



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: Jesus makes us new. —from 2 Corinthians 5:17

- Puppet Intro and Curiosity Questions
- Declaring God's Wonder
- Prayer of Invitation
- Worship: Happy Day, My God
- God's Big Story: The Fall
- Connecting the Wonder Truth
- Prayer and Blessing





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 Showed His Love by Dying for Us

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 27

WORD OF WONDER: From 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 EARLY CHILDHOOD

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

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 27

WORD OF WONDER: From 2 Corinthians 5:17

Welcome

Slide: Series Welcome Loop

As kids arrive...

Walk around the room and welcome as many kids as possible by showing excitement that they have joined you. Give high-fives, fist bumps, encourage them to sit on the floor in their spots, and ask questions about their week.

Video: Countdown

Welcome kids to worship time. Introduce yourself by name.

Puppet Intro and Curiosity Questions

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: Tac the Cat puppet

For this section, you can use the cat picture provided, a stuffed animal cat, or a cat hand puppet.

Leader: Remember our friend, Tac? He's here again, and he's curious!

Tac the Cat: Hi, kids! I'm curious today about my grandma, Meow-ma, because I don't know if she loves me. My mom says she loves me ... but does she really?

Leader: Tac, I'm sure your Meow-ma loves you! Doesn't she show you her love by the way she treats you?

Tac the Cat: What do you mean?

Leader: Well, does she call you and spend time with you?

Tac the Cat: Yes, she does. She takes me on cat walks.

Leader: Does she get you things or do things for you?

Tac the Cat: Yes, she does all that! She got me a fun new cat toy last week. And she planned a park play date for the two of us.

Leader: And when you have a problem and go to her for advice, does she help you?

Tac the Cat: She does! She gave me some wonderful advice yesterday.

Leader: It sounds like she shows you that she loves in lots of ways, Tac.

Tac the Cat: You're right. She does love me! And I love her. I need to think of a way to show her.

Leader: It reminds me of the story we're going to hear today. We'll learn about the most amazing way Jesus showed His love for us! He loves us so much.

Tac the Cat: He does?! That does sound amazing. I bet it's a really good story.

Leader: We'll learn all about it today in God's big story. There are lots of ways to show love. And God is love, so He's the best at it.

Tac the Cat: That's great! Now I'm going to go find my Meow-ma and let her know how much I love her too.

Leader Tip: Be sensitive to the fact that some kids might not have family members who show love like Tac's "Meow-ma" and might feel discouraged. Remind them that God loves them so much.

Have you ever been curious about something? Let's take a moment and think: What do you think the word love means? Allow the kids to respond. **What things have you done to show love and care to someone else?** Allow the kids to respond. **What makes you know you're loved?** Pause for responses. **We'll learn about the most amazing way Jesus showed His love for us.**

Today's Wonder Truth is JESUS SHOWED HIS LOVE BY DYING FOR US. Today, we'll discover how Jesus showed His love for us by dying for us.

Declaring God's Wonder

Show the Early Childhood Declaration Slide and encourage the kids to say the statements and do the motions with you.

Thank You, God, that You made me! (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Make prayer hands, then point up and then to yourself.

And I am Your kid! (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Put your hands on your hips.

Jesus loves me so much. (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Spread your arms out wide to your side one at a time, then pull them in for a hug around your chest.

His love for me is big. (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Hold your arms up high and wide above your head.

The Holy Spirit leads me, (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Bring your arms down from above, making a path in front of you.

And I can follow You. (Kids repeat words and motions.)

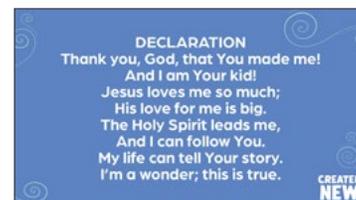
March in place like you're following the leader.

My life can tell Your story. (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Hold your hands in front of you like an open book.

I'm a wonder; this is true. (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Put your hands up, shake your fingers, and celebrate ("praise hands").



Prayer of Invitation

Before entering into God's big story, lead kids in a prayer of invitation. Use the prayer here or your own words: **God, thank You for loving us with a big, unchanging, never-ending love! Help us understand how great Your love is for us and help us to hear the truth of Your word today. Thank You most of all for Jesus, who loves us so much He was willing to die for us. In Jesus' name, Amen.**

Worship

Today we'll learn about how much Jesus loves us and how He showed that love by giving His own life for us dying on the cross. Let's sing about Jesus and His incredible love for us!

