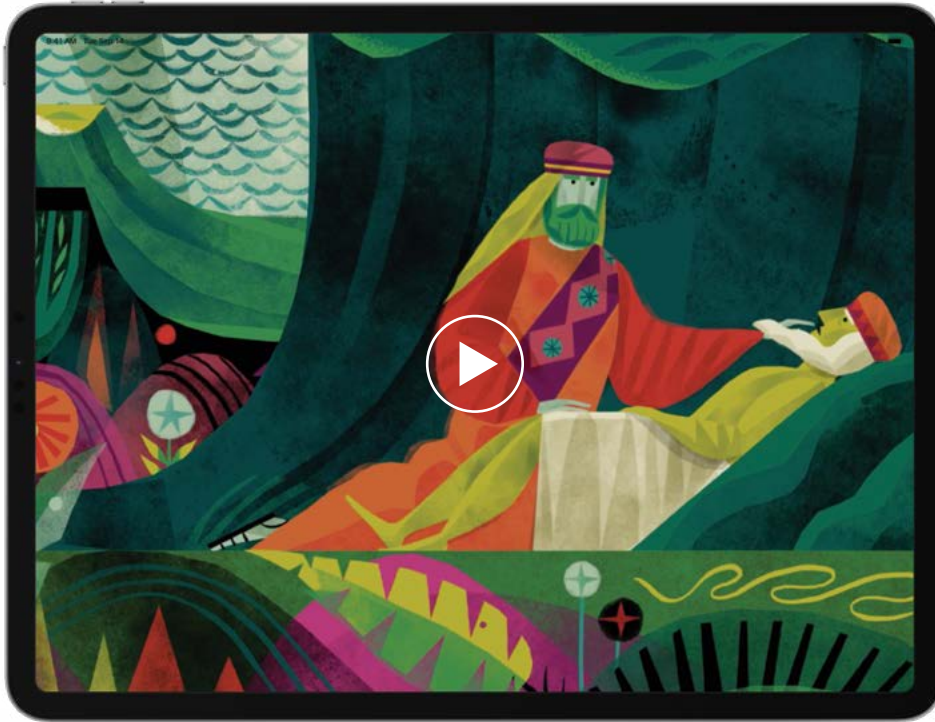
CRAFTS

10–15 minutes

Each lesson includes a number of suggested crafts that connect to the story in some way. These crafts are broken up into two age ranges (K–2nd and 3rd–5th) and include recommended preparation before the class begins, a list of necessary supplies, and simple instructions for doing the craft in class.

A Note on Artwork

Users will notice that some stories within *The Biggest Story Curriculum* include pictures of Jesus. The illustration style shows that these are not meant to be depictions of Jesus as he really was on earth. Instead, the artwork used here recognizes that Jesus is indeed the main character of the Biggest Story.



TheBiggestStory.com

TheBiggestStory.com

Visit TheBiggestStory.com to stream or download free materials designed to complement *The Biggest Story Curriculum*.

Featuring beautiful animation and custom sound design, *The Biggest Story Bible Storybook Videos* help bring the Bible to life for children in a home or classroom setting. The videos are available to stream for free.

Downloadable and printable worksheets give kids fresh ways to engage with and review each of the 104 Bible lessons from *The Biggest Story Curriculum*. Each activity page encourages children to recap key points from the story, helping them apply what they have learned throughout the week, and the coloring pages give them a creative way to meditate on the story.

Sample Lesson Plans

The Biggest Story Curriculum consists of lesson components that can be customized for various church, home, and classroom contexts. The following sample lesson plans are intended to serve as inspiration as you develop the plan that is right for your context. A blank worksheet is provided at the end of this section for you to build your own lesson plan.

● Sunday School: Small Group/Large Group Plan

This 60-minute lesson plan was developed for a Sunday school format that includes small groups led by volunteer leaders and a single large group teaching time led by a primary teacher.

Time/Day	Duration	Lesson Component	Notes
8:30 a.m.	5 min	Welcome, Activity Sheets	Led by small group volunteers
	5 min	Transition to large group	
8:40 a.m.	5 min	The Big Picture	Led by large group teacher
	5 min	Tell the Story	Video or Storybook
	10 min	Teach the Story	
	5 min	Gospel Connection	
	5 min	Transition to small groups	
9:10 a.m.	10 min	Discuss the Story	Led by small group volunteers
	10 min	Craft or Activity	

● Sunday School: Simple Plan

This 45-minute lesson plan was developed for a one-room Sunday school context. It is simple and fast-moving to help younger kids stay engaged.

Time/Day	Duration	Lesson Component	Notes
9:30 a.m.	5 min	Welcome, Coloring Sheets	Room Leader, Volunteer 1
	10 min	Activity	Volunteer 2
9:45 a.m.	10 min	Tell the Story	Room Leader, Video or Storybook
	5 min	Gospel Connection	Room Leader
10:00 a.m.	5 min	Snack	Volunteer 3
10:05 a.m.	10 min	Craft	Volunteer 1

● Homeschool or Classroom: Daily Plan

This lesson plan was developed for a daily homeschool or classroom learning environment. Two stories are covered each week and Fridays are used for review and Scripture memory.

Time/Day	Duration	Lesson Component	Notes
Mon	5 min	The Big Picture (Story 1)	
	10 min	Tell the Story (Story 1)	Storybook or Video
	10 min	Craft or Activity (Story 1)	
Tue	10 min	Teach the Story (Story 1)	
	5 min	Gospel Connection (Story 1)	
	10 min	Discuss the Story (Story 1)	
Wed	5 min	The Big Picture (Story 2)	
	10 min	Tell the Story (Story 2)	Storybook or Video
	10 min	Craft or Activity (Story 2)	
Thu	10 min	Teach the Story (Story 2)	
	5 min	Gospel Connection (Story 2)	
	10 min	Discuss the Story (Story 2)	
Fri	5 min	Review	
	10 min	Scripture Memory	Choose one of the two verses
	10 min	Bonus Craft or Activity	

Build Your Own Plan Worksheet

Use this worksheet to build your own lesson from the components listed below.

Lesson Components

The Big Picture (5 min)

Tell the Story: Bible (5–10 min)

Tell the Story: Storybook (5 min)

Tell the Story: Video (5 min)

Teach the Story (10 min)

Gospel Connection (5 min)

Discuss the Story (10 min)

Memory Verse (5 min)

Activity Sheet (5 min)

Coloring Sheet (5 min)

Activity (10 min)

Craft (10 min)

Non-Curriculum Components:

Snack (5–10 min)

Worship/Singing (5–10 min)

Room Transitions (5 min)

Attendance (5 min)

Free Time (10 min)

Build Your Own Plan Worksheet

Use this worksheet to build your own lesson from the components listed below.

Lesson Components

The Big Picture (5 min)

Tell the Story: Bible (5–10 min)

Tell the Story: Storybook (5 min)

Tell the Story: Video (5 min)

Teach the Story (10 min)

Gospel Connection (5 min)

Discuss the Story (10 min)

Memory Verse (5 min)

Activity Sheet (5 min)

Coloring Sheet (5 min)

Activity (10 min)

Craft (10 min)

Non-Curriculum Components:

Snack (5–10 min)

Worship/Singing (5–10 min)

Room Transitions (5 min)

Attendance (5 min)

Free Time (10 min)



PART 6

ACTS & EPISTLES

ACTS–JUDE

The Gospels are obviously about Jesus — who he was, what he did, and what he taught — but we shouldn't think the rest of the New Testament is about something else. If the Gospels are about what Jesus "began to do and teach," then the Acts of the Apostles are about what Jesus continued to do and teach (Acts 1:1). The book of Acts is sometimes called a history of the early church. That's true, but it's also a history of what God was doing by the Spirit to proclaim the word around the world.

Most of the books in the New Testament are letters, or what are sometimes called epistles. Most of the letters are from the apostle Paul, but there is also one from James, two from Peter, and three from John. These letters are addressed to specific churches, groups of churches, or church leaders, and they explain what the gospel is, how Christians should live, and how the church should be organized. Because of the Spirit's inspiration, these letters, along with Acts, are every bit as much about Jesus and from Jesus as the sermons and miracles in the Gospels.



STORY 85

The Spirit Comes

ACTS 2

BEFORE THE LESSON

- *Read Acts 2.*
- *Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is what he has done, and how they should respond to him.*
- *Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.*

1

Read

THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}

2

Teach

Sometimes in really old copies of the Bible the authors of the four Gospels are pictured as four creatures: a man (Matthew), a lion (Mark), an ox (Luke), and an eagle (John). An early Christian pastor named Irenaeus used these pictures to help people remember what the Gospels showed us about Jesus. The picture of the man points to Jesus's humanity, the lion emphasizes his power, the ox reminds of his sacrifice for us, and the eagle depicts Jesus as over all things, since he is the creator of everything ever made. If we had to pick symbols for the book after the Gospels—the book of Acts—then the perfect symbols would be wind and fire. You see, Acts begins with Jesus's disciples gathered together on the Jewish Day of Pentecost—shortly after Jesus went up to heaven. And “suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing *wind*” and

“tongues as of *fire* . . . rested on each one of them” (Acts 2:2–3). As Jesus had promised, they were baptized “with the Holy Spirit and fire” (Luke 3:16). Let’s learn more about this awesome scene!

TELL THE STORY

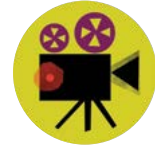
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the
Bible passage
together



Read from
*The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook*



Play *The
Biggest Story*
video

TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

Big Truth
The Spirit was
poured out so
people might
hear the gospel
and be saved.

Imagine your best friend said, “I’m moving out of state, but don’t worry, it’s good for you that I’m leaving.” What would you think? You’d probably think they were crazy. But before Jesus left his disciples, he told them that it was better for them that he was going away (John 16:7). How could this be? What Jesus said only made sense after he ascended into heaven and sent the Holy Spirit to dwell in them and fill them with power.

The story of the sending and filling of the Spirit took place fifty days after Easter. It was the day of Pentecost, a special feast day. Jerusalem was packed with thousands of celebrating Jews from around the world. The apostles and some of Jesus’s other closest friends were gathered to celebrate, when suddenly that “mighty rushing wind” from heaven “filled the entire house” (Acts 2:2). Then, what looked like flames, which were shaped like a tongue sticking upward that just happened to be on fire, sat over each person’s head. These tongues of fire were symbols that “they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.” And, because of that, they were able “to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance” (2:4). Basically, the Spirit gave them the ability to speak about the mighty works of God in the languages of all the different people from all the different places.

Next, Peter stood up and explained all these things to those who were watching them happen. He said, “What you see—men and women, both young and



old, speaking in many tongues about the wonderful things of God—is just what the prophet Joel said would happen when God poured out his Spirit.” And he told them, “More than that, it is a sign that Jesus, who was crucified, is alive and crowned Lord and Christ.” The people listening “were cut to the heart” (2:37), which means they felt deeply sorry for not believing in Jesus. They asked what they should do. Peter said to call on the Lord Jesus to be saved and to “repent and be baptized . . . for the forgiveness of sins” (see 2:21, 38). They did just that. Three thousand people (!) received Peter’s message, were baptized, and then received the Holy Spirit too.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher.
{5 minutes}

The prophet Joel had a vision of what it would be like when God’s kingdom came and the Snake Crusher ruled over it. In that vision God poured out his Spirit on all people: men and women, young and old. Now that the Snake Crusher had come, that vision was coming true. It all began at Pentecost. The Spirit came down and enabled his followers to preach in different languages so that God’s kingdom could spread. It spread and spread and spread, from that small group of disciples to all nations. The book of Acts tells the story of how the gospel spread from Jerusalem to every part of the world. Jesus’s rescue mission had begun, and it cannot be stopped. The kingdom of God is coming, just as Joel foretold!

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. **QUESTION:** How do you think the disciples felt when Jesus said he was leaving them? Why did Jesus say it was better that he go? What did he say he would send to be with them always?

TAKEAWAY: When Jesus went to heaven, he sent his Spirit to be with his people always.

2. **QUESTION:** Fifty days after Easter, on the day of Pentecost, who was gathered together in Jerusalem? And what did it look like when God sent the Holy Spirit to the disciples?

3

Engage

TAKEAWAY: God first sent the Holy Spirit to his disciples on the day of Pentecost.

Memory Verse

The Helper, the
Holy Spirit, whom
the Father will
send in my name,
he will teach you
all things and bring
to your remem-
brance all that I
have said to you.

JOHN 14:26

- 3. QUESTION:** What are some of the things that happened when the Spirit was poured out? As people spoke in different languages, what did Peter say it was a sign of? What happened to people who responded to Peter by believing in Jesus?

TAKEAWAY: The Spirit was poured out so people might hear the gospel and be saved.

- 4. QUESTION:** Who had said that he would send his Spirit? Who was filled with the Holy Spirit?

TAKEAWAY: The promised Spirit fills all who call on the Lord Jesus to be saved.

ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from *TheBiggestStory.com*, or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: A Great Wind Blows

Supply List: chairs

Before Class: Place chairs in a circle (one chair less than the number of children).

Choose one child to stand in the middle of the circle, and have remaining children sit in chairs. The child in the middle says, “A great wind blows for everyone who . . .” (completing the sentence with what could describe a child; e.g., has a dog). The seated children who have a dog must stand and find a new seat. The person in the middle must also find a seat. Whoever is unable to find a seat is the new person in the middle and calls a different description. Play continues as time allows. Remind children that at Pentecost a mighty wind from heaven filled the room.



Option 2: Balloon Relay

Supply List: balloons

Before Class: Gather supplies. Inflate balloons (one per team).

Divide children into teams, and have them line up. Give each team a balloon. On “Go” the first child on each team blows the balloon down to the opposite side of the room (until it hits the wall) and blows it back to the next person in line. The first team to race all players wins. Remind children that at Pentecost a mighty wind from heaven filled the room.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Mighty Wind Relay Race

Supply List: straws (one per child), ping-pong balls (one per team), cones

Before Class: Gather supplies. Place cones on one side of the room (one per team).

Divide children into two teams, and have them line up opposite a cone. Give each team a ping-pong ball and each child a straw. On “Go” the first person on each team places the ping-pong ball on the floor and crawls forward, using only the straw to blow the ping-pong ball around his team’s cone and back. The next person in line then repeats the process. The first team to race all its players wins. Remind children that at Pentecost a mighty wind from heaven filled the room.

Option 2: A Great Wind Blows

Supply List: chairs

Before Class: Place chairs in a circle (one chair less than the number of children).

Choose one child to stand in the middle of the circle, and have remaining children sit in chairs. The child in the middle says, “A great wind blows for everyone who . . .” (completing the sentence with what could describe a child; e.g., has a dog). The seated children who have a dog must stand and find a new seat. The person in the middle must also find a seat. Whoever is unable to find a seat is the new person in the middle and calls a different description. Play continues as time allows. Remind children that at Pentecost a mighty wind from heaven filled the room.

CRAFTS

Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Flames of Fire Headband

Supply List: cardstock, paper, construction paper, tissue paper (red, orange, yellow), paper plates, glue, pencils, scissors, stapler

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, make copies of a large flame picture (one per child). Make copies of Acts 2:3, and cut them out (one per child). Cut 3-inch wide strips of construction paper (two per child). Cut 1-inch squares of red, orange, and yellow tissue paper. Put liquid glue on paper plates. Make a sample craft.

Place copies, paper plates, and remaining supplies on tables. Have children staple two strips of construction paper together to form a headband. Have them cut out a flame and glue it and the verse to the headband. Have children wrap a tissue paper square around the end of a pencil, dip it in glue, and stick it on the flame. Continue until the flame is completely filled in. Help children fit the headband around their heads like a crown, and staple the ends together.

Option 2: Pinwheel

Supply List: paper, scissors, ruler, pencil, markers, pin with ball top, unsharpened pencils (one per child)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut paper into 6-inch squares (one per child). Use a ruler to draw two lines that cross in the center (corner to corner). Make a $2\frac{3}{4}$ -inch cut along the diagonal line from each corner toward the center, forming four “triangular flaps.” Make a sample craft.

Give each child a prepared square. Place remaining supplies on tables. Have children color one side of their square. Next, have children loosely fold every other point down to the center of their square (no crease). Help children use a pin to poke through the tips of the folded-down points at the paper’s center and into the side of a pencil eraser. They can hold the pencil that is now attached to the pinwheel and blow on the pinwheel until it rotates freely. Remind children that at Pentecost a mighty wind from heaven filled the room.



Option 1: Pinwheel

Supply List: paper, scissors, ruler, pencil, markers, pin with ball top, unsharpened pencils (one per child)

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Give each child a prepared square. Place remaining supplies on tables. Have children color one side of their square. Next, have children loosely fold every other point down to the center of their square (no crease). Help children use a pin to poke through the tips of the folded-down points at the paper’s center and into the side of a pencil eraser. They can hold the pencil that is now attached to the pinwheel and blow on the pinwheel until it rotates freely. Remind children that at Pentecost a mighty wind from heaven filled the room.

Option 2: “Jesus Loves Me” in All Languages

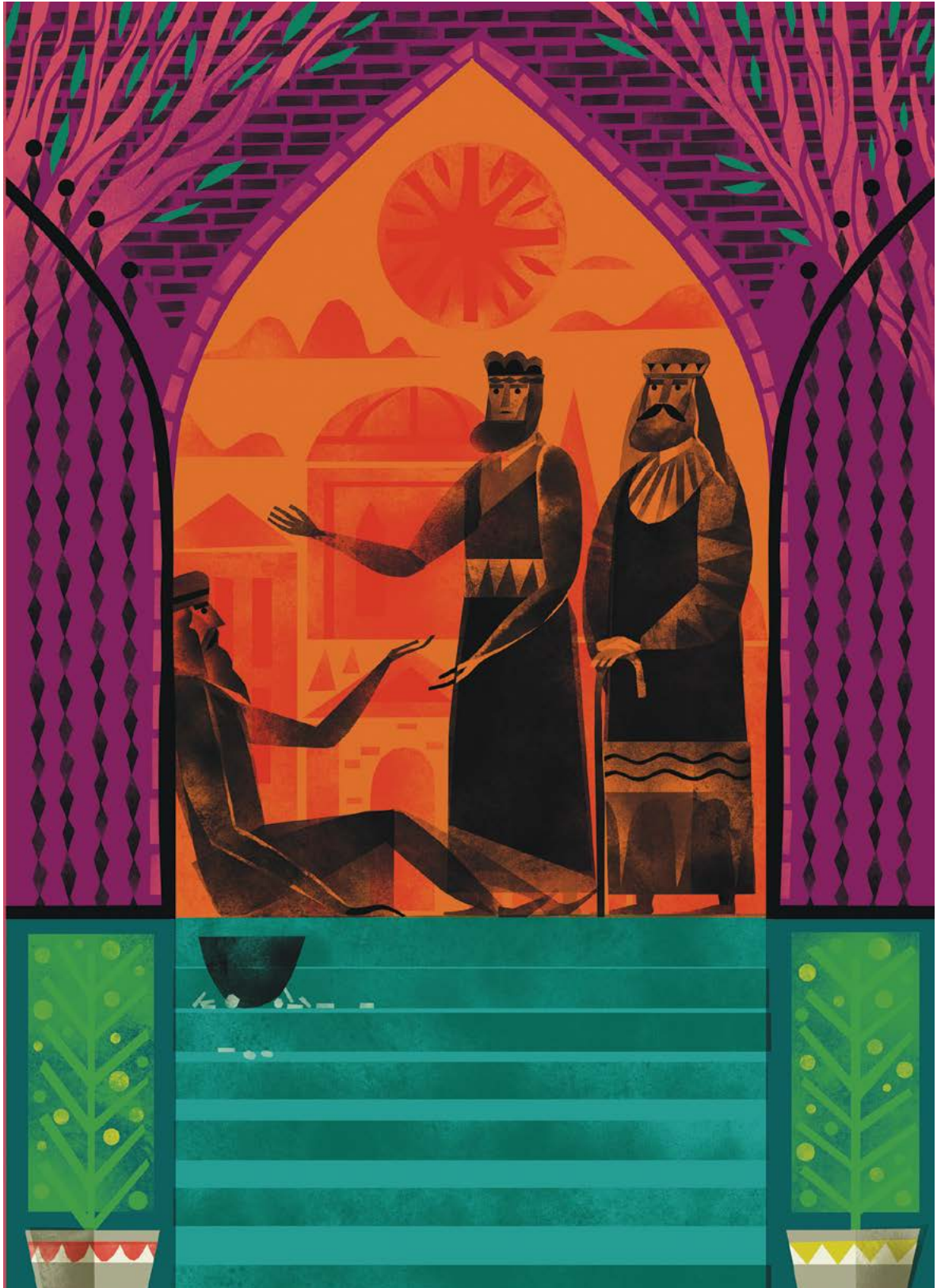
Supply List: paper, construction paper, scissors, glue sticks

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make copies of “Jesus loves me” written in different languages using different fonts. Make a sample craft.

Place copies and remaining supplies on tables. Have children cut a heart out of construction paper and glue it to the middle of another piece of construction paper. Then children can cut out the different ways to say “Jesus loves me” and glue them around the heart. Remind children that when the Spirit came on Pentecost, the people spoke in different languages.



Visit TheBiggestStory.com for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.



STORY 86

The Beautiful and the Beggar

ACTS 3

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Acts 3.
- *Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is what he has done, and how they should respond to him.*
- *Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.*

1
Read

THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}

2
Teach

Do you remember John the Baptist? What a great man! But even that great man had his deep doubts. When he was in prison, he asked his disciples to ask Jesus, "Are you really the Christ or should we look for another?" He asked because Jesus didn't always speak and act like John thought the Snake Crusher would. Jesus replied, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them" (Matt. 11:4–6). Jesus was indeed the promised Savior!

Shortly before Jesus died, he told his disciples something mind-blowing: “Whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father” (John 14:12). After Jesus’s resurrection, he ascended to the Father, then he sent the Holy Spirit. Once the Spirit filled God’s people with God’s power, the gospel spread around the world. And, like Jesus, they did some amazing things that showed everyone that a new time in world history had arrived. Do you want to hear an example of those greater works? Well then, listen in.

TELL THE STORY

Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the
Bible passage
together



Read from
The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook



Play *The*
Biggest Story
video

TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

Big Truth
The powerful
name of Jesus is
able to save those
who believe.

Do you know someone who cannot walk? You might think, “Sure, my baby sister, or my great grandfather who needs a wheelchair.” You might also have seen a beggar on the streets who can’t walk because he was hurt in a war or because he was born with legs that didn’t work right. Well, one day, not so long after the Spirit descended at Pentecost, Peter and John went into the temple, and they saw a beggar being carried to the Beautiful Gate. (They didn’t have wheelchairs then!) People carried him to that gate so he could beg for money from those who were going in and out of the temple. He probably begged there day after day, year after year. He was forty years old, and his whole life he never walked even once. He probably felt his life was not so beautiful.

When Peter and John walked by, the man begged for some coins. Peter responded, “I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!” (Acts 3:6). Can you guess what happened? Immediately God gave strength to the man’s legs, and for the first



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3

time in his life he stood up. More than that, he began to walk and then leap. He was “walking and leaping and praising God” (3:8). What a beautiful sight at the Beautiful Gate! Everyone who saw this miracle was “utterly astounded” (3:11). They were totally surprised. But Peter used the opportunity to preach another Spirit-filled sermon about Jesus. He started that sermon, saying, “Why are you surprised? And why are you staring at us like we in ourselves had the power to do this? It is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who through Jesus, made this man walk. Our faith in the name of Jesus has made this man strong enough to walk and leap” (see 3:12–16). Through the Spirit’s power God used Peter and John to bring healing and salvation to this man. And through that same Spirit’s power God used Peter’s sermon to bring salvation to many who saw the miracle!

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher.
{5 minutes}

Peter’s sermon didn’t just explain why the man could now walk. It ended with the good news about the Snake Crusher. Peter told the people that they “delivered over the Holy and Righteous Author of Life, and asked for Barabbas the murderer instead” (see Acts 3:13–15). Peter wanted them to understand that what they did was wrong. But thankfully he didn’t stop there. He told them the good news. “God raised Jesus from the dead and glorified him,” Peter preached. “And we apostles are all witnesses! We saw these things with our own two (or, actually twenty-four!) eyes” (see 3:13, 15). He continued, telling them that Jesus suffered just like the prophets said he would and that right then was the time to *repent: turn from sin and turn to God*. That same message—of bad then good news—is for us. We didn’t have Jesus killed two thousand years ago, but we are still responsible. He had to die because we are terrible sinners. But the good news is that if we repent and believe, God will forgive our sins, give us new life, and help us to walk with Jesus.

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

- 1. QUESTION:** What are some of the great works that Jesus did? What are some great works that Jesus’s followers did? When Jesus told the disciples that they would do even greater works than him, what do you think he meant?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus’s followers will do even greater works than him.

3

Engage

Memory Verse

The blind receive
their sight and the
lame walk, lepers
are cleansed and
the deaf hear, and
the dead are raised
up, and the poor
have good news
preached to them.

MATTHEW 11:5

2. **QUESTION:** When John the Baptist asked if Jesus was really the Messiah, how did Jesus answer? What does this teach us about what God's kingdom is like? Which of those miracles do we see in the story today?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus is revealing what his kingdom is like through his disciples' works.

3. **QUESTION:** Did Peter heal the lame man in his own name? What name did he use? And what happened? Whose name did he say people must call on to be saved?

TAKEAWAY: The name of Jesus has the power to heal and save for those who believe.

4. **QUESTION:** Now that Jesus is seated on his throne in heaven, who does he use to bring healing and salvation to all people? And who gives them the power to do it?

TAKEAWAY: With the Spirit's power, God uses his church to bring healing and salvation to all people.

ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from *TheBiggestStory.com*, or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Can't Walk Relay

Supply List: none

Divide children into teams. Name one side of the room the "Beautiful Gate," and line teams up opposite the gate. On "Go" the first child on each team must sit on her bottom and scoot to the other side of the room by pushing with her hands. Once she touches the gate, she must skip back to tag the next person on her team, who repeats the process. The first team to race all players wins. Remind children that the beggar who couldn't walk was carried to the gate for healing, but after he was healed, he leaped and praised God.



Option 2: Seek and Find

Supply List: fifty to one hundred pennies, paper plates (one per child), pen

Before Class: Gather supplies. Hide the pennies around the room.

Give each child a paper plate, and have each write his or her name on it. Have the children put their plates in the center of the room. On “Go” children search for the hidden pennies. Each time someone finds a penny, he must run back and place it on his plate before finding another one. After a couple minutes (or when all the pennies are found), the children stop and count their pennies. The child with the most pennies wins. Remind children that the beggar was seeking money, but he was given much more when Peter healed him in the name of Jesus.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Coin Toss Relay

Supply List: large number of coins, bowl, equal-sized jars, masking tape

Before Class: Gather supplies. Put a bowl of coins on one side of the room, and spread jars out on a starting line opposite the bowl. Mark a “toss line” 1 foot in front of each jar.

