

Kindergarten—Unit 12

Jesus' Great Gift of Love

Jesus, King of Kings, gave us his life. Children will celebrate Jesus' entrance into the holy city as a king and walk with Jesus through the last days of his life. Because of Jesus' unselfish sacrifice, we have the promise of eternal life.

LESSONS

1. Hosanna
2. The Last Supper
3. Dying to Live
4. Jesus Is Alive

Unit 12: Jesus' Great Gift of Love

Unit Information

SUMMARY

This unit completes the story of Jesus' life, focusing on Holy Week. It begins with Palm Sunday, continues with Jesus preparing his disciples for his impending death, follows with the story of his death, and ends with the resurrection.

KEY BIBLE TEXTS

- Matthew 21:1-11
- Matthew 26:17-30, 47—27:66
- Matthew 28:1-10
- Mark 11:1-10
- Mark 14:12-26
- Luke 19:28-40
- Luke 22:7-23
- Luke 23:1-24:12
- John 14:1-14
- John 20:1-19

BIBLICAL BACKGROUND

Hosanna!

The biblical account of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem is found in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Jesus made a dramatic statement about his identity when he chose to ride a donkey into Jerusalem. The people understood the significance of his choice of animals to ride. Kings rode donkeys when coming in peace. The people responded to Jesus as if he were a king. They made a road with branches and cloaks, shouting: "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" (Mark 11:6). Hosanna means "Save now." The phrase "the one who comes" was often used in reference to the Messiah.

Jesus' entry into Jerusalem was also an act of courage. This was not his first visit to Jerusalem. He knew the risks involved. Yet Jesus chose to enter the city in a public manner at a time when Jerusalem was filled with people bringing their offerings and sacrifices to the temple.

The story of Jesus' death is a difficult one to relate to children. Adding the story of Jesus' triumphal entry provides a balance. Many people did acknowledge Jesus as king and Messiah. There was good along with evil in the events during Holy Week. It is a story children can replay with enthusiasm.

The Last Supper

As Jesus neared the end of his ministry, the clues for his coming death became more frequent. Jesus tried to prepare his disciples for life without his physical presence. Jesus talked to them about going to prepare a place for them (John 14:1-14). Jesus and his disciples shared a last meal together, the Passover meal.

Jesus told the disciples that he was the way to the Father. He repeatedly defined his interrelationship with God (John 14:6-11). He reassured the disciples

that in his absence they would be able to do great things: “Anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father” (John 14:12).

The disciples did not understand Jesus’ words at that time. Part of the lesson for us is to learn to trust without fully understanding why or how. Children model this type of trust continually as they rely on parents, pastors, teachers, and other significant people in their daily lives.

Jesus and his disciples shared the Passover feast in Jerusalem. Passover was traditionally celebrated in the family unit. In sharing this meal with his disciples, Jesus defined his family as those who believe in him. They ate this Passover meal after a long week of ridicule and derision from church leaders and other Jews in the city. The disciples were probably ready for “family time” together, apart from the stresses of the outside world.

With this meal, Jesus subtly changed a long-standing Jewish ritual, thus claiming his role as Savior of all people. He again told the disciples to be prepared for the time when he would no longer be with them.

Dying to Live

Jesus’ death was the ultimate conclusion to loving his enemies. Jesus made choices that led to his death. He did not hide or run when the authorities came to the garden of Gethsemane to arrest him. He did not answer Pilate, and he did not appease the religious leaders of the day. As Jesus’ prayer in the garden tells us, Jesus died to allow God’s purposes to be carried out. Jesus’ death fulfilled the prophecies about the Messiah. His death completed his mission on earth.

Jesus Is Alive

When the women went to the tomb to administer the burial rites, they found it empty. A being (*the Gospels differ on who it was*) told them Jesus had risen, as he said he would. Death had been conquered. From that moment on, those who believed in Jesus would need to have no fear of death.

The belief in the resurrection is the cornerstone of our faith. Many books have been written about it, yet the best route for adults may be to tell the story unadorned and allow children to guide us in their simple acceptance of the story as truth.

ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDINGS

- Jesus cares for us at all times.
- Jesus died on the cross.
- Jesus died to show his love for us.
- When Jesus died, the prophecies about him came true.
- Jesus rose from the dead.
- Jesus has prepared a place for us in heaven.

WORSHIP / BIBLE MEMORY

Here are some ideas you may want to use during your worship time:

- **Make a Lenten calendar**, beginning with Ash Wednesday. You may need to begin the calendar early and continue until Easter.
- **Make a bulletin board with seven branches.** Each week fill a new branch with an Easter symbol.

- **Make a pictorial calendar of Holy Week**, using the following symbols:

Palm Sunday: Triumphant entry
 Monday: Cleansing of temple
 Tuesday: Teaching in temple
 Wednesday: Quiet day, no activity
 Thursday: Last Supper, prayer in the garden and arrest
 Friday: Crucifixion and burial
 Saturday: Sealed tomb
 Sunday: Resurrection

- **Worship fingerplays:**

Palm Sunday

Stretch up your hands and wave your palm branches (*stretch up*)
 Bend yourself low to worship him! (*bend low*)
 Today Jesus comes into Jerusalem (*“walk” fingers on one hand*)
 Like a king!
 And our cheers are (*open and close other hand several times*)
 For him!

