

WEEK 3 LESSON GUIDE



BIG IDEA

We can choose
Jesus.

BIBLE

Jesus Before Pilate:
Mark 15:1–15; Jeremiah 31:31–34

LARGE GROUP TIME

Welcome to another week where we can see how to *glow in the dark* like Jesus! So far we've talked about shining God's light and how Jesus is that light in the darkness. Today we're talking about how light and darkness are choices we often have to make. Let's see what we can do to make sure we choose what's best!

WHAT? WHAT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT TODAY?

ACTIVITY | Flashlight Scavenger Hunt

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *About an hour before kids arrive, hide a bunch of glow-in-the-dark bugs, stars, and other [trinkets](#). Make sure your environment is very dark for this game. Have kids get into groups of two or three, and give each group a small flashlight. Tell them they must travel together throughout this activity. The group that collects the most items wins. For spaces that won't get dark enough, hide regular items but have kids wear dark sunglasses as an added challenge.*
 - ✂ **ACCESSIBILITY HACK:** *For kids who are uncomfortable in the dark, provide a sensory bin in a lighted space filled with uncooked beans, shredded paper, or other tactile materials where they can dig through and find these items.*
- Working together as a group means you need to listen to each other and follow each other's lead. This is a great strategy and lesson for life . . . if the people you're with are making wise choices.
- Today's Bible story will show us how an entire crowd was persuaded to make a terrible choice.

ACTIVITY | Block Strategy

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Play a lifesize version of the game "[Blokus](#)." Use sheets of four different neon-colored poster paper to create an assortment of Tetris-like [geometric shapes](#). Designate a square playing area using painter's tape. No need to create grid lines inside. Starting at each corner of the square, have members of each team take turns placing one of their pieces inside the board. Each piece must always be in contact with another block of the same color. While it's okay to touch the other team's blocks as long as they are not overlapping, their own team's blocks can only touch at the corners. Keep playing until one or more of the teams run out of moves. For a simpler version, tell teams to keep playing until there's no room to place their pieces without overlapping and remove the other rules.*
 - ✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** *Prepare a few Blokus board games, and have kids face off in a mini-tournament. Set a time limit so it doesn't take up more time than you'd like.*

- This game required making a lot of well-thought-out choices. Each choice could strategically block another team's moves or set your own team up to lose.
- Today, we're going to talk about a choice we can make that is guaranteed to always be the right one.

POLL | Glowing Choices

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Pass out glow bracelets of two different colors for every kid to wear around each wrist. Let them know which color to raise to indicate the answer choices below.
 - ✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** Ask "Would You Rather" type questions to get preteens thinking about making tough choices. You can search for a list (like [this one](#)) to help you get started.
- We make choices every single day! What we're going to wear, what we're going to eat for breakfast, or what to do after school. No matter how old you are, you will always be making decisions. For example . . .
 - **Candy or chocolate?**
 - **Pizza or hamburger?**
 - **Baseball or basketball?**
 - **Carrots or broccoli?**
 - **Yellow or green?**
 - **Math or science?**
 - **Yoda or Darth Vader?**
 - **Art or music?**
 - **Books or movies?**
- It's easy to make choices if you have strong opinions to stand by. I bet if you're not a big carrot person, there's not much anyone can say to convince you to choose carrots.
- It's okay to change your mind about the things you like and don't like, but there might come a time when you're faced with much tougher choices than these. How will we know what to choose? Let's see what our Bible story has to say about that.

SO WHAT? Why does it matter to God and to us?

