



LESSON 3
THE CRUCIFIXION

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: Jesus Showed His Love by Dying for Us

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 27

GOD'S BIG STORY: Jesus is crucified on a cross to defeat sin and fix the relationship between people and God. His sacrifice demonstrates His amazing love for us!

WORD OF WONDER: When anyone lives in Christ, the new creation has come. The old is gone! The new is here! —2 Corinthians 5:17

- Welcome Question: How would you fill in the blank? I love _____ so much!
- Curiosity Questions
- Word of Wonder Activity
- God's Big Story
- Discussion Questions for Elementary Kids and Preteens
- Small Group Prayer Time
- LARGE GROUP
- Elementary Responding in Worship: Rock Art Remembering
- Preteen Responding in Worship: Tearing the Curtain



INVITATION

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

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: Jesus Showed His Love by Dying for Us

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 27

WORD OF WONDER: 2 Corinthians 5:17

Have you ever been wrongfully accused? Perhaps someone spread false gossip about you, or maybe someone took something you said out of context.

When living in a fallen world of nearly eight billion imperfect humans, we're bound to face difficult things and difficult people. It's easy to develop a jaded view of humanity. And no one understands the imperfection of humans better than God, yet still He loves us.

Take some time to read Matthew 27:32–56.

Have you ever wondered why Jesus chose to die such an excruciating death? He had every right to show His power and put humans in their rightful place. Yet He chose to submit himself, facing the humiliation of being put on trial. Even the earthly authorities couldn't find anything illegal or evil about Him. He was innocent, yet His love for us is so great that He chose to die on the cross. Jesus showed His love by dying for us.

Does knowing what Jesus did for us give you the strength to face the evil in the world? Take some time to dwell in God's wonderful love. May it inspire you to show grace to those who might not deserve it but need it.

—Catherine Hwang-Jin

Children's Pastor

Contributor to Wonder Ink

DID YOU KNOW?

FOUNDATION BUILDING BLOCKS

WHO?

The climax (and turning point) of God’s big story is the death and resurrection of Jesus, God’s Son. Jesus became nothing and took on the nature of a servant, humbling Himself to death on a cross (Philippians 2:6–8).

WHAT?

Crucifixion was a horrible and painful process—a form of slow torture as the recipient suffocated to death. Jesus willingly went to the cross, submitting Himself to “the joy set before Him” as He endured the cross, so we could be restored to right relationship with God (Hebrews 12:2 NIV).

WHERE?

The crucifixion of Jesus took place outside the city gates of Jerusalem on a hill called Golgotha. Jesus would have been exposed up on that hill as He suffered. Jews from all over would have been in Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover.

WHEN?

It is no coincidence that Jesus died at Passover—the time when all of God’s people remembered God’s salvation in the Exodus. Jesus died as a sacrificial lamb, ushering in a new and better exodus event: freedom from our slavery to sin and death.

CONNECTING TO GOD’S BIG STORY:

Jesus died to fix the relationship between God and people, making the way for us to be with God. Jesus fulfills the promise God made after the first sin in Genesis 3, reversing the curse of sin. Jesus is the only One who can defeat sin and death!

LESSON 3 ELEMENTARY & PRETEEN

Small Group

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

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: Jesus Showed His Love by Dying for Us

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WORD OF WONDER: 2 Corinthians 5:17

Pre-Service Connection (15–20 min)

RESOURCES: whiteboard, poster paper, or butcher paper, writing utensils, board games or games

[Games & Activities Guide](#)

Small group leaders should be seated in place in their small groups 20 minutes prior to service time. Have activities ready to keep children occupied and engaged WITH you. This time is important to build relationships, welcome new kids, and keep structure in the room - you should be an active participant with them! Learn the kids names, and make sure they all know yours too!

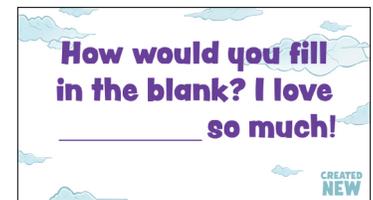
As kids arrive ...