Everyone’s Story

(*Raise one finger for each group of people.*)

For black people

White people

Yellow

Brown

Red

Jesus rose from the dead. (*Rest.*)

For rich

For poor

For young

And old

For me the Easter story is told,

Jesus rose from the dead. (*Raise both hands high.*)

- **Memory passages** for this unit are short and celebrative. Jesus invites us to trust in him. Our trust is based on our knowledge of the resurrection and Jesus’ unending love. Repeat the main verse together every day before you begin the lesson.

- **Songs** from *Jubilee Songbook*:

—Riding to Jerusalem, page 44

—Tell the Good News, page 42

—Easter Day, page 43

—Awake, Arise, O Sing a New Song, page 6

—Rise and Shine, page 7

ASSESSING TEACHING / LEARNING

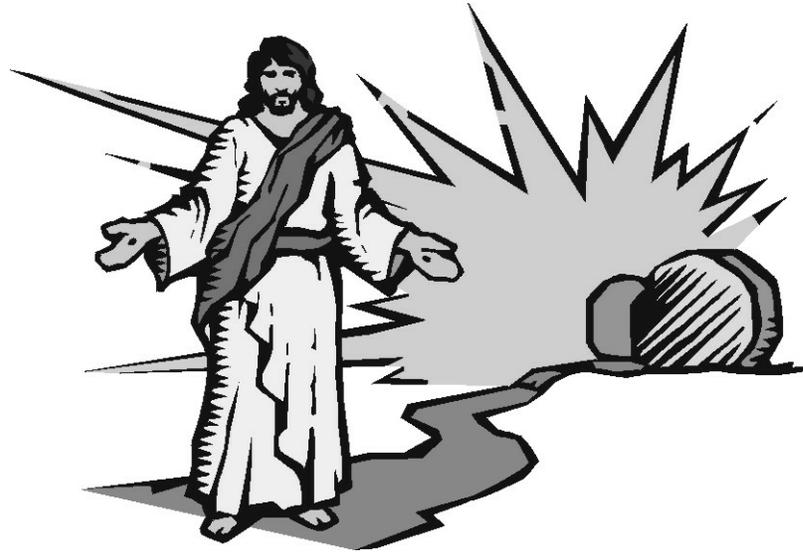
Observe students as they respond to the stories, to gauge what they understand. Note their responses to guided discussion, clarify their misconceptions, and review learning at the end of the unit.

Young children’s concepts of death and resurrection will change as their experiences broaden. Most children will readily embrace the knowledge that Jesus died

for us and rose again, without an in-depth understanding of death, resurrection and heaven. The important thing is for them to see the hope that is in Jesus because of his life among us, his death, and his new life in heaven. All concepts introduced in this unit will be explored at each grade level in a variety of ways.

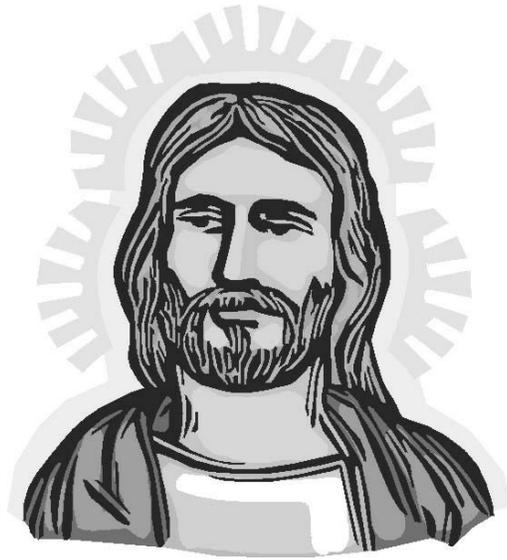
MEMORY PASSAGES

This unit offers the following main memory verse for students to memorize: Matthew 28:6a. Optional verses include John 14:1 and John 14:6-7. You will find these verses in large format on pages 323-325, to copy as take-home sheets for students.



[Jesus] is not here; he has
risen, just as he said.

Matthew 28:6a



“Do not let your hearts be
troubled. Trust in God;
trust also in me.”

John 14:1



Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.”

John 14:6-7

Jesus' Great Gift of Love

LESSON 1: HOSANNA!

Objective

Children will imagine the joy the crowd felt on Palm Sunday, welcoming Jesus into Jerusalem.

Key Concepts

- Jesus entered Jerusalem as a king.
- People were happy when Jesus rode into Jerusalem as a king.

Text: Matthew 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-10

Estimated Lesson Time: 25-30 minutes

Materials

- *Jubilee Songbook*
- Head covering for story dramatization
- Palm branch pattern (p. 329)
- 9" x 12" sheets green construction paper, scissors
- For Extend the Lesson, option two: pictures of Mount of Olives, Jericho, and old part of Jerusalem; video depicting Jesus' entry into Jerusalem (*optional*)

Teacher Preparation

- Practice reading the Bible story "letter."
- Copy the palm branch, found at the end of the lesson onto 9 x 12 paper
- If using Extend the Lesson, option three, arrange a visit to a farm to see a donkey *OR* invite someone to bring a donkey to school.

INTRODUCING THE LESSON

1. Worship and Bible memory. See Unit Information, pages 320-321.

2. Presidents and royalty. Ask children if they have ever seen pictures or videos of a president or king/queen arriving somewhere. (*It would be great if you could find a picture to show them.*) Ask what they noticed. Did the leader drive his/her own car? Did the leader ride a bicycle? Was the leader alone? Did people notice when the leader went by? What did the leader's car look like? Say, "Today you will hear a story about a different kind of king."

