

Jesus is Crucified



Scripture Reference: [Matthew 27:32-56](#)

Suggested Theme: Jesus took on our sins at the cross so we could be forgiven. He did this because He loves us.

Memory Verse: “But Christ died for us while we were still sinners. In this way God shows his great love for us.” [Romans 5:8, ICB](#)

Story Overview:

Jesus was crucified on a cross like a common criminal, even though He had never done anything wrong. Being crucified was a horrible way to die, but Jesus died this way because He loved us. While Jesus was on the cross, He took on our sins so that we could be forgiven. Jesus’ death also led to many miraculous events that day in Jerusalem. This was a terrible and powerful day.

Background Study:

Each of the gospel writers wrote about the crucifixion of Jesus. In addition to Matthew’s version, in [Matthew 27:32-56](#), read the other writing to gain other perspectives and a fuller understanding of what happened on this most terrible day. The other accounts can be found in the following:

- [Mark 15:21-41](#)
- [Luke 23:26-49](#)
- [John 19:17-37](#)

When teaching the important truths of Jesus’ suffering and death on the cross, consider the maturity level of our listeners. Too much graphic detail for young children will result in unhealthy fixation or fear. We want their minds to dwell upon Jesus and not remain fixated on the trauma of His death.

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. Remember to stress 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.

Although this lesson is about the crucifixion and death, it should always be considered within the context of the [Resurrection of Jesus](#). If you will continue the storyline in the next teaching session, consider ending today’s lesson with a hopeful message. Give them a glimpse of the “end of the story” and tell them that Jesus will return to life. Encourage them to return next time to learn how all the sadness would turn into joy.

After the [unfair trials in the city of Jerusalem](#), Jesus was led away by the soldiers to be executed on a cross. The cross beam that Jesus carried was probably 30-40 pounds and would have caused terrible pain to the torn flesh of a 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 or tied 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 their legs so that they could not lift themselves to 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, the worst criminals (like those leading rebellions against Rome) 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."

A feature of the cruel punishment of crucifixion was that the suffering would go on for a long time. Jesus was nailed to the cross around 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. This was unusual, and Pilate remarked upon it ([Mark 15:44](#)).

The last hours and words of Jesus are recorded by the gospel writers.

He was crucified between two criminals.

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. *'Then Jesus said to him, "Listen! What I say is true: Today you will be with me in paradise!"'* Luke 23:43, ICB

He made arrangements for his mother

[John 19: 26-27](#) 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." Jesus asked John to care for His mother as if she were his own.

He died alone for our sins

[Matthew 27:46](#) Sin separates us from God. While on the cross, Jesus was carrying the sins of every person upon Himself. In those hours, the sin he carried separated Him from God for the first and only time. This separation was an excruciating cost, even beyond the physical suffering. *"About three o'clock Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" This means, 'My God, my God, why have you left me alone?'"*

Jesus forgave those who crucified Him

[Luke 23:34](#) The soldiers, officers and even onlookers who passed by the cross made fun of Jesus. Instead of getting angry, do you know what Jesus did? He prayed for them. He prayed, "Father, forgive them. They don't know what they are doing."

He was thirsty

[John 19:28-29](#) Jesus refused the first drink offered to Him, but before He died, He accepted another. *“After this, Jesus knew that everything had been done. To make the Scripture come true, he said, ‘I am thirsty.’ There was a jar full of vinegar there, so the soldiers soaked a sponge in it. Then they put the sponge on a branch of a hyssop plant and lifted it to Jesus’ mouth.”*

He gave up his life

Jesus had the power to stop all of this from happening, but He did not. God did not make Jesus die on the cross. Jesus chose to obey His Father and die for us.

- [Luke 23:46](#): *“Jesus prayed to God, ‘Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.’”*
- [John 19:30](#): *“Jesus cried out in a loud voice, ‘Father, I give you my life.’ After Jesus said this, he died.”*

Everyone felt the effects of the death of Jesus

[Luke 23:44-47](#) and [Matthew 27:50-54](#) list a number of immediate effects occurring when Jesus died.

- There was a big earthquake, and the ground shook.
- Darkness fell in the middle of the day, from 1 pm until 3 pm.
- The curtain in the Temple was split from top to bottom.
- An army officer and soldiers who witnessed Jesus die were convinced He was the Son of God.
- Tombs opened. Later in the week, people witnessed raised people walking in the city.

But why did Jesus have to die?

A simple way to explain the cross to young children...

“God created the whole world, and He wanted everyone to love Him. He wanted to show everyone His love for them. Sadly, people make bad choices, which has caused many bad things 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 His love and how to obey and love Him.

Sadly, many people did not believe what Jesus said about God’s love and how to follow Him. They got so angry that they made Him die on the cross.

