

Today's Suggested Schedule—April 2026, Week 1

Bible Story: Easter (Crucified and Risen) • *John 18–20:23*

Bottom Line: You can have joy because Jesus is alive.

Conversation Starter: How do you celebrate Easter?

Monthly Memory Verse: *Always be joyful because you belong to the Lord. I will say it again. Be joyful!* • Philippians 4:4 NIV

Supplies NOT Included in the Activity Bags

Application Activity: Take a Snapshot

- Water
- markers

Bible Story Review: Bible Story Extension and Discussion Questions

- Painter's tape

Memory Verse Activity: Verses to Take with You

- Write parts of the Memory Verse on strips of masking tape and stick them to the beanbags. (e.g., "Always," "be joyful," "because," "you belong," "to the Lord." "I will," "say it again." "Be joyful!" "Philippians 4:4")*
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Prayer Activity: Make It Personal with Prayer

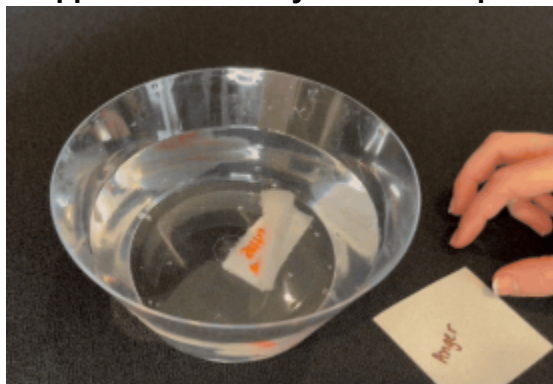
- Sticky notes, one for every kid
- Writing supplies, one for every kid
- Tape, one roll for each Small Group
- Butch Paper- Make a large cross

Bible Story Summary

Easter (Crucified and Risen)

In Week 1, we explore the events leading up to Easter Sunday. A story that began with betrayal, arrest, and the desertion of Jesus' closest friends set the stage for Jesus to lay aside every right and give up His life for all of us. But even though the sun went dark and all hope seemed lost, God was still at work. And when Mary Magdalene came to the tomb at dawn on the third day, she found it empty! [BOTTOM LINE] You can have joy because Jesus is alive.

1. Application Activity- Take a Snapshot



What You Need:

- Dissolving paper
- Washable markers
- Clear, plastic bowl
- Water

What You Do:

- Give each kid a piece of dissolving paper and a washable marker.
- Instruct them to write a word or draw a picture that represents a sin that separates us from God. (Sin is anytime we choose to go our own way instead of God's.) (e.g., "Lying," "Selfishness," "Envy.")
- Direct them to fold the paper.
- Explain that Jesus' death on the cross paid the price for all of these things.
- One by one, encourage the kids to drop their paper into the water in the bowl. (*Stir gently with your finger if needed.*)
- Watch as the paper dissolves and disappears completely.

What You Say:

"Look at that. Your papers are gone! Not just what you wrote but the paper too—it's ALL gone! Completely gone. That's what Jesus did for us on the cross. He took all our sin—all our bad choices, all of the times we chose to go our way instead of God's way—and He washed them away. He broke the curse of sin so we could be close to God again. Because He's alive, we're forgiven and free! That's the biggest reason for joy. **[Bottom Line] You can have joy because Jesus is alive.**"

[Make It Personal] (Share an age-appropriate way you trust Jesus with your sins.) You can say something like: "I know I make bad choices. But I don't have to carry that weight around anymore because I know Jesus has already paid for my sins. And that gives me so much peace and joy.")

2. Bible Story Extension



What You Need:

- “Chalk Cross” Activity Page cutouts
- Black construction paper
- Painter’s tape
- Chalk pastels
- Heart sticker
- Hand wipes

What You Do:

- Give each kid a piece of black construction paper and a cutout from the “Chalk Cross” Activity Page.
- Help them use a small piece of painter’s tape to stick the cross to the center of the black construction paper.
- Instruct them to use the chalk pastels to color heavily around the edges of the cross, drawing outward from the cross onto the black paper. Encourage them to use bright colors!
- Encourage them to smudge the chalk outward with their fingers to create a glowing effect.
- Once they’re done coloring, carefully peel off the cross cutout. This will reveal a stark black cross surrounded by a burst of color.
- Give each kid a heart sticker to place in the center of the black cross.
- Give each kid a hand wipe.