LESSON STEPS

1. Tell the story of Jesus riding into Jerusalem. The stories in this unit will be in the form of letters from Jesus' friend Mary Magdalene. You can take her role, covering your head with a cloth and reading the letters to the children.

Dear friends,

My name is Mary Magdalene. I am one of Jesus' good friends. Several other women and I often travel with Jesus and watch him teach and heal. I have an exciting story to tell you. Today something amazing happened! We were coming

back from Jericho with Jesus. When we got near Jerusalem, Jesus told two of the disciples to get a donkey. This is what he said: “Go into the village next to us, and right away you will find a donkey tied up and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. If anyone asks you about it, say, ‘The Lord needs them,’ and the owner will send them immediately.’ How did Jesus know about the donkey? I wish I knew. Jesus can do all sorts of amazing things. He seems to know everything about everyone.

The disciples did what Jesus said to do. Sure enough, the donkey and the colt were just where Jesus had told them. The disciples brought the animals to Jesus. They laid their coats on the colt, and Jesus got on. We all walked beside him while he rode slowly. I couldn’t stop thinking about what a great man Jesus was, but here he was, riding on a little donkey!

When we got close to Jerusalem, we saw a crowd of people waiting for us. They had seen Jesus coming and wanted to welcome him. They laid their coats on the ground to make a path for Jesus. Some even cut branches from the trees and spread those on the ground in front of him. Suddenly there were people everywhere! They were in front of us, beside us, and behind us. All of them were cheering. “Hosanna to the Son of David!” “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Hosanna in the highest!” *Hosanna* means, “Save us now.” Jesus said, “They think I’m going to fight the Romans. They think I’m going to make the Jewish people powerful again here on earth.” He wished the people knew what he was *really* trying to do. Not everyone in Jerusalem knew who Jesus was. I heard some people ask, “Who is that man?” Others in the crowd answered them, saying, “This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee.”

Well, that’s my story. I wish I knew what’s going to happen next. Everything seems to be going so well. I wonder if Jesus is going to become famous everywhere now. I don’t think that’s what he wants. I’m going to stick close to him and find out.

One of Jesus’ friends,
Mary Magdalene

2. Wonder about the story, using the following statements:

- I wonder why even some of Jesus’ friends didn’t know what he was trying to do.
- I wonder what the leaders in Jerusalem thought when they saw Jesus becoming popular.
- I wonder if anyone besides Jesus knew what sad things were coming next.

Pray, “Dear Jesus, we love you and want to cheer for you like the crowds did. Amen.”

3. Make palm branches. Give each student a 9" x 12" sheet of green construction paper with the outline of a palm branch (p. 329). Have them cut out the branches on the lines (*don’t aim for perfection here!*). Explain that you will wave the palm branches in a parade. Before marching around the school (*with warning to other teachers*), playground, or just your classroom, practice appropriate waving as you sing familiar songs. Then enjoy the parade.

4. Tell the story of a more recent nonviolent leader. You may want to read a picture book about someone such as Gandhi or Martin Luther King Jr. Each worked to change the system they lived in by working in nonviolent ways. Gandhi, an English-educated lawyer, organized poor farmers and laborers in peaceful demonstrations against taxation and discrimination in India. He worked for the poor, for women,

for relationships across religions, ethnicity, and caste. He helped India receive its independence from foreign domination. Throughout his life, Gandhi was committed to nonviolence and truth, even in extreme situations. He lived simply, making his own clothes and eating a simple vegetarian diet.

Gandhi's work inspired Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to lead a similar movement in the American south. He used nonviolent ways to bring peace and equality in America's segregated society of the 1960s. He led marches, spoke eloquently, and like Gandhi, encouraged peace in every situation.

