

## Today's Suggested Schedule—March 2024, Week 4

**Today's Bible Story:** Take You at Your Word (Palm Sunday) • *Matthew 21:1-11*

**Today's Bottom Line:** Jesus came to be our Savior.

**Monthly Memory Verse:** *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16 (ESV)*

**Monthly Virtue:** Easter—Celebrating that Jesus is alive!

**Basic Truth:** I can trust God no matter what.

*Before kids arrive, take a few moments to pray for them. Pray for those who might visit your group for the first time. As you prepare for the week leading up to Easter, reflect on the example Jesus set to love and serve others. Thank God for fulfilling the promise to send a Savior. Pray for the kids in your group—that they would be open to discovering that Jesus came to be our Savior.*

Check out our Pinterest page here <https://bit.ly/447HSZI> for a visual on some of the activities.

### **LARGE GROUP (35 minutes)**

**STORY:** Communicating God's Truth in Engaging Ways

**WORSHIP:** Inviting People to Respond to God

Welcome/Opener

Worship

Bible Story

Bottom Line

Prayer

Closer

### **SMALL GROUP (25 minutes)**

**GROUPS:** Creating a Safe Place to Connect

Story Exploration

Bible Story Review: Wave Parade!

Application Activity: Promise Keepers

Memory Verse Activity: Roll Doubles

Prayer Activity: Pray and Dismiss

**HOME:** Prompting Action Beyond the Experience

Parent Cue Card (Print or Email)

Devotionals for Kids

Parent Cue App

## The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

*Use this if kids have questions about following Jesus.*

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word gospel. Clarify that the word gospel means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.

God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.

We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)

God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.

Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.

We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

If a child has expressed interest in following Jesus, please let the parents know so they can be a part of the conversation that their child is having about faith.

### What Now?

If you put your trust in Jesus Christ and believe in Him as the One who forgives your sins and makes it possible for you to know God, we are so proud of you! There is no greater single decision that you could make.

We believe that baptism is an important next step for you. Baptism is your way of telling your friends and family, “Hey, I'm a follower of Jesus!” If you're interested in learning more or participating in baptism, talk to a staff member about the next steps you should take.

## **GROUPS: Creating a Safe Place to Connect (25 minutes)**

### **Story Exploration**

#### **What is the Bible?**

The Bible is real and true. God gave us the Bible so we could know Him. The Bible is filled with many books and stories, but it's all a part of one BIG story — God's Story.

#### What is God's Bigger Story?

Creation: God is the Creator of all things, and He is very good.

Fall: Adam and Eve sinned and disobeyed God. Sin broke the world, and people were separated from God.

Redemption: People could not fix their sin problem on their own. God sent His Son, Jesus, who died on the cross to take the punishment for our sins.

Restoration: When we trust in Jesus as our Savior, our relationship with God can be made right again through His grace. One day, Jesus will return and make the broken world new again.

#### **Where is Today's Bible Story?**

Matthew and Luke are both Gospels that tell the story of Jesus' life. This story was so important that it is recorded in both books. Today's story comes near the end of Jesus' earthly ministry. He has taught about God and performed miracles. He has also angered the religious leaders because of the true things He has said and the miracles He has done.

*Open a Bible and show the kids the title page for the book of Luke. Then show them how to get to today's Bible passage (Luke 19:28-40, Matthew 21:1-11).*

Bible Teaching: Triumphal Entry

Bible Passage: Luke 19:28-40, Matthew 21:1-11

Supplies: Bible, printable pages, crown

Prep: Print the printable pages and cut out. Hide the images and the crown around your room ahead of time.

Instructions:

Say: Today, we'll find out about a day we celebrate as Palm Sunday, but I'll need your help. When I tell you to, you'll need to gather some objects that are related to what happened in the story. Ready?

Say: Jesus and the disciples went to Jerusalem. As they neared the city, Jesus told two of the disciples to enter it.

Read Luke 19:29b-30 directly from the Bible, *He sent two of the disciples, saying, "Go into the village in front of you, where on entering you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever yet sat. Untie it and bring it here."*

Say: He told them if anyone asked what they were doing, they should say that the Lord needs it.

*Have kids look around the room for the colt image, then bring it back to you.*

Say: They did as He said and brought the donkey to Jesus. They laid their cloaks on it for Him to sit on. Others spread their cloaks on the ground.

