

THE BIGGEST STORY CURRICULUM



October - December

Acts

Epistles

Revelation

1st - 3rd Grade: Red Check Marks

4th - 5th Grade: Green Check Marks



STORY 94

Paul, Purple Goods, and a Prison Quake

ACTS 16

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Acts 16.
- *Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is what he has done, and how they should respond to him.*
- *Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.*



THE BIG PICTURE

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



Have you ever seen a lifeguard jump into a pool to save a drowning child, or a fireman run into a burning building to save a family? Or, have you heard the story about how NASA scientists saved the Apollo 13 spaceship from total destruction? With amazing skills the scientists found a way to get the astronauts (who were 200,000 miles away from earth!) safely home.

Rescue stories are awesome! The Bible is filled with awesome rescue stories. In the last lesson we heard how God rescued Peter from Herod, just like he saved Daniel from the lions and Israel from the Egyptians. (And, of course, we reminded ourselves of the biggest rescue in the Biggest Story—when the Snake

Crusher crushed Satan on the cross.) When God rescued Peter from prison, the guards who were supposed to be guarding him ended up in big trouble. When Herod discovered Peter was missing, he had all the guards killed!

Today's lesson is about another God-powered prison break. But this time, something wonderful will happen to the jailer. Let's listen to what happens to him after a giant earthquake makes the prison doors open and the prisoner's chains break.

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}

God called Paul to preach the gospel to the people in Philippi (which sounds like “Fill up pie!” and rhymes with “Silly Tie”). There Paul preached Jesus, and by God's power Lydia came to faith: “The Lord opened her heart to pay attention” (Acts 16:14). She was so excited by the gospel that she believed, was baptized, and invited the apostles to her house.

But God didn't just rescue wealthy women. While they were in Philippi, a slave girl with demonic powers (who knew things others didn't) was also rescued. After days of following Paul and crying out, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation” (16:17), Paul cast out her demon: “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her” (16:18). The demon immediately left her, which was great for her, but bad for her owners. She no longer made them lots of money with her demonic powers. “No demon, no money, no good,” her slave masters thought. They were so mad that they had Paul and Silas captured, stripped, beaten, and thrown into prison. The jailer was ordered to make sure they wouldn't escape, so he put them in the

Big Truth
If we believe in
Jesus, we will
be saved!



Story

94

Acts

16

middle cell and chained their feet between heavy blocks of wood. They were cold (without clothing), injured (from the beatings), and likely scared (it was dark). So what did they do? Lose hope? No! They prayed and sang psalms. Wow! (This is something *you* can do if you're ever feeling alone or scared.) Then around midnight, as their prayers and songs filled the prison, "suddenly there was a great earthquake," and "the foundations of the prison were shaken" (16:26). As the floor started to crack, the cell doors opened and the chains snapped. All the prisoners were freed! Double wow!

When the jailer saw this, he drew his sword. He was going to kill himself because he figured the warden would kill him when the prisoners escaped. Paul cried out just in time, "No, don't! We're all here." The jailer rushed to see. Sure enough, Paul and the others were there. The man trembled with fear (because he now knew how powerful Paul's God was). He fell before Paul and asked, "What must I do to be saved?" (16:30). Paul said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your whole family" (see 16:31). Sure enough, he and his family believed and were baptized. Triple wow! Everyone rejoiced in God's remarkable rescue.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

In God's kingdom to come everything will be perfect and no one will need to be rescued. But right now, there is a lot we need to be rescued from. The slave girl needed to be rescued from a demon, Paul needed to be rescued from prison, and the jailer needed to be rescued from sin and death. Only God can bring true rescue to you through Jesus. You might face evil forces, unfair punishment, or the pain that sin and death bring while you live now. But one day, if you believe in the Lord Jesus, you will be saved from all these things and live forever in God's perfect kingdom. Although not everyone will be rescued from prison, God's rescue of the jailer and his family, Lydia and her family, and the slave girl can happen to anyone anywhere. With the Spirit's power the chains of sin can always be broken, bodies and souls saved, and lives rescued forever. How? Just like he did for Lydia, God opens hearts to listen to the gospel preached. When we hear and believe, we find rescue! This rescue is greater than being saved from drowning, a burning building, or an explosion in outer space. This rescue is forever. Praise God!

3

Engage

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. **QUESTION:** What did Paul do when he went to Philippi? Who were some of the people he met there? Did things always go well for him when he preached about Jesus?

TAKEAWAY: Paul preached the gospel to people everywhere he went, even when he suffered.

2. **QUESTION:** When Lydia heard and believed the gospel, what happened next? When the jailer heard and believed the gospel, what happened next? Who else was baptized?

TAKEAWAY: When people heard the good news about Jesus, they wanted to be baptized.

3. **QUESTION:** What were some things that people were rescued from in today's story? How? Who rescued them?

TAKEAWAY: Belief in Jesus rescued people from demons, prison, sin, and death.

4. **QUESTION:** Who opens hearts to believe in Jesus?

TAKEAWAY: God opens hearts to believe the good news about Jesus.

ACTIVITIES

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Time to Praise

Supply List: shaker, music

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Have children sit in a circle. When the music plays, the children pass the shaker around the circle. When the music stops, the child holding the shaker says

Memory Verse

Believe in the
Lord Jesus, and
you will be saved.

ACTS 16:31



something God has done for her or something she is thankful for. Continue playing until most children have had a chance to praise God. Remind children that the Bible tells us to sing and tell of God's great deeds at all times.

Option 2: Jailbreak Tag

Supply List: plastic toy hoops (one per every four to six kids)

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Set hoops on one side of the room to represent jail cells. Divide children into two teams—the “prisoners” and the “guards.” The prisoners stand in the hoop jails, and the guards stand in the middle of the room. When you shout “Jailbreak,” the prisoners try to run to the opposite side of the room without being tagged by a guard. If someone is tagged, he must return to jail and does not run again. If a child is not tagged, she lines up on the wall to run again. If the guards succeed in capturing all prisoners in three attempts, they win. If there is even one prisoner left after three attempts, the prisoners win. Play another round, but have teams switch roles. Remind children that God was with Paul and Silas when they were put in prison for their faith.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Earthquake!

Supply List: none

Line children up on one side of the room. Choose someone to be “It” and have him or her stand on the opposite end of the room and call out “Red Light,” “Green Light,” or “Earthquake!” If “Green Light” is called, the children must bear crawl forward. If “Red Light” is called, they must freeze. If “Earthquake!” is called, they must shake and fall to the ground. If a child does not follow the given command immediately, he or she must return to the starting line. The first child to reach the opposite side of the room wins. Remind children that God has the power to do anything—even send an earthquake!

Option 2: Don't Steal the Joy!

Supply List: masking tape, two plastic toy hoops, two shakers

Before Class: Gather supplies. Use masking tape to divide the room in half. Place a hoop toward the back of each half and put a shaker inside the hoop.

Divide children into two teams, and assign each team one side of the room. On “Go” teams try to steal the opposing team’s shaker. Children are “safe” on their team’s side, but they can be tagged if they enter the opposing team’s side. If tagged, they must immediately return to their side. If a child has the shaker when tagged, he must first return it to the other team’s hoop. The first team to get the opposing team’s shaker into their hoop wins.

CRAFTS

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Prison Bar Sewing Card

Supply List: cardstock, scissors, hole punch, gray yarn, crayons

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, print a 4" x 6" picture of Paul and Silas praising God in jail (one per child). Punch five holes across the top of the picture and five holes along the bottom (top and bottom holes should line up vertically). Cut 24-inch lengths of gray yarn (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Set picture cards, yarn, and crayons on tables. Have children color the picture. Then the children tie a piece of yarn to the hole at the top left of their pictures. Instruct them to thread the yarn from the top to the bottom holes to make it look like the bars of a jail cell. Remind children that Paul and Silas rejoiced even though they were in prison—nothing stopped them from praising God.

Option 2: Cuffed for Jesus

Supply List: hole punch, empty toilet paper or paper towel rolls, string, scissors, markers, foam decorations, glue

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut paper rolls into 3-inch-long “handcuffs,” and punch one hole in each cuff (two per child). Cut 12-inch lengths of string (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Set 3-inch paper rolls, string, and remaining supplies on tables. Children cut paper rolls open by making one vertical cut, and they can use the provided





supplies to decorate their cuffs. They then tie a string through the hole in each cuff to attach the two “handcuffs.” Remind children that Paul and Silas praised God, even when imprisoned.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Microphone

Supply List: empty paper roll (toilet paper/paper towel/wrapping paper), paper, aluminum foil, jewels, stickers, crayons, glue, hot glue gun

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut aluminum foil into large pieces. On paper, print the words “Sing for Joy to the Lord.” Make a sample craft.

Set jewels, stickers, crayons, glue, and foil pieces on tables. Give each child a paper tube. Have children crumple up pieces of foil to form a ball larger than the paper tube opening. Have them glue the “Sing for Joy to the Lord” paper to the tube and then decorate. Have a leader use a hot glue gun to attach the foil ball to the top of the decorated tube, forming a microphone.

Option 2: Cuffed for Jesus

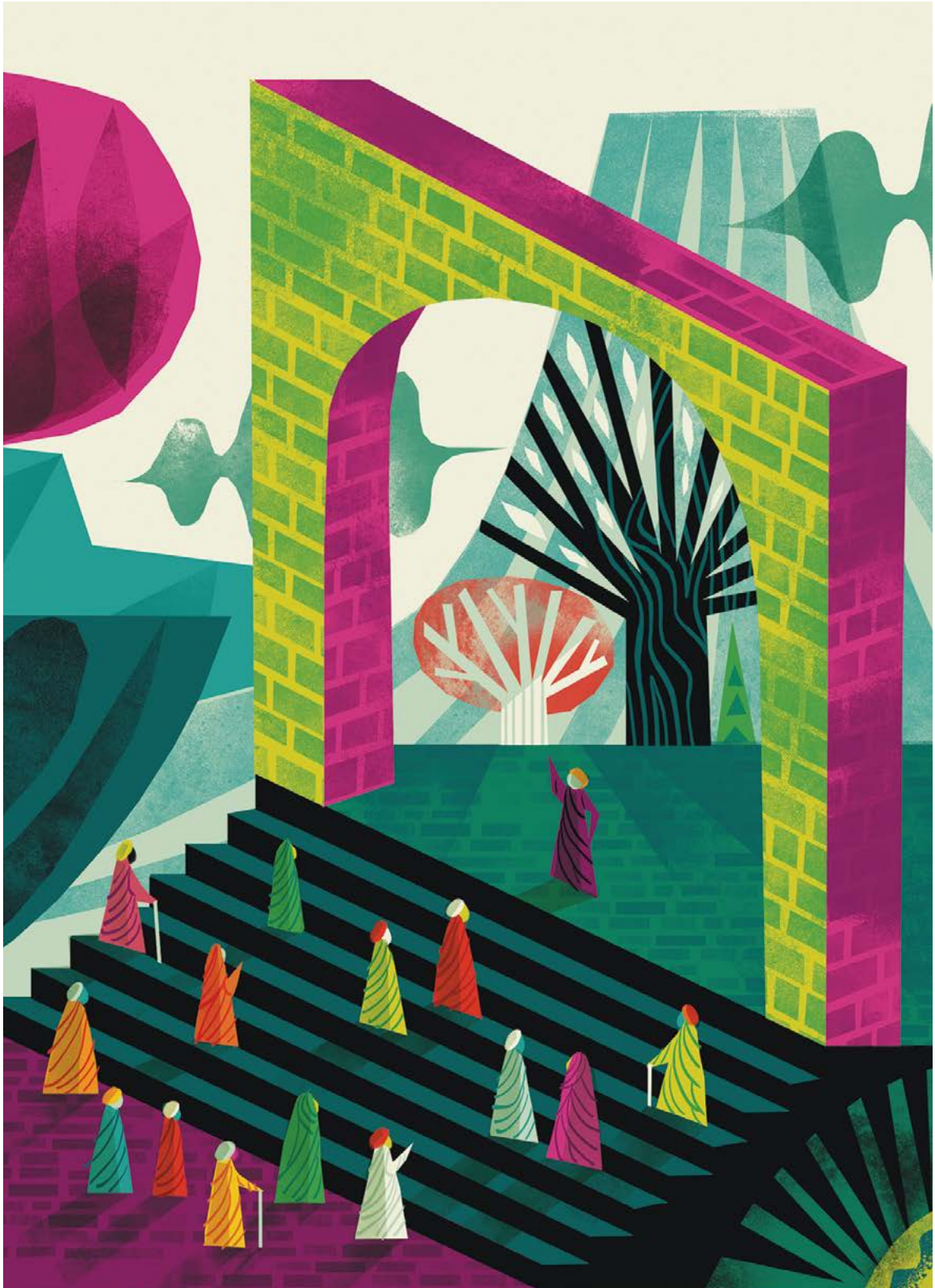
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Set 3-inch paper rolls, string, and remaining supplies on tables. Children cut paper rolls open by making one vertical cut, and they can use the provided supplies to decorate their cuffs. They then tie a string through the hole in each cuff to attach the two “handcuffs.” Remind children that Paul and Silas praised God, even when imprisoned.



