

THE BIGGEST STORY CURRICULUM



October - December

Poetry

Prophets

1st - 3rd Grade: Red Check Marks

4th - 5th : Green Check Marks

Kids Worship: Blue Check Marks



PART 3

POETRY

JOB—SONG OF SOLOMON

The Poetical Books in the Old Testament may not look like poetry to us. They don't rhyme, and they contain elements of history, prophecy, and song. But the writing is stylized and contains many of the patterns of poetry.

The five books of Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon are sometimes called Wisdom Literature. And that fits too. They contain wisdom about suffering, romance, and how to live a life pleasing to God. And of course, the Poetical Books also look forward to the coming of God's Wisdom, the one who doesn't just show the way, but is himself the way, the truth, and the life.



STORY 38

Cover Your Mouth

JOB 38–42

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read the focus passage (Job 38:1–8; 40:1–9; 42:1–6) or the whole passage (Job 38–42).
- Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is, what he has done, and how they should respond to him.
- Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.

1

Read

THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}

2

Teach

The first chapter of the book of Job tells us about Job's awful day. He lost his animals, children, and many of his servants. The next day wasn't any better. Satan attacked again, striking "Job with loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head" (Job 2:7). Ouch! Job was in bad shape—from head to toe. Also, his wife, who should have been his helper, was no help. "Curse God and die" (2:9)," she suggested. Double ouch! Job didn't listen. He didn't shake his fist at God, but bowed before him. "If the treasure comes from God," he said to her, "the trials must come from God too." What great faith! Job passed another test.

A final test came when Job's friends came to visit him. They came to comfort him, but they ended up siding with Satan, not God. They became his accusers!

They accused him of sins he didn't commit. They thought the bad things that happened were because he did bad things. They were wrong. Bad things sometimes happen to good people.

What was Job to do? His wife and friends didn't help. And when he cried out to God, God was silent. Then, after many days, God finally spoke. Let's listen to what God had to say.

TELL THE STORY

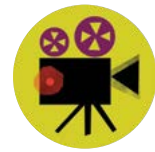
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the
focus passage
together



Read from
*The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook*



Play *The
Biggest Story*
video

TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

Big Truth

God is God, and we
are not! We should
trust him when
things are hard.

Through his sufferings, Job did what most people would do. He cried, complained, groaned, and grumbled. He wanted answers. “Are you one of the bad guys?” Job questioned God. “I’m innocent! So why am I suffering so much?” When God finally spoke out of a whirlwind, he didn’t answer Job’s questions, at least not directly. But he did help. He helped Job see that God was God and Job was not. He gave Job wisdom, which is what Job needed more than his health and wealth.

God gave Job wisdom by asking lots of questions: “Where were you when I made the world? Can you number the clouds? Do you rule over the animals? Do you know everything there is to know?” Question after question reminded Job that God alone is Creator and that God lovingly cares for every creature and every part of his vast and mind-blowing creation. He gives the eagle its sight, the hippo its strength, and the ostrich its stupidity. He controls the stars and seas.

Job got God’s point! He was humbled. He said to God, “Behold, I am of small account; what shall I answer you? I lay my hand on my mouth” (Job 40:4). He also realized that he needed to say that he was sorry. “I repent,” Job said. “You can do all things, God, and no power in the universe can stop you. I will stop



Story

38

Job

38–42

talking and start listening. I have heard *about* you, but now I heard *from* you. You have opened my eyes. I finally see that I wasn't seeing right" (see 42:2–6). God was pleased with Job's responses. But he wasn't so pleased with Job's so-called friends. They didn't speak the truth about Job or him. But God still forgave them. Job, his faithful servant, offered a prayer and sacrifice to cleanse them from their many sins. God accepted this worship and blessed Job. Job didn't live happily ever after, but he got close. God restored Job's fortunes, giving him ten more children and even more animals and servants than he had before. But Job's greatest blessing, in good times and bad, was God himself.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher.
{5 minutes}

God will turn around our suffering just like he did for Job. But he may not do it quickly, or in our lifetime. However long we suffer, God promises to bless those who stay close to him, and he promises to give us what we need most—himself. As Christians, we will have very hard things happen to us like Jesus did. But we suffer "that we may also be glorified with him" (Rom. 8:17). Jesus died, but now he reigns as King in heaven. Like him, we will suffer and die. But one day we will join him in heaven. Suffering on earth; glories in heaven. And because we have this heavenly hope, we can remind ourselves of that future when things are hard. We can wait, knowing that "all things work together for good" for those God loves (8:28). And we are loved. Can anything "separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?" No! "Neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (8:35, 38–39). What amazing love!

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

- 1. QUESTION:** Whom do you normally talk to when things are hard? When Job talked to his friends and wife, what was some of the bad advice he got? When he talked to God, what did he learn? Who helped Job the most?

TAKEAWAY: When things are hard, we should talk to God.

3

Engage

Memory Verse

I know that
you can do all
things, and that
no purpose of
yours can be
thwarted.

JOB 42:2

2. **QUESTION:** Job lost everything, but what good did God bring about through his suffering? How did God use Jesus's death and suffering for good? What hope do we have when we go through hard things?

TAKEAWAY: When we go through hard things, we can trust that God works everything for our good.

3. **QUESTION:** Job lost his health, wealth, and family, but what did he never lose? Even when Job was given back health, wealth, and family, what do you think was his greatest treasure? Can anything separate us from God? How does that make you feel?

TAKEAWAY: The best blessing is not health, wealth, or family, but it is God himself.

4. **QUESTION:** What were some of the questions God asked Job? Is anyone like God—creating all things and caring for them? Should we think we know more than God or trust him? Why?

TAKEAWAY: God alone created and cares for every person, place, and thing in the universe.

ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from TheBiggestStory.com, or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Trust God Tag

Supply List: none

Assign one child to be “It.” Begin a game of tag. A child can avoid being tagged by kneeling and saying, “Trust God in all things.” If a child is tagged before completing the phrase, he or she becomes “It.” Continue playing as time allows. Remind children that no matter what they go through, they can always trust God.



Story

38

Job

38–42

Option 2: Over/Under Relay

Supply List: two equal-sized balls

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Divide the children into two teams, and have each team stand in a single file line. The goal of the game is to be the first team to get to the finish line on the opposite side of the room. Give the person in the front of the line a ball. Say “Go!” Have the first person on each team pass the ball over her head to the person behind her. The second person passes it under (or through) his legs. The children alternate passing methods with each person. Once the last person gets the ball, she runs to the front of the line to move the team toward the finish line. The first team to reach the finish line is the winner. Remind children we can trust God in the highs and lows of life.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Human Knot

Supply List: none

Have the children stand shoulder to shoulder in a tight circle. Children should reach out and grab hands with two different people across the circle from them (not directly next to them). Have the children work together to untangle themselves without letting go of hands. When untangled, the group will be standing in a circle again. For groups over ten children, break into smaller circles and race to see which team can untangle first. Remind children that when life is tangled and messy, God can turn our struggles around just like he did with Job.

Option 2: Trust God Tag

Supply List: none

Assign one child to be “It.” Begin a game of tag. A child can avoid being tagged by kneeling and saying, “Trust God in all things.” If a child is tagged before completing the phrase, he or she becomes “It.” Continue playing as time allows. Remind children that no matter what they go through, they can always trust God.

CRAFTS

Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Textured Paper

Supply List: paper, crayons, variety of items with different textures and shapes (coins, keys, sandpaper, bark, leaves, doilies, sticker shapes, etc.)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Print paper with the Big Truth or Memory Verse printed on top (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child the Big Truth paper. Set crayons and a variety of textures and flat objects on the tables. Have children place different textures and objects under their paper and rub a crayon over the paper until the shapes and textures appear. Have children continue to rub different items to fill their paper. Remind children that when pressure and hard times come, God is there.

Option 2: Mouth Paper Bag Puppet

Supply List: paper bags, scissors, glue, crayons, yarn, googly eyes (optional)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a paper bag. Set glue, scissors, yarn, and crayons on the tables. Have them lay the paper bag with the flap facing up. Children should draw eyes (or glue on googly eyes), nose, and mouth on the flap. Have them cut yarn and glue it to the puppet for hair. Then have them open the flap and write “I trust you, God” so that when they open the mouth the words are visible. Remind children that we can trust God in all things.



Option 1: Trust God Wreath

Supply List: paper, paper plates, scissors, hole punch, string, construction paper, glue sticks

Before Class: Gather supplies. Punch a hole in the top of each plate (one per child). Cut pieces of string into 8-inch lengths for hanging. Print the Big Truth on paper (cut to fit the plate, one per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child a paper plate, scissors, string, and Big Truth paper. Set construction paper and glue sticks on the tables. Have them cut out the center circle and thread and knot the string through the punched hole. Have children tear the construction paper into small pieces and then glue them on their plates. Children continue to tear and glue paper until the entire plate is covered. Then have them glue the Big Truth to the wreath. Remind children that when they feel worn and torn, God is still God.

Option 2: Paper Lantern

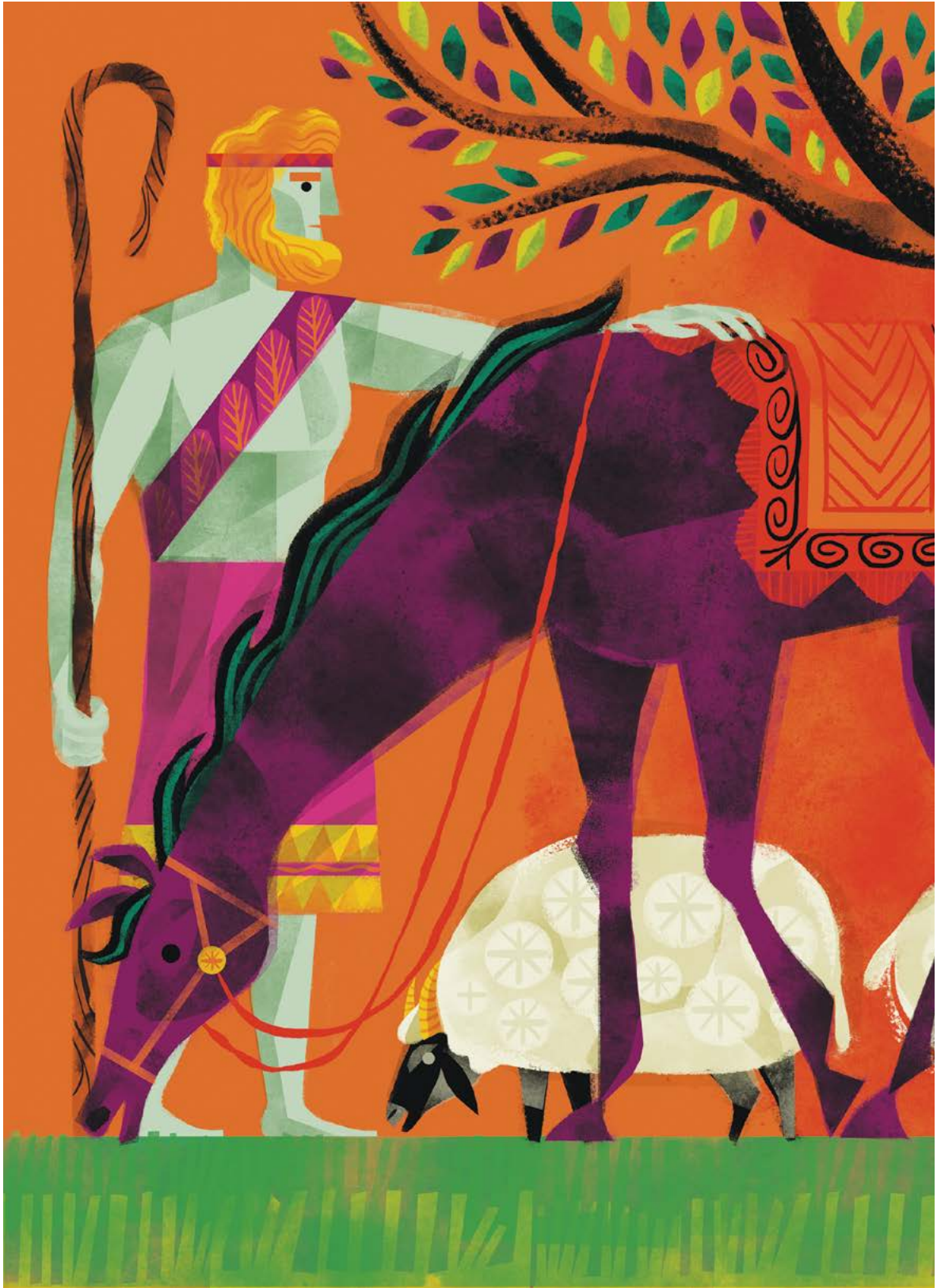
Supply List: paper, construction paper, markers, glue, staplers, scissors

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut 1-inch wide strips of construction paper (one per child). Print and cut in 1-inch strips the Big Truth (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child a piece of construction paper, the 1-inch Big Truth, the 1-inch construction paper, and scissors. Set markers, glue, and staplers on the tables. Have the children use markers to decorate their piece of construction paper. Then have them fold their paper in half lengthwise and cut nine slits into the folded edge (beginning 1 inch from the side and leaving about 1 inch between slits). They need to stop cutting at least 1 inch before reaching the other end of the folded paper. Unfold the paper and glue the Big Truth along the top or bottom. Then staple the short edges together to form a lantern. Staple a strip of construction paper to the top for a handle. Explain that when life seems dark and hard, God is making a way through the darkness.



Visit TheBiggestStory.com for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.



STORY 39

The Lord Is My Shepherd

PSALM 23

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Psalm 23.
- Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is, what he has done, and how they should respond to him.
- Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.

1

Read

THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}

2

Teach

The Biggest Story has lots of great stories. It also has lots of great songs. Some songs are victory songs that Israel sang after God saved them from their enemies. Can anyone remember one of those stories from Exodus or Judges? When God saves, God's people sing! So much so that there's a whole book of songs. It's called Psalms, and it has 150 songs. It contains sad songs about sad situations, longing songs that cry out for justice, and instructive songs that focus on living out God's wisdom. It has songs about saying sorry for sins, songs about God's forever kingdom, and songs that celebrate the coming of the promised King (the Christ!). Israel sang these songs when they gathered for worship. So did Jesus and his disciples. It became the church's first hymnbook. A favorite psalm that the church sang after Jesus's death and resurrection was Psalm 110,

which celebrates Jesus as both the victorious King and the forever priest. But Psalm 23 also became a favorite of the church. It's about God as our shepherd, and it's the one we'll be looking closely at today.

TELL THE STORY

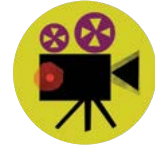
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the
Bible passage
together



Read from
The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook



Play *The*
Biggest Story
video

TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

Big Truth
God, as our
shepherd, leads,
feeds, protects,
and forgives us.

Do you have a favorite song? If you asked every Christian who ever lived from the time of Jesus until now to say their favorite psalm or song from the Bible, the most common answer would likely be Psalm 23. One reason people love this song is because of its beautiful words and the pictures those words paint. Can you picture yourself lying down in the greenest grass next to a quiet pool of clean blue water? Can you picture yourself having no fear whatsoever as you walk through complete darkness? Can you picture sitting down at a dinner table and God's serving you your favorite meal and filling your cup to the brim (and beyond!) with your favorite drink? Can you picture dwelling with God forever and ever in a safe place where there is perfect peace, complete happiness, and no sin? How wonderful! Yes please!

A second reason people love this song is that King David wrote it. David wrote lots of psalms, but this one is extra special because it reminds us that as strong and successful as David was, he still needed God to lead him and watch over him every step of the way. As you think back to his story, you might remember that he was a shepherd boy when God called him to be Israel's king. No wonder David wrote about God as his shepherd! David knew that he needed God's help to lead, protect, and provide just like he used to do for his father's sheep. And that is precisely what God did—for David and for God's people.



Story

39

Psalm

23

The third reason people love this *old* song (it's over three thousand years old!) is that it talks about truth. And these truths never change: God loves us. God provides for us. God leads us. Yes, it remains the most popular song in the Bible because it gives God's people great confidence that we can trust in a good God who loves us, provides for us, and leads us. If the Lord is our shepherd, is there anything we need? No! We have it all.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher.
{5 minutes}

King David knew God's goodness and mercy all the days of his life, and someday he will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. But while David was living on earth, he never met the greatest shepherd, who came from his family tree. He never met Jesus. When Jesus came to earth, he taught that he was a *shepherd* and that those who heard his voice would follow him like *sheep*. "The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out" and his "sheep follow him" (John 10:3, 4). He also said, "I am the good shepherd . . . [who] lays down his life for the sheep" (10:11). Jesus is not only the good shepherd. He is a sheep too. Do you remember the Passover lamb? When Jesus arrived, his cousin John said, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world" (John 1:29). Jesus is our Passover Lamb, which means he's the Lamb who takes away our sins. Jesus leads us and protects us and feeds us. But most importantly, through his death, he takes away our sins so we can be forgiven. And because we are forgiven, we can dwell in the presence of God forever. Jesus is the perfect *sheep* to save us from our sins and the perfect *shepherd* to bring us safely home.

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. **QUESTION:** What's another word for psalm? Who would sing the Psalms? Why would they sing them?

