

THE BIGGEST STORY CURRICULUM



VOLUME 4
GOSPELS

 **CROSSWAY**
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The Biggest Story Curriculum, Volume 4

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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

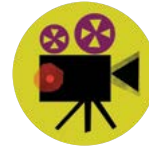
After reviewing how the lesson fits into the preceding lessons and the overarching story of the Bible, teachers progress to telling the current week's story. This can be done in one of three ways: (1) reading the relevant Bible passage out loud to the class, (2) reading the relevant story from *The Biggest 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.

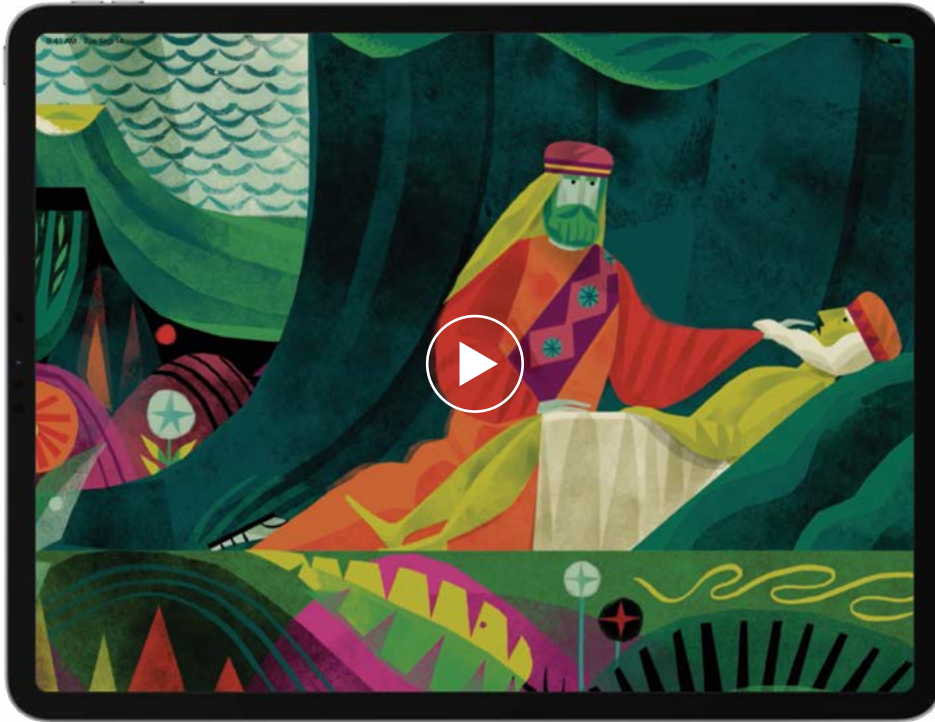
CRAFTS

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.

Time/Day	Duration	Lesson Component	Notes

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 5

THE GOSPELS

MATTHEW–JOHN

Now we come to the second half of the Bible called the New Testament. Actually, this “half” is quite a bit shorter than the first “half,” but it represents a new covenant with God’s people and the climax of the story that began in the garden. What we saw in shadow and symbols in the Old Testament, we will see in living color in the New Testament.

The word gospel means “good news.” The four Gospels in the New Testament tell the good news of Jesus’s birth, death, and resurrection. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are not four different stories, but four different angles on the central events of the Biggest Story. That’s why the books are not called the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Mark, as if they each had their own good news to share, but the Gospel according to Matthew and the Gospel according to Mark. The four books differ in their style, in their emphases, and in their outlines, but not in the gospel they announce.

Here we meet—in flesh and blood—the long-awaited Prophet, Priest, and King.



STORY 53

A New Baby and a New Beginning

MATTHEW 1

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Matthew 1.
- 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

After a whole year, we finally finished the Old Testament. Now we come to the New Testament! It's kind of like hearing a complicated riddle and then finally finding the answer to the riddle. Think of all the hints we've gotten. The Savior will be a Snake Crusher. He will be the true temple. He will be the sacrifice for our sins. He will be *the prophet* greater than Elijah, *the priest* in the order of Melchizedek, and *the king* greater than David!

And all these Old Testament shadows and symbols point forward to the Jesus we meet in the New Testament. Another way to think about the two big sections in the Bible—Old Testament and New Testament—is with the word *covenant*. And

if you remember, covenants were a special kind of promise. The Old Testament tells what God promised to do for his people and the New Testament tells how Jesus fulfills those promises.

The New Testament starts with four Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. They tell us the good news (or “gospel”) of Jesus’s birth, life, death, and resurrection. These four Gospels are like four cameras that are filming the same scenes. They give us four different angles on the big stories of the Biggest Story. We turn now to the opening scene. Lights. Cameras. Action!

TELL THE STORY

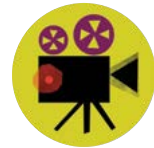
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



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 was born to
save his people
from their sin.

What do we celebrate on Christmas? The birth of our country? No. The new year? No. When the groundhog sees its shadow? Come on, now. On Christmas we celebrate the birth of Jesus. You know that. But you may not know the strange way Matthew begins the story of Christmas. He starts with a long list of names, called a *genealogy*. *Genealogy* is just a fancy way of saying family tree. Why would he tell the story of Christmas with a genealogy? One reason would be to remind us that Jesus was a real person. Another reason would be to remind us that he’s the promised Snake Crusher (see Matt. 1:1). Those are important reasons. But there just might be a final one. When we read the long list of names, we’re reminded of how sinful people are. There are some big-time sinners on the list. Even Abraham and David, men of great faith, were big-time sinners.

What does all this have to do with Jesus? Well, Jesus wasn’t a big-time sinner. Instead, he was a big-time Savior from sin. Even though he was fully human, he



Story

53

Matthew 1

was also fully God. And even though he came from a long line of sinners, he was born in a special way so he could do some special rescuing: he was from God. The angel Gabriel explained to Mary how this would happen: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you . . . therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God” (Luke 1:35). And since God is without sin, Jesus could be born free from the sin that marked his genealogy.

Now here’s where the story gets really interesting. Mary was engaged to Joseph. He was shocked to find out Mary was pregnant! He decided the best course was to quietly break up with her. But God sent an angel to let him in on what God was doing. “Joseph,” the angel told him, “Marry Mary, for the baby in her has been conceived from the Holy Spirit” (see Matt. 1:20). Joseph listened. The angel continued, “The baby will be a boy. When he is born, your job is to name him Jesus.” Joseph must have wondered, “Why that name? It’s not a family name.” The reason was that the name means “Yahweh saves.” The angel explained, “Call him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins” (see v. 21). Joseph and Mary obeyed the angel’s orders. They got married, she gave birth, and Joseph called the baby Jesus.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

The New Testament was written in Greek. We use some Greek words in English—like *galaxy*, *acrobat*, and *dinosaur*. Dinosaur is made from two Greek words: *denios* (which mean “terrible”) and *savra* (which means “lizard”). A dinosaur is a terrible lizard! Guess what is the second word in the New Testament. In Greek, it’s the word *genesis*. In English, it’s “genealogy.” Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Matthew used that word to remind us that when Jesus was born, there was a new beginning—a new genesis! This new genesis in Jesus is an invitation to us to enjoy a new life. If we trust him as our Savior, he gives us a new heart and a new start. Ask yourself today, “Do I have sins that need to be forgiven?” The answer is yes! Then ask yourself, “Who can forgive me?” The answer is Jesus! Remember what his name means? It means “Yahweh saves.” Remember what he did on the cross? He saved “his people from their sins” (1:21). He can save you too! Trust in him today and experience your new genesis.

3

Engage

Memory Verse

She [Mary] will
bear a son, and you
[Joseph] shall call
his name Jesus,
for he will save
his people from
their sins.

MATTHEW 1:21

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. **QUESTION:** What's the name of the first book in the Bible? How does the Gospel of Matthew begin? By beginning the story of Jesus's birth with a genealogy (which is from the same Greek word as *genesis*), what do you think Matthew is trying to say about the birth of Jesus?

TAKEAWAY: The birth of Jesus gives a new beginning to the world God created.

2. **QUESTION:** Who were some of the people named in Jesus's family tree (or "genealogy")? Did those people always follow God perfectly? If they were sinners, and Jesus came from their family, how could he be born without sin?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus is fully human—but without sin.

3. **QUESTION:** What was Joseph told to name Jesus? Why? How can we be saved from our sin?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus was born to save his people from their sin.

ACTIVITIES

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Jump from Old Testament to New Testament Game

Supply List: two ropes

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Place ropes parallel to one another a foot apart. Tell the children that the first rope is called Old Testament and the second rope is called New Testament. Have children form a line perpendicular to the first rope. The children should take turns attempting to jump over both ropes. If a child succeeds, he or she goes to the back of the line. If a child does not clear both ropes, he or she is out. After all children have attempted the jump, increase the distance between the two ropes and have remaining children jump again. Continue to increase the distance



between the ropes until one child remains and is the winner. Explain that in class we will be “leaping” from Old Testament stories to New Testament stories.

Option 2: Matching Wrapping Paper Game

Supply List: wrapping paper (various designs, one design for every two children), envelopes (one per child), scissors

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut three squares from each wrapping paper design. Hide one square of each design around the room, and place the other two each in their own envelope.

Give each child an envelope. On “Go” have children open their envelopes and find the other person with a matching piece. Together they must find their matching square hidden in the room. First team to find it wins. Remind children that the greatest gift is Jesus!

3rd–5th

Option 1: Matching Wrapping Paper Game

Supply List: wrapping paper (various designs, one design for every two children), envelopes (one per child), scissors

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut three squares from each wrapping paper design. Hide one square of each design around the room and place the other two each in their own envelope

Give each child an envelope. On “Go” have children open their envelopes and find the other person with a matching piece. Together they must find their matching square hidden in the room. First team to find it wins. Remind children that the greatest gift is Jesus!

Option 2: Christmas Picture Guessing Game

Supply List: whiteboard, dry-erase marker, notecards, pen

Before Class: Gather supplies. Write things related to Jesus's birth (shepherd, angel, baby Jesus, Mary, stable, star, Joseph, etc.) on cards.

Select a child to pick a card and give him thirty seconds to draw the word. Have the rest of the class try to guess what the child is drawing. If a child guesses correctly, he or she can either draw next or choose who does. If no one guesses correctly, reveal the answer and choose a different child to draw.

CRAFTS

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Christmas Wreath

Supply List: flat paper plates, scissors, hole punch, string, red and green paper, glue sticks, markers

Before Class: Gather supplies. Punch a hole in the top of each plate, and tie an 8-inch string to each for hanging (one per child). Cut 1-inch squares of green paper (ten per child). Cut 1-inch circles of red paper. Print bows on red paper. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a paper plate, scissors, and bow. Set green squares, red circles, markers, and glue sticks on tables. Have children write “Thank you for Jesus!” in the center of their plates. Have children glue the green squares on the ridged area of their plates. Have children cut out their bow, then have them glue the bow and four red circle “berries” on top of the green squares. Tell children this Christmas wreath can remind us that we have much to be thankful for in Jesus.

Option 2: Christmas Vase

Supply List: jars (one per child), bowls, glue, yarn (red, green, etc.), paintbrushes

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut assorted colors of yarn into 24-inch pieces. Place glue in bowls. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a jar and a paintbrush. Set yarn and bowls of glue on tables. Starting at the bottom, have children brush glue around a section of their jar. Next, have them wrap a piece of yarn around the jar, keeping each consecutive row tight against the one before it. When the piece of yarn ends, have them choose another piece of yarn to continue wrapping around the jar, brushing on more glue as needed. Continue until the whole jar is wrapped with yarn. Encourage children to give this jar as a gift to someone and to tell that person that Jesus is the greatest gift ever given.



Option 2: God with Us Door Hanger

Supply List: cardstock, scissors, hole punch, yarn, markers, stickers, sequins, glue

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut cardstock in half lengthwise to create door hangers (one door hanger per child). Punch two holes at the top of each door hanger for the yarn. Cut 12-inch pieces of yarn (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child a door hanger and a piece of yarn. Place markers, stickers, sequins, and glue on each table. Have children write “Immanuel” vertically on the door hanger and “God with Us” below, then have them decorate with the provided materials. When they are finished decorating, have them string the yarn through the holes and tie a knot so that it can be hung from a doorknob.

Option 2: Christmas Vase

Supply List: jars (one per child), bowls, glue, yarn (red, green, etc.), paintbrushes

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut assorted colors of yarn into 24-inch pieces. Place glue in bowls. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a jar and a paintbrush. Set yarn and bowls of glue on tables. Starting at the bottom, have children brush glue around a section of their jar. Next, have them wrap a piece of yarn around the jar, keeping each consecutive row tight against the one before it. When the piece of yarn ends, have them choose another piece of yarn to continue wrapping around the jar, brushing on more glue as needed. Continue until the whole jar is wrapped with yarn. Encourage children to give this jar as a gift to someone and to tell that person that Jesus is the greatest gift ever given.



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



STORY 54

Wise Men, Smart Move

MATTHEW 2

BEFORE THE LESSON

- *Read Matthew 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

Throughout the New Testament, Jesus is given many names. Already the angels have called him the “Son of God” (Luke 1:35), “Immanuel” (which means “God with us”; Matt. 1:23), and “Jesus” (which means “Yahweh saves”; 1:21). Matthew also calls Jesus the “Christ” (1:1), because that word means “Anointed” or “King.” The word *king* might remind you of God’s promise to David. God promised David that from his offspring would come an eternal king who would rule an everlasting kingdom. And don’t forget about God’s promise to Abraham that all the nations would be blessed through his Snake-Crushing offspring.

That brings us to one more name for Jesus in our story today. Wise men from the east followed a star a great distance to find the one they called “king of the Jews” (see 2:1–2). Could this king of the Jews also be the King of all the nations?

Let's find out by looking at what the wise men came to do and what that tells us about King Jesus.

TELL THE STORY

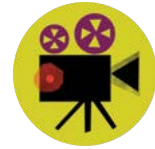
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



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 is the King
of all nations.

A long, long time ago, God promised that a king would come from the people of Israel who would be worshiped by people from every nation. Jesus is that King, and the story today gives us an early picture of what will one day be the world's biggest worship service.

Jesus was born in Bethlehem, a small town outside the big city of Jerusalem. At that time, Herod was the king over the Jews living in that region. One day, wise men from a faraway country came to Jerusalem. These men were called “magi” (from which we get the word “magic”) because they were pagan priests and stargazers. They came because a bright star rose in the sky, and it was a sign to them that a king had been born. In fact, God sent the star to lead them to his Son.

When they arrived, they asked where the new king was so they could worship him. Herod was troubled and asked the religious leaders where the coming “Christ” (or “king”) was to be born; they said Bethlehem. So Herod told the wise men to head to Bethlehem and find the new king. And so they did. In fact, the star led them to Bethlehem and the exact place where Jesus was. They “rejoiced exceedingly with great joy” (Matt. 2:10). They were super-duper happy! Then, going into the home, they saw baby Jesus in his mother's arms, and they did what they came to do: “They fell down and worshiped him” (2:11). Part of their worship was to bow before him, acknowledging him as King, and another part

was to give treasures to him—precious gold and expensive, nice-smelling oils (frankincense and myrrh).

The sad part about this story is what Herod did with the news of Jesus's birth. He was jealous of Jesus, and he thought that this new king would take over his kingdom and that he would lose his power. He told the wise men to find Jesus so he could worship him, but he actually wanted to kill him. Imagine that! But God protected his Son (and the wise men too). God warned them in a dream to get out of town. Nothing (not even a king!) would stop Jesus, the baby King, from coming to save his people.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

Three times in Matthew 2 Herod is called “king.” This is because Herod ruled over part of Israel. Jesus is called a “king” too. The wise men come to find the one “who has been born *king* of the Jews” (2:2). Of course, Jesus is more than the king of the Jewish people; he is King of all creation. At the end of Matthew’s Gospel Jesus says, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (28:18). That’s a lot of authority. Total power! Many powerful people, like Herod, are not good people. But Jesus is perfectly good. Unlike Herod, who lived in a stately palace, Jesus was born in a lowly stall. And unlike Herod, who sought to kill all his enemies, Jesus was born to die for his enemies—sinners like us. This is the good news of our good Savior. He is humble and gentle, yet great and powerful; he is King of kings, yet he came to seek and save the lost.

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. **QUESTION:** How long did God say his promised King would rule? What people do we see come worship the King of the Jews in today’s story? What does this show us about God’s promise that all nations would worship Israel’s King?

TAKEAWAY: The wise men show that God is keeping his promise that all nations will worship Israel’s King.

2. **QUESTION:** How did the wise men know a king had been born? Who controls the stars? Who did the wise men tell? What did Herod want to do to



Story
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Matthew 2

3

Engage

Jesus? How did God protect Jesus? Herod might have thought he was in control, but who controls all things?

TAKEAWAY: From stars to kings, God controls all things.

Memory Verse

Let everything
that has breath
praise the LORD!

PSALM 150:6

3. **QUESTION:** What did the wise men come to do? Why? What should Herod and the people of Jerusalem have done when they learned the promised King had been born? Why? What should we do? Why?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus deserves our worship.

4. **QUESTION:** What did Herod want to do to Jesus? Why? Why can't anyone stop Jesus from saving and ruling over his people? Is Jesus still King today? Will his kingdom ever end?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus is the forever King.

ACTIVITIES

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Herod Says

Supply List: none

Have children stand. Give an instruction (e.g., “Jump up and down” or “Turn in circles”). The children should do the actions as commanded. Alternate by sometimes starting commands with “Herod says” (e.g., “Herod says, march in place”). The children should *not* obey Herod’s commands. If they do the “Herod says” action, they are out and should sit down. Continue until one child remains standing. Remind students that King Herod was a jealous, cruel ruler and that the magi did the right thing by not obeying him.

Option 2: Pass the Present

Supply List: empty box, wrapping paper, music

Before Class: Gather supplies. Wrap a box with Christmas wrapping paper.

This game is played like “Hot Potato.” Have children sit in a circle. When the music plays, pass the present around the circle. When the music stops, the person holding the present is out. Continue until one person remains. Remind children the wise men brought gifts to worship Jesus.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Wise Men Balloon Tennis Relay

Supply List: balloons (three colors), large empty boxes (two per team), paint stirrers, paper plates, glue

Before Class: Gather supplies. Blow up balloons (at least one per child). Make one “balloon racket” for each team by gluing paint stirrers to paper plates.

Divide children into teams and have them line up single file behind a box filled with balloons. Tell children the three colors of balloons in their team’s box represent gold, frankincense, and myrrh that need to be brought to king Jesus (represented by a second empty box at the other end of the room). The first child on each team takes a balloon out of his team’s box, hits it with the racket down to the second box, hits it into the box, and runs the racket back to the next player on his team. Play continues until a team gets all their balloons into the box on the far end of the room and has all players back to the starting line.

Option 2: Walk Like a Camel Relay

Supply List: balloons

Before Class: Gather supplies. Blow up balloons (two per team and a few extra).

Divide the children into teams and line them up single file. Have the first two children on each team become a “camel” by each placing a balloon between their knees and having the person in back hold onto the first person’s shoulders. On “Go” the camels race to a designated spot and back. If either of the balloons drop, the pair must stop and put the balloon back in place before continuing. When they get back to the start, have them pass the balloons to the next two players who will become the next camel. The first team to run all their camels wins. Explain that it is possible the magi rode on camels to find the newborn King because it was a common mode of transportation in that time and place.



Story

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Matthew 2

CRAFTS

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

K–2nd

Option 1: King of Kings Crown

Supply List: paper, cardstock, scissors, tape, markers, jewels, sequins, glue

Before Class: Gather supplies. Print a paper with the sentence, “Jesus is King of kings” written four times in large print. Cut out the sentence strips (one per child). On cardstock, draw a zigzag line down the center lengthwise (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child one piece of cardstock. Place sentence strips and remaining supplies on tables. Have children cut along the zigzag line and tape the two pieces together to form a flat crown. (Do not yet form the circle.) Have them glue the sentence strip to their crown and decorate with markers, jewels, and sequins. Once decorated, form the crown into a circle and tape to secure. Remind children that even though Jesus was born in a stable, he is the King of kings!

Option 2: The Best Gift Picture

Supply List: Christmas wrapping paper, cardstock, markers, scissors, glue sticks

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut Christmas wrapping paper into smaller pieces. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a piece of cardstock. Place markers, scissors, glue sticks, and wrapping paper pieces on tables. Have children write “Jesus is the BEST gift!” on the cardstock. Have children cut wrapping paper into square and rectangular “gifts” and glue them to their paper. Have children add bows to the gifts using markers. Remind children the wise men knew Jesus is the best gift!

**Option 1: Craft Stick Star Ornament**

Supply List: ribbon, string, craft sticks, glue, sequins, jewels, glitter, plates

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

Give each child five craft sticks. Place glue, sequins, jewels, glitter, and plates on tables. Have children glue the craft sticks together to make a star shape, then have them tie the ribbon to the top for hanging. Have children glue sequins, jewels, and glitter to their stars. (Have children use the glitter over a plate so excess glitter falls on the plate.) Remind children that the wise men followed a star to Jesus. When they found him, they worshiped him.

Option 2: 3D Hanging Five-Point Star

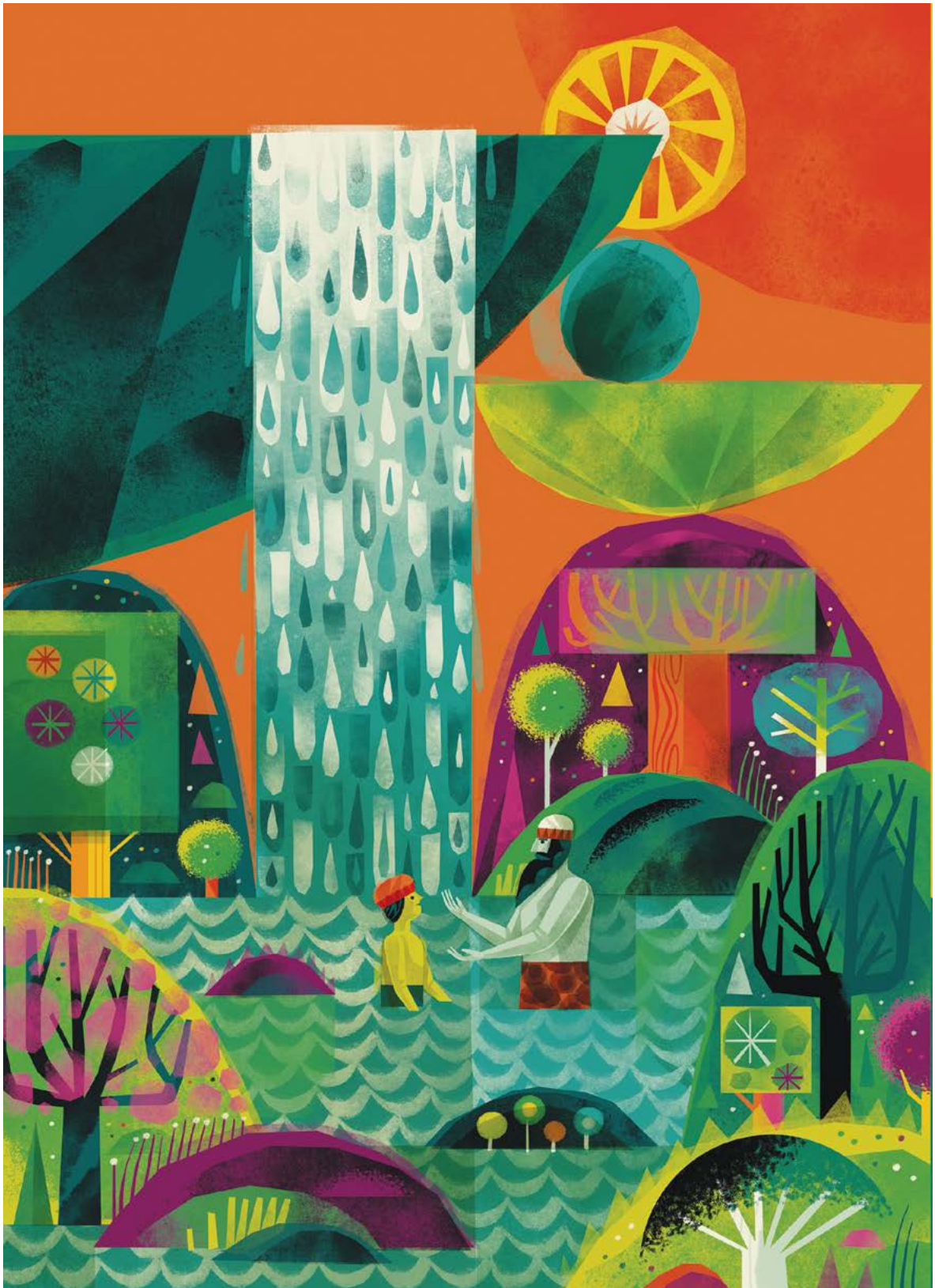
Supply List: cardstock, crayons, scissors, hole punch, clear tape, string

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut 8-inch pieces of string. Print large star shapes onto cardstock (two per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child two star papers and a string. Place crayons, scissors, a hole punch, and tape on tables. Have children cut out the stars and color them on both sides. Have children take one of their decorated stars and cut a slit from the bottom of the star up to the center (stop halfway). Next, have the children cut a slit on the other star from the top to the center of the star. Slide the stars together to make one 3D star. If needed, use tape to hold the two stars in place. Have children punch a hole at the top of the star and tie a string through for hanging. Remind children a star led the wise men to Jesus.



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



STORY 55

The Pointer and the Point

MATTHEW 3

BEFORE THE LESSON

- *Read Matthew 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 prophets in the Old Testament did all sorts of amazing things. Moses's face glowed after he met God on the mountain. Isaiah saw a vision of God on a throne surrounded by angels with six wings. Elijah the Tishbite had a unique name, and he also dressed funny. "He wore a garment of [camel's] hair, with a belt of leather about his waist" (2 Kings 1:8). But these stories paled in comparison to the importance of their message. They not only called God's people to live in a way that rightly reflected God but also pointed forward to a special rescuer. The prophets were pointers. One of them, Malachi, pointed to another prophet—a very special prophet—that would come later. God called this special prophet "my messenger" and "Elijah the prophet." He also said he had a big job: to "prepare the way" for God to come to earth (Mal. 3:1; 4:5). Who could this new Elijah

be? Would he dress funny like Elijah did? What would he do? All four Gospel writers—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—tell us that this special prophet was John the Baptist. And he was a pointer too. So who will this lesson be about? John the Baptist? Or the one John the Baptist pointed to—Jesus?

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
John the Baptist
pointed to the
point of the Biggest
Story—Jesus.

John the Baptist was a strange and wonderful person. Like Elijah, he “wore a garment of camel’s hair and a leather belt around his waist” (Matt. 3:4). He also ate locusts (yuck!) and wild honey (yum!). This was his food because he lived in the wilderness, and those were the only things available. The first Elijah was called Elijah *the Tishbite* because he was from the town of Tishbe. But John was not called John *the Baptist* because he was from Baptistville or because his parents were Mr. and Mrs. Baptist. He was given that title—*the Baptist*—because, well, he did a lot of *baptizing*.

John’s message was simple: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (3:2). He was telling people to turn from their sin and toward God. And, like the prophets of old, he was warning people to confess their sins and change the way they were living, because God’s judgment was coming. God’s people listened! Thousands and thousands came to John, and he baptized them in the Jordan River. The water rushing over them was a sign that God had cleansed them. A fresh start!

John’s job, however, was not was to be a popular preacher. His job was to “prepare the way of the Lord” (3:3, quoting Isa. 40:3). His hashtag was not #Followme but #FollowJesus. Like the prophets before him, John was a pointer. His job was



Story

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Matthew 3

to point people to Jesus. “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30) was John’s mission statement. John knew Jesus was the long-awaited King from heaven. The one who would make everything right. John baptized with water, but Jesus came to baptize with the Holy Spirit. John prepared the way; Jesus was the way. John was a voice crying in the wilderness; Jesus was the very word of God made flesh. “I am not worthy,” John told people, “even to carry Jesus’s dirty sandals” (see Matt. 3:11). John is a very special person in the Biggest Story, but he thought of himself as nobody compared to the *somebody* that had come.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

John’s baptism was a big deal. It was a sign people were repenting and a sign that God was cleansing. But even John’s baptism was a pointer. John said, “I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I . . . will baptize you with the Holy Spirit” (Luke 3:16). Sinners like us don’t just need water. We need our sinful, dead souls to have life breathed into them by the very Spirit of God. John the Baptist couldn’t make that happen. Only Jesus could. And the way Jesus made it happen was by dying on the cross for our sin. With our sin paid for in full, God could now pour his Spirit on us. And that’s exactly what happens for anyone who trusts Jesus. God gives us his Spirit and makes us alive. What a baptism!

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. **QUESTION:** Who were some of the Old Testament prophets? What funny clothes did Elijah wear? Who did Malachi say would come before the Lord came to earth? How did John the Baptist’s clothes show he was that special prophet?

TAKEAWAY: John the Baptist fulfilled the prophecy that a prophet like Elijah would come to prepare the way of the Lord.

2. **QUESTION:** What was the message that John preached? What did John tell people to do to show that they had repented? How did baptizing people prepare the way for Jesus?

3

Engage

Memory Verse
Repent and believe
in the gospel.

MARK 1:15

TAKEAWAY: John baptized as a sign people had confessed and repented of their sin.

- 3. QUESTION:** Were a lot of people coming to hear John? Did that make John think he was really important? Who did he want people to see as really important? How did he tell them that?

TAKEAWAY: John's main job was to point people to Jesus.

- 4. QUESTION:** Why did John baptize people? What did he say when Jesus came to be baptized? Why did Jesus say he must be baptized? What did God say and do to show he was pleased by Jesus's baptism?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus's baptism revealed God's plan to cleanse people of their sins through 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: Telephone

Supply List: none

Have children sit in a circle. Have the first person whisper a message into the ear of the person next to him (e.g., “John wore camel’s hair and ate sticky bugs,” or “Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life.”) That person whispers the message she thought she heard to the person next to her. The game continues until it reaches the last person in the circle. The last person says the message he heard to the group. Compare the original message to the final one shared. Remind children that John the Baptist was a messenger sent to prepare the way for the Lord.

Option 2: Turn from Sin and Run to Jesus

Supply List: paper, marker, scissors

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make a sign that says Sin and a heart sign that says Jesus.



Have children line up on one side of the room. The teacher stands at the opposite end of the room. When the teacher holds up the “Jesus” sign and calls out “Jesus,” children must run toward the sign. When the teacher holds up the “Sin” sign and calls out “Sin,” children must immediately stop and turn their backs to the sign. If a child does not stop immediately, send him or her back to the starting line. The child who passes the teacher first wins. Remind children sin keeps us from Jesus, but we can always run to Jesus and ask for forgiveness.

3rd–5th**Option 1: Heads or Tails**

Supply List: coin, masking tape

Before Class: Gather supplies. Place a piece of masking tape down the center of the room to divide it into two sections.

Tell children that you are going to flip a coin. If the children think it will land on heads, they should go to one side of the room. If they think it will land on tails, they should go to the other side of the room. Flip the coin. The children who guessed correctly are safe, and those who did not are out. Continue play until one child remains. Remind children that in life we have choices to make—not silly choices like heads or tails but choices about whether we will follow Jesus or not. John the Baptist encouraged people to choose repentance and pointed them to Jesus.

Option 2: Throw Away Your Sin

Supply List: masking tape, paper

Before Class: Gather supplies. Place a piece of masking tape down the center of the room to divide it into two sections.

Divide children into two teams and assign one team to each section. Distribute an equal number of pieces of paper to each team, and instruct children to crumple the paper into balls. Explain that the paper represents sin and that they’re trying to get rid of it. On “Go” each team tries to keep the paper off their side by tossing the pieces to the other side for a predetermined amount of time (about 3 minutes). When time is up, the team with the least number of paper balls on their side wins. Play again as time allows. Remind children that to repent of our sin means to get rid of it.

CRAFTS

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Salt Dough Hearts

Supply List: bowls, spoons, flour, salt, water, pencils, paper plates, ribbon, scissors, one-cup measuring cups, ½ teaspoon measures (optional), gel food coloring (optional)

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

Give each child a paper plate and a ribbon. Place remaining supplies on tables. Have children take turns mixing 1 cup of salt, 2 cups of flour, 1 cup of warm water, and ½ teaspoon of food coloring (optional). Once mixed, divide the dough so that each child has enough to shape the dough into a heart, using a paper plate as a work surface. Use a pencil to poke a hole in the top of the heart and add a ribbon for hanging. Remind children that when we have soft hearts toward God, we are quick to repent and make choices that please him.

Option 2: Transformations Pencil Topper

Supply List: cardstock, sharpened pencils, scissors, glue sticks, crayons

Before Class: Gather supplies. Print two small, simple, identical pictures of a butterfly on cardstock (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child a butterfly paper and a pencil. Set remaining supplies on tables. Have children color both butterflies and cut them out. Have them glue the butterflies together tightly around their pencil eraser so they won't slip. Remind children that just as butterflies go through transformations, Jesus changes us when we repent and come to him.



Option 1: Sand Art

Supply List: paper, cotton swabs, bowls, glue, sand, paper plates

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a piece of paper and a cotton swab. Set bowls of glue and sand on the tables. Have children make a design or picture on the paper by dipping the cotton swab into the glue and “drawing” with the swab. Have them sprinkle sand on their glue design. Shake off excess sand onto paper plates. Remind the children that John the Baptist lived in the sandy desert and prepared the way for Jesus.

Option 2: Paper Sandal

Supply List: cardstock, pencils, scissors, pipe cleaners, hole punches, markers, beads (optional)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a piece of cardstock and have them trace around their shoe with a pencil. Set remaining supplies on tables. Have children cut out their “sandal” and punch three holes in a triangular shape (like a flip flop). Have them insert and secure a pipe cleaner from the top hole to each of the other two holes, adding beads to the pipe cleaners to decorate (optional). Have children write “Jesus > me” on the sandal. Remind children that Jesus is so wonderful that John the Baptist said he was unworthy even to untie Jesus’s sandals.



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



STORY 56

The Sin That Wasn't

MATTHEW 4

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Matthew 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

"All the promises of God find their Yes" in Jesus (2 Cor. 1:20). The Snake Crusher who was promised to Eve? Yes! The long-predicted son of Abraham who would bless the nations? Yes! The long-awaited Son of David who would rule an everlasting kingdom? Yes! Immanuel—God with us? Yes! Jesus is the fulfillment of lots of old prophecies and promises. But he is more! Jesus came and lived perfectly, unlike the people of Israel. And Matthew doesn't want us to miss that point. He shows us how Jesus repeatedly got it right when Israel had gotten it wrong. Jesus left Egypt just like Israel left Egypt (Matthew 2). Jesus entered the Jordan River similar to Israel's crossing the Red Sea (Matthew 3). And Jesus was tempted in the wilderness for forty days just like Israel was tempted in the desert for forty years (Matthew 4). Israel, like Adam before them, failed when

Satan tested them. But what about Jesus? Jesus doesn't fail the test, like Israel did in the wilderness or like Adam did in the garden. Let's see how.

TELL THE STORY

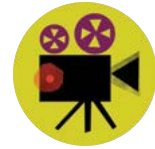
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



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
Jesus resisted
Satan's temptation
through the word
of God.

After Jesus's baptism, "the Spirit [led him] into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil" (Matt. 4:1). The fact that the Holy Spirit was leading Jesus shows us that Jesus's temptation was part of God's plan. While in the desert, Jesus fasted from food. That means he stopped eating for a reason. No peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. No apples and oranges. No cheeseburgers and fries. Not even wild honey and locusts! The Bible says "he was hungry" (4:2). He sure was! So, guess what temptation Satan ("the tempter"; 4:3) started with? He said to Jesus, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread" (4:3). That must have been so tempting! Jesus was really hungry, and he had the power to do what Satan asked him to do. Fresh warm bread—so good! But not on that day. He knew that obeying God's word was more important than obeying his stomach's cry for food! He answered Satan with a Bible verse, "It is written, 'Man doesn't live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from God'" (see 4:4). Jesus passed the first test.

For the second test, the devil took him to the top of the temple. "Jump, Jesus," he told him. "Because if you are God's Son, the Bible says that God will send angels to rescue you." Satan was twisting the Bible, and Jesus knew this. That is why he responded with another Bible verse, "It is wrong to put God to the test" (see 4:7). Jesus passed the second test.



Story

56

Matthew 4

The final test was perhaps the toughest. Satan brought Jesus to a very high mountain, and as they looked down as far as the eye could see, Satan showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world. He saw their riches and power. Their earthly glory! “If you bow down before me,” Satan said, “then I will let you rule over these kingdoms.” Jesus refused. “We should worship God and him alone!” Jesus also told the devil to get lost: “Be gone, Satan!” (4:10). Jesus passed the third test. Where Adam and Israel failed, Jesus succeeded. A+++.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

The devil wanted Jesus to clamor for bread (like Israel had done), to put God to the test (like Israel had done), and to worship other gods (like Israel had also done). Three times the devil tried; three times he failed. Three times the Son of God was tempted; three times he passed the test. The third test, however, wasn’t Jesus’s last test. He was tested throughout his life to skip suffering and go straight to ruling as king—to take the crown before the cross. His final temptation was on the cross, moments before he died. People who walked by him, as he was suffering on the cross, said to him, “If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross” (Matt. 27:40). Imagine how tempting that must have been. Jesus the powerful Son of God, could have pushed the nails out of his hands and feet, jumped to the ground, and saved himself from death. But he didn’t! Why? Because he knew that the only way to save sinners was to die for sinners, the only way to offer the good news of salvation was to die. How wonderful that Jesus succeeded on the final test so now all who trust in him can be saved.

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

- 1. QUESTION:** What were some ways that Jesus’s life was similar to Israel’s? What happened to both of them in the wilderness? How did Jesus’s temptations end differently?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus relived Israel’s story and got it right.

3

Engage

Memory Verse
You shall worship
the Lord your God
and him only shall
you serve.
MATTHEW 4:10

2. QUESTION: How did Satan first tempt Jesus? What did Jesus use to resist? What was the second temptation? How did Jesus respond? And what was the third temptation? Did Jesus give in? What did he say to Satan?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus resisted Satan's temptation through the word of God.

3. QUESTION: Did Jesus stop being tempted by Satan after he left the wilderness? What was the final temptation he experienced? What does it mean for all of us that Jesus did not leave the cross but stayed and died?

TAKEAWAY: Because Jesus passed the final test on the cross, we can be saved.

4. QUESTION: Even though Jesus's death means that we all can be saved from our sins, will we still be tempted to disobey God? How can we resist Satan's lies like Jesus did in the wilderness?

TAKEAWAY: When we are tempted, we should follow Jesus's example and trust God's word more than Satan's lies.

ACTIVITIES

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

K–2nd

Option 1: The Floor Is Lava

Supply List: paper, tape, marker

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make safe spots around the room by writing “God’s word” on paper and taping the papers to the floor.

Tell children that they should move around the room until the leader calls out, “The floor is lava!” They will then have until the count of five to get both feet onto a safe spot. Anyone who is not on a safe spot after the count of five is out. Continue play until one child remains, removing “safe spots” as the number of children in the game gets smaller. Remind children to run to the safety found in God’s word to resist temptations.



Story

56

Matthew 4

Option 2: Temptation Tag

Supply List: paper, tape, marker

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make safe spots by writing Prayer, Scripture, Worship, and Fellowship on paper (or using pictures) and taping the papers to the floor.

Assign one child to be “It.” Begin a game of tag. A child is safe from being tagged when standing on a safe spot, but they may only stand on the safe spot for ten seconds before running again. If a child is tagged, he or she becomes “It.” Play continues as time allows. Remind children that resisting temptation is possible with prayer, God’s word, worship, and help from friends who love Jesus.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Hit Away Temptations Relay

Supply List: paper, marker, pool noodles, trash cans

Before Class: Gather supplies. Write different temptations (e.g., cheat, steal, lie, disobey, unkind words, etc.) on papers (one word per paper, one set per team). Set up pool noodles at starting line and trash cans on the opposite side of the room.

