

THE
GOSPEL
PROJECT[®]
FOR PRETEENS

JESUS THE
SAVIOR

VOLUME 9 • LEADER GUIDE





Unit 25, Session 1

Kingdom Parables

Matthew 13

Story Point: God's growing kingdom is more valuable than anything.

Open your Bible and read aloud from Matthew 13, or tell the story from the following Bible story script.

One day, Jesus went out and sat by the sea. Large crowds of people gathered around Him, so He got into a boat and sat down. All the people stood on the shore. Then **Jesus told the people parables**, or stories, **to teach them about the kingdom of God.**

Jesus' disciples asked Him, "Why do you teach in parables?"

Jesus answered, "Not everyone will understand the hidden truths about the kingdom of heaven."

Jesus reminded them about some of the words spoken by the prophet Isaiah. Some people look, but they do not see. They hear, but they do not listen or understand. Jesus made these prophecies come true. Jesus said, "You are blessed because you do understand."

Jesus told a parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that a man planted in his field. It is the smallest of all seeds, but it grows taller than the garden plants. It becomes a tree, and the birds come and build nests in its branches."

Jesus continued, "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, or yeast, that a woman mixed

into fifty pounds of flour. The leaven makes the dough rise."

Jesus told another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure, buried in a field, that a man found. He reburied it, and then he joyfully sold everything he had and bought that field."

Then Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls. When he found one priceless pearl, he went and sold everything he had and bought it."

When Jesus finished teaching the crowds, He left that place and went to Nazareth.

Christ Connection: The kingdom of God is growing in the world. This kingdom is valuable and worth giving everything for. While we wait for Jesus to return and fully set up His kingdom, we carry out the mission of telling others about King Jesus, who rescues sinners.



INTRODUCE the Story

WELCOME TIME

Greet each preteen as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Prompt kids to share about their favorite book or story. When was the first time they heard it or read it? What do they like most about it and why?

OPTION 1: Hidden treasure

Supplies: small object

Before the session, hide a small object somewhere in the room. Put the object in a place that is not obvious but that kids can see without moving other items.

Explain to kids that you've hidden a special object—a treasure!—somewhere in the room. Describe the item and challenge kids to walk around, trying to find it. Emphasize that when a kid finds the treasure, he should quietly walk to his chair and sit down. Kids may delay a moment after finding the treasure to avoid giving away its location. Play until all kids find the treasure. If needed, give hot/cold clues to indicate how close to or far from the item they are.

- How did you feel when you found the hidden treasure?

OPTION 2: Compare seeds

Supplies: various seeds (mustard, pumpkin, sunflower, chickpea, rice, apple), paper, pencils

Invite kids to examine the seeds. What do they notice about each seed? Provide paper and pencils for kids to record their observations. Challenge them to guess what plant each seed produces. Point out the mustard seed and explain that the tiny seed can grow into a large bush!

- Did any of those matches surprise you?
- Why do you think the Bible would say the kingdom of God is like a mustard seed?



TEACH the Story

The Bible tells us what is true about God and about ourselves. All of the stories in the Bible fit together to tell us the big story of how God rescues sinners through His Son, Jesus.

Today we are going to hear some stories Jesus told to teach about God's kingdom. Whether this is your first time or your tenth time hearing this story, there is always something new to learn in God's Word.

Read Matthew 13:10-16,31-33,44-46.

- What does this story teach us about God?

God's growing kingdom is more valuable than anything. The kingdom of God continues to grow today as we tell others the good news of the gospel, and it is a treasure that we should seek after.

- What four stories did Jesus tell to teach about God's kingdom?

First, He compared the kingdom of heaven to a mustard seed and to leaven—or yeast. Jesus also told a story about a man who found a treasure in a field. He told a fourth story about a merchant who found a priceless pearl.

- Form groups of two or three and practice retelling the Bible story in your own words. Think of someone you could share the story with this week.

CHRIST CONNECTION

The kingdom of God is growing in the world. This kingdom is valuable and worth giving everything for. While we wait for Jesus to return and fully set up His kingdom, we carry out the mission of telling others about King Jesus, who rescues sinners.



TEACH the Story

MISSIONS MOMENT

Supplies: map of the United States

God's growing kingdom is more valuable than anything. That's why missionaries dedicate their whole lives to telling others about Him. Luis Soto lives in Salt Lake City, Utah and tells people there about Jesus. Find Utah on a map. Pray for Luis and his work in Salt Lake City.

PRAY

God, we confess that we feel hesitant to give up earthly treasures to follow You. Help us understand what is true. Your kingdom is a valuable treasure. It is growing and moving throughout the earth. We look forward to the day when Jesus will return and set up the kingdom forever. Use us in growing Your kingdom for Your glory. We love You. Amen.

THE GOSPEL: GOD'S PLAN FOR ME

The gospel is the good news, the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use Scripture and the guide provided below to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.



GOD RULES. Ask: "Who is in charge at home?" Explain that because God created everything, He is in charge of everything. Read Revelation 4:11.



WE SINNED. Ask: "Have you ever done something wrong?" Tell kids that everyone sins, or disobeys God. Our sin separates us from God. Read Romans 3:23.



GOD PROVIDED. Explain that God is holy and must punish sin. God sent His Son, Jesus, to take the punishment we deserve. Read John 3:16.



JESUS GIVES. Ask: "What is the best gift you've ever received?" Say that Jesus took our punishment for sin by giving His life, and He gives us His righteousness. God sees us as if we lived the perfect life Jesus lived. This is the best gift ever! Read 2 Corinthians 5:21.



WE RESPOND. Explain that everyone has a choice to make. Ask: "Will you trust Jesus as your Savior and Lord? You can turn from self and sin and turn to Jesus." Read Romans 10:9-10.



APPLY the Story

Big Picture Question

How does God care for His creation?
God loves and rules over His creation according to
His perfect plan.

In God's kingdom, He reigns over all. God is a good King, and He cares for His creation.

- Where is God's kingdom? What does it look like?
- What do you think God's kingdom will be like when Jesus returns?

Distribute Bibles. Guide preteens to open their Bibles to Matthew 13. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Matthew 13:44. Remind kids that God's growing kingdom is more valuable than anything. Choose another volunteer to read aloud Matthew 13:44 again. Then lead the group to discuss the following questions.

1. Why did Jesus teach in parables?

Lead kids to recall that parables reveal hidden truths about God's kingdom that not everyone will understand. Point out how the religious leaders did not accept Jesus as Messiah. They did not recognize that God's kingdom had come—perhaps because it was unlike they expected. When we understand the truth about God's kingdom, we joyfully accept it and are blessed. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Matt. 13:35.)

2. What role can you play in growing God's kingdom?

Encourage kids to consider ways they can share the gospel with others. Remind them of the mustard seed, emphasizing that even seemingly small things, such as inviting a friend to church or praying for a neighbor, can have a big impact in God's kingdom. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Isa. 55:11.)

3. What is most valuable to you? How do your actions show its value?

Invite kids to share what is most important to them. Challenge them to assess whether or not their actions support their claims. Point out that some of the ways we show what is most valuable to us is in the way we spend our time and resources. Discuss some of the things the world values and why God's kingdom is more valuable than anything. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Matt. 6:19-21.)



APPLY the Story

KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY

Supplies: Bibles, table tennis balls, permanent marker, muffin tin (optional)

Before the session, write the key passage as words or phrases on table tennis balls. Instruct kids to open their Bibles to Colossians 1:13-14. Lead the kids to read the key passage together.

Challenge kids to gather the table tennis balls and arrange the words in order. You may choose to provide a muffin tin for organizing the words and phrases. Then prompt kids to say the key passage again.

PRAY

Invite volunteers to share prayer requests. Then pray, asking God to give kids understanding of His Word and a desire to seek His kingdom above all else.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY: Parable posters

Supplies: poster board, construction paper, Bibles, markers, glue, various decorations (mustard seeds, yeast, artificial pearls)

Form four groups of kids. Assign each group a parable from today's Bible story: parable of the mustard seed (Matthew 13:31-32); parable of the leaven (Matthew 13:33); parable of the hidden treasure (Matthew 13:44); parable of the priceless pearl (Matthew 13:45-46).

Instruct groups to find and read their assigned passages. Provide markers, construction paper, and other craft supplies for groups to make posters illustrating the kingdom parables. Consider providing glue with mustard seeds, yeast, and artificial pearls for kids to use to decorate the corresponding parable posters.

Direct each group to write the story point on their posters. When groups finish, invite them to take turns retelling the parable to the rest of the group. Display the posters in the room throughout the unit.

Emphasize that Jesus used parables to teach about God's kingdom. God's growing kingdom is more valuable than anything. The kingdom of God is growing in the world. This kingdom is valuable and worth giving everything for. While we wait for Jesus to return and fully set up His kingdom, we carry out the mission of telling others about King Jesus, who rescues sinners.



Unit 25, Session 2

Three Parables

Luke 15

Story Point: Jesus came to seek and save the lost.

Open your Bible and read aloud Luke 15, or tell the story from the following Bible story script.

Tax collectors and sinners came to listen to Jesus teach. **Jesus told them three parables to teach them about God. Jesus said, “If a man has 100 sheep and loses one, what does he do? He leaves the 99 sheep and searches for the lost sheep until he finds it.** Then he tells his friends and neighbors, ‘Let’s celebrate! I found my lost sheep!’ In heaven, there is more joy when one sinner repents and turns back to God than for 99 people who did not wander off.”

Jesus also said, “**If a woman has 10 silver coins and loses one of them, what does she do? She lights a lamp, sweeps the house, and searches carefully until she finds it.** Then she tells her friends and neighbors, ‘Let’s celebrate! I found my lost coin!’”

Jesus told a third story. “**A man had two sons. The younger son said, ‘Father, give me my inheritance today.’ So the father gave his son his share. The younger son left home. He wasted his money and lived foolishly. There was a famine, and the people in that country did not have enough food. The son got a job feeding pigs. He was so hungry, even the pigs’ food looked tasty.**

“The younger son made a plan. He would go back to his father and admit he was wrong. He would ask to work for his father like the servants.

“So the younger son headed home. He was still a long way away when his father saw him coming. His father ran to him, threw his arms around him, and kissed him. The son began to apologize. ‘I have sinned against God and against you,’ he said.

“But the father told his servants, ‘Let’s celebrate with a feast! This son of mine was lost, and now he is found!’

“At this time, the older son came from the fields and heard music at the house. ‘What’s going on?’ he asked one of the servants.

“‘Your brother is here,’ the servant said. ‘Your father is celebrating.’

“The older brother was angry! He refused to go to the feast. The father asked him to come inside. The older brother said, ‘I never disobeyed you! But you never threw a party for me.’ ‘Son,’ the father said, ‘everything I have is yours. We have to celebrate. Your brother was lost and is found.’”

Christ Connection: The religious leaders complained that Jesus welcomed sinners. Jesus told these parables to teach about God’s forgiveness. God sent Jesus so sinners can be forgiven. As Savior, Jesus seeks sinners. He paid the ultimate price—His own life—to save people from sin.



INTRODUCE the Story

WELCOME TIME

Greet each preteen as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Prompt kids to share about a time they lost something. Did they ever find it? How did they feel?

OPTION 1: Celebrate!

Supplies: party horns or other noisemakers (optional)

Explain to kids that you are going to make some announcements. Kids should respond to the news according to how excited they are about it (boo/hiss, clap softly, jump and cheer). Read the sample announcements or give your own one at a time, pausing for kids to respond. You may choose volunteers to explain why they reacted in the way they did.

Samples announcements: Teachers have decided to have school on Saturdays. Your parents are going to serve spaghetti for dinner every night this week. You can eat candy for breakfast. You are getting a new brother or sister. Your lost pet has returned home.

- What kind of news might make your mom or dad celebrate?
- What kind of news might make a brother upset and angry?

OPTION 2: What's missing?

Supplies: 15 to 20 small items, tray, small towel or blanket

Before the session, collect 15 to 20 various small items and arrange them on a tray. Display the tray for the kids. Encourage them to look at the objects for 30 seconds. Then cover the tray, move it out of sight, and remove one item.

Uncover the tray for kids to examine. Challenge the kids to identify which item is missing. Play additional rounds as time allows, removing one or more different items each round.

- If you had one hundred of something, do you think you would notice if one was missing?



TEACH the Story

The Bible tells us what is true about God and about ourselves. All of the stories in the Bible fit together to tell us the big story of how God rescues sinners through His Son, Jesus.

Today we are going to hear about three parables, or stories, Jesus told about things that were lost. Whether this is your first time or your tenth time hearing this story, there is always something new to learn in God's Word.

Read Luke 15.

- What does this story teach us about God?

God cares about people. He won't ignore or give up on one lost person; He wants everyone to be part of His family. Jesus came to seek and save the lost.

- In the third parable, how did the father react to his son's return?

The father was so happy to have him home that he ran to hug him and he threw a party! The father did not treat the younger son like a servant; rather, he invited him back into the family as a beloved son.

- Form groups of two or three and practice retelling the Bible story in your own words. Think of someone you could share the story with this week.

CHRIST CONNECTION

The religious leaders complained that Jesus welcomed sinners. Jesus told these parables to teach about God's forgiveness. God sent Jesus so sinners can be forgiven. As Savior, Jesus seeks sinners. He paid the ultimate price—His own life—to save people from sin.



TEACH the Story

MISSIONS MOMENT

Many of the people in Utah have heard of Jesus, but they do not know the truth about Jesus found in the Bible. Because Jesus came to seek and save the lost, Luis Soto knows that Jesus wants the people in Utah to hear about Him. Ask a volunteer to pray for the Sotos' ministry.

PRAY

God, thank You for sending Jesus to rescue us from our sin. Help us be lights in a dark world full of people who do not know and love You. Give us boldness to tell others the good news about Jesus. Amen.

THE GOSPEL: GOD'S PLAN FOR ME

The gospel is the good news, the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use Scripture and the guide provided below to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.



GOD RULES. Ask: "Who is in charge at home?" Explain that because God created everything, He is in charge of everything. Read Revelation 4:11.



WE SINNED. Ask: "Have you ever done something wrong?" Tell kids that everyone sins, or disobeys God. Our sin separates us from God. Read Romans 3:23.



GOD PROVIDED. Explain that God is holy and must punish sin. God sent His Son, Jesus, to take the punishment we deserve. Read John 3:16.



JESUS GIVES. Ask: "What is the best gift you've ever received?" Say that Jesus took our punishment for sin by giving His life, and He gives us His righteousness. God sees us as if we lived the perfect life Jesus lived. This is the best gift ever! Read 2 Corinthians 5:21.



