



WEEK
FOUR
MARCH 2024

LARGE GROUP
PRETEEN

Communicator Guide

TODAY'S BIBLE STORY

Take You at Your Word
Palm Sunday
Matthew 21:1-11

TODAY'S KEY QUESTION

Why are promises important?

TODAY'S BOTTOM LINE

Jesus came to be our Savior.

MONTHLY MEMORY VERSE

"God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son. Anyone who believes in him will not die but will have eternal life."
John 3:16, NIV

MONTHLY VIRTUE

Easter—Celebrating that Jesus is alive

BASIC TRUTH

I can trust God no matter what.

WEEK 4

Key Question: Why are promises important? We start with a high-level question about promises to get kids thinking about the ways that making and keeping promises can build trust with people. Promises can allow us remain at peace with each other. They can also show how much we're willing to go the extra mile to show others how much they mean to us. Most of all, we pray that kids start to understand some of God's huge promises that came true through Jesus.

We kick off Easter week with the story of Palm Sunday as described in **Matthew 21:1-11**. By this time, God's people had been waiting hundreds of years for God's promised Savior. As Jesus' ministry grew, the people were starting to believe that Jesus WAS that Savior. They were sure that God's promises were finally coming true! So when Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey, just like a prophesy foretold, the people celebrated and worshipped Him. And while they might not have fully understood how Jesus was about to make peace, they could celebrate because God was faithful to send a Savior.

Bottom Line: Jesus came to be our Savior. Jesus was more than a good teacher and miracle worker. Jesus is God's very own Son. God promised that Jesus would come and save us from the consequences of our sin. When Jesus came, He fulfilled all of the promises that God made.

On top of that, Jesus is the Savior we all need to have a forever relationship with God. We pray that all kids choose to trust Jesus as their Savior this Easter season.

LANDING

COMMUNICATOR: "As you head to your Small Groups, think about this:

SLIDE: KEY QUESTION

"Why are promises important? How have you seen God keep promises throughout the Bible? Why might that be important for us to think about today? Those might be tricky questions for you to answer. But don't worry, you'll have all sorts of time to chat about them with your Small Group. But before you head out, let's pray and ask God to help us be the kind of people that keep our promises as well! Let's pray!"

SLIDE: THEME BACKGROUND

Communicator leads group in a prayer related to what they just heard. After prayer, Communicator dismisses kids to Small Group.



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PRELUDE **SOCIAL** **STORY** **WORSHIP** **GROUPS** **HOME**

25 MINUTES

10 MINUTES

TODAY'S BIBLE STORY

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LARGE GROUP

ENGAGE KIDS' HEARTS THROUGH A DYNAMIC AND INTERACTIVE BIBLE STORY, WORSHIP, AND PRAYER EXPERIENCE IN A LARGE GROUP SETTING.

AUDIO: PLAY HIGH-ENERGY MUSIC AS STUDENTS ENTER.

SLIDE: THEME

OPTIONAL VIDEO (MEDIA PACKAGE): THEME LOOP

Host enters . . .

OPTIONAL VIDEO (MEDIA PACKAGE): COUNTDOWN

OPTIONAL VIDEO (MEDIA PACKAGE): THEME

WELCOME

Host has lots of energy as he or she welcomes everyone to [Name of Environment]. Host is relatable and inviting. Host can talk about something that happened culturally throughout the week like a big sports game, movie opening, a viral video on YouTube, etc. Host tells them how excited he or she is that they're there and briefly runs through what they can expect. This is especially helpful for first-time guests to make them feel like they know what's happening.

OPENER

HOST: "Welcome to [Name of Environment], everybody! I don't know about you, but I'm really excited for this time of year. It's getting to be spring, winter and cold are moving into the rearview mirror, and next week is Easter! We're waiting until next week to really celebrate big because Jesus is alive!

"And, as per usual, we're kicking things off with an unusual game. We'll need five volunteers . . . and a bathrobe.

Bring volunteers up on stage near a predetermined starting and ending line. Lay one bathrobe on the ground in front of the group as a demonstration.

"I need your entire group to stand on this robe. Make sure nobody is touching the ground.

After all the volunteers crowd onto the robe, continue.

"When I say go, you will take this second robe (hand a second robe to the group), lay it on the ground in front of you, and without touching the ground, move onto the second robe. The person closest to the first robe has to pick it up and pass it down, and the front person will lay that robe on the ground.



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“Sort of like a robe caterpillar. A Robe-A-Pillar!