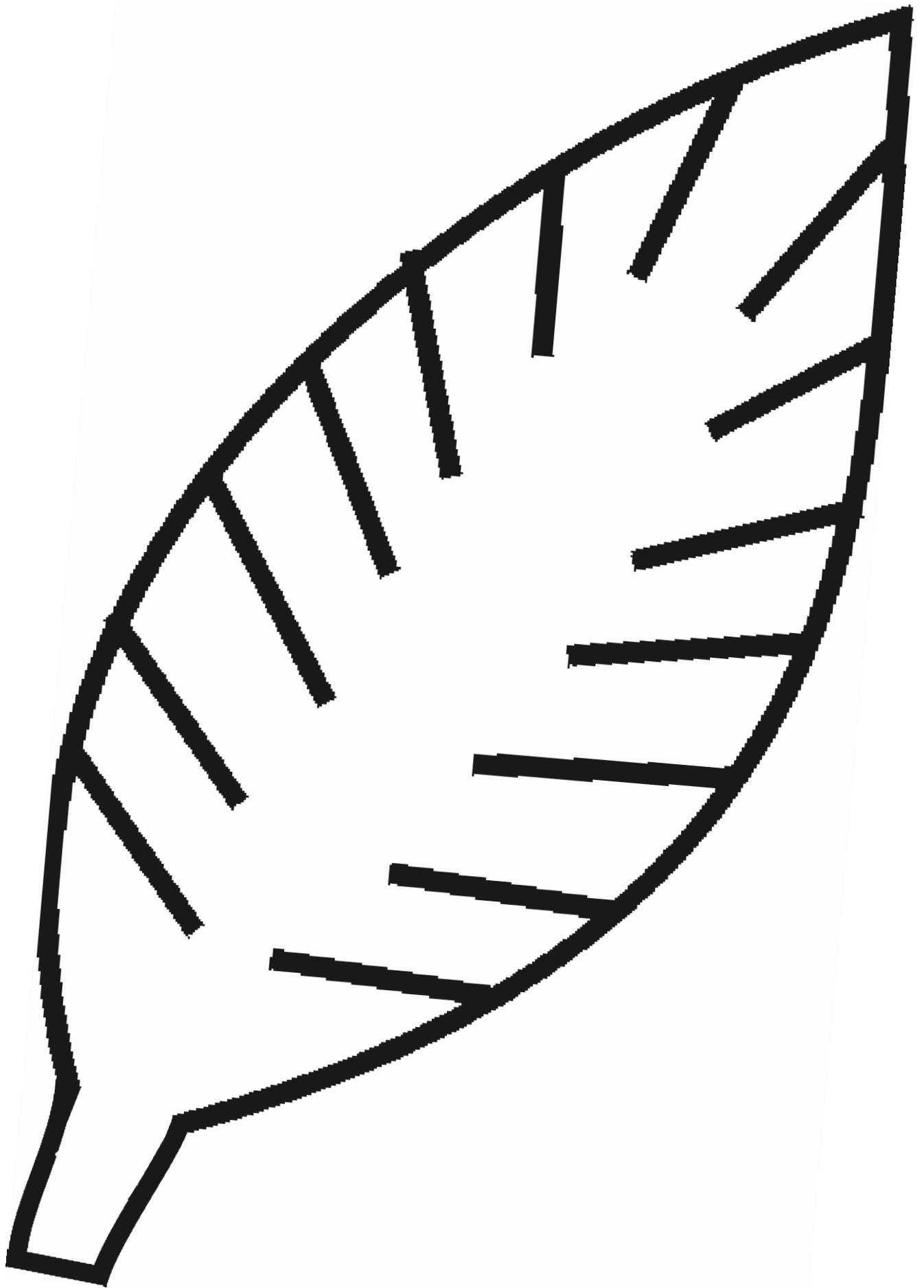
These two men, like Jesus, were committed to nonviolent change. Jesus was different, because he did not have a political agenda, but was aiming at creating a different kind of kingdom. Rather than entering Jerusalem as a king, about to conquer a city, Jesus entered the city humbly, in peace. Some of the people there may have thought Jesus was going to fight and get rid of the ruling Roman army, but Jesus' way was the way of peace and humility.

5. Close with prayer: *God, we know your way is different. We know that Jesus was a different kind of king. He didn't want to hurt people or become powerful and rich. Help us to remember that what is important in our world isn't always important to you. Help us to learn what is important in your kingdom. Amen.*

EXTEND THE LESSON

(These activities will extend the lesson to longer than 25-30 minutes.)

- **Act out the story** with the children. Invite them to put their coats on. If you want, one child can be the donkey. Children can take turns walking beside the donkey as the others spread their coats on the ground and wave their palm branches, shouting "Hosanna!"
- **Show pictures of the places Jesus traveled** just before and on that Palm Sunday. He traveled from Jericho to the Mount of Olives and on to Jerusalem. Show pictures of streets in the old part of Jerusalem that look much like they did when Jesus was alive. You may also find an appropriate section of video depicting Jesus' ride into Jerusalem. One possibility is *Jesus of Nazareth* (1977; directed by Franco Zeffirelli).
- **Visit a farm that has a donkey** or invite a donkey (*and its owner!*) to school.



Jesus' Great Gift of Love

LESSON 2: THE LAST SUPPER

Objective

Children will hear that we can trust in Jesus even when we don't understand everything he says, just as the disciples did during the last supper.

Key Concepts

- We can trust in Jesus even when we don't understand.
- Jesus cared for his disciples as his family.
- Jesus told the disciples he would be leaving them.

Text: Mark 14:12-26

Estimated Lesson Time: 30-40 minutes

Materials

- *Jubilee Songbook*
- Blindfolds for trust walk (1 for every 2 children)
- Headcovering for story dramatization
- 1 egg, 1 bone, horseradish
- Small piece of parsley for each child
- Salt water in a cup
- *Matzah* bread (available at larger grocery stores), enough for 1 piece per child
- Applesauce, raisin and nut mixture (enough to spread on *matzah*)
- Grape juice (enough for each to have cup), small cups
- For Extend the Lesson, option one: Picture of *The Last Supper* by Leonardo da Vinci (check art books or www.art.com)

Teacher Preparation

- Practice reading the Bible story "letter."
- Read the information on the Passover celebration on page 333 and prepare *Seder* food according to the directions.
- If using Extend the Lesson, option three, invite a Jewish person to come to your classroom.

INTRODUCING THE LESSON

1. Worship and Bible memory. See Unit Information, pages 320-321.

2. Go on a trust walk. Pair students. One child is blindfolded, while the other child leads him/her slowly by the hand. The seeing child must tell the blindfolded child when to step up, around, etc. Make sure students understand that they are responsible for their blindfolded partners. (*This works best on the playground or in a large gym.*)

After a few minutes, have partners switch roles. Emphasize the importance of trust between partners. The blindfolded person needs to trust the leader, and the leader needs to earn that trust by going slowly and reassuring the partner along the way.