SCRIPTURE | Mark 15:1–15 (Jesus Before Pilate)

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** This week, prepare a blacklight flashlight, a T-shirt with a heart drawn on it with [neon fabric markers](#), another T-shirt with the letter "B" on it, and a glow necklace for you to wear on your head. You can recruit two leaders to be Jesus and Barabbas to wear the shirts or drape them over chairs. Point to the emblem on each shirt as the names are mentioned throughout the Scripture and storytelling. Turn down the lights before you begin teaching.
 - ✂ **ACCESSIBILITY HACK:** Speaking of making choices this week, try to provide choices for kids with disabilities whenever possible. An easy way to do this is to ask kids in what order they'd like to do a certain activity. (For example: "Would you like to color before we hear the Bible story or afterward?") Some kids may have limited preferences or might ask for something that's not an option at the time, in which case you should communicate when those choices may become available.
- Now it's time to turn the spotlight on the Bible story. Each time I say, "Scripture Spotlight!" pretend to slam a gavel by pounding a fist on one hand and say, "Order! Order!" **Are you ready?** Let's glow!

- **Scripture Spotlight: Mark 15:1.**

- Last time, Jesus was at dinner with his best buds when he said one of them was going to betray him. Well, this came true, and that night he was betrayed and arrested. He was brought to court to determine if he was innocent or guilty. The one who had to make the final decision was someone named Pilate. *(Shine flashlight on your head.)*

- **Scripture Spotlight: Mark 15:2–5.**

- Jesus hadn't broken any laws. He was completely innocent. But the religious leaders really wanted him gone anyway. They were threatened by Jesus' popularity, and his teachings about God felt so contrary to what they thought they knew about God. They also thought he was lying about being God's son. For that, especially, they didn't want Jesus arrested and put in jail. They wanted him to receive the worst punishment . . . they wanted him dead.

- **Scripture Spotlight: Mark 15:6–11.**

- Pilate couldn't find anything to pin on Jesus. So he let the people choose who they wanted to set free. He probably thought they would choose to let Jesus go. But the crowd chose to have Barabbas released instead! Barabbas was someone who was actually guilty of committing crimes. The religious leaders convinced the crowd to believe that Jesus deserved to die. By the end, everyone demanded it.

- **Scripture Spotlight: Mark 15:12–15.**

- The crowd had made a terrible choice. They really thought they were making the right call, though. Before he died, Jesus even prayed for the people who put him on the cross, saying that they didn't know what they were doing.

- Sometimes we don't know what to do, and we choose the wrong thing. But God never gives up on us. God loves us and forgives us. Every day we get the chance to choose light . . . to choose Jesus.

- This is not the end of the story. It's incredibly sad, but even in this dark moment, there were still many people who chose to believe that Jesus truly was the son of God. And we'll find out that something unbelievably amazing happened just a few days later.

BIG IDEA | We can choose Jesus.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Have large poster boards with one word of the Big Idea painted on each using [invisible blacklight paint](#). You will need a [blacklight](#) to reveal the message. Use [neon tape](#) to create a frame around the poster board. Have kids read each word together as you show them one poster at a time.*
- What Big Idea will glow in the dark? **We can choose Jesus.**

ACTIVITY | Pick Up Glow Sticks

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Lay down a pile of at least 40 to 50 [glow sticks](#). Invite kids, one at a time, to pick up a glow stick without disturbing the other sticks. The one they touch first is the stick they have to pick up. If they move another stick in the process, they have to leave their stick and allow the next player to continue. Give each player only ten seconds to make their choice. To make it more challenging, divide kids into teams and tell them they can only pick up the glow sticks that are their team's color.*

✂ **ACCESSIBILITY HACK:** *To prevent frustration and outbursts, eliminate the rule about not being able to move other sticks and allow kids to retrieve whatever color they're supposed to.*

- This was a simple activity, but if you think about it, it required you to think carefully about which stick you would choose to pick up next. When you were running out of time, you might have been forced to make a choice that you didn't get to think through fully.

