

God's Plan: 2 SAVE US!

Bible Story

The Salvation Solution
Luke 22—24:35

Why did Jesus
have to die?

Bible Verse

“For Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the sake of the unrighteous, that he might lead you to God. Put to death in the flesh, he was brought to life in the spirit.”
1 Peter 3:18

Jesus died and
rose again so that
you can live as a
member of God’s
family.

Session Goals

1. PARTICIPATE in telling the story of Jesus’ death and resurrection.
2. TALK ABOUT God’s plan for us.
3. THANK God for sending Jesus to make a way for our sins to be forgiven.
4. CHOOSE to live as a member of God’s family.

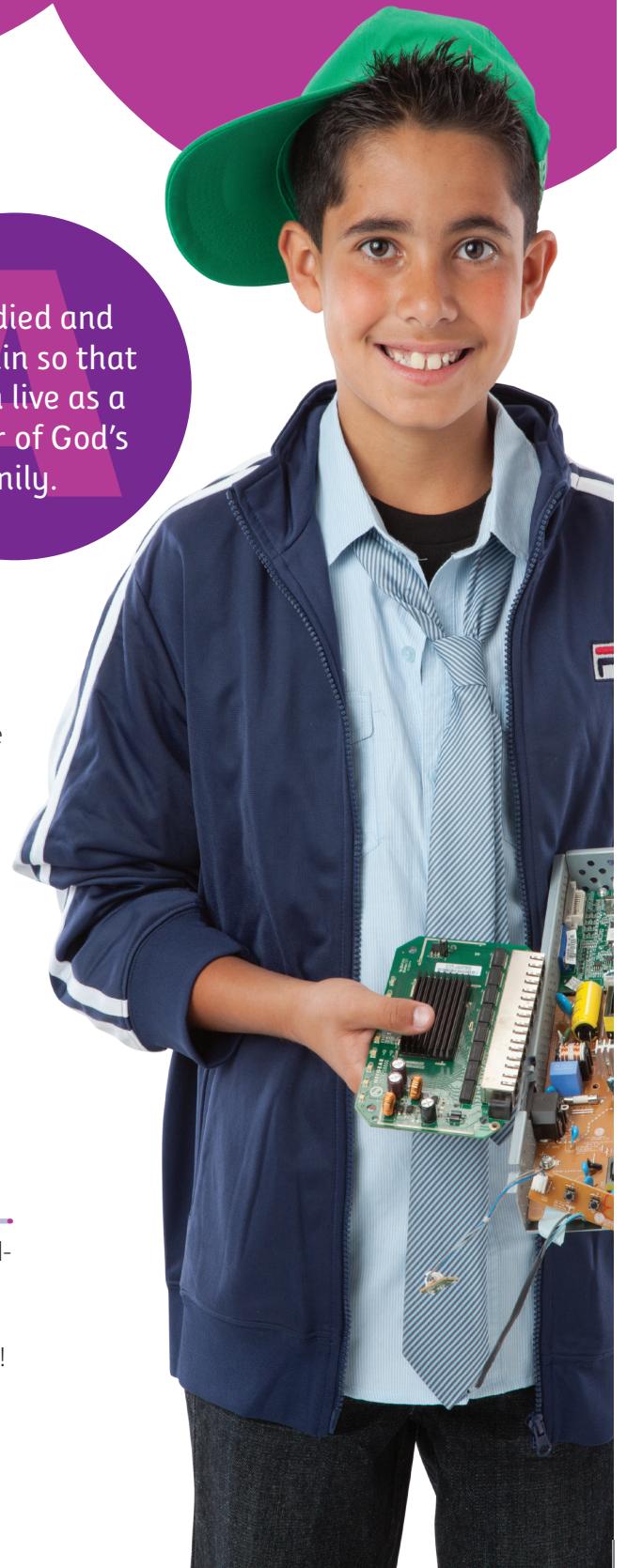
Spark Principle— Transformation

Transformations occur when something new is introduced to an existing object and changes the object. Jesus changes us.



Cross

For centuries, the shape of the cross has reminded people of the sacrifice Jesus made by dying on a wooden cross for our sins. When you see a cross, you can remember that Jesus died and that He rose again! Jesus died and rose again so that our sins could be forgiven.