When you finish, discuss the children’s feelings about the trust walk. What did it feel like to be blindfolded? To have the responsibility to lead? Explain that Jesus’ disciples had to trust him even when they didn’t understand everything he said. Say, “Today you will hear about a time when Jesus told his disciples things they didn’t understand. It happened in Jerusalem, during the Passover feast. Do you remember another time when Jesus went with his family to Jerusalem for Passover?”

LESSON STEPS

1. Tell the story of the Last Supper. Again, dress as Mary Magdalene to read this letter to the children:

Dear friends,

It’s celebration time here in Jerusalem! Jews from all over the country have come to celebrate the Passover with their families. Last night, Jesus and his 12 disciples ate the special Passover meal together in the upper room. It was a nice place.

Everything was going just fine. Everyone was having a great time when Jesus, with a sad, faraway look in his eyes, started to talk. “I need to tell you something,” Jesus said. “One of you is going to sell me to my enemies.”

“Oh no, Jesus. None of us would do that,” the disciples protested. “We love you too much to do that.” They couldn’t imagine that one of them would do such a terrible thing.

“It’s the one who dips his bread into the bowl with me. I feel so sorry for him! It would be better if he had never been born!”

A heavy sadness filled the room as they all continued to eat their supper. Then Jesus took the bread in his hands and said a prayer of thanksgiving. He gave some bread to each of the disciples.

“Eat it,” he said. “This is like my body—broken for you.”

Next, he offered a prayer of thanksgiving for the wine before he served it.

“Share this with each other,” he said. “This is like my blood that will pour from my body. That is my sacrifice for the sins of many people.”

Jesus wanted his disciples to know that he was going to die for the sins of everyone. But the disciples didn’t really understand what Jesus was telling them. When the meal was finished, they sang a hymn together. Then they left.

“Jesus!” said Peter. “I will never leave you, even if the others do!”

“Oh Peter, my friend,” answered Jesus. “Let me tell you the truth. Before the rooster crows twice tomorrow morning, you will say you don’t know me three times.”

Peter insisted that he would die for Jesus. The other disciples also kept saying that they would always be his true friends.

I keep thinking about everything Jesus said at the supper. Will one of the disciples really betray him? Will Peter really say he doesn’t know his best friend? It makes me feel so sad.

One of Jesus’ friends,
Mary Magdalene

2. Wonder about the story, using the following statements:

- I wonder how Jesus knew that one of the disciples would betray him.
- I wonder if Jesus was afraid to die.
- I wonder what the disciples thought would happen next.

Pray, “Dear Jesus, sometimes your disciples were confused, but they were still your friends and trusted you. We want to be your friends, too. Amen.”

3. Eat a Passover meal together. Explain that in Jesus’ time, all Jewish families ate a Passover meal together. Jesus ate his Passover meal with his disciples. Many Jewish families still celebrate Passover with a meal. Eat a simple Passover meal together, prepared according to directions on page 333. Remind students that at this Last Supper Jesus talked to the disciples about his upcoming absence.

- With students gathered around the table, talk about the symbolism of each item (*see p. 333*). Students will enjoy participating in this structured celebration of remembrance.
- Instruct students to take one swallow of juice. Tell them God’s first promise: **“I will bring you out.”** Eat the *charoses* by putting a spoonful on a piece of *matzah*. Take a second swallow of juice, telling students God’s second promise: **“I will rid you of bondage.”** Eat the parsley dipped in salt water. Then take the third swallow of juice, telling God’s third promise: **“I will redeem you.”** Talk about the bone. Drink the last swallow of juice and tell God’s fourth promise: **“I will take you to me.”**
- End with the traditional Jewish closing: **“Next year in Jerusalem. Next year may all be free.”**

EXTEND THE LESSON

(These activities will extend the lesson to longer than 30-40 minutes.)

- **Show da Vinci’s painting** of the Last Supper. Have the children tell everything they notice in the painting.
- **Invite a Jewish person** to your classroom to talk about how Passover is celebrated by Jews today.
- **Relate the Seder to Christian communion.** How are they the same? How are they different? Have the children tell about communion in their congregations.

The Promise of Passover

Note: This is an explanation of Passover for the teacher. Use the information below and put it into children's terms to help them understand.

The story of Passover, the oldest continually celebrated holiday, is the story of the Israelites' delivery out of Egypt. When the Israelites were slaves in Egypt, Moses was sent to lead them out of Egypt into the Promised Land. Pharaoh refused to let them go, so God sent plagues to convince him to change his mind. In the tenth plague, the firstborn son of every Egyptian family was to die. To keep the Israelite children safe, God promised to "pass over" their homes if the doorposts were marked with the blood of a lamb.

The next morning, when Pharaoh saw that the sons of Egypt had died and the Israelite boys had been saved, he ordered the Israelites to leave immediately. There was not time to pack or even finish baking their bread that was rising. The Israelites baked it immediately to have something to eat on their trip. The unrisen bread became known as *matzah*.

The holiday of Passover has been celebrated by Jewish families ever since their escape from Egypt. The eight days of Passover begin with a special meal called the *Seder*. At this meal, special foods are served that have symbolic meanings.

