



Use Week of:

Easter • Session 2

Jesus' Crucifixion and Resurrection

BIBLE PASSAGE:

Matthew 26–28; 1 Corinthians 15

STORY POINT:

Jesus' resurrection gives us hope for eternal life.

KEY PASSAGE:

John 3:30

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

Why did Jesus become human? Jesus became human to obey His Father's plan and rescue sinners.

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Additional resources are available at gospelproject.com. For free training and session-by-session help, visit MinistryGrid.com/thegospelproject.

LEADER Bible Study

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

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

Jesus died on the cross to satisfy the wrath of God toward sin. His resurrection proved that God was satisfied with Jesus' sacrifice. If Jesus had died but not been raised up, He would have been like military leaders who died without a throne. (Acts 5:33-37) But Jesus conquered death, just as He said He would. (John 2:19-21) If there was no resurrection, Paul says, our faith would be worthless. We would be dead in our sins. (1 Cor. 15:17)

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

Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection are not the end of the story, but the center of it. As you teach kids this Bible story, emphasize the gospel: the good news of who Jesus is and what He has done. We do not worship a dead Savior. Jesus is alive! There is hope for sinners. Jesus' resurrection gives believers the promise of new life. "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:22).

The BIBLE Story

Jesus' Crucifixion and Resurrection

Matthew 26–28; 1 Corinthians 15

After Jesus was arrested, He was led to the high priest. The religious leaders were trying to find a reason to kill Jesus, but they could not. The high priest asked, “Are You the Messiah, the Son of God?”

Jesus replied, “Yes, that’s right.”

The high priest said, “He has spoken against God! He deserves to die!” The religious leaders refused to believe that Jesus was God’s Son.

In the morning, the religious leaders led Jesus to Pilate, the governor. “Are You the King of the Jews?” Pilate asked.

“Yes, that’s right,” Jesus replied.

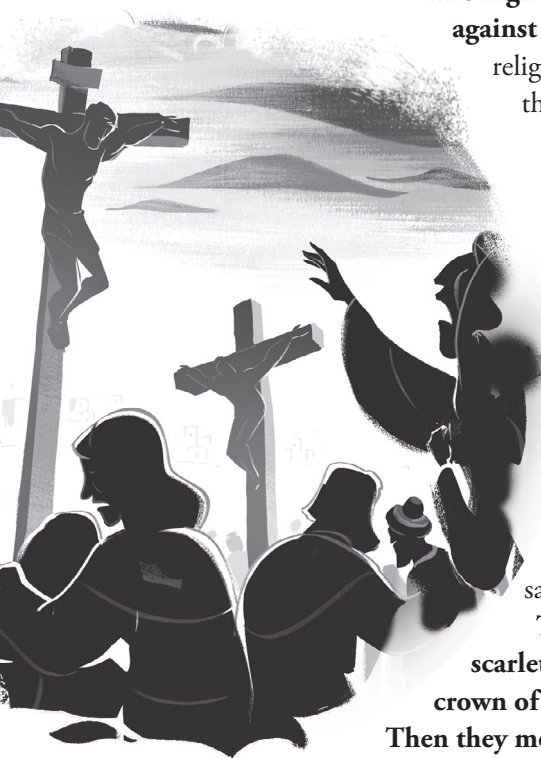
“What should I do with Jesus?” Pilate asked the crowd. “Crucify Him!” they answered. Pilate did not think Jesus had done anything wrong, but he handed Jesus over and said, “Do whatever you want.”

The governor’s soldiers put a scarlet robe on Jesus. They made a crown of thorns and put it on His head.

Then they mocked Him: “Here is the King of the Jews!” They beat Jesus and led Him away to

be killed.

The soldiers nailed Jesus to a cross. They put a sign above His head that said THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS. Two



criminals were crucified next to Him.

Darkness covered the land. **Jesus cried out, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” Jesus shouted again and then He died.** Suddenly, the curtain in the temple sanctuary split in two, from top to bottom, and there was an earthquake. One of the men guarding Jesus’ body said, “This man really was God’s Son!”

Jesus was buried in a tomb. A stone was sealed in front of the tomb so that no one could steal Jesus’ body.

On the third day, Mary Magdalene (MAG duh leen) and the other Mary went to the tomb. Suddenly there was an earthquake. **An angel of the Lord rolled back the stone and sat on it.** The guards were so afraid that they fainted.

The angel spoke to the women, “Don’t be afraid! I know you are looking for Jesus. He is not here. He has risen, just like He said He would.”

