

Volume 11 Adult/Kid Connections (Spring 2015)

Unit 31, Session 1: The Rich Young Ruler

Matthew 19:16-30; Mark 10:17-31; Luke 18:18-30

Christ Connection:

Preschool: The rich young ruler loved his things more than he loved Jesus. Jesus wants us to be happy to give up anything to follow Him. Jesus is better than any treasure on earth. When we trust Jesus, we get eternal life.

Kids: The rich young ruler loved his possessions more than he loved Jesus. Jesus asks us to be willing to give up everything and follow Him because He is ultimately the only One worth following. Jesus is better than any treasure on earth. As people who know and love Jesus, we receive eternal life.

Adult Connection Point: The story about the rich young ruler points out to us that we should love Jesus more than anything else. Following Him should be the first priority of our lives. As a result, we should love what He loves, and one of things that He loves is the church, His bride for which He died (Eph. 5:25-26). Therefore, if we are to follow Jesus, we have no option but to live and serve as members of His body. To follow Jesus and become a member of His body, though, first requires that we turn from our sins and trust in Him alone for salvation. We must look to His death on the cross and resurrection from the grave in order to be made right with God. We must be made alive by the Holy Spirit and forgiven of our sin before we can follow Him as members of His body, the church.

While the Bible provides various insights into God's intention for His people, one of the most accessible is that we were created to adorn the person and work of Jesus Christ. As people formed by the gospel, we are united to show forth the beauties of the gospel in the way that we love each other (John 17:20-23). Accordingly, the Spirit has composed the body of Christ in order to facilitate our working together to accomplish the mission of the kingdom of God. The more we love the more we understand and appreciate the glory of the body of Christ, the more we will be enthralled with the opportunity to contribute to its common good. Consider the Voices from the Church quote below.

Voices from the Church:

"This is no polite and formal fellowship. It's a body, bound together by our individual decisions but also bound together by far more than human decision—the person and work of Christ."

—Mark Dever, *What Is a Healthy Church?* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007), 26.

Materials: spool of thread, needle

Direct each family to thread the needle assisting any preschoolers. When each member has had a chance, ask, "How hard was it to thread the needle? How hard would it be to push a camel through the needle?"

Summarize the Bible story of the rich young ruler.

Ask: “How did Jesus respond when the rich young ruler asked, ‘Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?’”

Comment how Jesus was testing the young man to see if he thought Jesus was only a good man or if he really believed Jesus is God’s Son. Jesus is good but more importantly He is God’s Son.

Ask: “What was holding the young man back from following Jesus?”

Recall how the young man was very rich and valued his things more than his relationship with Jesus. He walked away sad when Jesus told him to sell all his things, give the money to the poor, and follow Him. Jesus showed the young ruler that money cannot buy your way into heaven. Only when we trust Jesus will we receive eternal life. When we follow Jesus we will learn that a relationship with Him is better than any treasure on earth.

Consider giving up one activity this week and replacing it with time with Jesus. Pray, thanking God for giving us the greatest treasure of all—Jesus! Help us to remember that following Jesus is the only way to eternal life.

Unit 31, Session 2: Jesus Was Anointed

Matthew 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; John 12:1-8

Christ Connection:

Preschool: Mary did the right thing by pouring expensive oil on Jesus. She worshiped Him. Jesus deserves to be worshiped. Jesus knew that He was going to die to rescue people from sin. Then He would be buried, and, on the third day, He would rise from the dead.

Kids: Pouring the very expensive oil on Jesus was not a waste; it was worship. By allowing Mary to anoint Him, Jesus showed that He is more valuable than anything. Jesus knew He would soon die for sinners, be buried, and rise from the dead on the third day.

Adult Connection Point: As Mary's pouring of the oil demonstrates, worship is an appropriate response to Jesus, for He is God incarnate. Since in Him the fullness of God dwells bodily (Col. 2:9), the image of temple serves as quite the accurate image to describe Him. As the Son of God said, "Something greater than the temple is here!" (Matt. 12:6). Jesus Christ Himself is the temple of God. He is the union of divinity and humanity; He is where God and man meet. No longer was man to meet God in a place but rather in a Person. The temple was the sanctioned place of worship for God's people during the period of the Mosaic covenant (i.e., the Old Testament law), but as Jesus told the woman at the well, a new time has dawned where God's people are to worship Him in Spirit and truth from any location (John 4:21-24). We as the church are God's new temple in Christ and in us dwells the Holy Spirit. Hence, everywhere we go is in a real sense holy ground and everything we do necessarily involves our worship of the triune God because we ourselves are collectively and individually the temple of Yahweh.

In the Old Testament, the temple referred to a place. In the New Testament, the temple refers to a people. Christ is the foundation of this sanctuary where the Spirit lives. As Christians, we are being built together as God's residence—a beacon of light and hope to the world. The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ—the center of the good news of God's kingdom—stands as the only foundation that will withstand the shifts and storms of life. If our lives are to be built upon the foundation of Jesus Christ, then the same should be true of our churches. After all, the church itself is the pillar and foundation of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15).

This reality has deep implications for a local church's particular philosophy and practice—from preaching to teaching, groups, praying, eating, and singing. It gives meaning to our traditions and rituals and habits and infuses them with purpose and a filter by which all is to be assessed. Unless founded upon the person and work of Jesus Christ, all of our potlucks and prayer meetings and worship services will be pointless—like chaff that simply drifts away.

Without the centrality of the person and work of Jesus, our churches will be unable to stand and weather the cultural currents or tests of time. Unless we are grounded in the reality of the gospel, we offer nothing distinct to the world around us.

Materials: perfume or cologne bottle

Carefully pass the opened bottle of perfume around to each family member and allow them to smell. Guide your children to relate the perfume to this week's Bible story. Include important details or points your kids may have left out.

Ask: "What did Mary do to Jesus and what was the cost of her sacrifice?"

Recall how Mary knelt down next to Jesus, broke the alabaster jar then poured the very expensive oil on Jesus' head. The cost of the oil was estimated at a year's worth of salary.

Ask: "Why were the others upset at Mary's action?"