What You Say:

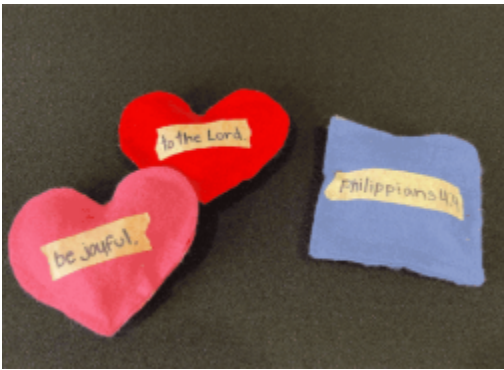
“This beautiful art reminds us of today’s true story from the Bible: the story of Easter and what Jesus did for every one of us. When Jesus died on the cross, it was a dark, sad moment. Jesus’ friends didn’t know it, but Jesus was paying for sins and making a way for us to be God’s friends. And then Jesus didn’t stay dead—He rose again on the third day! Jesus is alive, and that means that anyone who believes in Him can have a friendship with God that lasts forever!

“The heart reminds us that He did all of this because He loves us. At any moment, Jesus could have called down powerful angels to save Him from the agony of the cross. He could have walked away. But He didn’t. Jesus chose to endure the pain so He could rescue us. Now, even in our darkest times, we have the light and joy of Jesus. **[Bottom Line] You can have joy because Jesus is alive.**”

3. Discussion Questions

- Ask these questions:
 - Why do you think Jesus allowed Himself to be arrested even though the soldiers fell down when He said, "I am he"? (John 18:6 NIV)
 - What moment in today's Bible story amazes you the most?
 - What does the resurrection prove about who Jesus really is?
 - Peter messed up, but Jesus still forgave him and used him. What does that tell you about how Jesus sees YOU when you mess up?
 - How does knowing Jesus is alive change the way you face: Fear? Confusing moments? Mess-ups?

4. Verses to Take with You



What You Need:

- Bibles
- Laundry basket
- Prepared beanbags
 - Write parts of the Memory Verse on strips of masking tape and stick them to the beanbags. (e.g., "Always," "be joyful," "because," "you belong," "to the Lord." "I will," "say it again." "Be joyful!" "Philippians 4:4")

What You Do:

- Give every kid a Bible.
- Invite them to look up Philippians 4:4 using the Bible Navigation Tips below:

Finding verses with 4th-5th graders: Ask kids to tell you if the book of the Bible they're looking for is in the Old Testament or New Testament. If it's in the Old, instruct kids to flip slowly, starting at the front of the Bible and heading toward the back, until they find the book they're looking for. If it's in the New, instruct kids to start flipping from the back, going forward to find the book they're looking for. Once they find the book, explain that the big numbers on the page are the chapter numbers. First, have them find the chapter they're looking for. Then explain that the small numbers are verse numbers. Tell kids to find the verse within the chapter they've already found.

- Read the Memory Verse together out loud several times.
- Review any words that might be unfamiliar to the kids.
- Invite the kids to set their Bibles aside.
- Create a line with floor tape on one side of your activity area.
- Place the prepared beanbags in a pile on the tape line.
- Place the laundry basket about five feet from the tape line.

- Instruct the kids to line up behind the tape line and take turns trying to toss one beanbag at a time into the laundry basket.
- Once all the beanbags are in the basket, dump them out.
- Challenge the group to race to put the beanbags in the correct order to form the verse.
- Read the verse together out loud. If needed, help the kids put the beanbags in the correct order.

What You Say:

“Nice work, everyone! And great teamwork getting all the beanbags into the basket and then putting the verse together. Philippians 4:4 tells us to *‘Always be joyful.’* That isn’t always easy, especially when times are tough, or hard things happen in our lives. But when we remember that we *‘belong to the Lord’*—and that Jesus is alive with us—it makes joy possible. No matter what happens, Jesus made a way for you to be friends with God forever, and that friendship can start right now. Life with God is far better than you can ever imagine, and **[Bottom Line] you can have joy because Jesus is alive!**”

5. Make It Personal with Prayer

What You Need:

- Prepared posterboard cross that’s taped to the wall at a kid’s height
- Sticky notes
- Writing supplies

What You Do:

- Point out the large cross taped to the wall.
- Give each kid a sticky note and ask them to write a short “Thank You” note to Jesus on it. They can thank Him for dying for them, for being alive, for being their friend, or for something specific He has done in their lives.
- Invite them to go to the wall and stick their note on the cross.
- Gather around the cross and pray.

What You Say:

“Jesus came to Earth, lived a perfect life, and then He gave that perfect life to pay the price for our sin. Because He never did anything wrong, Jesus was able to take on our sin. With His own life, He paid for all the wrong things anyone has ever done or ever will do. He broke the curse of sin we were under. He set us free. Because the curse is broken and our sin is paid for, now we can be close to God forever! Jesus chose to endure the cross because God wants to be close to YOU. Seeing all these thank-you notes reminds us of how much we have to be grateful for. Let’s pray together.

“Jesus, thank You. Thank You for the cross. Thank You for the empty tomb. Thank You that You’re alive right now! We are so grateful that we can know You and be Your friends. Please fill us with Your joy this week. We love You, and we pray these things in Jesus’ name. Amen.”