

## WEEK 4 LESSON GUIDE



### BIG IDEA

God hears  
our cries.

### BIBLE

**Jesus Dies on the Cross:**  
Luke 23:32–49; Psalm 31:9–16

## LARGE GROUP TIME

Easter is almost here! I can almost see that early morning Easter sunrise sending sunlight rays of hope into the darkness. Before we head off into that *glow*-rious celebration, we must remember the deepest darkness that Jesus had to go through for you and me and how the light of his love never flickered out.

*WHAT? What are we talking about today?*

### ACTIVITY | Blacklight Pictionary

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Prepare a bunch of [Easter-related words](#) on individual slips of paper to put into a basket. Make two copies. Have kids split into two teams and select one person to start as the artist. Using a [colorful liquid timer](#), the artists have to draw an image and get their respective teams to correctly guess the word before time runs out. Kids can guess while the artists are drawing with an [invisible ink pen](#), but at any point they want to reveal the image using a blacklight, they can't add to their drawings. The team with the most number of correct guesses wins.
  - ✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** Preteens will love bringing this game into an augmented reality dimension using [Pictionary Air](#), where they can draw in the air and have their glow drawings appear on a screen.
  - ✂ **ACCESSIBILITY HACK:** You might want to project an image of some kind of busy scene where you can play "I Spy" and have kids locate the item you are describing. It might even be fun to project a group picture of your kids and have kids locate their friends through descriptions of what they're wearing or holding.
- You could only see the full picture once the blacklight was turned on, but sometimes it was too late for you to make the correct call, right?
- In today's Bible story, we'll see that some people only recognized Jesus for who he really was when it was already too late.

### ACTIVITY | Tic Tac Glow

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Create [tic-tac-toe](#) grids using neon tape or glow sticks. Tape together five "O"s and five "X"s using glow sticks for game play. Split kids up into as many even-numbered teams as grids you made. Have members of teams take turns placing their markers on the grid, but the trick is they have to toss it onto the grid from a designated distance.
  - ✂ **ACCESSIBILITY HACK:** Create the grid on a table and allow kids to freely move their pieces without having to toss it.

- The goal of this game was to get three in a row. That reminds me of today's Bible story, where we see not one but three crosses in a row on the day Jesus died. We'll find out what happened in just a minute.

### POLL | Things That Make Us Cry

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Poll your kids' responses to the following questions by having them show you their best crying faces whenever they hear a statement that might make them sad.
  - ✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** Some preteens might be reluctant to share that they get emotional in certain scenarios. You can have preteens reflect on times they may have cried when they were younger or have them make observations about what makes people cry in general.
- I know a lot of us might not want to admit this, but we all cry sometimes. Sometimes it's because we're sad or frustrated, and other times it's because we were laughing so hard that it made us cry. Sometimes we even try not to cry, even though we really want to.
- **Which of these things might make you want to cry?**
  - You watch a sad scene in a movie.
  - You have to move away to a new town.
  - You walked into the kitchen while someone was chopping onions.
  - Your best friend won't talk to you anymore.
  - You have to get a shot at the doctor's office.
  - You lost a pet.
  - Your friend lost a pet.
  - You got in trouble because you made a big mistake.
  - You got in trouble for no reason.
- Today's Bible story is about a time when Jesus got in trouble for no reason . . . well, there was a very good reason he had to suffer, but it wasn't because he did anything wrong. It was so awful that even Jesus cried out.

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

### SCRIPTURE | Luke 23:32–49 (Jesus Dies on the Cross)

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Stand under a single spotlight (or have it pointed at you) as you read from the passage and tell the Bible story. Create three crosses with glow-in-the-dark [tape](#) on a wall near where you are teaching, and illuminate it with a blacklight. Give each kid a battery-operated tea candle. Turn down the lights before you begin teaching.
- Now it's time to turn the spotlight on the Bible story. Each time I say, "Scripture Spotlight!" hold your candle up in the air. **Are you ready?** Let's glow!
- The time had come for Jesus, God's son, to die on the cross. Up until now, he had shown that he hadn't done anything wrong, but the religious leaders, Pilate, and the crowd chose to have Jesus sentenced to death. As if that wasn't enough, Jesus was humiliated and beaten severely before his execution.
- **Scripture Spotlight: Luke 23:32–38.**
  - Jesus was nailed to the cross like a criminal. Even as he was dying, people were gathering to watch. They divided up his clothes. They mocked him for not rescuing himself.
  - **Can you imagine how much sadness Jesus was experiencing?** He was in excruciating pain, and he was betrayed and despised by the people he came to love and save. He was hurting so much that in a different account of this story, Jesus cried out to God because he felt like God had left him.