Remind your kids that Judas Iscariot didn't care about the poor because in fact he was a thief. The others did not understand that Mary's action was poured out on Jesus in love and worship not as an attempt to waste the perfume or take away from the poor. By pouring the entire jar, she was showing the others that Jesus is more valuable than anything on earth. Soon after this Jesus died on the cross.

Think of some ways you could worship Jesus this week. Maybe attend worship services together as a family. Consider deferring a purchase and giving the amount to your church or a ministry. End your time singing a worship song from the curriculum.

Pray, thanking God for showing us that Jesus is more valuable than anything. Ask Him to show your family ways to worship Him this week.

Unit 31, Session 3: Jesus Cleansed the Temple

Matthew 21:12-17; Mark 11:15-19; Luke 19:45-48

Christ Connection:

Preschool: Jesus was right to be angry when He saw people were using the temple in a wrong way. God is holy and must be worshiped in the way He says. Jesus came so that people would no longer have to offer sacrifices to worship God. Now we can meet with God anytime and anywhere. Jesus came to sacrifice His own body so we can worship God forever.

Kids: Jesus was angry that people were misusing the temple, the place people could go to meet with God. Today, Christians do not go to a temple to meet with God or to offer sacrifices for sin. Jesus died on the cross as the final payment for sin, and God's Spirit lives in us.

Adult Connection Point:

Read Revelation 19:6-9.

Jesus' forcing people to leave the temple, as recorded in the Gospels, reveals to us God's concern that His people worship in purity. God is pure, so people must worship Him in purity. Since everyone is a sinner and impure by nature, we must be made pure through the work of Jesus on the cross on our behalf. Through Jesus' death and belonging to Him by faith, we are made clean and able to approach God (1 John 1:7-9). God declares us to be righteous in His sight because of Jesus' perfect obedience (Rom. 5:1). We are as a result called to live a life of purity in light of this declaration. The New Testament uses the imagery of a bride adorning herself in purity while she awaits her groom to depict the church's relationship to Jesus as we long for His return.

As we have considered the images of *body* and *temple* during the two previous weeks, so we now turn to that of *bride*. Who are we? We are the bride of Christ. And the Bible speaks of a day in which our marriage to Christ will be consummated in unending joy. The last book of the Bible paints a picture of a glorious wedding feast, with Jesus as the groom and the church as the bride in Revelation 19:6-9.

"His wife has prepared herself," wrote John. As the bride of Christ, we are to make ourselves ready for the coming marriage supper, the consummation of our faith and hope. We have something to do as we wait. Until the final glorious day, our duties are not done. For as final preparations are being made through the rehearsal and into the day of the wedding, so provision is being made constantly by the saints for that blessed feast.

Good works are an evidence of the internal wonder of faith. As the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us in the gospel, so it flows through us and creates an actual righteousness in us that begins to transform our lives. God looks upon the heart (1 Sam. 16:7), but His seeing doesn't stop there. Why? Because the heart is made evident by the hands and feet that follow wherever the heart leads. Those who love goodness and holiness and justice will pursue those things and thus adorn themselves accordingly. Those who consider others greater than themselves and have minds and hearts set on what is above will gladly serve Christ by serving His body. Those who are the bride of Christ will prepare themselves for this glorious day.

Materials: socks (clean and dirty)

Direct your children to gather their socks and place them all over your kitchen table. Similar to what Jesus did in the Bible story; allow each child to swipe the socks off the table.

Review today's story.

Ask: "What made Jesus angry?"

Remind your kids that long ago in the Old Testament the prophet Isaiah had told the people that the temple would be a place of worship. Just like the kitchen table is for eating at and not for putting dirty socks on, the temple was a place to worship God and make sacrifices. The people forgot and turned it into a noisy market. They were selling the animals to make money showing Jesus that the people were more interested in money than worshipping God!

Ask: "What made the religious leaders angry?"

Recall how the leaders were afraid of Jesus and were plotting to kill Him. They did not understand who Jesus was and how He would have to die on the cross as the final payment for our sin. Mention that today we do not have to offer sacrifices because Jesus was our sacrifice once and for all. When we trust in Jesus, God's Spirit lives in us. We can then talk to God anytime and anywhere, we do not need to go to the temple.

Choose a praise song from the curriculum and lead your kids to worship Jesus.

Pray, thanking God that you can talk to Him anytime and anywhere.

Unit 31, Session 4: The Widow's Gift

Mark 12:41-44; Luke 21:1-4

Christ Connection:

Preschool: Jesus said that the widow had made a big sacrifice to help those in need. Jesus would soon make a big sacrifice Himself, but He was going to give something much more important than money. He was going to give His own life to help those in need—all of us who need a Savior.

Kids: Jesus gave up everything He had in heaven to come to earth and save us from our sins. Jesus even gave up His own life, dying on the cross in our place. When you know and love Jesus, you can serve Him as the Lord of your life and offer everything you have. God rewards those who seek Him. (Hebrews 11:6)

Adult Connection Point:

Read Mark 12:41-44 and Acts 4:32.

If the gospel has transformed us, we will become more generous. The widow's giving sacrificially, even out of her poverty, is a beautiful example of the kind of generosity that the gospel motivates. The apostle Paul described the proper for our giving in his second letter to the Corinthians: "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ: Though He was rich, for your sake He became poor, so that by His poverty you might become rich" (2 Cor. 8:9). As followers of Jesus, we do not give out of guilt or from coercion but because we have freely received. Christ gave Himself for us, so we give ourselves to others, personally or monetarily. The grace of God compels us to do as such for everyone but especially our fellow Christians (Gal. 6:10). We take special care of those joined to Christ's body.

The common heart and mind we read about in Acts 4:32 is not only birthed out of the body metaphor, however. Because of their future hope, the early Christians were less likely to hold tightly to their present possessions. Only the gospel can free men and women to be so generous because only the gospel calls such sacrifice a wise investment. This is what Jesus meant when He spoke about the necessity of present sacrifice for the sake of future glory. "Everyone who has left houses, brothers or sisters, father or mother, children, or fields because of My name will receive 100 times more and will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first" (Matt. 19:29-30).