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



STORY 95

The God Who Can Be Known

ACTS 17

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Acts 17.
- *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}



Remember how Jesus saved Saul? Remember the light? The voice? The blindness? The sight? The command to preach the good news to both Jews and Gentiles? That day on the road to Damascus, Paul's life was forever changed. And from that day forward he preached the gospel of Jesus Christ every day to everyone who would listen. He preached in cities and towns. He preached in synagogues, places where Jews gathered. He preached in the marketplaces, places lots of people came to buy and sell. "Jesus is the promised Messiah," he preached. "Jesus can save you from sin," he preached. "Jesus died and rose again!" he preached. "Jesus is Lord, Savior, and Judge," he preached. Over and over, place by place, person to

person, he preached the gospel. And some people, like Lydia, listened and were saved. Other people, like many in the synagogues, rejected his message. And a few people, like the bad bosses of the demon-possessed slave girl, injured and tried to kill him. In today's lesson, Paul is on the run because a group of people are after him. He fled both Thessalonica and Berea (two towns in Greece), and he ended up in the city of Athens. Let's see what he sees and says there.

TELL THE STORY

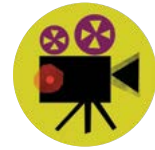
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



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
Because the
one true God
can be known,
we should make
him known.

Athens was the capital city of Greece. The Greeks were an important group of people with famous philosophers like Plato. (And no, he wasn't the first man to play with playdough.) They had famous military leaders too, like Alexander the Great. But as great as the Greeks were, they were also not so great because they worshiped false gods and made idols.

When Paul "saw that the city was full of idols" (Acts 17:16), he decided to get to work! He preached the gospel everywhere to all who would listen. Some of the philosophers in town listened. They heard that "he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection" (17:18), but they didn't understand what he was talking about. "You bring some strange things to our ears" (17:20), they said. So they invited him to speak at their outdoor theater. (The Greeks loved to hear new ideas, and Paul sure had some to share!)

Paul stood up and spoke. He spoke about seeing their idols. He spoke about how they had an altar "to the unknown god" (12:23). Then he spoke about the true and living God. "Let me tell you about the God who made the world and everything in it. He is the Lord of heaven and earth. He doesn't live in temples



we make. He doesn't need anything from us. He made all the nations. He rules times and places. And he wants everyone to seek him and find him. He is near us now! So turn from worshiping your idols and turn to our Creator" (see 17:24–30). He didn't stop there. Next he talked about Jesus—who rose from the dead and will come again to judge. Good news, right? But instead of rejoicing that he rose from the dead, some people laughed at this. They didn't believe anyone who died could rise again. But just like God opened Lydia's heart, God opened hearts that day. Some of the listeners *believed*. Now that shouldn't sound *unbelievable* to us, because we know God's mercy is deep and wide. And powerful! Paul did his part: he made the gospel known to anyone and everyone who would listen. Not all responded in faith—our hearts are hard and stubborn. But some responded in faith—our God is loving and merciful.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

The Snake Crusher's death and resurrection stand at the center of the Biggest Story. We know that because all four Gospels end by talking about Jesus's death and resurrection. In the book of Acts, Paul focuses on Jesus's death and resurrection too—every time he preaches. These truths about Jesus stand at the center, because they are the heart of the gospel—good news for all people. And any time that gospel is preached and believed, lives are changed. Paul had this happen in his own life, he saw it happen to others when he preached, and he wrote about it in his many letters. Christians turned “from idols to serve the living and true God” (1 Thess. 1:9). If you believe the gospel, you will see Jesus change your life too.

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. **QUESTION:** What bothered Paul when he came to Athens? Instead of a different god for everything they needed, who did Paul tell them was the one true God that made everything and ruled over everything? What are some false gods that we worship instead of the one true God?

TAKEAWAY: Without knowledge of the true God, people will worship false gods.

3

Engage

Memory Verse
The God who
made the world
and everything
in it . . . does not
live in temples
made by man.

ACTS 17:24

2. **QUESTION:** Why did the Athenians have an altar to an unknown God? What are some things that Paul shared about God? What's wrong with worshipping lots of different gods?

TAKEAWAY: There is only one true God, and he can be known.

3. **QUESTION:** What does repentance mean? What did the people of Athens need to repent of when they heard about Jesus? Who does God command to repent? Who is coming again to judge the earth?

TAKEAWAY: Because Jesus will come again to judge everyone on earth, God commands all people everywhere to repent.

4. **QUESTION:** Did everyone who heard Paul preach believe the good news about Jesus? Will everyone whom we tell about Jesus believe the good news? Should we still tell people about Jesus?

TAKEAWAY: Like Paul, we should tell people about Jesus even though we can't control how they respond.

ACTIVITIES

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Knock Down

Supply List: plastic cups, permanent marker, balls (one per team)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Write Idol on each cup (ten cups per team). Set cups right side up in a bowling pin formation about 15 feet from a starting line.

Divide children into teams of two to three. Give each team a ball. On “Go” have one person from each team roll the ball down and try to knock over his team’s cups (like bowling). He then carefully retrieves the ball and hands it to the next player on his team. Play continues until all “idols” are knocked down. The first team to knock down their idols wins. To make the game more challenging, add another cup to each team that says “God” and challenge children to knock down the idol cups without knocking down the God cup. Remind children that when



Paul went to Athens (a city full of idols), he shared how people could know the one true God.

Option 2: Hippy-Hop

Supply List: masking tape, music

Before Class: Gather supplies. Use masking tape to mark a long line.

Have children stand on the line. Explain that one side represents worshipping God and the other side represents worshipping idols. When the music starts, have children hop back and forth over the line. When the music stops, they must freeze. Any child on the idol side is out. Play continues until there is only one child left.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Blind Bowling Relay

Supply List: plastic cups, blindfolds (one per team), balls (one per team)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Place ten plastic cups right side up in a bowling pin formation about 15 feet from a starting line (one set per team).

Divide children into teams of four to five. Give each team a ball and a blindfold. On “Go” the first person on each team puts on the blindfold and rolls the ball toward the cups. She then takes off the blindfold, retrieves the ball, and tags the next person in line, who repeats the process. The first team to knock down all ten cups wins. Reset the cups and start again as time allows. Remind children that even though the people were spiritually blind, some believed when Paul spoke the truth to them about Jesus.

Option 2: Pac-Man

Supply List: masking tape

Before Class: Use masking tape to make lines on the floor.

Choose one child to be “Pac-Man,” and this child will run on the lines clapping his hands together in front of him like a giant Pac-Man mouth, trying to tag the other players. The other children must also stay on the lines while trying to avoid being tagged by Pac-Man. If tagged, they become a Pac-Man and try to tag others. The last child not tagged is the winner and is the Pac-Man for the

next round. Remind children that, like Paul, we should open our mouths and share the good news about Jesus with others.

CRAFTS

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Open-Up Mouth

Supply List: construction paper (pink and red), glue, scissors, colored pencils, mini marshmallows

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make a sample craft.

Place supplies on tables. Children fold a piece of pink construction paper in half and cut out a half circle, starting and ending along the folded edge. Instruct children to write “Tell others about Jesus” on the folded paper. Then they open the pink paper “mouth” and create “teeth” by gluing mini marshmallows around the circular cut. Have children cut a tongue shape from red construction paper and glue it to the center of the mouth. Remind children that God softens people’s hearts, but we have the privilege of opening our mouths and sharing Jesus with others.

Option 2: Cup Telephone

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

Before Class: Gather supplies. Print copies of the words “I can tell others about Jesus’s love” and “People need Jesus.” Cut 18-inch lengths of string. Use a pen to poke the ends of a piece of string through the bottom of two cups, and attach paper clips with a large knot to the ends of the string to hold them in place (one cup telephone set per child). Make a sample craft.

Distribute copies and a cup telephone to each child. Have them cut out the printed words and then glue “I can tell others about Jesus’s love” to one cup and “People need Jesus” to the other cup. They can decorate their telephones with markers and stickers as desired. Demonstrate how to pull the string tight

and talk/listen to someone on the other end. Remind children that God can use them to share Jesus's love with a hurting, lost world.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Good News Cross

Supply List: cardstock, string, scissors, hole punches, markers, glue sticks

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, print a large cross template. Cut 6-inch lengths of string (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Place copies, string, and remaining supplies on tables. First, children cut out a cross template. Instruct children to punch a hole in the top of the cross and add the string for hanging. Have children write “Share the good news about Jesus” on the cross. Remind children that they can tell the good news of Jesus like Paul did.

Option 2: Cup Telephone

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

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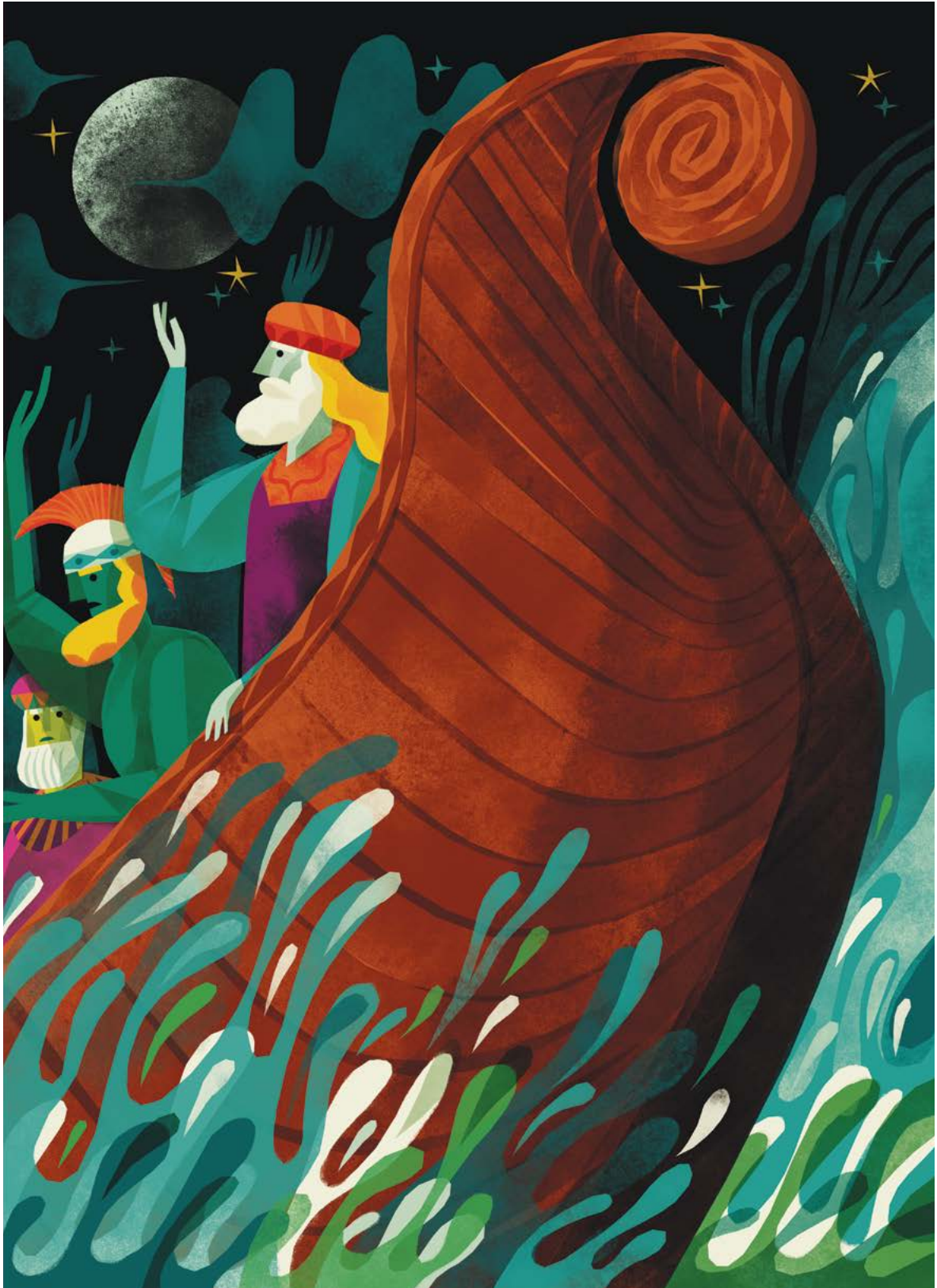
Story

