Jesus is Crucified


Suggested Emphasis: Jesus was innocent but he was killed.

Story Overview:

Jesus was crucified on a cross like a common criminal. While he was on the cross the earth became dark. The huge curtain in the temple in Jerusalem suddenly ripped in half at the exact moment Jesus died outside the city. There was also an earthquake. The day of the crucifixion was a terrible day.

A simple way to explain the cross to young children...God created the whole world and he wanted everyone to be happy and love him. Sadly, people made bad choices and that has made lots of bad things happen in this world. Sometimes people even die. God was very sad that people had caused the earth to be so bad. Even though many people did not follow him he still loved them. So God sent his son, Jesus, from heaven to earth to show everyone how to obey God and make good choices.

But many people did not believe Jesus and got so angry that they made him die on a cross.

But guess what!? He was dead but after 3 days Jesus came alive again! Jesus showed that he is stronger than death and stronger than any bad thing that can ever happen.

Soon after he came back to life, the time came for Jesus to go to heaven to live with his
Father again in heaven. Before Jesus left he told his followers to be sure and tell other people the good news. The good news is that “Jesus died but he came alive again!” God says that Jesus dying on the cross means that people can change from being bad to being good. People who follow Jesus do not have to be afraid of dying. If you follow Jesus then you will also come alive again to live in heaven someday!”

Background Study:

Children need to know that Jesus died on the cross to save the world from sin. We must teach about the pain and agony Jesus suffered and yet we must be sensitive to the maturity level of our student. Generally, younger children need to know the big picture and that Jesus died for us even though it hurt. Older children can grasp more of the graphic detail of the crucifixion. Most importantly, is the fact that Jesus is the Son of God and could have called on all the power in the universe to stop the crucifixion. He chose to suffer for us instead.

After the trial Pilate turned Jesus over to the Roman soldiers. The robe they placed on him was probably an old soldier’s cloak. The crown was made from briars. “Hail, king of the Jews” was an imitation of “Hail Caesar.”

The cross beam that Jesus carried was probably 30-40 pounds and would have caused terrible pain to the torn flesh of recently flogged back. The soldiers must have thought Jesus too slow because they ordered someone in the crowd, a man named Simon from Cyrene (northern Africa), to carry the cross. It would have been customary for the sign stating his crime to be carried before him and then later nailed above him on the cross.

We usually think of the cross in one particular shape but a Roman cross could also be shaped like a T, X, Y, or I. Crucifixion was a Roman means of execution in which the victim was nailed to a cross. Although famous paintings often depict the nail scars in the palms of Jesus’ hands, in actual fact the heavy, wrought iron nails would have been driven through the wrist and the heel bones. The person crucified would not be able to breathe in a sagging position so they would have to lift themselves by pushing their feet against the nails. If the person lingered then the soldiers would break the legs so that they could not lift and breathe. This brought death on more quickly. Jesus was already dead when the soldiers came to do this. They pierced his side to make sure. Only slaves and the basest of criminals and offenders who were not Roman citizens were executed in this manner. It was a true injustice that Jesus was crucified.

The place of execution was called “The Place of the Skull”. Some say it is so named because of a hill shaped like a skull. Others believe it is referred to by this name because of its association with death. The Latin (official language of Rome) word for skull is “Calvaria” from which we get the word “Calvary”. The gospels do not mention a hill although we often hear “Hill of Calvary”. “Golgotha” is the Jewish Aramaic word for “skull”.

Tradition says that women of Jerusalem offered a pain-killing narcotic mixture to the sufferers. This might have been the mixture referred to in Matthew 27:34. His refusal was probably because he wanted to be conscious and alert. The fact that he still had the energy of a loud voice before he gave up his life shows that he maintained some strength to the end (Mark 15:37). Jesus gave his life instead of having it taken away. Later, Jesus asked for something to drink and was given wine-vinegar that soldiers and labourers often drank.

Jesus was nailed to the cross 9.00 Friday morning. (Mark 15:25). He had been up all night with the trial. Death by crucifixion could last 2-3 days but Jesus was dead by Friday afternoon. Pilate remarked on this (Mark 15:44).