Divide children into three teams, and have them line up behind a jar. On “Go” the first child from each team must run down, grab a coin from the bowl, run back to his “toss line,” and try to toss the coin into his jar. If the coin does not go into the jar, leave it. After the toss, the child tags the next person, who repeats the process. After five minutes, count the number of coins in each jar. The team with the most coins wins. Remind children that the beggar was seeking money, but he was given much more when Peter healed him in the name of Jesus.

Option 2: Can’t Walk Relay

Supply List: none

Divide children into teams. Name one side of the room the “Beautiful Gate,” and line teams up opposite the gate. On “Go” the first child on each team must sit on her bottom and scoot to the other side of the room by pushing with her hands. Once she touches the gate, she must skip back to tag the next person on her team, who repeats the process. The first team to race all players wins.

Remind children that the beggar who couldn't walk was carried to the gate for healing, but after he was healed, he leaped and praised God.

CRAFTS

Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Coin Rubbing

Supply List: paper, crayons, variety of coins

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make copies of a temple gate similar to the Beautiful Gate where the beggar would have met Peter, with the words of Acts 3:6 printed above it (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child a gate paper. Set remaining supplies on tables. Have children color the gate, place different coins under their paper, and rub a crayon over the paper until the coin shapes appear. Tell children that, like the beggar, our biggest need is not money but Jesus.

Option 2: Puppet

Supply List: cardstock, construction paper, scissors, crayons, glue sticks, craft sticks

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, make copies of an outline of a man's upper body and two feet (do not include legs). Cut 1" x 5" strips of construction paper (two per child). Make a sample craft.

Place copies, prepared strips, and remaining supplies on tables. Have children color and cut out the man's upper body and feet. Have children accordion-fold two strips of construction paper. Instruct them to unfold the strips and to glue one end of each strip to the man's upper body and the other end to a foot. They should glue just the man's upper body to a craft stick so his legs move and bounce. Remind children that after Peter healed the beggar in Jesus's name, he leaped and praised God.



Option 1: Puppet

Supply List: cardstock, construction paper, scissors, crayons, glue sticks, craft sticks

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, make copies of an outline of a man's upper body, and two feet (do not include legs). Cut 1" x 5" strips of construction paper (two per child). Make a sample craft.

Place copies, prepared strips, and remaining supplies on tables. Have children color and cut out the man's upper body and feet. Have children accordion-fold two strips of construction paper. Instruct them to unfold the strips and to glue one end of each strip to the man's upper body and the other end to a foot. They should glue just the man's upper body to a craft stick so his legs move and bounce. Remind children that after Peter healed the beggar in Jesus's name, he leaped and praised God.

Option 2: Footprint Craft

Supply List: construction paper, pencils, scissors, pipe cleaners, hole punches, markers, pony beads

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make a sample craft.

Place supplies on tables. Have children trace around their shoe onto a piece of construction paper and then cut out their footprint. Instruct them to punch three holes in their footprint in a triangular shape (like a flip-flop). They can then insert and secure a pipe cleaner from the top hole to each of the other two holes, adding pony beads to the pipe cleaners to decorate. Have children write "I want to walk with Jesus everyday!" on the footprint. Remind children that walking with Jesus brings great joy.



Visit TheBiggestStory.com for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.



STORY 87

One Name under Heaven

ACTS 4

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Acts 4.
- Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is what he has done, and how they should respond to him.
- Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.

1

Read

THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}

2

Teach

Do you know Christianity is the largest religion in the world? It is! Why do you think the church grew from a tiny seed (a very small group of people gathered in a small room in the city of Jerusalem) into a tree whose branches reach across the world—from Brazil to Russia, Canada to Australia, Greenland to South Africa? God's power, right? Yes! The Holy Spirit breathed life on the church, and the Spirit keeps breathing life into the church. Here's a simple equation (like $1 + 1 + 1 = 3$) for how the church grows: power + preaching + persecution = growth. It makes sense that God's *power* is necessary, and *preaching* makes sense too (people need to hear the good news). But how does *persecution* (God's people suffering for the gospel) grow the church? It is a bit of a mystery, but the answer to the mystery is connected to Christ. He suffered, so we must suffer; he is raised to

glory, so we too will one day be raised to glory. So, all that to say, *keep an eye out* for another sermon, *see* how many people our powerful God saves, and *watch* what happens when the apostles run into some persecution.

TELL THE STORY

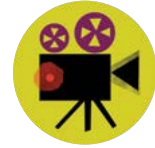
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the
Bible passage
together



Read from
The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook



Play *The*
Biggest Story
video

TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

Big Truth
There is
salvation in
Jesus and
him alone.

Remember the beautiful miracle that happened to the beggar at the Beautiful Gate? When the beggar begged Peter for money, Peter gave him something better than all the money in the world! “In the name of Jesus,” he said, “rise up and walk!” (Acts 3:6). Immediately, the man stood, walked, and leapt! He was praising God, and everyone was filled with wonder. Then Peter explained to all those gathered what happened, and he preached the gospel: all men can be spiritually healed—saved from sin and the power of the snake—if they trust in the Snake Crusher.

As he and John continued to tell people about Jesus, many people listened and believed. Can you guess how many? Fifty? No. One hundred? No. One thousand? Now, let’s not be ridiculous. Wait a minute, let’s be more than ridiculous—let’s be *realistic*. That day there were *really* five thousand men (not including women and children) who came to faith in Jesus. Talk about growth! Everyone was so happy—well, not everyone. When the Jewish leaders learned that the apostles were preaching “in Jesus the resurrection from the dead,” they were “greatly annoyed” and they “arrested” Peter and John (4:2–3). The next day, the leaders asked, “By what power did the beggar walk?” (see 4:7). “Jesus!” said Peter. Well, he said more than Jesus’s name. He talked about Jesus’s death and resurrection and about how Jesus is the cornerstone, that is, the first and most important



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stone that God's kingdom is built upon. Peter also said this super important sentence, "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (4:12). Or, we might put it this way: the *only* way to get to heaven is to believe in Jesus.

Peter's answer upset the rulers even more. "You are not allowed to preach about Jesus—or else!" Peter and John must have laughed, at least inside, at their order. They would obey God, not these godless men. "Filled with the Holy Spirit," they "continued to speak the word of God with boldness" (4:31). So bold. So brave! So blessed.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher.
{5 minutes}

In Jesus's day many people thought there were many gods, and they would pray to these different gods for the different problems they faced. If they needed water, they prayed to the god of rain; victory in battle, the god of war; someone to marry, the goddess of love. That might sound crazy, but people today think crazy things too. They think if they have enough money, they will be secure. They think if they find someone to marry, they will be completely happy. And they think that if they are basically good, they will go to heaven (whether they believe in Jesus or not). That is wrong. What is right is what Jesus and Peter taught. The night before the Snake Crusher went to the cross to crush sin and Satan, he said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). What he meant by that is what Peter preached: that the only way to be saved is to trust in Jesus. So, when people say there are many ways to God, we are to say, "No way! There is only one way!" And when people say, "I will go to heaven because I'm a good person," we should say, "Only Jesus is perfectly good. We must believe in him and his perfect goodness alone."

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

- 1. QUESTION:** When Peter preached the good news, in what two ways did people respond? How is that similar to when Jesus taught about the kingdom of God?

3

Engage

Memory Verse

There is salvation
in no one else, for
there is no other
name under heaven
given among men
by which we must
be saved.

ACTS 4:12

TAKEAWAY: Like Jesus, the disciples had some people believe their message and others hate it.

2. **QUESTION:** What happened to Peter and John for preaching about Jesus? What were they told would happen if they continued to preach about him? How is this like what Jesus suffered for preaching the good news?

TAKEAWAY: Like Jesus, the disciples had to suffer for following God's ways.

3. **QUESTION:** What gave Peter the power to preach about Jesus? What kept him preaching even when he was persecuted and thrown in prison?

TAKEAWAY: The Spirit of Jesus gave the disciples power to preach even when they were persecuted.

4. **QUESTION:** Is there any way to be saved from your sins apart from believing in Jesus?

TAKEAWAY: Salvation can be found only in Jesus.

ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from *TheBiggestStory.com*, or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Seated Volleyball

Supply List: masking tape, beach ball

Before Class: Gather supplies. Use a strip of masking tape to divide the room into two equal sections.

Divide children into two teams. Have children spread out and sit on the floor of their team's side of the tape. While remaining seated, children volley a beach ball back and forth across the line. If at any time the ball hits the floor, the team whose side it fell on gets a point. The first team to receive ten points loses the game. Remind children that after Peter healed a man in Jesus's name, he was able to get up and walk.



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Option 2: Pass It On

Supply List: two equal-sized balls

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Divide children into two teams, and line each team up single file across from a designated finish line. Give the first person in each line a ball. On “Go” have the first person on each team pass the ball over her head to the person behind her. The second person then passes it through his legs to the person behind him. The teams continue to pass the ball, alternating passing methods with each person. When the last person gets the ball, he runs to the front of the line, moving the team closer to the finish line. The team then repeats the process as many times as needed to reach the finish line. The first team to reach the finish line wins. Remind children that Jesus gave the good news to his disciples and that they passed it on to the world.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Seated Volleyball

Supply List: masking tape, beach ball

Before Class: Gather supplies. Use a strip of masking tape to divide the room into two equal sections.

Divide children into two teams. Have children spread out and sit on the floor of their team’s side of the tape. While remaining seated, children volley a beach ball back and forth across the line. If at any time the ball hits the floor, the team whose side it fell on gets a point. The first team to receive ten points loses the game. Remind children that after Peter healed a man in Jesus’s name, he was able to get up and walk.

Option 2: Get Up and Walk Tag

Supply List: none

Assign one child to be “It” and another child to be “Peter.” Begin a game of tag. When someone is tagged, she must sit down. If Peter tags a seated child and says, “In Jesus’s name, get up and walk,” she can reenter the game. Continue play until one child remains or until the leader decides to choose two new people to be “It” and Peter.

CRAFTS

Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Healing Sock

Supply List: white socks (one per child), permanent or fabric markers, dried beans

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a white sock. Set remaining supplies on tables. Have children use permanent or fabric markers to decorate the sock and write “In Jesus’s name” on it. Children then add dried beans to the inside of the sock. Help children tie a knot at the top of the sock to seal it. Tell children that if they have a tummy ache or hurt muscles, they can warm the sock in the microwave for thirty seconds and rest it on the spot of their body that hurts. The warmth of the sock can help them feel better. Remind children that Jesus loves them and heals our hearts. Optional: Include a piece of paper with these instructions for parents: “Heat the sock in the microwave for short amounts of time. In between each time in the microwave, move the beans around a bit so no part of the bag is cooked too much.”

Option 2: Jesus Art

Supply List: white cardstock, masking tape, watercolor paints, paintbrushes (one per child), paper cups

Before Class: Gather supplies. On white cardstock, use masking tape to form the name Jesus (one per child). Fill cups with water (two per table). Make a sample craft.

Set prepared cardstock, cups of water, and remaining supplies on tables. Have children take a Jesus paper and paint all over the paper and tape. When finished, instruct them to carefully remove the tape to reveal the beautiful, powerful name of Jesus. Remind children there is saving power in the beautiful name of Jesus.

**Option 1: Shine Jesus Shine**

Supply List: cardstock, pencils, liquid glue, glitter, paper plates

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make a sample craft.

Place supplies on tables. Using a pencil, have children write the name JESUS in large bubble letters on a piece of cardstock. Next, instruct them to trace the letters with liquid glue. Finally, they can sprinkle glitter on the letters, shaking excess glitter onto a paper plate. Remind children there is saving power in the beautiful name of Jesus.

Option 1: Healing Sock

Supply List: white socks (one per child), permanent or fabric markers, dried beans

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a white sock. Set remaining supplies on tables. Have children use permanent or fabric markers to decorate the sock and write “In Jesus’s name” on it. Children then add dried beans to the inside of the sock. Help children tie a knot at the top of the sock to seal it. Tell children that if they have a tummy ache or hurt muscles, they can warm the sock in the microwave for thirty seconds and rest it on the spot of their body that hurts. The warmth of the sock can help them feel better. Remind children that Jesus loves them and heals our hearts. Optional: Include a piece of paper with these instructions for parents: “Heat the sock in the microwave for short amounts of time. In between each time in the microwave, move the beans around a bit so no part of the bag is cooked too much.”



Visit TheBiggestStory.com for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.



STORY 88

The Couple Who Lied and Died

ACTS 5

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Acts 5.
- *Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is what he has done, and how they should respond to him.*
- *Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.*



THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}



In the garden of Eden the snake slithered up to Eve and told her that she and Adam would *not* die if they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He lied, and death came into the world. In Jerusalem King David told Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, to come home from battle so Uriah could spend time with his wife. David lied! He was trying to cover up his sin. And when Uriah refused to be with his wife (because the rest of his army was at war), David had to lie some more to try to cover up his tracks. Eventually, he got caught in one big fat lie after another. What a mess! There have been times God's people have lied to save the lives of others—like Rahab's lie to help the spies in Jericho, or

peoples' lies to protect their innocent neighbors during World War II. Usually, however, breaking the Ninth Commandment is really *wrong*, and God comes down pretty *strong* on people who lie. Today's story is about a couple who lied and died. Want to hear what happened so that we don't fall into the same error? Good. Let's listen and learn.

TELL THE STORY

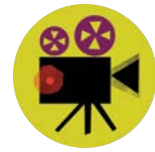
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the
Bible passage
together



Read from
The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook



Play *The*
Biggest Story
video

TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

Big Truth
It is impossible
for God to lie,
so he wants his
followers to be
people of truth.

Do you know what is impossible for God to do? One answer in the Bible is that “it is impossible for God to lie” (Heb. 6:18). Isn’t that incredible? It means that he is all-good all the time. He cannot lie. How about you? Have you ever lied? (Now don’t lie about your answer!) Many people tell little lies, often to avoid getting punished. “No, Mom, I didn’t eat a cookie!” That’s natural—but not good. It is not God’s way for us to live. He wants us to always tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

One day in the early church—when wonderful things were happening—something terrible happened. First, let’s hear about the wonderful things. Thousands of people were coming to Christ as they heard the preaching of the apostles. Among those thousands there were many needs. So one way to provide for others was for people to share what they owned. Some opened their homes and provided shelter; others shared food and clothing; still others made bigger sacrifices. How wonderful! But that paved the way for the terrible thing. Ananias and Sapphira, a couple in the community, sold some land to give to the church. What a sacrifice! Ah, but what a scam. Here’s what they did. They decided to sell the land, keep some of the money from the sale, give some money to the church, and then lie



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5

about the fact that they kept some for themselves. They wanted to impress people with how righteous and generous they were, even if it meant lying to God.

It didn't take long for their lie to come to light. "Ananias," Peter said, "Satan has filled your heart so you would lie, not just to the church but to the Holy Spirit. You have not lied to man but to God!" (see Acts 5:3–4). When Ananias heard Peter's words, he couldn't get a word in. Why? Because "he fell down and breathed his last" breath (5:5). He died because he lied. His body was carried away, and they buried him. About three hours later the same thing happened to his wife. She lied and died too. Her body was carried away, and they buried her next to her husband. Yikes! "Yikes" is right. We are told that, after these two sudden deaths, "great fear came upon the whole church" (5:11). God doesn't strike us down every time we lie. Thank God! He is a merciful God. But he does want us to speak the truth always. And he does warn us that there are penalties if we don't. He is a God to be feared.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher.
{5 minutes}

God is a truth teller; Satan is the opposite. Jesus taught that Satan "does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. . . . He is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44). And the Bible says this about the people who act like the father of lies by lying all the time: they will be thrown, with Satan, "in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death" (Rev. 21:8). Those who make a practice of lying will die (like Ananias and Sapphira) and be sent to hell. Double yikes! We don't want that. So what do we do? Should we just stop lying? Definitely. But, no one (except Jesus) can live their whole life without lying. Jesus alone is the truth. In fact, he is "the way, and the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). We escape hell, the lake of fire, not by never lying but by lying down at the feet of Christ—trusting that the Snake Crusher crushed all our sins. The little lies—crushed. The big lies—crushed. Let us confess those sins to God and find forgiveness and eternal life from Jesus.

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

- 1. QUESTION:** What are some ways that people cared for each other in the early church? What were some of the rich people doing?

3

Engage

TAKEAWAY: The early church cared for each other by sharing their possessions with each other.

Memory Verse

Deliver me,
O LORD, from
lying lips, from a
deceitful tongue.

PSALM 120:2

2. **QUESTION:** What is it impossible for God to do? If God cannot lie, do you think he wants his children to lie? What should we do if we tell a lie?

TAKEAWAY: It is impossible for God to lie, and he wants his followers to be people of truth.

3. **QUESTION:** Who told the first lie in the Bible and is known as the father of lies? What did Ananias and Sapphira do with the money they got from selling their land? What immediately happened to both of them when they lied? What does the Bible warn will happen if you make a pattern of lying?

TAKEAWAY: Satan is the father of lies, and those who make a pattern of lying will be thrown with him into the lake of fire.

4. **QUESTION:** Why is it right to both fear and trust God? What does the Bible promise will happen if you confess your sins to God and turn from them?

TAKEAWAY: God can be trusted, but he is also a God to be feared.

ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from TheBiggestStory.com, or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Ananias and Sapphira

Supply List: thirty cups, fifteen coins

Before Class: Gather supplies. Spread cups around the room. Randomly hide coins under half the cups.

Divide children into teams. On “Go” the first child on each team runs to a cup and looks under it. If it has a coin, he brings it back to his team. If not, he returns to his team empty handed. The next person repeats the process. Play continues until all coins have been found. The team with the most coins wins. Remind children that Ananias and Sapphira displeased God when they hid money and lied about it.



Option 2: Who's Got the Coin?

Supply List: coin

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Have children sit in a circle. Choose one child to be “It,” give her a coin, and have her stand in the middle of the circle. Seated children close their eyes and put one hand out with their palm up. “It” then touches each child’s open hand, placing the coin in only one child’s hands. When a child’s hand is touched, he or she closes it. When “It” has touched each hand, the children say, “Coin, coin, who’s got the coin?” Have children open their eyes, and ask a seated child to guess who has the coin. Continue clockwise around the circle until someone guesses correctly. (The child holding the coin does not reveal he has it when it is his turn, but he guesses someone else.) The person with the coin is “It” for the next round. Remind children that Ananias and Sapphira hid money and lied about it.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Truth or Lie

Supply List: paper

Before Class: Gather supplies. On paper, print the word Truth on one side and the word Lie on the other side (one per child).

Have children sit in a circle, and give each child a printed paper. Have kids think of a believable true or false statement they can share about themselves. Have a child share his statement. Have all children use their “Truth or Lie” papers to reveal if they think the statement is true or false. Then the child who made the statement reveals the right answer. Continue around the circle until all children have shared their statement. Remind children that Ananias and Sapphira chose to lie and suffered the consequences for their choice. Being a truth teller is important to God.

Option 2: Ananias and Sapphira

Supply List: thirty cups, fifteen coins

Before Class: Gather supplies. Spread cups around the room. Randomly hide coins under half the cups.

Divide children into teams. On “Go” the first child on each team runs to a cup and looks under it. If it has a coin, he brings it back to his team. If not, he returns to

his team empty handed. The next person repeats the process. Play continues until all coins have been found. The team with the most coins wins. Remind children that Ananias and Sapphira displeased God when they hid money and lied about it.

CRAFTS

Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: “God Sees” Glasses

Supply List: cardstock, markers, scissors, pipe cleaners

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, print a variety of sunglasses patterns (just the front of the glasses). Make a sample craft.

Set copies and remaining supplies on tables. Instruct children to choose a sunglasses pattern, color the glasses, and write “God sees” on them. Then they cut out the glasses, including the inside lens area. Have children attach a pipe cleaner to each side of the glasses, twisting one end around the frame and bending the other end to fit around their ear for wearing. Remind children that God knows and sees all that we do.

Option 2: Two-Faced Mask

Supply List: cardstock, scissors, markers, feathers, sequins, jewel stickers, tape, straws

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, print a masquerade mask pattern (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Place mask copies and remaining supplies on tables. Have children cut out a mask face, including the eye holes. They should color and decorate one side of the mask in a sad way to represent sin and lying, and the other side in a happy way to represent the joy that comes with honesty. Instruct children to tape a straw to the side of the mask for holding it up. Remind children that lying grieves God but that being honest pleases him.



Option 1: God Sees

Supply List: paper, pencils, scissors, colored pencils, black construction paper, glue

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make a sample craft.

Give each child two pieces of white paper. Set remaining supplies on tables. Have children fold one piece of paper in half (“hamburger” fold). Instruct them to use a pencil to draw two large half-circle eyes about 2 inches apart in the center of the folded paper and then to cut them out. Children then fold the other piece of paper in half (“hot dog” fold). They insert this folded paper inside the one with the cut-out eyes. Have them use colored pencils to draw and color an eye-ball inside of each cut-out hole (onto the other paper). Have children cut small strips of black paper to make “eyelashes,” which they can glue to the top of the semi-circles. Demonstrate how to pull the inside paper to the left and right to move the eyes. Have children write “God sees” on the paper, and remind them that God knows and sees all that we do.

Option 2: Two-Faced Mask

Supply List: cardstock, scissors, markers, feathers, sequins, jewel stickers, tape, straws

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, print a masquerade mask pattern (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Place mask copies and remaining supplies on tables. Have children cut out a mask face, including the eye holes. They should color and decorate one side of the mask in a sad way to represent sin and lying, and the other side in a happy way to represent the joy that comes with honesty. Instruct children to tape a straw to the side of the mask for holding it up. Remind children that lying grieves God but that being honest pleases him.



Visit TheBiggestStory.com for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.



STORY 89

Stephen's Speech

ACTS 7

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Acts 7.
- *Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is what he has done, and how they should respond to him.*
- *Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.*



THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}



The day before Jesus died, he told the apostles something very important. "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you" (John 15:18). Wait a minute, shouldn't people love Christians since we seek to love everyone—even our enemies? And shouldn't they be glad when we share the good news about good Jesus? You would think so. But remember, we live in a fallen world full of fallen people. And fallen people usually reject God's ways.

Acts teaches us that Jesus's first followers were hated, just like Jesus had said. They treated his followers just like they treated him. All twelve disciples were eventually rejected, and most of them were killed too. They all suffered for Christ. But can anything stop the gospel from spreading throughout the world? No! Remember the equation for gospel growth? Power + preaching + persecution = growth. For today's lesson we meet Stephen, one of the bravest Christians. He

was a servant in the church, caring for the basic needs of others. He was also a “man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 6:5), someone who performed great wonders and preached great sermons. Do you want to hear a bit from the last sermon, the one that got him killed? Then listen in.

TELL THE STORY

Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the
Bible passage
together



Read from
*The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook*



Play *The
Biggest Story*
video

TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

Big Truth
Jesus's followers
boldly proclaim
the gospel no
matter the cost.

Stephen's sermon didn't take place in a big church with a tall steeple. It took place when he was on trial after people lied about him and he was arrested. “He speaks against Moses,” one lied. “He wants to destroy the temple,” said another. As Stephen stood before the religious leaders, the high priest asked, “Are these things so?” (Acts 7:1). Stephen knew they were not so, but he chose to answer them with a sermon beginning with a history lesson. “Listen to me. Long ago, our glorious God appeared to Abraham and promised him a great family and a great land” (see 7:2–8). Then Stephen talked about how God rescued his people from slavery in Egypt and whom God used to rescue them—Moses!

He reminded them how the Lord spoke to Moses from the burning bush, “I am the god of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I have seen the sufferings of my people. I will now deliver them” (see Acts 7:32–34). Deliver them, he did! “Still, our fathers refused to obey him,” Stephen said. “And they even made a golden calf and offered a sacrifice to the idol” (see 7:39, 41). “But,” Stephen kept on preaching, “there were good times in our history—like when Joshua led our fathers into the promised land and when Solomon built the temple” (see 7:44–47). At this point, the leaders probably liked his message. But then Stephen got to his main point. A very pointed point—like the tip of an arrow: “You stiff-necked



people, you always resist the Holy Spirit. You rejected the law, persecuted the prophets, and betrayed and murdered Jesus, the Righteous One” (see 7:51–53).

How do you think the leaders responded? They were so mad that they picked up stones to kill him. As they threw the stones at Stephen, he saw the heavens open and Jesus at the right hand of God. As he died, he said these final words: “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” and “Do not hold this sin against them” (7:59, 60).

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher.
{5 minutes}

In his sermon, Stephen talked about how Moses was rejected, just as all the prophets God sent were rejected. Then he shared how Jesus was rejected too. The funny thing (actually the wonderful thing, which isn’t so funny) is that one of the prophets wrote about how the coming Savior (whom we know as Jesus, the Snake Crusher) would be rejected and crushed. In Isaiah 53 the prophet Isaiah wrote, “He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief” (53:3). Isaiah also went on to say that Jesus “carried our sorrows” and that he was “crushed” on the cross (53:4, 5). But the good news (and Isaiah talked about this too) was that when he was crushed on the cross, our sins were forgiven (“He bore the sin of many [people],” 53:12). Because he suffered, we have been made well (“With his wounds we are healed,” 53:5; see also 53:3–6, 12). Another way to put it is this: *Jesus’s rejection is our salvation*. What good news! Let us praise God. Let us also, like Stephen, boldly share that gospel with others—no matter if they hate us or hurt us.

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. **QUESTION:** When Stephen began preaching about Jesus, how did people respond? What did the religious leaders do?

TAKEAWAY: Some people were happy to hear the good news that believers were sharing, but some rejected it.

2. **QUESTION:** Who put Jesus on trial and had him killed? Who put Stephen on trial? Why was he put on trial?

3

Engage

TAKEAWAY: Just like religious leaders rejected and killed Jesus, his followers were often rejected and killed for preaching the gospel.

Memory Verse

Let us hold fast
the confession of
our hope without
wavering, for he
who promised
is faithful.

HEBREWS 10:23

3. QUESTION: What was Stephen's last sermon about? What in his sermon made the religious leaders angry?

TAKEAWAY: Stephen preached that God raised up deliverers for his people but also that his people rejected those leaders and God's ways.

4. QUESTION: What happened to Stephen when he said that the religious leaders betrayed and murdered Jesus, the Righteous One? What is surprising about what Stephen saw and said when he died?

TAKEAWAY: Stephen was the first person to die for preaching the gospel.

ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from *TheBiggestStory.com*, or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Find Forgiveness

Supply List: large, smooth rocks (at least three per child); permanent marker

Before Class: Gather supplies. Write *forgive* with permanent marker on some rocks and leave some blank (at least one *forgive* rock per child).

Place the rocks in a pile on one side of the room. Divide children into teams. On “Go” have the first child on each team run to the rock pile, find a *forgive* rock, and run it back to her team. The next child repeats the process. The first team to have all team members retrieve a *forgive* rock wins. Remind children that when Stephen was being stoned, he asked God to forgive those who were hurting him.

