

Jesus's

Bad Day

The Point: Jesus loves us.

Scripture Connect: Matthew 27:32–50

Supplies for all Session 9 activities options: pencils, prepared poster, stopwatch, empty soda cans (with pull tabs removed; 1 per pair of kids), 5 pennies per child, Bible, white paper plates, crayons (optional), tape, several wooden cooking spoons, paper

The Basics for Leaders

If there's a way to die more painfully or slowly than crucifixion, the Romans couldn't find it. That's why they reserved crucifixion for criminals—but not most Roman criminals. Crucifixion was considered too painful for Roman citizens, but Jesus wasn't a Roman citizen.

So after being beaten until his back was slashed through to the bone, Jesus was nailed to a cross to die, a public reminder that crossing the Romans was a mistake that brought swift and brutal consequences.

A sad day? Most of Jesus's disciples hid, fearful for their lives. Jesus's mother stood, weeping, watching her son die a criminal's death. It was a day that cut short the life of an innocent man.

A bad day? Not at all—because although he was innocent, Jesus had come to die, to be the sacrifice that let us come to God through him. The Romans weren't murdering Jesus; he was giving his life willingly.

For us, that day on the cross was a gift of love that has never been equaled. And it was the first step leading to a day, three days later, that changed everything ... forever.

All because Jesus loves us.

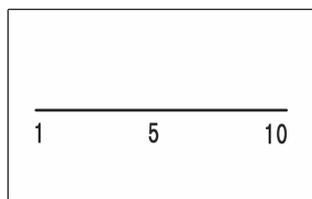
OPENING ACTIVITY—OPTION 1

HOWZITGOIN'

Time: about 5 minutes, depending on attendance

Supplies: pencils, prepared poster

Before kids arrive, draw a line on a poster. Write a 1 on the left end of the line, a 10 on the right, and a 5 in the middle. As kids arrive, ask them to pencil in their initials on the line.



Say: **If this past week was so awful you wish you'd slept through it, place your initials by the 1. If it was a great week you wish you could repeat, put your initials by the 10. Place your initials anywhere on the line that shows how you feel about this past week—except exactly on the 5. Because there's no such thing as a week that's exactly half good and half bad!**

After kids have signed in, give them 30 seconds each to explain why they placed their initials where they did. Be sure to include your own initials and explain your placement on the line. Kids will begin to express themselves more over time, and hearing their stories will help you adapt this lesson to make it relevant to your kids' lives.

OPENING ACTIVITY—OPTION 2

BLINKFEST

Time: about 4 minutes

Supplies: stopwatch

Ask children to pick partners and sit on the floor facing their partners.

Say: **In a few moments I'll ask you to stare at your partner's eyes. We'll see how long we can go without blinking. The average person blinks**

about every four seconds—automatically—so keeping your eyes open longer than that will be hard. Ready? Go!

Count off every five seconds. When the last child has blinked, continue.

Say: **Good job! Your eyes will soon be back to normal—the discomfort you might feel will be over in the blink of an eye.**

Today we'll take a look at an event where someone felt real pain that was far worse and lasted far longer. And he experienced that pain not because he had to but because he loves us and wanted to serve us.

Bad Days Game

POINT OF VIEW

Time: 5 minutes or more, as desired

Supplies: empty soda cans (with pull tabs removed; 1 per pair of kids), 5 pennies per child

Say: **When Jesus's friends saw him nailed to a cross, they were very sad. They knew their friend was dead. They didn't really understand that the story wasn't over, that Jesus would rise again. They weren't seeing what happened clearly.** Tell children they'll test how not seeing things clearly can result in poor decisions.

Have each child find a partner, and ask partners to sit on the floor facing each other, at least two feet apart. Give each pair an empty soda can and 10 pennies. Have children set the soda can between them and each child take five pennies. Say: **In a few moments I'll ask you to take turns dropping pennies into your soda can—from at least 12 inches above the cans. It can be done—if you're right on target. But before you begin, close one eye and keep it closed. No cheating! OK, you can begin.**

With one eye closed, depth perception is gone—and so is kids' ability to accurately gauge when to release their pennies. After this round have children again play the game, only this time with both eyes open (and only six inches above the cans, if desired). The pennies should land closer to the opening on the soda cans.