WE RESPOND. Explain that everyone has a choice to make. Ask: "Will you trust Jesus as your Savior and Lord? You can turn from self and sin and turn to Jesus." Read Romans 10:9-10.



APPLY the Story

Big Picture Question

How does God care for His creation?
God loves and rules over His creation according to
His perfect plan.

God created everything and He is in charge of everything.

- How should you treat others who have been unkind to you?
- How can the way they treat someone can show that person the truth about Jesus?

Distribute Bibles. Guide preteens to open their Bibles to Luke 15. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Luke 15:20. Emphasize that like the father reacted to his son's return, we should be full of joy when anyone comes into God's kingdom!

Choose another volunteer to read aloud Luke 15:20 again. Then lead the group to discuss the following questions.

1. How are we "lost" before we trust in Jesus?

Lead kids to recognize that being lost means not knowing Jesus as Lord and Savior. The Bible says that apart from Jesus, we are in darkness and are dead in sin. Jesus makes us alive and brings us into His kingdom. He shows us what is true about God and about ourselves. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Eph. 2:8-9.)

2. How does it make you feel that God came looking for you?

Allow kids to share their feelings. Remind kids that God created us, so He knows us and sees us. He seeks after us because He loves us. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Ps. 139:1-2.)

3. What might you say to someone who doesn't know Jesus?

Invite kids to share their ideas. Suggest that kids might share their testimonies, or stories of how they came to know and love Jesus. Review the Gospel Plan Poster and encourage kids to remember the five points to summarize the good news about Jesus: God rules, we sinned, God provided, Jesus gives, and we respond. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read 1 Cor. 15:3-4.)



APPLY the Story

KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY

Supplies: Bibles, balloons

Instruct kids to open their Bibles to Colossians 1:13-14. Lead the kids to read the key passage together. Inflate and tie a balloon. Challenge kids to tap the balloon, keeping it in the air as they say the key passage together. If the balloon hits the floor, lead kids to say the key passage from the beginning. If kids complete the key passage, add a second balloon.

Invite any kids who have memorized the key passage to recite it from memory.

PRAY

Invite volunteers to share prayer requests. Then pray, thanking God for being a loving Father who joyfully welcomes into His home both people who have wandered away from Him and people who have trusted in themselves instead of in Jesus.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY: Storytelling studio

Supplies: Bibles, play dough or modeling clay, poster board, markers, digital camera (optional)

Invite kids to work together to retell the Bible story using clay models. If your group is large, form smaller groups and assign each group one of the three parables from Luke 15. If working as one group, focus on the parable of the lost son from Luke 15:11-32. You may assign roles of narrator, set designers, model builders, and so forth to give each kid a chance to participate.

Allow kids several minutes to design a scene and practice retelling the story, moving their models throughout the scene. Consider providing a digital camera for kids to take photos of each scene. Then invite the group to present.

Emphasize that Jesus came to seek and save the lost. When someone who was lost trusts in Jesus as Lord and Savior, we should celebrate! The religious leaders complained that Jesus welcomed sinners. Jesus told these parables to teach about God's forgiveness. God sent Jesus so sinners can be forgiven. As Savior, Jesus seeks sinners. He paid the ultimate price—His own life—to save people from sin.



Unit 25, Session 3

Jesus' Hard Teachings

John 6

Story Point: Many people misunderstood Jesus' teaching.

Open your Bible and read aloud John 6:22-69, or tell the story from the following Bible story script.

A crowd of people went looking for Jesus. They had seen Him perform miracles, like feeding more than five thousand people. **They** went to Capernaum and **found Jesus on the other side of the Sea of Galilee.** “Teacher, when did You get here?” they asked Jesus.

Jesus answered, “Why are you looking for Me? Did you want to find Me because I can do miracles, or were you looking for Me because I gave you food? If you’re seeking food, remember that food on earth will perish. **Search for food that gives eternal life. The Son of Man will give it to you.** This food never goes bad.”

The people asked, “What does God want us to do?” Jesus said, “Believe in the One whom He has sent.”

The people said, “What will You do for us to make us believe? Will You do another miracle?” The people wanted bread from heaven like Moses and the Israelites received in the wilderness.

Jesus said, “God the Father gives true bread from heaven. **I am the bread of life. No one who comes to Me will ever be hungry, and no one who believes in Me will ever be thirsty again.**” Jesus explained that the Father had

sent Him to do God’s plan. God’s plan is that everyone who sees Jesus—God the Son—and believes in Him will have eternal life. **The Jews began complaining** because Jesus said He came from heaven. “Isn’t this the son of Joseph?” they asked.

Jesus said again, “I am the bread of life. I came from heaven. Unless you eat My flesh and drink My blood, you will not live forever.”

When Jesus said this, many of His followers said, “This teaching is hard. Who can accept it?” Many of the people who had followed Jesus turned away from Him. Jesus asked His twelve disciples, “Do you want to go away too?”

Peter answered, “Lord, where would we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that You are the Holy One of God.”

Christ Connection: Jesus wanted to do more than fill people’s stomachs; He wanted to give them true life. Jesus’ teachings were hard to understand. When Jesus talked about His flesh and blood, He was talking about His death and resurrection. When we trust in Jesus, He gives us the gift of eternal life.



INTRODUCE the Story

WELCOME TIME

Greet each preteen as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Prompt kids to share about their least favorite subject in school. Why is it their least favorite? Is the subject hard to understand?

OPTION 1: Believe it or not!

Instruct kids to stand in a circle. Choose one player to begin by stating something about himself that is either true or false. The rest of the kids should decide if they believe it (and remain standing) or don't believe it (and sit down). Then prompt the player to reveal if his statement is true or false. Continue around the circle until everyone has a chance to participate.

- Did any of you have a hard time believing something that turned out to be true?
- Is there anything you've learned about God that seems hard to believe?

OPTION 2: Food tag

Instruct kids to stand in a circle. Go around the circle, prompting each player to say the name of a food. Players should choose a food that no other player has already chosen. Assign one player to stand in the middle of the circle. The rest of the players should stand with their hands out and palms up.

The player in the center of the circle will say the name of another player's chosen food. Then he will try to tag that player. The player whose food was chosen should shout out the name of a different player's food before the player in the middle tags her. (Tip: To give kids more time to react, instruct players in the circle to take a step back.)

If a player is tagged before calling out another food, she takes the place of the player in the middle.

- What is your favorite food? How do you feel when someone else gives you food?



TEACH the Story

The Bible tells us what is true about God and about ourselves. All of the stories in the Bible fit together to tell us the big story of how God rescues sinners through His Son, Jesus.

Today we are going to hear some of Jesus' hard teachings. Whether this is your first time or your tenth time hearing this story, there is always something new to learn in God's Word.

Read John 6:22-69.

- What does this story teach us about God?

People don't need to do anything to earn eternal life; they only need to believe in God's Son, Jesus. **When we trust in Him, He gives us the free gift of salvation** from sin and life with God forever.

- What did Jesus say that caused people to turn away from Him?

Jesus said His followers needed to eat His flesh and drink His blood in order to have eternal life. The people did not know what was going to happen to Jesus. Jesus was going to give His body by dying on the cross. He would shed His own blood to rescue people from sin and death. We "eat and drink" by trusting in Jesus' death and resurrection.

- Form groups of two or three and practice retelling the Bible story in your own words. Think of someone you could share the story with this week.

CHRIST CONNECTION

Jesus wanted to do more than fill people's stomachs; He wanted to give them true life. Jesus' teachings were hard to understand. When Jesus talked about His flesh and blood, He was talking about His death and resurrection. When we trust in Jesus, He gives us the gift of eternal life.



TEACH the Story

MISSIONS MOMENT

It's important that we keep telling the people around us about Jesus because many people misunderstand Jesus' teaching today, just like they misunderstood in the Bible story. Missionaries Luis and Betty Soto serve in the mission field of Salt Lake City, Utah. They help Spanish-speaking people understand how to know Jesus and what He taught us. Pray for the Sotos and for missionaries your church supports.

PRAY

Lord, we see in the Bible that many people misunderstood Jesus' teaching. We confess that we do not always understand or accept the truth. Give us wisdom. We believe that everything in Your Word is true. Help us obey You—for our good and Your glory. Amen.

THE GOSPEL: GOD'S PLAN FOR ME

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WE SINNED. Ask: "Have you ever done something wrong?" Tell kids that everyone sins, or disobeys God. Our sin separates us from God. Read Romans 3:23.



GOD PROVIDED. Explain that God is holy and must punish sin. God sent His Son, Jesus, to take the punishment we deserve. Read John 3:16.



JESUS GIVES. Ask: "What is the best gift you've ever received?" Say that Jesus took our punishment for sin by giving His life, and He gives us His righteousness. God sees us as if we lived the perfect life Jesus lived. This is the best gift ever! Read 2 Corinthians 5:21.



WE RESPOND. Explain that everyone has a choice to make. Ask: "Will you trust Jesus as your Savior and Lord? You can turn from self and sin and turn to Jesus." Read Romans 10:9-10.



APPLY the Story

Big Picture Question

How does God care for His creation?
God loves and rules over His creation according to
His perfect plan.

God's kingdom is wherever God is ruling. He is ruling over us now, but one day His kingdom will come fully when Jesus returns.

- What can you do when you encounter something in the Bible that doesn't make sense to you?
- What stories or parts of Scripture do you find hard to understand?

Distribute Bibles. Guide preteens to open their Bibles to John 6. Choose a volunteer to read aloud John 6:67-69. Emphasize that as Jesus spoke, many people misunderstood Jesus' teaching. Others rejected Jesus because He did not meet their expectations. Choose another volunteer to read John 6:67-69 again. Then lead the group to discuss the following questions.

1. How would you answer Jesus' question—you don't want to go away too, do you? Do any of Jesus' teachings confuse you?

Invite kids to share their thoughts. Acknowledge any doubts or confusion. Emphasize that Jesus' closest disciples recognized that even though Jesus' teachings were hard, He has the words of eternal life. He is the Holy One of God. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Matt. 26:35.)

2. What did Jesus mean when He said people would eat His body and drink His blood?

Lead kids to identify that Jesus was talking about His death and resurrection. He did not mean people would literally eat Him; He meant that those who trust in His finished work on the cross would have forgiveness and eternal life. Point out that when we take the Lord's Supper (the bread and drink), we remember what Jesus did for us. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read 1 Cor. 10:16.)

3. What kind of king did the people want Jesus to be? What kind of king is Jesus?

Help kids recall that people thought Jesus would provide food for their hunger and protection from enemy kings. But Jesus' kingdom is not of this world. He came to give life by rescuing sinners. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Dan. 2:44.)



APPLY the Story

KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY

Supplies: Bibles, index cards, marker

Before the session, write the words or phrases of the key passage on separate index cards. Consider including some word cards that do not belong in the key passage. Mix up the word cards. Instruct kids to open their Bibles to Colossians 1:13-14. Lead the kids to read the key passage together.

Challenge kids to arrange the word cards in order. Kids should identify and set aside any words that don't belong.

PRAY

Invite volunteers to share prayer requests. Then pray, asking God to give kids understanding of His Word. Thank God for sending Jesus to show us what He is like.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY: Reaching out

Supplies: index cards, pencils, dry erase board and markers (optional)

Explain that Utah is a state that has many tourists. Christians who live there find ways to share the gospel so that visitors can hear about Jesus. We can share the gospel, too, with people who visit us or the people who live around us.

Guide kids to form small groups or partners. Ask them to list a few things in your town or state that people might enjoy doing. Encourage them to think of tourist spots, scenic areas, or sporting events that might attract visitors. (Option: Complete this activity in a large group with a dry erase board.)

Next, ask each group to switch cards with another group. On the back of the swapped card, ask them to list ways Christians can share Jesus with visitors at those locations.

Encourage kids to be creative. Emphasize that as Christians, we can share God's love anytime and anywhere. In coming weeks, let your kids be a part of planning one missions activity outside of your church.



Unit 25, Session 4

Jesus Raised Lazarus

John 11

Story Point: Jesus has power over death.

Open your Bible and read aloud John 11:1-44, or tell the story from the following Bible story script.

Jesus and Lazarus were friends. Lazarus lived in the town of Bethany, in Judea, with his sisters, Mary and Martha. **One day, Lazarus got sick. Mary and Martha sent a message to Jesus. “Lord, Your friend Lazarus is sick,” they said.**

Jesus told His disciples, “Lazarus’ sickness will not end in death. This sickness will bring glory to God and to the Son of God.” **Jesus stayed where He was for two more days. Then Jesus said, “Let’s go back to Judea.”**

By the time Jesus arrived in Bethany, Lazarus had been in a tomb for four days. Martha hurried to meet Jesus, but Mary stayed home. **Martha said, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother wouldn’t have died.”** Martha knew Jesus could do a miracle though. “I know God will give You whatever You ask,” she said.

Jesus replied, “Your brother will rise again.” Martha believed that Lazarus would rise from the dead in the future—on the last day. But **Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in Me, even if he dies, will live. Everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die—ever. Do you believe this?”**

“Yes, Lord,” Martha said. “I believe You are

the Messiah, the Son of God.”

Martha went back to her house. She told Mary that Jesus wanted to see her. So Mary left the house, and all the people who had come to comfort Mary and Martha followed her.

Mary fell at Jesus’ feet and said, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died!” Mary was crying. Jesus wept too.

Mary led Jesus to the tomb where Lazarus was buried. It was a cave, and a huge stone covered the opening. “Remove the stone,” Jesus said.

So the stone was moved aside. Jesus looked up and said, “Father, I thank You that You heard Me.” Then Jesus shouted, **“Lazarus, come out!”**

Lazarus came out of the tomb, wrapped in linen and cloth. Jesus said, “Unwrap him and let him go.”

Christ Connection: When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, He showed that He has power over death. Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life.” Jesus died on the cross for our sins and rose from the dead. He gives eternal life to those who trust in Him.



INTRODUCE the Story

WELCOME TIME

Greet each preteen as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Prompt kids to share about a time they heard a friend was sick. Did they visit or send a get-well card? If you were sick, what would you want your friends to do?

OPTION 1: Take a tissue

Supplies: box of facial tissues

Instruct kids to sit in a circle. Pass around a box of facial tissues, instructing each kid to take one or more. Then announce that for each tissue in a kid's hand, she should share that many facts about herself. Consider giving prompts: things that make you happy, things that make you sad, things that make you laugh, and so on.