Imagine being offered 10 dollars today or 100 billion dollars tomorrow, but you can only have one or the other. Only a fool would reach for the 10 dollars today. God's promise of eternity gives us the perspective that frees us to love and serve others.

As brothers and sisters in Christ, we share in a future inheritance that will far outweigh every deposit we make now. Every temporary sacrifice will result in eternal treasure since Christ Himself is the heir of all things (Heb. 1:2). The question is the degree to which we believe this truth. Our greed and covetousness and selfishness are manifestations of unbelief and foolishness. We either do not really believe that God's reward will be greater or we don't care.

If we are united to Christ in faith and love, then we will share in a great and glorious inheritance. This inheritance will far surpass anything we could gain or earn

in the present. Therefore, all sacrifice and suffering is far outweighed by the glory to come (Rom. 8:18; 2 Cor. 4:17).

Materials: lots of coins, metal bowl

Direct your children to go throughout the house and garage looking for loose change. Suggest they look under cushions and in the cars. Guide them back to your devotional time. While you tell the story choose your oldest child to dump all the coins in the metal bowl, continue this with each child until you have the youngest child left. Direct the youngest to drop only two coins. Finish telling the story.

Ask: "What were the people celebrating?"

Recall the special meaning behind the Passover. The Passover was a yearly celebration God's people attended to remember how God had rescued them from Egyptian slavery. Anyone who had blood over their door that night was "passed over." God kept them safe.

Ask: "How did Jesus respond when he saw the widow put only two coins in the offering box?"

Summarize the Christ Connection by reminding your kids that even though the woman gave only two coins, she sacrificed all her money to help the poor. Jesus gave up something more important than money. He gave up everything He had in heaven and His life to help those in need—all of us in need of a Savior.

Pray, thanking God for sending His Son Jesus to die for us. Ask God for help to serve Him as Lord of your lives and to offer everything you have.

Unit 31, Session 1: Preparation for Passover

Matthew 26:17-30; Mark 14:12-26; Luke 22:7-23

Christ Connection:

Preschool: God made a covenant with His people many years before. The people promised to love and obey God, and He promised to be their God. Sadly, God's people did not love and obey Him. They broke the covenant. God sent Jesus to make a new, even better covenant. God would forgive His people for their sins, and God would help them obey Him.

Kids: Passover is a special meal to celebrate how God delivered His people from Egypt. Only God's covenant people could observe Passover (Ex. 12:43-49). But God's people did not keep the covenant. God sent Jesus to earth to make a new covenant. As Jesus' disciples prepared for Passover, Jesus prepared to die. On the cross, Jesus brought forgiveness and made the way for people to know and love God again.

Adult Connection Point: Sacrifice is a major theme of the Bible. The offerings in their many forms point ultimately to Christ's final sacrifice on the cross as an atonement for our sins (see Heb. 10:1-18). Among the sacrifices in the Old Testament that point to Jesus' death is the the Passover meal (Ex. 12:43-50). Even though the blood of Passover lambs protected the Israelites' firstborns from death and led to their deliverance from the land Egypt, neither these lambs nor any of the slain animals of this period provided full and final redemption for the Israelites (Heb. 10:4). Yes, they were delivered from the oppression of Egyptian rule, but the greater bondage that is sin remained. The people not only needed transfer from a hostile land but also transformation from the hostility within—hence the need for a new covenant that ensures inner transformation (see Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:26-28).

At the Last Supper, Jesus stated, "This cup is the new covenant established by My blood; it is shed for you" (Luke 22:20). With this statement, Jesus not only announced a new tradition for His people—namely, the Lord's Supper—but He also interpreted for His disciples what His impending death meant. A new way for humanity to relate to God was coming about, the new and better covenant promised in the Prophets. Jesus' died to bring about the reality of these new covenant promises, and among these promises is that God's people would be able to obey His commandments in a way that they could not do previously.

Therefore, Christ not only lived, died, and rose so that we could be forgiven but also so that we by the power of the Spirit could obey. And the pattern for obedience often presented in the New Testament is that of dying or being crucified with Christ (see Rom. 6:5-8; 2 Cor. 4:10; 1 Pet. 2:21-24; 4:1-2). The path to life for the Christian ironically is through death. Because of our membership in the new covenant, we have the ability to pursue such a counter-intuitive lifestyle.

As we follow Christ, we follow Him toward suffering. Some suffering is the result of external forces, such as persecution, sickness, etc. We will consider that aspect shortly. For now, we will focus on the internal conflict with residual sin.

Believers are called to follow Christ in radical commitment to cease following sin and instead to be ruled by the will of God. Because sin has been defeated and we have been released from its tyrannical rule, we are no longer to chase after it but instead to run hard after Christ. So, in the sacrifices throughout the Bible, we see

both the provision for our salvation in Christ and the pattern for our sanctification in Christ.

Materials: blanket or tablecloth, food, grape juice

Direct your kids to find a tablecloth, prepare the food and pour drinks for your Passover celebration. Hold your Passover meal on the floor in one of your rooms.

After you have enjoyed your feast, review the Bible story.

Ask: "Why did God give special instructions about the Passover and what was its meaning?"

Remind your kids that the Passover celebration helped God's people remember when He rescued them from slavery in Egypt. God told them to take the blood of a lamb and cover their entrance with it. Those who did were saved. Jesus told his disciples to get ready for the Passover.

Ask: "What were some things Jesus said during the Passover meal?"

Recall how Jesus told his disciples this was his last Passover, and He would soon suffer. He told them the bread was like His body soon to be broken. The drink was like his blood soon to be shed. He would soon rescue all people from their sin. He would begin a new covenant because God's people did not keep the old covenant. Those who believed He died on the cross for all sin and was resurrected would have eternal life with Jesus.

Hold hands and pray, thanking God for starting a new covenant. Thank him that Jesus brought forgiveness and a way for people to know and love God again.

Unit 32, Session 2: The Last Supper

John 13–17

Christ Connection:

Preschool: Jesus is King over everything, but He got down and washed His friends' dirty feet, even Judas' feet. Jesus loved and helped His friends and taught them to love and help each other. Jesus loves us and helped us by doing for us what we could never do: die on the cross for our sins. He is our King, and He died in our place.

