

Paul Made Much of Jesus

BIBLE PASSAGE: Colossians 1:15–2:3

MAIN POINT: Jesus is better than anyone or anything else.

KEY PASSAGE: Philippians 1:20-21

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: When should we tell others about Jesus? We should always tell others about Jesus even when it is difficult.

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Leader BIBLE STUDY

5 Paul wrote his letter to the church at Colossae not long after he arrived in Rome as a prisoner. The letter served to correct false teaching in the church and to encourage right living among believers. Focus on verses 15-20, in which Paul described who Jesus is.

Paul's teaching to the Colossians was important because the believers were trying to figure out what it meant to follow Jesus. They were struggling to understand the gospel and discern what is really true. These are the same questions we face as believers today: Who is Jesus? What is the gospel? What is true about God and about myself?

Before you teach boys and girls about Paul's letter to the Colossians, pray for the Holy Spirit's help. Pray that Jesus would be lifted up and treasured. Keep these points in mind as you prepare for the session.

1. Jesus is the image of the invisible God. (Col. 1:15) If you want to know what God is like, look at Jesus. His life and teaching tells us what is true about God. He reflects God's character. (See Heb. 1:3.) Jesus Himself said, "The one who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9).

2. Jesus is Creator. (Col. 1:16-17) Because He created everything, He is in charge of everything—even invisible things! His controls and sustains all things. Because He is at the center, we can take comfort in Him even when life is hard.

3. Jesus is King. (Col. 1:18) The reality is that we live in God's kingdom. If we live for ourselves instead of Him, we sin. Sin is rebellion against the King. We deserve to die for our sin, but the good news—the gospel—is that Jesus came to save sinners.

Paul made much of Jesus because Jesus is better. He has authority over everything—including us and our salvation. Jesus is great, and He is all we need.

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Additional resources for each session are available at gospelproject.com. For free training and session-by-session help, visit www.ministrygrid.com/web/thegospelproject.

The BIBLE STORY

Bible Storytelling Tips

Paul Made Much of Jesus

Colossians 1:15–2:3

• Use a narrator:

Record yourself or another leader reading the quotation in a different voice from your normal speaking voice. When you arrive at that part of the story, play the recording to help kids understand that these are not your words, but God's words from Paul.

• Show emotions:

Use facial expressions to show confusion, certainty, thought, and hope at appropriate times.

When Paul was a prisoner in Rome, people brought him news about how believers in churches all over the world were doing. Paul had visited many of these churches, and he wrote letters to encourage the Christians in each church.

Paul wrote a letter to the church in Colossae (koh LAHS sih). **The Colossian believers knew the gospel, but false teachers had been telling them lies.** This confused them. **Some were saying there was a secret gospel only they knew about.** Paul wrote to remind them the truth about Jesus. This is what Paul wrote:

“Jesus shows us what God is like.

The Son of God existed before God created anything.

He created everything—everything in heaven and on earth,

everything you see and don't see;

everything exists for Him.

Jesus holds everything together.

The church—all the believers in the world—are the body, and He is the head.

God was happy to send His Son to earth to rescue people from sin through His blood on the cross.”

Paul reminded the believers that their sin had separated them from God. They were His enemies. **But now, they had salvation and forgiveness through Jesus.**

Paul had told them the complete gospel. Anyone who

came and said there was a secret gospel was lying.

“Be encouraged and love one another,” Paul wrote.

“I want you to know Jesus. All wisdom and knowledge is found in Him.”

Christ Connection: Paul encouraged believers by reminding them that Jesus is great. Jesus is God’s Son, and He died on the cross to rescue people from sin. The gospel is true, and Jesus is all we need.



**WANT TO
DISCOVER
GOD’S WORD?
GET
ADVENTURE!**

Invite kids to check out this week’s devotionals to discover how God’s Word can help them grow in the gospel. Order in bulk, subscribe quarterly, or purchase individually. For more information, check out www.lifeway.com/devotionals.

