

LESSON 3
HOLY WEEK

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: Jesus Loves Us and Gave His Life for Us

SCRIPTURE: John 12–13; 19

GOD'S BIG STORY: After God's people waited many years for Him to rescue them from sin, Jesus shows God's great love by dying on the cross. His death brings life.

WORD OF WONDER: I will spend time thinking about everything you have done. —Psalm 77:12

CURIOSITY

BELIEF

FAITH

- Play Stations:
 - Praise Parade
 - Feet Washing
 - Holy Week Coloring Sheet
- Curiosity Activity: Magic Pencil
- God's Big Story / Snack
- Word of Wonder: Psalm 77:12
- Circle Time: Palm Parade Review
- Craft: Story Stones
- LARGE GROUP
- Game: Roll the Egg
- Responding in Worship: Play Dough Response
- Closing Game: Pass the Cup



[Connected Easter Preschool Spotify playlist](#)



LESSON 3 FOR LEADERS

INVITATION

We invite you to pause, listen, and shift your gaze toward the Father ...

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: Jesus Loves Us and Gave His Life for Us

SCRIPTURE: John 12–13; 19

WORD OF WONDER: Psalm 77:12

Last year I conducted an experiment.

I wish I hadn't.

As kids tumbled into our children's ministry one Sunday morning, I asked them why they liked Easter. Their answers ranged from candy to new shoes to candy to visiting cousins to egg hunts to candy.

Guess who didn't come up? Jesus.

Like you, we talk a lot about Jesus. He's front and center, week after week. It's our mission for kids to know, love, and follow Him. We want how kids feel about themselves and their world to be shaped by a deep awareness that Jesus loves them so dearly He literally died for them.

That's a message we share often—especially at Easter.

Yet, somehow, the reality of Jesus' love and sacrifice doesn't always sink beneath the surface, deep into kids' hearts and minds. And what's true for our kids is often true for us too.

So here's a challenge. As you prepare for this lesson, read John 12, 13, and 19. But don't just skim the words—pause often to let them speak to you. Ask the Holy Spirit to let those words change you. Ask the Spirit to cement in you this truth: Jesus loves you. He loves you right now, and He'll love you for eternity.

Make this Easter the one you see clearly: as a love story.

Including you.

—Mikal Keefer

Children's Ministry Volunteer and Author
Contributor to Wonder Ink

DID YOU KNOW?

FOUNDATION BUILDING BLOCKS

WHO?

Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor of the province of Judea. He presided over Jesus' trial, which involved discussion with the chief priests, who were members of the Jewish ruling council, or Sanhedrin. Pilate ultimately authorized Jesus' crucifixion, albeit reluctantly.

WHAT?

In the week leading up to His death, Jesus was anointed by Mary in Bethany and welcomed to Jerusalem as king. He predicted His death and washed His disciples' feet. He was betrayed by Judas, tried by Pilate, and crucified at Golgotha.

WHERE?

The events of Holy Week took place in and around Jerusalem. Bethany was about two miles east of Jerusalem. Golgotha, where Jesus was crucified, was located outside the city gate of Jerusalem (Hebrews 13:12) somewhere near the city (John 19:20). The exact location is debated.

WHEN?

Jesus was crucified during the week of the Jewish Passover Feast while Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea (approximately AD 26–36). The exact date is debated, but biblical scholars often estimate Jesus' death to be between AD 30–33.

CONNECTING TO GOD'S BIG STORY

Holy Week led up to the climactic moment of God's big story. The death of Jesus made way for the defeat of death, the forgiveness of sins, and life forever with God in a kingdom that will never end.



Curiosity

Belief

Faith

Identity

LESSON 3 EARLY CHILDHOOD

Spark curiosity, encourage exploration, and get kids thinking about the wonder of God.

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WORD OF WONDER: Psalm 77:12

Play Stations

SUPPLIES: painter's tape, musical instruments (several), palm branches or green streamers (1 per kid), wet wipes (several), baby dolls (several), coloring utensils, wet rags (optional)

RESOURCES: [Holy Week Coloring Sheet \(1 per kid\)](#)

Greet kids warmly as they arrive and briefly explain the play stations. Invite them to play at any of the play stations.

"Welcome to church! While we're getting ready to start, you can play at any of these stations to help get ready for our lesson today. Do you have any ideas of what we'll be learning about today?"

Play Station: Praise Parade

Set-up: Mark a path on the floor using painter's tape. Set out musical instruments and place palm branches or green streamers nearby.

Play: Kids can walk the path on the floor and pretend they are welcoming Jesus to town by playing their musical instruments and waving their palm branches or streamers.

Play Station: Feet Washing

Set-up: Set out wet wipes (or a wet rag) and several baby dolls.

Play: Kids can take turns washing the dolls' feet with the wet wipes or wet rags like Jesus washed His disciples' feet.

Play Station: Holy Week Coloring Sheet

Set-up: Print one copy per kid of the Holy Week Coloring Sheet. Set out the Coloring Sheets and coloring utensils.

Play: Let the kids color. The kids can also turn the sheet over and draw a picture of someone who loves them and does kind things for them.