95

Acts

17





STORY 96

Ships and Snakes and Sermons, Oh My!

ACTS 27–28

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Acts 27–28.
- 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.



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}



Who is the most powerful ruler in the world right now? In the Bible we've seen many powerful kings. In fact, a long, long time ago in a place far, far away, God gave a vision to Nebuchadnezzar, the powerful king of the Babylonian Empire.

It was a vision of a statue—the statue's head was made of *gold*, the chest and arms *silver*, the belly and thighs *bronze*, and the legs *iron* (mixed with clay). Daniel, the prophet, was given wisdom to interpret the dream. He explained the gold was Nebuchadnezzar and the other metals were powerful kings and kingdoms that would rule after him. Daniel then explained that the God of heaven would set up a kingdom, which would never be destroyed and would end all these kingdoms (Dan. 2:44).

What does this old, strange dream have to do with Paul and Acts? A lot! The Roman Empire was in power in Paul's day. Roman soldiers killed Jesus. But he rose again. And the gospel of the kingdom, which Jesus preached, was now being preached throughout the Empire. That powerful Empire was eventually destroyed (just like all the kingdoms in Nebuchadnezzar's dream), but God's kingdom is forever. As Acts ends, Paul is on his way to Rome. He'll have quite the adventure to get there and quite the ministry once he arrives. Want to learn what happened to him?

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
of God's forever
kingdom will
spread across
the world.

At the beginning of Acts Jesus's disciples asked him about the kingdom, "Lord, will you now restore the kingdom of Israel?" (see Acts 1:6). Jesus gave an interesting answer. He talked about the Holy Spirit coming upon his disciples and how they would then take the message of the kingdom of God to *Israel* and to *the world* (see 1:8).

Acts tells us how the gospel went to Jerusalem. (Remember how the Spirit came, Peter preached, and many believed?) Acts tells us how the gospel went to Samaria (Acts 8) and how it went to the Gentiles. (Remember Peter's and Cornelius's visions?) By the end of Acts the Gospel reached the capital of the Roman Empire! But how it got there is a story for the ages.

Paul had been put in prison for preaching the gospel. It looked as though the gospel would not make it any further. But Paul (and, more importantly, God) had other plans. God put Paul on a prison ship to Rome. Paul knew that the trip was destined for danger, so he tried to warn the captain—no luck. They pressed



Story

96

Acts

27–28

on. Sure enough, just like Paul said, a storm arose. The expert sailors of this Roman prison ship tried every trick in the book to survive—they had tied the ship together and thrown excess weight overboard—but the storm kept pounding them. They were sure they’d all die. But Paul comforted them. God had plans, and none of them were going to die. God was going to get him to Rome one way or the other. Sure enough, the ship ran aground and all on board made it safely to a nearby island.

Somehow Paul had managed to escape death. But then, when he was on the island gathering wood for a fire, a venomous snake bit him! The people of the island concluded that Paul must have done something very wrong—the gods weren’t allowing him to escape death. But God had plans for Paul, and the snakebite didn’t kill him. The islanders changed their minds about him and thought, “Is Paul a god himself?” No, but the power of God was with him. And so, just like Jesus had said at the outset of Acts, God brought Paul to the capital of the known world to proclaim the gospel. This is how the book of Acts ends: “[Paul] lived there two whole years . . . and welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance” (28:30–31).

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

Paul’s journey on the ship is a great picture of what it can be like to follow Jesus. Sometimes we face great storms, scared of what’s ahead. Even after Jesus brings us through the storm, we often face new challenges—like Paul being bit by the snake! When we follow Jesus, we will still face hard things. But because of Jesus we have hope of something better to come! Just like Paul, we too will make it to our promised destination—not Rome, but Home. The home Jesus has gone to prepare for us in heaven. Paul’s wild journey can remind us that no matter what hardships we face, God will be with us and bring us safely to our forever home. Just as Paul had been promised that he would stand before kings, we have been promised we will stand face to face with *the* King of the forever kingdom, our Savior Jesus Christ. Jesus rules the kingdom that is winning now (even when it doesn’t look like it) and will win in the end—the kingdom of God. So don’t despair over evil rulers (like the Roman Emperor) who rule and hurt their people and other people. Their rule won’t last long. Jesus is alive, and his kingdom will last forever and ever. Keep following the King!

3

Engage

Memory Verse

I can do all things
through him who
strengthens me.

PHILIPPIANS 4:13

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. **QUESTION:** How many kings or rulers do you think exist today? While some are good and some are bad, will any of them last forever? Did the powerful Roman Empire last forever? Will the kingdom of God ever be destroyed like human kingdoms?

TAKEAWAY: The kingdom of God will never be destroyed.

2. **QUESTION:** What are some ways people have tried to stop Paul from preaching about Jesus? What things happened in our story that could have stopped Paul from preaching about Jesus? Could anything stop Paul from preaching?

TAKEAWAY: Nothing stopped Paul from preaching about Jesus.

3. **QUESTION:** Where did Jesus say his disciples would take the gospel message? What was the biggest city in Paul's day? Did the gospel message make it there? How do we know the gospel will spread to all nations?

TAKEAWAY: The gospel will spread to all nations because Jesus promised it would.

4. **QUESTION:** How is the Christian life like Paul's final journey on the ship? How can we be encouraged when we face storms in our life? Who will bring us safely home to heaven?

TAKEAWAY: God will bring his people safely home to heaven.

ACTIVITIES

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Shipwreck

Supply List: none

Have children line up on one side of the room. Choose one person to be “It,” and have him or her stand in the middle of the room. When “It” yells “Shipwreck,” the



children must run to the other side of the room, while “It” tries to tag as many people as possible. Anyone who is tagged joins “It” as a tagger. Continue play until one child remains. That child wins and becomes “It” for the next round.

Option 2: Snakebite!

Supply List: plastic snake

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Have children sit in a circle. Choose one child to be “Paul,” and have him walk around the circle while carrying a plastic snake. Paul drops the snake into a child’s lap. That child must quickly stand up and chase Paul around the circle. Paul tries to run around the circle and sit back in the empty spot before being tagged. If the chaser tags Paul before he sits down (giving a “snakebite”), Paul must sit in the middle of the circle for one round while he waits to heal from the snakebite. The chaser becomes the new Paul. Continue play as time allows.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Swim to Safety

Supply List: plastic toy hoops

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Place six to eight hoops on the floor to represent islands (these are “safe zones”). Choose one child to be the “shark.” Remaining children are shipwrecked swimmers. When the music plays, children must pretend to swim around the room. When the music stops, children must run to an island before being tagged by the shark. If a child is tagged, she is out. Each time the music stops, a leader removes one island. Play continues until one child remains, who wins the round.

Option 2: Snakebite!

Supply List: plastic snake

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Have children sit in a circle. Choose one child to be “Paul,” and have him walk around the circle while carrying a plastic snake. Paul drops the snake into a child’s lap. That child must quickly stand up and chase Paul around the circle. Paul tries to run around the circle and sit back in the empty spot before being

tagged. If the chaser tags Paul before he sits down (giving a “snakebite”), Paul must sit in the middle of the circle for one round while he waits to heal from the snakebite. The chaser becomes the new Paul. Continue play as time allows.

CRAFTS

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Snake Craft

Supply List: toilet paper tubes, scissors, hole punch, string, red yarn, paintbrushes, washable paint, cups of water, googly eyes (two per child), glue

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut toilet paper tubes into four rings (one set of four per child). Hole punch two holes across from each other on each end of each tube. Cut string into 4-inch pieces (six per child) and red yarn into 2-inch pieces (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Place tube pieces, string, yarn, and remaining supplies on tables. Children take four tube pieces and paint each one a different color or design. When the pieces are dry, children then thread string from a hole in one roll to a hole in another roll and tie a knot to secure. They continue this process until all four pieces are connected, with two pieces of string between each tube. Have them glue two googly eyes to the top of the front tube and glue a piece of red yard to the bottom of the inside of the front tube, sticking out like a tongue. Remind children that even though Paul was bitten by a snake, he didn’t die. God protected him.

Option 2: Paper Plate Boat Craft

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

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut paper plates in half (one half per child). On cardstock, make copies of a boat template (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Place supplies on tables. First, children color wave shapes along the straight edge of their plate. Then children color and cut out a boat template, attaching the boat to the waves with a brass fastener so it can rock on the waves. Remind children that God protected Paul in the storm and that he protects us too!





Option 1: Snake Craft

Supply List: toilet paper tubes, scissors, hole punch, string, red yarn, paintbrushes, washable paint, cups of water, googly eyes (two per child), glue

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut toilet paper tubes into four rings (one set of four per child). Hole punch two holes across from each other on each end of each tube. Cut string into 4-inch pieces (six per child) and red yarn into 2-inch pieces (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Place tube pieces, string, yarn, and remaining supplies on tables. Children take four tube pieces and paint each one a different color or design. When the pieces are dry, children then thread string from a hole in one roll to a hole in another roll and tie a knot to secure. They continue this process until all four pieces are connected, with two pieces of string between each tube. Have them glue two googly eyes to the top of the front tube and glue a piece of red yarn to the bottom of the inside of the front tube, sticking out like a tongue. Remind children that even though Paul was bitten by a snake, he didn't die. God protected him.

Option 2: Have Faith!

Supply List: paper, construction paper (shades of blue), scissors, glue sticks, colored pencils

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make copies of a boat template (one per child). Make copies of Acts 27:25 (one per child): "So take heart, men, for I have faith in God." Cut different shades of blue construction paper into ½" x 5" strips. Make a sample craft.

Give children a boat paper, verse paper, and full-sized piece of construction paper. Set remaining supplies on tables. Have children color and cut out the boat and Bible verse. Children then glue the boat to the center of their construction paper and glue the verse above it. Instruct children to make "waves" beneath the boat by gluing the end of a blue strip to the paper, then rolling the strip around a pencil to make it curl up. They continue to add and curl strips until there are waves all around the boat.



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



STORY 97

No Nothing

ROMANS 8

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Romans 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.