The women left the tomb quickly. They ran to tell the disciples the good news. Just then Jesus greeted them. The women worshiped Him. “Don’t be afraid,” Jesus told them. “Tell My followers to go to Galilee. They will see Me there.”

Jesus appeared to Peter and then to the other disciples. Jesus also appeared to more than 500 people who followed Him. **Many people witnessed that Jesus is alive!**

Christ Connection: Jesus’ death and resurrection is the center of the gospel. In Adam, we were spiritually dead in sin, but Jesus died to pay for our sins. Jesus is alive! God gives new life to everyone who trusts in Jesus.

Bible Storytelling Tips

- **Draw pictures:** Sketch symbols as you tell the story—a question mark for Jesus’ trial, a cross for His death, a rising sun for His resurrection, and so on.
- **Use lighting effects:** Begin the story with lights dimmed. Raise the lights when telling of Jesus’ resurrection.

INTRODUCE the Story



SESSION TITLE: Jesus' Crucifixion and Resurrection

BIBLE PASSAGE: Matthew 26–28; 1 Corinthians 15

STORY POINT: Jesus' resurrection gives us hope for eternal life.

KEY PASSAGE: John 3:30

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why did Jesus become human? Jesus became human to obey His Father's plan and rescue sinners.

Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Prompt kids to discuss what their family does to celebrate Easter. Steer conversations away from secular traditions to help kids focus on the true reason for Easter.

SAY • Easter is a wonderful holiday on which we celebrate the most amazing thing that has ever happened: Jesus' resurrection from the dead. Many people have different ways they celebrate Easter, but Christians all over the world are all celebrating the same thing: Jesus' victory over death!

Activity page (5 minutes)

- "Bleak and Beautiful" activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete the "Bleak and Beautiful" activity page. Guide kids to color the sheet according to the number key.

SAY • The day Jesus died on the cross is called Good Friday. It was a very sad day, but we call it good because it was the day Jesus took our place and died on the cross for our sins. It was both sad and beautiful.

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Crime and punishment

Direct the kids to come up with silly rules and silly punishments to go along with those rules if they are broken. For example, you could say that there is a new rule that you may not bend your elbows; if you bend your elbows, you will have to hold your hands over your head for two days.

SAY • Those crimes were silly, and the silly punishments fit alongside the crimes. Today we will learn about Jesus. His punishment was severe and very serious, but He did not commit any crime at all. Why do you think Jesus was punished severely if He was not guilty?

OPTION 2: Empty tomb

Use chairs and tables to provide structure for a pillow fort. Stack pillows or cushions against the furniture and drape blankets over the structure to make a kind of “cave.” Allow the kids to take turns going into the cave. To ensure everyone’s safety, do not allow any kids to play unsupervised in the pillow fort and ensure no adult leader enters the fort one-on-one with a kid.

SAY • Jesus died on the cross and was buried in a tomb.

Jesus’ tomb would have been kind of like a cave; the Bible tells us it was cut into the side of a rocky hill. We took turns going into our little tomb and coming out, and today we will hear about how Jesus came out of His tomb. A little while later, some other people also went in the tomb and came out.

**LOW
PREP**

- chairs and tables
- pillows or cushions
- blankets

Transition to teach the story

TEACH the Story



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Countdown

· countdown video

Show the countdown video as you transition to teach the story. Set it to end as the session begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

· leader attire
· reflective vest
· hard hat

[Leader enters wearing blue jeans, a T-shirt with a reflective vest, and a hard hat.]

LEADER • Hey there, friends. I've got some great news for you. It's Easter! I'm all dressed for work, but I actually have today off. I just think these reflective vests are cool. I'm not the only one either, as I saw a lot of folks in the parking lot wearing them too.

When I was a kid, I never really got as excited about Easter as I did for some other holidays like Christmas. But the reason was I didn't fully understand how amazing the good news of Jesus really is. Eventually, when I did understand what Easter is all about, I saw that it's just as exciting as Christmas, and more exciting than just about any other holiday!

You see, Easter isn't just a time to use bright colors and enjoy springtime weather. Christmas is

Tip: If you prefer not to use themed content or characters, adapt or omit this introduction.

a celebration of the fact that Jesus came to earth as a human, and Easter is a time to remember and celebrate why He came. Here, I'll tell you all about it!

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • As we get into the story, we should say our big picture question and answer. Can you all say it with me? [*Allow responses.*] Great! ***Why did Jesus become human? Jesus became human to obey His Father's plan and rescue sinners.*** God had a plan since before the creation of the world. His plan included sending Jesus, His own Son, to earth as a human. Jesus obeyed and came as a human so that He could perfectly understand our suffering and pain that comes from sin and live the sinless life we fail to live. He then died on the cross for our sins and rose again to defeat death. That's how He rescued sinners!