Heart Prep

Today we come to the greatest of all events. We were created to be companions of the Father, but sin separated us from God. Christ died on the cross to make a way for us to get back to God. He paid the wages of sin with His own life, that we might be brought into fellowship with the Father. Listen to His prayer: “Father, forgive them. They know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). This is the only way an unholy people can approach a holy God.

Others have died for a good cause, but the grave was the end. Jesus Christ rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. He appeared to Mary Magdalene (John 20:11–18), the other women (Matthew 28:1,8–10), Peter (1 Corinthians 15:5) and the disciples on the way to Emmaus (Luke 24:13–35).

What effect did all these appearances have on the disciples? They knew in whom they believed; they knew that He had conquered death and that He was a risen Master and Lord and Savior.

The cross upon which Christ died has become the focal point of all history. The cross was the triumphant goal of Christ’s life—the one thing to which He had been looking forward, not from the beginning of His earthly life, but from before time began. He is “the Lamb who was slain” (Revelation 13:8). Surely salvation is God’s greatest plan and His greatest miracle.

Daily Recap

At the end of each session, take time to reflect on what happened. Use these questions as a guide:

- What worked well today? Pray for the energy to finish VBS strong.
- If you have extra time, use this lesson to talk to children about how God forgives us in a special way during the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- As you prepare for the final session of VBS, pray for each child by name. Ask God to water the seeds that were planted today.

Materials

Optional Bible Story materials listed on page 30.

Bibles



Lab Journal



Session 4 Daily Plan Pennant



Session 4 Bible Story Poster from Bible Teaching Poster Pack



newspaper



safety glasses



sandwich-sized and snack-sized resealable plastic bags



measuring cups and spoons



baking soda



vinegar



glass preserved (or recreated) from Session 2



bleach



markers



Tell the Bible Story

Preparation: Mark Luke 22 in children's Bibles. (Optional: Use Post-it Notes to mark Bibles.) If Bibles are not available for all children, mark your Bible and ask volunteers to read verses as indicated in the story.

Bring the Bible Story to Life!

Bring in some or all of the following props, and hold them up or pass them around as described in the story: walking stick, seder plate (or any plate), olives, cross, clock, cloth or towel and a perfume bottle.

Cover a table with newspaper where you will be leading the Story Starter activity. Put on safety glasses. In sandwich-sized resealable plastic bag, place approximately 1 tablespoon of baking soda. In a snack-sized resealable plastic bag, place $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of vinegar. Blow some air into the vinegar bag, seal it and place it inside the baking-soda bag. Remove as much air as possible from the baking-soda bag and seal shut. Place on the newspaper-covered table.

Story Starter

Welcome back to SonSpark Labs. I'm glad to see you again! Today we're going to discover another one of the laws God made!

Show plastic bags and explain the contents. Place bags back on table, and smack down hard with your fist on the vinegar bag. The bag should break. Make sure the outside bag remains sealed tightly! Shake the two bags to mix the vinegar and baking soda, and then place bag back on the table. It will fill with gas and might even burst open!



When vinegar and baking soda mix, something new is formed: a gas called carbon dioxide. When something new is created by bringing two different things together, that's a transformation.

The most important part of God's plan for US involves transformation. WE are transformed when Jesus becomes a part of our lives and we become members of God's family. In today's Bible story, we'll hear all about what Jesus did so that we can be transformed into members of God's family.

The Salvation Solution

Luke 22—24:35

Stranger on the Road

One day, a man named Cleopas was walking down the road with a friend. Cleopas and his friend loved and followed Jesus. The men talked as they walked toward the town of Emmaus. **Hold up walking stick.** Suddenly, a stranger joined them.

"Excuse me," said the stranger. "You seem deep in conversation. What are you talking about?"

"You must be a visitor to these parts," Cleopas answered. "Haven't you heard about the things that have happened in Jerusalem?"

"What things?" the stranger asked.

"Jesus of Nazareth—our friend, the One we hoped would rescue us—has been . . . KILLED!" And Cleopas reported all the events of the last three days.

The Arrest and Crucifixion of Jesus

Cleopas began where we ended our story yesterday, with Jesus and His friends in danger. **Read about the danger in Luke 22:2.** They were in danger because the religious leaders wanted to find a way to get rid of Jesus. And if they were mad at Jesus, they were probably just as mad at Jesus' friends!

