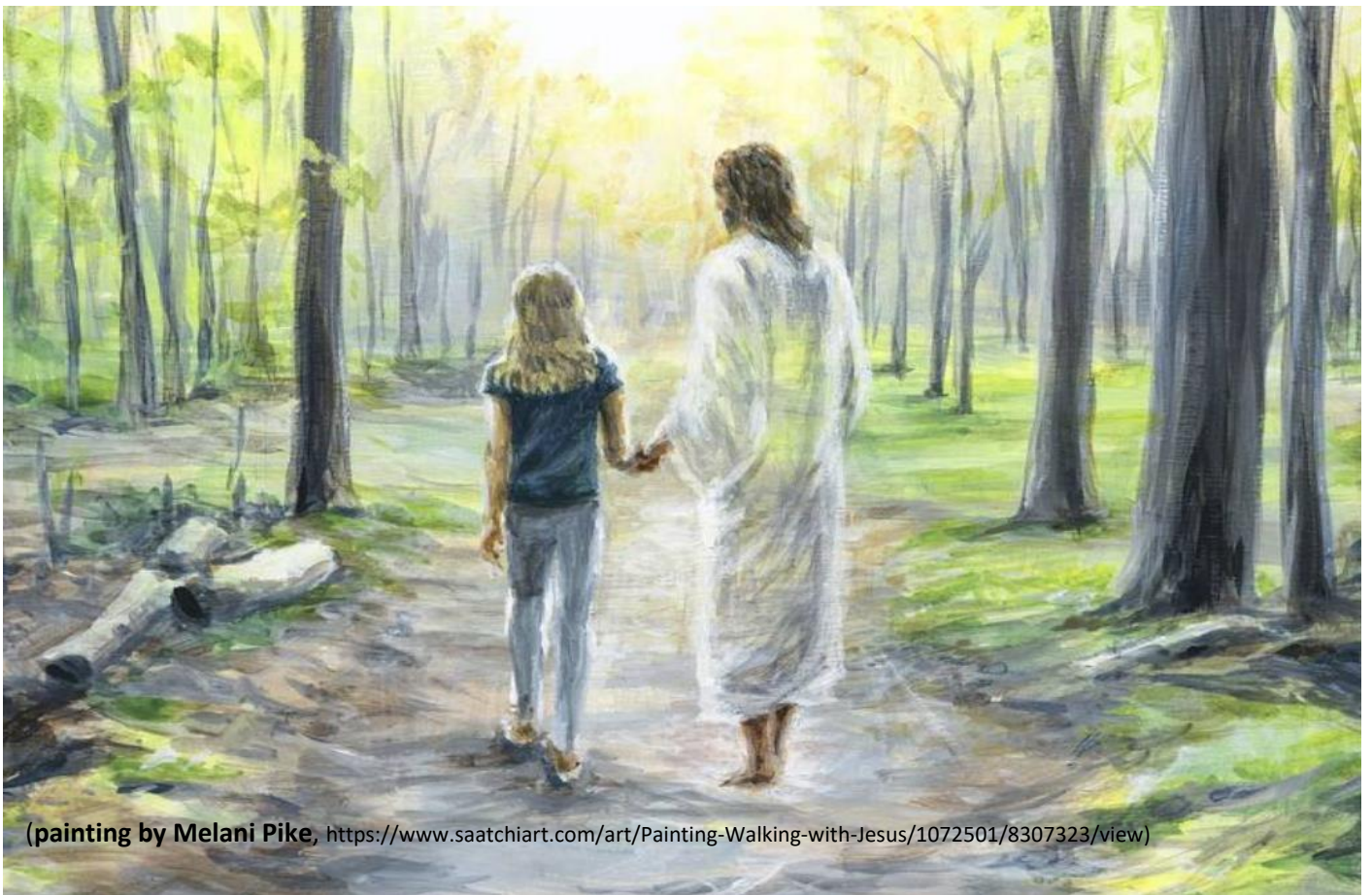


# We Faithfully Follow: on the Way with Jesus

Lent and Easter 2022



(painting by Melani Pike, <https://www.saatchiart.com/art/Painting-Walking-with-Jesus/1072501/8307323/view>)

Lessons for Children's Church, Family Worship,  
Youth Group or Sunday School



# Introduction to the curriculum

Lent is the traditional time of preparation for Easter, usually evoking images of sacrifice and a special focus on the great lengths to which God went in showing love for his children by sending Jesus to die for their sins and be raised on Easter morning. For many, that means a dedication to fasting and prayer for the forty days of Lent. For others, they seek to deepen their spiritual experience of God by adopting new practices rather than denying themselves anything in the sense of “giving something up for Lent.”

This curriculum was written with the objective of being versatile in use for a number of ministry formats. Children’s church and Sunday school may be the most obvious applications, but we are hoping that we have included enough flexibility in the lessons that they could be adopted for online Zoom lessons, be used in Family worship times, or youth leaders could pick and choose what aspects of the lessons, games, songs and crafts might work for their fellowship groups.

The songs have been selected from music that can be found online using videos that have both the lyrics and suggested motions. Our assumption is that if you choose to use these songs in a public setting that you will give proper attribution to the artist. “Zoom worship” has made many of us more aware of that need, and I am hoping that by selecting songs that have been “out there” on YouTube for some time that there won’t be any issues for you using them in whatever setting you choose!

We hope that these lessons are a blessing to you and that you will share them with others. If you would like to partner these lessons with a **“Change for Children”** change-can drive or a special offering, we would greatly appreciate your assistance in the mission of bring hope and healing to hurting children and their families. Reach out to us for supporting materials, such as **prayer cards** or **posters** to advertise your Change for Children effort (and, of course, the **Change for Children cans** themselves!). Whatever it is that will help you, let us know what you need and we’ll be happy to send it out to you!

With our sincere appreciation,

The Development Team at Intermountain

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# Lent, Week 1: Tests and Timing

## Opening Activity/Game: BLUFF

[note: sometimes this card game is called “BS” for the not-appropriate-for-church words when someone is being untruthful. Chances are, you’ll have kids that know the game by this moniker. “Bluff” is a much better name because it refers to a strategy in numerous card games and situations, and it doesn’t have the negative associations that the term “BS” has!]

Bluff is a card game that encourages... you guessed it... “bluffing.” Now, you can win the game without bluffing, but it takes a LONG time to do so. The ability to strategize when to bluff and when not to is all part of the game. You’ll need a deck or two of cards depending on how many are in your group. A good rule of thumb is to have one deck for every four or five players. If you have multiple decks, just remember that it will multiply the number of ACEs, TWOs, etc. that can be played! Here’s how to play:



1. Sit around a table or in a circle on the floor and deal out the entire deck of cards evenly to each player.
2. The youngest person starts the game by placing a card (or more?) in the center, face down, and says, “One ACE,” or two, or three... depending on how many cards they are playing. The cards can either be truly ACEs or, if the player wants to BLUFF, they can put face-down any cards they want in the middle and bluff their way through their turn.
3. From there the game moves in clockwise fashion with the next person placing all their 2's in the center even if he or she has no 2's. Then 3's, 4's, and so on.
4. Any player can call out “BLUFF!” if they think the person is bluffing. If more than one person calls it out, the person who’s turn it will be most immediately after the one who played gets to call the player’s bluff.
5. The player who called “BLUFF” turns over those cards they suspect are falsely played. If the player was bluffing, he or she picks up the stack of cards in the middle. If he or she isn't, the accuser takes the cards.
6. First one to get rid of all their cards wins.

After you have played for a few minutes, wrap things up and transition to the lesson using the following discussion questions.

Discussion questions:

1. Who had a good time playing that game? Do you think it makes a difference—your enjoyment of that game—on how you feel about bluffing or not telling the truth all the time?

2. Who was our best “bluffer?” Who was our worst “bluffer?” Why do you think that is?
3. Each little “bluff” was a test of some sorts, wasn’t it? A lot of a person’s strategy in this game is based on relationship... how well do you know the people you are playing with... what are their tendencies? What weaknesses or strengths do they have? How consistently do they play one style or another? What connection did you see between your relationships with the people playing and your expectations on how they would try to “test” you?

This theme of relationships, testing, and timing—probing for weaknesses and more—comes up in our lesson for today. And... lucky you! *It involves candy.*

## Lesson time!

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Jesus answered, “Scripture says, ‘Do not test the Lord your God.’”

-Luke 4:13

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**Objects needed:** Two bags of candies (your choice!), one open so you can hand each person a single candy, and the other closed. This lesson works best if the single candy is not large (a single gummy bear, or a single M&M, etc.)

**Theme/Main Idea:** The temptations that Satan confronted Jesus with had more to do with *timing* than anything else. Jesus trusted God the Father to give him what he needed and what was rightfully his at the appropriate time. As we walk through Lent, can we be as patient as we wait on the Lord to meet our needs?

**Presentation:**

How many of you like to eat? Mmm-mmm... me too! I like to eat so much that sometimes I eat things I know aren’t really good for me, but they taste good!

[Take out candy]

What is this? Yep. CANDY... I am a big fan of candy. I’d like to give one of these to each of you. Would that be okay?