Divide children into teams, line them up by the pool noodles, and give them a set of “temptation” papers. The first child on each team takes a temptation paper, crumples it into a ball, and tries to hit the temptation into the trash can using the pool noodle. The child must keep trying until she gets it in. Once it lands in the trash can, she can hand the pool noodle to the next player, who repeats the process. The first team to hit all their temptations into the trash wins.

Option 2: Resist Temptation

Supply List: cups, permanent marker, balls

Before Class: Gather supplies. Write Temptation on nine cups per team, and write Truth on one cup per team.

Set the cups right side up in a bowling pin formation about 15 feet from the starting line. Divide children into teams of two to three. Give each team a ball. On “Go” one person from each team rolls the ball to try to knock over his team’s Temptation cups without knocking down the Truth cup. He then retrieves the

ball and hands it to the next player, who rolls next. If someone knocks down the Truth cup, that person must set all the cups back upright and start over. Play continues until a team knocks down all their Temptations cups without knocking down their Truth cup.

CRAFTS

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Rock Decorating

Supply List: rocks, markers

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make a sample craft.

Satan tempted Jesus to show his power by turning stones into bread. Give each child a 4- to 6-inch smooth rock. Have the children color/decorate their rock then write *NO!* with markers to remind them to resist temptation like Jesus did.

Option 2: Victory Ribbon

Supply List: cardstock, scissors, markers, stickers

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, print out award ribbon templates (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child an award ribbon template. Set scissors, markers, and stickers on tables. Have children write “I can win over sin!” on the circular part of the ribbon, then decorate it using provided supplies. Have children cut out their decorated ribbons. Remind children that Jesus can help us have victory over sin.



Option 1: 3D Heart

Supply List: cardstock, yarn, colored pencils, markers, scissors, hole punches, glue sticks

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, print 6-inch hearts (three per child). Cut yarn into 8-inch pieces (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child three hearts and one piece of yarn. Set remaining supplies on tables. Have children write the Big Truth on the first heart, the Memory Verse on the second heart, and their own message on the third heart. Decorate all three hearts. Cut out hearts and fold them in half. Have children glue the back of one half of a heart to the back of another half of a heart. Repeat the process so all three hearts are connected. Have children punch a hole through the hearts and thread the yarn through for hanging. Remind children that God loves us and we can trust his word.

Option 2: Stone Tic-Tac-Toe

Supply List: large resealable plastic bags, small stones (ten per child), masking tape, markers

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a plastic bag. Have them use masking tape to make a tic-tac-toe board on the outside of the bag. Have them decorate the tape with markers. Give each child ten small stones that will fit in the tic-tac-toe gameboard spaces. Have them color or mark five of the stones with markers so there are five marked stones and five unmarked stones. The stones can be stored in the bag and taken out to play on the taped board. Tell children that the stones can be reminders that when Jesus was tempted to turn stones into bread, he resisted temptation and trusted God. When we are tempted, we can also trust God and resist temptation.



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



STORY 57

The Sermon That Was

MATTHEW 5–7

BEFORE THE LESSON

- *Read Matthew 5–7.*
- *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.*

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

When you think about Jesus, do you think of him most when he was a baby, a boy, or a grown man? At Christmas, most of us think about Jesus when he was a baby. But, the rest of the time, we likely think about him as a man. This makes sense, because the Gospels focus most on what Jesus did when he was a man. And what do they focus on? His death and resurrection—that's for sure. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John all end with stories about Jesus's death and resurrection. But they also focus on Jesus's making disciples, healing the sick, casting out demons, caring for people's physical needs, and performing miracles that showed he was God's heaven-sent Son (like walking on water!). This is why Jesus was called the Son of God, the Good Shepherd, the Lamb of God, and Lord. Jesus was also called Teacher, and that is because he was a teacher, or

what we'd call a "preacher." Like your pastor, he regularly preached sermons. In fact, Jesus once told his disciples that the reason that he came was so he could preach the good news of God's kingdom (see Mark 1:38). Today, we will learn about his most famous sermon—the Sermon on the Mount.

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 proclaimed
that he had come
to crush the snake's
rule and bring in
his own kingdom.

The Sermon on the Mount is called a *sermon* because, like the sermons we are used to hearing, it was preached to people who gathered around Jesus to listen to God's word. It is called the Sermon *on the Mount* because Jesus preached it on a mountain. On the one hand, Jesus was like Moses who received and explained God's word on a mountain; on the other hand, he was greater than Moses because God didn't have to meet with him to give him the words to say. Jesus simply spoke the very words of God. Words that are famous like, "You are the light of the world" (Matt. 5:14); "If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn the other cheek" (see 5:39); "Love your enemies" (5:44); "Pray . . . 'Our Father in heaven'" (6:9); "You cannot serve God and money" (6:24); "Seek first the kingdom of God" (6:33); and "Whatever you wish others would do to you, do also to them" (7:12).

And while Jesus gave many commands, he was giving more than a new set of laws. He was announcing what *his* kingdom was like. Did you catch that? His focus was on himself as King and the wonderful kingdom he was bringing! The prophets said, "Here is what God has to say to you"; Jesus said, "Here is what *I* have to say to you." And he made statements like, "You are blessed if people say evil things against you because you follow *me*"; "*I* came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets [the whole Old Testament!];" "Everyone will stand *before me*



Story

57

Matthew

5-7

as the judge, and *I will decide* who makes it into heaven”; and “The wise person hears *my words* and builds his life on their sure and solid foundation” (see 5:11; 5:17; 7:21–23, 24). King Jesus was the center of his sermon because it was about his new and wonderful kingdom! This is why, when he finished, people were amazed at his teaching and said, “Wow! Jesus speaks with such authority!” (see 7:28–29).

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

A lot of people think that religion is all about keeping rules. Be good. Avoid these sins. Do these good deeds. Sometimes even Christians can think this way. If we just go to church, don’t swear, and pray before bed, then we’re good. But Jesus’s sermon shows how silly that kind of thinking is. Jesus says that in his kingdom, righteousness has to flow from our hearts. It has to flow out of who we are. But there’s a problem with that. It’s one thing to expect us to do good things. We can try to do that. But how can I change my heart? How can I change who I am? Only God can do that! And that’s exactly why Jesus came. To die for our sins and allow us to receive new hearts—to be “born again” (John 3:3). When we trust Jesus, he changes our hearts. People who trust King Jesus are changed from within. Now that’s the kind of people God wants in his kingdom. Not self-righteous people who think they’ve done enough good works, but meek people who mourn over their sin and love Jesus with all their hearts.

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. **QUESTION:** What did Jesus tell his disciples was the reason he came? What was Jesus doing on the mountain? Why do you think Jesus focuses so much on himself when he taught?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus came to preach the good news, and his message focused on himself as Lord and Savior.

2. **QUESTION:** Where was Moses when he gave the Ten Commandments? Where was Jesus when he gave the Sermon on the Mount? What were some commands Jesus gave in the Sermon on the Mount?

3

Engage

Memory Verse

Whatever you
wish that others
would do to you,
do also to them,
for this is the
Law and the
Prophets.

MATTHEW 7:12

TAKEAWAY: Jesus, like Moses, gave God's law to God's people on a mountain.

3. **QUESTION:** How did Moses and the prophets know what God wanted them to say to the people? What was different when Jesus spoke God's word? Why did Jesus not need God to tell him what to say?

TAKEAWAY: Unlike Moses and the prophets, when Jesus preached, he spoke God's word directly and with authority.

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 Game of Opposites

Supply List: none

Have children spread out in front of the leader. Tell children that the leader will call out commands (using words like loud/quiet, backwards/forwards, and big/small) and that they must do the opposite of what is called out. (If the leader says, "Walk forward three steps," then the whole class should walk backwards three steps). If a child does what is called out (instead of the opposite), he is out. Call out commands until one child remains or until time is up. Remind children that Jesus instructed people to live in ways that are opposite of how the world lives.

Option 2: Can Stacking Relay

Supply List: canned goods

Before Class: Gather supplies. Set canned goods on one side of the room (eight per team).

Divide children into teams and line them up. On "Go" the first person from each team runs to get a can, returns to his or her team, and places the can on the ground. The next player runs down and brings back a second can, placing it on

top of the previous one and forming a tower. If at any time the tower falls, all the cans must be returned to the other side and recollected one at a time. The first team to successfully stack eight cans wins. Remind children that Jesus taught people to build their life on the solid rock of his word so their life wouldn't fall apart when trouble comes.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Treasures and Thieves

Supply List: four plastic toy hoops, bean bags

Before Class: Gather supplies. Set a large number of bean bags in the center of the room and one plastic toy hoop in each corner.

Divide children into four teams and assign each team a corner. On “Go” the first player from each team runs to the middle, grabs a “treasure,” drops it into his or her team’s hoop, and tags the next person to go. Play continues until all bean bags are gone from the middle. The leader then calls out, “Thieves break in!” The children have 1 minute to steal bean bags from other teams’ hoops and drop them in their team’s hoop. Children can only carry one treasure at a time. After 1 minute, everyone freezes. The team with the most bean bags in their hula hoop wins. Remind children of Jesus’s teaching that we should not store up treasures on earth because they do not have lasting value.

Option 2: Love Your Neighbor

Supply List: chairs

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

Have children sit in chairs. The child without a chair is “It.” “It” walks up to someone and asks, “Who do you love?” If she replies, “I love my neighbor,” then everyone gets up and moves to a new seat. If she replies, “I love people who . . .” (are wearing blue, are wearing jewelry, etc.), then only the children who meet that description switch seats. When the children are moving, “It” also tries to get a seat. The person who does not get a seat is the new “It.” Continue play as time allows. Remind children that Jesus tells us to love all people—even our enemies.



Story

57

Matthew

5–7

CRAFTS

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Fingerprint “Bee-attitudes”

Supply List: paper, yellow paint, paper plates, black markers, baby wipes

Before Class: Gather supplies. Print the Beatitudes on paper (Matthew 5:3–12; one per child). Place yellow paint on paper plates. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a “Bee-attitudes” paper. Place black markers and paint plates on tables. Have children dip one finger in the yellow paint and make a fingerprint on the “Bee-attitudes” paper. Continue to make fingerprints in various places on the paper. Clean children’s fingers with wipes. Allow paint to dry a little, then use markers to add strips and antennae to each print to make them look like bees.

Option 2: Tissue Paper Flower

Supply List: cardstock, small squares of colored tissue paper, paper plates, liquid glue, pencils

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, print Matthew 6:33 alongside a simple outline of a flower (one per child). Make a sample craft. Put glue on paper plates.

Give each child a pencil and flower paper. Place tissue paper and glue on tables. Have children wrap a single square of tissue paper around the end of a pencil, dip it in glue, and stick it on their flower, continuing until the flower is completely filled in. Remind children Jesus taught that just as God takes care of flowers and clothes them in splendor, God will take care of us too.



Option 1: “Blessed Are” Craft

Supply List: colored paper, paper plates, scissors, string, tape, colored pencils

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut string into 8-inch pieces (ten per child). With space between, print on colored paper the different groups who are blessed (“the poor in spirit,” “those who mourn,” “the meek,” etc.). Make a sample craft.

Give each child a paper plate, scissors, printed colored paper, and string. Set colored pencils and tape on tables. Have the children write “Blessed are” in the center of their plate, then cut out the nine blessed groups in various shapes (stars, circles, etc.). Have them tape the shape to one end of the string, then tape the other end of the string to the plate (so the shape hangs down). Continue with other shapes. Decorate. Take final string, loop, and tape to the top of the plate for hanging.

Option 2: Tissue Paper Flower

Supply List: cardstock, small squares of colored tissue paper, paper plates, liquid glue, pencils

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, print Matthew 6:33 alongside a simple outline of a flower (one per child). Make a sample craft. Put glue on paper plates.

Give each child a pencil and flower paper. Place tissue paper and glue on tables. Have children wrap a single square of tissue paper around the end of a pencil, dip it in glue, and stick it on their flower, continuing until the flower is completely filled in. Remind children Jesus taught that just as God takes care of flowers and clothes them in splendor, God will take care of us too.



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



STORY 58

Mr. Clean

MARK 1

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Mark 1.
- 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

In Leviticus (that's the third book in the Bible) we find a list of laws that tell God's people what is clean and unclean. Just like sinful people couldn't perfectly reflect a holy God, neither could unclean people. So, this very important list of rules included what is clean or unclean, who might be clean or unclean, and how to get clean if you are unclean. For example, Israel could eat lamb. That animal was clean. But not pigs. That animal was unclean. Other animals like bats and rats, lizards and vultures, wasps and hornets were also considered unclean. (Don't eat hornets, especially when they are still alive!) To touch a dead body made someone unclean. A woman was unclean after she gave birth. And if someone was unclean, they had to wash themselves. In the days of Jesus (and the days of Leviticus too) the most unclean person was a leper. A leper was

not someone who looked like a leopard (the spotted cat), but someone who had an itchy, scratchy, sore, ugly skin disease that wouldn't go away. To keep other people from getting the terrible disease, lepers were to shout "Unclean, unclean" if they were coming close to people. Today's story is about how an unclean leper gets clean.

TELL THE STORY

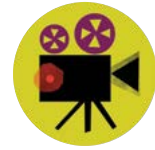
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



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
Our sins make us
dirty; Christ can
make us clean.

Imagine how awful it would be to be a leper. It's *not* like having a big mosquito bite that itches but doesn't bother you for too long. It is like having a bad case of poison ivy, because if people touch the plant's oil on your skin, they can get the poison ivy too. But it's *not* like that, because poison ivy doesn't usually kill people. With leprosy you lose feeling throughout your body, so you can't feel if you cut yourself or something bit you. You also scratch off parts of your body because you can't feel. This made lepers look ugly. They had sores on their skin, and they had parts of their limbs and faces missing. And people wouldn't get close to them. They had no friends, other than other lepers. And they couldn't go to worship in the temple or at synagogue.

One day, a very courageous leper believed that Jesus could turn his sad and scary life around. He was desperate. He came to Jesus, bowed before him, and begged him, "If you will, you can make me clean" (Mark 1:40). Notice he didn't say, "If you can, will you make me clean?" He believed that Jesus had the power to do the impossible—to clean the incurable unclean! Mark's Gospel tells us about what Jesus felt: he was "moved with pity." Then it tells us what Jesus did: he "stretched out his hand and touched him." Then it tells us what Jesus said:



Story

58

Mark 1

“I will; be clean” (1:41). And do you know what happened? A miracle! “Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean” (1:42). A leopard may not be able to change its spots, but this leper was spot clean!

Next, Jesus commanded him to do what Leviticus said to do: “Go to the priest and show him you are now clean” (see 1:44). This way he could return to society—get a job, be with family and old friends, and worship. He also commanded him not to tell anyone else what had happened. But do you know what he did? He disobeyed! It was good news he was sharing, but it is not what Jesus asked him to do. In fact, it created a big problem for Jesus. Now he couldn’t go anywhere without people mobbing him. Jesus now had to act like an outcast and secretly enter towns! To heal this leper cost Jesus something, but that’s why he came—to give his life for others.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

Why did Jesus touch the leper when he healed him? Did Jesus need to do that? No. Sometimes he healed people just by saying a word. (The centurion’s servant was healed miles away when Jesus just gave a command.) Plus, the moment Jesus touched the leper, according to the laws in the Old Testament, he should have become unclean. Ah, but that’s just it. Here’s the bigger miracle! Because Jesus is perfectly holy, he didn’t become unclean the moment he touched the man. Rather, the man became perfectly clean. Jesus took away the man’s uncleanness and gave him his cleanness. In that way, it’s like a little picture of what Jesus would do on the cross—the very biggest miracle of all! Jesus, “who knew no sin,” took on our sin so that everyone who bows before Jesus and believes in him (like the leper did!) becomes clean—we become “the righteousness of God” (2 Cor. 5:21). So, you see, as the Snake Crusher is crushing Satan, he is also cleansing us of all our ugly sins.

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

- 1. QUESTION:** Since God was perfectly holy, what were his people to be? What did they have to do to remain holy?

TAKEAWAY: Because God is perfectly holy, he wants his people to be holy.

3

Engage

Memory Verse

I will . . .
cleanse them;
and they shall
be my people,
and I will be
their God.

EZEKIEL 37:23

2. **QUESTION:** Who was the most unclean person in our story? What was it like to be a leper? Was there any way that lepers could be made clean? What did the leper believe only Jesus could do for him?

TAKEAWAY: The unclean can be made clean by Jesus.

3. **QUESTION:** When Jesus healed the leper, what did he tell him to do? What did he tell him not to do? What did the leper do? When someone does something amazing for you, what do you want to do?

TAKEAWAY: When God makes us clean, we want to tell others!

4. **QUESTION:** Why didn't people touch lepers? Why did Jesus touch the leper to heal him? How can Jesus make us, not just the leper, clean and righteous?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus took our uncleanness to make us clean.

ACTIVITIES

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Leprosy Tag

Supply List: none

Have children line up on one side of the room. Assign one child to have leprosy and to stand in the middle of the room. When the leper calls out “Unclean,” the other children try to run to the other side without being tagged. If a child is tagged, he becomes a leper and helps tag others. Play continues until one child remains. Remind children that Jesus had compassion on the man with leprosy and healed him.

Option 2: Helping Relay

Supply List: adhesive bandages, table

Before Class: Gather supplies. Spread out adhesive bandages on a table on one side of the room.



Divide children into teams and line them up across from the adhesive bandages. On “Go” the first two children from each team link their arms together and walk to the table with adhesive bandages on it. Each child opens one and places it on the hand of his or her partner. They then walk back arm-in-arm to tag the next two children on their team. The race continues until every player has raced. The first team to have their whole team bandaged and back to the starting point wins. Remind children that Jesus healed the leper. We should follow his example and care for others when they are sick too.

3rd–5th**Option 1: No Touch Race**

Supply List: balloons

Before Class: Gather supplies. Blow up balloons (one for every two children, plus a few extra).

Divide children into pairs and give each pair a balloon. Have pairs line up along one side of the room and place the balloon between their shoulders (the balloon should prevent the two children from touching one another). On “Go” each pair tries to walk to the opposite side of the room without touching each other and without letting the balloon fall. If it falls, the pair must stop and reposition the balloon before continuing. The first pair to reach the other side wins. Continue to race as time allows. Remind children that lepers were unclean and unable to touch others, but Jesus had compassion on a leper and touched him.

Option 2: Do Not Touch Musical Game

Supply List: string, music

Before Class: Gather supplies. Place a long string on the floor to form a circle big enough for all children to walk around in it.

Tell children that when the music is playing, they should move around inside the circle, being careful not to touch anyone. If a child touches someone, he or she is out and must leave the circle. When the music stops, all remaining children freeze. The leader then pulls the string to make the circle smaller. Play continues in the same manner, with the circle getting smaller each time the music stops. The last two children remaining win. Remind children that people with leprosy couldn’t touch others but had to stay at a distance and yell, “Unclean!”

CRAFTS

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Adhesive Bandage Cross

Supply List: construction paper, adhesive bandages, crayons, heart stickers

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a piece of construction paper and three adhesive bandages. Set crayons and stickers on tables. Have children write “Jesus is our healer” on the paper. Have them open their three adhesive bandages and use them to form a cross on their paper. Have them add heart stickers to remember Jesus’s great love and compassion for us.

Option 2: Stick Puppets

Supply List: cardstock, paper, scissors, crayons, glue sticks, craft sticks, white dot stickers

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, make an outline of a sad face and a happy face (one per child). Print the words Unclean and Clean and cut out. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a sad face / happy face paper, *unclean* and *clean* words, and scissors. Place crayons, glue sticks, craft sticks, and white dot stickers on tables. Have children color and cut out the two faces. Glue the sad face and *unclean* to one side of a craft stick, and the happy face and *clean* to the other side. Have them place white dot stickers on the sad face to show they have leprosy. Remind children that people with leprosy had sad, lonely lives, but Jesus healed the leper and made him clean.



Option 1: Handprint Picture

Supply List: red copy paper, colored construction paper, pencils, scissors, glue sticks

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make copies of a 2-inch heart on red paper (one per child).

Make a sample craft.

Give each child two pieces of construction paper (different colors) and a red heart paper. Set remaining supplies on tables. Have children trace their hand on construction paper and cut it out. Next, have them cut out the red heart. Have the children glue their handprint to the second piece of construction paper and glue the heart to the middle of their handprint. Remind children that Jesus had compassion on the leper and touched him when no one else would.

Option 2: “Create in Me a Clean Heart” Puffy Paint

Supply List: shaving cream, glue, bowls, paint brushes, cardstock, string, stapler, glitter (optional)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut string into 18-inch lengths. Stir together equal parts white liquid glue and white foam shaving cream to make a “paint” mixture (add glitter if desired). Put mixture in bowls and set on tables. On colored cardstock, print the words “Create in me a clean heart” in bubble letters and put a large heart under it (one copy per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child a heart paper and string. Place glue mixture and paint brushes on tables. Have children fold the top of their paper down over the string for hanging and staple to hold in place. Have children paint the bubble letters and heart with the glue mixture. Remind children that our sins make us dirty, but Jesus can make us clean!



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



STORY 59

Get Up!

MARK 2

BEFORE THE LESSON

- *Read Mark 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

How does God forgive sins? In the Old Testament, God gave his people certain things they had to do. First, he asked his people to build him a tabernacle (later called the temple). In the temple was a holy place where our holy God would meet with his unholy people and they could seek forgiveness. Second, only certain people could go into this place on behalf of the rest of God's people. Do you remember Moses's brother Aaron? Only people from Aaron's family (from the tribe of Levi) could go into the holy place. Third, God instructed these men (called priests) to offer sacrifices for the sins of God's people in that holy place—that was how God forgave sins. Outside the holy place, there weren't signs that said "Restricted Access" or "Authorized Personnel Only," but everyone knew only priests could enter. So, in today's lesson when Jesus—who was outside the holy

place and not a priest from Levi's line—announced to someone, “Your sins are forgiven,” it makes sense that the religious leaders said, “Why does this man speak like that?” (Mark 2:7). They knew God alone—through his priests, in the temple—could forgive sins. So what is Jesus talking about, and who does he think he is? Let's find out.

TELL THE STORY

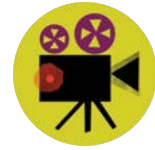
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



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
Jesus has
the power to
forgive sins.

Famous people are hard to get close to because they usually have crowds around them. Jesus had become famous, and crowds surrounded him all the time. He was not famous for being a great singer, actor, or politician. He was famous because of what he said and what he did. People came from all over to hear him teach and be healed by him.

Today's story starts with a packed house. Mark tells us that there were so many people in the house “that there was no more room, not even at the door” (Mark 2:2). The living room was packed. The bedrooms. Even the front hallway. As Jesus was teaching in that packed house, four men arrived carrying their friend on a stretcher. Their friend was paralyzed (he couldn't move from his back to his toes), so they carried him. They carried him to Jesus because they believed Jesus had the power to heal. They couldn't enter by the front door, but that didn't stop them! At the back of the house was a stairway that led to the roof, which was flat and made of straw, twigs, and dried mud. They carried him up, dug a hole through the roof, and lowered him down.

When Jesus “saw their faith,” he said something strange: “Son, your sins are forgiven” (2:5). The man wasn't there to have his sins forgiven but his body



Story

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Mark 2

healed. The man and his friends were probably confused. The religious leaders, we know, were steaming mad! “Only God can forgive sins,” they thought to themselves. “What on earth! Does Jesus think he is like God in heaven? This man needs to have a priest offer a sacrifice in the holy place so his sins can be forgiven—not have an ordinary man say the words, ‘Your sins are forgiven!’” (see 2:6–7).

Well, they were right that only God can forgive sins. But they were wrong, because they didn’t know that Jesus is the God-man—so he can do what only God can do. To prove he had authority to forgive sins, he performed a miracle. He told the man, “Get up, take your bed, and go home” (see 2:11). Suddenly, his feet, legs, arms, and back were as strong as he and his friends’ faith. He did exactly what Jesus told him to do. He walked home. Maybe he skipped. Maybe he jumped up and down, then skipped! And the crowd responded, like we would, praising God and saying, “We never saw anything like this!” (2:12).

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

When Jesus said to the paralyzed man, “Your sins are forgiven” (2:5), we don’t know what sins the man committed. But in the very next story, we are told about the sins of a man named Levi. He had a priest’s name, but he was a tax collector! What’s wrong with that? No one likes to pay taxes (money for the government), and Levi was the one who collected them. But he did more than that. He overcharged people. He squeezed his own people (the Jews) for money, gave some to the Romans, and kept the rest for himself. Because of this, the Jews hated tax collectors like Levi more than anyone.

But Jesus didn’t! He called Levi to leave behind his sinful life and follow him. And—miracle of miracles—he accepted Jesus’s invitation. More than that, he invited all his sinful friends to meet Jesus so they too could be loved and forgiven. When the Pharisees heard about this, they didn’t understand why Jesus would get together with such terrible people. They forgot what Jesus taught when he healed the paralyzed man. That he “came to call not those who think they are good but those who know they need a Savior” (see 2:17). Jesus came to forgive *sinners*—that’s the point. To experience the good news that Jesus has the power to forgive all sins, we must first recognize how much sinners like us need him.

3

Engage

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. **QUESTION:** Why were so many people trying to get to Jesus? Why were the friends of the paralyzed man trying to get to Jesus? Did Jesus say he came to call those who are good or those who know they need a Savior? Why did Jesus heal the paralyzed man?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus came to heal those who know they need a Savior.

2. **QUESTION:** According to the Old Testament, how would people find forgiveness for their sin? Who is the only one that could forgive sins? Why did it make the religious leaders angry when Jesus told the paralyzed man, “Your sins are forgiven”? What did they get right? What did they get wrong?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus has authority to forgive sins.

Memory Verse

The Son
of Man has
authority
on earth to
forgive sins.

MARK 2:10

3. **QUESTION:** If you break something of your parents, ask their forgiveness, and are forgiven by them, how do you feel? What about if you’re feeling really sick and a doctor gives you medicine that makes you feel better? How do you think the paralyzed man felt when Jesus healed and forgave his sins? How did the crowd respond?

TAKEAWAY: When Jesus heals and forgives, the people of God celebrate.

4. **QUESTION:** According to Jewish law, who should the paralyzed man have gone to for forgiveness of his sins? Who are we to go to for forgiveness of our sins? Why don’t we need to go to a temple anymore?

TAKEAWAY: Because of Jesus, we no longer need a temple priest to ask forgiveness for our sins; we can ask Jesus directly.

ACTIVITIES

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Pass the Man Race

Supply List: ping-pong balls, small pillows

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Divide children into teams and have them stand in single file lines. Give each team a ping-pong ball (representing the paralyzed man) and a small pillow. Set the ball in the center of the pillow. On “Go” the first child in each line must pass the pillow between his legs to the person behind him. The children continue to pass the pillow in this way until it reaches the end of the line. It is then returned to the front by passing over the children’s heads to the person in front of them. If the ball drops, the team must start over. The first team to get the “man” back to the front wins. Remind children that the paralyzed man’s friends carried him to Jesus to be healed.

Option 2: Friendship Tag

Supply List: none

Have children link arms with a partner. Choose one pair to disconnect. One of the “disconnected” kids is “It” and tries to tag the other child. To avoid being tagged, the runner can link onto one of the connected pairs. When he links onto a pair, the child on the opposite side of the link is now the runner. If a child is tagged, she becomes “It.” If the leader calls “Find a new friend,” all pairs must break apart and make new pairs. Anytime the children are not connected, they can be tagged and become “It.” Remind children that the paralyzed man had friends who brought him to Jesus. Continue play as time allows.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Pass the Man Race

See above.



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Mark 2

Option 2: Shoebox Relay

Supply List: adult-sized shoeboxes (two per team), scissors, packing tape

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut openings on top of the shoeboxes so children can slip their feet into them. Tape the tops of the shoeboxes to the bottoms.

Divide children into teams of six or less and give each team two shoeboxes. On “Go” the first person on each team slips his feet into the boxes, walks to the other side of the room, then returns to his team to give the boxes to the next person. The first team to race all their members wins. Remind children that the ability to walk is a gift and that the paralyzed man struggled to get around.

CRAFTS

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Dress the Paralytic

Supply List: cardstock, scissors, glue, scrapbook/construction paper, pom-poms, buttons, sequins, felt, googly eyes, markers

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, print a simple outline of an 8-inch person. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a person paper, scissors, and glue. Set remaining supplies on tables. Have children cut out the person and write “Jesus forgives sin” on the back. Have the children use the supplies to make clothes and decorate their person. Remind children that the paralyzed man had to have people help him do everything, including getting dressed, but that his greatest need was forgiveness.

Option 2: Paper Weaving Bookmark

Supply List: white cardstock, construction paper, scissors, tape, markers

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut construction paper into ½" x 5" strips. Cut white cardstock into 3" x 9" pieces. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a piece of white cardstock and scissors. Set construction paper strips, tape, and markers on tables. Have children fold the cardstock in half to



form a 3" x 4.5" rectangle. Have children make five evenly-spaced cuts that start at the folded edge and end an inch from the open edge. Unfold the paper. Have children weave in the paper strips by alternating over and under the lines they cut. Trim the strips as needed and use tape to secure. Have children write the Big Truth on the bookmark.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Paper Patchwork Quilt

Supply List: paper, scrapbook paper, scissors, glue

Before Class: Gather supplies. Print sample patchwork quilt templates. Print the Memory Verse (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child a piece of paper, Memory Verse, and scissors. Set quilt templates and remaining supplies on tables. Have children use the quilt templates as inspiration to design their own quilts by gluing scrapbook paper pieces onto their paper. After their quilt design is complete, glue on the Memory Verse. Remind children that before Jesus healed the paralyzed man, he had to lie around and depend on others for help.

Option 2: Paper Weaving Bookmark

Supply List: white cardstock, construction paper, scissors, tape, markers

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut construction paper into $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 5" strips. Cut white cardstock into 3" x 9" pieces. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a piece of white cardstock and scissors. Set construction paper strips, tape, and markers on tables. Have children fold the cardstock in half to form a 3" x 4.5" rectangle. Have children make five evenly-spaced cuts that start at the folded edge and end an inch from the open edge. Unfold the paper. Have children weave in the paper strips by alternating over and under the lines they cut. Trim the strips as needed and use tape to secure. Have children write the Big Truth on the bookmark.



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



STORY 60

Follow the Leader

MARK 3

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Mark 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

Followers of Jesus are called *disciples*. When they began to follow him, Jesus's disciples also became part of Jesus's family (see Mark 3:34–35). Last lesson we met Levi (also called Matthew), the tax collector. Remember when Jesus called him and Levi left his old life and followed Jesus? He became a disciple. There are millions and millions of disciples today; and there have been billions and billions throughout history. But Jesus started with twelve disciples. He picked twelve so they could share a dozen donuts for breakfast. Just kidding! He picked twelve because there had been twelve tribes of Israel that made up the people of God, and Jesus would use his twelve disciples (who were all from Jewish tribes) to form a new people of God (called the church). Today we learn a bit about them—their names, why they are important, and what Jesus called them

to do. “The household of God” (God’s family—the church) is “built on [the twelve disciples’] foundation” (Eph. 2:19–20), with Jesus himself as “the cornerstone” (the most important stone because all the rest are built on it).

TELL THE STORY

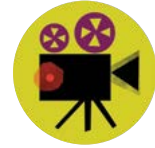
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



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
Jesus picked
twelve ordinary
men to do
extraordinary
things.

Do you know people, churches, or hospitals that have the names Peter, James, John, or Andrew? Maybe someone you know is named John. Maybe you were born in St. James’s Hospital in Ireland, have heard of St. Peter’s church in Italy, or watch professional golfers play at St. Andrews in Scotland. Those people and places are named after the first four disciples that Jesus called. Peter and Andrew were brothers, and so were James and John. All four were fishermen. Jesus called them to stop fishing for fish and start fishing for people.

One day, Jesus climbed a mountain and he asked his disciples to follow him. From that group, he chose twelve men whom he called “apostles,” a word that means “people sent out.” Once he trained them about the kingdom of God (they spent a lot of time with him!), he sent them out to share what they learned with others. God gave them the power to preach and cast out demons (see Mark 3:14–15). We might say their job was to announce the coming of the Snake Crusher and show his power over evil.

All the twelve apostles were Jewish, all spoke the same language, and all were from the same part of the world. (And it’s likely twelve out of twelve had beards!) But they were also very different. For example, James and John were fishermen who worked for their dad’s business, Matthew was a tax collector



Story

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Mark 3

who worked for the Roman government, and Simon was a “Zealot” (a freedom fighter who worked against the Roman government). Not a lot in common! What these men—along with Andrew, Bartholomew, Peter, Philip, Thomas, Thaddaeus, Judas, and another James—all had in common was Jesus. When he said, “Follow me,” they all left everything and followed him. Jesus became their leader, teacher, and friend. And on the cross he became (for the eleven who continued to follow him) the Snake Crusher, who saved them from all their sins, freed them from the power of Satan, and filled them with the Holy Spirit so they might share the good news they received with all the nations.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

If you are a Christian, why are you a Christian? The simple answer is that, like Matthew, God called you. But, of course, there is more to it than that, isn’t there? God used other people to share the good news with you and show you the power of the gospel by their changed lives. Maybe your parents told you that God loved the world so much that he sent Jesus, that Jesus died for the sins of the world, and that now God calls everyone (even you!) to turn from sin (repent), trust in Jesus (believe), and follow him (become a disciple). The disciples did what your parents might have done—they were sent out by Jesus to tell people the good news about Jesus, and then the Holy Spirit worked in people’s hearts so they would repent, believe, and follow Jesus. The good news about Jesus may be an old story now, but it is new every day for thousands of people around the world. Jesus is still calling people everywhere to follow him. And those who follow him (no matter what language they speak) are part of the new people of God, children in God’s one big family.

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

- 1. QUESTION:** What did Jesus tell Matthew, James, and John to do when he met them? What do you call people who follow Jesus? Who can become a disciple?

TAKEAWAY: If you follow Jesus, you are his disciple.

3

Engage

Memory Verse
If anyone would
come after me,
let him deny
himself and take
up his cross and
follow me.

MARK 8:34

2. **QUESTION:** How many men did Jesus call to be his first disciples? How many tribes did Israel have? What was Jesus trying to show by choosing twelve to be his disciples?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus chose twelve men as his first disciples to form a new people of God—the church.

3. **QUESTION:** What was another name for the twelve disciples? What does apostle mean? What did Jesus give the twelve apostles the power to do as he sent them out?

TAKEAWAY: The twelve disciples were sent out to preach the good news and cast out demons.

4. **QUESTION:** Where were God’s people from in the Old Testament? What’s different about God’s people in the New Testament?

TAKEAWAY: God’s family is now made up of people from all over the world, not just Israel.

ACTIVITIES

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Footprint Relay

Supply List: cardstock, scissors

Before Class: On cardstock, print and cut out large footprints that have Jesus printed on them (one set per team).

Divide children into teams and give each team one set of footprints. On “Go” the first person on each team places the footprints on the ground and puts one foot on each. The goal is to travel to and from the opposite wall by picking up and moving the footprints, only allowing one’s feet to touch the papers. Children then hand the footprints to the next person in line, who repeats the process. The first team to race all team members wins. Remind children that we should follow in Jesus’s footsteps.



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Mark 3

Option 2: Jesus Called Twelve Race

Supply List: paper plates, shaving cream, masking tape, bowls, pom-poms

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cover paper plates with shaving cream (one per team). Set plates on the floor on one side of the room. Using tape, mark a line 8 feet from the plates. Place bowls of pom-poms at the line.

Divide children into teams and line them up on the opposite side of the room from the plates. On “Go” the first child on each team crabwalks to the line, takes a pom-pom, and tosses it onto the shaving cream (continue tossing until successful). The child then bear crawls back to his or her team to tag the next person. The first team to land twelve pom-poms on the shaving cream wins. Remind children that Jesus called twelve disciples to follow him.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Who’s the Leader?

Supply List: none

Have children sit in a circle. Choose one child to be a “disciple” and to step out of the room. When the disciple is out of the room, choose one child to be the leader. Have the disciple come back into the room. Have the leader start doing an action (clap, snap, pat knees, etc.). The other children should follow the leader without being obvious about who the leader is. The disciple tries to guess who the leader is. When she guesses correctly, the leader becomes the disciple and a new leader is chosen. Remind children that Jesus chose disciples to follow him.

Option 2: Jesus Called Twelve Race

Supply List: paper plates, shaving cream, masking tape, bowls, pom-poms

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person. The first team to land twelve pom-poms on the shaving cream wins. Remind children that Jesus called twelve disciples to follow him.

CRAFTS

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Chain of Disciples

Supply List: construction paper, heavy paper, pencils, scissors, tape

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut construction paper into 6" x 12" strips (two per child). On heavy paper, cut out copies of a simple person outline, with arms extending outwards (6 inches high, 2 inches across). Make a sample craft.

Give each child two strips of construction paper and an outline. Set remaining supplies on tables. Have children accordion-fold one paper strip, making folds every 2 inches. Using the template, trace the person on top of the folded paper (the hands should touch the folds). Have children cut along the drawn lines (not cutting the hands at the folds) and open the paper to see six joined men. Have them repeat the process with their second strip. Tape the two strips together to form the twelve disciples.

Option 2: Stuffed Paper Fish

Supply List: cardstock, string, scissors, stamp pads, baby wipes, hole punches, paper towels, stapler

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, print two matching fish templates (one set per child). Cut string into 8-inch pieces. Make sample craft.

Give each child one set of fish and string. Set remaining supplies on tables. Have children cut out both fish. Using the stamp pad, have children make fingerprint “scales” on the fish until they are covered. Help children staple the two fish together. Before fully closing, have children stuff crumpled paper towels between the two fish. Punch a hole in the fish and tie string through for

hanging. Remind children Jesus told his disciples they would become “fishers of men.”

3rd–5th

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Option 2: Stuffed Paper Fish

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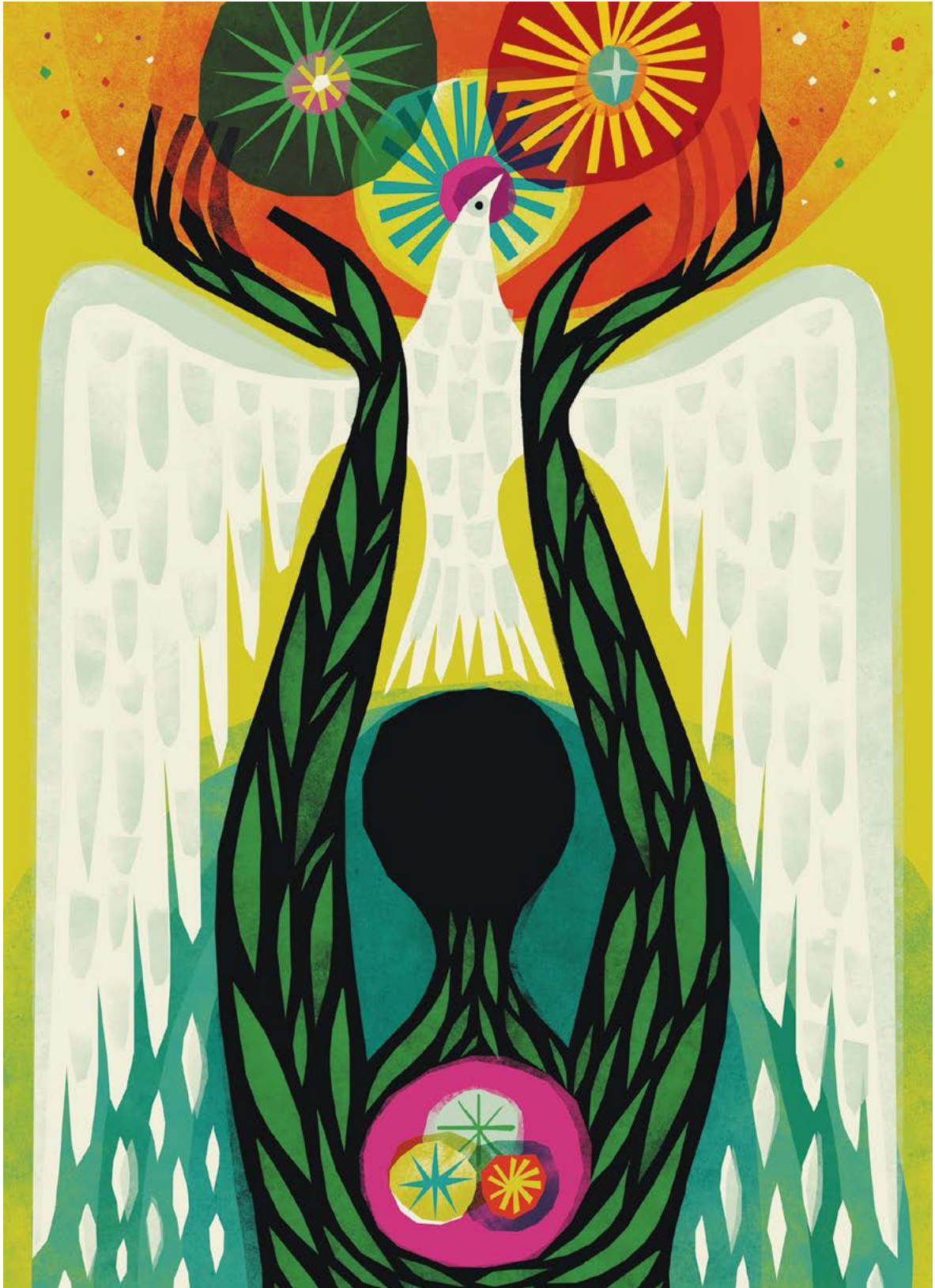
Visit TheBiggestStory.com for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.