TAKEAWAY: God's people use the Psalms for worship.

2. **QUESTION:** How many songs are in the book of Psalms? What are some of the feelings they express? Who are the Psalms often about?

3

Engage

TAKEAWAY: There are 150 Psalms in our Bible—some are happy, some are sad, and some thank God for salvation.

Memory Verse

The LORD is my
shepherd; I shall
not want.

PSALM 23:1

3. **QUESTION:** What does a shepherd do? What are some of the beautiful pictures in Psalm 23? Psalm 23 begins, “The LORD is my shepherd.” What does that mean God does for us?

TAKEAWAY: As our shepherd, God leads, feeds, protects, and forgives us.

4. **QUESTION:** Who came after David and said, “I am the good shepherd . . . [who] lays his life down for the sheep”? Who are the sheep that he lays his life down for? What animal was sacrificed at Passover? Who is the perfect Passover Lamb that is sacrificed for our sins?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus is the good shepherd and the perfect sheep.

ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from TheBiggestStory.com, or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Sheep, Sheep, Shepherd

Supply List: none

Have children sit in a circle and select one person to be the “shepherd.” This person walks around the circle and taps the head of each child while saying “sheep.” When the shepherd wants to choose a new shepherd, he taps a child’s head, says “Shepherd,” and runs around the circle. The new shepherd gets up and tries to tag the tagger before the tagger returns to the spot where the new shepherd had been sitting. If tagged, the original shepherd sits in the middle of the circle until someone else is tagged and takes his place. If not tagged, the new shepherd becomes the tagger and gets to walk around the circle and choose a new person to be shepherd. If your group is large, break into two groups to give more people an opportunity to play. Place a limit on the number of times one person can be chosen. Remind the children that God has chosen to be our shepherd and promises to care for and protect us.



Option 2: Gather the Sheep



Supply List: cotton balls



Hide some cotton wool balls around the room. If you have some extra time, you could draw some faces to glue onto them first. Tell the children how many sheep there are and on go they must find all the sheep.



Option 1: Sheep to the Sheepfold Game

Supply List: masking tape

Before Class: Mark off an area on the floor with the tape so all the children can stand in it.

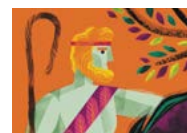
Have the children stand in the taped area (the sheepfold). Choose one person to be the shepherd and the others to be sheep. The shepherd stands in the center of the play area and counts to five with his eyes closed. While he counts, the sheep scatter outside of the sheepfold. After counting, the shepherd opens his eyes and tries to tag the sheep until he has tagged them all. When a sheep is tagged, he must go to the sheepfold. As time allows, the last person to be tagged is the new shepherd.

Option 2: Woolly Relay Race

Supply List: paper, tape, fifty cotton balls, two glue sticks

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make copies of a large picture of a sheep (one per team) and tape it to the wall across from each team.

Divide children into two teams, give the first person a glue stick, and have the children line up behind a cup filled with twenty-five cotton balls. When the teacher calls “Go!” the first person on each team should take the glue stick and one cotton ball out of her team’s cup, run down to the sheep paper, and glue the cotton ball to the picture. Then she must run back and hand the glue stick to the next player in line. Play continues with each player gluing one cotton ball at a time. The first team to get all their cotton balls on the paper—and then to get back to the cup—is the winner. Remind children that God calls himself the great shepherd, and we are his sheep.



Story
39

Psalm
23



Option 1: Stand Up Sheep

Supply List: cardstock, colored pencils, scissors, cotton balls, glue sticks, wiggly eyes, clothespins (two per child), black tempera paint, paintbrushes, cups, water, paper plates

Before Class: Gather supplies. Squirt black paint onto a paper plate (two per table). Fill cups with water (one per table). Print a simple sheep picture on cardstock (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child a sheep picture, scissors, and a glue stick. Set cotton balls, wiggly eyes, colored pencils, black paint plates, paintbrushes, cups of water, and clothespins on each table. Have each child paint two clothespins black. Then have them cut the sheep out and use colored pencils to write “The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.” Have the children turn the sheep over, glue cotton balls to the body of the sheep, and glue wiggly eyes to the face. Attach clothespins to the bottom of the sheep so it can stand. This sheep can be a reminder that the Lord is our shepherd and is all we need.

Option 2: “Beside Still Waters” Yarn Picture

Supply List: construction paper, glue, scissors, yarn (shades of white, blue, yellow, green)





Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut 3-foot lengths of different colored yarns (shades of white, blue, green, yellow—one set per child). Make a sample craft.

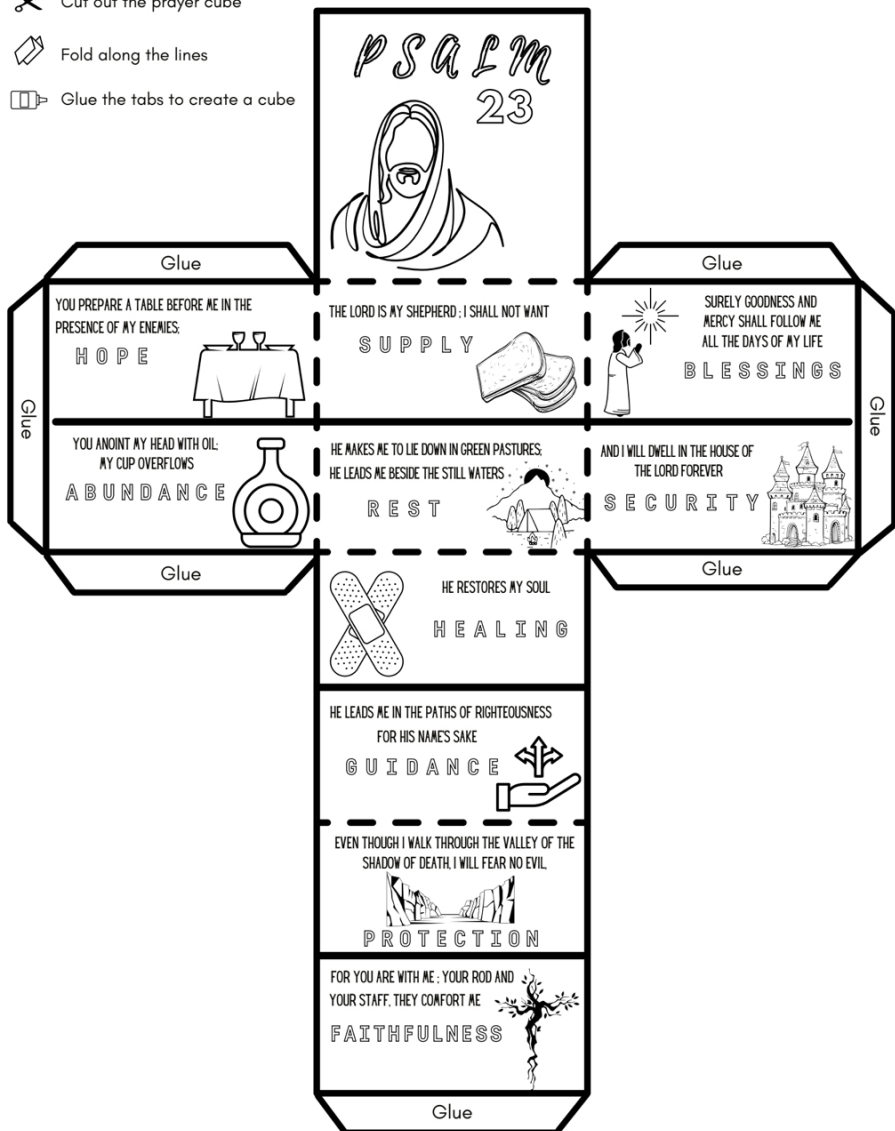
Give each child construction paper, scissors, glue, and a set of assorted yarn colors. Have children write “He leads me beside still waters” on the bottom of the paper. Have the children cut the yarn and glue it to the paper in the shape of water, grass, sun, clouds, and the like. Remind the children that if they follow Jesus, they will be tenderly cared for.



Visit TheBiggestStory.com for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.

HOW TO MAKE

-  Color the prayer cube
-  Cut out the prayer cube
-  Fold along the lines
-  Glue the tabs to create a cube





STORY 40

The Beginning of Wisdom

PROVERBS 1

BEFORE THE LESSON

- *Read Proverbs 1.*
- *Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is, what he has done, and how they should respond to him.*
- *Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.*

1

Read

THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}

2

Teach

The Bible, the Biggest Story, has lots of great stories and lots of great songs. It also has something called proverbs. A proverb is a short memorable truth. There are lots of proverbs scattered throughout the Bible: "He who loves money will not be satisfied with money" (Eccles. 5:10); "Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you" (James 4:8); "Your sin will find you out" (Num. 32:23). Jesus spoke in proverbs too. For example, he said, "No one can serve two masters. . . . You cannot serve God and money" (Matt. 6:24). In the Old Testament, there is a whole book that has almost one thousand proverbs. It's called the book of Proverbs. Original name, isn't it? God gave us the book of Proverbs to help us understand how to live a good and godly life. When we read through Proverbs, we can pray that God would give us his wisdom. The Bible tells us, "If any of

you lacks wisdom, let him ask God . . . and it will be given him” (James 1:5). And this book of Proverbs tells us the most important secret to becoming wise. Any guess what it is? Let’s listen and find out!

TELL THE STORY

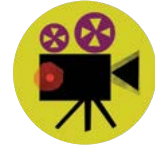
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the
Bible passage
together



Read from
*The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook*



Play *The
Biggest Story*
video

TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

Big Truth
Fearing God
makes us wise.

Who is the smartest person you know? Maybe she can figure out every math problem and always gets straight As. Do you know someone who can fix just about everything? Maybe he repairs a broken fan in the morning, unclogs a sink in the afternoon, and builds a treehouse before the sun sets. Wisdom is something more than knowing a lot of information or figuring out how to make things work. Wisdom is understanding how the world works and how God wants us to live in it. The opposite of wisdom is foolishness. Left to ourselves, we wouldn’t live wisely. We would just do whatever we wanted to do! How foolish. But God is gracious. He gives us parents and pastors and teachers to teach us his wisdom. And he gives us a book to teach us how we ought to live.

That book is Proverbs! There are thirty-one chapters in Proverbs. Read a chapter a day to keep foolishness away! Proverbs teaches us that it is wise to listen to our parents, make the right friends, work hard, be honest and generous, and speak kindly to others. But Proverbs doesn’t just tell us some wise ways to live. It also tells us the secret to being wise. It says, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom” (Prov. 9:10). Fear of the Lord? Wait a minute, we get wisdom by being afraid of God? Afraid like we would be if we were alone in a dark room or if a pit bull were charging us? No, that’s not what the fear of God means.



To fear God means that we understand how powerful God is—more powerful and amazing than anything in the world. Remember, he spoke the whole world into existence. That's power! He is the King and he rules everything. So we should never think “Who cares?” about what God says. We should fear him. We should obey him. We should trust him. It is a good fear, the kind of fear that keeps us wise—since we are looking to our wise God.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher.
{5 minutes}

Proverbs and Job are part of the Wisdom Books of the Bible. In Job this question is asked: “Where shall wisdom be found?” (Job 28:12, 20). The answer is in God and his word, and the way that we get this wisdom is through fearing God. “The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom” (Job 28:28). Sounds like Proverbs, huh?

We also find wisdom in Jesus. The Bible tells us in Jesus “are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3). Do you ever think of wisdom as a treasure? Something you would hunt for? Well, it is! And Jesus is where we can find it. If you want to become wise, go to Jesus. That means read the Bible. Talk to him through prayer. Ask him to help you live wisely. And the wisest thing of all? Put all your faith in Jesus and what he has done for you on the cross. The Bible calls Jesus's death on the cross “the wisdom of God” (1 Cor. 1:24). So where can wisdom be found? God's word. Jesus. The cross.

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. **QUESTION:** How would you explain wisdom to a friend? Is it just knowing a lot of stuff? Why would someone want to be wise instead of foolish? Why does God want us to be wise?

TAKEAWAY: Wisdom is understanding how the world works and how God wants us to live in it.

2. **QUESTION:** Are we born wise? How do we become wise? What is the beginning of wisdom? What does it mean to fear God?

TAKEAWAY: The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

3

Engage

Memory Verse
The fear of the
LORD is the
beginning of
knowledge.
PROVERBS 1:7

3. QUESTION: What are some things that you treasure? Why would the Bible call wisdom a treasure?

TAKEAWAY: Wisdom is a treasure.

4. QUESTION: Where can wisdom be found? Who is the wisest person? How do we grow in wisdom?

TAKEAWAY: Wisdom is found in God's word, in Jesus, and on the cross.

ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from TheBiggestStory.com, or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Four Corners

Supply List: paper, marker, tape

Before Class: Take four pieces of paper and write the numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4 on them (one number per paper). Tape one paper to each corner or wall of the room.

Pick one child to stand in the middle of the room and close his eyes. He should wait one minute while the rest of the children go stand under whatever number they choose (every child chooses his or her own number). He should then call out number 1, 2, 3, or 4. The children who are under that number are “out” and have to stand to the side. Play continues until one child remains. Remind children

that we are protected when we stay in the safety of God's word and his wisdom.

Option 2: Pass the Present Relay

Supply List: two Bibles, different types of paper/coverings (newspaper, wrapping paper, tissue paper, plastic wrap, aluminum foil, etc.), tape, four gloves





Before Class: Gather supplies. Wrap two Bibles in an equal number of layers of different types of paper or covering (at least one layer per child on a team).

Divide the children into two teams and have each team sit around a table. Give each team two gloves. The relay starts when the teacher says “Go!” The first child puts on the gloves and unwraps one layer of the present. Then she takes off the gloves and hands them and the present to the person next to her, who unwraps the next layer. The first team to completely unwrap the Bible wins. Remind children that the Bible is an incredible gift from God because it contains wisdom and truth.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Protect the Ping-Pong Ball

Supply List: large bedsheet, ping-pong ball

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Divide children into four teams. Have each team hold one side of a large bedsheet. The teacher drops a ping-pong ball in the middle of the sheet. Have each team keep the ball from falling off their side of the sheet while trying to get the ball to fall off the other teams’ sides. If the ball falls off a team’s side, that team gets a point. The team with the lowest number of points after a predetermined amount of time wins. Remind children that God’s word is like a guardrail that keeps us safe and on the right path.

Option 2: Pass the Present Relay

Supply List: two Bibles, different types of paper/coverings (newspaper, wrapping paper, tissue paper, plastic wrap, aluminum foil, etc.), tape, four gloves

Before Class: Gather supplies. Wrap two Bibles in an equal number of layers of different types of paper or covering (at least one layer per child on a team).

Divide the children into two teams and have each team sit around a table. Give each team two gloves. The relay starts when the teacher says “Go!” The first child puts on the gloves and unwraps one layer of the present. Then she takes off the gloves and hands them and the present to the person next to her, who unwraps the next layer. The first team to completely unwrap the Bible wins. Remind children that the Bible is an incredible gift from God because it contains wisdom and truth.

CRAFTS

Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Wisdom Protection Umbrella

Supply List: white basket coffee filters, markers, spray bottle with water, pipe cleaners

Before Class: Gather supplies. Fill spray bottles with water. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a white basket coffee filter and pipe cleaner. Set markers and spray bottles on the tables. Have children color the coffee filters with markers. Have children lightly spray the filter with water so the colors bleed into each other. Help children insert a pipe cleaner through the center of the filter and bend the tip so it doesn't fall out. Make a hook at the bottom so it resembles an umbrella. Remind children that God's gift of wisdom is like an umbrella of protection for us.

Option 2: Thinking Cap Crown

Supply List: paper, stapler, staples, glue sticks, tape, pipe cleaners (five per child)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut construction paper lengthwise into 2-inch-wide strips and staple two strips together to make one long strip (one per child). Print paper with the Big Truth or Memory Verse so that it will fit on the 2-inch strip (cut them out, one per child). Make a sample craft.



Give each child the Big Truth strip, one long strip of construction paper, and five pipe cleaners. Place glue and tape on each table. Have the children glue the Big Truth to the middle of their strip. Have the children bend five pipe cleaners into different shapes and designs to represent thoughts/ideas. Then have them attach the pipe cleaners to the “crown” using tape. Help them staple the strip into a crown so that it fits their head. Explain that sometimes people say, “Put on your thinking cap.” Remind children to think wisely by fearing God.



Option 1: Wisdom Cuff

Supply List: empty toilet paper or paper towel rolls, scissors, markers, yarn, sequins, jewels, glue sticks

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut the paper towel or toilet paper roll 2 to 3 inches thick. Then make vertical cuts on the roll so it will fit a child's wrist. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a paper cuff. Set decorating supplies and glue on the tables. Have them write “Fear God” on the cuffs, then decorate them with yarn, markers, sequins, and jewels. Remind children that Proverbs tells us the fear of God is the beginning of knowledge.

Option 2: Thinking Cap Crown

Supply List: paper, stapler, staples, glue sticks, tape, pipe cleaners (five per child)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut construction paper lengthwise into 2-inch-wide strips and staple two strips together to make one long strip (one per child). Print paper with the Big Truth or Memory Verse so that it will fit on the 2-inch strip (cut them out, one per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child the Big Truth strip, one long strip of construction paper, and five pipe cleaners. Place glue and tape on each table. Have the children glue the Big Truth to the middle of their strip. Have the children bend five pipe cleaners into different shapes and designs to represent thoughts/ideas. Then have them attach the pipe cleaners to the “crown” using tape. Help them staple the strip into a crown so that it fits their head. Explain that sometimes people say, “Put on your thinking cap.” Remind children to think wisely by fearing God.