Option 2: Quiet Ball

Supply List: soft ball(s)

Before Class: Gather supplies.



Have children spread out in the room. Tell children they must be silent as they play Quiet Ball. Give one child a ball, and have him toss it to another child. If the child catches it, she throws it to someone else. If that child drops the ball, whoever is nearest the ball should pick it up and toss it to another child. If any child talks, drops the ball when it is thrown to him, or throws the ball poorly, he must step out of the game and do jumping jacks on the side of the room. (He may reenter the game after the remaining children have completed five throws). Remind children that there is a time to be quiet and a time to speak up. When we are given opportunities to tell others about Jesus, we should bravely share the good news. Optional: Add a second ball to make the game more challenging.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Stones Race

Supply List: stones (four per team)

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Divide children into teams. Give each team four stones. On “Go” have the first child on each team crawl to the other side of the room while holding all four stones. When the children get to the opposite side, they must scoot on their bottom back to their starting lines, while continuing to hold the stones. If a child drops her stone, she must start over. (If crawling, she must return to the beginning of the crawling line; if scooting, she must return to the beginning of the scooting line.) The first team to race all team members wins. Remind children that the stones remind us of the first martyr, Stephen, who was stoned for speaking about Jesus.

Option 2: Monster Ball

Supply List: masking tape, beanbags, large beach ball

Before Class: Gather supplies. Use masking tape to divide the room in half. Use the tape to make an additional line near the back of each side (an equal distance from the center line). Give each side an equal number of beanbags.

Divide children into two teams, and assign each team one side of the room. Place the “Monster Ball” (the large beach ball) on the center line. On “Go” have both teams throw beanbags at the Monster Ball, attempting to move it across the marked line in their opponent’s section. The Monster Ball can only be touched

with beanbags. The first team to successfully get the Monster Ball over their opponent's back line wins. Remind children that people threw stones at Stephen when he spoke of Jesus, but that Stephen continued to proclaim Christ even to his death.

CRAFTS

Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Stone Painting

Supply List: large smooth stones (one per child), multicolored permanent markers

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make a sample craft.

Place supplies on tables. Have children write the word *Forgive* on a stone and then decorate it. Remind them that when Stephen was being stoned, he asked God to forgive those who threw the stones. We should be quick to forgive too.

Option 2: Megaphone

Supply List: cardstock, crayons, scissors, clear tape

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, print a cone-shaped megaphone pattern (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Set copies and remaining supplies on tables. Have children write “I will tell about Jesus” on a megaphone and decorate it. Instruct children to cut out the megaphone, roll it into a cone shape, and use tape to secure it in place. Remind children to speak about Jesus no matter the cost.



Option 1: Forgive Flowers

Supply List: paper, colored pencils, large buttons, green and non-green construction paper, glue, scissors

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make copies of seven flower petals (one copy per child). Make a sample craft.

Set copies and remaining supplies on tables. Have each child take a non-green piece of construction paper and a flower petal paper. Children will write one letter from the word *forgive* on each flower petal, then color and cut them out. They can then glue a button to the middle of the non-green construction paper and glue the flower petals around the button to spell *forgive*. Finally, the children can design and cut out stems and leaves using the green construction paper, gluing them to the flower. Remind children that Stephen could have hated the people who persecuted him, but instead he prayed they would be forgiven.

Option 2: Bold Bracelet

Supply List: elastic cording, pony beads, letter beads, tape

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut elastic cord into 8-inch pieces. Make a sample craft.

Place supplies on tables. Have children brainstorm a list of words that describe Stephen (bold, forgiving, etc.). Then each child takes a piece of elastic cord and tapes one end to the table in front of him or her. Instruct children to string beads onto the cord. They will use the letter beads to include a word that describes Stephen. Have children stop beading about 2 inches from the end of the cord to provide sufficient space to tie the ends together. Adjust the size to fit the child's wrist. Tell children the bracelet can encourage them to be bold for Jesus like Stephen.



Visit TheBiggestStory.com for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.



STORY 90

Philip and the Man from Africa

ACTS 8

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Acts 8.
- *Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is what he has done, and how they should respond to him.*
- *Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.*



THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}



Whoosh. Smash. Whoosh. Crunch. Whoosh. Crack. Stone after stone struck Stephen. He fell to the ground, and the moment before he died, he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. . . . Do not hold this sin against them" (Acts 7:59–60). The heavens opened. Stephen saw Jesus standing, looking down and ready to receive his faithful disciple.

Do you think Stephen's stoning stopped the Spirit-filled church? No way! Even though Saul (whom we'll learn about next lesson) and others were persecuting the church so much that many Christians had to flee Jerusalem for their lives, their escape was all part of God's plan. Jesus told his disciples to take the good

news to Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria. As the church fled from persecution in Jerusalem, they next went to Judea and Samaria. The first person to preach the gospel in Samaria was Philip. Like Stephen, Philip was a servant who cared for the needs of others. He was also someone who, through the Spirit's power, performed amazing miracles and preached great sermons. He preached "the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans" (8:25), and many people believed and were baptized. He also went on a special mission to take the word to one special man from Africa.

TELL THE STORY

Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the
Bible passage
together



Read from
*The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook*



Play *The
Biggest Story*
video

TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

Big Truth
God calls his
people to teach the
gospel to everyone
everywhere.

In the Biggest Story, God sometimes speaks directly to people or speaks to them through an angel. You might remember when God spoke to Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Samuel, Hannah, Jeremiah, Mary, or Joseph. This doesn't happen a lot, so when it does happen it is a big deal. One day God spoke to Philip: "Get up and go to the road that goes down from Jerusalem through the desert to Gaza" (see Acts 8:26). Philip obeyed. Soon after, he saw a cloud of smoke in the dry desert. It was a chariot. Philip—with super Spirit-power speed—ran to it. He heard a man reading the book of Isaiah. The man was from Ethiopia in Africa, and he served in the court of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. The Ethiopian was in Jerusalem to worship the Lord, and he was reading the Bible because he wanted to learn more about the God he worshiped. (Always a good thing to do!) Philip asked him, "Do you understand what you are reading?" The man said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" (8:30–31). Philip joined him in the chariot, and as he sat next to him, he explained how Isaiah's words about a sheep "led to the slaughter" (Isa. 53:7) point to Jesus, the Lamb of God,



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who suffered and died for our sins. He also must have taught him that those who believe in Jesus should be baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit, because just then the Ethiopian saw some water and said, “Look—water! I should be baptized.” The chariot stopped. The two men “went down into the water” and Philip “baptized him” (Acts 8:38).

When Philip preached in the city of Samaria, the Bible says that “there was much joy in that city” (8:8). Imagine how happy the Ethiopian was when he also heard and understood the good news! Indeed, the story ends by saying that the Ethiopian “went on his way rejoicing” (8:39). What a joy it is to know the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world!

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher.
{5 minutes}

The Ethiopian man was reading from Isaiah 53, which is the same passage from last story’s Gospel Connection. (It must be an important passage!) We learned there that Jesus’s rejection is our salvation. What good news! The Bible tells us that this good news was entrusted to people who lived many years ago in a place that’s many miles away—have you ever considered how you know about it now?

God wants everyone everywhere to know about him and what he’s done. Jesus told his disciples to take the good news “to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Way before that, God told Isaiah to tell people that anyone in the world can be saved if they “join themselves to the LORD” (Isa. 56:6). But how would the whole world learn about this? Would God speak audibly to everyone? Actually, no. God told *Isaiah* to tell the world. And God told *Philip* to tell the man from Africa. God’s calls his people to teach the Bible to others!

That you know the gospel means God is accomplishing his plan, which he always does! It also means someone answered God’s call to teach the Bible, which we don’t always do. Praise the Lord for his plan, and pray for his strength in answering the call to share the gospel with everyone everywhere.

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

- 1. QUESTION:** Do you ever find the Bible hard to understand? Who helps you understand it?

3

Engage

Memory Verse
All Scripture is
breathed out by
God and profitable
for teaching,
for reproof, for
correction, and
for training in
righteousness, that
the man of God
may be complete,
equipped for every
good work.

2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17

TAKEAWAY: God sends people to teach and preach the Bible so we can understand it.

2. **QUESTION:** What was the man reading about in Isaiah that he found confusing? How did Philip explain who the Lamb was to him?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus is the Lamb of God, who suffered for our sins on the cross.

3. **QUESTION:** What did Christians do after Stephen was stoned and people were being thrown in prison? How did God use this persecution to spread the gospel?

TAKEAWAY: When Christians had to flee persecution, God used it to spread the gospel to new places.

4. **QUESTION:** What are some examples you can think of where God used something bad to accomplish something good? In Jesus's life? In our story today? In your own life?

TAKEAWAY: God's wise plan often uses something bad to accomplish something good.

ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from *TheBiggestStory.com*, or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Four Corners

Supply List: paper, marker, tape

Before Class: Using supplies listed, label the four walls in your room as north, south, east, and west.

Select one child to stand in the middle of the room with eyes closed. Give remaining children thirty seconds to choose one wall to stand by. Have the child in the middle call out one of the four walls. Any children who chose that wall are out. Play continues until one person remains. Remind children that when Philip obeyed the Lord and traveled south, he had the joy of sharing the gospel with an Ethiopian man.



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Option 2: Pass It On

Supply List: ping-pong balls (ten per team), buckets (two per team), spoons (one per child)

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Divide children into teams of eight to ten, and have them stand single file. Place a bucket filled with ten ping-pong balls at the front of each line and an empty bucket at the end of each line. Give each child a spoon. On “Go” the first person on each team uses his spoon to scoop a ball out of the bucket and pass it spoon-to-spoon to the next player in line. Have children continue passing the ball down the line. When it reaches the last child, have her drop the ball into the empty bucket. As soon as the first ball is passed to the second player, another ball can be scooped from the bucket. If a ball falls, everyone must stop passing balls until the dropped ball is back on a spoon. The first team to get all ten balls into their bucket wins. Remind children that Philip passed on the message of Jesus and we can too!

3rd–5th

Option 1: Four Corners

Supply List: paper, marker, tape

Before Class: Using supplies listed, label the four walls in your room as north, south, east, and west.

Select one child to stand in the middle of the room with eyes closed. Give remaining children thirty seconds to choose one wall to stand by. Have the child in the middle call out one of the four walls. Any children who chose that wall are out. Play continues until one person remains. Remind children that when Philip obeyed the Lord and traveled south, he had the joy of sharing the gospel with an Ethiopian man.

Option 2: Four-Corner Dodgeball

Supply List: masking tape, dodgeballs

Before Class: Gather supplies. Use tape to divide room into four equal sections.

Divide children into four teams, and have each team stand in one section. Assign each team the name of a country from different continents. Give each team an equal number of dodgeballs. On “Go” have each team throw balls at the opposing

teams. If someone is hit by a ball, he must join the team that hit him. If someone catches a ball, the person who threw it must go to the catcher's team. The team with the most players after a set time wins. Tell children we can share the gospel wherever God sends us—in every corner of the world!

CRAFTS

Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: God's Word Bookmark

Supply List: cardstock, cardboard, ribbon, colored pencils, markers, scissors, glue, black construction paper

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, print a bookmark shape (one per child). On cardboard, make templates of an open Bible (small enough to fit on the bookmark). Cut pieces of ribbon slightly longer than the length of the Bible. Make a sample craft.

Place prepared and remaining supplies on tables. Children first write the Big Truth on a bookmark, decorate it, and cut it out. Then they trace the Bible template on black construction paper, cut it out, and glue it to the bookmark. Lastly, they glue a ribbon down the middle of the Bible.

Option 2: Wordless Reminders

Supply List: envelopes (one per child), construction paper (black, red, white, green, yellow), colored pencils, scissors

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut each color of construction paper into 4" x 5" rectangles. Place one rectangle of each color in an envelope (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child a prepared envelope, colored pencils, and scissors. The children then draw and cut out the following shapes using the enclosed rectangles: a heart (black paper, representing our sinful hearts without Jesus), a cross (red paper, representing the blood Jesus shed in our place), another heart (white paper, representing our sin forgiven), a leaf (green paper, representing growing

in Jesus), and a crown (gold paper, representing eternal life). Encourage children to use the envelope to share the gospel with someone.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Wordless Reminders

Supply List: envelopes (one per child), construction paper (black, red, white, green, yellow), colored pencils, scissors

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut each color of construction paper into 4" x 5" rectangles. Place one rectangle of each color in an envelope (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child a prepared envelope, colored pencils, and scissors. The children then draw and cut out the following shapes using the enclosed rectangles: a heart (black paper, representing our sinful hearts without Jesus), a cross (red paper, representing the blood Jesus shed in our place), another heart (white paper, representing our sin forgiven), a leaf (green paper, representing growing in Jesus), and a crown (gold paper, representing eternal life). Encourage children to use the envelope to share the gospel with someone.

Option 2: Scroll

Supply List: cardstock, paper, tea bags (one per child), water, scissors, glue, straws (two per child)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut white cardstock into 4" x 12" strips (one per child). Make copies of Memory Verse (one per child). Make a sample craft. Soak tea bags in water.

Place paper strips, copies, soaked tea bags, and remaining supplies on tables. Children cut out the Memory Verse and glue it to the center of a paper strip. Next, they glue one straw lengthwise to each end of the strip. Instruct them to dab their tea bag on the “scroll” to make it look old. When the scroll is dry, have children gently roll both straws toward the middle. Remind children that Philip taught God’s word to the Ethiopian man.



Visit TheBiggestStory.com for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.



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STORY 91

Saul Sees the Light

ACTS 9

BEFORE THE LESSON

- *Read Acts 9.*
- *Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is what he has done, and how they should respond to him.*
- *Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.*

1

Read

THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}

2

Teach

Saul was a really bad guy who thought he was really good. He thought he was good because he was stopping the church from talking about Jesus (who, Paul thought, was against the God he worshiped). So the Bible tells us that he was seeking to destroy the church by barging into houses, arresting any Christians he found, and dragging them off to prison. Worse than that, he was out to kill Christians. In fact, when Stephen was stoned, Saul was there and he approved of the whole thing. How awful! What is more awful (or just as awful) is what he wanted to do next. Because he was “still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, [he] went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way [a name for Christians], men or women, he might bring them [150 miles!] bound

to Jerusalem” (Acts 9:1–2). Here Saul is described like a raging bull—with eyes aflame and smoke coming out of his nose—ready to charge! In “raging fury,” he later confessed, he persecuted God’s people and sentenced many “to death” (26:9–11). What a merciless murderer on a merciless mission. Who will put a stop to him? And how?

TELL THE STORY

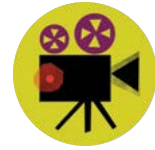
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the
Bible passage
together



Read from
The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook



Play *The*
Biggest Story
video

TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

Big Truth
Christ Jesus
came into the
world to save
sinners.

Jesus put a stop to Saul’s merciless mission! How? By showing him mercy. As Saul was on the road to Damascus, “suddenly a light from heaven shone around him” (Acts 9:3). The light was so bright that Saul fell to the ground. And as he looked up, he “heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’” (9:4). Saul had no idea who was talking, so he asked, “Who are you?” (9:5). If the sudden bright light wasn’t surprising enough, what he heard next must have blown his sandals off. The voice said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.” Wow! Do you know what that meant? It meant that Jesus was alive! It meant that Jesus was part of his church and feels his people’s pain. It meant that Saul was dead wrong.

Before Saul could say anything, Jesus gave a command to go into the city. Now this was tricky because God’s bright light had blinded Saul. So he had to be led there. Also, as a way of saying sorry for all he had done, Saul fasted from food and drink. As Saul was waiting to hear from the Lord, God spoke to a man named Ananias (not the guy who died because he lied). He told this other Ananias where to find Saul. His job was to “lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight” (9:12). Ananias was afraid. “Lord,” he said, “he is a bad man



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who has come to persecute your people.” God assured him that Saul was now a different man. Well, he was the same man, but he now had a new heart. He also had a new mission. Instead of persecuting the church, he would preach the gospel. As Ananias touched Saul, Saul regained his sight, was filled with the Spirit, and was baptized. (Oh and he also had something to eat.) Once his strength returned, do you know what he did? He immediately preached that Jesus is the Son of God (see v. 20). Wow! If God can save Saul, he can save anyone!

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher.
{5 minutes}

How did Saul become a Christian? Jesus himself met him and saved him. Saul received the Holy Spirit and was baptized. He was also given the special job of preaching the gospel. He went from persecutor to preacher.

Do you think that someone as bad as Saul can become a Christian even today? Of course! God’s grace knows no limits. God can, and does, call greedy tax collectors (like Zacchaeus), the demon possessed (like the crazy man of the cemetery), and merciless murderers (like Saul). Saul also went by Paul. In Paul’s many letters, he wrote about his life before and after his Damascus road experience. Before he encountered Jesus he was “a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent” (1 Tim 1:13), someone who “persecuted the church violently and tried to destroy it” (Gal. 1:13). Jesus saved Saul to show how patient and loving a Savior he is. No one is too bad to be saved. Anyone who confesses that he is sinner (however big or small the sins), asks for forgiveness, and believes that the Snake Crusher died for him can be saved. That’s what’s so great about the gospel. Paul put it this way: “The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost” (1 Tim. 1:15).

This gospel is great news worth sharing with the whole world, no matter how far people seem from God!

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

- 1. QUESTION:** Who was Saul throwing into prison? Who did Jesus say that Saul was persecuting? How was Saul persecuting Jesus?

3

Engage

TAKEAWAY: When Christians are persecuted, Jesus is persecuted too.

Memory Verse

The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.

1 TIMOTHY 1:15

2. **QUESTION:** Why did Jesus come to Saul on the road to Damascus? What special job did God call Saul to do? What things in the story showed that this was all part of God's plan?

TAKEAWAY: Saul was chosen by God to take Jesus to Jews, Gentiles, and the kings of the earth.

3. **QUESTION:** What changed about Saul after he met Jesus?

TAKEAWAY: Saul was given a new heart to follow Jesus.

4. **QUESTION:** Is there anyone too bad to be saved?

TAKEAWAY: No one is too bad to be saved by God.

ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from *TheBiggestStory.com*, or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Saul, Saul

Supply List: blindfold

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Choose one child to be “Saul.” Put the blindfold on Saul, and have remaining children scatter. When Saul calls out “Saul, Saul,” have the scattered children freeze and repeatedly reply “Saul, Saul.” Saul then has 10 seconds to try to touch someone by following the voices. If Saul tags someone, that person becomes the new Saul. If no one is tagged after 10 seconds, the children can move again and the process repeats. Remind children that God called out to Saul and saved him.



Option 2: Opposite Game

Supply List: none

Have children spread out in a line facing the leader. When the leader calls out an action (“up,” “down,” “stop,” or “go”), children should do the opposite (for “up” touch the floor, for “down” reach arms up, for “stop” run in place, and for “go” freeze). If a child does not do the correct opposite action, he or she is out. Remind children that when God changed Saul’s heart, he was completely opposite from his former self.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Blindfold Walk

Supply List: blindfold, items for obstacle course (chairs, cones, etc.)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make a simple obstacle course—you may want to change it each time there is a new child.

Have each child find a partner. The children will complete the obstacle course one pair at a time. To begin, blindfold one child. Have the other child lead his blindfolded partner through the obstacle course by giving clear directions. (He may not touch his partner.) Record how long it takes each pair to complete the course. The pair with the fastest time wins. Remind children that when Saul encountered Jesus, he was temporarily blinded.

Option 2: Carry My Name

Supply List: cardstock, scissors

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut out bubble letters of the name JESUS (one set per team). Place sets of JESUS letters on one side of the room.

Divide children into teams of five, and have them line up across from a set of letters. On “Go” the first child on each team must crawl to her letters, balance one on her head, and crawl back to her team without letting it fall. (She must stop and replace the letter if it drops.) The next child in line repeats the process. When all letters have been collected, the team must put them in order and yell “Jesus!” The first team to yell “Jesus!” wins. Remind children that Jesus said Saul would carry his name to both Jews and Gentiles.

CRAFTS

Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Shine!

Supply List: construction paper, specialty paper in a variety of colors and textures, scissors, glue, markers

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make a sample craft.

Place supplies on tables. Children first choose a specialty paper to use as the center of their sun. Have them cut it into a circle and glue it to a piece of construction paper. Instruct children to make sunrays by ripping strips from a variety of specialty papers and gluing each one around their circle. Have the children write *Shine!* on the paper with markers. Remind children that when Saul was saved, he started to shine brightly for Jesus.

Option 2: From Persecutor to Preacher

Supply List: cardstock, craft sticks (one per child), scissors, crayons, glue

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, print an outline of a man's head without facial features (two per child). Make a sample craft.

Place copies and remaining supplies on tables. Have children cut out two heads. On one head, children should draw angry facial features. On the second, they can draw happy facial features. Instruct children to glue one face to each side of a craft stick. Have them write “Saul the Persecutor” on the stick showing the angry face and “Saul the Preacher” on the stick showing the happy face. Remind children that when Saul met Jesus, he was totally changed.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Night Light

Supply List: paper plates (two per child), foam cups, toothpicks, paint, paintbrushes, battery-operated tea lights



Before Class: Gather supplies. Place paint on paper plates (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child a foam cup and toothpick. Have children poke holes in the cup with the toothpick to make designs. Next, give children a paper plate with paint. Have them place their cup on the plate and paint the entire cup. When they are done painting, give them a clean paper plate with a battery-operated tea light on it. Have them set their cup upside down on top of the light. Explain that when they turn the light on in a dark room, the light will shine through the holes and create designs on the wall and ceiling. Remind children that God used a bright light to get Saul's attention before changing his life.

Option 2: Changed and Beautiful!

Supply List: spring clothespins (one per child), magnets (one per child), glue, pipe cleaners, beads, paint, paintbrushes, paper plates

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut pipe cleaners in half (one half per child). Place a small amount of paint on paper plates (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child a clothespin, a magnet, two 12-inch pipe cleaners, and one 6-inch pipe cleaner. Set paint, glue, and an assortment of beads on tables. Have children glue the magnet to the back of the clothespin and then paint the clothespin. While the paint is drying, children will string about thirty-five beads onto their 12-inch pipe cleaners (leave 1 inch of pipe cleaner unbeaded on both ends). Children first twist the ends of each pipe cleaner together to form circles and then twist each circle to make a figure eight shape, forming two sets of wings. Finally, they can open the clothespin, insert the wings, and shape to look like butterfly wings. Have them bend the 6-inch pipe cleaner in half to make butterfly antenna and glue to the top of the clothespin. Remind children that just as a caterpillar is transformed into a butterfly, Jesus transformed Saul from a sinner to a Jesus follower.



Visit TheBiggestStory.com for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.



STORY 92

Peter Eats and a Soldier Believes

ACTS 10

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Acts 10.
- *Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is what he has done, and how they should respond to him.*
- *Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.*



THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}



When Saul became a Christian, it was a big deal. A really big deal! It was so big that he talked about it many times in his letters to churches, and the story is retold three times in the book of Acts. But there's another story that was really important in Christian history, especially the earliest days, about another man who became a Christian. The book of Acts uses two whole chapters to tell and retell his story. In some ways it is the same story as Saul's: God's grace reached down and saved someone. But in other ways the two stories are worlds apart. Both men prayed to the God of Israel. Both men wanted to know and follow God's ways. But Saul was a Jew from the tribe of Benjamin and a very serious Pharisee.

And before Jesus saved him from his sins, he persecuted Christians and was on a terrible mission to destroy Christianity. The other man was different in a lot of ways! Do you want to learn about him and how God saved him? Listen up!

TELL THE STORY

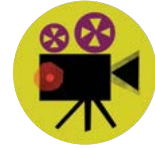
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the
Bible passage
together



Read from
*The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook*



Play *The
Biggest Story*
video

TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

Big Truth
The good news
about Jesus is
for both Jews
and Gentiles.

Cornelius was a Gentile. More than that, he was a Roman. Oh, and he was also a military commander. The Jews were supposed to stay away from Gentiles—and the Romans were foreign invaders who ruled over the Jews. So was God’s gospel for someone like Cornelius? It was an important question. At first Peter thought the good news about Jesus was especially for Jews. But God did something to change Peter’s thinking.

One afternoon, Cornelius had a vision in which an angel told him that he had favor with God and that he should talk to Peter, who was with a man who lived by the sea named Simon. The very next day Peter also had a vision. His vision showed him various animals that were unclean for Jews to eat, but God told Peter three times that these animals were now clean. This means it would be okay to enter a Gentile’s house and eat with him. As you can tell, these two visions were God’s way of moving the two men to meet each other. When they finally met, Peter preached the gospel. And do you know what happened? While Peter was speaking about Jesus’s life, death, and resurrection, “the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word” (Acts 10:44). The Gentiles (Cornelius and his household) immediately repented, believed, and were baptized!

Man’s rebellion against God led to the nations being driven apart from one another (see Gen. 11:1–9). But when God sent the Snake Crusher, he brought the

nations back together. Jews and Gentiles could become a new kingdom, with the Snake Crusher as their King.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher.
{5 minutes}

Out of all the nations God called Israel to be his chosen people. They weren't chosen because they were the biggest group—or the richest, strongest, or best looking. God chose them to show his great mercy. And although he chose to save Israel, God's calling of Abraham showed he had a bigger plan in mind, one that was always God's plan A and that he would reveal more fully over time. He promised Abraham that *all the nations* would be blessed through him and his offspring (see Gen. 12:1–3). We see this plan unfolding throughout the Old Testament: people from other nations (Gentiles) believe the word of the Lord (e.g., Rahab, Ruth, and the Ninevites) and experience God's blessings and salvation. We see it more clearly in the New Testament: with the coming of Jesus, the promised King of the Jews, an open invitation was extended to both Jews and Gentiles to receive all God's blessings *through faith in Jesus*. Through these stories we learn that God's grace knows no limits. Even the worst of sinners, like Saul, can be saved; even Roman soldiers, like Cornelius, can be saved. The wideness of God's mercy includes all people from all nations—whoever trusts in Jesus!

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. **QUESTION:** Who was Cornelius? Why did God send visions to Cornelius and Peter? What did they see in those visions? What did God want Peter to see clearly?

TAKEAWAY: God used visions to make clear that Gentiles were now clean.

2. **QUESTION:** What happened when Peter preached about Jesus to Cornelius? What does the Holy Spirit falling on Cornelius tell us about whom the gospel is for?

TAKEAWAY: The good news about Jesus is for both Jews and Gentiles.



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3

Engage

3. **QUESTION:** Why is it so important that Cornelius, a Gentile, could be part of God's kingdom? Why is it so important that Peter (a Jew) and Cornelius could share a meal together?

TAKEAWAY: Cornelius's story shows that Jews and Gentiles can eat as one people in God's kingdom.

ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from *TheBiggestStory.com*, or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Memory Verse

I am not ashamed
of the gospel, for
it is the power of
God for salvation
to everyone who
believes, to the
Jew first and also
to the Greek.

ROMANS 1:16

Option 1: Jew, Gentile, Jesus!