1

Read

THE BIG PICTURE

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

2

Teach

The New Testament is made up of lots of different kinds of books. There are the four Gospels that tell us about the life of Jesus—who he was, what he taught, and what he did. There is the book of Acts that shares about the early church and how the gospel started to spread throughout the world. If the Gospels are about what Jesus “began to do and teach” (Acts 1:1), then the Acts of the Apostles is about what Jesus continued to do and teach through his apostles and his church. Besides the Gospels and Acts, most of the New Testament is letters—short letters, long letters, letters from Peter, John, James, and Paul. (Mostly Paul.) There are twenty-one letters in the Bible, and thirteen of them are written by Paul. Many of Paul's letters were written while he was in prison for sharing the gospel. All twenty-one letters were inspired by the Holy Spirit to help Christians

understand what Jesus has done and how to live in response. And these letters are every bit as much about Jesus as the sermons and miracles in the Gospels and Acts. Perhaps the most famous letter is the letter Paul wrote to the Romans. And perhaps the most famous chapter in his letter was chapter 8. What could make it so famous? Let's listen and find out.

TELL THE STORY

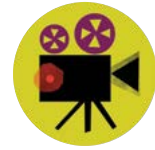
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the
Bible passage
together



Read from
The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook



Play *The*
Biggest Story
video

TEACH THE STORY

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

Big Truth
In Jesus, God
loves us always
and forever.

Paul's famous letter to the Romans was sixteen chapters, and the famous chapter sits right in the middle of them. It is famous because it provides great comfort for Christians who are going through really hard times. Have you experienced sad and confusing things? Have you been mistreated by your friends or a family member? Have you lost a loved one? Then you should read the letter to the Romans.

In the first seven chapters of the letter Paul explains how we are saved. We are all sinners. Jesus died for sinners. Those who believe in Jesus are made right with God. And Jesus gives the Spirit to those who believe to help us follow God's ways. Now when we get to the famous chapter 8, Paul talks about how we are kept safe in Jesus.

First, he gives us this marvelous promise: "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). "No condemnation" means "no judgment." God will not judge us as sinners, because Jesus took on the punishment we deserve. No condemnation! What a promise! Second, Paul explains that this world is a little bit like a woman giving birth. There's a lot of groaning and pain, but something good is coming later. Our present suffering



Story

97

Romans

8

paves the way for a far better future glory. Lastly, Paul ends with some of the most beautiful words in the Bible, sharing about God's always-and-forever love for us in Jesus: "If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?" (8:31–32). So, can troubles on this earth separate us from the love of God in Christ? No! Persecution or pain? No! Dangers or distresses? No! Demons or death? No! Nothing can "separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (8:39). Whatever hard thing you are experiencing, know it cannot separate you from God's love for you in Jesus. And if the all-powerful God loves us, we can trust that everything that happens to us—even the bad, sad stuff—our always-good-God has planned to work for our good. What great comfort!

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

Do you remember last week we talked about Paul's scary ship journey and how sometimes the Christian life can be like that? Full of storms and danger. We need God to keep us safe from all the dangers that exist in our fallen world. And we need regular reminders that he can and he will! The letter to the Romans is Paul's way of reminding us that God will keep us safe if we trust in Jesus. Think of it like this—Jesus is like the boat that carries us all the way to our home in heaven. If we leave Jesus, we leave our place of safety. As long as we keep following Jesus, there is nothing that can separate us from God. Not death, not bad dreams, not bad people, not cancer, not car accidents, not things in the sky or things in the sea—nothing. We know through Jesus that the snake has been crushed, that our sins have been paid for, and that death has been defeated. We have nothing to fear! We are safe. Safe in Jesus. If that isn't good news, then nothing is!

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

- 1. QUESTION:** What kinds of books are in the New Testament? Who wrote some of the letters? Why did they write these letters for churches?

TAKEAWAY: The New Testament is full of letters for the church about following Jesus.

3

Engage

Memory Verse
For I am sure that
neither death nor
life, . . . nor height
nor depth, nor
anything else in
all creation, will
be able to separate
us from the love
of God in Christ
Jesus our Lord.

ROMANS 8:38–39

2. **QUESTION:** What's the most famous letter in the New Testament? Do you remember what the first seven chapters teach us about? And what does the most famous chapter say about how we are kept safe in Jesus?

TAKEAWAY: The letter to the Romans teaches us how we are saved in Jesus and how we are kept safe in Jesus.

3. **QUESTION:** What are some things that can separate you from someone's love? Is there anything that can separate us from God's love if we follow Jesus?

TAKEAWAY: Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Jesus.

4. **QUESTION:** If we are all sinners and deserve God's punishment, what is our only hope of rescue? Why doesn't God judge us and punish those who trust in Jesus? Is there anything or anyone that can condemn you if you trust in Jesus?

TAKEAWAY: God will not judge us as sinners, because Jesus died for our sins.

ACTIVITIES

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Cupside Down

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

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

Divide children into two teams, and assign one team to be the “cup up” team and the other team to be the “cup down” team. Explain that for 3 minutes each team will work to run around the room and place the cups up or down depending on their team's objective. After 3 minutes, players freeze while a leader counts how many cups are facing each direction. Teams get one point for every cup that faces their direction. After three rounds of play, the team with the most points is the winner. Remind children that even when it seems like everything is against us, God is for us.



Option 2: Lean on Me

Supply List: two chairs or cones

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Divide children into two teams, and have them line up opposite the chairs/cones. Within each team, children pair up and sit back-to-back in line. The first pair on each team must lock arms and stand up together without using their hands to push them up. Once standing and with their arms hooked, they must walk to the other end of the room, around the chair/cone, and back to their starting line. The next pair on their team repeats the process. The first team to have all pairs complete the relay wins. Remind children that things might separate us from people, but nothing can separate us from God's love.

3rd–5th

Option 1: High/Low Relay

Supply List: two equal-sized balls

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Divide children into two teams, and have each team stand single file. The goal of the game is to be the first team to get to a finish line on the opposite side of the room. Give the first person in each line a ball. On "Go" have the first person pass the ball over his head to the person behind him. The second person passes it through her legs. The children alternate passing methods with each person. Once the last person gets the ball, he runs to the front of the line to move the team toward the finish line. Teams continue this passing process until a team reaches the finish line, winning the game. Remind children that we can trust God in the highs and lows of life.

Option 2: Lean on Me

Supply List: two chairs or cones

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Divide children into two teams, and have them line up opposite the chairs/cones. Within each team, children pair up and sit back-to-back in line. The first pair on each team must lock arms and stand up together without using their hands to push them up. Once standing and with their arms hooked, they must

walk to the other end of the room, around the chair/cone, and back to their starting line. The next pair on their team repeats the process. The first team to have all pairs complete the relay wins. Remind children that things might separate us from people, but nothing can separate us from God's love.

CRAFTS

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Recycled

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

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make copies of a recycling symbol measuring less than 4" x 6" (one per child). Cut cardstock into 4" x 6" pieces. Make a sample craft.

Place copies, cardstock pieces, and remaining supplies on tables. Have children color and cut out a recycling symbol, then glue it to a piece of cardstock. In the center of the symbol children write "God doesn't waste anything." They then glue a craft stick to the bottom of the cardstock piece to make a sign. Remind children that God will use everything that happens to us for good.

Option 2: Stick with Jesus

Supply List: cardstock, scissors, markers, glue sticks, magnets

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, make copies of the name Jesus written in 4-inch-high block letters. Make a sample craft.

Place copies and remaining supplies on tables. Children take a JESUS sheet, color each letter with a different pattern/color, and cut each letter out. They then glue the letters together in the right order, with each letter overlapping a bit. Have children add a magnet to the back. Remind children that it is Jesus who took the penalty for our sins and that it is his love that makes a way for us to heaven.





Option 1: Recycled

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

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make copies of a recycling symbol measuring less than 4" x 6" (one per child). Cut cardstock into 4" x 6" pieces. Make a sample craft.

Place copies, cardstock pieces, and remaining supplies on tables. Have children color and cut out a recycling symbol, then glue it to a piece of cardstock. In the center of the symbol children write "God doesn't waste anything." They then glue a craft stick to the bottom of the cardstock piece to make a sign. Remind children that God will use everything that happens to us for good.

Option 2: Sticky Craft

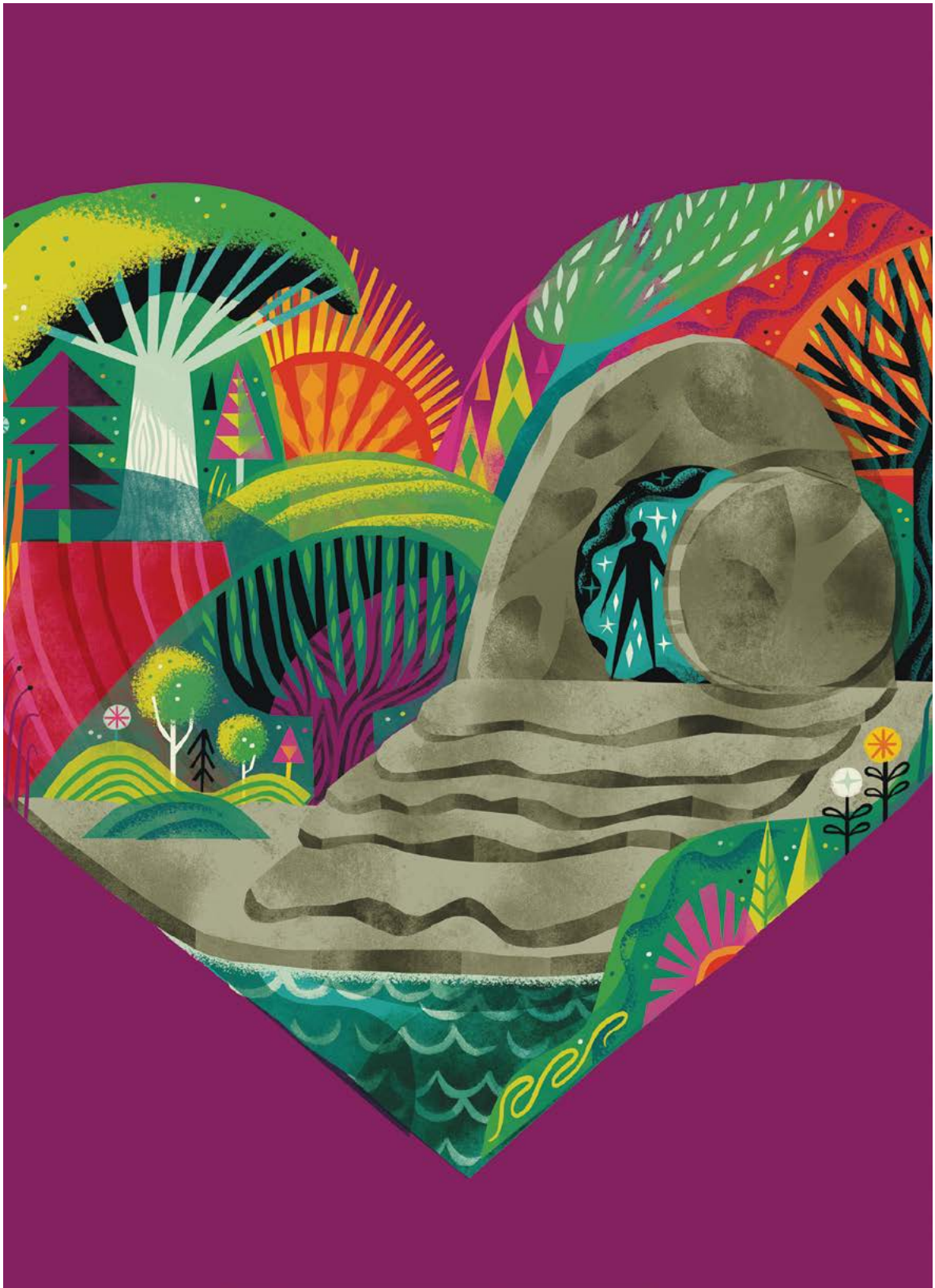
Supply List: black construction paper, clear contact paper, colored tissue paper, scissors, yarn, hole punches

Before Class: Gather supplies. Use black construction paper to make 1-inch frames, then glue the same size piece of clear contact paper to the frame (one per child). Reattach backing to the contact paper until use. Cut black construction paper into ½-inch wide strips of varying lengths. Cut colored tissue paper into small pieces. Cut yarn into 6-inch pieces for hanging. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a frame, and place remaining supplies on tables. Children peel off the contact paper backing and place the thin strips of black construction paper to the sticky side of the frame, dividing the window into smaller sections. Have them trim the strips with scissors as needed. Then they place tissue paper pieces in each section until it is completely covered, creating a stained glass window. Lastly, children punch a hole through the top and attach a string for hanging in a window. Remind children that God's love for us will stick with us no matter what.