Warmly welcome new friends, and introduce them to your group.

Use the Welcome Question and the following "I'm Curious" questions to engage kids. Say "I'm curious.." before each question and give kids an chance to think before answering each one. After each question, consider having kids share their ideas with a neighbor before you call on one or two of them to share with the group.

Consider having a whiteboard or poster for kids to write or draw answers to any of the questions:

- **What do you think the word love means?**
- **What do you think the word relationship means? Who are some people you have relationships with?**



Leader Tip: Consider introducing this definition for love: Love is not just a feeling but selfless actions that put others before ourselves. Love is who God is. As Jesus followers, we can be filled with God's love so that Christlike love becomes what describes us best!

Word of Wonder Activity

WORD OF WONDER

When anyone lives in Christ, the new creation has come. The old is gone! The new is here!
—2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIRV)

SUPPLIES: Bibles (1 per kid), permanent marker (prep only), adhesive name tags or masking tape
Ahead of time, split the Word of Wonder into as many parts as there are kids in each small group and use a permanent marker to write each part on an adhesive name tag or strip of masking tape. You'll need one verse set for each small group.

Our Word of Wonder for the Created New series talks about being made new! Let's say the verse together. Open your Bible to 2 Corinthians 5:17. Lead the kids in reading the verse several times in unison.

For this activity, each kid will be given an adhesive name tag or strip of masking tape with one part of the Word of Wonder on it. There are multiple options for this activity. Choose the one that works best for the kids in your small group:

1. Each kid sticks their verse section to the front of their shirts. They work together to put themselves in verse order as quickly as possible. (This option works great with younger kids!)
2. With permission from each kid, the leader sticks one verse section to the back of each kid's shirt, so kids can't see it. Kids work together to put themselves in verse order. They're allowed to talk! (This option works great with middle elementary kids and groups with mixed ages.)
3. With permission from each kid, the leader sticks one verse section to the back of each kid's shirt, so kids can't see it. Kids work together to put themselves in order but are not allowed to talk! (This option works great with preteens.)

Leader Tip: Because of the sensitive nature of today's story, the leader should read today's scripture and use discretion for younger groups. We share the truth of what Jesus did, but want to be sensitive to any individual needs of your kids.

God's Big Story

SUPPLIES: Bibles (1 per kid)

Explain that this part of God's big story can be read about in all four of the Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—but today we'll be reading from the book of Matthew. Matthew is the first book in the New Testament.

In this passage, Jesus is on the cross, taking the punishment for all the wrong things people have done. He prayed for the people who hurt Him, showing love even in the hardest moments. The sky became dark, and then Jesus died, showing the power of God's plan to save the world. As you read, think about what it means that Jesus chose to give His life for everyone.

Read Matthew 27:27-31; 35-37

Elementary Questions

- **When Jesus was arrested in the garden, how did He respond—did He fight or go willingly with the guards? What do you think this shows us about Jesus?** (*Jesus went willingly.*)
- **Jesus was put on trial two times. Did the trials show that Jesus was innocent (which means He didn't do anything against the law) or guilty (which means that He did)?** (*innocent*)
- **What happened to Jesus next, even though He was innocent?** (*He was crucified, which means He was hung on a wood cross and died.*)
- **Why do you think Jesus was willing to die?** (*Possible answer: Jesus loves all people—that means us too—and died to fix our relationship with God, which had been broken by sin—the wrong things we say and do.*)
- **How can you thank Jesus for His love and for dying on the cross?**
- **When Jesus died, it wasn't the end of the story! What happened three days later?** (*He rose from the dead and is alive!*)

Jesus made the decision to die on the cross because He loves us and knew that's what it would take for us to be able to know God as a friend. Let's talk with God in prayer and thank Him for Jesus' sacrifice!

