

Leader Prep & Bible Study

THE
GOSPEL
PROJECT[®]
FOR KIDS

UNIT 26
Session 1
OLDER

Session Title: Jesus' Crucifixion

Bible Passage: Matthew 27:11-66

Main Point: Jesus was crucified on the cross.

Key Passage: You are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift—not from works, so that no one can boast. Ephesians 2:8-9

Big Picture Question: Why did Jesus die on the cross? Jesus died on the cross to save us from our sins and came back to life to show we are forgiven.

BIBLE STUDY

Jesus' crucifixion, burial, and resurrection are the center of the gospel. Jesus accomplished the plan God had been working out throughout the Old Testament to bring salvation to sinners, and it happened in such an unlikely way.

In the Book of Acts, Peter testified to the Israelites about Jesus' death: "Though He was delivered up according to God's determined plan and foreknowledge, you used lawless people to nail Him to a cross and kill Him" (Acts 2:23). Crucifixion was a horrific way to die. As you teach kids, rather than focus on the graphic details of how Jesus died, emphasize why He died. Two primary reasons stand out: God is loving, and God is just.

First, God is loving. He sent His Son to be the Savior of the world because He loves us. (See John 3:16; Rom. 5:8; 1 John 4:10.) Jesus submitted to the Father's will; He humbled Himself and came to earth as a man, and He laid down His life because He loves us. (Eph. 5:2)

Jesus lived the perfect life we failed to live and died the guilty death we don't want to die. Those who trust in Him receive forgiveness and eternal life.

Second, God is just. God's law for the people was plain. (See Deuteronomy 6:5.) But God's people, and all people, broke the law. We have loved other things more than we love God. That is sin. So why did Jesus have to die? Why couldn't He just say, "You are forgiven"? Because God is just, He requires due payment for sin. To simply forgive sin without requiring a payment would be unjust.

Jesus was our substitute, taking our place on the cross and absorbing God's wrath on our behalf so we can be forgiven and declared righteous. (See Rom. 3:25-26; Col. 2:13-15.) Jesus died to release sinners from slavery to sin, and when we trust in Him, we are free indeed.

SUGGESTED THEME DECORATING IDEAS:

Create a forest scene with trees using construction paper or large sheets of paper. These can be taped to the walls. Arrange various rescue equipment around on the stage: climbing ropes and carabiners, helmets, and a stretcher. You may also display the theme background slide. Simulate a base camp for a search and rescue team. Set up a table and display maps, flashlights or lanterns, climbing ropes, and safety equipment. You may choose to project the theme background slide.

SALVATION
MESSAGE
WEEK

Large Group LEADER

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- Key Passage song
"Saved by Grace"

KEY PASSAGE SONG

Play the Key Passage song as your kids arrive.

- Theme Slide



- leader attire
- backpack
- two-way radio
- climbing rope
- small blanket
- Bible

WORSHIP

Worship leaders sing two songs with the children and collect offering.

INTRODUCE THE SESSION (3 MINUTES)

[Leader enters wearing a backpack and carrying a two-way radio. Leader sets down the radio and backpack on a table unpacks a climbing rope, small blanket, and Bible.]

Leader •Climbing rope ... check! Small blanket ... check! Bible ... check! Rubber boots ... oh, drat. I knew I forgot something.

Hey, everyone. I'm [*your name*], volunteer assistant for the Lackanada Search and Rescue Squad. We just got word that there's a hiker missing in the nearby mountains. This is not good; it's getting dark, and nighttime rescues are much more difficult than daytime rescues. Fortunately a team has already headed out and should be making contact with the hiker soon. So the squad coordinator sent me back here to base to organize our supplies.

There's not a lot to be done around here, which is great because I want to share with you an incredible Bible story. In some ways, this is a search and rescue story—the greatest search and rescue story ever!

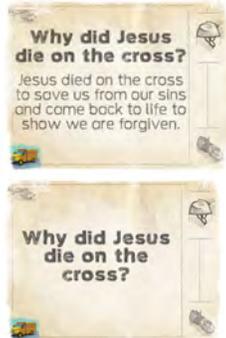
- Giant Timeline

GIANT TIMELINE (1 MINUTE)

Leader •Check out all of these stories from the Bible we have already learned about. From the beginning of the Gospels back through the Old Testament prophets and back all the way to Genesis in the beginning.

