

Use Week of: October 1

UNIT 26 - Session 1

Jesus' Crucifixion

BIBLE PASSAGE: Matthew 27:11-66

MAIN POINT: Jesus died on the cross.

KEY PASSAGE: Ephesians 2:8

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why did Jesus die on the cross? Jesus died on the cross to save us from our sins, and He is alive today.

Leader BIBLE STUDY

Jesus' crucifixion, burial, and resurrection are the center of the gospel. Jesus accomplished the plan God had been working out throughout the Old Testament to bring salvation to sinners, and it happened in such an unlikely way.

In the Book of Acts, Peter testified to the Israelites about Jesus' death: "Though He was delivered up according to God's determined plan and foreknowledge, you used lawless people to nail Him to a cross and kill Him" (Acts 2:23).

Crucifixion was a horrific way to die. As you teach preschoolers, rather than focus on the graphic details of how Jesus died, emphasize why He died. Two primary reasons stand out: God is loving, and God is just.

First, God is loving. He sent His Son to be the Savior of the world because He loves us. (See John 3:16; Rom. 5:8; 1 John 4:10.) Jesus submitted to the Father's will; He humbled Himself and came to earth as a man, and He laid down His life because He loves us. (Eph. 5:2) Jesus lived the perfect life we failed to live and died the guilty death we don't want to die. Those who trust in Him receive forgiveness and eternal life.

Second, God is just. God's law for the people was plain. (See Deuteronomy 6:5.) But God's people, and all people, broke the law. We have loved other things more than we love God. That is sin. So why did Jesus have to die? Why couldn't He just say, "You are forgiven"? Because God is just, He requires due payment for sin. To simply forgive sin without requiring a payment would be unjust. Jesus was our substitute, taking our place on the cross and absorbing God's wrath on our behalf so we can be forgiven and declared righteous. (See Rom. 3:25-26; Col. 2:13-15.)

Jesus died to release sinners from slavery to sin, and when we trust in Him, we are free indeed.

Introduce THE STORY

Welcome time

Set out a few favorite theme-related toys, such as puzzles and blocks.

Activity page

SUPPLIES: “Dot-to-Dot” activity page (1 per child), pencils or crayons

Lead preschoolers to connect the dots to form a cross.

SAY • We often see a cross when we talk about Jesus. The cross reminds us of the greatest thing that has ever been done or ever will be done—Jesus’ dying on the cross for sin and coming back to life. That’s what today’s Bible story is about.

Play a quiet game

Guide preschoolers to sit in a circle. Choose a preschooler to start the game. Direct her to tiptoe around the circle and gently tap the quietest child’s shoulder. Then she will take his spot in the circle while he tiptoes around the circle and gently taps the next quietest person’s head. Continue until interest wanes.

SAY • Jesus was arrested and taken to Pilate, the governor. The religious leaders lied and said that Jesus had done wrong things, but Jesus never did anything wrong. Instead of saying the religious leaders were lying, Jesus stayed quiet. He did not say anything.

Listen to today’s Bible story to hear what happened.

Transition to teach the story

Teach THE STORY

Introduce the Bible story

SUPPLIES: Bible, bookmark

Open a Bible to today's Bible passage: Matthew 27:11-66.

SAY • Our Bible story today and next week are the most important stories in all of the Bible. Everything that God said before these stories [holding pages before passage] and everything He said after these stories [holding pages before passage] point us to these stories: [holding open passage] Jesus' death and resurrection.

Tell the Bible story

SUPPLIES: Bible Story Picture Poster, Main Point Poster, Giant Timeline or Big Story Circle

Point to Matthew 27 in your Bible.

SAY • Everything in the Bible is true. God gave us His very own words in the Bible. Today's Bible story is in the first book of the New Testament: Matthew. Tell the Bible story using the provided storytelling tips.

Jesus' Crucifixion - Matthew 27:11-66

Jesus had been arrested and taken to Pilate (PIGH luht), the governor. "Are You the King of the Jews?" Pilate asked.

"Yes," Jesus said. Then the religious leaders lied and said that Jesus had done wrong things, but Jesus never did anything wrong. Pilate thought Jesus would say something about the religious leaders' lies, but Jesus was quiet.

Every year at Passover, Pilate would let the people choose a prisoner to set free. One of the prisoners had done very bad things. His name was Barabbas (buh RAB uhs). So Pilate asked the crowd, "Who do you want me to set free? Barabbas or Jesus?"

The crowd shouted, "Barabbas!"

Pilate asked, "What should I do with Jesus?"

"Kill Him on a cross!" they said. "Crucify Him!"

Pilate's soldiers took Jesus away. They made fun of Him because He said He was a King. The soldiers put a crown of thorns on Jesus' head and a purple robe on His back. They pretended to bow down to Him. Then they led Jesus away. Jesus was nailed to a cross. They put a sign above Jesus' head that said: THIS IS JESUS OF NAZARETH,

THE KING OF THE JEWS. Two criminals were crucified next to Jesus. The day turned dark. In the afternoon, Jesus cried out, "My God, My God, why have You left Me all alone?" Then Jesus shouted and said, "It is finished!"

Jesus died and was buried in a tomb. A large stone was rolled in front of the tomb, and Pilate's soldiers guarded the tomb so that no one could steal Jesus' body.

Christ Connection: We deserve to die because of our sin, but God loves us and kept His promise to send a Rescuer. Jesus never did anything wrong, but He died in our place. On the third day, Jesus rose from the dead. When we trust in Jesus, God forgives our sin and gives us life forever with Him.

