

THE BIGGEST STORY CURRICULUM



July - September

Gospels

Acts

1st - 3rd Grade: Red Check Marks

4th - 5th Grade: Green Check Marks



STORY 76

Little Man, Big Faith

LUKE 19

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Luke 19.
- 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 is so generous! He gives his grace to people who don't deserve it—like us! We should always thank God for his generous grace. We should always wear our grace glasses. Remember them? Don't forget to wear them! And be sure to toss your glasses of grumbling into the garbage. We don't want to act like the first workers from the story we learned about last week. Remember how they grumbled when they learned the owner of the vineyard gave the same payment both to the workers who only worked one hour and to those who worked all day? They lost sight of the generous heart of the boss, just like we lose sight of God's generous heart. None of us deserve his grace, no matter if we are first or last. We are all sinners deserving to be punished for our sins. That's what is fair! We don't want God to be fair in that way. Instead of being fair like that

and punishing everyone, our just and generous God sent Jesus to save us. In today's lesson we learn about one of those people. His name is Zacchaeus. No one in his town would have expected that Jesus would give him grace. But he did! Want to find out what happened?

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 gives
grace even
to big-time
sinners.

Two words can be used to tell Zacchaeus's salvation story: *seeking* and *receiving*. We are told that Zacchaeus "was *seeking* to see who Jesus was" (Luke 19:3). But we are also told two other important details about him: "He was a chief tax collector and was rich" (19:2). Those weren't good things. No one in town would have liked Zacchaeus. Why? Because he collected taxes from his fellow Jews for the Roman Empire. Paying taxes isn't bad. What is bad, though, is what tax collectors did: they would lie about how much people had to pay. Then, all the extra money they collected they'd keep for themselves. It made them filthy rich! The other important detail about this greedy man is that he was short. He was so short he couldn't see Jesus over the heads of the crowd when he came through Jericho on his way to Jerusalem. So he had an idea. He ran ahead of the crowd and climbed up onto a sycamore tree. Now he could see Jesus. Short, bad Zacchaeus was seeking.

As Jesus walked, he came to the base of the sycamore tree. He looked up. What a strange sight—a man in a tree! "Zacchaeus," he called out his name. "Hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today" (19:5). The little man climbed down. He took Jesus to his house and "*received* him joyfully" (19:6). *Receiving!* He received Jesus with his emotions ("joyfully") and with his actions: "Lord,



half of what I have, I give to the poor. And all the people I have cheated I will give them back four times as much” (see 19:8). He received Jesus by giving his riches away in one day. Amazing!

What is more amazing is what Jesus said next: “Today salvation has come to this house” (19:9) because Zacchaeus believed in Jesus. The people grumbled that Jesus had “gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner” (19:7). But Zacchaeus, the big-time sinner, knew that Jesus came for that very purpose: “To seek and to save the lost” (19:10).

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

Seeking. Receiving. Those two important words help us understand how Zacchaeus approached Jesus. He needed a Savior, a Snake Crusher, to crush all his sins. Lots of sins! He was a *chief* tax collector, after all. So he sought Jesus. Then he received Jesus.

There is another important word that helps us understand what was happening. *Pulling.* The last line in the story, which is the most important, comes from Jesus. He says, “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost” (19:10). Another way to say that is Jesus came to save sinners. But what about *pulling*? Do you remember that Jesus said, “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God” (18:25)? Zacchaeus is rich! So how did he get through the eye of the tiny sewing needle? Easy. Jesus pulled him through. He came to seek and save the lost—both rich and poor, short and tall. The next time you think about Zacchaeus, picture Jesus pulling a camel through the eye of a needle. Impossible? Not with God—all things are possible for him.

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. **QUESTION:** What did Zacchaeus do to seek out Jesus? What did Jesus do to seek out Zacchaeus? Why did Jesus say he came?

TAKEAWAY: Zacchaeus was seeking Jesus, and Jesus was seeking him.

3

Engage

Memory Verse
The Son of Man
came to seek and
to save the lost.

LUKE 19:10

2. **QUESTION:** When Jesus told Zacchaeus he was coming to his house, how did he respond? What were his emotions? What were his actions? What did Jesus say had come to his house?

TAKEAWAY: When Zacchaeus received Jesus, he was saved and his heart was changed.

3. **QUESTION:** How easy did Jesus say it would be for a rich man (like Zacchaeus) to enter the kingdom of God? How was Zacchaeus able to enter the kingdom of God?

TAKEAWAY: It is impossible for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God—but with God, all things are possible.

4. **QUESTION:** What did Zacchaeus deserve for cheating poor people out of their money? What did God give him instead? How did that change Zacchaeus?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus gives grace even to big-time sinners.

ACTIVITIES

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Heads, Shoulders, Knees, Zacchaeus

Supply List: bean bags (one for every two children)

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Divide children into pairs. Have each pair face one another, and place a bean bag on the floor between them. If the leader calls “head,” “shoulders,” or “knees,” everyone must touch that body part. If the leader calls “Zacchaeus,” everyone tries to grab the bean bag before his or her partner does. Whoever gets the bean bag first earns a point. Continue randomly calling “head,” “shoulders,” “knees,” or “Zacchaeus.” After a set amount of time, the person in each pair with the most points wins. Remind children that Jesus called Zacchaeus by name.



Option 2: Capture the Balloon

Supply List: balloons, permanent marker, music

Before Class: Gather supplies. Inflate balloons (one per child).

Write each child's name on a balloon with permanent marker. Distribute balloons around the room. Have children hit the balloons around while music plays. When the music stops, have each child find the balloon with his or her name on it. The last person to find the balloon is out. Continue play until one child remains. Alternatively, have a leader record how long it takes for all the children to find their balloons and see if the group can beat their time in subsequent rounds. Remind children that Jesus knew Zacchaeus by name, and he knows our names too.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Capture the Balloon

Supply List: balloons, permanent marker, music

Before Class: Gather supplies. Inflate balloons (one per child).

Write each child's name on a balloon with permanent marker. Distribute balloons around the room. Have children hit the balloons around while music plays. When the music stops, have each child find the balloon with his or her name on it. The last person to find the balloon is out. Continue play until one child remains. Alternatively, have a leader record how long it takes for all the children to find their balloons and see if the group can beat their time in subsequent rounds. Remind children that Jesus knew Zacchaeus by name, and he knows our names too.

Option 2: Zacchaeus in Action

Supply List: tape, paper, markers

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make three evenly spaced parallel lines across the playing area with tape. Label the furthest line "Zacchaeus climbed a tree," the middle line "Zacchaeus came down," and the bottom line "Zacchaeus was changed."

When the leader calls out one of the phrases, have children run to that line as quickly as possible. The last child to the line is out. Continue calling out phrases until one child remains.

CRAFTS

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Zacchaeus, Come Down!

Supply List: cardstock, scissors, hole punches, yarn, small paper plates, glue, craft sticks, green tissue paper, pencils

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock make copies of Zacchaeus (one per child). Cut out each Zacchaeus, and punch a hole at the top. Tie and knot one end of a 12-inch piece of yarn through each hole. Cut tissue paper into 1-inch squares. Make a sample craft.

Set Zacchaeus figures, tissue squares, and remaining supplies on tables. Have children glue a plate to a craft stick to make a “tree.” Have children decorate the tree by wrapping tissue squares around a pencil eraser and gluing them to the plate. Next, have children punch a hole at the top of the plate. They can then thread the yarn attached to Zacchaeus through the hole and tie a large knot at the end of the yarn so that it cannot pass back through the hole. Demonstrate how Zacchaeus goes up and down the tree by pulling the string.

Option 2: My Name

Supply List: cardstock, glue, cotton swabs, paper plates, empty boxes, spoons, glitter

Before Class: Gather supplies. On the top of cardstock print “Jesus knows my name and loves me!” (one per child). Put glue on paper plates and set on tables. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a cotton swab and printed paper. Have children dip the swab in glue and use it to write their name in the center of the paper. While holding the paper over an empty box, gently shake a spoonful of glitter over the glue to make the letters appear. Remind children that just as Jesus knew Zacchaeus’s name, he knows each of their names and loves them!



Option 1: String Tree Art

Supply List: paper, brown yarn, scissors, cotton swabs, green paint, paper plates, colored pencils

Before Class: Gather supplies. Print the Big Truth at the top of a piece of paper (one per child). Print pictures of Zacchaeus (one per child). Cut various lengths of brown yarn. Put green paint on paper plates. Make a sample craft.

Set Big Truth papers, Zacchaeus pictures, yarn, paint, and remaining supplies on tables. Have children make a tree by gluing brown yarn onto the Big Truth paper. Have them dip their cotton swab into the green paint and dab around the branches to make “leaves.” Have them color and cut out Zacchaeus and then glue him onto the tree.

Option 2: Zacchaeus, Come Down!

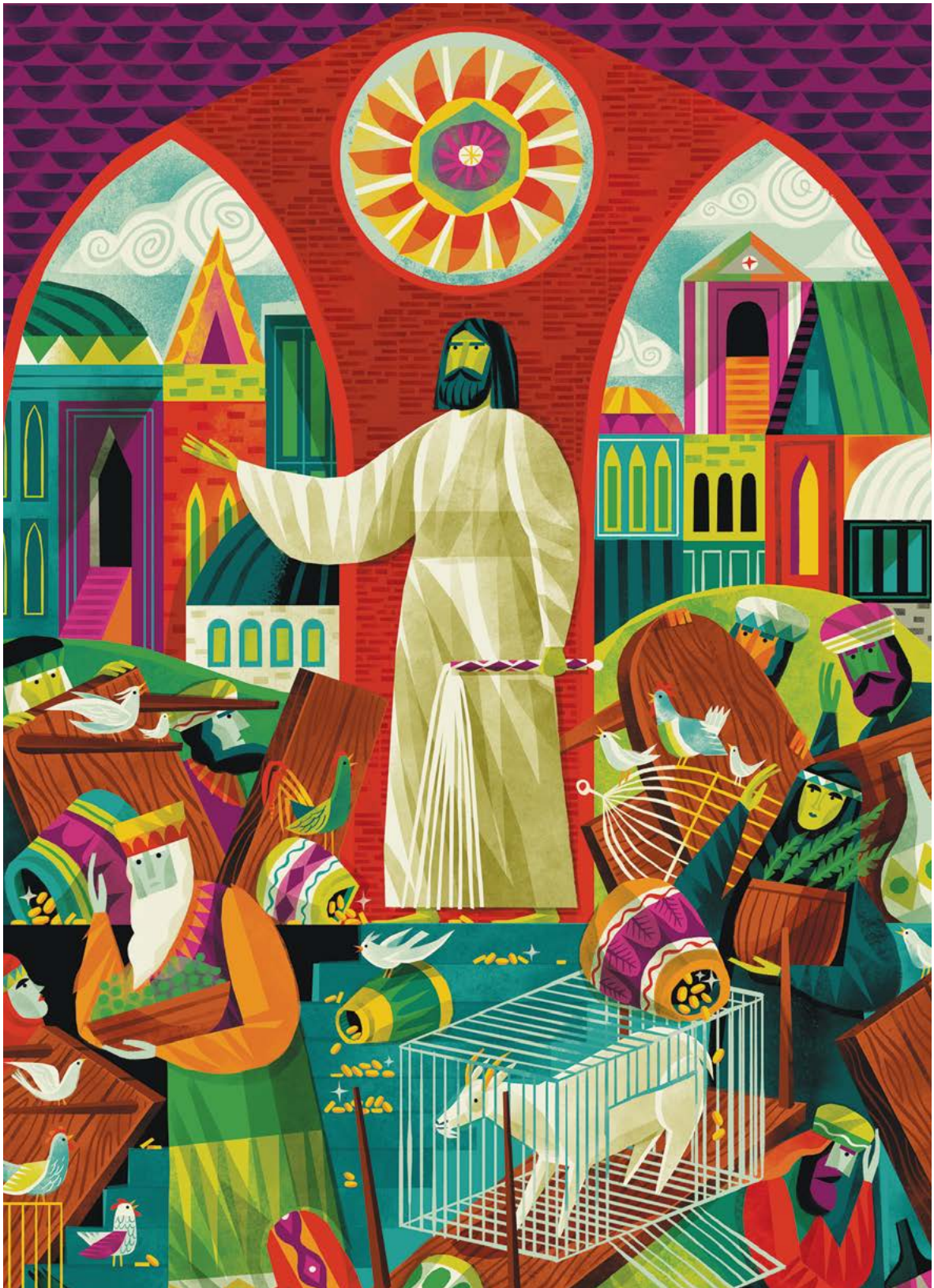
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Visit TheBiggestStory.com for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.



STORY 78

Jesus Cleans House

MARK 11

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Mark 11.
- 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

Last lesson we looked at Palm Sunday, the first day of Holy Week. King Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a colt, a young donkey. The next few lessons focus on that same week, the last days of Jesus's life. One of the details that we left out from last lesson was something the Gospel writer, Matthew, wrote about. He said that Jesus's riding on a colt fulfilled what the Old Testament prophet Zechariah said, "Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted . . . on a colt" (Matt. 21:5; Zech. 9:9). This verse tells us that Jesus's plan was God's plan. It also tells us we serve a humble King. Jesus was humble—meek and mild and kind and gentle. But, when he needed to, he also showed his awesome power and righteous anger. "Righteous anger" is getting mad about things that upset God, like stealing food from the poor. The day after Palm Sunday, Jesus

showed such anger. Let's listen to what happens, and let's also remember that Jesus is both the Lamb of God, who came to sacrifice his life, and the Lion of the tribe of Judah, who came to show his teeth—and roar!

TELL THE STORY

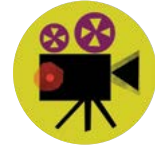
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



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 wants
faithful
and fruitful
followers.

Have you ever been in a cathedral—an old church with stone walls, stained glass, and a really tall ceiling? A place where if you said hello your voice would bounce off the walls for about ten seconds? The temple in Jerusalem was kind of like that. The temple had painted cedar roofs, marble pillars, and the doors to the Holy of Holies were over 60 feet high. Most people were in awe when they saw the temple. It was so big and beautiful! When Jesus entered it on Holy Week, however, he was not impressed. The temple was to be a place of prayer and praise, but the Court of the Gentiles (the temple area for non-Jewish believers) looked more like a noisy and corrupt market. People were buying animals for their Passover sacrifice, but they were being cheated by many of the sellers. This so upset Jesus that he drove out “those who sold and those who bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons” (Mark 11:15). And as he was putting a stop to all the buying and selling, he taught, “Doesn’t the Bible say, ‘The temple shall be a place of prayer for Jews *and Gentiles*’? But you have turned it into a hideout for cheats and thieves” (see 11:17).