Visit TheBiggestStory.com for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.



PART 4

THE PROPHETS

ISAIAH–MALACHI

The last major section in the Old Testament consists of the Prophets, which are often divided into Major Prophets and Minor Prophets.

Isaiah, Jeremiah (with the companion book Lamentations), Ezekiel, and Daniel are classified as Major Prophets, not because they are more important or more inspired, but because they are long. The books of the Major Prophets warn God's people of judgment for their sins, while also preaching good news about a deliverer to come.

The Minor Prophets consist of the twelve books from Hosea through Malachi. Since some of the Twelve Prophets (as they're sometimes called) are quite short—and all are much shorter than Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel—these last books in the Old Testament are called Minor Prophets. They deal with sin and salvation in Israel, in Judah, and in the time after the exile. The last two books in particular (Zechariah and Malachi) speak often about the Messiah and the coming day of the Lord when God will judge the wicked and save his chosen ones.



STORY 41

What Isaiah Saw

ISAIAH 6

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Isaiah 6.
- Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is, what he has done, and how they should respond to him.
- Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.

1

Read

THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}

2

Teach

The Old Testament can be divided into the different types of books—History, Wisdom, and the Prophets. The Prophets feature the major prophets (like Isaiah) and minor prophets (like Obadiah). Obadiah was called a minor prophet because he was really short. Two feet tall. Just kidding. He was called a *minor* prophet because *his book* is really short. One chapter. Isaiah has sixty-six chapters! But what united all the prophets was their message. They warned people that God was going to judge their hard hearts and wicked sins. They held out hope of a time to come when God would make everything right. And they foretold a coming Deliverer, who would forgive sins, defeat enemies, and bring in God's perfect kingdom. Simply put, when God had something to say, the prophets were God's messengers. When God had something important to

say, they spoke for him. It was an exciting job. Imagine hearing directly from God! But it was also a tough job. People didn't like hearing the message that they were sinning and would be judged. This was certainly true in Isaiah's day. But the book is filled with good news about a coming salvation for the whole earth and all who live in it.

TELL THE STORY

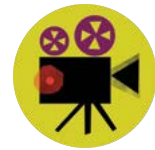
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the
Bible passage
together



Read from
The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook



Play *The*
Biggest Story
video

TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

Big Truth
God is holy, and
only God can
make us holy.

What is the coolest thing you have ever seen? An eclipse of the sun? The Grand Canyon? An awesome sports stadium? Take those amazing sights and multiply them times infinity and you'll get close to the awesomeness of what Isaiah saw. He saw God! Actually, he saw a vision of God—a dreamlike picture of what God is like. These visions, though strange sometimes, are like symbols or little clues that help us understand how amazing God is. Isaiah's vision of God was awesome. He saw the Lord sitting on a humongous throne that was lifted high in the air. God was wearing a kingly robe so long that just the hem of it filled a huge temple about twenty stories high. Why was God's robe so long in this vision? His robe was far longer than any earthly king's robe to show he is much more powerful and glorious than any other ruler. What an awesome King.

But there was more to the vision. Above God were six-winged angels called seraphim. With two of their wings, they flew; with the other four, they covered their faces and feet. They covered themselves from head to toe because God was too holy to see. As they flew above him, they called out to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" (Isa. 6:3).



Story

41

Isaiah

6

When Isaiah saw this holy King, he cried out, “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!” (6:5). He recognized that God alone was perfectly holy (that’s why the angels said “holy” three times). He also realized he wasn’t holy, which terrified him. He was a sinner. His unclean lips were just one part of his unclean self. He needed a Savior ASAP!

But there was even more to the vision. And this part is super important because it showed how God saved a sinner like Isaiah. A seraph swooped down, grabbed a burning coal from the altar, touched Isaiah’s mouth, and said, “Your guilt is taken away and your sin completely covered” (see 6:7). This strange picture shows a wonderful truth. Only God has the power to take away guilt and sin and make sinners holy. Our gracious and holy God did this for Isaiah. And he can do it for you.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher.
{5 minutes}

How could Isaiah’s sins be forgiven? What was the vision of the burning coal supposed to represent?

The rest of Isaiah fills in the picture. It speaks of a servant who would suffer so that our sins could be forgiven (Isaiah 53). It tells us that the sign of his coming would be a virgin (Mary!) conceiving and bearing a son who would be known as “Immanuel” (Isa. 7:14), which means “God with us.” And it says that this deliverer would sit on David’s throne and rule over a never-ending kingdom of peace (Isa. 9:7). Any guess who this could be?

That’s right! Jesus! The sacrifice on the altar that allows our sins to be forgiven isn’t ultimately a piece of coal. It’s Jesus, who gave himself up so that we could be forgiven.

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. QUESTION: What was the prophet’s job? What made it exciting? What made it hard? Why did people dislike the prophets’ messages?

TAKEAWAY: The prophets were God’s messengers who told God’s people of God’s judgment and salvation.

3

Engage

Memory Verse
Holy, holy, holy is
the LORD of hosts;
the whole earth is
full of his glory!

ISAIAH 6:3

2. **QUESTION:** What do the seraphim repeat three times? Is that true of anyone other than God? Why was Isaiah terrified in the presence of a holy God? Who made him clean and holy? Who can make us clean and holy?

TAKEAWAY: God is holy, and only he can make us holy.

3. **QUESTION:** Who does Isaiah tell us is coming? What are some ways he describes him? What does he say the Savior will do? And who do we know this Savior to be?

TAKEAWAY: Isaiah tells us God will make us holy through a coming Savior—Jesus!

ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from TheBiggestStory.com, or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Musical Thrones

Supply List: chairs, decorations (streamers, balloons, etc.), music

Before Class: Gather supplies. Decorate a chair to represent God's throne. Arrange all chairs (including the decorated one) in a circle facing outward (one per child).

Have children sit in a chair. Explain that one chair will be removed when they stand up and start walking, and explain that whoever sits in the “throne” must shout, “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!” Start the music. As the music plays, children stand and walk clockwise around the circle. Take one chair out (not the throne). When the music stops, all the children try to sit on a chair. The child who cannot find a chair is out. Whoever is out will join in shouting the words alongside the one sitting on the throne, and he or she will do so every round for the remainder of the game. Continue playing until all chairs have been removed (except the throne) and everyone is shouting, “Holy, holy, holy.” Remind children that Isaiah was a prophet who saw God's throne in heaven and heard the angels praise God because he is holy.





Option 2: Tong Relay

Supply List: two kitchen tongs, two bowls, charcoal squares (ten per team, or at least one per child)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Place an empty bowl for each team on the opposite side of the room and a bowl with ten charcoal squares at each team's starting point. (If necessary, substitute black rocks or large marshmallows painted black for charcoal.)

Divide the children into two teams and have each team line up behind a bowl with charcoal. Give the first person on each team the kitchen tongs. Say "Go!" Have that person pick up one piece of charcoal with the tongs and carry it to the bowl on the other side of the room. After the child drops it in the bowl, he walks backward to his team. If he drops the charcoal while carrying it, the child must stop, pick it up with the tongs, and continue. The next person continues in the same manner. The team that gets all the pieces of charcoal into the bowl and returns to their team first wins the race. Remind children that when Isaiah realized he was a sinner who needed a Savior, God sent the seraph to touch his mouth with a burning coal and declared that his sins had been taken care of.

3rd–5th

Option 1: "Here I Am, Send Me!" Game

Supply List: none

Have children line up shoulder to shoulder facing forward. The leader chooses one person to be "It," and that person stands in front of the group with their back to the line of children. Explain that you will tap one of the children standing in line on the shoulder. "It" will call out, "Whom shall I send?" The child who was tapped replies in a disguised voice, "Here I am, send me." "It" will turn around and guess who replied. He or she gets one guess. If "It" guesses correctly, he or she gets to choose the next person to be "It." But if "It" guesses incorrectly, the person who successfully disguised their voice is the new "It." Then the next child goes. Play until many children have had an opportunity to participate. Tell children that when Isaiah saw the holiness of God and his sins were forgiven, he was immediately ready to go and be used by God.

Option 2: Musical Thrones

See Above

CRAFTS

Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Charcoal Picture

Supply List: paper, charcoal, hammer, baby wipes, charcoal pencils (optional)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Break charcoal squares into smaller pieces with a hammer or use charcoal pencils. Print the words of Isaiah 6:3 on the top of a page (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child the Isaiah 6:3 paper. Set pieces of charcoal or charcoal pencils on the table. Have children use the charcoal to draw (or trace if using the template) a six-winged angel (seraph) on the paper. Children can smudge the charcoal with their fingers to change the look and soften the lines. When they are done, have them clean their fingers with the wipes. Remind the children that God had an angel put a burning coal to Isaiah's lips to make them clean.

Option 2: Paper Plate Angel Craft

Supply List: paper, thin paper plates (one per child), doilies (one per child), stapler, staples, crayons, scissors, glue, construction paper

Before Class: Gather supplies. Print the words of Isaiah 6:3 on paper and cut to fit on craft (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child a paper plate, a doily, and the Isaiah 6:3 paper. Set crayons, scissors, and construction paper on the table. Have the children color both sides of the paper plate with crayons. To make the angel's body, help children fold their colored plates in half twice (it will look like a quarter piece of pie) and staple to secure. For the head, have children cut a circle out of construction paper and draw a face on it. Glue the face to the top of the paper plate body. Have children fold the doily in half and glue to the back of the body as wings, then glue the Bible verse onto the angel. Remind children that Isaiah heard the angels praise God saying, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!"



Option 1: Watercolor Art



Supply List: white cardstock (one per child), watercolor paints (one per child), paintbrushes (one per child), paper cups (two per table)



Before Class: Gather supplies. Fill cups with water (two per table). Make a sample craft.

Give each child a piece of cardstock with the word HOLY on it. They should paint with watercolors all over the paper.

Option 2: Charcoal Picture

Supply List: paper, charcoal, hammer, baby wipes, charcoal pencils (optional)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Break charcoal squares into smaller pieces with a hammer or use charcoal pencils. Print the words of Isaiah 6:3 on the top of a page (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child the Isaiah 6:3 paper. Set pieces of charcoal or charcoal pencils on the table. Have children use the charcoal to draw (or trace if using the template) a six-winged angel (seraph) on the paper. Children can smudge the charcoal with their fingers to change the look and soften the lines. When they are done, have them clean their fingers with the wipes. Remind the children that God had an angel put a burning coal to Isaiah's lips to make them clean.



Visit TheBiggestStory.com for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.



STORY 42

Jeremiah against Everyone

JEREMIAH 1

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Jeremiah 1.
- Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is, what he has done, and how they should respond to him.
- Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.



THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}



The Old Testament prophets can be divided into two groups: the major and the minor prophets. Were the minor prophets called “minor” because the prophets were short? No! They were called minor because the books they wrote were short. The major prophets were the opposite; they wrote big books. Isaiah wrote a big book—about 25,000 words! Ezekiel's book is big too—nearly 30,000 words. But do you know what is the biggest book in the Bible (“biggest” meaning “the most words”)? It is not the Psalms, with its 150 songs. (That is the third biggest.) It's not Genesis. (That is the second biggest.) Jeremiah is the biggest book—over 33,000 words! With his pen, Jeremiah shared some really good news. He wrote of God's faithfulness and the promise of his new covenant. But most of what he wrote and spoke about was God's coming judgment against God's unfaithful

people. This was not the news God's people wanted to hear. Let's put it this way: Jeremiah didn't have a lot of friends. But God was his true and faithful friend. God's steadfast love sustained him throughout his tough life.

TELL THE STORY

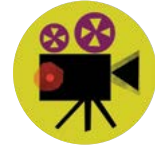
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the
Bible passage
together



Read from
*The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook*



Play *The
Biggest Story*
video

TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

Big Truth
When we stand
with God, he
is for us even
when everyone
is against us.

What is the hardest job in the world? Brain surgeon? Stuntman? Spy? Prison guard? Alaskan crab fisherman? Those are all hard jobs. Being called by God to serve as a prophet was really hard too. Prophets had the best job when Israel was obeying God, because the people loved their words of encouragement and blessing. But when Israel was not obeying God, the prophets had to rebuke and warn—which the people hated.

Of all the prophets, no one had a harder job than Jeremiah. Israel was called to be a holy nation and a royal priesthood. That means they were to think and act differently than the nations around them. But in Jeremiah's day, instead of living like special people following God's special commands, they lived just like people who didn't know the true and living God. They worshiped fake gods that they carved out of wood or stone! They mistreated the poor and needy! They lied, to others and to God. And worst of all, they thought it didn't matter because they were "God's people" and had "God's temple." Jeremiah's job was to speak God's judgments against them "for all their evil in forsaking" him (Jer. 1:16). One day, God showed Jeremiah a vision of his coming judgment. In this vision there was a boiling pot, which represented the Babylonians, their enemies. That pot was about to be pushed over and everything in its path

destroyed. God gave this vision so Jeremiah could warn the people that the Babylonians were coming to destroy the Israelites' homes in Jerusalem. He said that God would judge Jerusalem for two years by punishing them through the Babylonians—they would burn the beautiful temple and knock down the strong city walls.

This message was not well received, nor were others like it. Jeremiah was treated very badly. No one liked him. No one listened. It made Jeremiah sad! He was so sad that he was called the weeping prophet. But he should also be called the faithful prophet. What kept Jeremiah going was God's calling. Before he was even born, God made him "a prophet to the nations" (1:5). When Jeremiah was a boy, he was afraid and told God, "I do not know how to speak" (1:6), God comforted and reassured him by saying, "Do not be afraid. I will tell you what to say, protect you, and deliver you from those who fight against you" (see 1:8–9, 19). God kept his word—as he always does. And Jeremiah kept preaching the hard message of God's judgment.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher.
{5 minutes}

When we say that Jeremiah was treated very badly, we mean *very badly*. Once he was tossed into prison and fed only a piece of bread each day. Another time he was lowered into a deep dungeon, a deep hole in the ground. But God was with Jeremiah and rescued him. And everything Jeremiah spoke to the Israelites came true. He said the Babylonians would burn Jerusalem to ashes and capture God's people. That happened. He also said God's people would be brought home after seventy years. That also happened. He said the mighty Babylonians would fall. That happened. He spoke of a new covenant, a new promise, where God would remember his people's sins no more and write his law on their hearts (see Jer. 31:33–34). And—you guessed it—that happened too. But how? Through Jesus. While Jeremiah brought a message from God, Jesus was the message from God. He is the Word of God made flesh. And as they did to Jeremiah, God's people turned against Jesus. Through all he suffered for us—rejection, betrayal, denial, mockery, and death—Jesus made the new covenant. He rescued his people from judgment, freed them to obey, and promised to bring them to their forever home with God.



Story

42

Jeremiah

1

3

Engage

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. **QUESTION:** What were some of the reasons God was angry with his people? What did he want them to do? What does he want us to do?

TAKEAWAY: God calls us to obey and do what he says.

2. **QUESTION:** Because the Israelites were disobeying, what message did God give Jeremiah for the people? Did the Israelites listen to the message and turn away from their sin? So what happened?

TAKEAWAY: There is judgment for disobeying God.

3. **QUESTION:** Since Jeremiah was young when God called him to be a prophet, how did he feel about it? What did he say to God? And how did God comfort him? When Jeremiah spoke God's word to the Israelites, how did they treat him? What did God do for Jeremiah then?

TAKEAWAY: God will be with us, even if everyone is against us.

4. **QUESTION:** Despite all the bad news about judgment for disobedience, what good news did Jeremiah share about the new covenant that would come? How did Jesus bring about this good news and rescue sinners from judgment?

TAKEAWAY: Through Jesus's death, God made a new covenant that rescues us from judgment and frees us to obey God.

ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from TheBiggestStory.com, or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Cupside Down Game

Supply List: large plastic cups (at least two per child), timer

Before Class: Gather supplies. Place large plastic cups randomly around the play area, making sure there are an equal number of cups facing up and down.

Memory Verse

Do not be
afraid of them,
for I am with
you to deliver
you, declares
the LORD.

JEREMIAH 1:8





Story

42

Jeremiah

1

Divide children into two teams and assign one team to be the “cup up” team and the other team to be the “cup down” team. Explain that for 3 minutes each team will work to run around the room and place the cups up or down depending on their team’s objective. After 3 minutes, players freeze while a leader counts how many cups are facing each direction. The team with the most cups in their direction wins that round. Play three rounds, and the team who wins two of the three rounds is the winner! Remind children that, like Jeremiah, we may feel everything is working against us, but we should continue doing what God commands.

Option 2: Messenger Game

Supply List: none

Have children line up shoulder to shoulder facing forward. The teacher chooses one person to be the “prophet” and that person stands facing the group about 10 feet away. Explain that they are to obey each command of the prophet. And when they hear the prophet say “Stop sinning!” they must freeze, if they move then they sit down. Then the teacher whispers a command to the prophet (e.g., do ten jumping jacks, hop in place like a bunny, act like a monkey, run in place). The prophet communicates the message to the group, and they obey. The teacher can decide how many separate commands to give, but the final message will always be “Stop sinning!” The last person standing is the new prophet in the next round.

