

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.

MEMORY VERSE: I will spend time thinking about everything you have done. —[Psalm 77:12](#)

CURIOSITY

Interactive activities to help kids begin thinking about the wonder of God.

- Free Play
- Declaring God's Wonder



BELIEF

A deep and interactive dive into Scripture that guides kids into knowing God more deeply, exploring His big story, and marveling at His wonder.

- Prayer of Invitation and Worship
- God's Big Story
- Connecting the Wonder Truth
- Memory Verse: [Psalm 77:12](#)

FAITH

An intentional interactive discussion that helps kids discover the wonder of God's story and how it connects to their own.

- Circle Time: Discussion
- Prayer and Blessing

CLOSING

Interactive activities to reinforce the lesson and keep kids engaged during pick up.

- Roll the Egg
- Pass the Cup

INVITATION

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

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.

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

Free Play

As kids arrive...

Greet kids warmly as they arrive and help them find a game or activity to enjoy until the lesson begins. This is a great opportunity to get to know the kids in your class and play alongside them.

PRO TIP: This is also a great opportunity for a bathroom reminder!

Clean Up

At the end of free play...

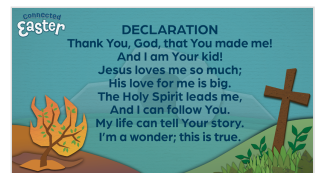
Play the Clean Up video to signal time to put away toys and activities. After working together to clean up, gather kids on sit spots, benches, or chairs to begin the lesson.

Declaring God's Wonder

At your start time...

SUPPLIES: Early Childhood Declaration [Slide](#)

Show the [Declaration Slide](#) if you choose, and encourage the kids to say it with you and do the motions.



Welcome to church today! I am so glad to be here with all of you. Let's get started by saying our declaration together. These words that we're about to say together remind us of what God says is true about me and you! Repeat after me:

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

Make prayer hands, then point up to God and 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 the sky, making a path in front of you.

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

March 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, shaking your fingers, celebrating ("praise hands").



Belief

LESSON 3 EARLY CHILDHOOD

Guide kids into knowing God more deeply, exploring His big story, and marveling at His wonder.

LESSON AT A GLANCE

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

SCRIPTURE: John 12–13; 19

MEMORY VERSE: Psalm 77:12

Worship

SUPPLIES: Worship music videos

Today we'll learn about how Jesus loves us so much that He was willing to give His life for us. Let's sing about Jesus' love together!

Play songs and encourage the kids to sing and dance as they praise God.

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: **Father God, as we listen and learn about Holy Week, may Your Spirit teach us, lead us, and show us Your love and plan. Show us how Jesus loves us and gave His life for us. In Jesus' name, Amen.**

God's Big Story

SUPPLIES: Bible, Easter eggs (4), coloring or writing utensils, [I Spy Sheet](#) (1 per kid, plus 1), [God's Big Story Video](#)

Before kids arrive, print a copy of the [I Spy Sheet](#) for each kid, plus one extra. On the extra sheet, cut out the following pictures and put them inside Easter eggs with numbers written on the outside: palm branch—1, loaf of bread—2, soap bubbles—3, and cross—4. Set these eggs close by.

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.



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

When ready to begin, hand each child an I Spy Sheet and a coloring utensil.

God's Big STORY SCRIPT

It was almost time for the Passover Feast. Passover is when God's people remember how God saved them long ago from being held captive in Egypt. Jesus was going to do something even bigger and more special. Jesus was making the way for all people to be saved from sin!

Jesus came to Jerusalem for Passover. Hold up egg #1 and have a child open the egg. Take out the picture of the palm branch and show the kids. **Can you find a picture of a palm branch like this one on your paper? Draw a circle around it when you find it.** Pause to allow the kids to circle the palm branch picture on their papers.

A lot of people came to welcome Jesus as their king. They held palm branches like this one in our picture and shouted, "Hosanna!" (John 12:13). That means "Save us, please!" Jesus came to save people, but it was not how they thought.

Some people were very unhappy with Jesus. They wanted to put an end to Him! Jesus knew He was going to die soon.

Hold up egg #2 and have a child open the egg. Take out the picture of the loaf of bread and show the kids. **Can you find a picture of a loaf of bread like this one on your paper? Draw a circle around it when you find it.** Pause to allow the kids to circle the bread loaf picture on their papers. **When it was almost time for Passover, Jesus was eating with His disciples, His followers. One of them was named Judas. Jesus loved His disciples. And He knew He would have to leave His disciples soon.**

Hold up egg #3 and have a child open the egg. Take out the picture of the soap bubbles and show the kids. **Can you find a picture of soap bubbles like this one on your paper? Draw a circle around it when you find it.** Pause to allow the kids to circle the soap bubbles picture on their papers. **Jesus got up during the meal and washed His disciples' dirty feet. Jesus did this for them to show He loved them.**

At first, one disciple named Peter told Jesus not to wash his feet. But Jesus said, "Unless I wash you, you can't share life with me" (John 13:8). Jesus was not talking about washing dirt off a body. Jesus washed their feet to show how He cleans hearts from sin. Like dirt, sin is in us. Jesus died for us to make us clean from the wrong things we do. Peter needed Jesus to make him clean from sin. We do too!