Story

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Mark 3



STORY 61

A Story about Soils

MARK 4

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Mark 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

One day a big red dragon with seven heads flew from his lair and landed in front of King Frederick the Great's great castle. The dreadful dragon spread his scary wings, and with his fiery breath blew down the front door. The castle guards fell dead and the princess was captured.

Jesus told stories. But *not* stories like that. He told a lot of stories a lot of the time. Some of his stories have scary endings, but none of his stories are about red dragons. He told simple, short stories about ordinary people and everyday events—a woman baking bread, fishermen casting their nets, a shepherd watching his sheep, a farmer sowing seed. These stories are called parables. Jesus often ended his parables, saying, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear" (Mark 4:9). He wanted people to listen and learn about the kingdom of God through

his stories. But he knew that people needed his help to understand what he was saying. The parable of the soils, which we will listen to today, teaches us about the ways people either accept or reject Jesus's teachings. Listen up!

TELL THE STORY

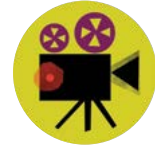
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



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
Jesus's true
followers accept
his word and
bear fruit.

One day Jesus told a parable about four kinds of dirt. Dirt that was really hard. Dirt filled with rocks. Dirt overgrown with thorns. And dirt that was good for growing seeds. Do you want to hear the short story? Do you promise to *listen*?

Once there was a farmer who went around his farm and threw seed everywhere. Some seeds fell on the hard dirt pathway, and birds quickly swooped down and swallowed the seeds. Some seeds fell on rocky ground, and because the soil was so shallow, the hot sun quickly wilted the seeds. Some seeds fell among thorns, and when the seeds started to sprout, they were choked by the thorns that wrapped around the seedlings. But some seeds dropped down deep into good soil. Those seeds got all the nutrients they needed. And sure enough, after a few days, the tiny seeds sprouted. They produced thirty, sixty, and even a hundred times more than what the farmer first planted.

Jesus's disciples heard Jesus's parable, but they didn't understand it. They needed Jesus's help. Thankfully, Jesus explained. The seeds represent the good news about Jesus and his kingdom (the gospel). Each soil represents how people respond to the message. Some people hear the gospel, but before it can change them, Satan (like the birds) comes and snatches it away. Like the seed on the hard path, the truth of the gospel never takes root. Other people are happy to receive the gospel for a while, but when hard things come and they



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Mark 4

start to suffer for following Jesus, they don't want it any more. They are like the seeds thrown on rocky ground that have very small roots and don't get enough water. Then there are people who hear the gospel, and they start to think and act like Christians, but worries about life and money become more important than pleasing God. They never grow and produce any fruit. They are like the seed sown among thorns. Finally, there are the seeds that fall on good soil and produce a huge harvest. This soil represents those who hear the gospel, let it soak into their hearts, and their lives are full of fruit—like caring for the needy, loving the unlovely, and teaching others about Jesus.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

Some people think there are only two responses to the good news about Jesus. You either accept it or reject it. But Jesus teaches us that there are some responses where someone seems like they are accepting the good news, but it ultimately doesn't bear any fruit in their lives. They liked Jesus for a little bit, but they weren't changed by him.

But Jesus taught that when we really believe the real gospel, it changes us. Not always in one quick swoop overnight, but steadily over a long time—like a farmer with his field. Does that mean that if we decide to be a Christian, we have to work really hard to be good enough for God's farm? No, if that were the case, none of us could be saved. Instead, we have to hold onto that gospel and let it go down deep into our hearts. The more we know the Jesus who died to rescue us from sin, the more we know the Father who sent his Son to rescue us, and the more God will bring change in our lives. Let's have good soil and hold tight to Jesus's gospel.

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. **QUESTION:** What kinds of stories did Jesus tell? Why did Jesus use parables to teach people?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus taught in parables to help separate good and bad listeners.

2. **QUESTION:** In the parable of the soils, where was the seed thrown? When Jesus explained the parable, what did he say the seed represented?

3

Engage

TAKEAWAY: The gospel is heard by hard and soft hearts.

3. **QUESTION:** What happened to the seed thrown on the hard pathway? What about the seed thrown on rocky soil? And what about seed thrown in the thorns? What does the parable teach us about how the gospel might not take root in our hearts?

TAKEAWAY: If our hearts are hard or we are distracted by hard things and worries, the gospel won't take root in our hearts.

4. **QUESTION:** What happened to the seed thrown on the good soil? How much fruit did it produce? What does the parable teach us about how the gospel can take root in our hearts?

TAKEAWAY: If our hearts are soft and ready to receive the gospel, it will take root and produce much fruit.

Memory Verse

I am the vine; you
are the branches.
Whoever abides in
me and I in him,
he it is that bears
much fruit, for
apart from me you
can do nothing.

JOHN 15:5

ACTIVITIES

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Pathway Relay

Supply List: paper, scissors, cups, obstacles (plastic toy hoops, cones, etc.)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Print and individually cut out the words path, rocks, thorns, and good. Put the words in a cup (one set per team). Make identical, simple obstacle courses using cones, hula hoops, and the like (one course per team).

Divide children into teams of four. Have each child draw one word from the team's cup. If the word is *path*, the children must complete the obstacle course on all fours. If it is *rocks*, they must walk on their knees. If it is *thorns*, they must hold one arm behind their backs while crawling. And if it is *good*, they have no limitations. When the leader says, "Grow," the first child on each team races through the course according to the word he or she drew, then tags the second person. The first team to have all team members finish the course wins.



Option 2: Who's Got the Seed?

Supply List: large seed

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Have children sit in a circle with their hands behind their backs. Choose one child to go to the center of the circle and close her eyes. Hand a seed to one of the children in the circle, then have the child in the center of the circle open her eyes. Have the children discreetly pass the seed from person to person. The person in the center guesses who has the seed. If she is correct, the person with the seed trades places with the person in the middle and the game continues. Remind children that as we hear and obey the word of God, we bear much fruit.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Rocks and Thorns

Supply List: none

Divide children into two teams. Have teams line up facing one another in the center of the room. Identify one team as “rocks” and the other team as “thorns.” Explain that their respective bases are the walls behind their team. The leader will call “rocks” or “thorns.” If rocks are called, the thorns must turn and run to their base before being tagged by a rock (and vice versa). If someone is tagged, he must join the team who tagged them. Play continues until all children are on one team. Remind children that Jesus used a parable to explain that some people stop obeying God’s word when life gets difficult, thorny, and rocky.

Option 2: Tossing Seeds in the Soils

Supply List: paper, marker, tape

Before Class: Gather supplies. Write path, rocks, thorns, and good on four pieces of paper and tape one word on each wall in the room.

Choose one child to stand in the middle of the room, to close her eyes, and to count down from ten. Have the remaining children choose a sign to stand by. On zero, with eyes still closed, the person in the middle calls out one of the four words. The children by that sign are out. Play continues until one person remains. Remind children that Jesus told a parable that compared different soils to how people respond to God’s word.

CRAFTS

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Healthy Soil Bloom

Supply List: coffee filters, muffin liners, craft sticks, markers, pom-poms, glue, spray bottle with water

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a coffee filter, muffin liner, and craft stick. Set markers, glue, and pom-poms on tables. Have children color their coffee filters with markers. Teachers then lightly spray the outside edges of the filter to blend colors. Have children glue muffin liners to the center of their filters, then glue pom-poms to the middle of the muffin liners. Have children color the craft stick green and glue to the flower as a stem.

Option 2: Story of the Soil Wheel

Supply List: paper, scissors, marker, crayons, brass fasteners

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut out 8-inch-diameter circles (two per child). Divide half the circles into four equal sections, and label them Path, Rocky Ground, Thorns, and Good Soil. In the other half, cut out a section one-fourth the size of the circle. Write the Big Truth on the remaining portion. Make a sample craft.

Provide children with crayons and the circle divided into four sections. Have them draw something that illustrates each of the four sections, then help them fasten the circle with a section cut out of it on top with a brass fastener.

**Option 1: Good Soil Flower**

Supply List: tissue paper sheets, scissors, string, green pipe cleaners

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut string into 8-inch lengths (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Have children choose six to eight pieces of tissue paper and lay them on top of one another. Place remaining supplies on tables. Have children accordion-fold their stacked tissue paper into 1- to 2-inch folds. Help them tie the string tightly around the middle to secure the folds. Have children use scissors to shape both ends of the tissue paper (curved, fringe, etc.). Have children fan out both sides of the tissue paper and gently pull up each layer toward the string, one layer at a time. Have children create stems and leaves with pipe cleaners and attach by twisting them around the flower. Remind children that being hearers and doers of God's word helps us grow strong and beautiful in him.

Option 2: Careful Where You Plant

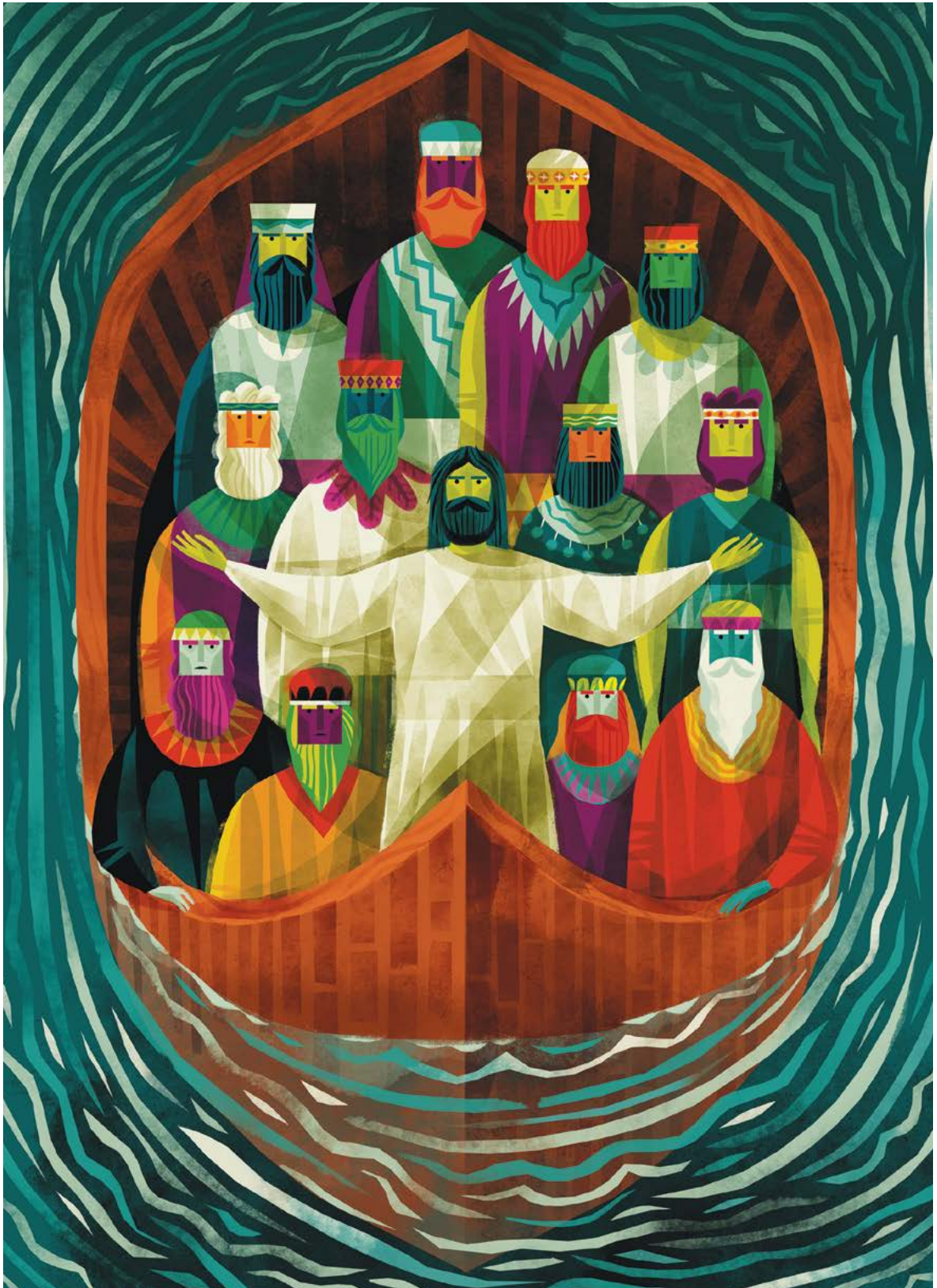
Supply List: paper, glue, colored pencils, large seeds

Before Class: Gather supplies. Print Mark 4:14–20 (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Set glue and colored pencils on tables. Give each child a blank paper and four large seeds. Have children fold the paper in half twice so it has four sections. Have them label the sections *Path*, *Rocky Ground*, *Thorns*, and *Good Soil*. Have them glue one seed in each section, then draw pictures to illustrate each section's label. Have children glue the Mark 4:14–20 paper to the back of the drawings, facing outwards.



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



STORY 62

The Scary Boat Ride

MARK 4

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Mark 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

Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River. He was tempted by the snake in the wilderness for forty days. (And he didn't give in!) Then, after John was arrested, Jesus walked up to a place called Galilee and he *said* and *did* a lot of things there. Like? He preached, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15). He called his first followers and they followed. He "cast out many demons" and "healed many who were sick with various diseases" (1:34). He prayed to his Father in heaven. He cleansed a leper. He forgave the sins and healed the body of a paralyzed man. He dined with tax collectors and sinners and shared the good news with them. He taught large crowds, often using parables—those simple, short (but symbolic!) stories we learned about last lesson. Wow, that's a lot to say and do!

And it all drives us to a very important question: Who is Jesus? Do you think the disciples ever asked that question? In today's story, we'll find out what Jesus *said* and *did* that made them ask: Who is Jesus?

TELL THE STORY

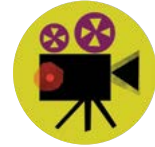
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



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 is so strong
that those who
trust him never
have to be afraid.

Have you ever been really scared? Maybe a nightmare? Maybe your big brother snuck up behind you and said, “Boo!” Maybe a thunderstorm? Maybe a big wave that slammed you down to the ocean floor? One night, Jesus’s disciples were really scared. Do you want to know why?

Here’s what happened. After a long day of helping people, Jesus said to his twelve apostles, “Let’s sail across to the other side” (see Mark 4:35). So they got on a boat and pushed off from shore. As they were sailing, a terrible storm arose out of nowhere. The wind was blowing against them and pushing huge waves into the boat. The boat was starting to fill with water; the disciples were totally filled with fear! For even the experienced fishermen on board knew that they couldn’t save the boat from sinking if it filled with water. So the disciples rushed to Jesus. One problem—he was fast asleep. “Teacher,” they yelled, “Wake up! Don’t you care about us? We are all about to die!” (see 4:38). Of course, Jesus cares! He cared for them then; he cares for us now. But he didn’t fear the storm. When you’re as strong as Jesus, you’re even more powerful than the wind and waves. So he woke right up and he shushed the storm! “Peace! Be Still!” he commanded the waves. And you know what? They obeyed! The water stilled and the wind stopped. In an instant, the sea was like a sheet of glass—perfectly flat and still.



Story

62

Mark 4

Jesus rebuked the wind and waves, and then he rebuked the twelve: “Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?” (4:40). Jesus wanted them to trust him even in the storm. The disciples *had been* afraid of the storm, but now they were afraid (in a good way!) of Jesus. Mark ends this story, saying that the disciples “were filled with great fear and said to one another, ‘Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?’” (4:41). What a great question! But they’d have to wait until after Jesus’s death and resurrection to really get their answer. He is the Almighty Creator, the only Son of God, the Savior of the world. For now, they needed to learn a lesson we too need to learn: Jesus is so strong that those who trust him never have to be afraid.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

Do you know what a boat’s mast is? It is the two poles that stick up in the middle of the boat where sailors set the sails. If you’ve ever seen one, you may know it looks like a cross. While Mark doesn’t tell us if the disciples’ boat had a mast or not (it likely did), he is making a connection between the shape of this story and what happened to Jesus on the cross. On the waters, Jesus saves his twelve disciples from drowning. A small salvation. But on the cross, he saves all his disciples (including us) from the punishment of eternal death for our sins. Our big salvation! In today’s story, Jesus brought peace to the wind and waves. On the cross, he brought peace between sinful people and a holy God! You see, this scary boat ride is not just to teach us how powerful Jesus is or that he can calm the storms we encounter on earth. It also teaches us who Jesus is (the Creator and Son of God) and what he came to do (save us).

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

- 1. QUESTION:** What are some of the miracles that the disciples had seen Jesus do? What happened on their boat ride to make them afraid? What do you think would have happened if the disciples told the wind and waves to be still? What happened when Jesus told them to be still? What does that tell us about Jesus?

TAKEAWAY: Even the wind and waves obey Jesus, because he is the Creator.

3

Engage

Memory Verse

They were filled
with great fear
and said to one
another, “Who
then is this, that
even the wind and
the sea obey him?”

MARK 4:41

2. **QUESTION:** Do you remember what Jesus said to the disciples after he calmed the storm? Why do you think he said they had no faith? What would it have looked like for them to have faith during the storm? When we encounter scary things, like the storm, what can we remember?

TAKEAWAY: Faith in Jesus helps us face our biggest fears.

3. **QUESTION:** What would have happened to the disciples if Jesus hadn’t stilled the storm? What would happen if Jesus hadn’t died on the cross for us? What difference does it make that he stilled the storm and died for us?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus came to save us.

ACTIVITIES

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

K–2nd

Option 1: “Peace! Be Still!” Dancing

Supply List: music

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Have children dance while music is playing. When the music stops, call out, “Peace! Be still!” Have children freeze until the music starts again. If the teacher sees a child move before the music starts back up, that child is out. Play continues until one child remains. Note: This can also be a nonelimination game to keep children active. If a child moves when music is off, they must do twenty jumping jacks before reentering the game.

Option 2: Don’t Blow Me Down Game

Supply List: tissues

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Give the children each an uncrumpled tissue and have them place it on their heads. Children should move around the room and try to blow tissues off other people's heads, all while keeping their tissue on their head. If a child's tissue falls off, he may not catch it but must sit down in that spot. Play continues until only one child remains. Remind children that Jesus calmed the raging winds with a word.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Bail Out the Boat

Supply List: masking tape, blue paper

Before Class: Gather supplies. Using tape, make the outline of a boat on the floor. Crumple blue paper into balls (at least five per child) and scatter them around the outside of the boat.

Choose two children to be the “disciples” and stand inside the boat. Have the remaining children throw the paper balls into the boat while the disciples try to keep the “water” out. After 1 minute, shout, “Peace! Be still!” and have everyone freeze. Count how many pieces of paper are in the boat and record. Choose two new disciples and repeat the process. Continue until all children have had a chance to be the disciples. The winning pair is the pair that had the least amount of water in the boat after 1 minute.

Option 2: Strong Winds at Sea Relay

Supply List: balloons, straws

Before Class: Gather supplies. Inflate balloons (one per team and a few extra).

Divide children into teams, line them up single file, and give each team a balloon. Give each child a straw. The first child on each team blows through his or her straw to move the balloon to a designated spot and back. The child then passes the balloon to the next player on the team, who repeats the process. The first team to have all players finish wins. Remind children that when Jesus commanded the winds and waves to be still, they obeyed.



Story

62

Mark 4

CRAFTS

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Winds and Waves Wind Sock

Supply List: paper, crepe paper streamers, crayons, tape, hole punch, string

Before Class: Gather supplies. On paper, print Mark 4:41: “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?” (one per child). Cut string into 20-inch lengths (one per child). Cut crepe paper streamers into 15-inch lengths. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a verse paper. Set crayons, tape, and streamers on tables. Have children decorate the verse paper with crayons. Have children roll the paper widthwise into a tube and secure with tape, decorated side facing outwards. Have children tape streamers to the inside bottom edge of the wind sock. Help children punch two holes directly across from each other at the top of the wind sock. Thread the string through both holes and tie the ends together for hanging.

Option 2: Boat Baggie

Supply List: plastic sandwich baggies, blue gel toothpaste, clear shipping tape, construction paper, scissors, glue sticks, crayons

Before Class: Gather supplies. Squirt 2 tablespoons of blue gel toothpaste into baggies, seal shut, and reinforce with clear shipping tape (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child a toothpaste baggie. Set remaining supplies on tables. Have children press the toothpaste around in the baggie to spread it out to look like water. Have children use construction paper to cut a right triangle for the boat sail, a semicircle for the base of the boat, and a long, skinny rectangle to attach the two parts of the boat. Glue pieces together, decorate with crayons, and “sail” the boat on the “water” baggie.

**Option 1: Winds and Waves Wind Sock**

Supply List: paper, crepe paper streamers, crayons, tape, hole punch, string

Before Class: Gather supplies. On paper, print Mark 4:41: “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?” (one per child). Cut string into 20-inch lengths (one per child). Cut crepe paper streamers into 15-inch lengths. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a verse paper. Set crayons, tape, and streamers on tables. Have children decorate the verse paper with crayons. Have children roll the paper widthwise into a tube and secure with tape, decorated side facing outwards. Have children tape streamers to the inside bottom edge of the wind sock. Help children punch two holes directly across from each other at the top of the wind sock. Thread the string through both holes and tie the ends together for hanging.

Option 2: Sea in a Bottle

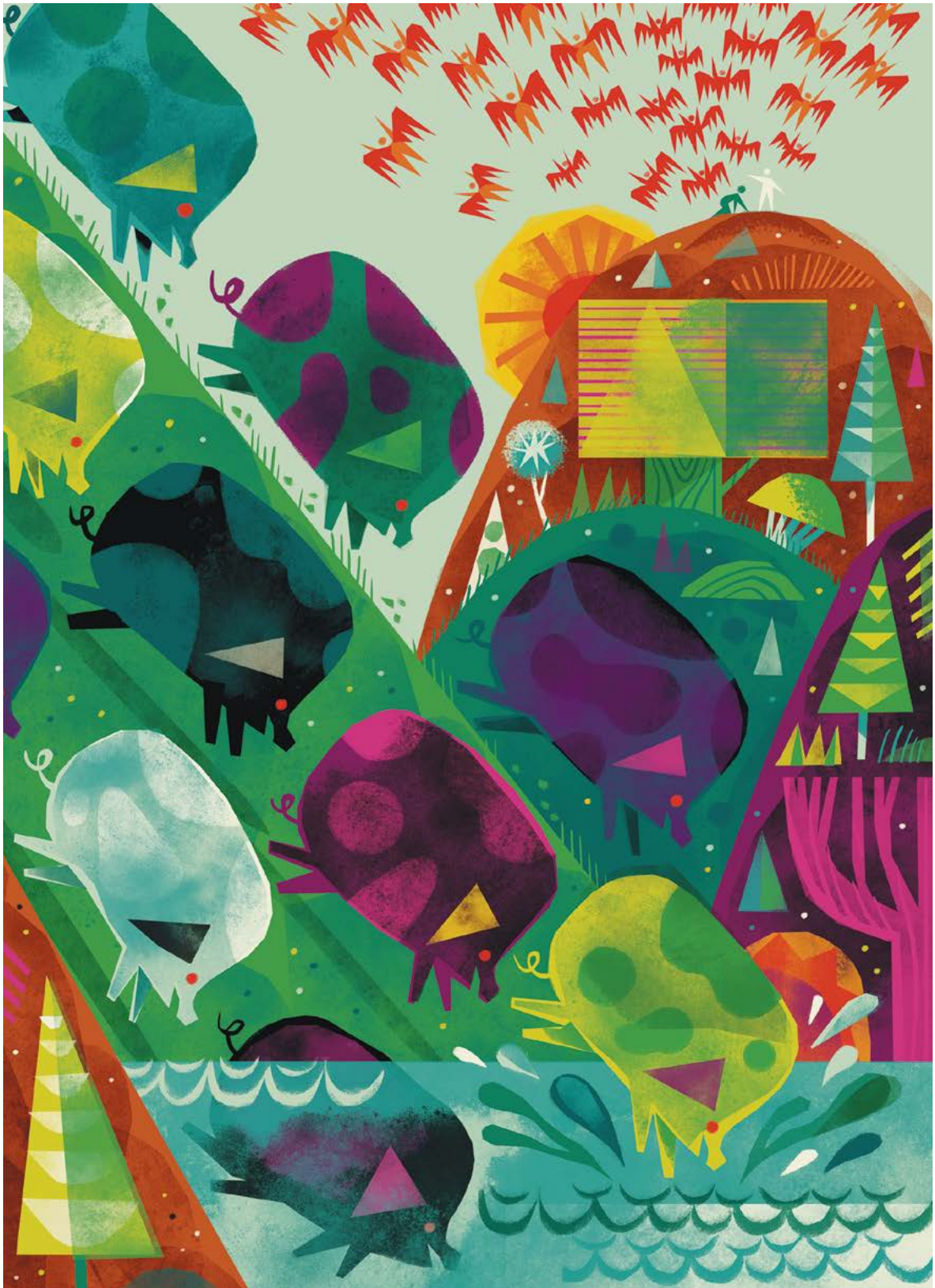
Supply List: water bottles, funnels, water, baby or mineral oil, blue food coloring, small cork or foam balls, hot glue gun or duct tape

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make a sample craft.

Give each child an empty water bottle. Have children use funnels to fill their bottle halfway with water. Next, have them add a few drops of blue food coloring. Put on the lid and shake until well blended. Have children use the funnels again to fill bottles with baby or mineral oil, leaving about 1 inch unfilled at the top. Have children insert a small cork or foam ball. Have teachers secure the lid with a hot glue gun or duct tape. Encourage children not to shake the bottle but to hold it horizontally and raise and lower the top and bottom to create waves. Remind children that Jesus has power over winds and waves and that we do not have to fear.



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



STORY 63

Send Us to the Pigs!

MARK 5

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Mark 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.

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

Remember the boat ride from last week? That journey was memorable to say the least. There was a terrible storm with fierce winds and scary waves. Remember who calmed the storm? Jesus! And how did the disciples respond? They shook in their wet boots. They were "filled with great fear" (Mark 4:41). They also wondered, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" (4:41). Our story today answers that question. We'll see Jesus rescue a scary man in a scary place. And we'll see what happens when he encounters an extremely powerful demon named Legion. Will Legion be a match for Jesus? Let's find out.

TELL THE STORY

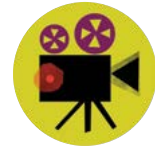
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



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
Because Jesus
has come to
free us from the
power of the evil
one, we should
celebrate and tell
our friends.

After their scary boat ride, Jesus and the twelve arrived in the “country of the Gerasenes” (5:1). This country was a Gentile region. The Jews viewed Gentiles as unclean people. And the most unclean person in that place was about to meet Jesus. As soon as Jesus stepped off the boat, “a man with an unclean spirit” (5:2) rushed toward him. He was possessed by demons and lived in a tomb cut from stone that was filled with dead bodies (how very unclean!). If that’s not bad enough, there was “a great herd of pigs . . . feeding there on the hillside” (5:11). Now you might think, “Piglets are so cute.” But God’s law clearly stated: “And the pig . . . is unclean to you” (Lev. 11:7). So this is one unclean scene! There’s a demon-possessed Gentile living with dead bodies and pigs.

This super-unclean man needed some superstrong cleaning powers. But it was worse than that, because Mr. Super-Unclean was also Mr. Superstrong. “And no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain, for he had often been bound with shackles and chains, but he wrenched the chains apart, and he broke the shackles in pieces. No one had the strength to subdue him” (Mark 5:3–4). His strength came because he was possessed by a large and powerful group of demons called “Legion” (5:9). In those days, the word *legion* described a group of six thousand Roman foot soldiers. Who was strong enough to crush that many demons? Could the Snake Crusher do it? Amazingly, the battle scene lasted only a few seconds. Who do you think won? It was the Snake Crusher! Jesus simply commanded, “Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!” (5:8), and soon the thousands of unclean spirits came out. And where did they go? Into the unclean pigs. The pigs were so spooked that they stampeded down

the steep mountainside and crashed into the sea. With just a few words Jesus conquered the demons, showed he was the Son of God, and cleaned this man of his unclean spirit. What do you think that man did? He “began to proclaim . . . how much Jesus had done for him” (5:20). He had really good news to share!

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

Do you know that we are in a spiritual war against Satan? We are! The Bible states that the “whole world lies in the power of the evil one” (1 John 5:19) and that we “wrestle against . . . spiritual forces of evil” (Eph. 6:12). The good news is that Jesus is the Snake Crusher; he came to “destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8) and crush the serpent’s head (Gen. 3:15).

So when we see demons being driven out of a person—like in today’s story—these are pictures of Jesus’s putting his foot on the snake. It is not until the cross that Satan’s head is crushed. And is it not until Jesus’s glorious return—where he will toss the devil and his minions into the “lake of fire” (Rev. 20:10)—that all evil in this world will be destroyed. Until then, we are in a spiritual battle. But, like the man in this story, we have been made clean and set free by Jesus. And like him we should tell our family and friends this good news of God’s mercy. The Lord has done so much for us!

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. **QUESTION:** In the story, where do we see Jesus showing his power? Why do you think Jesus is able to be this powerful? What hard things do you need Jesus’s power to help you with?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus is the all-powerful Son of God.

2. **QUESTION:** What was this man like before he met Jesus? How about after he met Jesus? How can you tell Jesus loved this man? How can Jesus’s love for you and power over sin change your life?

TAKEAWAY: Because Jesus loved this man, he set him free from sin and made him new.



Story

63

Mark 5

3

Engage

Memory Verse
Go home to your
friends and tell
them how much
the Lord has
done for you.

MARK 5:19

- 3. QUESTION:** Have you ever felt really angry or sad or just yucky and you needed someone to come alongside you and help you? Who did you go to? Who can we always go to (whether we need forgiveness, or comfort, or help)?

TAKEAWAY: Even when we are unclean, we can come to Jesus.

- 4. QUESTION:** What did the man do after Jesus rescued him? What has Jesus done for you that you can share with others? Can you think of a specific person that you can tell about Jesus's work in your life this week?

TAKEAWAY: If Jesus has made us clean and set us free from the evil one, we should tell others the good news!

ACTIVITIES

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Balloon Game

Supply List: balloons, large sheet of paper/whiteboard

Before Class: Gather supplies. Blow up balloons (one per pair).

Put children in pairs. Give each pair one balloon. Have pairs hit the balloon back and forth without letting the balloon fall to the ground. If the balloon falls, have the pair go to the whiteboard and write down (or have the teacher write) one thing that they can tell others about Jesus. Play continues as long as time allows.

Option 2: Sin Snowball Fight

Supply List: white paper, pens, masking tape

Before Class: Gather supplies. Divide the classroom in half using a long piece of masking tape.

Give the children each two pieces of paper. Have them write the name of a sin they struggle with on each of the papers, then crumple them up. Divide children



into two teams and assign each team to one half of the classroom. On “Go” have children throw their “sin snowballs” across to the other side. (They want to get rid of that sin!) At the end of 2 minutes, say “Freeze!” Count the snowballs on each side of the room. The team with the fewest snowballs wins. Have children shoot all snowballs into a trash can. Tell them Jesus takes all the sin in our lives, cleans us up, and makes us new.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Charades

Supply List: notecards

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make situation cards about ways we show mercy to others. (Examples: One falls off a bike, and someone gets an adhesive bandage. One is crying, and someone comes over and comforts. One is getting bullied, and someone shows kindness.)

Have children come up two at a time to act out one of the situations without using words. Have remaining children guess what they are acting. Continue play until all children have had the opportunity to act out a situation. Remind children that Jesus showed mercy to the demon-possessed man.

Option 2: Sin Snowball Fight

Supply List: white paper, pens, masking tape

Before Class: Gather supplies. Divide the classroom in half using a long piece of masking tape.

Give the children each two pieces of paper. Have them write the name of a sin they struggle with on each of the papers, then crumple them up. Divide children into two teams and assign each team to one half of the classroom. On “Go” have children throw their “sin snowballs” across to the other side. (They want to get rid of that sin!) At the end of 2 minutes, say “Freeze!” Count the snowballs on each side of the room. The team with the fewest snowballs wins. Have children shoot all snowballs into a trash can. Tell them Jesus takes all the sin in our lives, cleans us up, and makes us new.

CRAFTS

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Megaphone Craft

Supply List: paper, crayons, tape

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make copies of a megaphone template with the Memory Verse written on it (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child a template. Place remaining supplies on tables. Have children cut out and decorate their megaphones. Roll the template into a megaphone shape and secure with tape. Encourage children to go and tell others what Jesus has done for them.

Option 2: Butterfly Stained Glass

Supply List: white cardstock, string, hole punch, crayons, cotton balls, vegetable oil, bowls, plastic bags

Before Class: Gather supplies. On white cardstock, print copies of a stained glass butterfly template with the Memory Verse written underneath it (one per child). Cut 1-foot lengths of string (one per child). Place vegetable oil in small bowls. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a template and string. Place remaining supplies on tables. Have children punch a hole at the top of the template and loop their string through for hanging. Have children color the different butterfly sections with crayons. Encourage them to press hard when coloring and to fill every space with color. Next, have children use cotton balls to rub vegetable oil over both sides of the entire butterfly. Send butterflies home in plastic bags and encourage children to hang them in a window. Tell children that just as butterflies change from caterpillars, so Jesus changes people into something beautiful.



Option 1: Sin Paper Chains

Supply List: black construction paper, scissors, white crayons, tape

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Place supplies on tables. Have each child cut a piece of black construction paper into six strips. Next, have the children use a white crayon to write a sin that they struggle with on each strip. If they need help, give examples such as lying, anger, hatred, worry, jealousy, unkind words, or cheating. Using tape, make a paper chain with the strips. Remind children that just as the demon-possessed man was controlled by sin, sin controls us too. Remind children that the only way to break the “chains” of sin is through Jesus.

Option 2: Butterfly Stained Glass

Supply List: white cardstock, string, hole punch, crayons, cotton balls, vegetable oil, bowls, plastic bags

Before Class: Gather supplies. On white cardstock, print copies of a stained glass butterfly template with the Memory Verse written underneath it (one per child). Cut 1-foot lengths of string (one per child). Place vegetable oil in small bowls. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a template and string. Place remaining supplies on tables. Have children punch a hole at the top of the template and loop their string through for hanging. Have children color the different butterfly sections with crayons. Encourage them to press hard when coloring and to fill every space with color. Next, have children use cotton balls to rub vegetable oil over both sides of the entire butterfly. Send butterflies home in plastic bags and encourage children to hang them in a window. Tell children that just as butterflies change from caterpillars, so Jesus changes people into something beautiful.



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



STORY 64

A Sick Woman and a Sad Dad

MARK 5

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Mark 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.*

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 lesson 58? Probably not. How about the lesson called Mr. Clean, where Jesus cleansed the leper? Maybe you remember that. In that lesson, we learned that in the Old Testament, God gave his people a list of laws telling them what was clean and unclean. Certain animals were unclean. Bats and rats? Yes. Pigs? For sure. Squirrels? Them too. So, if someone ate an unclean animal, they became unclean. (And maybe sick too!) What else could make someone unclean? If someone touched a dead body, he was unclean. If someone was bleeding in a certain way, she was unclean.

In today's lesson Jesus does something remarkable. (Actually a few remarkable things.) He meets two people who desperately need his help. One is an unclean woman, and the other is a religious leader. Will Jesus do what they ask? Will they do what he asks? Let's 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

Jesus showed
his power over
disease and
death, and one
day he will
defeat them for
all who believe.

Does Jesus save only rich people? No! Religious people? No! Girls but not boys? No! Jesus came to save all people. And today's story (actually two stories woven together) makes that fact very clear. It also makes clear that Jesus has power over any disease and even death.

One day a great crowd surrounded Jesus. Suddenly, a man named Jairus pushed his way through, saw Jesus face-to-face, and bowed before him. That's not unusual. People should bow before King Jesus. The leper did this—others too. But what is unusual is that Jairus was an important religious leader: "One of the rulers of the synagogue" (Mark 5:22). Why would a religious leader bow before Jesus? He did so because he was desperate: "My little daughter is dying. But if you come," he begged Jesus, "and lay your hands on her she will live" (see 5:23). Wow! What faith. He believed that Jesus's touch could save his little girl.

As they journeyed to the man's house, a woman then pushed her way through the crowd and touched the edge of Jesus's robe. Why did she do that? Like the ruler, she was desperate for help and thought if she touched his robe, maybe she would be healed. For twelve years she had been terribly sick. Day after



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day, year after year, her body didn't stop bleeding which made her unclean. She went to the doctors. They couldn't help. In fact, she got worse. Her only hope was Jesus. And sure enough, as soon as she touched him, God touched and healed her. Jesus knew his touch had healed her, so he stopped and called her out, saying, "Daughter, your faith has saved you! Your disease is gone. Go in peace" (see 5:34). Two people with great faith. An important religious man and an unclean woman. Jesus healed the woman, but what about the man's daughter?

As Jesus continued his journey, people came from the ruler's house and told him awful news: "Your daughter is dead" (5:35). The end. No, not the end! What Jesus did next was amazing. He encouraged the sad dad ("Do not fear, only believe," 5:36) and then walked into the house, took the girl by the hand, and said, "Little girl, I say to you, arise" (5:41). And guess what? She rose from the dead! She got up, walked around the room, and then had something to eat. Maybe it was a piece of warm raisin bread or a chocolate snowball (a Jewish cookie!). What she ate doesn't matter. What does matter is that she was really alive. Everyone was amazed! Jesus came to save old and young, men and women, religious and unclean—anyone who believed.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

Remember how the disciples in the boat feared they would drown and die? The man and woman in today's story both feared too. The woman feared she might never be healed from her bleeding; the man feared that his little girl was about to die. And sure enough, she did die! But both the woman and man had hope. They knew who Jesus was and believed he had the power to heal serious sickness. What they learned, however, was that Jesus has more power than they could imagine. He has power to conquer even death! And because of this, Jesus's command to the man is a command we should hear and obey: "Do not fear, only believe" (Mark 5:36). We don't need to fear death because Jesus has conquered it through his death on the cross, and has given us certain hope that we will rise from the dead someday just as the little girl did—and just as he did two thousand years ago. What wonderful good news! Praise the Father, Son, and Spirit for his gospel.