Option 1: Prophet Ball

Supply List: soccer-sized rubber ball

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Have children stand in a circle, foot to foot with legs spread shoulder-width apart. Explain that the goal is to hit the ball between other players’ legs while blocking the ball from going through their own legs. They must use an open palm rather than grabbing or throwing the ball. If the ball does go through a child’s legs, that child gets the first letter of the word *obey*. The next time the ball goes through the same child’s legs, he or she gets the next letter of the word *obey*, until someone spells the entire word. When you have all four letters, you are out. The last two players remaining win the game.

Option 2: Cupside Down Game

See Above

CRAFTS

Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: “I Have Put My Words in Your Mouth” Picture

Supply List: white cardstock, washable red stamp pads or red finger paint, baby wipes, paper plates (if using red paint)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Print a large outline of a mouth/lips on cardstock with Jeremiah 1:9 printed on the bottom (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child the cardstock with the mouth outline. Set stamp pads or small paper plates with red finger paint on each table. Have children press their thumb on the stamp pad or paint and then place it on the mouth. Children continue making thumbprints until the outline of the mouth is filled. When they’re done, give children baby wipes to clean their hands. Jeremiah 1:9 says, “Then the LORD put out his hand and touched my mouth. And the LORD said to me, ‘Behold, I have put my words in your mouth.’”

Option 2: Cup Telephone

Supply List: paper, paper cups, pen, string, scissors, paper clips, markers, stickers, glue sticks

Before Class: Gather supplies. Print “Turn from sin” multiple times on paper and cut the phrase out so that it fits on a cup (one per child). Cut pieces of string about 24 inches long (one per child). Make cup telephones by using a pen to poke holes in the bottom of each cup so the ends of the string fit through. Attach string to two cups by threading through each base and tying each end of the string to a paper clip to hold it in place (one set per child). Make a sample craft.

Distribute a cup telephone and the “Turn from sin” phrase to each child. Place markers, stickers, and glue sticks on each table. Have children decorate with markers and stickers as desired. Then have them glue the “Turn from sin” paper to one of the cups. Demonstrate how to pull the string tight and talk/listen to messages with someone on the other end.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Megaphone

Supply List: paper, large paper cups (one per child), yarn, hole punchers, scissors (one per child), stickers, markers, crepe paper streamers, glue sticks

Before Class: Gather supplies. Print paper with the Big Truth and cut into a strip that will fit on a paper cup (one per child). Cut pieces of yarn about 18 inches long (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child a paper cup, scissors, yarn, and Big Truth paper strip. Set stickers, markers, hole punchers, crepe paper, and glue sticks on each table. Have children glue the Big Truth to the cup. Have children cut out the bottom of the cup and punch a hole in the side of the cup. Have children thread the yarn through the hole and connect the ends with a knot so it can hang around their neck. Children should decorate the cup with markers, stickers, and crepe paper streamers. Remind children that Jeremiah was a young prophet who spoke God’s words. We, too, can speak God’s words.

Option 2: Cup Telephone

See Above



Visit TheBiggestStory.com for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.



Story

42

Jeremiah

1



STORY 43

The Valley of Dry Bones

EZEKIEL 37

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Ezekiel 37.
- Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is, what he has done, and how they should respond to him.
- Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.

1

Read

THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}

2

Teach

The prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel are called the major prophets because they wrote big, or major, books. Isaiah wrote *before* the evil Assyrians took over Israel and led them into exile far away from home. Jeremiah wrote *as* the bad Babylonians captured Judah. And Ezekiel wrote *while* God's people were in exile in Babylon. The book of Ezekiel describes six visions (or special dreams) he had over twenty years. The six visions talk about three big ideas: God's judgment on Israel, God's judgment on the other nations, and God's future blessings for Israel. The blessings are covered in the final chapters of his book. Chapter 37 records one of the most amazing visions in all the Bible: Ezekiel sees a valley of dry bones. What is that all about? We'll have to wait and see. But I'll give you one little hint. Like Isaiah and Jeremiah, Ezekiel had a tough job. He had

to announce the bad news that judgment had come to Israel because of their sin. But he also had a wonderful job because he got to preach the good news of God's saving them from their enemies and the even better news of a brand new world that was coming. What does a valley of bones have to do with God's good news? Let's listen and find out.

TELL THE STORY

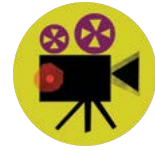
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the
Bible passage
together



Read from
The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook



Play *The*
Biggest Story
video

TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

Big Truth
God has power
to raise the dead
to life.

Did you dream last night? Do you remember your dream? Was it about a monster living under your bed? Your teeth falling out? Getting lost in the supermarket? Having a crocodile chase you? Lots of your dreams can be scary! Ezekiel had something like a scary dream. (At least it started out scary.) The Bible calls Ezekiel's dream a vision, a special time when God shows something about the future.

One day, Ezekiel writes, “the Spirit of the LORD . . . set me down in the middle of the valley,” and that valley was “full of bones” (Ezek. 37:1). It was like going to an old graveyard, except the skeletons were not in their graves! The dry bones of dead people were scattered everywhere. They were so dried by the hot sun that if you stepped on them, they might shatter. God asked him, “Do you think these lifeless, dry bones can come to life?” Ezekiel shrugged his shoulders, “I have no idea. Only you know, God.” Deep down he may have doubted that they could come to life. But he didn't doubt the power of God's word. So, next, when God told him to talk to the bones, he obeyed right away. He prophesied, “O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. Thus says the Lord GOD . . . Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. And I will lay sinews [or “muscles”] upon you,



Story

43

Ezekiel

37

and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the LORD” (37:4–6). And do you know what happened? There was a strange sound. The bones started to rattle and to come together, forming people. And for each and every person the foot bone connected to the leg bone, the leg bone to the knee bone, the thigh bone to the hip bone, the hip bone to the backbone, the backbone to the neck bone. Then, from nowhere, muscles started to grow on the bones, followed by skin. Finally, the breath of life rushed into them. They were alive! An “exceedingly great army” (37:10) stood before Ezekiel. The dead were raised to life!

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher.
{5 minutes}

Why did God give Ezekiel this strange vision? It wasn’t to give him an idea for a scary skeleton costume to wear to a haunted house. But it was to give him a message for the house of Israel. The dry bones represented Israel, driven from the land because of their sin. But just as the dead bones came back to life, God was letting his people know that he would keep his promise. God promised, “I will give you a new heart. I will put my Spirit within you so you will obey my rules. I will take you home to the place I promised Abraham. I will make you one nation with one king—a king like David. I will save and cleanse you from your sins, and make with you a covenant that lasts forever. You will always be my people, and I will always be your God” (see 36:26–28; 37:21–26). As sure as the dead bones came to life, God would keep these promises.

The vision also shows us how Jesus, the promised king like David, saves you and me. Like those dry bones, we are spiritually dead. But when God speaks his powerful word and sends his Holy Spirit, he breathes new life in us—just like he did for the bones! We were dead in our sins; God has made us alive with Christ (see Eph. 2:5). Through faith in Jesus we are raised from death to life!

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

- 1. QUESTION:** Did Ezekiel give good or bad news, or both, to Israel? Since Israel was in exile, far from home, why did they need to hear good news? How would the good news encourage them?

3

Engage

TAKEAWAY: Ezekiel told Israel they were in exile because of their sin, but he promised God would bless them and bring them safely home.

2. **QUESTION:** Can you take a pile of dust and create a person? How did God create Adam and Eve? How did God make the dry bones in Ezekiel's vision come to life? What does that tell us about God?

TAKEAWAY: The dry bones came to life because God's word has power to create and his Spirit gives life.

Memory Verse

I will put my
Spirit within you,
and you shall live.

EZEKIEL 37:14

3. **QUESTION:** When God says that we are "dead in our sin," what do you think he means? If we can't live in a way that pleases God without his help, what should we do? How does God help us live for him?

TAKEAWAY: We are spiritually dead because of our sin, like Israel, and we need God's word and Spirit to make us alive.

4. **QUESTION:** When God promised that he would bring Israel back to the land, how did he describe the king that would rule over them? Who is the forever King? How does this picture of dead bones rising from the grave remind you of Jesus? How does it remind you of what Jesus does for you when you follow him?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus is the promised King, who saves us from our sin, gives us new life, and brings us safely home.

ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from *TheBiggestStory.com*, or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Steal the Bone Game

Supply List: two "bones" (popsicle sticks, dog bones, rolled-up newspapers, etc.), masking tape

Before Class: Gather supplies. Place two "bones" in the center of the playing area, and mark off two lines with masking tape.



Divide children into two teams. Assign each child a number so that each team has a player with each number. Have the teams line up on opposite sides of the room. Call out two numbers. The children on each team with those numbers run to the center, grab a “bone,” and try to get back to their line without being tagged by the children representing the other team. If a player crosses his or her line with a bone without being tagged, his or her team gets a point. If a player gets tagged while carrying the bone, the opposing team gets a point. Continue to play—being sure to call all numbers at least once—until one team reaches a set number of points and is declared the winning team. Remind the children that God can breathe life into dried-up, dead bones.

Option 2: “Ezekiel, Ezekiel, Where’s Your Bone?” Game

Supply List: chair, popsicle stick

Before Class: Gather supplies. Set one chair in the front of the room so a person sitting on it would be facing away from the group. Place a popsicle stick “bone” under the chair.

Have children sit behind the chair. Choose one person to be “Ezekiel” and have that person sit in the chair and close his or her eyes. Tap one of the children, and have that child quietly take the bone from under Ezekiel’s chair and hide it in his or her lap. Have everyone say, “Ezekiel, Ezekiel, where’s your bone? Somebody took it from your home.” Ezekiel can then turn around and has two chances to guess who took the bone. If the child guesses right, he or she continues to be Ezekiel. If he or she guesses incorrectly, the person who took the bone gets to be the new Ezekiel. Continue to play until many have had the opportunity to be Ezekiel and hide the bone. Remind the children that God can breathe life into dried-up, dead bones.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Dry Bones Skeleton

Supply List: rolls of white masking tape (one per team), large black garbage bags (one per team)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut a slit in each garbage bag so a child could put his or her head through it.

Divide the children into teams of three to five members. Give each team a roll of masking tape and a garbage bag. Have one child from each team volunteer to be the skeleton and put on the garbage bag. Explain that the goal is to work together to place tape pieces on the garbage bag to represent a human skeleton

as accurately as possible. Give teams 5 minutes to complete their skeletons. When the 5 minutes are up, all teams must stop working. The leaders will then determine which team has the most accurate skeleton. The team with the best skeleton wins the game. Remind children that God brought dead bones to life.

Option 2: Dry Bones Relay Race

Supply List: two colors of paper, scissors, straws (one per child), buckets/boxes (one per team)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Print and cut out a small bone pattern on colored paper (one color for each team). Make sure there are an equal number of bones of each color and at least two bones per child. Spread the paper bones randomly around the play area.

Divide children into teams and assign each team a bone color. Tell the children that they must pick up their team's bones and carry them back to their team's bucket/box. When the leader says "Go!" all children can begin collecting bones. The first team to retrieve all of their bones wins the game. Remind the children that God can breathe life into dried-up, dead bones.

CRAFTS

Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Hope Bookmark

Supply List: strips of paper, crayons/markers, string

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Give each child a bookmark to decorate. Have them write "God Bring Hope to the Hopeless". Remind the children that God can breathe life into us and change us too!



Option 2: Bones Necklace

Supply List: thin string, pony beads, white straws, scissors

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut straws into various lengths (cut enough for each child to make a necklace). Cut pieces of thin string about 24 inches long (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Set straw pieces and pony beads on each table. Give each child a piece of string. Explain that the straw pieces represent bones. Allow them to make a necklace by stringing the straw pieces and beads in the pattern of their choice. Help children tie the two ends together when they are done with their necklace. Remind the children that our God is awesome. He can take dry bones and make them into a living person! When they wear their necklaces, it can help them to remember that God can breathe life into us and change us too.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Handprint Bones Craft

Supply List: paper (white and skin-toned colors), pencils, scissors, toothpicks, glue

Before Class: Gather supplies. Print the Memory Verse on the top of a sheet of paper—one sheet per child (“I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live.” Ezekiel 37:14). Make a sample craft.

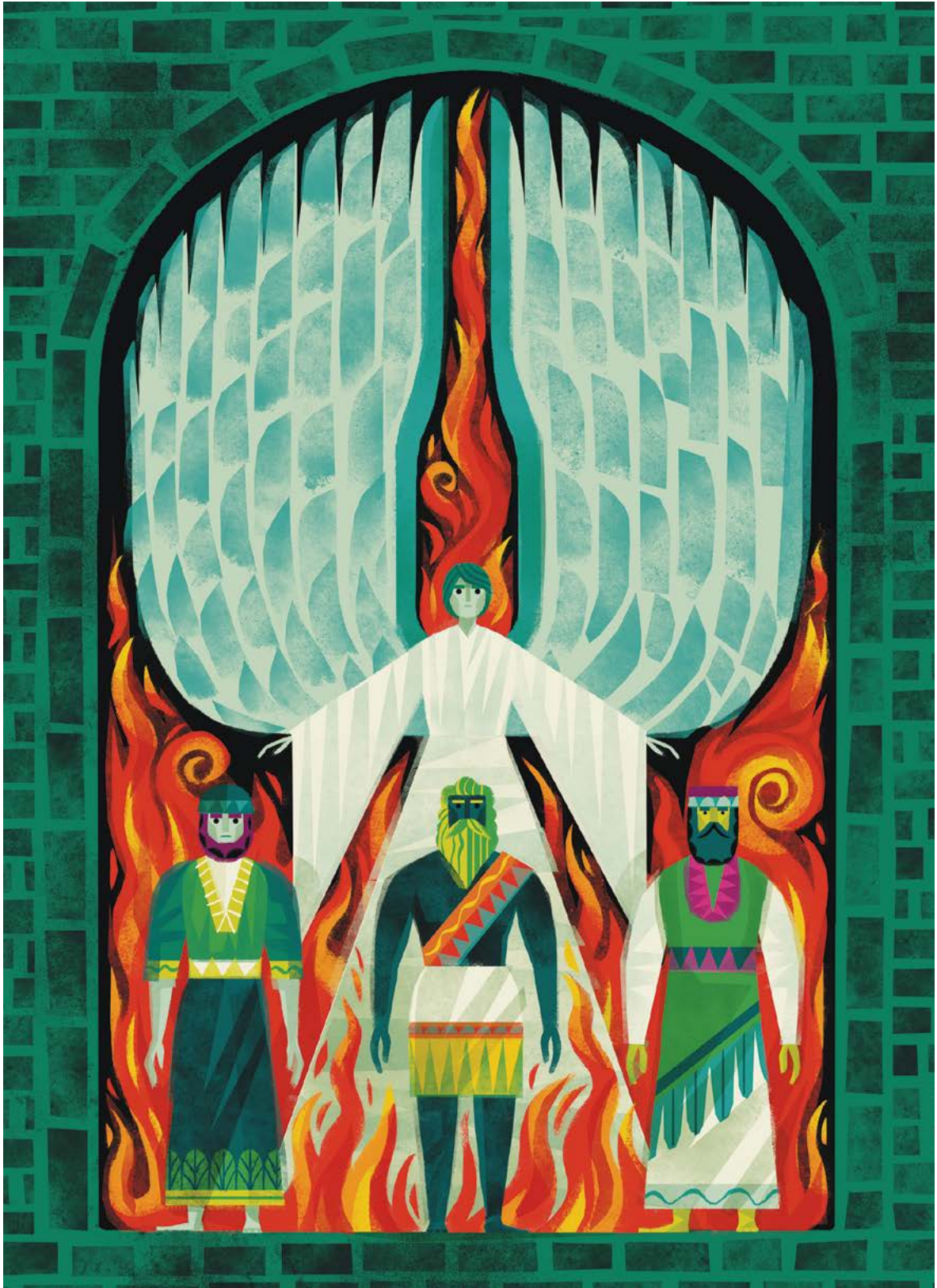
Give each child a verse paper. Allow each child to choose a separate blank sheet of paper that they think best represents their skin tone. Set scissors, toothpicks, pencils, and glue on each table. Have children trace one of their hands onto the skin-colored paper with a pencil. Then have them cut out the handprint and glue it to the Bible verse paper. Children should glue toothpicks to the handprint to resemble bones.

Option 2: Cotton Swab Skeletons

See Above



Visit TheBiggestStory.com for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.



STORY 44

The Fiery Furnace

DANIEL 3

BEFORE THE LESSON

- *Read Daniel 3.*
- *Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is, what he has done, and how they should respond to him.*
- *Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.*

1

Read

THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}

2

Teach

God's people knew how they were supposed to honor God in Jerusalem with the temple nearby. But that was before the Babylonians came to Jerusalem, destroyed the temple, broke down the city walls, killed lots of people, and took the rest to live in Babylon. Far from home, their new king was the powerful Nebuchadnezzar. He had a long, hard-to-pronounce name, but that was the least of their problems. The Jews had to figure out how to honor God under a king who did not know God. Sometimes that was easy. They could receive a new name. Daniel's new Babylonian name was Belteshazzar. (Imagine how long it took him to spell that at the top of his homework!) They could learn a new language (Babylonian). They could respect those in authority over them and obey the rules. They could work hard at their jobs. They could even pray to the Lord, as Daniel did three

times a day. But sometimes their faith was tested. Today's story is the record of one of the biggest tests God's people faced in exile. Would they put God first? Would they obey and serve God even if it meant death? Let's find out.