SLIDE: “ROBE-A-PILLAR”

“A few rules! You can’t touch the ground—at all—and everyone must be on the next robe before picking up the last one. Oh! And the whole thing is timed, so you have to move as fast as you can. If you fall, touch the ground, or grab the robe before all of you are on the next one, you start over at the start line!

“Make sense? Let’s do it!

Play the game and time the team. Keep the energy up by leading the crowd to cheer on the volunteers. Once finished, note the time and play the game again, this time with five new volunteers.

Once finished with several teams, declare the team with the lowest time the winner and applaud all who participated.

“Amazing job, Robe-A-Pillars! Well done, my friends! Hopefully you feel a bit closer with one another now. Let’s keep that feeling going as we stand to worship!”



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WORSHIP

Worship Leaders enter as Host exits.

WORSHIP LEADER: "I'm so excited that we get to sing and praise God together! This song says, 'Every day, I will sing Your praise.' (*Show the dance motions.*) We can worship God by lifting our voices together, AND by showing God's love everywhere we go. Sing this with me.

AUDIO: "SING YOUR PRAISE" / TRACK 2 FROM MY LIFE FOR YOU

OPTIONAL VIDEO: "SING YOUR PRAISE" LIVE LYRICS OR DANCE MOVES MUSIC VIDEO

"Way to go, everyone! I love it when we lift our voices to praise God. Before we continue in worship, check this out.

OPTIONAL VIDEO (MEDIA PACKAGE): LIVE LOUD VIDEO FROM GET REEL

"We've been singing this song this month called 'Jesus Is Peace!' And it's so true—Jesus gives us peace. Jesus IS peace! Lots of things can try to move us and shake us . . . but we can choose to live in a way that shows what a difference Jesus has made in our lives. We can show with our words and actions how good, kind, loving Jesus really is. Let me hear you sing. Here we go!

AUDIO: "JESUS IS PEACE" / TRACK 8 FROM MY LIFE FOR YOU

OPTIONAL VIDEO (MEDIA PACKAGE): "JESUS IS PEACE" LIVE LYRICS OR DANCE MOVES MUSIC VIDEO

"Listen to these words from Psalm 106:3: '*Blessed are those who always do what is fair. Blessed are those who keep doing what is right.*' (NirV) We can KEEP living God's way, even when it's tough. With God's help, we can bring peace to our relationships with the people around us. Our faith is what drives us to show love and make peace with others . . . because we've experienced God's peace for ourselves. Let's sing out what we believe."

AUDIO: "WE BELIEVE" / TRACK 1 FROM KIDMIN WORSHIP VOL. 4

OPTIONAL VIDEO: "WE BELIEVE" LIVE LYRICS VIDEO



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COMMUNICATOR SCRIPT (STORY)

SLIDE: THEME BACKGROUND

Communicator enters as Worship Leaders exit.

INTRODUCTION

COMMUNICATOR: "What's happening, everyone! I can't believe next week is Easter . . . I blinked and we're already nearing the end of March. Crazy! I'm not sure I can wait for next week. It's such a great time hanging with my family, eating amazing food and, of course, celebrating Jesus' resurrection.

"Have you ever had to wait for something? Maybe something you were promised would happen, something fun, and you are bouncing in your seat, going completely insane just waiting?"

Tell a personal story of something exciting you had to wait for. Maybe a family trip, a birthday, or results from trying out for a sport or a musical.

"What about you? Have you ever had to wait on a promise?"

Allow volunteers to share some of their experiences.

TENSION

COMMUNICATOR: "I get it. I've been there. But sometimes . . . the promise isn't what you thought it would be. Sometimes you've built it up in your head so much that when the thing you've been waiting for happens . . . it's kind of a letdown.

"What does it feel like when something doesn't go the way you thought it should? Or worse when someone makes a promise . . . but then they bail on it? How do you react when the thing you've been hoping and waiting for turns out to be not what you built up in your head?"

"Those are great questions. And, as always, we've got an excerpt from this (*hold up Bible*) to help us out. The Bible is all about promises—and the God who knows how to keep them!"

TRUTH

COMMUNICATOR: "To start, we're looking at the last week of Jesus' life. It's equal parts tragic and triumphant. It's written about in each of the Gospels—the first four book in the New Testament of the Bible—but today, we're focusing on the first Gospel—the Gospel of Matthew.

"Throughout His life, Jesus did some amazing things. Healing. Miracles. Sermons and teachings. And because of these, people talked about Him.