3

Engage

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. **QUESTION:** What foods were considered unclean by Jews? What other things made a person unclean? What happened when the unclean, bleeding woman touched Jesus? What are some reasons you might go to Jesus?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus's touch makes the unclean clean.

Memory Verse

*Do not fear,
only believe.*

MARK 5:36

2. **QUESTION:** Who were some of the characters in our story? How were they different? How were they the same?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus came to save all people.

3. **QUESTION:** What did the woman hope Jesus could do for her? What did the man hope Jesus could do for his daughter? What did Jesus show he has power to do?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus has power to heal and raise the dead.

4. **QUESTION:** What was the man afraid might happen to his daughter? Did that happen? What surprising thing happened after she died? If Jesus can raise us from the dead, do we need to fear death?

TAKEAWAY: Because Jesus conquered death, we don't need to fear it.

ACTIVITIES

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Touch and Find Relay

Supply List: boxes, newspaper/paper, adhesive bandages

Before Class: Gather supplies. Fill boxes with crumpled paper and adhesive bandages (one box per team; at least one bandage per child).

Divide children into teams and set boxes on the far end of the room. On "Go!" the first person on each team runs to his team's box, reaches inside, finds a ban-

dage without looking, sticks it to himself, and runs back to tag the next person. Remaining team members repeat the process. The first team to race all members wins. Remind children that Jesus is able to heal people's bodies and hearts.

Option 2: Touch and Guess

Supply List: none

Choose five children to be "It" and have them stand in front of the room. Have remaining children sit at tables, close their eyes, put their heads down on the table, and put one thumb up. Have each of the five "Its" quietly press down the thumb of one person and then return to the front. The leader then calls, "If someone touched you, stand up." Have the children who stand take turns guessing who touched them (one guess per child). If a child guesses correctly, she becomes "It" for the next round and the person who chose her sits down. If she guesses incorrectly, the person who chose her remains "It." Remind children that Jesus knew who touched him because Jesus knows everything!

3rd–5th

Option 1: Four Touch Ball

Supply List: ball

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Divide children into two teams and have them form two lines facing each other. Assign each child a number so that each team has a player with each number. Place a ball halfway between the teams. The leader calls out two numbers. The children assigned those numbers race to the ball and try to grab it first. As soon as someone has the ball, all children can move around the room. The person with the ball must toss it to a teammate before getting tagged by someone from the opposing team. To score a point, the team must complete four total tosses without being tagged. If the person holding the ball is tagged or the ball is dropped, no points are scored and a new round begins. The first team to three points wins.

Option 2: Touch and Guess

Supply List: none

Choose five children to be "It" and have them stand in front of the room. Have remaining children sit at tables, close their eyes, put their heads down on the



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table, and put one thumb up. Have each of the five “Its” quietly press down the thumb of one person and then return to the front. The leader then calls, “If someone touched you, stand up.” Have the children who stand take turns guessing who touched them (one guess per child). If a child guesses correctly, she becomes “It” for the next round and the person who chose her sits down. If she guesses incorrectly, the person who chose her remains “It.” Remind children that Jesus knew who touched him because Jesus knows everything!

CRAFTS

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Great Physician Kit

Supply List: cardstock, hole punch, pipe cleaners, cotton balls, cotton swabs, adhesive bandages, tongue depressors, glue

Before Class: Gather supplies. On the bottom half of a piece of cardstock, print a picture of a red cross symbol and the words “Great Physician Kit” (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child a “Great Physician Kit” paper and two pipe cleaners. Place remaining supplies on tables. Have children fold the paper in half so the words and symbol are in front, then punch two holes centered on the folded edge. Have children insert pipe cleaners through the holes and shape to make handles. Set remaining supplies on tables. Have children glue the various items to the inside of their “medical kit.” Remind children that Jesus is the Great Physician.

Option 2: Wake Up Puppet

Supply List: lunch-sized paper bag, googly eyes, crayons, scissors, glue, construction paper, yarn

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a paper bag and two googly eyes. Set remaining supplies on tables. Have children lift the bag’s flap and glue the googly eyes underneath. Have children use construction paper to make two fringed rectangles to represent



closed eyes and glue to the top of the closed flap. Have children design and cut out a nose and mouth and glue them below the googly eyes (so they can always be seen). Lastly, have them make and glue clothing, hair, and jewelry to the bag. Remind children that when Jairus's daughter died, Jesus healed her and she woke up.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Strong Faith Wall Hanging

Supply List: tape, aluminum foil, construction paper, permanent markers

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut pieces of aluminum foil slightly smaller than pieces of construction paper (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child a piece of aluminum foil and construction paper. Have children tape the aluminum foil to the center of the construction paper. Set markers on tables. Have children write FAITH in large bubble letters and decorate around the letters. Remind children that Jesus told the woman that her faith had healed her.

Option 2: Get Up Girl!

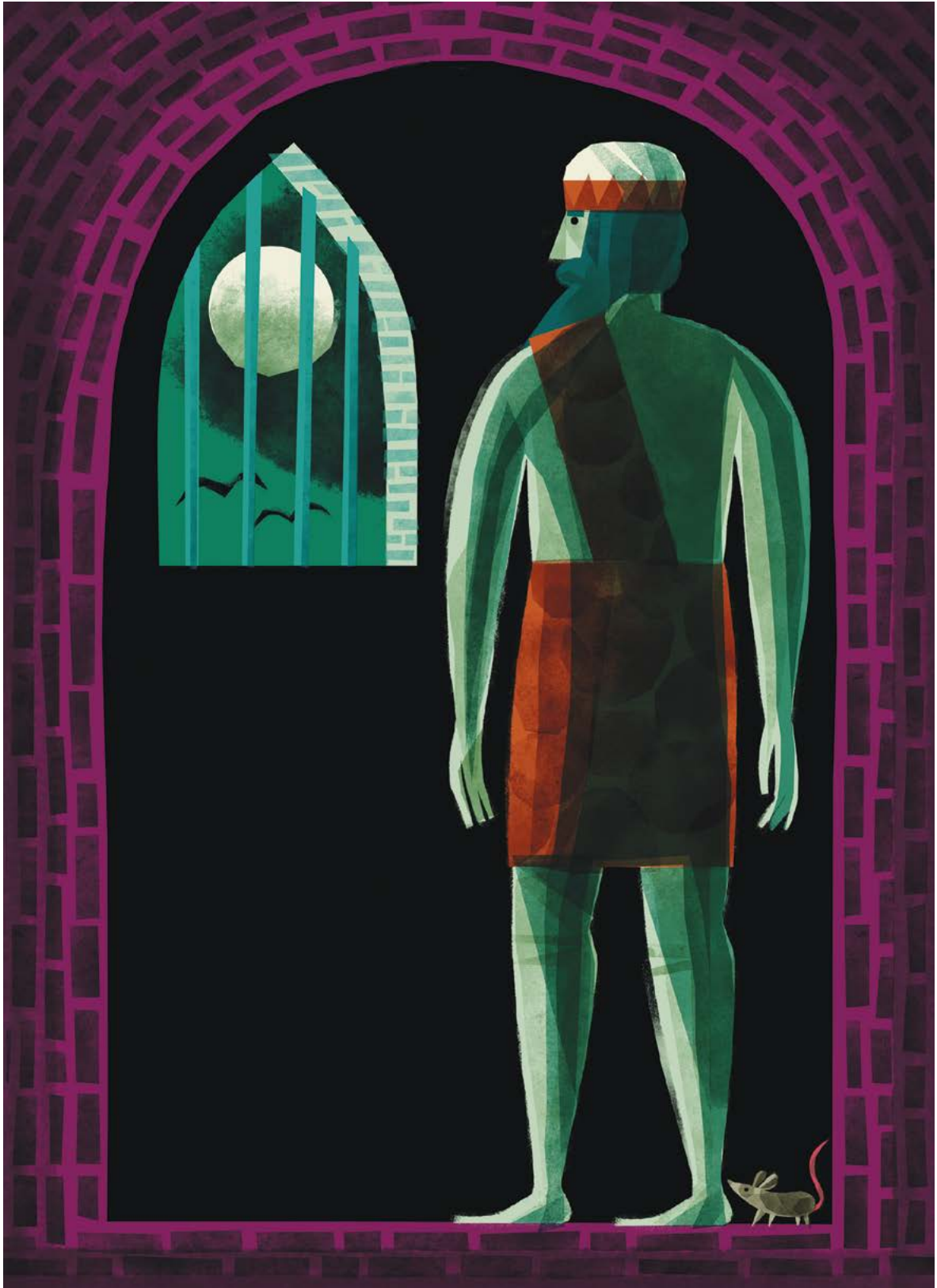
Supply List: cardstock, scissors, straws, colored pencils, staplers

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut 3-inch squares of cardstock (two per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child a straw and two pieces of cut cardstock. Set remaining supplies on tables. On one square, have children draw the face of a sad girl with closed eyes. On the second square, have children draw the same girl with open eyes and a big smile. Have children staple the squares together so faces are outward and attach to the top of a straw. Have children place the straw between their palms and quickly slide hands back and forth so the two faces seem to blend into one. Adjust speed to make eyes “open” and “close.” Remind children that when Jairus's daughter died, Jesus healed her and told her to get up.



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



STORY 65

The Voice Is Silenced

MARK 6

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Mark 6.
- 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 this life, the good guys don't win. This is true of many of the heroes in the Old Testament. Righteous Abel was killed. Humble Moses was rejected and ultimately missed out on the promised land. The prophet Jeremiah was imprisoned and accused of being a traitor. Other prophets were tortured, mocked, whipped, chained, and imprisoned; others were stoned to death, killed by the sword, and even sawn in two! (see Heb. 11:35–37). These heroes of the faith did not receive all God's promises in their lifetimes, but they knew he had more to offer them. They knew he would provide for them, after their deaths, "something better" (Heb. 11:40).

Today's lesson is about John the Baptist, whom Jesus calls a great man (see Matt. 11:11). John was certainly one of the "good guys" also. And as one of the

good guys he did good things and spoke good words. He announced that everyone should repent and be baptized. He also told Herod—an evil king—that he should start living by God’s rules not his own. Over and over, he preached, “It is not right for you, Herod, to divorce your wife and marry your brother’s wife” (see Mark 6:17–18). How do you think Herod received that? What do you think might happen to John? Let’s find out.

TELL THE STORY

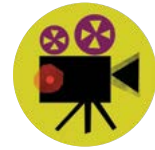
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



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
We need faith
to believe Jesus
wins—even when
it looks like bad
guys are winning.

King Herod liked to hear John preach, and he was even interested in learning about Jesus. But he didn’t want to hear about Jesus as the “King” of God’s people. Herod was the king of the Jews (or so he thought)! Also, he really didn’t like John’s message about his divorce and remarriage. King Herod ignored his words and refused to repent. In fact, he had his soldiers capture John and lock him in prison.

Herod didn’t plan on killing John. He just wanted John to stop preaching against him. Herod’s new wife, however, wanted him dead. So, when she had the chance to make that happen, she did. One night Herod was having a big birthday bash. All the important men of the city were there. This played right into the wicked plans of Herod’s wicked wife. Her daughter did a special dance in front of all the men. Herod was so pleased with the dance that he told the girl, “Ask me for anything, and I’ll give it to you.” He vowed to do whatever she wanted. So she went out of the room and asked her mom, “What should I ask for?” Her mom said, “The head of John the Baptist” (see Mark 6:24). Crazy, huh? Awful, right? Crazier and more awful still, the daughter then stood before Herod and said, “Cut off John’s head and serve it to me on a platter!” Now, because Herod



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had promised to do whatever she asked (and because he was afraid of what his important guests might think of him), he gave the order to do what she asked. John's head was cut off and brought to the girl, who brought it to her mother. A terrible and disgusting gift.

Jesus taught that we are blessed when we suffer for God's kingdom and that the reward for the righteous (like John!) is great in heaven (see Matt. 5:11–12). When the soldiers locked John in prison, I'm sure it was hard to suffer and trust God's promise. And when they came to cut off his head, he had to know that his reward would not be in this life. John's life on earth ended, but his life in heaven (that very moment) started. Though it might have looked like the good guy lost at Herod's party, good will triumph over evil in the end. When Jesus returns God's enemies won't win anymore and evil will be destroyed. Praise God that Jesus wins!

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

Whenever people asked John the Baptist about who he was, he was quick to say he wasn't the promised king (see John 1:19–20). But he was like Jesus in one way—both of them died a cruel death. And with both of them, it seemed like evil had defeated good. But John the Baptist was right when he said that Jesus was far greater than him (see John 1:27, 30). Jesus rose up from the grave. Death and evil couldn't hold him. And the Bible ends with Jesus bringing in a perfect kingdom. In the end, good triumphs over evil. Jesus wins! His resurrection proves that. Hallelujah!

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. **QUESTION:** Who were some people in the Old Testament that suffered even though they obeyed God? What did Jesus think about John the Baptist—was he a good guy or a bad guy? What happened to him?

TAKEAWAY: Until Jesus returns as King, sometimes the bad guys win.

2. **QUESTION:** Do you think John was scared when he was sitting in prison? How would you have felt? What do you think gave him hope when he was scared? What happens to those who trust Jesus when they die?

3

Engage

TAKEAWAY: Those who trust Jesus will live forever, even though they die.

3. **QUESTION:** How did Jesus suffer like John the Baptist? What gave Jesus hope when he suffered on the cross? How do we know Jesus conquered death? What will happen to evil when Jesus returns as King?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus's death and resurrection mean death is defeated and evil will be destroyed.

Memory Verse
Blessed are
those who are
persecuted for
righteousness'
sake, for theirs
is the kingdom
of heaven.

MATTHEW 5:10

4. **QUESTION:** What do we need to remember when it looks like the bad guys are winning?

TAKEAWAY: We need faith to believe Jesus wins when it looks like bad guys are winning.

ACTIVITIES

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Called by Name Game

Supply List: soft ball

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Have children stand in a circle. The leader throws the ball as high as possible straight up in the air and calls a child's name. The child whose name is called runs quickly to retrieve the ball. Once the child has it, she yells, "Freeze!" and everyone freezes. The person with the ball identifies a person she thinks she can successfully hit with the ball, then throws the ball at the target. If the ball hits the intended person, the person is out and remaining players make a smaller circle. If the thrower does not hit her target, the thrower is out. Continue this process until only one child remains. Remind children that sometimes good guys lose.

Option 2: Jailbreak!

Supply List: none



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Choose one child to be the “Jailer.” Divide remaining children into pairs and have each pair link arms. Assign each child the number one, two, three, or four. The Jailer calls a number one through four, and anyone with that number must find a new partner who is not linked to anyone. If the Jailer calls “Jailbreak,” all children must find a new partner. While the children are finding a new partner, any child that is not linked can be tagged by the Jailer. The person who is tagged becomes the new Jailer. Remind children that John the Baptist was wrongfully put in jail because Herod didn’t like what John said.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Pass It Along

Supply List: beach balls

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Divide children into two teams. Have children in each team lie in a line with their feet against the wall and space between each child. Using only his feet, the first child must roll a beach ball along the wall and pass it to the next person. After passing the beach ball, he must stand up and move to the end of his team’s line to keep the ball moving down the wall. Continue passing the ball until it reaches a predetermined finish line. The first team to reach the finish line and shout “Jesus is Lord!” wins. Tell children that we should boldly pass along the good news about Jesus like John the Baptist did.

Option 2: Unscramble It!

Supply List: index cards, marker, paper

Before Class: Gather supplies. On index cards, write one word of the Memory Verse per card (one verse set per team). Print copies of the Memory Verse (one per team).

Mix all index cards for teams together and spread upside down on the far side of the room. Divide children into teams. Give each team a copy of the Memory Verse. On “Go!” the first child on each team runs down to the cards, picks one up, brings it back, and tags the next child, who repeats the process. If a child returns with a word her team already has, the next person in line must run it back and get a different one. Teams continue to retrieve cards until one team finds all the words in the Memory Verse, puts them in order, and says it aloud together.

CRAFTS

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Point to Jesus Picture

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

Before Class: Gather supplies. Print the outline of a large arrow on paper (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child an arrow paper. Set remaining supplies on tables. Have children draw a picture of themselves on the arrow and decorate. Have them cut out the arrow and glue it to a piece of construction paper. Next to the arrow's point, have children write "Jesus." Remind children that, like John, we should point people to Jesus.

Option 2: Sailor Hat

Supply List: paper, newspaper, markers, glue, pom-poms, sequins

Before Class: Gather supplies. Print strips of paper that say, "Where Jesus leads, I will follow" (one per child). Find instructions on how to fold a sailor hat. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a piece of newspaper and a printed paper strip. Set remaining supplies on tables. Demonstrate how to fold the newspaper into a sailor hat while children follow along. Have children glue the "Where Jesus leads, I will follow" strip to their hats, then decorate them with the provided supplies. Remind children that, like John, they can trust Jesus and follow him wherever he leads them.



Option 1: All My Days Plaque

Supply List: paper plates, watercolor paints, paintbrushes, water, cups, permanent black markers, hinged clothespins (two per child)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut 9-inch paper plates in half (one half plate per child). Fill cups with water. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a paper plate half and two clothespins. Set remaining supplies on tables. Have children write “I will trust God all the days of my life” on one side of the plate with permanent marker. Have them use watercolors to paint over and around the words. Have them attach two clothespins to the bottom of their plate to make a stand. Remind children that John trusted God and pointed others to Jesus all the days of his life.

Option 2: Sailor Hat

Supply List: paper, newspaper, markers, glue, pom-poms, sequins

Before Class: Gather supplies. Print strips of paper that say “Where Jesus leads, I will follow” (one per child). Find instructions on how to fold a sailor hat. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a piece of newspaper and a printed paper strip. Set remaining supplies on tables. Demonstrate how to fold the newspaper into a sailor hat while children follow along. Have children glue the “Where Jesus leads, I will follow” strip to their hats, then decorate them with the provided supplies. Remind children that, like John, they can trust Jesus and follow him wherever he leads them.



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



STORY 66

The Happy Meal That Kept on Going

MARK 6

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Mark 6.
- *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}



God loves his people. And he shows his love in many different ways. One way he shows his love is by providing food. Food? Yes, food! The garden of Eden was filled with the freshest fruits. Adam and Eve could eat from all the trees but one. That's a lot of mangoes, cherries, olives, almonds, and coconuts. Then, in the wilderness, God provided daily bread from heaven. It must have tasted wonderful. Finally, the promised land was called a land flowing with milk and honey. Imagine how yummy a honey milkshake would taste after wandering through the dry desert.

So, when God’s people thought about the coming Christ, they pictured someone who would save them from sin, sickness, and even death and the devil. But they also thought about food! They believed with the coming of the promised king would come some meals so satisfying they would fill you with joy—true happy meals! So, it is no surprise that when the promised King came, he showed God’s love to God’s people in ways they expected: healings from his hand and all the food they would ever need.

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 is the
bread of life.

Have you ever said, “I’m starving!” We all say that from time to time when we’re really hungry. But we aren’t really starving to death. What is the longest amount of time you’ve gone without food? Have you ever skipped breakfast, lunch, and dinner? If you did, you still wouldn’t be starving, but you sure would be hungry.

One day, there were lots of hungry people gathered around Jesus. Jesus tried to get away from the crowd for a few hours so he and his disciples could rest and grab a bite to eat. They took a boat to the other side of the lake to get a break. But the people just followed them on land, so when Jesus and the twelve landed onshore, they were surrounded. But Jesus—being so compassionate—wanted to care for the people. He did so by teaching them and providing food for them.

Regarding the food, however, there was a minor problem. Well, major problem! There wasn’t any. Or, there wasn’t much. As the sun was setting, Jesus



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turned to his disciples and said, “Give them something to eat” (Mark 6:37). They looked for leftovers. There weren’t any. Then, they questioned Jesus, “That makes no sense. We can’t feed all these people. It would cost us thousands of dollars.” There were five thousand men there, plus lots of women and children. It would be like feeding a crowd in a huge basketball stadium. Jesus had an idea. He asked his disciples, “How many loaves do you have?” (6:38). They had none, but as they asked around, Andrew found a boy who was willing to share his five loaves and two fish. “What good are these two fish burgers?” someone might have asked. “Such a small amount of food can’t possibly feed this huge crowd.” Jesus had another idea. He took the bread and fish, said a prayer, and then something amazing happened. As the disciples started to feed the people, the five loaves and two fish turned into ten, then the ten into thousands. There was so much food that everyone ate and was totally stuffed. There were even twelve baskets of bread left—twelve, like the number of apostles and the tribes of Israel. The people were amazed and thought, “Maybe Jesus is the prophet and king we have been waiting for” (see John 6:14, 15). Maybe he is that and more!

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

What do we need more than food? That’s a tough question because we all know we need food to live. When Satan tempted Jesus, he said, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread” (Matt. 4:3). That wouldn’t be a temptation if Jesus just ate from the all-you-can-eat fish and bread buffet near the Sea of Galilee. But that was not the case. He’d had no food for forty days. He was starving. Really starving! And because of that, the Snake Crusher’s answer to the serpent was surprising. He said, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4). Another time in Jesus’s ministry (actually right after he fed these five thousand), he said something just as surprising. He said, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst” (John 6:35). Wow, what a claim! Wow, what a wonderful promise. What do you think? Do you believe in Jesus? Have you come to him for everything you need, even eternal life?

3

Engage

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. **QUESTION:** What's the longest you've ever gone without eating? When you're really hungry and tired, how do you act toward other people? How did tired and hungry Jesus act when the crowd surrounded him and the disciples?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus is compassionate and cares for our needs.

2. **QUESTION:** Where have we seen God provide food in the Bible? How much food would it take to satisfy five thousand men, plus women and children? How much food was Jesus given to feed that many people? And what was he able to do with it that no one else could? Why?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus, the promised King, provides food that satisfies.

3. **QUESTION:** How did Satan tempt Jesus when he was starving? What did Jesus tell Satan was more important than food? What do you and I need more than food? If Jesus is the bread of life, what should we do to be satisfied by him?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus is the bread of life and anyone who comes to him and believes in him will be satisfied.

Memory Verse

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst."

JOHN 6:35

ACTIVITIES

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Fishing for Food

Supply List: dowel rods, string, magnets, scissors, paper clips, cardstock, paper lunch bags

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make "fishing poles" by tying a string with a magnet to the end of a dowel rod (one per team). On cardstock, print and cut out pictures of five loaves and two fish (one set per team). Attach a paper clip to each picture.

Divide children into teams and give each team a paper lunch bag. Across the room, set fishing poles and the sets of fish and loaves. On "Go" the first person



on each team runs down, grabs a fishing pole, “catches” one item, takes it off the fishing pole, and runs back to drop it into the team’s bag. The next child repeats the process. Play continues until a team has five loaves and two fish in their bag, winning the game. Remind children that Jesus multiplied one boy’s food to feed thousands.

Option 2: Fishy Relay

Supply List: large bowl, spoons (one per team), goldfish crackers, bowls (one per team)

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Fill a large bowl with goldfish crackers and place it in the center of the room. Divide children into teams. Give each team a spoon and a bowl. On “Go!” the first person on each team takes the team’s spoon, runs to the large bowl, scoops out some goldfish, and carefully returns to his team to drop the goldfish into the team’s bowl. Any crackers that fall off must be left on the floor. The spoon is then passed to the next person in line, who repeats the process. Play continues until all goldfish are gone from the large bowl. The team with the most goldfish in their bowl wins.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Lunch Bag Relay

Supply List: paper, scissors, clothespins, tape, chairs (one per team), paper lunch bag (one per team)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Print and cut out pictures of five loaves and two fish (one set per team). Tape each picture to a clothespin.

Divide children into equal-sized teams and give each team a set of fish and loaves clothespins. Next to each team, set an open paper lunch bag on the floor next to a chair. On “Go!” the first child on each team kneels on the team’s chair and drops one clothespin from eye-level into the team’s bag. The child must drop all seven clothespins into the bag successfully before tagging the next player. If she misses, her teammates hand her the clothespin to try again. Play continues until all children on one team successfully complete the challenge, winning the game.

Option 2: Fishy Relay

Supply List: large bowl, spoons (one per team), goldfish crackers, bowls (one per team)

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Fill a large bowl with goldfish crackers and place it in the center of the room. Divide children into teams. Give each team a spoon and a bowl. On “Go!” the first person on each team takes the team’s spoon, runs to the large bowl, scoops out some goldfish, and carefully returns to their team to drop the goldfish into the team’s bowl. Any crackers that fall off must be left on the floor. The spoon is then passed to the next person in line, who repeats the process. Play continues until all goldfish are gone from the large bowl. The team with the most goldfish in their bowl wins.

CRAFTS

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Beaded Fish

Supply List: pipe cleaners, beads

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make a sample craft.

Set supplies on tables. Have each child choose a pipe cleaner. Have children thread 24 beads onto the pipe cleaner. Have children fold the pipe cleaner in half and twist the ends together at the end of the beads to form a fish shape.

Option 2: Torn Paper Picture

Supply List: paper, construction paper, glue sticks

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make copies of a paper with five loaves, two fish, and the Memory Verse on it (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Set construction paper and glue sticks on tables. Give each child a printed paper. Have children tear the construction paper into small pieces and glue them onto the pictures of loaves and fish. Remind children that Jesus multiplied one boy's food to feed thousands.

3rd–5th

Option 1: God Provides Mobile

Supply List: cardstock, scissors, yarn, clear tape, crayons

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, print pictures of five loaves and two fish (one per child). On cardstock, print copies of the Big Truth and cut them out in strips. Cut varying lengths of yarn (seven pieces per child). Make a sample craft.

Set tape, scissors, crayons, and cut yarn on tables. Give each child a fish and loaves paper and a Big Truth strip. Have children tape the ends of the Big Truth strip together to form a circle. Have children color and cut out the five loaves and two fish, then tape each one to the end of a piece of yarn. Attach the yarn pieces to the Big Truth circle to make a mobile. Add a piece of yarn to the top for hanging.

Option 2: Jesus Provides Basket

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

Before Class: Gather supplies. Print a paper with five loaves and two fish. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a printed paper and a paper lunch bag. Set remaining supplies on tables. Children should cut the bag so it stands about 6 inches high, then color it to resemble a basket. Write the verse “And they all ate and were satisfied” (Mark 6:42) on the basket. Have children use the part of the bag they cut off to make a handle and then attach it to the top of the open basket. Have them color and cut out the five loaves and two fish and place them in their baskets.



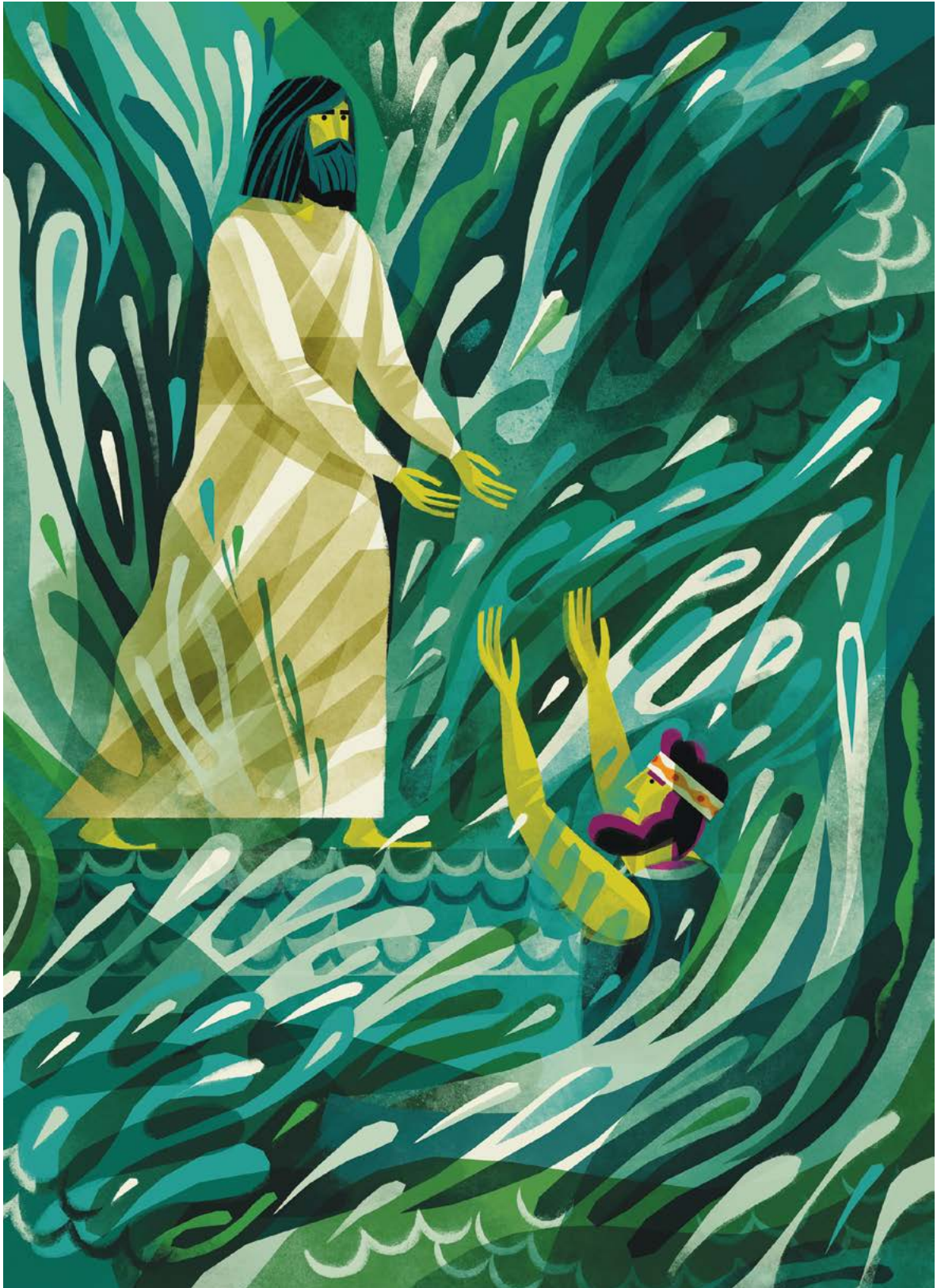
Visit TheBiggestStory.com for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.



Story

66

Mark 6



STORY 67

A Walk on the Water

MATTHEW 14

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Matthew 14.
- 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

A lot has happened since Jesus's birth. He was baptized by John the Baptist. He was tempted in the wilderness and said no, no, no to the snake's temptations. He called twelve apostles to follow him. He taught the good news of God. He healed many sick people. He drove out demons. He raised the dead. He calmed the wind and waves, saving the twelve from a deadly storm. He fed thousands of people with just five loaves of bread and two fish. A lot has happened.

Jesus needed a break. He was exhausted. He needed physical rest. He needed spiritual rest too. To find it, he told the fully fed crowds to return home. He also sent his apostles away. "Get on the boat," he instructed them, "and sail to the other side of the sea. I'll meet you there soon" (see Matt. 14:22–23). Then Jesus climbed a nearby mountain. At the top, he was finally alone. Well, not really.

His Father was there. Up on the high mountain he talked with his Father in heaven. We call that prayer—talking to our Heavenly Father. But that’s not the end of the story.

TELL THE STORY

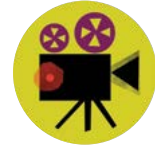
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



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 Jesus is
the Son of God, he
can save us when
we cry out to him.

As Jesus was praying, the sun started to set. So he hiked down the mountain. By the time he reached the shore, the twelve were on the boat “a long way from the land” (Matt. 14:24), and it was dark. Why was it taking them so long to reach the other shore? Another terrible storm! The boat was being “beaten by the waves,” and “the wind was against them” (14:24). Because of the wild winds, they couldn’t use the sail. It would be too dangerous. So they rowed and rowed with all their might. But it was useless. They were in big trouble! Just then, Jesus saw them. Wait, how could he see them? “They had rowed about three or four miles” out (John 6:19). That’s a long way to see, even if the moon was fully lit. That’s not the only odd detail of this story. Guess what Jesus did next? He walked on the water! Yes, that’s what the Bible says: “He came to them, walking on the sea” (Matt. 14:25). With wave-parting, wind-ceasing, superhuman speed, Jesus was defying gravity. Incredible!

When the frightened disciples saw him, they screamed, “It’s a ghost!” Who could blame them for being so scared? And who could blame them for thinking it was a ghost since only a spirit could glide across the waters? But Jesus was not a ghost. He yelled to them, “It’s really me! Don’t be afraid.” Peter cried out, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water” (14:28). So Jesus invited him. Peter got out of the boat, and (this is the oddest part) he started to



Story

67

Matthew

14

walk on water. Just like Jesus! But suddenly, he took his eyes off Jesus, saw the fierce wind, got really scared again, and started to sink. He cried out, “Lord, save me” (14:30). Jesus wasted no time. He reached out, grabbed him, and brought him onto the boat. He saved him. While Jesus was saving him, he also taught Peter that he can trust him no matter what. For all of us, trusting Jesus is the smartest and safest thing to do. “Peter, why did you doubt? You should have kept on believing” (see 14:31). What a good lesson for us to learn too: keep on believing—even when you see the big waves.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

The story didn’t end with the call to believe. When Jesus and Peter got back in the boat, suddenly the wind stopped and the waves calmed down. The twelve must have looked at each other in amazement. This time Jesus didn’t say, “Peace, be still,” but they knew he stilled the sea. They also just saw him walk on water! They knew Jesus was no ordinary man. So, one after the other (or maybe all at the same time), they fell at his feet and confessed, “You really are the Son of God” (see Matt. 14:33).

This confession is also what the Roman soldiers who crucified Jesus said after Jesus died (27:54). And it’s the confession we will make too when we see Jesus clearly! Jesus showed that he was God’s Son and our Savior in many ways. He multiplied bread and fish to feed over five thousand people. He healed every sickness imaginable. He raised the dead. And he walked on water and calmed storms. But his greatest demonstration of power was actually the one the Roman soldiers saw when he died on the cross. That showed God’s power because it’s the way God saved us from our sins. Jesus’s death was unlike any other. He died in our place. Let’s fall down before him and trust him completely, even when the waves seem big. He’s strong enough to save us. Truly he is the Son of God!

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. QUESTION: What are some miracles we’ve seen Jesus do? What did Jesus do in our story today that is amazing?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus is no ordinary man.

3

Engage

Memory Verse
Truly you are the
Son of God.

MATTHEW 14:33

2. **QUESTION:** When Jesus was walking on the waves, were they still or choppy? How did the disciples feel when they saw him? What did Jesus say to them?

TAKEAWAY: If Jesus is with us, we don't need to fear—even when things are scary.

3. **QUESTION:** Why did Peter begin to sink when he was walking on the water? What did Peter cry out as he sank? And what did Jesus do? Will Jesus ever turn us away when we come to him for help and salvation?

TAKEAWAY: Even when we doubt God's promises and are afraid, if we cry out to Jesus, he will save us.

4. **QUESTION:** How did the disciples know Jesus is the Son of God? Then how did they respond to him? How should we?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus is the Son of God; let's fall down and worship him.

ACTIVITIES

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Keep Your Eyes on Jesus

Supply List: green paper, red paper, glue, craft stick

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make a Go and Stop sign by attaching green paper to one side of a craft stick and red paper to the other side.

Have children line up on one side of the room, facing a leader at the opposite end. When the leader holds up the green sign, the children move forward. When the leader holds up the red sign, the children freeze. Any child who does not immediately freeze must return to the start. The first child to reach the leader wins. Remind children that when Peter kept his eyes on Jesus, he did not sink into the waters.

Option 2: Sink or Swim

Supply List: green paper, red paper, glue, craft stick, plastic toy hoops (one per team)



Before Class: Gather supplies. Make a Go and Stop sign by attaching green paper to one side of a craft stick and red paper to the other side.

Divide children into teams of four. Give each team a hoop, and instruct them to hold it by having each team member use one finger. Have teams line up on one side of the room, facing a leader at the opposite end. When the leader holds up the green sign, each team moves forward holding their hoop. When the leader holds up the red sign, each team must drop the hoop and stand inside it. The last team to stand inside their hoop must return to the start. The first team to reach the leader wins. Remind children that Peter did not sink into the waters when he kept his eyes on Jesus.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Sink or Swim

Supply List: green paper, red paper, glue, craft stick, plastic toy hoops (one per team)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make a Go and Stop sign by attaching green paper to one side of a craft stick and red paper to the other side.

Divide children into teams of four. Give each team a hoop, and instruct them to hold it by having each team member use one finger. Have teams line up on one side of the room, facing a leader at the opposite end. When the leader holds up the green sign, each team moves forward holding their hoop. When the leader holds up the red sign, each team must drop the hoop and stand inside it. The last team to stand inside their hoop must return to the start. The first team to reach the leader wins. Remind children that Peter did not sink into the waters when he kept his eyes on Jesus.

Option 2: Captain's Orders

Supply List: none

Tell children the room is a ship and they must follow the captain's orders. If the captain shouts "Bow," the children run to the front wall. If "Stern," they run to the back wall. If "Port," they run to the left wall. If "Starboard," they run to the right wall. If the captain shouts "Hit the deck," the children drop to the floor. The last child to the correct wall (or floor) is out. The last child remaining wins. Remind children the disciples were on a boat when Jesus came to them by walking on water.

CRAFTS

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Eyes on Jesus Binoculars

Supply List: toilet paper rolls (two per child), scissors, yarn, markers, stickers, stapler

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut yarn into 18-inch lengths (one per child). Make sample craft.

Give each child two toilet paper rolls and a piece of yarn. Put remaining supplies on tables. Have children decorate the toilet paper rolls and then staple the rolls together to form binoculars. Staple yarn to the sides so they can hang around the child's neck. Remind children to keep their eyes on Jesus.

Option 2: Waves of Life

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

Before Class: Gather supplies. Print and cut out Matthew 14:27, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid" (one per child). Cut ½" x 9" strips of blue construction paper. Make a sample craft.

Give children the verse and a full-sized piece of blue construction paper. Set paper strips and glue sticks on tables. On the full-sized paper, have children make waves by gluing down both ends of a strip to form a long arch. Next have children glue down the arch in one or two places to form waves. Have children add strips until the page is covered with waves. Glue the verse in the middle of the waves. Remind children that Jesus came to the disciples by walking on water in the middle of a storm.



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Before Class: Gather supplies. Print and cut out Matthew 14:27, “Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid” (one per child). Cut ½" x 9" strips of blue construction paper. Make a sample craft.

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Option 2: Walk with Jesus

Supply List: bowls, blue paint, marbles, white cardstock, boxes, spoons, construction paper, markers, scissors, glue

Before Class: Gather supplies. Put paint in bowls and add marbles. Make a sample craft.

Have children take turns putting a piece of white cardstock in a box and then using a spoon to add some marbles. The first child shakes the box to spread paint around the cardstock to resemble waves. He then removes his paper when complete. Return the marbles to the bowls for the next child. Set markers, scissors, glue, and construction paper on tables. Have children trace their footprint onto construction paper, cut it out, and write “I will walk with Jesus” on it. Have children glue the footprint to the marble-painted paper. Remind children that Peter had faith to step out of the boat and walk to Jesus.



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



STORY 68

A Dogged Faith

MARK 7

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Mark 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.

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 what the word *circumlocution* means? What about *epistolary*? Could you define *idiosyncratic*? Likely not! Part of growing up means learning lots of new words and what they mean. As we work through the Biggest Story, we have been learning lots of new words and ideas, along with lots of names—like Saul and Samson, Zechariah and Zelophehad. Those are some of the people you might now know from the Biggest Story. How about words? What new words have you learned? *Exodus*. *Covenant*. *Prophecy*. *Scapegoat*. *Repent*. *Idolatry*. *Parable*. Those might be a few. Today's lesson will focus on two important words: *Jew* and *Gentile*. Can you say those words? The Jews were the children of Abraham and the people of King David. They had the Scriptures, filled with all God's promises.

The Gentiles were everyone else—those who weren't Jews. What could Jews and Gentiles have to do with our story? Let's listen and find out!