Supply List: masking tape

Before Class: Gather supplies. Using masking tape, make a line long enough for all the children to stand on it without being crowded.

Have children stand on the line. If the leader calls out “Jew,” have them jump to the right. If the leader calls out “Gentile,” have them jump to the left. If the leader calls out “Jesus,” have them jump onto the line. If a child does not jump the correct direction, he or she is out. Continue play until one child remains. Remind children that Jesus came to bring salvation to both the Jews *and* the Gentiles.

Option 2: Stuffed Animal Relay

Supply List: stuffed animals

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Divide children into teams, and have them line up. Place equal piles of stuffed animals a good distance away from each team's starting line. On “Go” have the first child on each team run to her pile, grab a stuffed animal, place it between her knees, and run back to her team. The next player repeats the process. If at any point the stuffed animal falls, the child must stop and replace it before continuing. The first team to retrieve all their stuffed animals wins. Remind children that in Peter's vision, a large sheet was coming down from heaven that contained different animals the Jewish people considered unclean.



Option 1: Jews and Gentiles

Supply List: masking tape, two plastic toy hoops, balls (in two different colors)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Using masking tape, divide the room into two sections. Place a hoop on the far end of each section and place five balls of the same color in each hoop (i.e., five red on one side, five blue on the other side).

Divide class into two teams (“Jews” and “Gentiles”), and assign teams a side. On “Go” have both teams try to steal balls one at a time from the other team. If a child retrieves a ball, he must run it back to his team’s hoop without being tagged by the opposing team. If he is tagged, the ball is returned and the child is out. The first team to steal all the opposing team’s balls and place them in their team’s hoop wins. Remind children that Jews and Gentiles were different, but that Jesus brings them together.

Option 2: Jew, Gentile, Jesus!

Supply List: masking tape

Before Class: Gather supplies. Using masking tape, make a line long enough for all the children to stand on it without being crowded.

Have children stand on the line. If the leader calls out “Jew,” have them jump to the right. If the leader calls out “Gentile,” have them jump to the left. If the leader calls out “Jesus,” have them jump onto the line. If a child does not jump the correct direction, he or she is out. Continue play until one child remains. Remind children that Jesus came to bring salvation to both the Jews *and* the Gentiles.

CRAFTS

Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}

Option 1: “Loved by God” Mirror

Supply List: cardstock, aluminum foil, paper plates, jewels, sequins, scissors, glue, crayons

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, print the outline of a hand mirror (one per child). Cut aluminum foil into oval shapes that will fit the mirror portion of the hand mirror. Place an assortment of jewels and sequins on paper plates. Make a sample craft.

Set hand mirror copies, aluminum foil ovals, paper plates, and remaining supplies on tables. Have children cut out a hand mirror and glue a piece of foil to the center of the face of the mirror. They can glue jewels and sequins around the outside of the foil. On the handle, children write “Loved by God.” Remind children that *all* people are loved by God!

Option 2: One in Jesus

Supply List: cardstock, colored copy paper, scissors, colored pencils, staplers

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, print the Big Truth in bubble letters (one per child). On colored copy paper, print the words Jew, Gentile, and Jesus, and cut into strips with one word per strip. Make a sample craft.

Set Big Truth copies, paper strips, and remaining supplies on tables. Instruct children to interlock and staple the strips of paper together to form a paper chain that includes the words *Jew*, *Gentile*, and *Jesus* a few times each. Children then can color the Big Truth paper and staple their chain around the perimeter of the paper. Remind children that Jesus brought salvation to all people.

3rd–5th

Option 1: “Loved by God” Mirror

Supply List: cardstock, aluminum foil, paper plates, jewels, sequins, scissors, glue, crayons

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, print the outline of a hand mirror (one per child). Cut aluminum foil into oval shapes that will fit the mirror portion of the hand mirror. Place an assortment of jewels and sequins on paper plates. Make a sample craft.



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Supply List: cardstock, colored copy paper, scissors, colored pencils, staplers

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, print the Big Truth in bubble letters (one per child). On colored copy paper, print the words Jew, Gentile, and Jesus, and cut into strips with one word per strip. Make a sample craft.

Set Big Truth copies, paper strips, and remaining supplies on tables. Instruct children to interlock and staple the strips of paper together to form a paper chain that includes the words *Jew*, *Gentile*, and *Jesus* a few times each. Children then can color the Big Truth paper and staple their chain around the perimeter of the paper. Remind children that Jesus brought salvation to all people.



Visit TheBiggestStory.com for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.



STORY 93

Knock Knock, Who's There?

ACTS 12

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Acts 12.
- *Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is what he has done, and how they should respond to him.*
- *Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.*



THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}



There are lots of make-believe enemies. Lex Luthor is Superman's enemy, and the Joker is Batman's enemy. In the Biggest (and truest!) Story, God's people are always up against enemies. The first and worst is Satan, who throughout history bites at the church's heels and who sought to devour Adam and Eve whole. Then there were the Egyptians. Remember Pharoah who made the Israelites slaves and chased them down to the Red Sea? The Canaanites, Philistines, Babylonians, and Assyrians also did terrible things to God's people and tried to destroy them and their worship of the Lord. How successful were they? Not very successful! In the end the living God still lives! And the Canaanites, Philistines,

Babylonians, and Assyrians (and their false, dead gods) aren't around anymore. No one today sacrifices to Baal or bows down before King Darius.

Besides those enemies, sometimes the Israelites themselves persecuted God's people. This happened a lot in the days of the prophets. It also happened in Jesus's day: the Jews (his own people), with the help of the Romans, killed him. King Herod, who liked to call himself "the King of the Jews," also persecuted the early church, which was made up of both Jews and Gentiles. Today we'll hear how Herod persecuted God's people and what God did about it!

TELL THE STORY

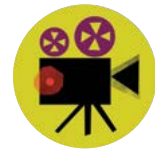
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the
Bible passage
together



Read from
*The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook*



Play *The
Biggest Story*
video

TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

Big Truth
We pray to a
God who can
rescue his people
from evil.

Peter found himself stuck in a prison cell—with no way out. King Herod was laying his "violent hands on some who belonged to the church" (Acts 12:1). He had already killed James, John's brother. And now he had "seized" Peter and "put him in prison," enlisting "four squads of soldiers to guard him" (12:4). He made sure there would be no escape.

But King Herod didn't count on who he was up against: Peter's heavenly Father. The Bible says that "earnest prayer for [Peter] was made . . . by the church" (12:5), and God heard those prayers. Peter was asleep in prison, bound in chains between two guards. Suddenly, a light shone in the cell, his chains fell off, and an angel told Peter to get up and follow him. Peter escaped! But Peter thought it was all just a vision. It wasn't until he walked past all the guards and the iron gate out of the city opened *by itself* that he knew that God rescued him: "Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod" (12:11).

Peter went to the house where the church was praying for Peter to be freed. He knocked on the door. A girl named Rhoda saw Peter, but she didn't open the



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door. She was so excited, she forgot! She just ran to tell everyone that Peter was free. They said, “You’re crazy. It must be a dream.” Peter kept knocking until they finally saw him and let him in. They were amazed. Even though God had done exactly what they were asking him to do, they found it hard to believe. They barely believed God could answer their prayers, but that didn’t stop God from answering them.

The next day, Herod couldn’t find Peter anywhere. So he punished the prison guards by killing them. Soon after, God struck down the proud king. And so Peter lived to preach another day, because God rescued him from the wicked king. And “the word of God increased and multiplied” (12:24), which is another way to say that the church kept growing and growing.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher.
{5 minutes}

There are lots of rescue stories in the Bible. As we just learned, God rescued Peter from Herod’s violent hand. God also rescued King Saul and his soldiers from the giant Goliath, Daniel from the lion’s den, and Jeremiah from the well he was thrown into. Those are big rescues, and they point to the bigger rescues of God’s people in the Bible—like when God rescued the Israelites from Pharaoh and his army at the Red Sea, or when he stopped the evil Haman from wiping out all the Jews in the time of Queen Esther. The biggest rescue in the Biggest Story, however, was when the Snake Crusher crushed Satan on the cross.

God continues today to rescue his people in big and small ways, and one day soon, Jesus will come again and “rescue [us] from every evil deed and bring [us] safely into his heavenly kingdom” (2 Tim. 4:18). As we wait for Jesus to return, let’s turn away from worshiping any idols or false gods and turn to “the living and true God” (1 Thess. 1:9), the only God worthy of our worship. When we cry out to him in prayer, he rescues us from our sin.

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

- 1. QUESTION:** How did Satan try to stop Jesus from rescuing God’s people? When Jesus rose again, did Satan stop attacking God’s people? How did Satan try to stop Peter from preaching about Jesus? Who rescued Peter from prison?

3

Engage

TAKEAWAY: Satan is still seeking to attack the church, but God will rescue them.

Memory Verse

The Lord will
rescue me from
every evil deed and
bring me safely
into his heavenly
kingdom. To
him be the glory
forever and ever.

Amen.

2 TIMOTHY 4:18

2. **QUESTION:** When the church learned that Peter was in prison, what did they do? What did God do in answer to their prayers?

TAKEAWAY: God rescued Peter through the church's prayers.

3. **QUESTION:** What happened to the word of God after Peter was rescued from prison? And what happened to the church? Can God's word or the church be stopped by Satan?

TAKEAWAY: With God's Spirit at work and God's people at prayer, the word keeps going and the church keeps growing.

4. **QUESTION:** What are some other stories of rescue in the Bible? What is the biggest rescue in the Biggest Story? Who was rescued by Jesus at the cross?

TAKEAWAY: When Jesus crushed Satan on the cross, everyone who trusts in Jesus was rescued from sin and death.

ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from *TheBiggestStory.com*, or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Bound in Chains

Supply List: construction paper, scissors, stapler

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut 2-inch strips of construction paper (long enough to comfortably fit around a child's ankle).

Divide children into pairs. Staple paper chains together so there is one chain around each child's ankle and one chain between the pair of children. On "Go" all pairs walk together to the other side of the room and back without breaking the chains. If a pair's chain breaks, they must return to the start line and run in place until all the groups complete the race. Remind children that Peter was chained to two guards but was still freed—God can do anything!



Option 2: Paper Airplane Prayers

Supply List: paper, pencils

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Divide children into relay teams of four to five children. Assign an adult leader to each team, and give leaders a piece of paper and pencil. Have children share prayer requests while the leader writes the requests on the paper. The teams then make the prayer request paper into a paper airplane. Have teams line up single file. On “Go” the first person on each team throws his team’s airplane until it reaches the other side of the room. Then he throws the airplane back to the start, so the next person in line can repeat the process. The first team to have all team members complete the race wins. Remind children that we can bring our prayer requests to God.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Prison Ball

Supply List: soft dodgeballs, masking tape

Before Class: Gather supplies. Use masking tape to divide the room in half and to create a designated “prison” on each side.

Divide children into two teams, and assign each team to one side of the room. Place dodgeballs on the dividing line. Begin a game of dodgeball. If a child is hit waist-down by a ball, she must go to the opposing team’s prison. If a child catches a ball, the person who threw the ball must go to the opposing team’s prison. If a prisoner has a ball rolled or thrown to him, he can try to hit someone who is still in the game. If he is successful in hitting someone, he is released from prison and gets a free walk back to his team’s side. The team with the least number of children in prison after a designated time wins. Remind children that followers of Jesus (like Peter) were put in prison and persecuted for their faith in Jesus.

Option 2: Bound in Chains

Supply List: construction paper, scissors, stapler

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut 2-inch strips of construction paper (long enough to comfortably fit around a child’s ankle).

Divide children into pairs. Staple paper chains together so there is one chain around each child's ankle and one chain between the pair of children. On "Go" all pairs walk together to the other side of the room and back without breaking the chains. If a pair's chain breaks, they must return to the start line and run in place until all the groups complete the race. Remind children that Peter was chained to two guards but was still freed—God can do anything!

CRAFTS

Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Pray Every Day

Supply List: cardstock, construction paper, scissors, glue sticks, crayons, stapler

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, make copies of praying hands with the Memory Verse at the top. Cut 1-inch strips of construction paper (thirty per child). Make a sample craft.

Give children a praying hand paper. Place strips and remaining supplies on tables. Children color and cut out the praying hands, and they make a chain of thirty rings using the strips of paper and glue stick. Help children staple the chain to the bottom of their praying hands. Challenge children to use the craft to remind them to pray every day for thirty days, explaining that each day they pray they should take a link off the chain.

Option 2: "Nothing Is Impossible with God" Prison

Supply List: cardstock, copy paper, colored pencils, scissors, glue, craft sticks

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut pieces of cardstock into 4½-inch squares. Print "Nothing is impossible with God" on paper and cut into strips.

Set precut squares, word strips, and remaining supplies on tables. Children first draw a picture of Peter and an angel on the cardstock. Then they glue craft sticks to make a frame around the cardstock, and they glue more sticks over the

pictures of Peter and the angel (forming a jail). Add the “Nothing is impossible with God” strip to the bottom of the picture. Remind children that we shouldn’t be surprised when God answers our prayers, because he can do anything!

3rd–5th

Option 1: Pray Every Day

Supply List: cardstock, construction paper, scissors, glue sticks, crayons, stapler

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, make copies of praying hands with the Memory Verse at the top. Cut 1-inch strips of construction paper (thirty per child). Make a sample craft.

Give children a praying hand paper. Place strips and remaining supplies on tables. Children color and cut out the praying hands, and they make a chain of thirty rings using the strips of paper and glue stick. Help children staple the chain to the bottom of their praying hands. Challenge children to use the craft to remind them to pray every day for thirty days, explaining that each day they pray they should take a link off the chain.

Option 2: Prayer Wreath

Supply List: string, paper plates, hole punch, scissors, different shades of green construction paper, glue sticks, markers

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut 6-inch pieces of string, punch a hole in the top of each plate, and tie the string through the hole. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a paper plate. Place remaining supplies on tables. Have children cut out the inside of the plate to make a wreath shape. Children then use the green construction paper to cut out enough green leaves to cover the wreath. Before gluing the leaves to the plate, the children write something they can pray for on at least five leaves. Children continue to draw and cut out flowers to add to the wreath as time allows.



Visit TheBiggestStory.com for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.



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STORY 94

Paul, Purple Goods, and a Prison Quake

ACTS 16

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Acts 16.
- *Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is what he has done, and how they should respond to him.*
- *Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.*



THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}



Have you ever seen a lifeguard jump into a pool to save a drowning child, or a fireman run into a burning building to save a family? Or, have you heard the story about how NASA scientists saved the Apollo 13 spaceship from total destruction? With amazing skills the scientists found a way to get the astronauts (who were 200,000 miles away from earth!) safely home.

Rescue stories are awesome! The Bible is filled with awesome rescue stories. In the last lesson we heard how God rescued Peter from Herod, just like he saved Daniel from the lions and Israel from the Egyptians. (And, of course, we reminded ourselves of the biggest rescue in the Biggest Story—when the Snake

Crusher crushed Satan on the cross.) When God rescued Peter from prison, the guards who were supposed to be guarding him ended up in big trouble. When Herod discovered Peter was missing, he had all the guards killed!

Today's lesson is about another God-powered prison break. But this time, something wonderful will happen to the jailer. Let's listen to what happens to him after a giant earthquake makes the prison doors open and the prisoner's chains break.

TELL THE STORY

Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the
Bible passage
together



Read from
*The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook*



Play *The
Biggest Story*
video

TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

God called Paul to preach the gospel to the people in Philippi (which sounds like “Fill up pie!” and rhymes with “Silly Tie”). There Paul preached Jesus, and by God's power Lydia came to faith: “The Lord opened her heart to pay attention” (Acts 16:14). She was so excited by the gospel that she believed, was baptized, and invited the apostles to her house.

But God didn't just rescue wealthy women. While they were in Philippi, a slave girl with demonic powers (who knew things others didn't) was also rescued. After days of following Paul and crying out, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation” (16:17), Paul cast out her demon: “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her” (16:18). The demon immediately left her, which was great for her, but bad for her owners. She no longer made them lots of money with her demonic powers. “No demon, no money, no good,” her slave masters thought. They were so mad that they had Paul and Silas captured, stripped, beaten, and thrown into prison. The jailer was ordered to make sure they wouldn't escape, so he put them in the

Big Truth
If we believe in
Jesus, we will
be saved!



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middle cell and chained their feet between heavy blocks of wood. They were cold (without clothing), injured (from the beatings), and likely scared (it was dark). So what did they do? Lose hope? No! They prayed and sang psalms. Wow! (This is something *you* can do if you're ever feeling alone or scared.) Then around midnight, as their prayers and songs filled the prison, "suddenly there was a great earthquake," and "the foundations of the prison were shaken" (16:26). As the floor started to crack, the cell doors opened and the chains snapped. All the prisoners were freed! Double wow!

When the jailer saw this, he drew his sword. He was going to kill himself because he figured the warden would kill him when the prisoners escaped. Paul cried out just in time, "No, don't! We're all here." The jailer rushed to see. Sure enough, Paul and the others were there. The man trembled with fear (because he now knew how powerful Paul's God was). He fell before Paul and asked, "What must I do to be saved?" (16:30). Paul said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your whole family" (see 16:31). Sure enough, he and his family believed and were baptized. Triple wow! Everyone rejoiced in God's remarkable rescue.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher.
{5 minutes}

In God's kingdom to come everything will be perfect and no one will need to be rescued. But right now, there is a lot we need to be rescued from. The slave girl needed to be rescued from a demon, Paul needed to be rescued from prison, and the jailer needed to be rescued from sin and death. Only God can bring true rescue to you through Jesus. You might face evil forces, unfair punishment, or the pain that sin and death bring while you live now. But one day, if you believe in the Lord Jesus, you will be saved from all these things and live forever in God's perfect kingdom. Although not everyone will be rescued from prison, God's rescue of the jailer and his family, Lydia and her family, and the slave girl can happen to anyone anywhere. With the Spirit's power the chains of sin can always be broken, bodies and souls saved, and lives rescued forever. How? Just like he did for Lydia, God opens hearts to listen to the gospel preached. When we hear and believe, we find rescue! This rescue is greater than being saved from drowning, a burning building, or an explosion in outer space. This rescue is forever. Praise God!

3

Engage

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. **QUESTION:** What did Paul do when he went to Philippi? Who were some of the people he met there? Did things always go well for him when he preached about Jesus?

TAKEAWAY: Paul preached the gospel to people everywhere he went, even when he suffered.

2. **QUESTION:** When Lydia heard and believed the gospel, what happened next? When the jailer heard and believed the gospel, what happened next? Who else was baptized?

TAKEAWAY: When people heard the good news about Jesus, they wanted to be baptized.

3. **QUESTION:** What were some things that people were rescued from in today's story? How? Who rescued them?

TAKEAWAY: Belief in Jesus rescued people from demons, prison, sin, and death.

4. **QUESTION:** Who opens hearts to believe in Jesus?

TAKEAWAY: God opens hearts to believe the good news about Jesus.

ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from TheBiggestStory.com, or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Time to Praise

Supply List: shaker, music

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Have children sit in a circle. When the music plays, the children pass the shaker around the circle. When the music stops, the child holding the shaker says

Memory Verse

Believe in the
Lord Jesus, and
you will be saved.

ACTS 16:31



something God has done for her or something she is thankful for. Continue playing until most children have had a chance to praise God. Remind children that the Bible tells us to sing and tell of God's great deeds at all times.

Option 2: Jailbreak Tag

Supply List: plastic toy hoops (one per every four to six kids)

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Set hoops on one side of the room to represent jail cells. Divide children into two teams—the “prisoners” and the “guards.” The prisoners stand in the hoop jails, and the guards stand in the middle of the room. When you shout “Jailbreak,” the prisoners try to run to the opposite side of the room without being tagged by a guard. If someone is tagged, he must return to jail and does not run again. If a child is not tagged, she lines up on the wall to run again. If the guards succeed in capturing all prisoners in three attempts, they win. If there is even one prisoner left after three attempts, the prisoners win. Play another round, but have teams switch roles. Remind children that God was with Paul and Silas when they were put in prison for their faith.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Earthquake!

Supply List: none

Line children up on one side of the room. Choose someone to be “It” and have him or her stand on the opposite end of the room and call out “Red Light,” “Green Light,” or “Earthquake!” If “Green Light” is called, the children must bear crawl forward. If “Red Light” is called, they must freeze. If “Earthquake!” is called, they must shake and fall to the ground. If a child does not follow the given command immediately, he or she must return to the starting line. The first child to reach the opposite side of the room wins. Remind children that God has the power to do anything—even send an earthquake!

Option 2: Don't Steal the Joy!

Supply List: masking tape, two plastic toy hoops, two shakers

Before Class: Gather supplies. Use masking tape to divide the room in half. Place a hoop toward the back of each half and put a shaker inside the hoop.

Divide children into two teams, and assign each team one side of the room. On “Go” teams try to steal the opposing team’s shaker. Children are “safe” on their team’s side, but they can be tagged if they enter the opposing team’s side. If tagged, they must immediately return to their side. If a child has the shaker when tagged, he must first return it to the other team’s hoop. The first team to get the opposing team’s shaker into their hoop wins.

CRAFTS

Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Prison Bar Sewing Card

Supply List: cardstock, scissors, hole punch, gray yarn, crayons

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, print a 4" x 6" picture of Paul and Silas praising God in jail (one per child). Punch five holes across the top of the picture and five holes along the bottom (top and bottom holes should line up vertically). Cut 24-inch lengths of gray yarn (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Set picture cards, yarn, and crayons on tables. Have children color the picture. Then the children tie a piece of yarn to the hole at the top left of their pictures. Instruct them to thread the yarn from the top to the bottom holes to make it look like the bars of a jail cell. Remind children that Paul and Silas rejoiced even though they were in prison—nothing stopped them from praising God.

Option 2: Cuffed for Jesus

Supply List: hole punch, empty toilet paper or paper towel rolls, string, scissors, markers, foam decorations, glue

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut paper rolls into 3-inch-long “handcuffs,” and punch one hole in each cuff (two per child). Cut 12-inch lengths of string (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Set 3-inch paper rolls, string, and remaining supplies on tables. Children cut paper rolls open by making one vertical cut, and they can use the provided



supplies to decorate their cuffs. They then tie a string through the hole in each cuff to attach the two “handcuffs.” Remind children that Paul and Silas praised God, even when imprisoned.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Microphone

Supply List: empty paper roll (toilet paper/paper towel/wrapping paper), paper, aluminum foil, jewels, stickers, crayons, glue, hot glue gun

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut aluminum foil into large pieces. On paper, print the words “Sing for Joy to the Lord.” Make a sample craft.

Set jewels, stickers, crayons, glue, and foil pieces on tables. Give each child a paper tube. Have children crumple up pieces of foil to form a ball larger than the paper tube opening. Have them glue the “Sing for Joy to the Lord” paper to the tube and then decorate. Have a leader use a hot glue gun to attach the foil ball to the top of the decorated tube, forming a microphone.

Option 2: Cuffed for Jesus

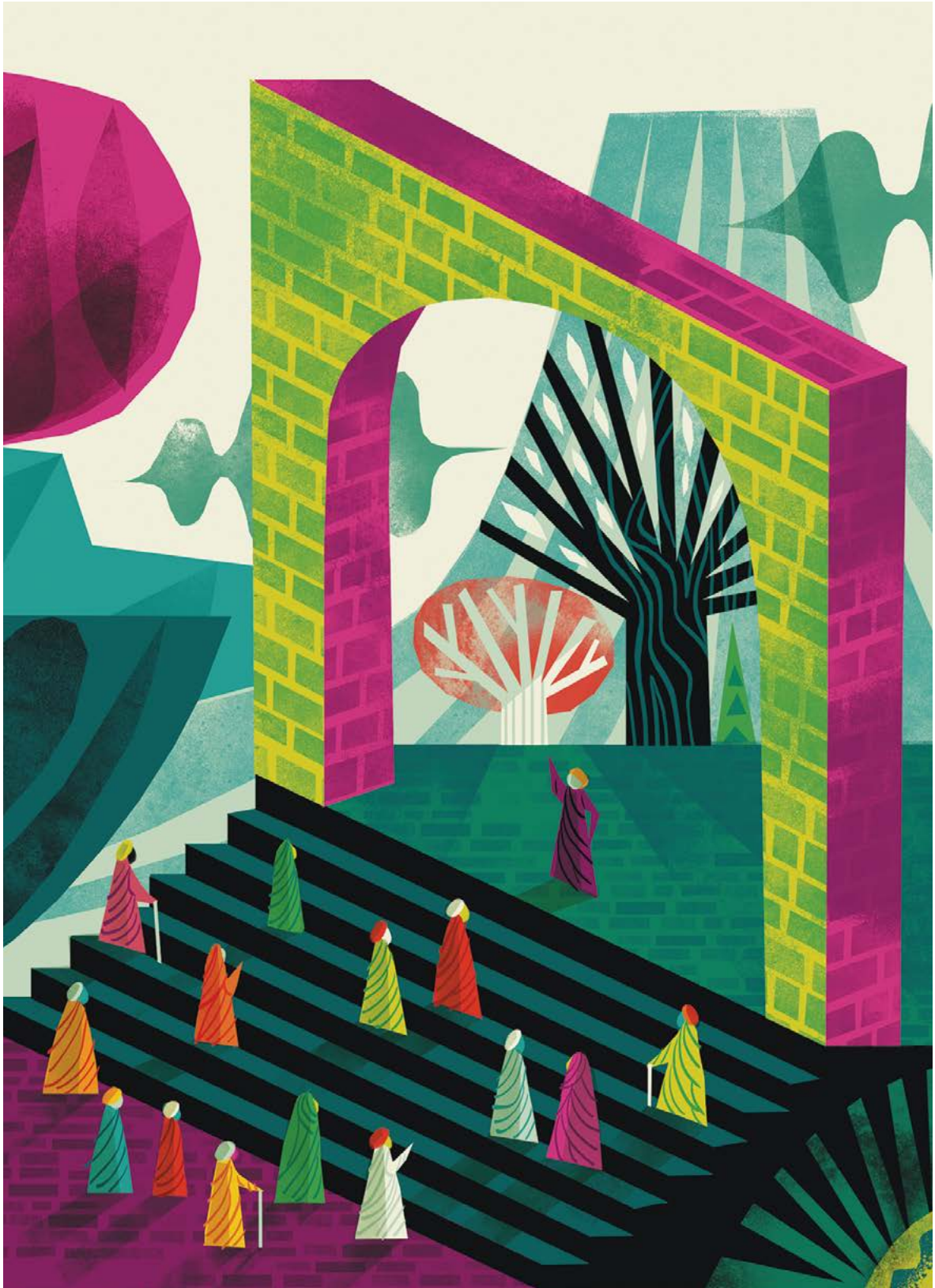
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Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut paper rolls into 3-inch-long “handcuffs,” and punch one hole in each cuff (two per child). Cut 12-inch lengths of string (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Set 3-inch paper rolls, string, and remaining supplies on tables. Children cut paper rolls open by making one vertical cut, and they can use the provided supplies to decorate their cuffs. They then tie a string through the hole in each cuff to attach the two “handcuffs.” Remind children that Paul and Silas praised God, even when imprisoned.