"As Jesus grew in popularity, more and more people were convinced that He was, in fact, the Messiah they'd been waiting for. For hundreds of years, prophets spoke of a day when God's anointed one, His son, the Savior of mankind, would come, set things right, and lead the nation with truth and justice.

"If you know anything about the nation of Israel at this time . . . things were not so great. Okay, that is an understatement. It was a dumpster fire. Israel was ruled by Rome, and Rome as rulers were ruthless and oppressive. Despite the hardship of living under such tyrannical rule, there was great hope that the Messiah, the Savior, would



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come and free everyone from this mess. He would finally rid the land of their enemies and restore them back to the great nation they once were.

"Many people were waiting on this promise. Looking, searching, hoping, and praying. Something had to happen. Something had to give. And Jesus just might be the answer they've all been looking for.

"For this next part, I'm going to need a little help. I need three volunteers.

Select three outgoing volunteers and bring them up on stage.

"In our story, there are some crowds, and those crowds play an important part. So for now, you're the crowd. I'm going to have you stand right here.

Ask the volunteers to move to the middle of stage, next to a large box set on a table.

"Jesus and his disciples were about to head into Jerusalem. Now, Jerusalem was the capital, and to top it off, it was a festival week! Families, music, food, celebrations . . . the place was hopping! Jerusalem was packed with (*point to volunteers*) crowds of people all showing off the latest dance moves.

"(Pause) Well, go on. Let's see them!

AUDIO: UP TEMPO DANCE MUSIC (ABOUT 15 SECONDS)

Encourage the volunteers to comically dance.

"Not bad! I knew I picked the right volunteers!

Open the Bible to Matthew 21:1-3 (NirV) and read.

"As they all approached Jerusalem, they came to Bethphage. It was on the Mount of Olives. Jesus sent out two disciples. He said to them, 'Go to the village ahead of you. As soon as you get there, you will find a donkey tied up. Her colt will be with her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them. The owner will send them right away.'

"(To volunteers) Would you all look in this box and see if you find what Jesus was asking for?

The volunteers should pull out a stuffed donkey.

"What's going on here? Why was Jesus asking His disciples to collect barnyard animals before heading to Jerusalem?

"Maybe to ride it. Jesus had been to Jerusalem numerous times before, and usually He just walked. Why would He want to ride a donkey now? Was He tired? Did He just want to experience something different?

"Not quite.

Open the Bible to Matthew 21:4-5 (NirV) and read.



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"This took place so that what was spoken through the prophet would come true. It says, 'Say to the city of Zion, 'See, your king comes to you. He is gentle and riding on a donkey. He is riding on a donkey's colt.'"

"Interesting! Do you now see why Jesus was riding into the city on a donkey? Many years earlier, a prophet named Zechariah had talked about a day when the long-awaited king would ride into Zion—another name for Jerusalem—on the colt of a donkey. So, what did Jesus do? He rode into Jerusalem on *(hold up stuffed animal)* the colt of a donkey!

"The crowds knew this. They knew what signs to look for. They knew the prophecies. And they were about to go wild when they saw it! The King was finally here! And if the King was finally here, they must have been thinking, our freedom must be, too! So, when they saw Jesus, they cheered loudly!

Hold the stuffed donkey behind your back, then bring it out suddenly, encouraging the volunteers to cheer. Hide it quickly, making them stop. Bring it out again, quickly, several times, making the volunteers cheer, stop, cheer, and stop comically.

"Just keeping you on your toes.

"The disciples did exactly what Jesus asked, and they found things exactly as He had said. They put their coats on top of the donkey for Jesus to sit on. *(To volunteers)* Do you see any cloaks in there?"

The volunteers should grab the bathrobes (left over from the Opener) that are in the box.

Open the Bible to Matthew 21:8 (NIRV) and read.

"A very large crowd spread their coats on the road. Others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.

"(To volunteers) Oh! There should be some branches in there too!

Have the volunteers grab the branches.

"Let's visualize that this *(center aisle or pathway up front)* is the road into Jerusalem. Where do the robes go? And as people see Jesus, what are they doing with the branches?

Instruct volunteers to lay the bathrobes and branches across the path as Communicator walks holding the stuffed donkey.

"Exactly! They were lining the road for Jesus to walk across. Honestly, that's kind of odd, isn't it? Throwing coats and cloaks on the road?"