TELL THE STORY

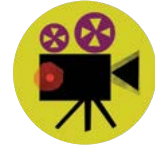
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the
Bible passage
together



Read from
The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook



Play *The*
Biggest Story
video

TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

Big Truth
God's people
should put
God first no
matter what.

Do you remember the Ten Commandments? How about the first two—"You shall have no other gods before me" (Ex. 20:3) and "You shall not make for yourself a carved image . . . [and] bow down" before that image (Ex. 20:4–5)? Nebuchadnezzar didn't know these commandments. Or if he did, he didn't obey them. One day, he made a tall golden statue, and he commanded everyone to "fall down and worship the golden image" (Dan. 3:5) whenever the loud music played. Even worse, he decreed that "whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace" (3:6). When the horns blew, "all the peoples, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the golden image" (3:7). Well, not all. There were three Hebrew men who chose to obey God instead of the king. Their names were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They told Nebuchadnezzar, "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up" (3:17–18). What faith! What courage!

Nebuchadnezzar was not pleased. He was furious! He was so mad he heated the already hot furnace seven times hotter. Then he tied those three men up and tossed them in. Within a second, they burned up like a piece of paper in a roaring campfire. Actually, that's what everyone *expected* would happen. But it's



Story

44

Daniel

3

not what happened at all. Surprisingly, the three men who chose to obey didn't burn up at all! The king couldn't believe it. He also couldn't believe that he saw another man, whom he thought was an angel. The king shouted, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here!" (3:26). They walked out. Not a hair on their heads was burnt by the fire, and their clothes didn't even smell like smoke. The king had a huge change of heart. He went from being furious to praising God. He said, "There is no other god who is able to rescue in this way" (3:29). How true!

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher.
{5 minutes}

When King Nebuchadnezzar looked into the fiery furnace, he expected to see Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego burned to death. Instead, to his surprise, they were alive! They were "walking in the midst of the fire" and were "not hurt" (3:25). That is not all that made his jaw drop. He saw a fourth person, whom he took to be an angel, or some sort of divine being. "The fourth is like a son of the gods," he said (3:25). He acknowledged that God "sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him" (3:28).

It's clear that God sent the angel to deliver them from the furnace; God also sent us someone to deliver us—Jesus. These three men faced punishment because they followed God over the Babylonian king. By saving them, God showed to all that he is good to those who obey him. Our situation is different—we face punishment because in our sin we followed ourselves as kings over God. But God, in his great grace, still sent Jesus to deliver us! By saving us, God shows to all that he is *really* good to those who obey him, for now every person who follows Jesus will be rescued forever from death and the punishment we deserve. What a wonderful God and a wonderful Savior!

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

- 1. QUESTION:** What are some ways it can be hard to obey God when no one around you believes in God? Where were Daniel and his three friends living in our story? How do you think they knew how to live for God when those around them did not?

3

Engage

TAKEAWAY: God's people must learn to live for God even when those around them don't.

2. **QUESTION:** What do the first two commandments tell us about God? What was the rule Nebuchadnezzar made that all people had to obey? What did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego decide to do?

TAKEAWAY: Put God first no matter what.

Memory Verse

You shall not
make for yourself
a carved image,
or any likeness of
anything that is in
heaven above, or
that is in the earth
beneath, or that
is in the water
under the earth.

EXODUS 20:4

3. **QUESTION:** What was the punishment the men faced for obeying God's command and disobeying Nebuchadnezzar's command? In the New Testament, what similar test did Jesus face for obeying God? How could Jesus have avoided his death on the cross?

TAKEAWAY: Like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, Jesus faced death for obeying God.

4. **QUESTION:** When God rescued Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, did they still die from the flames? How was Jesus's rescue different? What does it mean for you and me that God rescued Jesus by raising him from the dead?

TAKEAWAY: When God rescued Jesus by raising him from the dead, he also rescued all that follow Jesus.

ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from TheBiggestStory.com, or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Movement Freeze

Supply List: music

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Gather children in an open area. Call out an action (jumping, running in place, hopping, twirling, etc.). Have all children move in that way while the music plays. When the music stops, children must freeze. The last child the leader sees moving must sit down. The leader calls out another action then starts



the music. Play continues until one child is left. Remind children that King Nebuchadnezzar decreed that when people heard the music, they must stop what they were doing and bow to him. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did not follow this command because they knew they should only worship the one true God.



Story

44

Daniel

3

Option 2: Fiery Furnace Scavenger Hunt



Supply List: cutouts of flames



Before Class: Hide cutouts around the classroom.

Have children try to find the fire that is hidden around the classroom. The person who finds the most, gets to help hide them the next round.

Option 1: Fiery Furnace Dodgeball

Supply List: masking tape, dodgeballs, two coins

Before Class: Gather supplies. Using masking tape, mark off a small section on each side of the classroom to represent a fiery furnace.

Divide children into two teams. Each team is assigned one side of the playing area. One person from each team is the “Protector” and is given a coin. He stands in his team’s “fiery furnace.” Place the balls in a line down the center of the room and have each team line up on opposite walls. On “Go” have each team begin play by picking up the balls and throwing them at the opposing team. If someone is hit by a ball, that person must go to her team’s fiery furnace. If someone catches a ball, the person who threw it must go to her team’s fiery furnace. When there are three people in a team’s fiery furnace, the Protector can ask the three people to choose heads or tails. The Protector then flips the coin. Whoever guessed the correct side is back in the game. The Protector can

flip the coin every time there are three new people in the fiery furnace. The winning team is the team that has the most people in play at the end of 5 to 10 minutes. Explain that the Lord was with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and protected them in the fiery furnace.

Option 2: Lean on Me Relay

Supply List: chair or cone (one per team)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Place chairs/cones on one side of the classroom.

Divide the children into two teams and have them line up opposite the chairs/cones. Within each team, have children pair up and sit back-to-back in line. The first pair on each team must lock arms and stand up together without using their hands to push them up. Once they are standing, they need to walk to the other end of the room with their arms still hooked, around the chair/cone, and back to their starting line. The next pair on their team then continues in the same manner. The first team to have all pairs complete the relay is the winning team. Tell the children that we should stand up and do what is right, even when it is difficult, knowing God is with us to strengthen us.

CRAFTS

Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: God Is with Us Clock

Supply List: cardstock, paper plates, crayons, markers, scissors, brass fasteners

Before Class: Gather supplies. Print clock hands on cardstock (one set of clock hands per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child a paper plate, clock hands, and a brass fastener. Place markers, crayons, and scissors on each table. Have children write the words “God is with us all the time” on the front of the plate. Have children cut out the clock hands and help them fasten them to the center of the plate using the brass fastener. Then have children write the numbers one through twelve around the outside of the clock and decorate using the provided supplies.



Story

44

Daniel

3

Option 2: Paper Bag Fiery Furnace Craft

Supply List: paper, paper bags, glue sticks, red/orange/yellow tissue paper, crayons, scissors, newspaper

Before Class: Gather supplies. Find and print a picture of the four men that were in the fiery furnace (one per child). Open paper bags and cut a “window” in one of the sides of the bag. Cut 1-inch squares of colored tissue paper. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a paper bag and a paper with the four men pictured. Set crayons, scissors, glue sticks, and tissue paper on each table. Have the children color the picture with crayons and cut it out. Help them glue the picture to the inside of the paper bag so the men can be clearly seen through the “window.” Then have them glue tissue paper squares onto the paper bag to surround the window. Have children open the bag and fill the base with crumpled-up newspaper so that the fiery furnace stands upright. Remind children that God rescued Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the fiery furnace.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Paper Plate Fiery Furnace Scene

Supply List: paper plates, markers, colored pencils, glue sticks, scissors, red/orange/yellow tissue paper

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut colored tissue paper into 1-inch squares. Make a sample craft.

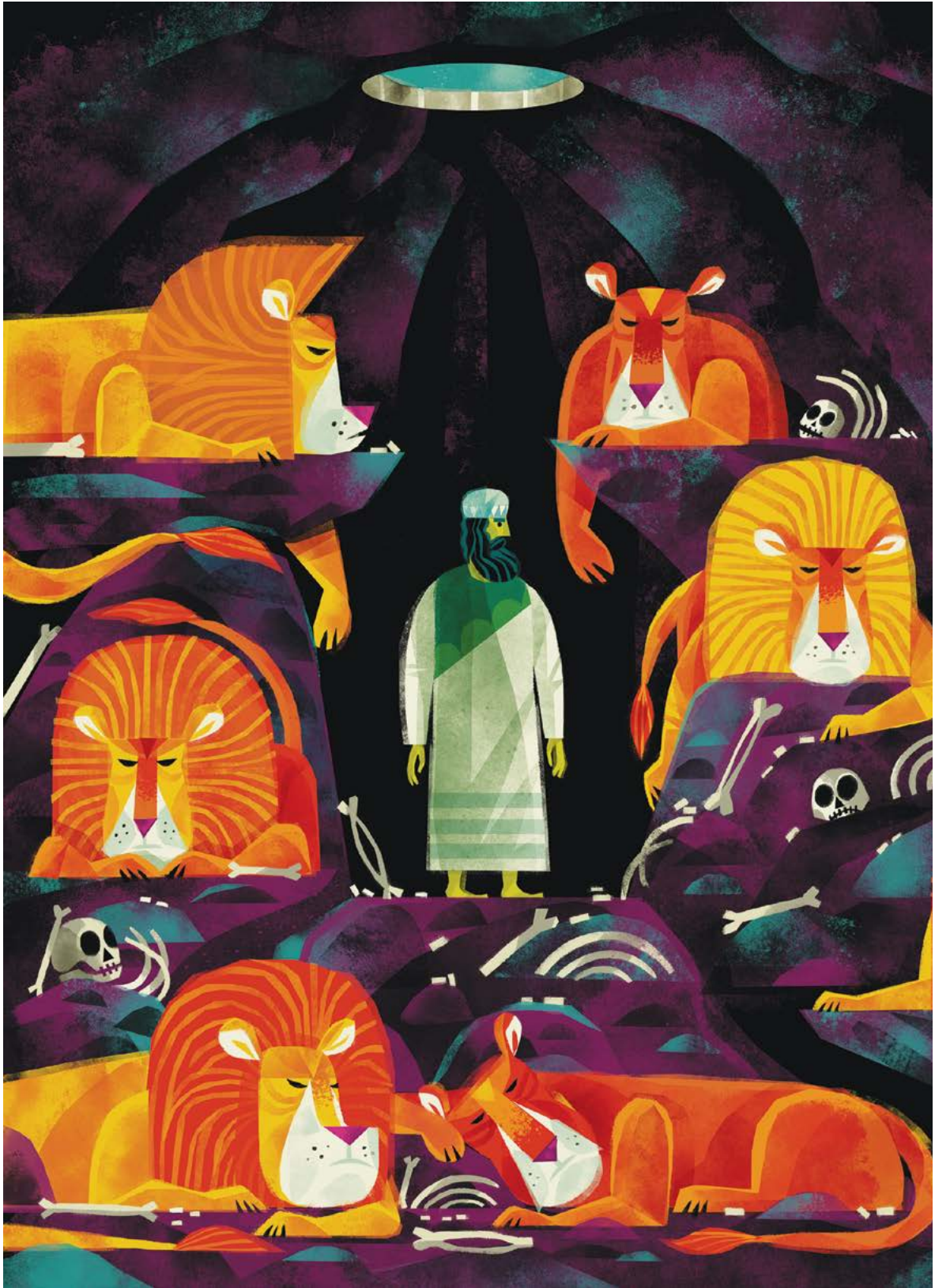
Give each child a paper plate. Set colored pencils, markers, and tissue paper on each table. Have children draw four people in the center of the paper plate to represent the four men in the furnace. Then have them glue the tissue paper squares around the four men to represent the fiery furnace. Remind children that God rescued Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the fiery furnace.

Option 2: Paper Bag Fiery Furnace Craft

See Above



Visit TheBiggestStory.com for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.



STORY 46

The Miraculous Catnap

DANIEL 6

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Daniel 6.
- Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is, what he has done, and how they should respond to him.
- Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.



THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}



Throughout Daniel's life God was with him. God protected and blessed him. Even though Daniel was one of the people captured and taken from Judah, he served in very high positions of power under three different kings. After King Nebuchadnezzar died, Belshazzar became king in his place. But he was killed after his party, just like God had foretold through that hand that wrote on the wall. Remember that? Then, as God predicted, the Medes and the Persians conquered the Babylonians. A new kingdom with a new king. The new king's name was Darius (which was much easier to pronounce). Darius's kingdom had 120 states with 120 governors. And to rule over all those governors, Darius picked three men. Their names were Stan, Hann, and Dan. (Just kidding. The Bible only gives us Dan's or Daniel's name.) Daniel quickly became the favorite. In fact,

Darius planned to make him rule over the whole kingdom. When the other two rulers found out, what do you think they thought? Let's listen in.

TELL THE STORY

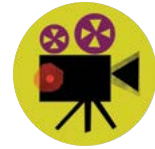
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the
Bible passage
together



Read from
The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook



Play *The*
Biggest Story
video

TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

Big Truth
Like Daniel,
we can trust
and obey God
no matter what
happens.

As you might have guessed, the two rulers who served with Daniel were jealous. Have you ever been jealous of someone? You wish you had what he had or could do what she could do? When you feel jealous, you should remember that a good God takes care of us. That is *not* what these men did. They wanted to have what Daniel had. And to get that, they needed to get rid of him. So they came up with an evil plan. They tricked Darius into signing a new law that said “whoever prays to any god or man except the king will be tossed into the den of lions” (see Dan. 6:7). Yikes! The other rulers knew that Daniel was an honest and faithful man who would not break rules. But they also knew that he would break *this* rule. Why? Because he worshiped the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He prayed to the Lord every day at three different times, and he would not stop doing that no matter what. Sure enough, one day he was caught praying “on his knees . . . before his God” (6:10).

When the king learned that his friend Daniel broke his new law, he was greatly troubled. He thought of ways to deliver Daniel from his new law, but there was nothing he could do. There was a rule that not even the king could disobey the laws he made. So Daniel was cast into the lions’ den and a stone was laid over its opening. Darius cried out, “May your God, whom you serve continually, deliver you!” (6:16). And God did just that! He sent an angel and shut the lions’ mouths. When the king came the next morning to check on Daniel, he learned



Story

46

Daniel

6

Daniel was alive and well. The king was so happy! Daniel was taken out of the den and those who tricked the king were tossed in instead. “The lions overpowered them and broke all their bones in pieces” (6:24). But not Daniel. Daniel was saved “because he had trusted in his God” (6:23). We should trust God in the same way. In fact, King Darius wrote a new law for everyone in his kingdom saying that they should fear Daniel’s God because “his kingdom shall never be destroyed. . . . He delivers and rescues . . . he who has saved Daniel from the power of the lions” (6:26–27).

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher.
{5 minutes}

What would you do if the government said, “Whoever worships Jesus will be sent to prison”? Would you still trust God’s word? Keep worshipping Jesus? Praying? Telling others about Jesus? Would you still act like you were a Christian? Daniel had such courageous faith. He prayed to the Lord even though he knew he would be tossed into the lions’ den. And like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, he had no guarantee from God that he would survive. He chose to worship God no matter what. He chose to worship God because he loved and trusted God with his life.

In the book of Hebrews, some people with great faith are listed. “Through faith,” we are told, these heroes of faith “stopped the mouths of lions” and “quenched the power of fire” (Heb. 11:33–34). The author is writing about Daniel and his friends! Later in Hebrews, we are told that others, because of their faith, were mistreated, mocked, tortured, imprisoned, and killed. We also read that Jesus, who is called “the founder and perfecter of our faith, . . . endured the cross” (Heb. 12:2). If we are to keep the faith like Daniel, we need to follow Jesus, who trusted God even though it led to death. And just like God delivered Jesus by raising him from the dead, he will deliver us if we keep trusting him.

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

- 1. QUESTION:** What good things had happened to Daniel? What bad thing happened? How did Daniel respond to the new law? Why?

TAKEAWAY: Like Daniel, we should trust and obey God no matter what happens to us.

3

Engage

Memory Verse

Those who
know your name
put their trust
in you, for you,
O LORD, have
not forsaken
those who
seek you.

PSALM 9:10

2. QUESTION: What did the king fear would happen to Daniel? Do you think Daniel was afraid of being eaten by the lions? Why do you think Daniel chose to obey God rather than the king? Who did he fear more—the king or God?

TAKEAWAY: We should fear God, who has the power to save us even from powerful and hungry lions, more than people.

3. QUESTION: How does the story of Daniel and the lions' den remind you of Jesus? What's different? What do both stories teach us about trusting and obeying God?

TAKEAWAY: If we follow Jesus, who is the author and perfecter of our faith, we will be delivered—even from death.

ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from TheBiggestStory.com, or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Roar Like a Lion

One person faces the wall. Everyone else stands somewhere in the room behind them.

The people behind take turns to roar like a lion. The person facing the wall must try and guess who is making the roar.