- **Scripture Spotlight: Luke 23:39–43.**

- That second criminal, regardless of what he had done in the past, understood who Jesus was. When he cried out to Jesus, Jesus answered back. He listened to the criminal and showed him love and forgiveness. Even in his darkest moment, Jesus offered hope and light.

- **Scripture Spotlight: Luke 23:44–49.**

- Jesus cried out to God one last time before he died. We know God heard Jesus' cry! Why? Because this is not the end of the story. Nope! This is just the beginning. Even though Jesus had died and was placed in a tomb, God does something amazing just three days later. More on that next time!
- The way we experience pain and sadness is nothing like what Jesus went through, but that doesn't mean we can't cry out to God, too. God did not leave or forget Jesus when he was on that cross, even though it might have felt like it. Just like how God doesn't leave or forget us.

## BIG IDEA | God hears our cries.

- **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? God hears our cries.

## ACTIVITY | For Crying Out Loud!

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Dim or turn off the lights for this game. Designate one kid to be "it" and hand them a flashlight. Encourage kids to move about and make noise freely in the room, but once the person who's "it" shines the flashlight on someone's shoes, that person needs to stop moving and be completely silent. If they're caught moving or if they make a noise, they are now "it."
- It was a bit of a challenge to suddenly be super quiet and still, right? When it comes to God, though, we don't have to keep it all in. When we are upset or hurting, it's perfectly okay to cry out loud. Even if it's not with physical tears. We can call out to God with our questions and troubles because God hears them all.
- God's people had been crying out for a savior for hundreds of years. When Jesus entered the world, everyone was convinced — and rightly — that Jesus was the savior they had been waiting for. Then, Jesus didn't turn out to be the kind of savior they expected. Instead of being a mighty ruler or warrior, he was a humble carpenter's son who had fishers and tax collectors as friends. So they probably thought God didn't hear their cries and gave up on following Jesus.
- God did hear their cries. God sent Jesus to be the savior that would save them in a bigger way than they could imagine. That same savior saves us, too. Because **God hears our cries.**

## ACTIVITY | God Hears My Emojis

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give each team a set of emoji [printables](#). Call out a statement below and see how quickly each team could locate a corresponding emoji and bring it to the front. If the emojis brought up are different from each other, ask them to explain why they made their choices. Afterward, have them discuss in their circles a time when they might feel each of the emotions portrayed by the emoji expressions.
- **What face would you make when you are feeling . . .**
  - **Angry?**
  - **Happy?**
  - **Scared?**
  - **Tired?**
  - **Excited?**
  - **Sad?**

- **Doubt?**
- **Pain?**

- God doesn't mind it when we show our emotions, every single one of them. God is always listening to us and wants us to share how we are feeling.
- **When are some times when you might feel these types of emotions?**
- We were created to have all kinds of emotions. God is with us all the time, when we are happy and when we're sad. And we can go to God with everything. God hears our laughter. God hears our screams. God hears our questions. God hears our yawns. And **God hears our cries.**

### SCRIPTURE | Psalm 31:9–16

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read the passage aloud.*
- The first half of this scripture talks about being sad, feeling alone, and being in physical pain. We all have felt these emotions before. Even Jesus felt these emotions. In fact, they are so common there's a word for it: lament.
- It's a kind of prayer or truth-telling that admits we are sad and we need God. Jesus lamented, old prophets wrote laments, and even today we can lament when we wish a situation is better than it actually is.
- **But let's read verse 14 again.** The writer of this psalm is crying out to God. Why? Because **God is listening. God hears our cries.**