- What kinds of things make you sad? Did you know the Bible says that Jesus cried?

OPTION 2: Emotions charades

Supplies: index cards, marker

Before the session, write several emotions on separate index cards. (*confused, sad, happy, disappointed, angry, disgusted, afraid, excited*, and so on) You may also choose to let each kid write an emotion on an index card.

Invite kids to take turns acting out the emotions using only silent motions. The rest of the group should guess the emotion. If your group is large, form two teams and call a volunteer from each team to look at a card and act it out. The first team to guess the emotion earns a point. End the game by acting out the emotion *sad*. Portray weeping and grief.

- The Bible says Jesus wept. How do you feel knowing Jesus cried like we sometimes do?



TEACH the Story

The Bible tells us what is true about God and about ourselves. All of the stories in the Bible fit together to tell us the big story of how God rescues sinners through His Son, Jesus.

Today we are going to hear about the time Jesus raised His friend Lazarus from the dead. Whether this is your first time or your tenth time hearing this story, there is always something new to learn in God's Word.

Read John 11:1-44.

- What does this story teach us about God?

Sometimes God's plans are different than our plans. Jesus waited two more days before He went to Judea where Lazarus, Mary, and Martha lived. Jesus explained to His disciples that Lazarus had died, and Jesus was going to wake him up. He told Martha that if she believed, she would see how great God is.

- Why do you think Jesus didn't heal Lazarus right away?

If Jesus had healed Lazarus when he was sick, **no one would have seen Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead.** Jesus has power over death, and many people who saw what Jesus did believed in Him.

- Form groups of two or three and practice retelling the Bible story in your own words. Think of someone you could share the story with this week.

CHRIST CONNECTION

When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, He showed that He has power over death. Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life." Jesus died on the cross for our sins and rose from the dead. He gives eternal life to those who trust in Him.



TEACH the Story

MISSIONS MOMENT

Today we learned that Jesus has power over death. This is something that missionaries like the Sotos are teaching people. The Sotos often teach about Jesus in Spanish. Even though they have a church in the United States, where most people speak English, God is using them to share the good news of Jesus with Spanish-speaking people in Utah. Discuss with kids what languages they might like to learn or are learning and how God could use their language skills to teach others about Him.

PRAY

Jesus, You are the resurrection and the life. You have power over death. So when we face death in this life, we grieve—not as those who have no hope, but as those who look forward to the promise that You will one day raise us to life again. We trust in You, and we love You. Amen.

THE GOSPEL: GOD'S PLAN FOR ME

The gospel is the good news, the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use Scripture and the guide provided below to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.



GOD RULES. Ask: “Who is in charge at home?” Explain that because God created everything, He is in charge of everything. Read Revelation 4:11.



WE SINNED. Ask: “Have you ever done something wrong?” Tell kids that everyone sins, or disobeys God. Our sin separates us from God. Read Romans 3:23.



GOD PROVIDED. Explain that God is holy and must punish sin. God sent His Son, Jesus, to take the punishment we deserve. Read John 3:16.



JESUS GIVES. Ask: “What is the best gift you’ve ever received?” Say that Jesus took our punishment for sin by giving His life, and He gives us His righteousness. God sees us as if we lived the perfect life Jesus lived. This is the best gift ever! Read 2 Corinthians 5:21.



WE RESPOND. Explain that everyone has a choice to make. Ask: “Will you trust Jesus as your Savior and Lord? You can turn from self and sin and turn to Jesus.” Read Romans 10:9-10.



APPLY the Story

Big Picture Question

How does God care for His creation?
God loves and rules over His creation according to
His perfect plan.

We see God's care for creation when we hear how Jesus cared for people when He was on earth. Jesus shows us what God is like.

- Is it OK to be sad about death? Why?
- How is it helpful to know that death was never part of God's design?

Distribute Bibles. Guide preteens to open their Bibles to John 11. Choose a volunteer to read aloud John 11:4. Remind kids that Lazarus was the brother of Mary and Martha. Choose another volunteer to read John 11:4 again. Then lead kids to discuss the following questions.

1. Why did Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead?

Point out that Jesus could have healed Lazarus while he was sick. Instead, Jesus waited and Lazarus died. Jesus said Lazarus' sickness would end not in death but in God's glory. Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead to show His power over death. Help kids recognize that God sometimes allows bad things to happen so that His glory might be displayed.

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Phil. 2:9-11.)

2. Jesus said, "Everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die—ever." What did He mean? Do you believe this?

Invite kids to share their thoughts. Remind them that unless Jesus returns first, we will face physical death on earth. But Jesus gives us eternal life. Though our bodies may die, this physical death is temporary. When Jesus returns and sets up His kingdom, we will get new bodies and will live with Him forever. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read 1 Thess. 4:13-14.)

3. How do you think someone who comes back to life from the dead might live differently? How should we live differently as Christians who have been brought from death to life?

Allow kids to share their ideas. Emphasize that when God gives us new life in Jesus, we should turn from our evil ways of sin and live for Him. God created us to do good works and share the good news of Jesus with the world. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Eph. 2:4-5.)



APPLY the Story

KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY

Supplies: Bibles, dry erase board or large sheet of paper, markers

Instruct kids to open their Bibles to Colossians 1:13-14. Lead the kids to read the key passage together. Then form two teams of kids. Position each team across from a large sheet of paper or dry erase board. Give the first player on each team a marker. Explain that when you say go, the first player should run to the paper, write the first word of the key passage, and then return the marker to his team. The next player should run to the paper, write the second word, and return to the team.

Continue until teams write out the entire key passage. Then lead kids to recite the key passage together.

PRAY

Invite volunteers to share prayer requests. Then pray, asking God to comfort those who are grieving the loss of a loved one. Thank God for sending Jesus to rescue us from sin and death.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY: Wrap up race

Supplies: bath tissue or white paper streamers

Explain that in Bible times, when a person died, his body would be washed, covered with good-smelling spices or oils, wrapped in linen cloth, and buried in a cave or tomb. Lazarus died and had been in a tomb for four days, but that didn't stop Jesus. Jesus has power over death. He raised Lazarus from the dead.

Form teams of three to five kids. Instruct each team to choose a volunteer to be wrapped up. Give each team a roll of paper streamers or two rolls of bath tissue.

When you say go, players will wrap their team's volunteer from ankles to head. Kids should use all of the paper, but be sure kids do not cover a player's feet, mouth, or eyes. When all the volunteers are wrapped, prompt the rest of the kids to shout together, "Lazarus, come out!" Volunteers should break out of the wraps. Assist if needed.

Emphasize that like Lazarus was physically dead, we are all spiritually dead apart from Jesus. But Jesus can free us from the power of sin and death. Jesus died on the cross for our sins and rose from the dead. He gives forgiveness and eternal life to those who trust in Him.



Unit 26, Session 1

Jesus' Triumphal Entry

Matthew 21; Mark 11; Luke 19; John 12

Story Point: People welcomed Jesus to Jerusalem as their King.

Open your Bible and read aloud Matthew 21:1-17, or tell the story from the following Bible story script.

Jesus and His disciples traveled to Jerusalem. When they neared Bethphage (BETH fayj) and Bethany near the Mount of Olives, **Jesus sent two of His disciples ahead into a village.** “As soon as you enter the village,” Jesus told them, “you will find a young donkey tied there. No one has ever sat on it. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone says to you ‘Why are you doing this?’ say, ‘The Lord needs it.’”

The disciples did as Jesus asked. As they untied the donkey, its owners asked why. “The Lord needs it,” they said. Then **they brought the donkey to Jesus, threw their robes onto the donkey, and helped Jesus get onto it.** **People spread their robes along the road for Jesus, and others spread palm branches cut from the fields.**

The whole crowd praised God with a loud voice for all the miracles they had seen. **“Hosanna!” they said. “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!”** The word *hosanna* means “save now.” The people welcomed Jesus as their promised King. They hoped He would save them from the Romans. **Some religious leaders asked Jesus to tell His disciples to be quiet.**

Jesus answered, “If they did not praise Me, the rocks would praise Me!”

While Jesus was in the temple complex, people who were blind and people who were lame came to Him. Jesus healed them. The blind and lame would not have been allowed to worship in the temple.

Other religious leaders saw Jesus’ miracles and heard the children saying, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” They were very angry and asked Jesus, “Do You hear what these children are saying?” They were saying Jesus is the king.

“Yes,” Jesus told them. The writer of the Psalms had said, “You have prepared praise from the mouths of children and nursing infants.”

Jesus left them and went to the town of Bethany to spend the night.

Christ Connection: During Jesus’ triumphal entry, the people welcomed Him as King. Jesus was the Messiah spoken about by the prophet Zechariah: “Look, your King is coming to you; He is righteous and victorious, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey” (Zechariah 9:9). One day, Jesus will return to earth on a white horse as King over everything.



INTRODUCE the Story

WELCOME TIME

Greet each preteen as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Prompt kids to imagine they are preparing to welcome a king to church today. What do they think they would need to do to get ready?

OPTION 1: Guess the word

Supplies: dry erase board or sticky notes, marker

Lead the kids in a guess-the-word game using key words from today's Bible story. (*hosanna, triumphal, Jesus, Jerusalem, king, donkey, Messiah, Roman, temple*) Draw a blank for each letter of the word on a dry erase board or use sticky notes on the wall. Call on kids one at a time to guess a letter. If a player guesses a letter in the word, he can guess another. If a player guesses a letter that does not appear in the word, his turn is over and play passes to the next kid. The player who completes the word is the winner. Play as time allows.

- Based on these words, what do you think our Bible story is about?

OPTION 2: Explore the story

Supplies: 12 plastic eggs, story props (small leaf, nickels or quarters, thimble, bread, red or purple cloth, small crown, nails, numbered cube, piece of sponge, thin fabric, small rock)

Before the session, conceal the props inside separate eggs. Hide the eggs around the room. Leave one egg empty. Challenge kids to find and collect all the eggs. Invite kids to open the eggs one at a time. Discuss what the items inside might have to do with today's Bible story.

Story props: small leaf—People waved palm branches to welcome Jesus into Jerusalem. (Matt. 21:8); nickels or quarters—Judas received 30 pieces of silver for betraying Jesus. (Matt. 26:15); thimble—Jesus said His blood is like the cup at the Last Supper. (Matt. 26:27-28); bread—Jesus said His body is like the bread at the Last Supper. (Matt. 26:26); red or purple cloth—Soldiers put a robe on Jesus. (Matt. 27:28); small crown—Soldiers put a crown of thorns on Jesus' head. (Matt. 27:29); nails—Jesus was nailed to the cross. (Matt. 27:35); numbered cube—Soldiers cast lots for Jesus' clothing. (Matt. 27:35); piece of sponge—Soldiers offered Jesus sour wine. (Matt. 27:48); thin fabric—Jesus' body was wrapped in linen. (Matt. 27:59); small rock—A large stone was rolled in front of Jesus' tomb. (Matt. 27:60); (empty)—On the third day, Jesus rose from the dead. The tomb was empty! (Matt. 28:6)

- Do any of these items seem unusual to you? Why?



TEACH the Story

The Bible tells us what is true about God and about ourselves. All of the stories in the Bible fit together to tell us the big story of how God rescues sinners through His Son, Jesus.

Today we are going to hear about Jesus' triumphal entry. Whether this is your first time or your tenth time hearing this story, there is always something new to learn in God's Word.

Read from Matthew 21:1-17.

- What does this story teach us about God?

God often does things in ways we don't expect. The people had seen all that Jesus had done: His miracles and healing of the sick. Now they expected Him to conquer the Romans and reign as King. That is not what Jesus did, but He would save His people in an even greater way.

- Why was Passover such an important time for the Jewish people?

Passover was not just a special meal, but a weeklong celebration of what God had done to free His people from slavery in Egypt. This was especially important for the Jews during Jesus' day because they were again under oppression—this time under the Roman Empire. **They were looking for the rescuer, or Messiah**, whom the prophets from long ago had said would come.

- Form groups of two or three and practice retelling the Bible story in your own words. Think of someone you could share the story with this week.

CHRIST CONNECTION

During Jesus' triumphal entry, the people welcomed Him as King. Jesus was the Messiah spoken about by the prophet Zechariah: "Look, your King is coming to you; He is righteous and victorious, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey" (Zechariah 9:9). One day, Jesus will return to earth on a white horse as King over everything.



TEACH the Story

MISSIONS MOMENT

Ask kids who thinks they can run fast. Have they ever run a race? Explain that running fast might not seem like something useful for a missionary to do, but we are going to learn about a missionary who used that skill to share Jesus. Eric Liddell was his name and he had a special life of serving Jesus. Emphasize that missionaries share the same stories about Jesus that we learn, like our story today about how people welcomed Jesus to Jerusalem as their King. We can share these stories, too, and be on mission with God.

PRAY

God, thank You that out of Your love for us, You provided Your Son as the Messiah, the One who saves us from our sins. Thank You for being the eternal King who will reign over all. May we welcome You as King in every part of our lives. We love You, Lord. Amen.

THE GOSPEL: GOD'S PLAN FOR ME

The gospel is the good news, the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use Scripture and the guide provided below to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.



GOD RULES. Ask: "Who is in charge at home?" Explain that because God created everything, He is in charge of everything. Read Revelation 4:11.



WE SINNED. Ask: "Have you ever done something wrong?" Tell kids that everyone sins, or disobeys God. Our sin separates us from God. Read Romans 3:23.



GOD PROVIDED. Explain that God is holy and must punish sin. God sent His Son, Jesus, to take the punishment we deserve. Read John 3:16.



JESUS GIVES. Ask: "What is the best gift you've ever received?" Say that Jesus took our punishment for sin by giving His life, and He gives us His righteousness. God sees us as if we lived the perfect life Jesus lived. This is the best gift ever! Read 2 Corinthians 5:21.



WE RESPOND. Explain that everyone has a choice to make. Ask: "Will you trust Jesus as your Savior and Lord? You can turn from self and sin and turn to Jesus." Read Romans 10:9-10.



APPLY the Story

Big Picture Question

What did Jesus do to save us? Jesus lived a sinless life, died on the cross, and rose from the dead.

Jesus is the promised Messiah who came to save sinners. He is worthy of all praise.

- How could you make new neighbors feel welcome?
- What ways will you make others feel welcome—at home, at school, or in the community?

Distribute Bibles. Guide preteens to open their Bibles to Matthew 21. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Matthew 21:9. Explain that the story of Jesus' triumphal entry is found in all four Gospels. All four of the accounts of the triumphal entry bring different details to the story. Because our Bible story today, as well as many others, are recorded in many of the Gospels, we are able to have a deeper insight into Jesus' life and ministry.