These symbols include:

- **An egg**, which depicts regeneration and newness of life.
- **A sprig of parsley**, as a reminder of the branch that was used to sprinkle the lintel and doorpost with blood. Dipping the parsley in salt water symbolizes the tears of the Israelites.
- **The applesauce/raisin/crushed nut mixture** (*charoses*) symbolizes the mortar the Israelites used to make the bricks for Pharaoh.
- **A shank bone** from a lamb (*use a chicken bone*) to remember the houses that were passed over.
- **Bitter herbs** (*horseradish*) are a remembrance of being in slavery.
- **Matzah** (*unleavened bread*) reminds us of the Israelites' quick leave-taking from Egypt.
- **Wine** (*grape juice*) was drunk four times, because God's promise (Exodus 6:6-7) had four parts: **1. "I will bring you out;" 2. "I will rid you of bondage;" 3. "I will redeem you;" and 4. "I will take you to me."**



To prepare for your classroom *Seder*, arrange food attractively in the middle of a table. Use one egg for symbolism (*not to eat*). Put the sprigs of parsley next to a saucer of salt water. Mix applesauce, raisins, and chopped nuts in a bowl. This is called *charoses*. Display the horseradish. Put enough *matzah* pieces for each child on a plate covered with a cloth. Pour grape juice into cups, one for each child.

Jesus' Great Gift of Love

LESSON 3: DYING TO LIVE

Objective

Children will feel the sadness that Jesus' followers experienced at Jesus' death. They will recognize the cross as a symbol of Christ's sacrifice for us.

Key Concepts

- Jesus died on a cross.
- Jesus' friends were sad and missed him.

Text: Matthew 26:47–27:66

Estimated Lesson Time: 30-40 minutes

Materials

- *Jubilee Songbook*
- Picture of someone you love that has died
- Head covering for story dramatization
- *The Tale of Three Trees* by Angela Elwell Hunt (Cook Communications, 2004)

Materials for your choice of cross activities (p. 337):

- Cross centerpiece: empty juice cans; potting soil; grass seed; twigs fastened in shape of cross and fastened with string or narrow twine; paper to cover juice cans; tape; markers, stickers, etc.
- Hot cross buns: Roll ingredients (*see recipe, p. 337*); utensils needed for mixing
- “Stained-glass” cross banner: Black felt cut into 8" x 10" rectangles (1 per child) with narrow casing sewn at top; brown felt cut into narrow rectangles; brightly-colored felt cut into random shapes; white glue; thin dowel rods for hanging
- For Extend the Lesson, option one: modeling clay, rock, gauze-covered figure
- For Extend the Lesson, option three: passion music tape or CD, tape/CD player
- For Extend the Lesson, option four: branches from thorny bush or tree

Teacher Preparation

- Practice reading the Bible story “letter.”
- If making cross centerpiece, fill empty juice cans with potting soil and cut paper to fit around each can.
- If making hot cross buns, arrange to use an oven at school or to have a parent take rolls home to bake.
- If making cross banner, cut and sew felt as described above.
- If using Extend the Lesson, option two, research the story of Oscar Romero or other Christians who suffered for their faith.

INTRODUCING THE LESSON

1. Worship and Bible memory. See Unit Information, pages 320-321.

2. When someone we love dies. Show a picture of someone dear to you that has died. Talk about your sadness at their death and what you did to show that sadness.

Discuss fears we may feel about our own death, and the different emotions we might have when someone we love isn't around anymore. We miss them. We have things to tell them and wish they were with us. Ask children to share any experiences they have had with death or funerals. How did they feel? *(Sometimes it is hard for young children to experience the sadness an older person feels about death. Acknowledge that their stories may be told without emotion.)*

LESSON STEPS

1. Tell the story of Jesus' death on a cross. Again, become Mary Magdalene to read this letter to the children.

Dear friends,

In my letters, I have often told you about Jesus, the kind teacher who changed and healed lives and taught about God. Well, he died today. They killed him on a cross. It was a Friday I will never forget.

Last night, Judas Iscariot, a disciple of Jesus, led a group of soldiers to the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus was praying with his disciples. The soldiers captured Jesus and took him to Caiaphas, the high priest. A lot of church leaders and teachers were there. They were angry with Jesus! They said mean things to him and made fun of him. When Jesus simply answered their questions, they became furious. They spit in Jesus' face, and hit him hard with their fists.

Early this morning, they took Jesus to Pontius Pilate, to King Herod, and then back to Pilate. All the time, hatred for Jesus was spreading like wildfire! People were telling lies about what he did and said. They made fun of him. They even dressed him up as a pretend king and pushed a crown made of sharp thorns onto his head. Then the soldiers whipped him. After a while, everyone started shouting, "Crucify him! Crucify him! Crucify him!"

It was terrible! Jesus never harmed anyone, yet all these people were treating him badly. All the while, Jesus stayed calm and looked at them kindly.

Then the soldiers made Jesus carry a heavy cross. Since he was weak, he kept falling down. They made Simon the Cyrene carry it for him. I wanted so badly to do something to help Jesus, but the soldiers were mean to everyone who tried to help. I just cried and cried. It was so sad.

There were three people crucified today—Jesus in the middle and a criminal on each side. My heart feels like it's broken. Jesus was the most wonderful, most perfect person I have ever met. My special friend Jesus died today. What a sad, sad day!