Just before Jesus had cleared out the money-changers from the temple, Jesus had done something else unusual. He’d cursed a fig tree! Yes, he saw a fig tree that had big, beautiful green leaves, and he expected, because it looked alive, it



Story

78

Mark

11

to have little buds he could eat. But when he got closer, he noticed that the fruit tree had no fruit. So, he cursed it: “May no one ever eat fruit from you again.” And sure enough, the “fig tree withered away to its roots” (11:14, 20). Wow. Why did he do that? He did it as a symbol to show that the temple was like that fruitless tree and that it was soon to be judged for being fruitless. Now, God’s people are called to be the temple where God dwells, a light to the nations. Are we like the temple and the tree, looking good on the outside but not truly happy to follow God’s ways? Or are we full of good fruits, like forgiveness and prayer? Jesus came to save all of us—let’s turn to him and ask him to make us truly alive and fruitful.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

The Passover was the most important Jewish holiday. People would travel to the temple, buy an animal to sacrifice for their sins, bring it to the high priest, and have him sacrifice it (see Num. 28:16–25). In this way their sins would be forgiven. The animal died in their place. Now they were in a right relationship with God. But Jesus came into the temple at Passover and cleared it out. He was asked why he did it. Do you know what he said?

Jesus talked about the “temple of his body” and how it would be “destroyed” (he’d be killed on the cross) but raised up “in three days” (John 2:20–21). He also taught, another time, that he was “greater than the temple” (Matt. 12:6). What was he talking about? Jesus was teaching that he was the new and better “temple.” Think about it. Do we travel to Jerusalem to have our sins forgiven? No. We go to Jesus. Do we need to buy an animal and have it brought to the high priest? No. Jesus is our high priest. Do we need an animal to be sacrificed? No. Jesus is our sacrifice for sin. Jesus is greater than the temple, because he is the only person that we need to go to for God’s mercy. What incredibly good news!

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

- 1. QUESTION:** Was there anything that made you angry this morning? Was Jesus ever angry? What’s different about his anger than our anger?

3

Engage

TAKEAWAY: When Jesus was angry, he was angry about the right things and in the right way.

Memory Verse

My house shall
be called a house
of prayer for all
the nations.

MARK 11:17

2. **QUESTION:** What was happening in the temple courts when Jesus entered? What was supposed to happen there? Why did it make Jesus angry? What did he do?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus was angry that the temple court was full of cheaters and that there was no place for people from other nations to pray.

3. **QUESTION:** What happened just before Jesus came into the temple? Why was he angry at the fig tree? Is Jesus happy when churches and people look great on the outside but inside are not good at all? How might a church seem good but not actually be good? How about you?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus wants his people to be faithful and fruitful, not just to look good on the outside.

4. **QUESTION:** What did Jesus say would be destroyed? What did he say would happen three days later? What was he talking about? How is Jesus like the temple? How is he better than the temple?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus is the new and better temple.

ACTIVITIES

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Clean Up Relay

Supply List: chairs, tennis balls, brooms

Before Class: Gather supplies. Place a chair on the opposite side of the room from each team's starting line.

Divide children into teams, and have teams stand single file at the starting line. Give the first child on each team a broom and a tennis ball. On “Go” the

first person must use his broom to hit the ball to the opposite side of the room, around give the broom and ball to the next player. The first team to race all team members wins. Explain that Jesus didn't clean the temple with a broom. Instead, he cleared the temple of cheaters and thieves.



Option 2: What is more important?

Supply List: none

In this activity, children must decide what is most important. Not all answers need to be right or wrong. Some ideas could be:

1. Study for a test or Play online
2. Listen to your mom or Watch TV
3. Read the Bible or Chat online
4. Stay up late or Get a good night sleep
5. Clean your room or Go out to play
6. Talk to God or Talk on the phone
7. Practice an instrument or Play with sport
8. Write an essay for school or Read a comic

Have children either stand or sit. You could also have them run to one side of the room to choose. Talk about how we need to be careful to choose good things and fill our lives with things that please God.

Story

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Mark

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Option 2: Get Out Tag!

Supply List: none

Choose one child to be “It,” and have remaining children be “money-changers.” Play a game of tag. On “Go” the child who is “It” must chase the money-changers. If a child is tagged, she must go to jail (a predetermined corner of the room). When “It” has tagged four people, one of the four becomes the new “It” and the game continues. Remind children that Jesus drove money-changers out of the temple because they were cheating people and preventing worship.

CRAFTS

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Braided Whip Bookmark

Supply List: thick string, tape, beads

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut thick string into 15-inch pieces (three per child). Make a sample craft.

Set string and remaining supplies on tables. Have children knot three pieces of string together at the top, then tape the knot to the table to hold it in place. Instruct children to braid the string until there are 4 inches left. Have them string two or three beads onto each string and then knot the three pieces together to close. Tell children that the braided whip bookmark represents when Jesus drove the money-changers out of the temple with a whip.

Option 2: Faithful and Fruitful

Supply List: paper, construction paper (green, brown, and red), glue sticks, markers

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make copies of a large, full tree (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Set copies and remaining supplies on tables. Have children rip green paper into pieces and then glue them to a tree paper to make leaves. Have them rip brown paper into pieces and then glue them to the tree paper to form the trunk.



Then they can rip red paper to make fruit to add to the tree. Have children use markers to write, “God can make me faithful and fruitful.”

3rd–5th

Option 1: Braided Whip Bookmark

Supply List: thick string, tape, beads

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut thick string into 15-inch pieces (three per child). Make a sample craft.

✓ Set string and remaining supplies on tables. Have children knot three pieces of string together at the top, then tape the knot to the table to hold it in place. Instruct children to braid the string until there are 4 inches left. Have them string two or three beads onto each string and then knot the three pieces together to close. Tell children that the braided whip bookmark represents when Jesus drove the money-changers out of the temple with a whip.

Option 2: Prayer Jar

Supply List: tissue paper, decoupage glue, paper bowls, empty baby food jars, foam paintbrushes, craft sticks, permanent markers

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut tissue paper into small pieces. Pour decoupage glue into paper bowls. Make a sample craft.

Set tissue paper, decoupage glue, and remaining supplies on tables. Have children use a foam paintbrush to spread the glue on the outside of a baby food jar. Children then cover the jar with tissue pieces. Finally, children can “paint” the glue over the tissue to seal. While the jar is drying, have children take five to ten craft sticks and use permanent markers to write someone or something they want to be praying for (family, friends, the church, not getting angry, etc.). Have them place the sticks in their jar. Encourage them to use the jar to help them remember to pray for these things because God hears and answers prayer.



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



Story

78

Mark

11



STORY 79

A Woman to Be Remembered

JOHN 12

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read John 12.
- 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

As Jesus journeyed to Jerusalem, he stopped in Jericho to save Zacchaeus. Then he rode on a colt into the holy city, as people praised him as King and Savior. Then he did those strange symbolic things in and outside the temple. In the temple, he cleansed it of those who were making money off sacrifices for sin. Outside the temple, he cursed the fruitless fig tree. No faith, no fruit? No good! It was Passover week. But right before and during that week, Jesus stayed about 2 miles away in the home of his close friends—sisters Mary and Martha, as well as Lazarus, their brother. The story of Lazarus is one of the best stories in the Bible. It happens right before the story we will talk about today. Lazarus

dies. Jesus arrives in town. He weeps at Lazarus's tomb. Then, Jesus said, "Take away the stone" (John 11:39) from the tomb. After the stone was moved, Jesus shouted, "Lazarus, come out," and sure enough, Lazarus "who had died came out" (11:43–44). Mary and Martha now believed without a doubt that Jesus was the Christ and that he had resurrection power. They loved him more than ever. Let's see now how Mary showed that love.

TELL THE STORY

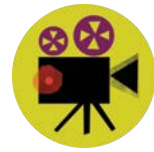
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



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

We cannot love
Jesus too much.

Have you ever been to a fancy dinner? Maybe there were cloth napkins, fine silverware, and fancy plates. A few days before Holy Week started, Jesus and his disciples were having dinner with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus in their house. We don't know if it was a fancy dinner, but it must have been a big one.

For special dinners guests would recline on their stomachs around a low table and the food would be placed in the center. Everyone around the table would lean on one elbow and grab the food from the center, and their feet would stick out the back. Strange, huh? Or kind of cool. Try it some day! As Martha was serving the guests—placing dishes of wonderful food on the middle table—her sister was listening to Jesus teach. This upset Martha because she wanted help. But Jesus was happy that Mary was listening because it was the better choice (see Luke 10:38–42). He was likely teaching about what was about to happen to him in Jerusalem. He would suffer, die, and rise again. Mary was so moved by Jesus's teaching that she left, went to her room, and grabbed a tall white jar filled with expensive perfume. She returned to the table and opened it by Jesus's feet. The whole house was now filled with the smell of the sweet perfume. Then



she did something that seemed crazy. She poured the perfume on Jesus's feet, let down her long hair, and wiped his feet clean.

Judas said, "What a waste! She could have sold that for thousands of dollars and given the money to the poor." Jesus replied, "She has done a beautiful thing. For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. In pouring this on my body, she is preparing me for burial. Wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her" (see Matt. 26:10–13). Do you know what is beautiful? Do you know what will be remembered, at least by God? When we love Jesus with crazy love—with the best that we have! Such love and worship is never a waste.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

When Mary poured the perfume on Jesus's feet, he was still alive. But his death was coming soon, even if Mary didn't know it. Regardless, Mary loved Jesus so much that she wanted to give him the best she had. Jesus, however, knew he would die in a few days. And he saw her gift as preparing him for burial. He responded to her extravagant gift by saying she had done a beautiful thing. Anytime we worship Jesus, it is beautiful. He is worthy of the most extravagant, costly worship we can give. Her costly gift was given to the one who would give the costliest gift to us—his life. As we remember Mary's gift, may we remember how it points us toward Jesus's burial and death and his great love for us.

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. **QUESTION:** Who are some people that you think of when you think of the Bible? Who is the surprising woman that Jesus said would be remembered wherever the gospel is told? What did she do?

TAKEAWAY: Wherever the gospel goes in the world, Mary will be remembered for her gift.

2. **QUESTION:** What would people in Jesus's day do to prepare a dead body for burial? What did Mary's perfume prepare Jesus for?

3

Engage

Memory Verse

Keep yourselves
in the love of
God, waiting
for the mercy of
our Lord Jesus
Christ that leads
to eternal life.

JUDE 21

TAKEAWAY: Mary's perfume pointed ahead to the fact that Jesus would soon die and be buried.

3. **QUESTION:** How much did Mary's gift cost? Why was Judas upset that she used it on Jesus? What else did Mary do that was embarrassing? Was Jesus happy with her gift? Why do you think he thought it was beautiful?

TAKEAWAY: Mary's love for Jesus was crazy and costly.

4. **QUESTION:** Can you ever love Jesus too much? Can you praise him too loudly? Can you follow him too closely? Are you willing to follow him even when it costs you a lot? When it's embarrassing? Why?

TAKEAWAY: True worship is never a waste.

ACTIVITIES

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Heel-to-Toe Relay

Supply List: none

Divide children into teams of five or six. Have the first person on each team walk heel-to-toe to the other side of the room and then run back to tag the next player in line, who will repeat the process. The first team to race all team members wins. Remind children that Mary poured perfume on Jesus's feet, and he said she'd be remembered forever.

Option 2: Don't Break the Treasure!

Supply List: balloons

Before Class: Gather supplies. Inflate balloons (one for every two children plus a few extra).

Divide children into pairs. Have the pairs line up on the starting line. Give each pair a balloon, and explain that it represents a special treasure that they must not drop. On "Go" have the pairs walk to the opposite side of the room and back with the balloon held between their backs. If the balloon slips out, they must

let it touch the floor before replacing it and continuing the race. The pair that completes the race first wins. Remind children that Mary took her treasure and broke it to anoint Jesus's feet.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Pick Up Relay

Supply List: plastic cups, water, large clear jars, kitchen tongs (one per team), towels

Before Class: Gather supplies. Fill plastic cups full with water (one per child). Set plastic cups along the starting line. Place jars on the opposite side of the room (one per team).

Divide children into teams of five or six. Give the first person on each team a pair of kitchen tongs. On “Go” have the first player on each team use the tongs to pick up a plastic cup filled with water, to carry it to the other side of the room, and to pour as much water as possible into his team’s jar. Have him return to his team and hand the tongs to the next person, who will repeat the process. The team with the most water in their jar after all players have raced wins. (Note: Have towels on hand to clean up any spills.)

Option 2: Don’t Break the Treasure!

Supply List: balloons

Before Class: Gather supplies. Inflate balloons (one for every two children plus a few extra).

Divide children into pairs. Have the pairs line up on the starting line. Give each pair a balloon, and explain that it represents a special treasure that they must not drop. On “Go” have the pairs walk to the opposite side of the room and back with the balloon held between their backs. If the balloon slips out, they must let it touch the floor before replacing it and continuing the race. The pair that completes the race first wins. Remind children that Mary took her treasure and broke it to anoint Jesus’s feet.



Story

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John

12

CRAFTS

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Perfumed Feet

Supply List: spray bottles (one for each scent blend), water, essential oils, construction paper, pencils, scissors, markers

Before Class: Gather supplies. Prepare spray bottles with a mixture of water and essential oils in different scents. Make a sample craft.

Set supplies on tables. Have each child remove his or her sock and shoe from one foot and trace that foot on construction paper with a pencil. Then they can cut out the footprint and use markers to write the Big Truth on it and decorate it. Have children come to a leader to help them spray their scent of choice lightly on their footprint.

Option 2: Great Love Picture

Supply List: paper, black and brown yarn, scissors, glue, crayons

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut black and brown yarn into 4-inch lengths. Print a picture of a woman kneeling at the feet of Jesus with the Big Truth written underneath (one copy per child). Make a sample craft.