But even though this was terrible, Jesus’ death had a purpose. When He died, He took all of our sins so that we could be forgiven. He died because He loves us. When people die, they do not come back to life. But God had a plan, and He planned to do a miracle. After three days, God made Jesus come alive again! Jesus showed us that He is stronger than death and stronger than any bad thing that can ever happen. Because Jesus died, the world will one day be good and beautiful again, and we will live with God forever.

Soon after He came back to life, the time came for Jesus to leave this earth to go and live with His Father again in heaven. Before Jesus left, He told his followers to be sure to tell other people the good news.

The good news is that “Jesus died, but He came alive again!” God loved the world so much that He gave us His only son, Jesus, so that if we believe in Him, we can have eternal life. If you follow Jesus, you can be forgiven, and after you die, you can come alive again too and live with God and Jesus forever!”

Way to Introduce the Story:

Sit in a circle with the children and give everyone a rock. Choose rocks that have some weight and a child can hold in their hand. Have the kids compare the differences between the rocks. “Our rocks might be different, but we all have rocks. Something else we all have is sin, even if our sins are different. Our sin weighs us down like a rock. The only one who can take this weight away is Jesus.” In the middle of the

circle, place a cross or Jesus' name.

Have the children think of their sin as they look at their rock. When they're ready, they can place their rock on Jesus. **Explain that Jesus carries the weight of their sin now, and He is the only one who can. He gladly carries it because He loves us. Now we can take hold of God's forgiveness instead. If you would like, give each child a heart sticker or draw a heart on their palm to show that God loves and forgives them.**

Tell the children that today's lesson will be about how Jesus took the weight of our sins.

The Story:

Jesus was the Son of God and God loved Him very much. Jesus had lived with God since before the world began, but 2000 years ago, God sent Jesus to earth to show us His love for us. When Jesus lived on Earth, He was always loving and always chose to obey God. He was perfect.

But even though Jesus was good, there were people who hated Him. They did not like it when He taught about God's love for people and said He was God's son. Some people hated Jesus so much that they found a way to put him on trial and sentence Him to die on a cross.

No one wanted to die on a cross. It was painful, shameful, and scary. Even though Jesus knew he hadn't done anything wrong, even though he knew how terrible the cross was, He didn't stop it from happening to Himself. Why? Jesus chose the cross because He loves us.

When the soldiers took Jesus away to be crucified, they made fun of Him and humiliated Him, giving Him a pretend royal robe and a crown made of thorns. The soldiers put a big piece of wood from the cross on Jesus' back and made Him carry it on the way to the place where He would die. When he got there, soldiers put nails in his hands and feet and nailed them to the cross. Dying on a cross hurt very much. It hurt His body and hurt His feelings. But Jesus chose the cross because He loves us.

The place where Jesus died was called "Golgotha" which means "Place of the Skull." Dying on the cross was scary. But Jesus chose the cross because He loves us.

Crosses were for criminals and very bad people. But Jesus was perfect. He was perfectly loving. He had never done anything wrong. He didn't deserve to die on a cross. It wasn't fair! But Jesus chose the cross because He loves us.

When Jesus was arrested to go and die on the cross, His best friends left Him. Peter, Andrew, James and John and His other disciples left Jesus when He needed them with Him the most. When Jesus hung on the cross, He felt alone. He felt like God had left Him. He said, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" But Jesus chose the cross because He loves us.

Jesus hung on the cross for many hours. During that time, Jesus was thirsty and the soldiers gave Him a drink. He was made fun of and mocked for being the Son of God and King of the Jews. He talked with the criminals on the crosses beside Him, and forgave one of them when he asked Jesus to remember Him in Jesus' Kingdom. He even asked God to forgive the people who were killing Him.

Finally, it was time. With a loud cry, Jesus said, "Father, I give you my life." He said, "It is finished." He took His last breath, and died.

After Jesus died, the sky turned dark even though it was only in the middle of the afternoon. Some people who had died came out of their tombs and walked around the city, alive! There was an earthquake. The curtain in the temple tore in two. Some of the soldiers who had killed Jesus saw these terrible things happen and realized what they had done. They said, "Surely this was the Son of God." All of these things happened because Jesus died.

Even though dying on the cross was painful, scary, unfair and lonely, Jesus chose to die on the cross because He loves us. That's how much He wanted to take our sins away. Dying on the cross was a terrible

thing, but it was the only way for us to be forgiven. Jesus loved us so much that He was willing to die on the cross so that we could be forgiven of our sins and live with God forever.

Romans 5:8 says that God showed His great love for us by sending us His son Jesus, and that while we were still sinners, Jesus died for us on the cross. This is a big mystery and the most important part of our faith- Jesus' death on the cross that took away our sins, and His rising from the dead on the third day after He was buried.

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 or other group participation.