### VIDEO | Glow in the Dark, Episode 4

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

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

### REFLECTION | How Can I Cry Out to God?

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *As kids reflect, you might want to switch off the lights or have them cover their eyes with their hands.*
  - ✂ **ACCESSIBILITY HACK:** *Some kids with disabilities may not have the language to describe what they are feeling. Understand that sometimes the behaviors you see might not be the emotion they are experiencing. Reflect back the behavior you observe ("I hear that you are frustrated") and allow them to correct you if that's not what's happening.*
- God created us with feelings. You may be incredibly sad, upset about something that has happened to you, or frustrated with a situation that you have no control over. There are so many things that happen to us and around us that we simply can't control.
- **Do you share these feelings with God?**
- Crying out to God doesn't mean you have to literally cry. But it does mean you should talk to God about it. And we know that God hears us when we do.
- **What are some ways you could cry out to God?**

### RESPONSE | Glowing Teardrops

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Give kids a piece of glow-in-the-dark play dough and have them form teardrops. Leave the lights on as they do this so the dough could get exposed to light to activate the glowing part. Afterward, have them form a cross.*

✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** *Many preteens cry or cry out as a response to frustration and anger more than sadness. They're also undergoing physiological changes and may be unable to explain exactly why they react in certain ways. In addition to reminding them that it's okay to have these feelings, remind them of coping skills they can employ to regulate their emotions, such as deep breathing, self-affirmations, grounding exercises, and talking to someone.*

- **If you need to cry out to God, where would you go?**
- Wherever you take your worries, fears, and sadness to God, you can be sure God is there. Not only will you feel better by talking to God about it, you might even gain some hope about what you can do about your situation.
- Jesus dying on the cross felt like the end for his followers, but in their sadness and disappointment, they forgot that Jesus told them he would come back to life!
- **Let's turn our teardrops into a cross** to remember what Jesus has done for us and the unchanging truth that **God hears our cries.**

### MEMORY VERSE | Psalm 27:1a (NIV)

- **"The Lord is my light and my salvation – whom shall I fear?"**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Get [glow-in-the-dark flying discs](#) or [light-up frisbees](#) to pass around in the dark. Each time the disc changes hands, everyone has to recite the next word of the memory verse. See if they can get through the whole verse without dropping the disc.

### PRAYER

- God, thank you for sending us Jesus, even though that meant letting your own son go through incomparable pain, suffering, and sadness. Because of this, we know you understand the tough things we experience, too. Thank you for hearing us when we cry out to you. Amen.

## SMALL GROUP TIME

### DISCUSSION

- **SCRIPTURE QUESTIONS**
  - **Who cried out to Jesus things like, "Save yourself if you're really the king?"** *Soldiers, rulers, people watching.*
  - **Who cried out to Jesus, "Remember me when you come into your kingdom?"** *One of the criminals beside Jesus*
  - **Who cried out to God, "Into your hands I commit my spirit?"** *Jesus*
  - **Psalm 31:14–16. How can you tell the writer of this psalm knew God hears our cries?** *The verse says things like "I trust in you," "my times are in your hands," and "save me in your unfailing love."*
- **APPLICATION QUESTIONS**
  - **When are times that you feel sad, worried, or any other big emotion?**
  - **What are some words you can use to cry out to God when you are feeling these things?**
  - **How do you think crying out to God can help when things are tough?**

### ACTIVITY | Crying Rocks

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Hand out stones made for painting, and have tables set up so kids can paint the stones with glow-in-the-dark paint or markers. Have kids paint the Big Idea on the rocks and any pictures or words that remind them of Jesus and his love for us.*

- Did you know before Jesus was captured, he entered the city of Jerusalem on a donkey and the crowd greeted him happily? Some of the religious leaders did not like this and told Jesus to tell his disciples to be quiet. But Jesus said that if they were quiet, then the rocks would cry out instead! The rocks – like the ones you are holding – would cry out!
- So we never need to be quiet when it comes to talking to God . . . we can cry out at any time. Our Big Idea today reminds us to never stop crying out to God because **God hears our cries!**