Preteen Questions

- **Did Jesus know ahead of time He would die for the sake of human beings? Why don't you think He tried to stop it?** (*Yes, Jesus knew He would die to fix the broken relationship between humans and God and to defeat sin.*)
- **What did the sign that was hung above Jesus' head say? What do you think is interesting about this sign?** (*"This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." Jesus never called Himself a king, yet as God's own Son, Jesus actually is King over the whole world.*)
- **What does the word sacrifice mean to you? How are sacrifice and love connected?**
- **How do you think you would have reacted to seeing Jesus die on the cross?**
- **How can you thank Jesus for His love and for dying on the cross?**
- **When Jesus died, it wasn't the end of the story! What happened three days later?** (*He rose from the dead and is alive!*)

Jesus made the decision to die on the cross because He loves us and knew that's what it would take for us to be able to know God as a friend. Let's talk with God in prayer and thank Him for Jesus' sacrifice!

Small Group Prayer Time

SUPPLIES: paper (1 sheet per kid), writing utensils (1 per kid)

Give each kid a piece of paper and a writing utensil. Invite them to write short notes to Jesus, thanking Him for His sacrifice. Kids may also write down any prayer requests they have on the back of their paper. Then pray together, giving kids an opportunity to speak their praises and requests aloud as prayers.

Head to Large Group!

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

Elementary Responding in Worship: Rock Art Remembering

SUPPLIES: small rocks (1 per kid), paint pens/markers (1 per 2–3 kids), paintbrushes (1 per kid), red acrylic paint, wet wipes, disposable tablecloths (optional), hair dryer (optional), clear acrylic gloss (optional)

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: “At the Cross (Love Ran Red)/The Cross Has the Final Word” from the [Created New Elementary Spotify playlist](#)

Ahead of time, set up art stations where kids can paint their rocks. Consider covering tables with disposable tablecloths and set out small rocks (one per kid) and painting supplies. If possible, create a sample rock ahead of time.

Leader Tip: If you have a lot of younger kids or limited time for this activity, use a paint pen/marker to draw a heart on each of the rocks ahead of time. Kids will then use red paint to stamp their fingerprints inside their hearts and draw their own crosses over the hearts.



Today we heard about how Jesus showed His love for us by dying on the cross. Let's create some rock art to help us remember that Jesus loves us so much that He sacrificed His own life so that we can be with God forever! Invite kids to find a place at an art station and give a rock to each kid. Walk them through the process of creating their own rock art by explaining the following steps. If you created a sample ahead of time, show it to the kids.

1. With a paint pen/marker, draw a heart on the rock. (Skip this step if hearts were drawn on the rocks ahead of time.)
2. Use a paintbrush to paint red onto one of your fingers.
3. Use your painted finger like a stamp and stamp red inside the heart. Use a wet wipe to wipe finger clean.
4. Let the rock dry for several minutes. (If a hair dryer is available, have a leader hold the hair dryer as kids take turns setting their rocks under the hair dryer for several seconds. The paint should dry quickly! Just be sure the hot air is aimed at rocks only—not at people or their fingers!)
5. Once the heart is dry, use a paint pen/marker to draw a cross on top of the heart.
6. If you have clear acrylic gloss, have an adult leader spray kids' finished rocks to seal them. (Do this somewhere away from the kids, such as outside or in another room.) The seal will weatherproof the rocks so that kids can set them outside.

Play music, such as “At the Cross (Love Ran Red)/The Cross Has the Final Word,” from the [Created New Elementary Spotify playlist](#) as kids paint their rocks. As kids create, invite them to think of ways Jesus has shown His love to them. Encourage them to share their thoughts with the kids near them.

Make It Inclusive: Some kids who have sensory sensitivities don't like painting on their fingers. As an alternative, invite them to create the heart using paint and a paintbrush, a paint pen, or a dot marker. Dot markers are good to have available for kids who have difficulty grasping thinner utensils.

When all the kids have finished, gather everyone and invite them to hold their painted rocks in front of them. **As you go home today, I encourage you to put your rocks somewhere that you'll see often, such as next to your bed or on the ground outside your front door** (if the rocks are sealed). **When you see the heart on your rock, remember that Jesus loves you! And when you see the cross, remember that Jesus showed His love for you by dying on the cross. Let's say our Wonder Truth together now: Jesus showed His love by dying for us!** Repeat the Wonder Truth several times together, getting louder each time.