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



STORY 98

Love Is

1 CORINTHIANS 13

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read 1 Corinthians 13.
- Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is what he has done, and how they should respond to him.
- Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.

1

Read

THE BIG PICTURE

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

2

Teach

The Bible says a lot about lots of important things—like peace, hope, faith, sin, and judgment. It also says a lot about love. Jesus said the most important commandment in the Old Testament was to “love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” (Matt. 22:37; see Deut. 6:5) and following from that to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt. 22:39; see Lev. 19:18). Seems like love is pretty important! Indeed, the Bible helps us see that love is the essential ingredient in the relationship between parents and children, between husbands and wives, between Christians, and even for Christians toward their enemies (even if enemies don’t love us back!). But this love doesn’t come from us, and so we don’t get to decide by ourselves what love ultimately is. As John wrote, “We love because [God] first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

Love is what God says it is. So what is it? God devoted a whole chapter to tell us about his love, and that's the chapter we're looking at today.

TELL THE STORY

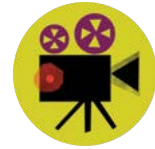
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the
Bible passage
together



Read from
The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook



Play *The*
Biggest Story
video

TEACH THE STORY

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

Big Truth
We love because
God first loved us.

If someone says, “Love is _____,” how would you fill in the blank? Love is when someone spends all their time with you. Love is when you hold hands with someone. Love is when you share your dessert with someone. Those are not terrible ways to talk about love. But love, as 1 Corinthians 13 talks about it, is so much more than that. Love can include some hard things too. Love does not mean agreeing with everyone, only doing what people want you to do, or never saying something difficult to someone.

What is love? First Corinthians 13 is a beautiful picture of love. At the beginning Paul talks about how being a person full of love is more important than anything else we could do. We can have the most amazing gifts (like faith to move mountains!) and be the most generous person (give all our money to help others), but if we don't have love, then all our gifting and giving is worthless.

In the middle of the chapter Paul talks about how love shapes our thoughts, our feelings, and our actions. For example, love makes us patient and kind with others; love keeps us from laughing when bad things happen to others or bragging to them about how amazing we are.

Then at the end of the chapter Paul says, “Now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor. 13:13). Why is love greater? Because love will last! We only need faith and hope until we get to heaven to live forever with Jesus. But in heaven, all we will need (and think, feel, and do)

is love! There God—who “is love” (1 John 4:8)—will love us and we will love him and others all the time for the rest of time. Sounds lovely.

The picture of love in 1 Corinthians 13 goes far beyond a warm feeling or romance. Love is what drives us to give ourselves for the good of others, even when it costs us. Such love must be connected to God’s love for them and the good he wants for them.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

Do you want to know something interesting? Paul’s beautiful chapter about love was actually a rebuke. A rebuke is when someone tells someone else that what they are doing is wrong, like when your mom says, “Stop hitting your brother!” A rebuke is also when you tell someone something they should be doing, like “Clean your filthy room!” Paul rebuked the Christians with this chapter because they were not loving each other. Some people were not sharing their food; others were saying terrible things about Paul; still others were celebrating when other Christians sinned. And Paul showed them, through this chapter, a better way to live—the loving way.

When we read this chapter, we probably feel the rebuke too. None of us loves perfectly. Most of us mess up a lot. So how can we love like this? First John answers this for us: “We love because [God] first loved us” (1 John 4:19). We are only able to love when we have known God’s love. The more we know God’s love, the better we’ll be able to love. John 3:16 says, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” That means the way to know God’s love is to know the gospel. Jesus died for us. The more we grasp our sin, the more we grasp what Jesus did when he died for our sins, and the more we will love like Jesus did.

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

- QUESTION:** What are some examples of God’s love in the Biggest Story? How does the whole story show us God’s love for us?

TAKEAWAY: The Biggest Story is a love story.



Story
98

Romans
13

3

Engage

2. **QUESTION:** What's the problem with the person who is really popular, really sure of God's promises, or really smart but who has no love for his neighbor? How does love change the way you think about others? How does it change the way you act toward others?

TAKEAWAY: Love is more important than anything else because it shapes our thoughts, feelings, and actions.

Memory Verse

So now faith,
hope, and love
abide, these three;
but the greatest of
these is love.

1 CORINTHIANS 13:13

3. **QUESTION:** Do you naturally think more about yourself or others? How do we learn to love others? How does God's love change us and make us people who love others?

TAKEAWAY: We love because God first loved us.

4. **QUESTION:** What does it mean to have faith in God's promises? What does it mean to hope that God will keep his promises? Why won't faith and hope be necessary once Jesus returns? Why will love still be necessary?

TAKEAWAY: Where faith and hope will pass away, love lasts forever.

ACTIVITIES

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

K–2nd

Option 1: "Love Is _____" Tag

Supply List: none

Assign one child to be "It." Begin a game of tag. If a child is being chased by "It," she can kneel and say one of the things love is according to 1 Corinthians 13 (e.g., love is patient, love is kind, love does not envy). If the child completes the phrase before being tagged, she is safe. If tagged before completing the phrase, she becomes "It." Continue play as time allows.

Option 2: 1 Corinthians 13:12 Relay

Supply List: obstacles (cones, chairs, etc.), paper hearts, masking tape, hand mirrors (one per team)



Before Class: Gather supplies. Place obstacles around the room. Tape paper hearts on the wall opposite a starting line (eight per team).

Divide children into teams of four. Give the first person on each team a hand mirror. On “Go” the first person must walk backward to the other side of the room and remove a paper heart from the wall, using the mirror to guide him. If he touches an obstacle, he must return to the start line and begin again. The first team to get eight hearts back to the start wins. Remind children that 1 Corinthians 13:12 says, “For now we see in a mirror dimly; but then face to face.”

3rd–5th

Option 1: Faith, Hope, and Love Relay

Supply List: index cards

Before Class: Gather supplies. Write the letters from faith, hope, and love on index cards (one letter per card, one set per team). Place sets of cards on the opposite side of the room with the letters scrambled.

Divide children into teams of five to six. On “Go!” the first child on each team must bear walk to the opposite side of the room, take one letter from her team’s cards, and run back to tag the next person in line, who repeats the process. Once a team has retrieved all their letters, they must unscramble the letters to make three words. If they are struggling, provide the hint of 1 Corinthians 13:13 “So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”

Option 2: 1 Corinthians 13:12 Relay

Supply List: obstacles (cones, chairs, etc.), paper hearts, masking tape, hand mirrors (one per team)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Place obstacles around the room. Tape paper hearts on the wall opposite a starting line (eight per team).

Divide children into teams of four. Give the first person on each team a hand mirror. On “Go” the first person must walk backward to the other side of the room and remove a paper heart from the wall, using the mirror to guide him. If he touches an obstacle, he must return to the start line and begin again. The first team to get eight hearts back to the start wins. Remind children that 1 Corinthians 13:12 says, “For now we see in a mirror dimly; but then face to face.”

CRAFTS

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Yarn-Wrapped Hearts

Supply List: paper, cardboard, scissors, yarn, masking tape

Before Class: Gather supplies. Use a heart template to trace hearts onto cardboard. Cut out cardboard hearts (one per child). Cut 2- to 3-foot lengths of yarn. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a cardboard heart. Set yarn pieces and remaining supplies on tables. Children tape a piece of yarn to their cardboard heart, then wrap the yarn in different directions around the heart, tying on additional pieces of yarn as needed. Children continue wrapping until the entire heart is covered. Help children loop the end of the yarn through another piece of yarn and knot it to secure, trimming any excess yarn. Remind children that we love because God first loved us.

Option 2: “Love Is _____” Mobile

Supply List: hangers (one per child), paper, scissors, cardstock, yarn, tape, markers, beads (optional)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make copies of the words “Love is” and cut into strips (one per child). On cardstock, make copies of heart shapes in various sizes. Cut yarn into various lengths, ranging from 6 to 12 inches. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a hanger and “Love is” strip. Place paper hearts, yarn pieces, and remaining supplies on tables. Have children tape the “Love is” strip to the hanger. Help them reference 1 Corinthians 13 to write at least five different descriptions of love onto the paper hearts (one word/phrase per heart). Children will tape a piece of yarn to the back of each heart, then tie each heart to the hanger at varying lengths (taping each piece in place if needed). Optional: Have children add a few beads to each piece of yarn before tying it to the hanger.



Option 1: “Love Is _____” Wheel

Supply List: paper, scissors, markers, brass fasteners

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut out 8-inch diameter circles (two per child). Divide half the circles into six equal sections. In the other half, cut out a section one-sixth the size of the circle (without cutting through the center). Make a sample craft.

Give each child one of each of the circles. Set markers and brass fasteners on tables. On the circle with the cut-out section, children write “Love is.” On the divided circle, have them write words from 1 Corinthians 13 that describe what love is. Have them fasten the two circles together in the center with a brass fastener.

Option 2: “Love Is _____” Mobile

Supply List: hangers (one per child), paper, scissors, cardstock, yarn, tape, markers, beads (optional)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make copies of the words “Love is” and cut into strips (one per child). On cardstock, make copies of heart shapes in various sizes. Cut yarn into various lengths, ranging from 6 to 12 inches. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a hanger and “Love is” strip. Place paper hearts, yarn pieces, and remaining supplies on tables. Have children tape the “Love is” strip to the hanger. Help them reference 1 Corinthians 13 to write at least five different descriptions of love onto the paper hearts (one word/phrase per heart). Children will tape a piece of yarn to the back of each heart, then tie each heart to the hanger at varying lengths (taping each piece in place if needed). Optional: Have children add a few beads to each piece of yarn before tying it to the hanger.



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



STORY 99

More Than a Slave

PHILEMON

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Philemon.
- 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

Our last two lessons taught us a lot about love. Do you remember what we learned? First, we learned that nothing can “separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:39). Not troubles on this earth, not persecution or pain, not dangers or demons or death—nothing! God loves us always and forever in Christ, who died for us and brought us into relationship with God. Then we learned what love is like. We listened as Paul described that “love is patient and kind,” “love bears all things,” and “love never ends” (1 Cor. 13:4, 7, 8). And we learned in both lessons that “if God so loved us [in Jesus!], we also ought to love one another” (1 John 4:11). Today we’re going to see how seriously Paul took these commands to love God and one another. And we’re going to hear how Paul called his dear friend (whom he loved!) to show God’s love to a

runaway slave with a memorable name. We're going to learn that love is always more than a feeling—it requires action. Let's listen!

TELL THE STORY

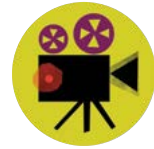
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



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
God's love
frees us to
love others.

Paul wrote his letter to Philemon while he was in prison. Did Paul do something bad to wind up in prison? No! He was “a prisoner *for* Christ Jesus” (Philem. 1); that is, he was in a Roman prison because he was preaching the good news about Jesus. That was not right for the Romans to do. It was also not right to have slaves, and lots of Romans had slaves. Some slaves were just like workers today who worked all day for a big company. It was long and hard work for little pay, but they could go home at the end of the day, and they could try to work for someone else if they were not happy. But other slaves were owned by masters, and only their masters could set them free. And some of those slaves were treated badly. Really badly.