Play songs Happy Day, My God and encourage the kids to sing and dance as they praise God.

God's Big Story: The Crucifixion

SUPPLIES: Bible

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, which comes from the book of Matthew in the Bible.

Hold up a Bible and show the kids. Open a Bible and show them where the story is found in the book of Matthew.

Watch the God's Big Story Video.

GOD'S BIG STORY SCRIPT

SUPPLIES: play dough, small cross, paper heart

Parts of our story today might be sad. Can you show me your sad face? Demonstrate a sad face. **But other parts will be happy. Can you show me your happy face?** Demonstrate a happy face. **As we hear about how Jesus showed His love for us, you can make a sad face when the story makes you sad and a happy face when the story makes you happy.**

Make It Inclusive! This is a very heavy story and may be a lot for preschoolers to handle. Use care in how you share the story to sensitive or emotionally fragile kids, while still telling the truth of what Jesus did. For some kids who are highly emotional, a leader may need to be available to explain or answer questions.

God's plan to fix the relationship with His people started long ago. It was time for it to happen! God sent His Son, Jesus, to earth. Jesus taught people about God. He helped people. He healed sick people. It was time for Jesus to save people from sin. Sin is anything wrong we think, say, and do. Jesus came to fix everything that sin messed up. But the sad part is: Jesus had to die to do that. Jesus knew it was almost time for Him to die. He prayed in a garden and asked God for help.

Does that make you happy or sad? Can you use the play dough to make a sad or happy face? Invite a kid to come up and shape the dough while you talk. It's OK if the kids aren't sure how to respond or feel at this point.

Jesus knew He was going to die because people do so many wrong and bad things. These wrong things—called sin—keep us apart from God. Is that sad or happy? Pause for responses. **It's OK if the kids aren't sure how to respond or feel. Can one of you shape the dough into a sad or happy face?** Invite another kid to come up and shape the dough while you talk.

One of Jesus' followers was named Judas. But Judas was not faithful to Jesus. Judas worked with some leaders who wanted to stop Jesus. Judas took them to where Jesus was in the garden. The leaders arrested Jesus. But Jesus never did anything wrong. He did not deserve to be arrested or punished. The leaders took Jesus to a judge. The judge said Jesus did not do anything wrong. But the leaders asked the judge to punish Jesus anyway. Jesus was sent to die on a cross. Can someone come hold up the cross? Invite a kid to come up and hold up the small cross.

It was a sad way to die. It hurt Jesus. Some people beat Him up. People made fun of Him. They put Jesus on a cross, and He died there. He had power to save Himself, but He did not save Himself. He chose to die so we can be saved. He did not even sin! Jesus died to beat sin.

Show me with your face about how that makes you feel. You can feel sad Jesus died or happy He loves you so much that He rescues you from sin. Whatever you feel is OK! Allow kids time to show their expression and be willing to talk about it if needed.

When Jesus died, it was the middle of the day. But it got very dark. The earth shook. The curtain in the temple (where people worshiped God) tore right in the middle. But this was not the end of the story. Jesus died, but three days later, He would live again!

Can someone come up and hold up the heart? Invite a kid to come up and hold up the paper heart. **It can feel sad, but Jesus' love for us is something to smile and be happy about! Jesus chose to die because it was the only way to beat sin once and for all. Since Jesus died for our sins, we can be forgiven. We can be close with God forever. And He didn't stay dead—the best part of the story is coming next week! We can thank God because Jesus showed His love by dying for us!**

Connecting the Wonder Truth

Ask the following question to help kids connect the Wonder Truth to God's big story:

Our Wonder Truth today is JESUS SHOWED HIS LOVE BY DYING FOR US. Where did you see our Wonder Truth happen in the story? Allow kids to answer freely.

Jesus died to fix the relationship between God and people, making the way for us to be with God. A long time ago, when sin came into the world, God promised to one day make it right so people can be saved. Jesus is the answer to that promise! Jesus is the only One who can defeat sin and death!

Prayer and Blessing

After the kids finish their activity, pray with them, thanking God for loving us and sending Jesus to die for us.

Let's pray and talk to God.

God, thank You for loving us and sending Jesus. Thank You for forgiving our sins. We love You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Encourage the kids to hold their hands out in front of them, with palms up, as if their hands are open to receive something. Tell them to listen and receive the blessing as you speak it over them.

Blessing: **Because of Jesus, your sins are forgiven, and you can have a relationship with God ... forever! May you always remember that Jesus showed His great love by dying for you, and in Him, you are made new!**