Choose another volunteer to read aloud Matthew 21:9 again. Then lead the group to discuss the following questions.

1. Why do you think the people welcomed Jesus as King?

Help kids recognize that the people knew the prophecies and believed Jesus was the Messiah who was promised long ago. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Ps. 118:26.)

2. What type of Messiah were the Jewish people expecting?

Help kids recognize that many were expecting the Messiah to be the conqueror of the Roman Empire, but God had another plan—a plan to save people from sin. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Isa. 55:9.)

3. What are some things you can trust God with in your life, knowing that His plans are best?

Help kids recognize that God is trustworthy and we can trust Him in all areas of our life. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Prov. 3:5-6.)



APPLY the Story

KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY

Supplies: Bibles, chalkboard or dry erase board, chalk or marker

Instruct kids to open their Bibles to Philippians 2:8. Lead the kids to read the key passage together. Write the key passage on a chalkboard or dry erase board. Lead kids to read the key passage together. Erase a couple of words and challenge kids to read the key passage again, saying the missing words from memory. See how many words you can erase with the kids still saying the verse correctly.

If time allows, repeat the whole challenge and continue until the class says the whole verse without any words on the board.

PRAY

Invite volunteers to share prayer requests. Then pray, thanking God for sending Jesus as the Messiah and for the promise of eternal life that we have through Him.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY: Make invitations

Supplies: colored paper, markers, crayons, stickers, envelopes, stamps (optional)

Provide supplies for kids to create invitations for people they would like to invite to church next week to learn about King Jesus.

Prepare a sample note on the board for kids to use as a template: *Dear _____,
I have been having a really great time learning about Jesus' life at my church, and I would really like for you to join me next week as we learn more. Will you come with me? Sincerely,*

Remind kids that we have talked about how people welcomed Jesus to Jerusalem as their King and how He will one day come again and rule as King for all eternity. Do you have any friends or family members you would like to invite to learn more about Jesus?

Encourage kids to use the supplies to make a card to either mail or hand deliver to friends, neighbors, or family members.



Unit 26, Session 2

Jesus Was Questioned

Matthew 22; Mark 12; Luke 10

Story Point: Jesus spoke with wisdom and authority.

Open your Bible and read aloud Matthew 22:15-22,34-46, or tell the story from the following Bible story script.

The religious leaders heard Jesus teaching in Jerusalem, and they **decided to ask tricky questions to catch Him saying something wrong.** They sent some men to Jesus. The men said, “Teacher, we know You tell the truth. Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?”

Jesus knew what they were doing. “**Why are you trying to trick Me?**” He asked. “**Show Me the coin you use to pay taxes.**”

The men brought Him a denarius. Jesus asked, “**Whose picture is on the coin? Whose name is on it?**”

“Caesar’s,” they answered.

Jesus said, “**Then give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and give to God what belongs to God.**”

The men were amazed at what Jesus said, and they went away.

Later, the religious leaders came to question Jesus again. “Teacher, which command in the law is the greatest?” they asked.

Jesus answered, “**Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with**

all your mind, and with all your strength. The second most important command is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself.”

A man said to Jesus, “That’s right. To love God and your neighbor as yourself is far more important than offerings and sacrifices.”

The man answered wisely, and Jesus said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.”

Then Jesus asked the religious leaders a question: “**Whose son is the Messiah?**”

“David’s,” they said.

“How can that be?” Jesus asked. “David called the Messiah ‘Lord.’ Why would he do that if the Messiah is his son?”

The religious leaders didn’t know what to say. Their plan had failed, and no one was brave enough to ask Him any more questions.

Christ Connection: When the religious leaders questioned Jesus, He answered with wisdom and power. Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. He is the Word of God, who came to show us exactly what God is like. Jesus has authority in heaven and on earth.



INTRODUCE the Story

WELCOME TIME

Greet each preteen as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Prompt kids to think about one thing they would ask Jesus if He were physically in the room right now. Invite them to share their questions.

OPTION 1: Only three

Supplies: modeling clay or play dough

Make a sculpture out of clay or play dough in front of the group. Allow the kids time to ask only three questions to help them figure out what you have sculpted. Then give them 30 seconds to take their best guesses. Play additional rounds, allowing the kids to take turns sculpting.

- Were three questions enough to figure out what the sculpture was? Why or why not?
- Did you think more carefully about the questions you asked more because you could only ask three?

OPTION 2: Musical mind challenge

Supplies: chairs, music

Before the session, prepare a list of questions about the Bible or previously studied Bible stories. Set up chairs in a circle around the room. Provide enough chairs for every kid except one.

Play a game of musical chairs, removing one chair each round. When the music stops, the player left standing gets to answer a question. If he answers correctly, he remains in the game; if he answers incorrectly, he is out for this round of the game.

- Were some of these questions difficult to answer? What questions do you think the religious leaders had for Jesus?



TEACH the Story

The Bible tells us what is true about God and about ourselves. All of the stories in the Bible fit together to tell us the big story of how God rescues sinners through His Son, Jesus.

Today we are going to hear about a time the religious leaders questioned Jesus. They wanted to catch Jesus saying something wrong. Whether this is your first time or your tenth time hearing this story, there is always something new to learn in God's Word.

Read Matthew 22:15-22,34-46.

- What does this story teach us about God?

Jesus helped the religious leaders realize that **the Messiah is both a human** (the son of David) **and the Son of God** (David's Lord). The religious leaders could not respond to that, so they stopped questioning Jesus.

- Why did the religious leaders question Jesus?

They did not like that Jesus claimed to be the Messiah, and they really didn't like the way He threatened their power and authority. But Jesus spoke with wisdom and authority. The religious leaders were amazed after listening to Jesus. Matthew 22:46 says that from that day on, no one dared to challenge Him again.

- Form groups of two or three and practice retelling the Bible story in your own words. Think of someone you could share the story with this week.

CHRIST CONNECTION

When the religious leaders questioned Jesus, He answered with wisdom and power. Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. He is the Word of God, who came to show us exactly what God is like. Jesus has authority in heaven and on earth.



TEACH the Story

MISSIONS MOMENT

Eric Liddell was a runner who qualified for the 1924 Olympics in Paris, France. Eric believed that he should not compete on Sundays. When he found out that he would have to run the 100-meter races on Sunday, he chose to run two other races that wouldn't be on Sunday, even though those weren't his best races. Eric chose to honor God in all things. People all over the world heard about Jesus because Eric said, "Not on Sunday." Close in prayer, thanking God for missionaries who are obedient to God.

PRAY

God, thank You for sending Jesus to earth. Jesus displayed His wisdom and authority on earth and in heaven. Give us Your wisdom as we go throughout our week. We want to be good representatives of You to those we are around. Amen.

THE GOSPEL: GOD'S PLAN FOR ME

The gospel is the good news, the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use Scripture and the guide provided below to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.



GOD RULES. Ask: "Who is in charge at home?" Explain that because God created everything, He is in charge of everything. Read Revelation 4:11.



WE SINNED. Ask: "Have you ever done something wrong?" Tell kids that everyone sins, or disobeys God. Our sin separates us from God. Read Romans 3:23.



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JESUS GIVES. Ask: "What is the best gift you've ever received?" Say that Jesus took our punishment for sin by giving His life, and He gives us His righteousness. God sees us as if we lived the perfect life Jesus lived. This is the best gift ever! Read 2 Corinthians 5:21.



WE RESPOND. Explain that everyone has a choice to make. Ask: "Will you trust Jesus as your Savior and Lord? You can turn from self and sin and turn to Jesus." Read Romans 10:9-10.



APPLY the Story

Big Picture Question

What did Jesus do to save us? Jesus lived a sinless life, died on the cross, and rose from the dead.

Jesus was “obedient to the point of death—even to death on a cross” (Philippians 2:8).

- Why did the religious leaders hate Jesus so much?
- How can you show love to people who reject Jesus?

Distribute Bibles. Guide preteens to open their Bibles to Matthew 22. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Matthew 22:22. Remind preteens that when Jesus answered the religious leaders' questions, Jesus spoke with wisdom and authority.

Choose another volunteer to read aloud Matthew 22:22 again. Then lead the group to discuss the following questions.

1. Why did the religious leaders ask Jesus questions? Were they really interested in what Jesus was teaching?

Lead kids to recall that the religious leaders were only questioning Jesus to try to catch Him doing something wrong. Jesus knew what they were trying to do and answered them with wisdom and authority. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Luke 20:22-26.)

2. How can we see Jesus' wisdom and authority in the way He answered the religious leaders?

Help kids recognize the religious leaders thought they had come up a question that would trap Jesus when they chose to ask Him about taxes. They thought either way He answered, the Jews or the Romans would have a problem with it; however, Jesus saw beyond their craftiness and answered with wisdom and power. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Luke 20:25.)

3. How can we answer life's questions with wisdom?

Help kids recognize that we can find the answers to life's questions as we spend time with the Lord through prayer and reading His Word. When we hide God's Word in our heart, we too can answer with wisdom. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Ps. 119:105.)



APPLY the Story

KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY

Supplies: Bibles, index cards, marker, tape

Instruct kids to open their Bibles to Philippians 2:8. Lead the kids to read the key passage together. Write the words of the key passage on separate index cards, one card per kid. Mix up the cards and tape one card on each kid's shirt.

Challenge kids to arrange themselves in order. If kids struggle, allow them to refer to the key passage poster. If you have a large group, form teams and compete to see who can arrange themselves in the correct order the fastest.

PRAY

Invite volunteers to share prayer requests. Then pray, thanking God for sending Jesus to show us what He is like and that because of His authority in heaven and on earth, we can trust Him as our firm foundation for life.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY: Answering with wisdom

Supplies: dry erase board or large piece of paper, marker, Bibles

Write four Bible verse references on a dry erase board or large piece of paper. Suggestions: Psalm 56:3 (fear); John 14:27 (anxiety); Psalm 24:18 (sadness); Joshua 1:9 (nervousness)

Instruct kids to work together to look up each reference and how the truth found in each verse might help us through certain hard times we face.

Emphasize that as we go throughout life, we are certain to face hard times. The good news is we do not have to face these hard times alone. God has given us His Word, which provides wisdom, truth, and encouragement in times of need. God teaches us through His Word.

If kids find any of these verses comforting, encourage them to write down the references to read again later when they go through something difficult or to share with someone who might need wisdom from God's Word.



Unit 26, Session 3

The Last Supper

Matthew 26; Mark 14;
Luke 22; John 13

Story Point: Jesus commanded His disciples to remember His sacrifice.

Open your Bible and read aloud Matthew 26:17-35, or tell the story from the following Bible story script.

Jesus and His disciples were in Jerusalem to celebrate Passover. Long ago, God delivered His people from slavery in Egypt. He sent ten plagues to Egypt and during the tenth plague, the firstborn of the Egyptians died. The Israelites smeared the blood of a lamb on their doorposts, and God kept them safe; He passed over their houses. God said that once a year, the Israelites should celebrate the Passover to remember how He rescued them. He told His people when and how to celebrate.

On the day when the Jewish people were supposed to kill the Passover lamb, Jesus sent Peter and John to get the meal ready. He said, “Go into the city, and you will meet a man carrying a jug of water. Follow him.”

Jesus said that the man would go to a house, and the homeowner would show Peter and John a large room upstairs with furniture in it. That was the place Jesus wanted them to get the Passover meal ready. So Peter and John did as Jesus said.

When the Passover meal was ready, Jesus and His disciples reclined to eat. Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, one of you will betray Me.” The disciples were upset, but Jesus knew this was part of God’s plan. Peter said he would

never betray Jesus, but Jesus said Peter would deny Him three times.

Then Jesus took the bread, gave thanks to God for it, broke it, and then gave it to His disciples to eat. Jesus said, “This is My body, which I am giving for you. Do this to remember Me.”

Jesus took the cup and gave it to His disciples. They drank from it, and Jesus said, “This is My blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many.”

They sang a hymn together, and then they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Jesus knew He would be arrested and would suffer. Then He would die on the cross to take the punishment for the sins of the world. On the third day, Jesus would rise from the dead.

Christ Connection: Jesus showed His disciples with the bread and the drink that He is the true Passover Lamb. God’s people had broken the old covenant, and God promised to make a new covenant to forgive sins. The new covenant says that everyone who turns away from sin and trusts in Jesus’ death and resurrection will be forgiven of his sins and will have eternal life.



INTRODUCE the Story

WELCOME TIME

Greet each preteen as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Prompt kids to think about holidays that are used to remember or celebrate certain events. (*Veteran's Day, Christmas, Memorial Day, Columbus Day, and so on*)

OPTION 1: What do we need?

Supplies: paper, pencils

Give each kid a piece of paper and a pencil. Instruct them to imagine they are preparing a dinner for all of their friends. Ask each kid to list all the supplies and food they would need to have the dinner. Allow a couple of minutes for the kids to create their lists. Then invite the kids to share their lists with the group.

- What do you think Jesus ate at His last meal with His friends?

OPTION 2: Dinner with friends

Supplies: dinner items and decor (plates, cups, napkins, cutlery, tablecloth, flowers, and so on)

Display items you might use for a special dinner. Ask the kids think about how they would prepare for a very special dinner (clean the house, dust, change clothes, set the table, play music, and so on) and allow them to share with the group. Then invite the kids to work together to set up a dinner table in the room.

For a larger group, you may need multiple tables. The kids can sit around the table throughout the session.

- Did you know that before Jesus died, He shared one final meal with His disciples? What do you think it was like?



TEACH the Story

The Bible tells us what is true about God and about ourselves. All of the stories in the Bible fit together to tell us the big story of how God rescues sinners through His Son, Jesus.

Today we are going to hear about the Last Supper. Whether this is your first time or your tenth time hearing this story, there is always something new to learn in God's Word.

Read Matthew 26:17-35.

- What does this story teach us about God?

Jesus used this special supper to help explain **God's great plan of salvation for all people**. Passover was a time for the Jews to remember and celebrate how God protected His people and delivered them out of slavery in Egypt. God had told them to celebrate the Passover every year but at this celebration, Jesus showed His disciples with the bread and the drink that He is the true Passover Lamb.

- What did Jesus say the bread and drink represented?

When Jesus served the bread, He said that **the bread was like His body**. He said **the cup represented His blood** of the new covenant.

- Form groups of two or three and practice retelling the Bible story in your own words. Think of someone you could share the story with this week.