Kids: At the Passover, Jesus shared with the disciples His last meal before His death and resurrection. Jesus washed the disciples' feet, something a lowly servant would do. Jesus showed His love even to His enemies when He washed Judas' feet as well. As sinners, we are all enemies of God. But God proved His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8).

Adult Connection Point:

As we learned in the last session, the path to life for the Christian is through death, namely through crucifixion. That pattern played out in Jesus' washing of the disciples' feet. It is those who humble themselves who will be exalted, those who makes themselves last who will become first (Matt. 19:30; 20:16; 23:12). No more is this principle manifest than in the humiliation of and subsequent exaltation of Christ Himself (Phil. 2:5-11). By realizing that resurrection glory comes after crucifixion agony, we no longer need to serve the all-consuming god of self-service.

Because of Christ's resurrection, sin has been displaced in our lives. It has been robbed of power and prestige and replaced by another who is more powerful. Why, then, would we give it our homage and obedience? This is Paul's point. Having its tyranny overthrown, why would we again submit to its slavery?

As Paul spoke of our call to pursue sanctification as a resurrected people, he used violent images to express the seriousness of our task: "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, so that you obey its desires. And do not offer any parts of it to sin as weapons for unrighteousness. But as those who are alive from the dead, offer yourselves to God, and all the parts of yourselves to God as weapons for righteousness. For sin will not rule over you, because you are not under law but under grace" (Rom. 6:12-14). Elsewhere he wrote that we are to mortify the flesh. We kill sin. We wage war against sin. This is not the time or task for casualness and comfort; this is a time for violence and warfare. And all of our effort and energy are turned toward this pursuit of righteousness now that we have been set free and made alive in Christ. By washing the feet of others, we proclaim our victory through Christ over sin.

Materials: large bowl, towels, water

Fill your bowl with water and collect some towels. Direct your family to remove their shoes and socks. Wash each individual's feet and pray over each family member as you do.

Review the Bible story after you have finished with the foot washing.

Ask: "What was Jesus teaching His disciples when He washed their feet?"

Comment that even in his final hour Jesus desired to teach them about His love for them—even His enemies. Judas would soon lead Jesus' enemies to Him so they could kill Him. Knowing that Jesus still washed Judas' feet. Only a lowly servant would wash another's feet, but Jesus showed His disciples what a servant of God looked like.

Ask: "What was the new command Jesus gave His disciples, and how did He live it out?"

Remind your kids that Jesus' new command was to "Love one another as I have loved you." Jesus laid down His life for us when He died on the cross. This proved God's love for us showing that "...while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8)." After His resurrection Jesus went back up to heaven but promised to send the Holy Spirit as a Helper.

Think of ways your family could show a servant heart to someone not so lovable then try it this week.

Pray, thanking God for loving you while you were yet a sinner. Ask God to reveal ways you could love your enemy this week.

Unit 32, Session 3: The Triumphal Entry

Matthew 21:1-17; Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:28-44; John 12:12-19

Christ Connection:

Preschool: The people were happy to see Jesus. They knew He was their King. Jesus came riding on a donkey, just as the prophet Zechariah said He would (Zech. 9:9).

Kids: During Jesus' triumphal entry, the people welcomed Him as King. Jesus was the Messiah spoken about by the prophet Zechariah: "Look, your King is coming to you; He is righteous and victorious, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey" (Zech. 9:9).

Adult Connection Point:

Read Luke 19:28-44.

With Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, we see the appropriate response to the Messiah's coming: "...the whole crowd of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the miracles they had seen" (Luke 19:37). However, not everyone welcomed Jesus' first coming. There were those who conspired to kill Him—and did. And as there were many who did not welcome His first coming, many sadly will be ill-prepared for His second coming. In the meantime, however, we as Christians, like the crowd at the Mount of Olives, are to praise God joyfully with loud voices, occupy ourselves with pointing to this Messiah who came and will come again.

The Christian is like the light that is put on a lampstand because we should not be hidden (Matt. 5:13-16). But unlike a flame that produces its own light, believers simply reflect the light of Christ because He is the Light of the world (John 8:12; 9:5).

Christ-followers are humble vessels that carry a profound message. Paul stated:

For we are not proclaiming ourselves but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your slaves because of Jesus. For God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness" has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ. Now we have this treasure in clay jars, so that this extraordinary power may be from God and not from us. (2 Cor. 4:5-7)

Paul intentionally described a common vessel (jars of clay) to highlight the contrast between the value of the messenger and the all-surpassing greatness of the message that we carry. The implication is that the vessel should not distract from nor add to the content it carries.

Like the crowd at the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, we should draw little attention to ourselves and praise God by pointing people to the Messiah who came humbly to redeem His people and will return in exalted form in order to judge the world.

Materials: dolls, stuffed animals, figurines, Joseph (from your nativity scene)
Direct you kids to collect all their dolls and stuffed animals to play the part of the crowd for the triumphal entry. Use your Joseph figure to act as Jesus. If you don't have a donkey use a block or horse for Jesus to ride. As you review the story, guide your kids to move the figures and give them voice when the crowd shouts out.

Ask: "What important prophecies were fulfilled in today's story?"

Recall how three different Old Testament books were quoted during this scene in the Bible. The Psalmist, Isaiah and Zechariah told about events leading up to Jesus' triumphal entry. Zechariah said Jesus would arrive on a donkey and would be a King. Isaiah prophesied the temple would be called a house of prayer although it had turned into a den of thieves. The psalmist stated even the children would praise Jesus. All these came true.

If you have older kids look up these prophecies in Zechariah 9:9, Isaiah 56:7 and Psalm 8:2.

The people in the crowd asked, "Who is this?" when Jesus rode by on the donkey. Ask your family, "Who is Jesus?"

Remind you kids that Jesus is God's Son, Lord, King and the One who saves. Conclude your time by singing along with one of the praise songs from the curriculum.

Pray, thanking God for keeping his promise to send us our King and Savior—Jesus.