Jesus gathered with His friends to eat a special meal, called the Passover meal. **Show plate.** Jesus tried to tell His friends that some terrible things were going to happen to Him, but they didn't understand

what He was saying. They didn't want to see Him suffer. However, Jesus knew it was time for those things to happen, just as God had planned.

At the end of their meal, Jesus and 11 of His friends went to a place called the Mount of Olives to pray. **Show olives.** Another friend, Judas, had made secret plans to help the religious leaders arrest Jesus. And that's exactly what happened. Soldiers came to the garden and took Jesus away, even though He had done nothing wrong! But Jesus knew this was just as God had planned.

Read what happened next in Luke 22:63–65.

Pilate, the Roman governor, didn't want to put Jesus to death. He tried to talk the religious leaders and other people into letting Jesus go free. But they kept shouting loudly for Jesus to be crucified, or killed on a wooden cross. So Pilate gave them what they wanted. Even though he knew Jesus had done nothing wrong, Pilate allowed Jesus to be crucified, just as God had planned.

Soldiers took Jesus to a hill outside the city and nailed Him to a cross. **Show cross.** They hung a criminal on either side of Him. Jesus' followers wept as they watched Him suffer. The rulers and soldiers who had beaten Jesus sneered and made fun of Him. "If you really are the Christ, save yourself!" they cried. No one understood that Jesus HAD to suffer these things, just as God had planned.

But Jesus understood. He knew that what He was doing was absolutely necessary to pay the price for people's sins. And He even had words of love for those who were mean to Him. **Read what Jesus said in Luke 23:34.** Jesus asked His Father to forgive those who had hurt Him. Jesus said, "They don't know what they are doing." Hours passed. **Show clock.** Dark clouds covered the sun. Jesus cried out, "It is finished!" And then He died, just as God had planned.

A man named Joseph (not Jesus' father) asked Pilate for permission to bury Jesus. **Show cloth or towel.** Joseph wrapped the body in cloth and placed it in a nearby tomb. Some of the women who loved Jesus went home to prepare spices and perfumes to put on His body. **Show perfume bottle.**



Confusion at the Empty Tomb

When those same women returned to the tomb on Sunday morning, they found an astounding surprise! The stone that had sealed the tomb was rolled away, Jesus' body was gone and two men in shining clothes were standing there as if waiting for them.

Read Luke 24:4–8 to find out what happened.

The men said to the women, "Jesus isn't here! He has risen! He told you that on the third day He will rise from the dead."

The women remembered! They were so happy! The women turned and ran back from the tomb. They told everything to Jesus' friends. But they did not believe the women. It just didn't make any sense!

Some of Jesus' friends ran to the tomb to make sure that what the women had said was true. And it was! The tomb was empty! But where was Jesus? Was He REALLY alive or had someone stolen His body?

The Encounter Resumed

When Cleopas finished his story, the stranger spoke to the two men. "Don't you understand that Christ HAD to suffer all those things?" He began to explain God's plan. Jesus had to suffer and die and rise from the dead. There was no other way people's sins could

be forgiven; there was no other way to end the separation caused by sin and bring people to God.

The two men were amazed at the stranger's words. They begged the stranger to stay and eat with them. When the stranger gave thanks for the food, the men got the surprise of their lives! They suddenly realized that the stranger was Jesus Himself! He WAS alive! As soon as they recognized Him, He disappeared. And they hurried back to Jerusalem to tell the others the incredible news that everything had happened just as God had planned.

Skit Option

As a fun alternative or supplement to this Bible story, ask leaders, youth helpers or other volunteers to perform "Stranger on the Road" Bible story skit in *ShowTime! Assemblies*.

Conclusion

Hold up glass with the experiment preserved (or recreated) from Session 2. **Remember this experiment? What did the top clear layer represent?** (God.) **What did the bottom red layer represent?** (Adam and Eve. Us.) **In the beginning, Adam and Eve were close to God. Then what happened?** (Sin separated Adam and Eve from God.) **That sin is represented in our glass by the middle blue layer.**

Since that time, everyone has been separated from God. We all sin. But our sin hasn't ruined God's plan. Today's Daily Plan is "God's Plan: 2 SAVE Us!" Jesus suffered and died to bring us

to God. He took the punishment for our sins so that we can be forgiven and be with God forever. Watch. This is like what can happen to our sins because Jesus died on the cross. Carefully pour bleach down inside of glass. It will slowly bleach the blue color between the layers.