TELL THE STORY

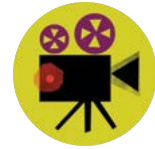
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



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
Jesus saves
anyone who
believes in him.

Up until this point, Jesus has spent all his time in the promised land, teaching and healing the Jews. One day, Jesus decided to go on a long journey “to the region of Tyre and Sidon” (Mark 7:24). That might not seem like a big deal to us, but it was back then. Tyre and Sidon were outside the promised land and *Gentiles* lived there. Even worse, these cities had a bad reputation. In the Old Testament these cities are where God’s enemies—the Canaanites—lived. So, what is Jesus doing in enemy territory?

Let’s keep listening. When he got to that region he slipped into a house. He “did not want anyone to know” where he was (7:24). But that didn’t last long. When word got out that Jesus was in town, a *Gentile* woman knocked on the door. She was a mother whose little girl was possessed by a demon. How horrible! She needed help.

She “fell down at [Jesus’s] feet . . . and begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter” (7:25–26). Usually, Jesus heals people as soon as they ask. This time he did something strange. He replied to her, “Let the children be fed first, for it is not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs” (7:27). What did he mean? He was telling her that he first came to provide healing for the Jews (“children”) not the Gentiles (“dogs”). Ouch! But Jesus didn’t say this to be mean and to call her names. He was testing her, because she had something special that he wanted everyone to see. “Yes, Lord,” she said, “I see your point.



Story

68

Mark

7

But even the dogs under the table get to eat the crumbs that fall” (see 7:28). That was her way of saying, “I may be a Gentile, but I trust you will have mercy on me too.” Wow! What a *dogged* faith! She passed the test and showed all of us what true faith is. Jesus loves such faith. He declared, “O woman, your faith is great!” (see Matt. 15:28). And then, at that very moment, the demon left her daughter.

Jesus has come to love and save both Jews and Gentiles. He doesn’t save us because of how worthy we are; he saves us when we realize we are low and needy. This Gentile woman knew that. And she was the one Jesus used to show us what great faith looks like.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

If someone asked you what the gospel is, what would you say? Here are three options: you might focus on (1) *who* Jesus is (the Son of God who the Father sent into the world), (2) *what Jesus did* (he lived, died, and rose again), or (3) *what we receive* if we believe in Jesus (the forgiveness of sins and eternal life). When the Bible talks about the gospel in Romans 1, it talks about those three things—*who* Jesus is (“the Son of God” and “our Lord,” 1:4), *what he has done* (“resurrection from the dead,” 1:4), and *what we receive* if we believe (“salvation,” 1:16). But it also adds something else, a fourth important part of the gospel. It talks about *who* the gospel is for. The wonderful answer is “everyone” (1:16)! The good news about Jesus is for “all the nations” (1:5). So, whether we are Jews or Gentiles, like this Gentile woman we can come to Jesus, bow before him, and receive mercy.

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

- 1. QUESTION:** What do you think the two words are that our story focused on? What are some things we know about the Jews? Even though they were God’s people, did they still sin? What about Gentiles? What did both Jews and Gentiles need?

TAKEAWAY: Both Jews and Gentiles are sinners who need forgiveness and faith.

3

Engage

Memory Verse
Everyone who
calls on the name
of the Lord will
be saved.

ROMANS 10:13

2. **QUESTION:** What was wrong with the woman's daughter? How do you think this mother felt? Whom did she go to for help? What are some times we might go to Jesus for help?

TAKEAWAY: We should go to Jesus for help.

3. **QUESTION:** When Jesus tested the woman and said he came to heal the Jews and not the Gentiles, how did she respond? Did this Gentile woman believe he came to save and heal Gentiles too? Was she right?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus saves everyone who believes in him.

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: streamers (one per team), tape

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Divide children into teams of four. Have each team form a single file line, and have children hold onto the shoulders of the person in front of them. Attach a streamer to the back of the last person in each line. On “Go” teams run together to try to pull the “tail” (streamer) off other teams while avoiding getting their tail pulled by other teams. If a team's tail is pulled, or if a team breaks apart, they are out. Continue play until one team remains. Remind children that, in Christ, Jews and Gentiles are no longer enemies but family.

Option 2: Jew, Gentile, Jesus!

Supply List: masking tape

Before Class: With masking tape make a line that gives ample space for all children to stand.



Story

68

Mark

7

Have children stand on the line facing the same direction. Explain that if the leader calls out “Jew,” they jump to the right of the line. If “Gentile” is called, they jump to the left. And if “Jesus” is called, they jump onto the line. If a child jumps incorrectly, she is out. Have a leader randomly call out “Jew,” “Gentile,” or “Jesus” until one child remains. Remind children that Jesus came for everyone and that we should run to him in faith.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Jews and Gentiles

Supply List: two plastic toy hoops, balls (five balls of the same color for each team)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Divide the room in half and set a hoop on the far end of each side. Put five balls of the same color in each hoop (e.g., five red on one side, five blue on the other side).

Divide children into two teams, the “Jews” and the “Gentiles,” and assign each team to one side. On “Go” teams try to steal balls from the other side and place them inside their own hoop without being tagged by the opposing team. Any child who is tagged is out and must return any balls in his possession to the opposing team’s hoop. Once a ball has been successfully stolen, it cannot be stolen back. The first team to steal all the opposing teams’ balls and place them inside their team’s hoop wins. Remind children that even though Jews and Gentiles were divided, Jesus came to save them both.

Option 2: Oh Crackers!

Supply List: crackers

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Give each of the children a cracker, and have them place it on their heads. When the music plays, the children must walk around the room while balancing the cracker on their heads. If the music is slow, they must walk slowly. If the music is fast, they must walk quickly. If the music stops, they must freeze. If the cracker falls off a child’s head, he is out. Play continues until one child remains. Remind children that the Gentile woman begged for crumbs from Jesus’s table and had great faith.

CRAFTS

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

K–2nd

Option 1: For Everyone!

Supply List: paper, scissors, watercolor paint, paintbrushes, cups, water, construction paper, crayons, glue

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make copies of a simple outline of the world about 8 inches in diameter. Make a sample craft. Put water in cups.

Give each child a world paper. Set remaining supplies on tables. Have children cut out the world and then paint the land (continents) green and the water (seas/oceans) blue. Children then write “Jesus came for everyone!” on a piece of construction paper and glue the painted world to the construction paper.

Option 2: Dog Mask

Supply List: paper plates, scissors, craft sticks, pom-poms, glue, construction paper, markers

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut paper plates in half (one half per child). Cut two eye holes in each half-plate toward the top of the curved edge. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a half plate. Set remaining supplies on tables. Have children attach a craft stick to the left side of their plate. They then design and cut out dog ears from the construction paper. Have them glue the ears to the sides of the plate and glue on a pom-pom to make a nose. They can add spots or colors to the mask as desired. Remind children that Jesus used an illustration of dogs and bread to talk with a Gentile woman about saving faith.

**Option 1: “For God So Loved the World” Magnet**

Supply List: cardstock, red paper, scissors, blue and green paint, paper plates, paintbrushes, glue, magnets

Before Class: Gather supplies. On white cardstock make copies of 8-inch-diameter circles. On red paper make copies of a heart (that will fit in the circle) with John 3:16 typed inside it. Make a sample craft. Put blue and green paint on paper plates.

Give each child one circle and one heart paper. Set remaining supplies on tables. Have children cut out the circle and heart. They then paint the circle until it resembles a globe. Next, the children glue the heart to the center of the globe and attach a magnet to the back.

Option 2: Faith Acrostic

Supply List: paper, markers or colored pencils, stickers

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a piece of paper. Set remaining supplies on tables. Have children write FAITH vertically in large letters on the left-hand side of their paper. As a group, brainstorm words that describe Jesus, using the letters from FAITH. Have each child choose the words she likes best and write them next to the corresponding letter on her paper. Children then decorate their acrostic using provided materials. Remind children that the Gentile woman had great faith in Jesus and in his power to heal her daughter.



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



STORY 69

Confessing Christ

MATTHEW 16

BEFORE THE LESSON

- *Read Matthew 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.*

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 is filled with questions: “Did God really say?” “Am I my brother’s keeper?” “Are you the king of the Jews?” “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” But it’s not just the Bible that’s filled with questions, life is as well: Do you want fries with that? Is your room cleaned? What is your favorite show? Why did you do that? What color are your eyes? Where is the farthest place you have traveled? Where do babies come from? Do you like video games? Do you feel sad? Does God love us? So many questions!

That last question is a very important one, isn’t it? In today’s lesson, we hear another important question: Who is Jesus? How would you answer that question right now? Was Jesus just a great teacher, a good man, an amazing

miracle-worker, or another God-sent servant like Abraham, Moses, and David? Or was he something (someone!) more? Let's find out the right answer.

TELL THE STORY

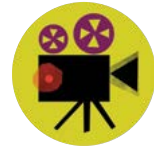
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



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 is the
Christ, who came
to suffer, die, and
rise again.

One day Jesus and his disciples traveled to a place with a *big* name: Caesarea Philippi. It was a *big* name because it was named after some important people: the Roman Emperor (Caesar) and the Jewish ruler of that region (Herod Philip). But its importance didn't stop there. It had not one but two temples. One was the Temple of Augustus built to honor a Roman Emperor. The other was a temple to the Greek god, Pan. Not Peter Pan, just Pan—the god of the goats. Yep, the god of the goats! Anyway, it was in this *big* place—a place filled with worship of the wrong rulers and dead idols—that Jesus asked his disciples a *big* question: Who is Jesus?

First, he asked, “Who do *people* think I am?” The disciples replied: “Some people say you are John the Baptist risen from the dead. Others think you are the prophet Elijah who has returned. We’ve also heard people say that you are another prophet like Jeremiah or Isaiah” (see Matt. 16:13–14). Then Jesus asked a second question, “But who do *you*—my close followers—say that I am?” (see 16:15). Peter, who was like that kid in class who always raises his hand first, answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (16:16). A great answer; the right answer! But there was one important element Peter was missing.

He understood Jesus was the Christ, but he didn't yet understand what Jesus came to do. He thought the Christ (the long-awaited King) would rule like most earthly kings ruled—with power and might. The farthest thing from his mind



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was that the Christ would be killed on a cross. But that's precisely what Jesus told him was about to happen. "I must go to Jerusalem," Jesus said, "to suffer and die" (see 16:21). Peter didn't like this direction one bit. "No!" he rebuked Jesus. "This shall never happen to you" (16:22). Peter was upset. But Jesus was more upset. He was sad Peter's mind was so far removed from the mind of God. Peter's plan was that the Christ would rule in power now, without any suffering and death. God's plan was that his Son would rule in power *through* his sufferings, death, and then resurrection. It's good to know that Jesus is the Christ. It's better to know how this Christ would rescue his people.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

A lot of questions we ask are not life or death questions. Your answer to the question of your favorite ice cream flavor doesn't determine if you'll live forever. But there is a question that does—Jesus's question: "Who do you say I am?"

The gospel clearly teaches that Jesus is the promised Messiah and the always-existing Son of God. We need to know *who* Jesus is, just like Peter did. But we also need to know *what* he came to do. Did he come to rule as earthly kings ruled? No. Jesus came to suffer and die; Jesus also came to rise from the dead. And through his suffering, death, and resurrection he took the penalty we deserve and brought the kingdom of heaven down to earth. First comes the cross, then comes the crown. If we trust in Jesus—that he came for us, suffered and died for us, and rose from the dead for us—we will live forever in his perfect kingdom.

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. **QUESTION:** What were some questions you were asked before you came to church today? What's the most important question in our story? What was Peter's answer to that question? Why is that the most important question?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

2. **QUESTION:** What did people think the Messiah would be like? How was Jesus different than they expected? What do you think you would have ex-

3

Engage

pected the Messiah to be like? Why is God's plan of Jesus's coming to suffer and die better?

TAKEAWAY: God's ways are better than our ways.

Memory Verse

You are the
Christ, the Son of
the living God.

MATTHEW 16:16

3. **QUESTION:** When Jesus told his disciples he would suffer and die, what did Peter do? Jesus rebuked Peter because he knew Satan was tempting him to skip the suffering and go straight to ruling as king. What would have happened if Jesus had decided to skip the suffering and death on a cross? Who would pay for our sins?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus came to suffer, die, and rise again for sinners.

4. **QUESTION:** What are some ways that Satan might tempt you to take the easy path? Jesus resisted Satan and took the hard path to the cross. If Jesus suffered, do you think we will too? What will we receive if we follow Jesus even if it involves suffering or death?

TAKEAWAY: Following Jesus often means suffering before blessing—the cross before the crown.

ACTIVITIES

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Charades

Supply List: none

Select a child to act out a person or thing of choice (e.g., firefighter, doctor, elephant). The child has thirty seconds to act it out while the remaining children guess who or what it is. Whoever guesses correctly has the option to either be the next person to act or to choose which student goes next. Remind children that we don't have to guess who Jesus is—God's word tells us.



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Option 2: Rock Stacking Relay

Supply List: tables, bowls, rocks

Before Class: Gather supplies. Set up tables on the far end of the room and place a bowl with five smooth, flat stones on each table (one table per team).

Divide children into teams, and have each team line up single file. On “Go” the first child runs to his team’s table and stacks the five rocks on top of one another. The rocks must stay stacked for three seconds. If the rocks fall, the child must try again. The child then puts the rocks back in the bowl and runs back to tag the next person in line, who repeats the process. The first team to have all team members finish wins. Remind children that though following Jesus can be hard and slow it still is the way to go.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Rock, Paper, Scissors

Supply List: masking tape

Before Class: Using masking tape, divide the room in half and mark a safe zone on each side.

Divide children into two teams. Teams will play “Rock, Paper, Scissors” using their bodies. For “rock,” children cross arms on their chest with closed fists on opposite shoulders. For “paper,” children put arms straight up in the air with palms flat. For “scissors,” children put arms out in front, crossed at the wrists. Have each team meet briefly to decide if they will be rock, paper, or scissors. Then have the teams line up facing each other on either side of the masking tape. When a leader says, “Rock, Paper, Scissors, Show,” both teams must show their choice. Rock beats scissors, paper beats rock, and scissors beats paper. The team that loses must run to their safe zone before being tagged by someone from the other team. If tagged, the child joins the opposing team for the next round. Play continues until one team is eliminated. Remind children that Jesus defeated Satan every time he was tempted by him.

Option 2: Never Have I Ever

Supply List: none

Have children sit in a circle and hold up five fingers. Ask children to think of something they have never done that most people have done. Then pick a child to start, who will say, “Never have I ever . . .” (been on an airplane, gone on a roller coaster, gone fishing, etc.). Everyone who *has* done the named thing must put down one of his or her fingers. Continue around the circle with children taking turns making “Never have I ever” statements. Once a child has put all five fingers down, he is out. The last person remaining wins. Remind children that Jesus did something no one else has ever done when he lived a perfect life and died on the cross for our sins.

CRAFTS

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Craft Stick Frame

Supply List: paper plates, colored craft sticks, glue, jewels, sequins, foam shapes, magnets

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a paper plate to use as his or her workspace and to aid in carrying the craft home if still wet. Place remaining supplies on tables. Have children choose twelve craft sticks and lay them side by side lengthwise. The children then cover two additional sticks with glue and place one across the top of the twelve sticks and one across the bottom. Once the frame is secure, children can carefully flip it over and decorate the edges using provided supplies, leaving space in the center for a picture. Have children attach a magnet to the back. Encourage children to glue a picture of themselves to the frame as a reminder that we want other people to see Jesus when they look at us.

Option 2: Name Rocks

Supply List: large, flat, smooth rocks (one per child); permanent markers

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make a sample craft.



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Set supplies on tables. Each child chooses a rock, draws a cross on it, and writes his or her name under it. On the other side have children draw a crown with Jesus's name under it. Then they can decorate their rocks. Remind children that when we follow Jesus, the cross comes before the crown.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Craft Stick Frame

Supply List: paper plates, colored craft sticks, glue, jewels, sequins, foam shapes, magnets

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a paper plate to use as his or her workspace and to aid in carrying the craft home if still wet. Place remaining supplies on tables. Have children choose twelve craft sticks and lay them side by side lengthwise. The children then cover two additional sticks with glue and place one across the top of the twelve sticks and one across the bottom. Once the frame is secure, children can carefully flip it over and decorate the edges using provided supplies, leaving space in the center for a picture. Have children attach a magnet to the back. Encourage children to glue a picture of themselves to the frame as a reminder that we want other people to see Jesus when they look at us.

Option 2: Known and Loved

Supply List: paper, colored pencils, markers

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make a sample craft.

Set supplies on tables. Children should write their name in large block or bubble letters in the center of a piece of paper and then decorate their names. Next, children can walk around the room and write one word to describe the child whose name is on each paper. Encourage children to write kind, descriptive words with creative lettering.



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



STORY 70

Glory Mountain

MATTHEW 17

BEFORE THE LESSON

- *Read Matthew 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.*

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

In the Biggest Story some big things happen on mountains. Do you remember what happened to Noah's Ark? After many days, "the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat" (Gen. 8:4). From there God told Noah to bring his family and all the animals off the ark. Do you remember what happened to Abraham when he took Isaac to Mount Moriah? God stopped Abraham from sacrificing his son, and God provided a ram in Isaac's place. Do you remember what happened to Moses on Mount Sinai? He received the Ten Commandments. Do you remember what happened on Mount Carmel? God sent down fire from heaven to consume Elijah's sacrifice. There are other important mountains in the Bible, like Mount Zion (where Jerusalem sits), and Mount Eremos, where Jesus is believed to have preached the Sermon on the Mount. Today's story takes place

on another mountain. It's officially called Mount Tabor, but we'll call it Glory Mountain because of something glorious that happened there. Before I tell you the story, I'll give you one hint. It involves a strange word: *transfigured*. Not *transformed*. Not *Transylvania*. *Transfigured*.

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 is the
glorious Son
of God, who is
perfectly holy.

Have you ever climbed a big hill? How did you feel when you reached the top? Were you out of breath? One day Jesus took Peter, James, and John on a long hike up a high mountain. We don't know if they were out of breath when they reached the top, but we do know that they saw something awesome. Jesus was *transfigured*! That word means he was changed. But he wasn't transformed from a robot into a semitruck or a caterpillar into a butterfly. Jesus wasn't transformed into another thing. He stayed human; he just showed himself to be who he really was. Peter, James, and John saw Jesus in all his glory. He was human but he was more than just human. "He was transfigured," Matthew writes, "and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light" (Matt. 17:2). Talk about a light show! This was a light show that *showed* Jesus is as pure and glorious as God. The transfiguration showed that Jesus is God's very own Son.

But the light show wasn't over. All of a sudden, out of nowhere, Moses and Elijah appeared and started talking with Jesus. But they didn't look normal either. They also "appeared in glory" (Luke 9:31). Peter and his two friends were seeing a glimpse of what Jesus's forever kingdom would look like. And Peter liked it. Remember, he wanted Jesus to get the crown without the cross. So,



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in a moment of confusion, he said, “This is great. I’ll set up a tent for each of you. We can make this last for a while” (see Matt. 17:4). But that was the wrong thing to say. Jesus had just told him how there could be no crown without the cross. No Glory Mountain without Mount Calvary. Peter needed to listen to Jesus. And that’s what led to the third glorious moment. Right after Peter spoke, a thick cloud rolled in. A talking cloud! God the Father himself was speaking. And here’s what he told Peter, James, and John: “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him” (Matt. 17:5). The disciples fell on their faces in fear. Jesus “touched them” and said, “Do not be afraid” (see Matt 17:7). When the disciples looked up, everything was back to normal. The “glory” was gone. And Jesus continued his trek to Mount Calvary.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

Last lesson we looked at the right answer to Jesus’s all-important question, “Who do you say that I am?” (Matt. 16:15), and we learned that Jesus is the Christ and the Son of the living God. Here, on Glory Mountain, what else do we learn about Jesus? We learn that he is the *glorious* Son of God, who—like God the Father and Spirit—is perfectly holy (like the brightest light in the universe). That’s who Jesus is.

Now think about this. It would be surprising if a good man died for our sins. It would be amazing if a very important person—like a king or queen—would take the punishment that we deserve. It, then, is truly astounding that Jesus—the King of glory—should lay down his life for us and die in our place. Peter, James, and John were confused, afraid, and surely stunned on the day Jesus took them atop the mountain. And while we should be amazed, we should not be fearful because we can take comfort in knowing Jesus died for us on Mount Calvary, a hill outside Jerusalem. He showed his glory to us by dying and rising again. What a glorious King!

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

- 1. QUESTION:** What important things happened on mountains in the Bible? Whom does Jesus bring on the mountain to learn more about who he is?

3

Engage

TAKEAWAY: God uses mountains in the Bible to teach important things about himself.

2. **QUESTION:** What did prophets do? Who were the two greatest prophets in the Old Testament? Why do you think they appeared with Jesus on the mountain? Who was the only prophet left after God spoke?

TAKEAWAY: Although Moses and Elijah were great prophets, Jesus is greater because he speaks as God's Son.

3. **QUESTION:** What did God say about Jesus on the mountain? And what did he tell the disciples to do? How do we obey God's command today?

TAKEAWAY: God commanded his people to listen to Jesus.

4. **QUESTION:** What happened to Jesus on the mountain? What was the disciples' response? How do you think you would have responded? Why do you think Jesus wanted his disciples to see him transfigured?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus showed his glory at the transfiguration.

Memory Verse

For the LORD

is a great God,
and a great King
above all gods.

In his hand are
the depths of the
earth; the heights
of the mountains
are his also.

PSALM 95:3-4

ACTIVITIES

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

K-2nd

Option 1: Caterpillar Race

Supply List: none

Divide children into groups of five or six. Each team chooses a team name and then forms a "caterpillar" by standing in a single file line and placing their hands on the shoulders of the child in front of them. On "Go" the first person in each line takes one step forward. The second person then takes one step and so on until every team member has taken one step. After taking her step, the last person in line yells out the team's name. The first person can then take another step. This process repeats until one team reaches a designated finish line. If a team breaks apart or steps out of turn, they must return to the start and begin again. Tell children that when caterpillars transform into butter-

flies, it can remind us that an even greater transformation occurred at Jesus's transfiguration.

Option 2: On the Mountaintop

Supply List: none

Have children lie on their backs. When the leader says, "Jesus went up on the mountain," children must jump up to a standing position. The last child to stand is out. Have the leader also yell out silly statements like "Jesus went up on the monkey" or "on the Mickey Mouse." Any child who starts to stand for one of the silly statements is also out. The last child remaining wins. Remind children that when Peter, James, and John saw Jesus in his glory, they fell on their faces in fear. Jesus told them, "Get up, don't be afraid."

3rd–5th

Option 1: On the Mountaintop

Supply List: none

Have children lie on their backs. When the leader says, "Jesus went up on the mountain," children must jump up to a standing position. The last child to stand is out. Have the leader also yell out silly statements like "Jesus went up on the monkey" or "on the Mickey Mouse." Any child who starts to stand for one of the silly statements is also out. The last child remaining wins. Remind children that when Peter, James, and John saw Jesus in his glory, they fell on their faces in fear. Jesus told them, "Get up, don't be afraid."

Option 2: Crazy Caterpillar

Supply List: plastic toy hoops

Before Class: Set an odd number of hoops around the room.

Divide children into two teams. Have each team form a "caterpillar" by lining up shoulder-to-shoulder and holding hands. On "Go" each team runs to a plastic toy hoop with hands joined. The first person picks up the hoop with her free hand and puts it over her head. The team must then work together to move the hoop down the line without letting go of each other's hands. When the hoop gets to the last person, he holds the hoop and yells "Butterfly!" Teams continue to collect hoops until they are all collected. If hands separate at any point, the



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team must start over with the hoop they are working on. The team that collects the most hoops wins. Tell children that when caterpillars transform into butterflies, it can remind us that an even greater transformation occurred at Jesus's transfiguration.

CRAFTS

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Handprint Butterflies

Supply List: scissors, pencils, construction paper, glue, large craft sticks, permanent markers, googly eyes

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make a sample craft.

Set supplies on tables. Have children use a pencil to trace their hands onto construction paper (with help, if needed). Children then cut out the hands and glue them to a craft stick so the palms overlap and the fingers point outward like wings. Have children add googly eyes to the craft stick and draw in a mouth with permanent markers. Tell children that when caterpillars transform into butterflies, it can remind us that an even greater transformation occurred at Jesus's transfiguration.

Option 2: Egg Carton Caterpillars

Supply List: cardboard egg cartons, pipe cleaners, plastic tablecloths, tempera paints, paper plates, paintbrushes, cups of water, glue, googly eyes

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut egg cartons into three-egg strips (one per child). Poke two holes at the top of the strips. Cut pipe cleaners in half. Cover tables with plastic tablecloths. Make a sample craft.

Give each child an egg cup strip. Set supplies on tables, with paints on paper plates. Have children flip their strip so the outside of the carton is facing up. Children then insert the pipe cleaners into the premade holes and bend them



to make antennae. Have them glue googly eyes under the antennae and then paint their caterpillars. Tell children that when caterpillars transform into butterflies, it can remind us that an even greater transformation occurred at Jesus's transfiguration.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Glory Mountain

Supply List: cardstock, scissors, yarn (white, gray, brown, yellow, and orange), glue

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, make copies of a simple mountain scene: a large triangle-shaped mountain, a circle for a sun, and the Memory Verse (one per child). Cut random lengths of yarn. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a mountain scene. Set remaining supplies on tables. Have children glue white, gray, and brown yarn pieces to fill in their mountains, and yellow and orange yarn pieces to fill in their suns.

Option 2: Coffee Filter Butterfly

Supply List: coffee filters, clothespins, watercolor paints, cups of water, paintbrushes, tiny googly eyes, glue, pipe cleaners

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut pipe cleaners in half. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a coffee filter and clothespin. Set remaining supplies on tables. Have children fold their coffee filter in a tight accordion fold and secure in the middle with a clothespin. Have them use paintbrushes to drip different colors of paint onto their coffee filter until it is completely covered. They then carefully open and fan out the two sides of the coffee filter, keeping the clothespin in place. Next, the children can glue two googly eyes to the clothespin, bend a pipe cleaner, and glue it above the eyes to make antennae. Tell children that when caterpillars transform into butterflies, it can remind us that an even greater transformation occurred at Jesus's transfiguration.



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



STORY 71

The Kids Can Come Too

MARK 10

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Mark 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}



What makes Jesus different than anyone else in history? He cured the blind? That's true. He calmed a storm? That's true too. What is also true, and what really sets him apart, is that though he is a glorious king (the very Son of God!), he came to earth and lived like a poor man. He was made a human, born of a poor woman, raised in a small town, worked as a carpenter for most of his life, and ministered to the sick, dying, and demon possessed. The people that he called to follow him were fishermen, tax collectors, and other outcasts. Of course, the greatest thing he did (and the humblest!) was dying for us. The apostle Paul describes it like this: "Though he is fully God, he set aside his heavenly glory and became a man. More than that, he lived the life of total obedience to his Father and day-by-day service to others, even serving God's people by dying a

criminal's death on the cross for them" (see Phil. 2:6–8). Such an unusual king! With a king like this, what is his kingdom like? Who belongs in such a king's kingdom? Let's listen in for Jesus's answer.

TELL THE STORY

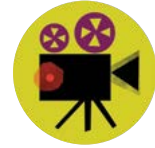
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



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 wants
us to come to
him like little
children—needy
and helpless.

Throughout the four Gospels we read about people coming to Jesus. A leper came to him to be cured of his awful, yucky skin disease. Four men came to him to heal their paralyzed friend. Large crowds came to him to be cured of every type of sickness. One day, some parents brought their children to him. Why? Were the children sick? No. Were they hungry? No. Were they dying? No. They brought their children to Jesus so he might lay his loving hands on them and give them a special blessing. How beautiful! It is beautiful that these parents wanted that. It is beautiful that Jesus wanted that too. Not many powerful people want little children around. Little children can be noisy, messy, and, well, sometimes stinky. None of that bothered our Lord, who “took them in his arms and blessed them” (Mark 10:16).

But it bothered his disciples. When they saw this, they told the parents to stop. They thought Jesus was too busy, too important, and too powerful to waste his precious time with children. But, boy, were they wrong. When Jesus saw what his disciples did, “he was indignant” (10:14). *Indignant* is a big word that means angry, upset, or furious. Why was Jesus so upset? There were two reasons: (1) Jesus welcomed children to be part of his kingdom, and (2) everyone (even an adult) needs to be like a child to be part of the kingdom. He put it this way:



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“Let the children come to me . . . for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it” (10:14–15). Jesus didn’t mean everyone should act like selfish, spoiled children crying for candy at the supermarket. Rather, he meant that we should come to Jesus knowing that we are small, helpless, weak (like a newborn baby), and in need of his blessing.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

Right after those children came to Jesus, Mark tells a story about a rich man who also came to Jesus. This man wanted the answer to the question, “How do I live with God forever?” Jesus tested his heart, saying, “Have you obeyed the Ten Commandments?” This man replied, “Yes, my whole life!” He may have thought he obeyed all ten all the time, but no one (except Jesus!) has ever done that. So Jesus tested him by seeing if he could keep—right then and there—the first commandment (love God above all) and the last (do not covet). “Sell all that you have and give to the poor . . . and come, follow me” (10:21). The rich man, we are told, “went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions” (10:22). He couldn’t let go of his stuff! Jesus doesn’t test everyone like he did this man, but he does ask everyone to be totally dependent on him whether we are rich rulers or tiny children. The gospel is for everyone in the world. Because everyone in the world is small, helpless, and weak compared to God. What this rich ruler didn’t understand is that no one can live with God forever until they realize they are as weak and helpless as toddlers. That’s how God wants us to come to him. And when we do, he will take us in his arms and bless us.

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. **QUESTION:** What are some amazing things that Jesus has done? Even though Jesus is a glorious king, what is surprising about how he lived on earth and whom he spent time around?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus is a glorious king and a humble servant.

3

Engage

Memory Verse
Truly, I say to
you, whoever
does not receive
the kingdom of
God like a child
shall not enter it.

MARK 10:15

2. **QUESTION:** Why did parents want to bring their children to Jesus? Why didn't the disciples want them to? What was Jesus's response to the disciples? Are little children welcome in God's kingdom?

TAKEAWAY: Children are welcome in God's kingdom.

3. **QUESTION:** What does it mean that the kingdom of God belongs to little children? What did the rich man need to do to enter the kingdom of God, which he was unwilling to do? What sort of people does Jesus want in his kingdom?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus's kingdom is for the weak, not the strong.

4. **QUESTION:** Can a rich man come to Jesus? How should he come? How should we all come to Jesus?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus wants us to come to him like little children—needy and helpless.

ACTIVITIES

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Keep Away

Supply List: beach ball

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Have children form a large circle. Choose one child to stand in the center of the circle. Give a beach ball to a child on the circle and have her toss the ball to someone on the opposite side while the person on the inside tries to intercept it. When the “insider” gets the ball, he switches places with the person who threw the ball. Continue play as long as time allows. Remind everyone that the disciples tried to keep children away from Jesus, but Jesus welcomed children and blessed them.



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Option 2: Children Come!

Supply List: none

Put children into pairs. Have one person from each pair stand in an inner circle and the other person stand in an outer circle. Children on the inner circle walk clockwise and the children on the outer circle walk counterclockwise. After about 10 seconds, call out, “Children come!” Children must find their partners as quickly as possible and link arms with them. The pair that links arms last is out. Play continues until one pair remains. Remind children that we can run to Jesus any time—he is never too busy or bothered.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Obstacle Course Relay

Supply List: various items to make obstacles (cones, chairs, ropes, etc.)

Before Class: Set up identical obstacle courses (one per team).

Divide children into teams and have them line up. Have the first person on each team maneuver through the obstacle course in both directions before tagging the next player in line. The first team to get all its players through the obstacle course wins. Remind children that they should never let anything stop them from getting to Jesus.

Option 2: Connect Four Relay

Supply List: masking tape, sticky notes, marker

Before Class: Use masking tape to create a grid on the wall that has seven columns and five rows. Draw hearts on two different colors of sticky notes.

Divide children into two teams (Team 1 and 2), and give each team one of the colors of sticky note hearts. Have the first person on Team 1 attach a heart of her team’s color to the grid. As in the game Connect Four, the grid must be filled from the bottom up. After Team 1’s turn, the first player on Team 2 attaches a heart. Play continues with each team’s taking a turn until one team wins by getting four of its hearts in a row vertically, horizontally, or diagonally. Tell children the hearts remind us that Jesus values children and his love for them is great—in all directions, at all times.

CRAFTS

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

K–2nd

Option 1: “Jesus Loves Children” Headband

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

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut construction paper in half lengthwise. Make copies of the words “Jesus loves children.” Make copies of pictures of children of different ethnicities. Make a sample craft.

Place scissors, tape, glue, crayons, and printed copies on tables. Give children two strips of construction paper each, and have them tape them together to make one long strip. Children then color and cut out the words “Jesus loves children” and the pictures of the children, and they glue them to the strip of paper. Help children tape the two ends of the strip together to fit their heads.

Option 2: Heart in Hands

Supply List: paper, pencils, scissors, pink and red construction paper, glue, markers

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make a sample craft.

Set supplies on tables. Have children fold a piece of paper in half so the short ends meet. Trace around one of their hands with fingers spread out, angling their hand so the tips of their thumb and pointer finger touch the edge of the fold. Next, they cut out their traced hand, being sure not to cut off the folded tips of the thumb and pointer finger. Children can then open the paper to reveal the heart shape that has formed in the middle of the two hands. Have the children glue this paper to a piece of red or pink construction paper and write “Jesus loves me” above the hands.



Option 1: “Jesus Has Time for Me” Clock

Supply List: paper plate, cardstock, scissors, markers, brass fasteners

Before Class: Gather supplies. Print two arrow shapes on cardstock, one arrow longer than the other (one copy per child). Make sample craft.

Give each child a paper plate, scissors, arrow paper, and brass fastener. Place markers and glue on tables. Have children write “Jesus Has Time for Me” on the plate and decorate with markers. Instruct them to cut out and attach the base of the two arrows to the center of the plate using the fastener, allowing the hands to move around the plate. Have them write the numbers 1 to 12 around the outside of the plate like a clock. Remind children that Jesus took time to bless the children and that he has time for each of them.

Option 2: Soooooo Much Love!

Supply List: construction paper, paper, pencil, scissors, markers, glue

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut 1-inch-wide strips of construction paper. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a piece of paper and pencil. Set paper strips and remaining supplies on tables. Have children fold their paper in half so the short ends meet. On one side of the paper, children should trace their hand with fingers spread out. Then they cut out their traced hand to form two handprints. Next, they tape together two strips of construction paper to make one long strip. On the strip, have them write, “Jesus loves me soooooo much!” Instruct them to accordion fold the strip from end to end and glue one end of the strip to each handprint. Children can open and close the handprints to display the message of Jesus’s great love for them.



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



STORY 72

Who Is My Neighbor?

LUKE 10

BEFORE THE LESSON

- *Read Luke 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.*

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

Remember how Jesus's disciples were upset that children were coming to Jesus? They thought Jesus was too busy, too important, and too powerful to waste his precious time with children. They misunderstood the King and his kingdom, so Jesus corrected them. The disciples weren't the only ones who misunderstood the King and his kingdom. They weren't the only ones Jesus needed to correct. There was also another group. But this second group was trickier and meaner than the disciples. They didn't like Jesus; they wanted him dead. Sometimes they'd ask him questions to get him into trouble. In today's lesson, they ask him one of those trick questions. But Jesus isn't tricked. Instead, he uses their question to correct their wrong views about his kingdom.

TELL THE STORY

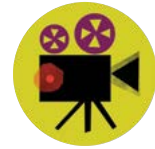
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



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
Loving God
means loving
our neighbors,
which involves
showing mercy
to those in need.

One day “a lawyer” tried to test Jesus. He asked a trick question, trying to trip Jesus up. This lawyer was not a lawyer in the way we talk about lawyers. He was an expert in the *law* of Moses. The lawyer asked, “What do I have to do to live forever?” (see Luke 10:25). This is a good question—a question everyone should ask, because everyone will one day die. Some people might have asked that important question because they wanted an answer. However, the Bible tells us that this man asked it to test Jesus, hoping it would show that Jesus didn’t know the law as well as the lawyer did.

But Jesus (who was far wiser than this lawyer) answered his question with another question, “How does the Bible answer your question?” (see 10:26). The man replied, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself” (10:27). “That’s right,” said Jesus. “If you perfectly love God and love your neighbor you will live forever.” Ah, Jesus was now testing him! Do you think this lawyer could perfectly love God and his neighbor? Of course not. Only God loves like that. At this point the lawyer decided to ask Jesus a follow-up question, “And who is my neighbor?” (10:29). He wanted Jesus to answer the question how he himself would answer it. “My neighbors,” the man thought, “are people like me and people I like.” Then Jesus shared this shocking story to correct him and show him that our neighbors include anyone in need. He told this *Jewish* religious leader the parable of the good *Samaritan*.

A man was traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho. On the way, some robbers beat him up, stole all he had, and left him on the road to die. Soon after, a



priest saw him. But instead of helping, he walked right by him. Then, a Levite passed by, and did the same thing. Finally, a Samaritan saw him. And do you know what he did? Even though Samaritans and Jews didn't like each other, this Samaritan had compassion on this helpless man. He poured oil and wine on his wounds (to clean them), wrapped him in his own clothing, and brought him to an inn. The next day, the Samaritan gave the innkeeper money and said, "Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back" (10:35).

After the parable, Jesus asked, "Which man loved his neighbor?" The answer was obvious. "The one who showed him mercy" (10:37), the lawyer admitted. "Right," Jesus said, "Now go and do the same."

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

Think again about what the Samaritan did in the parable, and then think about what Jesus has done for us. Like the Samaritan, Jesus came to the rescue. The Samaritan just crossed the road to do so; Jesus came all the way from heaven! The man who was beaten was rescued from dying; we were already dead in our sins when Jesus came for us. It cost the Samaritan some money to restore the dying man back to life; it cost Jesus his very life to restore our relationship with God. Jesus suffered for us. Jesus bled for us. Jesus died for us.

We are to follow the example of the good Samaritan, but more importantly we are to follow Jesus, our always good Savior. The right answer to the lawyer's first question ("What do I have to do to live forever?") is to follow Jesus—the only person to ever love God and neighbor perfectly.

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

- 1. QUESTION:** What question did the lawyer ask Jesus to test him? How did Jesus respond? Even though the lawyer wanted to test Jesus, how did Jesus test that man's heart? How does his story test your heart?

TAKEAWAY: People sought to test Jesus, but it is Jesus who tests our hearts.

3

Engage

Memory Verse

You shall love the
Lord your God
with all your heart
and with all your
soul and with all
your strength
and with all your
mind, and your
neighbor as
yourself.

LUKE 10:27

2. **QUESTION:** How did the man answer Jesus's question about how to summarize the law? What happens if you perfectly love God and your neighbor? What keeps us from doing that? Who is the only person who can do that?

TAKEAWAY: The whole law is summed up by loving God with all your heart and loving your neighbor as yourself, and only Jesus can do that perfectly.

3. **QUESTION:** Who were the three men who saw the wounded man on the road to Jericho? Which one helped the man? Why is that surprising? In what ways is Jesus the Great Samaritan?

TAKEAWAY: The parable of the good Samaritan reminds us that Jesus came to save his enemies; he is the Great Samaritan.

4. **QUESTION:** What's the final question that Jesus asked the lawyer? What was his answer? The whole story was to answer the question "Who is my neighbor?" So what is the answer? If we love God and want to follow Jesus, what must we go and do?

TAKEAWAY: Loving God means loving our neighbors, including our enemies.

ACTIVITIES

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

K–2nd

Option 1: TP Bandage Relay

Supply List: toilet paper (one roll per team)

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Divide children into teams of three to four, and give each team a roll of toilet paper. Have each team choose one child to be "hurt." On "Go" each team must wrap the hurt person with toilet paper. The first team to use the entire roll of toilet paper wins. Remind children that Jesus told a story about a hurt man who was helped by an unlikely good neighbor.