Unit 32, Session 4: Jesus' Crucifixion and Resurrection

Matthew 26:36–28:10; John 18:1–20:18

Christ Connection:

Preschool: The most important thing that ever happened is that Jesus died and was raised from the dead. Jesus never did anything wrong, but He was punished because we sinned. God forgives us for sin because Jesus died for us. God raised Jesus from the dead to be King over everything.

Kids: The crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus is the center of the gospel. We deserve to die because of our sin, but Jesus died in our place. He was the blood sacrifice made once and for all for the forgiveness of sin. God was pleased with Jesus' sacrifice and raised Jesus from the dead to reign as King over all creation. We are forgiven only through Jesus (Acts 4:12).

Adult Connection Point:

Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection are the most important events in history. Paul said as much in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4:

Now brothers, I want to clarify for you the gospel I proclaimed to you; you received it and have taken your stand on it. You are also saved by it, if you hold to the message I proclaimed to you—unless you believed for no purpose. For I passed on to you as most important what I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

But for what purpose did Christ die and rise? In a word, fellowship—that is, the restoration of relationships that sin has fractured and corrupted.

The foundation of true fellowship is being reconciled to God through Christ, and this reconciliation affects the whole of our lives. Jesus died to heal four broken relationships that resulted from the fall recorded in Genesis 3, namely, between (1) humanity and God, (2) human and human, (3) humanity and creation, and (4) human and self.

God in Christ has provided salvation for His people past, present, and future through His work on Calvary's cross. Paul concluded one of the earlier sections of 1 Corinthians with thanks to God because He is faithful to His children, and this faithfulness is evident because of the fellowship (Greek, *koinonia*) His people have with His Son (1 Cor. 1:9).

The apostle Paul reminded us that "[we] are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from [ourselves]; it is God's gift—not from works, so that no one can boast." Paul continued, saying, "For we are His creation, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time so that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:8-10). Here we see the proactive nature of God in salvation contrasted with our inability to save ourselves. Our salvation, from first to last, depends upon God's grace.

Our gratitude grows deeper still when we recognize that only Jesus was able to purchase true, restored fellowship between God and humanity. In the Old Testament, the priests rehearsed the ritual sacrifices to obey the law and cover over the sins of the people. To cease the endless shedding of blood, Jesus, who was fully man and fully God, intervened and completely satisfied the wrath of God by fulfilling

the law and healing the gaping wound of sin. In contrast with the human priests, Jesus offered the final sacrifice—Himself—that ended the religious rituals and made a way for genuine relationship with God (see Heb. 10:11-14).

The gift of salvation is Christ Himself, but with Him comes the security that makes fellowship possible. Those who are in Christ are eternally secure. Jesus said, “I give them eternal life, and they will never perish—ever! No one will snatch them out of My hand” (John 10:28). Because of God’s grace, a relationship with Christ might be the first time that many of us have experienced unconditional acceptance.

Search around the house looking for things in the shape of a cross. Consider the architectural features of your house. Point out a cross when one is found. When you are finished, review the Bible story.

Before Jesus death, several people turned away from Jesus or turned Him over to someone else. Ask: “What did Judas, Peter, Caiaphas and Pontius Pilate do to show their true feelings about Jesus?”

Recall how Judas identified Jesus to the mob by giving him a kiss. Peter denied Him three times. Caiaphas had Him beaten. Pontius Pilate turned Him over to the crowd. All alone, Jesus asked God if it was possible He would not have to suffer, but in the end He accepted God’s plan—death on the cross.

Ask: “What amazing natural events happened during Jesus death on the cross?”

Remind your kids that darkness covered the sky, the temple curtain ripped from top to bottom, and an earthquake occurred. After Jesus death another earthquake happened and the tomb rolled away. The most amazing event, though, was the empty tomb. Jesus was alive!

Comment that Jesus’ death and resurrection are the main point of the gospel. We all sin so we all deserve to die. However, God’s plan was to save us through Jesus’ death on the cross. This sacrifice was once and for all. When we trust in Jesus our sins are forgiven.

Sing a praise song from this week’s lesson.

Pray, thanking God your sins are forgiven through Jesus.

Unit 33, Session 1: The Emmaus Disciples

Mark 16:12-13; Luke 24:13-35

Christ Connection:

Preschool: Jesus showed His friends that the Scriptures tell about Him! The whole Bible is about Jesus. The Bible tells us the story of what God did to save His people through Jesus, His Son.

Kids: The Bible is about Jesus. When Adam and Eve sinned, God began working out His plan to send Jesus to rescue people from sin (Gen. 3:15). All of the Old Testament points forward to Jesus' life, death, and resurrection—the time when Jesus would bring God's promised salvation for sinners.

Adult Christ Connection: In Luke 24:25-27 (cf. 24:44-47), Jesus instructed two of His disciples about how the Old Testament Scriptures point to Him and the salvation He brings to sinners. There are a lot of ways that the Bible points to Jesus. Historical figures and events foreshadow what He did for us on the cross; certain prophecies about the Messiah or Son of Man foretell of His future reign over the world; and the failures of God's people—particularly those of leaders and officeholders such as prophets, priests, and kings—draw our attention for our need for a sufficient savior and deliverer. Another way the Old Testament points us to Jesus is through its commanded institutions and practices for the covenant people of God at earlier times.

When we read the Scriptures, we find multiple occasions when Old Testament practices are contrasted with New Testament counterparts. One such occasion involves the rites of circumcision and baptism. The circumcision of the flesh in the Old Testament to mark out the people of God becomes the circumcision of the heart in the New Testament, foretold by Moses (Deut. 10:6) and illustrated in baptism (Col. 2:11-12).

Incidentally, this represents a discernable pattern that is worth taking a moment to point out. As you read the Bible, notice that physical realities in the Old Testament often become spiritual realities in the New Testament. This does not mean that the Old Testament is void, just that it finds its fulfillment in Christ (Matt. 5:17).

In Colossians 2:11, Paul borrowed the concept of circumcision to describe union with Christ. This use of circumcision, however, was intended to contrast with the Mosaic law, to illustrate a change in how one portrays belonging to God from the Old Testament to the New. In the Old Testament, circumcision was an external sign that demonstrated participation in God's covenant with Israel. But Paul's contrast between physical circumcision and spiritual circumcision ("not done with hands") shows that identification with the people of God is no longer an external mark but an internal reality. We belong to God because we are in Christ, who was cut off for our sin through His death on the cross ("the circumcision of the Messiah")!