Set copies, glue, crayons, and yarn pieces on tables. Have children color the picture with crayons and then glue the yarn pieces to the woman's hair. Remind children that the woman wanted to show Jesus how much she loved him.





Option 1: Perfumed Envelope

Supply List: envelopes, colored pencils, spoon, bowl, rice, essential oil or perfume

Before Class: Gather supplies. Fill a bowl with dry rice and mix in some essential oil or perfume. Make a sample craft.

Give each child an envelope. Set remaining supplies on tables. Have children use colored pencils to decorate the envelope and write the Big Truth on it. Have children bring their envelope to the bowl and fill it with two or three spoonfuls of rice before sealing it shut. Tell children this envelope can be put in a drawer to make it smell beautiful like Jesus's feet after Mary anointed him.

Option 2: Perfumed Feet

Supply List: spray bottles (one for each scent blend), water, essential oils, construction paper, pencils, scissors, markers

Before Class: Gather supplies. Prepare spray bottles with a mixture of water and essential oils in different scents. Make a sample craft.

Set supplies on tables. Have each child remove his or her sock and shoe from one foot and trace that foot on construction paper with a pencil. Then they can cut out the footprint and use markers to write the Big Truth on it and decorate it. Have children come to a leader to help them spray their scent of choice lightly on their footprint.



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



STORY 84

A Mission for the Ages

MATTHEW 28

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Matthew 28.
- 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

As we come to the end of the Gospels, let's review what Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John record about Jesus. Jesus was born. He grew in wisdom. He taught and performed miracles. He was betrayed and arrested. He was put on trial and sentenced to be crucified. He suffered and died. But then, three days later, he turned the world upside down (or right-side up): he rose from the dead. He is alive! He appeared to the women at the tomb, the two men on the road outside Jerusalem, and all the apostles. In fact, Paul tells us "he appeared to more than five hundred brothers [Christians] at one time" (1 Cor. 15:6) and then later to Paul himself. Over five hundred people. Wow! That's a lot of eyewitnesses! One of the times Jesus appeared to his disciples, he said something very important

to them. He wanted them to be more than eyewitnesses; he wanted them to tell the world what they had seen and heard. Let's listen!

TELL THE STORY

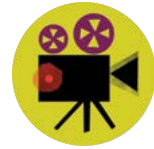
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



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
The King of
heaven and earth
calls his followers
to make disciples
of all nations.

When the angel of the Lord appeared to “Mary Magdalene and the other Mary” (Matt. 28:1) at the tomb, he told them to tell the other disciples some important information: that Jesus had “risen from the dead” (28:7) and that the disciples were to journey to Galilee. That’s the place Jesus first called them, and he wanted to meet there with them again. When the disciples arrived in Galilee, sure enough Jesus showed up. And “when they saw him they worshiped him” (28:17). They worshiped him because he had proved by his resurrection that he was truly God in the flesh. We should worship him too!

At the meeting Jesus gave them what is called the Great Commission, important instructions about their important mission. But before he talked about what they should do, he said something important about himself. He said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (28:18). How much authority? All! Authority over the rising and setting sun? Yes. Authority over the ocean’s big waves and the tornado’s wild winds? Yes. Authority over every earthly king. Yes. “All authority” means authority over everything! We worship a powerful risen King, don’t we?

After our powerful risen King said that about himself, he said this to his disciples: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” (28:19). Just as Jesus made disciples, his disciples are to make disciples. *Of whom?* The nations—that is, people from every country, every group, and every language throughout the



Story

84

Matthew

28

world! *How are they to make disciples?* By going to them, “teaching them” (28:20) what Jesus taught, and “baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (28:19). That’s a pretty big job! *How are they to accomplish this great task?* Through Jesus’s presence: “And behold,” Jesus concludes his Great Commission, “I am with you always and for all time” (see 28:20). They would soon discover that the Spirit of Jesus would indeed be with them. In fact, God would pour out his Holy Spirit on the disciples. But let’s not get ahead of ourselves.

The mission they were given by Jesus is the same mission that the church has today. To go tell all people the good news that Jesus taught and to baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

Jesus said many things to his disciples after he rose from the dead. But the final thing Jesus told his disciples to do was so important that we call it the Great Commission. The word “commission” just means “command.” And what is the Great Commission? Jesus commanded this: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.” He wanted to make it crystal clear that he didn’t just come to rescue his disciples, or just the Jews. He came to rescue all people—from every country and every language. Every group of people. What a *great* command indeed! And the best part is, if Jesus, who has all authority over everything, tells us to do something, we can be sure he will help us complete that task. In fact, he promises to be with us always! As we tell people about how they can be rescued by Jesus and how he has crushed the snake, we help accomplish his mission to rescue all people. How awesome is that!

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

- 1. QUESTION:** How many gods are there? Is it okay to worship other things than God—like a president, or money, or an amazing singer? How many persons is our God?

TAKEAWAY: We worship only one God in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

3

Engage

Memory Verse
**Go therefore and
make disciples
of all nations.**

MATTHEW 28:19

2. **QUESTION:** After Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to disciples, where did he return? What was the last thing he said to his disciples before he went back to heaven?

TAKEAWAY: Before Jesus returned to his Father, he gave his disciples a final command to go and make disciples of all nations.

3. **QUESTION:** Do you think it's easy to go and make disciples of all nations? To give his disciples confidence as they obey his command, what did Jesus say he had been given? And who did Jesus say would be with them always?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus was given all authority in heaven and on earth, so we know all nations will have disciples.

4. **QUESTION:** Was it just the first disciples that were to go and make disciples of all nations? What is the mission of the church (you and me) today?

TAKEAWAY: The mission Jesus gave his disciples is still the mission of the church today.

ACTIVITIES

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Red Light, Green Light

Supply List: none

Have children line up on one side of the room. Choose someone to be “It” and to stand opposite the class. Have “It” call out “Red Light” or “Green Light.” On “Green Light” players must move forward as quickly as possible. On “Red Light” players must freeze. Any child who moves after “Red Light” is called must return to the starting line. The child who reaches “It” first wins. Remind children that Jesus gave his followers the green light to go and tell others about him.

Option 2: Tell the World Balloon Game

Supply List: balloons, permanent marker



Story

84

Matthew

28

Before Class: Gather supplies. Blow up seven balloons per team and use a permanent marker to write the names of the seven continents on the balloons (one continent per balloon).

Divide children into two teams, and have each team stand in a circle. Give each team a set of the continent balloons. On “Go” have the children on each team try to keep all seven balloons from falling to the ground by hitting them up in the air. If a balloon touches the ground, it is out of play. At the end of five minutes, the team with the most balloons still in play wins. Remind children that Jesus told his followers to share the good news about him with the whole world.

3rd–5th

Option 1: A Piece of the World Relay

Supply List: simple world map puzzle (one per team)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Scramble the pieces to the puzzle and set the pieces in a pile on the opposite side of the room (one puzzle per team).

Divide children into teams. On “Go” the first person on each team runs to his team’s puzzle pieces, grabs a piece, runs it back to the starting line, and tags the next person in line, who repeats the process. Once the team has gathered all the puzzle pieces in this way, the children must work as a team to put the puzzle together. The first team to finish wins. Remind children that Jesus told his followers to share the good news about him with the whole world.

Option 2: Tell the World Balloon Game

Supply List: balloons, permanent marker

Before Class: Gather supplies. Blow up seven balloons per team and use a permanent marker to write the names of the seven continents on the balloons (one continent per balloon).

Divide children into two teams, and have each team stand in a circle. Give each team a set of the continent balloons. On “Go” have the children on each team try to keep all seven balloons from falling to the ground by hitting them up in the air. If a balloon touches the ground, it is out of play. At the end of five minutes, the team with the most balloons still in play wins. Remind children that Jesus told his followers to share the good news about him with the whole world.

CRAFTS

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

K–2nd

Option 1: “Go and Make Disciples” Craft

Supply List: paper, maps, scissors, glue

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make copies of a paper that has the word GO in large bubble letters, with “therefore and make disciples of all nations” in smaller letters underneath it. Make a sample craft.

Set scissors and maps on tables. Have children cut out pieces of maps and glue the pieces inside the word GO.

Option 2: “I’m Ready to Go!” Suitcase

Supply List: paper, cardstock, colored pencils, scissors, glue sticks

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, print a suitcase template with the Memory Verse written underneath it. Make copies of pictures of the following items: a Bible, a globe, praying hands, and a heart. Make a sample craft.

Place copies and remaining supplies on tables. Have children color and cut out the pictures of the Bible, globe, praying hands, and heart. Have them glue the pictures inside their “suitcase.” Have children decorate the rest of the suitcase with colored pencils. Remind children that no matter where they go, near or far, God wants them to share the good news of Jesus and be a part of the work he is doing in the world.



Option 1: Shoes Are Made for Going

Supply List: cardstock, yarn, colored pencils, scissors, hole punches

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, make copies of a gym shoe pattern. Cut yarn into 8-inch pieces. Make a sample craft.

Set copies, yarn, and remaining supplies on tables. Have children color a gym shoe and cut it out. Instruct children to punch holes where the laces would go and to lace and tie a piece of yarn through the holes, tying the yarn in a bow as if tying a shoe. Have children write the Memory Verse on the shoe.

Option 1: “Go and Make Disciples” Craft

Supply List: paper, maps, scissors, glue

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make copies of a paper that has the word GO in large bubble letters, with “therefore and make disciples of all nations” in smaller letters underneath it. Make a sample craft.

Set scissors and maps on tables. Have children cut out pieces of maps and glue the pieces inside the word go.



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



PART 6

ACTS & EPISTLES

ACTS–JUDE

The Gospels are obviously about Jesus — who he was, what he did, and what he taught — but we shouldn't think the rest of the New Testament is about something else. If the Gospels are about what Jesus “began to do and teach,” then the Acts of the Apostles are about what Jesus continued to do and teach (Acts 1:1). The book of Acts is sometimes called a history of the early church. That's true, but it's also a history of what God was doing by the Spirit to proclaim the word around the world.

Most of the books in the New Testament are letters, or what are sometimes called epistles. Most of the letters are from the apostle Paul, but there is also one from James, two from Peter, and three from John. These letters are addressed to specific churches, groups of churches, or church leaders, and they explain what the gospel is, how Christians should live, and how the church should be organized. Because of the Spirit's inspiration, these letters, along with Acts, are every bit as much about Jesus and from Jesus as the sermons and miracles in the Gospels.



STORY 85

The Spirit Comes

ACTS 2

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Acts 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.

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

Sometimes in really old copies of the Bible the authors of the four Gospels are pictured as four creatures: a man (Matthew), a lion (Mark), an ox (Luke), and an eagle (John). An early Christian pastor named Irenaeus used these pictures to help people remember what the Gospels showed us about Jesus. The picture of the man points to Jesus's humanity, the lion emphasizes his power, the ox reminds of his sacrifice for us, and the eagle depicts Jesus as over all things, since he is the creator of everything ever made. If we had to pick symbols for the book after the Gospels—the book of Acts—then the perfect symbols would be wind and fire. You see, Acts begins with Jesus's disciples gathered together on the Jewish Day of Pentecost—shortly after Jesus went up to heaven. And “suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing *wind*” and

“tongues as of *fire* . . . rested on each one of them” (Acts 2:2–3). As Jesus had promised, they were baptized “with the Holy Spirit and fire” (Luke 3:16). Let’s learn more about this awesome scene!

TELL THE STORY

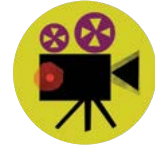
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



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
The Spirit was
poured out so
people might
hear the gospel
and be saved.

Imagine your best friend said, “I’m moving out of state, but don’t worry, it’s good for you that I’m leaving.” What would you think? You’d probably think they were crazy. But before Jesus left his disciples, he told them that it was better for them that he was going away (John 16:7). How could this be? What Jesus said only made sense after he ascended into heaven and sent the Holy Spirit to dwell in them and fill them with power.

The story of the sending and filling of the Spirit took place fifty days after Easter. It was the day of Pentecost, a special feast day. Jerusalem was packed with thousands of celebrating Jews from around the world. The apostles and some of Jesus’s other closest friends were gathered to celebrate, when suddenly that “mighty rushing wind” from heaven “filled the entire house” (Acts 2:2). Then, what looked like flames, which were shaped like a tongue sticking upward that just happened to be on fire, sat over each person’s head. These tongues of fire were symbols that “they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.” And, because of that, they were able “to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance” (2:4). Basically, the Spirit gave them the ability to speak about the mighty works of God in the languages of all the different people from all the different places.

Next, Peter stood up and explained all these things to those who were watching them happen. He said, “What you see—men and women, both young and



Story

85

Acts

2

old, speaking in many tongues about the wonderful things of God—is just what the prophet Joel said would happen when God poured out his Spirit.” And he told them, “More than that, it is a sign that Jesus, who was crucified, is alive and crowned Lord and Christ.” The people listening “were cut to the heart” (2:37), which means they felt deeply sorry for not believing in Jesus. They asked what they should do. Peter said to call on the Lord Jesus to be saved and to “repent and be baptized . . . for the forgiveness of sins” (see 2:21, 38). They did just that. Three thousand people (!) received Peter’s message, were baptized, and then received the Holy Spirit too.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

The prophet Joel had a vision of what it would be like when God’s kingdom came and the Snake Crusher ruled over it. In that vision God poured out his Spirit on all people: men and women, young and old. Now that the Snake Crusher had come, that vision was coming true. It all began at Pentecost. The Spirit came down and enabled his followers to preach in different languages so that God’s kingdom could spread. It spread and spread and spread, from that small group of disciples to all nations. The book of Acts tells the story of how the gospel spread from Jerusalem to every part of the world. Jesus’s rescue mission had begun, and it cannot be stopped. The kingdom of God is coming, just as Joel foretold!

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. **QUESTION:** How do you think the disciples felt when Jesus said he was leaving them? Why did Jesus say it was better that he go? What did he say he would send to be with them always?

TAKEAWAY: When Jesus went to heaven, he sent his Spirit to be with his people always.

2. **QUESTION:** Fifty days after Easter, on the day of Pentecost, who was gathered together in Jerusalem? And what did it look like when God sent the Holy Spirit to the disciples?