CHRIST CONNECTION

Jesus showed His disciples with the bread and the drink that He is the true Passover Lamb. God's people had broken the old covenant, and God promised to make a new covenant to forgive sins. The new covenant says that everyone who turns away from sin and trusts in Jesus' death and resurrection will be forgiven of his sins and will have eternal life.



TEACH the Story

MISSIONS MOMENT

Eric Liddell gave his life serving Jesus. Even when it was dangerous, he did not leave China but chose to stay and continue the mission work. We know that Jesus commanded His disciples to remember His sacrifice. Eric remembered Jesus' sacrifice and was willing to sacrifice his own life. Missionaries today are serving all over the world and are willing to sacrifice their own lives for Jesus, because He gave His life for us. Pray for missionaries around the world as well as any missionaries your church supports.

PRAY

God, we praise You for loving us even while we were lost in our sin. Thank You for giving Jesus as the Passover Lamb, the payment for our sin. Help us remember Your sacrifice and honor You with the way we live our lives. Amen.

THE GOSPEL: GOD'S PLAN FOR ME

The gospel is the good news, the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use Scripture and the guide provided below to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.



GOD RULES. Ask: "Who is in charge at home?" Explain that because God created everything, He is in charge of everything. Read Revelation 4:11.



WE SINNED. Ask: "Have you ever done something wrong?" Tell kids that everyone sins, or disobeys God. Our sin separates us from God. Read Romans 3:23.



GOD PROVIDED. Explain that God is holy and must punish sin. God sent His Son, Jesus, to take the punishment we deserve. Read John 3:16.



JESUS GIVES. Ask: "What is the best gift you've ever received?" Say that Jesus took our punishment for sin by giving His life, and He gives us His righteousness. God sees us as if we lived the perfect life Jesus lived. This is the best gift ever! Read 2 Corinthians 5:21.



WE RESPOND. Explain that everyone has a choice to make. Ask: "Will you trust Jesus as your Savior and Lord? You can turn from self and sin and turn to Jesus." Read Romans 10:9-10.



APPLY the Story

Big Picture Question

What did Jesus do to save us? Jesus lived a sinless life, died on the cross, and rose from the dead.

God loves us and provided the way of salvation through His Son, Jesus.

- Why is it important for Christians to remember Jesus?
- What questions do you have about how our church celebrates the Lord's Supper?

Distribute Bibles. Guide preteens to open their Bibles to Luke 22. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Luke 22:19-20. Remind kids that during the Last Supper, Jesus gave His disciples a hint of the plan God had to rescue people from their sins. Jesus commanded His disciples to remember His sacrifice. He commands everyone who believes in Him to remember too.

Choose another volunteer to read aloud Luke 22:19-20 again. Then lead the group to discuss the following questions.

1. When was the old covenant established? What is the new covenant?

Help kids recognize that in the old covenant, God expected His people to live a certain way. He explained this covenant to Abraham in Genesis. God's people had broken the old covenant over and over, so God in His mercy established a new covenant. The new covenant says that everyone who turns away from sin and trusts in Jesus' death and resurrection will be forgiven of his sins and have eternal life. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Jer. 31:31.)

2. Why did Jesus instruct the disciples to take the bread and the cup?

Lead kids to recall that by remembering Jesus' sacrifice in this way, we "proclaim the Lord's death until He comes." (Option: Choose a volunteer to read 1 Cor. 11:23-26.)

3. What must we do to be saved through the new covenant?

Discuss with kids that our salvation is not dependent on our works because Jesus already lived a perfect life and died on the cross to pay for our sins. We receive the free gift of salvation by trusting Him as our Lord. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Rom. 10:9.)



APPLY the Story

KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY

Supplies: Bibles; paper; pencils, markers, colored pencils, or crayons; music (optional)

Instruct kids to open their Bibles to Philippians 2:8. Lead the kids to read the key passage together. Invite kids who have memorized the key passage to recite it.

Provide paper and writing utensils for kids to each draw a picture to illustrate the key passage in their own way. Encourage volunteers to share their drawings with the group. By illustrating the key passage, kids will focus on the words and meaning of the verse. Consider playing the key passage song while kids draw.

Encourage kids to hang up their drawings at home as a reminder of Jesus' sacrifice for them.

PRAY

Invite volunteers to share prayer requests. Then pray, thanking God for sending His Son as a sacrifice. Ask Him to help kids faithfully tell others how much He loves them.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY: Exploring the bread

Supplies: unleavened bread (such as matzah), Bible

Show kids the unleavened bread. Consider passing around several pieces for kids to examine. Explain that this unleavened bread is like the bread used at a Passover meal. Invite them to make observations about unleavened bread compared to bread we use to make sandwiches.

Point out that unleavened bread feels more like a cracker than a slice of bread. In the Bible, leavening—the stuff that makes bread rise—represents sin. Jews observing Passover remembered their need to have their sins removed. This bread is also pierced. It has tiny little holes all throughout each piece. It is also bruised. It has little brown spots throughout each piece. [*Read aloud Isa. 53:5.*] Ask kids if they can see how this special bread can help us remember Jesus' sacrifice for us.

Consider providing enough unleavened bread for each kid to taste it. Encourage them to spend a couple of minutes thinking about the sin they need removed from their lives and praying, thanking Jesus for His sacrifice.



Unit 26, Session 4

Jesus Was Arrested

Matthew 26–27

Story Point: Jesus allowed His enemies to arrest Him.

Open your Bible and read aloud from Matthew 26–27, or tell the story from the following Bible story script.

Jesus came with His disciples to a garden called Gethsemane (geth SEM uh nih). He said to them, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.” **Jesus took three of His disciples into the garden, and Jesus became very sad and troubled.** Jesus told the three disciples to stay there, and He went a little farther. **Jesus fell facedown and prayed, “Father! If it is possible, spare Me from this. But I want to do Your plan.”**

Jesus came back and found the three disciples asleep. He asked Peter, “Couldn’t you stay awake with Me for one hour?” **Jesus went away and prayed a second time.** Then He found His disciples sleeping again. **He said, “Are you still asleep? Get up, for it is almost time. Someone is going to betray Me.”**

Suddenly Judas arrived with a large crowd carrying swords and clubs. Judas kissed Jesus so the crowd would know which man was Jesus. **The men grabbed Jesus and arrested Him.** Peter pulled out his sword to fight the men, but Jesus told Peter to put away his sword. Jesus said, “Isn’t this what God planned all along?” **Jesus’ followers ran away, but Peter stayed nearby to watch.**

The men who arrested Jesus led Him to

the house of Caiaphas the high priest. The religious leaders wanted a reason to kill Jesus, but they couldn’t find one. The high priest asked, “Do You have anything to say? Are You the Messiah, the Son of God?”

Jesus replied, “Yes, that’s right.” The high priest said, “Ah ha! He has spoken against God.” **Caiaphas and the religious leaders did not want to believe that Jesus is God’s Son. They said Jesus was lying, but Jesus was telling the truth! The crowd said, “He deserves to die!”** They spit in Jesus’ face and hit Him.

A servant saw Peter and asked, “Aren’t you one of Jesus’ disciples?” “No, I’m not!” Peter said. Twice more as Peter watched what was happening to Jesus, someone asked him if he was a follower of Jesus. Peter lied. “No!” he said. “I don’t even know Him!”

The next morning, the religious leaders decided how they would kill Jesus. Then they took Him to Pilate, the governor.

Christ Connection: Jesus knew that His death was God’s plan to save people from sin. Jesus’ friends turned against Him and He was arrested and put on trial, but Jesus followed His Father’s plan in order to bring salvation to the world.



INTRODUCE the Story

WELCOME TIME

Greet each preteen as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Prompt kids to think about a time they were accused of doing something they didn't do. How did they feel? What did they do?

OPTION 1: Who has the money?

Supplies: coin

Instruct kids to put their heads down and close their eyes. Walk around the room and secretly give one kid a coin. Call for every kid to look up and try to guess who has the coin. If the class guesses on the first three tries, choose a random kid to be “out” and stand at the front of the room.

- Were the rules of the game fair? Why?
- Why might God allow something to happen that seems unfair?

OPTION 2: Block stack

Supplies: tumbling tower block games (1 per group)

Form groups of three or four kids. Provide a tumbling tower block game for each group. Lead the kids to play the game until one person causes the block tower to fall down. Instead of that player being out, change the rules so that the person who played before the one who made the tower collapse is out. Play until one kid remains.

- What was different about this version of the game?
- Why do you think Jesus would take the punishment for something He never did?



TEACH the Story

The Bible tells us what is true about God and about ourselves. All of the stories in the Bible fit together to tell us the big story of how God rescues sinners through His Son, Jesus.

Today we are going to hear how Jesus was arrested. Whether this is your first time or your tenth time hearing this story, there is always something new to learn in God's Word.

Read Matthew 26:36–27:2.

- What does this story teach us about God?

We see Jesus' humility in our Bible story today by the way **Jesus allowed His enemies to arrest Him**. Even though Jesus was perfect and completely undeserving of arrest, He humbled Himself out of obedience to His Father and His love for us.

- Why didn't Jesus stop His enemies from arresting Him?

Jesus prayed to God, asking Him to spare Him from what was coming, but **Jesus told His father that He wanted to do His plan**. Jesus could have stopped all this from happening. He could have stopped Judas and the soldiers and the religious leaders, but He didn't.

- Form groups of two or three and practice retelling the Bible story in your own words. Think of someone you could share the story with this week.

CHRIST CONNECTION

Jesus knew that His death was God's plan to save people from sin. Jesus' friends turned against Him and He was arrested and put on trial, but Jesus followed His Father's plan in order to bring salvation to the world.



TEACH the Story

MISSIONS MOMENT

We've been learning about missionary Eric Liddell, who won a gold medal at the Olympics in 1924. Missionaries today still look for ways to share the gospel during the Olympic games. In fact, Christians from all over the world go to the Olympics because they can meet people from many countries at one event. Jesus allowed His enemies to arrest Him and crucify Him because He wanted people all over the world to be saved. At the 2020 Olympics, missionaries told people in Japan about Jesus. Pray that people who heard the gospel will trust in Jesus.

PRAY

God, thank You for Your mercy and grace. You did not leave us on our own in our sin but provided salvation through Jesus. Only You can save and give us eternal life. Help us live our lives in obedience and service to You and tell others about the free gift of salvation. Amen.

THE GOSPEL: GOD'S PLAN FOR ME

The gospel is the good news, the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use Scripture and the guide provided below to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.



GOD RULES. Ask: "Who is in charge at home?" Explain that because God created everything, He is in charge of everything. Read Revelation 4:11.



WE SINNED. Ask: "Have you ever done something wrong?" Tell kids that everyone sins, or disobeys God. Our sin separates us from God. Read Romans 3:23.



GOD PROVIDED. Explain that God is holy and must punish sin. God sent His Son, Jesus, to take the punishment we deserve. Read John 3:16.



JESUS GIVES. Ask: "What is the best gift you've ever received?" Say that Jesus took our punishment for sin by giving His life, and He gives us His righteousness. God sees us as if we lived the perfect life Jesus lived. This is the best gift ever! Read 2 Corinthians 5:21.



WE RESPOND. Explain that everyone has a choice to make. Ask: "Will you trust Jesus as your Savior and Lord? You can turn from self and sin and turn to Jesus." Read Romans 10:9-10.



APPLY the Story

Big Picture Question

What did Jesus do to save us? Jesus lived a sinless life, died on the cross, and rose from the dead.

Because of God's love for us, He sent Jesus as the Messiah—the One who would save us from our sins.

- Did Jesus ever do anything wrong?
- What should we do when we do something wrong?

Distribute Bibles. Guide preteens to open their Bibles to Matthew 26. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Matthew 26:63-64. Emphasize that Jesus allowed His enemies to arrest Him. In this way, He willingly laid down His life out of His love for us. We can share the good news about Jesus with others, laying down our lives for those around us by putting others before ourselves.

Choose another volunteer to read aloud Matthew 26:63-64 again. Then lead the group to discuss the following questions.

1. Why did Jesus allow His enemies to arrest Him?

Help kids recognize that Jesus could have chosen not to be arrested. He is all-powerful. His enemies did not trap Him or catch Him. He willingly allowed them to arrest Him out of His humility and obedience to the Father. Because of His love for us, He laid down His life. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read John 15:13.)

2. Caiaphas asked Jesus if He was the Messiah. What does *Messiah* mean?

Lead kids to recall that Messiah means "the anointed one" or the "promised deliverer." (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Acts 3:18.)

3. Jesus laid down His life for us. How can we lay down our life for others?

Invite kids to share their ideas. Discuss how we can lay down our lives for others by making choices to place others before ourselves. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read 1 John 3:16.)



APPLY the Story

KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY

Supplies: Bibles, stopwatch or timer (optional)

Instruct kids to open their Bibles to Philippians 2:8. Lead the kids to read the key passage together. Assign a word from the key passage to each kid. For larger groups, more than one kid may be assigned a particular word.

Explain that when you say “go,” kids should say the words in the correct order, one at a time, to complete the key passage. Instruct kids to stand as they say their words and then sit down. Repeat several times and challenge kids to increase their speed.

PRAY

Invite volunteers to share prayer requests. Then pray, thanking God for sending Jesus to lay down His life for us. Pray that He will help kids discover ways to show His love and share the good news of the gospel with the people around us.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY: Laying down my life

Supplies: magazine pictures

Find pictures online or in magazines of situations in which kids could display their love for people by “laying down their life” for another.

For example, hold up a picture of an older person carrying many bags and ask the kids to share ways they could demonstrate the love of Jesus to others through their actions. For this example, kids could show the love of Jesus to that person by helping carry that person’s bags to the car. Invite kids to discuss several pictures.

Emphasize that Jesus allowed His enemies to arrest Him. We can lay down our life for others in many ways. This won’t be natural for us. We will have to look for opportunities to serve others and show the love of Jesus to people around us. Look for ways you can lay down your life for others this week.



Unit 26, Session 5

Jesus' Crucifixion

Matthew 26–27; John 18–19

Story Point: Jesus died on the cross to pay for our sins.

Open your Bible and read aloud from Matthew 26–27; John 18–19, or tell the story from the following Bible story script.

Jesus stood before Pilate, the governor. Pilate asked Him, “Are You the King of the Jews?” Jesus answered, “Yes, that’s right.” Then the religious leaders made accusations against Jesus, but Jesus did not say anything. Pilate was surprised that Jesus was silent.