Option 2: Watch Out for Lions!

Supply List: adhesive bandages or stickers (two per child)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Mark off a “lion’s den.”

Assign two children to be the lions. Give each of the other children two adhesive bandages or stickers. The lions' goal is to tag ("bite") the other children. If someone is bit, he must stop and put an adhesive bandage / sticker on the spot where he was tagged and then hold his hand on that spot as he continues to run. When a child is bit a second time, he must put the other adhesive bandage / sticker on that spot and his other hand must cover that spot while he continues to run. If bit a third time, the child must go to the lions' den and he is out of the game. Continue play until everyone is in the den or a set amount of time has elapsed.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Lion's Paw Relay

Supply List: paper

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make copies of a lion's paw print (two per team).

Divide children into teams. Give the first person on each team two paw print papers. Explain that these children need to get to the other end of the room (the lions' den) by placing the paw prints on the ground one after the other. They must only step on the paw print papers; if they step on the floor, they have to go back to the starting line and start again. Once they get to the opposite side, they can pick up the paw prints, run back, and hand the paw prints to the next person in line. The first team to have all their team members go to the lion's den and back is the winning team.

Option 2: Pass the Lion

Supply List: stuffed lion, music, two gloves

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Have children sit in a circle. Give one glove to the person who will start the game with the lion and the other glove to the person to her left. When the music begins, the children should pass the lion clockwise. The lion may only be touched by a gloved hand, so once a child has passed the lion, he must take off the glove and pass it to the next person in the circle who does not have one. When the music stops, the person holding the lion is out. Continue play until there is a winner.



Story

46

Daniel

6

CRAFTS

Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Lion Mask

Supply List: cardstock, scissors, glue sticks, crayons, orange and yellow yarn, sandwich bags (one per child), craft (one per child), clear tape

Before Class: Gather supplies. Print and cut a simple lion face out of cardstock (one per child). Cut out eye holes. Cut 2-inch pieces of yarn (twenty per child, place in sandwich bag). Make a sample craft.

Give each child a lion face mask, bag of yarn, and a craft stick. Set glue sticks and crayons on each table. Have each child color the lion face with crayons, then use glue sticks to attach the yarn around the outside of the face to look like a lion's mane. Tape a craft stick to the bottom of the back of the lion so they can hold it up to their face. Tell children the mask can remind us of the miraculous way that God protected Daniel from the lions.

Option 2: Lion's Face Picture

Supply List: paper, glue sticks, wiggly eyes (two per child), yellow and orange washable paints, paper plates (one per table), plastic forks (one per child), wipes

Before Class: Gather supplies. Print papers with the Memory Verse on the bottom and a simple lion face in the center. Put paint on paper plates for each table. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a lion face paper, two wiggly eyes, and a fork. Place glue sticks and paint on each table. Have children glue the wiggly eyes onto the lion's face. Then have the children dip their forks in the paint and gently press it around their lion's face to make a mane. Provide wipes to clean fingers as needed.



Option 1: Paper Plate Lion

Supply List: paper plates (one per child), wiggly eyes (two per child), yellow and orange construction paper, glue sticks, markers, pencils, scissors

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut construction paper into 4" x 1" strips. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a paper plate and pencil. Set paper strips, glue sticks, and markers on each table. Have children draw a simple lion's face in the center of the paper plate, using glue to attach the wiggly eyes. Next have them gently wrap each strip of construction paper around a pencil to make the paper curl. Then have them glue the curled strips around the lion's face to make a mane.

Option 2: Praying Hands

Supply List: paper (one per child), pencils, scissors (one per child), colored pencils, glue sticks

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a piece of paper and a pencil. With the help of a friend, the children should trace both of their hands with a pencil, making sure that the four fingers are together when tracing. Have children cut out their traced hands and glue them together to form "praying hands." Have them write the Memory Verse on the hands and decorate with colored pencils.



Visit TheBiggestStory.com for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.



STORY 47

A Marriage Made in Heaven

HOSEA 1–3

BEFORE THE LESSON

- *Read Hosea 1–3.*
- *Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is, what he has done, and how they should respond to him.*
- *Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.*



THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}



Have you ever had to pull weeds? That's a hard job. How about take out the stinky trash? That's a hard (or at least stinky) job too. The prophets—like Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel—all had hard jobs. The work of a prophet was hard (and sometimes stinky!) work because they often preached an unpopular message to people who didn't want to hear. Some of the prophets had to warn God's people that God was going to judge them. Others had to tell people to turn away from sin and love God. Still others had to tell bad kings and queens to stop behaving badly. But one prophet might have had the hardest assignment of all. His name was Hosea.

The first message Hosea heard from God was this: “Go and find a bad woman to marry. I don’t want you to marry someone who is good and will be faithful to you, but someone who is not good and will continue to be unfaithful.” Normally, this would be very bad advice. But in Hosea’s case it was from a good God who wanted to make an important point. He wanted the prophet’s bad marriage to symbolize how bad God’s people had been to God.

TELL THE STORY

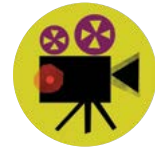
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the
Bible passage
together



Read from
The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook



Play *The*
Biggest Story
video

TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

Big Truth
God’s love and
mercy is shown
to sinners, who
don’t deserve it.

Hosea obeyed the Lord and married Gomer, a bad woman (with a memorable name). Hosea and Gomer lived happily ever after. The end. Nope. Sorry, wrong story. Their marriage was no fairy tale. It was a true story of two people whose marriage showed the truth about God’s relationship with Israel. Hosea married a woman who promised to love him, but then loved lots of other men instead. She was unfaithful to him, just like Israel was unfaithful to God by loving and serving all sorts of other things besides God.

Hosea and Gomer had three children: Jezreel, Lo-ruhama, and Lo-ammi. These are Hebrew names that mean God Sows (or God will Scatter), No Mercy, and Not My People. They are funny names, but what they represented was no laughing matter. Jezreel was named God Sows because Israel was going to reap rotten fruit from the sowing of her rotten deeds. There are consequences for sin! Lo-ruhama was named No Mercy, and Lo-ammi Not My People, because God’s people had been so disobedient—worshiping the false gods of the nations around them—that they didn’t deserve God’s mercy and they didn’t deserve to be called God’s people.



Story

47

Hosea

1-3

But did God stop loving them? He could have—they broke their promises to him. But he didn't. He promised that one day after Israel was scattered, they would repent and call God their husband. Then he would renew their marriage. On that day, God says,

I will have mercy on No Mercy,
and I will say to Not My People, "You are my people";
and he shall say, "You are my God." (Hos. 2:23)

What incredible love!

What then was Hosea to do? He was to act out that incredible love. God asked him to find his promise-breaking wife (who was living with her new boyfriend), pay off whatever money she owed (she was a slave to her sin!), and renew his marriage with her. Imagine how hard that would be to do! Once again, the obedient prophet obeyed God's word. And he once again showed, in his marriage, how God loves sinners and is willing to forgive us and make us his own.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher.
{5 minutes}

God brought Israel out of slavery in Egypt. He made a covenant with them. But over and over throughout their history they broke their promises to God. They worshiped him on the weekends, but broke the Ten Commandments throughout the week. They bowed before other gods. They treated the poor poorly. They trusted in the armies of their enemies rather than the Lord Almighty. It looked like the Snake was winning. And God was upset with their bad behavior! He had a right to be upset. They were like a wife who leaves her husband to be with other men. God could have stopped loving them. Instead, he chose to keep loving them—to renew his promises to them and restore his relationship with them.

The short story of Hosea's love for Gomer is like the Big Story of God's love for us in Jesus Christ. We have broken the Ten Commandments. We deserve for God to show us no mercy. We deserve to be crushed along with the Snake. He should not call us his children. But instead God does the unthinkable! He shows his love for us in that "while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). Through Jesus's blood (what a loving sacrifice!) we have been forgiven. We have a fresh start. He loves us as his children. Let us love him in return with our whole heart.

3

Engage

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. **QUESTION:** Why wouldn't someone want to marry Gomer? Why did God ask Hosea to marry her? What did God want to show his people through their marriage?

TAKEAWAY: Just like Gomer broke her promises to love Hosea, God's people have broken their promises to love and obey God.

2. **QUESTION:** How were God's people and Gomer alike? What did they both deserve because of their sin?

TAKEAWAY: Because of their sin, God's people (like Gomer) do not deserve to be welcomed and loved.

3. **QUESTION:** How does the story of Hosea and Gomer end? What does Hosea's love for Gomer tell us about God's love for his people?

TAKEAWAY: The story of Hosea and Gomer is a picture of how God loves his unlovely people.

4. **QUESTION:** Who did God send to show us how much he loved us? How did Jesus show us his love? How can we be welcomed as God's children even though we have sinned and broken our promises to God?

TAKEAWAY: Because Jesus loved us and died for our sin, we can be welcomed as God's children.

Memory Verse

God shows
his love for us
in that while
we were still
sinners, Christ
died for us.

ROMANS 5:8

ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from TheBiggestStory.com, or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Walk in Someone Else's Shoes Relay

Supply List: large, adult-sized shoes (one per team), chairs (one per team)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Set chairs on one side of the room.



Story
47

Hosea
1-3

Divide children into teams. Give each team a pair of shoes. The first person on each team puts on the shoes, runs around his team's chair, and returns to his team. He then gives the shoes to the next person in line, who repeats the process. The first team to get all their players down and back is the winning team. Tell children it's easy to think that we are better than Gomer, but in some ways we have all walked in Gomer's shoes by sinning against God.

Option 2: Balloon Competition

Supply List: balloons (one per child), fans

Before Class: Gather supplies. Blow up balloons.

Give each child a balloon. Explain that they need to keep their balloon from touching the floor by tapping it in the air. If a child's balloon hits the floor, she has to sit down where it dropped (becoming an obstacle to others). After a set period of time or when one child remains, start a new game but turn on some fans in the play area to add to the challenge. Remind children that sin, like the fan, makes things out of control, but if we trust God and battle sin, God will keep us from falling.

3rd-5th

Option 1: Seated Bean Bag Challenge

Supply List: bean bags (three per team), buckets (one per team)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Place buckets on one side of the room.

✓ Divide the class into teams. Give each team three bean bags and line teams up across from their bucket. Explain that each team must spread themselves out between the start line and their bucket and sit down. On "Go" they are to toss one bean bag at a time from kid to kid until it reaches the bucket. If a bean bag hits the ground, it has to go back to the start. The first team to get all their bean bags in their bucket wins. Remind children that although Israel wandered far from God, God promised to bring her back to himself.

Option 2: Jesus Paid It All Relay Race

✓
✓ *Supply List: coins, bowl, two jars, masking tape*

Before Class: Gather supplies. Put a bowl on one side of the room and two jars on the other side. Mark a "toss line" 1 foot from each jar.

Divide children into two teams and have them stand by the “toss line.” On “Go” the first child from each team runs down to the bowl, grabs a coin, then runs back to the toss line to try to toss the coin into the jar. If the coin doesn’t go in the jar, leave it. After the toss, the child tags the next person in line to go. Continue relay for a set amount of time. The team with the most coins in their jar at the end wins. Remind children that just as Hosea bought Gomer back at a great price, so too Jesus paid a great price to save us.

CRAFTS

Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Mosaic Cross

Supply List: cardstock, paper, construction paper (two colors per child), glue sticks

Before Class: Gather supplies. Print an outline of a large cross on white cardstock (one per child). Print strips of paper with the Big Truth on it. Make a sample craft.

Give each child the cross paper, Big Truth strip, and two colors of construction paper (one to fill in the cross and one to fill in the background). Set glue sticks on each table. Have children rip their construction papers into small pieces and glue one color to the cross and the other color to the background. Then have them glue on the Big Truth.

Option 2: Keep God at the Center Magnet

Supply List: cardstock, construction paper (three colors per child), pencils, scissors, glue sticks, crayons, magnets (one per child)



Before Class: Gather supplies. Make sets of three different-sized circle templates on cardstock and cut out (two sets per table). Make a sample craft.



Give each child three colors of construction paper. Set pencils, scissors, glue sticks, crayons, and circle patterns on each table. Have children trace one of the different-sized circles on each of their colors of paper and then cut the circles out. Have them glue the circles together to form a bull’s-eye target, with the

largest circle on the bottom. Then have them use crayons to write “Keep God at the Center.” Finally, add a magnet to the back.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Heart Puzzle

Supply List: cardstock, scissors, colored pencils, markers, small plastic bags (one per child)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Print a large heart outline on white cardstock (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child a heart paper and bag. Set colored pencils, markers, and scissors on each table. Have children write the Big Truth on the heart and then decorate it. Have them cut around the heart and then cut the heart into six to eight puzzle pieces (place in bag to bring home). Remind children that God’s heart breaks when we are unfaithful, but he still loves us.

Option 2: Salt Art Cross

Supply List: cardstock, food coloring, salt, small plastic bags, liquid glue, scissors, paintbrushes (one per child)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Color salt by adding salt to a bag, adding a few drops of food coloring, resealing the bag, and kneading the salt and food coloring until mixed together (create four to five colors per table). Open bags to allow salt to dry out before use. Print a large cross outline on white cardstock (one per child). Put glue on paper plates (one per table). Make a sample craft.

Give each child a cross paper and paintbrush. Place glue, scissors, and salts at each table. Have children cut out the cross. Have them brush glue onto one section of the cross and then sprinkle colored salt over it. Next have them paint glue onto another section and sprinkle a different-colored salt in that space. Continue this process until the cross is covered. Remind children that while we were still sinners, Jesus died for us.



Visit TheBiggestStory.com for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.



Story

47

Hosea

1–3



STORY 48

Let Justice Roll Down

AMOS 5

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Amos 5.
- Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is, what he has done, and how they should respond to him.
- Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.

1

Read

THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}

2

Teach

The Bible teaches us so many truths about God. God is holy. God is love. God is just (or fair). God is great! The Bible also teaches us a lot about ourselves. We are born sinners who are not holy, loving, and just. Yet we think we are great! We are filled with pride. But when God's Spirit enters into our hearts, he changes us from the inside out. With new hearts we can think, talk, and act like God wants us to. But how does God want us to think, talk, and act? Like God! Because God is holy, he wants us to be different from the evil in the world. Because God is loving, he wants us to love our neighbors as much as we love ourselves. Because God is just, he wants us to treat others fairly. The prophet Micah put it this way:

[God] has told you . . . what is good;
and what does the LORD require of you

but to do justice, to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God? (Mic. 6:8)

The prophet Amos couldn't agree more! Like most of the prophets he tells God's people about God's gracious rescue plan that the Snake Crusher will usher in. But also like most of the prophets, he tells them that they are really big sinners who need to start thinking, speaking, and acting like God. And today, we're going to focus in on one of the ways Amos called people to reflect God.

TELL THE STORY

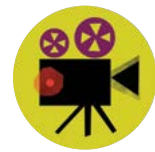
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the
Bible passage
together



Read from
*The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook*



Play *The
Biggest Story*
video

TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

Big Truth
God wants his
people to hate
evil, love good,
and seek justice.

Have you ever had someone (maybe a big brother!) steal a piece of pizza from your plate? Or, worse than that, has anyone ever pushed you to the ground on the playground and called you names? People around the world experience lots of injustice. “Injustice” is when people are treated in a way that isn’t right and wouldn’t please God. Like when someone is robbed or when a rich person can get out of trouble just because he is rich.

Amos called God’s people to “seek the LORD and live” (Amos 5:6). They needed to seek God because they had stopped listening to the prophets who spoke God’s words to them. They also needed to seek God because they had forgotten that he was a just God who required them to seek justice. Amos sighs, “You turn justice to wormwood!” (see 5:7). Wormwood is a plant that has an awful taste. It’s like Amos is saying that they are turning sweet justice into a sour, moldy, and stinky sandwich. Yuck!



Story

48

Amos

5

Now, get this! God’s people were gathering together for religious feasts—they sang praise songs and offered sacrifices—but then they would leave worship and act in unjust ways. The rich and powerful treated the poor and powerless unfairly. They stole land from them. They used their power to push people down instead of picking them up. How foolish! You cannot worship and love God and *not* love your neighbor! God hated what they were doing. “I hate your feasts,” he said, “and I take no delight when you gather for worship. Your songs are noise in my ears and your sacrifices are yuck in my mouth” (see 5:21, 23).

God’s people had made the land dry and dark through their injustice. Amos called them to repent. Turn around! Turn back to God. “Hate evil, and love good, and start acting justly” (see 5:15). Then he gives this beautiful image of the rushing waters of a waterfall flowing into a never-ending river of goodness: “let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream” (5:24). Instead of drying up the people and the land by taking away what is good, God wanted Israel to be like those waters—pouring justice and love over everyone.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher.
{5 minutes}

From the beginning God made man to be like him, perfect and good. But Adam and Eve disobeyed God and evil entered the world. People were no longer holy and just and loving like God. And yet God promised that one day he would destroy evil and bring about a perfect world again. And he did so through Jesus, the Snake Crusher. When Jesus came to earth, he announced that the perfect kingdom of God had come near (Mark 1:14–15). And then Jesus showed us what that perfect kingdom looks like. The Snake Crusher lived as the prophets asked God’s people to live. He always obeyed God. He was kind and loving. He was just and fair. He lifted up the poor. He was humble.