Visit TheBiggestStory.com for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.



STORY 95

The God Who Can Be Known

ACTS 17

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Acts 17.
- *Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is what he has done, and how they should respond to him.*
- *Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.*



THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}



Remember how Jesus saved Saul? Remember the light? The voice? The blindness? The sight? The command to preach the good news to both Jews and Gentiles? That day on the road to Damascus, Paul's life was forever changed. And from that day forward he preached the gospel of Jesus Christ every day to everyone who would listen. He preached in cities and towns. He preached in synagogues, places where Jews gathered. He preached in the marketplaces, places lots of people came to buy and sell. "Jesus is the promised Messiah," he preached. "Jesus can save you from sin," he preached. "Jesus died and rose again!" he preached. "Jesus is Lord, Savior, and Judge," he preached. Over and over, place by place, person to

person, he preached the gospel. And some people, like Lydia, listened and were saved. Other people, like many in the synagogues, rejected his message. And a few people, like the bad bosses of the demon-possessed slave girl, injured and tried to kill him. In today's lesson, Paul is on the run because a group of people are after him. He fled both Thessalonica and Berea (two towns in Greece), and he ended up in the city of Athens. Let's see what he sees and says there.

TELL THE STORY

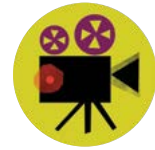
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the
Bible passage
together



Read from
The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook



Play *The*
Biggest Story
video

TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

Big Truth
Because the
one true God
can be known,
we should make
him known.

Athens was the capital city of Greece. The Greeks were an important group of people with famous philosophers like Plato. (And no, he wasn't the first man to play with playdough.) They had famous military leaders too, like Alexander the Great. But as great as the Greeks were, they were also not so great because they worshiped false gods and made idols.

When Paul "saw that the city was full of idols" (Acts 17:16), he decided to get to work! He preached the gospel everywhere to all who would listen. Some of the philosophers in town listened. They heard that "he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection" (17:18), but they didn't understand what he was talking about. "You bring some strange things to our ears" (17:20), they said. So they invited him to speak at their outdoor theater. (The Greeks loved to hear new ideas, and Paul sure had some to share!)

Paul stood up and spoke. He spoke about seeing their idols. He spoke about how they had an altar "to the unknown god" (12:23). Then he spoke about the true and living God. "Let me tell you about the God who made the world and everything in it. He is the Lord of heaven and earth. He doesn't live in temples



we make. He doesn't need anything from us. He made all the nations. He rules times and places. And he wants everyone to seek him and find him. He is near us now! So turn from worshiping your idols and turn to our Creator" (see 17:24–30). He didn't stop there. Next he talked about Jesus—who rose from the dead and will come again to judge. Good news, right? But instead of rejoicing that he rose from the dead, some people laughed at this. They didn't believe anyone who died could rise again. But just like God opened Lydia's heart, God opened hearts that day. Some of the listeners *believed*. Now that shouldn't sound *unbelievable* to us, because we know God's mercy is deep and wide. And powerful! Paul did his part: he made the gospel known to anyone and everyone who would listen. Not all responded in faith—our hearts are hard and stubborn. But some responded in faith—our God is loving and merciful.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher.
{5 minutes}

The Snake Crusher's death and resurrection stand at the center of the Biggest Story. We know that because all four Gospels end by talking about Jesus's death and resurrection. In the book of Acts, Paul focuses on Jesus's death and resurrection too—every time he preaches. These truths about Jesus stand at the center, because they are the heart of the gospel—good news for all people. And any time that gospel is preached and believed, lives are changed. Paul had this happen in his own life, he saw it happen to others when he preached, and he wrote about it in his many letters. Christians turned “from idols to serve the living and true God” (1 Thess. 1:9). If you believe the gospel, you will see Jesus change your life too.

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. **QUESTION:** What bothered Paul when he came to Athens? Instead of a different god for everything they needed, who did Paul tell them was the one true God that made everything and ruled over everything? What are some false gods that we worship instead of the one true God?

TAKEAWAY: Without knowledge of the true God, people will worship false gods.

3

Engage

Memory Verse
The God who
made the world
and everything
in it . . . does not
live in temples
made by man.

ACTS 17:24

2. **QUESTION:** Why did the Athenians have an altar to an unknown God? What are some things that Paul shared about God? What's wrong with worshipping lots of different gods?

TAKEAWAY: There is only one true God, and he can be known.

3. **QUESTION:** What does repentance mean? What did the people of Athens need to repent of when they heard about Jesus? Who does God command to repent? Who is coming again to judge the earth?

TAKEAWAY: Because Jesus will come again to judge everyone on earth, God commands all people everywhere to repent.

4. **QUESTION:** Did everyone who heard Paul preach believe the good news about Jesus? Will everyone whom we tell about Jesus believe the good news? Should we still tell people about Jesus?

TAKEAWAY: Like Paul, we should tell people about Jesus even though we can't control how they respond.

ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from *TheBiggestStory.com*, or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Knock Down

Supply List: plastic cups, permanent marker, balls (one per team)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Write Idol on each cup (ten cups per team). Set cups right side up in a bowling pin formation about 15 feet from a starting line.

Divide children into teams of two to three. Give each team a ball. On “Go” have one person from each team roll the ball down and try to knock over his team’s cups (like bowling). He then carefully retrieves the ball and hands it to the next player on his team. Play continues until all “idols” are knocked down. The first team to knock down their idols wins. To make the game more challenging, add another cup to each team that says “God” and challenge children to knock down the idol cups without knocking down the God cup. Remind children that when

Paul went to Athens (a city full of idols), he shared how people could know the one true God.

Option 2: Hippy-Hop

Supply List: masking tape, music

Before Class: Gather supplies. Use masking tape to mark a long line.

Have children stand on the line. Explain that one side represents worshipping God and the other side represents worshipping idols. When the music starts, have children hop back and forth over the line. When the music stops, they must freeze. Any child on the idol side is out. Play continues until there is only one child left.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Blind Bowling Relay

Supply List: plastic cups, blindfolds (one per team), balls (one per team)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Place ten plastic cups right side up in a bowling pin formation about 15 feet from a starting line (one set per team).

Divide children into teams of four to five. Give each team a ball and a blindfold. On “Go” the first person on each team puts on the blindfold and rolls the ball toward the cups. She then takes off the blindfold, retrieves the ball, and tags the next person in line, who repeats the process. The first team to knock down all ten cups wins. Reset the cups and start again as time allows. Remind children that even though the people were spiritually blind, some believed when Paul spoke the truth to them about Jesus.

Option 2: Pac-Man

Supply List: masking tape

Before Class: Use masking tape to make lines on the floor.

Choose one child to be “Pac-Man,” and this child will run on the lines clapping his hands together in front of him like a giant Pac-Man mouth, trying to tag the other players. The other children must also stay on the lines while trying to avoid being tagged by Pac-Man. If tagged, they become a Pac-Man and try to tag others. The last child not tagged is the winner and is the Pac-Man for the



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next round. Remind children that, like Paul, we should open our mouths and share the good news about Jesus with others.

CRAFTS

Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Open-Up Mouth

Supply List: construction paper (pink and red), glue, scissors, colored pencils, mini marshmallows

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make a sample craft.

Place supplies on tables. Children fold a piece of pink construction paper in half and cut out a half circle, starting and ending along the folded edge. Instruct children to write “Tell others about Jesus” on the folded paper. Then they open the pink paper “mouth” and create “teeth” by gluing mini marshmallows around the circular cut. Have children cut a tongue shape from red construction paper and glue it to the center of the mouth. Remind children that God softens people’s hearts, but we have the privilege of opening our mouths and sharing Jesus with others.

Option 2: Cup Telephone

Supply List: paper cups, string, scissors, paper clips, permanent markers, stickers, glue sticks

Before Class: Gather supplies. Print copies of the words “I can tell others about Jesus’s love” and “People need Jesus.” Cut 18-inch lengths of string. Use a pen to poke the ends of a piece of string through the bottom of two cups, and attach paper clips with a large knot to the ends of the string to hold them in place (one cup telephone set per child). Make a sample craft.

Distribute copies and a cup telephone to each child. Have them cut out the printed words and then glue “I can tell others about Jesus’s love” to one cup and “People need Jesus” to the other cup. They can decorate their telephones with markers and stickers as desired. Demonstrate how to pull the string tight

and talk/listen to someone on the other end. Remind children that God can use them to share Jesus's love with a hurting, lost world.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Good News Newspaper

Supply List: cardstock, string, scissors, hole punches, newspaper, markers, glue sticks

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, print a large cross template. Cut 6-inch lengths of string (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Place copies, string, and remaining supplies on tables. First, children cut out a cross template. Then, they cut out pieces of newspaper and glue them to the cross until it is covered. Instruct children to punch a hole in the top of the cross and add the string for hanging. Have children write “Share the good news about Jesus” on the newspaper cross. Remind children that they can tell the good news of Jesus like Paul did.

Option 2: Cup Telephone

Supply List: paper cups, string, scissors, paper clips, permanent markers, stickers, glue sticks

Before Class: Gather supplies. Print copies of the words “I can tell others about Jesus’s love” and “People need Jesus.” Cut 18-inch lengths of string. Use a pen to poke the ends of a piece of string through the bottom of two cups, and attach paper clips with a large knot to the ends of the string to hold them in place (one cup telephone set per child). Make a sample craft.

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Visit TheBiggestStory.com for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.

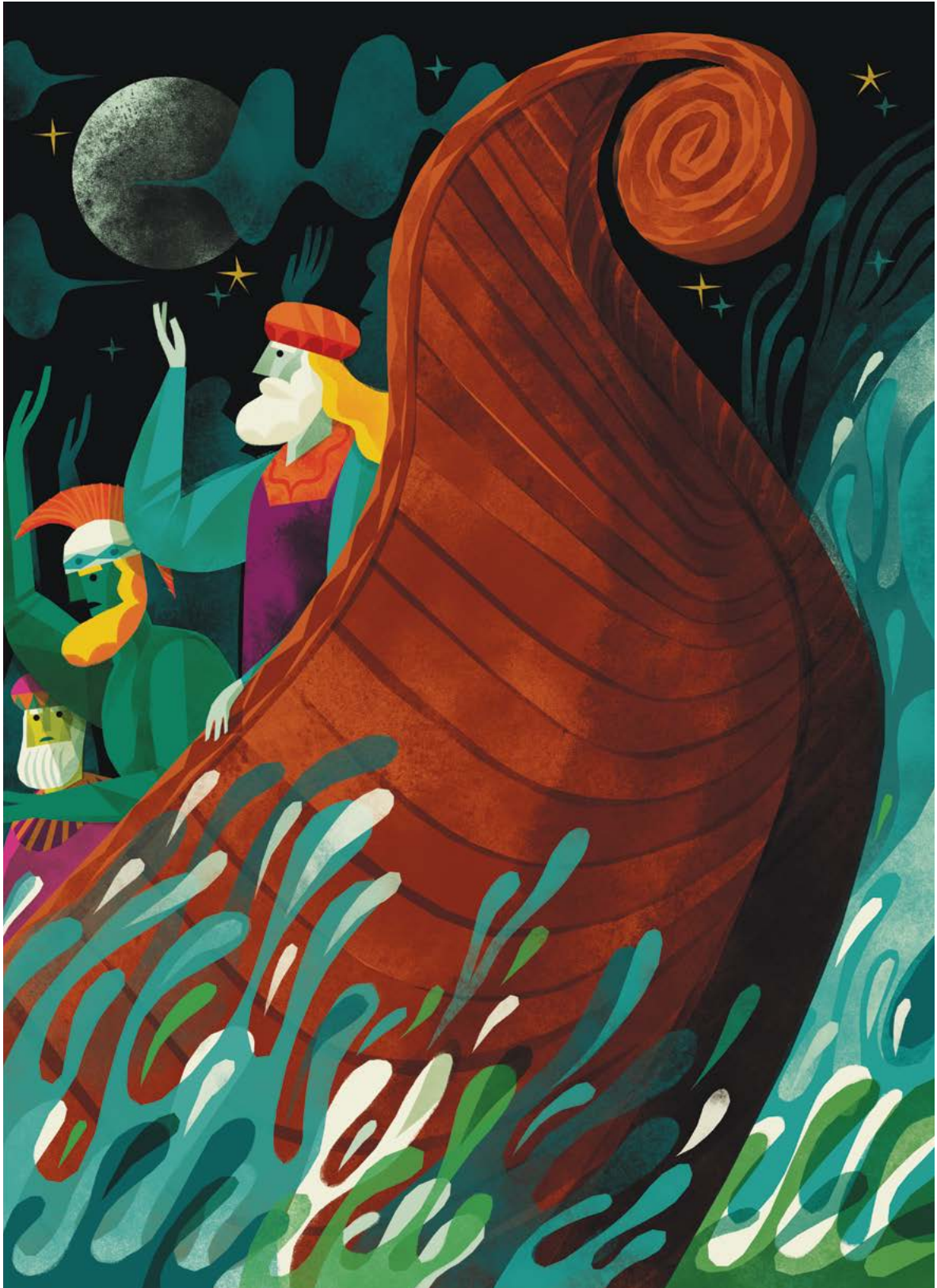


Story

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Acts

17



STORY 96

Ships and Snakes and Sermons, Oh My!

ACTS 27–28

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Acts 27–28.
- Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is what he has done, and how they should respond to him.
- Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.

1
Read

THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}

2
Teach

Who is the most powerful ruler in the world right now? In the Bible we've seen many powerful kings. In fact, a long, long time ago in a place far, far away, God gave a vision to Nebuchadnezzar, the powerful king of the Babylonian Empire.

It was a vision of a statue—the statue's head was made of *gold*, the chest and arms *silver*, the belly and thighs *bronze*, and the legs *iron* (mixed with clay). Daniel, the prophet, was given wisdom to interpret the dream. He explained the gold was Nebuchadnezzar and the other metals were powerful kings and kingdoms that would rule after him. Daniel then explained that the God of heaven would set up a kingdom, which would never be destroyed and would end all these kingdoms (Dan. 2:44).

What does this old, strange dream have to do with Paul and Acts? A lot! The Roman Empire was in power in Paul's day. Roman soldiers killed Jesus. But he rose again. And the gospel of the kingdom, which Jesus preached, was now being preached throughout the Empire. That powerful Empire was eventually destroyed (just like all the kingdoms in Nebuchadnezzar's dream), but God's kingdom is forever. As Acts ends, Paul is on his way to Rome. He'll have quite the adventure to get there and quite the ministry once he arrives. Want to learn what happened to him?

TELL THE STORY

Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the
Bible passage
together



Read from
The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook



Play *The*
Biggest Story
video

TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

Big Truth
The good news
of God's forever
kingdom will
spread across
the world.

At the beginning of Acts Jesus's disciples asked him about the kingdom, "Lord, will you now restore the kingdom of Israel?" (see Acts 1:6). Jesus gave an interesting answer. He talked about the Holy Spirit coming upon his disciples and how they would then take the message of the kingdom of God to *Israel* and to *the world* (see 1:8).

Acts tells us how the gospel went to Jerusalem. (Remember how the Spirit came, Peter preached, and many believed?) Acts tells us how the gospel went to Samaria (Acts 8) and how it went to the Gentiles. (Remember Peter's and Cornelius's visions?) By the end of Acts the Gospel reached the capital of the Roman Empire! But how it got there is a story for the ages.

Paul had been put in prison for preaching the gospel. It looked as though the gospel would not make it any further. But Paul (and, more importantly, God) had other plans. God put Paul on a prison ship to Rome. Paul knew that the trip was destined for danger, so he tried to warn the captain—no luck. They pressed



Story

96

Acts

27–28

on. Sure enough, just like Paul said, a storm arose. The expert sailors of this Roman prison ship tried every trick in the book to survive—they had tied the ship together and thrown excess weight overboard—but the storm kept pounding them. They were sure they'd all die. But Paul comforted them. God had plans, and none of them were going to die. God was going to get him to Rome one way or the other. Sure enough, the ship ran aground and all on board made it safely to a nearby island.

Somehow Paul had managed to escape death. But then, when he was on the island gathering wood for a fire, a venomous snake bit him! The people of the island concluded that Paul must have done something very wrong—the gods weren't allowing him to escape death. But God had plans for Paul, and the snakebite didn't kill him. The islanders changed their minds about him and thought, "Is Paul a god himself?" No, but the power of God was with him. And so, just like Jesus had said at the outset of Acts, God brought Paul to the capital of the known world to proclaim the gospel. This is how the book of Acts ends: "[Paul] lived there two whole years . . . and welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance" (28:30–31).

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher.
{5 minutes}

Paul's journey on the ship is a great picture of what it can be like to follow Jesus. Sometimes we face great storms, scared of what's ahead. Even after Jesus brings us through the storm, we often face new challenges—like Paul being bit by the snake! When we follow Jesus, we will still face hard things. But because of Jesus we have hope of something better to come! Just like Paul, we too will make it to our promised destination—not Rome, but Home. The home Jesus has gone to prepare for us in heaven. Paul's wild journey can remind us that no matter what hardships we face, God will be with us and bring us safely to our forever home. Just as Paul had been promised that he would stand before kings, we have been promised we will stand face to face with *the* King of the forever kingdom, our Savior Jesus Christ. Jesus rules the kingdom that is winning now (even when it doesn't look like it) and will win in the end—the kingdom of God. So don't despair over evil rulers (like the Roman Emperor) who rule and hurt their people and other people. Their rule won't last long. Jesus is alive, and his kingdom will last forever and ever. Keep following the King!

3

Engage

Memory Verse

I can do all things
through him who
strengthens me.

PHILIPPIANS 4:13

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. **QUESTION:** How many kings or rulers do you think exist today? While some are good and some are bad, will any of them last forever? Did the powerful Roman Empire last forever? Will the kingdom of God ever be destroyed like human kingdoms?

TAKEAWAY: The kingdom of God will never be destroyed.

2. **QUESTION:** What are some ways people have tried to stop Paul from preaching about Jesus? What things happened in our story that could have stopped Paul from preaching about Jesus? Could anything stop Paul from preaching?

TAKEAWAY: Nothing stopped Paul from preaching about Jesus.

3. **QUESTION:** Where did Jesus say his disciples would take the gospel message? What was the biggest city in Paul's day? Did the gospel message make it there? How do we know the gospel will spread to all nations?

TAKEAWAY: The gospel will spread to all nations because Jesus promised it would.

4. **QUESTION:** How is the Christian life like Paul's final journey on the ship? How can we be encouraged when we face storms in our life? Who will bring us safely home to heaven?

TAKEAWAY: God will bring his people safely home to heaven.

ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from TheBiggestStory.com, or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Shipwreck

Supply List: none

Have children line up on one side of the room. Choose one person to be “It,” and have him or her stand in the middle of the room. When “It” yells “Shipwreck,” the



children must run to the other side of the room, while “It” tries to tag as many people as possible. Anyone who is tagged joins “It” as a tagger. Continue play until one child remains. That child wins and becomes “It” for the next round.

Option 2: Snakebite!

Supply List: plastic snake

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Have children sit in a circle. Choose one child to be “Paul,” and have him walk around the circle while carrying a plastic snake. Paul drops the snake into a child’s lap. That child must quickly stand up and chase Paul around the circle. Paul tries to run around the circle and sit back in the empty spot before being tagged. If the chaser tags Paul before he sits down (giving a “snakebite”), Paul must sit in the middle of the circle for one round while he waits to heal from the snakebite. The chaser becomes the new Paul. Continue play as time allows.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Swim to Safety

Supply List: plastic toy hoops

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Place six to eight hoops on the floor to represent islands (these are “safe zones”). Choose one child to be the “shark.” Remaining children are shipwrecked swimmers. When the music plays, children must pretend to swim around the room. When the music stops, children must run to an island before being tagged by the shark. If a child is tagged, she is out. Each time the music stops, a leader removes one island. Play continues until one child remains, who wins the round.

Option 2: Snakebite!

Supply List: plastic snake

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Have children sit in a circle. Choose one child to be “Paul,” and have him walk around the circle while carrying a plastic snake. Paul drops the snake into a child’s lap. That child must quickly stand up and chase Paul around the circle. Paul tries to run around the circle and sit back in the empty spot before being

tagged. If the chaser tags Paul before he sits down (giving a “snakebite”), Paul must sit in the middle of the circle for one round while he waits to heal from the snakebite. The chaser becomes the new Paul. Continue play as time allows.

CRAFTS

Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Snake Craft

Supply List: toilet paper tubes, scissors, hole punch, string, red yarn, paintbrushes, washable paint, cups of water, googly eyes (two per child), glue

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut toilet paper tubes into four rings (one set of four per child). Hole punch two holes across from each other on each end of each tube. Cut string into 4-inch pieces (six per child) and red yarn into 2-inch pieces (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Place tube pieces, string, yarn, and remaining supplies on tables. Children take four tube pieces and paint each one a different color or design. When the pieces are dry, children then thread string from a hole in one roll to a hole in another roll and tie a knot to secure. They continue this process until all four pieces are connected, with two pieces of string between each tube. Have them glue two googly eyes to the top of the front tube and glue a piece of red yard to the bottom of the inside of the front tube, sticking out like a tongue. Remind children that even though Paul was bitten by a snake, he didn’t die. God protected him.

Option 2: Paper Plate Boat Craft

Supply List: paper plates, cardstock, scissors, crayons, cups of washable blue paint, paintbrushes, brass fasteners

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut paper plates in half (one half per child). On cardstock, make copies of a boat template (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Place supplies on tables. First, children paint wave shapes along the straight edge of their plate. Then children color and cut out a boat template, attaching the boat to the waves with a brass fastener so it can rock on the waves. Remind children that God protected Paul in the storm and that he protects us too!



Option 1: Snake Craft

Supply List: toilet paper tubes, scissors, hole punch, string, red yarn, paintbrushes, washable paint, cups of water, googly eyes (two per child), glue

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut toilet paper tubes into four rings (one set of four per child). Hole punch two holes across from each other on each end of each tube. Cut string into 4-inch pieces (six per child) and red yarn into 2-inch pieces (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Place tube pieces, string, yarn, and remaining supplies on tables. Children take four tube pieces and paint each one a different color or design. When the pieces are dry, children then thread string from a hole in one roll to a hole in another roll and tie a knot to secure. They continue this process until all four pieces are connected, with two pieces of string between each tube. Have them glue two googly eyes to the top of the front tube and glue a piece of red yarn to the bottom of the inside of the front tube, sticking out like a tongue. Remind children that even though Paul was bitten by a snake, he didn't die. God protected him.

Option 2: Have Faith!

Supply List: paper, construction paper (shades of blue), scissors, glue sticks, colored pencils

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make copies of a boat template (one per child). Make copies of Acts 27:25 (one per child): "So take heart, men, for I have faith in God." Cut different shades of blue construction paper into ½" x 5" strips. Make a sample craft.

Give children a boat paper, verse paper, and full-sized piece of construction paper. Set remaining supplies on tables. Have children color and cut out the boat and Bible verse. Children then glue the boat to the center of their construction paper and glue the verse above it. Instruct children to make "waves" beneath the boat by gluing the end of a blue strip to the paper, then rolling the strip around a pencil to make it curl up. They continue to add and curl strips until there are waves all around the boat.



Visit TheBiggestStory.com for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.



STORY 97

No Nothing

ROMANS 8

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Romans 8.
- Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is what he has done, and how they should respond to him.
- Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.

1

Read

THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}

2

Teach

The New Testament is made up of lots of different kinds of books. There are the four Gospels that tell us about the life of Jesus—who he was, what he taught, and what he did. There is the book of Acts that shares about the early church and how the gospel started to spread throughout the world. If the Gospels are about what Jesus “began to do and teach” (Acts 1:1), then the Acts of the Apostles is about what Jesus continued to do and teach through his apostles and his church. Besides the Gospels and Acts, most of the New Testament is letters—short letters, long letters, letters from Peter, John, James, and Paul. (Mostly Paul.) There are twenty-one letters in the Bible, and thirteen of them are written by Paul. Many of Paul's letters were written while he was in prison for sharing the gospel. All twenty-one letters were inspired by the Holy Spirit to help Christians

understand what Jesus has done and how to live in response. And these letters are every bit as much about Jesus as the sermons and miracles in the Gospels and Acts. Perhaps the most famous letter is the letter Paul wrote to the Romans. And perhaps the most famous chapter in his letter was chapter 8. What could make it so famous? Let's listen and find out.

TELL THE STORY

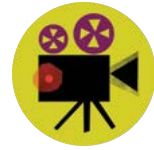
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the
Bible passage
together



Read from
The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook



Play *The*
Biggest Story
video

TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

Big Truth
In Jesus, God
loves us always
and forever.

Paul's famous letter to the Romans was sixteen chapters, and the famous chapter sits right in the middle of them. It is famous because it provides great comfort for Christians who are going through really hard times. Have you experienced sad and confusing things? Have you been mistreated by your friends or a family member? Have you lost a loved one? Then you should read the letter to the Romans.

In the first seven chapters of the letter Paul explains how we are saved. We are all sinners. Jesus died for sinners. Those who believe in Jesus are made right with God. And Jesus gives the Spirit to those who believe to help us follow God's ways. Now when we get to the famous chapter 8, Paul talks about how we are kept safe in Jesus.

First, he gives us this marvelous promise: "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). "No condemnation" means "no judgment." God will not judge us as sinners, because Jesus took on the punishment we deserve. No condemnation! What a promise! Second, Paul explains that this world is a little bit like a woman giving birth. There's a lot of groaning and pain, but something good is coming later. Our present suffering



Story

97

Romans

8

paves the way for a far better future glory. Lastly, Paul ends with some of the most beautiful words in the Bible, sharing about God's always-and-forever love for us in Jesus: "If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?" (8:31–32). So, can troubles on this earth separate us from the love of God in Christ? No! Persecution or pain? No! Dangers or distresses? No! Demons or death? No! Nothing can "separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (8:39). Whatever hard thing you are experiencing, know it cannot separate you from God's love for you in Jesus. And if the all-powerful God loves us, we can trust that everything that happens to us—even the bad, sad stuff—our always-good-God has planned to work for our good. What great comfort!

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher.
{5 minutes}

Do you remember last week we talked about Paul's scary ship journey and how sometimes the Christian life can be like that? Full of storms and danger. We need God to keep us safe from all the dangers that exist in our fallen world. And we need regular reminders that he can and he will! The letter to the Romans is Paul's way of reminding us that God will keep us safe if we trust in Jesus. Think of it like this—Jesus is like the boat that carries us all the way to our home in heaven. If we leave Jesus, we leave our place of safety. As long as we keep following Jesus, there is nothing that can separate us from God. Not death, not bad dreams, not bad people, not cancer, not car accidents, not things in the sky or things in the sea—nothing. We know through Jesus that the snake has been crushed, that our sins have been paid for, and that death has been defeated. We have nothing to fear! We are safe. Safe in Jesus. If that isn't good news, then nothing is!