3

Engage

TAKEAWAY: God first sent the Holy Spirit to his disciples on the day of Pentecost.

Memory Verse

The Helper, the
Holy Spirit, whom
the Father will
send in my name,
he will teach you
all things and bring
to your remem-
brance all that I
have said to you.

JOHN 14:26

- 3. QUESTION:** What are some of the things that happened when the Spirit was poured out? As people spoke in different languages, what did Peter say it was a sign of? What happened to people who responded to Peter by believing in Jesus?

TAKEAWAY: The Spirit was poured out so people might hear the gospel and be saved.

- 4. QUESTION:** Who had said that he would send his Spirit? Who was filled with the Holy Spirit?

TAKEAWAY: The promised Spirit fills all who call on the Lord Jesus to be saved.

ACTIVITIES

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

K–2nd

Option 1: A Great Wind Blows

Supply List: chairs

Before Class: Place chairs in a circle (one chair less than the number of children).



Choose one child to stand in the middle of the circle, and have remaining children sit in chairs. The child in the middle says, “A great wind blows for everyone who . . .” (completing the sentence with what could describe a child; e.g., has a dog). The seated children who have a dog must stand and find a new seat. The person in the middle must also find a seat. Whoever is unable to find a seat is the new person in the middle and calls a different description. Play continues as time allows. Remind children that at Pentecost a mighty wind from heaven filled the room.



Option 2: Balloon Relay

Supply List: balloons

Before Class: Gather supplies. Inflate balloons (one per team).

Divide children into teams, and have them line up. Give each team a balloon. On “Go” the first child on each team blows the balloon down to the opposite side of the room (until it hits the wall) and blows it back to the next person in line. The first team to race all players wins. Remind children that at Pentecost a mighty wind from heaven filled the room.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Mighty Wind Relay Race

Supply List: straws (one per child), ping-pong balls (one per team), cones

Before Class: Gather supplies. Place cones on one side of the room (one per team).

Divide children into two teams, and have them line up opposite a cone. Give each team a ping-pong ball and each child a straw. On “Go” the first person on each team places the ping-pong ball on the floor and crawls forward, using only the straw to blow the ping-pong ball around his team’s cone and back. The next person in line then repeats the process. The first team to race all its players wins. Remind children that at Pentecost a mighty wind from heaven filled the room.

Option 2: A Great Wind Blows

Supply List: chairs

Before Class: Place chairs in a circle (one chair less than the number of children).

Choose one child to stand in the middle of the circle, and have remaining children sit in chairs. The child in the middle says, “A great wind blows for everyone who . . .” (completing the sentence with what could describe a child; e.g., has a dog). The seated children who have a dog must stand and find a new seat. The person in the middle must also find a seat. Whoever is unable to find a seat is the new person in the middle and calls a different description. Play continues as time allows. Remind children that at Pentecost a mighty wind from heaven filled the room.

CRAFTS

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Flames of Fire Headband

Supply List: cardstock, paper, construction paper, tissue paper (red, orange, yellow), paper plates, glue, pencils, scissors, stapler

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, make copies of a large flame picture (one per child). Make copies of Acts 2:3, and cut them out (one per child). Cut 3-inch wide strips of construction paper (two per child). Cut 1-inch squares of red, orange, and yellow tissue paper. Put liquid glue on paper plates. Make a sample craft.

Place copies, paper plates, and remaining supplies on tables. Have children staple two strips of construction paper together to form a headband. Have them cut out a flame and glue it and the verse to the headband. Have children wrap a tissue paper square around the end of a pencil, dip it in glue, and stick it on the flame. Continue until the flame is completely filled in. Help children fit the headband around their heads like a crown, and staple the ends together.

Option 2: Pinwheel

Supply List: paper, scissors, ruler, pencil, markers, pin with ball top, unsharpened pencils (one per child)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut paper into 6-inch squares (one per child). Use a ruler to draw two lines that cross in the center (corner to corner). Make a $2\frac{3}{4}$ -inch cut along the diagonal line from each corner toward the center, forming four “triangular flaps.” Make a sample craft.

Give each child a prepared square. Place remaining supplies on tables. Have children color one side of their square. Next, have children loosely fold every other point down to the center of their square (no crease). Help children use a pin to poke through the tips of the folded-down points at the paper’s center and into the side of a pencil eraser. They can hold the pencil that is now attached to the pinwheel and blow on the pinwheel until it rotates freely. Remind children that at Pentecost a mighty wind from heaven filled the room.



Option 1: Pinwheel

Supply List: paper, scissors, ruler, pencil, markers, pin with ball top, unsharpened pencils (one per child)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut paper into 6-inch squares (one per child). Use a ruler to draw two lines that cross in the center (corner to corner). Make a $2\frac{3}{4}$ -inch cut along the diagonal line from each corner toward the center, forming four “triangular flaps.” Make a sample craft.

Give each child a prepared square. Place remaining supplies on tables. Have children color one side of their square. Next, have children loosely fold every other point down to the center of their square (no crease). Help children use a pin to poke through the tips of the folded-down points at the paper’s center and into the side of a pencil eraser. They can hold the pencil that is now attached to the pinwheel and blow on the pinwheel until it rotates freely. Remind children that at Pentecost a mighty wind from heaven filled the room.

Option 2: “Jesus Loves Me” in All Languages

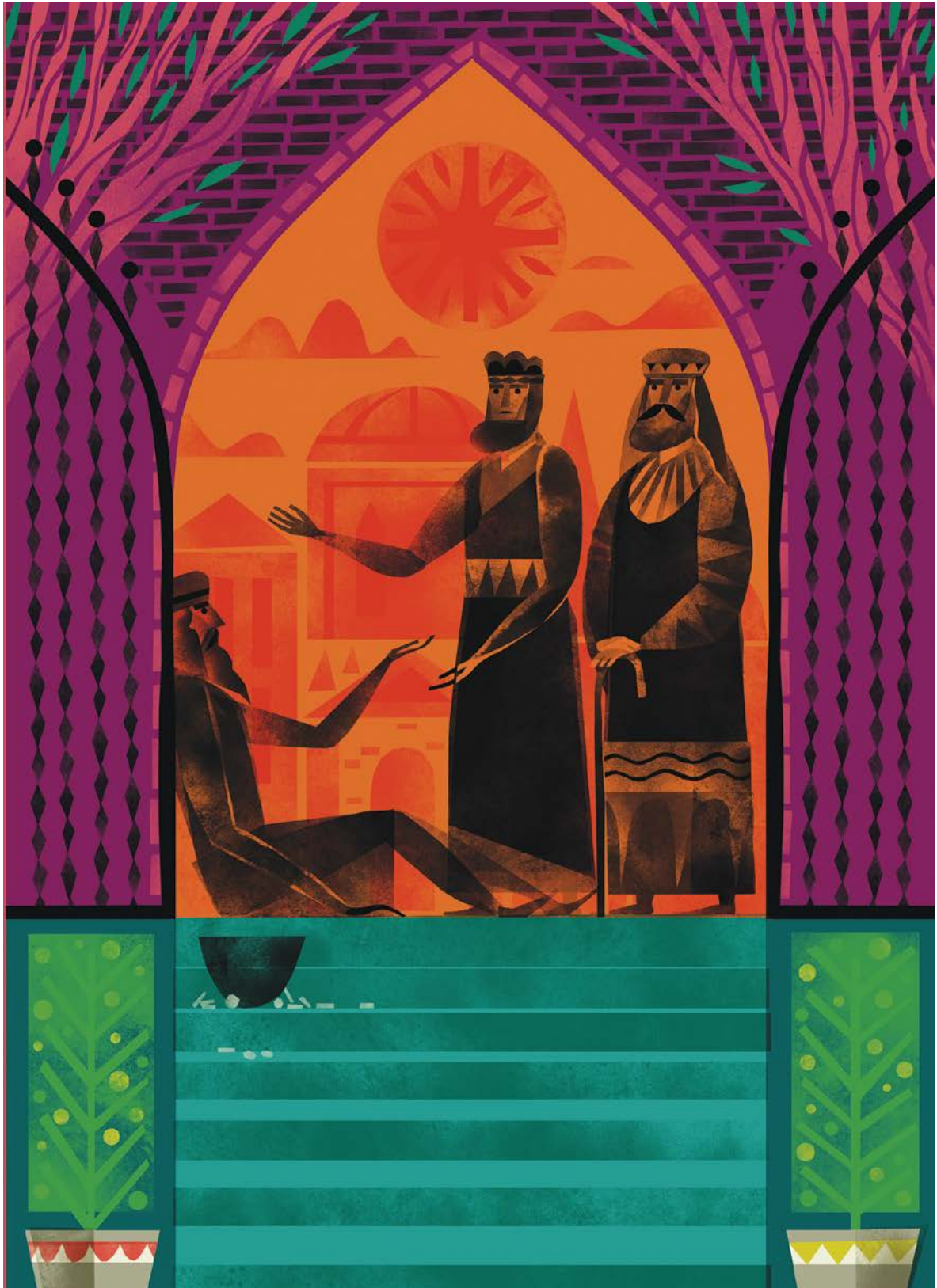
Supply List: paper, construction paper, scissors, glue sticks

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make copies of “Jesus loves me” written in different languages using different fonts. Make a sample craft.

Place copies and remaining supplies on tables. Have children cut a heart out of construction paper and glue it to the middle of another piece of construction paper. Then children can cut out the different ways to say “Jesus loves me” and glue them around the heart. Remind children that when the Spirit came on Pentecost, the people spoke in different languages.



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



STORY 86

The Beautiful and the Beggar

ACTS 3

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Acts 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}



Do you remember John the Baptist? What a great man! But even that great man had his deep doubts. When he was in prison, he asked his disciples to ask Jesus, "Are you really the Christ or should we look for another?" He asked because Jesus didn't always speak and act like John thought the Snake Crusher would. Jesus replied, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them" (Matt. 11:4–6). Jesus was indeed the promised Savior!

Shortly before Jesus died, he told his disciples something mind-blowing: “Whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father” (John 14:12). After Jesus’s resurrection, he ascended to the Father, then he sent the Holy Spirit. Once the Spirit filled God’s people with God’s power, the gospel spread around the world. And, like Jesus, they did some amazing things that showed everyone that a new time in world history had arrived. Do you want to hear an example of those greater works? Well then, 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
The powerful
name of Jesus is
able to save those
who believe.

Do you know someone who cannot walk? You might think, “Sure, my baby sister, or my great grandfather who needs a wheelchair.” You might also have seen a beggar on the streets who can’t walk because he was hurt in a war or because he was born with legs that didn’t work right. Well, one day, not so long after the Spirit descended at Pentecost, Peter and John went into the temple, and they saw a beggar being carried to the Beautiful Gate. (They didn’t have wheelchairs then!) People carried him to that gate so he could beg for money from those who were going in and out of the temple. He probably begged there day after day, year after year. He was forty years old, and his whole life he never walked even once. He probably felt his life was not so beautiful.

When Peter and John walked by, the man begged for some coins. Peter responded, “I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!” (Acts 3:6). Can you guess what happened? Immediately God gave strength to the man’s legs, and for the first



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3

time in his life he stood up. More than that, he began to walk and then leap. He was “walking and leaping and praising God” (3:8). What a beautiful sight at the Beautiful Gate! Everyone who saw this miracle was “utterly astounded” (3:11). They were totally surprised. But Peter used the opportunity to preach another Spirit-filled sermon about Jesus. He started that sermon, saying, “Why are you surprised? And why are you staring at us like we in ourselves had the power to do this? It is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who through Jesus, made this man walk. Our faith in the name of Jesus has made this man strong enough to walk and leap” (see 3:12–16). Through the Spirit’s power God used Peter and John to bring healing and salvation to this man. And through that same Spirit’s power God used Peter’s sermon to bring salvation to many who saw the miracle!

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

Peter’s sermon didn’t just explain why the man could now walk. It ended with the good news about the Snake Crusher. Peter told the people that they “delivered over the Holy and Righteous Author of Life, and asked for Barabbas the murderer instead” (see Acts 3:13–15). Peter wanted them to understand that what they did was wrong. But thankfully he didn’t stop there. He told them the good news. “God raised Jesus from the dead and glorified him,” Peter preached. “And we apostles are all witnesses! We saw these things with our own two (or, actually twenty-four!) eyes” (see 3:13, 15). He continued, telling them that Jesus suffered just like the prophets said he would and that right then was the time to *repent: turn from sin and turn to God*. That same message—of bad then good news—is for us. We didn’t have Jesus killed two thousand years ago, but we are still responsible. He had to die because we are terrible sinners. But the good news is that if we repent and believe, God will forgive our sins, give us new life, and help us to walk with Jesus.

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. **QUESTION:** What are some of the great works that Jesus did? What are some great works that Jesus’s followers did? When Jesus told the disciples that they would do even greater works than him, what do you think he meant?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus’s followers will do even greater works than him.

3

Engage

Memory Verse

The blind receive
their sight and the
lame walk, lepers
are cleansed and
the deaf hear, and
the dead are raised
up, and the poor
have good news
preached to them.

MATTHEW 11:5

2. **QUESTION:** When John the Baptist asked if Jesus was really the Messiah, how did Jesus answer? What does this teach us about what God's kingdom is like? Which of those miracles do we see in the story today?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus is revealing what his kingdom is like through his disciples' works.

3. **QUESTION:** Did Peter heal the lame man in his own name? What name did he use? And what happened? Whose name did he say people must call on to be saved?

TAKEAWAY: The name of Jesus has the power to heal and save for those who believe.

4. **QUESTION:** Now that Jesus is seated on his throne in heaven, who does he use to bring healing and salvation to all people? And who gives them the power to do it?

TAKEAWAY: With the Spirit's power, God uses his church to bring healing and salvation to all people.

ACTIVITIES

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Can't Walk Relay

Supply List: none

Divide children into teams. Name one side of the room the "Beautiful Gate," and line teams up opposite the gate. On "Go" the first child on each team must sit on her bottom and scoot to the other side of the room by pushing with her hands. Once she touches the gate, she must skip back to tag the next person on her team, who repeats the process. The first team to race all players wins. Remind children that the beggar who couldn't walk was carried to the gate for healing, but after he was healed, he leaped and praised God.