Introduce the STORY

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KEY PASSAGE: Philippians 1:20-21

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: When should we tell others about Jesus? We should always tell others about Jesus even when it is difficult.

Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. As kids arrive, ask them to list a few things that they need and some things they want.

SAY • We need many things to survive each day. Some things—like food and water—are more important than others. One person whom we all need is Jesus. He is the One who sustains us day by day. But did you know that we should also *want* God in our lives? We'll learn more today.

Activity page (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete the “Name Scramble” on the activity page. Kids will unscramble different names of Jesus.

SAY • Jesus is everywhere in the Bible, even when the name *Jesus* isn't directly mentioned. There are lots of names for Him, and each name describes another aspect of who He is and what He has done.

- “Name Scramble” activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Four Corners

Write on four sheets of paper *Firstborn of creation*, *Head of the Church*, *Image of the invisible God*, and *the Lord*. Tape one sheet of paper in each of the corners of the room. Create four slips of paper with the same labels and place them in a bag. Instruct the kids to stand in the middle of the room. Play music as kids march around the room. When the music stops, they must run to the nearest corner. Draw one of the four slips of paper and read it aloud. The kids in that corner earn a point. Play multiple rounds. The kids with the most points at the end win.

SAY • How do we know that Jesus is all of these things? The whole Bible, whether in the Old Testament or New, points us to Jesus. Today we're going to hear another story about Paul, and we'll hear from a letter that he wrote to believers about who Jesus is. We'll learn that Paul made much of Jesus.

OPTION 2: I want that

Form a circle of chairs with one fewer chairs than you have kids in your group. Take a volunteer to stand in the center of the circle and say one thing he wants. All the kids who would also like that thing (or who already own it) should stand up and seek to find a new chair. The kid in the center will also try to find a seat. Whoever is left standing must come up with something different that they want.

SAY • We all have different things we want. But the truth is, the only thing that can truly satisfy us is Jesus. We'll learn more today about why Jesus is so great.



LOW PREP

- paper
- markers
- tape
- bag
- “Unstoppable Victory” song (optional)

- chairs

Transition to teach the story

Teach the STORY

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Countdown

• countdown video

Show the countdown video as your kids arrive, and set it to end as the session begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

• leader attire

[Leader runs onstage wearing ragged clothing and a bandanna tied around his head. He is out of breath.]

LEADER • Oh good! You're all here! I'm so excited! I just need to catch my breath really quick. *[Leans over with hands on knees, breathing heavily.]* I just ran all the way over here to tell you some great news! A boat has just arrived on our island! We're saved! I'm so excited I could just dance and sing!

I think the first thing I want when I get back to civilization is a big, juicy cheeseburger. Oh, oh! And I want a thick and creamy chocolate milkshake. And air conditioning! I want that for sure. And I want to listen to some of my favorite songs too. It's amazing how much you miss when you live stranded on an island for so long. But the truth is, as much as I am looking forward to some of those things, I've had the best thing here with me all along. Even here, Jesus

is with me, and He is all I really need to satisfy me. Jesus is the greatest treasure.

You know what though, I think we might be able to spare a few minutes for just one more Bible story. As excited as I am about finally getting off this island, our friend Paul was even more excited about Jesus. In fact, **Jesus is better than anyone or anything else.**

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • The big picture question we've been talking about is, *When should we tell others about Jesus? We should always tell others about Jesus even when it is difficult.* For Paul it was always a joy to talk about Jesus, even if it meant he got thrown in prison. Paul knew that Jesus is greater than anything else in the world!

Giant timeline (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline or big story circle.

LEADER • We've learned a lot about Paul over the last few weeks. We know that at first, Paul hated Christians and wanted to arrest everyone who believed in Jesus. But then Paul had an encounter with Jesus that forever changed him. Instead of trying to kill people for believing in Jesus, now he wanted to tell people about Him! Paul traveled all over the world and planted many churches. He also wrote letters to churches to encourage them in their faith. Today's story comes from Paul's letter to the Colossian believers. It's called "Paul Made Much of Jesus."