*Have kids look around the room for the images of coats, then place them on the ground to make a pathway.*

Read Matthew 21:8 directly from the Bible, *Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.*

Say: This is where we get the term *Palm Sunday*, which is the Sunday before Easter, because of the palm branches. Jesus rode the donkey down the Mount of Olives. As He drew closer to Jerusalem, great crowds of people began to celebrate.

Read Luke 19:37b-38 directly from the Bible, *the whole multitude of His disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, saying, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"*

Say: Matthew 21:9 also tells us that people shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David. Hosanna in the highest!" *Hosanna* means "save now"!

*Divide your group in two. Have one group say, "Blessed is the King!" and have the other respond, "Hosanna!" Invite groups to say it louder and louder.*

Say: The Pharisees, the religious leaders of that time, were angry. In fact, they had already started to plot to kill Jesus after He raised Lazarus from the dead. Now, all of the people were celebrating Him and calling Him the King!

*Have kids look around the room for the crown. Hold it up high when kids return it to you.*

Say: The Pharisees said to Jesus, "Tell them to stop! Tell them not to say things like that!"

Read Luke 19:40 directly from the Bible, *He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out."*

*Invite kids to repeat their group's assigned cheer from earlier.*

Many of the Jewish people thought Jesus was coming to be an earthly king who would help them escape the rule of the Romans. They did not understand that He was an even greater King than they could imagine.

## POINT TO JESUS

Jesus was worthy of all of the praise and celebrations of the people. He is the King of Kings! By defeating death on the cross, He rules over sin, death and everything. He also wants to be the King of our hearts. When we choose to believe in Him, seek His forgiveness and trust in Him as Savior, we allow Him to rule our lives. He is the true King, and we can follow Him.

## Teaching Wrap-Up

What makes Jesus the King?

Jesus doesn't just rule over the Earth but over God's kingdom. He has authority over everything. One day, every knee will bow down to Him.

Since Jesus is King, how does that change things for us?

We can have a personal relationship with the King of Kings. Since He has all authority, we can trust Him for salvation, worship Him with our lives and seek to follow His ways.

### **HOW CAN I KNOW THIS IS TRUE?**

Discuss: What is prophecy? What is one prophecy that came true?

Say: It was prophesied the Messiah would enter Jerusalem riding on donkey/colt. The prophecy is found in Zechariah 9:9, and it was written around 500 years before Jesus walked the earth. Not only did Jesus fulfill this one prophecy, but He fulfilled over 300 Old Testament prophecies! The probability that a normal person would fulfill these prophecies is one chance in a trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion! Yet, Jesus did. This shows us that He really is the true Messiah.

Read Zechariah 9:9b directly from the Bible, *Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is He, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.*

**BUT WHAT ABOUT ... Praise of People**

Discuss: What are some ways that people show what they like on social media?

Discuss: Do kids ever base how they feel about themselves on what others say?

Discuss: What does God say about seeking people's praise?

It can be easy for us to focus on what other people think about us. You may have heard kids talk about how important it is to have likes or follows on social media. Maybe you've worried about what friends, teachers, or coaches say about you. It always feels good when other people praise us, but it's a problem when it becomes too important to us. Galatians 1:10 says, "For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ." We should be most concerned about what God thinks of us instead of other people. We can point all praise and attention to Jesus, instead of trying to get it for ourselves.

Say: We want to respond to God and remember what He has taught us today. During the coming week we also want to use what He's taught us. As we become more like Jesus, our lives change!

## **GROUPS: Creating a Safe Place to Connect (25 minutes)**

### **1. Wave Parade!**

#### **[Talk about God | Bible Story Review]**

*Made to Move: an activity that increases the oxygen in the brain and taps into the energy in the body*

**What You Need:** green crepe paper streamers

#### **What You Do:**

- Give each kid a strip of green crepe paper.
- One at a time, read a statement from the “Wave Parade!” Activity Page.
- If the fact is true, instruct the kids to wave their palm leaves (or green streamers) in the air.
- If the fact is false, direct the kids to keep their palm leaves (or streamers) at their sides.
- If the fact is false, ask a kid to share the correct fact.
  - If the kid comes up with the correct fact, invite everyone to celebrate with their palm leaves or streamers again!