Option 2: Seek and Find

Supply List: fifty to one hundred pennies, paper plates (one per child), pen

Before Class: Gather supplies. Hide the pennies around the room.

Give each child a paper plate, and have each write his or her name on it. Have the children put their plates in the center of the room. On “Go” children search for the hidden pennies. Each time someone finds a penny, he must run back and place it on his plate before finding another one. After a couple minutes (or when all the pennies are found), the children stop and count their pennies. The child with the most pennies wins. Remind children that the beggar was seeking money, but he was given much more when Peter healed him in the name of Jesus.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Coin Toss Relay

Supply List: large number of coins, bowl, equal-sized jars, masking tape

Before Class: Gather supplies. Put a bowl of coins on one side of the room, and spread jars out on a starting line opposite the bowl. Mark a “toss line” 1 foot in front of each jar.

Divide children into three teams, and have them line up behind a jar. On “Go” the first child from each team must run down, grab a coin from the bowl, run back to his “toss line,” and try to toss the coin into his jar. If the coin does not go into the jar, leave it. After the toss, the child tags the next person, who repeats the process. After five minutes, count the number of coins in each jar. The team with the most coins wins. Remind children that the beggar was seeking money, but he was given much more when Peter healed him in the name of Jesus.

Option 2: Can’t Walk Relay

Supply List: none

Divide children into teams. Name one side of the room the “Beautiful Gate,” and line teams up opposite the gate. On “Go” the first child on each team must sit on her bottom and scoot to the other side of the room by pushing with her hands. Once she touches the gate, she must skip back to tag the next person on her team, who repeats the process. The first team to race all players wins.

Remind children that the beggar who couldn't walk was carried to the gate for healing, but after he was healed, he leaped and praised God.

CRAFTS

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Coin Rubbing

Supply List: paper, crayons, variety of coins

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make copies of a temple gate similar to the Beautiful Gate where the beggar would have met Peter, with the words of Acts 3:6 printed above it (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child a gate paper. Set remaining supplies on tables. Have children color the gate, place different coins under their paper, and rub a crayon over the paper until the coin shapes appear. Tell children that, like the beggar, our biggest need is not money but Jesus.

Option 2: Puppet

Supply List: cardstock, construction paper, scissors, crayons, glue sticks, craft sticks

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, make copies of an outline of a man's upper body and two feet (do not include legs). Cut 1" x 5" strips of construction paper (two per child). Make a sample craft.

Place copies, prepared strips, and remaining supplies on tables. Have children color and cut out the man's upper body and feet. Have children accordion-fold two strips of construction paper. Instruct them to unfold the strips and to glue one end of each strip to the man's upper body and the other end to a foot. They should glue just the man's upper body to a craft stick so his legs move and bounce. Remind children that after Peter healed the beggar in Jesus's name, he leaped and praised God.



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Option 2: Footprint Craft

Supply List: construction paper, pencils, scissors, pipe cleaners, hole punches, markers, pony beads

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make a sample craft.

Place supplies on tables. Have children trace around their shoe onto a piece of construction paper and then cut out their footprint. Instruct them to punch three holes in their footprint in a triangular shape (like a flip-flop). They can then insert and secure a pipe cleaner from the top hole to each of the other two holes, adding pony beads to the pipe cleaners to decorate. Have children write "I want to walk with Jesus everyday!" on the footprint. Remind children that walking with Jesus brings great joy.



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



STORY 88

The Couple Who Lied and Died

ACTS 5

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Acts 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.*



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}



In the garden of Eden the snake slithered up to Eve and told her that she and Adam would *not* die if they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He lied, and death came into the world. In Jerusalem King David told Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, to come home from battle so Uriah could spend time with his wife. David lied! He was trying to cover up his sin. And when Uriah refused to be with his wife (because the rest of his army was at war), David had to lie some more to try to cover up his tracks. Eventually, he got caught in one big fat lie after another. What a mess! There have been times God's people have lied to save the lives of others—like Rahab's lie to help the spies in Jericho, or

peoples' lies to protect their innocent neighbors during World War II. Usually, however, breaking the Ninth Commandment is really *wrong*, and God comes down pretty *strong* on people who lie. Today's story is about a couple who lied and died. Want to hear what happened so that we don't fall into the same error? Good. Let's listen and learn.

TELL THE STORY

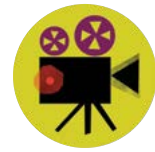
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



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
It is impossible
for God to lie,
so he wants his
followers to be
people of truth.

Do you know what is impossible for God to do? One answer in the Bible is that “it is impossible for God to lie” (Heb. 6:18). Isn’t that incredible? It means that he is all-good all the time. He cannot lie. How about you? Have you ever lied? (Now don’t lie about your answer!) Many people tell little lies, often to avoid getting punished. “No, Mom, I didn’t eat a cookie!” That’s natural—but not good. It is not God’s way for us to live. He wants us to always tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

One day in the early church—when wonderful things were happening—something terrible happened. First, let’s hear about the wonderful things. Thousands of people were coming to Christ as they heard the preaching of the apostles. Among those thousands there were many needs. So one way to provide for others was for people to share what they owned. Some opened their homes and provided shelter; others shared food and clothing; still others made bigger sacrifices. How wonderful! But that paved the way for the terrible thing. Ananias and Sapphira, a couple in the community, sold some land to give to the church. What a sacrifice! Ah, but what a scam. Here’s what they did. They decided to sell the land, keep some of the money from the sale, give some money to the church, and then lie



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Acts

5

about the fact that they kept some for themselves. They wanted to impress people with how righteous and generous they were, even if it meant lying to God.

It didn't take long for their lie to come to light. "Ananias," Peter said, "Satan has filled your heart so you would lie, not just to the church but to the Holy Spirit. You have not lied to man but to God!" (see Acts 5:3–4). When Ananias heard Peter's words, he couldn't get a word in. Why? Because "he fell down and breathed his last" breath (5:5). He died because he lied. His body was carried away, and they buried him. About three hours later the same thing happened to his wife. She lied and died too. Her body was carried away, and they buried her next to her husband. Yikes! "Yikes" is right. We are told that, after these two sudden deaths, "great fear came upon the whole church" (5:11). God doesn't strike us down every time we lie. Thank God! He is a merciful God. But he does want us to speak the truth always. And he does warn us that there are penalties if we don't. He is a God to be feared.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

God is a truth teller; Satan is the opposite. Jesus taught that Satan "does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. . . . He is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44). And the Bible says this about the people who act like the father of lies by lying all the time: they will be thrown, with Satan, "in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death" (Rev. 21:8). Those who make a practice of lying will die (like Ananias and Sapphira) and be sent to hell. Double yikes! We don't want that. So what do we do? Should we just stop lying? Definitely. But, no one (except Jesus) can live their whole life without lying. Jesus alone is the truth. In fact, he is "the way, and the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). We escape hell, the lake of fire, not by never lying but by lying down at the feet of Christ—trusting that the Snake Crusher crushed all our sins. The little lies—crushed. The big lies—crushed. Let us confess those sins to God and find forgiveness and eternal life from Jesus.

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

- 1. QUESTION:** What are some ways that people cared for each other in the early church? What were some of the rich people doing?

3

Engage

TAKEAWAY: The early church cared for each other by sharing their possessions with each other.

Memory Verse

Deliver me,
O LORD, from
lying lips, from a
deceitful tongue.

PSALM 120:2

2. **QUESTION:** What is it impossible for God to do? If God cannot lie, do you think he wants his children to lie? What should we do if we tell a lie?

TAKEAWAY: It is impossible for God to lie, and he wants his followers to be people of truth.

3. **QUESTION:** Who told the first lie in the Bible and is known as the father of lies? What did Ananias and Sapphira do with the money they got from selling their land? What immediately happened to both of them when they lied? What does the Bible warn will happen if you make a pattern of lying?

TAKEAWAY: Satan is the father of lies, and those who make a pattern of lying will be thrown with him into the lake of fire.

4. **QUESTION:** Why is it right to both fear and trust God? What does the Bible promise will happen if you confess your sins to God and turn from them?

TAKEAWAY: God can be trusted, but he is also a God to be feared.

ACTIVITIES

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Ananias and Sapphira

Supply List: thirty cups, fifteen coins

Before Class: Gather supplies. Spread cups around the room. Randomly hide coins under half the cups.

Divide children into teams. On “Go” the first child on each team runs to a cup and looks under it. If it has a coin, he brings it back to his team. If not, he returns to his team empty handed. The next person repeats the process. Play continues until all coins have been found. The team with the most coins wins. Remind children that Ananias and Sapphira displeased God when they hid money and lied about it.



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Option 2: Who's Got the Coin?

Supply List: coin

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Have children sit in a circle. Choose one child to be “It,” give her a coin, and have her stand in the middle of the circle. Seated children close their eyes and put one hand out with their palm up. “It” then touches each child’s open hand, placing the coin in only one child’s hands. When a child’s hand is touched, he or she closes it. When “It” has touched each hand, the children say, “Coin, coin, who’s got the coin?” Have children open their eyes, and ask a seated child to guess who has the coin. Continue clockwise around the circle until someone guesses correctly. (The child holding the coin does not reveal he has it when it is his turn, but he guesses someone else.) The person with the coin is “It” for the next round. Remind children that Ananias and Sapphira hid money and lied about it.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Truth or Lie

Supply List: paper

Before Class: Gather supplies. On paper, print the word Truth on one side and the word Lie on the other side (one per child).

Have children sit in a circle, and give each child a printed paper. Have kids think of a believable true or false statement they can share about themselves. Have a child share his statement. Have all children use their “Truth or Lie” papers to reveal if they think the statement is true or false. Then the child who made the statement reveals the right answer. Continue around the circle until all children have shared their statement. Remind children that Ananias and Sapphira chose to lie and suffered the consequences for their choice. Being a truth teller is important to God.

Option 2: Ananias and Sapphira

Supply List: thirty cups, fifteen coins

Before Class: Gather supplies. Spread cups around the room. Randomly hide coins under half the cups.

Divide children into teams. On “Go” the first child on each team runs to a cup and looks under it. If it has a coin, he brings it back to his team. If not, he returns to

his team empty handed. The next person repeats the process. Play continues until all coins have been found. The team with the most coins wins. Remind children that Ananias and Sapphira displeased God when they hid money and lied about it.

CRAFTS

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

K–2nd

Option 1: “God Sees” Glasses

Supply List: cardstock, markers, scissors, pipe cleaners



Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, print a variety of sunglasses patterns (just the front of the glasses). Make a sample craft.



Set copies and remaining supplies on tables. Instruct children to choose a sunglasses pattern, color the glasses, and write “God sees” on them. Then they cut out the glasses, including the inside lens area. Have children attach a pipe cleaner to each side of the glasses, twisting one end around the frame and bending the other end to fit around their ear for wearing. Remind children that God knows and sees all that we do.

Option 2: Two-Faced Mask

Supply List: cardstock, scissors, markers, feathers, sequins, jewel stickers, tape, straws

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, print a masquerade mask pattern (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Place mask copies and remaining supplies on tables. Have children cut out a mask face, including the eye holes. They should color and decorate one side of the mask in a sad way to represent sin and lying, and the other side in a happy way to represent the joy that comes with honesty. Instruct children to tape a straw to the side of the mask for holding it up. Remind children that lying grieves God but that being honest pleases him.



Option 1: God Sees

Supply List: paper, pencils, scissors, colored pencils, black construction paper, glue

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make a sample craft.

Give each child two pieces of white paper. Set remaining supplies on tables. Have children fold one piece of paper in half (“hamburger” fold). Instruct them to use a pencil to draw two large half-circle eyes about 2 inches apart in the center of the folded paper and then to cut them out. Children then fold the other piece of paper in half (“hot dog” fold). They insert this folded paper inside the one with the cut-out eyes. Have them use colored pencils to draw and color an eye-ball inside of each cut-out hole (onto the other paper). Have children cut small strips of black paper to make “eyelashes,” which they can glue to the top of the semi-circles. Demonstrate how to pull the inside paper to the left and right to move the eyes. Have children write “God sees” on the paper, and remind them that God knows and sees all that we do.

Option 2: Two-Faced Mask

Supply List: cardstock, scissors, markers, feathers, sequins, jewel stickers, tape, straws

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, print a masquerade mask pattern (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Place mask copies and remaining supplies on tables. Have children cut out a mask face, including the eye holes. They should color and decorate one side of the mask in a sad way to represent sin and lying, and the other side in a happy way to represent the joy that comes with honesty. Instruct children to tape a straw to the side of the mask for holding it up. Remind children that lying grieves God but that being honest pleases him.



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



STORY 89

Stephen's Speech

ACTS 7

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Acts 7.
- *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 day before Jesus died, he told the apostles something very important. "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you" (John 15:18). Wait a minute, shouldn't people love Christians since we seek to love everyone—even our enemies? And shouldn't they be glad when we share the good news about good Jesus? You would think so. But remember, we live in a fallen world full of fallen people. And fallen people usually reject God's ways.

Acts teaches us that Jesus's first followers were hated, just like Jesus had said. They treated his followers just like they treated him. All twelve disciples were eventually rejected, and most of them were killed too. They all suffered for Christ. But can anything stop the gospel from spreading throughout the world? No! Remember the equation for gospel growth? Power + preaching + persecution = growth. For today's lesson we meet Stephen, one of the bravest Christians. He

was a servant in the church, caring for the basic needs of others. He was also a “man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 6:5), someone who performed great wonders and preached great sermons. Do you want to hear a bit from the last sermon, the one that got him killed? Then 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
Jesus's followers
boldly proclaim
the gospel no
matter the cost.

Stephen's sermon didn't take place in a big church with a tall steeple. It took place when he was on trial after people lied about him and he was arrested. “He speaks against Moses,” one lied. “He wants to destroy the temple,” said another. As Stephen stood before the religious leaders, the high priest asked, “Are these things so?” (Acts 7:1). Stephen knew they were not so, but he chose to answer them with a sermon beginning with a history lesson. “Listen to me. Long ago, our glorious God appeared to Abraham and promised him a great family and a great land” (see 7:2–8). Then Stephen talked about how God rescued his people from slavery in Egypt and whom God used to rescue them—Moses!

