

SACRED INVITATION

F a m i l y
W o r s h i p
E x p e r i e n c e s

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY DOWNLOAD

HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

These experiences and activities are intended to be used during a family worship experience where all ages are worshipping together. The scriptures align with the Gospel texts in *Sacred Invitation* for Ash Wednesday, each Sunday in Lent, both Holy Week services, and Easter Sunday. Ash Wednesday and each Sunday in Lent offer three activity options for kids to choose from.

Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, and Good Friday also include a short children's message to be incorporated into the regular service order and a simple responsive reading for the entire congregation.

Each child attending the Ash Wednesday or a Sunday service should receive a supply packet before service, and a Bible if they did not bring their own. You can post the instructions for each activity on a screen during the service, or you can print the instructions and include them in each packet.

Some of these activities will require a flat surface or table for children to work on. You could also provide a clipboard or sturdy piece of cardboard for use when writing or drawing. Do whatever works for your context.

If your church does not facilitate a family worship space every week, the activities suggested in the **Family Worship Experiences** can also be used in conjunction with the **Children's Teaching Outlines** and/or the **Scripture Art Journal**.

ASH WEDNESDAY

Family Worship Experience

SCRIPTURE

Luke 18:9–14

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- Activity 1: Jesus Prayer coloring page printable handout
- Activity 1: Markers, crayons, or colored pencils
- Activity 2: None
- Activity 3: Black scratch paper (available at craft stores or online using search terms “black scratch off art paper kids”)
- Activity 3: Wooden dowels, popsicle sticks, or other tool for scraping

CHILDREN’S MESSAGE: READ LUKE 18:9–14

Today’s story is a tale of two people. There’s a person who has spent his whole life devoted to learning about God and learning God’s laws. He’s certain he has it right, and he thinks he’s better than everyone else. I imagine he might have a tendency to walk around with his nose stuck up in the air.

Then there’s another man. He knows he has made a lot of mistakes. Maybe he hasn’t treated people fairly. Maybe he ignored things God asked him to do. He looked down, beat his chest, and said, “God, have mercy on me, a sinner.”

Jesus said, “In God’s way of doing things, those who humble themselves like this man will be lifted up.”

Whether we have done everything in our power to make all the right choices in our life, or we know we’ve messed up big time, we all need Jesus. Ash Wednesday reminds us of that truth. On Ash Wednesday, we remember in a special way that we need Jesus. When the ashes are placed on our foreheads and the words, “From dust you have come and to dust you shall return” are spoken over us, we remember that one day we will die. We acknowledge that we all sin and mess up and make mistakes. We repent of our sins by admitting the things we’ve done wrong and asking Jesus to help us live differently. On this day, we enter into the forty-day period (not including Sundays) called Lent, in which we make space to draw closer to Jesus.

I’m going to invite you to help me lead the congregation in response to this good news. The congregational response sounds a lot like the words of the sinner. It is a version of a prayer called the Jesus Prayer. Christians have been praying these words for centuries. You might hear it prayed, “Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me” or “Lord Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner,” or any number of slight variations. These are words we can pray any time, over and over again, together or individually. These are words that remind us we need Jesus.

Would you please help me lead the congregation in response to this good news?

Leader: We know that we all need you, Jesus. Help us to be humble.

Congregation: Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us, for we are sinners.

Leader: We acknowledge that we have come from dust and that we will return to dust.

Congregation: Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us, for we are sinners.

Leader: We ask that you forgive us when we think we've got it all figured out and when we make mistakes.

Congregation: Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us, for we are sinners.

Leader: Help us to draw near to you during this season of Lent.

Congregation: Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us, for we are sinners.

ACTIVITY 1: THE JESUS PRAYER COLORING PAGE

The Jesus Prayer is attributed to the desert fathers and mothers and other Christian writers who lived around the same time period. Sometime around 400 AD, the Christians living in the Egyptian desert prayed something like, “Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us” repeatedly as they went about their day. Another version often repeated is: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” This prayer is not unlike the prayer of the tax collector in Luke 18:13, who said, “God, have mercy on me, a sinner.”

This prayer is appropriate always, but it is especially appropriate on Ash Wednesday and throughout the season of Lent as we confess our deep need for Jesus and his great mercy. Choose a version of this prayer to repeat out loud as a group 4–8 times. Perhaps families will want to continue this practice together daily throughout the season.

Encourage participants to decorate the coloring page to hang on the refrigerator or in their bedrooms as a reminder of this simple yet profound prayer throughout the season of Lent.

ACTIVITY 2: TWO POSTURES

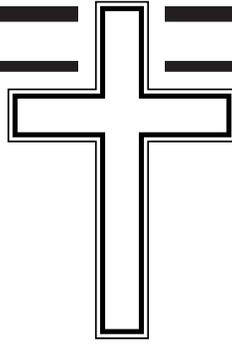
Without making any noise in your seat, pretend you are the proud man. How should you sit? What kind of posture would you have? What would your face look like?