Preteen Responding in Worship: Tearing the Curtain

SUPPLIES: thin fabric swatches (1 per kid, purple or dark blue if possible), whiteboard, dry-erase marker, scissors (prep only; optional), cardstock (optional, half sheet per kid), fabric window curtain (optional)

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: Tearing the Curtain Slide, “At the Cross (Love Ran Red)/The Cross Has the Final Word” from the [Created New Elementary Spotify playlist](#)

In this activity, kids will tear fabric swatches in half to represent the temple curtain tearing in two the day Jesus died. You'll need a swatch of fabric for each kid that is thin enough for them to tear in half. Consider cutting a tiny slit on one side of the fabric so kids can more easily tear the fabric in half. The size of the swatches isn't important as long as they can be easily torn. If possible, procure purple or dark blue swatches to resemble the colors of the temple curtain. As an alternative to fabric swatches, kids can tear half sheets of cardstock.

Ahead of time, write “The curtain is torn! Sin has lost its power! Because of Jesus, we can be with God forever!” on the whiteboard.

Today we heard about the greatest act of love in history—Jesus' death on the cross. Sin—the wrong things people say and do—broke our relationship with God. Jesus loves us so much that He willingly died in a horrible way to fix our relationship with God! Does anyone remember what unusual things happened at the moment when Jesus died?

Invite kids to share. **Yes! Just before Jesus died, the entire land was covered in darkness in the middle of the afternoon. Then the moment He cried out and breathed His last breath, the earth shook and the curtain in the temple tore in two.**

If you have a fabric window curtain, hold it up as you continue. **The temple was the place in Jerusalem where Jews went to worship God. The most inner room in the temple was called the Holy of Holies.**

It was an extremely sacred space that was considered the actual dwelling place of God's presence on earth. Only one person, the High Priest, was allowed to enter the Holy of Holies and only on one day each year. A special curtain, or veil, separated the Holy of Holies from other parts of the temple. This curtain was very large and very thick. It was made from the finest blue, purple, and red yarn. Scholars estimate that it was 60 feet high (about 18 meters), 30 feet wide (about 9 meters), and about four inches thick (10 centimeters)! **Imagine trying to tear that curtain!**

Give a swatch of fabric (or half sheet of cardstock) to each kid. **The temple curtain symbolized the separation between God and people caused by sin. When Jesus died, the curtain tore in two!**

- **What do you think the curtain tearing in two might represent?** (Possible answer: Sin separated us from God. Jesus' death broke the power of sin, so we're no longer separated from Him. The curtain, which separated people in the temple from the place of God's presence, tore in two representing that the people can be with God again!)

Begin quietly playing music, such as "At the Cross (Love Ran Red)/The Cross Has the Final Word," from the [Created New Elementary Spotify playlist](#). Invite kids to spread out with their fabric (or cardstock) in hand. **As the music plays, I encourage each of you to think about the temple curtain. Close your eyes and image how high and wide and thick it was.** Pause as kids think quietly. **Now picture that thick curtain separating you and God like the sin that separated us from Him.** Pause for a few moments. **Because of Jesus' death on the cross, sin has lost its power! Now there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God! As you picture the temple curtain tearing in two, take your own fabric (or cardstock) and tear it in two!** Pause for kids to tear their fabric. If you have a fabric swatch, tear it now as well! **Together let's read the words on the whiteboard as a declaration: The curtain is torn! Sin has lost its power! Because of Jesus, we can be with God forever!**

Invite kids to take their torn fabric (or cardstock) home as a reminder that Jesus showed His love by dying for us. When we follow Him, we can have a relationship with the God of the universe!

Leader Tip: Some kids might be hearing the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection for the first time. This is a great opportunity to talk with them about the joy of following Jesus! Consider inviting their families as well as other ministry leaders into the conversation. Reference the Salvation Path resource for details and ideas.