So, something as bizarre and seemingly insignificant as the practice of circumcision directs our minds toward the true offspring of Abraham, Christ, who Himself will be cut off and cursed for His people so that they might be blessed (Gal. 3:13-18). Only by putting our trust in Jesus can we become the true children of Abraham and thus recipients of the salvation that God promised to bring about through his offspring from ages past (Gen. 12:1-3).

Materials: Bibles

If you can, take your family on a walk around the neighborhood and tell the Bible story. Otherwise, direct your kids to bring their Bibles to your devotional time. As you review the story open your Bible and flip through it as your talk, starting in Genesis, then Exodus, the prophets and into the New Testament.

Ask: "What are some events that happened before our story today?"

Recall how Jesus had died on the cross, was resurrected and seen that morning by Mary Magdalene and others. As the two men walked the seven miles from Jerusalem to Emmaus, they discussed the events that had happened.

Ask: "What were some things Jesus taught the two men as they walked along the road to Emmaus?"

Comment how Jesus reminded them of the scriptures starting with Moses through the prophets showing them these things had to happen. It wasn't until Jesus broke the bread and blessed it were their eyes open and they recognized Him.

Guide your kids to this story in the Gospel of Mark and Luke I their Bibles. Comment that all the stories they have learned in the Old and New Testament point to Jesus as the promised Savior. God's plan to rescue His people began in Genesis when Adam and Eve sinned and was finished in Jesus' death and resurrection.

Pray, thanking God for your Bible. Ask Him to help you remember it is about Jesus and to read it each day.

Unit 33, Session 2: Jesus Appeared to the Disciples

Luke 24:36-49; John 20:19-29; Acts 1:3

Christ Connection:

PCC: God made Jesus alive again! Jesus visited many, many people so they would know He is alive. Jesus is still alive today.

CC: God made Jesus alive again! For 40 days, Jesus presented Himself to at least 500 people and proved that He is alive (1 Cor. 15:3-8). Jesus is still alive today.

Adult Connection Point: The good news is not only that Jesus died but that He rose and remains alive forever. Jesus' resurrection demonstrates that He has accomplished full salvation for His people, those who turn from their sins and trust in Him alone. But that's not the end of the story. Jesus sends out His people to let everyone else in the world know that He is alive and reigning forever, beginning in these passages with the first generation of disciples. We tell the true story about Jesus' rising from the grave because death does not have the final word. The motivation and strength, then, to go and tell this good news comes from truly knowing the risen Jesus and experiencing His life-restoring power.

The Great Commission is one of the most well-known passages of Scripture. Most of the time, we think of it as starting with "Go" in Matthew 28:19, but the word "therefore," also in verse 19, points back to the strong statement in verse 18 of Jesus' total authority in heaven and on earth. Let's take a look at the verses that come just before Jesus' command and why they matter:

The 11 disciples traveled to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had directed them. When they saw Him, they worshiped, but some doubted. Then Jesus came near and said to them, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. (Matt. 28:16-18)

Why is it important to remember Matthew 28:18? Because we only fulfill the Great Commission when we obey the Great Commander.

What is unique about this Commander is that Jesus' power empowers and Jesus' authority authorizes. He is unlike people in power who like to make their subjects feel powerless. No, this Commander invites His followers to experience His power—which is demonstrated in the giving of love.

Worshiping Jesus is a declaration of your high regard for the authority of Jesus. He is worth obeying. He is worth submitting to His Great Commission.

Materials: candle or flashlight

Direct your kids to lock all the outside doors. Gather them into a closed room in your house and lock that door, if possible. Turn off the lights and turn on your flashlight. Talk about how the disciples might have felt after Jesus died. Review the Bible story by telling it in your own words.

Ask: "What were some ways Jesus showed He was alive to the disciples?"

Recall how Jesus stood among them, talked to them, showed them the nail holes in his hands and side and ate fish with them. How delighted they must have been

to know Jesus was no longer dead but alive! Even though He had told them He would die then rise from the dead they now could see it with their own eyes.

Ask: "What were some things Jesus said to Thomas?"

Comment how Thomas did not believe the disciples when they told him they had seen Jesus. Even though the doors were locked Jesus appeared again to the disciples and told Thomas to touch his hands and side. Jesus wanted Thomas to believe like the rest of the disciples. Jesus continued to show Himself to the disciples and 500 other people after His death. Jesus proved to them that He was indeed alive!

Pray, thanking God that Jesus is alive today and that you can talk to Him. Pray for those who like Thomas want to see instead of believe.

Unit 33, Session 3: Jesus Served Breakfast by the Sea

John 21:1-19

Christ Connection:

Preschool: When Jesus was arrested, His friends ran away. Jesus did what He came to earth to do—rescue people from sin. Jesus showed His friends that He still loved them and wanted them to follow Him. Sometimes we make mistakes as we follow Jesus too. Jesus rescued us from sin. We know He forgives us and wants us to continue following Him.

Kids: Jesus called the disciples to follow Him. He promised to make them fishers of men. Instead of catching fish, they would tell people about Jesus (Luke 5:1-11). The disciples left Jesus when He was arrested, but Jesus still wanted to use them in God's plan. Jesus is a Lord who forgives us and makes things right again.

Adult Connection Point:

Read John 21:1-19.

Despite their abandoning of Him at the time of His arrest, Jesus extends peace and fellowship to His disciples. Why? They repented. While the text does not state this explicitly, we see their repentance expressed in how they approached Jesus, turning from their former trade of fishing to learning from Him and eating with Him once again. Peter's repentance and restoration is highlighted further by his abrupt diving into the water and Jesus' conversation with him (John 21:7, 15-19). Even though the disciples had left Jesus' side at the time of His arrest and trial, Jesus was willing to receive them once again. Jesus will always honor true repentance.

When the idea of repentance gets isolated from its biblical context, people tend to think of a would-be prophet holding a sign that says, "Turn or Burn!" But if we take our cue from Jesus, who just got through teaching about how the Old Testament pointed to Him, we will take a step back and see the meaning of repentance from within the biblical story line.