We don't know how Onesimus was treated. What we do know is that he was a runaway slave and that *Philemon* was his master. We also know that both Philemon and Onesimus had become Christians (God is so gracious!). Paul told Onesimus to do the right thing and return to Philemon, which must have been difficult to do! But Paul told Philemon to do the right thing and free Onesimus! Paul told him it was the right thing to do, because they were both now Christians. The master and his slave were now *brothers* in Christ—together freed by Christ, equal in God's eyes, and fellow members of the church. Part of God's forever family! “Have him back forever, no longer as a bondservant,” Paul said, “but . . . as a beloved brother . . . in the Lord” (Philem. 15, 16). He told Philemon



Story
99

Philemon

to receive Onesimus with open arms. Paul was sure that Philemon would do just that—welcome, forgive, and free his runaway slave. He believed that just as Philemon had been forgiven by Jesus and loved by God so also Philemon would forgive and love Onesimus. Because the love of God changes us. It is always more than a feeling—this kind of love leads to action. We are freed to freely love like God.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

What does *free* mean? Sometimes it means there's no cost for something—like a free lollipop. It can also mean we aren't forced to do something—free to do what we want. These are true but not the full picture. The Bible tells us that we have freedom in Christ! Does that mean that we don't have to listen to our parents? No. Does it mean we don't have to work for a boss? No. Does it mean Christians who are slaves today (as many are around the world) will always be set free? No. Does it mean Christians who are in prison, like Paul was, will always be released? No. What then does it mean? It means that, through Jesus's death, we have been "set free from sin" (Rom. 6:7). We don't have to sin! We are free to live for God. As Jesus taught, "If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:36). More than that (although that is quite a lot!) we are to use this freedom to "serve one another" (Gal. 5:13). Peter puts it this way: "Live as people who are free. Live as servants [slaves!] of God! Love your brothers and sisters in Christ" (see 1 Pet. 2:16–17). If we believe in Jesus, we have been set free! Free to love God. Free to serve God. Free to love others. Free to treat every brother and sister in Christ as equals.

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

- 1. QUESTION:** What does it mean to be a slave to something? What does it mean when the Bible says we are slaves to sin? How are we freed from the invisible chains of sin?

TAKEAWAY: Through Jesus the chains of sin are broken.

3

Engage

2. **QUESTION:** Why did God set us free from slavery to sin? How does God want us to treat others? How does God's forgiveness of our sins help us to forgive others?

TAKEAWAY: God's love frees us to love others.

3. **QUESTION:** When Onesimus ran away, who was his master? How did Paul want Philemon to treat Onesimus—as a slave or a brother? How can Philemon and Onesimus be brothers?

TAKEAWAY: All Christians are brothers and sisters in God's family.

Memory Verse

Beloved, if God
so loved us, we
also ought to love
one another.

1 JOHN 4:11

ACTIVITIES

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Paul Ball

Supply List: soccer-sized rubber ball

Before Class: Gather supplies.

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

Option 2: Broken Hearts

Supply List: cardstock, scissors

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut out heart shapes from cardstock, and cut each heart in half using a different zigzag pattern (one half per child).



Hide the broken heart halves around the room. On “Go” have children hunt for a heart half. When a child finds one, she must then find the person who has the piece that completes her heart. The first pair to find their match wins (but allow time for all children to find their match). Remind children that, like Onesimus, we sometimes hurt others, but we need to be quick to make it right.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Forgiveness Dodgeball

Supply List: dodgeballs

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Divide children into two teams. Explain that they will be playing a game of dodgeball, but that they cannot catch or block the balls. If a child gets hit, he or she must go to a predetermined “jail” area. At any time the leader can yell out “Forgiveness!” Those who are in jail must individually ask the leader, “Can I be forgiven?” The leader grants forgiveness to each one, which allows the children to reenter the game. Remind children that we can’t dodge the sins we’ve done. We need to be quick to ask Jesus for forgiveness.

Option 2: Free the Prisoners

Supply List: plastic toy hoops, cones, balls

Before Class: Gather supplies. Set six hoops around the perimeter of the room. Use four cones to mark a center area for throwers, and place four balls inside this marked area.

Divide children into two teams. Identify one team as prisoners, and have them stand in the hoop “prisons.” Choose two children from this team to be throwers. They must stand and stay in the marked area. The prisoners can be freed from prison if they catch a ball from a thrower (prisoners may run from hoop to hoop but must be inside a hoop when they catch a ball to be freed). The children on the other team are defenders. They are trying to prevent prisoners from catching balls. When a prisoner catches a ball, he is free and becomes a thrower. Throwers continue to throw balls to prisoners until all have been freed. Have teams switch roles. Remind children that Paul and Onesimus met while in prison and became friends and brothers in Christ.

CRAFTS

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Reconciliation Craft

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

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make copies of the outline of a man (three per child). Cut construction paper into 1" x 12" strips (two per child). Make a sample craft.

Place copies, strips, and remaining supplies on tables. Have children cut out three men, color them, and write the names Paul, Onesimus, and Philemon on them (one name per man). Have them accordion-fold two strips, gluing one strip to join Onesimus and Paul and one strip to join Paul and Philemon (with Paul in the middle). Remind children that Paul helped to bridge the gap in Onesimus and Philemon's relationship.

Option 2: "Free in Christ" Firework Painting

Supply List: cardstock, paper towel tubes, scissors, washable paint, paper plates

**We will use
watercolor
for this**



Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, make copies of the words "Free in Christ." Cut paper towel tubes into 5-inch lengths. Make a fringe by cutting 2-inch slits all the way around one end of each tube. Put different colored paint on paper plates. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a "Free in Christ" paper. Demonstrate how to dab the fringed edge of a tube into the paint and then gently press and twist the tube onto the paper to make a "firework." Have children make fireworks on their papers, overlapping fireworks using different colors. Explain that while we associate the Fourth of July with fireworks and freedom, perfect freedom is only found in knowing Jesus.



Option 1: Pom-Pom Shooter

Supply List: 12-inch balloons, paper cups, scissors, permanent markers, stickers, washi tape, duct tape, large pom-poms, bucket/bowl

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut the tops off of uninflated balloons and knot the ends where you blow into. Make a sample craft.

Place supplies on tables. Have children cut the bottom out of a paper cup and decorate the cup with the provided supplies. Children then stretch the cut end of a balloon over the open bottom of their decorated cup. Help them secure the balloon in place using duct tape. Show children how to shoot a pom-pom by placing one in the cup, pulling back on the knot of the balloon, and releasing the balloon. Have children take a pom-pom and practice shooting it into a bucket/bowl on the floor. Remind children that Paul sent Onesimus back to Philemon to make things right.

Option 2: “Free in Christ” Firework Painting

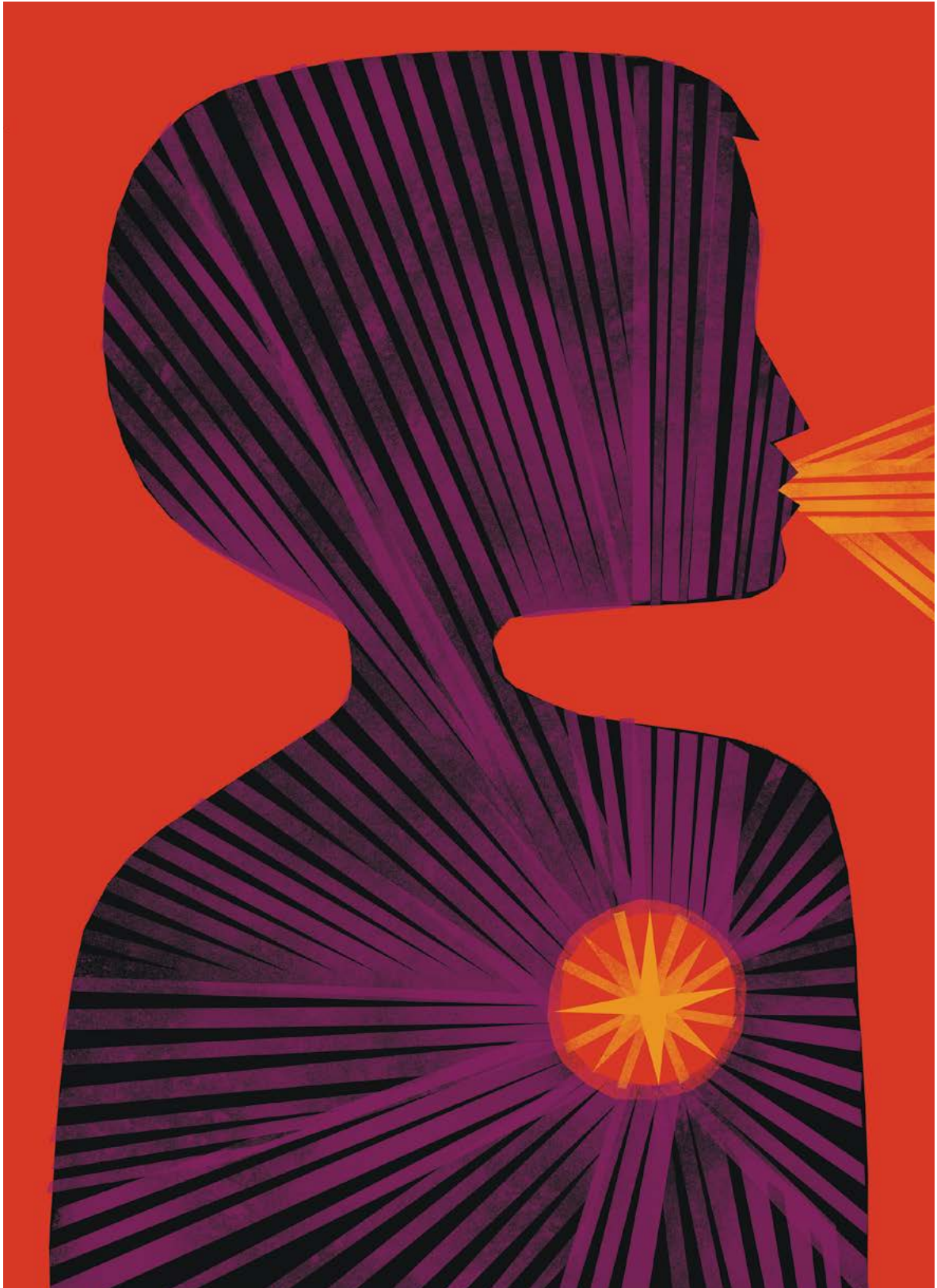
Supply List: cardstock, paper towel tubes, scissors, washable paint, paper plates

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, make copies of the words “Free in Christ.” Cut paper towel tubes into 5-inch lengths. Make a fringe by cutting 2-inch slits all the way around one end of each tube. Put different colored paint on paper plates. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a “Free in Christ” paper. Demonstrate how to dab the fringed edge of a tube into the paint and then gently press and twist the tube onto the paper to make a “firework.” Have children make fireworks on their papers, overlapping fireworks using different colors. Explain that while we associate the Fourth of July with fireworks and freedom, perfect freedom is only found in knowing Jesus.



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



STORY 100

Taming the Tongue

JAMES 3

BEFORE THE LESSON

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

1

Read

THE BIG PICTURE

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

2

Teach

The Biggest Story is full of wisdom. There are thousands of words of wisdom between Genesis and Revelation! Remember King Solomon? He was known for his wisdom. God gave him “wisdom and understanding beyond measure” (1 Kings 4:29) and made him wiser than “all the people of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt” (4:30). And he used his wisdom to speak three thousand proverbs and write over one thousand songs. Proverbs 3:5 (“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding”) is one of his most famous proverbs. In the New Testament the book of James is known as a book of wisdom. It is filled with wise proverbs, such as “Be doers of the word, and not hearers only” and “Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you” (James 1:22; 4:8). And James teaches us that wisdom from God is “first pure,

then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits” (3:17). God’s wisdom leads to peace with people! But we’re not naturally people of peace. And James tells us the best clue of this is our terrible tongues.