He reminded them how the Lord spoke to Moses from the burning bush, “I am the god of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I have seen the sufferings of my people. I will now deliver them” (see Acts 7:32–34). Deliver them, he did! “Still, our fathers refused to obey him,” Stephen said. “And they even made a golden calf and offered a sacrifice to the idol” (see 7:39, 41). “But,” Stephen kept on preaching, “there were good times in our history—like when Joshua led our fathers into the promised land and when Solomon built the temple” (see 7:44–47). At this point, the leaders probably liked his message. But then Stephen got to his main point. A very pointed point—like the tip of an arrow: “You stiff-necked



people, you always resist the Holy Spirit. You rejected the law, persecuted the prophets, and betrayed and murdered Jesus, the Righteous One” (see 7:51–53).

How do you think the leaders responded? They were so mad that they picked up stones to kill him. As they threw the stones at Stephen, he saw the heavens open and Jesus at the right hand of God. As he died, he said these final words: “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” and “Do not hold this sin against them” (7:59, 60).

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

In his sermon, Stephen talked about how Moses was rejected, just as all the prophets God sent were rejected. Then he shared how Jesus was rejected too. The funny thing (actually the wonderful thing, which isn’t so funny) is that one of the prophets wrote about how the coming Savior (whom we know as Jesus, the Snake Crusher) would be rejected and crushed. In Isaiah 53 the prophet Isaiah wrote, “He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief” (53:3). Isaiah also went on to say that Jesus “carried our sorrows” and that he was “crushed” on the cross (53:4, 5). But the good news (and Isaiah talked about this too) was that when he was crushed on the cross, our sins were forgiven (“He bore the sin of many [people],” 53:12). Because he suffered, we have been made well (“With his wounds we are healed,” 53:5; see also 53:3–6, 12). Another way to put it is this: *Jesus’s rejection is our salvation*. What good news! Let us praise God. Let us also, like Stephen, boldly share that gospel with others—no matter if they hate us or hurt us.

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. **QUESTION:** When Stephen began preaching about Jesus, how did people respond? What did the religious leaders do?

TAKEAWAY: Some people were happy to hear the good news that believers were sharing, but some rejected it.

2. **QUESTION:** Who put Jesus on trial and had him killed? Who put Stephen on trial? Why was he put on trial?

3

Engage

TAKEAWAY: Just like religious leaders rejected and killed Jesus, his followers were often rejected and killed for preaching the gospel.

Memory Verse

Let us hold fast
the confession of
our hope without
wavering, for he
who promised
is faithful.

HEBREWS 10:23

3. QUESTION: What was Stephen's last sermon about? What in his sermon made the religious leaders angry?

TAKEAWAY: Stephen preached that God raised up deliverers for his people but also that his people rejected those leaders and God's ways.

4. QUESTION: What happened to Stephen when he said that the religious leaders betrayed and murdered Jesus, the Righteous One? What is surprising about what Stephen saw and said when he died?

TAKEAWAY: Stephen was the first person to die for preaching the gospel.

ACTIVITIES

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Find Forgiveness

Supply List: large, smooth rocks (at least three per child); permanent marker

Before Class: Gather supplies. Write *forgive* with permanent marker on some rocks and leave some blank (at least one *forgive* rock per child).

Place the rocks in a pile on one side of the room. Divide children into teams. On “Go” have the first child on each team run to the rock pile, find a *forgive* rock, and run it back to her team. The next child repeats the process. The first team to have all team members retrieve a *forgive* rock wins. Remind children that when Stephen was being stoned, he asked God to forgive those who were hurting him.

Option 2: Quiet Ball

Supply List: soft ball(s)

Before Class: Gather supplies.



Have children spread out in the room. Tell children they must be silent as they play Quiet Ball. Give one child a ball, and have him toss it to another child. If the child catches it, she throws it to someone else. If that child drops the ball, whoever is nearest the ball should pick it up and toss it to another child. If any child talks, drops the ball when it is thrown to him, or throws the ball poorly, he must step out of the game and do jumping jacks on the side of the room. (He may reenter the game after the remaining children have completed five throws). Remind children that there is a time to be quiet and a time to speak up. When we are given opportunities to tell others about Jesus, we should bravely share the good news. Optional: Add a second ball to make the game more challenging.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Stones Race

Supply List: stones (four per team)

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Divide children into teams. Give each team four stones. On “Go” have the first child on each team crawl to the other side of the room while holding all four stones. When the children get to the opposite side, they must scoot on their bottom back to their starting lines, while continuing to hold the stones. If a child drops her stone, she must start over. (If crawling, she must return to the beginning of the crawling line; if scooting, she must return to the beginning of the scooting line.) The first team to race all team members wins. Remind children that the stones remind us of the first martyr, Stephen, who was stoned for speaking about Jesus.

Option 2: Monster Ball

Supply List: masking tape, beanbags, large beach ball

Before Class: Gather supplies. Use masking tape to divide the room in half. Use the tape to make an additional line near the back of each side (an equal distance from the center line). Give each side an equal number of beanbags.

Divide children into two teams, and assign each team one side of the room. Place the “Monster Ball” (the large beach ball) on the center line. On “Go” have both teams throw beanbags at the Monster Ball, attempting to move it across the marked line in their opponent’s section. The Monster Ball can only be touched

with beanbags. The first team to successfully get the Monster Ball over their opponent's back line wins. Remind children that people threw stones at Stephen when he spoke of Jesus, but that Stephen continued to proclaim Christ even to his death.

CRAFTS

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Stone Painting

Supply List: large smooth stones (one per child), multicolored permanent markers

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make a sample craft.

Place supplies on tables. Have children write the word *Forgive* on a stone and then decorate it. Remind them that when Stephen was being stoned, he asked God to forgive those who threw the stones. We should be quick to forgive too.

Option 2: Megaphone

Supply List: cardstock, crayons, scissors, clear tape

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, print a cone-shaped megaphone pattern (one per child). Make a sample craft.



Set copies and remaining supplies on tables. Have children write “I will tell about Jesus” on a megaphone and decorate it. Instruct children to cut out the megaphone, roll it into a cone shape, and use tape to secure it in place. Remind children to speak about Jesus no matter the cost.



Option 1: Forgive Flowers

Supply List: paper, colored pencils, large buttons, green and non-green construction paper, glue, scissors

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make copies of seven flower petals (one copy per child). Make a sample craft.

Set copies and remaining supplies on tables. Have each child take a non-green piece of construction paper and a flower petal paper. Children will write one letter from the word *forgive* on each flower petal, then color and cut them out. They can then glue a button to the middle of the non-green construction paper and glue the flower petals around the button to spell *forgive*. Finally, the children can design and cut out stems and leaves using the green construction paper, gluing them to the flower. Remind children that Stephen could have hated the people who persecuted him, but instead he prayed they would be forgiven.

Option 2: Bold Bracelet

Supply List: elastic cording, pony beads, letter beads, tape

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

Place supplies on tables. Have children brainstorm a list of words that describe Stephen (bold, forgiving, etc.). Then each child takes a piece of elastic cord and tapes one end to the table in front of him or her. Instruct children to string beads onto the cord. They will use the letter beads to include a word that describes Stephen. Have children stop beading about 2 inches from the end of the cord to provide sufficient space to tie the ends together. Adjust the size to fit the child's wrist. Tell children the bracelet can encourage them to be bold for Jesus like Stephen.



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



STORY 90

Philip and the Man from Africa

ACTS 8

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Acts 8.
- *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}



Whoosh. Smash. Whoosh. Crunch. Whoosh. Crack. Stone after stone struck Stephen. He fell to the ground, and the moment before he died, he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. . . . Do not hold this sin against them" (Acts 7:59–60). The heavens opened. Stephen saw Jesus standing, looking down and ready to receive his faithful disciple.

Do you think Stephen's stoning stopped the Spirit-filled church? No way! Even though Saul (whom we'll learn about next lesson) and others were persecuting the church so much that many Christians had to flee Jerusalem for their lives, their escape was all part of God's plan. Jesus told his disciples to take the good

news to Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria. As the church fled from persecution in Jerusalem, they next went to Judea and Samaria. The first person to preach the gospel in Samaria was Philip. Like Stephen, Philip was a servant who cared for the needs of others. He was also someone who, through the Spirit's power, performed amazing miracles and preached great sermons. He preached "the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans" (8:25), and many people believed and were baptized. He also went on a special mission to take the word to one special man from Africa.

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 calls his
people to teach the
gospel to everyone
everywhere.

In the Biggest Story, God sometimes speaks directly to people or speaks to them through an angel. You might remember when God spoke to Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Samuel, Hannah, Jeremiah, Mary, or Joseph. This doesn't happen a lot, so when it does happen it is a big deal. One day God spoke to Philip: "Get up and go to the road that goes down from Jerusalem through the desert to Gaza" (see Acts 8:26). Philip obeyed. Soon after, he saw a cloud of smoke in the dry desert. It was a chariot. Philip—with super Spirit-power speed—ran to it. He heard a man reading the book of Isaiah. The man was from Ethiopia in Africa, and he served in the court of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. The Ethiopian was in Jerusalem to worship the Lord, and he was reading the Bible because he wanted to learn more about the God he worshiped. (Always a good thing to do!) Philip asked him, "Do you understand what you are reading?" The man said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" (8:30–31). Philip joined him in the chariot, and as he sat next to him, he explained how Isaiah's words about a sheep "led to the slaughter" (Isa. 53:7) point to Jesus, the Lamb of God,



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who suffered and died for our sins. He also must have taught him that those who believe in Jesus should be baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit, because just then the Ethiopian saw some water and said, “Look—water! I should be baptized.” The chariot stopped. The two men “went down into the water” and Philip “baptized him” (Acts 8:38).

When Philip preached in the city of Samaria, the Bible says that “there was much joy in that city” (8:8). Imagine how happy the Ethiopian was when he also heard and understood the good news! Indeed, the story ends by saying that the Ethiopian “went on his way rejoicing” (8:39). What a joy it is to know the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world!

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

The Ethiopian man was reading from Isaiah 53, which is the same passage from last story’s Gospel Connection. (It must be an important passage!) We learned there that Jesus’s rejection is our salvation. What good news! The Bible tells us that this good news was entrusted to people who lived many years ago in a place that’s many miles away—have you ever considered how you know about it now?

God wants everyone everywhere to know about him and what he’s done. Jesus told his disciples to take the good news “to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Way before that, God told Isaiah to tell people that anyone in the world can be saved if they “join themselves to the LORD” (Isa. 56:6). But how would the whole world learn about this? Would God speak audibly to everyone? Actually, no. God told *Isaiah* to tell the world. And God told *Philip* to tell the man from Africa. God’s calls his people to teach the Bible to others!

That you know the gospel means God is accomplishing his plan, which he always does! It also means someone answered God’s call to teach the Bible, which we don’t always do. Praise the Lord for his plan, and pray for his strength in answering the call to share the gospel with everyone everywhere.

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

- 1. QUESTION:** Do you ever find the Bible hard to understand? Who helps you understand it?

3

Engage

Memory Verse
All Scripture is
breathed out by
God and profitable
for teaching,
for reproof, for
correction, and
for training in
righteousness, that
the man of God
may be complete,
equipped for every
good work.

2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17

TAKEAWAY: God sends people to teach and preach the Bible so we can understand it.

2. **QUESTION:** What was the man reading about in Isaiah that he found confusing? How did Philip explain who the Lamb was to him?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus is the Lamb of God, who suffered for our sins on the cross.

3. **QUESTION:** What did Christians do after Stephen was stoned and people were being thrown in prison? How did God use this persecution to spread the gospel?

TAKEAWAY: When Christians had to flee persecution, God used it to spread the gospel to new places.

4. **QUESTION:** What are some examples you can think of where God used something bad to accomplish something good? In Jesus's life? In our story today? In your own life?

TAKEAWAY: God's wise plan often uses something bad to accomplish something good.

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: Using supplies listed, label the four walls in your room as north, south, east, and west.



Select one child to stand in the middle of the room with eyes closed. Give remaining children thirty seconds to choose one wall to stand by. Have the child in the middle call out one of the four walls. Any children who chose that wall are out. Play continues until one person remains. Remind children that when Philip obeyed the Lord and traveled south, he had the joy of sharing the gospel with an Ethiopian man.



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Option 2: Pass It On

Supply List: ping-pong balls (ten per team), buckets (two per team), spoons (one per child)

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Divide children into teams of eight to ten, and have them stand single file. Place a bucket filled with ten ping-pong balls at the front of each line and an empty bucket at the end of each line. Give each child a spoon. On “Go” the first person on each team uses his spoon to scoop a ball out of the bucket and pass it spoon-to-spoon to the next player in line. Have children continue passing the ball down the line. When it reaches the last child, have her drop the ball into the empty bucket. As soon as the first ball is passed to the second player, another ball can be scooped from the bucket. If a ball falls, everyone must stop passing balls until the dropped ball is back on a spoon. The first team to get all ten balls into their bucket wins. Remind children that Philip passed on the message of Jesus and we can too!

3rd–5th

Option 1: Four Corners

Supply List: paper, marker, tape

Before Class: Using supplies listed, label the four walls in your room as north, south, east, and west.

Select one child to stand in the middle of the room with eyes closed. Give remaining children thirty seconds to choose one wall to stand by. Have the child in the middle call out one of the four walls. Any children who chose that wall are out. Play continues until one person remains. Remind children that when Philip obeyed the Lord and traveled south, he had the joy of sharing the gospel with an Ethiopian man.

Option 2: Four-Corner Dodgeball

Supply List: masking tape, dodgeballs

Before Class: Gather supplies. Use tape to divide room into four equal sections.

Divide children into four teams, and have each team stand in one section. Assign each team the name of a country from different continents. Give each team an equal number of dodgeballs. On “Go” have each team throw balls at the opposing

teams. If someone is hit by a ball, he must join the team that hit him. If someone catches a ball, the person who threw it must go to the catcher's team. The team with the most players after a set time wins. Tell children we can share the gospel wherever God sends us—in every corner of the world!

CRAFTS

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

K–2nd

Option 1: God's Word Bookmark

Supply List: cardstock, cardboard, ribbon, colored pencils, markers, scissors, glue, black construction paper

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, print a bookmark shape (one per child). On cardboard, make templates of an open Bible (small enough to fit on the bookmark). Cut pieces of ribbon slightly longer than the length of the Bible. Make a sample craft.