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

- 1. QUESTION:** What kinds of books are in the New Testament? Who wrote some of the letters? Why did they write these letters for churches?

TAKEAWAY: The New Testament is full of letters for the church about following Jesus.

3

Engage

Memory Verse
For I am sure that
neither death nor
life, . . . nor height
nor depth, nor
anything else in
all creation, will
be able to separate
us from the love
of God in Christ
Jesus our Lord.

ROMANS 8:38–39

2. **QUESTION:** What's the most famous letter in the New Testament? Do you remember what the first seven chapters teach us about? And what does the most famous chapter say about how we are kept safe in Jesus?

TAKEAWAY: The letter to the Romans teaches us how we are saved in Jesus and how we are kept safe in Jesus.

3. **QUESTION:** What are some things that can separate you from someone's love? Is there anything that can separate us from God's love if we follow Jesus?

TAKEAWAY: Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Jesus.

4. **QUESTION:** If we are all sinners and deserve God's punishment, what is our only hope of rescue? Why doesn't God judge us and punish those who trust in Jesus? Is there anything or anyone that can condemn you if you trust in Jesus?

TAKEAWAY: God will not judge us as sinners, because Jesus died for our sins.

ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from TheBiggestStory.com, or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Cupside Down

Supply List: large plastic cups (at least two per child)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Place plastic cups randomly around the room, making sure there are an equal number of cups facing up and down.

Divide children into two teams, and assign one team to be the “cup up” team and the other team to be the “cup down” team. Explain that for 3 minutes each team will work to run around the room and place the cups up or down depending on their team's objective. After 3 minutes, players freeze while a leader counts how many cups are facing each direction. Teams get one point for every cup that faces their direction. After three rounds of play, the team with the most points is the winner. Remind children that even when it seems like everything is against us, God is for us.



Option 2: Lean on Me

Supply List: two chairs or cones

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Divide children into two teams, and have them line up opposite the chairs/cones. Within each team, children pair up and sit back-to-back in line. The first pair on each team must lock arms and stand up together without using their hands to push them up. Once standing and with their arms hooked, they must walk to the other end of the room, around the chair/cone, and back to their starting line. The next pair on their team repeats the process. The first team to have all pairs complete the relay wins. Remind children that things might separate us from people, but nothing can separate us from God's love.

3rd–5th

Option 1: High/Low Relay

Supply List: two equal-sized balls

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Divide children into two teams, and have each team stand single file. The goal of the game is to be the first team to get to a finish line on the opposite side of the room. Give the first person in each line a ball. On “Go” have the first person pass the ball over his head to the person behind him. The second person passes it through her legs. The children alternate passing methods with each person. Once the last person gets the ball, he runs to the front of the line to move the team toward the finish line. Teams continue this passing process until a team reaches the finish line, winning the game. Remind children that we can trust God in the highs and lows of life.

Option 2: Lean on Me

Supply List: two chairs or cones

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Divide children into two teams, and have them line up opposite the chairs/cones. Within each team, children pair up and sit back-to-back in line. The first pair on each team must lock arms and stand up together without using their hands to push them up. Once standing and with their arms hooked, they must

walk to the other end of the room, around the chair/cone, and back to their starting line. The next pair on their team repeats the process. The first team to have all pairs complete the relay wins. Remind children that things might separate us from people, but nothing can separate us from God's love.

CRAFTS

Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Recycled

Supply List: paper, cardstock, scissors, colored pencils, glue sticks, craft sticks

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make copies of a recycling symbol measuring less than 4" x 6" (one per child). Cut cardstock into 4" x 6" pieces. Make a sample craft.

Place copies, cardstock pieces, and remaining supplies on tables. Have children color and cut out a recycling symbol, then glue it to a piece of cardstock. In the center of the symbol children write "God doesn't waste anything." They then glue a craft stick to the bottom of the cardstock piece to make a sign. Remind children that God will use everything that happens to us for good.

Option 2: Stick with Jesus

Supply List: cardstock, scissors, markers, glue sticks, magnets

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, make copies of the name Jesus written in 4-inch-high block letters. Make a sample craft.

Place copies and remaining supplies on tables. Children take a JESUS sheet, color each letter with a different pattern/color, and cut each letter out. They then glue the letters together in the right order, with each letter overlapping a bit. Have children add a magnet to the back. Remind children that it is Jesus who took the penalty for our sins and that it is his love that makes a way for us to heaven.



Option 1: Recycled

Supply List: paper, cardstock, scissors, colored pencils, glue sticks, craft sticks

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make copies of a recycling symbol measuring less than 4" x 6" (one per child). Cut cardstock into 4" x 6" pieces. Make a sample craft.

Place copies, cardstock pieces, and remaining supplies on tables. Have children color and cut out a recycling symbol, then glue it to a piece of cardstock. In the center of the symbol children write “God doesn’t waste anything.” They then glue a craft stick to the bottom of the cardstock piece to make a sign. Remind children that God will use everything that happens to us for good.

Option 2: Sticky Craft

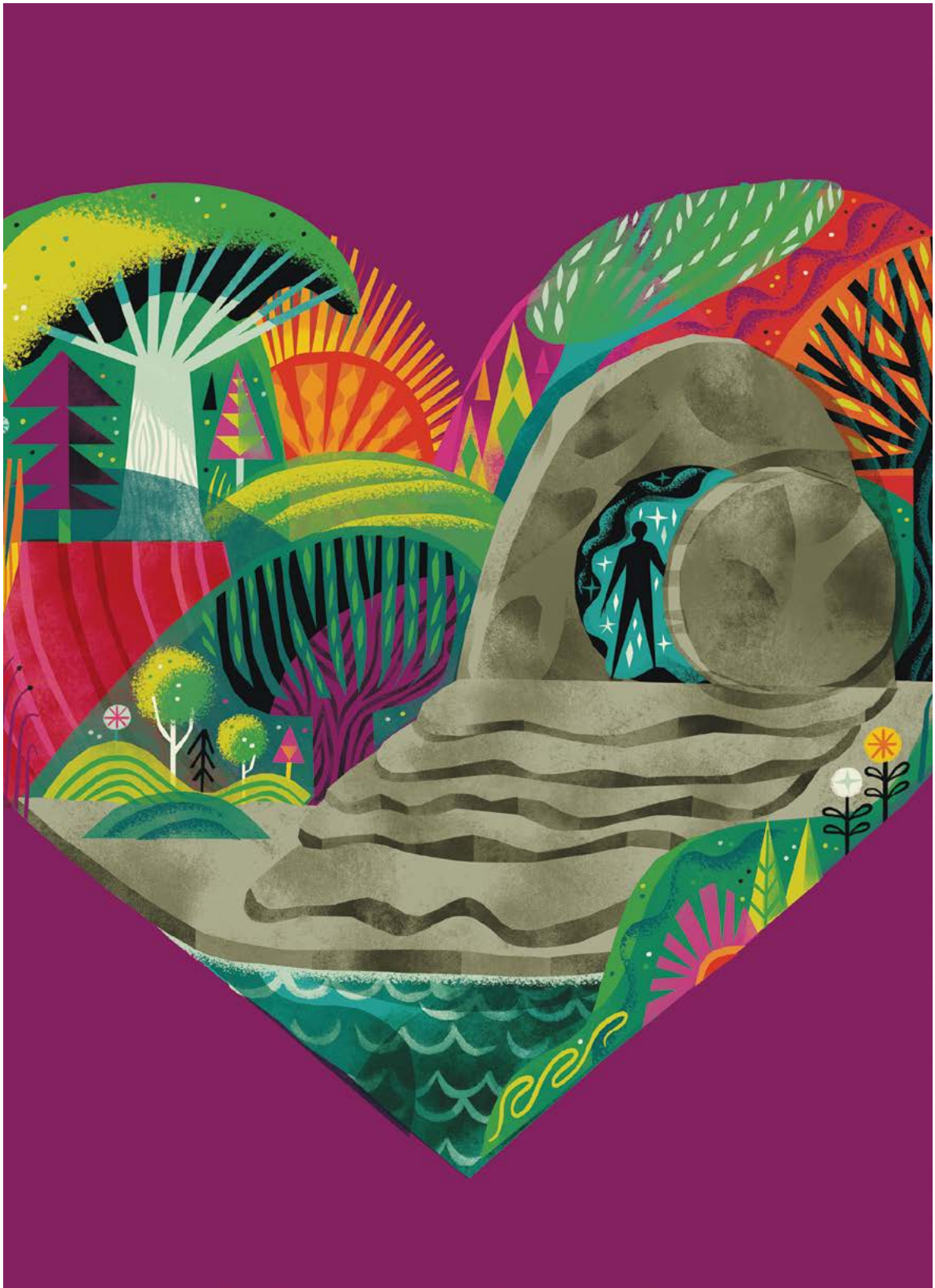
Supply List: black construction paper, clear contact paper, colored tissue paper, scissors, yarn, hole punches

Before Class: Gather supplies. Use black construction paper to make 1-inch frames, then glue the same size piece of clear contact paper to the frame (one per child). Reattach backing to the contact paper until use. Cut black construction paper into ½-inch wide strips of varying lengths. Cut colored tissue paper into small pieces. Cut yarn into 6-inch pieces for hanging. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a frame, and place remaining supplies on tables. Children peel off the contact paper backing and place the thin strips of black construction paper to the sticky side of the frame, dividing the window into smaller sections. Have them trim the strips with scissors as needed. Then they place tissue paper pieces in each section until it is completely covered, creating a stained glass window. Lastly, children punch a hole through the top and attach a string for hanging in a window. Remind children that God’s love for us will stick with us no matter what.



Visit TheBiggestStory.com for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.



STORY 98

Love Is

1 CORINTHIANS 13

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read 1 Corinthians 13.
- Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is what he has done, and how they should respond to him.
- Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.

1

Read

THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}

2

Teach

The Bible says a lot about lots of important things—like peace, hope, faith, sin, and judgment. It also says a lot about love. Jesus said the most important commandment in the Old Testament was to “love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” (Matt. 22:37; see Deut. 6:5) and following from that to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt. 22:39; see Lev. 19:18). Seems like love is pretty important! Indeed, the Bible helps us see that love is the essential ingredient in the relationship between parents and children, between husbands and wives, between Christians, and even for Christians toward their enemies (even if enemies don’t love us back!). But this love doesn’t come from us, and so we don’t get to decide by ourselves what love ultimately is. As John wrote, “We love because [God] first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

Love is what God says it is. So what is it? God devoted a whole chapter to tell us about his love, and that's the chapter we're looking at today.

TELL THE STORY

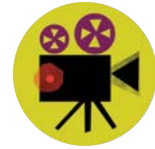
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the
Bible passage
together



Read from
The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook



Play *The*
Biggest Story
video

TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

Big Truth
We love because
God first loved us.

If someone says, “Love is _____,” how would you fill in the blank? Love is when someone spends all their time with you. Love is when you hold hands with someone. Love is when you share your dessert with someone. Those are not terrible ways to talk about love. But love, as 1 Corinthians 13 talks about it, is so much more than that. Love can include some hard things too. Love does not mean agreeing with everyone, only doing what people want you to do, or never saying something difficult to someone.

What is love? First Corinthians 13 is a beautiful picture of love. At the beginning Paul talks about how being a person full of love is more important than anything else we could do. We can have the most amazing gifts (like faith to move mountains!) and be the most generous person (give all our money to help others), but if we don't have love, then all our gifting and giving is worthless.

In the middle of the chapter Paul talks about how love shapes our thoughts, our feelings, and our actions. For example, love makes us patient and kind with others; love keeps us from laughing when bad things happen to others or bragging to them about how amazing we are.

Then at the end of the chapter Paul says, “Now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor. 13:13). Why is love greater? Because love will last! We only need faith and hope until we get to heaven to live forever with Jesus. But in heaven, all we will need (and think, feel, and do)

is love! There God—who “is love” (1 John 4:8)—will love us and we will love him and others all the time for the rest of time. Sounds lovely.

The picture of love in 1 Corinthians 13 goes far beyond a warm feeling or romance. Love is what drives us to give ourselves for the good of others, even when it costs us. Such love must be connected to God’s love for them and the good he wants for them.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher.
{5 minutes}

Do you want to know something interesting? Paul’s beautiful chapter about love was actually a rebuke. A rebuke is when someone tells someone else that what they are doing is wrong, like when your mom says, “Stop hitting your brother!” A rebuke is also when you tell someone something they should be doing, like “Clean your filthy room!” Paul rebuked the Christians with this chapter because they were not loving each other. Some people were not sharing their food; others were saying terrible things about Paul; still others were celebrating when other Christians sinned. And Paul showed them, through this chapter, a better way to live—the loving way.

When we read this chapter, we probably feel the rebuke too. None of us loves perfectly. Most of us mess up a lot. So how can we love like this? First John answers this for us: “We love because [God] first loved us” (1 John 4:19). We are only able to love when we have known God’s love. The more we know God’s love, the better we’ll be able to love. John 3:16 says, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” That means the way to know God’s love is to know the gospel. Jesus died for us. The more we grasp our sin, the more we grasp what Jesus did when he died for our sins, and the more we will love like Jesus did.

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

- QUESTION:** What are some examples of God’s love in the Biggest Story? How does the whole story show us God’s love for us?

TAKEAWAY: The Biggest Story is a love story.



Story
98

Romans
13

3

Engage

2. **QUESTION:** What's the problem with the person who is really popular, really sure of God's promises, or really smart but who has no love for his neighbor? How does love change the way you think about others? How does it change the way you act toward others?

TAKEAWAY: Love is more important than anything else because it shapes our thoughts, feelings, and actions.

Memory Verse

So now faith,
hope, and love
abide, these three;
but the greatest of
these is love.

1 CORINTHIANS 13:13

3. **QUESTION:** Do you naturally think more about yourself or others? How do we learn to love others? How does God's love change us and make us people who love others?

TAKEAWAY: We love because God first loved us.

4. **QUESTION:** What does it mean to have faith in God's promises? What does it mean to hope that God will keep his promises? Why won't faith and hope be necessary once Jesus returns? Why will love still be necessary?

TAKEAWAY: Where faith and hope will pass away, love lasts forever.

ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from *TheBiggestStory.com*, or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: "Love Is _____" Tag

Supply List: none

Assign one child to be "It." Begin a game of tag. If a child is being chased by "It," she can kneel and say one of the things love is according to 1 Corinthians 13 (e.g., love is patient, love is kind, love does not envy). If the child completes the phrase before being tagged, she is safe. If tagged before completing the phrase, she becomes "It." Continue play as time allows.

Option 2: 1 Corinthians 13:12 Relay

Supply List: obstacles (cones, chairs, etc.), paper hearts, masking tape, hand mirrors (one per team)



Story

98

Romans

13

Before Class: Gather supplies. Place obstacles around the room. Tape paper hearts on the wall opposite a starting line (eight per team).

Divide children into teams of four. Give the first person on each team a hand mirror. On “Go” the first person must walk backward to the other side of the room and remove a paper heart from the wall, using the mirror to guide him. If he touches an obstacle, he must return to the start line and begin again. The first team to get eight hearts back to the start wins. Remind children that 1 Corinthians 13:12 says, “For now we see in a mirror dimly; but then face to face.”

3rd–5th

Option 1: Faith, Hope, and Love Relay

Supply List: index cards

Before Class: Gather supplies. Write the letters from faith, hope, and love on index cards (one letter per card, one set per team). Place sets of cards on the opposite side of the room with the letters scrambled.

Divide children into teams of five to six. On “Go!” the first child on each team must bear walk to the opposite side of the room, take one letter from her team’s cards, and run back to tag the next person in line, who repeats the process. Once a team has retrieved all their letters, they must unscramble the letters to make three words. If they are struggling, provide the hint of 1 Corinthians 13:13 “So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”

Option 2: 1 Corinthians 13:12 Relay

Supply List: obstacles (cones, chairs, etc.), paper hearts, masking tape, hand mirrors (one per team)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Place obstacles around the room. Tape paper hearts on the wall opposite a starting line (eight per team).

Divide children into teams of four. Give the first person on each team a hand mirror. On “Go” the first person must walk backward to the other side of the room and remove a paper heart from the wall, using the mirror to guide him. If he touches an obstacle, he must return to the start line and begin again. The first team to get eight hearts back to the start wins. Remind children that 1 Corinthians 13:12 says, “For now we see in a mirror dimly; but then face to face.”

CRAFTS

Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Yarn-Wrapped Hearts

Supply List: paper, cardboard, scissors, yarn, masking tape

Before Class: Gather supplies. Use a heart template to trace hearts onto cardboard. Cut out cardboard hearts (one per child). Cut 2- to 3-foot lengths of yarn. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a cardboard heart. Set yarn pieces and remaining supplies on tables. Children tape a piece of yarn to their cardboard heart, then wrap the yarn in different directions around the heart, tying on additional pieces of yarn as needed. Children continue wrapping until the entire heart is covered. Help children loop the end of the yarn through another piece of yarn and knot it to secure, trimming any excess yarn. Remind children that we love because God first loved us.

Option 2: “Love Is _____” Mobile

Supply List: hangers (one per child), paper, scissors, cardstock, yarn, tape, markers, beads (optional)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make copies of the words “Love is” and cut into strips (one per child). On cardstock, make copies of heart shapes in various sizes. Cut yarn into various lengths, ranging from 6 to 12 inches. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a hanger and “Love is” strip. Place paper hearts, yarn pieces, and remaining supplies on tables. Have children tape the “Love is” strip to the hanger. Help them reference 1 Corinthians 13 to write at least five different descriptions of love onto the paper hearts (one word/phrase per heart). Children will tape a piece of yarn to the back of each heart, then tie each heart to the hanger at varying lengths (taping each piece in place if needed). Optional: Have children add a few beads to each piece of yarn before tying it to the hanger.

**Option 1: “Love Is _____” Wheel**

Supply List: paper, scissors, markers, brass fasteners

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut out 8-inch diameter circles (two per child). Divide half the circles into six equal sections. In the other half, cut out a section one-sixth the size of the circle (without cutting through the center). Make a sample craft.

Give each child one of each of the circles. Set markers and brass fasteners on tables. On the circle with the cut-out section, children write “Love is.” On the divided circle, have them write words from 1 Corinthians 13 that describe what love is. Have them fasten the two circles together in the center with a brass fastener.

Option 2: “Love Is _____” Mobile

Supply List: hangers (one per child), paper, scissors, cardstock, yarn, tape, markers, beads (optional)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make copies of the words “Love is” and cut into strips (one per child). On cardstock, make copies of heart shapes in various sizes. Cut yarn into various lengths, ranging from 6 to 12 inches. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a hanger and “Love is” strip. Place paper hearts, yarn pieces, and remaining supplies on tables. Have children tape the “Love is” strip to the hanger. Help them reference 1 Corinthians 13 to write at least five different descriptions of love onto the paper hearts (one word/phrase per heart). Children will tape a piece of yarn to the back of each heart, then tie each heart to the hanger at varying lengths (taping each piece in place if needed). Optional: Have children add a few beads to each piece of yarn before tying it to the hanger.



Visit TheBiggestStory.com for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.



STORY 99

More Than a Slave

PHILEMON

BEFORE THE LESSON

- *Read Philemon.*
- *Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is what he has done, and how they should respond to him.*
- *Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.*



THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}



Our last two lessons taught us a lot about love. Do you remember what we learned? First, we learned that nothing can “separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:39). Not troubles on this earth, not persecution or pain, not dangers or demons or death—nothing! God loves us always and forever in Christ, who died for us and brought us into relationship with God. Then we learned what love is like. We listened as Paul described that “love is patient and kind,” “love bears all things,” and “love never ends” (1 Cor. 13:4, 7, 8). And we learned in both lessons that “if God so loved us [in Jesus!], we also ought to love one another” (1 John 4:11). Today we’re going to see how seriously Paul took these commands to love God and one another. And we’re going to hear how Paul called his dear friend (whom he loved!) to show God’s love to a

runaway slave with a memorable name. We're going to learn that love is always more than a feeling—it requires action. Let's listen!

TELL THE STORY

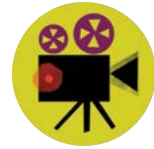
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the
Bible passage
together



Read from
The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook



Play *The*
Biggest Story
video

TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

Big Truth
God's love
frees us to
love others.

Paul wrote his letter to Philemon while he was in prison. Did Paul do something bad to wind up in prison? No! He was “a prisoner *for* Christ Jesus” (Philem. 1); that is, he was in a Roman prison because he was preaching the good news about Jesus. That was not right for the Romans to do. It was also not right to have slaves, and lots of Romans had slaves. Some slaves were just like workers today who worked all day for a big company. It was long and hard work for little pay, but they could go home at the end of the day, and they could try to work for someone else if they were not happy. But other slaves were owned by masters, and only their masters could set them free. And some of those slaves were treated badly. Really badly.

We don't know how Onesimus was treated. What we do know is that he was a runaway slave and that *Philemon* was his master. We also know that both Philemon and Onesimus had become Christians (God is so gracious!). Paul told Onesimus to do the right thing and return to Philemon, which must have been difficult to do! But Paul told Philemon to do the right thing and free Onesimus! Paul told him it was the right thing to do, because they were both now Christians. The master and his slave were now *brothers* in Christ—together freed by Christ, equal in God's eyes, and fellow members of the church. Part of God's forever family! “Have him back forever, no longer as a bondservant,” Paul said, “but . . . as a beloved brother . . . in the Lord” (Philem. 15, 16). He told Philemon



Story
99

Philemon

to receive Onesimus with open arms. Paul was sure that Philemon would do just that—welcome, forgive, and free his runaway slave. He believed that just as Philemon had been forgiven by Jesus and loved by God so also Philemon would forgive and love Onesimus. Because the love of God changes us. It is always more than a feeling—this kind of love leads to action. We are freed to freely love like God.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher.
{5 minutes}

What does *free* mean? Sometimes it means there's no cost for something—like a free lollipop. It can also mean we aren't forced to do something—free to do what we want. These are true but not the full picture. The Bible tells us that we have freedom in Christ! Does that mean that we don't have to listen to our parents? No. Does it mean we don't have to work for a boss? No. Does it mean Christians who are slaves today (as many are around the world) will always be set free? No. Does it mean Christians who are in prison, like Paul was, will always be released? No. What then does it mean? It means that, through Jesus's death, we have been "set free from sin" (Rom. 6:7). We don't have to sin! We are free to live for God. As Jesus taught, "If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:36). More than that (although that is quite a lot!) we are to use this freedom to "serve one another" (Gal. 5:13). Peter puts it this way: "Live as people who are free. Live as servants [slaves!] of God! Love your brothers and sisters in Christ" (see 1 Pet. 2:16–17). If we believe in Jesus, we have been set free! Free to love God. Free to serve God. Free to love others. Free to treat every brother and sister in Christ as equals.

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

- 1. QUESTION:** What does it mean to be a slave to something? What does it mean when the Bible says we are slaves to sin? How are we freed from the invisible chains of sin?

TAKEAWAY: Through Jesus the chains of sin are broken.

3

Engage

2. **QUESTION:** Why did God set us free from slavery to sin? How does God want us to treat others? How does God's forgiveness of our sins help us to forgive others?

TAKEAWAY: God's love frees us to love others.

3. **QUESTION:** When Onesimus ran away, who was his master? How did Paul want Philemon to treat Onesimus—as a slave or a brother? How can Philemon and Onesimus be brothers?

TAKEAWAY: All Christians are brothers and sisters in God's family.

Memory Verse

Beloved, if God
so loved us, we
also ought to love
one another.

1 JOHN 4:11

ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from *TheBiggestStory.com*, or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Paul Ball

Supply List: soccer-sized rubber ball

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Have children stand in a circle, foot to foot with legs spread shoulder-width apart. Explain that the goal is to hit the ball between other players' legs while blocking the ball from going through their own legs. They must use an open palm rather than grabbing or throwing the ball. If the ball does go through a child's legs, that child gets the first letter of the word *Paul*. The next time the ball goes through the same child's legs, he or she gets the next letter of the word *Paul*. When you have all four letters, you are out. The last two players remaining win the game.

Option 2: Broken Hearts

Supply List: cardstock, scissors

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut out heart shapes from cardstock, and cut each heart in half using a different zigzag pattern (one half per child).



Story

99

Philemon

Hide the broken heart halves around the room. On “Go” have children hunt for a heart half. When a child finds one, she must then find the person who has the piece that completes her heart. The first pair to find their match wins (but allow time for all children to find their match). Remind children that, like Onesimus, we sometimes hurt others, but we need to be quick to make it right.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Forgiveness Dodgeball

Supply List: dodgeballs

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Divide children into two teams. Explain that they will be playing a game of dodgeball, but that they cannot catch or block the balls. If a child gets hit, he or she must go to a predetermined “jail” area. At any time the leader can yell out “Forgiveness!” Those who are in jail must individually ask the leader, “Can I be forgiven?” The leader grants forgiveness to each one, which allows the children to reenter the game. Remind children that we can’t dodge the sins we’ve done. We need to be quick to ask Jesus for forgiveness.

Option 2: Free the Prisoners

Supply List: plastic toy hoops, cones, balls

Before Class: Gather supplies. Set six hoops around the perimeter of the room. Use four cones to mark a center area for throwers, and place four balls inside this marked area.

Divide children into two teams. Identify one team as prisoners, and have them stand in the hoop “prisons.” Choose two children from this team to be throwers. They must stand and stay in the marked area. The prisoners can be freed from prison if they catch a ball from a thrower (prisoners may run from hoop to hoop but must be inside a hoop when they catch a ball to be freed). The children on the other team are defenders. They are trying to prevent prisoners from catching balls. When a prisoner catches a ball, he is free and becomes a thrower. Throwers continue to throw balls to prisoners until all have been freed. Have teams switch roles. Remind children that Paul and Onesimus met while in prison and became friends and brothers in Christ.

CRAFTS

Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Reconciliation Craft

Supply List: paper, construction paper, scissors, crayons, glue sticks

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make copies of the outline of a man (three per child). Cut construction paper into 1" x 12" strips (two per child). Make a sample craft.

Place copies, strips, and remaining supplies on tables. Have children cut out three men, color them, and write the names Paul, Onesimus, and Philemon on them (one name per man). Have them accordion-fold two strips, gluing one strip to join Onesimus and Paul and one strip to join Paul and Philemon (with Paul in the middle). Remind children that Paul helped to bridge the gap in Onesimus and Philemon's relationship.

Option 2: "Free in Christ" Firework Painting

Supply List: cardstock, paper towel tubes, scissors, washable paint, paper plates

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, make copies of the words "Free in Christ." Cut paper towel tubes into 5-inch lengths. Make a fringe by cutting 2-inch slits all the way around one end of each tube. Put different colored paint on paper plates. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a "Free in Christ" paper. Demonstrate how to dab the fringed edge of a tube into the paint and then gently press and twist the tube onto the paper to make a "firework." Have children make fireworks on their papers, overlapping fireworks using different colors. Explain that while we associate the Fourth of July with fireworks and freedom, perfect freedom is only found in knowing Jesus.



