

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 of 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

Hang Time
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: Hosanna! Yay, Jesus!
Application Activity: Draw with Me
Memory Verse Activity: Memory Verse Motions
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

1. Hosanna! Yay, Jesus!

[Talk about God | Bible Story Review]

Made to Imagine: an activity that promotes empathy and facilitates biblical application through role-play and reenactment

What You Need: “Palm Sunday Retelling” Activity Page, and palm leaves

What You Do:

- Give each kid the palm leaf craft stick they made.
- Instruct the kids to stand and spread out.
- Read the “Palm Sunday Retelling” Activity Page, directing kids to wave their palm leaves at the appropriate places.

What You Say:

“Have a seat, friends. Jesus entered Jerusalem to find a huge parade in His honor! Why? (*Invite responses.*) Because the crowds recognized that Jesus was the Savior God had promised. Jesus did not come to rescue the people from the Romans as many people may have expected. Jesus knew that He was going to rescue people from something even bigger.

“The crowds that day didn’t know that Jesus was about to do something no one else could do. Jesus was ready to save all of us from our sins and mistakes, to make a way for everyone to have a relationship with God that lasts forever. Jesus came as our Rescuer. **[Bottom Line] Jesus came to be our Savior.**”

[Make It Personal] (Share why it’s important to you that [Bottom Line] Jesus came to be our Savior. What does that truth mean to you? How does that change the way you think about yourself?)

* 2. Draw with Me

[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: Whiteboards or plastic plates, dry-erase markers, and paper towels

What You Do:

- Give each kid a plate or whiteboard, a dry-erase marker, and a paper towel.
- Give yourself a plate or whiteboard, a dry-erase marker, and a paper towel too.
- As you read the text below, instruct the kids to draw the pictures you share on their plates.
- Draw the picture first, then direct the kids to draw the same thing on their own plates.
- Instruct the kids to use the paper towel to wipe off their plates for each new picture.

What You Say:

“Do you know why **[Bottom Line] Jesus came to be our Savior?** *(Pause for responses.)* Let’s talk about it! As I share about Jesus, I’m going to draw a picture on my plate, and I want you to draw the same thing on your own plate. We’re going to draw several different pictures. Have your paper towels ready to erase each picture so you have room for the next one!

“God made people. God loves us very much. God wants to have a relationship with us. Draw a happy face. *(Show your drawing to the kids.)*

“But people turned away from God. They thought their way was better. Draw a sad face. *(Show your drawing to the kids.)*

“But God had a plan! Draw a check mark. *(Show your drawing to the kids.)*

“God chose to bless the WHOLE world through one family, called the Israelites. Draw lots of circles or stick figures to represent lots of people. *(Show your drawing to the kids.)*

“God promised to send a Savior through this family. Who was that Savior? *(Pause for responses.)* Yes! Jesus. Draw a smiley face. *(Show your drawing to the kids.)*

“Jesus came to show us how to love God and love others! Draw a heart. *(Show your drawing to the kids.)*

[Bottom Line] “Jesus came to be our Savior. God loved all of the people in the world SO much that God sent Jesus! Do you know who Jesus is? *(Pause for responses.)* Yes! Jesus is God’s Son. Jesus came to make a way for us to have a relationship with God forever.”

3. Memory Verse Motions

[Hear from God | Memory Verse Activity]

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

What You Need: Bibles marked at John 3:16

- Instruct the kids to get into pairs.
- Give each pair of kids a marked Bible.
- Together, look up John 3:16 using the Bible Navigation Tips below.

Finding verses with kindergartners: Guide children to open the Bibles to the marked page. Point to the word *John* at the top of the page as you say “John” aloud. Then guide children to find the big number 3 on the page. Explain that this is the chapter number. Finally, guide them to look under the big 3 for the little 16; this is the verse number. Tell them to leave their finger on the verse as you read the verse aloud. Then lead everyone to say the verse together.

Finding verses with 1st graders: Guide the kids 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.” You can help by telling them that John starts with the letters J-O. 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.

- Read John 3:16 together or have them repeat after you.
- Teach the kids the motions below to help them learn the verse.
- Practice the motions together several times.

ESV:

- *God:* point to the sky
- *so loved:* hands crossed over chest
- *the world:* make a big circle with your hands
- *that he gave:* hold hands together as if holding a gift
- *his one and only Son,:* make a cross with your forearms
- *Anyone who believes:* motion hands out and away from body (palms up)
- *in him:* point to the sky
- *will not die:* move finger as if saying “no”
- *but have eternal life. John 3:16:* point to heaven

What You Say:

“Great job! This verse tells us exactly why **[Bottom Line] Jesus came to be our Savior.** Have you ever seen a lifeguard at the pool? What does a lifeguard do? (*Pause for responses.*) They watch the water, and they’re ready to rescue someone who’s in trouble!

“Even though people turned away from God, God had a plan all along to save us, to rescue us, because we couldn’t do that ourselves. God sent Jesus because God LOVES us. God sent Jesus to make a way for all of us to have a relationship with God. God made a promise to send us a Savior, and God kept that promise by sending Jesus.”

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?

What You Need: Whiteboards or plastic plates, and dry-erase markers

What You Do:

- Direct the kids to sit in a circle.
- Give each kid a whiteboard or plastic plate and a dry-erase marker.
- Instruct the kids to write their names on the center of their plate and pass it to the kid on their left.
 - If it works better for your group, you can help them write the first letter of their name then fill in the rest of the letters for them.
- Instruct the kids to pray for the kid on the plate by saying, "Thank You, God, that Jesus came to be *[kid's name]* Savior."
- Direct the kids to place their plates on the floor in front of them.
- Close your group time in prayer, saying each of the kids' names as you pray and remember that **[Bottom Line] Jesus came to be our Savior.**

What You Say:

"Thanks for praying for each other. Now, I want to pray for each of you! Let's pray.

"Dear God, You are an awesome God. Thanks for allowing us to come here today, to hear the good news about Jesus, and to have so much fun together. We know that You love us. You proved that love by sending Your only Son, Jesus. Thank You for sending Jesus to be *(name each person around the circle, including you)*'s Savior. We are so grateful for what Jesus has done for us. We love You and we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen."

As adults arrive to pick up, invite the kids to teach the adults the motions they learned to help them remember John 3:16 and that **[Bottom Line] Jesus came to be our Savior.**

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

1. Hosanna! Yay, Jesus!

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What You Need:

- Print "Palm Sunday Retelling" Activity Page on paper, one for each Small Group
- Palm leaves

* 2. Draw with Me

[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:

- Mini whiteboards or plastic plates, one for each kid and leader
- Dry-erase markers, one for each kid and leader
- Paper towels, one for each kid and leader

3. Memory Verse Motions

[Hear from God | Memory Verse Activity]

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

What You Need:

- Bibles marked at John 3:16 for Kindergarteners, one for every two kids

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:

- Mini whiteboards or plastic plates, one for each kid
- Dry-erase markers, one for each kid

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**