• Giant Timeline or
Big Story Circle

- Bibles
- “Paul Made Much of Jesus” video
- Big Picture Question Poster
- Bible Story Picture Poster

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Colossians 1:15–2:3. Use the Bible storytelling tips on the Bible story page to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “Paul Made Much of Jesus.”

LEADER • Have you ever been so excited about something that you couldn’t stop talking about it? That’s how Paul was about Jesus! He couldn’t stop sharing about the grace of Christ. Paul wanted the whole world to know about Jesus and the hope that we can have for all eternity when we give our lives to Him. Do you remember some of the words or phrases that Paul used to describe Jesus? *[Allow time for kids to answer.]*

Paul wrote this letter to the church in Colossae. False teachers had popped up there who tried to add extra rules to the gospel. Paul wanted to remind believers that the gospel is not about doing the right things, but about knowing the right person—Jesus. Paul wanted believers to understand who Jesus is and what He has done for us.

Jesus is better than anyone or anything else. Paul wanted the Colossians to understand that He is our Savior and He is the only person who can satisfy us. He is the rescuer that God had planned to send to save us from sin all along. Only through Jesus can we have life with God forever.

We’ve learned about a lot of Paul’s trials and how he had joy and trusted God through them. All of those stories are connected to what Paul teaches in this story. Paul was able to face prison, shipwrecks, plots to kill him, and angry people rejecting him because Paul understood that Jesus is the ultimate

prize. Jesus is our treasure. When we have Jesus in our lives, we are complete.

Christ connection

LEADER • Paul encouraged God’s people by reminding them that Jesus is great. Jesus is God’s Son, and He died on the cross to rescue people from sin. The gospel is all we need; Jesus is all we need. The Bible is about Him, and He is the head of the church.

In addition to needing Jesus for salvation and life, our hearts want Jesus because we were made to worship God. We sometimes try to fill our lives with other things, but nothing can satisfy us except Jesus.

Note: You may use this opportunity to use Scripture and the guide provided to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together Philippians 1:20-21.

LEADER • Jesus is the Source and Perfector of our faith. He alone deserves our praise and worship because He is the only One who can save us from our sin. Like Paul, our desire should be to honor Christ with our lives in response to His grace and mercy.

Lead boys and girls in singing “My Eager Expectation.”

- Key Passage Poster
- “My Eager Expectation” song

Discussion starter video (4 minutes)

LEADER • Have you ever met a movie or TV star? What do you think it would be like to meet a person you look up to? Think about that as you watch this.

Show the “Unit 34, Session 5” discussion starter video.

Discuss why the kids were surprised. What would the kids in your group say if they met a famous actor or other celebrity? Why do we tend to treat famous people

- “Unit 34, Session 5” discussion starter video

differently? Who is the only one who deserves praise? Why did Paul make much of Jesus?

LEADER • It's exciting to meet famous people. Usually a famous person has done something incredible or difficult that made him or her famous. However, only Jesus has died on the cross for sin and come back from the dead. Only Jesus can give us eternal life and fill us with joy. **Jesus is better than anyone or anything else.**

Sing (4 minutes)

• "Unstoppable Victory"
song

LEADER • Learning so much more about who Jesus is makes me want to sing praises to Him! We praise Him because we love Him. He is victorious.

Sing together "Unstoppable Victory."

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • God, thank You for revealing more of Yourself to us through Your Word. We thank You for showing us how much You love us by sending Jesus to rescue us from our sin and inviting us into Your kingdom. Help us honor and glorify You with our lives this week. Amen.

Dismiss to apply the story

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

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.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus. Provide *I'm a Christian Now* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

Apply the STORY

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BIG PICTURE QUESTION: When should we tell others about Jesus? We should always tell others about Jesus even when it is difficult.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

• Key Passage Poster

Show the key passage poster and review it a few times with the class. Then form small groups of kids and instruct them to make up a cheer or chant using the key passage. Each group will have a few minutes to perform their cheer or chant for the rest of the class. Then, take volunteers to say the key passage from memory.