Bible Storytelling Tips

- Act it out: Select two volunteers to help you tell the story. Identify one as Barabbas and the other as Jesus. When telling the story stand behind or next to the volunteers, moving between the two and pointing to a child when referring to that volunteer.

Talk about the Bible story

SAY • God loves people, but we are sinners. We love other things more than we love God. Jesus died on the cross to take the punishment we deserve for our sin. When we turn from our sin and trust in Jesus, God forgives us, and we get to live forever with the God who loves us.

Point to the Bible story picture the giant timeline or big story circle as you ask the following review questions:

1. What did Jesus say when Pilate asked if He was King of the Jews? ("Yes.")
2. What did the people say when Pilate asked them what to do with Jesus? ("Crucify Him!")
3. What did Jesus say just before He died? ("It is finished!")
4. Who guarded Jesus' tomb so no one could take His body? (soldiers)

Learn the big picture question

SUPPLIES: Big Picture Question Poster

SAY • Our big picture question asks, Why did Jesus die on the cross? Jesus died on the cross to save us from our sins, and He is alive today. We deserve to die because of our sin, but God kept His promise to send a Rescuer. Jesus never did anything wrong, but He died in our place and then rose from the dead.

Practice the key passage

SUPPLIES: Key Passage Poster

Open your Bible to Ephesians 2:8. Read the key passage aloud several times.

SAY • We can do absolutely nothing to save ourselves, but Jesus did everything needed to save us from sin when He died on the cross and rose again. That is God's grace! Salvation is a gift! We cannot earn it.

Transition to experience the story

Experience THE STORY

Build a castle

SUPPLIES: blocks

Invite preschoolers to build a castle using blocks.

SAY • The sign above Jesus' head that said, THIS IS JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS was correct. Usually a king lives in a castle, but Jesus did not live in a castle. Jesus lived in heaven, but He came to earth so He could die for our sin. Jesus is a King who loves His people. Jesus died on the cross. On the third day, Jesus rose from the dead. When we trust in Jesus, God forgives our sin and gives us life forever with Him.

Sing a song

Sing the lyrics below to the tune of "The Farmer and the Dell."

" Jesus came to save, Jesus came to save!
Jesus died on the cross, oh, Jesus came to save!
Jesus is alive, Jesus is alive!
Jesus died and rose again, oh, Jesus is alive!"

SAY • Jesus died on the cross. We deserve to die because of our sin, but God loves us and kept His promise to send a Rescuer. Jesus never did anything wrong, but He died in our place. On the third day, Jesus rose from the dead. When we trust in Jesus, God forgives our sin and gives us life forever with Him.

Play a cup game

SUPPLIES: plastic cups (3), permanent marker, Jesus figure or image

Set the cups upside-down. Draw a cross on the side of each cup. Place a Jesus figure or image under one of the cups. Invite a preschooler to watch while you shuffle the cups around. Challenge a preschooler to identify which cup hides the figure. Allow preschoolers to take turns guessing. Consider allowing older preschoolers to take turns shuffling the cups.

SAY • When Jesus was killed, there were three crosses because two criminals were crucified next to Jesus. Those two men were punished for wrong things they did. [Hold up the Jesus figure or image.] Jesus never did anything wrong, but He was punished like a criminal. Jesus died on the cross. We deserve to die because of our sin, but Jesus died in our place to rescue us from sin.

Make a “stained glass” cross

SUPPLIES: “Cross Template” printable, heavyweight colored paper, scissors, tissue paper (multiple colors), permanent marker, masking tape, clear contact plastic

Before the session, print a copy of the “Cross Template” on heavyweight colored paper for each preschooler and cut out the cross outline. Set out different colors of tissue paper and invite preschoolers to tear the paper into small pieces. Use the outside edge of the “Cross Template” as a guide to draw a cross on a sheet of clear contact plastic for each preschooler.

Use masking tape to tape each cross sticky-side-up on the table. Invite preschoolers to fill the cross shape with pieces of tissue paper. Encourage preschoolers to lay the tissue paper flat so light will shine through the finished product. When a preschooler finishes his cross, lay the cross outline you cut out earlier on top of the tissue paper and then add another sheet of clear contact plastic. Seal the plastic and trim the excess. Display artwork in a window.

SAY • Jesus died on the cross. We deserve to die because of our sin, but God loves us and kept His promise to send a Rescuer. Jesus never did anything wrong, but He died in our place. On the third day, Jesus rose from the dead. When we trust in Jesus, God forgives our sin and gives us life forever with Him.

Snack

Guide preschoolers to clean their areas. Take a restroom break and wash hands. Gather preschoolers for snack time. Thank God for the snack.

Transition

SUPPLIES: Journal Page printable (1 per child), Bible Story Coloring Page, crayons, Big Picture Cards for Families: Babies, Toddlers, and Preschoolers

When a child finishes his snack, guide him to throw away any trash. He may select a book or puzzle to examine, play quietly with play dough or a favorite toy, or color the Bible story coloring page.

Offer the journal page and invite preschoolers to draw a picture of a cross. Ask, Why did Jesus die on the cross? Jesus died on the cross to save us from our sins, and He is alive today. Pray for the children.

SAY • God, You showed us the greatest love of all when You sent Your Son to die on the cross for our sin. Thank You for making the way to rescue us. Help us to turn from our sin and trust in Jesus. Amen.

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