The temple curtain between the holy place and the holy of holies tore spontaneously at the moment Jesus died. Under the Law of Moses only the High Priest could go into the Holy of Holies where God dwelled. Jesus broke down the barrier between God and man. The blood of Christ allows Christians to go directly into God’s presence (Hebrews 9:1-14; 10:11-14, 19-22).

Only Matthew records the dead being raised from tombs in Jerusalem (Matthew 27:52-53)
Way to Introduce the Story:

Collect “cross” items: jewellery, cards, bible covers, magazine pictures, artwork, newspaper ads, telephone yellow pages, etc. Look through these with the children and ask where they have seen crosses. The cross is “used” for decoration so much that it has often lost its meaning. Encourage them to think about the “real cross” throughout the lesson. Discuss this again at the end of the lesson. Ask them if they will think of the true meaning of the cross when they see these items next.

The Story:

Jesus was the Son of God. He was always kind and always chose to do right. But even though Jesus was good there were people who hated him. They did not like it when he said he was the King of the Jews. Some people hated Jesus so much that they found a way to have him put on trial and sentenced to die on a cross.

After his trial the soldiers made fun of Jesus. They put a soldier’s robe on him and put a staff in his hand to make him look like a king. They twisted thorny plants together to make a fake crown and stuck the crown on Jesus’ head. Then they kicked him and spat on him and hit him on the head over and over with the staff. The soldiers bowed down in front of Jesus and made fun of him by saying, “Hail, the King of the Jews.”

Jesus is the King! Jesus could have called all of the angels in heaven to come and help him. He could have called down fire to burn up the soldiers. He could have even just disappeared. But Jesus did not do any of those things because he knew that the only way to save everyone from sin was to die on the cross.

The soldiers put a big piece of wood from the cross on Jesus’ back and made him carry it. When Jesus got too tired the soldiers grabbed a man named Simon out of the crowd and made him carry Jesus’ cross.

The soldiers took Jesus to a place called “The Skull” (in other languages this is Calvary or Golgotha). The soldiers took off Jesus’ clothes and cast lots (sort of like dice) to see who got to keep them. They nailed big nails through Jesus’ wrists and heels to put him on the cross. Jesus must have really wanted stop everything then! Maybe he thought about all of his apostles and friends. Since he knew the future maybe he thought about all of us who had not been born yet. He must have really loved us to suffer like that!

Jesus was crucified in between two criminals who had done very bad things. One of the criminals made fun of Jesus but the second criminal told the first to be quiet and said, “You and I did bad things and we deserve to die. This man has not done anything wrong.” The criminal thought that maybe Jesus really was the King of the Jews. He asked Jesus to remember him in his kingdom.

Jesus said to the criminal, “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.” (Luke 23:43)

Jesus’ mother, Mary stood near the cross along with John, the apostle. Jesus looked at them and said, “Dear
woman, here is your son.” To John he said, “Here is your mother.” After that day Mary lived at John’s house so he could take care of her. (John 19: 26-27)

God had sent his son to die for the sins of the world. Even though it hurt very much Jesus decided to obey God. Still, when he was feeling very lonely, he called out to God, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?” That means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46)

The soldiers and rulers still made fun of Jesus. Instead of getting angry, do you know what Jesus did? He prayed for them. He prayed, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” (Luke 23:34)

Jesus knew it was time to die. He only asked for one thing. He looked down from the cross and said, “I am thirsty.” (John 19:28) Someone soaked a sponge with wine vinegar and used a plant stalk to lift it up to Jesus.

Even though it was the middle of the day the sky began to get dark. Darkness came over the whole land from noon until three in the afternoon. God had not forgotten Jesus!

Jesus prayed to God, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.” (Luke 23:46) Then he cried out in a loud voice, “It is finished” and he bowed his head and died. (John 19:30)

At the moment Jesus died, the great curtain in the temple of Jerusalem tore all the way from the top to bottom all on its own. The earth shook and rocks split. Tombs opened and many good people came back to life.

One of the Roman soldiers- a centurion in charge of 100 other soldiers said, “Surely he was the Son of God.”

Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using a variety of methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection, student interaction and/or emotion. Click here for visual aids and story-telling methods.