- The wrong kind of pressure can cause us to make poor choices. Think about the crowd who chose to crucify Jesus. On any other day, they might not have made this choice. Some of them used to follow Jesus around and be amazed at his miracles and teachings. On this day, they were all convinced that the religious leaders were right and that Jesus deserved to die. They chose a known criminal to be set free instead of Jesus.
- It must have been hard for Jesus to hear people yelling for his death. But Jesus came to earth to show us what love looks like in action. He knew that whatever happened, he would show love to all of us until the end. That's why, even when someone might tell us to do otherwise, **we can choose Jesus.**

ACTIVITY | Contagious Light

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Pass out a battery-operated tea light to everyone. Have kids close their eyes. Walk around the room and tap one kid on the shoulder to be it. Everyone opens their eyes and roams around the room. The person who is "it" has to discreetly tap someone on the shoulder without getting noticed. Once tagged, the person has to turn on their light and say nothing for the rest of the round. Keep going until the person that is "it" is discovered or until everyone's lights are on. Play new rounds with a different "it" person. For large groups, start with multiple "it" people.*
- You saw how it took so little to light up the room. It really only takes a few people to say or do something that will start a trend or pattern for people to follow — like doing the wave at a sporting event or singing "Happy Birthday" over cake.
- In today's story, we saw that a small group of people were able to move a crowd to choose wrongly, and this kind of thing still happens today. This can work in the reverse — meaning a few people choosing to spread love and kindness can be contagious. It can move others and change everything.
- We can choose to be that small bit of light that gets spread throughout the darkness. **We can choose Jesus.**

SCRIPTURE | Jeremiah 31:31–34

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read the passage aloud.*
- **Have you ever made a pinky promise with someone?** It's when two friends lock pinkies and make a promise together — like "I promise to play that game with you today" or "I promise to pray for you tonight." God makes promises with humans, too, called covenants.
- Way, way long ago, God made a covenant promise to the people of Israel. God's side of the promise was always kept, but the Israelites had trouble keeping their end. They kept forgetting about God and turning to everything else, but God never forgot them and wanted to renew the covenant with the people. God says they will always be God's people, and God will always forgive them.
- This promise is for us, too. God forgives us each time we mess up and turn away from God. When we choose Jesus, we choose the road that leads to God . . . the God who, like Jeremiah says, forgives and will remember our sins no more.
- **We can choose Jesus.**

VIDEO | Glow in the Dark, Episode 3

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Play this week's episode of [Press Play](#).*

NOW WHAT? *What does God want us to do about it?*

REFLECTION | How Can I Choose Jesus?

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** As kids reflect, you might want to switch off the lights or have them cover their eyes with their hands. Prepare an age-appropriate story about a time when you were presented with a choice between Jesus and something else. What happened? Use this time to talk to kids about how choosing Jesus means accepting his forgiveness and love. If this time lends to kids deciding to follow Jesus, set aside extra time for this conversation.
- Sometimes it can be challenging to choose Jesus because choosing Jesus could mean you have to let go or put off something else that you really want to do.
- **Let me share an example from my life.** (Share a short story from your life that kids will understand.)
- Jesus had some hard choices to make while he was on this earth, but he always chose what was best, even though it wasn't always the easiest. He chose God's plans over doing life the easy way. He chose the path of forgiveness even when he had the power to squash the people who hurt him. He chose to die so that we may live.
- That's how we know that Jesus is the best choice . . . he knew the right thing to do all the time. Choosing Jesus means first and foremost realizing that Jesus chooses you. It means recognizing that everything Jesus went through — dying and coming back to life — he did that for you so that you can be connected to God.
- **So do you choose Jesus?**
- **Do you accept the forgiveness and love he gives to you for free?**
- **What are some changes you might want to make in your life because you are choosing Jesus?**
- When we believe in Jesus, his love shines in us and through our actions. We can show the love of Jesus in our actions toward ourselves and others. There are so many ways we can use this light inside of us. It can help us see the best parts of ourselves, and we can shine it on other people when they're in need. This light always reminds us that we are forgiven and we are loved.
- **We can choose Jesus, and I'm glad you did!**