But, before I do, what if I told you that you could eat your candy now, or... IF you waited and just held on to that candy, I’d meet you back here in one hour and if you could show me that same piece of candy, and I would give you a bunch more... like a handful, ok? [How much you give might depend on

the candy. For instance, if you are offering one M&M now, perhaps they get a whole snack-sized package later].

What would you say about that?

[Pass out the candy, wait for responses]

How many just want to eat the one candy now?

[response]

How many would rather hold on to it and guard it, and then show me later, earning a bunch more?

[responses]

Very interesting. Did you know that this is the type of choice that Jesus had before him in the Bible lesson today? When Satan tempted Jesus with turning stones to bread, depending on God to send angels to protect him from a fall, or the chance to rule all the nations of the world... well, all these things were stuff that Jesus could have given into and said, *"I deserve this. I want it now."*

Think about it, Jesus created the whole world, so if he wants to change a rock into bread, why not? Jesus is God the Father's only Son, dearly loved, so Jesus might have thought, *"Why not test my Father's love by doing something dangerous and scary?"* And, finally, Jesus is God—King over everything. So, ruling over the nations? He might have thought, *"Ok, that sounds reasonable. Someday everyone will bow their knee to me, so why not today?"*

Wow. It's kind of a big deal when you think about it that way! Why didn't Jesus just take the devil's bait and give in to one of those tests? I think it was because he knew that all the good things God the Father wanted for him needed to also come *WHEN* the Father knows is best.

Waiting for God can be a tough thing. It can be as tough as holding on to a yummy piece of candy now, because you know you'll get even MORE later if you wait. But, waiting for God to answer our prayers and meet our needs always works out better than trying to get things done on our own. Let's pray for God's help through this season of Lent, as we each wait on God and listen to him teach us and lead us.

Let's pray:

*God, thank you for your presence in each of our lives. Give us patience to wait for all the good things you promise to those that love you and place their trust in you. When the little temptations of this life come our way, help us not trade in our heavenly treasures for the little trinkets this world can give us. Help us hold out for the best, YOUR best God—for us, and for our church and our community. In Jesus' name, Amen."*

**Key Text:** Luke 4:1-13, New International Reader's Version (NIRV)

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan River. The Spirit led him into the desert. There the devil tempted him for 40 days. Jesus ate nothing during that time. At the end of the 40 days, he was hungry. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread."

Jesus answered, "It is written, 'Man must not live only on bread.'" (Deuteronomy 8:3)

Then the devil led Jesus up to a high place. In an instant, he showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world. He said to Jesus, "I will give you all their authority and glory. It has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. If you worship me, it will all be yours."

Jesus answered, "It is written, 'Worship the Lord your God. He is the only one you should serve.'" (Deuteronomy 6:13)

Then the devil led Jesus to Jerusalem. He had Jesus stand on the highest point of the temple.

"If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here. It is written, 'The Lord will command his angels to take good care of you. They will lift you up in their hands. Then you won't trip over a stone'" (Psalm 91:11, 12).

Jesus answered, "Scripture says, 'Do not test the Lord your God.'" (Deuteronomy 6:16)

When the devil finished all this tempting, he left Jesus until a better time.

## Craft: Air-Dry Clay Creations

This craft can be a good opportunity to practice active waiting and patience. One day you all can make sculptures. Then they need to dry. Then you all can paint them. Then they need to dry again.

**Conversation around the craft:** *Why is it important that we let our clay creations fully dry? What did it feel like to work with the clay? Did it move and shape like you imagined it? What was it like to imagine something in your mind and then try to shape the clay into it?*

**Ingredients:** 1 cup baking soda, ½ cup corn starch, ¾ cup water

**Tools:** Cooking pot, spatula, stove

**Directions:** Mix everything together, stirring regularly over medium heat. It will thicken as you stir. Once the clay is the consistency of mashed potatoes, remove from heat and let it cool on a plate. After it is cooled off enough to handle, knead the clay for a couple of minutes until it is smooth. Store clay in a sealed container or bag until use. Once the clay creations are made, let them dry for at least 24 hours. This clay is paintable. Food coloring can also be added during the cooking process.



## Snack: Popcorn

This snack can be prepped beforehand, or it can be a group project. Kids can help listen and smell for the popcorn popping in the microwave or on the stove. They can listen for when the pops slow down to know when it is ready to eat. They can also help with toppings.

## Song: Stand Strong

If you choose to incorporate a song into your time together, we suggest the following song by Lifeway Kids, called "Stand Strong." The message of the song is to be aware of the temptations that come to everyone, and that if we remember that God lives in us we can make better decisions and rely on God's help to shape our choices. Remember to tell the children that discipleship is not about achieving perfection but making progress in our relationship with the Lord as we trust God's guidance and rely on Jesus' perfect love for us!

**Song:** Stand Strong ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=52GHF\\_8v-kw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=52GHF_8v-kw) )

**Artist:** Lifeway Kids

**Licensed to YouTube by** SME (on behalf of Lifeway Worship); ASCAP, Adorando Publishing, Music Services, Inc. (Publishing), and 4 Music Rights Societies

Careful what you say, careful what you do  
Dare to keep your head, dare to keep your cool  
Life can be distracting, careful how you're acting  
Don't forget God lives in you.

Chorus:

Stand Strong, hold on, even when it's tough  
gotta lean on God and He will hold you up.  
Stand strong, hold on, even when it's hard  
gotta lean on Him and remember who you are.  
Stand strong.

# Lent, Week 2: Are you chicken?

## Opening game/activity: Chicken basketball

**Items needed:** Rubber chicken (you can find small ones that fit on your fingers in packs of 8-10 now that work great!), bucket or waste basket

**How to play:** Played like the game “HORSE” where players or teams take turns shooting the chicken from various parts of the room into the bucket or waste basket. If you have more than four children, I would suggest dividing the group into two teams and having players take turns representing their team.

If player or Team 1 makes their shot, the other team must make that shot or gain a letter in the word, “HEN.” (Why “Hen,” and not “Chicken?” Well, for time... and for the tie-in to the words of Jesus in Luke 13:34!) If a team or player gets “HEN,” then the other team wins.



Questions for transition:

1. Why do you think people who are afraid to do something are sometimes called “chicken?”
2. When there is a threat, a mother hen will hide her chicks under her wings. Why do you think she does that?

## Lesson time!

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“Many times I have wanted to gather your people together. I have wanted to be like a hen who gathers her chicks under her wings. And you would not let me.”

—Jesus, in Luke 13:34

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**Objects needed:** Copy of the book *Chicken Little* (though I have given you the story below, you might want to read from a different version... especially if you can find a book that has fun pictures!); Also, you’ll want a picture of a Hen with her chicks or a stuffed animal. *If you wanted to be a little silly, you could substitute a rubber chicken!*

**Theme/Main Idea:** Even when we are scared the sky is falling, we can be sure that we have a God, who like a loving hen gathers her chicks under her wing, wants to comfort us and shelter us from harm.

## Presentation:

Before I show you the object for our lesson today, I have a story I'd like to share with you. Maybe you have heard this story before. It goes by a few names—**Henny Penny** or **Chicken Little** are the most common. It's a folk tale about a little chicken who jumps to conclusions and thinks the world is going to end. Ready for a story?

ONE day, Chicken Little was picking up corn in the cornyard when – whack! Something hit her upon the head. "Goodness gracious me!" said Chicken Little, "the sky's a-going to fall. I must go and tell the farmer."

So she went along and she went along and she went along until she met Cocky-locky. "Where are you going, Chicken Little?" said Cocky-Locky. "Oh! I'm going to tell the farmer the sky's a-falling," says Chicken Little. "May I come with you?" says Cocky-Locky. "Certainly," said Chicken Little. So Chicken Little and Cocky-Locky went to tell the farmer the sky was falling.

They went along, and they went along, and went along, until they met Ducky-daddles. "Where are you going to, Chicken Little and Cocky-Locky?" said Ducky-Daddles. "Oh! We're going to tell the farmer the sky's a-falling," said Chicken Little and Cocky-Locky. "May I come with you?" says Ducky-Daddles. "Certainly," said Chicken Little and Cocky-Locky. So Chicken Little, Cocky-Locky and Ducky-Daddles went to tell the farmer the sky was a-falling.

So they went along, and they went along, and they went along, till they met Goosey-Loosey, "Where are you going to, Chicken Little, Cocky-Locky and Ducky-Daddles?" said Goosey-Loosey. "Oh! We're going to tell the farmer the sky's a-falling," said Chicken Little and Cocky-Locky and Ducky-Daddles. "May I come with you?" said Goosey-Loosey.

"Certainly," said Chicken Little, Cocky-Locky and Ducky-Daddles. So Chicken Little, Cocky-Locky, Ducky-Daddles and Goosey-Loosey went to tell the farmer the sky was a-falling.

So they went along, and went along, and went along, until they met Turkey-Lurkey. "Where are you going, Chicken Little, Cocky-Locky, Ducky-Daddles, and Goosey-Loosey?" says Turkey-Lurkey. "Oh! We're going to tell the farmer the sky's a-falling," said Chicken Little, Cocky-Locky, Ducky-Daddles and Goosey-Loosey. "May I come with you; Chicken Little, Cocky-Locky, Ducky-Daddles and Goosey-Loosey?" said Turkey-Lurkey. "Why, certainly, Turkey-Lurkey," said Chicken Little, Cocky-Locky, Ducky-Daddles, and Goosey-Loosey. So Chicken Little, Cocky-Locky, Ducky-Daddles, Goosey-Loosey and Turkey-Lurkey all went to tell the farmer the sky was a-falling.