SAY • Great job! Jesus was Paul's greatest treasure. Paul knew that people can only have peace with God through Christ and he wanted to share the good news with everyone. **Jesus is better than anyone or anything else.** Paul made much of Jesus all the time, wherever he went. We can make much of Jesus too!

Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

• Bibles, 1 per kid

• Main Point Poster

Ask a volunteer to tell where the Book of Colossians is found. (*New Testament*) Provide Bibles and help the kids find Colossians 1:15–2:3. Explain that the Book of Colossians is a letter from Paul to the believers in the city of Colossae.

Briefly review the Bible story; then play “Freeze Frame.” Form five groups of kids. Assign each group one of the

Bible stories we learned about Paul from this unit. Teams will come up front and freeze in a picture that describes their Bible story. The other kids will try to guess what aspect of the Bible story they are representing. Then ask the following review questions from the entire unit:

Option: Retell or review the Bible stories using the bolded text of the Bible story scripts.

1. Who wanted to kill Paul? (*Jewish people and religious leaders, Acts 23:12-15*)
2. Why did God protect Paul from the religious leaders who wanted to kill him? (*so he could preach about Jesus to more people, Acts 23:11*)
3. Which rulers did Paul preach to? (*Felix, Festus, and Agrippa; Acts 24-25*)
4. Why didn't Agrippa and Festus release Paul when they decided he was innocent? (*Paul had appealed to appear before Caesar, Acts 26:32*)
5. What happened to Paul's boat on the way to Rome? (*it was shipwrecked because of a storm, Acts 27:40-41*)
6. What did Paul say about dying? (*Paul said that to die and be with Jesus face-to-face was a good thing; Phil. 1:23*)
7. What did Paul say about living? (*He said that to live for the glory of Jesus was a good thing, Phil. 1:24-25*)
8. ***When should we tell others about Jesus? We should always tell others about Jesus even when it is difficult.***

SAY • Jesus is better than anyone or anything else. Jesus is the Son of God. Only Jesus is worthy of our worship because He alone is able to save us from our sin. Paul knew this was true and told others about it so that they would trust in Jesus and be saved from sin. Jesus is our source of life, hope, and peace.

LOW PREP

- “Names of Jesus Bingo” printables, 1 per kid
- small items or pieces of paper
- bowl
- paper

Activity choice (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Names of Jesus Bingo

Print the “Names of Jesus Bingo” printables and give one card to each kid. Provide small squares of paper, bottle caps, or buttons to serve as markers for the boards. Write the names of Jesus on small pieces of paper, fold the paper in half, and place them in a bag or bowl. Draw a name from the bowl and call it out. The kid who gets five in a row and calls out “bingo” first wins. Play again as time allows.

SAY • Throughout the Bible, Jesus is known by many names. He is the Wonderful Counselor, Savior, Lion of Judah, Prince of Peace, Lamb of God and so many more! Each of these names tells us something about who Jesus is and what He is like. We worship Jesus for what He has done and because of who He is.

Jesus is better than anyone or anything else.

OPTION 2: Cheering for Jesus

Encourage kids to form groups of four or five kids. Guide them to work together to create a cheer, rap, or spoken word that celebrates who Jesus is and what He has done. After a few minutes, invite groups to share their cheer with the rest of the class.

SAY • Paul was one of Jesus’ biggest cheerleaders.

Everywhere Paul went, he told others about the glory and goodness of Jesus. Paul wrote letters to the churches around the world and reminded the believers who Jesus is. Jesus is the Son of God and our source of life, hope, peace, and joy. **Jesus is better than anyone or anything else.**

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute each child's journal. Ask the kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

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

Make sure each child secures this week's sheet in the journal, and then collect them. Keep the journals in the classroom so they will be available every week or as often as you wish to use them.

If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page provided with this session. Pray for your group.

- pencils and crayons
- Journal Page
- Bible Story Coloring Page, 1 per kid

Tip: Give parents this week's *Big Picture Cards for Families* to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.