Everything that happened fits together to tell a bigger story of God's plan to rescue people from sin. The promise God made at the very beginning finally comes true in today's story. Let's listen.

- Big Picture question slides



BIG PICTURE QUESTION (2 MINUTES)

Leader •The next few weeks, we are going to answer this big picture question: *Why did Jesus die on the cross?* Now that is a great question. Here's the answer: *Jesus died on the cross to save us from our sins and came back to life to show we are forgiven.*

SALVATION
MESSAGE
WEEK

- Bible Story Video
“Jesus’ Crucifixion” video
- Bible Story Picture Slide
- Bible

WATCH THE BIBLE STORY (5 MINUTES)

Open your Bible to Matthew 27:11-66. Use the Bible storytelling tips on the Bible story page to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “Jesus’ Crucifixion.”



OPTIONAL BIBLE STORY SCRIPT

Jesus’ Crucifixion

Matthew 27:11-66

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 bad. 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. Then they cast lots to decide who would get His clothes. They put a sign above His head that said: THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS. Two criminals were crucified next to Him.

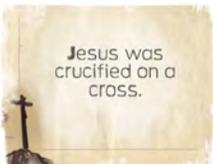
As Jesus was on the cross, people mocked Him. “He saved others, but He cannot save Himself!” they said.

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.

- Timeline Poster
- Main Point Slide



TALK ABOUT THE BIBLE STORY (1 MINUTE)

Leader •When we talk about Jesus’ crucifixion, we mean His death on the cross. Crucifixion was a terrible punishment, usually used for the worst criminals. Jesus never did anything wrong, but we know that His death was part of God’s plan to save sinners.

Imagine how Jesus’ disciples felt. They believed that Jesus was the Messiah. They thought He was going to overthrow the Romans and set up His kingdom and rescue them.

Jesus was the Savior God promised—but how can someone who is dead save anyone? Well, we know this is not the end of the story. When Jesus was arrested and nailed to a cross, the governor’s soldiers made fun of Him. They put a crown of thorns on His head and a scarlet robe on Him. They mocked Him as the King of the Jews. But they did not understand that Jesus is a King, and this was God’s plan all along.

Only Jesus could be the perfect substitute for sinners. He lived the perfect life we cannot live and died the guilty death we don’t want to die.

CHRIST CONNECTION

LEADER • On this dark day, Jesus' followers probably thought all hope was lost. **Jesus was crucified on the cross**, and His body was laid in a tomb. But the story was not over.

By dying on the cross, Jesus paid the penalty for our sin—all of it: past, present, and future. He was the blood sacrifice made once and for all for the forgiveness of sin. And God was satisfied with Jesus' sacrifice. We know this because on the third day, God raised Jesus from the dead. Those who trust in Him have forgiveness and eternal life.

SALVATION MESSAGE

What does it mean when we say, "those who trust in Him have forgiveness and eternal life?" To trust in Jesus means that we trust that He is the Son of God, that He died and rose again to save us from our sin. It also means that we trust Him so much, we will choose to live our lives as He has shown us in His Word. We will love Him and love others, we will obey His commands and forgive others. It sounds easy, but sometimes it's hard and even though we put our trust in Him, we will sometimes still sin. When we turn our lives over to God and ask Jesus to be our Lord and leader, we have a forever life with God, not just one day in heaven, but right now because His Holy Spirit comes to live in us. God's Spirit guides us every day (if we choose to listen) and we know we are never alone even when things are hard or when we are scared. Life with God as our leader is the best life we can live. If you've never asked Jesus to be your Lord and Leader, you can do that today. If you already have asked, pray for your friends in the room who haven't made that choice yet and if you aren't ready today, that's okay, but you need to keep coming to church, ask questions so you can learn more so one day you will be ready to ask God to take charge! If you're ready, pray this prayer behind me: "Father God, thank you for coming to this earth and choosing to save me from my sin. I believe that Jesus came and died on the cross so that I can have my sin erased and my life with you can begin today. I now choose to follow you, to obey you and to love others the way you love me. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

