

Beginner's Church Guide

Notes to teacher: For the month of April, we are jumping ahead in the Big Picture Story Bible to the New Testament. We want to prepare for Easter Sunday by re-introducing Jesus, our Savior! The April Memory Verse: Psalm 108:4 "For great is your love, higher than the heavens; your faithfulness reaches to the skies". This verse is part of the song for this month. See the lyrics below. We are in the middle of telling the story of Jesus' death and resurrection. I say "middle" because that is right where we are. The story Bible we are using uses three stories to tell of the events, and I'm sticking with that, even though it is different than other children's Bibles. The first story is of his arrest and crucifixion. The second is of his followers' confusion and grief. The third is the resurrection. This "middle" story is short -- only 8 pages, versus 12+ for the first and third. Use the pictures exhaustively -- they are very well done. Have the children look at every detail, especially the introduction pages for Part 21 and 22. Review the story from part 20 (the "first" story) and even introduce the "third" story (part 22). As you prepare for this lesson, pray -- ask God to open your heart to this true story. Think of a time in your life when you could not see God's goodness, only pain and misunderstanding and grief. Remember the apostles and other disciples of Christ did NOT understand what was going on! I forget that so often. I often fly through the story to the joyous ending. Pain, misunderstanding God's plan, and grief are part of our life: children need to know that -- some of them may already know this first-hand. We do not want to "make light" of Jesus' death... I will be praying for you all as we all prepare for this Sunday and next week's Easter celebration. Jesus was DEAD, but now He is alive forevermore! Astounding!

1. (5-10 minutes) **Welcome**
 - a. Have kids sit down and open with a short, simple prayer (i.e. Dear God, thank you for listening. Thank you that we could come to church today. Help us learn new things about you! In Jesus' name. Amen."
 - b. Have each child share their name, how old they are, any other fun or seasonal questions. After each child shares their answers, have the entire class say, "Hi Stacey, etc". While they are sharing, fill out the attendance sheet at this time. *Remember to sign it and have all volunteers sign it as well.*
2. (3-5 minutes) **Song Time:** "CD: 50 Action bible Songs, Track 5, "Great Is Your Love" (all lyrics are available in the Beginner's Church Notebook) Lyrics: a. Great is your love! It is higher than the heavens. Your faithfulness reaches to the skies! Great is your love! It is higher than the heavens. Your faithfulness reaches to the skies! So I will love you, Lord, and give you my praise. I will lift up my hands in joyous praise. I will praise you Lord with my voice and heart. Singing, "Lord you are true. How great thou art!"
3. (5 minutes) **Prayer Time:** lead the kids in sharing prayer requests. Praise for who God is/ Thanks for things / Hurts. Needs, etc. Depending on the size of the group, tell them how many volunteers you can have pray (example: "today I need 3 volunteers to pray. Who would like to pray?") If you have more than 3 volunteers, adjust your number to allow more. You pray to close.
4. (2-3 minutes) **Opening Illustration:** Start the lesson time by saying, "Children, do you remember last week's story about Jesus?" Review the last few pages of Part 20. "Children, today our story is still sad, just like last week, but we must remember the hope Jesus told us about. Let's listen to our true story from the Bible now." Then explain p.375 where the introductory picture shows the disciples and followers putting Jesus' body in the tomb. "Look. Are these people sad or happy? What are they doing?" Ask the children to point out to you what is happening in the pictures on p.377 BEFORE you start reading the text. As you read it slowly with the children, take time to encourage the children to tell you what they see in the pictures. If you are comfortable discussing funerals and burial with the children, you may do so. Some people do not believe in taking small children to funerals, so many of the children may not have been to one, but some may have or may have visited a cemetery. Be prepared for reactions about Halloween and ghosts. Redirect the children to our true story and the truth that Jesus won over death: we have nothing to fear now.

5. (10 minutes) **Lesson Time**

- a. Coloring Sheet: Matthew 27:32-56
- b. Big Picture Story Bible: Part 21 "Jesus' Followers Are in the Dark" p375
- c. Talking Points: Do you remember how Jesus brought Lazarus back to life? (Flip back to p346-7 -- marked for you.) Everyone was sad for three days. Look here -- in our story today -- how everyone is sad and confused. What do we know? We know Jesus is coming back to life! Jesus Christ said, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies"(John 11:25). Jesus Christ is our Savior -- He saves us from the punishment we deserve and opens the door so we can be with God when we die. Wow! Jesus loves us! The Bible tells us the truth -- the true story of how much God loves us. God created us, and then we disobeyed Him. We deserve "huge" punishment. We deserve to be separated from God forever. GOD LOVES US! GOD sent His Son, Jesus, to take our punishment. Now, we know the Gospel -- the good news -- the best news EVER: "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" Romans 5:8 -- our memory verse from last month.

6. (5-10 minutes) **Moving Time:** Feel free to use any of the CDs in the background. There are coloring sheets and crayons, blocks, puzzles and the splendid option of games on the floor (never underestimate the value of Duck, Duck, Goose!) Have the children help you push back the chairs and tables. Have Fun!

P.S. to teachers:

Do take time to review the facts from the Talking Points section with the children throughout the remainder of class time as they color or play.

Do say, "We know the end of the story. These people didn't understand what God was doing. Just like Mary and Martha cried when Lazarus was sick and died and Jesus did not come in time to heal him (turn to page 346), Jesus' friends are crying now. Tell me, children, what is the end of the story? What happens to Jesus after he dies? That's right! He is resurrected -- brought back to life. He is alive! Next week we'll tell even more of the story..."