One of Jesus' friends,
Mary Magdalene

2. Wonder about the story, using the following statements:

- I wonder why Judas led the soldiers to Jesus.
- I wonder how it felt to wear a crown of thorns.
- I wonder why the crowd hated Jesus so much.
- I wonder what Jesus' friends said to each other as they watched him die.

Pray, "Dear God, Mary Magdalene was sad that her friend Jesus died. We are sad, too. Amen."

3. Do a cross activity. Choose one of the options from page 337 to create a cross symbol. Each of these projects may require additional help in the classroom. Ask a parent to come in, or recruit help from an older class.

4. Read a story. Finish the lesson by reading *The Tale of Three Trees* by Angela Elwell Hunt. This is the story of three trees and their fates, connected to Jesus' life. The end hints at the good news coming in the next lesson.

EXTEND THE LESSON

(These activities will extend the lesson to longer than 30-40 minutes.)

- **Make a clay cave** on an empty desk. Wrap gauze or cloth around a small figure of a man and place it on a ledge in the clay tomb. Put a rock in front of the tomb to seal the opening.
- **Tell the story of Oscar Romero** or others who suffered because they chose to follow God.
- **Listen to music**, to help students feel the sadness and agony of Jesus' death. Two choices might be: "All They that See Him" and "He Trusted in God" from Handel's Messiah.
- **Make a crown of thorns** using branches from a thorny bush or tree. Let children touch it. Talk about how it would have felt to wear it. Use the crown as a display somewhere in the room.

Three Cross Activities

Cross Table Centerpiece

Give each student an empty juice can filled with potting soil, and a cross made of twigs, fastened with string or twine. Place cross in potting soil. Plant rye grass (*or other fast-growing grass seed*) around cross. Provide markers, stickers, etc., to decorate a paper to tape around can. Watch new life emerge.

Hot Cross Buns

These buns are traditionally eaten on Good Friday.

Buns:

Sweet roll dough (*or purchased frozen bread dough*)

1 $\frac{1}{3}$ cups raisins or currants

1 tsp. cinnamon

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. nutmeg

Egg white



Glaze:

1 $\frac{1}{3}$ cups powdered sugar

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. finely chopped lemon zest

$\frac{1}{2}$ t. lemon extract

1-2 T. milk

Knead spices and raisins or currants into dough. You may want to let children try kneading the dough. After the first rising, divide dough into 24 equal pieces, shape into balls, and place on baking sheet about $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch apart. (*Let children each shape 1 ball.*)

Cover dough balls with clean towel and let rise in warm place until doubled in size, about 1 hour. When buns have risen, take sharp knife and slash buns with cross shape.

Brush with egg white and bake at 400° for 10 minutes. Reduce heat to 350° and bake until golden brown. Mix glaze ingredients and spoon over warm buns in a cross pattern. (*Children may help with this, too.*) Serve buns warm, if possible.

“Stained-glass” Cross Banner

Give each child a piece of black felt about 8" x 10" with a narrow casing sewn on the top. Also give each child two narrow, brown, rectangular pieces of felt for the cross. Show children how to glue the cross pieces in the center of the banner.

When they finish, provide many random shapes of bright-colored felt. Invite children to glue these onto the banner, leaving narrow spaces of black between to create a stained-glass effect. When glue is dry, slip narrow dowel rod in casing, allowing ends to extend about an inch on each side. Attach string for hanging.

Jesus' Great Gift of Love

LESSON 4: JESUS IS ALIVE

Objective

Children will hear the good news that Jesus is alive. They will share that good news with others.

Key Concepts

- Jesus rose from the dead, as he said he would.
- Jesus is living today.
- Jesus promises us eternal life.

Text: Luke 24:1-12

Estimated Lesson Time: 30-40 minutes

Materials

- *Jubilee Songbook*
- Newspaper with interesting headlines
- Head covering for story dramatization
- Blanket to make tomb
- Blank paper for cards, markers/crayons
- Packets of seeds (at least 1 per child), tape
- CD or tape of Handel's *Messiah*, CD/tape player
- For Extend the Lesson, option one: book about the Easter story

Teacher Preparation

- Practice reading the Bible story "letter."
- Cue the CD or tape of Handel's *Messiah* to the Hallelujah Chorus.

INTRODUCING THE LESSON

1. Worship and Bible memory. See Unit Information, page 320-321.

2. Look at headlines. Bring in a newspaper and show children the "news" in the headlines. Talk about who might be interested in hearing this news. How do their parents hear news? Ask, "Is this good news?" Explain that today they will hear a story with some really good news.

LESSON STEPS

1. Tell the story of Jesus' resurrection. Again, dress as Mary Magdalene to read this letter to the children.

Dear friends,

Today is Sunday—the most amazing, wonderful day of my life! It began early this morning, when Salome, Mary, and I met with some of the women while it was still dark. We prepared some spices to take to the place where Jesus was buried.

We talked quietly as we walked along the road together. "How are we going to put these spices on Jesus' body?" I asked.

“I wonder, too,” said another. “There’s a huge stone in front of the doorway to the tomb.”

“It’s much too heavy for us to move,” someone else added.

“Surely someone will be there to help us,” responded another.

“But who?” we asked each other. “The stone is very large. Will the soldiers still be guarding the tomb?”

