

EASTER | BONUS SESSION 2

JESUS SAVES US TO FOLLOW HIM

MATTHEW 27-28; MARK 15-16; LUKE 23-24; JOHN 19-20



KEY PASSAGE: John 3:16

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Who is Jesus? Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, who came to earth to save us.

CHRIST CONNECTION: While the people were crucifying Jesus, He asked His Father to forgive them. Even though Jesus never sinned, He went to the cross for our sin. Jesus forgives everyone who repents and believes He died and rose again.

STORY POINT: Jesus died on the cross and rose again to defeat sin and death.



PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

LEADER Bible Study

The resurrection reveals the astounding nature of God’s mercy and grace: that sinners like us can receive forgiveness through faith in His Son— forgiveness that leads to new life. The torment Jesus endured on the cross was not the end of the story. On the third day after His crucifixion, Jesus rose to make the way for fallen people to be reunited to God by faith.

In Luke 23:34, Jesus prays some of His last words before His death: “Father, forgive them, because they do not know what they are doing.” Though the scoffers and mockers were in control of their hateful words and actions, they did not know the one and only Son of God was hanging on the cross on their behalf.

Jesus, who is fully God and fully man, knew the depths of the people’s sins and the lengths He needed to endure to satisfy the wrath of God their sin deserved. Only Jesus has the power to forgive His transgressors, and only Jesus would take to the cross on our behalf for the joy set before Him (Hebrews 12:2). The evil that the people planned against Jesus would be used by God to bring about our eternal good: the salvation of all who would believe in Him by faith.

This gift of salvation is for anyone who repents of their sin and turns toward Christ in faith. Lead boys and girls to see that there is not a single person in this story, or in all the Scriptures, or anywhere in the world who is too far lost to receive God’s grace. Lead them to understand the lengths Christ was willing to endure so that they might be saved. May we continually find ourselves in awe of the gracious forgiveness God extends to His followers through faith in His Son.



PREPARE

THE WEEK PRIOR

Prepare your heart to teach; plan the session



WELCOME

10-15 MINUTES

Greet kids and open the session



LEARN

25-30 MINUTES

Teach kids the story of the gospel



LOVE

15-20 MINUTES

Lead kids to love the God of the gospel



LIVE

15-20 MINUTES

Lead kids to live out the mission of the gospel



Scan the QR code to listen to The Gospel Project for Kids Weekly Leader Training Podcast.



PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

GATHER Supplies

Keep a regular supply of the following items available at all times: Bibles, pens or pencils, markers, crayons, colored pencils, scissors, glue or tape, paper.



WELCOME

Activity Page

- "Rockin' Reveal" activity page

Session Starter (Option 1)

- several small items (pencils, yo-yos, toys, books, etc.)



LOVE

Review & Bible Skills

- Small Group Timeline and Map Set (optional)



LIVE

Activity Choice (Option 1)

- backpacks, 2
- heavy objects (bricks, rocks, etc.)

Activity Choice (Option 2)

- mini chocolate donuts
- miniature chocolate sandwich cookie
- green icing
- paper plate
- plastic knife
- Allergy Alert

Reflection and Prayer

- Bible story coloring page



LEARN

Introduce the Session

- countdown video
- Story Point Poster

Big Picture Question

- Big Picture Question Poster

Review the Timeline

- Giant Timeline

Tell the Bible Story

- "Jesus Saves Us to Follow Him" video
- Bible Story Picture Poster

Key Passage Activity

- Key Passage Poster
- "Eternal Life (John 3:16)" song
- dry erase board
- dry erase marker and eraser
- worship song of your choice (optional)



WELCOME Kids

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, build relationships, and help new kids connect to your group.

SAY “Can you think of someone who has given up something for you? Who was it, and what did they sacrifice for you?”

1 ACTIVITY PAGE (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete “Rockin’ Reveal” on the activity page.

SAY “Great work using the pictures to decipher today’s story point! Together, we are going to learn that through His death and resurrection, Jesus has defeated sin and death once and for all.”