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Luke

10

Option 2: Bandage Tag

Supply List: bag of bandages

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Choose one child to be “It” and one to be the “good Samaritan.” Give the good Samaritan a bag of bandages. Begin a game of tag. If a child is tagged, she must freeze until the good Samaritan comes and puts a bandage on her hand. Once she has a bandage, she can rejoin the game. If a child is tagged a second time, she must remain frozen because each person can only be saved once per game. After a few minutes, restart the game with a new “It” and “good Samaritan.”

3rd–5th

Option 1: Bandage Relay

Supply List: bandages, table

Before Class: Gather supplies. Set a table on the opposite side of the starting line, and spread out bandages on the table.

Divide children into teams of five to six. Have each team choose one child to be “hurt,” who will then stand in front of the bandage table directly opposite from his team. On “Go” have the first person on each team skip down to the bandage table, take a bandage, stick the bandage somewhere on his team’s “hurt” person, and skip back to tag the next person in line, who will repeat the process. After five minutes, the team that has placed the most bandages on its “hurt” person wins. Remind children that one way to love our neighbors is by helping people when they are hurt.

Option 2: I Love My Neighbor!

Supply List: chairs

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

Choose one child to stand in the middle of the circle, and have the rest sit in chairs. The person in the middle says, “I love my neighbor, especially the ones who . . .” (the child then calls out a characteristic like “are wearing blue,” “have a sister,” or “like pizza”). If the statement is true of a child, he or she must stand

and find a new place to sit. While those children are moving to a new seat, the person in the middle also tries to get a chair. The child who does not get a chair is the new person in the middle. Continue play for a predetermined time, ensuring that all children get to participate. Remind children that Jesus wants us to love our neighbors.

CRAFTS

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Sign Language “I Love You”

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

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make a sample craft.

Set supplies on tables. Demonstrate how to say “I love you” with your hand in sign language. Have children take a piece of construction paper and trace around one of their hands with their fingers spread out. Children should then cut out their traced hand and glue the middle and ring fingers down to say “I love you” in sign language. Have children write Luke 10:27 on the front of the handprint. Remind children that when we love God, we want to love others like Jesus did!

Option 2: “Love One Another” Beaded Craft

Supply List: cardstock, pipe cleaners, string, scissors, tape, pony beads

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut 6-inch pieces of string. On cardstock, print the words “Love One Another” (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Set copies and supplies on tables. Have children thread pony beads onto a pipe cleaner, leaving 1 inch unbeaded at each end. Then they can shape the pipe cleaner into a heart, twisting the unbeaded ends to secure. Have them cut out the words “Love One Another” and attach them to the back of the heart with tape. Last, they should tie a piece of string to the top for hanging.



Option 1: Heart Chain

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

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut 2-inch-wide strips of construction paper (eleven per child). Make copies of a paper that has five hearts, with each heart containing one word from the phrase “I Can Love My Neighbor” (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Set strips, heart papers, and remaining supplies on tables. Have children use the paper strips and glue to make a paper chain with eleven links. Have them cut out the hearts and glue them on every other link so the paper chain reads “I Can Love My Neighbor.” Remind children that when we show love and mercy to others, we are like Jesus.

Option 2: Love Dangler

Supply List: cardstock, string, red paper, scissors, glue sticks, colored pencils, tape

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, print simple pictures of a cross, a heart, and a hand. On red paper, print three small hearts that say “Love God,” “Love others,” and “Serve others.” Cut 15-inch pieces of string. Make a sample craft.

Set copies and supplies on tables. Instruct children to color and cut out the cross, heart, and hand. Children should then cut out the three hearts and glue the “Love God” heart to the cross, the “Love others” heart to the heart, and the “Serve others” heart to the hand. Have children line up the shapes facedown with space in between them, and then they can tape a piece of string to the backs of the shapes so they will hang vertically. Leave extra string at the top to form a loop for hanging. Remind children that when we love God, we will love and serve others.



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



STORY 73

Lost and Found

LUKE 15

BEFORE THE LESSON

- *Read Luke 15.*
- *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

Jesus told the parable of the good Samaritan to answer the lawyer's questions. And while the lawyer may have gotten an answer to his big question about living forever, there were still many more people with many more questions. There were also more people trying to catch Jesus doing something wrong. People who didn't like what Jesus was saying and doing. Jesus didn't like that they grumbled about God's grace or about his spending time with people who were lost. And so Jesus told more stories to show them why he came to be with sinners. He told them a story about a man who went to rescue his lost sheep. He told them about a woman who scoured her house looking for a precious coin. After telling stories of a lost sheep and a lost coin, he told one about a lost son. He told them these parables because the Pharisees and scribes were complaining about how

really bad people (“tax collectors and sinners,” Luke 15:1) were coming to Jesus, eating with him, listening to him, and following him. His stories helped show why there is much joy when lost things are found—and why spending time looking for the lost is good. How will the Pharisees respond to the stories? Will their grumbling against Jesus turn to joy? Will they begin to seek the lost with hope that they will be found? Let’s find out!

TELL THE STORY

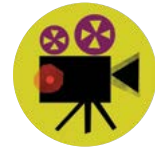
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



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
Jesus came
to rescue and
redeem lost
sinners.

This is the famous story of the prodigal son. Of course, most people don’t know what “prodigal” even means. It means wasteful or reckless. A prodigal is someone who recklessly wastes money. But there is more to the famous parable of the prodigal son than the story of a son who wastes money. He certainly does that! He spends all his father’s money. But he also has an amazing transformation.

The story goes like this. Once there was a rich man who had two sons. The younger son said, “Father, give me right now all the money I will receive when you die. My inheritance!” His father agreed. The boy then took the money and traveled far from home. Before long he spent every single dollar on selfish things with sinful people. Now he was poor and hungry and needed a job. The only job he could find was feeding pigs. Oink. Oink. Ugh. Ugh. He was so hungry he dreamed about eating the pig slop. Yuck. Yuck. Especially for Jews who want nothing to do with “unclean” pigs. Suddenly an idea came to him: “Why starve to death? Why not go home? Even your father’s hired servants have more than enough to eat.” As he walked home, he rehearsed what he would say to his father: “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to



be called your son” (15:18–19). What an amazing transformation—from prodigal to humble and repentant. But how would his father respond? Before he reached the front door, his father noticed his son walking in the distance. Did he lock the door? No. Send out the guard dogs to sic ‘em? No. The father loved him and forgave him. He ran to his son, hugged and kissed him, and ordered his servants to give his son new shoes, clothe him with the best robe, and put a ring on his hand. Then he gave this order: “Let us eat the biggest and best cow and celebrate. Steaks for everyone! For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found” (see 15:23–24). The father had been longing for just such a transformation. He rejoiced to have his son back home.

How do you think the Pharisees reacted to this story? We’re told they responded by ridiculing Jesus (Luke 16:14). Instead of learning from Jesus, they remained upset with Jesus for seeking the lost. Their hearts toward the “sinners” remain unchanged. How sad.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

Do you know that not everyone was excited when the prodigal son returned home? When the older brother heard the music and saw the dancing (and likely smelled the tasty steaks on the grill), he was angry and refused to join in the celebration. He complained just like the Pharisees and scribes did. He told his father, “What are you doing? Look, all these years I have faithfully served you and never disobeyed you, and you have never thrown even a little party for me. But you have thrown a big party for this sinful son of yours, who did terrible things and spent all the money you gave him. Why?” (see 15:29–30). He thought we earn the Father’s favor, so he begrudged when it was an undeserved gift. The father replied to the older son, “Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found” (15:31–32).

The older brother’s thinking is common even today. It’s easy to think we deserve God’s salvation because we’ve done enough good things. We’re not as bad as others (so we think). Jesus told the three “lost” parables to correct such thinking. All heaven rejoices when someone repents of their sins and returns to God. When the lost are found. That is why Jesus came and spent time with sinners—to seek and save the lost, like us. When we understand the true gospel, we rejoice that God came to rescue sinners of all kinds.

3

Engage

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. **QUESTION:** Why were the Pharisees upset with Jesus? Whom did Jesus come to save?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus came to find lost sinners.

2. **QUESTION:** In the last parable, what was lost? What had he done to ruin his life? How did the son think his father would respond when he returned? How did his father respond when he returned to him? What does the story teach us about our Father in heaven?

TAKEAWAY: We are never too lost to return to our Father in heaven.

3. **QUESTION:** What are some of the things the father did when his son returned home? Why did he do them? What does this teach us about how God feels when a sinner repents and returns to him?

TAKEAWAY: God rejoices when someone repents of sins and returns to him.

4. **QUESTION:** How did the older brother feel when his brother returned home and his father rejoiced? Would you have felt the same way? What did his father encourage him to do? How should we feel if Jesus has found us?

TAKEAWAY: We should rejoice that we have been found by Jesus and rejoice when others are 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: Gather My Sheep

Supply List: poster board, marker, tape, cups, cotton balls, glue sticks

Before Class: Gather supplies. Draw a large rectangular “sheep pen” on poster (one per team), and tape it to the wall opposite the starting line. Fill each cup with one hundred

Memory Verse

There is joy
before the
angels of God
over one sinner
who repents.

LUKE 15:10



Story

73

Luke

15

cotton balls (one cup per team), and place the cups along the starting line across from the sheep pens.

Divide children into teams of five or six, and have each team line up behind a cup. Give each team a glue stick. On “Go” the first person on each team must take the glue stick and one cotton ball out of his team’s cup, run to glue the cotton ball inside the sheep pen, and run back to hand the glue stick to the next player in line. Play continues with each player’s gluing one cotton ball at a time. The first team to glue all their cotton balls inside their “pen” wins. Remind children that Jesus will find all his sheep.

Option 2: Pass the Snort and Baa

Supply List: none

Have children sit in a circle. One child starts the game by looking at the child on her left and making a pig snort noise without laughing. That child must then pass the snort to the person on his left, and so on around the circle. If the person snorting or receiving the snort laughs, he is out. When the snort has been passed around the circle, continue play by passing a sheep’s baa around the circle without laughing. Continue play (alternating between snorts and baas) until one child remains or until time is up. Remind children that Jesus told a parable about a lost sheep and a parable about a lost son who was so hungry he dreamed about eating pig slop!

3rd–5th

Option 1: Coin Hunt

Supply List: paper plates, crayons, fifty to one hundred coins

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

Have each child write his or her name on a paper plate and place it in the center of the room. Tell children that there are coins hidden all around the room and that their goal is to find as many as possible. On “Go” have children begin looking for coins. When a child finds a coin, he must place it on his plate before finding another one. Play continues for a couple minutes or until all the coins have been found. The child with the most coins wins. Remind children that Jesus came to search for the lost.

Option 2: Lost and Found

Supply List: random objects, dry rice, large bucket

Before Class: Gather objects like buttons, bouncy balls, clothespins, and the like. Mix the objects with rice in a large bucket. Make note of the objects in the box.

Divide children into two teams, and have them line up facing each other with the bucket of objects in the middle. When you call out one of the objects, the first person on each team runs to the bucket to find the object named. The first person to find the object gets a point for her team. Continue calling objects until all children have had the opportunity to participate and all objects have been found. The team with the most points wins. Remind children that Jesus came to seek what was lost.

CRAFTS

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Party Hats

Supply List: paper, scissors, streamers, staplers, markers, glue sticks, sequins

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make copies of a large semicircle pattern with the words “Rejoice! The lost are found!” printed inside it (one per child). Cut streamers into 5-inch lengths. Make a sample craft.

Set copies, streamers, and remaining supplies on tables. Children first cut out a semicircle and decorate one side. Then they shape the semicircle into a cone, stapling along the seam to close. Have children glue streamers to the point of the hat.

Option 2: Paper Bag Pig

Supply List: paper, paper lunch bags, scissors, glue sticks, tape, crayons, pencils, pink pipe cleaners, googly eyes

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make copies of a pig nose and two pig ears (one set per child). Make a sample craft.



Place copies and remaining supplies on tables. Children first color and cut out a pig nose and two ears. Then they glue the nose, ears, and two googly eyes to the bottom flap of the bag, creating a pig puppet. Have them add a tail by wrapping a pink pipe cleaner around a pencil and taping the tail to the back of the puppet. Remind children that the lost son was so hungry he dreamed of eating pig slop!

3rd–5th

Option 1: Coin Collage

Supply List: paper, variety of coins, crayons

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make copies of the words “I was lost, but now I am found,” with FOUND in block letters (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Set copies, coins, and crayons on tables. Have children place a coin under the found paper so the coin is inside one of the block letters. Gently color on top of the coin with a crayon. Have children continue this process with different coins and colors until the block letters are filled in.

Option 2: Lost Things Story Wheel

Supply List: paper, scissors, colored pencils, brass fasteners

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make copies of an 8-inch-diameter circle divided into three equal sections (one per child). Make copies of another 8-inch-diameter circle with a one-third section marked (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child one of each circle. Set remaining supplies on tables. Children first cut out the circles, then take the circle divided into three sections and label the sections “A Lost Sheep,” “A Lost Coin,” and “A Lost Son.” Have children draw pictures to go with each parable. Instruct children to cut out the one-third section on the other circle and fasten this circle on top of the first using a brass fastener. Have them write, “God rejoices when the lost are found” on the top circle. Children can rotate the top circle to remind them of each parable.



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



STORY 74

Debts and Debtors

MATTHEW 18

BEFORE THE LESSON

- *Read Matthew 18.*
- *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}



A couple weeks ago we looked at Jesus's parable of the good Samaritan and learned that we should love our neighbor, especially when he is in great need. Then we looked at Jesus's parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son. And we learned that, like God, we should rejoice when someone repents and receives God's forgiveness. Today we will look at the parable of the unforgiving servant. In the next lesson we will look at the parable of the laborers in the vineyard. That's a lot of parables, isn't it? Why did Jesus teach so often with these short stories? Thankfully, Jesus answers that question. He says that he taught in parables to reveal and conceal. To *reveal* means to make something known that was hidden; to *conceal* means to hide or cover something up. To those who want to be Jesus's disciples and to whom God gives ears to hear

and understand, Jesus's parables show us great truths about God's kingdom. To those who don't want to be disciples, parables fall on deaf ears. They cannot hear. They do not listen. God's truth is hidden. For today's parable let's ask God to open our ears and our eyes!

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 should
forgive others
just as God
forgave us.

What should you do if someone steals something from you or tells a lie that gets you in trouble? One day Jesus taught his disciples what to do if someone sins against them. If a person admits his fault and asks for forgiveness, Christians should forgive. When Peter heard this teaching, he had a follow up question: “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” (Matt. 18:21). Jesus replied, “Not seven times, but seventy-seven times” (see 18:22). In other words, “Stop counting how many times someone sins against you. You are to forgive them every single time!” Jesus told a story to explain why.

One day a rich king decided to require his servants to pay back money they owed him. One servant owed him ten billion dollars. Wow, that's a big debt. Astronomical! Because he obviously couldn't pay back that astronomical amount, he fell on his knees and begged the king to be patient. The king decided to be more than patient; he would be merciful. He forgave the whole debt!

That's shocking. But what happens next is even more shocking. Shockingly sad. The servant who was forgiven remembered that another servant owed him money—about fifteen thousand dollars. That's still a lot. (More than you get from your grandma on your birthday, right?) But that's not anywhere close



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Matthew

18

to ten billion dollars! Now here's what the forgiven servant did. He grabbed his fellow servant and started to choke him. "Give me the money you owe me," he screamed. The man begged him to be patient: "Give me some time to repay you." "No way!" the first servant said. "Off you go to debtors' prison." When the king found out what happened, he called the forgiven servant and said, "You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?" (18:32–33). The king tossed the man into debtors' prison until he could pay every last penny (which might just take an eternity!).

The point of the parable is that because God (like the king) has forgiven our many sins (like the first servant's debts), we should forgive others (like the second servant's much-smaller debt) when they sin against us.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

Do you know the Lord's Prayer? It starts, "Our Father in heaven" (Matt. 6:9). After we pray "Give us this day our daily bread," the very next thing we ask God to do for us is to "forgive us our debts" (or trespasses or sins). Just like we need daily bread to live, we need daily forgiveness too. Our trespasses or sins are like debts we owe God. Our debt is as massive as the first servant's debt in the parable. We owe God ten billion dollars. So what are we to do? *We can't do anything* to earn our salvation. But thankfully *God has done something* about our debt problem. He sent Jesus to pay it all. Jesus gave his "life as a ransom" (20:28), a full payment. We, through faith, can accept that good news. And forgiven people forgive others. That's how it works. In fact, after Jesus taught the Lord's Prayer, he taught that Christians are to "forgive others their trespasses" (6:14). Jesus even implied that if we haven't forgiven, we probably haven't truly been forgiven (see 6:12, 14). The forgiven must be forgiving! We are to "be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one other, as God in Christ forgave" us (Eph. 4:32).

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

- 1. QUESTION:** What did Peter want to know about forgiveness? How many times did Jesus say Peter should forgive someone who sinned against him?

3

Engage

What did he mean by that? How many times will God forgive you for sinning against him?

TAKEAWAY: There is no limit to God's forgiveness of sins.

Memory Verse

Be kind to
one another,
tenderhearted,
forgiving one
another, as
God in Christ
forgave you.

EPHESIANS 4:32

2. **QUESTION:** How much money did the first servant owe the king? Could he ever pay that debt? Why did the king forgive the debt? How much money did the second servant owe the first? What should he have done when the second servant asked for time to pay his debt?

TAKEAWAY: Because God has forgiven us, we must forgive others.

3. **QUESTION:** What did the first servant do to the servant who couldn't pay him back? What was wrong with that? What did the king say and do to punish him? What lesson is God trying to teach us?

TAKEAWAY: If we do not forgive others, God will not forgive us.

4. **QUESTION:** What do we ask God to forgive in the Lord's prayer? And what do we tell him we will do to others? What should we do when we struggle to forgive others?

TAKEAWAY: When we pray the Lord's Prayer, we ask God to forgive us as we forgive 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: String Search

Supply List: string, scissors

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut one extremely long length of string, and sixty different lengths of string, from a couple inches to a foot. Hide the sixty lengths of string around the room.

Show the long length of string, and explain that it represents Jesus's forgiveness of sins. Tell the class that you have hidden strings all around the room.



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Matthew

18

On “Go” have children collect as many as they can. Once all the strings have been found, have each child line up the strings he or she found to form one long string. The child with the longest string wins. Show children the string that represents Jesus’s forgiveness. (This string should be much longer than any of theirs.) Remind children that we need to forgive like Jesus—way more than we think we should.

Option 2: Swat away Unforgiveness Game

Supply List: masking tape, paper

Before Class: Gather supplies. Place a piece of masking tape down the center of the play area to divide it into two sections.

Divide children into two teams and assign one team to each side of the tape. Distribute an equal number of pieces of paper to each team, and instruct children to crumple the paper into balls. Explain that the paper represents sins committed against us and that we don’t want to hold onto unforgiveness. We need to let go of hurts and trust God. On “Go” have teams try to keep crumpled paper balls off their side by continually tossing them to the other side. Continue play for 3 to 5 minutes. When the time is up, the team with the least number of paper balls on their side wins. Remind children that when we are unforgiving, we lose. Instead, we should keep on forgiving others, like Jesus forgives us.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Balloon Stomp

Supply List: balloons, string, scissors

Before Class: Gather supplies. Blow up balloons and tie a string to the knot of each balloon (one per child).

Tie a balloon around each child’s ankle. Have children spread out around the playing area. On “Go” have children try to stomp on and pop other children’s balloons while protecting their own from being popped. The last child with an unpopped balloon wins. Remind children that in the parable, the servant only looked out for himself.

Option 2: Ball Battle

Supply List: ball

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Have children stand in a circle with their feet slightly more than shoulder width apart and with the edges of their feet touching their neighbors'. The object of the game is for players to use their hands to hit the ball between other players' legs while blocking balls from coming through their own legs. If a ball passes through a child's leg, he gets a "one." If it passes through a second time, he gets a "two." This continues up to "seven." Once a child gets to seven, the game restarts. Jesus taught that we should forgive someone not seven times but seventy-seven times.

CRAFTS

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Heart Puzzle

Supply List: cardstock, scissors, crayons

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, make copies of a large heart pattern (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Set crayons on tables. Give children a heart pattern and scissors. Have them cut out the heart and then cut it into two pieces to make a broken heart. Children then write "Jesus forgives my sins" on one half, and "I can forgive others" on the other half. Remind children that sin breaks God's heart, but he still forgives us. Sometimes our hearts are hurt by the sins of others, but we should forgive like God has forgiven us.

Option 2: King's Crown

Supply List: construction paper, scissors, tape, markers, jewels, sequins, glue

Before Class: Gather supplies. Draw a zigzag line lengthwise down the center of a piece of construction paper (one per child). Make a sample craft.



Give each child one piece of construction paper. Place remaining supplies on tables. Have children cut along the zigzag line and then tape the pieces together to form one long piece. Have them write “Jesus is a forgiving and merciful King!” and then decorate it with markers, jewels, and sequins. Have children tape the two ends of the long piece to form a crown.

3rd–5th**Option 1: Keep on Forgiving Spiral**

Supply List: cardstock, scissors, markers, hole punch, string

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

Give each child a spiral template. Set remaining supplies on tables. Have children write “Keep on forgiving” on their spiral and then color it with markers. Have children cut along the lines to make a long snakelike spiral. Have them punch a hole in the middle of the spiral, then thread and tie a piece of string through the hole for hanging. Remind children that forgiveness is not something we need just once but something we need again and again.

Option 2: Stained Glass

Supply List: cardstock, thin washi or masking tape, watercolor paints, paintbrushes, cups, water

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, make copies of a small square (centered on the cardstock) with the Memory Verse printed inside it (one per child). Fill cups one-fourth full with water. Make a sample craft.

Set copies, cups of water, and remaining supplies on tables. Have children use the washi or masking tape to divide the space surrounding the square into at least eight different sections. Using the watercolor paints, have children paint the sections different colors. Once all sections have been painted, have children remove the tape to display a stained-glass picture that highlights the Memory Verse.



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



STORY 75

Grumbles and Grace

MATTHEW 20

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Matthew 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

The ballerina danced with *grace*. The sports star *graced* us with his presence. The teacher gave the class a *grace* period to finish the assignment. We use the word *grace* a lot and for a lot of things. The Bible uses the word a lot too, but it expresses a different idea than the examples above. Grace is God's kindness toward those who don't deserve his kindness. God's grace, then, is a generous gift. It is like getting an unexpected present for Christmas after you have been naughty from January to December!

So, let's think of some examples of grace throughout the Biggest Story. When God called a nobody named Abraham to come to the promised land and receive God's blessing, that's grace. When God forgave King David's awful sins, that's grace. When Jesus called the tax collector Matthew to follow him, that's grace.

When the father in Jesus's parable of the prodigal son welcomed his son home, forgave all his sins, and threw a big party to celebrate his son's return, that's grace. That's amazing grace! In today's lesson we learn more about God's amazing grace. It's another parable, one usually called the parable of the laborers (or workers) in the vineyard. By God's grace, let's listen!

TELL THE STORY

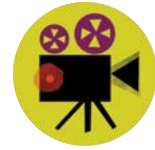
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



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 is free to
bless anyone he
chooses in the
ways he knows
are best.

When it comes to seeing the world the way God wants us to, we need to put on grace glasses. This means we stop paying attention to everything in life that doesn't seem fair and start seeing all the good things God gives us every day.

Jesus told the parable of the laborers in the vineyard to teach this point. One morning a man who owned a vineyard needed help harvesting grapes. So he hired some workers. They agreed to work the whole day in order to provide a day's worth of food and shelter for their family (about a hundred dollars). Then a few hours later, the boss walked into town and saw some people who had nothing to do. Without work, their families would suffer. "Do you want some work? I'll pay you whatever is right." Off they went to the vineyard and started to work. The boss hired more workers later in the day—at noon, three, and five. It is strange that he would hire people so late in the day. Maybe his heart was more focused on helping them than on the help they could give him. When all the work was done, those who were hired last were paid first. They got a hundred dollars—enough to provide for their families! Those hired first thought to themselves, "If they got a hundred dollars for working just one hour, we should get a thousand." But no, they received a hundred too. "Wait a minute," they



Story

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Matthew

20

grumbled. “We worked all day, and they only worked an hour. It’s not fair that they should get the same as us.” Maybe not, but the boss seemed more focused on making sure everyone got the money they needed to care for their families. So the boss replied, “It is fair. You agreed to work for a hundred dollars. If I decide to give the same to the other workers, why does my generosity upset you?”

Jesus ended the parable saying, “So the last will be first, and the first last” (Matt. 20:16). The point is this: if we put on the grace glasses, we will be glad when people who really don’t deserve grace get it (which includes all of us). The people who think they’ve earned God’s blessing will begrudge when others receive it, but those who know they don’t deserve God’s blessing will rejoice the most.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

Do you know what Jesus said right after he told this parable? He said, “Let us now journey to Jerusalem, for when we get there I will be delivered over to the Jewish religious leaders and they will condemn me to death. Then they will deliver me over to the Romans and they will mock me and whip me and crucify me. But, on the third day, I will rise from the dead” (see Matt. 20:18–19). By going to the cross for us, God gave us more than a hundred dollars. He gave us the most precious gift of eternal life through Jesus’s death and resurrection. God gave us grace upon grace. How could we possibly grumble? Instead, we put on grace glasses and rejoice anytime God chooses to bless anyone. Instead of comparing and trying to make sure it’s all even, we are free to trust God. He’s given us the greatest gift of all, so we can trust that he will be good however he blesses—even in itty-bitty things like who gets the best Christmas presents or which sibling got the biggest helping of dessert.

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

- 1. QUESTION:** Do people normally want to be first in line or last? In the story that Jesus told about the workers, who got paid first—those who started last and did the least or those who started first and did the most? What point was Jesus making?

TAKEAWAY: In God’s kingdom the last will be first and the first last.

3

Engage

Memory Verse
So the last will
be first, and
the first last.
MATTHEW 20:16

2. **QUESTION:** Do you think you would have been upset like the first workers that you didn't get paid more for doing more work? Why? How does Jesus say those workers should have responded? Why?

TAKEAWAY: When you're tempted to compare your life to others, remember that God has given you everything he promised.

3. **QUESTION:** Who created you? Whom do you belong to? When you create something, does it get to tell you what you're allowed to do with it? Why not? Since we belong to God, who gets to decide what he can do with us?

TAKEAWAY: God has the right to bless anyone he chooses as he sees fit.

4. **QUESTION:** Did Jesus die on the cross for you because you were so obedient? Does God listen to your prayers because you're so good? Why doesn't it make sense to respond to God's grace by complaining when other people get more than you? How should we respond to God's amazing gift of salvation?

TAKEAWAY: When we remember we don't deserve God's blessing and salvation, we stop complaining and start rejoicing.

ACTIVITIES

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Grumble and Grace Tag

Supply List: none

Have children spread out in the room. Choose one child to be "Grumble Blob" and one to be "Grace Blob." Start a game of tag. The Blobs are "It." When a Blob tags someone, the tagged child links arms with the Blob. Continue play until everyone is part of one of the Blobs. Remind children that both grumbling and showing grace can be contagious. Let's be people of grace!



Story

75

Matthew

20

Option 2: Move on Back!

Supply List: masking tape, dice (one per team)

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

Divide children into teams of six, and give each team a die. Have teams line up single file at a starting line. On “Go” the first person on each team rolls the die. The whole team must move forward the number of steps shown on the die. The die is then passed to the next person in line, and the team again moves forward the number of steps rolled. If the number one is rolled, the team must return to the starting line and begin again. The first team to cross the finish line wins. Remind children that it can be easy to complain when something in life seems unfair (like when they rolled a one!), but God wants us to be thankful for all he has given us.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Payday Relay

Supply List: dice (one per team), play money, envelopes (one per team)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Place dice across the room from the starting line.

Divide children into teams, give each team an envelope, and line each team up across from a die. Have the first person on each team bear walk to his team’s die and roll it. The number he rolls is his day’s wages. He then gathers wages from the leader (e.g., a 4 earns \$4), runs to add the money to his team’s envelope, and tags the next person to go. After 5 minutes, teams count their money. Surprise them by saying that the team with the least amount of money wins, because in God’s economy the first shall be last.

Option 2: You’re So Grape!

Supply List: packing tape (one roll per team), green or purple balloons, large bag

Before Class: Gather supplies. Inflate balloons and place in a large bag.

Divide children into groups of four. Give each team packing tape. Have teams choose one team member to be the “grape.” Before starting the relay, give teams time to wrap their grape in packing tape, sticky side facing out. On “Go” the

first person from each team runs to get a balloon from the bag, brings it back to stick on her team's grape, and tags the next person. After three minutes, the team with the most balloons stuck to their grape wins. Tell children the grapes remind us of the parable Jesus told about workers in a vineyard.

CRAFTS

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Cluster of Grace

Supply List: paper, purple and green construction paper, glue sticks, crayons

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make copies of an outline of a cluster of grapes with Matthew 20:15 printed underneath (one per child). Cut 1" x 4" purple and green strips of paper. Make a sample craft.

Place copies, strips, and remaining supplies on tables. Have children take a grape paper and color any leaves or stems. Next, children roll the strips of paper into cylinders and glue at the seam. Have them glue these “grapes” to their paper until the cluster is filled. Remind children that in the parable of the vineyard workers, we learn about God’s great generosity.

Option 2: Be Grapeful

Supply List: purple and green paint, paper plates, empty toilet paper rolls (one per child), paintbrushes

Before Class: Gather supplies. Put purple and green paint on paper plates (one color per plate). Make copies of Matthew 20:15 printed at the bottom of a paper (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child an empty toilet paper roll and a verse paper. Place paint and paintbrushes on tables. Have children dip the end of the toilet paper roll in the paint and press onto their verse paper to make a circle. Have children form a cluster of grapes by continuing to make circles that touch one another, then

paint a stem and leaves using the paintbrush and green paint. Remind children that in the parable of the vineyard workers, we learn about God's great generosity.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Spread Grace

Supply List: construction paper, paper plates, washable paint (green, black, and white), paper towels

Before Class: Gather supplies. Place green, black, and white washable paint on paper plates (one plate per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child a piece of construction paper, a plate with paint, and a paper towel. Have children dip a finger in the black paint and make a large dot that will be the center of a dandelion. Children should then dip a finger in the green paint to make a stem coming down from the black dot. Next, they dip a finger in the white paint and make lines coming out from the black dot like a firework, then make dots to the right of the dandelion to look like seeds blowing. Have them use paint on their fingers to write "Spread Grace" under the flower. Encourage children to wipe their fingers on the paper towel between new colors.

Option 2: "First Shall Be Last" Trophy

Supply List: paper, tape, glue, scissors, a variety of supplies (toilet paper rolls, cardstock, cardboard, pom-poms, aluminum foil, etc.)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Print papers that say "First shall be last" (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Place copies and remaining supplies on tables. Have children use the provided supplies to design a trophy that displays the "First shall be last" paper. Remind children that Jesus used a parable to teach us that the first shall be last.



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



Story

75

Matthew

20



STORY 76

Little Man, Big Faith

LUKE 19

BEFORE THE LESSON

- *Read Luke 19.*
- *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

God is so generous! He gives his grace to people who don't deserve it—like us! We should always thank God for his generous grace. We should always wear our grace glasses. Remember them? Don't forget to wear them! And be sure to toss your glasses of grumbling into the garbage. We don't want to act like the first workers from the story we learned about last week. Remember how they grumbled when they learned the owner of the vineyard gave the same payment both to the workers who only worked one hour and to those who worked all day? They lost sight of the generous heart of the boss, just like we lose sight of God's generous heart. None of us deserve his grace, no matter if we are first or last. We are all sinners deserving to be punished for our sins. That's what is fair! We don't want God to be fair in that way. Instead of being fair like that

and punishing everyone, our just and generous God sent Jesus to save us. In today's lesson we learn about one of those people. His name is Zacchaeus. No one in his town would have expected that Jesus would give him grace. But he did! Want to find out what happened?

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 gives
grace even
to big-time
sinners.

Two words can be used to tell Zacchaeus's salvation story: *seeking* and *receiving*. We are told that Zacchaeus "was *seeking* to see who Jesus was" (Luke 19:3). But we are also told two other important details about him: "He was a chief tax collector and was rich" (19:2). Those weren't good things. No one in town would have liked Zacchaeus. Why? Because he collected taxes from his fellow Jews for the Roman Empire. Paying taxes isn't bad. What is bad, though, is what tax collectors did: they would lie about how much people had to pay. Then, all the extra money they collected they'd keep for themselves. It made them filthy rich! The other important detail about this greedy man is that he was short. He was so short he couldn't see Jesus over the heads of the crowd when he came through Jericho on his way to Jerusalem. So he had an idea. He ran ahead of the crowd and climbed up onto a sycamore tree. Now he could see Jesus. Short, bad Zacchaeus was seeking.

As Jesus walked, he came to the base of the sycamore tree. He looked up. What a strange sight—a man in a tree! "Zacchaeus," he called out his name. "Hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today" (19:5). The little man climbed down. He took Jesus to his house and "*received* him joyfully" (19:6). *Receiving!* He received Jesus with his emotions ("joyfully") and with his actions: "Lord,



half of what I have, I give to the poor. And all the people I have cheated I will give them back four times as much” (see 19:8). He received Jesus by giving his riches away in one day. Amazing!

What is more amazing is what Jesus said next: “Today salvation has come to this house” (19:9) because Zacchaeus believed in Jesus. The people grumbled that Jesus had “gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner” (19:7). But Zacchaeus, the big-time sinner, knew that Jesus came for that very purpose: “To seek and to save the lost” (19:10).

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

Seeking. Receiving. Those two important words help us understand how Zacchaeus approached Jesus. He needed a Savior, a Snake Crusher, to crush all his sins. Lots of sins! He was a *chief* tax collector, after all. So he sought Jesus. Then he received Jesus.

There is another important word that helps us understand what was happening. *Pulling.* The last line in the story, which is the most important, comes from Jesus. He says, “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost” (19:10). Another way to say that is Jesus came to save sinners. But what about *pulling*? Do you remember that Jesus said, “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God” (18:25)? Zacchaeus is rich! So how did he get through the eye of the tiny sewing needle? Easy. Jesus pulled him through. He came to seek and save the lost—both rich and poor, short and tall. The next time you think about Zacchaeus, picture Jesus pulling a camel through the eye of a needle. Impossible? Not with God—all things are possible for him.

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

- 1. QUESTION:** What did Zacchaeus do to seek out Jesus? What did Jesus do to seek out Zacchaeus? Why did Jesus say he came?

TAKEAWAY: Zacchaeus was seeking Jesus, and Jesus was seeking him.

3

Engage

Memory Verse
The Son of Man
came to seek and
to save the lost.

LUKE 19:10

2. **QUESTION:** When Jesus told Zacchaeus he was coming to his house, how did he respond? What were his emotions? What were his actions? What did Jesus say had come to his house?

TAKEAWAY: When Zacchaeus received Jesus, he was saved and his heart was changed.

3. **QUESTION:** How easy did Jesus say it would be for a rich man (like Zacchaeus) to enter the kingdom of God? How was Zacchaeus able to enter the kingdom of God?

TAKEAWAY: It is impossible for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God—but with God, all things are possible.

4. **QUESTION:** What did Zacchaeus deserve for cheating poor people out of their money? What did God give him instead? How did that change Zacchaeus?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus gives grace even to big-time sinners.

ACTIVITIES

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Heads, Shoulders, Knees, Zacchaeus

Supply List: bean bags (one for every two children)

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Divide children into pairs. Have each pair face one another, and place a bean bag on the floor between them. If the leader calls “head,” “shoulders,” or “knees,” everyone must touch that body part. If the leader calls “Zacchaeus,” everyone tries to grab the bean bag before his or her partner does. Whoever gets the bean bag first earns a point. Continue randomly calling “head,” “shoulders,” “knees,” or “Zacchaeus.” After a set amount of time, the person in each pair with the most points wins. Remind children that Jesus called Zacchaeus by name.



Option 2: Capture the Balloon

Supply List: balloons, permanent marker, music

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

Write each child's name on a balloon with permanent marker. Distribute balloons around the room. Have children hit the balloons around while music plays. When the music stops, have each child find the balloon with his or her name on it. The last person to find the balloon is out. Continue play until one child remains. Alternatively, have a leader record how long it takes for all the children to find their balloons and see if the group can beat their time in subsequent rounds. Remind children that Jesus knew Zacchaeus by name, and he knows our names too.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Capture the Balloon

Supply List: balloons, permanent marker, music

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

Write each child's name on a balloon with permanent marker. Distribute balloons around the room. Have children hit the balloons around while music plays. When the music stops, have each child find the balloon with his or her name on it. The last person to find the balloon is out. Continue play until one child remains. Alternatively, have a leader record how long it takes for all the children to find their balloons and see if the group can beat their time in subsequent rounds. Remind children that Jesus knew Zacchaeus by name, and he knows our names too.

Option 2: Zacchaeus in Action

Supply List: tape, paper, markers

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make three evenly spaced parallel lines across the playing area with tape. Label the furthest line "Zacchaeus climbed a tree," the middle line "Zacchaeus came down," and the bottom line "Zacchaeus was changed."

When the leader calls out one of the phrases, have children run to that line as quickly as possible. The last child to the line is out. Continue calling out phrases until one child remains.

CRAFTS

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Zacchaeus, Come Down!

Supply List: cardstock, scissors, hole punches, yarn, small paper plates, glue, craft sticks, green tissue paper, pencils

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock make copies of Zacchaeus (one per child). Cut out each Zacchaeus, and punch a hole at the top. Tie and knot one end of a 12-inch piece of yarn through each hole. Cut tissue paper into 1-inch squares. Make a sample craft.

Set Zacchaeus figures, tissue squares, and remaining supplies on tables. Have children glue a plate to a craft stick to make a “tree.” Have children decorate the tree by wrapping tissue squares around a pencil eraser and gluing them to the plate. Next, have children punch a hole at the top of the plate. They can then thread the yarn attached to Zacchaeus through the hole and tie a large knot at the end of the yarn so that it cannot pass back through the hole. Demonstrate how Zacchaeus goes up and down the tree by pulling the string.

Option 2: My Name

Supply List: cardstock, glue, cotton swabs, paper plates, empty boxes, spoons, glitter

Before Class: Gather supplies. On the top of cardstock print “Jesus knows my name and loves me!” (one per child). Put glue on paper plates and set on tables. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a cotton swab and printed paper. Have children dip the swab in glue and use it to write their name in the center of the paper. While holding the paper over an empty box, gently shake a spoonful of glitter over the glue to make the letters appear. Remind children that just as Jesus knew Zacchaeus’s name, he knows each of their names and loves them!



Option 1: String Tree Art

Supply List: paper, brown yarn, scissors, cotton swabs, green paint, paper plates, colored pencils

Before Class: Gather supplies. Print the Big Truth at the top of a piece of paper (one per child). Print pictures of Zacchaeus (one per child). Cut various lengths of brown yarn. Put green paint on paper plates. Make a sample craft.

Set Big Truth papers, Zacchaeus pictures, yarn, paint, and remaining supplies on tables. Have children make a tree by gluing brown yarn onto the Big Truth paper. Have them dip their cotton swab into the green paint and dab around the branches to make “leaves.” Have them color and cut out Zacchaeus and then glue him onto the tree.

Option 2: Zacchaeus, Come Down!

Supply List: cardstock, scissors, hole punches, yarn, small paper plates, glue, craft sticks, green tissue paper, pencils

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock make copies of Zacchaeus (one per child). Cut out each Zacchaeus, and punch a hole at the top. Tie and knot one end of a 12-inch piece of yarn through each hole. Cut tissue paper into 1-inch squares. Make a sample craft.

Set Zacchaeus figures, tissue squares, and remaining supplies on tables. Have children glue a plate to a craft stick to make a “tree.” Have children decorate the tree by wrapping tissue squares around a pencil eraser and gluing them to the plate. Next, have children punch a hole in the top of the plate. They can then thread the yarn attached to Zacchaeus through the hole and tie a large knot at the end of the yarn so that it cannot pass back through the hole. Demonstrate how Zacchaeus goes up and down the tree by pulling the string.