We continued talking as we trudged on in the stillness of the morning.

The sun was just beginning to peek over the faraway hills as we rounded the corner. We could see the tomb ahead. Our eyes grew big and our mouths dropped open. The stone was rolled away from the doorway of the tomb! There wasn’t one soldier in sight. The morning was perfectly peaceful, as if the terrible events of the weekend had never happened.

We were so excited and curious! Running to the entrance, we scrambled to look in. The body was gone! But where? How? Who had taken it? We didn’t know what to think!

All at once, two angels dressed in shining white clothes appeared from nowhere. We were frightened! We fell to our knees and put our faces to the ground.

“Why are you looking here, in a tomb, for someone who is alive?” the angels asked us. “Jesus isn’t here.”

“He’s dead,” I desperately tried to explain. “Where is his body?”

“He has risen from the dead,” an angel answered. “Don’t you remember the day by the sea, when Jesus tried to tell you what was going to happen? He told you he would die and then rise to life.”

“That’s right!” Salome remembered. Her eyes shone with tears of joy as she stood to her feet.

“I remember, too,” said Mary thoughtfully, as she thought back to that warm day by the Sea of Galilee.

Immediately, I knew what we had to do. “Let’s go and tell the others what’s happened!” I exclaimed.

“Yes, let’s go!” agreed the others.

We walked as fast as we could, to share our good news with the disciples.

“Jesus is alive!” we told them.

Our story seemed unbelievable to everyone we told. But the story was true! Jesus IS alive! He has risen, just as he said!

One of Jesus’ friends,
Mary Magdalene

2. Wonder about the story, using the following statements:

- I wonder how Jesus got out of the tomb.
- I wonder what the women said to the disciples to make them believe.
- I wonder who I can tell about the good news that Jesus is alive.

Pray, “Dear Jesus, your friends were so happy that you were alive. We’re happy, too! Amen.”

3. Dramatize the story of the women finding an empty tomb. Drape a blanket over several chairs to create a “tomb.” Let children take turns, in groups, to look inside the tomb, discover Jesus is not there, and respond with words and actions to the rest of the class.

4. Make Easter cards. Give each child a piece of plain paper, folded into card size. Invite children to decorate the front with a picture from the Easter story and write some words inside that tell the good news that Jesus is alive. By this time of the year, some students may be writing on their own. Encourage them to write whatever they want to say phonetically. For those who cannot, write a few simple phrases (*such as “Jesus is alive!” or “He is risen!”*) on cards for students to copy. Avoid writing the phrases on the board, to encourage independent writing for those who can. When children finish, provide small packets of seeds for them to tape inside their card. (*Often these are available ten for a dollar at discount stores.*) If a child finishes early, encourage him/her to make another card.

5. Worship together. Close the lesson with an Easter worship service. Use the following order, or adapt it to suit your time and your class:

- **Sing** “Tell the Good News,” page 42, *Jubilee Songbook*
- **Greeting.** Have children turn to someone close to them and say, “Jesus is alive!” Then ask them to tell someone else. And someone else. Then say, “All together, let’s shout it from the mountaintop: JESUS IS ALIVE!”
- **Sing** “Easter Day,” page 43, *Jubilee Songbook*
- **Responsive reading** (*have children respond to your statements with “Jesus is alive!”*):

Teacher: Did you hear the good news? Jesus is not dead. He’s alive!
Believe me, it’s true!

Students: *Jesus is alive!*

Teacher: Some people didn’t like Jesus. They thought he was too popular.
They found a way to have him killed.

Students: *Jesus is alive!*

Teacher: Soldiers beat him and made him wear a crown of thorns. They
made fun of him and hung him on a cross to die.

Students: *Jesus is alive!*

Teacher: But on Sunday morning, when Jesus’ friends came to the tomb,
the stone was rolled away and the tomb was empty.

Students: *Jesus is alive!*

Teacher: An angel was there. He said, “Don’t look for your friend in
here. He is alive.”

Students: *Jesus is alive!*

Teacher: They went to tell the good news. And we can do the same.
Jesus is alive!

Students: *Jesus is alive!*

All: Jesus is alive!

- **Sing** “Come and See,” page 22, *Jubilee Songbook*

- **Responsive reading** (*have children respond to your statements with “God makes all things new”*):

Teacher: The plants are turning green. Leaves sprout on the trees.

Students: *God makes all things new.*

Teacher: Jesus died. They buried him. But now he is alive!

Students: *God makes all things new.*

Teacher: Sometimes we feel sad, worried that nothing is going right. God sends people to cheer us.

Students: *God makes all things new.*

Teacher: Sometimes we feel lonely and far away from God. We know that God is still there.

Students: *God makes all things new.*

Teacher: Hallelujah!

- **Listen to the “Hallelujah Chorus”** from Handel’s *Messiah*.

EXTEND THE LESSON

(These activities will extend the lesson to longer than 30-40 minutes.)

- **Clay tomb.** Move the rock away from the tomb you made in the previous lesson. It is empty! Read a book about the Easter story.
- **Mime or role-play** the changing moods of the disciples: fear at the trial, sadness at Jesus’ death, loneliness in the days between death and resurrection, and joy following the resurrection.
- **Easter follow-up.** The first school day following Easter, invite children to share how they celebrated Jesus’ resurrection at their churches and in their homes.