Option 1: Pom-Pom Shooter

Supply List: 12-inch balloons, paper cups, scissors, permanent markers, stickers, washi tape, duct tape, large pom-poms, bucket/bowl

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut the tops off of uninflated balloons and knot the ends where you blow into. Make a sample craft.

Place supplies on tables. Have children cut the bottom out of a paper cup and decorate the cup with the provided supplies. Children then stretch the cut end of a balloon over the open bottom of their decorated cup. Help them secure the balloon in place using duct tape. Show children how to shoot a pom-pom by placing one in the cup, pulling back on the knot of the balloon, and releasing the balloon. Have children take a pom-pom and practice shooting it into a bucket/bowl on the floor. Remind children that Paul sent Onesimus back to Philemon to make things right.

Option 2: “Free in Christ” Firework Painting

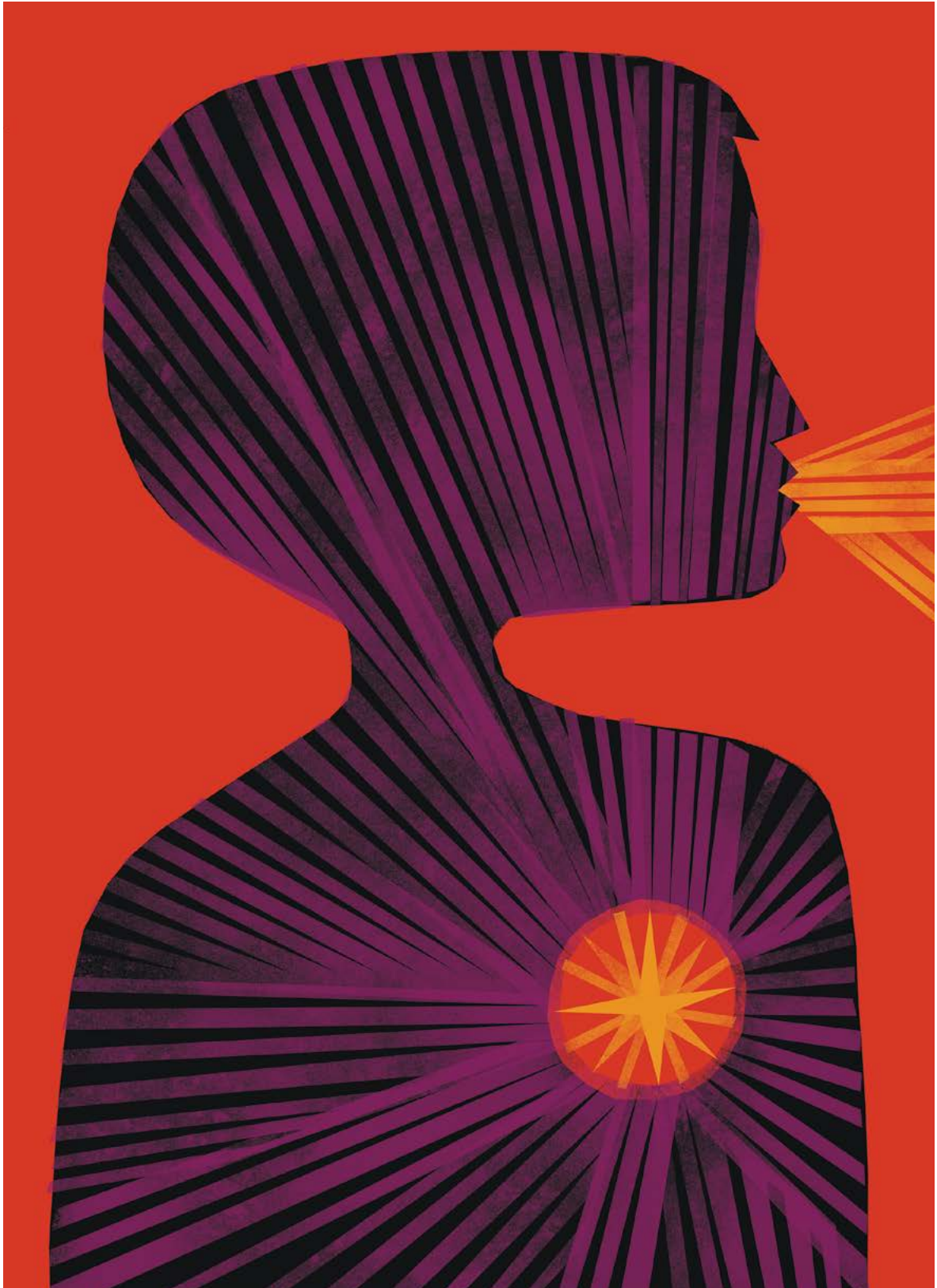
Supply List: cardstock, paper towel tubes, scissors, washable paint, paper plates

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, make copies of the words “Free in Christ.” Cut paper towel tubes into 5-inch lengths. Make a fringe by cutting 2-inch slits all the way around one end of each tube. Put different colored paint on paper plates. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a “Free in Christ” paper. Demonstrate how to dab the fringed edge of a tube into the paint and then gently press and twist the tube onto the paper to make a “firework.” Have children make fireworks on their papers, overlapping fireworks using different colors. Explain that while we associate the Fourth of July with fireworks and freedom, perfect freedom is only found in knowing Jesus.



Visit TheBiggestStory.com for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.



STORY 100

Taming the Tongue

JAMES 3

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read James 3.
- Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is what he has done, and how they should respond to him.
- Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.

1

Read

THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}

2

Teach

The Biggest Story is full of wisdom. There are thousands of words of wisdom between Genesis and Revelation! Remember King Solomon? He was known for his wisdom. God gave him “wisdom and understanding beyond measure” (1 Kings 4:29) and made him wiser than “all the people of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt” (4:30). And he used his wisdom to speak three thousand proverbs and write over one thousand songs. Proverbs 3:5 (“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding”) is one of his most famous proverbs. In the New Testament the book of James is known as a book of wisdom. It is filled with wise proverbs, such as “Be doers of the word, and not hearers only” and “Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you” (James 1:22; 4:8). And James teaches us that wisdom from God is “first pure,

then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits” (3:17). God’s wisdom leads to peace with people! But we’re not naturally people of peace. And James tells us the best clue of this is our terrible tongues.

TELL THE STORY

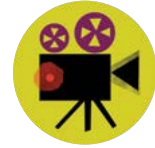
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the
Bible passage
together



Read from
*The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook*



Play *The
Biggest Story*
video

TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

Big Truth

No one can tame
the tongue—only
Jesus can do that.

What’s something really small that has a lot of power? Perhaps a little plastic block when you step on it unexpectedly. Maybe the bit that goes in a horse’s mouth, which allows you to direct such a big and strong animal. Or maybe even a small rudder that sets the course for a huge boat. The Bible says there’s also something else that’s small but has great power: the tongue.

Everyone has a tongue. So everyone has something very powerful. And you’d think people, being the kind and decent folk we are, would use this powerful little instrument for great good. But we don’t. Sure, we say “Please” and “Thank you.” We can offer a word of encouragement or a compliment. We can even go to church and sing praises to God. But our tongues also wound and hurt. We talk back to those God has placed over us. We use our tongues to get our own way, to manipulate. When we’re angry, we say hurtful and unloving words that demean others who are created in God’s image. We gossip about people, repeating hurtful stories just because we like to be in the know. We lie, cuss, tell inappropriate jokes, and brag. James 3 says the tongue is “setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell” (3:6).

You might expect the Bible to tell us we need to tame these filthy tongues of ours; keep them under control. But that’s not what it says. Instead, it says



Story

100

James

3

“every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue” (3:7–8).

Our tongues might be the clearest evidence we need a Savior. Thank God we have such a Savior. And here’s the good news: when we trust the Savior, his Spirit comes into us and starts producing better fruit (see Gal. 5:22–24). Only the Holy Spirit can tame our tongues.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher.
{5 minutes}

Before James talks about our tongues, he talks about judgment and sin. First, he says those who teach others about God “will be judged with greater strictness” (James 3:1). He warns teachers they really need to use their words wisely! Right after that, James talks about sin: “For we all stumble in many ways” (3:2). We are all sinners and sin in a lot of different ways. James says: “If we keep all the commandments but disobey just one, we are guilty in God’s eyes of breaking all of God’s commandments” (see 2:10). Whoa! That means if one day you pray to God, go to church, obey your parents, share your toys, and don’t scream and beg for a candy bar at the checkout counter, but you yell at your friend, “You’re so dumb!” after she loses the board game, you are totally guilty. You are a sinner! That means we’re all guilty. And this is why we need Jesus, the Snake Crusher. Only Jesus never sinned with his tongue. He used his words to encourage people and praise his Father in heaven. And because he tamed his tongue, he was able to offer his body as the perfect sacrifice for our sins. For all our mean and unkind words. And if we believe in him and what he has done for us, then all our sins are forgiven. What good news!

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. **QUESTION:** How do you steer a big boat? How do you get a horse to change directions? How can what we say and how we say it affect our life?

TAKEAWAY: The tongue is small, but it can affect our whole life.

2. **QUESTION:** What are some good things we can do with our words? What are some hurtful things we can do? Why do you think words are so powerful?

3

Engage

TAKEAWAY: The tongue has great power to hurt or help others.

Memory Verse

Let your
speech always
be gracious.
COLOSSIANS 4:6

3. **QUESTION:** What does it mean to tame a dog? How would you try to tame your tongue? How can Jesus help us tame our tongues?

TAKEAWAY: No one can tame the tongue—only Jesus can do that.

4. **QUESTION:** If we want to be wise, how will we use our tongues? Who gives us wisdom to do this?

TAKEAWAY: Wise words praise God and build up others.

ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from *TheBiggestStory.com*, or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Fast Like Fire

Supply List: large beach ball, stopwatch

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Have children line up shoulder-to-shoulder facing a wall, then lie on their backs with their feet 1 to 2 feet from the wall. Place a large beach ball at the end of the line between the children's feet and the wall. Have children pass the ball down the line using only their feet. Have them move the ball fast like a spreading fire. Once a child passes the ball, he must run down to the end of the line and lie down. The goal is to move the ball to the opposite side of the room as quickly as possible. Have a leader time the group, and then have them try again to see if they can beat their time. Remind children that our words can be destructive like fire.

Option 2: Ping-Pong Battle

Supply List: tables, ping pong balls (one per pair)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Set up tables so that children can space themselves out for the ping-pong battle.



Divide children into pairs. Have pairs face each other on opposite sides of a table. Set a ping-pong ball in the middle of each pair. On “Go” have each child try to blow the ball off the opposite side of the table (no hands allowed). The child who succeeds wins the round. Have pairs play best three out of five, then switch teams. Remind children that just as the air we blow has power to move a ball, so our words have power for good or evil.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Attention Ball

Supply List: chairs, ball

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Set up a circle of chairs with one chair less than the number of children. Choose one child to be “It” and to stand in the middle of the circle. Have remaining children sit in a chair. Give a seated child a ball, who will throw it to another seated child before “It” tags her and without “It” intercepting the ball. Seated children continue to throw the ball to one another until someone is tagged or the ball is intercepted. If a child is tagged or the ball she threw is intercepted, she becomes the new “It” and the previous “It” takes her seat. Remind children that just as we paid attention in the game, so we must pay attention to our words and use them wisely.

Option 2: Ping-Pong Battle

Supply List: tables, ping pong balls (one per pair)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Set up tables so that children can space themselves out for the ping-pong battle.

Divide children into pairs. Have pairs face each other on opposite sides of a table. Set a ping-pong ball in the middle of each pair. On “Go” have each child try to blow the ball off the opposite side of the table (no hands allowed). The child who succeeds wins the round. Have pairs play best three out of five, then switch teams. Remind children that just as the air we blow has power to move a ball, so our words have power for good or evil.

CRAFTS

Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Control Your Tongue Puppet

Supply List: red construction paper, paper plates, glue, large googly eyes, pencils, crayons

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut red construction paper into 1" x 12" strips. Make a sample craft.

Place strips and remaining supplies on tables. Children fold a paper plate in half. They then color the plate and glue two googly eyes to the top of the folded plate. Have them write the Big Truth on a strip of red construction paper. Instruct them to open the plate and glue the strip as a tongue inside, with most of the tongue hanging out of the mouth. Have them roll the strip around a pencil to make it curl. Remind children of the importance of controlling their tongues.

Option 2: Building Blocks

Supply List: paper, scissors, glue sticks, colored pencils

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make copies of brick shapes with encouraging words printed on them. Make a sample craft.

Place copies and remaining supplies on tables. Have children color and cut out the bricks, then glue them to a piece of paper to form a shape of their choice (a house, a heart, etc.). Remind children that we want to be people who build others up with our words.



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Option 2: Tame the Tongue

Supply List: crayons, red construction paper, scissors, glue, small paper plates (two per child), craft sticks

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make a sample craft.

Place supplies on tables. Have children brainstorm a list of good things they can do with their mouths (use kind words, be honest, praise God, etc.), and a list of wrong things they can do with their mouths (use mean words, lie, etc.). Have them draw a happy face on one plate and an angry face on a second one. With red construction paper, children cut out two overly large tongues (to exaggerate the power of the tongue). On one tongue they write good things they can do with their mouths, and on the other they write some wrong things. Have them glue each tongue to its corresponding face, then glue the plates back-to-back to a craft stick so both faces are visible. Remind children of the importance of using our words wisely.



Visit TheBiggestStory.com for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.



PART 7

REVELATION

The last book of the Bible — Revelation — is a letter, a prophecy, and an apocalypse. That’s a big word, but it just means that Revelation is a book of revealing. It’s a book that shows the past, the present, and the future through “pictures” written with words.

Although the book can be confusing, the big idea is simple: God and the Lamb sit on the throne, and those who overcome all the trials and temptations of the world will enjoy eternal life with them in the new heavens and new earth. Revelation focuses our attention on Christ as our conquering King and on the church as his beloved people.



STORY 101

Jesus Writes a Letter

REVELATION 1–3

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Revelation 1–3.
- Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is what he has done, and how they should respond to him.
- Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.



THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}

The end is coming! The end of what? The world? Maybe. The end of our lessons—for sure. Only four more lessons to go. We have reached the end of the Bible, the book of Revelation. Revelation is sometimes called the Apocalypse, which is the Greek word for when something is made known, uncovered, or revealed. The book of Revelation *reveals* truths about Jesus, and it does so in a very interesting way. It does so through visions and images, signs and symbols. Maybe you'll even recognize some of these images from the Old Testament (like plagues or gardens or snakes). The visions tell us about the past—like when Jesus died to redeem us. They tell us about the present—like how the church is suffering for believing in Jesus. And they tell us about the future—like how King

Jesus will return to judge evildoers and save all who trust in him. Most of all, the visions reveal Jesus. And the mighty Jesus of Revelation begins the book by writing letters to seven churches. Sounds pretty important! Want to hear more?

TELL THE STORY

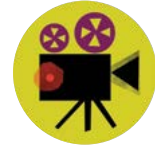
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the
Bible passage
together



Read from
The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook



Play *The*
Biggest Story
video

TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

Big Truth
Jesus warns and encourages the church to keep following him.

In the first chapter of this last book Jesus appears to the apostle John. John is now an old man and he has been exiled to an island called Patmos between Greece and Turkey (not greasy turkey, for the record). There, on Sunday (“the Lord’s Day,” as John calls Sunday), he heard “a loud voice like a trumpet” (Rev. 1:10). That voice was Jesus’s!

When Jesus reveals himself to John, he commands him to write what he sees. And then John saw some strange things—like “a woman sitting on a scarlet beast [that] . . . had seven heads and ten horns” (17:3). What? Wow! John is also to write about Jesus, whom he describes in a strange way too. Jesus is “clothed with a long robe . . . with a golden sash around his chest” (1:13). His hair looks “like white wool” and his eyes “like a flame of fire” and his face “like the sun shining in full strength” (1:14, 16). And he is given titles like “him who is and who was and who is to come” (1:4), “the ruler of kings on earth” (1:5), and “the living one” (1:18).

That powerful and shining Jesus tells the seven churches—whom he loves and has freed from their sins “by his blood” (1:5)—to serve him as priests, that is, to sacrifice their lives as they hold to the truth and share it with others. The seven letters to the seven churches are written to keep them (and us!) on mission. Because Jesus loves the church, he encourages us to believe the right things, keep working hard, continue to be patient, and stand strong through suffering.



Story

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Revelation

1–3

He also, in love, corrects and warns us to return to the truth, remember to love God first, and repent of sins. And he promises us that if we listen to what the Spirit is saying through Jesus's words, we will receive gifts that are out-of-this-world amazing! We will live with Jesus and feast with him in paradise forever. Forever food. Forever fellowship. Forever happiness!

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher.
{5 minutes}

Jesus's letters to the seven churches are like receiving a report card. Have you ever received a report card? If you receive a good report card—A after A and nice remark (“Good job!”) after nice remark (“A joy to teach”)—you feel good; but if you receive a bad report card—failing grades and instruction (“Needs improvement”) after instruction (“Needs to stop hitting others!”)—you feel bad. Feeling bad isn't always bad. A kind teacher tells you where you fall short because she wants to help you grow, not because she wants you simply to feel bad. Jesus is a lot better than the kindest teacher. He loves his church so much that he died for each and every Christian. He loves the church so much that he continues to tell us the truth about ourselves—so that he can help us grow. The way we become a Christian and join the church—turning *from* sin and *to* God—is what we need to do over and over throughout our Christian lives. Repent. Follow Jesus. Keep repenting and keep following Jesus. Jesus saved us once and for all. But Jesus also saved us so that he could change us, helping us pursue goodness day by day until the day he takes us home.

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. **QUESTION:** Have you ever had to cover your eyes because someone wanted to surprise you with something? When you opened your eyes, what was revealed? What is being revealed to John by Jesus in the last book of the Bible?

TAKEAWAY: In Revelation Jesus shows John what is and what will be in the future.

2. **QUESTION:** Do any of you remember the visions Joseph had or what they meant? How about the visions that Daniel interpreted for the kings? How are

3

Engage

visions different from real life? What big truth do the visions in Revelation reveal to encourage the church?

TAKEAWAY: No matter what happens, Jesus will defeat evil and rescue his people.

Memory Verse

Fear not, I am
the first and the
last, and the living
one. I died, and
behold I am alive
forevermore, and
I have the keys of
Death and Hades.

REVELATION 1:17-18

3. **QUESTION:** How many churches did the letter address? What were some of the things the churches were doing wrong? What were they doing right? What things do you need to keep doing or stop doing?

TAKEAWAY: The letter to the seven churches warns them and encourages them to keep following Jesus no matter what.

4. **QUESTION:** Have your parents ever promised you good things if you obey them? Does that help you when you're tempted to disobey them? What amazing things does Jesus promise us if we listen to and obey his words? How can that help you when you're tempted to disobey his words?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus promises us that if we listen to his words, we will receive blessings beyond what we can imagine.

ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from TheBiggestStory.com, or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Trumpet Tag

Supply List: paper, marker, tape

Before Class: Gather supplies. Write Jesus on a piece of paper and tape it to a wall in the room.

Choose one child to be “It,” and begin a game of tag. When a child is tagged, he must freeze. When the teacher makes a trumpet sound, every child must run to the sign that says *Jesus*. The last child to get to the sign is the new “It.” Remind children that when John was given the visions of Revelation, he heard a voice like a trumpet.



Option 2: Keys Game

Supply List: chairs, set of keys

Before Class: Gather supplies. Scatter chairs randomly around the room (one chair less than the number of children).

Have everyone sit on a chair. The child without a chair is the leader. Give the leader a set of keys that jingle. The leader walks through the chairs and grabs someone's hand, lifting him up to walk with him. That person then grabs another child's hand, who does the same. Children continue to join the train until the leader drops the keys. When the keys drop, everyone standing must run to sit in a chair. The child who does not get a chair is the leader for the next round. Remind children that Jesus holds the keys—he has authority over everything, even “Death and Hades” (Rev. 1:18).

3rd–5th

Option 1: Pass the Letter Game

Supply List: toilet paper (one roll per team)

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Divide children into two teams, and have teams line up single file. Distribute a roll of toilet paper to each team. On “Go” the first child holds the end of the toilet paper and passes the roll over her shoulder to the child behind her. The next person continues to unroll the toilet paper as he passes it under his legs to the child behind him. This pattern continues (shoulder/legs/shoulder/legs) until the end of the line. The last child wraps the toilet paper around her waist and starts it back the opposite way. The first team to use up their roll of toilet paper wins. If at any point the toilet paper rips, the team is responsible for keeping it from touching the ground for the remainder of the game. Remind children that the letters were to be passed from one church to the next.

Option 2: Keys Game

Supply List: chairs, set of keys

Before Class: Gather supplies. Scatter chairs randomly around the room (one chair less than the number of children).

Have everyone sit on a chair. The child without a chair is the leader. Give the leader a set of keys that jingle. The leader walks through the chairs and grabs someone's hand, lifting him up to walk with him. That person then grabs another child's hand, who does the same. Children continue to join the train until the leader drops the keys. When the keys drop, everyone standing must run to sit in a chair. The child who does not get a chair is the leader for the next round. Remind children that Jesus holds the keys—he has authority over everything, even “Death and Hades” (Rev. 1:18).

CRAFTS

Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Ear Headband

Supply List: cardstock, construction paper, paper, scissors, tape, crayons, stapler

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, make copies of a left ear and a right ear. Cut construction paper into 2-inch wide strips. Staple two strips together to form one long strip (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Place copies, stapled strips, and remaining supplies on tables. Children color and cut out the ears, then tape them upright to a stapled strip. Have children write “He who has an ear, let him hear” on the headband. Help children to fit the headband around their heads like a crown and then to staple the ends together. Remind children that the phrase “He who has an ear, let him hear” is repeated in the letters to the churches in Revelation.

Option 2: Jesus Holds the Keys

Supply List: cardstock, scissors, crayons, hole punches, binder rings

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, make copies of a large key (three keys per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child three key papers. Set remaining supplies on tables. Help children write one phrase about Jesus's authority on each key (e.g., Jesus holds the keys to

death, Jesus holds the keys to life, Jesus holds the keys to my heart, Jesus holds the keys to salvation. Jesus holds the keys to heaven). Children color and cut out the keys. Help children to punch a hole in the top of each key and then to put them together on a binder ring. Remind children that Jesus holds the keys. He has authority over all things!

3rd–5th

Option 1: Revelation 3:20 Door

Supply List: paper, scissors, colored pencils, glue sticks

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make copies of Revelation 3:20 centered on a piece of paper (one per child): “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.” Make copies of double doors that are larger than the words of the verse (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child a verse paper and door paper. Place remaining supplies on tables. Children color the doors and cut them out separately. Then they glue the far ends of the doors over the verse so that the doors meet in the middle and can open to reveal the verse.

Option 2: Jesus Holds the Keys

Supply List: cardstock, scissors, crayons, hole punches, binder rings

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, make copies of a large key (three keys per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child three key papers. Set remaining supplies on tables. Help children write one phrase about Jesus’s authority on each key (e.g., Jesus holds the keys to death, Jesus holds the keys to life, Jesus holds the keys to my heart, Jesus holds the keys to salvation. Jesus holds the keys to heaven). Children color and cut out the keys. Help children to punch a hole in the top of each key and then to put them together on a binder ring. Remind children that Jesus holds the keys. He has authority over all things!



Visit TheBiggestStory.com for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.



Story

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Revelation

1–3



STORY 102

The Center of the Universe

REVELATION 4–5

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Revelation 4–5.
- Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is what he has done, and how they should respond to him.
- Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.



THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}

If you had to draw a picture that represented the fourth day of creation, when God created the lights in the sky (the sun, moon, and stars), what picture would you draw? Maybe a sunrise, or a half moon with a few stars flickering around it. You can draw the sun, moon, and stars because you have seen those lights in the sky. You know what they look like, at least from a great distance. How about if you had to draw the parting of the Red Sea, when the Israelites escaped from Pharaoh and the Egyptian army? No one today has seen anything like that—two huge waves separating so people can walk through on dry land. But everyone could draw something, right? We all know what dry land, armies, and waves look like. How about God? Can you draw a picture of God? We're not talking



about drawing Jesus, who we all know was a person. How would you draw the eternal, invisible God who is Spirit but not flesh? The book of Revelation gives us a picture of *that* God. Want to see it?

TELL THE STORY

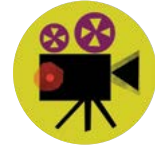
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the
Bible passage
together



Read from
The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook



Play *The*
Biggest Story
video

TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

Big Truth
God is the
center of all
creation and
worthy of all
praise.

Picture this! John had another dreamlike vision. He saw an opened door to heaven. He walked through, and he heard again that voice that sounded like a trumpet. Whose voice is that? Jesus's! "Come up here," Jesus said, "and I will show you what must take place" (Rev. 4:1). The next thing you know, God the Spirit took John to the throne room of God the Father. John saw a vision of "one seated on the throne" (4:2), who looked like jasper and carnelian and emerald—beautiful, colorful, and expensive stones. God wasn't literally sitting on some throne looking like three stones. God doesn't have a body, and he doesn't need something to sit on. The throne symbolizes God's power and control; the stones his beauty and mercy. "From the throne came flashes of lightning" and "peals of thunder," and "before the throne" everything was still, as if it was "a sea of glass" (4:5–6). Power and peace. John sees incredible creatures too. Surrounding the throne are four living creatures who have six wings and eyes on every part of their bodies, and all they do day and night is sing, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty" (4:8). Circling the throne are twenty-four men seated on twenty-four thrones, wearing white garments and gold crowns. These people cast their crowns before their Creator and say:

Worthy are you, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honor and power,

for you created all things,
and by your will they existed and were created. (4:11)

What an amazing vision of God! We can't see him, but we can see who he is: powerful, the center of the universe, holy, good and merciful.

But that is not all John saw that day. This Mighty God was holding a scroll that was sealed with seven seals. Super sealed! An angel called out, "Who is worthy to open the scroll?" (5:2). Silence. More silence. No one could open it. Then John was so sad that he started to sob. As John was crying, one of the men on the thrones said, "Weep no more; look, the Lion, the promised king! He can open the scroll." As John wiped his eyes, he didn't see a mighty conquering lion but a lamb who was slain but is now alive. This Lion/Lamb is Jesus. Jesus took the scroll, and as he did so, everyone sang and shouted, praising the Father and the Son through the Spirit: "To him who sits on the throne [the Father] and to the Lamb [the Son] be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!" (5:13). Amen!