The word *repent* means "to turn around" or "change directions." The reason repentance is needed (and called for) is because Adam and Eve, in the garden of Eden, made a choice to live apart from the love and goodness of God. In their rebellion, they sinned. Then they ran and hid from the God who made them. But God came to find His wayward creatures, and though He knew where Adam was hiding, still He asked, "Where are you?"

Where are you? Repentance is a heartfelt response to the kindness of a God who grieves the lostness of His people and aches for us to be rescued, to be with Him once again, giving Him praise and honor forever. Sin and selfishness lead us to hide from God in the dark. But the God of the gospel asks, "Where are you?" (Gen. 3:9). Repentance is about turning around and coming into the light.

To call people to repentance is not to say, "Change your life," but to invite people to run to the God who changes us. It means we plead with people: "Please come out from the darkness of your hiding into the light of His love. Please believe that He is not here to condemn you but to save you. Please turn away from (repent of) trusting in yourself, and turn to the gracious arms of the only Savior who can forgive your sins. Believe that He wants to give you abundant life rather than eternal destruction." When the church proclaims repentance, it should be with tears and pleas reflecting the heart of a loving God.

Materials: breakfast food, dishes

Serve breakfast to your kids even though it might be dinner time. While you are enjoying your food, give each family member a chance to make a fish face. After you have enjoyed your meal, tell the Bible story about how Jesus served breakfast to His disciples.

Ask: "What had the disciples been doing while Jesus was on shore?"

Remind the kids that Jesus had died, rose from the dead and had appeared to them already. The disciples decided to do what they knew best—go fishing. However, they had been out all night and did not catch one fish. Jesus called to them to put their nets on the right side of the boat. As soon as they did the nets were bulging with fish, and they recognized the man as Jesus.

Ask: "Why do you think Jesus pulled Peter aside to talk to him only?"

Recall how when Jesus was taken away Peter had told people at three different times that He did not know Jesus. Jesus knew that Peter felt bad about his mistake so three times He asked Peter "Do you love me?" Jesus did not give up on Peter or the rest of the disciples. He had other plans for them then to fish. Their new job would now be to tell other people about Jesus.

Pray, thanking God that someone told you about Jesus. Thank God that you are forgiven.

Unit 33, Session 4: Jesus Gave the Great Commission

Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 1:3

Christ Connection:

Preschool: Jesus told His friends that everywhere they went they were to make more followers of Him. Jesus' friends could do this because Jesus is in charge of everything, and He promised He would be with them. When we follow Jesus, He promises to always be with us too. Jesus' mission to His friends is our mission too. We are to make more followers of Jesus.

Kids: The good news about what Jesus has done to rescue us from our sins is too great to keep to ourselves. Before Jesus went back to heaven, He gave the disciples a job to do. Jesus wants His followers to teach people everywhere about Jesus so they will trust in Him as their Lord and Savior.

Adult Connection Point:

Read John 20:19-23.

Jesus told His disciples that they are sent by the Son as He has been sent from the Father. The pattern of the church's mission is rooted in the eternal character and plan of God. So also, the message for the mission is the very means by which we who are sent have been made right with God. Through Christ's death on the cross, we have peace with God, and it is this same peace that we offer to everyone who will hear us.

Peace with God is the prerequisite to being sent out by God. We cannot fulfill our mission until we know we are forgiven, until we know we are with Him, secure in His presence, growing in His grace. God secures us by His love and then sends us out to share His life.

Our greatest need is to be at peace with God, to be reconciled to Him. Only when we have peace with God can we truly love. Love is too risky to give away without the peace that comes from the forever presence of the God of love who gave Himself away. Until we abide in Christ and bask in the peace He brings, we will never be secure enough to take the initiative to love others first. Like the disciples, we will hide away in our insecurities and fears and never risk anything for God's kingdom. Once God grants us peace, however, we are freed to love others the way Christ has loved us. The best way to love other people is to tell them about the peace available to them through the reconciling work of Christ' cross.

Materials: paper, markers

Direct your kids to print on the paper what they know about the good news of Jesus. If you have preschooler, suggest drawing a picture. Allow each child to share what he wrote or tell about the picture. Save these for later.

Ask: "What job did Jesus give His disciples?"

Remark that Jesus told His disciples God had given Him all authority in heaven and on earth. Because He had this authority He gave His disciples a job to do--a very important job. Jesus was soon leaving so now the disciples would be responsible to tell people how Jesus could rescue them from their sins. Once those people trusted Jesus as their Lord and Savior they too could become a

disciple. Jesus told His disciples to teach these new disciples to obey everything Jesus had commanded them.

Ask: "Who are some people you can share the good news?" (Refer back to your activity.)

Take time to think about different people in the neighborhood, social groups, school, or family. Choose your oldest child and have him practice sharing the good news with another sibling or yourself. Encourage all your kids to share this good news with one of the people you mentioned.

Pray, asking God to give your family courage to share this good news about Jesus with others. Ask Him to bring to mind others who need Jesus as well.

Unit 33, Session 5: Jesus Ascended to Heaven

Acts 1:3-11

Christ Connection:

Preschool: Jesus left earth and returned to heaven, but He did not leave us alone. Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit helps us do God's work on earth while we wait for Jesus to come back and make everything new!

Kids: Jesus left earth and returned to heaven, but He did not leave us alone. Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to be with us and help us do God's work. One day Jesus will return to make all things new and to rule as Lord over all.

Adult Connection Point:

Read Acts 1:3-11 and 17:16-34.

The gospel story takes us from a beautiful creation and the uniqueness of humanity created in God's image through the devastation of the fall, showing the need for and the glory of the cross of Christ that provides eternal life and restoration. Yet the message of the gospel is incomplete without a call to respond. Each person must personally receive the salvation offered by Jesus through His people. Paul challenged his hearers to repent and believe (Acts 17:30-31). And the same Spirit that empowers our mission is the Spirit who works in the hearts of those with whom we share the gospel, urging to them to respond to our message with repentance and faith. Hence, a person's refusal to believe the gospel does not mean that we have failed in our preaching. It simply means that the Spirit has yet to transform their hearts in such a way as to enable them to respond to our preaching with saving faith (John 3:5-8; Acts 11:18; 16:14).