2 SESSION STARTER (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: MEMORIZATION MADNESS

Before the session, gather several small items the kids can easily recognize. Lay the items out on a table, keeping them relatively close together. Gather the kids around the table and allow them to carefully note all the items they see. After about 10 seconds, instruct the kids to close their eyes while you remove one of the items from the table. Once an item has been removed, invite the kids to open their eyes and attempt to discover which item is missing. Repeat this several times, removing a different item each time.

SAY “One moment the items were there, then some were gone! Jesus died and was buried in a tomb, but He didn’t stay there. Today, we will learn that **JESUS DIED ON THE CROSS AND ROSE AGAIN TO DEFEAT SIN AND DEATH.**”

OPTION 2: THREE DAYS!



Form two teams of kids. Challenge each team to make a list of things any person on their team has done in the last three days (played video games, ate at a fast-food restaurant, colored a picture, rode a bike, etc.). Assign a volunteer (leader or kid) to be the team’s scribe and write down all the things the team names. Caution teams not to let the other team hear their list. Call time after three minutes.

Direct teams to take turns calling out an item on their lists. If both teams had that item, both teams will mark it off. Teams score points for any item that was only on their team’s list. The team with the most points wins.

SAY “Wow, when you started thinking about it, you realized that a lot can happen in three days. Today, we are going to learn about three very significant days. During that time, **JESUS DIED ON THE CROSS AND ROSE AGAIN TO DEFEAT SIN AND DEATH.**”





INTRODUCE the Bible Story

1 INTRODUCE THE SESSION (3 minutes)

Show the countdown video as you transition to introduce the Bible story. Set it to end as the session begins.

SAY “Hello, everyone! My name is [your name]. I can’t wait to explore today’s Bible story with you! Together, we are going to read about God’s great love for us, which He showed through His Son Jesus. If you brought your Bible, please take it out and turn to the New Testament. **[Distribute Bibles to any kid who needs one.]** Our story can be found in the Gospels. The word gospel means ‘good news.’ Can anyone remember the names of the four Gospels? **[Allow responses.]** Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John wrote the Gospels to share the good news of Jesus with others. Let’s pray together before we open God’s Word. Lead kids in a time of prayer, ‘Thank You, God, for showing Your love for us through Your Son Jesus. Give us listening ears to hear what You have shown us in Your Word. Amen.’ ”

2 BIG PICTURE QUESTION (1 minute)

Display the Big Picture Question Poster.

SAY “Jesus showed that He is the Messiah, the Son of God, when He died on the cross for our sins. Through His death and resurrection, He made the way to restore our relationship with God the Father. When we turn away from sin and believe in Him as Lord, He forgives us. Those who reject that Jesus is God’s Son and don’t turn to Him will be separated from God forever. God wants us to share about Jesus’ offer of salvation with others!

Let’s review our big picture question: **Who is Jesus?** What is the answer we learned? **[Allow responses.] Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, who came to earth to save us.** ”

3 REVIEW THE TIMELINE (1 minute)

Show the Giant Timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

SAY “Jesus was born in Bethlehem, just as the prophets promised, to save us from sin. Many people recognized that God had kept His promise and worshiped Jesus as the Messiah. But there were some, like King Herod, who rejected Jesus’ kingship. As Jesus grew and found favor with the people around Him, He obeyed God’s will, just as He had been sent to do. Jesus perfectly obeyed God the Father, all the way to death on the cross. Today, we will see that Jesus has defeated our greatest enemies: sin and death. ”



LEARN the Bible Story

1 TELL THE BIBLE STORY: VIDEO OR STORYTELLER (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Matthew 27. Use the Bible storytelling tips to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “Jesus Saves Us to Follow Him.” Use the bold text to retell or review the story.

JESUS SAVES US TO FOLLOW HIM

“**The religious leaders in Jerusalem did not like what Jesus was doing and saying. They did not believe He was the Son of God and did not want people to follow Him instead of them. They made a plan to have Him arrested and killed.**

First, **they dressed Him in a scarlet robe, made a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and knelt before Him, saying, “Hail, king of the Jews!”** They did not really believe He was king. **They were mocking Him.** Then they led Him away to the cross.

Jesus was nailed to the cross between two criminals. All the people said, “If Jesus was really the Son of God, then God would help him! He would come down from the cross. He saved others, but he can’t save himself!”