So they went along, and they went along, and they went along, until they met Foxy-woxy, and Foxy-woxy said to Chicken Little, Cocky-Locky, Ducky-Daddles, Goosey-Loosey and Turkey-Lurkey, "Where are you going, Chicken Little, Cocky-Locky, Ducky-Daddles, Goosey-Loosey, and Turkey-Lurkey?" Chicken Little, Cocky-Locky, Ducky-Daddles, Goosey-Loosey, and Turkey-Lurkey said to Foxy-Woxy, "We're going to tell the farmer the sky's a-falling."

“Oh! But this is not the way to the farmer, Chicken Little, Cocky-Locky, Ducky-Daddles, Goosey-Loosey and Turkey-Lurkey,” said Foxy-Woxy, “I know the proper way. Shall I show it to you?”

“Why certainly, Foxy-woxy,” said Chicken Little, Cocky-Locky, Ducky-Daddles, Goosey-Loosey, and Turkey-Lurkey. So Chicken Little, Cocky-Locky, Ducky-Daddles, Goosey-Loosey, Turkey-Lurkey, and Foxy-Woxy all went to tell the farmer the sky was a-falling. So they went along, and they went along, and they went along, until they came to a narrow and dark hole.

Now this was the door of Foxy-Woxy’s cave. But Foxy-woxy said to Chicken Little, Cocky-Locky, Ducky-Daddles, Goosey-Loosey, and Turkey-Lurkey, “This is the short way to the farmer’s place. You’ll soon get there if you follow me. I will go first and you come after, Chicken Little, Cocky-Locky, Ducky-Daddles, Goosey-Loosey, and Turkey-Lurkey.”

“Why of course, certainly, without doubt, why not?” Said Chicken Little, Cocky-Locky, Ducky-Daddles, Goosey-Loosey, and Turkey-Lurkey.

So Foxy-Woxy went into his cave, and he didn’t go very far but turned around to wait for Chicken Little, Cocky-Locky, Ducky-Daddles, Goosey-Loosey and Turkey-Lurkey. First Turkey-Lurkey went through the dark hole into the cave. He hadn’t got far when “Hrumph,” Foxy-Woxy swallowed up Turkey-Lurkey.

Then Goosey-Loosey went in, and “Hrumph,” she was eaten too.

Then Ducky-Daddles waddled down, and “Hrumph,” snapped Foxy-Woxy, and Ducky-Daddles made the next course.

Then Cocky-Locky strutted down into the cave and he hadn’t gone far when “Snap, Hrumph!” went Foxy-Woxy.

But Foxy-Woxy had made two bites at Cocky-Locky, and when the first snap missed, he called out to Chicken Little. So she turned tail and ran back home.

She never told the farmer the sky was a-falling.

Well, now that I am finished with my story, what do you think?

[let the group respond]

I’ll tell you what I think... I think that little chicken caused a lot of trouble for her friends by jumping to conclusions and getting very afraid. Rather than face her fear by turning to someone who could help, Chicken Little was too chicken to see that the sky WASN’T falling and that everything was okay.

Do you know Jesus had to deal with some ‘Chicken Littles’ in his day? Yes! It’s true. They were so concerned about what Jesus should or shouldn’t be doing, **who** he should have healed and **when** he should have done it, and all manner of things that... well... they missed that Jesus was really God’s Son

sent to show them God loved them and cared for them. In fact, rather than being like Chicken Little, Jesus said that God wanted them to be like little chicks willing to be pulled in close and warm by a loving God.

[pull out picture of Hen and chicks, or figurine, etc. Obviously, if you are working with a rubber chicken, your delivery will have to be a little different! 😊]



See this? Yes, it's a Mama Hen. To protect her chicks, she will hide them under her wings. She's doing what good mamas do. In Luke, chapter 13, verse 34, Jesus says, "I have wanted to be like a hen who gathers her chicks under her wings. And you would not let me."

Next time you feel scared and worried, like the sky is falling, will you remember to be like a little chick and not like Chicken Little? Understand that God is there to protect you under his wings like a Mother Hen? Yes?

[hopefully responses or nodded heads say yes]

God wants to help us with our big worries and to know that God loves us like a hen loves her chicks. We don't have to fear when we understand that our loving God is so near.

Let's pray:

*God, thank you for loving us so well. Like a mother hen, you want to shelter us from the big and scary things in the world, even if they are just imaginations. When we feel like the sky is falling, you are strong to protect us. Help us to give all our worries and cares to you. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

**Key Text:** Luke 13:31-35, New International Reader's Version (NIRV)

At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus. They said to him, "Leave this place. Go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you."

He replied, "Go and tell that fox, 'I will keep on driving out demons. I will keep on healing people today and tomorrow. And on the third day I will reach my goal.' In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day. Certainly no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!

"Jerusalem! Jerusalem! You kill the prophets and throw stones in order to kill those who are sent to you. Many times I have wanted to gather your people together. I have wanted to be like a hen who gathers her chicks under her wings. And you would not let me. Look, your house is left empty. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.'" (Ps. 118:26)

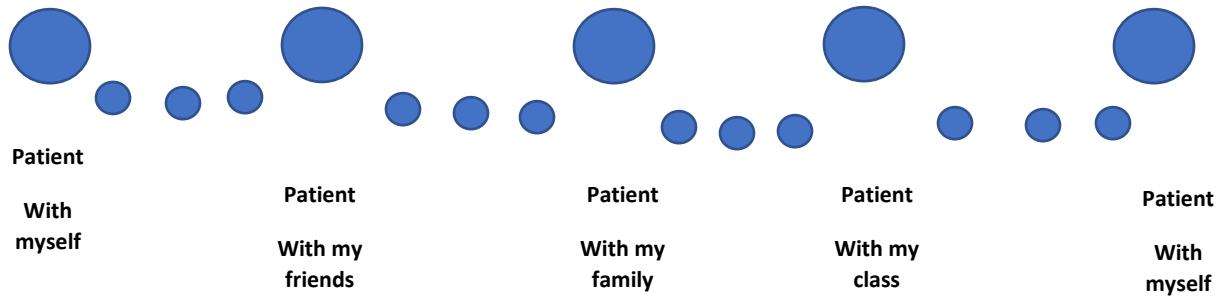


## Craft: Patience Prayer Beads

**Supplies:** (for each kid) 12 little beads, 5 big beads, bracelet string or yarn

**Directions:** This craft project is a process that can be helpful and calming for kids. Each big bead has a patience prayer focus, and each little bead is for specific prayers. The big bead should be noticeably bigger than the others, so if your eyes are shut and you feel the bead, you can move your way around the bracelet by touch (like the Rosary from the Roman Catholic tradition)!

## The order of the beads:



## Snack: Chicken Nuggets (and Dipping Sauces)

A bag of frozen chicken nuggets and some ranch dressing or ketchup can be a fun active snack to enjoy while working on the beads!

## Song: Great is Thy Faithfulness

This week we suggest a song that is a youthful “remix” of a favorite hymn, “Great is Thy Faithfulness.” Chances are some of your students will recognize the words and the tune from having sung the hymn in worship services. The video link included here is not the highest quality but includes the words which can be helpful for those unfamiliar with the lyrics.

Link: <https://youtu.be/sqvFP1sux7o> © Group Publishing Hands On Worship, Fall 2014

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father  
There is no shadow of turning with Thee  
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not  
As Thou hast been, Thou forever will be

Great is Thy faithfulness  
Great is Thy faithfulness  
Morning by morning new mercies I see  
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided  
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me

# Lent, Week 3: 'Fig'-uratively speaking

## Opening game: Perfection or Concentration

If you have access to the game "Perfection," it is a great one to play as an opener for this week. If you have a large class, you can have the group line up and come to the table one-by-one in order to remove a piece from the board until the timer goes off. If you have a smaller class, you could take turns and make it a little competitive...

you know your group best and what will help to make the point and lesson tie-in. That connection to the lesson is this: God is patient with us, and while sometimes we might take advantage of that gracious patience, it is MUCH better than the alternative! And, if

perfection were the object of the "game of life," we would all be in sorry shape. Thankfully, Jesus has taken care of the need for perfection and extended to us the grace we need to do our best, even if we know we might fail (such as not getting all the pieces of the board before the timer goes off).



### Discussion questions for "Perfection" game opener:

1. How do you do when under pressure? Do you tend to perform better or worse? Why is that?
2. In the Bible lesson today, the example is given of a situation that seems hopeless, yet Jesus is still willing to give it more time. What do you tend to do when something doesn't seem to be working? How long until you are ready to move on or concede that things haven't worked out right?
3. Does your approach to sticking with it or giving up depend on: 1) How hopeful you were going in? 2) How much you enjoy the "work" that goes in to getting the result you are wanting, and 3) whether the situation is a task (a hard school assignment) or a relational one (trying to resolve a disagreement with a friend)?