Place prepared and remaining supplies on tables. Children first write the Big Truth on a bookmark, decorate it, and cut it out. Then they trace the Bible template on black construction paper, cut it out, and glue it to the bookmark. Lastly, they glue a ribbon down the middle of the Bible.

Option 2: Wordless Reminders

Supply List: envelopes (one per child), construction paper (black, red, white, green, yellow), colored pencils, scissors

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut each color of construction paper into 4" x 5" rectangles. Place one rectangle of each color in an envelope (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child a prepared envelope, colored pencils, and scissors. The children then draw and cut out the following shapes using the enclosed rectangles: a heart (black paper, representing our sinful hearts without Jesus), a cross (red paper, representing the blood Jesus shed in our place), another heart (white paper, representing our sin forgiven), a leaf (green paper, representing growing

in Jesus), and a crown (gold paper, representing eternal life). Encourage children to use the envelope to share the gospel with someone.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Wordless Reminders

Supply List: envelopes (one per child), construction paper (black, red, white, green, yellow), colored pencils, scissors

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut each color of construction paper into 4" x 5" rectangles. Place one rectangle of each color in an envelope (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child a prepared envelope, colored pencils, and scissors. The children then draw and cut out the following shapes using the enclosed rectangles: a heart (black paper, representing our sinful hearts without Jesus), a cross (red paper, representing the blood Jesus shed in our place), another heart (white paper, representing our sin forgiven), a leaf (green paper, representing growing in Jesus), and a crown (gold paper, representing eternal life). Encourage children to use the envelope to share the gospel with someone.

Option 2: Scroll

Supply List: cardstock, paper, tea bags (one per child), water, scissors, glue, straws (two per child)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut white cardstock into 4" x 12" strips (one per child). Make copies of Memory Verse (one per child). Make a sample craft. Soak tea bags in water.

Place paper strips, copies, soaked tea bags, and remaining supplies on tables. Children cut out the Memory Verse and glue it to the center of a paper strip. Next, they glue one straw lengthwise to each end of the strip. Instruct them to dab their tea bag on the “scroll” to make it look old. When the scroll is dry, have children gently roll both straws toward the middle. Remind children that Philip taught God’s word to the Ethiopian man.



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



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STORY 91

Saul Sees the Light

ACTS 9

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Acts 9.
- 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}



Saul was a really bad guy who thought he was really good. He thought he was good because he was stopping the church from talking about Jesus (who, Paul thought, was against the God he worshiped). So the Bible tells us that he was seeking to destroy the church by barging into houses, arresting any Christians he found, and dragging them off to prison. Worse than that, he was out to kill Christians. In fact, when Stephen was stoned, Saul was there and he approved of the whole thing. How awful! What is more awful (or just as awful) is what he wanted to do next. Because he was “still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, [he] went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way [a name for Christians], men or women, he might bring them [150 miles!] bound

to Jerusalem” (Acts 9:1–2). Here Saul is described like a raging bull—with eyes aflame and smoke coming out of his nose—ready to charge! In “raging fury,” he later confessed, he persecuted God’s people and sentenced many “to death” (26:9–11). What a merciless murderer on a merciless mission. Who will put a stop to him? And how?

TELL THE STORY

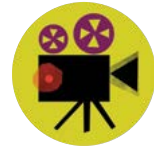
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



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
Christ Jesus
came into the
world to save
sinners.

Jesus put a stop to Saul’s merciless mission! How? By showing him mercy. As Saul was on the road to Damascus, “suddenly a light from heaven shone around him” (Acts 9:3). The light was so bright that Saul fell to the ground. And as he looked up, he “heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’” (9:4). Saul had no idea who was talking, so he asked, “Who are you?” (9:5). If the sudden bright light wasn’t surprising enough, what he heard next must have blown his sandals off. The voice said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.” Wow! Do you know what that meant? It meant that Jesus was alive! It meant that Jesus was part of his church and feels his people’s pain. It meant that Saul was dead wrong.

Before Saul could say anything, Jesus gave a command to go into the city. Now this was tricky because God’s bright light had blinded Saul. So he had to be led there. Also, as a way of saying sorry for all he had done, Saul fasted from food and drink. As Saul was waiting to hear from the Lord, God spoke to a man named Ananias (not the guy who died because he lied). He told this other Ananias where to find Saul. His job was to “lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight” (9:12). Ananias was afraid. “Lord,” he said, “he is a bad man



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who has come to persecute your people.” God assured him that Saul was now a different man. Well, he was the same man, but he now had a new heart. He also had a new mission. Instead of persecuting the church, he would preach the gospel. As Ananias touched Saul, Saul regained his sight, was filled with the Spirit, and was baptized. (Oh and he also had something to eat.) Once his strength returned, do you know what he did? He immediately preached that Jesus is the Son of God (see v. 20). Wow! If God can save Saul, he can save anyone!

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

How did Saul become a Christian? Jesus himself met him and saved him. Saul received the Holy Spirit and was baptized. He was also given the special job of preaching the gospel. He went from persecutor to preacher.

Do you think that someone as bad as Saul can become a Christian even today? Of course! God’s grace knows no limits. God can, and does, call greedy tax collectors (like Zacchaeus), the demon possessed (like the crazy man of the cemetery), and merciless murderers (like Saul). Saul also went by Paul. In Paul’s many letters, he wrote about his life before and after his Damascus road experience. Before he encountered Jesus he was “a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent” (1 Tim 1:13), someone who “persecuted the church violently and tried to destroy it” (Gal. 1:13). Jesus saved Saul to show how patient and loving a Savior he is. No one is too bad to be saved. Anyone who confesses that he is sinner (however big or small the sins), asks for forgiveness, and believes that the Snake Crusher died for him can be saved. That’s what’s so great about the gospel. Paul put it this way: “The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost” (1 Tim. 1:15).

This gospel is great news worth sharing with the whole world, no matter how far people seem from God!

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

- 1. QUESTION:** Who was Saul throwing into prison? Who did Jesus say that Saul was persecuting? How was Saul persecuting Jesus?

3

Engage

TAKEAWAY: When Christians are persecuted, Jesus is persecuted too.

Memory Verse

The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.

1 TIMOTHY 1:15

2. **QUESTION:** Why did Jesus come to Saul on the road to Damascus? What special job did God call Saul to do? What things in the story showed that this was all part of God's plan?

TAKEAWAY: Saul was chosen by God to take Jesus to Jews, Gentiles, and the kings of the earth.

3. **QUESTION:** What changed about Saul after he met Jesus?

TAKEAWAY: Saul was given a new heart to follow Jesus.

4. **QUESTION:** Is there anyone too bad to be saved?

TAKEAWAY: No one is too bad to be saved by 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: Saul, Saul

Supply List: blindfold

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Choose one child to be “Saul.” Put the blindfold on Saul, and have remaining children scatter. When Saul calls out “Saul, Saul,” have the scattered children freeze and repeatedly reply “Saul, Saul.” Saul then has 10 seconds to try to touch someone by following the voices. If Saul tags someone, that person becomes the new Saul. If no one is tagged after 10 seconds, the children can move again and the process repeats. Remind children that God called out to Saul and saved him.

Option 2: Opposite Game

Supply List: none

Have children spread out in a line facing the leader. When the leader calls out an action (“up,” “down,” “stop,” or “go”), children should do the opposite (for “up” touch the floor, for “down” reach arms up, for “stop” run in place, and for “go” freeze). If a child does not do the correct opposite action, he or she is out. Remind children that when God changed Saul’s heart, he was completely opposite from his former self.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Blindfold Walk

Supply List: blindfold, items for obstacle course (chairs, cones, etc.)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make a simple obstacle course—you may want to change it each time there is a new child.

Have each child find a partner. The children will complete the obstacle course one pair at a time. To begin, blindfold one child. Have the other child lead his blindfolded partner through the obstacle course by giving clear directions. (He may not touch his partner.) Record how long it takes each pair to complete the course. The pair with the fastest time wins. Remind children that when Saul encountered Jesus, he was temporarily blinded.

Option 2: Carry My Name

Supply List: cardstock, scissors

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut out bubble letters of the name JESUS (one set per team). Place sets of JESUS letters on one side of the room.

Divide children into teams of five, and have them line up across from a set of letters. On “Go” the first child on each team must crawl to her letters, balance one on her head, and crawl back to her team without letting it fall. (She must stop and replace the letter if it drops.) The next child in line repeats the process. When all letters have been collected, the team must put them in order and yell “Jesus!” The first team to yell “Jesus!” wins. Remind children that Jesus said Saul would carry his name to both Jews and Gentiles.



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CRAFTS

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Shine!

Supply List: construction paper, specialty paper in a variety of colors and textures, scissors, glue, markers

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make a sample craft.

Place supplies on tables. Children first choose a specialty paper to use as the center of their sun. Have them cut it into a circle and glue it to a piece of construction paper. Instruct children to make sunrays by ripping strips from a variety of specialty papers and gluing each one around their circle. Have the children write *Shine!* on the paper with markers. Remind children that when Saul was saved, he started to shine brightly for Jesus.

Option 2: From Persecutor to Preacher

Supply List: cardstock, craft sticks (one per child), scissors, crayons, glue

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, print an outline of a man's head without facial features (two per child). Make a sample craft.



Place copies and remaining supplies on tables. Have children cut out two heads. On one head, children should draw angry facial features. On the second, they can draw happy facial features. Instruct children to glue one face to each side of a craft stick. Have them write “Saul the Persecutor” on the stick showing the angry face and “Saul the Preacher” on the stick showing the happy face. Remind children that when Saul met Jesus, he was totally changed.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Night Light

Supply List: paper plates (two per child), foam cups, toothpicks, paint, paintbrushes, battery-operated tea lights



Before Class: Gather supplies. Place paint on paper plates (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child a foam cup and toothpick. Have children poke holes in the cup with the toothpick to make designs. Next, give children a paper plate with paint. Have them place their cup on the plate and paint the entire cup. When they are done painting, give them a clean paper plate with a battery-operated tea light on it. Have them set their cup upside down on top of the light. Explain that when they turn the light on in a dark room, the light will shine through the holes and create designs on the wall and ceiling. Remind children that God used a bright light to get Saul's attention before changing his life.

Option 2: Changed and Beautiful!

Supply List: spring clothespins (one per child), magnets (one per child), glue, pipe cleaners, beads, paint, paintbrushes, paper plates

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut pipe cleaners in half (one half per child). Place a small amount of paint on paper plates (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child a clothespin, a magnet, two 12-inch pipe cleaners, and one 6-inch pipe cleaner. Set paint, glue, and an assortment of beads on tables. Have children glue the magnet to the back of the clothespin and then paint the clothespin. While the paint is drying, children will string about thirty-five beads onto their 12-inch pipe cleaners (leave 1 inch of pipe cleaner unbeaded on both ends). Children first twist the ends of each pipe cleaner together to form circles and then twist each circle to make a figure eight shape, forming two sets of wings. Finally, they can open the clothespin, insert the wings, and shape to look like butterfly wings. Have them bend the 6-inch pipe cleaner in half to make butterfly antenna and glue to the top of the clothespin. Remind children that just as a caterpillar is transformed into a butterfly, Jesus transformed Saul from a sinner to a Jesus follower.



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



STORY 92

Peter Eats and a Soldier Believes

ACTS 10

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Acts 10.
- *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}



When Saul became a Christian, it was a big deal. A really big deal! It was so big that he talked about it many times in his letters to churches, and the story is retold three times in the book of Acts. But there's another story that was really important in Christian history, especially the earliest days, about another man who became a Christian. The book of Acts uses two whole chapters to tell and retell his story. In some ways it is the same story as Saul's: God's grace reached down and saved someone. But in other ways the two stories are worlds apart. Both men prayed to the God of Israel. Both men wanted to know and follow God's ways. But Saul was a Jew from the tribe of Benjamin and a very serious Pharisee.

And before Jesus saved him from his sins, he persecuted Christians and was on a terrible mission to destroy Christianity. The other man was different in a lot of ways! Do you want to learn about him and how God saved him? Listen up!

TELL THE STORY

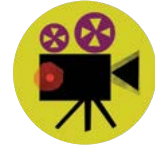
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



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
The good news
about Jesus is
for both Jews
and Gentiles.

Cornelius was a Gentile. More than that, he was a Roman. Oh, and he was also a military commander. The Jews were supposed to stay away from Gentiles—and the Romans were foreign invaders who ruled over the Jews. So was God’s gospel for someone like Cornelius? It was an important question. At first Peter thought the good news about Jesus was especially for Jews. But God did something to change Peter’s thinking.

One afternoon, Cornelius had a vision in which an angel told him that he had favor with God and that he should talk to Peter, who was with a man who lived by the sea named Simon. The very next day Peter also had a vision. His vision showed him various animals that were unclean for Jews to eat, but God told Peter three times that these animals were now clean. This means it would be okay to enter a Gentile’s house and eat with him. As you can tell, these two visions were God’s way of moving the two men to meet each other. When they finally met, Peter preached the gospel. And do you know what happened? While Peter was speaking about Jesus’s life, death, and resurrection, “the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word” (Acts 10:44). The Gentiles (Cornelius and his household) immediately repented, believed, and were baptized!

Man’s rebellion against God led to the nations being driven apart from one another (see Gen. 11:1–9). But when God sent the Snake Crusher, he brought the

nations back together. Jews and Gentiles could become a new kingdom, with the Snake Crusher as their King.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

Out of all the nations God called Israel to be his chosen people. They weren't chosen because they were the biggest group—or the richest, strongest, or best looking. God chose them to show his great mercy. And although he chose to save Israel, God's calling of Abraham showed he had a bigger plan in mind, one that was always God's plan A and that he would reveal more fully over time. He promised Abraham that *all the nations* would be blessed through him and his offspring (see Gen. 12:1–3). We see this plan unfolding throughout the Old Testament: people from other nations (Gentiles) believe the word of the Lord (e.g., Rahab, Ruth, and the Ninevites) and experience God's blessings and salvation. We see it more clearly in the New Testament: with the coming of Jesus, the promised King of the Jews, an open invitation was extended to both Jews and Gentiles to receive all God's blessings *through faith in Jesus*. Through these stories we learn that God's grace knows no limits. Even the worst of sinners, like Saul, can be saved; even Roman soldiers, like Cornelius, can be saved. The wideness of God's mercy includes all people from all nations—whoever trusts in Jesus!

