Preschool–Grade 6

Jesus Dies on the Cross

Sunday School Lesson for Kindergarten to 2nd Grade, 45 minutes

Main point: God loves us so much that Jesus died on the cross for our sins.
Bible passage: Matthew 26:36–27:61 and Luke 23. Read them before class.
Memory verse: "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." *Romans 5:8 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible, 7 paper hearts (one for the game, six for the verse), a marker, tape, crayons, and one take-home sheet for each child.
Before class: write the memory verse on 6 of the paper hearts (see part 4). Put bookmarks in your Bible at Luke 23:34 and Romans 5:8.

1. Opening game: Pass the Heart (5 minutes)

Kids sit in a circle and pass one paper heart around while you count out loud. When you stop and say "Love!", the child holding the heart tells one way someone showed them love (a hug, a meal, a ride, help with homework). Play until most kids have had a turn. Say: "Today we will hear about the greatest love there ever was."

2. Bible story: Jesus Dies on the Cross (10 minutes)

Hold up your Bible open to Luke 23, so the kids can see the story comes from God's Word. Tell it in your own words, quietly and reverently:

On the night before Jesus died, He ate supper with His disciples. He told them His blood would be shed "for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:28). **Remission** means God takes our sins away. Then Jesus went to a garden called **Gethsemane** to pray (26:36). He prayed, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt," which means, "I will do what God wants" (26:39).

A man named **Judas** came with a big crowd carrying swords and sticks, and they took Jesus away (26:47–50). One of Jesus' friends pulled out a sword, but Jesus said to put it away. Jesus said He could pray, and God would send more than twelve legions of angels, thousands and thousands of them (26:51–53)! Jesus could have stopped them. But He let them take Him.

In the morning they brought Jesus to the ruler, **Pilate** (27:2). Pilate asked Him questions. Then Pilate said, "I find no fault in this man" (Luke 23:4). That means Jesus had done nothing wrong. But the crowd shouted, "Crucify him" (23:21). So Pilate gave them what they asked for (23:24).

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The story continues: The soldiers made fun of Jesus (Matthew 27:29). Then they led Him away. A man named **Simon** carried the cross for Jesus (Luke 23:26). They came to a place called **Calvary**, and there they **crucified** Jesus. That means they put Him on a cross to die. Two other men who had done wrong were crucified too, one on His right and one on His left (23:33).

Then Jesus prayed for the people who were hurting Him. **Read Luke 23:34 from your Bible:** "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Say: "Jesus asked God to forgive them!"

One of the two men said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." Jesus told him, "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise" (23:42–43). **Paradise** is where God is.

In the middle of the day, the sun stopped shining, and it was dark over all the land for three hours (23:44–45). Then Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." That means, "I give My spirit to God." And Jesus died (23:46). The Roman captain watching said, "Certainly this was a righteous man" (23:47).

That evening a good man named **Joseph** took Jesus' body down from the cross. He wrapped it in clean cloth and laid it in a **sepulchre**, a tomb cut out of rock (23:50–53). He rolled a great stone to the door (Matthew 27:60). Jesus had said, "After three days I will rise again" (27:63). Say: "Next week we will hear what happened on the third day!"

3. Questions to ask (5 minutes)

1. Where did Jesus go to pray? *(A garden called Gethsemane, Matthew 26:36)*
2. What did Pilate say about Jesus? *("I find no fault in this man," Luke 23:4)*
3. Who carried the cross for Jesus? *(Simon, 23:26)*
4. What did Jesus pray for the people who hurt Him? *("Father, forgive them," 23:34)*
5. Why did Jesus die? *(For our sins, because He loves us, Romans 5:8)*

4. Memory verse: Heart Verse game (5 minutes)

Tape the 6 hearts up in order: *But God commendeth / his love toward us, / in that, while we were / yet sinners, / Christ died / for us. Romans 5:8.* Explain the old words: **commendeth** means shows, and **sinners** are people who have done wrong things. Read the verse together. Then take one heart away and read it again. Keep taking hearts away, one each time, until the kids can say the whole verse by themselves.

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5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "Jesus did nothing wrong, but He died on the cross for our sins, because He loves us. God loves you very much. But everyone has done wrong things. The Bible calls that sin: 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). That means none of us is as good as God. Jesus is God who came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). Jesus died for our sins, He was buried, and He rose again (1 Corinthians 15:3–4)! The Bible tells us how to obey the gospel, the good news about Jesus: 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) To **repent** means we are sorry for our sin and we turn away from it. We are **baptized**, buried all the way under the water, in Jesus' name, so our sins are washed away (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). **Remission** means God takes our sins away, the same word Jesus used about His blood (Matthew 26:28). And God fills us with the **Holy Ghost**, His own Spirit, and we speak in other tongues, words God gives us, just like the believers did in the Bible (Acts 2:4)."
Pray with the kids, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.
This week: when someone hurts you, pray for them like Jesus did, and forgive them.

6. Activity (10–15 minutes)

Choose one: the **Jesus dies on the cross word search** (vbshq.com/puzzles/the-cross-word-search), crossword (vbshq.com/puzzles/the-cross-crossword), maze (vbshq.com/puzzles/the-cross-maze) or worksheet (vbshq.com/worksheets/the-cross-worksheet), the coloring page or craft (vbshq.com/bible-stories/the-cross), or **Forgive Hearts:** each child gets a paper heart and draws someone they can show love to or forgive this week. Pray over the hearts together.

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You for loving us so much. Thank You, Jesus, for dying on the cross for our sins. Help us forgive others the way You forgave. In Jesus' name, amen."

What this lesson leaves out on purpose: the beating, the scourging and how a crucifixion was done. Read Matthew 27:26–50 yourself. **If a child asks whether it hurt:** answer gently. Yes, it hurt, but Jesus chose to do it because He loves us (Matthew 26:53; Romans 5:8). He is not hurting now. He rose again, and He is alive.
If a child asks who Jesus was praying to: Jesus is God who came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). As a man, He prayed to God, His Father, the one God who was in Him (John 14:10). Jesus prays, and He teaches us to pray too.

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