Giant timeline (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

· Giant Timeline

LEADER • Last week we talked about Jesus' baptism. That was the start of Jesus' public ministry. Before that, He was basically living a normal but perfectly sinless life. **Jesus obeyed God by being baptized,** and God spoke from heaven to say that Jesus is His Son and God is pleased with Him. Then the Holy Spirit rested on Jesus like a dove. Today, we are going to jump ahead a bit to talk about what exactly God had planned.

- “Jesus’ Crucifixion and Resurrection” video
- Big Picture Question Poster
- Bible Story Picture Poster
- Story Point Poster

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Matthew 26–28; 1 Corinthians 15. Use the Bible storytelling tips on the Bible story page to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “Jesus’ Crucifixion and Resurrection.”

LEADER • He is risen! For thousands of years, Christians have used this phrase as a greeting and a way to declare the good news. When you hear a person say “He is risen,” you can respond by saying “He is risen indeed.” Let’s try that together; I’ll say the first part, and you respond with the second part. Ready? He is Risen! [*Allow responses, coaxing kids to say “He is risen indeed.”*] Great job!

The crucifixion of Jesus and His resurrection on the third day make up the center of the one big story of the Bible. Ever since Adam and Eve chose to rebel against God and eat the fruit He commanded them not to eat, all of creation has been broken. People could no longer have a loving relationship with God without multiple sacrifices every year. For generations, it seemed as though evil might eventually win. When Jesus—the only perfect Person, who is God the Son—died, it looked like evil actually had won. But in a wonderful turn of events, God brought about the ultimate defeat of sin and death when Jesus’ heart began to beat and His lungs filled with fresh breath. Jesus was alive!

He is still alive today. He will never again die because His sacrifice for sin is perfect and complete. He took the punishment of God’s anger for sin on Himself. He died with it, taking it away from everyone who believes in Him. Then He rose

from the dead without it. The sin stayed dead, but Jesus did not. Now we can live forever too. **Jesus' resurrection gives us hope for eternal life.**

Christ connection

LEADER • Jesus' death and resurrection is the center of the gospel. In Adam, we were spiritually dead in sin, but Jesus died to pay for our sins. Jesus is alive! God gives new life to everyone who trusts in Jesus. The Bible tells us that when we trust in Jesus, our sin was put to death with Jesus, and we have new, resurrected hearts.

Note: You may use this opportunity to use Scripture and the guide provided to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

Questions from kids video (3 minutes)

Show the "Easter, Session 2" questions from kids video. Prompt kids to think about why we forgive others. Guide them to discuss if there are ever times we do not have to forgive others.

"Easter, Session 2" Questions from Kids video



Missions moment (3 minutes)

Show "The Gospel" missions video. Ask kids to describe things we can tell other people about Jesus. (*He was born on earth; He is fully God and fully human; He died on a cross for our sins; He rose to life; He wants everyone to be with Him in heaven forever; and so forth.*)

"The Gospel" missions video

LEADER • The gospel—the good news of Jesus—is the reason that missionaries go all over the world. They want to be obedient to take the gospel to all people, even those who are very hard to reach. Missionaries sacrifice a lot so other people can know that **Jesus' resurrection gives us hope for eternal life.**

• Key Passage Poster
• “He Must Increase,
but I Must Decrease
(John 3:30)” song

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together John 3:30. Then sing “He Must Increase, but I Must Decrease (John 3:30).”

LEADER • John the Baptist knew that Jesus is most important. John did not want his life to be about bringing glory to himself. He wanted to give all glory to Jesus, the only Person who deserves all glory! That’s why John said that he must decrease while Jesus must increase.

Sing (4 minutes)

• “Take It to the Lord”
song

LEADER • In the Bible, Jesus teaches that there is no greater way to show love than to sacrifice your life to save someone else’s. Jesus showed this love perfectly when He died for our sins and rose again to give us eternal life. Let’s praise Him, the best friend we can have. Sing together “Take It to the Lord.”

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • Father, thank You for the wonderful gift of salvation. We know that we could never earn such a perfect love. We praise You for giving it to us anyway. Help us love You and celebrate what Jesus has done. Give us hearts that want to obey. Amen.

Dismiss to apply the story

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.



God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.



We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)



God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.



Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.