These people didn’t know that by dying for sin and rising again, Jesus was saving God’s people. Staying on the cross was exactly what God had planned for Jesus.

Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, because they do not know what they are doing.”

Then darkness covered the whole land, even though it was the middle of the day. **Jesus gave a loud cry, and then He died. The curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The ground shook.** One of the guards saw all that was happening and said, “Truly, this Jesus was the Son of God!”

On Friday night, a man named **Joseph from Arimathea took the body of Jesus down off the cross and placed it in a new tomb cut into rock. Then Joseph rolled a great stone over the entrance.**

The leaders of God’s people remembered that Jesus said He would rise from the dead in three days. So, they placed a guard at the tomb of Jesus so that no one could break in, take His body, and pretend like Jesus had risen from the dead.

On Sunday morning, two women, both named Mary, went to the tomb. There was an earthquake, and **an angel of the Lord came down. He rolled away the stone of the tomb and sat down on it. He said, “Don’t be afraid! Jesus is not here. He is risen, just as he said! Go and tell his disciples!”**

On the way to tell the disciples, the women saw Jesus! They fell at His feet and worshiped Him, the Savior who died and rose again.

STORYTELLING TIPS

Encourage expression:

As you read the story, ask the kids to smile and clap when something good happens. When something bad happens, they should frown. Jesus’ death was sad, but His resurrection is good news for sinners!

Change location:

If weather permits, consider teaching the lesson outside. Invite kids to think about what it would have looked like for the land to go dark during the day!



LEARN

THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

Christ Connection: While the people were crucifying Jesus, He asked His Father to forgive them. Even though Jesus never sinned, He went to the cross for our sin. Jesus forgives everyone who repents and believes He died and rose again. ”

2 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

SAY “ The religious leaders didn’t believe Jesus is the Son of God, and they were jealous of Him, so they had Him crucified. What did the leaders call Jesus as they mocked Him? **[Allow responses.]** Jesus really was the king of the Jews who had come to bring salvation, and through His death, He was carrying out God’s plan. At any moment, Jesus could have ended His suffering. But in perfect obedience to God the Father, Jesus remained on the cross to save us from sin.

It’s hard to forgive someone who has treated us badly, but Jesus demonstrated great love by forgiving the people who were crucifying and mocking Him. Can you remember what the guard said when the earth went dark, the ground shook, and the veil tore? **[Allow responses.]** As a result of these events that the guard witnessed, he concluded that Jesus really is God’s Son!

Why did the leaders place a guard in front of Jesus’ tomb? **[Allow responses.]** The leaders were scared that Jesus’ disciples would come and take His body, but Jesus showed that He is more powerful than any guard or stone. What did the angel tell the women when they came to the tomb? **[Allow responses.]** Jesus fulfilled His promises and completed God’s plan for salvation through His resurrection. Just as the angel told the women, we don’t have to fear! Jesus has defeated our greatest enemies, sin and death, forever.

While the people were crucifying Jesus, He asked His Father to forgive them. Even though Jesus never sinned, He went to the cross for our sin. Jesus forgives everyone who repents and believes He died and rose again. ”

3 GOSPEL DISCUSSION

SAY “ Each of us has treated God badly by sinning against Him. But on the cross, Jesus, the perfect sacrifice, took God’s anger for sin upon Himself. When we repent of our sins and trust that Jesus died and rose again as Lord, He forgives us and offers us life with Him forever. If you would like to learn more about what it means to trust your life to Jesus, please talk to your parents, to me, or to another leader at church. ”

(Tip: Use Scripture and the Gospel Plan Poster to explain how to become a Christian. Create an environment where kids are welcome to ask questions about what it means to follow Jesus.)



LEARN

THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

6 KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY (5 minutes)

Show the Key Passage Poster. Lead kids in reading aloud John 3:16 together.

SAY “Our key passage reminds us that Jesus is the Son of God who came to conquer sin and death. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus offers us new life in Him!”

Write the key passage on a dry erase board. Invite the kids to read the key passage aloud with you one time through. Erase one or two words and have the kids read it again, this time filling in the missing words. Continue doing this, erasing more words each time the kids read. Build up to erasing the entire verse and encourage the kids to say the entire key passage from memory.