Curiosity Activity: Magic Pencil

SUPPLIES: table, sandwich-size resealable baggies (at least 2), pitcher of water, scissors or pen, large bowl, sharpened pencil, stool (optional)

Leader Tip: Consider practicing the magic pencil experiment ahead of time!

Ahead of time, set the supplies on a table at the front of your teaching space.

Gather kids and hold up an empty resealable baggie. **"Can this bag hold water?"** Allow kids to answer, then fill the bag with water and seal it. **What happens when the bag gets a hole?** Allow kids to answer. Then use scissors or the tip of a pen to make a small hole in the bottom corner of the bag and show kids how it drips into the large bowl. Set that baggie aside.

Take out a new empty resealable baggie and fill it with water. Hold up a sharpened pencil. **I bet I can stick this pencil all the way through this baggie and make it come out on the other side without spilling a drop of water. If you believe me, walk to this side of the room. If you don't believe I can do that, walk to this side of the room.** Point to the other side of the room.

Once kids have traveled to one side of the room or the other, quickly stick the sharpened pencil straight through the plastic bag. If your group is especially adventurous, select a kid volunteer to sit on a stool. Then stick the pencil through the bag as you suspend it over the volunteer's head.

Invite kids to sit back down. **Everyone on this side of the room** (the side that didn't believe), **were you surprised?** Allow responses. **Everyone on this side of the room** (the side that did believe), **why do you think that the water didn't spill?** Allow responses. **Sometimes things don't happen the way we think they will. During Holy Week—which is Jesus' last week on the earth before He died—lots of things happened that showed people Jesus is God's Son. These things showed that Jesus would make the way for everyone to be forgiven and saved. But no one guessed how that would happen. Jesus came to show us that He loves us and was willing to give His life for us."**



WORD OF WONDER

I will spend time thinking about everything you
have done.

—Psalm 77:12

Word of Wonder

SUPPLIES: Bible, paper (1 sheet), writing utensil (prep only), scissors (prep only), plastic eggs (1 per kid; at least 11)

Cut a sheet of paper into 11 pieces. Write one word from the Word of Wonder on each square. Then add numbers to the papers so that when the kids put the numbers in order, the verse will be in order: “I will spend time thinking about everything you have done.” Write “Psalm 77:12” on the last piece. Put each piece of paper into a plastic egg and hide the eggs around the room.

“We are going to practice our Word of Wonder and then have an egg hunt to see if we can find all the words from our Word of Wonder.

Encourage the kids to do the motions and say the verse with you.

- **I WILL SPEND TIME THINKING ABOUT**—Point to head.
- **EVERYTHING**—Stretch hands out in front of you with palms together, then spread arms out wide.
- **YOU HAVE DONE.**—Point up.
- **PSALM 77:12**—Hold your hands together in front, palms together, as if opening a book.

You did a great job saying our verse. Now let’s have an egg hunt and see if we can find all the words from our Word of Wonder. Once you find an egg, bring it to the front of the room and sit down. Let each kid find an egg (or more than one if you have a small group). Once all the eggs have been found, have the kids open their eggs to see if there is a piece of paper inside. **If your egg has a piece of paper inside, bring it to me.**

Once you have all the pieces of paper, put the words in order and hold each word up as you say it together with the kids. Even kids who can’t read can look at the papers and may be able to recognize letters and numbers.

Leader Tip: If you have an older group, the kids can help put the words in order. Ask questions like, “Which paper has the letter I on it?” “Can you find the paper that has the word that starts with a W?”

Gather kids to discuss these questions:

- **Our Word of Wonder says we will think about everything that God has done. What can we remember that God did in today’s story?**
- **What has God done in your life that you can remember?**

God's Big Story / Snack

SUPPLIES: Bible; NIV Bible

Hold up a Bible and show the kids. Tell them that today's story comes from the book of John in the Bible. Open a Bible and show them where the story is found. Tell them that John is in the Gospels, which are the first four books of the New Testament.

Bible Time Rhyme

Say the Bible time rhyme (with motions) each week before the Bible story to remind kids that what they're about to hear is part of God's big story.

I open my Bible and what do I see? (Hold your hands together, then open your palms, as if opening a book.)

God's big story, waiting for me! (Point to yourself.)

"Let's hear part of God's big story, a part that comes from the book of John in the Bible."

[Read John 12:1–3, 12–15 from the Bible.](#)

Circle Time: Palm Parade Review

SUPPLIES: painter's tape, palm branches or green streamers (optional, 1 per kid)

Use painter's tape to make a small cross on the floor. Gather kids into a circle and ask one of them to stand next to the cross. You could give each child a palm branch or a green streamer to wave.

"We're going to pretend that we're waving palm branches and welcoming Jesus to town just like the people did in the part of God's big story that we heard today. We're going to march around in a circle and wave our palm branches. Listen carefully, because when I say, "Stop!" you'll freeze wherever you're standing. Whoever is standing closest to the cross can answer a question.