RESPONSE | I Choose Jesus

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Show "[Ultraluminary](#)" from "Over the Moon." Then on a piece of neon-colored paper, have kids write or draw images that represent what it looks like when they choose Jesus. They can write about a spending time with God habit they want to start (like reading the Bible, praying, singing songs to God) or ways they can show kindness and love to others (like smiles, sharing, helping, forgiving). For younger kids, have them write the Big Idea. Afterward, have them fold the paper into a fan like [this](#).
- ✳ **PRETEEN HACK:** Preteens face tougher choices every day, especially as they are constantly trying to fit in with their peers rather than stand out in any way. Talk to kids about how choosing Jesus requires courage, but it doesn't necessarily have to be an isolating experience away from their friends. What can they do to share the light of Jesus in their social circles?
- Chang'e, as the queen of Lunaria, has a world of adoring fans. You can see how much Fei Fei is mesmerized by Chang'e throughout this song. And it's not hard to see why . . . Chang'e is literally glowing!
- It's hard to imagine, but the people in the crowds who chanted for Jesus to be killed all used to have that same amount of admiration for Jesus. Less than a week before the events of today's Bible story, the people were welcoming him into the city as they would a king.
- Choosing Jesus means we can't be "fair weather fans" — which means we follow Jesus only when it's easy to do so. We are faced with choices between Jesus and well, not Jesus, in everyday situations. You may have to choose between coming to church or hanging out with friends. You might have to choose between saying nothing or standing up for someone. You may have to choose between being truthful and facing

consequences or hiding something wrong you did.

- **Can you think of a time when you were faced with a similar choice?**
- **Let's think of some ways we can practice choosing Jesus.** When we keep up this habit, one day, it won't even feel like a difficult choice because we will choose Jesus automatically.
- Jesus shined the light of God's love so that the world would see that he is the most "ultraluminary" of them all . . . I don't know about you, but I choose to be a forever fan and follower of Jesus! **We can choose Jesus.**

MEMORY VERSE | Psalm 27:1a (NIV)

- **"The Lord is my light and my salvation — whom shall I fear?"**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Use either a glow cup or glow stick for this game. Split the kids into two groups. Have the groups choose who will be first from their team to play. Place the glowing object between them. You will begin to read the verse and pause at a word. Whoever knows what word comes next and grabs the glowing object gets to give their answer. If they're right, their team gets a point. If they are wrong the other team gets to try and steal the point. Play several rounds and give everyone who wants to a chance to participate.

PRAYER

- God, we know that sometimes it can be hard to choose Jesus. Instead of listening to what the crowds of life are saying, help us to follow you and choose you first. Thank you for choosing to show your love and forgiveness to us every day. Amen.

SMALL GROUP TIME

DISCUSSION

- **SCRIPTURE QUESTIONS**
 - **Who did the religious leaders hand Jesus over to so that he could be put on trial?** *Pilate*
 - **What choice did Pilate give to the crowd?** *The choice was to have Jesus or Barabbas released.*
 - **Why do you think they made that choice?** *Possible answers: They went along with what everyone else was saying, they were confused, they didn't really know Jesus, or they were disappointed Jesus was not the king they thought he was.*
 - **Read Jeremiah 31:33–34. What is the covenant, or promise, God is making with the people (and with us)?** *They will always be God's people, and God will forgive their sins.*
- **APPLICATION QUESTIONS**
 - **Have you ever made a choice that you knew wasn't Jesus' way? What happened?**
 - **What can you do to remind yourself to choose Jesus the next time you are faced with a similar choice?**
 - **How can we help each other to choose Jesus?**

ACTIVITY | Choosing the Light

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give everyone a piece of transparency film or another type of sturdy plastic cut into a circle, slightly larger than the opening of a cardboard tube. Have kids write "Jesus" on the paper and attach it to the end of a cardboard tube using plastic wrap and rubber bands. Shine a flashlight or phone light through the tube and [project the word](#) onto a flat surface. Provide markers and stickers for them to decorate the cardboard tube.
- We might not always notice it, but there are a lot of times when we have to make a choice between what pleases God and what doesn't. Whenever that happens, we can shine Jesus bright and remember that in any situation, **we can choose Jesus!**