Our Scripture verse for today, 1 Peter 3:18, says, "For Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the sake of the unrighteous, that he might lead you to God. Put to death in the flesh, he was brought to life in the spirit." Because Jesus died and rose again, our sins can be forgiven. And that is the most important part of God's awesome plan for you!



St. Gianna Beretta Molla was born in Italy and loved sharing her faith and helping people. When Gianna got older she decided to be a doctor. Gianna got married and shared her faith with her children. When she was pregnant with her fourth child Gianna found out she had a tumor near her baby and had it removed. The baby was okay, but it made Gianna very sick. Let's say a silent prayer to be as strong as St. Gianna and love God even when we're sad or hurting. **(Adapted from *Gianna Beretta Molla: Wife, Mother, and Doctor* by Barbara Yoffie © 2013 Liguori Publications).**

Prayer

Divide group into two teams. Instruct one team to say the following prayer in unison: "Thank You, God, for sending Jesus." Instruct the other team to pray in unison, "Thank You, Jesus, that You are alive and forgive our sins!" Lead teams to repeat their prayers, one after the other, encouraging children to express the prayer with joyful voices.

Catechetical Connection:

Jesus loved us so much he died for us on the cross. We participate in this sacrifice in a special way during the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Whenever you take communion you are close to God in a special way! **(Adapted from *Handbook for Today's Catholic Children* by Francine O'Conner © Liguori Publications).**



Apply the Bible Story

Bible Story Review

To review the Bible Story, lead children to complete “Why Did Jesus Have to Die?” activity on page 14 of the *Lab Journal*. As children work, ask these questions to guide conversation:

- ① **What happened on the Mount of Olives where Jesus went to pray?** (Jesus was arrested.)
- ① **Why didn't Jesus stop the people who lied about Him and hurt Him?** (Jesus knew it was part of God's plan.)
- ① **How did Jesus' friends feel when He died?** (Sad. Scared.) **How and why did their feelings change?** (They were happy and excited because Jesus was alive again.)
- ① **What are some of the reasons we are glad that Jesus is alive?** (Because Jesus died and rose from the dead, we can become members of God's family at Baptism. Jesus made a way for us to be forgiven of our sins and be close to God.)

The question in today's Q&A is “Why did Jesus have to die?” After hearing our story, how would you answer that question? Volunteers respond. The Q&A answer is that “Jesus died and rose again so that you can live as a member of God's family.” That's a promise from God to you, me and everyone! Jesus' dying and rising from the dead is the most important part of God's plan. It's the most important thing that ever happened!

Active Review

Divide children into groups of three or four. Give each group a penny. At your signal, a member of each group flips the penny. Groups whose coins land heads up answer one of the questions above. Continue flipping coins and answering questions until all questions are answered.

God's Plan for Me (Life Application)

Today's Scripture verse is 1 Peter 3:18. Volunteer reads verse aloud from Bible. **Who does this verse say Jesus died for?** (Those who don't do right.) **Who is that?** (Everyone.) **We all sin. We have all chosen to do what isn't right. But Jesus made a way for us to be forgiven and be in God's family.**

Children complete “Bridging the Gap” activity on page 15 of the *Lab Journal*. Ask children questions such as these:

- ① **When Jesus lived on Earth, what things did He do to show God's love?** (Taught people about God. Healed sick people. Died on the cross and rose again.)
- ① **How does Jesus show His love for us today?** (Forgives our sins during Reconciliation. Promises always to be with us and help us. Hears and answers our prayers.)
- ① **What can we do to thank Jesus for laying down His life for us?** (Believe in His death and resurrection. Accept His forgiveness.)

What part of God's plan are we talking about today? Pause for children to respond, “2 SAVE Us!” **This is the most important part of God's plan. That's why our formula for this plan is GP4U = J! It's all about Jesus and His amazing sacrifice so that we can be saved from our sins and live as members of God's family!**

Hold up Session 4 Daily Plan Pennant. **The cross reminds us that Jesus died on the cross and rose from the tomb so that we can live as members of God's family. Jesus loves us THAT MUCH! And that's the best news ever.**