Now... If you don't have access to the game "Perfection," a suitable substitute would be the game "Concentration," the simple matching card game. Sometimes it is called "Memory," and those of us who are a little older might struggle with this game more than our students! It can be played with a standard deck of cards, where the pairs that you are matching are the red or black versions of each of the numbered cards or face cards. Place all the cards face down on the table in a grid pattern and take turns for each person playing turning over two cards at a time to see if you can make a match.

Certainly, this game will take a LOT of concentration and attention. You will likely have to play to a time limit... maybe about 10 minutes before you look to transition. Of course, you can be making some of the points alluded to by the discussion questions as you go along!



### Discussion questions for Concentration game:

1. Did you have a strategy going into the game as to how you were going to try and collect matching pairs? What was it? How did that strategy work out?
2. How does concentration, your memory, and patience help a person succeed at this game? Conversely, how much does luck play into your success in this game?
3. In life, what sort of approach do you tend to take towards situations where you are hoping for a certain outcome (making a team, learning a new skill, approaching someone to become friends, etc.)? Are you someone who has a strategy or plan, or are you just looking for a little “luck” to have things work out in the way you are hoping?
4. In the Bible lesson today, Jesus proposes a situation where frustration might have set in for those that were doing all the right things, but they weren’t seeing any results. When have you felt like you were doing everything you should, but weren’t getting anywhere? What advice do you think Jesus would give you?

## Lesson Time!

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The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in love.

—Psalm 103:8

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**Objects needed:** Fig Newtons (preferably one small package, and one large package)

**Theme/Main Idea:** God waits patiently for us to respond to his love... what are we waiting for?

**Presentation:**

How is everyone? I know it makes a big difference for me when I do a devotional if I have a chance to pause and make sure I’m doing okay and can focus my heart and mind on God and not on however good or bad my day went. So, let’s all take a deep breath and try and focus.

[Give group a chance to take a deep breath or two. You will have to lead by example!]

You know what else makes a big difference... at least for me when I am *hungry*?

[Take out small package of Fig Newtons]

That’s right! Food. Food is really important, right?! In fact, I am so hungry, I am going to eat some right now.

[eat all of the small package of Fig Newtons and really ham it up... Mmmm... so good, etc.]

There... much better. Not hungry anymore. So much easier to focus now.

[pause]

Why are you all looking at me like that? Oh, you thought I had some for you? Hmmm... maybe I should have shared? Well, I'll see what I can do about that later. But first I want to tell you a story. Actually, it's a story Jesus told...

"A man had a fig tree," Jesus said. "It was growing in his vineyard. When he went to look for fruit on it, he didn't find any. So he went to the man who took care of the vineyard. He said, 'For three years now I've been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree. But I haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?'

"'Sir,' the man replied, 'leave it alone for one more year. I'll dig around it and feed it. If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.'"

What an interesting story, right? Who knew that Jesus cared so much about trees, *right?!*

Do you think Jesus was really talking about fig trees? Maybe not? Well, here's one thing I get from the story...

In the story, we're supposed to think, 'Yes. That is a really reasonable way to treat a tree that hasn't produced any fruit for three years.' Cut it down... why not?

Then, we are supposed to see how reasonable it is wait and hold out hope for maybe one more year, and with special attention and care, maybe the tree will bear fruit.

But, what about people rather than trees? How long do we give them before we cut them down or cut them off? Oh, we don't cut them down physically, but maybe we cut them with our words? ("Hey, you stink at that... move over and let somebody else do it!") Or, we cut them off entirely? ("You and I are kinda different... and I don't like to do some of the things you do. So, I don't think we should be friends.") Hmmm... maybe this story isn't about trees after all?

God shows us so much love and patience but I wonder, does he get tired and want to be rid of us if we aren't doing what we are supposed to?

[let the group respond]

No. God doesn't. God keeps patiently waiting for us, loving and caring for us way beyond what might be considered reasonable. And, I am so thankful for that!

Let's pray and thank God for just how patiently and loving he cares for us until we do what we should... which is not only to respond to God's love, but to share that love with others... which is why...

[take out larger package of Fig Newtons]

I think I should share with you some of what I was greedily just enjoying myself. Do you think that's a good idea?

[the group will likely respond enthusiastically]

Yeah, me too.

Let's pray:

*God, thank you for so patiently loving us. We are glad that, unlike the fig tree in the story, we can see the fruit in our lives as a result of your love flowing through us to others. For those who have not responded yet to Jesus' call, or maybe haven't got much fruit to show for all the love you have poured into them... Prompt them, Holy Spirit, to open their hearts to you this day. Bless our efforts to help others, and therefore show that we are 'fig trees' bearing much fruit! In Jesus' name, Amen."*

**Key Text:** Luke 13:1-9 (NirV)

Some people who were there at that time told Jesus about certain Galileans. Pilate had mixed their blood with their sacrifices. Jesus said, "These people from Galilee suffered greatly. Do you think they were worse sinners than all the other Galileans? I tell you, no! But unless you turn away from your sins, you will all die too. Or what about the 18 people in Siloam? They died when the tower fell on them. Do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? I tell you, no! But unless you turn away from your sins, you will all die too."

Then Jesus told a story. "A man had a fig tree," he said. "It was growing in his vineyard. When he went to look for fruit on it, he didn't find any. So he went to the man who took care of the vineyard. He said, 'For three years now I've been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree. But I haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?'

"'Sir,' the man replied, 'leave it alone for one more year. I'll dig around it and feed it. If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.'"

## Craft: Chia Sprouting!

**Supplies:** chia seeds (grocery store), a waterproof container (plastic plate or Tupperware, jar), water, cotton (paper towel, baby wipes, etc).

**Directions:** wet the cotton with water, place it in/on the container, sprinkle a large handful of chia seeds on it, and place it in the sunshine! Over the next week, have the kids water them with a spray bottle. You can offer a small "reward" for those that can bring their sprouts back next week successfully. *NOTE: the cotton needs to stay moist, but too much water will cause the seeds to mold.* Harvest your sprouts when they are about an inch tall!



## Snack: Cheese and crackers

This snack can be enjoyed by stacking up double-deckers, chatting about where crackers are made and how cheese is made, etc.

Also, you can pretend the cheese and crackers stacking up are like “tree rings” marking time, connecting the snack to the story Jesus tells. Eating the crackers could be interpreted a few different ways. Is it the tree getting “chopped down?” Is it like Jesus “gobbling up” our past sins and remembering them no more? Ask the students to come up with their own ideas.

## Song: Stand Strong (Review from Week 1)

This week you have the option of reviewing the song from Week 1, or if you are planning on doing a presentation or children’s chorus for Easter, this would be a great time to introduce the songs that you will be singing together (see the songs suggested for Easter morning later in the curriculum). The “Stand Strong” lyrics not only have a connection to the temptation and timing lesson of week one, but also the lesson of patience and grace from this week. The hardest patience to foster in our lives can be the patience we have for our own failings. It is good to know that we have a God who is SO patient with us as we work towards greater faithfulness and fruitfulness.

**Song:** Stand Strong ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=52GHF\\_8v-kw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=52GHF_8v-kw) )

**Artist:** Lifeway Kids

**Licensed to YouTube by** SME (on behalf of Lifeway Worship); ASCAP, Adorando Publishing, Music Services, Inc. (Publishing), and 4 Music Rights Societies

Careful what you say, careful what you do  
Dare to keep your head, dare to keep your cool  
Life can be distracting, careful how you're acting  
Don't forget God lives in you.

Chorus:

Stand Strong, hold on, even when it's tough  
gotta lean on God and He will hold you up.  
Stand strong, hold on, even when it's hard  
gotta lean on Him and remember who you are.  
Stand strong.

# Lent, Week 4: Counting on the Father's Love

## Opening Game/Activity: Skit in a bag!

Skit in a bag is a fun way to allow your students to tell an “old” story in new ways. All you need is a few paper bags or multiple-use grocery sacks with a few random items/props in it. I try and stick to just 4 or 5 so it is not too overwhelming. Include a “checklist” of the items with each bag.



If your class is large enough, divide into at least two teams. The story for the skit will be a familiar Bible story for most of your students—hence the challenge of getting them to come up with a fun skit to retell the story—and that is the Parable of the Lost Son (from Luke 15). Teams are given a bag, a Bible, and about 5 minutes to come up with their roles and how they are going to incorporate their items/props.

If you only have a few students, you (as the teacher) will be the audience. Teams are “scored” on their ability to work the items/props into the skit. They get one point each for every item they use for their skit, and they can double their points based on how artfully they include the items. For instance, they can get a point for tucking a soup

ladle into their belt as part of their costume, but two points if they give it to the farmer who uses it to scoop out feed for the pigs... Wearing a hat as a hat would be one point... using the hat as a bowl and a colander as a hat instead would be two points! *You see where this is going, I hope?* The point is to be a little silly and creative.

If you have enough students for multiple teams, they can score each other as they take turns, using the checklist that is with the “skit in a bag” items for each team.

One last twist, if you have an especially creative group. Each team can earn an additional 3 points if they work in a phrase that the other team(s) give them before the skit begins. It usually helps to put some parameters around this to save time, such as, “Okay, now give the team a phrase you want them to work in from a Star Wars movie...” or “Give them a line from a popular nursery rhyme you want them to work into the skit,” etc.