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. **QUESTION:** Who was Cornelius? Why did God send visions to Cornelius and Peter? What did they see in those visions? What did God want Peter to see clearly?

TAKEAWAY: God used visions to make clear that Gentiles were now clean.

2. **QUESTION:** What happened when Peter preached about Jesus to Cornelius? What does the Holy Spirit falling on Cornelius tell us about whom the gospel is for?

TAKEAWAY: The good news about Jesus is for both Jews and Gentiles.



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Engage

Memory Verse

I am not ashamed
of the gospel, for
it is the power of
God for salvation
to everyone who
believes, to the
Jew first and also
to the Greek.

ROMANS 1:16



3. **QUESTION:** Why is it so important that Cornelius, a Gentile, could be part of God's kingdom? Why is it so important that Peter (a Jew) and Cornelius could share a meal together?

TAKEAWAY: Cornelius's story shows that Jews and Gentiles can eat as one people in God's kingdom.

ACTIVITIES

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Jew, Gentile, Jesus!

Supply List: masking tape

Before Class: Gather supplies. Using masking tape, make a line long enough for all the children to stand on it without being crowded.

Have children stand on the line. If the leader calls out “Jew,” have them jump to the right. If the leader calls out “Gentile,” have them jump to the left. If the leader calls out “Jesus,” have them jump onto the line. If a child does not jump the correct direction, he or she is out. Continue play until one child remains. Remind children that Jesus came to bring salvation to both the Jews *and* the Gentiles.

Option 2: Stuffed Animal Relay

Supply List: stuffed animals

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Divide children into teams, and have them line up. Place equal piles of stuffed animals a good distance away from each team's starting line. On “Go” have the first child on each team run to her pile, grab a stuffed animal, place it between her knees, and run back to her team. The next player repeats the process. If at any point the stuffed animal falls, the child must stop and replace it before continuing. The first team to retrieve all their stuffed animals wins. Remind children that in Peter's vision, a large sheet was coming down from heaven that contained different animals the Jewish people considered unclean.



Option 1: Jews and Gentiles

Supply List: masking tape, two plastic toy hoops, balls (in two different colors)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Using masking tape, divide the room into two sections. Place a hoop on the far end of each section and place five balls of the same color in each hoop (i.e., five red on one side, five blue on the other side).

Divide class into two teams (“Jews” and “Gentiles”), and assign teams a side. On “Go” have both teams try to steal balls one at a time from the other team. If a child retrieves a ball, he must run it back to his team’s hoop without being tagged by the opposing team. If he is tagged, the ball is returned and the child is out. The first team to steal all the opposing team’s balls and place them in their team’s hoop wins. Remind children that Jews and Gentiles were different, but that Jesus brings them together.

Option 2: Jew, Gentile, Jesus!

Supply List: masking tape

Before Class: Gather supplies. Using masking tape, make a line long enough for all the children to stand on it without being crowded.

Have children stand on the line. If the leader calls out “Jew,” have them jump to the right. If the leader calls out “Gentile,” have them jump to the left. If the leader calls out “Jesus,” have them jump onto the line. If a child does not jump the correct direction, he or she is out. Continue play until one child remains. Remind children that Jesus came to bring salvation to both the Jews *and* the Gentiles.

CRAFTS

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

Option 1: “Loved by God” Mirror

Supply List: cardstock, aluminum foil, paper plates, jewels, sequins, scissors, glue, crayons

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, print the outline of a hand mirror (one per child). Cut aluminum foil into oval shapes that will fit the mirror portion of the hand mirror. Place an assortment of jewels and sequins on paper plates. Make a sample craft.

Set hand mirror copies, aluminum foil ovals, paper plates, and remaining supplies on tables. Have children cut out a hand mirror and glue a piece of foil to the center of the face of the mirror. They can glue jewels and sequins around the outside of the foil. On the handle, children write “Loved by God.” Remind children that *all* people are loved by God!

Option 2: One in Jesus

Supply List: cardstock, colored copy paper, scissors, colored pencils, staplers

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, print the Big Truth in bubble letters (one per child). On colored copy paper, print the words Jew, Gentile, and Jesus, and cut into strips with one word per strip. Make a sample craft.

Set Big Truth copies, paper strips, and remaining supplies on tables. Instruct children to interlock and staple the strips of paper together to form a paper chain that includes the words *Jew*, *Gentile*, and *Jesus* a few times each. Children then can color the Big Truth paper and staple their chain around the perimeter of the paper. Remind children that Jesus brought salvation to all people.

3rd–5th

Option 1: “Loved by God” Mirror

Supply List: cardstock, aluminum foil, paper plates, jewels, sequins, scissors, glue, crayons

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



STORY 93

Knock Knock, Who's There?

ACTS 12

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Acts 12.
- *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}



There are lots of make-believe enemies. Lex Luthor is Superman's enemy, and the Joker is Batman's enemy. In the Biggest (and truest!) Story, God's people are always up against enemies. The first and worst is Satan, who throughout history bites at the church's heels and who sought to devour Adam and Eve whole. Then there were the Egyptians. Remember Pharoah who made the Israelites slaves and chased them down to the Red Sea? The Canaanites, Philistines, Babylonians, and Assyrians also did terrible things to God's people and tried to destroy them and their worship of the Lord. How successful were they? Not very successful! In the end the living God still lives! And the Canaanites, Philistines,

Babylonians, and Assyrians (and their false, dead gods) aren't around anymore. No one today sacrifices to Baal or bows down before King Darius.

Besides those enemies, sometimes the Israelites themselves persecuted God's people. This happened a lot in the days of the prophets. It also happened in Jesus's day: the Jews (his own people), with the help of the Romans, killed him. King Herod, who liked to call himself "the King of the Jews," also persecuted the early church, which was made up of both Jews and Gentiles. Today we'll hear how Herod persecuted God's people and what God did about 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
We pray to a
God who can
rescue his people
from evil.

Peter found himself stuck in a prison cell—with no way out. King Herod was laying his "violent hands on some who belonged to the church" (Acts 12:1). He had already killed James, John's brother. And now he had "seized" Peter and "put him in prison," enlisting "four squads of soldiers to guard him" (12:4). He made sure there would be no escape.

But King Herod didn't count on who he was up against: Peter's heavenly Father. The Bible says that "earnest prayer for [Peter] was made . . . by the church" (12:5), and God heard those prayers. Peter was asleep in prison, bound in chains between two guards. Suddenly, a light shone in the cell, his chains fell off, and an angel told Peter to get up and follow him. Peter escaped! But Peter thought it was all just a vision. It wasn't until he walked past all the guards and the iron gate out of the city opened *by itself* that he knew that God rescued him: "Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod" (12:11).

Peter went to the house where the church was praying for Peter to be freed. He knocked on the door. A girl named Rhoda saw Peter, but she didn't open the



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door. She was so excited, she forgot! She just ran to tell everyone that Peter was free. They said, “You’re crazy. It must be a dream.” Peter kept knocking until they finally saw him and let him in. They were amazed. Even though God had done exactly what they were asking him to do, they found it hard to believe. They barely believed God could answer their prayers, but that didn’t stop God from answering them.

The next day, Herod couldn’t find Peter anywhere. So he punished the prison guards by killing them. Soon after, God struck down the proud king. And so Peter lived to preach another day, because God rescued him from the wicked king. And “the word of God increased and multiplied” (12:24), which is another way to say that the church kept growing and growing.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

There are lots of rescue stories in the Bible. As we just learned, God rescued Peter from Herod’s violent hand. God also rescued King Saul and his soldiers from the giant Goliath, Daniel from the lion’s den, and Jeremiah from the well he was thrown into. Those are big rescues, and they point to the bigger rescues of God’s people in the Bible—like when God rescued the Israelites from Pharaoh and his army at the Red Sea, or when he stopped the evil Haman from wiping out all the Jews in the time of Queen Esther. The biggest rescue in the Biggest Story, however, was when the Snake Crusher crushed Satan on the cross.

God continues today to rescue his people in big and small ways, and one day soon, Jesus will come again and “rescue [us] from every evil deed and bring [us] safely into his heavenly kingdom” (2 Tim. 4:18). As we wait for Jesus to return, let’s turn away from worshiping any idols or false gods and turn to “the living and true God” (1 Thess. 1:9), the only God worthy of our worship. When we cry out to him in prayer, he rescues us from our sin.

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

- 1. QUESTION:** How did Satan try to stop Jesus from rescuing God’s people? When Jesus rose again, did Satan stop attacking God’s people? How did Satan try to stop Peter from preaching about Jesus? Who rescued Peter from prison?

3

Engage

TAKEAWAY: Satan is still seeking to attack the church, but God will rescue them.

Memory Verse

The Lord will
rescue me from
every evil deed and
bring me safely
into his heavenly
kingdom. To
him be the glory
forever and ever.

Amen.

2 TIMOTHY 4:18

2. **QUESTION:** When the church learned that Peter was in prison, what did they do? What did God do in answer to their prayers?

TAKEAWAY: God rescued Peter through the church's prayers.

3. **QUESTION:** What happened to the word of God after Peter was rescued from prison? And what happened to the church? Can God's word or the church be stopped by Satan?

TAKEAWAY: With God's Spirit at work and God's people at prayer, the word keeps going and the church keeps growing.

4. **QUESTION:** What are some other stories of rescue in the Bible? What is the biggest rescue in the Biggest Story? Who was rescued by Jesus at the cross?

TAKEAWAY: When Jesus crushed Satan on the cross, everyone who trusts in Jesus was rescued from sin and 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: Bound in Chains

Supply List: construction paper, scissors, stapler

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut 2-inch strips of construction paper (long enough to comfortably fit around a child's ankle).

Divide children into pairs. Staple paper chains together so there is one chain around each child's ankle and one chain between the pair of children. On "Go" all pairs walk together to the other side of the room and back without breaking the chains. If a pair's chain breaks, they must return to the start line and run in place until all the groups complete the race. Remind children that Peter was chained to two guards but was still freed—God can do anything!



Option 2: Paper Airplane Prayers

Supply List: paper, pencils

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Divide children into relay teams of four to five children. Assign an adult leader to each team, and give leaders a piece of paper and pencil. Have children share prayer requests while the leader writes the requests on the paper. The teams then make the prayer request paper into a paper airplane. Have teams line up single file. On “Go” the first person on each team throws his team’s airplane until it reaches the other side of the room. Then he throws the airplane back to the start, so the next person in line can repeat the process. The first team to have all team members complete the race wins. Remind children that we can bring our prayer requests to God.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Prison Ball

Supply List: soft dodgeballs, masking tape

Before Class: Gather supplies. Use masking tape to divide the room in half and to create a designated “prison” on each side.

Divide children into two teams, and assign each team to one side of the room. Place dodgeballs on the dividing line. Begin a game of dodgeball. If a child is hit waist-down by a ball, she must go to the opposing team’s prison. If a child catches a ball, the person who threw the ball must go to the opposing team’s prison. If a prisoner has a ball rolled or thrown to him, he can try to hit someone who is still in the game. If he is successful in hitting someone, he is released from prison and gets a free walk back to his team’s side. The team with the least number of children in prison after a designated time wins. Remind children that followers of Jesus (like Peter) were put in prison and persecuted for their faith in Jesus.

Option 2: Bound in Chains

Supply List: construction paper, scissors, stapler

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut 2-inch strips of construction paper (long enough to comfortably fit around a child’s ankle).

Divide children into pairs. Staple paper chains together so there is one chain around each child's ankle and one chain between the pair of children. On "Go" all pairs walk together to the other side of the room and back without breaking the chains. If a pair's chain breaks, they must return to the start line and run in place until all the groups complete the race. Remind children that Peter was chained to two guards but was still freed—God can do anything!

CRAFTS

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Pray Every Day

Supply List: cardstock, construction paper, scissors, glue sticks, crayons, stapler

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, make copies of praying hands with the Memory Verse at the top. Cut 1-inch strips of construction paper (thirty per child). Make a sample craft.

Give children a praying hand paper. Place strips and remaining supplies on tables. Children color and cut out the praying hands, and they make a chain of thirty rings using the strips of paper and glue stick. Help children staple the chain to the bottom of their praying hands. Challenge children to use the craft to remind them to pray every day for thirty days, explaining that each day they pray they should take a link off the chain.

Option 2: "Nothing Is Impossible with God" Prison

Supply List: cardstock, copy paper, colored pencils, scissors, glue, craft sticks

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut pieces of cardstock into 4½-inch squares. Print "Nothing is impossible with God" on paper and cut into strips.

Set precut squares, word strips, and remaining supplies on tables. Children first draw a picture of Peter and an angel on the cardstock. Then they glue craft sticks to make a frame around the cardstock, and they glue more sticks over the

pictures of Peter and the angel (forming a jail). Add the “Nothing is impossible with God” strip to the bottom of the picture. Remind children that we shouldn’t be surprised when God answers our prayers, because he can do anything!

3rd–5th

Option 1: Pray Every Day

Supply List: cardstock, construction paper, scissors, glue sticks, crayons, stapler

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, make copies of praying hands with the Memory Verse at the top. Cut 1-inch strips of construction paper (thirty per child). Make a sample craft.

Give children a praying hand paper. Place strips and remaining supplies on tables. Children color and cut out the praying hands, and they make a chain of thirty rings using the strips of paper and glue stick. Help children staple the chain to the bottom of their praying hands. Challenge children to use the craft to remind them to pray every day for thirty days, explaining that each day they pray they should take a link off the chain.

Option 2: Prayer Wreath

Supply List: string, paper plates, hole punch, scissors, different shades of green construction paper, glue sticks, markers

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut 6-inch pieces of string, punch a hole in the top of each plate, and tie the string through the hole. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a paper plate. Place remaining supplies on tables. Have children cut out the inside of the plate to make a wreath shape. Children then use the green construction paper to cut out enough green leaves to cover the wreath. Before gluing the leaves to the plate, the children write something they can pray for on at least five leaves. Children continue to draw and cut out flowers to add to the wreath as time allows.



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



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