Jesus was so humble that he sacrificed his body on the cross so people like us—who aren’t loving, just, and humble—might be part of God’s perfect kingdom. Right now, the earth is full of injustice. Sin. Death. But one day, when Jesus returns to earth, he will make everything new and perfect. Then there will be more than a river of righteousness. The whole “earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” (Hab. 2:14). Come, Lord Jesus, come! We want to live in that perfect kingdom.

3

Engage

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. **QUESTION:** What had God's people forgotten in Amos's day? What is God like? And what does he want his people to be like?

TAKEAWAY: God is holy, loving, and fair, and he wants his people to be holy, loving, and fair.

Memory Verse

Let justice
roll down like
waters.

AMOS 5:24

2. **QUESTION:** If we love God, how should we treat the people that God made? How does God feel when we come to worship him and say we love him but then act in unfair and unloving ways to our neighbors? Why?

TAKEAWAY: We can't love and worship God and not love our neighbor.

3. **QUESTION:** Whom did God send to destroy evil and begin his perfect kingdom? Why was Jesus able to destroy evil on the cross? How do sinful people like us get to be a part of God's perfect kingdom?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus was perfectly holy, loving, and fair, and he died so that we could be part of God's perfect kingdom.

4. **QUESTION:** Why is Jesus coming back to earth someday? What will he do?

TAKEAWAY: When Jesus returns, he will make the whole world perfect and new.

ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from TheBiggestStory.com, or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Caterpillar Relay

Supply List: plastic toy hoops (one per team)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Assign leaders to hold a plastic toy hoop in front of each team so children can walk through it.



Divide the class into teams of eight to ten children. Each team should line up behind a hoop with their hands on the shoulders of the child in front of them. When the leader says “Caterpillars, wiggle!” the teams must go through the hoop, travel to the opposite end of the room, come back through the hoop, and return to the start line—all while staying connected. If a team breaks apart, they must stop and reconnect before continuing. The first team to get all players across the line wins. Remind children that we are to care for those around us and seek justice.

Option 2: Keys Game

Supply List: one set of keys, chairs

Before Class: Gather supplies. Scatter chairs randomly through the room (one chair less than the number of children).

Have everyone sit on a chair. The child that does not have a chair is the leader. Give the leader a large set of keys that jingle. Have the leader grab the hand of someone and lift that person up to join as the leader walks through the chairs. That person then grabs another child’s hand and does the same. Children continue to join the train until the leader drops the keys. When the keys drop, everyone standing runs to sit in a chair. The child who does not get a chair is the leader for the next round. Remind children that as God’s people we want to lift other people up and make them feel welcome.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Jump the Stream Challenge

Supply List: two long strings

Before Class: Gather supplies. Place two strings on the ground parallel to one another, about 1 foot apart.

Explain that between the two strings is a stream that the children need to jump over. Once everyone has jumped over the stream, widen it. If a child lands in the stream when she jumps, that child is out. After each jump, widen the strings until only one child remains. Remind children that God wanted Israel to be like a stream that flowed with justice.

Option 2: Keys Game

Supply List: one set of keys, chairs

Before Class: Gather supplies. Scatter chairs randomly through the room (one chair less than the number of children).

Have everyone sit on a chair. The child that does not have a chair is the leader. Give the leader a large set of keys that jingle. Have the leader grab the hand of someone and lift that person up to join as the leader walks through the chairs. That person then grabs another child's hand and does the same. Children continue to join the train until the leader drops the keys. When the keys drop, everyone standing runs to sit in a chair. The child who does not get a chair is the leader for the next round. Remind children that as God's people we want to lift other people up and make them feel welcome.

CRAFTS

Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Sun Visor

Supply List: paper plates, hole punch, yarn, markers, foam pieces, stickers, jewels, glue sticks

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut paper plates into a crescent shape (one per child). Punch one hole at each end of the crescent. Cut 8-inch pieces of yarn (two per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child a prepared paper plate and two pieces of yarn. Place markers, foam pieces, stickers, jewels, and glue sticks on each table. Have children decorate the top side of the paper plate. Then help children attach a piece of yarn to each hole and tie the two pieces of yarn together to fit their head. Remind children that just as visors help us see things when it's sunny, the Lord helps us see how to live justly.

Option 2: Doorknob Hanger

Supply List: cardstock, colored pencils, markers, scissors, glue sticks, sequins, jewels

Before Class: Gather supplies. Print a simple doorknob hanger on cardstock. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a doorknob hanger. Set remaining supplies on each table. Have the children write “Let justice roll down” on the hanger and cut it out. Then have them decorate it using the provided supplies.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Paper Wreath

Supply List: 9" x 18" construction paper (one per child), scissors, pencils, stapler, rulers, string

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make a sample craft.

Set supplies on each table. Have children fold a piece of construction paper lengthwise, then draw a line lengthwise about 2 inches from the edge that is open (not the folded, creased side). This is the “no cutting zone.” Have children cut slits from the folded side to the marked line every inch or half inch. Have them open up the paper, flip it over, and roll it to make a tube shape. Help children staple the tube closed and then staple the two ends of the tube together to form a circle. Have children cut out flowers, shapes, or bows and write words like *Welcome*, *Love*, and *Justice* on the shapes. Then glue the shapes to the wreath and tie a string to the top for hanging. Remind children that through Jesus, God welcomes us into his kingdom of perfect love and perfect justice.

Option 2: Give Generously Bank

Supply List: cardstock, scissors (one per child), tape, markers

Before Class: Gather supplies. Print a cube template on cardstock (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child a cube template. Set markers, scissors, and tape on each table. Have children cut out the template, then write “Be Generous” on one face of the cube. Next, have them cut a slit in the center of what will be the top section of the cube. Help them fold the sides up and tape the sides together to form a cube-shaped bank. Remind children that God’s justice includes giving generously to those in need. Encourage them to collect money in this bank to give to someone in need.



Visit TheBiggestStory.com for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.



Story

48

Amos

5



STORY 50

Big Fish, Bigger Mercy

JONAH 1–4

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Jonah 1–4.
- Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is, what he has done, and how they should respond to him.
- Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.



THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}



Lots of the prophets, like Amos and Ezekiel, were good and godly men. They were humble, obedient, and merciful. The prophet Jonah was different. God spoke to him (like the other prophets) and said, “Get up and go to Nineveh.” Nineveh was a big city, but it was also a bad city. It was the home of the evil Assyrians. God told Jonah to go there and tell them that God had seen their evil deeds and was about to judge them for the terrible things they had done.

But Jonah did the opposite. He ran “from the presence of the LORD” (Jonah 1:3). You might think Jonah fled because he was afraid to go. Nineveh was awfully wicked. But that’s not why he fled. He tells us in 4:2 why he fled. He knew God was merciful, forgiving people when they repent. But Jonah wanted Nineveh to get what was coming to them. So instead of bringing God’s message

to them, he boarded a boat for a city that was far, far away. Jonah was trying to get as far away from Nineveh, and as far away from the Lord, as possible. How do you think that will turn out? What will a merciful God do with disobedient Nineveh? What will a merciful God do with his disobedient prophet?

TELL THE STORY

Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the
Bible passage
together



Read from
The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook



Play *The*
Biggest Story
video

TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

Big Truth
God's people
should reflect
the mercy of
their God.

Can you hide from God's presence? Of course not! God is a spirit, so he can see you when you hide in your closet or at the bottom of a boat. Jonah should have known that. During his boat ride "the LORD hurled a great wind upon the sea . . . so that the ship threatened to break up" (1:4). The sailors knew that this big storm was big trouble. And they soon found out that Jonah was the reason for the storm. Jonah told them he was disobeying God, and he suggested a plan. "Throw me overboard and the sea will calm down." Sure enough, once he splashed into the sea, the storm stopped. The sailors were amazed that they had been saved, and they praised the Lord for his mercy. But what about Jonah? Did he drown?

No! God sent a huge fish to swallow and save him! Jonah was amazed and praised the Lord inside the fish. When Jonah was the recipient of God's mercy, he liked it! God told the fish to spit Jonah out on the dry land. The fish obeyed God (maybe God's prophet could learn a thing or two from that fish). Once again God told Jonah, "Go to Nineveh." This time Jonah listened. When he got there, he announced, "In forty days, your city will be overthrown!" Jonah was glad the nasty Ninevites would be judged. But do you know what happened? They believed Jonah's warning, showed they were sorry for their sins, and changed



Story

50

Jonah

1–4

their ways. In response God was merciful on the disobedient Ninevites. Just like he'd been merciful to his disobedient prophet. Nineveh was saved!

Now that's a happy ending for the Ninevites, but it made Jonah mad! He was thankful God forgave him and saved him. But he hated that God would forgive and save his enemies. But God wanted his prophet to repent just like he wanted Nineveh to repent. So the merciful God hatched a plan. While Jonah was sitting in the hot sun, God made a huge plant grow and provide shade for him. Jonah was happy, but not for long. The next day, God destroyed the plant. Jonah was steaming mad! God asked him, "Why do you care more about one plant than the 120,000 people in Nineveh?" The Bible doesn't tell us if Jonah repented or if he learned to be merciful. But it does tell us that we worship a gracious and merciful God who is slow to anger and abounds in steadfast love (see 4:2)—even to really bad people who repent.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher.
{5 minutes}

Even though Jonah was the pouting prophet, Jesus used his story to point to his own death and resurrection.

The scribes and Pharisees shouted at Jesus. "Show us a sign that you are the Messiah!" Jesus had already shown lots of signs. He had cleansed a leper, healed a paralyzed man, and given sight to the blind. He had even raised the dead to life! What kind of sign were they looking for? They wanted a supernatural sign—like water turning to blood. Jesus replied to them, "Only people with no faith want a special sign like that. I will only give you one sure sign that I am the Messiah. Just as Jonah was three days in the belly of the great fish, so will I will be three days in a tomb" (see Matt. 12:39–40). What do you think he is talking about? Yes, he's talking about his death—and resurrection. On Friday he died. That night (day one) and the whole day after (day two) his body was buried. Then, on day three, he rose from the grave!

But Jesus didn't choose the story of Jonah just because the number of days matched. He chose the story because it was all about God's mercy for sinners who repent. Jesus's death and resurrection are the signs that prove he is the Son whom God sent to save us from our sins and the punishment of death. Anyone who trusts in Jesus—disobedient prophets or wicked enemies—can be saved.

3

Engage

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. **QUESTION:** When God first asked Jonah to go to Nineveh, why didn't Jonah want to go? What did he do? Why was that a silly thing to do?

TAKEAWAY: We cannot hide from God.

2. **QUESTION:** Why did God send the big storm on the boat? How did God save the sailors? How did he save Jonah? How did they both respond to God when he saved them?

TAKEAWAY: God's salvation should cause us to praise him.

3. **QUESTION:** Why did God send Jonah to Nineveh? What happened when Jonah told the Ninevites that they were going to be conquered because of their sins? Why did God save them?

TAKEAWAY: God is merciful and saves those who repent.

4. **QUESTION:** What did the Pharisees ask Jesus to give them? What sign did Jesus say he would give them? How does Jesus's death and resurrection remind you of Jonah and the big fish?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus forgives and saves even his enemies by his death and resurrection.

ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from TheBiggestStory.com, or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Jonah, Jonah!

Supply List: toy fish

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Have children sit in a circle and place their hands behind their backs with palms up. Choose one person to be “Jonah,” and have him carry the fish while walking



Memory Verse
Salvation belongs
to the LORD!

JONAH 2:9



Story

50

Jonah

1-4

around the circle. While Jonah walks, the rest of the children say, “Jonah, Jonah disobeyed. Until inside the fish he prayed.” When the children finish, Jonah drops the fish into the hands of the child in front of him. The child with the fish stands up and chases Jonah around the circle. Jonah runs around the circle and tries to sit in that person’s empty spot. If the chaser tags Jonah before he sits down, Jonah must sit in the “belly of the whale” (middle of the circle) for one round. The chaser becomes the new Jonah. Continue play until all children have had a turn.

Option 2: Great Fish and Jonahs

Supply List: none

Have children line up on one side of the room. Choose one “great fish” and have him or her stand in the middle of the room. Tell the class they are all like Jonah, who disobeyed God and ran away from Nineveh. When the great fish yells “Overboard!” the children run to the other side of the room. The great fish tries to tag as many Jonahs as possible. Everyone tagged becomes a great fish. Continue play until one Jonah remains.

3rd-5th

Option 1: Walk the Plank

Supply List: masking tape

Before Class: put a long piece of masking tape on the floor to create a plank

Have the children walk down the plank without falling into the sea. If they fall in, shout ‘man overboard’.

Speak about how Jonah did not walk the plank but offered to be thrown into the sea overboard because he caused the storm. Remind your children, that God was gracious and saved him with the big fish.

Option 2: Big Fish Tag

Supply List: none

Have children line up on one side of the room. Choose three children to be the “big fish” and to stand in the middle of the room holding hands. The remaining

children are “Jonahs.” Explain that the big fish will move together to swallow up children. To swallow someone, the two children on the ends of the trio clasp hands to complete a circle around a Jonah. Once a child is swallowed, he or she joins the big fish. Continue play until one Jonah remains. For larger groups, start with more than one big fish.

CRAFTS

Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: “God Saves” Worm

Supply List: paper, plastic cups, glue sticks, construction paper, pencils, scissors, wiggly eyes

Before Class: Gather supplies. Print the Big Truth (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child a Big Truth paper, plastic cup, pencil, and scissors. Set glue sticks, construction paper, and wiggly eyes on each table. Have children trace around their cup onto construction paper to make six circles. Have them cut out the circles and glue them together (overlapping a bit) to form a worm. Glue the worm onto the Big Truth paper. Attach the wiggly eyes. Remind children God used a worm to teach Jonah that he should be merciful.

Option 2: Jonah Swallowed Up!

Supply List: cardstock, scissors, glue sticks, crayons, brass fasteners

Before Class: Gather supplies. Print a sheet of paper that includes a whale template with a simple open mouth, a separate whale mouth (same size as the one on the whale template), and a picture of Jonah that will fit inside the mouth. Make copies on cardstock (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child the printed cardstock and a brass fastener. Set crayons, scissors, and glue sticks on each table. Have children color and cut out the whale pieces and Jonah, then attach the whale’s mouth to the body using the fastener. Have them glue Jonah to the inside of the mouth so that he is visible when the mouth tilts up. Remind children that God had a great fish swallow up Jonah when he was disobedient.



Option 1: Jonah and Fish Cup Game

Supply List: plastic cups, paper, scissors, balloons, string, dried beans, permanent markers, tape

Before Class: Gather supplies. Print a small picture of a whale. Cut string into 18-inch pieces. Poke holes in the bottom of the cups. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a whale picture, plastic cup, balloon, and string. Set tape, markers, and dried beans on the tables. Have children cut and tape the whale picture to the side of the cup. Have children use permanent markers to draw a stick figure man on the deflated balloon. Then have them work with a partner to put dried beans into their balloon until it is about three inches in diameter. Tie the balloon closed. Help children thread the string through the hole in the cup, using a knot and tape to secure it. Tie the other end of the string to the balloon. Challenge the children to try and catch Jonah in the whale's "mouth."

Option 2: "God Saves" Worm

Supply List: paper, plastic cups, glue sticks, construction paper, pencils, scissors, wiggly eyes

Before Class: Gather supplies. Print the Big Truth (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child a Big Truth paper, plastic cup, pencil, and scissors. Set glue sticks, construction paper, and wiggly eyes on each table. Have children trace around their cup onto construction paper to make six circles. Have them cut out the circles and glue them together (overlapping a bit) to form a worm. Glue the worm onto the Big Truth paper. Attach the wiggly eyes. Remind children God used a worm to teach Jonah that he should be merciful.



Visit TheBiggestStory.com for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.



STORY 53

A New Baby and a New Beginning

MATTHEW 1

BEFORE THE LESSON

- *Read Matthew 1.*
- *Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is, what he has done, and how they should respond to him.*
- *Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.*

1
Read

THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}

2
Teach

After a whole year, we finally finished the Old Testament. Now we come to the New Testament! It's kind of like hearing a complicated riddle and then finally finding the answer to the riddle. Think of all the hints we've gotten. The Savior will be a Snake Crusher. He will be the true temple. He will be the sacrifice for our sins. He will be *the prophet* greater than Elijah, *the priest* in the order of Melchizedek, and *the king* greater than David!

And all these Old Testament shadows and symbols point forward to the Jesus we meet in the New Testament. Another way to think about the two big sections in the Bible—Old Testament and New Testament—is with the word *covenant*. And

if you remember, covenants were a special kind of promise. The Old Testament tells what God promised to do for his people and the New Testament tells how Jesus fulfills those promises.

The New Testament starts with four Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. They tell us the good news (or “gospel”) of Jesus’s birth, life, death, and resurrection. These four Gospels are like four cameras that are filming the same scenes. They give us four different angles on the big stories of the Biggest Story. We turn now to the opening scene. Lights. Cameras. Action!

TELL THE STORY

Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the
Bible passage
together



Read from
The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook



Play *The*
Biggest Story
video

TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

Big Truth
Jesus was born to
save his people
from their sin.