"Several times in the Old Testament, we read about a new king anointed to become king. For instance, when King Jehu was announced to become king, people took off their coats and laid them on the steps for him to walk across! It was an acknowledgement that a person was truly the king. Symbolically, it was a way for people to show that they were giving up protection, warmth, and comfort and laying it at the feet of their Savior and King. And here in the streets of Jerusalem, they are doing exactly that—hailing Him as king!

"And not only were they laying cloaks and branches down for Him to walk across, but they were shouting. Singing, actually. Imagine them waving some of the palm branches as He rode by!



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Encourage the volunteers to take a few more branches and wave them.

Open the Bible to Matthew 21:9 (NIRV) and read.

"Some of the people went ahead of him, and some followed. They all shouted, 'Hosanna to the Son of David!' and 'Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!' and 'Hosanna in the highest heaven!'

"(pause) Well? Let's hear it, crowd!

Have the volunteers wave branches and shout, "Hosanna"! as they walk with the donkey down the "road."

"Hosanna! Interesting word. What in the world does that mean?"

"Hosanna is actually a cry for salvation. It means 'Lord, save us.' As the crowds cry, 'Hosanna' (look at the volunteers, prompt to say it again), they are crying out, 'Lord save us!' These are also words from an ancient psalm or song of Israel that would have been familiar to many.

"Between the coats (points to coats on ground) and the branches (prompt volunteers to wave) and the shouting of Hosanna (prompt volunteers to shout) this was quite the scene. And it does not go unnoticed.

Open the Bible to Matthew 21:10-11 (NIRV) and read.

"When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up. The people asked, 'Who is this?' The crowds answered, 'This is Jesus. He is the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.'

"And with that, the crowd went wild!

AUDIO: UP TEMPO DANCE MUSIC (ABOUT 15 SECONDS)

Encourage the volunteers to comically dance.

"That's right. Dance your hearts out! Friends, can we give our volunteers a hand for helping out today?"

Lead the Large Group in applause as the volunteers are seated.

"Why was the city stirred up? Well, for one thing, here comes their King riding a donkey! And for many, they thought this was the time they would finally be free from their enemies. The moment had finally come! But then . . . Jesus didn't go after the Romans. In fact, the religious leaders and the Romans would soon both go after Him.

"There was most likely a lot of confusion. What is Jesus doing? Wasn't He supposed to take over the government and rule as King? Get rid of the Romans? Some might have wondered, 'Doesn't He care about our freedom?' What about all the promises?"

"But Jesus knew exactly what He was doing. And what He was about to do. He would make a way for the people to be even more free than they could ever imagine."



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APPLICATION

COMMUNICATOR: "There are a lot of times in life where we expect things to turn out one way and they end up being completely different. We get all of our hopes up just to find ourselves disappointed. Sometimes the reason is because our expectations were wrong in the first place. We're incredibly creative, and the stories we make up in our heads aren't always accurate.

"Many people expected Jesus to be this conquering king that would come and destroy His enemies and free Israel. The crowds were really hyped up about this, as we saw with the help of our volunteers. But that is not what Jesus did. And many people were disappointed. They thought the promise had died.

"These misguided expectations may have caused some to miss the even greater reason why Jesus came in the first place. Their expectations might've helped them miss the even greater promise and freedom that Jesus came to offer. Jesus came to be our Savior. Not a military savior, not a political savior, but the Savior of the world.

"I don't know about you, but there are certainly times when I can get caught hoping God will do things one way, and all of my hope is built on that expectation. Answer my prayer a specific way. Deal with mean people a specific way. Bless me specifically like this. But God might not always respond the way we expect. In fact, He often doesn't!

"But just like Jesus entering into Jerusalem the final week of his life, just because God doesn't do what you hope doesn't mean God isn't about to do something even greater. And it's important for us to look back at all the ways that God has kept promises in the past, because it will help us to trust God more with our own lives."

LANDING

COMMUNICATOR: "As you head to your Small Groups, think about this:

SLIDE: KEY QUESTION

"Why are promises important?" How have you seen God keep promises throughout the Bible? Why might that be important for us to think about today? Those might be tricky questions for you to answer. But don't worry, you'll have all sorts of time to chat about them with your Small Group. But before you head out, let's pray and ask God to help us be the kind of people that keep our promises as well! Let's pray!"

SLIDE: THEME BACKGROUND

Communicator leads group in a prayer related to what they just heard. After prayer, Communicator dismisses kids to Small Group.

AUDIO: PLAY HIGH-ENERGY MUSIC AS THE KIDS EXIT.

SLIDE: THEME

OPTIONAL VIDEO (MEDIA PACKAGE): THEME LOOP