****Encourage kids to tell their leaders in small group if they prayed this prayer so we can celebrate their choice**

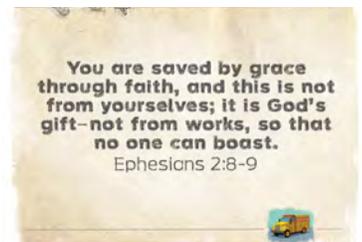
• Key Passage slide



KEY PASSAGE (4 MINUTES)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together Ephesians 2:8-9.

Leader • Our key passage reminds us that we can't do anything to save ourselves. That's why God sent His Son to die on the cross for our sins. Before Jesus died, He said, "It is finished!" The work was done. Salvation is God's gift to anyone who trusts in Jesus. We do not deserve this gift; it is all grace.



PRAYER

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to small groups.

Leader • Lord God, we hear about Jesus' death on the cross with both sadness at the suffering He so unfairly endured and thankfulness because He suffered in our place. We admit that we are sinners who need Your grace. Thank You for the gift of Your Son. We do not deserve Him, but we love Him. Thank You. Amen.

DISMISS TO SMALL GROUP

Small Group LEADER

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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. Prompt kids to share their ideas about what they will be doing one week from today. What will they eat for breakfast? What will they do during the day? Who will they talk to that day?

SESSION STARTER (10 MINUTES)

Let the crowd decide

Form two groups of kids. Instruct groups to stand at opposite sides of the room. Explain that you are going to give them an option between two things. Group members must agree on an option and then shout it out together.

Alternate between groups. Give the following options or offer your own:

peanut butter and jelly sandwich or macaroni and cheese?	morning or evening?
basketball or soccer?	science or math?
chocolate cake or strawberry ice cream?	cats or dogs?

Say • Today we are going to hear a Bible story about a time when a crowd had to choose between Jesus and a criminal named Barabbas (buh RAB uhs). Let's find out whom they chose.

Transition to large group

10 minutes after the start of service

Transition to small group

Break into groups of 10 or less children for Small group

Small group time

SALVATION MESSAGE (10 MINUTES)

Have kids sit in small groups and have leaders with each group. Pass out Commitment Cards and tell kids, they are not to look at what their neighbor is writing – this is a decision that has to be made by each individual.

- Salvation Message
Commitment Cards
pencils

Say to kids: This time we have together right now is so special! Here we have a chance to talk about the greatest thing anyone has ever done for us. Jesus laid down His life to make sure we aren't separated from God. Remember the part of the story where the curtain was torn? That curtain separated people from God's most Holy place. The tear was to show that we are no longer separated because of Jesus' death. There's a lot to learn about Jesus before making this choice, so it's okay if you need to learn more, but, God doesn't expect you to be an expert on the Bible – He just wants you to understand His love and be willing to be obedient. As you fill out your sheet, make sure you put your name and only check ONE box. If you have any questions about what we learned today, you can ask me now or if you want to step into the hall, we can talk there.

SALVATION
MESSAGE
WEEK

IMPORTANT NOTE!!

****Check each child's sheet, if more than one box is marked, please verify and clearly mark their choice so we can contact those who've made this choice for the first time**

- Journal Page
- Pencils

JOURNAL AND PRAYER (5 MINUTES)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Guide kids to think about and answer the questions listed on the page:

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 better?

While kids journal, invite them to share their ideas. Then lead kids in prayer.

Say •Lord God, as we learn about Jesus' dying a death He didn't deserve, we realize that we deserve death for our sins. Thank You for sending Your Son to rescue us from sin and death. We want to remember Jesus' great sacrifice and live in a way that brings glory to our Savior. We love You, God. Amen.



THE GOSPEL: GOD'S PLAN FOR ME

Use Scripture and the guide provided in the classroom to explain to boys and girls how to become a Christian. Assign individuals to meet with kids who have more questions. If this is not possible, encourage boys and girls to ask their parents, leader, or other Christian adults any questions they may have about becoming a Christian.

Bible Story Script

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