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher.
{5 minutes}

When the Lamb (who is also the Lion!) took the scroll, a short song was sung:

Worthy are you to take the scroll
and to open its seals,
for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God
from every tribe and language and people and nation,
and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God,
and they shall reign on the earth. (Rev. 5:9–10)

That song might sound complicated, but the ideas in it are simple—and super important. We praise Jesus for the good news that he alone is holy enough to open the sealed scroll. And that he alone made the blood sacrifice on the cross that set sinners free from our slavery to sin. More than that, Jesus's death turned unholy people into priests. We don't make sacrifices in the temple, like priests in the Old Testament did. We sacrifice ourselves by giving our whole lives to God (see Rom. 12:1–2). And we don't do this alone. No, Jesus has gathered in his kingdom people from every nation around the world and throughout time. That's a big kingdom! That's a good kingdom. That's the perfect kingdom that every follower of Jesus will live in someday. That makes me want to shout and sing to our amazing God.



Story

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Revelation

4–5

3

Engage

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. **QUESTION:** What does John see when he enters the door to heaven? Who is at the very center of the throne room? What do the creatures around the throne do and say? Who is worthy of all their praise?

TAKEAWAY: God is the center of all creation and worthy of all praise.

2. **QUESTION:** Does God have a body that you can draw? How does John describe God to help us understand what he is like? What does the lightning and thunder show? What about the throne?

TAKEAWAY: God has no body but he rules with perfect power and control.

3. **QUESTION:** How many seals does the scroll have? Who can't open the scroll? Who can? How is Jesus described?

TAKEAWAY: Only Jesus is worthy to open the sealed scroll.

4. **QUESTION:** Do you remember the song that everyone sang after Jesus took the scroll? Why did they call Jesus the Lamb who was slain? How did Jesus rescue us from slavery to sin? Who will be a part of this perfect kingdom?

TAKEAWAY: By his blood Jesus has rescued people from every nation to live in his perfect kingdom on earth.

Memory Verse

To him who sits
on the throne
and to the Lamb
be blessing and
honor and glory
and might forever
and ever!

REVELATION 5:13

ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from TheBiggestStory.com, or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Rainbow Tag

Supply List: pool noodle

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Choose one child to be “It,” and have her stand in the middle of the room with a pool noodle. Remaining children line up on one end of the room. When “It”



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4–5

calls out a color, all children wearing that color try to run to the opposite side of the room without being tagged by the pool noodle. Any child who is tagged is out. If “It” calls out “Rainbow” all players must run to the other side. The last child remaining wins. Remind children that in John's vision, he saw a rainbow encircling the throne of God.

Option 2: Revelation Four Corners

Supply List: paper, marker, tape

Before Class: Gather supplies. Label the four corners in the room as Lion, Ox, Man, and Eagle.

Select one child to stand in the middle of the room with eyes closed. Give remaining children 30 seconds to choose one corner to stand in. Have the child in the middle call out one of the four creatures. Any children who chose that corner are out, and must move to the side and act like that creature until the game ends. Play continues until one person remains. Remind children that in John's vision there were four living creatures around the throne that continuously said, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.”

3rd–5th

Option 1: Musical Thrones

Supply List: chairs, chair decorations, music

Before Class: Gather supplies. Decorate a chair to represent God's throne. Arrange all chairs (including decorated one) in a circle facing outward (one per child).

Have children sit in a chair. Start some music. As the music plays, children stand and walk clockwise around the circle. Take one chair out (not the “throne”). When the music stops, all children must try to sit on a chair. The child who doesn't find a chair is out. Whoever sits in the throne must shout, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come.” Whoever is out joins them in shouting the words. Continue this process until all chairs have been removed except the throne and everyone is shouting the verse. Remind children that John saw a vision of the throne of God in heaven.

Option 2: Rainbow Tag

Supply List: pool noodle

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Choose one child to be “It,” and have her stand in the middle of the room with a pool noodle. Remaining children line up on one end of the room. When “It” calls out a color, all children wearing that color try to run to the opposite side of the room without being tagged by the pool noodle. Any child who is tagged is out. If “It” calls out “Rainbow” all players must run to the other side. The last child remaining wins. Remind children that in John's vision, he saw a rainbow encircling the throne of God.

CRAFTS

Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Revelation Crowns

Supply List: cardstock, scissors, tape, markers, jewels, sequins, glue

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, make copies of a zigzag line down the center lengthwise (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Place copies and remaining supplies on tables. Children take a paper, cut along the zigzag line, and tape the two pieces together to form a flat crown. (Do not yet form the circle.) Have them decorate with provided supplies. Once crowns are decorated, help children form the crown into a circle and tape to secure. Remind children that the people threw their crowns before God in worship.

Option 2: Lion and the Lamb

Supply List: paper, yellow yarn, cotton balls, glue, crayons

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make copies of the words “Jesus is” written in large letters at the top of the paper, with a vertical line underneath the words dividing the paper into two sections. Cut yellow yarn into 2-inch lengths. Make a sample craft.



Set copies, yarn pieces, and remaining supplies on tables. Children take the paper, draw a lion on one side that represents the Lion of Judah. On the other side, have them draw a lamb that represents the Lamb who was slain. Have them glue yarn pieces to the lion's mane and cotton balls to the lamb's body. Remind children that Jesus is called both the Lion of Judah and the Lamb who was slain. He is the only one worthy of opening the scroll.

3rd-5th

Option 1: Revelation Crowns

Supply List: cardstock, scissors, tape, markers, jewels, sequins, glue

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, make copies of a zigzag line down the center lengthwise (one per child). Make a sample craft.

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Visit TheBiggestStory.com for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.



STORY 103

The Snake Crusher Wins

REVELATION 20

BEFORE THE LESSON

- *Read Revelation 20.*
- *Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is what he has done, and how they should respond to him.*
- *Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.*

1

Read

THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}

2

Teach

"I learn best by watching." Have you ever heard someone say that? Have you said it yourself? It means that you learn better by seeing things than reading words or listening to words. The Bible is a book. So, yes, it is full of words. Words matter to God, and God's people are people of the Book. But God's inspired word is full of *stories*. The Biggest Story is one story after another that comes together to tell God's story. That Big Story in the Big Book is also filled with pictures. God knows we learn by seeing. And no book of the Bible has more images than the book of Revelation. In Revelation 1 Jesus is pictured with pure white hair and shining brighter than sun to show us something of his holiness. In Revelation 5 he is pictured as a lion and then a lamb to show us that our powerful King (the Lion) is also a meek and merciful Savior (the Lamb). In Revelation 20–21

Jesus is pictured as the Snake Crusher. Well, at least that is what he is called in Genesis 3, and what we have been calling Jesus over and over. Want to see what happens to Satan when Jesus comes again?

TELL THE STORY

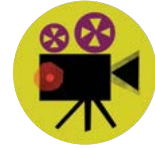
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the
Bible passage
together



Read from
*The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook*



Play *The
Biggest Story*
video

TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

Big Truth
The Snake
Crusher will
judge Satan
once and
for all.

Some people try to guess what Jesus looked like, depicting Jesus as having blonde hair and blue eyes or black hair and brown eyes. Others think of Jesus as having brown skin (like many people from Greece) or black skin (like people many people from Kenya) or white skin (like many people from Sweden). But we don't know what he actually looked like! Sometimes too we think of Jesus in terms of one story or setting: Do you think of him as a baby in the manger? Do you think of him with a halo around his head, standing in a cloud, with his hands raised up? Or, as sad and weak, hanging on a cross with his arms stretched out and a crown of thorns stuck in his head?

On the island of Patmos, nearly two thousand years ago, the apostle John had a vision of Jesus. It was a strange vision of the *real* Jesus, who now rules as the King of kings, who rescues his church from evil, and who will come soon to judge the world. John saw what we today and always should see: Jesus the Lion (King), Jesus the Lamb (Savior), Jesus the Snake Crusher (Judge). Yes, Jesus, who defeated death and conquered the grave, will soon judge and crush Satan. Yes, that slithering serpent of old—who accuses and tempts God's people and tells lies to the world—will be “thrown into the lake of fire” (Rev. 20:10). His day of doom is soon!



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On that day everyone will stand before “a great white throne” of judgment (20:11). Those who believe in Jesus will not experience God’s wrath. Their names are written in *the book of life*. But that is not the only book that will be opened on judgment day. Books will be opened that list everything every person has thought, said, and done. That would be a long read, right? And not a fun one. And those who followed the ways of the snake will be judged with the snake: “Anyone’s name [that] was not found written in the book of life . . . was thrown into the lake of fire” (20:15). Jesus wins! Death is defeated. Evil is judged.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher.
{5 minutes}

What is described in Revelation 20 can be scary. Are you afraid of the lake of fire? God’s judgment throne? Can you imagine each and every sinful thought, word, and deed being read aloud when people stand before God on judgment day? Scary stuff! We should all fear God. He is an awesome, powerful, and holy God. But if we believe in Jesus, we don’t need to be afraid. Or—to use the images above—if our names are written in the book of life, our future will not be filled with fear but a feast!

Revelation 21 describes heaven as being like a wonderful banquet. An all-you-can-and-want-to-eat forever feast! It’s also a wedding feast. Who’s getting married? Get this—the church! Everyone who has followed Jesus. We are called “the Bride, the wife of the Lamb” (21:9). The Lamb (who we know is Jesus) is marrying us. And just like a bridegroom, the Lamb showed how much he loved his bride—not with a ring but with his life. He was slain for us. And now that he has come to life, Jesus invites us to know him and love him as much as a bride loves her husband on the wedding day.

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. QUESTION: What are some ways that Jesus is pictured in Revelation? What does it mean that he is a Lion? A Lamb? The Snake Crusher?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus is a Lion, a Lamb, and the Snake Crusher.

3

Engage

Memory Verse
Salvation and
glory and power
belong to our
God, for his
judgments are
true and just.

REVELATION 19:1-2

2. **QUESTION:** When did God promise that someone would come and crush the head of the serpent? How did Jesus do that on the cross? If Satan is still at work in the world today, when will he be crushed once and for all?

TAKEAWAY: When Jesus returns, the Snake Crusher crushes Satan once and for all.

3. **QUESTION:** What does it mean to judge something? Who does Revelation say will stand before the judgment throne of God? Is there anyone who won't be there?

TAKEAWAY: Everyone everywhere will stand before the judgment throne of God.

4. **QUESTION:** When we stand before the judgment throne, what is opened? What do those books say? What book do our names need to be written in to live forever and escape the lake of fire? How do we get our names written in that book?

TAKEAWAY: Only those who believe in Jesus have their names in the book of life.

ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from TheBiggestStory.com, or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Dragon Tag

Supply List: scarves (one per team)

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Divide children into groups of four to five, and have them link arms to form a “Dragon.” Give the child on the end a scarf to act as the “tail,” and have him tuck it into the back of his waistband. Have teams spread out in the room. On “Go” the dragons chase each other and try to grab other teams’ tails. Only the first child in the dragon chain can pull tails. When a team’s tail gets pulled, they must keep running together as an obstacle for other teams, but they can



no longer pull tails. If a team's chain breaks during play, the team must relink their arms, but with a different child at both the head and tail. The last team to keep their tail intact wins. Remind children that in Revelation 20, the serpent Satan is also called a dragon.

Option 2: Stay Away from Fire! Tag

Supply List: balloons (red or orange to represent fire)

Before Class: Gather and inflate balloons.

Choose two children to be "It." These two children try to hit the balloons into the other children. If a child is hit with a balloon, she is "burned" and must sit down in that spot. The last two children standing win and become "It" for the next round. Remind children that there is a lake of fire and eternal punishment for the serpent and for those whose names are not written in the book of life.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Dragon Tag

Supply List: scarves (one per team)

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Divide children into groups of four to five, and have them link arms to form a "Dragon." Give the child on the end a scarf to act as the "tail," and have him tuck it into the back of his waistband. Have teams spread out in the room. On "Go" the dragons chase each other and try to grab other teams' tails. Only the first child in the dragon chain can pull tails. When a team's tail gets pulled, they must keep running together as an obstacle for other teams, but they can no longer pull tails. If a team's chain breaks during play, the team must relink their arms, but with a different child at both the head and tail. The last team to keep their tail intact wins. Remind children that in Revelation 20, the serpent Satan is also called a dragon.

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CRAFTS

Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Sponge Painting

Supply List: sponges, scissors, clothespins, cardstock, washable paint, paper plates, double-sided tape

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut sponges into squares and rectangles. Clip a clothespin to the top of each sponge. On cardstock, make copies of a large throne and cut out (one per child). Place various colors of paint on paper plates. Make a sample craft.

Place prepared supplies on tables. Give each child a piece of white cardstock. Have them place a strip of double-sided tape to the back of a throne template and stick it to their paper. Children dab the sponges into the paint and press it around the throne on their paper. When the paper around the throne is covered with paint, they gently pull off the throne template to reveal a great white throne. Remind children that Jesus will reign forever.

Option 2: Beaded Name Bracelet

Supply List: elastic, letter beads, colored beads

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut thin elastic into 8-inch pieces. Place an assortment of beads on paper plates. Make a sample craft.

Place beads on tables. Give each child a piece of elastic. Have each children find the letters to his or her name and string them onto a piece of elastic. Children

choose a bead pattern to add to the elastic on both sides of their names, leaving space at each end to knot ends together. Help children knot the ends and tie the bracelets to their wrist. Remind children that everyone who believes in Jesus the Snake Crusher has his or her name written in the book of life.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Victory Pennant

Supply List: cardstock, markers/colored pencils, straws, tape, scissors

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, make copies of a pennant flag template with the word Victory! written in large block letters on the pennant (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Place copies and remaining supplies on tables. Children decorate the pennant and draw a picture of the Snake Crusher having victory over the serpent or dragon. Children then cut out their pennant, attaching a straw to the side with tape. Remind children that the day is coming when the Snake Crusher will have ultimate and final victory and the devil will be powerless forever.

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Supply List: elastic, letter beads, colored beads

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut thin elastic into 8-inch pieces. Place an assortment of beads on paper plates. Make a sample craft.

Place beads on tables. Give the children each a piece of elastic. Have each children find the letters to his or her name and string them onto a piece of elastic. Children choose a bead pattern to add to the elastic on both sides of their names, leaving space at each end to knot ends together. Help children knot the ends and tie the bracelets to their wrist. Remind children that everyone who believes in Jesus the Snake Crusher has his or her name written in the book of life.



Visit TheBiggestStory.com for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.

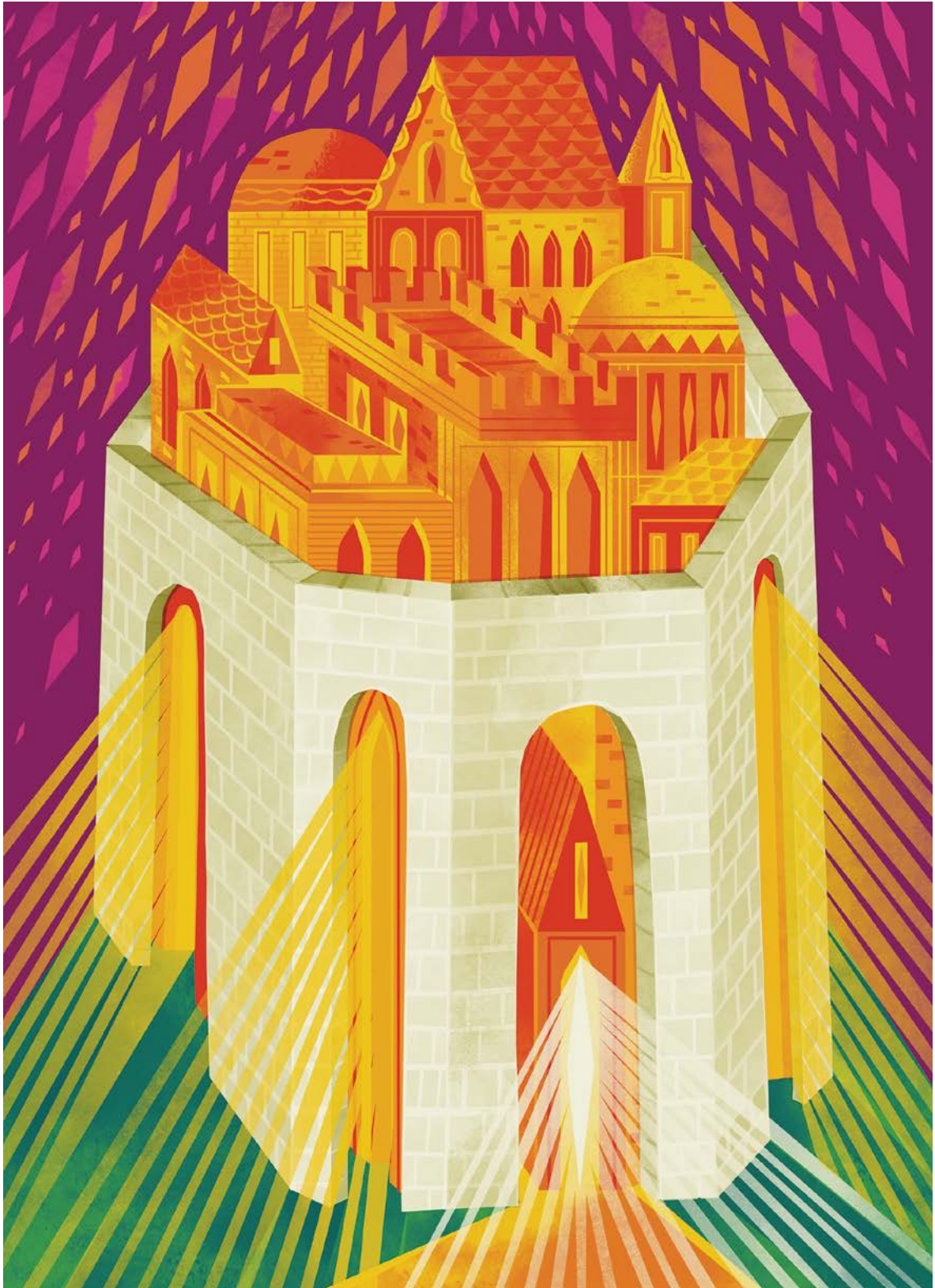


Story

103

Revelation

20



STORY 104

All Things New

REVELATION 21–22

BEFORE THE LESSON

- *Read Revelation 21–22.*
- *Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is what he has done, and how they should respond to him.*
- *Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.*

1

Read

THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}

2

Teach

The last lesson! But a lesson about new beginnings. The first chapter of the Bible—Genesis 1—records God's creation of the heavens and the earth. On the first day, light was created. On the second day, the sky was created. On the third day land, plants, trees, and the sea were created. On the fourth day, the sun, moon, and stars were created. On the fifth day, creatures—on the land, in the sky, and under the sea—were created. On the sixth day, animals were created. Humans too! Yes, God created man and woman in his image. They were God's good people living in God's good land and ruling over God's good creation.

On the last day of the first heavens and earth, God will judge every man, woman, and child. The book of Revelation shows us that those who reject Jesus as their King and Savior will go to everlasting destruction and those who trust

him as Savior and bow before him as King will go to everlasting life. Revelation also *shows* us the place where God’s people (“the Bride . . . of the Lamb,” Rev. 21:9) will live. But the last day of the first heavens and earth will be the first day of the new heavens and earth. Do you think there will be trees there? Land? Waters? The sun, moon, and stars? Let’s see what Revelation *shows*.

TELL THE STORY

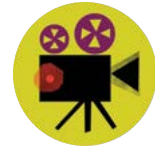
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the
Bible passage
together



Read from
The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook



Play *The*
Biggest Story
video

TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

Big Truth
When Jesus
returns, he will
create new heavens
and earth with no
suffering, sin,
or Satan.

How does it make you feel when you hear about an army, somewhere in the world, moving their tanks, flying their fighter jets into another country, knocking down their buildings, killing people, and taking over? Does it make you mad? Sad? Both sad and mad? How does it make you feel when someone pushes you on the playground, steals your stuff, or calls you mean names? Does it make you mad? Sad? Both sad and mad? How do you feel when a baby dies? Does it make you mad? Sad? Both sad and mad? We live in very broken world. We sin. Other people around us sin. Everyone everywhere sins. And everyone everywhere dies or will soon die. That is the bad news. But there is good news: Jesus has saved many sinners from sin and death. And sometime soon, he will return to earth to deal with sin and suffering and Satan once and for all. What better-than-amazing news!

More than that, he will give us a new home. It will be like the garden of Eden. It will have a river, trees, flowers, animals, and maybe even mosquitoes that don’t bite. It will be like Eden, but better. The Bible calls it the new earth. And on the new earth, there will be a new Jerusalem. This holy city will be on a high mountain and made of “pure gold” (Rev. 21:18). It will be surrounded by “a great,



Story

104

Revelation

21–22

high wall, with twelve gates [made of pearls]" (21:12), and the wall's foundation will be "adorned with every kind of jewel" (21:19). Beautiful! Glorious! It is beautiful and glorious because God is there. God's full presence means there is no need for a temple. And there is no need for the sun, moon, or stars because "the glory of God gives it light" (22:21) and by its light God's people from every nation live, laugh, and love. "His servants will worship him" (22:3). Together, with God, this people made in Christ's image will do what they were created to do: "Reign forever and ever" (22:5). And God will do what he promised to do: "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore" (21:4). No more reasons to be mad and sad. I can't wait for that day!

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher.
{5 minutes}

Throughout the ages and in every country around the world, Christians have made this simple confession of faith: "Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again." We could add to that: "Christ came to earth; Christ was born; Christ lived the perfect life." We can think of the Son of God's mission on earth as summarized in those six key events: (1) He left heaven for earth. (2) He was born a human of Mary in the town of Bethlehem. (3) He lived a life without sin, healed the sick, cast out demons, taught truths, and welcomed people to follow him. (4) He suffered and died on the cross on behalf of sinners. (5) He rose in glory from the grave. (6) Someday soon he will come again to gather his people, judge evil, and renew creation. Isn't Jesus amazing? Yes! Shouldn't we praise him? Yes! And shouldn't we long for the day when he returns? Yes, or "Amen." Let the last line of the Bible (well, the second to last!) be our words now and until Jesus comes: "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev. 22:20).

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

- 1. QUESTION:** Why were Adam and Eve forced to leave the garden of Eden? How will Jesus finally destroy the evil that entered the world when they disobeyed God? After evil is destroyed, where will God's people live?

TAKEAWAY: After evil is destroyed, Jesus will create a new heavens and earth.

3

Engage

Memory Verse
Behold, I am
making all
things new.

REVELATION 21:5

2. **QUESTION:** Did God dwell with Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden? Where did God dwell with his people in the Old Testament? How did God dwell with his people after Jesus died and rose again? Where will God dwell with his people when Jesus comes again?

TAKEAWAY: In the new creation God will dwell with his people forever.

3. **QUESTION:** What are some things that make you sad? Can you imagine what it will be like if there was no sadness or sin or Satan? When will that happen?

TAKEAWAY: In the new creation there will be no suffering, no sin, no Satan, and no tears.

4. **QUESTION:** What are some promises that God has made? Has he kept all of them? Is it possible for God to lie? What was the last thing that Jesus told John in his vision? How does that make you feel?

TAKEAWAY: We can know for certain that Jesus is coming soon to crush Satan and make all things new.

ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from TheBiggestStory.com, or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Old to New Relay

Supply List: index cards, marker

Before Class: Gather supplies. Write each of the following words on a separate index card: old, new, tears, joy, death, life, pain, no pain (two sets per team).

Divide children into teams of four. Set the cards that say *old, tears, death* and *pain* in a pile at the starting line of each team. Set the cards that say *new, joy, life*, and *no pain* on the opposite side of the room from each team. On “Go!” have the first child on each team take a card from her pile, slide step down to the



opposite side, find the card that is the opposite of the one she picked, and skip it back to her team. Have the next child repeat the process. The first team to get all the new words back to their team wins. Remind children that Revelation 21:5 says, “I am making all things new!”

Option 2: Jewel Relay

Supply List: plastic jewels, bowls, spoons, glue sticks, paper, marker

Before Class: Gather supplies. Divide jewels evenly among bowls (one per team). Place bowls along a starting line. On the opposite side of the room from each bowl, lay a piece of paper that says New and set a glue stick in front of it.

Divide children into teams of four to five and have them line up behind a bowl with a spoon. On “Go!” have the first child on each team use the spoon to scoop one plastic jewel out of his bowl, carry it down to the other side of the room, glue the jewel to his *New* paper, and return the spoon to the next child on his team, who repeats the process. If the jewel falls off the spoon, the child must spin in a circle two times before picking up the jewel and continuing the race. The first team to glue all their jewels to their *New* paper wins. Remind children that the New Jerusalem is described as full of precious stones and gold!

3rd–5th

Option 1: Through the Gate

Supply List: masking tape, dodgeballs, large beach ball

Before Class: Gather supplies. Use masking tape to mark a line down the center of the room and a goal line (“gates”) on each side.

Divide children into two teams and have each team line up behind one goal line. Children must stay behind the goal line during game play. Place a big beach ball in the center of the room and disperse smaller dodgeballs equally to each team. On “Go!” have children use the dodgeballs to try to hit the beach ball across the opposing team’s goal line. Teams get a point each time they successfully get the beach ball across the opposing team’s goal line. Continue play until one team gets 12 points. Remind children that there are twelve gates in the New Jerusalem.

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CRAFTS

Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Wind Sock

Supply List: string, paper streamers, paper plates, crayons, stapler, glue, cotton balls, hole punches

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut string into 10-inch lengths (one per child). Cut streamers into 12-inch lengths. Make a sample craft.

Place string, streamers, and remaining supplies on tables. Help children fold a paper plate in half and staple it shut. Have them write “Come, Lord Jesus!” on the paper plate (fold-side up) and color it. Children stretch the cotton balls and glue them around the words. They then glue streamers to the circular edge of the wind sock. Help children punch two side-by-side holes at the top of their wind sock. Thread the string through both holes and tie the ends together for hanging. Remind children that Jesus will come again! We should be ready and keep looking up!



Option 2: "No More _____" Craft

Supply List: paper, crayons

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make copies of a paper that is divided into three sections labeled "No pain," "No death," and "No tears" (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Children draw a picture to represent each section, then put a large X on top of each picture. Remind children that the new earth will be perfect in every way!

3rd-5th

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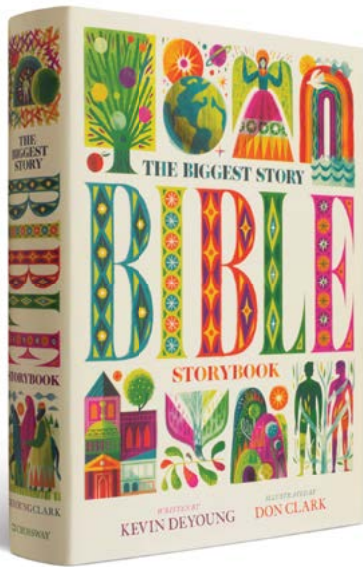
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The Biggest Story leads kids through the overarching story of the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. These resources can be used together to help children engage with Scripture and grow to know and love God better.



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Each colorful, pocket-size card in this set of 104 features a Bible verse and an illustration to help children remember key verses from Genesis through Revelation.

Purchase a set for each student and hand out a card after each corresponding lesson.

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