Hold up egg #4 and have a child open the egg. Take out the picture of the cross and show the kids. **Can you find a picture of a cross like this one on your paper? Draw a circle around it when you find it.** Give everyone a chance to find and circle the picture, and then continue: **After they ate, Judas left to turn in Jesus to the people who did not like Him. Those people arrested Jesus. They hurt Jesus and beat Him up. They nailed Him to a cross. It hurt Him a lot, and He died. It was the worst thing that has ever happened. But it was also the best thing that has ever happened. Because Jesus was going to show that death does not get to win! He made the way for people to be saved from sin. Jesus beat death because He loves us and gave His life for us.**

Watch God's Big Story

Watch the [Holy Week God's Big Story Video!](#)



Connecting the Wonder Truth

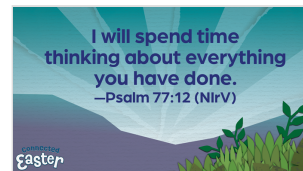
Our Wonder Truth today is **JESUS LOVES US AND GAVE HIS LIFE FOR US.**

Holy Week, which is Jesus' last week on earth before He died, led up to the biggest moments of God's big story: the death and resurrection of Jesus! Jesus' death on the cross made the way for our sins to be forgiven and for us to live forever with God.

When Jesus died on the cross, he let God blame the sins of the whole world on him. Every wrong thing we've done, Jesus took the punishment for us. He sacrificed himself to save us. Now we can live with God in a kingdom that will never end.

Memory Verse

SUPPLIES: Bible, plastic eggs filled with words to memory verse



Ahead of time, cut a sheet of paper into 11 pieces. Write one word from the verse 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.

MEMORY VERSE

**I will spend time thinking about
everything you have done.**

—Psalm 77:12

We are going to practice our memory verse together and then have an egg hunt to see if we can find all the words from our verse and put them in order.

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 verse. 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.

Help kids see the wonder of God's story and how it connects to their own story.

Divide kids into small groups and pass out coloring sheets to keep hands busy during discussion. Don't forget to practice the memory verse and award prizes!

Circle Time: Play Dough Response

SUPPLIES: play dough, paper plates (optional, 1 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.

Have kids sit quietly at a table, or if no tables are available, you could give each child a paper plate. Give each child some play dough. Kids can take their play dough home as a prize.

Let's think about the start of Holy Week. Holy Week started with people welcoming Jesus into the city like a king. They waved palm branches and shouted "Hosanna!" Let's make a palm branch out of our play dough and thank God for sending Jesus as King.

God, thank You for sending Jesus as our King and Savior.

Next Jesus ate dinner with His followers. Jesus knew that it was about time for Him to die. He washed His friends' feet after their dinner. To help us remember that dinner, let's make a loaf of bread out of play dough. We can think about what it would be like to have had dinner with Jesus and to have Him wash our feet.

Jesus, thank You for loving us even though we make wrong choices sometimes.

There were some people who hated Jesus. They hurt Jesus and nailed Him to a cross. It hurt Him a lot, and He died. Take part of your play dough and let's make a cross while we think about what Jesus did to save us.

Jesus, thank You for loving us so much that You were willing to die for us.

Let's make a heart and put it on top of the cross. It will remind us that death does not get to win! Jesus loves us and gave His life for us.

Let's talk to God now in prayer.

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.

Prayer and Blessing

After the kids finish pray with them and thank God for sending Jesus to save us.

Father God, thank You for sending Jesus to save us. Jesus, thank You for loving us so much that You were willing to die to save us. 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 were open to receive something. Tell them to listen and receive the blessing as you speak it over them.

Blessing: May you know the deep, never-ending love of God—a love so great that Jesus gave His life for us. Now and always, may you live loved and free!



Closing

LESSON 3 EARLY CHILDHOOD

Use the following activities to reinforce the lesson and keep kids engaged during pick up.

Option 1: Roll the Egg

SUPPLIES: plastic eggs (3–4), spoons (3–4), cones or chairs (3–4)

Split kids into three to four different groups for a relay race. Give the first person in each line a plastic egg and a spoon. Place a cone or a chair at the other end of the room opposite each team.

Using a spoon, we're going to have a relay race to see who can roll their eggs down and around the cone (or chair) and back the fastest. But there is something special about this race! When you get back to the line, before you can hand the next person in line the egg and spoon, say, "Jesus loves you!" As soon as someone tells you, "Jesus loves you," you can take your turn rolling your egg down and back with the spoon. Play as time allows.

Leader Tip: Kids might find it easier to get down on all fours and crawl as they roll the eggs with their spoons. Remind kids to push the eggs just a little at a time, so they don't go rolling away.

Option 2: 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.

Make It Inclusive! Some kids may have trouble sitting still and holding their hands behind their backs if they don't actually have the cup. Offer a small fidget toy for them to hold in their hands behind their backs instead of the cup.