Click here to download these illustrations and slideshow: Be selective. Each teacher is unique so only use the illustrations that best relate to the way YOU are telling the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

Review Questions:

1. How did Jesus die? Crucified on a cross
2. Name three miracles that happened when Jesus died. Earthquake, darkness, temple curtain tore by itself.
3. Name one of the things Jesus said while he was on the cross. “It is finished” “My God, my God why have you forsaken me?” “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise” “Dear woman, here is your son. Here is your mother.” “I thirst.” “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit”
4. What did the sign above Jesus’ cross have written on it? “The King of the Jews”
5. What day of the week did Jesus die on? Friday

Song Suggestions:

- Crayon Song
- Oh, How I Love Jesus Song
- Sing songs from a church hymnal concerning the cross (The Old Rugged Cross, He Could Have Called Ten
Thousand Angels, Hallelujah! What a Saviour, Tell Me the Story of Jesus, etc.) Try inviting a few singers to visit your classroom to explain and sing some of these songs. If you arrange it with the song leader early in the week, he might be able to lead one of the songs in the worship service this Sunday.

- Refer to the Song Page on this website for more options.

Learning Activities and Crafts:

(How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation)

Activities:

- Pre-view and show the crucifixion portion of a video from a video rental shop. Choose one carefully and be sure and point out any parts that are depicted in any way different from the bible.
- Guide the children in reading today’s scripture references. Then have them draw about what they have read. Use a blank piece of paper or print this worksheet: The Crucifixion of Jesus Writing Response
- This story is part of a bigger story about the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. A simple way to tell the story is to open plastic Easter Eggs one at a time. Each egg reveals something about the story. If you are telling the stories about the death, burial and resurrection over a few weeks why not try repeating this method every week. The children will really know the story after this! Click here to learn how to do it.

 Stories about the Death, Burial and Resurrection of Jesus:

- Triumphal Entry
- The Last Supper
- A Night of Betrayal and Prayer
- The Trial of Jesus
- Jesus is Crucified
- Burial and the Resurrection

Crafts:

- Draw a large and simple cross shape on a paper and divide it into seven parts like a puzzle. Using a version of the bible with Jesus’ words in red, help children find the last seven statements Christ made on the cross.
- Use craft method to make a “cross”: finger-paint, paper mache’, ice-block/craft sticks, seeds glued on a board, etc.
- Use large pieces of wood to make crosses- one for each child and the teacher. You might want to ask someone for help on this. You and the children should write sins (bad things) on plastic bags with sharpee markers and then fill the bags with sand. Use string or strong tape to tie the bags to the cross. Each person should now carry their cross for a short distance. Make it harder to carry by using one hand or holding behind your back. Now, guide the children in transferring all of the bags to your cross. Now you should walk a distance carrying everyone’s bags. Discuss how Jesus bore the weight of everyone’s sins on
the cross. (Thanks to Kayla Robinson for this idea!).

- Use these instructions for The Story of the Cross to learn a simple way to tell the story using one sheet of paper.
- Guide the children in reading today’s scripture references. Then have them draw about what they have read. Use a blank piece of paper or print this worksheet: The Crucifixion of Jesus Drawing Response

Check the Teaching Ideas page on this website for ideas that are adaptable to any lesson.

Click here for “Jesus is Crucified” printables to print on A4 size paper
Click here for “Jesus is Crucified” to print on Letter size paper (USA)

Other Online Resources:

- Colouring page and worksheets about Jesus before Pilate and then the road to the cross (Calvary Curriculum)
- Colouring page and worksheets about the crucifixion (Calvary Curriculum)
- Colouring page (sermons4kids.com)
- Colouring page (christiananswers.net)
- Map of Crucifixion (bible-printables.com)
- Same palm flax with instructional video (ucatholic.com)
- Crafts: Cross craft selection (artistshelpingchildren.org - scroll down once you are on the page)
- Craft: Simple paper cross (motherhoodonadime.com)
- Video: Amazing telling of the crucifixion and resurrection using sand art-6 minutes 49 seconds (youtube)
- Video: “What Was the Crucifixion Like?” by Messages of Christ. Youtube video 7 minutes 37 seconds in length. Helpful background information and detailed explanation of the crucifixion.
- Printable Bookmarks. Enter your own personal text and then print them. (activitiesforkids.com)
- A good selection of both online and printable puzzles, activities and story words covering the Last Supper through to the crucifixion (gardenofpraise.com)
- Class plan and worksheets (cllutheran.org)

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