#### **What You Say:**

“You did a GREAT job remembering today’s Bible story! Jesus traveled toward Jerusalem on a donkey’s colt, and the people were so excited that they waved their palm leaves in celebration. The crowds cheered as they celebrated Jesus as the Savior that God promised. Show me how you wave your palm leaves! *(Let kids wave and get excited!)* Even though the religious leaders wanted Him out, Jesus stayed focused on what He had come to do: **[Bottom Line] Jesus came to be our Savior.**”

***[Make It Personal] (Talk about the time in your life when you decided for yourself to accept Jesus as your Savior. What helped you make this decision? What safe people in your life did you talk to? Follow your church’s guidelines if any kids express interest in trusting in Jesus as their Savior. Include parents/guardians in this conversation.)***

## \* 2. Promise Keepers

### [Live for God | Application Activity]

*Made to Create: an activity that explores spiritual ideas through the process of drawing, building, and designing*

**What You Need:** “Promise Keepers” Activity Page, embroidery floss (or other yarn or string), colorful beads, letter beads, dry-erase board, dry-erase marker, and tape

#### What You Do:

- Remind the kids that God has given us many promises in the Bible.
- One at a time, read a verse listed on the “Promise Keepers” Activity Page.
- After you read each verse, invite the kids to share a promise the verse speaks about.
- Write down the promises on the dry-erase board. (Ideas are listed below each Scripture on the Promise Keepers” Activity Page.)
- Set out the embroidery floss and beads.
- Invite the kids to create a bracelet (or “promise keeper”) to remind them of a promise God has made to them.
- Invite kids to use the letter beads to spell out one word that will remind them of one of God’s promises.
- Kids can use the other, colorful beads to decorate their bracelet.
- Use the tape to tape down one end of the floss (or string) as the kids place the beads on the floss (or string).
- Once each kid is done, remove the tape and tie the bracelet around their wrists, leaving ample room to pull the bracelet on and off.

#### What You Say:

“The Bible is *filled* with promises that God has given us! What are some of the promises we heard today? (*Pause for responses.*) That’s incredible!”

“It’s life-changing to know that there’s a God who sees us, knows us, and loves us. Even when people turned away from God and the world was broken, God had a plan to restore us. God promised to send a Savior, and that promise came true when God sent us Jesus. Jesus didn’t come to rescue the people from the Romans, like a lot of people thought. He came for an even bigger rescue. He came to rescue everyone from their sin and make a way for everyone to have a relationship with God that lasts forever!”

“It’s true, **[Bottom Line]** Jesus came to be our Savior. That’s the best promise of all!”

### 3. Roll Doubles

#### [Hear from God | Memory Verse Activity]

*Made to Connect: an activity that invites kids to share with others and build on their understanding*

**What You Need:** Bibles, prepared gift box, small prizes, and dice

#### What You Do:

- Instruct the kids to sit in a circle.
- Make sure each kid has a Bible.
- Together, look up John 3:16, using the Bible Navigation Tips below.

**Finding verses with 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> graders:** Guide them to open their Bibles to the front and find the table of contents. (Hold up a Bible opened to the table of contents to show the kids what the page looks like.) When the kids find the table of contents, lead them to find John in the list under “New Testament.” When the kids find John, lead them to look at the page number beside the word. Explain that the number tells them on what page they can find John. Help the kids find the page. When they find John, explain that the big numbers on the page are the chapter numbers. Help them find chapter 3. Explain that the small numbers are verse numbers. Help them find verse 16 in chapter 3.

- Say the verse out loud together several times.
- Direct the kids to set aside their open Bibles outside the circle for prayer time.
- Set out the pre-wrapped box (with index card and prizes inside) in the center of the circle.
- Give one kid two dice.
- Instruct the kid to roll the dice.
- If the kid rolls two different numbers, direct them to pass the dice to the kid on the right to roll next.
- Anytime a kid rolls doubles, instruct them to go into the middle of the circle to carefully unwrap one layer of tissue paper or wrapping paper, and then return to their spot. (Kids can continue rolling as they are unwrapping.)
- As soon as the next kid rolls doubles, instruct that kid to move to the middle to carefully unwrap one layer of tissue paper or wrapping paper (even if the previous kid has not finished yet).
- Instruct the kid who successfully unwraps the final layer to open the box, pull out the index card, and read the Memory Verse for the whole group.
- Ask the winner to hand out the prizes to the rest of the kids.