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



STORY 77

The King Comes

LUKE 19

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Luke 19.
- 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

What is the name of the holiday that celebrates the birth of Jesus? How about the holiday where Jesus rose from the dead? Christmas and Easter are two of the most important days in history, and that is why we celebrate them every year, year after year. Christians around the world and throughout history have also celebrated Holy Week. Holy Week ends with Easter, but it begins with Palm Sunday, when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey and people waved palm branches to welcome him as the King. They welcomed him as King because they witnessed, or heard about, Jesus's wonderful words and amazing miracles. He taught terrific truths, fed the hungry, cared for the poor, blessed children, healed the sick, raised the dead, gave sight to the blind, and cast out thousands of demons. No wonder people wanted to make him king! Of course, Jesus is a

king. He is the King of kings. But he didn't come on Holy Week to be made an earthly king. He came to suffer and die on Good Friday. So while the lesson for today focuses on a happy day in history—Palm Sunday—let's remember where the week is heading.

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 is the King
of kings—but not
the king God's
people expected.

If you were a great king and had lots of power, money, and servants, how would you decide to make your entrance into an important city, like London or Washington DC? Would you fly into the airport on a private jet and then take a big, bulletproof limousine through town? Back in Jesus's day, if the Roman Emperor rode into an important town, he would ride on a strong and beautiful horse with hundreds of guards surrounding him—holding banners, shields, and swords. When Jesus decided to make his entrance into Jerusalem, he did things differently. He sent two of his disciples into a small town to borrow a young donkey, called a colt. No one had ever ridden this colt. After the disciples found the colt, they brought it to Jesus and laid their coats on it as a saddle. Then Jesus sat on it. It took days to train a colt to let a person ride it, yet Jesus immediately steadied the small creature like he steadied the big waves.

As Jesus rode up to Jerusalem, a crowd ran ahead of him to spread their coats and palm branches on the road. Some shouted, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" (Luke 19:38). Others yelled, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!" (Mark 11:9–10). "Hosanna" means "save us." They were asking King Jesus to



save them. The Pharisees didn't like what they heard. They didn't want to praise Jesus. They didn't believe that Jesus was the King they were waiting for. "Tell them to stop shouting such things," they told Jesus. But he would have none of their nonsense: "Even the stones would cry out in praise, if I silenced all the people" (see Luke 19:40). All creation should praise the Creator. All people, then and now, should cry out, "Save us, King Jesus!"

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

There was a lot to make Jesus happy on Palm Sunday. How wonderful it was that so many people praised him as King and Savior. But Jesus was also sad. He was sad to hear what the Pharisees said. It also made him sad to see Jerusalem. In fact, the Bible tells us that when he "saw the city, he wept over it" (Luke 19:41). He knew that Holy Week was going to be the hardest week. Even as the crowds that day praised him shouting, "Blessed is the King," he knew a few days later the crowds would be shouting, "Crucify, crucify him" (23:21). He wept because his own people would reject him as King. He also wept because he knew that in a few years, after the Romans crucified him, they would destroy the city.

But is all hope lost? Of course not. We have the gospel—the good news! What is the good news? Jesus suffered and died. But then he rose from the dead. Now Jesus is crowned King and reigns in heaven. One day soon he will come again and enter earth (not just one city) in power and glory, riding on a white horse, with millions of mighty angels at his side. Then and there every knee will bow before him and confess that Jesus is *the* King.

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

- 1. QUESTION:** What are some things you remember about Jesus from the Biggest Story so far? What do you think is the most important thing about Jesus in the Biggest Story? Why do you think the Gospels spend the most time on the last week of Jesus's life?

TAKEAWAY: The biggest thing about the Biggest Story is that Jesus died—and didn't stay dead.

3

Engage

Memory Verse
Blessed is the
King who comes
in the name of
the Lord!

LUKE 19:38

2. **QUESTION:** Who were God's people waiting for from King David's line? What did they expect this king to do? Was Jesus the King they were waiting for? How was he different than they expected?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus is the King God's people had waited for—but not the king they expected.

3. **QUESTION:** Who was praising Jesus in our story? Who was not? What did Jesus say to the Pharisees when they tried to get Jesus to stop the people from worshiping him? Why would the stones praise Jesus?

TAKEAWAY: If we didn't praise Jesus, the stones would cry out in worship.

4. **QUESTION:** When Jesus came to Jerusalem, did everyone recognize he was the promised King? What will be different when he comes again?

TAKEAWAY: When Jesus returns, every knee will bow and every tongue confess that he is King.

ACTIVITIES

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Pin a Coat on the Donkey

Supply List: paper, scissors, large piece of paper or poster board, black marker, tape, blindfold

Before Class: Gather supplies. Print and cut out pictures of a coat (one per child). Draw a large picture of a donkey (big enough for the coat to fit as a saddle). Tape the donkey to the wall at a child's shoulder height.

Give each child a coat picture with tape and the child's name on it. Going one at a time, each child will be blindfolded, spun around, and be pointed in the direction of the donkey. Instruct each child to tape his coat where he first touches the wall. The child whose coat is closest to the correct place to sit on the donkey wins.



Option 2: Pass the Palm

Supply List: chairs (one per child), palm branches (one per team)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Place chairs in lines of six around the room.

Divide children into teams of six. Have each team go to a line of chairs and sit down. Give a palm branch to the first child in each line. On “Go” the first child passes the branch to the person sitting next to her and so on down the row. When the branch gets to the last child, he runs behind his team’s chairs to the first chair while the other children all move down one seat. The child who sits in the first seat then passes the branch back down the row. Children continue this cycle until all children have returned to their original chairs. The first team to return to its original position wins.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Donkey Relay

Supply List: balloons

Before Class: Gather supplies. Inflate balloons (one per team plus a few extra).

Divide children into teams of five or six and have each team line up single file. Give the first person on each team a balloon. On “Go” have the first person place the balloon between his knees, run to the other side of the room and back, and pass the balloon to the next team member, who repeats the process. If the balloon falls at any time, the child must stop and reset the balloon before continuing. The first team to finish wins. Tell children that if you ride a donkey, you may walk a little funny when you get off.

Option 2: Travel by Coats

Supply List: old coats (two per team)

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Divide children into teams of five or six. Give each team two coats. Tell teams they must travel to the opposite side of the room by only stepping on the coats (by placing one down, stepping on it, placing the next down, stepping on it, picking up the first, etc.). Once she reaches the opposite side of the room, the child must use the coats and slide step back to her team. The child should give the coats to the next player, who repeats the process. The first team to race all

team members wins. Remind children the crowds lined the road with their coats to welcome Jesus like a king.

CRAFTS

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

K–2nd

Option 1: My “Palms” Branch

Supply List: various shades of green paper, craft sticks, glue sticks, pencils, scissors, permanent markers

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make a sample craft.

Set supplies on tables. Have children trace their hand six times on shades of green paper. Have them cut out all six hand prints and glue them onto a craft stick so the hands slightly overlap, resembling a palm branch. With a permanent marker, children then write “Hosanna!” on the craft stick. Remind children that people waved palm branches and shouted “Hosanna!” as Jesus entered Jerusalem.

Option 2: Praise Tambourine

Supply List: heavy-duty paper plates, paint, paintbrushes, cups, water, pipe cleaners, scissors, markers, bells, hole punches

Before Class: Gather supplies. Place various colors of washable paint on paper plates. Fill cups halfway with water for cleaning paintbrushes. Cut pipe cleaners in half (four halves per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child a paper plate, four bells, and four pipe cleaner pieces. Set remaining supplies on tables. Children first write “Hosanna!” on the plate with markers. They then punch four holes around the edge of the plate. Have children attach the bells to the plate by threading each pipe cleaner through a bell and hole, twisting to secure. Children then paint the back of the paper plate. When the paint dries, encourage children to shake their tambourines and shout “Hosanna!”



Option 1: King of Kings Palm

Supply List: paper, glue sticks, tissue paper in shades of green, scissors

Before Class: Gather supplies. Print a template of a palm branch (one per child). On the bottom of a separate paper, print the words “Jesus is the King of kings!” (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Set copies and remaining supplies on tables. Have children cut out the palm branch. Have them cut out pieces of tissue paper and glue them to the palm branch until it is covered. Glue the palm branch onto the “Jesus is the King of kings” paper.

Option 2: Praise Tambourine

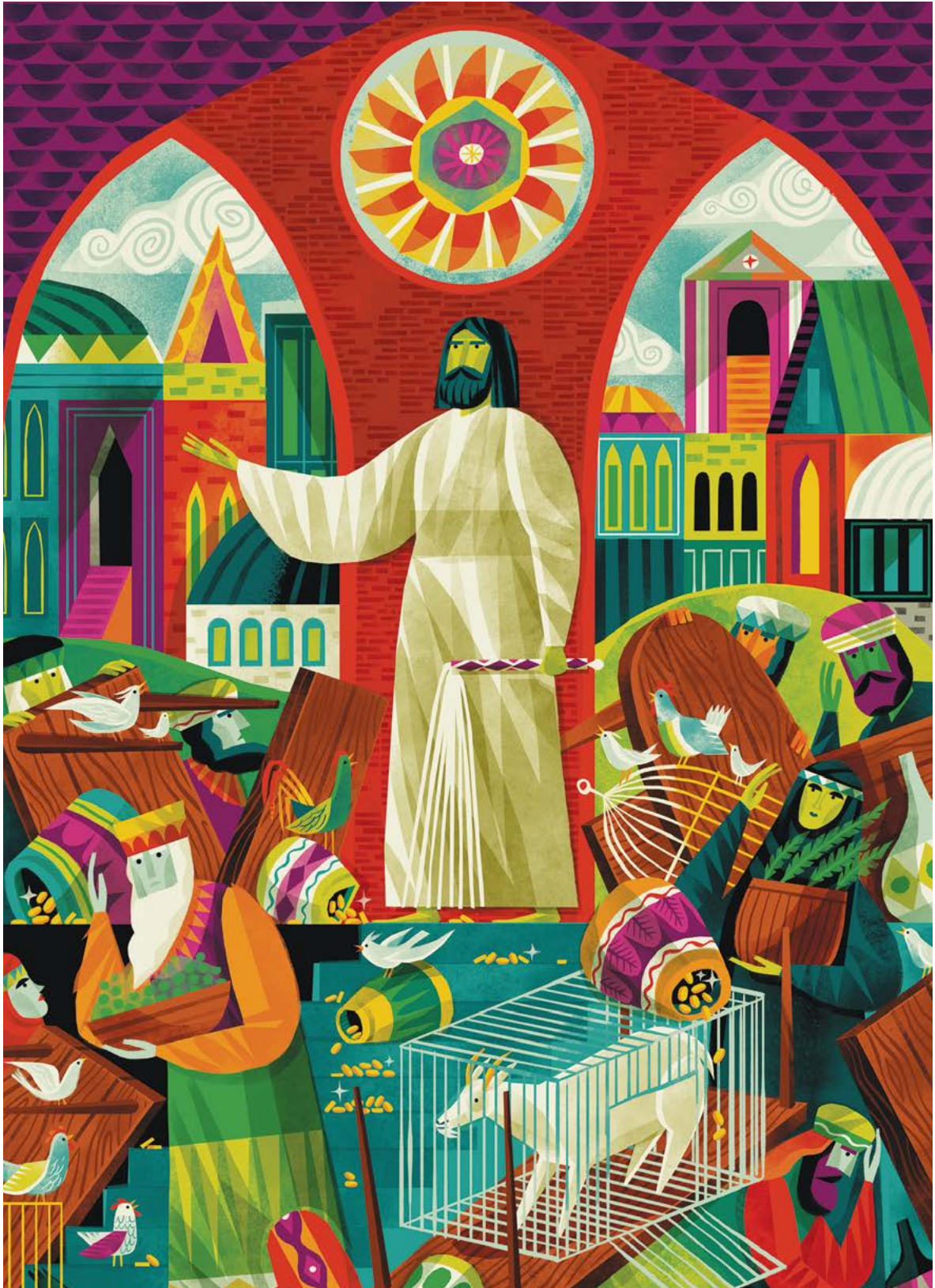
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Give each child a paper plate, four bells, and four pipe cleaner pieces. Set remaining supplies on tables. Children first write “Hosanna!” on the plate with markers. They then punch four holes around the edge of the plate. Have children attach the bells to the plate by threading each pipe cleaner through a bell and hole, twisting to secure. Children then paint the back of the paper plate. When the paint dries, encourage children to shake their tambourines and shout “Hosanna!”



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



STORY 78

Jesus Cleans House

MARK 11

BEFORE THE LESSON

- *Read Mark 11.*
- *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}



Last lesson we looked at Palm Sunday, the first day of Holy Week. King Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a colt, a young donkey. The next few lessons focus on that same week, the last days of Jesus's life. One of the details that we left out from last lesson was something the Gospel writer, Matthew, wrote about. He said that Jesus's riding on a colt fulfilled what the Old Testament prophet Zechariah said, "Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted . . . on a colt" (Matt. 21:5; Zech. 9:9). This verse tells us that Jesus's plan was God's plan. It also tells us we serve a humble King. Jesus was humble—meek and mild and kind and gentle. But, when he needed to, he also showed his awesome power and righteous anger. "Righteous anger" is getting mad about things that upset God, like stealing food from the poor. The day after Palm Sunday, Jesus

showed such anger. Let's listen to what happens, and let's also remember that Jesus is both the Lamb of God, who came to sacrifice his life, and the Lion of the tribe of Judah, who came to show his teeth—and roar!

TELL THE STORY

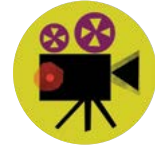
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



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 wants
faithful
and fruitful
followers.

Have you ever been in a cathedral—an old church with stone walls, stained glass, and a really tall ceiling? A place where if you said hello your voice would bounce off the walls for about ten seconds? The temple in Jerusalem was kind of like that. The temple had painted cedar roofs, marble pillars, and the doors to the Holy of Holies were over 60 feet high. Most people were in awe when they saw the temple. It was so big and beautiful! When Jesus entered it on Holy Week, however, he was not impressed. The temple was to be a place of prayer and praise, but the Court of the Gentiles (the temple area for non-Jewish believers) looked more like a noisy and corrupt market. People were buying animals for their Passover sacrifice, but they were being cheated by many of the sellers. This so upset Jesus that he drove out “those who sold and those who bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons” (Mark 11:15). And as he was putting a stop to all the buying and selling, he taught, “Doesn’t the Bible say, ‘The temple shall be a place of prayer for Jews *and Gentiles*’? But you have turned it into a hideout for cheats and thieves” (see 11:17).

Just before Jesus had cleared out the money-changers from the temple, Jesus had done something else unusual. He’d cursed a fig tree! Yes, he saw a fig tree that had big, beautiful green leaves, and he expected, because it looked alive, it



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to have little buds he could eat. But when he got closer, he noticed that the fruit tree had no fruit. So, he cursed it: “May no one ever eat fruit from you again.” And sure enough, the “fig tree withered away to its roots” (11:14, 20). Wow. Why did he do that? He did it as a symbol to show that the temple was like that fruitless tree and that it was soon to be judged for being fruitless. Now, God’s people are called to be the temple where God dwells, a light to the nations. Are we like the temple and the tree, looking good on the outside but not truly happy to follow God’s ways? Or are we full of good fruits, like forgiveness and prayer? Jesus came to save all of us—let’s turn to him and ask him to make us truly alive and fruitful.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

The Passover was the most important Jewish holiday. People would travel to the temple, buy an animal to sacrifice for their sins, bring it to the high priest, and have him sacrifice it (see Num. 28:16–25). In this way their sins would be forgiven. The animal died in their place. Now they were in a right relationship with God. But Jesus came into the temple at Passover and cleared it out. He was asked why he did it. Do you know what he said?

Jesus talked about the “temple of his body” and how it would be “destroyed” (he’d be killed on the cross) but raised up “in three days” (John 2:20–21). He also taught, another time, that he was “greater than the temple” (Matt. 12:6). What was he talking about? Jesus was teaching that he was the new and better “temple.” Think about it. Do we travel to Jerusalem to have our sins forgiven? No. We go to Jesus. Do we need to buy an animal and have it brought to the high priest? No. Jesus is our high priest. Do we need an animal to be sacrificed? No. Jesus is our sacrifice for sin. Jesus is greater than the temple, because he is the only person that we need to go to for God’s mercy. What incredibly good news!

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

- 1. QUESTION:** Was there anything that made you angry this morning? Was Jesus ever angry? What’s different about his anger than our anger?

3

Engage

TAKEAWAY: When Jesus was angry, he was angry about the right things and in the right way.

Memory Verse

My house shall
be called a house
of prayer for all
the nations.

MARK 11:17

2. **QUESTION:** What was happening in the temple courts when Jesus entered? What was supposed to happen there? Why did it make Jesus angry? What did he do?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus was angry that the temple court was full of cheaters and that there was no place for people from other nations to pray.

3. **QUESTION:** What happened just before Jesus came into the temple? Why was he angry at the fig tree? Is Jesus happy when churches and people look great on the outside but inside are not good at all? How might a church seem good but not actually be good? How about you?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus wants his people to be faithful and fruitful, not just to look good on the outside.

4. **QUESTION:** What did Jesus say would be destroyed? What did he say would happen three days later? What was he talking about? How is Jesus like the temple? How is he better than the temple?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus is the new and better temple.

ACTIVITIES

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Clean Up Relay

Supply List: chairs, tennis balls, brooms

Before Class: Gather supplies. Place a chair on the opposite side of the room from each team's starting line.

Divide children into teams, and have teams stand single file at the starting line. Give the first child on each team a broom and a tennis ball. On “Go” the



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first person must use his broom to hit the ball to the opposite side of the room, around his chair, and back to his team. When he reaches his team, he must give the broom and ball to the next player. The first team to race all team members wins. Explain that Jesus didn't clean the temple with a broom. Instead, he cleared the temple of cheaters and thieves.

Option 2: Balloon Train

Supply List: tape, balloons

Before Class: Gather supplies. Place tape on the floor along the perimeter of the room. Inflate balloons (two for every three children).

Divide children into teams of three, and give each team two balloons. Have teams line up along the tape with space between teams. Have each team make a train by standing single file and placing one balloon between each team member. Teams must stand close enough together to keep the balloon in place without touching it with their hands. On "Go" teams walk clockwise along the tape perimeter. The first team to return to its starting point wins. If at any time a balloon falls, the team must stop, step inside the tape line, do five jumping jacks, then reset and walk forward as a train again. Following close to Jesus protects us from getting off track like the cheaters and thieves.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Protect the Temple

Supply List: masking tape, four cones, four small balls, eight soft dodgeballs

Before Class: Gather supplies. Use masking tape to divide the room in half. Place two cones inside each half, and place a small ball on top of each cone (making "temples"). Place eight soft dodgeballs along the tape line.

Divide children into two teams. Have each team stay on its side while using the balls to knock down the other team's "temples." When a temple is knocked down, the children must reset it before their second temple is knocked down. If a team successfully knocks down the second temple before the first is reset, they win. Remind children that Jesus predicted that the temple would be destroyed and that he would rebuild it in three days.

Option 2: Get Out Tag!

Supply List: none

Choose one child to be “It,” and have remaining children be “money-changers.” Play a game of tag. On “Go” the child who is “It” must chase the money-changers. If a child is tagged, she must go to jail (a predetermined corner of the room). When “It” has tagged four people, one of the four becomes the new “It” and the game continues. Remind children that Jesus drove money-changers out of the temple because they were cheating people and preventing worship.

CRAFTS

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Braided Whip Bookmark

Supply List: thick string, tape, beads

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut thick string into 15-inch pieces (three per child). Make a sample craft.

Set string and remaining supplies on tables. Have children knot three pieces of string together at the top, then tape the knot to the table to hold it in place. Instruct children to braid the string until there are 4 inches left. Have them string two or three beads onto each string and then knot the three pieces together to close. Tell children that the braided whip bookmark represents when Jesus drove the money-changers out of the temple with a whip.

Option 2: Faithful and Fruitful

Supply List: paper, construction paper (green, brown, and red), glue sticks, markers

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make copies of a large, full tree (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Set copies and remaining supplies on tables. Have children rip green paper into pieces and then glue them to a tree paper to make leaves. Have them rip brown paper into pieces and then glue them to the tree paper to form the trunk.

Then they can rip red paper to make fruit to add to the tree. Have children use markers to write, “God can make me faithful and fruitful.”

3rd–5th

Option 1: Braided Whip Bookmark

Supply List: thick string, tape, beads

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut thick string into 15-inch pieces (three per child). Make a sample craft.

Set string and remaining supplies on tables. Have children knot three pieces of string together at the top, then tape the knot to the table to hold it in place. Instruct children to braid the string until there are 4 inches left. Have them string two or three beads onto each string and then knot the three pieces together to close. Tell children that the braided whip bookmark represents when Jesus drove the money-changers out of the temple with a whip.

Option 2: Prayer Jar

Supply List: tissue paper, decoupage glue, paper bowls, empty baby food jars, foam paintbrushes, craft sticks, permanent markers

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut tissue paper into small pieces. Pour decoupage glue into paper bowls. Make a sample craft.

Set tissue paper, decoupage glue, and remaining supplies on tables. Have children use a foam paintbrush to spread the glue on the outside of a baby food jar. Children then cover the jar with tissue pieces. Finally, children can “paint” the glue over the tissue to seal. While the jar is drying, have children take five to ten craft sticks and use permanent markers to write someone or something they want to be praying for (family, friends, the church, not getting angry, etc.). Have them place the sticks in their jar. Encourage them to use the jar to help them remember to pray for these things because God hears and answers prayer.



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

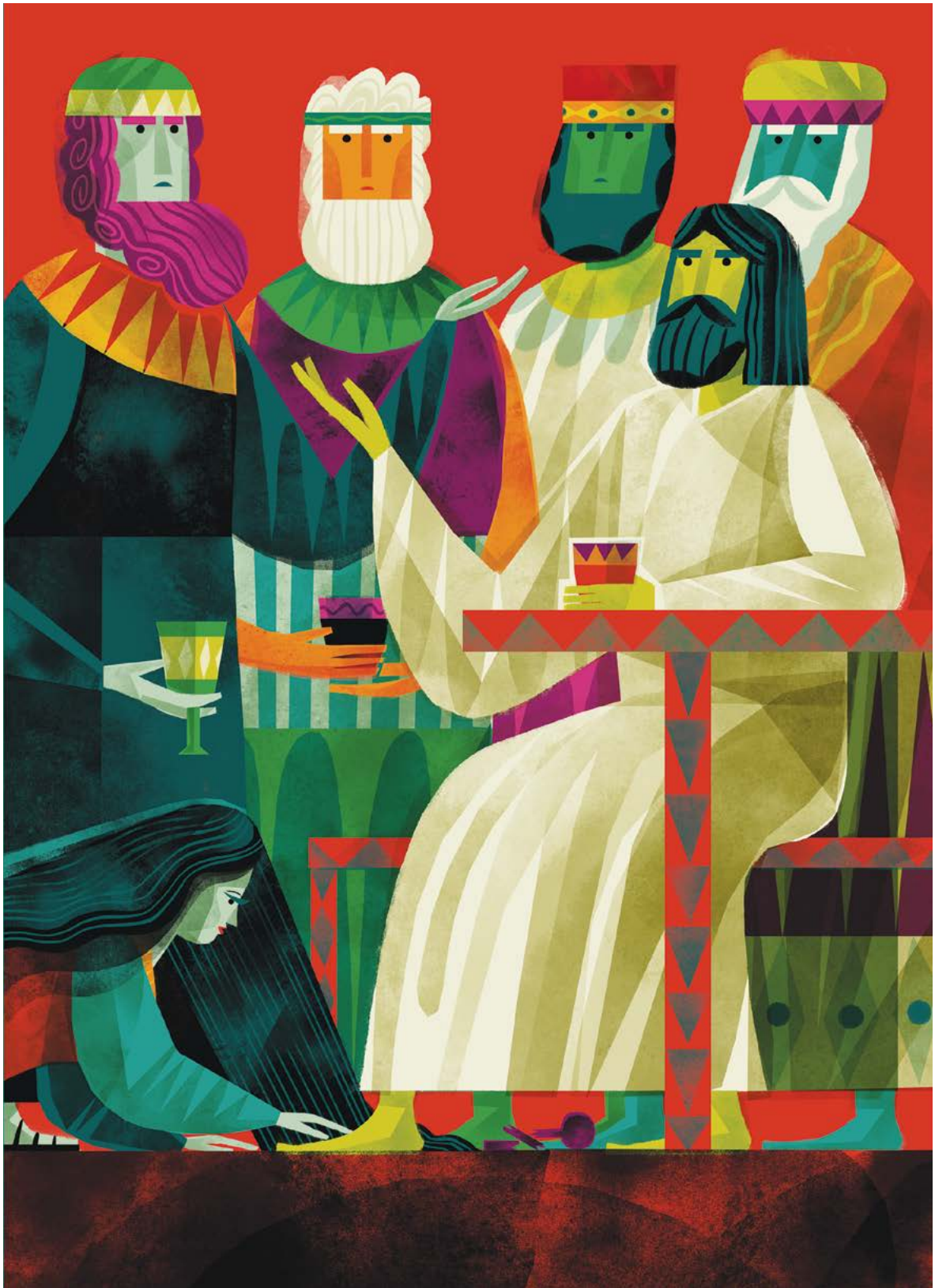


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STORY 79

A Woman to Be Remembered

JOHN 12

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read John 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.

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

As Jesus journeyed to Jerusalem, he stopped in Jericho to save Zacchaeus. Then he rode on a colt into the holy city, as people praised him as King and Savior. Then he did those strange symbolic things in and outside the temple. In the temple, he cleansed it of those who were making money off sacrifices for sin. Outside the temple, he cursed the fruitless fig tree. No faith, no fruit? No good! It was Passover week. But right before and during that week, Jesus stayed about 2 miles away in the home of his close friends—sisters Mary and Martha, as well as Lazarus, their brother. The story of Lazarus is one of the best stories in the Bible. It happens right before the story we will talk about today. Lazarus

dies. Jesus arrives in town. He weeps at Lazarus's tomb. Then, Jesus said, "Take away the stone" (John 11:39) from the tomb. After the stone was moved, Jesus shouted, "Lazarus, come out," and sure enough, Lazarus "who had died came out" (11:43–44). Mary and Martha now believed without a doubt that Jesus was the Christ and that he had resurrection power. They loved him more than ever. Let's see now how Mary showed that love.

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 cannot love
Jesus too much.

Have you ever been to a fancy dinner? Maybe there were cloth napkins, fine silverware, and fancy plates. A few days before Holy Week started, Jesus and his disciples were having dinner with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus in their house. We don't know if it was a fancy dinner, but it must have been a big one.

For special dinners guests would recline on their stomachs around a low table and the food would be placed in the center. Everyone around the table would lean on one elbow and grab the food from the center, and their feet would stick out the back. Strange, huh? Or kind of cool. Try it some day! As Martha was serving the guests—placing dishes of wonderful food on the middle table—her sister was listening to Jesus teach. This upset Martha because she wanted help. But Jesus was happy that Mary was listening because it was the better choice (see Luke 10:38–42). He was likely teaching about what was about to happen to him in Jerusalem. He would suffer, die, and rise again. Mary was so moved by Jesus's teaching that she left, went to her room, and grabbed a tall white jar filled with expensive perfume. She returned to the table and opened it by Jesus's feet. The whole house was now filled with the smell of the sweet perfume. Then



she did something that seemed crazy. She poured the perfume on Jesus's feet, let down her long hair, and wiped his feet clean.

Judas said, "What a waste! She could have sold that for thousands of dollars and given the money to the poor." Jesus replied, "She has done a beautiful thing. For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. In pouring this on my body, she is preparing me for burial. Wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her" (see Matt. 26:10–13). Do you know what is beautiful? Do you know what will be remembered, at least by God? When we love Jesus with crazy love—with the best that we have! Such love and worship is never a waste.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

When Mary poured the perfume on Jesus's feet, he was still alive. But his death was coming soon, even if Mary didn't know it. Regardless, Mary loved Jesus so much that she wanted to give him the best she had. Jesus, however, knew he would die in a few days. And he saw her gift as preparing him for burial. He responded to her extravagant gift by saying she had done a beautiful thing. Anytime we worship Jesus, it is beautiful. He is worthy of the most extravagant, costly worship we can give. Her costly gift was given to the one who would give the costliest gift to us—his life. As we remember Mary's gift, may we remember how it points us toward Jesus's burial and death and his great love for us.

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. **QUESTION:** Who are some people that you think of when you think of the Bible? Who is the surprising woman that Jesus said would be remembered wherever the gospel is told? What did she do?

TAKEAWAY: Wherever the gospel goes in the world, Mary will be remembered for her gift.

2. **QUESTION:** What would people in Jesus's day do to prepare a dead body for burial? What did Mary's perfume prepare Jesus for?

3

Engage

Memory Verse

Keep yourselves
in the love of
God, waiting
for the mercy of
our Lord Jesus
Christ that leads
to eternal life.

JUDE 21

TAKEAWAY: Mary's perfume pointed ahead to the fact that Jesus would soon die and be buried.

3. **QUESTION:** How much did Mary's gift cost? Why was Judas upset that she used it on Jesus? What else did Mary do that was embarrassing? Was Jesus happy with her gift? Why do you think he thought it was beautiful?

TAKEAWAY: Mary's love for Jesus was crazy and costly.

4. **QUESTION:** Can you ever love Jesus too much? Can you praise him too loudly? Can you follow him too closely? Are you willing to follow him even when it costs you a lot? When it's embarrassing? Why?

TAKEAWAY: True worship is never a waste.

ACTIVITIES

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Heel-to-Toe Relay

Supply List: none

Divide children into teams of five or six. Have the first person on each team walk heel-to-toe to the other side of the room and then run back to tag the next player in line, who will repeat the process. The first team to race all team members wins. Remind children that Mary poured perfume on Jesus's feet, and he said she'd be remembered forever.

Option 2: Don't Break the Treasure!

Supply List: balloons

Before Class: Gather supplies. Inflate balloons (one for every two children plus a few extra).

Divide children into pairs. Have the pairs line up on the starting line. Give each pair a balloon, and explain that it represents a special treasure that they must not drop. On "Go" have the pairs walk to the opposite side of the room and back with the balloon held between their backs. If the balloon slips out, they must

let it touch the floor before replacing it and continuing the race. The pair that completes the race first wins. Remind children that Mary took her treasure and broke it to anoint Jesus's feet.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Pick Up Relay

Supply List: plastic cups, water, large clear jars, kitchen tongs (one per team), towels

Before Class: Gather supplies. Fill plastic cups full with water (one per child). Set plastic cups along the starting line. Place jars on the opposite side of the room (one per team).

Divide children into teams of five or six. Give the first person on each team a pair of kitchen tongs. On “Go” have the first player on each team use the tongs to pick up a plastic cup filled with water, to carry it to the other side of the room, and to pour as much water as possible into his team’s jar. Have him return to his team and hand the tongs to the next person, who will repeat the process. The team with the most water in their jar after all players have raced wins. (Note: Have towels on hand to clean up any spills.)

Option 2: Don’t Break the Treasure!

Supply List: balloons

Before Class: Gather supplies. Inflate balloons (one for every two children plus a few extra).

Divide children into pairs. Have the pairs line up on the starting line. Give each pair a balloon, and explain that it represents a special treasure that they must not drop. On “Go” have the pairs walk to the opposite side of the room and back with the balloon held between their backs. If the balloon slips out, they must let it touch the floor before replacing it and continuing the race. The pair that completes the race first wins. Remind children that Mary took her treasure and broke it to anoint Jesus’s feet.



Story

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John

12

CRAFTS

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Perfumed Feet

Supply List: spray bottles (one for each scent blend), water, essential oils, construction paper, pencils, scissors, markers

Before Class: Gather supplies. Prepare spray bottles with a mixture of water and essential oils in different scents. Make a sample craft.

Set supplies on tables. Have each child remove his or her sock and shoe from one foot and trace that foot on construction paper with a pencil. Then they can cut out the footprint and use markers to write the Big Truth on it and decorate it. Have children come to a leader to help them spray their scent of choice lightly on their footprint.

Option 2: Great Love Picture

Supply List: paper, black and brown yarn, scissors, glue, crayons

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut black and brown yarn into 4-inch lengths. Print a picture of a woman kneeling at the feet of Jesus with the Big Truth written underneath (one copy per child). Make a sample craft.

Set copies, glue, crayons, and yarn pieces on tables. Have children color the picture with crayons and then glue the yarn pieces to the woman's hair. Remind children that the woman wanted to show Jesus how much she loved him.



Option 1: Perfumed Envelope

Supply List: envelopes, colored pencils, spoon, bowl, rice, essential oil or perfume

Before Class: Gather supplies. Fill a bowl with dry rice and mix in some essential oil or perfume. Make a sample craft.

Give each child an envelope. Set remaining supplies on tables. Have children use colored pencils to decorate the envelope and write the Big Truth on it. Have children bring their envelope to the bowl and fill it with two or three spoonfuls of rice before sealing it shut. Tell children this envelope can be put in a drawer to make it smell beautiful like Jesus's feet after Mary anointed him.

Option 2: Perfumed Feet

Supply List: spray bottles (one for each scent blend), water, essential oils, construction paper, pencils, scissors, markers

Before Class: Gather supplies. Prepare spray bottles with a mixture of water and essential oils in different scents. Make a sample craft.

Set supplies on tables. Have each child remove his or her sock and shoe from one foot and trace that foot on construction paper with a pencil. Then they can cut out the footprint and use markers to write the Big Truth on it and decorate it. Have children come to a leader to help them spray their scent of choice lightly on their footprint.



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



STORY 80

A Meal for the Ages

MATTHEW 26

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Matthew 26.
- 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

One of the most important jobs God's people have is to remember. Last lesson, Jesus said that we should remember what Mary did when she anointed his body with expensive perfume. That special act symbolized his burial. In the Old Testament God's people were supposed to remember the Passover, when God rescued them out of Egypt. The angel of death passed over the firstborn sons and didn't kill them. They remembered by throwing a big feast! At a typical Jewish Passover meal they would have three main things: lamb, flatbread, and wine. They ate lamb because it was the lamb's blood on the doorway that kept them safe from the angel of death. They remembered how God saved them when they trusted him and cried out to him. They ate flatbread to remember that there wasn't time

for bread to rise because they had to leave Egypt so quickly. And they drank wine to remember how God had freed them and would bring them into his kingdom.

In our lesson today we'll learn how Jesus celebrated that Passover feast with his disciples—but with some important differences. Those differences will link the Passover with Mary's perfume. And they will leave us with a very important way for Christians to remember what Jesus has done for us.

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
Every time we
take the bread
and cup of the
Lord's Supper,
we celebrate
that Jesus died
for our sins.

Jesus and the twelve gathered to celebrate the Passover. As the sun was setting and the meal was about to be served, Jesus made an announcement: "One of you will betray me" (Matt. 26:21). The twelve couldn't believe their ears! How could one of Jesus's closest friends betray him? They were super sad and seriously surprised. They had no idea who would do such a terrible thing. One after the other they asked, "Is it me?" When it came to Judas and he said, "Is it me?" Jesus replied, "Yes, it is you." Soon after, Jesus said, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer" (Luke 22:15). He then took some flatbread, blessed it, broke it, and handed pieces of the broken bread to each disciple. "Take and eat," he said, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me" (Matt. 26:26; Luke 22:19). He didn't mean that his body somehow turned into thirteen pieces of bread. He meant that that bread symbolized what would happen to his body—it would be broken, in a way. He would suffer and die! And each and every time they celebrated this meal in the future it would be a reminder that he died for them.



Story

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Matthew

26

After they ate the bread, Jesus took a cup and said, “Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matt. 26:27–28). They all drank from the cup, and as they drank they may have had some questions. They certainly didn’t think they were actually drinking Jesus’s blood (he hadn’t even died yet). But they would soon understand—after Jesus died and rose again—that the red wine poured out of the cup was a symbol of Jesus’s blood being poured out on the cross. Instead of forgiveness coming from the blood of bulls and goats, it would come from Jesus’s blood. If we have faith in Jesus—who is the only sacrifice we need—all our sins have been forgiven. Nothing could be more important! No wonder Jesus commanded Christians to continue that meal “in remembrance” of him.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

Right before Mary anointed Jesus with perfume, he announced to his disciples, “The Passover is coming, and when it comes the Son of Man [Jesus!] will be delivered up to be crucified” (see Matt. 26:1–2). And right before Jesus was handed over to be crucified, he celebrated the Passover meal with his disciples. Why? He wanted them, and all Christians throughout all time, to make an important connection. Jesus is the perfect Passover Lamb, who was sacrificed for our sins. Our sins are *passed over* only because he died in our place! And like those Israelites in Egypt who believed what God said and took the lamb’s blood and smeared it on their doorway, we believe that the blood of Jesus saves us now and that God will pass over us on judgment day. Jesus wants us to remember this gospel message. So he established the Lord’s Supper (or *Communion*). As we eat the bread and drink the cup together, we remind each other that Jesus’s body was sacrificed and his blood shed for us. We *commune* with each other, which means we are joined to each other and to Jesus. When we eat and drink, God strengthens and feeds our faith!

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

- 1. QUESTION:** What were special things about the Passover meal that Jesus had with his disciples? What was going to happen the very next day?

3

Engage

TAKEAWAY: The Passover was the Last Supper Jesus had with his disciples before he was crucified.

2. **QUESTION:** When the Israelites were slaves in Egypt, what did they have to do so the angel of death would spare their firstborn sons from death? When they celebrated the Passover meal to remember how God spared them, what was the focus of their meal? When Jesus celebrated the Passover with his disciples, why don't you think he talked about the lamb? Whom was Jesus revealing as the Lamb that would be sacrificed to save people from sin?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus is the Passover Lamb, who was sacrificed for the forgiveness of sins.

Memory Verse

This is my blood
of the covenant,
which is poured
out for many for
the forgiveness
of sins.

MATTHEW 26:28

3. **QUESTION:** What did Jesus say the bread in the meal was? What did that mean? And what did he say the cup was? What did he want them to remember? Did Jesus only want the disciples to remember his death? Who else did he want to remember his death and what it meant?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus wants all Christians to remember his sacrifice by eating the bread and drinking the cup of the Lord's Supper.

4. **QUESTION:** What does Jesus do when Christians eat the bread and drink the cup of the Lord's Supper?

TAKEAWAY: When Christians eat the bread and drink the cup of the Lord's Supper, Jesus strengthens them and feeds their faith.

ACTIVITIES

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Run for Your Supper

Supply List: none

Have children stand in a circle and hold hands. Choose one child to be "It." "It" walks clockwise around the circle, stops at random, separates the hands of two



Story

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Matthew

26

children, and yells, “Run for your supper!” The two players whose hands were separated run around the circle in opposite directions while “It” takes one of their spots. The runners race to claim the second empty spot where they were previously standing. The child who arrives last is the new “It.” Play continues as time allows. Remind children that the Lord’s Supper was a special meal Jesus had with his disciples.

Option 2: Cups Up, Cups Down

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

Before Class: Gather supplies. Place plastic cups around the room, with an equal number of cups facing up and down.

Divide children into two teams: a “cup up” team and a “cup down” team. Have children line up randomly around the perimeter of the room. On “Go” each child runs to place the cups up or down depending on his or her team’s objective. After three minutes, tell players to freeze and count how many cups are facing each direction. The team with the most cups facing in their direction wins. Play additional rounds as time permits. Remind children that at the Last Supper, Jesus said the cup would be a way to remember Jesus’s blood shed for them—and us!

3rd–5th

Option 1: Team Memory

Supply List: sixteen coins (four pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters), sixteen opaque plastic cups

Before Class: Gather supplies. Set sixteen coins on the floor (four of each type). Place coins in random order in a four-by-four grid. Cover each coin with a cup so it is not visible.

