Alley Small Group
The Greatest Story Ever Told

Bible Story: The Greatest Story Ever Told (Crucifixion) • *John 18-19 (Supporting: Matthew 27; Luke 23)*
Bottom Line: Whatever happens, remember God is still at work.
Memory Verse: "In this world you will have trouble. But be encouraged! I have won the battle over the world." *John 16:33b, NIrV*
Life App: Hope—believing that something good can come out of something bad.
Basic Truth: I can trust God no matter what.

Shadow Puppet Charades *(application activity / review the Bible story)*
What You Need: Bible, flashlight or other bright light

What You Do:
- Show kids how to use the flashlight and their hands to make shadow puppets on the wall.
- Let kids practice making shadow puppets for a minute or two.
- Challenge kids to work together to retell the Bible story using both words and shadow puppets. They can use the Bible as a guide. Make sure they hit on the following points:
    - Jesus and His friends went to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray.
    - Jesus was arrested.
    - Peter said He didn't know Jesus three times, and the rooster crowed.
    - False charges were brought against Jesus.
    - Pilate found that Jesus had done nothing wrong.
    - The Jews wanted Jesus dead anyway and Pilate went along with it.
    - Jesus had to carry His own cross.
    - Jesus' hands and feet were nailed to the cross.
    - Many people mocked Jesus.
    - Jesus told the criminal next to Him that He would go to heaven.
    - The soldiers took Jesus' clothes.
    - Darkness covered the land.
    - Jesus died.

What You Say:
In our lives, when we think about dark times, we don't usually think about good things happening. But sometimes in the darkest times, there is a light we can see if we will just look for it. And through our hardest struggles, there are good things God is doing that we can look for. The Bible tells us that while Jesus was on the cross, there was darkness throughout the whole land. It was literally dark, but it was also emotionally and spiritually the darkest time in history. Jesus suffered through worse things than any of us could imagine, and He did that because He wasn't thinking about the pain or the struggle or the darkness He was in. Instead of thinking about that, Jesus was thinking about the joy that would come out of the crucifixion.
Today, even though the crucifixion was terrible and was a dark, dark time, we know that the greatest light and the greatest joy in history come from the sacrifice that Jesus made on the cross for us. When we go through dark and difficult times we can hold on to the fact that Jesus knows what that is like and that God is still at work in our lives, no matter what. ***[Bottom Line]*** **Whatever happens, remember**

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God is still at work."

It's Not Finished! *(discussion questions)*

Encourage kids to share a time they were punished for something they did. Ask if they feel like the punishment "fit the crime," as it were. Be careful to make sure they know you're listening, but don't let the conversation turn into a parent-critiquing session.

- Take it a step further and talk about a time when you didn't deserve punishment or you were punished for something you didn't do.
- Ask kids if anyone has ever taken the blame, covered for, or been punished even though it should have been them.
- What motivates or convinces someone to do that for someone else? If you haven't ever covered for someone else or volunteered to take their place, is there anything, any situation, you can think of where you would? What makes that different?
- Today is a great time to really dig deep and think about how Jesus didn't deserve to die, but He volunteered to do so in our place, out of His great love for us.
- To get kids thinking differently, ask them what would have happened IF Jesus hadn't died on the cross? What IF He didn't keep His promise? What IF He decided at the last moment it was too hard and He went into hiding, like many of His disciples did? How would that have changed history?

3. Puzzle The Verse Together *(memory verse activity)*
What You Need: "Memory Verse Puzzle" pieces from the Activity Page, Bibles

What You Do:

- Help kids look up John 16:33b in their Bibles. Then read it out loud together a few times.
- Hand the group the puzzle and keep a few of the pieces.
- Hide those pieces somewhere and don't let the kids know that you have the missing pieces.
- Have the kids work together to put together the rest of the puzzle.
- Eventually, when the kids realize that there are missing pieces, reveal that you have them and help the kids put the verse together and say it all together a few more times.

What You Say:
"When you were working with some of the pieces missing, you couldn't complete the puzzle. In our lives, God is the only one who sees all the pieces of life's puzzles. We don't always see all the pieces that God has in play. When you go through a puzzling or difficult time, remember that you don't have to make everything fit by yourself. God has promised to be with us and to guide us. ***[Bottom Line]*** **Whatever happens, remember God is still at work."**

- When Jesus died on the cross, the disciples thought everything they had worked for was over and done with. When have you felt like something you worked for was over and done with? Was it really over and done with? Have you been able to see any good come from that time?
- We know how much Jesus loves us that He would suffer and die on the cross for us, and we know that He calls us to take up our cross and follow Him. With that knowledge and with the promise of Jesus in our Memory Verse that we will have trouble in the world, why do you think

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that sometimes we get upset with God when our lives don't turn out as easy and painless as we might want?

Pray

What You Need: No supplies needed

What You Do:

- Remind kids that we are all works in progress, and that when we face troubles we can still have hope and trust that God is still at work in us and around us.
- Lead them in a prayer, thanking God for graciously working in our lives.
- Ask if anyone would like to volunteer to pray out loud.

Please keep kids in small groups until ALL kids have been picked up. Thanks!

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