TELL THE STORY

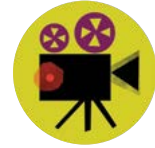
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



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

No one can tame
the tongue—only
Jesus can do that.

What’s something really small that has a lot of power? Perhaps a little plastic block when you step on it unexpectedly. Maybe the bit that goes in a horse’s mouth, which allows you to direct such a big and strong animal. Or maybe even a small rudder that sets the course for a huge boat. The Bible says there’s also something else that’s small but has great power: the tongue.

Everyone has a tongue. So everyone has something very powerful. And you’d think people, being the kind and decent folk we are, would use this powerful little instrument for great good. But we don’t. Sure, we say “Please” and “Thank you.” We can offer a word of encouragement or a compliment. We can even go to church and sing praises to God. But our tongues also wound and hurt. We talk back to those God has placed over us. We use our tongues to get our own way, to manipulate. When we’re angry, we say hurtful and unloving words that demean others who are created in God’s image. We gossip about people, repeating hurtful stories just because we like to be in the know. We lie, cuss, tell inappropriate jokes, and brag. James 3 says the tongue is “setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell” (3:6).

You might expect the Bible to tell us we need to tame these filthy tongues of ours; keep them under control. But that’s not what it says. Instead, it says



Story

100

James

3

“every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue” (3:7–8).

Our tongues might be the clearest evidence we need a Savior. Thank God we have such a Savior. And here’s the good news: when we trust the Savior, his Spirit comes into us and starts producing better fruit (see Gal. 5:22–24). Only the Holy Spirit can tame our tongues.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

Before James talks about our tongues, he talks about judgment and sin. First, he says those who teach others about God “will be judged with greater strictness” (James 3:1). He warns teachers they really need to use their words wisely! Right after that, James talks about sin: “For we all stumble in many ways” (3:2). We are all sinners and sin in a lot of different ways. James says: “If we keep all the commandments but disobey just one, we are guilty in God’s eyes of breaking all of God’s commandments” (see 2:10). Whoa! That means if one day you pray to God, go to church, obey your parents, share your toys, and don’t scream and beg for a candy bar at the checkout counter, but you yell at your friend, “You’re so dumb!” after she loses the board game, you are totally guilty. You are a sinner! That means we’re all guilty. And this is why we need Jesus, the Snake Crusher. Only Jesus never sinned with his tongue. He used his words to encourage people and praise his Father in heaven. And because he tamed his tongue, he was able to offer his body as the perfect sacrifice for our sins. For all our mean and unkind words. And if we believe in him and what he has done for us, then all our sins are forgiven. What good news!

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. **QUESTION:** How do you steer a big boat? How do you get a horse to change directions? How can what we say and how we say it affect our life?

TAKEAWAY: The tongue is small, but it can affect our whole life.

2. **QUESTION:** What are some good things we can do with our words? What are some hurtful things we can do? Why do you think words are so powerful?

3

Engage

TAKEAWAY: The tongue has great power to hurt or help others.

Memory Verse

Let your
speech always
be gracious.
COLOSSIANS 4:6

3. **QUESTION:** What does it mean to tame a dog? How would you try to tame your tongue? How can Jesus help us tame our tongues?

TAKEAWAY: No one can tame the tongue—only Jesus can do that.

4. **QUESTION:** If we want to be wise, how will we use our tongues? Who gives us wisdom to do this?

TAKEAWAY: Wise words praise God and build up others.

ACTIVITIES

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Fast Like Fire

Supply List: large beach ball, stopwatch

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Have children line up shoulder-to-shoulder facing a wall, then lie on their backs with their feet 1 to 2 feet from the wall. Place a large beach ball at the end of the line between the children's feet and the wall. Have children pass the ball down the line using only their feet. Have them move the ball fast like a spreading fire. Once a child passes the ball, he must run down to the end of the line and lie down. The goal is to move the ball to the opposite side of the room as quickly as possible. Have a leader time the group, and then have them try again to see if they can beat their time. Remind children that our words can be destructive like fire.

Option 2: Ping-Pong Battle

Supply List: tables, ping pong balls (one per pair)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Set up tables so that children can space themselves out for the ping-pong battle.



Divide children into pairs. Have pairs face each other on opposite sides of a table. Set a ping-pong ball in the middle of each pair. On “Go” have each child try to blow the ball off the opposite side of the table (no hands allowed). The child who succeeds wins the round. Have pairs play best three out of five, then switch teams. Remind children that just as the air we blow has power to move a ball, so our words have power for good or evil.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Attention Ball

Supply List: chairs, ball

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Set up a circle of chairs with one chair less than the number of children. Choose one child to be “It” and to stand in the middle of the circle. Have remaining children sit in a chair. Give a seated child a ball, who will throw it to another seated child before “It” tags her and without “It” intercepting the ball. Seated children continue to throw the ball to one another until someone is tagged or the ball is intercepted. If a child is tagged or the ball she threw is intercepted, she becomes the new “It” and the previous “It” takes her seat. Remind children that just as we paid attention in the game, so we must pay attention to our words and use them wisely.

Option 2: Ping-Pong Battle

Supply List: tables, ping pong balls (one per pair)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Set up tables so that children can space themselves out for the ping-pong battle.

Divide children into pairs. Have pairs face each other on opposite sides of a table. Set a ping-pong ball in the middle of each pair. On “Go” have each child try to blow the ball off the opposite side of the table (no hands allowed). The child who succeeds wins the round. Have pairs play best three out of five, then switch teams. Remind children that just as the air we blow has power to move a ball, so our words have power for good or evil.

CRAFTS

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Control Your Tongue Puppet

Supply List: red construction paper, paper plates, glue, large googly eyes, pencils, crayons

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut red construction paper into 1" x 12" strips. Make a sample craft.

Place strips and remaining supplies on tables. Children fold a paper plate in half. They then color the plate and glue two googly eyes to the top of the folded plate. Have them write the Big Truth on a strip of red construction paper. Instruct them to open the plate and glue the strip as a tongue inside, with most of the tongue hanging out of the mouth. Have them roll the strip around a pencil to make it curl. Remind children of the importance of controlling their tongues.

Option 2: Building Blocks

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

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make copies of brick shapes with encouraging words printed on them. Make a sample craft.

Place copies and remaining supplies on tables. Have children color and cut out the bricks, then glue them to a piece of paper to form a shape of their choice (a house, a heart, etc.). Remind children that we want to be people who build others up with our words.





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

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make copies of brick shapes with encouraging words printed on them. Make a sample craft.

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Option 2: Tame the Tongue

Supply List: crayons, red construction paper, scissors, glue, small paper plates (two per child), craft sticks

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make a sample craft.

Place supplies on tables. Have children brainstorm a list of good things they can do with their mouths (use kind words, be honest, praise God, etc.), and a list of wrong things they can do with their mouths (use mean words, lie, etc.). Have them draw a happy face on one plate and an angry face on a second one. With red construction paper, children cut out two overly large tongues (to exaggerate the power of the tongue). On one tongue they write good things they can do with their mouths, and on the other they write some wrong things. Have them glue each tongue to its corresponding face, then glue the plates back-to-back to a craft stick so both faces are visible. Remind children of the importance of using our words wisely.



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

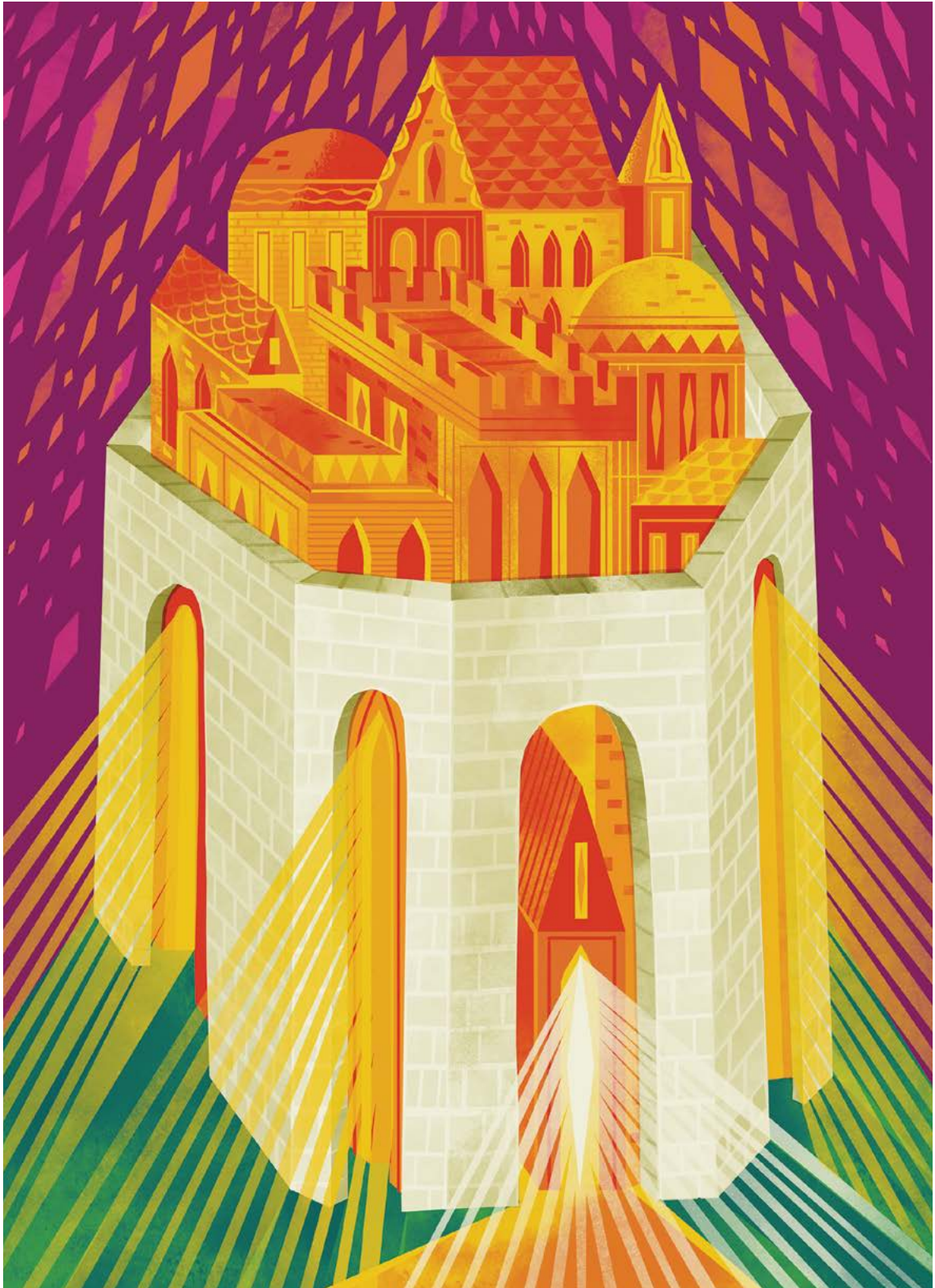


PART 7

REVELATION

The last book of the Bible — Revelation — is a letter, a prophecy, and an apocalypse. That’s a big word, but it just means that Revelation is a book of revealing. It’s a book that shows the past, the present, and the future through “pictures” written with words.

Although the book can be confusing, the big idea is simple: God and the Lamb sit on the throne, and those who overcome all the trials and temptations of the world will enjoy eternal life with them in the new heavens and new earth. Revelation focuses our attention on Christ as our conquering King and on the church as his beloved people.