#### What You Say:

“You all did a great job learning our new Memory Verse for Easter! As much as I enjoyed the gift we unwrapped together, God promised us a much better gift—a Savior! God kept that promise because **[Bottom Line] Jesus came to be our Savior.**”

“Jesus is God’s plan to rescue us. Jesus made a way for us to have a relationship with God. Jesus also showed us what it looks like to love people and serve others. **[Bottom Line] Jesus came to be our Savior.** That’s the best gift of all!”



## 4. Pray and Dismiss

### [Pray to God | Prayer Activity]

*Made to Reflect: an activity that creates space for personal understanding and application*

#### What You Say:

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Are there any commands in this story to obey? How are they for God's glory and my good?
- Are there any promises in this story to remember?
- How do they help me trust and love God?
- How does this story help me to live on mission?

#### What You Need: Bibles

#### What You Do:

- Instruct the kids to refer to their open Bibles from the Roll Doubles activity.
- Read John 3:16 several times together.
- Use the discussion below to talk about the first half of the Memory Verse.
- Lead your group in prayer.

#### What You Say:

"This is a wonderful verse to remember as we get ready to celebrate Easter.

**"God so loved the world:** God loves the world so much and everyone in it. That includes *everyone* in the world—you, me, everyone in this room, and everyone in our families.

**"that he gave his one and only Son.** Jesus was given to us as a gift, as a way to make things right between us and God. When we follow Jesus, we can have peace and a relationship with God. That's right—**[Bottom Line] Jesus came to be our Savior.**

"Let's pray!

"God, thank You so much for loving us. Thank You for giving us Jesus, who came to be our Savior. Help us to understand how big that love is! Give us opportunities to show love and kindness to others as we remember how much You loved us first. Help us to remember the promises You've given us, and to trust that You always keep Your promises. Thank You for everything You've done for us. We love You and we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen."

As adults arrive to pick up, encourage kids to show the adults their "promise keeper" bracelets. Invite kids to explain why they chose the word they chose.

## GETTING READY

Here's everything you need to know to get ready for this week.

### **GROUPS: Creating a Safe Place to Connect (25 minutes)**

Create a safe place to connect and learn how the Bible Story applies to real-life experiences, through interactive activities and discussion questions.

**(Choose as many of these activities as you like.)**

*\* If you don't have time to do all these activities, be sure to do activity #2.*

### **Story Exploration – Crown, Activity Page of donkey and cloaks**

#### **1. Wave Parade!**

**[Talk about God | Bible Story Review]**

*Made to Move: an activity that increases the oxygen in the brain and taps into the energy in the body*

**What You Need:**

- Print "Wave Parade!" Activity Page on paper, one for each Small Group
- green crepe paper streamers, one for each kid

#### **\* 2. Promise Keepers**

**[Live for God | Application Activity]**

*Made to Create: an activity that explores spiritual ideas through the process of drawing, building, and designing*

**What You Need:**

- Print "Promise Keepers" Activity Page on paper, one for each Small Group
- Embroidery floss (or yarn/other string), enough for each kid to make a bracelet
- Colorful beads, enough for each kid to make a bracelet
- Letter beads, enough for each kid to spell a word on their bracelet
- Dry-erase board, one for each Small Group
- Dry-erase marker, one for each Small Group
- Tape, one roll for each Small Group

#### **3. Roll Doubles**

**[Hear from God | Memory Verse Activity]**

*Made to Connect: an activity that invites kids to share with others and build on their understanding*

**What You Need:**

- Bibles, one for each kid
- Box, one for each Small Group
- Wrapping paper and tissue paper, enough to wrap the box a few times for each Small Group
- Tape
- Index card, one for each Small Group
- Small prizes (Ex: plastic Easter eggs for each kid, Easter pencils or erasers; *Optional: individually-wrapped candy, etc.*), one prize for each kid
- Dice, two for each Small Group
- Before group time:
  - Write the Memory Verse out on an index card.
  - Put the prepared index card and the small prizes in the box.
  - Wrap the box with the wrapping paper and tissue paper in several different layers.

#### **4. Pray and Dismiss**

##### **[Pray to God | Prayer Activity]**

*Made to Reflect: an activity that creates space for personal understanding and application*

##### **What You Need:**

- Bibles

##### **HOME: Prompting Action Beyond the Experience**

- Print on cardstock or email this week's devotionals and Parent Cue cards.
- Tell parents about our additional family resources: **Parent Cue app**