# Lesson time!

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Love keeps no record of wrongs.

—1 Corinthians 13:5b

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**Object needed:** A calculator.

**Theme/Main Idea:** God doesn't keep a running total on all every bad things we have done, nor does God forget about all the good you have done because of the last time you "did something bad." When we ask for forgiveness, it is wiped away... cleared out like on a calculator when you hit "CE"—"clear entry." Then, we can continue doing good and adding to the work of God's Kingdom.

**Presentation:**

Have you ever wondered what all the buttons on a calculator are for? I mean, there are some buttons I don't think I've ever used.



[Take out calculator]

Take a look at this calculator. Do you know what these symbols mean? I get the numbers, that's pretty easy... 1... 2... 3... 4... and so on. But what about this symbol?

[point to addition symbol]

Is that a little cross? No? What is it?

[wait for someone to respond]

Yes... it's for addition! Good. How about this one?

[you can continue with various symbols until everyone is engaged]

Great answers, everyone! Now, here's one that might be a little trickier. See this one? It says, "CE." What does that mean?

[group members take turns guessing]

Well, it's not "clear everything," which is what I used to think. And, it's not anyone's initials. It means, "clear entry." Do you know what that means? Do you know what that helps you do?

Well, let's say you are adding up a list of numbers... like, maybe we want to know what  $1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5$  is. So, you put in, [do this on the calculator as you narrate the steps] 1, hit the add sign, then 2, then the add sign, then 3, then the add sign, then... oh no! I just hit the number 7 instead of 4! Arg! Now I have to start all over because I made a mistake!!

But wait... let's try the 'CE' button. It has the power to clear out my last entry without wiping out all the work I have done up to that point.

[hit 'CE' to erase the 7]

There! No more 7. Now I can add my last two numbers... 4... hit the add sign... and 5. And, finally, equals... what is it? Yes. The answer is 15. Cool, right?

[This would be a fun time to reinforce for some that 'math is fun/cool'... never hurts, right?!]

Now, we aren't calculators, but I think we can learn some spiritual lessons from what we just did. In Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, Chapter 13, verse 5, he writes, 'Love keeps no record of wrongs.'

Notice he doesn't say, 'Love doesn't keep records.' Because, of course love keeps track of all the wonderful things we do. Someday, we'll come before God and God will say, 'Look at all the amazing things you did to show love to others in my name. Well done! Let's celebrate!'

And, we might think... 'But, what about all the bad things I did?' And God will have no idea what we are talking about! Why? Well, because when we ask for forgiveness, God hits the 'CE' button... clear entry! And, it is as if that mistake had never occurred. And, better yet, all the good we have done doesn't get wiped out with it... it's still there!

Now, Jesus didn't have calculators to make his point to his listeners, but he did tell a story about two brothers and a dad. The younger brother took his inheritance early, left the family, and wasted it all. He was ashamed of his behavior and dragged himself home. Perhaps he thought that all the bad he had done would wipe out any good—any love—his Father had for him. But, the Father ran to meet him on the road as he returned, interrupted his apology, and celebrated his return.

That Father hit 'CE' and picked up right where they had left off, loving him and giving him the best he could of all he had. The older brother had a hard time with this, just like we have a hard time REALLY believing that when we've asked for forgiveness, Jesus forgives, and the Heavenly Father wipes out any record of wrong doing.

So, next time you are holding a calculator, think about that 'CE' button, maybe say a little prayer like we will now, and be VERY thankful that we serve a God like the Father in the story, not like the older brother.

Let's pray:

*God, thank you for forgiving us and hitting "CE"—clear entry. When you look at us, you see your beautiful sons and daughters, forgiven and redeemed in Jesus' name. We can keep a record of our own wrongs, but you certainly don't. As the Bible says, "when we confess our sins, God is faithful and just and forgives our sins and cleanses us from all wrong." Amazing. Hear our hearts this morning. Forgive us any wrong that we have done that we are still holding on to. And, ultimately, Lord, help us to know how deeply you love and care for us. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

**Key Text:** Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32 (NirV)

The tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law were whispering among themselves. They said, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."

Then Jesus told them a story...

Jesus continued, "There was a man who had two sons. The younger son spoke to his father. He said, 'Father, give me my share of the family property.' So the father divided his property between his two sons.

"Not long after that, the younger son packed up all he had. Then he left for a country far away. There he wasted his money on wild living. He spent everything he had. Then the whole country ran low on food. So the son didn't have what he needed. He went to work for someone who lived in that country. That person sent the son to the fields to feed the pigs. The son wanted to fill his stomach with the food the pigs were eating. But no one gave him anything.

"Then he began to think clearly again. He said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough food! But here I am dying from hunger! I will get up and go back to my father. I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven. And I have sinned against you. I am no longer fit to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants."' So he got up and went to his father.

"While the son was still a long way off, his father saw him. He was filled with tender love for his son. He ran to him. He threw his arms around him and kissed him.

"The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer fit to be called your son.'

"But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattest calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. This son of mine was dead. And now he is alive again. He was lost. And now he is found.' So they began to celebrate.



“The older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants. He asked him what was going on. ‘Your brother has come home,’ the servant replied. ‘Your father has killed the fattest calf. He has done this because your brother is back safe and sound.’

“The older brother became angry. He refused to go in. So his father went out and begged him. But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve worked like a slave for you. I have always obeyed your orders. You never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But this son of yours wasted your money with some prostitutes. Now he comes home. And for him you kill the fattest calf!’

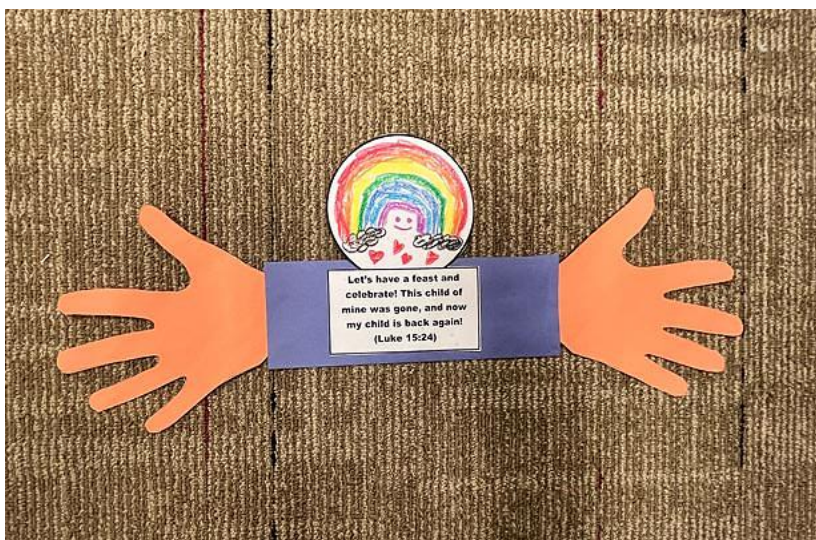
“‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me. Everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad. This brother of yours was dead. And now he is alive again. He was lost. And now he is found.’”

## Craft: A Hug from God

**Supplies:** construction paper (any color), scissors, glue stick, verse cut-out (see attachments), coloring supplies.

### Directions:

- 1) Cut a piece of paper in 4 equal strips width-wise (2.75" x 8.5")
- 2) Trace each hand on another piece of paper. Cut them out and decorate as desired.
- 3) Cut out the verse cut-out. Color the face as desired. (cut-out found at the end of this lesson)
- 4) Glue the verse cut-out in the middle of the strip (see below). Glue the hands on each end.



This craft can now fold in like a hug. (See the example in the picture to the left)

Discussion while working on the craft could be around what God could look like, and how a hug from God feels/what it feels like (giving your own examples, too).

## Snack: Party Food!

An option for the snack today could be a few “party foods” — cupcakes, chips and dip, veggie tray with ranch, etc. Another idea could be asking the kids the week before about what their favorite party food is for celebrating sports games, weddings, baptisms, etc. and then putting those items together for a special celebration.



## Song: Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing

This song fits well into the themes of this Lenten curriculum, particular coming half-way through the journey. Why is that? Well, one of the most obvious biblical allusions in the song appears in stanza two: “Here I raise mine Ebenezer/ hither by thy help I’m come.” Some revisions of the hymn omit the term “Ebenezer,” which means “Stone of Help,” a reference to 1 Samuel 7:12: “Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Jeshanah, and named it Ebenezer; for he said, ‘Thus far the Lord has helped us.’”

If your students have always wondered about the name “Ebenezer,” or if you sing from a Hymnal which has replaced the term, this would be a great opportunity to explain why Robert Robinson included it in his original. After coming into relationship with Jesus through faith, we start the journey towards God, and by God’s help we progress each day. Help your students to identify some of those moments or rituals that may serve as markers—“Ebenezers”—along their path of Christian discipleship (some ideas: making a decision to follow Jesus, baptism, first communion, confirmation, a meaningful church retreat, etc.).

### Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing

Words: Robert Robinson, 1758. Music: 'Nettleton' Asahel Nettleton, 1812. (public domain)

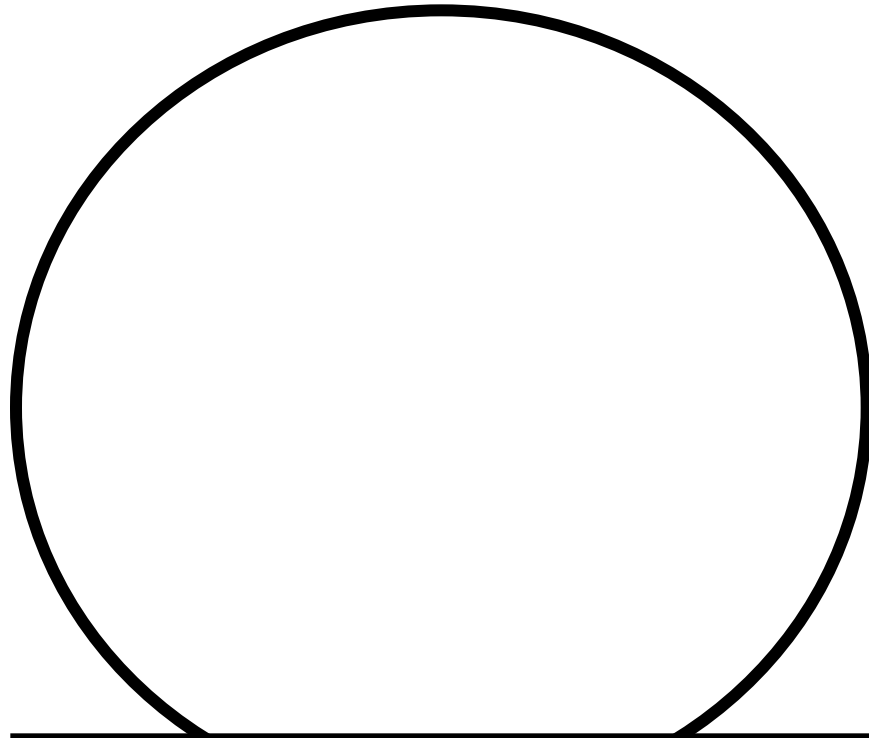
Link: <https://youtu.be/EYrTqBioaZ4>

Come, thou Fount of every blessing,  
tune my heart to sing thy grace;  
streams of mercy, never ceasing,  
call for songs of loudest praise.  
Teach me some melodious sonnet,  
sung by flaming tongues above.  
Praise the mount I'm fixed upon it  
mount of God's redeeming love.

Here I raise my Ebenezer;  
hither by thy help I've come;  
and I hope, by thy good pleasure,  
safely to arrive at home.  
Jesus sought me when a stranger,  
wandering from the fold of God;  
he, to rescue me from danger,  
bought me with his precious blood.

Oh, to grace how great a debtor  
daily I'm constrained to be!  
Let thy goodness, like a fetter,  
bind my wandering heart to thee:  
prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,  
prone to leave the God I love;  
here's my heart, O take and seal it;  
seal it for thy courts above.

Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,  
prone to leave the God I love;  
here's my heart, O take and seal it;  
seal it for thy courts above.



**Let's have a feast and  
celebrate! This child of  
mine was gone, and now  
my child is back again!  
(Luke 15:24)**

# Lent, Week 5: Wasteful Love?

## Opening game: Make it “Runneth Over!”

**Supplies:** Two large buckets with water, small Dixie Cups, and two larger “Solo Cups”-sized cups (20 oz)

**Object of the game:** To be the first team to transfer enough water from the large bucket to the 20 oz cup in order to make it overflow!

**Directions:** Divide the group into two teams. Each student gets a Dixie Cup. Set the large buckets of water on one end of the room (or, preferably, you are outside and can set the buckets on the far end of the space you have available) and the 20 oz cups on the other end.

If you have a small group, have the teams run one student at a time to their 20 oz cup, bringing as much water as they can get in their Dixie Cup from the large bucket each trip. After they dump their water into the 20 oz cup, the next student has to wait until they get back to the starting point (the large bucket) before they can fill their Dixie Cup and go themselves.



If you have a large group, line the teams up like “bucket brigade” where each student is passing water one to another along a line in order to get it from the large bucket into the 20 oz cup.

You can decide on the incidental rules, such as: will students be permitted to place their hands over their cups? Should they walk or run (if playing inside, especially over a surface that could become slippery when wet, we would suggest a walking only!), etc.

## Lesson time!

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*Mary took about a pint of pure nard. It was an expensive perfume. She poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the sweet smell of the perfume.*

—John 12:3

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**Objects needed:** Play money and a watch or some other timepiece

**Theme/Main Idea:** There are a lot of ways we can “spend” both time and money. We will never regret what we invest in God’s work, because it will last.

**Presentation:**

Who here likes money?

[wait for responses]

Why do you like money?

[group will probably talk about things they can buy with money]

So... what you are saying is that it’s not the money you like so much, but it’s what can be done with the money. Interesting. We’ll get back to that in a moment. But, today, I actually have two items.

[take out both the play money and the watch or time-telling device]

Do you know what these two items are?

[let individuals respond]

That’s right... play money, because I don’t have that much real money but I wanted you to get the idea of what a LOT of money would look like, and a watch.

Here’s another question: what do these two items have in common? Can you guess?

[children respond]

Ooh, all good guesses, but I was thinking of this similarity: both time and money can be *spent!* Yes, we take money and buy things, and we sometimes talk about investing our time or spending it on things that are important.

In the Bible story for today, a woman takes something very expensive—a sweet smelling and rare perfume—and uses it to do something nice for Jesus. She pours it on his feet!

I am seeing some funny looks. What is so funny? Oh, maybe you are thinking what Jesus’ disciples were thinking. One even said, *“Why did you let her do that, Jesus? That was worth a lot of money! What a waste... we could have sold it and helped a lot of people!”*

And, most of us hearing that story might think, *“That disciple had a point! It does seem like a waste. I wonder what Jesus was thinking.”*



Well, luckily, we don't have to guess. Jesus tells us what he was thinking. He saw the supposedly wasteful act for what it was: an act of love. The woman took something that had either cost her a lot of money, a lot of time, or some combination of both. And, for her, it wasn't too much to ask that she give it all to Jesus to show him what he meant to her.

What does that mean for us? Well, when we love someone or something, it usually shows in what others might consider "wasteful" behavior. We spend hours and hours talking, or texting, or writing the one we love. We buy gifts and we go out for fancy dinners. We treat other loved ones this way to show we love them and they are worth the expense.

This is what we do for people we love... but, what does God get from us?

The heart of love asks, "How much can I afford to spend—time and money to show God how much he means to me?"

The heart not captured by the love of God is more *reasonable*, and wonders, "How little can I do and still be okay?"

God has given us everything, even his son Jesus, because his love for us is HUGE! Let us consider the love that the woman in the story showed—giving up something very expensive and very dear to her—to show that Jesus was even more important.

Let's pray:

*God, thank you for giving us everything we could ever want in Jesus. Help our hearts, minds, and souls to be captured by your love. The time and money we invest in you, God, is never wasted. The toys we buy here on earth won't last forever, but our love and relationship with you will. That is time and money well spent. In Jesus' name, Amen."*

**Key Text:** John 12:1-8, NIV

It was six days before the Passover Feast. Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived. Lazarus was the one Jesus had raised from the dead. A dinner was given at Bethany to honor Jesus. Martha served the food. Lazarus was among the people at the table with Jesus. Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard. It was an expensive perfume. She poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the sweet smell of the perfume.

But Judas Iscariot didn't like what Mary did. He was one of Jesus' disciples. Later he was going to hand Jesus over to his enemies. Judas said, "Why wasn't this perfume sold? Why wasn't the money given to poor people? It was worth a year's pay." He didn't say this because he cared about the poor. He said it because he was a thief. Judas was in charge of the money bag. He used to help himself to what was in it.

"Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "The perfume was meant for the day I am buried. You will always have the poor among you. But you won't always have me."

## Craft: Elaborate Thank-You Cards

This craft is meant to be a fun, creative project that can be shared with others. Have the kids make and decorate very elaborate thank you cards with whatever supplies you have on hand. Then, help them brainstorm some people in their lives that could use a little boost right now—possibly a teacher or parent, the pastor or even the cashier at the store. Invite them to deliver them and tell the group about the experience next time.



## Snack: S'mores!

We can all use s'more reminding of how much God loves us and cares about us! Marshmallows can be melted onto the graham crackers and chocolate in a microwave... just make sure you keep an eye on your s'more as it cooks.

The other option is to make arrangements for a little cookstove to be set up outside and actually roasting the marshmallows outside for your s'mores.

The connection to the story will be a sense we don't often tap into for lessons... SMELL. In the story, the strong smell of the perfume filled the room. Everyone recognized the smell as expensive perfume. Similarly, the smell of toasted marshmallows is very distinct. It may be connected to particular memories for your students... campfires, special times with friends and family. Hopefully, these memories are positive and of time well spent investing in relationships that are important to them. Encourage your students to think of this snack as a camp-out with Jesus and have each one share something they have learned during the Lenten lessons and what they are thankful for.