We live in an increasingly secularized culture that sees conviction about Jesus as more of a vice while tolerance toward a vague spirituality is considered a virtue. In such a society of political correctness, we may not be aware of just how timid we can be in calling people to follow Jesus. Think about this: Paul found himself in a setting of unbelievers who had no respect for the Old Testament or for any exclusivist claims like a singular, resurrected Jesus. Yet he boldly called them to repent, and he warned them of judgment (vv. 30-31). We must do the same.

In verses 32-34, we see three possible responses of people when we share Jesus. Take note of these:

- **Some mocked.** Yes, it is sad, but not all will love Jesus as we love Him. Not all will want His message. Some will mock us. In fact, if no one ever mocks us for our witness, it's a good sign we are not witnessing!
- **Some wanted to hear more.** Many people today have not rejected Jesus; they have rejected a caricature of Jesus. No one has ever really told them the truth of the gospel story. This is why every gospel conversation matters, because even if people do not respond, we might have the opportunity to speak more with them later.
- **Some believed.** Yes, if you are faithful to witness, in God's timing, you will also be fruitful. What could be more amazing than knowing God used you in His great plan to touch someone for eternity!

Not everyone we share the good news with will follow Christ (most did not when Christ Himself called them). But as we share, we are being faithful to the commission Jesus has given us, and that is all He has asked of us.

Materials: sunglasses, beach towels, one cloudy day

Direct your family members to lie down on the towel in your backyard. While looking away from the sun, suggest your family tell what they think the clouds look like. Give each family member a chance to point out one specific cloud.

Remind your kids that in today's story Jesus goes back to heaven on a cloud. Re-tell the Bible story.

Ask: "What were some important instructions Jesus left his disciples?"

Recall how Jesus told his disciples to not leave Jerusalem. They were to wait until God sent the promised Holy Spirit. He also told them once they received the Holy Spirit's power they were to tell others about Jesus. The Holy Spirit helped them spread the news all over the world.

Ask: "What happened after Jesus gave these commands?"

Emphasize the Christ Connection by reminding your kids that Jesus returned to heaven to be with His Father, but He also did not leave the disciples alone or us alone. The disciples would soon receive the Holy Spirit and start doing the work Jesus had done. The Holy Spirit will also help us do God's work. You can rejoice that one day Jesus will return and be Lord over all.

Praise God by singing a song from this quarter's lessons.

Pray, thanking God that one day Jesus will return and be Lord over all. Ask God to help you remember that He sent the Holy Spirit to help do His work.

Unit 33, Session 6: The Holy Spirit Came

Acts 2:1-42

Christ Connection:

Preschool: God sent the Holy Spirit just as He promised. Now Jesus' friends had everything they needed to make more followers of Jesus! God gives the Holy Spirit to those of us who trust in Jesus and let Him be in charge of our lives. The Holy Spirit helps us do God's work and changes us to be more like Jesus.

Kids: God kept His promise to send the Holy Spirit. With the Holy Spirit's help, Jesus' disciples could begin their work to share the gospel with the entire world. God gives the Holy Spirit to those who trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior. The Holy Spirit gives us power to do God's work, and He changes us to be more like Jesus.

Adult Connection Point: Imitation is a key facet of discipleship, and the Holy Spirit plays a major role in this. As Christians, the goal of our salvation is that we will be made into the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29). So, we look to others who are being made in Christ's image so that we might increase our growth the most efficiently. Paul made the bold request of the Corinthian believers that they imitate his life. It sounds ridiculously arrogant until we read his words in 1 Corinthians 11:1—"Imitate me, as I also imitate Christ." Ultimately, Paul was not asking others to live like him but to live like Jesus. The commitment Paul made in such a bold request was that he would die to self so that Christ would be evident in his everyday living. Just as God has provided a tangible example of what He is like through Jesus His incarnate Son, we also have tangible examples of what godliness looks like through mature, Spirit-filled believers. How do we know if a peer is Spirit-filled and therefore to be imitated? Consider what Paul wrote in Galatians 5:16-26:

I say then, walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is against the Spirit, and the Spirit desires what is against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you don't do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, moral impurity, promiscuity, idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambitions, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and anything similar. I tell you about these things in advance—as I told you before—that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, we must also follow the Spirit. We must not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

"The works of the flesh are obvious," Paul states in verse 19. Hence, we avoid following ungodly examples and instead pursue following after examples that are in accord with the characteristics described in verses 22-23. The Bible's impact on a life must be taught and shown. It is not an either/or scenario but rather a both/and blessing. We have a message that must be modeled so that those who are growing

will know what it looks like to live out our faith and not just hear a theory about it. We seek to walk by the Spirit so that others

Discipleship is a process in which we learn by watching someone else encounter life and apply God's truth to it. The Spirit of God works within the church to provide for the needs of the body by giving us others to disciple as well as those who can disciple us.

Materials: computer or tablet

Using your internet browser, search for "What does 'Jesus is Lord' sound like in French?" Play the phrase for your kids. Try this search with several different languages.

Review the story from Acts 2.

Ask: "What amazing things happened on the day of Pentecost?"

Recall how the Holy Spirit came just as Jesus had promised. The Holy Spirit was described as a rushing wind and like flames of fire. After the Holy Spirit came, the disciples could speak different languages. The Holy Spirit gave the disciples courage and strength to share the good news of Jesus with thousands of people.

Ask: "What were some things Peter shared about Jesus?"

Comment how Peter reminded the people that the prophet Joel had said God would pour out His Holy Spirit on all humanity. He told about all the miracles and wonders God did through Jesus. Even though it was God's plan for Jesus to die on the cross, He did not stay there but rose from the dead. When the people heard all that Peter said, they knew it was true and wanted to be saved. Over 3000 people were saved that very day.

Sing a song from the curriculum and praise God for the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Pray, thanking God for keeping His promise to send a Helper—the Holy Spirit.

Ask God to help your family to be more like Jesus.