STORY 104

All Things New

REVELATION 21–22

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Revelation 21–22.
- Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is what he has done, and how they should respond to him.
- Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.

1

Read

THE BIG PICTURE

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

2

Teach

The last lesson! But a lesson about new beginnings. The first chapter of the Bible—Genesis 1—records God's creation of the heavens and the earth. On the first day, light was created. On the second day, the sky was created. On the third day land, plants, trees, and the sea were created. On the fourth day, the sun, moon, and stars were created. On the fifth day, creatures—on the land, in the sky, and under the sea—were created. On the sixth day, animals were created. Humans too! Yes, God created man and woman in his image. They were God's good people living in God's good land and ruling over God's good creation.

On the last day of the first heavens and earth, God will judge every man, woman, and child. The book of Revelation shows us that those who reject Jesus as their King and Savior will go to everlasting destruction and those who trust

him as Savior and bow before him as King will go to everlasting life. Revelation also *shows* us the place where God’s people (“the Bride . . . of the Lamb,” Rev. 21:9) will live. But the last day of the first heavens and earth will be the first day of the new heavens and earth. Do you think there will be trees there? Land? Waters? The sun, moon, and stars? Let’s see what Revelation *shows*.

TELL THE STORY

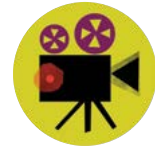
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the
Bible passage
together



Read from
The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook



Play *The*
Biggest Story
video

TEACH THE STORY

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

Big Truth
When Jesus
returns, he will
create new heavens
and earth with no
suffering, sin,
or Satan.

How does it make you feel when you hear about an army, somewhere in the world, moving their tanks, flying their fighter jets into another country, knocking down their buildings, killing people, and taking over? Does it make you mad? Sad? Both sad and mad? How does it make you feel when someone pushes you on the playground, steals your stuff, or calls you mean names? Does it make you mad? Sad? Both sad and mad? How do you feel when a baby dies? Does it make you mad? Sad? Both sad and mad? We live in very broken world. We sin. Other people around us sin. Everyone everywhere sins. And everyone everywhere dies or will soon die. That is the bad news. But there is good news: Jesus has saved many sinners from sin and death. And sometime soon, he will return to earth to deal with sin and suffering and Satan once and for all. What better-than-amazing news!

More than that, he will give us a new home. It will be like the garden of Eden. It will have a river, trees, flowers, animals, and maybe even mosquitoes that don’t bite. It will be like Eden, but better. The Bible calls it the new earth. And on the new earth, there will be a new Jerusalem. This holy city will be on a high mountain and made of “pure gold” (Rev. 21:18). It will be surrounded by “a great,



Story

104

Revelation

21-22

high wall, with twelve gates [made of pearls]" (21:12), and the wall's foundation will be "adorned with every kind of jewel" (21:19). Beautiful! Glorious! It is beautiful and glorious because God is there. God's full presence means there is no need for a temple. And there is no need for the sun, moon, or stars because "the glory of God gives it light" (22:21) and by its light God's people from every nation live, laugh, and love. "His servants will worship him" (22:3). Together, with God, this people made in Christ's image will do what they were created to do: "Reign forever and ever" (22:5). And God will do what he promised to do: "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore" (21:4). No more reasons to be mad and sad. I can't wait for that day!

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

Throughout the ages and in every country around the world, Christians have made this simple confession of faith: "Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again." We could add to that: "Christ came to earth; Christ was born; Christ lived the perfect life." We can think of the Son of God's mission on earth as summarized in those six key events: (1) He left heaven for earth. (2) He was born a human of Mary in the town of Bethlehem. (3) He lived a life without sin, healed the sick, cast out demons, taught truths, and welcomed people to follow him. (4) He suffered and died on the cross on behalf of sinners. (5) He rose in glory from the grave. (6) Someday soon he will come again to gather his people, judge evil, and renew creation. Isn't Jesus amazing? Yes! Shouldn't we praise him? Yes! And shouldn't we long for the day when he returns? Yes, or "Amen." Let the last line of the Bible (well, the second to last!) be our words now and until Jesus comes: "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev. 22:20).

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

- 1. QUESTION:** Why were Adam and Eve forced to leave the garden of Eden? How will Jesus finally destroy the evil that entered the world when they disobeyed God? After evil is destroyed, where will God's people live?

TAKEAWAY: After evil is destroyed, Jesus will create a new heavens and earth.

3

Engage

Memory Verse
Behold, I am
making all
things new.

REVELATION 21:5

2. **QUESTION:** Did God dwell with Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden? Where did God dwell with his people in the Old Testament? How did God dwell with his people after Jesus died and rose again? Where will God dwell with his people when Jesus comes again?

TAKEAWAY: In the new creation God will dwell with his people forever.

3. **QUESTION:** What are some things that make you sad? Can you imagine what it will be like if there was no sadness or sin or Satan? When will that happen?

TAKEAWAY: In the new creation there will be no suffering, no sin, no Satan, and no tears.

4. **QUESTION:** What are some promises that God has made? Has he kept all of them? Is it possible for God to lie? What was the last thing that Jesus told John in his vision? How does that make you feel?

TAKEAWAY: We can know for certain that Jesus is coming soon to crush Satan and make all things new.

ACTIVITIES

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Old to New Relay

Supply List: index cards, marker

Before Class: Gather supplies. Write each of the following words on a separate index card: old, new, tears, joy, death, life, pain, no pain (two sets per team).

Divide children into teams of four. Set the cards that say *old, tears, death* and *pain* in a pile at the starting line of each team. Set the cards that say *new, joy, life*, and *no pain* on the opposite side of the room from each team. On “Go!” have the first child on each team take a card from her pile, slide step down to the



opposite side, find the card that is the opposite of the one she picked, and skip it back to her team. Have the next child repeat the process. The first team to get all the new words back to their team wins. Remind children that Revelation 21:5 says, “I am making all things new!”

Option 2: Jewel Relay

Supply List: plastic jewels, bowls, spoons, glue sticks, paper, marker

Before Class: Gather supplies. Divide jewels evenly among bowls (one per team). Place bowls along a starting line. On the opposite side of the room from each bowl, lay a piece of paper that says New and set a glue stick in front of it.

Divide children into teams of four to five and have them line up behind a bowl with a spoon. On “Go!” have the first child on each team use the spoon to scoop one plastic jewel out of his bowl, carry it down to the other side of the room, glue the jewel to his *New* paper, and return the spoon to the next child on his team, who repeats the process. If the jewel falls off the spoon, the child must spin in a circle two times before picking up the jewel and continuing the race. The first team to glue all their jewels to their *New* paper wins. Remind children that the New Jerusalem is described as full of precious stones and gold!

3rd–5th

Option 1: Through the Gate

Supply List: masking tape, dodgeballs, large beach ball

Before Class: Gather supplies. Use masking tape to mark a line down the center of the room and a goal line (“gates”) on each side.

Divide children into two teams and have each team line up behind one goal line. Children must stay behind the goal line during game play. Place a big beach ball in the center of the room and disperse smaller dodgeballs equally to each team. On “Go!” have children use the dodgeballs to try to hit the beach ball across the opposing team’s goal line. Teams get a point each time they successfully get the beach ball across the opposing team’s goal line. Continue play until one team gets 12 points. Remind children that there are twelve gates in the New Jerusalem.

Option 2: Jewel Relay

Supply List: plastic jewels, bowls, spoons, glue sticks, paper, marker

Before Class: Gather supplies. Divide jewels evenly among bowls (one per team). Place bowls along a starting line. On the opposite side of the room from each bowl, lay a piece of paper that says New and set a glue stick in front of it.

Divide children into teams of four to five and have them line up behind a bowl with a spoon. On “Go!” have the first child on each team use the spoon to scoop one plastic jewel out of his bowl, carry it down to the other side of the room, glue the jewel to his *New* paper, and return the spoon to the next child on his team, who repeats the process. If the jewel falls off the spoon, the child must spin in a circle two times before picking up the jewel and continuing the race. The first team to glue all their jewels to their *New* paper wins. Remind children that the New Jerusalem is described as full of precious stones and gold!

CRAFTS

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Wind Sock

Supply List: string, paper streamers, paper plates, crayons, stapler, glue, cotton balls, hole punches

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut string into 10-inch lengths (one per child). Cut streamers into 12-inch lengths. Make a sample craft.

Place string, streamers, and remaining supplies on tables. Help children fold a paper plate in half and staple it shut. Have them write “Come, Lord Jesus!” on the paper plate (fold-side up) and color it. Children stretch the cotton balls and glue them around the words. They then glue streamers to the circular edge of the wind sock. Help children punch two side-by-side holes at the top of their wind sock. Thread the string through both holes and tie the ends together for hanging. Remind children that Jesus will come again! We should be ready and keep looking up!



Option 2: "No More _____" Craft

Supply List: paper, crayons

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make copies of a paper that is divided into three sections labeled "No pain," "No death," and "No tears" (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Children draw a picture to represent each section, then put a large X on top of each picture. Remind children that the new earth will be perfect in every way!

3rd-5th

Option 1: Wind Sock

Supply List: string, paper streamers, paper plates, crayons, stapler, glue, cotton balls, hole punches

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut string into 10-inch lengths (one per child). Cut streamers into 12-inch lengths. Make a sample craft.

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Children draw a picture to represent each section, then put a large X on top of each picture. Remind children that the new earth will be perfect in every way!



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



STORY 53

A New Baby and a New Beginning

MATTHEW 1

BEFORE THE LESSON

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

1
Read

THE BIG PICTURE

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

2
Teach

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

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

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

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

TELL THE STORY

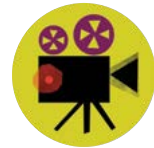
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the
Bible passage
together



Read from
The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook



Play *The*
Biggest Story
video

TEACH THE STORY

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

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

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

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



Story

53

Matthew 1

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

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

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

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

3

Engage

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

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

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

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

TAKEAWAY: Jesus is fully human—but without sin.

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

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

Memory Verse

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

MATTHEW 1:21

ACTIVITIES

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Jump from Old Testament to New Testament Game

Supply List: two ropes

Before Class: Gather supplies.

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



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

Option 2: Matching Wrapping Paper Game

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

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

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

3rd–5th

Option 1: Matching Wrapping Paper Game

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

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

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

Option 2: Christmas Picture Guessing Game

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

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

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

CRAFTS

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Christmas Wreath

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

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

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

Option 2: Christmas Vase

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

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

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



Option 2: God with Us Door Hanger

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

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

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

Option 2: Christmas Vase

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

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

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



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



STORY 54

Wise Men, Smart Move

MATTHEW 2

BEFORE THE LESSON

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



THE BIG PICTURE

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



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

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

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

TELL THE STORY

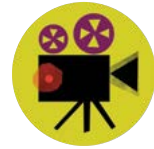
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the
Bible passage
together



Read from
The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook



Play *The*
Biggest Story
video

TEACH THE STORY

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

Big Truth
Jesus is the King
of all nations.

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

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

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

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

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

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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

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

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

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

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

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



Story
54

Matthew 2

3

Engage

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

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

Memory Verse

Let everything
that has breath
praise the LORD!

PSALM 150:6

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

TAKEAWAY: Jesus deserves our worship.

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

TAKEAWAY: Jesus is the forever King.

ACTIVITIES

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

K–2nd

Option 1: Herod Says

Supply List: none

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

Option 2: Pass the Present

Supply List: empty box, wrapping paper, music

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

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

3rd–5th

Option 1: Wise Men Balloon Tennis Relay

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

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

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

Option 2: Walk Like a Camel Relay

Supply List: balloons

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

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



Story

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Matthew 2

CRAFTS

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

K–2nd

Option 1: King of Kings Crown

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

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

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

Option 2: The Best Gift Picture

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

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

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



Option 1: Craft Stick Star Ornament

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

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

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

Option 2: 3D Hanging Five-Point Star

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

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

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



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