Every year at Passover, the governor would free a prisoner—whichever prisoner the people chose. At that time, there was a prisoner named Barabbas (buh RAB uhs) who was very dangerous. So Pilate asked the crowd, “Who do you want me to set free? Barabbas or Jesus, who is called the Messiah?”

The crowd answered, “Barabbas!”

Pilate asked, “Then what should I do with Jesus, who is called the Messiah?” The crowd answered, “Crucify Him!”

Pilate asked, “Why? What has He done wrong?” But the crowd kept shouting, “Crucify Him!”

Pilate’s soldiers took Jesus to the governor’s palace and gathered around Him. They **took off His clothes and put a scarlet robe on Him. They made a crown of thorns and put it on His head. Then they hit Jesus and mocked Him. “Hail, King of the Jews!”** they said.

The soldiers nailed Jesus to a cross. They put a sign above His head that said: THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS. Two criminals were crucified next to Him. As Jesus was on the cross, people mocked Him. “He saved others, but He cannot save Himself!” they said.

From noon until three in the afternoon, darkness covered the land. Then **Jesus cried out, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” Jesus shouted again with a loud voice, “It is finished!” Then Jesus died.** Suddenly, the curtain in the temple sanctuary split in two, from top to bottom, and there was an earthquake. One of the men near the cross said, “This man really was God’s Son!”

Jesus was buried in a rich man’s tomb cut into a rock. A stone was sealed in front of the tomb and Roman soldiers stood guard 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 Savior. Jesus never sinned, but He died in our place. He was the blood sacrifice made once and for all for the forgiveness of sin. Jesus rose from the dead on the third day, and those who trust in Him have forgiveness and eternal life.



INTRODUCE the Story

WELCOME TIME

Greet each preteen as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Prompt kids to share about a time they expected something to happen but it didn't. How did they feel? What did they do?

OPTION 1: Six hours

Supplies: paper, pencils, clocks (optional)

Consider showing two analog clocks: one set to nine o'clock and another set to three o'clock. Ask kids to identify the time on each clock and how many hours pass between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. (six)

Distribute paper and pencils. Challenge kids to think of everything they did the previous day between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. and list the activities on their paper. Invite volunteers to share their lists. Who listed the most activities?

- How much can you accomplish in six hours?
- What do you think was the most important six hours in history?

OPTION 2: Coin guess

Supplies: paper bag, various coins

Put various coins into a paper bag. Choose a volunteer to reach into the bag and grab a coin. He should try to identify the coin by touch alone. Give each kid a turn.

Then show the coins and let kids describe the differences between the coins. How did they know which coin they grabbed? Talk about things kids might want to buy and how much money they would need.

- Has anyone ever generously bought something for you that you couldn't afford to pay for yourself? How did you feel?



TEACH the Story

The Bible tells us what is true about God and about ourselves. All of the stories in the Bible fit together to tell us the big story of how God rescues sinners through His Son, Jesus.

Today we are going to hear about Jesus' crucifixion. Whether this is your first time or your tenth time hearing this story, there is always something new to learn in God's Word.

Read from Matthew 26–27; John 18–19.

- What does this story teach us about God?

Jesus shouted from the cross, “My God, my God, why have You abandoned Me?” Jesus freed us from sin and death by taking the curse of sin on Himself. **God is perfect and separate from sin**, so as Jesus hung on the cross, with the weight of all our sin on Him, God had to turn away from His Son. **When we trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior, God will never turn away from us.**

- How did Jesus respond to the accusations against Him?

Jesus was silent. He was even silent as the soldiers placed a robe and a crown of thorns on His head to mock Him. This fulfilled the prophecy about the Messiah found in Isaiah 53:7. Jesus' silence shows His humility, obedience, and willingness to lay down His life for us.

- Form groups of two or three and practice retelling the Bible story in your own words. Think of someone you could share the story with this week.

CHRIST CONNECTION

We deserve to die because of our sin, but God loves us and kept His promise to send a Savior. Jesus never sinned, but He died in our place. He was the blood sacrifice made once and for all for the forgiveness of sin. Jesus rose from the dead on the third day, and those who trust in Him have forgiveness and eternal life.



TEACH the Story

MISSIONS MOMENT

The Bible teaches us that Jesus died on the cross to pay for our sins. This is what we want to teach people all over the world. Missionaries in Japan knew they would have a unique opportunity to reach many nations during the Olympics. They created a ministry called Connect 2020 to direct their Olympic missions efforts. Pray for the continuing missions efforts that began at the 2020 Summer Olympics.

PRAY

God, thank You for loving us. Thank You for your mercy and grace and for sending Jesus to take the punishment of sin in our place. May we remember Your sacrifice for us and honor You in the way we live our lives. Use us to tell others about this good news! Amen.

THE GOSPEL: GOD'S PLAN FOR ME

The gospel is the good news, the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use Scripture and the guide provided below to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.



GOD RULES. Ask: "Who is in charge at home?" Explain that because God created everything, He is in charge of everything. Read Revelation 4:11.



WE SINNED. Ask: "Have you ever done something wrong?" Tell kids that everyone sins, or disobeys God. Our sin separates us from God. Read Romans 3:23.



GOD PROVIDED. Explain that God is holy and must punish sin. God sent His Son, Jesus, to take the punishment we deserve. Read John 3:16.



JESUS GIVES. Ask: "What is the best gift you've ever received?" Say that Jesus took our punishment for sin by giving His life, and He gives us His righteousness. God sees us as if we lived the perfect life Jesus lived. This is the best gift ever! Read 2 Corinthians 5:21.



WE RESPOND. Explain that everyone has a choice to make. Ask: "Will you trust Jesus as your Savior and Lord? You can turn from self and sin and turn to Jesus." Read Romans 10:9-10.



APPLY the Story

Big Picture Question

What did Jesus do to save us? Jesus lived a sinless life, died on the cross, and rose from the dead.

Jesus humbled Himself and was obedient to His Father, even when it meant His death. Jesus willingly laid down His life to fulfill God's plan of salvation.

- Why does God want us to do good things?
- How can doing good things point others to Jesus?

Distribute Bibles. Guide preteens to open their Bibles to John 19. Choose a volunteer to read aloud John 19:30. Point out that "It is finished!" were the last words Jesus spoke before He died. He had obeyed the Father and paid the punishment for sin. We don't have to work to be accepted by God. We can trust in Jesus, who lived a perfect life and died in our place.

Choose another volunteer to read aloud John 19:30 again. Then lead the group to discuss the following questions.

1. What is the cost of sin?

Prompt kids to recall that because of our sin, we deserve to die. But God loves us and sent Jesus to take the punishment in our place. We are saved only through the sinless Lamb of God's death on the cross. He lived a perfect life, and salvation is found only in Him.

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Acts 4:12.)

2. The Bible says that the curtain in the temple sanctuary split in two. Why is this important?

Lead kids to recognize that the curtain that was torn separated the area in the temple called the holy of holies from the other areas of the temple. Only the high priest was allowed to enter this room and only at certain times. But when Jesus declared "It is finished!" the curtain tore so all who receive His salvation have full access to God the Father.

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Heb. 4:16.)

3. Since Jesus died on the cross to pay for our sins, what must we do?

Help kids recognize that we don't have to work to earn God's acceptance. Salvation is a gift from Jesus. Kids must respond to this good news. If they have received this gift by trusting in Jesus' work for them, Jesus calls them to share this good news with others.

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Acts 1:8.)



APPLY the Story

KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY

Supplies: Bibles, permanent marker, 2 foil pans, wooden clothespins, bucket

Before the session, write the key passage reference in the middle of each foil pan. Write the words from the key verse on separate clothespins and place them in a bucket. Make at least two sets (one per team).

Instruct kids to open their Bibles to Philippians 2:8. Lead the kids to read the key passage together. Place the buckets with the clothespins at one side of the room the pans on tables at the other side of the room. Form two or more teams of kids and instruct them to line up single file.

When you say “go” the first kid will dig in the bucket for the first word of the key passage, race to the pan at the other end of the room, clip their clothespin to the edge of the pan and race back to tag the next player. Continue until kids complete the key passage. The first team to finish wins.

PRAY

Invite volunteers to share prayer requests. Then pray, thanking God taking the curse of sin for us and giving us a new life in Him. Pray for boldness for the kids to share the good news of the gospel with others.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY: Gospel zipper pulls

Supplies: large, flat beads, fine-point permanent markers, bracelet cord

Review "The Gospel: God's Plan for Me" (page 53) with kids. Provide kids with large, flat beads and bracelet cord. Guide them to use fine-point permanent markers to draw the gospel plan icons on separate beads. Instruct them to lace the beads onto the cord in order. Kids may tie off the cord to make a zipper pull or tie together the ends to form a bracelet.

Emphasize that the good news of the gospel is that Jesus died on the cross to pay for our sins. Encourage kids to keep the beads as a reminder of the gospel. If they have trusted in Jesus, kids can use these icons to share the good news with others.



Unit 27, Session 1

Jesus' Resurrection

Matthew 28; John 20

Story Point: God raised Jesus from the dead to defeat sin and death.

Open your Bible and read aloud from Matthew 28; John 20, or tell the story from the following Bible story script.

On the third day after Jesus' death, Mary Magdalene went to Jesus' tomb. It was still dark, and she saw that the large stone at the entrance had been moved away.

Mary ran to Simon Peter and John. "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and I don't know where they have put Him!" she said.

Peter and John ran to the tomb. John looked inside and saw the linen cloths lying there. Then Peter went into the tomb and saw the linen cloths too. The cloth that had been around Jesus' head was folded up. John believed that Jesus was alive. Then Peter and John went back home.

Mary went back to the tomb and cried. When she looked inside, she saw two angels sitting there. They said to her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

"Because they've taken away my Lord, and I don't know where they've put Him," she said. Then Mary turned around. Jesus stood in front of her, but she did not recognize Him. Jesus said, "Woman, why are you crying? Who are you looking for?"

Mary thought Jesus might be the gardener. She replied, "Sir, if you have taken Jesus away, tell me where you've put Him and I will go get Him."

Jesus said, "Mary." Mary realized who He was and said, "Teacher!"

Jesus sent Mary to tell the other disciples that He was going back to the Father. Mary did what Jesus said, and she told the disciples, "I have seen the Lord!"

Meanwhile, some of the guards from Jesus' tomb went into the city and told the religious leaders everything that had happened. The leaders got together and made a plan. They gave the soldiers a lot of money and told them to lie about what they saw.

"Say that Jesus' disciples came in the night and stole His body while you were sleeping," they said. The guards took the money and lied about Jesus' resurrection.

Christ Connection: Jesus died on the cross for our sins, but He didn't stay dead. God was pleased with Jesus' sacrifice and raised Jesus from the dead to reign as King over all creation. Jesus provides salvation from sin and the promise of eternal life.



INTRODUCE the Story

WELCOME TIME

Greet each preteen as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Prompt kids to share the best news they've ever heard and how they heard about it.

OPTION 1: Stay put

Supplies: stopwatch or timer

Announce to the kids that you have a few physical challenges for them to accomplish. Challenge the kids to stay put in a certain position for 60 seconds. Play multiple rounds as time allows. (Suggested challenges: stand with your hands straight up in the air, stand on one foot with your other knee bent, stand with one leg extended in front of you, stand with one leg extended behind you)

- Why do you think it's hard for living things to stay put?

OPTION 2: Rolling away

Supplies: various size balls (table tennis ball, tennis ball, foam ball, playground ball), hula hoop, masking tape

Line up the kids on one side of the classroom. Use masking tape to mark a small X on the floor. Ensure that no furniture is in the path between the kids and the X. Encourage kids to take turns rolling the balls across the X, starting with the smallest ball and ending with the hula hoop. Ask the kids which ones were easier and which ones were harder and why.

- What do you think it would take to roll away a large stone blocking the entrance to a small cave?



TEACH the Story

The Bible tells us what is true about God and about ourselves. All of the stories in the Bible fit together to tell us the big story of how God rescues sinners through His Son, Jesus.

Today we are going to hear about Jesus' resurrection. Whether this is your first time or your tenth time hearing this story, there is always something new to learn in God's Word.

Read from Matthew 28; John 20.

- What does this story teach us about God?

Jesus died and was buried in a tomb. But Jesus didn't stay in the tomb. Jesus came back to life and came out of the tomb in a glorified body. **God raised Jesus from the dead to defeat sin and death.**

- How does trusting in Jesus as Lord and Savior change us?

When we trust Him as our Savior, it's like burying the old sinful part of us. Then **we get new life in Him** through the Holy Spirit, who guides us to live for Jesus.

- Form groups of two or three and practice retelling the Bible story in your own words. Think of someone you could share the story with this week.

CHRIST CONNECTION

Jesus died on the cross for our sins, but He didn't stay dead. God was pleased with Jesus' sacrifice and raised Jesus from the dead to reign as King over all creation. Jesus provides salvation from sin and the promise of eternal life.



TEACH the Story

MISSIONS MOMENT

Have you ever been camping? Missionaries have to go camping sometimes, just to reach people with Jesus' love. They are willing to go to hard places and into difficult situations because they have an important message—the same one we're learning: God raised Jesus from the dead to defeat sin and death. Play the missions video and close in prayer, thanking God for missionaries who go to hard places. Pray for any missionaries your church supports.

PRAY

Jesus, thank You for not only taking away our sins through your death, but for giving us eternal life through Your resurrection. Help us understand more each day how much You love us. Give us the courage to share Your love with the people around us. Amen.

THE GOSPEL: GOD'S PLAN FOR ME

The gospel is the good news, the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use Scripture and the guide provided below to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.



GOD RULES. Ask: "Who is in charge at home?" Explain that because God created everything, He is in charge of everything. Read Revelation 4:11.



WE SINNED. Ask: "Have you ever done something wrong?" Tell kids that everyone sins, or disobeys God. Our sin separates us from God. Read Romans 3:23.



GOD PROVIDED. Explain that God is holy and must punish sin. God sent His Son, Jesus, to take the punishment we deserve. Read John 3:16.



JESUS GIVES. Ask: "What is the best gift you've ever received?" Say that Jesus took our punishment for sin by giving His life, and He gives us His righteousness. God sees us as if we lived the perfect life Jesus lived. This is the best gift ever! Read 2 Corinthians 5:21.



WE RESPOND. Explain that everyone has a choice to make. Ask: "Will you trust Jesus as your Savior and Lord? You can turn from self and sin and turn to Jesus." Read Romans 10:9-10.