Collect the cans and pennies. Then ask:

- **Why do you think it was easier to be accurate with both eyes open?**

- Tell us a time you thought you saw something clearly, but were wrong?

Say: Jesus's disciples saw something happen—but they didn't really understand it. They saw Jesus die on a cross. They thought that was the end of Jesus, but it wasn't. Let's dig into what happened!

Bad Days Bible Story

JESUS PLATES

Time: about 15 minutes

Supplies: Bible, white paper plates, pencils (crayons, if desired), tape

Give each child a white paper plate and a pencil (or crayon).

Say: **We've never seen someone die on a cross—and I'm glad about that. It's such a painful way to die that Romans almost never killed someone that way. They saved that punishment for non-Roman criminals. The torture warned others not to disobey Roman law.**

Jesus was crucified, but we've heard about it so often maybe we don't think about it anymore. It's just a story ... but it happened. As I read aloud an account of what happened to Jesus, listen for words or images that especially move you. Write a word or sketch a picture on your plate to show what happened or how it makes you feel. (Suggestions might include drawing crosses, tears, clouds, or hearts—or writing words such as *sad*, *painful*, *sacrifice*, and *love*.)

Read aloud Matthew 27:32–50. Pause often between verses so the story can sink in and so kids can write and draw. Let children work on their art for three to four minutes.

Ask children to show their plates and talk about what they've written or drawn. Then tape the plates to a wall. Depending on how many children's plates you have, create the shape of a cross.

AGE-ALERT TIPS

If you have mostly **younger children**, consider reading the story of Jesus's death from an illustrated story Bible. **Young children** may find it hard to illustrate emotions, so having them draw simple crosses on their plates and decorating them with hearts will help them express how they feel.

CLOSING PRAYER**FOUND SOUND PRAYER**

Time: about 5 minutes

Supplies: several wooden cooking spoons

Hand a wooden spoon to each child or let children share spoons.

Say: **Time to make some muffled music! Think of a song that sums up how you feel about Jesus. Any song—it doesn't have to be one people sing in church. We'll take turns beating out the rhythm on the floor and see if anyone can guess what you're playing.**

Take turns (you're playing too, right?), and when kids have finished say: **We've been praying as we communicated to Jesus what we felt about him. Please close your eyes as I finish for us.**

Briefly thank God for showing his love by sending Jesus. Thank Jesus for giving himself on the cross to die for our sins. Finish by saying "amen."

EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY—OPTION 1**LOVE LISTS**

Time: about 10 minutes

Supplies: 1 sheet of paper and 1 pencil per child

Give each child a sheet of paper and a pencil. Remind everyone that Jesus's death and resurrection demonstrated his great love for us. Then ask children to write "Jesus List" on the top of their papers and list or draw pictures of what Jesus has done—or is doing—that shows how much Jesus loves them. (If you have younger children, pair them with older kids to help them think of ideas to draw on their papers.)

Let children work for several minutes and then report to the larger group what they wrote or drew. As kids report, they can add missed items to their lists.

After sharing, have children turn over their papers and write "My List" at the top. Say: **On this list you'll write or draw what you've done or are doing to show Jesus how much you love him. You'll have three minutes.** (Again, have older kids help younger ones draw their pictures—or simply draw hearts.)

At the end of three minutes, ask children to share what they've drawn with others. Then discuss:

- **Which list is most convincing: how Jesus shows his love to us or how we show our love to Jesus?**
- **What could you do this week that you haven't done before to show Jesus how much you love him?**

EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY—OPTION 2

WHO-LOVES-YOU TOSS

Time: about 5 minutes

Supplies: a penny

Ask kids to form a circle and join them. Explain you'll be tossing a penny to someone in the circle, who will then toss it to someone else. The goal is to keep the penny going as long as possible without having to stop.

And that's the catch: to toss the penny, you have to call out someone or something that loves you. For instance, you might call out "my mom" or "my stepdad" or in a pinch, "my pet guppies."

When you've run out the string of "who loves you" answers, take the penny back and say: **Jesus loves all of us—let's all call out his name because he's shown his love for everyone!**

EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY—OPTION 3

INQUIRING MINDS WANT TO KNOW

Time: 5 minutes

Supplies: none

Gather kids in a circle. Ask: **We know Jesus loves us. If you could do anything to show your love for Jesus, what would you do, and why?**