[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 how YOU tell 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 and Reflection Questions:

Review questions help children remember and know the facts of a story, while reflection questions encourage them to internalize its meaning and implications for their lives. Asking at least one of each type of question can help strengthen a child's spiritual development and help them connect to God. [Click here to learn more about review and reflection questions.](#)

Review:

1. How did Jesus die? (Crucified on a cross)
2. What was the name of the place where Jesus was crucified? (Golgotha, which means "Place of the Skull")
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?", He asked God to forgive the people who were killing Him and forgive the criminal on the cross, He said He was thirsty)
4. Who asked Jesus to remember him? (The man on a cross next to Jesus)
5. On what day of the week did Jesus die? (Friday)
6. Name three miracles that happened when Jesus died. (Earthquake, darkness, temple curtain tore by itself, people raised from the dead)
7. Why did Jesus die? (Jesus loved us, and His death was the only way for our sins to be forgiven. His death defeated evil, sin and death. This lets us have eternal life and live with God forever)
8. What does this story show you about God?
9. What does this story show you about Jesus?
10. What does this story show you about people?

Reflection:

1. How does this story make you feel?
2. What do you think Golgotha, the place where Jesus was crucified, looked like?
3. How do you think Jesus felt when He was nailed to the cross?

4. Jesus' mother, His disciple John and a few others were standing by Jesus when He was on the cross. How do you think Jesus felt to have them there? How do you think those people felt seeing Jesus on the cross?
5. Jesus asked God to forgive the people making fun of and hurting Him while He was on the cross. Why do you think Jesus said this?
6. If you saw Jesus while He was on the cross, what would you be thinking or feeling?
7. What part of this story do you think was the most difficult or most sad for Jesus?
8. How do you think the people felt when the earthquake happened, the sky turned dark, and people were raised from the dead in Jerusalem?
9. What is something you wonder about in this story?
10. What question would you ask Jesus about this story?
11. What question do you have about this story?
12. What do you want to ask Jesus to forgive you for? What do you want to thank Jesus for? (Suggestion: Pray together, confessing and asking for forgiveness)

Prayer:

It is important to guide children in learning how to pray. In prayer, children can connect with God and learn that He hears and answers them. God can become a life-long friend who is with them every moment of their lives. Try using a variety of prayer methods from time to time so that the children can learn to connect with God in different ways. Note that you can pray at any time throughout your lesson. [A variety of prayer methods are found here.](#)

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 group 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.

Activities and Crafts:

[\(How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation\)](#)

Activities:

- Pre-view and show the crucifixion portion of a DVD/video from a rental shop. Choose one carefully, and be sure to 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](#)
- Play a simple word game. [Bible Wordz Game](#) is an adaptable game where children form words from letter tiles. The words relate to words found in the Bible lesson.
- This lesson is one of several that tell the story of Jesus' Death, Burial and Resurrection. These events are often grouped or taught together and called "The Passion Week." If you or the children want to explore this group of events, you can look below at the related lessons:
 - [Triumphal Entry](#)
 - [The Last Supper](#)

- [A Night of Betrayal and Prayer](#)
- [The Trial of Jesus](#)
- [Jesus is Crucified](#)
- [Burial and the Resurrection](#)



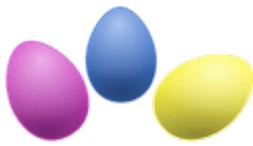
Invite the children to respond to this story using the adaptable “God’s Story” printable reflection page. [Free printables for this story.](#)

Crafts:

- Draw a large and simple cross shape on a piece of paper and divide it into seven parts like a puzzle. Using a version of the bible with Jesus’ words in red, help children find Christ’s last seven statements on the cross.
- Use craft methods 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 Sharpie 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 it 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](#)
- 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 tell stories about the death, burial and resurrection over a few weeks, you might try repeating this method weekly. The children will really know the story after this! [Click here to learn how to do it.](#)

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Print bookmarks, trading cards or timelines ([printable pages](#)).

- Visit the [Teaching Ideas](#) page for additional activities and crafts.

Other Online Resources:

- [Colouring page and worksheets about Jesus before Pilate and then the road to the cross \(Calvary Curriculum\)](#)
- [Colouring page with text \(Ministry Spark\)](#)
- [Colouring page \(sermons4kids.com\)](#)
- [Colouring page of Jesus carrying cross \(bible-printables.com\)](#)
- [Colouring page \(christiananswers.net\)](#)
- [Crafts: Cross-craft selection \(artistshelpingchildren.org -scroll down once you are on the page\)](#)
- [Craft: Simple paper cross \(motherhoodonadime.com\)](#)
- [Printable Bookmarks. Enter your own personal text and then print them. \(activitiesforkids.com\)](#)
- [Video: Amazing telling of the crucifixion and resurrection using sand art. The video is 6 minutes 49 seconds in length \(YouTube\)](#)
- [Video: "What Was the Crucifixion Like?" by Messages of Christ. Youtube video 7 minutes 37 seconds in length. Helpful background information and a detailed explanation of the crucifixion.](#)
- [Map of Crucifixion \(bible-printables.com\)](#)

<https://www.pinterest.com/marynnz/jesus-ministry-last-week-death-resurrection/top>

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