APPLY the Story

Big Picture Question

Where is Jesus now? Jesus ascended to heaven where He is seated at the right hand of the Father.

Jesus willingly gave up His life for us. Then He proved He was God's Son through His resurrection. Now we have eternal life through Him.

- How should you respond when someone forgives you?
- What's the difference between feeling bad that you did something wrong and continuing to feel guilty about it?

Distribute Bibles. Guide preteens to open their Bibles to Matthew 28. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Matthew 28:5-6. Emphasize that Christians have hope because Jesus is alive. God raised Jesus from the dead to defeat sin and death. Because Jesus rose from the dead, we know that He fully paid for our sins and defeated sin and death.

Choose another volunteer to read aloud Matthew 28:5-6 again. Then lead the group to discuss the following questions.

1. What did Jesus' resurrection prove about His death on the cross?

Lead kids to recognize that Jesus died to pay the penalty for our sins. He took the punishment we deserve. God's raising Jesus from the dead proves that His payment for sins was sufficient and final. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Heb. 10:10.)

2. How does Jesus' resurrection give us hope for our own resurrection?

Guide kids to understand that though our bodies may die on earth, we will live with God forever. When Jesus returns, believers who have died will be raised and all believers will receive new, transformed bodies that will never die.

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read 1 Cor. 15:51-52.)

3. How should we respond to Jesus' healing us through the forgiveness of our sins?

Help kids recognize that the more we understand Jesus' forgiveness, the more our love for Him grows. Because Jesus died for us, we live for Him.

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Luke 7:47.)



APPLY the Story

KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY

Supplies: Bibles, playground ball or beach ball, stopwatch

Instruct kids to open their Bibles to John 11:25. Lead the kids to read the key passage together. Give one kid a ball and instruct him to roll the ball to another kid and say the first word of the key passage.

Kids should continue rolling the ball to one another, saying one word of the key passage at a time. Consider timing the kids to see if they can go faster each time. Remind kids that Jesus didn't stay in the grave. He was resurrected! Jesus is alive.

PRAY

Invite volunteers to share prayer requests. Then pray, thanking Jesus for His sacrifice on the cross on our behalf and giving us new life in Him. Help us to never forget how much He loves us.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY: Plant seeds

Supplies: large plastic cups (1 per kid), bean seeds, potting soil, medium size scoop, permanent markers, water, tarp or plastic tablecloth (optional)

Tip: Lay down a tarp or plastic tablecloth to make clean up easier.

Give each kid a large cup. Provide permanent markers for kids to write their names on the outside of their cups. Allow each kid to scoop potting soil into their cup, filling it two-thirds full. Demonstrate how to make a hole for the seed with a finger. Insert the seed and cover it back up. Add enough water for the soil to be damp.

Encourage kids to take home the cup and place it in a window for sunlight. Remind kids to water enough to keep the soil damp and watch their seed come to life.

Explain that with enough water and sunlight, these seeds will come to life and begin to sprout through the soil. Planting seeds is a great reminder of what Jesus did for us and how we should respond. Jesus died for our sins and was buried in a tomb, like the seed is buried in this soil. On the third day, Jesus came back to life and came out of the tomb.

When we understand what Jesus did for us, we “die” to our old way of living and live a new life in Jesus, growing through the power of the Holy Spirit.



Unit 27, Session 2

The Emmaus Disciples

Luke 24

Story Point: Jesus taught that all the Scriptures point to Him.

Open your Bible and read aloud Luke 24:13-35, or tell the story from the following Bible story script.

On the day that Jesus rose from the dead, two of Jesus' disciples were walking to a village called Emmaus. The two disciples were talking about everything that had happened. As they talked, Jesus came and began to walk with them, but the disciples did not recognize Him. Jesus asked the disciples, "What are you talking about?" The disciples stopped walking. They looked sad. One of the disciples, Cleopas, answered, "Are you the only one in Jerusalem who hasn't heard what happened?"

They told Him, "Jesus of Nazareth was a Prophet. He was powerful when He acted and spoke before God and all the people. The religious leaders handed Jesus over to be sentenced to death, and they nailed Him to a cross. "We had hoped He was the One who would set Israel free. Besides, it's the third day since these things happened. Early this morning, some women went to the tomb and did not find Jesus' body. They saw angels, who said that Jesus is alive. Some of our friends went to the tomb, and they too saw that the tomb was empty."

Jesus said, "You are foolish to not believe what the prophets said! Isn't this what had to happen to the Messiah?" Then, beginning

with Moses and the Prophets, Jesus explained to them what all the Scriptures said about Him.

Jesus and the two disciples arrived at Emmaus, and they asked Jesus to stay with them. So Jesus joined them at the dinner table. He took the bread, thanked God for it, and broke it into pieces. Then He gave the pieces to the disciples. Right away, the disciples recognized Jesus! But Jesus immediately disappeared from their sight.

The two disciples thought about their walk to Emmaus. They said, "When Jesus talked to us on the road and explained the Scriptures, didn't our hearts burn with excitement?" The disciples immediately left Emmaus and went back to Jerusalem. They found Jesus' eleven disciples and others who gathered with them. They told them what happened. They said, "Simon saw Jesus too! Jesus is alive!"

Christ Connection: The whole Bible is about Jesus. When Adam and Eve sinned, God began working out His plan to send Jesus to rescue people from sin. All of the Old Testament points forward to Jesus' life, death, and resurrection—the time when Jesus would bring God's promised salvation for sinners.



INTRODUCE the Story

WELCOME TIME

Greet each preteen as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Prompt kids to share about a recent trip they took. How did they travel? Did they meet anyone new on their trip?

OPTION 1: Title

Supplies: 80- to 100-piece puzzle

Give the kids a puzzle to work on, but do not let them see the completed picture on the cover of the box or bag. Consider removing a few significant pieces from the middle of the puzzle. (Tip: For larger groups, provide multiple puzzles.)

Give the kids five minutes to complete the puzzle. When they get discouraged, assure them they don't need help. They can do it on their own if they try hard enough. At the end of five minutes, show them the completed picture and/or return the missing pieces.

- Who can see the big picture of our whole lives? How does that make you feel?

OPTION 2: Shadow guessing

Supplies: strong flashlight, various objects to create shadows

If possible, dim the lights in the room. Instruct the kids face a blank wall. Stand behind them and shine a bright flashlight toward the wall. Place one object at a time in front of the flashlight so the shadow appears on the wall.

Challenge the kids to guess the object. Repeat with different objects as time allows. Be sure to use at least one or two objects with unusual shapes.

- How well does a shadow represent the actual object?
- How can we know Jesus even though we cannot see Him?



TEACH the Story

The Bible tells us what is true about God and about ourselves. All of the stories in the Bible fit together to tell us the big story of how God rescues sinners through His Son, Jesus.

Today we are going to hear about the Emmaus disciples. Whether this is your first time or your tenth time hearing this story, there is always something new to learn in God's Word.

Read Luke 24:13-35.

- What does this story teach us about God?

God had been working all along to make the way for Jesus to defeat sin and death. When Jesus taught that all the Scriptures point to Him, He gave them the whole picture, filling in the missing pieces for them.

- Why do you think the two disciples were prevented from recognizing Jesus?

The Bible doesn't tell us the exact reason, but perhaps Jesus wanted the men to be able to focus on His words and teaching, and not be overwhelmed with seeing Him alive. To help His disciples to grow strong in their faith, Jesus had to weed out the lies and clear away the confusion. At the right moment, Jesus revealed Himself to them and then disappeared.

- Form groups of two or three and practice retelling the Bible story in your own words. Think of someone you could share the story with this week.

CHRIST CONNECTION

The whole Bible is about Jesus. When Adam and Eve sinned, God began working out His plan to send Jesus to rescue people from sin. All of the Old Testament points forward to Jesus' life, death, and resurrection—the time when Jesus would bring God's promised salvation for sinners.



TEACH the Story

MISSIONS MOMENT

Remind kids about a missionary named Peter Station. Explain that Peter is not his real name. He works in places that might not be safe for him or other believers. Emphasize that Jesus taught that all the Scriptures point to Him. This is something that missionaries and Christian workers teach to people groups all over the world. Peter wants the nomad people of East Asia to know that they can learn about Jesus in the Bible.

PRAY

Lord God, thank You for giving us Your truth in Your Word. And thank You that Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to us today to help us understand that truth, weeding out the lies and confusion from our lives. Help us to listen and learn so we can live for You. Amen.

THE GOSPEL: GOD'S PLAN FOR ME

The gospel is the good news, the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use Scripture and the guide provided below to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.



GOD RULES. Ask: "Who is in charge at home?" Explain that because God created everything, He is in charge of everything. Read Revelation 4:11.



WE SINNED. Ask: "Have you ever done something wrong?" Tell kids that everyone sins, or disobeys God. Our sin separates us from God. Read Romans 3:23.



GOD PROVIDED. Explain that God is holy and must punish sin. God sent His Son, Jesus, to take the punishment we deserve. Read John 3:16.



JESUS GIVES. Ask: "What is the best gift you've ever received?" Say that Jesus took our punishment for sin by giving His life, and He gives us His righteousness. God sees us as if we lived the perfect life Jesus lived. This is the best gift ever! Read 2 Corinthians 5:21.



WE RESPOND. Explain that everyone has a choice to make. Ask: "Will you trust Jesus as your Savior and Lord? You can turn from self and sin and turn to Jesus." Read Romans 10:9-10.



APPLY the Story

Big Picture Question

Where is Jesus now? Jesus ascended to heaven where He is seated at the right hand of the Father.

One day, everyone who trusts in Jesus will live with Him forever.

- Is it important to read all of the Bible? Why?
- How can you make a practice of reading God's Word each day?

Distribute Bibles. Guide preteens to open their Bibles to Luke 24. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Luke 24:27. Remind kids that as the disciples walked, they were discussing the things that had happened—Jesus' death and the reports that He was resurrected—when Jesus began walking with them. Jesus taught that all the Scriptures point to Him.

Choose another volunteer to read aloud Luke 24:27 again. Then lead the group to discuss the following questions.

1. What were the two disciples talking about as they walked, and why were they upset?

Lead kids to recall that the disciples were very sad about Jesus' death. All of Jerusalem had witnessed Jesus' triumphal entry and then His death on the cross. Jesus' disciples had scattered when He was arrested, but the two men traveling to Emmaus had heard rumors that Mary and the other women had seen Jesus alive. But they didn't know what to believe!

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Luke 24:6-7.)

2. How is the Bible all about Jesus?

Help kids recognize that Jesus was God's plan all along. Adam and Eve sinned, so God worked out His plan to send Jesus to rescue people from sin. The Old Testament points forward to Jesus' life, death, and resurrection—the time when Jesus would bring God's promised salvation for sinners. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Gen. 3:15.)

3. How do you think the disciples must have felt to finally realize the person they saw was Jesus?

Invite kids to share their thoughts. Compare the disciples' recognition of Jesus to the transformation we might experience when we trust in Him for salvation. When Jesus saves us, He brings light into our dark lives. We were dead in sin, but He makes us alive.

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read John 5:24.)



APPLY the Story

KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY

Supplies: Bibles, kid-friendly magazines, scissors, glue sticks, paper

Instruct kids to open their Bibles to John 11:25. Lead the kids to read the key passage together. Distribute magazines and challenge kids to find and cut out the letters or words of the key passage. Instruct them to glue the pieces together to create a poster. If your group is large, form smaller groups to create multiple posters.

PRAY

Invite volunteers to share prayer requests. Then pray, thanking Jesus for making a way for us to have eternal life and helping us understand this truth through His Word.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY: On the move

Supplies: orange cones or other movable objects, bandannas or blindfolds

Scatter the cones in the middle of the room. Blindfold a few volunteers and challenge them to find the cones. Quietly ask other kids to move the cones as kids get close. Try to keep the volunteers from finding the cones.

After a minute, tell the volunteers to take off their blindfolds and direct all kids to sit down. Ask the blindfolded volunteers why it was so hard to find the cones. (Other people kept moving them!)

Remind kids that missionary Peter Station is trying to reach a people group of nomads. People who are *nomadic* move around a lot. Peter might think that he knows where to find them, but often when he arrives, they have moved to another place and he can't find them. This is a challenge for sure, but it won't stop him or other Christians from working to share the good news.

Take time to pray for Peter and other missionaries who are sharing the good news that Jesus defeated sin and death.



Unit 27, Session 3

Jesus Appeared to the Disciples

Luke 24; John 20

Story Point: Jesus proved He is alive.

Open your Bible and read aloud from Luke 24; John 20, or tell the story from the following Bible story script.

On the first day of the week, in the evening, **the disciples gathered together in a house.** They locked the doors because they were afraid of the Jews. They didn't want to be killed like Jesus had been killed. But **some of Jesus' disciples had reported seeing Him alive. Was it true?**

As the disciples talked, Jesus appeared among them and said, "Peace to you!" The disciples were afraid! They thought they were seeing a ghost.

"It's Me!" Jesus said. "Look at Me and touch Me. A ghost does not have flesh and bones, but I do." Jesus showed His disciples His hands and His side. They saw His wounds. The disciples rejoiced because they were so happy to see Jesus!

The disciples gave Jesus some fish to eat. Jesus talked to them and explained the Bible to them. "The Bible is about Me," Jesus said. He helped them understand how the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms told about Him.

Then Jesus told the disciples that they had a job to do. Jesus had died and was raised from the dead so that people could be

forgiven for their sins. The disciples needed to tell other people to repent from their sins and be forgiven.

Jesus said, "God sent Me to earth, and in the same way, I am sending you."

One of Jesus' disciples, Thomas, was not with the others when Jesus visited him. He did not believe that Jesus was alive. Thomas said, "I want to see and touch the holes in His hands and His side, or I will never believe!"

A week later, Thomas was with the disciples when Jesus appeared again. Jesus said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and look at My hands. Reach out and touch My side. Don't be an unbeliever; believe!"

Thomas did believe. "My Lord and my God!" he said. Jesus said, "Because you have seen Me, you have believed. Those who believe in Me without seeing Me are blessed."

Christ Connection: For 40 days, Jesus presented Himself to more than 500 people and proved that He is alive. Jesus is still alive today. We have not seen Jesus, but if we believe in Him, we will be blessed. He sends out believers to tell others about Him and gives us power through the Holy Spirit.



INTRODUCE the Story

WELCOME TIME

Greet each preteen as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Prompt kids to share if they've ever heard a fact about something but wasn't sure it was true. When have they doubted what someone said?

