

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 Key Question: Why are promises important?

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 (Communicator Script)

Key Question

Prayer

SMALL GROUP (25 minutes)

GROUPS: Creating a Safe Place to Connect

Story Exploration

Application Activity: Take a Snapshot

Bible Story Review: Bible Story Extension and Discussion Questions

Memory Verse Activity: Verses to Take with You

Prayer Activity: Make It Personal with Prayer

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. Take a Snapshot

[Live for God | Application Activity]

Made to Explore: an activity that extends learning through hands on experimentation and discovery

What You Need: Assorted items that require power cords, or “Plugged In” Activity Page

What You Do:

- Invite the group to sit where they can all see you.
- If possible, stand or sit with the group near an electrical outlet.
 - If this is not possible, use the “Plugged In” Activity Page instead.
- Set out the assorted items that require power cords.
 - Or the stack of cards from the “Plugged In” Activity Page.
- Recruit a kid to hold up one of the items (or pick a card from the “Plugged In” Activity Page) and show it to the group.
- Ask the group:
 - What is this item?
 - What is it used for?
 - What will happen when it is plugged in?
 - What will happen when it is turned on?
 - What will happen if you try to turn it on after unplugging it?
- If you’re using the items, plug the first item in.
- Ask the kid who is holding the item to switch it on for a moment.
- Repeat this process for all items, choosing different kids to hold the items or pictures.
- After you’ve completed the process for each item, talk with the group about how we can always be plugged in with God because of Jesus. God kept the promise to send a Savior by sending Jesus. Jesus made a way for us to have a relationship with God so we could always stay connected.
- Ask:
 - What are some ways we can rely on God’s power?
 - What did Jesus come to the world to do?
- ***[Make It Personal] (Share a story about a time when you had to rely on God’s power to help you with something. Be sure to point out how having Jesus as your Savior gave you strength to do what you needed to do.)***

2. Bible Story Extension

[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: Elastic headband, “Character Trivia” Activity Page

What You Do:

- Invite kids to sit in a circle.
- Choose a volunteer to go first.
- Give the kid the elastic headband.
- Instruct the kid to place the headband on their head so the strap is stretched across their forehead.
- Set out the cards from the “Character Trivia” Activity Page facedown.
- Without letting the volunteer see, pick a card from the stack of “Character Trivia” cards, and secure it with the elastic band on the volunteer’s forehead.
- Instruct the rest of the group to provide clues to the volunteer about the character(s) who are on their head so the volunteer can guess who the character(s) is.
- Direct the group to think of clues that don’t completely give the answer away.
- One at a time, choose a kid to share their clue until the kid with the character on their forehead guesses the correct answer.
- Continue playing more rounds, giving different kids in the group turns to wear the headband and guess.
- After all the character cards have been used, ask:
 - Has anyone ever followed through on a promise they made to you a long time ago?
 - What does it tell you about someone who keeps their promise to you?
 - What does it prove about their relationship with you?
- Remind the kids the events leading up to Easter are extremely significant because they fulfill promises that were made long, long ago by God. This plan and promise show us the love God has for us.

3. Discussion Questions

[Talk about God | Bible Story Review]

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

What You Need: No supplies needed

What You Do:

Ask:

- Discuss: What was the best part of your week? What was the worst part of your week?
- Discuss: How did God use those experiences to grow you as a resilient disciple of Jesus?
- Discuss: Why did God send Jesus to Earth? (read John 3:16)
- Discuss: What makes Jesus King?
- Discuss: What kind of King is Jesus?
- Discuss: How do you think Jesus is different from the kings of this world?
- Discuss: How can you honor Jesus as King of your life?
- What does it feel like when someone doesn't keep their promise?
- Why are promises important?
- What does the word "Savior" mean?
- What does it mean to have a relationship with God?
- How do you know God loves you?

4. Verses to Take with You

[Hear from God | Memory Verse Activity]

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

What You Need: Bibles, pencils, “Power Prophets” Activity Page

What You Do:

- Instruct the kids to get into pairs and sit together.
- Hand each pair of kids a Bible, a pencil, and a copy of the “Power Prophets” Activity Page.
- Instruct the pairs to work together to look up the verses on the “Power Prophets” Activity Page and answer the corresponding questions.
- Once every pair of kids has finished, call on different pairs to read the verses out loud and answer the questions.
- After reviewing the verses and questions, ask:
 - Who were the prophets we learned about in these verses? (*Micah, Zechariah, Isaiah, and Nathan*)
 - Why is it important to consider what the prophets said about Jesus?
 - How does it make you feel when you think about how God kept the promises to send a Savior?
- Use a Bible to look up John 3:16 and read it to the group.
- Invite the group to come up with a creative way to remember this verse.

Answer Key:

1. Micah 5:2 – Israel; Bethlehem
2. Isaiah 9:6-7 – Wonderful Adviser, Mighty God, Father Who Lives Forever, Prince Who Brings Peace (Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace)
3. Zechariah 9:9-10 – Donkey (donkey’s colt); peace
4. 2 Samuel 7:4-5,12-13 – Nathan; forever
5. John 3:16 – Jesus; eternal

5. Make It Personal with Prayer

[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: "Prayer Palms" Activity Page, scissors, and markers

What You Do:

- Invite kids to sit in a circle.
- Ask these questions and let kids take turns sharing their answers:
 - When and where do you like to pray?
 - Is it challenging to make time for prayer?
- Give each kid a copy of the "Prayer Palms" Activity Page, a marker, and a pair of scissors.
- Instruct the kids to spread out.
- Direct the kids to cut out the palm branches on the "Prayer Palms" Activity Page.
- Invite the kids to write down different things they want to pray about on the fronds of the leaf.
 - Share that their prayers can be about anything. They can write down prayers for themselves or other people. They can write things they want to thank God for.
 - Remind kids that prayer is simply a conversation with God, and they can talk about anything.
- After kids have finished working on their "Prayer Palms," encourage them to take them home to use as a reminder to pray in the days ahead.
- Remind the kids the palm branch can be a symbol of the promises kept by God, which reminds us that God loves us.
- Close your group time in prayer.

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.)

Story Exploration: Crown, Activity Page of donkey and cloaks

1. Take a Snapshot

[Live for God | Application Activity]

Made to Explore: an activity that extends learning through hands on experimentation and discovery

What You Need:

- Small electrical items that require power cords, four or five items for each Small Group, like:
 - Small lamp
 - Electric pencil sharpener
 - Phone charger/phone
 - Desk fan
- OR print on paper and cut apart "Plugged In" Activity Page, one set for each Small Group

2. Bible Story Extension

[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:

- Print "Character Trivia" Activity Page on cardstock and cut apart, one set for each Small Group
- Elastic headband, one for each Small Group

3. Discussion Questions

[Talk about God | Bible Story Review]

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

What You Need:

- No supplies needed

4. Verses to Take with You

[Hear from God | Memory Verse Activity]

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

What You Need:

- Print "Power Prophets" Activity Page on paper, one for every two kids
- Bibles, one for every two kids
- Pencils, one for every two kids

5. Make It Personal with Prayer

[Pray to God | Prayer Activity]

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

What You Need:

- Print “Prayer Palms” Activity Page on paper, one for each kid
- Markers, one for each kid
- Scissors, one pair 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**