Let the kids march around in a circle. Shout out "Stop!" periodically and ask the kid who is standing closest to the cross one of the questions from the list below.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- **Who did the people welcome to Jerusalem as their king?** (Jesus)
- **What did Jesus know that the other people didn't?** (He was going to die soon.)
- **What did Jesus do to show His disciples He loved them and wanted to serve them?** (washed their feet)
- **Why did Jesus wash their feet?** (to show He cleans hearts from sin)
- **Why did Jesus have to die?** (to make us clean from the wrong things we do)
- **How do you know Jesus loves you?**

Jesus loves us so much that He was willing to die for us so that we could be made clean from our sin. That's a big love! Let's talk to God now in prayer."

PRAYER TIME: Invite kids to share prayer requests and praises and to pray for each other. Some kids may not be comfortable praying out loud. That's OK! Encourage them to pray silently and to thank God for sending Jesus to save us.

Head to Large Group!

Return and finish the rest of this guide before parents arrive.

Responding in Worship: Story Stones

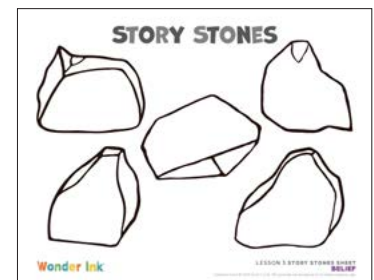
SUPPLIES: glue sticks, coloring utensils

RESOURCES: [Story Stones Sheet](#) (1 per kid, back of coloring page), [Story Stones Pictures](#) (for every 2 kids) small plastic baggies (optional); songs from the [Connected Easter Early Childhood Spotify playlist](#)

Print the Story Stones Sheet and the Story Stones Pictures. Cut out the Story Stones Pictures and separate into baggies. 1 set per kid.

"Jesus loves us and gave His life for us! Let's spend some time responding to Jesus together. We are going to make some shapes out of play dough to remind us how much Jesus loves us.

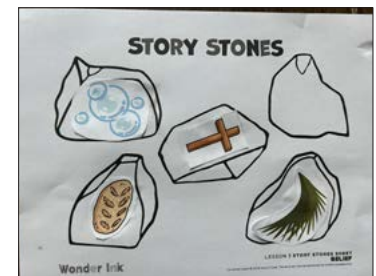
Let's think about the start of Holy Week. Each year, on your birthday, you can remember and celebrate that you were born. Each year on Christmas, we remember and celebrate that Jesus was born. And each year, during Holy Week—the week between Palm Sunday and Easter—we remember how Jesus died and came alive again.



Did you know that the Bible tells us that God's people sometimes used stones to remember the times God helped or saved them? They would pile up the stones and say, "Remember? This is where God helped us!" Today we're going to use story stones to remember what happened to Jesus during Holy Week. Pass out the Story Stones Sheet (flip over Coloring Page), Story Stones Pictures, and glue sticks. Remembering the events of Holy Week reminds us that Jesus loves us and gave His life for us. Let's cut out the picture of a palm branch and glue it on your first stone. Doing this will help us remember how Jesus was welcomed to Jerusalem as King.

Give kids time to find the picture of the palm branch and glue it on a paper stone.

Our next picture is of a loaf of bread. Let's cut out the loaf of bread and glue it on our next stone as we remember the dinner Jesus had with His friends.



Give kids time to find the picture of the bread and glue it on a paper stone.

Our next picture is of soap bubbles. This picture helps us remember that Jesus washed His friends' feet. Let's cut out the picture of the soap bubbles and glue it on our next stone as we remember how Jesus washed His friends' feet.

Give kids time to find the picture of the soap bubbles and glue it on either a paper stone.

Our last picture is of a cross. This picture helps us remember that Jesus loves us so much that He gave His life for us on the cross. Let's cut out the picture of a cross and glue it on our last stone as we remember how Jesus showed He loves us by dying on the cross. He was perfect and didn't deserve to die.

Give kids time to find the picture of the cross and glue it on a paper stone.

We have one more stone left—but there are no more pictures to cut out and glue. This empty stone reminds us that Jesus' death was not the end of the story! We'll learn more about that next week when we hear about the empty tomb.

You can take these stones home to help you remember that Jesus loves you and gave His life for you! And you can use them to share that news with other people as well!"

Closing Game: Pass the Cup

SUPPLIES: cup

Gather kids into a circle and have them sit down. Hand one kid a cup.

In God's big story today, we learned that Jesus had a last supper with His disciples. During that time, they ate bread and passed a cup around to drink. We are going to play a game with a cup to remind us that Jesus loves us.

I'm going to pick one person to stand in the middle of the circle and close her eyes. The rest of us are going to pass the cup around the circle and sing "Jesus Loves Me." When we get done singing, the person holding the cup will hold it behind her back. The rest of us will pretend that we're holding the cup behind our backs as well. The person in the middle will get three chances to guess who is holding the cup.

Choose one child to sit in the middle of the circle and close his eyes. Lead kids in the singing "Jesus Loves Me" while they pass the cup around the circle. When the song is done, remind kids to hold their hands behind their backs like they are holding the cup and then have the "guesser" open his eyes and guess who has the cup.

Play as time allows so that multiple kids can have a chance to guess.