## Song: Amazing Grace—Grace is Amazing!

This is a beautiful rendition of the song "Amazing Grace" that is arranged for children and youth. The link to the song on YouTube includes lyrics, which should make it easier to learn. Though not included in the list of suggested Easter songs (if you should choose to do a children's chorus or presentation on that Sunday), this would make a lovely addition!

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HRIPDHvLOUA> CCLI # 4654629. Additional music and lyrics by Bob Singleton. Original by John Newton. © 2009 Agnes Day Music BMI



Amazing grace, how sweet the sound  
That saved a wretch like me  
I once was lost, but now am found  
Was blind, but now I see

Grace is amazing... It's so amazing  
Grace coming down to you and me  
Heaven's our home, His death's the key  
Our sins erased... Amazing grace

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear  
And grace my fears relieved  
How precious did that grace appear  
The hour I first believed

Grace is amazing... It's so amazing  
Grace coming down to you and me  
Heaven's our home, His death's the key  
Our sins erased... Amazing grace

When we've been there ten thousand years  
Bright shining as the sun  
We've no less days to sing God's praise  
Than when we'd first begun

Grace is amazing... It's so amazing  
Grace coming down to you and me  
Heaven's our home, His death's the key  
Our sins erased... Amazing grace

Amazing grace

# Palm Sunday: Pet Rocks Don't Talk

## Opening Activity: The Elmo-Rocco feud (video)

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X6z0DonJvZQ> (Entertainment Tonight coverage of Elmo-Rocco feud); background of the "feud" = [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c\\_oqZ-Cfy14](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c_oqZ-Cfy14)

One of the funnier things that came out of the start of 2022 was a "feud" between Elmo and his friend Zoe's pet rock, Rocco. Chances are your students are aware of it, but if they are not, you can play the background videos that show that Elmo has had a long-running issue with his friend's choice in pet playmates. Rocco the Rock fails to impress Elmo and hilarity ensues. Why these videos from years ago resurfaced in early 2022 is anyone's guess, but they struck a nerve with a population eager to take sides on any disagreement... even one over pet rocks and imaginary Muppets.



Watch the video together as a group, if you can, and then hold a miniature mock debate. Form the group into two teams... Pro-Pet Rock and Anti-Pet Rock. Give each team 2 minutes to come up with their best arguments for or against the merits of having a Pet Rock.



Allow the Pro-Pet Rock team to go first. They can present their best arguments for Pet Pocks for the first minute. Then, allow the Anti-Pet Rock team to have a minute and a half rebuttal. Finally, allow the Pro-Pet Rock team to have 30 seconds to rebut the other team's position. Then, the whole group can take a vote as to who "won" the debate. [Another option would be to bring in a neighboring Sunday School class to listen to the debate and then vote on who they thought gave the most compelling argument].

As this whole activity will be conversational, there isn't a need for transitional conversation questions, so you can transition to the lesson as the debate dies down. The lesson is about... you guessed it: Pet Rocks!

## Lesson time!

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"If they keep quiet, the stones will cry out!"

—Jesus, in Luke 19:40

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**Object needed:** If possible, a “pet rock” decorated with eyes, mouth, etc. If not a “pet rock,” then just any old rock will do!

**Theme/Main Idea:** Jesus wants us to use our words and actions to show that we know He is God’s Son and our Savior.

**Presentation:**

I have a question for you before I show you what today’s object lesson is. Here it is... How many of you have a pet?

[Have the group share about pets they have and their names, etc. Let individuals answer but cut the responses short if it goes more than 20-30 secs. One way to involve everyone in a larger group is to take a “poll” and people can raise hands for different kinds of pets they might have: dogs, cats, birds, turtles, etc.]

Well, my pet is here in this box. It is very well behaved. Would you like to see it?

[Take rock out of the box you brought it in, or bag, or your pocket... whatever.]

What is it?

[A rock!]

What do you think of my pet?

[Some might think it is silly, funny, dumb...]



Some of you don’t seem to appreciate my pet. But let me tell you something:

In 1975, a man named Gary Dahl was talking with his friends who were all complaining about their pets. They complained about feeding, paying vet bills, cleaning up after them... all sorts of things.

Gary joked about a rock being the perfect pet, and a few months later he started selling pet rocks! You may think the idea is silly, but he sold enough of them that he became a millionaire. Wow! Apparently, a lot of people thought a rock would make a great pet, too... including, Elmo’s friend Zoe!

But, let me ask you... can a rock play with you?

[Group will respond... NO!]

Can it fetch a stick or roll over?

[...NO!]

Is it fun to cuddle with?

[...NO!]

Okay... one last question... does a rock make any noise? Like, can it talk or bark or sing or say anything?

[...NO!!!]

What if I were to tell you that there was one time in history when the rocks could almost have shouted and sung out? Do you know when that was?

[Let the group respond]

Yes! It was Palm Sunday. The day Jesus came into Jerusalem riding on a donkey. When Jesus was told to tell his followers to be quiet and to stop praising him as the Messiah, the son of David... the one who had come in the name of the Lord, well... Jesus told them that he couldn't tell them to be silent. And here's the kicker... even if he could have made them silent, Jesus said the rocks on the ground and all around them would have started to shout and sing his praises!

Wow! It almost makes me wish the people would have been quiet. It would have been really cool to see a rock sing! But, as it is... well, my pet rock doesn't do much of anything. And I guess that's okay.

I'd hate for my rock to start praising God for Jesus because I wasn't willing to. How about you? Wouldn't you rather sing and praise Jesus yourself than count on the rocks to do it? Yes, me too.

Will you pray with me?

*"God, we thank you that the rocks don't need to cry out on our behalf. We praise you for filling out hearts with joy and causing us to sing and shout your praises. Our joy is so great, we can't keep it to ourselves. We want to share this joy with everyone. Fill us with your love, grace, and peace. Amen."*

**Key Text:** Luke 19:37-40, (NIRV)

When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen:

"Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!"

"Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"

Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!"

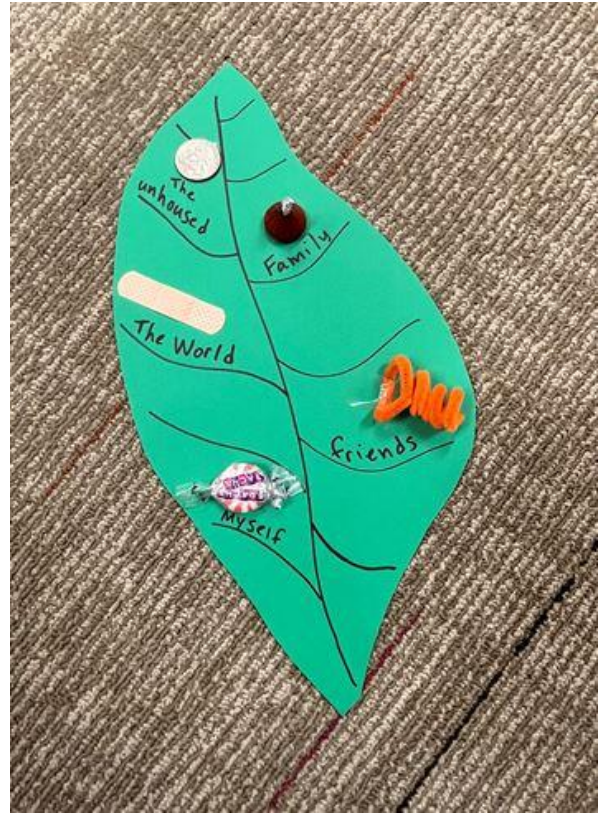
"I tell you," he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."

# Craft: Scavenger Hunt Palm Leaves

**Supplies:** cardstock paper (any color), markers, random green craft supplies, scissors, glue.

**Directions:**

- 1) Cut the cardstock into a leaf/palm shape while keeping the basic size (you want lots of space on your leaf!)
- 2) On the outside of the leaf/palm, write different prayer categories. The kids can help think of some. E.g., *our world, friends, family, ourselves, people who are hungry, doctors, teachers.*
- 3) Time for a scavenger hunt! Around the building, house, or even outside, have the kids collect items that remind them of the prayer topics. You may need to “plant” some items for them to find.
- 4) Attach the found items to their respected place on the cardstock. Discussion around how to use the palm to pray for all of these people because Jesus entered Jerusalem for everyone!



# Snack: Fruit Salad and Crackers

No insightful tie-in to the lesson this week... just something healthy and quick (you may wish to substitute snack-pack fruit cups to make the snack time even faster!) so you can get on to practicing a “Palm Parade” if that is something your church traditionally does. The song suggested with this lesson is a great one to sing as the children wave their palm fronds and march around the sanctuary or place of worship.

If you are using this curriculum for home worship, perhaps you play the song and sing along as you are walking around your house or through the rooms of your house. Those that are especially brave may choose to march and sing through their neighborhood?!

# Song: Hosanna Rock!

Traditionally, a hymn like “Hosanna, Loud Hosanna” would be sung on Palm Sunday. This is an upbeat song with the same theme. If you choose to do your Palm Sunday Parade to this song, you will definitely amp the energy up! The lyrics are in the YouTube video, and are likely repetitive enough that you won’t need much practice.