Divide children into teams and have each team line up single file. Assign each team a coin type. On “Go” the first player from each team runs to a cup and looks under it without revealing the coin type to anyone else. If the coin matches his team’s type, he brings it back to his team. If not (or if the coin is gone), he puts the cup down, returns to his team empty-handed, and tags the next player to go. The first team to find all four of its coins wins. Remind children that the most important thing to remember is Jesus and his sacrifice on our behalf.

Option 2: Hurry Waiter!

Supply List: paper plate (one per team), ping-pong ball (one per team)

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Divide children into equal teams, and have them line up single file with about 2 feet between each person on their team. The first person on each team is the first “waiter.” Give each waiter a plastic plate with a ping-pong ball on it. On “Go” have the waiter hold the plate with one hand while weaving in and out among his teammates. If the ball or plate falls, the player must start over from the beginning. When the child reaches the end of the line, he must hold the plate and ball with both hands while he runs back to the front. He then passes the plate and ball to the next person in line, saying, “Dinner is served!” before running back to the end of the line empty-handed. The new waiter repeats the process. Play continues until everyone on the team has had a turn to be the waiter. The first team to finish wins.

CRAFTS

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Supper Time!

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

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make copies of a fork, knife, spoon, and plate. Make a sample craft.

Place copies and remaining supplies on tables. Have children color the place setting, cut each item out, and glue all items to a piece of construction paper. Have children find pictures of food they like in the grocery ads, then cut them out and glue them to their plate. Remind children that the Last Supper was a supper to remember forever.

Option 2: Passover Lamb

Supply List: cardstock, scissors, cotton balls, glue sticks, crayons



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Matthew

26

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, make copies of a lamb template. Make a sample craft.

Set copies and remaining supplies on tables. Have children take a lamb paper and cut out the lamb. They then glue cotton balls to the lamb's body, pulling the cotton balls to stretch them out, if desired. Have them color the face of the lamb with crayons. On the back of the lamb have children write, "Jesus is our Passover Lamb."

3rd–5th

Option 1: Passover Lamb

Supply List: cardstock, scissors, cotton balls, glue sticks, crayons

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, make copies of a lamb template. Make a sample craft.

Set copies and remaining supplies on tables. Have children take a lamb paper and cut out the lamb. They then glue cotton balls to the lamb's body, pulling the cotton balls to stretch them out, if desired. Have them color the face of the lamb with crayons. On the back of the lamb have children write, "Jesus is our Passover Lamb."

Option 2: The Last, Best Supper

Supply List: paper, scissors, construction paper, colored pencils, glue sticks, red and brown tissue paper

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make copies of a picture of a glass (goblet style) and a loaf of bread. Make a sample craft.

Place copies and remaining supplies on tables. Have children cut out the glass and bread and then glue them to a piece of construction paper. Have them write the Big Truth underneath the glass and bread. Instruct children to tear the red tissue paper into small pieces and glue them "inside" the glass to make it look like wine. Then they can tear the brown tissue paper into small pieces and glue them to the loaf of bread. Remind children that the Last Supper was a supper to remember forever.



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



STORY 81

Everyone Leaves Jesus

MARK 14

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Mark 14.
- 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}



At least three times Jesus told the twelve that he would be betrayed, be arrested, suffer, and die. They heard him, but they didn't understand him. Even after the Passover meal, where Jesus used the bread and cup to point to his death, the twelve couldn't yet grasp why Jesus's blood would have to be poured out for the forgiveness of sins. They wouldn't really understand who Jesus was and what he was doing that Passover Week until after his resurrection and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The twelve didn't understand Jesus, but one of the twelve did something worse than misunderstand. He betrayed Jesus. Judas! Even though Judas was one of Jesus's closest friends and traveled with him for three years, he loved money more than he loved Jesus. And he was paid thirty pieces of silver from

the Jewish leaders to betray Jesus. How terrible! The Jewish leaders wanted Jesus so they could kill him. How totally terrible! Judas betrayed Jesus because Jesus wasn't the king he was looking for; the Jewish leaders wanted to kill Jesus because he was claiming to be the Son of God. Today's lesson focuses on how Jesus's enemies went after him and how his friends turned against him.

TELL THE STORY

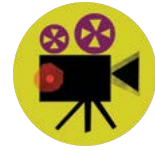
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



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
Jesus was
betrayed and
denied by his
friends and
handed over to
his enemies.

Have you ever had a friend stop wanting to be friends with you? It doesn't feel very good. The last hours of Jesus's life must have felt a bit like that. Actually, he must have felt much worse. Can you imagine a close friend handing you over to be killed? Can you imagine your other closest friends leaving you to die alone? It's hard to imagine, but that's what Jesus experienced.

After the Passover meal, Jesus took Peter, James, and John to the garden of Gethsemane. It was very late—and still dark. Everyone was exhausted. Jesus was super sad because he knew many terrible things were ahead for him. He wanted to be with his closest friends on earth and to spend time praying to his Father in heaven. There, in the garden, Jesus prayed for his sufferings to be taken away: "Abba, Father," he prayed. "Remove this cup of pain and death from me. That is what I want. But I pray for what you want, not what I want" (see Mark 14:36). Jesus prayed that prayer three times, and three times he returned to find his friends asleep. Snore. Snore. Snore. They couldn't even stay awake when Jesus needed them the most. How sad for Jesus. Suddenly, in the distance, they saw torches. It looked like a small army was approaching. It was Judas, leading a



Story

81

Mark

14

mob with swords and clubs. “The hour has come,” said Jesus. “The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners” (14:41).

Judas greeted Jesus with a kiss. That kiss of betrayal was the sign to the mob that this was the man to arrest. At once Jesus was arrested and brought back to Jerusalem for a trial. A bunch of people lied as they testified against Jesus, and the Jewish leaders declared, “Guilty!” The saddest thing, though, was not that his enemies lied, but that his friend Peter lied. Peter, who was standing outside, was asked three times if he knew Jesus. And three times he said, “I do not know the man!” Just then, a rooster crowed. He denied Jesus, just as Jesus said he would. Peter cried and fled. The morning had come. Jesus would have to journey to the cross alone.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

Peter’s last recorded words in the Gospel of Mark are his lies about not knowing Jesus. Imagine saying you didn’t know who Jesus was when he was your closest friend, when he personally called you to follow him, when you heard him teach great truths, and when you witnessed him cast out demons, cleanse a leper, restore sight to the blind, raise the dead, walk on water, and feed thousands of people with a few scraps of food! Peter cried after he denied Jesus. He cried because he was sad and sorry. He let fear get in the way of friendship (and faith!). Peter’s tears that early morning would be wiped away in two days. He would repent of his sin, return to Jesus after the resurrection, and be a great leader in the early church. He would preach the gospel and perform amazing miracles. And he would learn that Jesus came to die for sinners like him. Life has a way of exposing just how sinful we are. Even Peter wasn’t righteous or courageous enough to follow Jesus perfectly. He was a sinner; we are sinners. He needed a Savior; we need a Savior. Jesus was Peter’s Savior, and he is our Savior! Praise God for that good news.

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

- 1. QUESTION:** Why did the Pharisees want to kill Jesus? Why did Judas betray him?

3

Engage

TAKEAWAY: Most people didn't have eyes to see who Jesus really was.

Memory Verse

For our sake he
made him to be
sin who knew no
sin, so that in him
we might become
the righteousness
of God.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:21

2. **QUESTION:** After the Passover meal, where did Jesus go and with who? Why did he want his friends with him? What was he there to do? Was he looking forward to being crucified?

TAKEAWAY: Although Jesus knew he came to die, he needed help to face the suffering and death.

3. **QUESTION:** Did anyone stay with Jesus when he was betrayed by Judas and arrested? What did his closest friends do? How do you think he felt?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus was betrayed and denied by his closest friends.

4. **QUESTION:** How did Peter feel after he denied Jesus? How do you feel when you disobey God? Who did Jesus come to die for? What should we do when we sin?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus died to save sinners like Peter and you and me.

ACTIVITIES

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Hidden Kisses

Supply List: Hershey's Kisses (one per child)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Hide Hershey's Kisses around the room.

Have children search for a Hershey's Kiss (one per child). Remind children that Judas's kiss was not hidden. He betrayed Jesus with a kiss.

Option 2: Rooster Tag

Supply List: blindfold

Before Class: Gather supplies.



Choose one child to be the “Rooster,” and put a blindfold on him or her. Have the remaining children put their thumbs under their arms and strut around the room like a rooster repeatedly saying, “Cock-a-doodle-doo!” Have the Rooster use the children’s voices to find and tag someone. Whoever is tagged becomes the new Rooster. Remind children that Peter denied Jesus three times before the rooster crowed.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Scatterball

Supply List: ball

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Have a leader hold a ball in the middle of the room. Have all children place a hand on the ball. (If the group is large, have another leader hold an additional ball.) When the leader shouts “Scatter,” all children must run away from the ball while the leader tosses the ball straight up in the air. When the ball drops to the floor, any child can grab it and yell “Freeze,” and everyone freezes. She is not allowed to run with the ball, but she can pivot on one foot to throw the ball at someone. If someone is hit by the ball, he is out and must sit where he was hit. Then everyone else repeats these steps with the new leader throwing. If someone catches the ball, the person who threw the ball is out and must sit, and the catcher is the new leader. The last child standing wins. Remind children that Jesus’s disciples scattered when he was arrested.

Option 2: Rooster Tag

Supply List: blindfold

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Choose one child to be the “Rooster” and put a blindfold on him or her. Have the remaining children put their thumbs under their arms and strut around the room like a rooster repeatedly saying, “Cock-a-doodle-doo!” Have the Rooster use the children’s voices to find and tag someone. Whoever is tagged becomes the new Rooster. Remind children that Peter denied Jesus three times before the rooster crowed.

CRAFTS

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Praying at Sunset

Supply List: dark-colored paper, scissors, clothespins, sponges, washable paint in sunset colors, paper plates, white cardstock, white colored pencils, glue

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make copies of praying hands on dark-colored paper and cut out. Make sponge stampers by clipping small pieces of sponge with a clothespin (at least one per child). Place various sunset colors of washable paint on paper plates. Make a sample craft.

Give each child praying hands and a piece of white cardstock. Place remaining supplies on tables. Have children write “Jesus prayed” on the hands with a white colored pencil. Have children paint the bottom 2 inches of the cardstock by dabbing the sponge in paint and pressing it to the paper. Next, have children use a different color to paint another 2-inch section directly above the first, being sure to overlap and blend the two colors. Have children continue painting in this way until the whole paper is painted with various sunset colors. When the paint is dry, children can glue the praying hands to the paper as a reminder that Jesus prayed the night before he was arrested and crucified.

Option 2: Passion of Christ Story Wheel

Supply List: paper plates (two per child), brass fasteners, colored pencils, scissors, glue

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make copies of the following scenes: Jesus praying in the garden of Gethsemane, Judas betraying Jesus with a kiss, Jesus being arrested, and Peter denying Jesus (each picture should be small enough to fit on one-fourth of a paper plate). Cut a one-fourth-sized wedge out of half the paper plates (without cutting to the very center). Make a sample craft.

Place supplies on tables. Have each child take a full-sized paper plate and draw two perpendicular lines through the center to divide it into four equal sections. Have children color and cut out the different scenes, then glue them in sequential order onto the sections of their plate. Finally, assist children in using

a brass fastener to attach a paper plate with the one-fourth section removed to the top of their full-sized plate. Encourage children to retell the story using the story wheel.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Passion of Christ Story Wheel

Supply List: paper plates (two per child), brass fasteners, colored pencils, scissors, glue

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut a one-fourth-sized wedge out of half the paper plates (without cutting to the very center). Make a sample craft.

Place supplies on tables. Have each child take a full-sized paper plate and draw two perpendicular lines through the center to divide it into four equal sections. Have children draw the following scenes in sequential order (one per section): Jesus praying in the garden of Gethsemane, Judas betraying Jesus with a kiss, Jesus being arrested, and Peter denying Jesus. Finally, have children use a brass fastener to attach a paper plate with the one-fourth section removed to the top of their full-sized plate. Encourage children to retell the story using the story wheel.

Option 2: Paper Plate Rooster

Supply List: paper plates, brown watercolor paint, paintbrushes, cups of water, googly eyes, red feathers, scissors, pencils, red and yellow construction paper, glue

Before Class: Gather supplies. Fill small cups with water. Make a sample craft.

Place supplies on tables. Have each child paint a paper plate brown. When it is dry, instruct them to fold it in half. Have children design and cut out red wattles and yellow beaks from the construction paper. Next, children can make rooster faces on one end of the paper plate by gluing on the wattle, beak, and googly eyes. Finally, have them glue a couple red feathers on the opposite end of the plate to form the rooster's "tail." Remind children that Peter denied Jesus three times before the rooster crowed.



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



Story

81

Mark

14



STORY 82

The Snake Crusher Is Crushed for Us

MARK 15

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Mark 15.
- *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}



All four Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—describe how Jesus suffered and died. They don't all record the birth of Jesus (as important as that was!), and they don't all record the same teachings or miracles of Jesus. But all four spend a lot of time talking about the sufferings and death of Jesus. In fact, all four slow down the story once Jesus gets to Jerusalem for the Passover. In Mark's Gospel, for example, he summarizes thirty-three years of Jesus's life (including his three years of ministry) in the first ten chapters. But the last week of Jesus's life gets six whole chapters. Talk about slowing down—six chapters to cover seven days! Why does he do that? Why spend so much time telling us about the

Last Supper, Jesus's betrayal, Jesus's arrest and trial, Jesus's sufferings before the cross, and finally Jesus's terrible death on the cross? The reason is that the cross matters. The cross stands at the center of the Christian story. The cross is where the Snake Crusher was crushed for us.

TELL THE STORY

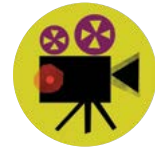
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



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 was
crushed for us.

Good Friday is one of the most important days in the whole of history, a day Christians set aside to remember Jesus's death. But why is it called Good Friday and not Sad Friday? It certainly was a *sad* day. Jesus was sentenced to death, beaten, and nailed to a cross. So sad. But it was so *good* too—extremely, awesomely, amazingly good! It was good because through Jesus's sacrifice we are forgiven. It was good because the Snake Crusher finally crushed Satan by being crushed on the cross for us.

Here's the story of that sad but good day. After the rooster crowed, the wicked Jewish leaders delivered Jesus over to Pilate, the Roman governor in Jerusalem who would decide whether Jesus lived or died. Pilate questioned Jesus, and he was convinced that Jesus was innocent. So he tried to release him. He brought out two prisoners—Jesus and Barabbas. Barabbas was a rebel and murderer. "Since it is your Passover feast celebration, I'll set one prisoner free," Pilate said to the crowd. "Do you want this rebel or this so-called ruler—Jesus, King of the Jews?" Pilate thought that they would free Jesus. But no! They shouted for Barabbas. "What!" Pilate said. "What then shall I do with Jesus? He hasn't done anything wrong." Then, they shouted, "Crucify him" (Mark 15:13). What! Why? Wow! Pilate preferred to please the crowds than release innocent Jesus, and so he "delivered him to be crucified" (15:15).



Story

82

Mark

15

The Roman soldiers took off Jesus's clothes and whipped him. (How painful!) Then they mocked him by placing a purple cloak on his body and a crown of thorns on his head. (How cruel!) Then they pretended to worship Jesus by kneeling before him, spitting on him, and saying, "Hail, King of the Jews" (15:18). (How blasphemous!) After all that, Jesus carried his cross beam to Calvary, the place where they crucified criminals. Along the way, Jesus fell a few times. The cross was heavy, and Jesus's body was weak from the beatings. A man named Simon was asked to help him carry the cross. Then, when he arrived, the soldiers put the cross beams together, nailed Jesus to it, and lifted him up between two thieves. People taunted him ("Save yourself, and come down from the cross," 15:30) and mocked him ("Come down . . . that we may see and believe," 15:32), but Jesus had a different plan. Instead, he "uttered a loud cry and breathed his last" (15:37). Then, the earth shook, the sky turned black, and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. God accepted Jesus's sacrifice! Indeed it was a Good Friday.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

Who is the Snake Crusher? Why is Jesus called that? That name goes back to one of the earliest promises in the Bible, when God said to the serpent who deceived Eve in the garden of Eden, "Because you have done this, there will be a long and great struggle between you and Eve's offspring until the day when a child is born from her family who will crush your head once and for all" (see Gen. 3:14–15). Jesus is that child. Jesus is the Snake Crusher. He's the son of Mary and the Son of God. But what is surprising in our story is that the Snake Crusher is crushed. Although he had never sinned, he was punished by God for all the sins of the world. Why? So we wouldn't have to be punished. Jesus was crushed so we don't have to be crushed. He took the punishment for us. That's why it was a Good Friday.

And the Snake? He will still be crushed just as it was promised. But that's a story for another day.

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

- 1. QUESTION:** What do we call the day Jesus died? Why do we call it good when it's the day he died?

3

Engage

TAKEAWAY: The day Jesus died can be called Good Friday.

2. **QUESTION:** According to the Bible, what is God's punishment for sin? Who has sinned? Jesus never sinned, so why did God punish him on the cross?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus became sin for us and took the punishment we deserved.

Memory Verse

He himself bore
our sins in his
body on the tree,
that we might die
to sin and live to
righteousness. By
his wounds you
have been healed.

1 PETER 2:24

3. **QUESTION:** Who was the Snake Crusher? Why was he crushed for us?

TAKEAWAY: The Snake Crusher was crushed as the punishment for our sin.

4. **QUESTION:** When Jesus died, what happened to the curtain in the temple? If the curtain kept people from the Holy Place where God met with the high priest, what do you think it means that the curtain was torn when Jesus died?

TAKEAWAY: When Jesus died, we were given access to 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: Silent Speed Ball

Supply List: none

Have children stand in a circle. Tell them they must be silent the entire game. Give one child a ball, and have her pass it to someone else in the circle. The child who catches the ball must then quickly pass it to another child in the circle (and so on). If a child makes a sound, fails to catch the ball, drops the ball after catching it, or throws the ball poorly (too short, over the head, etc.), he is out and must sit down. The last child standing wins. Tell children that when Jesus was arrested and put on trial, he was silent and did not defend himself.

Option 2: Sin Relay

Supply List: boxes, heavy books, chairs

Before Class: Fill boxes with books (one per team). Set up chairs on one side of the room (one per team).



Story

82

Mark

15

Divide children into teams, and have them line up across from a chair. Give each team a box of books. On “Go” the first child on each team must push the box across the room, around his team’s chair, and back to his team. The next person repeats the process. The first team to race all its players wins. Remind children that Jesus carried the heavy burden of our sin so that we could be free of it.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Build a Bridge Challenge

Supply List: masking tape, craft sticks (forty per team), paper clips (ten per team), string, pennies

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Divide children into small teams. Give each team 3 feet of masking tape, forty craft sticks, ten paper clips, and 1 foot of string. Have each team use the supplies to build a bridge that can hold weight. After teams have built their bridges, test how much weight each one can hold by adding pennies to the bridge until it collapses. The team whose bridge holds the most pennies wins. Remind children that Jesus’s death on the cross made a way for us to be with God.

Option 2: Sin Relay

Supply List: boxes, heavy books, chairs

Before Class: Fill boxes with books (one per team). Set up chairs on one side of the room (one per team).

Divide children into teams, and have them line up across from a chair. Give each team a box of books. On “Go” the first child on each team must push the box across the room, around his team’s chair, and back to his team. The next person repeats the process. The first team to race all its players wins. Remind children that Jesus carried the heavy burden of our sin so that we could be free of it.

CRAFTS

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Stained Glass Cross

Supply List: clear contact paper, permanent marker, yarn, scissors, masking tape, colored tissue paper, hole punches

Before Class: Gather supplies. With permanent marker, draw a cross onto clear contact paper and cut it out. Cut tissue paper into small pieces for the stained glass. Cut yarn into 6-inch pieces for hanging. Make a sample craft.

Set colored tissue paper, yarn, and hole punches on tables. Use tape to hold the cross in place, so the child can peel off the backing and begin putting tissue paper on it until it is completely covered. Have children untape the cross from the table and punch a hole through the top for hanging in a window. Remind children that Jesus loves them so much that he died on the cross for their sins.

Option 2: Fingerprint Cross

Supply List: washable paint, paper plates, markers, paper, baby wipes

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make copies of a large cross template (one per child). Place a small amount of different colored paints on paper plates (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Set markers on tables. Give each child a cross paper, and instruct children to write “Jesus died for me” above the cross. Give each child a plate with paint. The children should dip one finger in the paint, then make a fingerprint inside the cross. Have them continue to make fingerprints with different colors of paint until the entire cross is filled. Have children clean their fingers with baby wipes as needed. Remind children that Jesus loves them so much that he died on the cross for their sins.



Option 1: Foil Cross Necklace

Supply List: aluminum foil, pipe cleaners, string

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut aluminum foil into random-sized pieces. Cut string into 18-inch pieces. Make a sample craft.

Set supplies on tables. Have children take two pipe cleaners and form them into the shape of a cross with a loop at the top. Next, children should wrap and scrunch foil pieces tightly around both pipe cleaners until everything but the loop is covered. Have children thread a piece of string through the loop and tie the ends together, making a necklace. Encourage children to wear the necklace to remind them that Jesus loves them so much that he died on the cross for their sins.

Option 2: Faux Stained Glass Cross

Supply List: cardstock, black acrylic paint, white liquid glue, watercolor paints, paintbrushes, cups, water, pencil, ruler

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, make copies of a large cross. Mix black acrylic paint with half empty bottles of liquid white glue. Shake vigorously until mixed together (one per table). Fill cups with water. Make a sample craft.

Place copies, “black glue,” cups of water, and remaining supplies on tables. Have children take a cross paper and use a pencil and ruler to divide the cross into random sections. Instruct children to use watercolor paints to paint each section a different color. Children then can use the bottle of black glue to trace around the edges of the cross, as well as over the pencil lines that separate their sections. Remind children that Jesus loves them so much that he died on the cross for their sins.



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



STORY 83

Jesus Lives

LUKE 24

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Luke 24.
- 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

God's ways are not our ways. If we were to write the story of our salvation, would we have the glorious Son of God born of a young teenage girl and laid in a manger? Would we have him grow up in the small town of Nazareth? Would we have him ride into Jerusalem on a humble donkey? Would we have him suffer? Be mocked and mistreated? Carry a cross to Calvary? Be crucified between two criminals? No, we might write something like the Son of God flew down to earth riding in a golden chariot with six white horses pulling him, sixty million angels flying around him, and when everyone on earth saw him, they fell down before him. We might also write that he lived happily ever after with everyone in his holy (and huge!) palace in the holy city on the holy mountain. But God couldn't do that because he is just and must punish our sin. Fallen people aren't

fit to live happily ever after with him. Which is why God's Biggest Story is so different. It is upside down, different than we'd expected. Jesus's death was different than we'd expect—and so was his resurrection! His resurrection was unexpected but super important. So *listen up* as we talk about Jesus *rising 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

Jesus rose from
the dead—just like
the Old Testament
said he would.

Jesus predicted that one of the twelve would betray him. That happened. He predicted that Peter would deny him. That happened. He predicted that twelve out of twelve would forsake him. That happened. He predicted that he would suffer and die. That happened. And he predicted that in three days he would rise from the dead. Did that happen? It sure did!

On Friday Jesus died. So dark and sad. On Saturday his body lay in the tomb. Totally dark, sad, and silent. On Sunday, however, as the sun rose in the sky, the Son of God rose from the grave. The first to witness this miracle of miracles were a few women. They didn't expect Jesus to be alive. We know this because they brought spices to the tomb. Dead bodies don't smell so good, so they wanted to make Jesus's body smell better. But when they arrived at the tomb, they found that the huge stone in front of the tomb was rolled away and Jesus's body was not there. Surprise of all surprises! Just then, another surprise. Two angels stood before them in dazzling white clothes and announced, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you . . . that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise" (Luke 24:5–7). Only then did they remember.



Story

83

Luke

24

After the women spoke with the angels, they ran back to tell the other disciples. The disciples thought they were crazy, but Peter and John ran to the tomb to see for themselves. When they got there, they looked inside and saw Jesus's grave clothes but not his body. Jesus was indeed alive! They ran back and told the others, but at this time "they did not [yet] understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead" (John 20:9). It took a few appearances from Jesus (where they both saw him and touched him!) and his own teaching on the Old Testament for them to understand and believe the amazing news.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

One day after Jesus's death, two of his followers were walking away from Jerusalem when Jesus walked up to them and asked what they were talking about. They didn't recognize him. So they shared how their "chief priests and rulers delivered [Jesus] up ... and crucified him" (Luke 24:20). They said they "had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel" (24:21). They also shared how the women went to the tomb, found it empty, and saw angels "who said that he was alive" (24:23). But they didn't believe all this. That's why they were walking away. Jesus stopped them and said, "Why are you so dumb?" Well, he didn't say it exactly that way. He said it this way, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" (24:25–26). Then, starting with Genesis and ending with Malachi, he taught them from the Old Testament about himself. "It was written," Jesus said "that I should rise from the dead and that the good news that sins are forgiven should be preached to all the nations" (see 24:46–47). Jesus rose from the dead, just like the Old Testament said. Those two followers understood and believed. And that is the good news we should believe too!

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. **QUESTION:** What are some surprising things about how Jesus came to earth to save us? Why do you think God's ways are so different than our ways?

TAKEAWAY: God's ways are not our ways.

3

Engage

Memory Verse
“Death is swallowed
up in victory.”
“O death, where is
your victory?
O death, where is
your sting?”
1 CORINTHIANS 15:54–55

2. **QUESTION:** Did Jesus’s followers expect him to rise from the dead? How do you know they didn’t? Why should they have expected him to rise? How did Jesus explain to the two men why he had to die and rise?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus rose from the dead, just like the Old Testament had said.

3. **QUESTION:** When the women told the disciples that Jesus was alive, did they believe them? What convinced them?

TAKEAWAY: The disciples didn’t believe that Jesus was alive until they saw him with their own eyes.

4. **QUESTION:** Did Jesus only appear to a couple of people? Why did he appear to so many? Why was it important that so many people actually saw Jesus with their own eyes after he rose again?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus appeared to hundreds of disciples after his death so they could be his witnesses to all nations.

ACTIVITIES

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Alive Tag

Supply List: none

Have children line up along one wall. Identify a “safe zone.” Choose one child to be “It” and to stand in the middle of the room. On “Go” have “It” stand completely still (as if dead or asleep) while the other children walk quietly around him, whispering, “Are you alive?” Whenever “It” wants, he can yell out “I’m alive!” and tries to tag as many children as possible before they get to the safe zone. Anyone “It” tags becomes “It” also. Have all children who are “It” spread out in the room. The game continues as before, but now the original “It” yells “We’re alive” when it’s time to run and tag people. Play continues until one child remains. That person becomes “It” for the next round. Remind children that the disciples thought Jesus was still dead even though Jesus had risen from the dead!



Option 2: Empty Tomb Relay

Supply List: paper, plastic eggs, buckets

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut out small squares of paper and draw a cross on each one. Place cross papers inside plastic eggs. Fill buckets with cross-filled eggs and one empty egg (one per team). Place buckets on one side of the room.

Divide children into teams, and have them line up opposite a bucket. The first child on each team must jump down to her team's bucket and open an egg. If the egg has a cross in it, she must close the egg (with cross paper inside), return it to the bucket, and run back to tag the next person, who repeats the process. The first team to find and return the empty egg wins. Remind children that Jesus's tomb was empty because Jesus rose from the dead!

3rd–5th

Option 1: In the Tomb, Out of the Tomb, Bridge

Supply List: masking tape

Before Class: Gather supplies. Use masking tape to make a line down the center of the room.

Have children stand with one leg on each side of the line. Explain that the way they are standing will be called “bridge.” Identify one side of the line as “in the tomb” and the other side as “out of the tomb.” A leader calls out “in the tomb,” “out of the tomb,” or “bridge,” and children jump with two feet to the side or position that is called. If a child jumps to the wrong side or position, he is out and must sit to the side. The leader continues calling out the phrases in random order, calling out more quickly the less people there are in the game. The last child standing wins. Remind children that Jesus's death and resurrection provided a way for us to be with God.

Option 2: Pop! Relay

Supply List: balloons

Before Class: Gather supplies. Inflate balloons (one per child and a few extra).

Divide children into teams, and give each child a balloon. The first person on each team must run with her balloon to the opposite side of the room, pop her balloon by stomping on it or sitting on it, and run back to tag the next person in line, who repeats the process. The first team to have all players complete the

race wins. Remind children that the empty balloons are like the empty tomb the women found when they went to take care of Jesus's body. Jesus is alive!

CRAFTS

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Jesus Wins Trophy

Supply List: paper, tape, glue, scissors, a variety of supplies (toilet paper rolls, cardstock, cardboard, pom-poms, craft sticks, aluminum foil, etc.)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Print papers that say “Jesus won over sin and death!” (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Place copies and remaining supplies on tables. Have children use the provided supplies to design a trophy. After constructing a trophy, the children should cut out “Jesus won over sin and death” and attach it to their trophies. Remind children that Jesus won over sin and death!

Option 2: “He Is Risen” Handprint

Supply List: paper (white, green, brown, yellow), glue, scissors, crayons

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make copies of a semicircle “hill” on green paper and a cross on brown paper (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Place copies and remaining supplies on tables. Instruct children to trace both their hands on yellow construction paper, to cut the tracings out, and to glue them to the top of a piece of white paper (overlapping the palms to form the rays of a sun). Children will then cut out a green semicircle hill and glue it under the handprints. Finally, have them cut out a brown cross and glue it on top of the hill (it will also cover some of the “sun”). Instruct the children to write “He is risen!” on the hill.



Option 1: Jesus Wins Trophy

Supply List: paper, tape, glue, scissors, a variety of supplies (toilet paper rolls, cardstock, cardboard, pom-poms, craft sticks, aluminum foil, etc.)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Print papers that say “Jesus won over sin and death!” (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Place copies and remaining supplies on tables. Have children use the provided supplies to design a trophy. After constructing a trophy, the children should cut out “Jesus won over sin and death” and attach it to their trophies. Remind children that Jesus won over sin and death!

Option 2: “He Is Risen” Banner

Supply List: string, 11" x 17" construction paper, markers, colored pencils, glue sticks, sequins, stickers, tape

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut string into 3-foot pieces (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Place string and remaining supplies on tables. Instruct children to write “He is risen!” in the middle of a large piece of construction paper. Next, they can decorate their banners using the provided supplies, leaving room at the top. When completed, help children fold the top of their banner over a piece of string, using tape to secure it. Have children tie the ends of the string together for hanging. Remind children that Jesus conquered sin and death when he rose from the dead!



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



STORY 84

A Mission for the Ages

MATTHEW 28

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Matthew 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

As we come to the end of the Gospels, let's review what Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John record about Jesus. Jesus was born. He grew in wisdom. He taught and performed miracles. He was betrayed and arrested. He was put on trial and sentenced to be crucified. He suffered and died. But then, three days later, he turned the world upside down (or right-side up): he rose from the dead. He is alive! He appeared to the women at the tomb, the two men on the road outside Jerusalem, and all the apostles. In fact, Paul tells us "he appeared to more than five hundred brothers [Christians] at one time" (1 Cor. 15:6) and then later to Paul himself. Over five hundred people. Wow! That's a lot of eyewitnesses! One of the times Jesus appeared to his disciples, he said something very important

to them. He wanted them to be more than eyewitnesses; he wanted them to tell the world what they had seen and heard. Let's listen!

TELL THE STORY

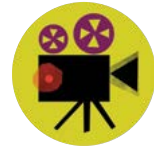
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



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
The King of
heaven and earth
calls his followers
to make disciples
of all nations.

When the angel of the Lord appeared to “Mary Magdalene and the other Mary” (Matt. 28:1) at the tomb, he told them to tell the other disciples some important information: that Jesus had “risen from the dead” (28:7) and that the disciples were to journey to Galilee. That’s the place Jesus first called them, and he wanted to meet there with them again. When the disciples arrived in Galilee, sure enough Jesus showed up. And “when they saw him they worshiped him” (28:17). They worshiped him because he had proved by his resurrection that he was truly God in the flesh. We should worship him too!

At the meeting Jesus gave them what is called the Great Commission, important instructions about their important mission. But before he talked about what they should do, he said something important about himself. He said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (28:18). How much authority? All! Authority over the rising and setting sun? Yes. Authority over the ocean’s big waves and the tornado’s wild winds? Yes. Authority over every earthly king. Yes. “All authority” means authority over everything! We worship a powerful risen King, don’t we?

After our powerful risen King said that about himself, he said this to his disciples: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” (28:19). Just as Jesus made disciples, his disciples are to make disciples. *Of whom?* The nations—that is, people from every country, every group, and every language throughout the



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world! *How are they to make disciples?* By going to them, “teaching them” (28:20) what Jesus taught, and “baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (28:19). That’s a pretty big job! *How are they to accomplish this great task?* Through Jesus’s presence: “And behold,” Jesus concludes his Great Commission, “I am with you always and for all time” (see 28:20). They would soon discover that the Spirit of Jesus would indeed be with them. In fact, God would pour out his Holy Spirit on the disciples. But let’s not get ahead of ourselves.

The mission they were given by Jesus is the same mission that the church has today. To go tell all people the good news that Jesus taught and to baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

Jesus said many things to his disciples after he rose from the dead. But the final thing Jesus told his disciples to do was so important that we call it the Great Commission. The word “commission” just means “command.” And what is the Great Commission? Jesus commanded this: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.” He wanted to make it crystal clear that he didn’t just come to rescue his disciples, or just the Jews. He came to rescue all people—from every country and every language. Every group of people. What a *great* command indeed! And the best part is, if Jesus, who has all authority over everything, tells us to do something, we can be sure he will help us complete that task. In fact, he promises to be with us always! As we tell people about how they can be rescued by Jesus and how he has crushed the snake, we help accomplish his mission to rescue all people. How awesome is that!

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

- 1. QUESTION:** How many gods are there? Is it okay to worship other things than God—like a president, or money, or an amazing singer? How many persons is our God?

TAKEAWAY: We worship only one God in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

3

Engage

Memory Verse
**Go therefore and
make disciples
of all nations.**

MATTHEW 28:19

2. **QUESTION:** After Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to disciples, where did he return? What was the last thing he said to his disciples before he went back to heaven?

TAKEAWAY: Before Jesus returned to his Father, he gave his disciples a final command to go and make disciples of all nations.

3. **QUESTION:** Do you think it's easy to go and make disciples of all nations? To give his disciples confidence as they obey his command, what did Jesus say he had been given? And who did Jesus say would be with them always?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus was given all authority in heaven and on earth, so we know all nations will have disciples.

4. **QUESTION:** Was it just the first disciples that were to go and make disciples of all nations? What is the mission of the church (you and me) today?

TAKEAWAY: The mission Jesus gave his disciples is still the mission of the church today.

ACTIVITIES

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Red Light, Green Light

Supply List: none

Have children line up on one side of the room. Choose someone to be “It” and to stand opposite the class. Have “It” call out “Red Light” or “Green Light.” On “Green Light” players must move forward as quickly as possible. On “Red Light” players must freeze. Any child who moves after “Red Light” is called must return to the starting line. The child who reaches “It” first wins. Remind children that Jesus gave his followers the green light to go and tell others about him.

Option 2: Tell the World Balloon Game

Supply List: balloons, permanent marker



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Before Class: Gather supplies. Blow up seven balloons per team and use a permanent marker to write the names of the seven continents on the balloons (one continent per balloon).

Divide children into two teams, and have each team stand in a circle. Give each team a set of the continent balloons. On “Go” have the children on each team try to keep all seven balloons from falling to the ground by hitting them up in the air. If a balloon touches the ground, it is out of play. At the end of five minutes, the team with the most balloons still in play wins. Remind children that Jesus told his followers to share the good news about him with the whole world.

3rd–5th

Option 1: A Piece of the World Relay

Supply List: simple world map puzzle (one per team)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Scramble the pieces to the puzzle and set the pieces in a pile on the opposite side of the room (one puzzle per team).

Divide children into teams. On “Go” the first person on each team runs to his team’s puzzle pieces, grabs a piece, runs it back to the starting line, and tags the next person in line, who repeats the process. Once the team has gathered all the puzzle pieces in this way, the children must work as a team to put the puzzle together. The first team to finish wins. Remind children that Jesus told his followers to share the good news about him with the whole world.

Option 2: Tell the World Balloon Game

Supply List: balloons, permanent marker

Before Class: Gather supplies. Blow up seven balloons per team and use a permanent marker to write the names of the seven continents on the balloons (one continent per balloon).

Divide children into two teams, and have each team stand in a circle. Give each team a set of the continent balloons. On “Go” have the children on each team try to keep all seven balloons from falling to the ground by hitting them up in the air. If a balloon touches the ground, it is out of play. At the end of five minutes, the team with the most balloons still in play wins. Remind children that Jesus told his followers to share the good news about him with the whole world.

CRAFTS

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

K–2nd

Option 1: “Go and Make Disciples” Craft

Supply List: paper, maps, scissors, glue

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make copies of a paper that has the word GO in large bubble letters, with “therefore and make disciples of all nations” in smaller letters underneath it. Make a sample craft.

Set scissors and maps on tables. Have children cut out pieces of maps and glue the pieces inside the word GO.

Option 2: “I’m Ready to Go!” Suitcase

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

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, print a suitcase template with the Memory Verse written underneath it. Make copies of pictures of the following items: a Bible, a globe, praying hands, and a heart. Make a sample craft.

Place copies and remaining supplies on tables. Have children color and cut out the pictures of the Bible, globe, praying hands, and heart. Have them glue the pictures inside their “suitcase.” Have children decorate the rest of the suitcase with colored pencils. Remind children that no matter where they go, near or far, God wants them to share the good news of Jesus and be a part of the work he is doing in the world.



Option 1: Shoes Are Made for Going

Supply List: cardstock, yarn, colored pencils, scissors, hole punches

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, make copies of a gym shoe pattern. Cut yarn into 8-inch pieces. Make a sample craft.

Set copies, yarn, and remaining supplies on tables. Have children color a gym shoe and cut it out. Instruct children to punch holes where the laces would go and to lace and tie a piece of yarn through the holes, tying the yarn in a bow as if tying a shoe. Have children write the Memory Verse on the shoe.

Option 1: “Go and Make Disciples” Craft

Supply List: paper, maps, scissors, glue

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make copies of a paper that has the word GO in large bubble letters, with “therefore and make disciples of all nations” in smaller letters underneath it. Make a sample craft.

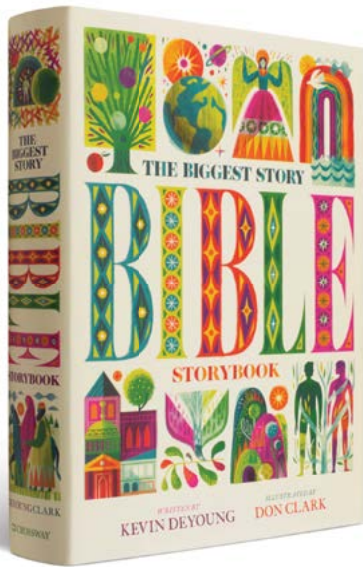
Set scissors and maps on tables. Have children cut out pieces of maps and glue the pieces inside the word go.



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

MORE RESOURCES FOR YOUR CLASSROOM

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.



The Biggest Story Bible Storybook

This beautifully illustrated book by Kevin DeYoung combines 104 easy-to-read stories from Scripture with artwork by Don Clark, helping children ages 6–12 learn the unified story of the Bible.

Purchase one of these for each classroom in your ministry.



The Biggest Story Curriculum Books

Available for individual purchase, these carefully constructed lessons on key biblical stories help children in kindergarten through fifth grade grasp God's plan to redeem the world through his Son, Jesus.

Purchase volumes as needed for each teacher or volunteer so they can study the curriculum at home.



The Biggest Story Posters

This set of 104 sturdy, 11" x 17" posters feature lesson details on one side and corresponding illustrations on the other. Use them to teach and review lessons, and to decorate your children's ministry area.

Purchase one set of these for each classroom in your ministry.



The Biggest Story Verse Cards

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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