OPTION 1: Believe it or doubt it

Supplies: 2 sheets of poster board, marker, tape

Create two signs: I Believe It and I Doubt It. Hang them on opposite sides of the room. Call out some outrageous statements, some true and some false. Instruct kids to stand under the sign that represents whether they believe it or doubt it. Before revealing the answer, allow kids to explain why they believe or why they doubt the information.

Sample statements: Bats are the only mammals that fly. (*true*); The Pug is the smallest dog breed. (*false, Chihuahua*); A grizzly bear can run as fast as a horse. (*true*); A sneeze travels 200 miles per hour. (*false, 100 mph*); The North Pole is warmer than the South Pole. (*true*)

- Jesus is alive! Can you believe it?

OPTION 2: What's in the box?

Supplies: box, random objects

Before the session, cut an opening in the box just large enough for kids to fit their hand through. Put a random object inside the box.

Choose a volunteer to place his hand inside a box without looking inside. Instruct him to describe how the item feels. Challenge the rest of the group to guess the item. After several guesses, pull the item out of the box. Repeat with different items as time allows.

- Do you find it difficult to believe things without seeing them? Why?



TEACH the Story

The Bible tells us what is true about God and about ourselves. All of the stories in the Bible fit together to tell us the big story of how God rescues sinners through His Son, Jesus.

Today we are going to hear about Jesus' appearing to His disciples after He rose from the dead. Whether this is your first time or your tenth time hearing this story, there is always something new to learn in God's Word.

Read from Luke 24; John 20.

- What does this story teach us about God?

We believe in Jesus by faith—believing without seeing. We trust that God is who He says He is, and He will do what He says He will do. **Faith is a gift from God.**

- How can we know Jesus even if we've never seen Him?

Though we can't see Jesus today with our eyes and touch Him with our hands, **we have the written testimony of those who did.** We find them in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

- Form groups of two or three and practice retelling the Bible story in your own words. Think of someone you could share the story with this week.

CHRIST CONNECTION

For 40 days, Jesus presented Himself to more than 500 people and proved that He is alive. Jesus is still alive today. We have not seen Jesus, but if we believe in Him, we will be blessed. He sends out believers to tell others about Him and gives us power through the Holy Spirit.



TEACH the Story

MISSIONS MOMENT

We've been learning about a people group in East Asia. Missionaries in East Asia have different ways to reach different people, but the message is the same—Jesus died and rose again. Jesus proved He is alive. Pray for missionaries serving in East Asia and for any missionaries your church supports

PRAY

Jesus, thank You for knowing and understanding our fears and doubts. Thank You for giving us the proof we need through Your Word to believe that You are alive today. Help us to share these truths with others so they can know You and have eternal life too. Amen.

THE GOSPEL: GOD'S PLAN FOR ME

The gospel is the good news, the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use Scripture and the guide provided below to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.



GOD RULES. Ask: "Who is in charge at home?" Explain that because God created everything, He is in charge of everything. Read Revelation 4:11.



WE SINNED. Ask: "Have you ever done something wrong?" Tell kids that everyone sins, or disobeys God. Our sin separates us from God. Read Romans 3:23.



GOD PROVIDED. Explain that God is holy and must punish sin. God sent His Son, Jesus, to take the punishment we deserve. Read John 3:16.



JESUS GIVES. Ask: "What is the best gift you've ever received?" Say that Jesus took our punishment for sin by giving His life, and He gives us His righteousness. God sees us as if we lived the perfect life Jesus lived. This is the best gift ever! Read 2 Corinthians 5:21.



WE RESPOND. Explain that everyone has a choice to make. Ask: "Will you trust Jesus as your Savior and Lord? You can turn from self and sin and turn to Jesus." Read Romans 10:9-10.



APPLY the Story

Big Picture Question

Where is Jesus now? Jesus ascended to heaven where He is seated at the right hand of the Father.

Jesus is alive today! We haven't seen Him for ourselves, but we believe by faith.

- Why might someone doubt God?
- What is the difference between doubt and disbelief?

Distribute Bibles. Guide preteens to open their Bibles to John 20. Choose a volunteer to read aloud John 20:29. Emphasize that Jesus proved He is alive. We have not seen Jesus, but if we believe in Him, we will be blessed.

Choose another volunteer to read aloud John 20:29 again. Then lead the group to discuss the following questions.

1. Why did Thomas doubt that Jesus was alive when the other disciples believed?

Help kids recognize that Thomas was not with the disciples the first time Jesus appeared to them as a group. He didn't get to see Jesus, so He didn't believe.

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Heb. 11:1.)

2. How are we blessed by believing in Jesus without seeing Him?

Lead kids to recall that when we believe in Jesus, we have forgiveness and eternal life. We will have peace and power through Him. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Mark 11:23.)

3. What can we do when we doubt what is true?

Assure kids that when they have questions about the Bible, Jesus, or their faith, it's OK to ask them. Encourage kids to talk with one of their leaders to help answer any questions. Remind them they can pray, asking God to speak to them through His Word and His Spirit to clear away their doubts. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Rom. 10:17.)



APPLY the Story

KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY

Supplies: Bibles, sticky notes, large sheet of paper, marker

Instruct kids to open their Bibles to John 11:25. Lead the kids to read the key passage together. Write the key passage on a large sheet of paper. Cover a few words with sticky notes and challenge kids to say the key passage again. Continue covering a few words at a time until kids can recite the entire key passage from memory.

PRAY

Invite volunteers to share prayer requests. Then pray, thanking Jesus that He cares about our doubts. Ask Jesus to help kids remember and believe His truths in their hearts.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY: Jesus truths

Supplies: Bibles (1 per kid), half sheets of paper, pens or pencils, markers or crayons

Form small groups or pairs of kids. Encourage groups to write down as many truths about Jesus as they can think of or find in their Bible. Encourage groups to share their list with the rest of the class. Suggest that kids decorate their paper and place it in their Bible to refer to when they need encouragement during times of doubt.

You may choose to provide some references to get kids started: John 6:35; John 8:12; John 10:9; John 10:10; John 14:6; John 15:5.

Assure kids that any time they begin to doubt what they've learned about Jesus, it's helpful to have a good reference to remind themselves what is true—not just because someone told them, but because it is written in the Bible. Explain that our feelings and emotions may fool us and cause us to doubt, but when we rely on the truth of God's Word, we will stand strong in our beliefs. God never changes!



Unit 27, Session 4

Jesus Returned to Heaven

Matthew 28; Acts 1

Story Point: Jesus gave His disciples the Great Commission.

Open your Bible and read aloud from Matthew 28; Acts 1, or tell the story from the following Bible story script.

After Jesus died on the cross and was raised from the dead, He spent time with His disciples over 40 days. During that time, Jesus told them even more about God's kingdom. Then Jesus told His disciples to go to a mountain in Galilee. They saw Jesus there, and they worshiped Him.

Jesus gave His disciples important instructions. Jesus said, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." Jesus gave the disciples—and everyone who follows Him—a job to do. He said, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel. Make disciples of people from every nation."

Jesus also said, "Baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you." Then Jesus said, "Remember this: I am always with you, until the very end of the age."

Jesus told His disciples to wait in the city of Jerusalem until God kept His promise to give them the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you. You will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

After Jesus said these things, He went up into heaven. The disciples watched Jesus until a cloud hid Him from their sight. All of a sudden, two angels appeared. They were wearing white clothes. These angels asked, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up into heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come again. He will return in the same way that you have seen Him going into heaven."

Christ Connection: Jesus left earth and returned to heaven, but He did not leave us alone. Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to be with us and help us do God's work—to teach people everywhere about Jesus so they will trust in Him as their Lord and Savior. One day, Jesus will return to make all things new and to rule as Lord over all.



INTRODUCE the Story

WELCOME TIME

Greet each preteen as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Prompt kids to share with the group a chore or task that is expected of them at home. Do they complete the job gladly or out of duty? Why?

OPTION 1: Multiply it

Supplies: paper, scissors

Show kids a single piece of paper. Invite kids to estimate how long it is. Ask them if they think you could make it any longer. How long? *[Allow kids to respond.]* Cut the paper into thin strips, from alternate sides, leaving a half inch margin so the strips stay connected. The thinner the strips, the more cuts you can make, making the paper longer. Don't pull too hard when you stretch the paper or it will tear.

- Why do you think Jesus would want His disciples to multiply themselves?

OPTION 2: Clear instructions needed

Supplies: paper, pencils, sandwich-making items (bread, lunch meat, cheese slices, mayonnaise or other spread, plate, plastic knife, and so forth)

Distribute paper and instruct kids to list the steps needed to make a sandwich. Call on a volunteer to give you the steps he wrote. Follow them word-for-word, only following the instructions given.

For example, do not put the bread on the plate unless the instructions specify to do so. Only unwrap the cheese or meat if instructed. If the instructions say to put the mayonnaise or ketchup on the bread, pick up the whole bottle or jar and put it on the bread. Make it obvious anywhere the instructions were not specific.

- How important is it to have specific instructions if you are doing something for the first time? Why?



TEACH the Story

The Bible tells us what is true about God and about ourselves. All of the stories in the Bible fit together to tell us the big story of how God rescues sinners through His Son, Jesus.

Today we are going to hear how Jesus returned to heaven. Whether this is your first time or your tenth time hearing this story, there is always something new to learn in God's Word.

Read from Matthew 28; Acts 1.

- What does this story teach us about God?

Jesus is God the Son; He always had authority. But after Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead, **God gave Jesus all authority in heaven and on earth.** Jesus is the King over all creation, and He rules over God's kingdom.

- What is a disciple?

Jesus gave His disciples the Great Commission. **A disciple is a follower.** Jesus wants His followers to tell people all over the world how to be rescued from sin and death by trusting in Jesus' death and resurrection. Then those people who believe would become disciples of Jesus too. Disciples who love Jesus will want to obey Him.

- Form groups of two or three and practice retelling the Bible story in your own words. Think of someone you could share the story with this week.

CHRIST CONNECTION

Jesus left earth and returned to heaven, but He did not leave us alone. Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to be with us and help us do God's work—to teach people everywhere about Jesus so they will trust in Him as their Lord and Savior. One day, Jesus will return to make all things new and to rule as Lord over all.



TEACH the Story

MISSIONS MOMENT

We support missionaries around the world because Jesus gave His disciples the Great Commission. Supporting missionaries is one way we help the gospel spread throughout the earth. Peter Station is trying to reach a people group in East Asia. Pray for Peter and thank God for new believers among that people group.

PRAY

Jesus, thank You for the forgiveness of our sins and the gift of eternal life through Your death and resurrection. Strengthen us by the Holy Spirit so we can share this amazing gift with others. Amen.

THE GOSPEL: GOD'S PLAN FOR ME

The gospel is the good news, the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use Scripture and the guide provided below to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.



GOD RULES. Ask: "Who is in charge at home?" Explain that because God created everything, He is in charge of everything. Read Revelation 4:11.



WE SINNED. Ask: "Have you ever done something wrong?" Tell kids that everyone sins, or disobeys God. Our sin separates us from God. Read Romans 3:23.



GOD PROVIDED. Explain that God is holy and must punish sin. God sent His Son, Jesus, to take the punishment we deserve. Read John 3:16.



JESUS GIVES. Ask: "What is the best gift you've ever received?" Say that Jesus took our punishment for sin by giving His life, and He gives us His righteousness. God sees us as if we lived the perfect life Jesus lived. This is the best gift ever! Read 2 Corinthians 5:21.



WE RESPOND. Explain that everyone has a choice to make. Ask: "Will you trust Jesus as your Savior and Lord? You can turn from self and sin and turn to Jesus." Read Romans 10:9-10.



APPLY the Story

Big Picture Question

Where is Jesus now? Jesus ascended to heaven where He is seated at the right hand of the Father.

We don't know when Jesus is returning to earth. That's why it's so important we share the gospel with as many people as we can so they might trust in Jesus before His return.

- Why did Jesus go back to heaven instead of staying on earth?
- How should we live while we wait for Jesus to return?

Distribute Bibles. Guide preteens to open their Bibles to Acts 1. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Acts 1:8. Explain that Jesus knew the disciples needed a plan. Jesus said to start in Jerusalem and then spread out to Judea, then to Samaria, and then to the end of the earth. Jesus calls everyone who follows Him to share the good news of the gospel in their city, nation, and around the world.

Choose another volunteer to read aloud Acts 1:8 again. Then lead the group to discuss the following questions.

1. What is the Great Commission?

Lead kids to recognize that Jesus is in heaven and He is going to come back someday. While we wait for Him, we have a special mission. Jesus wants us to help more people follow Him. The Great Commission is Jesus' command that His disciples go out and preach the gospel to all people. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read 2 Pet. 3:9.)

2. Why is obeying the Great Commission so important?

Help kids recognize that because of the obedience of believers before us, we can know and respond to the gospel. Jesus wants us to tell others about Him too. Encourage kids to obey Jesus' Great Commission. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Rom. 10:14.)

3. How does the Great Commission apply to us?

Emphasize that the Great Commission wasn't just for Jesus' disciples. It is a command for everyone who believes in Him! Everyone needs to hear this good news. God calls some people to travel to faraway places to share the gospel, and sometimes He calls people to stay where they are and share the gospel with their neighbors. God wants believers to share the gospel with everyone in the whole world. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Rom. 1:16.)



APPLY the Story

KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY

Supplies: Bibles, beanbag, stopwatch or timer (optional)

Instruct kids to open their Bibles to John 11:25. Lead the kids to read the key passage together. Give a beanbag to one kid. That kid will say the first word of the key passage and then toss the beanbag to another kid to say the next word. Continue through the entire key passage.

PRAY

Invite volunteers to share prayer requests. Then pray, thanking Jesus for His promise to be with us always and to send the Holy Spirit to guide us until He comes again.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY: The domino effect

Supplies: dominoes

Challenge kids to stand dominoes on end in a line, leaving only about an inch between the dominoes. Allow kids to work for several minutes.

Choose a volunteer to push over the domino at the end of the line so that a chain reaction occurs—one domino knocks over the next, which knocks over the next, and so forth. Kids may reset or rearrange the dominoes and play again as time allows.

Point out that that's what we call a *chain reaction*: when one event causes a bunch of other things to happen. In today's Bible story, Jesus gave His disciples the Great Commission. He told them to make disciples—to tell others about Jesus and teach them to obey His commands.

The disciples obeyed the Great Commission, and when those who heard believed, they told others. Everyone who follows Jesus is His disciple. The gospel is still spreading today because of the faithfulness and obedience of Jesus' disciples.