Link: “Hosanna Rock” <https://youtu.be/5582z642wFY>

**Song:** Hosanna Rock; **Artist:** Yancy, Little Praise Party; **Album:** Happy Day Everyday

**Licensed to YouTube by** Syntax Creative (on behalf of Yancy Ministries); Polaris Hub AB, ASCAP, and 7 Music Rights Societies

## HOSANNA ROCK

Hosanna... Ho, ho hosanna

Hosanna... Ho, ho hosanna

[repeat]

Everybody praise the Lord [4x]

So clap your hands

And wave your arms

Play the drums

Then rock the guitar

[repeat]

[Repeat from the start, then go to the ending below]

[Ending]

Ho, ho hosanna

Hosanna

Ho, ho hosanna

Words and music by Yancy ©2010 Dried Rose Music (ASCAP)

# Easter: Little is BIG when many (CFC Collection Sunday)

## Opening game/activity: Easter Egg Hunt

Include eggs that each have a few pennies in them, as well as other eggs that have candy or prizes in them. Tell the students that there will be some eggs that have MONEY in them... they will likely be excited by the prospect, but then a little disappointed when they find out that the money is just pennies.

Discussion questions:

1. How many of you were excited for our Easter Egg hunt? What were you most looking forward to?
2. When you found out that the money was pennies, how did that effect your enthusiasm? How did you feel? Does anyone want to keep their pennies, or would you rather get rid of them?
3. Disappointment is a feeling that the followers of Jesus were familiar with, as well as sadness. On Easter morning we have to remember that this was the feeling that Mary and the other disciples would have started with. Why were they disappointed and sad?



Let's see what our pennies and Easter may have in common as we turn to our lesson time...

## Lesson Time!

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Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed...

—John 20:1

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**Objects needed:** a few loose pennies or coins, and a jar FULL of pennies or coins

**Theme/Main Idea:** By itself, a penny isn't worth very much. But lots of pennies together can buy much more! Small gifts can seem insignificant alone, but together many small gifts can be used by God to make a huge difference.

**Presentation:**

Here we are at Easter, and all of us have come together to celebrate! This leads us right into what I wanted to share with you today.

[hold up a penny]

What is this? Right! It's a penny. What can you buy with a penny these days? Anything? No, not really... not anymore. When I was a child, you could still buy candy for a penny in the store... now, well, it costs at least a quarter, right? That's 25 pennies! Boy, how things have changed.

A penny isn't worth much. We know that. According to an article I read in the paper, it costs more to make a penny than a penny is worth! Isn't that silly? You see, even though pennies are now nearly 98% zinc with just a trace of copper, they still cost 1.99 cents to produce. It costs two pennies to make a penny!

Here's something else I learned that might really shock you... Have you ever seen someone throw away a penny or two, or drop one and not bother to pick it up? Maybe not any of you, but I am guessing there are some moms, dads, and grandparents out there that have thought... "Hmmm... it's just not worth the effort of bending down to get that little penny!"

So, lots of pennies are tossed away each year. In fact, it's been estimated that about \$1.2 million worth of pennies a year are simply thrown away! That's a lot of pennies and that's a whole lot of money!!

Just like this penny, when Jesus died on the cross and was buried, it seemed to most people like he wasn't worth any more than the little penny that gets thrown away. But, for those few disciples... especially the women who came to his tomb that Sunday morning, they knew that Jesus was more than simply a religious teacher that could be killed and thrown away to be forgotten.

And, because of their faith, they were the first ones to see the Risen Lord! Jesus had taught his followers that He was the resurrection and the life, and anyone who believes in him... even though they might physically die someday, they too will be raised to new life forever with God!

That's amazing!! Jesus was the first resurrection on Easter morning, but since then millions of Easter morning miracles have happened to those that have trusted in Jesus and have new life as a result.

You know what else is amazing? Let's see... though a penny by itself isn't worth much... let's take a look at what we have here... [hold up your jar of pennies, as well as some of the jars the children have brought in] We've got lots of pennies and other coins here! Lots of little coins making one big collection! Wow!

All together, we are making a difference. That's why it's important to remember that our efforts are not isolated. We are doing what we do for Jesus' sake alongside many others that also love Jesus. Added up, it will make a big difference. God can take lowly little pennies and make them the most important part of what He is doing in the lives of others.

I know this is the case for our Change for Children collection we have been gathering for Intermountain. Our collection, along with our prayers for the children and families, makes a HUGE difference in bringing healing and hope.



Thank you. Today makes my heart very happy, and I can see it makes you happy, too. Let's pray and thank God for this opportunity we have been given to take all our gifts and prayers and add them to the amazing work that He is doing through Intermountain.

*God, take our small gifts and multiply them many times. You are in the business, God, of taking what we would count as nothing much at all—throw away junk, even—and using it to build your coming Kingdom. Bless our offering, Jesus, not for our sake, but for yours, and for the sake of those that will receive it. As we have been blessed, we seek to be a blessing. As you have encouraged our hearts, we pray that our efforts and our gifts would encourage others. In Jesus name, Amen.*

**Key Text:** John 20:1-18 (NIV)

20 Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. <sup>2</sup> So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"

<sup>3</sup> So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. <sup>4</sup> Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. <sup>5</sup> He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. <sup>6</sup> Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, <sup>7</sup> as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. <sup>8</sup> Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. <sup>9</sup> (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) <sup>10</sup> Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.

<sup>11</sup> Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb <sup>12</sup> and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

<sup>13</sup> They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." <sup>14</sup> At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

<sup>15</sup> He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?"

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."

<sup>16</sup> Jesus said to her, "Mary."

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher").

<sup>17</sup> Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

<sup>18</sup> Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.

# Songs for Easter (all videos have lyrics for singing along)

The songs here are provided to give you options for a time of celebration if you are using this curriculum in Home Worship or Children's Church. The lyrics are in each video, so visitors can join right in without having had to be present for other lessons. May God bless you this Easter and always!

## "Christ the Lord is Risen Today / He's Alive!"

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fHTWZ0pZAQQ>

Christ the Lord is risen today, Alleluia!  
Sons of men and angels say, Alleluia!  
Raise your joys and triumphs high, Alleluia!  
Sing, ye heavens, and earth reply, Alleluia!

Lives again our glorious King, Alleluia!  
Where, O death, is now thy sting? Alleluia!  
Dying once he all doth save, Alleluia!  
Where thy victory, O grave? Alleluia!

He is alive, he's alive! He is alive, he's alive!  
Jesus the Lamb, crucified! He is alive, he's alive! [repeat]

Love's redeeming work is done, Alleluia!  
Fought the fight, the battle won, Alleluia!  
Death in vain forbids him rise, Alleluia!  
Christ has opened paradise, Alleluia!

He is alive, he's alive! He is alive, he's alive!  
Jesus the Lamb, crucified! He is alive, he's alive!  
He's alive!

## "O Happy Day! [Easter Song]"

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XpPeCSA2HzA>

The greatest day in history  
Death is beaten, You have rescued me  
Sing it out, Jesus is alive!

The empty cross, the empty grave  
Life eternal, You have won the day  
Shout it out, Jesus is alive! He's alive!

Oh, happy day, happy day  
You washed my sins away  
Oh, happy day, happy day  
I'll never be the same... Forever I am changed

When I stand in that place  
Free at last, meeting face to face  
I am yours, Jesus, You are mine

Endless joy, perfect peace  
Earthly pain finally will cease  
Celebrate, Jesus is alive... He's alive!

And oh, happy day, happy day  
You washed my sins away  
Oh, happy day, happy day  
I'll never be the same... Forever I am changed

Oh, the blood of Jesus (3x)  
It washes white as snow!  
[repeat]

I'll never be the same!  
Forever I am changed!

Oh, the blood of Jesus!

"Thankful" (2008 'Power Lab,' from Group Music)

Link: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Erok8\\_xBw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Erok8_xBw)

I like to think about the goodness of the Lord  
He gives me everything I need and so much more  
So, I just wanna lift my hands

And say that I love Him  
I just wanna lift my heart in praise  
And I wanna be

Thankful  
I wanna be... Grateful  
I wanna remember everything that the Lord has done  
I wanna be... Thankful  
I wanna be grateful  
I wanna be  
I wanna be  
I wanna be

I like to think about the goodness of the Lord  
He gives me everything I need and so much more  
So, I just wanna lift my hands  
And say that I love Him  
I just wanna lift my heart in praise  
And I wanna be

Thankful  
I wanna be... Grateful  
I wanna remember everything that the Lord has done

I wanna be... Thankful  
I wanna be... grateful  
I wanna be  
I wanna be  
I wanna be... Thankful  
I wanna be... grateful  
I wanna remember everything that the Lord has done

I wanna be... Thankful  
I wanna be grateful  
I wanna be, I wanna be  
I wanna be, I wanna be  
I wanna be, I wanna be  
I wanna be

## WHY GIVE?

Intermountain brings *Healing Through Healthy Relationships* for those children, youth, and families we serve. Public funding and private insurance pays for about 75% of what it takes us to create lasting change for those we serve.

This means we are wholly dependent upon the generosity of those who feel called to join us in mission to fill this gap. Please partner with us to provide hope and healing to the children, youth, families, and communities in need across Montana and the United States.

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