Lead kids to sing “Eternal Life (John 3:16).” You may also sing a worship song of your choice.

7 PRAY (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before transitioning to Love.

SAY “Thank You, God, for sending Your only Son to take on the punishment for our sins so that we can experience salvation. Help us live out and share the hope of Jesus’ resurrection with others. Amen.”

Transition from **LEARN** to **LOVE**





THE GOD OF THE GOSPEL

LOVE God by Applying the Story

1 REVIEW & BIBLE SKILLS (5 minutes)

Distribute Bibles and display the New Testament Israel Map. Guide kids to open their Bibles to John 19. Explain that all four Gospels record similar accounts of Jesus' death and resurrection. John shares that his account was written so that his readers would believe Jesus is the Christ, God's Son, and would have life by believing in Him (John 20:30-31).

Consider pointing out the location of Jerusalem (H5) on the New Testament Israel Map. Choose a volunteer to read aloud John 19:30, or ask the kids to follow along as you read the verses.

SAY “What does it mean to finish something? [Allow responses.] Whether it's completing a test at school or crossing the finish line of a race, when we finish something it means that activity has ended. Jesus declared from the cross that the work God the Father sent Him to do was finished. Salvation has nothing to do with what we can do; it has everything to do with what God has already done through Jesus! On the cross, Jesus died for everyone who would come to trust Him as Lord. The gift of salvation is freely offered to anyone who repents and believes that Jesus died and rose again. The gospel really is good news, and God wants us to share it with others!”

2 GROUP DISCUSSION (10 minutes)

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss.

SAY “How could the land go dark in the middle of the day?”

Explain that this event was a supernatural act of God that demonstrated His judgment on humanity for crucifying His Son. Remind kids that God is Creator and He controls everything in the universe to bring about His plan.

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Daniel 2:21.)

SAY “What do you think the torn veil in the temple demonstrated?”

Consider showing a diagram of the temple. Explain that the temple veil separated the people from God's presence. The high priest was the only one who could enter behind the veil once a year. When Jesus died, it ended the separation between God and His people that sin had caused. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Hebrews 9:12.)

SAY “How can we know that Jesus really rose from the dead?”

Remind the kids that God's Word is true. The Gospels were written based on the testimony of those who walked with Jesus and witnessed these events firsthand. Jesus also appeared to His mother Mary, Mary Magdalene, His disciples, and as Paul noted, more than 500 people at one time! (Option: Choose a volunteer to read 1 Corinthians 15:3-7.)





THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

LIVE the Mission

1 ACTIVITY CHOICE (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: BACKPACK RELAY

Place several heavy items such as bricks or rocks in two backpacks. Divide the kids into two teams and have them form a circle standing up. Give each team a backpack. Begin by having one kid from each team place the backpack on his or her shoulders. He or she must run around the circle once and hand off the backpack to the kid on his or her right. Have this kid repeat the challenge, handing it off to the kid on his or her right and so on. The first team whose backpack makes it all the way around the circle wins.

SAY “ Like the weight of the backpack, we are weighed down by sin. But on the cross, Jesus took our sin upon Himself. Because of Jesus’ death and resurrection, He has defeated sin and death forever! ”

OPTION 2: EMPTY TOMB SNACK



Make a sample “Empty Tomb Snack” to show the kids how to make it.

Spread green icing around the center of the plate for grass.

Make a thin slice from one side of the doughnut so it will sit flat and upright on the plate. Use a bit of icing to adhere the doughnut to the plate.

Attach the miniature chocolate sandwich cookie to the doughnut just to the side of the “hole” in the doughnut.

Optional: Provide extra doughnuts, cookies, and water for a snack.

SAY “ Our snack sculptures remind us that the tomb was empty. Jesus is alive! Jesus was placed in the tomb, but He rose again just as He promised! Through His death and resurrection, Jesus has defeated sin and death. ”

2 REFLECTION AND PRAYER (5 minutes)

Distribute a sheet of paper and pencil to each kid. Ask kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Who can I tell about this story?

Be sure to send the sheets home with the kids along with the activity pages so parents can continue to discuss the Bible story with their kids. If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page. Pray for your group.