What do we celebrate on Christmas? The birth of our country? No. The new year? No. When the groundhog sees its shadow? Come on, now. On Christmas we celebrate the birth of Jesus. You know that. But you may not know the strange way Matthew begins the story of Christmas. He starts with a long list of names, called a *genealogy*. *Genealogy* is just a fancy way of saying family tree. Why would he tell the story of Christmas with a genealogy? One reason would be to remind us that Jesus was a real person. Another reason would be to remind us that he’s the promised Snake Crusher (see Matt. 1:1). Those are important reasons. But there just might be a final one. When we read the long list of names, we’re reminded of how sinful people are. There are some big-time sinners on the list. Even Abraham and David, men of great faith, were big-time sinners.

What does all this have to do with Jesus? Well, Jesus wasn’t a big-time sinner. Instead, he was a big-time Savior from sin. Even though he was fully human, he



Story

53

Matthew 1

was also fully God. And even though he came from a long line of sinners, he was born in a special way so he could do some special rescuing: he was from God. The angel Gabriel explained to Mary how this would happen: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you . . . therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God” (Luke 1:35). And since God is without sin, Jesus could be born free from the sin that marked his genealogy.

Now here’s where the story gets really interesting. Mary was engaged to Joseph. He was shocked to find out Mary was pregnant! He decided the best course was to quietly break up with her. But God sent an angel to let him in on what God was doing. “Joseph,” the angel told him, “Marry Mary, for the baby in her has been conceived from the Holy Spirit” (see Matt. 1:20). Joseph listened. The angel continued, “The baby will be a boy. When he is born, your job is to name him Jesus.” Joseph must have wondered, “Why that name? It’s not a family name.” The reason was that the name means “Yahweh saves.” The angel explained, “Call him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins” (see v. 21). Joseph and Mary obeyed the angel’s orders. They got married, she gave birth, and Joseph called the baby Jesus.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher.
{5 minutes}

The New Testament was written in Greek. We use some Greek words in English—like *galaxy*, *acrobat*, and *dinosaur*. Dinosaur is made from two Greek words: *denios* (which mean “terrible”) and *savra* (which means “lizard”). A dinosaur is a terrible lizard! Guess what is the second word in the New Testament. In Greek, it’s the word *genesis*. In English, it’s “genealogy.” Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Matthew used that word to remind us that when Jesus was born, there was a new beginning—a new genesis! This new genesis in Jesus is an invitation to us to enjoy a new life. If we trust him as our Savior, he gives us a new heart and a new start. Ask yourself today, “Do I have sins that need to be forgiven?” The answer is yes! Then ask yourself, “Who can forgive me?” The answer is Jesus! Remember what his name means? It means “Yahweh saves.” Remember what he did on the cross? He saved “his people from their sins” (1:21). He can save you too! Trust in him today and experience your new genesis.

3

Engage

Memory Verse

She [Mary] will
bear a son, and you
[Joseph] shall call
his name Jesus,
for he will save
his people from
their sins.

MATTHEW 1:21

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. **QUESTION:** What's the name of the first book in the Bible? How does the Gospel of Matthew begin? By beginning the story of Jesus's birth with a genealogy (which is from the same Greek word as *genesis*), what do you think Matthew is trying to say about the birth of Jesus?

TAKEAWAY: The birth of Jesus gives a new beginning to the world God created.

2. **QUESTION:** Who were some of the people named in Jesus's family tree (or "genealogy")? Did those people always follow God perfectly? If they were sinners, and Jesus came from their family, how could he be born without sin?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus is fully human—but without sin.

3. **QUESTION:** What was Joseph told to name Jesus? Why? How can we be saved from our sin?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus was born to save his people from their sin.

ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from TheBiggestStory.com, or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Jump from Old Testament to New Testament Game

Supply List: two ropes

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Place ropes parallel to one another a foot apart. Tell the children that the first rope is called Old Testament and the second rope is called New Testament. Have children form a line perpendicular to the first rope. The children should take turns attempting to jump over both ropes. If a child succeeds, he or she goes to the back of the line. If a child does not clear both ropes, he or she is out. After all children have attempted the jump, increase the distance between the two ropes and have remaining children jump again. Continue to increase the distance



between the ropes until one child remains and is the winner. Explain that in class we will be “leaping” from Old Testament stories to New Testament stories.

Option 2: Matching Wrapping Paper Game

Supply List: wrapping paper (various designs, one design for every two children), envelopes (one per child), scissors

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut three squares from each wrapping paper design. Hide one square of each design around the room, and place the other two each in their own envelope.

Give each child an envelope. On “Go” have children open their envelopes and find the other person with a matching piece. Together they must find their matching square hidden in the room. First team to find it wins. Remind children that the greatest gift is Jesus!

3rd–5th

Option 1: Matching Wrapping Paper Game

Supply List: wrapping paper (various designs, one design for every two children), envelopes (one per child), scissors

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut three squares from each wrapping paper design. Hide one square of each design around the room and place the other two each in their own envelope

Give each child an envelope. On “Go” have children open their envelopes and find the other person with a matching piece. Together they must find their matching square hidden in the room. First team to find it wins. Remind children that the greatest gift is Jesus!

Option 2: Christmas Picture Guessing Game

Supply List: whiteboard, dry-erase marker, notecards, pen

Before Class: Gather supplies. Write things related to Jesus's birth (shepherd, angel, baby Jesus, Mary, stable, star, Joseph, etc.) on cards.

Select a child to pick a card and give him thirty seconds to draw the word. Have the rest of the class try to guess what the child is drawing. If a child guesses correctly, he or she can either draw next or choose who does. If no one guesses correctly, reveal the answer and choose a different child to draw.



Story

53

Matthew 1



CRAFTS

Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Christmas Wreath

Supply List: flat paper plates, scissors, hole punch, string, red and green paper, glue sticks, markers

Before Class: Gather supplies. Punch a hole in the top of each plate, and tie an 8-inch string to each for hanging (one per child). Cut 1-inch squares of green paper (ten per child). Cut 1-inch circles of red paper. Print bows on red paper. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a paper plate, scissors, and bow. Set green squares, red circles, markers, and glue sticks on tables. Have children write “Thank you for Jesus!” in the center of their plates. Have children glue the green squares on the ridged area of their plates. Have children cut out their bow, then have them glue the bow and four red circle “berries” on top of the green squares. Tell children this Christmas wreath can remind us that we have much to be thankful for in Jesus.

Option 2: Christmas Vase

Supply List: jars (one per child), bowls, glue, yarn (red, green, etc.), paintbrushes

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut assorted colors of yarn into 24-inch pieces. Place glue in bowls. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a jar and a paintbrush. Set yarn and bowls of glue on tables. Starting at the bottom, have children brush glue around a section of their jar. Next, have them wrap a piece of yarn around the jar, keeping each consecutive row tight against the one before it. When the piece of yarn ends, have them choose another piece of yarn to continue wrapping around the jar, brushing on more glue as needed. Continue until the whole jar is wrapped with yarn. Encourage children to give this jar as a gift to someone and to tell that person that Jesus is the greatest gift ever given.



Option 2: God with Us Door Hanger

Supply List: cardstock, scissors, hole punch, yarn, markers, stickers, sequins, glue

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut cardstock in half lengthwise to create door hangers (one door hanger per child). Punch two holes at the top of each door hanger for the yarn. Cut 12-inch pieces of yarn (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child a door hanger and a piece of yarn. Place markers, stickers, sequins, and glue on each table. Have children write “Immanuel” vertically on the door hanger and “God with Us” below, then have them decorate with the provided materials. When they are finished decorating, have them string the yarn through the holes and tie a knot so that it can be hung from a doorknob.

Option 2: Christmas Vase

Supply List: jars (one per child), bowls, glue, yarn (red, green, etc.), paintbrushes

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut assorted colors of yarn into 24-inch pieces. Place glue in bowls. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a jar and a paintbrush. Set yarn and bowls of glue on tables. Starting at the bottom, have children brush glue around a section of their jar. Next, have them wrap a piece of yarn around the jar, keeping each consecutive row tight against the one before it. When the piece of yarn ends, have them choose another piece of yarn to continue wrapping around the jar, brushing on more glue as needed. Continue until the whole jar is wrapped with yarn. Encourage children to give this jar as a gift to someone and to tell that person that Jesus is the greatest gift ever given.



Visit TheBiggestStory.com for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.



STORY 54

Wise Men, Smart Move

MATTHEW 2

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Matthew 2.
- Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is, what he has done, and how they should respond to him.
- Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.



THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}



Throughout the New Testament, Jesus is given many names. Already the angels have called him the “Son of God” (Luke 1:35), “Immanuel” (which means “God with us”; Matt. 1:23), and “Jesus” (which means “Yahweh saves”; 1:21). Matthew also calls Jesus the “Christ” (1:1), because that word means “Anointed” or “King.” The word *king* might remind you of God’s promise to David. God promised David that from his offspring would come an eternal king who would rule an everlasting kingdom. And don’t forget about God’s promise to Abraham that all the nations would be blessed through his Snake-Crushing offspring.

That brings us to one more name for Jesus in our story today. Wise men from the east followed a star a great distance to find the one they called “king of the Jews” (see 2:1–2). Could this king of the Jews also be the King of all the nations?

Let's find out by looking at what the wise men came to do and what that tells us about King Jesus.

TELL THE STORY

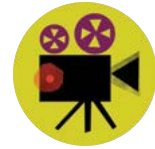
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the
Bible passage
together



Read from
The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook



Play *The*
Biggest Story
video

TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

Big Truth
Jesus is the King
of all nations.

A long, long time ago, God promised that a king would come from the people of Israel who would be worshiped by people from every nation. Jesus is that King, and the story today gives us an early picture of what will one day be the world's biggest worship service.

Jesus was born in Bethlehem, a small town outside the big city of Jerusalem. At that time, Herod was the king over the Jews living in that region. One day, wise men from a faraway country came to Jerusalem. These men were called “magi” (from which we get the word “magic”) because they were pagan priests and stargazers. They came because a bright star rose in the sky, and it was a sign to them that a king had been born. In fact, God sent the star to lead them to his Son.

When they arrived, they asked where the new king was so they could worship him. Herod was troubled and asked the religious leaders where the coming “Christ” (or “king”) was to be born; they said Bethlehem. So Herod told the wise men to head to Bethlehem and find the new king. And so they did. In fact, the star led them to Bethlehem and the exact place where Jesus was. They “rejoiced exceedingly with great joy” (Matt. 2:10). They were super-duper happy! Then, going into the home, they saw baby Jesus in his mother's arms, and they did what they came to do: “They fell down and worshiped him” (2:11). Part of their worship was to bow before him, acknowledging him as King, and another part

was to give treasures to him—precious gold and expensive, nice-smelling oils (frankincense and myrrh).

The sad part about this story is what Herod did with the news of Jesus's birth. He was jealous of Jesus, and he thought that this new king would take over his kingdom and that he would lose his power. He told the wise men to find Jesus so he could worship him, but he actually wanted to kill him. Imagine that! But God protected his Son (and the wise men too). God warned them in a dream to get out of town. Nothing (not even a king!) would stop Jesus, the baby King, from coming to save his people.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher.
{5 minutes}

Three times in Matthew 2 Herod is called “king.” This is because Herod ruled over part of Israel. Jesus is called a “king” too. The wise men come to find the one “who has been born *king* of the Jews” (2:2). Of course, Jesus is more than the king of the Jewish people; he is King of all creation. At the end of Matthew’s Gospel Jesus says, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (28:18). That’s a lot of authority. Total power! Many powerful people, like Herod, are not good people. But Jesus is perfectly good. Unlike Herod, who lived in a stately palace, Jesus was born in a lowly stall. And unlike Herod, who sought to kill all his enemies, Jesus was born to die for his enemies—sinners like us. This is the good news of our good Savior. He is humble and gentle, yet great and powerful; he is King of kings, yet he came to seek and save the lost.

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. **QUESTION:** How long did God say his promised King would rule? What people do we see come worship the King of the Jews in today’s story? What does this show us about God’s promise that all nations would worship Israel’s King?

TAKEAWAY: The wise men show that God is keeping his promise that all nations will worship Israel’s King.

2. **QUESTION:** How did the wise men know a king had been born? Who controls the stars? Who did the wise men tell? What did Herod want to do to



Story
54

Matthew 2

3

Engage

Jesus? How did God protect Jesus? Herod might have thought he was in control, but who controls all things?

TAKEAWAY: From stars to kings, God controls all things.

Memory Verse

Let everything
that has breath
praise the LORD!

PSALM 150:6

3. **QUESTION:** What did the wise men come to do? Why? What should Herod and the people of Jerusalem have done when they learned the promised King had been born? Why? What should we do? Why?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus deserves our worship.

4. **QUESTION:** What did Herod want to do to Jesus? Why? Why can't anyone stop Jesus from saving and ruling over his people? Is Jesus still King today? Will his kingdom ever end?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus is the forever King.

ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from *TheBiggestStory.com*, or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Herod Says

Supply List: none

Have children stand. Give an instruction (e.g., “Jump up and down” or “Turn in circles”). The children should do the actions as commanded. Alternate by sometimes starting commands with “Herod says” (e.g., “Herod says, march in place”). The children should *not* obey Herod’s commands. If they do the “Herod says” action, they are out and should sit down. Continue until one child remains standing. Remind students that King Herod was a jealous, cruel ruler and that the magi did the right thing by not obeying him.

Option 2: Pass the Present

Supply List: empty box, wrapping paper, music

Before Class: Gather supplies. Wrap a box with Christmas wrapping paper.

This game is played like “Hot Potato.” Have children sit in a circle. When the music plays, pass the present around the circle. When the music stops, the person holding the present is out. Continue until one person remains. Remind children the wise men brought gifts to worship Jesus.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Wise Men Balloon Tennis Relay

Supply List: balloons (three colors), large empty boxes (two per team), paint stirrers, paper plates, glue

Before Class: Gather supplies. Blow up balloons (at least one per child). Make one “balloon racket” for each team by gluing paint stirrers to paper plates.

Divide children into teams and have them line up single file behind a box filled with balloons. Tell children the three colors of balloons in their team’s box represent gold, frankincense, and myrrh that need to be brought to king Jesus (represented by a second empty box at the other end of the room). The first child on each team takes a balloon out of his team’s box, hits it with the racket down to the second box, hits it into the box, and runs the racket back to the next player on his team. Play continues until a team gets all their balloons into the box on the far end of the room and has all players back to the starting line.

Option 2: Walk Like a Camel Relay

Supply List: balloons

Before Class: Gather supplies. Blow up balloons (two per team and a few extra).

Divide the children into teams and line them up single file. Have the first two children on each team become a “camel” by each placing a balloon between their knees and having the person in back hold onto the first person’s shoulders. On “Go” the camels race to a designated spot and back. If either of the balloons drop, the pair must stop and put the balloon back in place before continuing. When they get back to the start, have them pass the balloons to the next two players who will become the next camel. The first team to run all their camels wins. Explain that it is possible the magi rode on camels to find the newborn King because it was a common mode of transportation in that time and place.



Story

54

Matthew 2

CRAFTS

Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: King of Kings Crown

Supply List: paper, cardstock, scissors, tape, markers, jewels, sequins, glue

Before Class: Gather supplies. Print a paper with the sentence, “Jesus is King of kings” written four times in large print. Cut out the sentence strips (one per child). On cardstock, draw a zigzag line down the center lengthwise (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child one piece of cardstock. Place sentence strips and remaining supplies on tables. Have children cut along the zigzag line and tape the two pieces together to form a flat crown. (Do not yet form the circle.) Have them glue the sentence strip to their crown and decorate with markers, jewels, and sequins. Once decorated, form the crown into a circle and tape to secure. Remind children that even though Jesus was born in a stable, he is the King of kings!

Option 2: The Best Gift Picture

Supply List: Christmas wrapping paper, cardstock, markers, scissors, glue sticks

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut Christmas wrapping paper into smaller pieces. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a piece of cardstock. Place markers, scissors, glue sticks, and wrapping paper pieces on tables. Have children write “Jesus is the BEST gift!” on the cardstock. Have children cut wrapping paper into square and rectangular “gifts” and glue them to their paper. Have children add bows to the gifts using markers. Remind children the wise men knew Jesus is the best gift!



Option 1: Craft Stick Star Ornament

Supply List: ribbon, string, craft sticks, glue, sequins, jewels, glitter, plates

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut ribbon into 8-inch pieces. Make a sample craft.

Give each child five craft sticks. Place glue, sequins, jewels, glitter, and plates on tables. Have children glue the craft sticks together to make a star shape, then have them tie the ribbon to the top for hanging. Have children glue sequins, jewels, and glitter to their stars. (Have children use the glitter over a plate so excess glitter falls on the plate.) Remind children that the wise men followed a star to Jesus. When they found him, they worshiped him.

Option 2: 3D Hanging Five-Point Star

Supply List: cardstock, crayons, scissors, hole punch, clear tape, string

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut 8-inch pieces of string. Print large star shapes onto cardstock (two per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child two star papers and a string. Place crayons, scissors, a hole punch, and tape on tables. Have children cut out the stars and color them on both sides. Have children take one of their decorated stars and cut a slit from the bottom of the star up to the center (stop halfway). Next, have the children cut a slit on the other star from the top to the center of the star. Slide the stars together to make one 3D star. If needed, use tape to hold the two stars in place. Have children punch a hole at the top of the star and tie a string through for hanging. Remind children a star led the wise men to Jesus.



Visit TheBiggestStory.com for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.