We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus. Provide *I'm a Christian Now!* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

APPLY the Story



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Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- stopwatch

Say the key passage as a group multiple times. Use the motions developed in the first session. Use a stopwatch to see how quickly the kids can say the verse without fumbling the motions. Thank all the kids for their efforts and encourage the kids to keep working to memorize the passage. You may also challenge the kids to say the verse in “slow motion,” to see if they can stretch the short verse over 10 seconds, 20 seconds, or more.

SAY • John knew that his purpose was to point others to Jesus so that Jesus would be glorified. We have the same role. We can glorify Jesus in our lives and point others to Him.

Discussion & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Story Point Poster
- Small Group Timeline and Map Set (005802970, optional)

Distribute a Bible to each kid. Help the kids use the table of contents to find Matthew 26–28. Ask a volunteer to explain what division Matthew is in, and what that division contains. (*the Gospels; the stories of Jesus' life, ministry, death, and resurrection*) You may select a strong reader to read a few verses of your choosing from those chapters, such as Matthew 27:50-51; 28:5-6.

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

1. What did the religious leaders want to do with Jesus? (*kill Him, Matt. 26:66*)
2. What sign was hung above Jesus on the cross? (*THIS IS JESUS, KING OF THE JEWS, Matt 27:37*)
3. Who saw Jesus raised from the dead? (*Mary Magdalene, Peter and the disciples, and more than 500 other people; Matt. 28:1,16; 1 Cor. 15:5-8*)
4. How can you know if you are saved? *Guide kids to see it is not our feelings that save us, it is God's grace given to us through faith. (Eph. 2:8-9) Help them understand that salvation comes to everyone who trusts in Jesus. (Rom. 10:9) Explain what is written in the Bible—we can know that we are saved, even if we don't feel saved or do sometimes choose sin. (1 John 5:12-13)*
5. Why is the resurrection so important? *Discuss Jesus' role as a substitute. Jesus died for our sins because He had no sin. If He had stayed dead, it would have meant His sacrifice wasn't enough. Jesus' resurrection ensures that we will live forever with God because it proved that sin is paid for completely.*
6. What does it mean to have eternal life? *Help kids understand that eternal life is more than just a place with God after we die. Point out that our new life begins as soon as we believe the truth about Jesus. We become new creatures. Our current lives reflect that change through loving obedience to Jesus, and we look to the future when Jesus will return and fix all that sin has broken.*

SAY • Jesus' resurrection gives us hope for eternal life.

Eternal life isn't just for some point in the future but begins right away as our lives change to glorify God.

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.

- small flower pots
- markers
- stickers or other craft supplies for decorating

Tip: Use this activity option to reinforce the missions moment found in Teach the Story.

Activity choice (10 minutes)



OPTION 1: Giving seeds

Distribute small flower pots and invite each kid to decorate a flower pot to use at home to collect coins to donate. Remind your kids about any special Easter collections your church participates in, or plan a special collection for the next few weeks to donate to missionaries your church supports.

SAY • Giving money is one way that we can support missionaries. That's why our church gives offerings to missions. We can help provide things like food, transportation, housing, and Bibles in different languages. It's one way that we can help missionaries who share the message that **Jesus' resurrection gives us hope for eternal life**. Even a small amount given can help provide the seeds needed to grow a thriving ministry.

Ask parents or church members to donate travel-size toiletry items for a mission project included in session 3 of unit 20.

OPTION 2: Resurrection tag

Select a kid to be *It*. He will chase the other kids to tag them. When a kid is tagged, she must sit on the ground. Untagged kids may bring tagged kids back into the game by tapping the tagged kid gently on the shoulder and saying **Jesus' resurrection gives us hope for eternal life**. Play as time allows, rotating which kid is *It* every few minutes.

SAY • In our game, being tagged meant you were out of the game—at least for a while. But hearing the good news about Jesus let you get back into the game. In a way this is similar to our lives. We are born in sin. Through Adam, all of us have sinful hearts that

**LOW
PREP**

choose to disobey God. But the good news is that Jesus died on the cross and rose again. Through Jesus, we can all have new life today and forever into the future. **Jesus' resurrection gives us hope for eternal life.**

Reflection and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute a sheet of paper to each child. Ask the kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or about the gospel?
- What does this story teach me about myself?
- Whom can I tell about this story?

Make sure to send the sheets home with kids alongside the activity page so that parents can see what their kids have been learning.

If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page provided with this session. Pray for your group.

- pencils and crayons
- paper
- Bible Story Coloring Page, 1 per kid

Tip: Give parents this week's *Big Picture Cards for Families* to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.