Next, pretend you are the humble man who knows he is a sinner. How would you sit? What would your face look like?

Switch back and forth between the two a few times. Whom does Jesus say we should be like? Why?

ACTIVITY 3: SCRATCH ART

The ashes and many of the symbols during Ash Wednesday and Lent may seem dark or sad, but when we focus on this season, many beautiful things are revealed as we celebrate the resurrection on Easter. Look at the black scratch paper. How does it look? How does it feel? Scratch away at the black to reveal a cool, colorful design. What do you think could be revealed in your life this Lenten season?



JESUS CHRIST

SON OF GOD

HAVE MERCY ON ME

◀ A SINNER ▶

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

Family Worship Experience

SCRIPTURE

Mark 2:18–22

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- Activity 1: Lenten Fast Commitment Card printable handout
- Activity 2 & 3: White board
- Activity 2 & 3: Dry erase markers
- Activity 3: Bible or Bible app

ACTIVITY 1: COMMIT TO A FAST

Choose a fast. During the season of Lent, Christians traditionally choose something to fast, or to give up, for the season as a reminder of Jesus's sacrifice for us and as a way to make space for God to work in our lives. Fill out the Lenten Fast Commitment card by choosing something you can give up during this season. Ask yourself: *What can I give up that will help me make space to remember Jesus's sacrifice and experience God in new ways during this season?*

ACTIVITY 2: FASTING AND FEASTING

On your white board, write or draw a menu for the best feast you can imagine. Ask yourself: *What foods would you include at your feast? Why? What is the difference between feasting and fasting? Why are both important?*

ACTIVITY 3: BIBLICAL IMAGINATION

Look up Psalm 63:1 in a Bible and read it to yourself. Using your white board, draw the images or write the keywords that come to mind as you read and think about this verse. Ask yourself: *What images come to mind? Which word or phrase stands out to you? Why?*

MY LENTEN FAST COMMITMENT

DURING THIS LENTEN SEASON, I AM COMMITTING

to fast from _____ with the Lord's help.

Fasting from _____ will help me draw closer to Jesus

because _____.

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

Family Worship Experience

SCRIPTURE

Mark 3:31–4:9

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- Activity 1: Film strip printable handout
- Activity 2: Pipe cleaners
- Activity 3: Bible or Bible app
- Activity 3: White board
- Activity 3: Dry erase markers

ACTIVITY 1: SOWING SEEDS

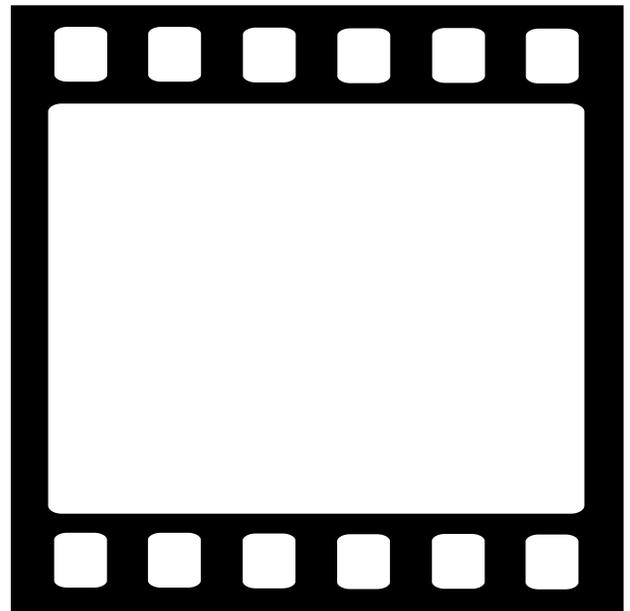
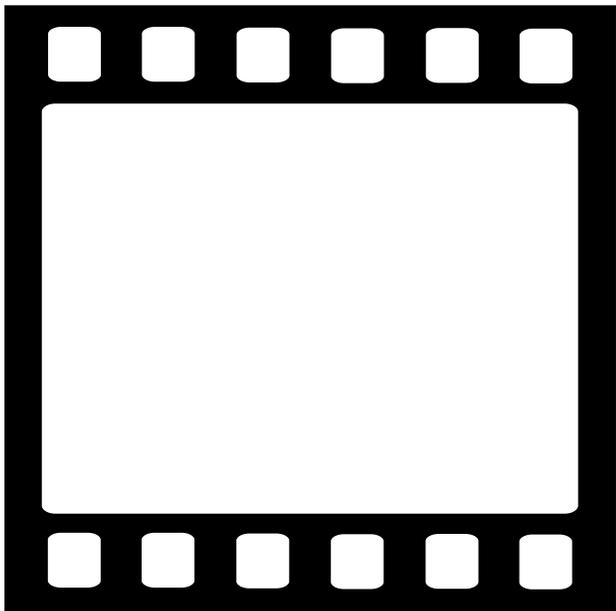
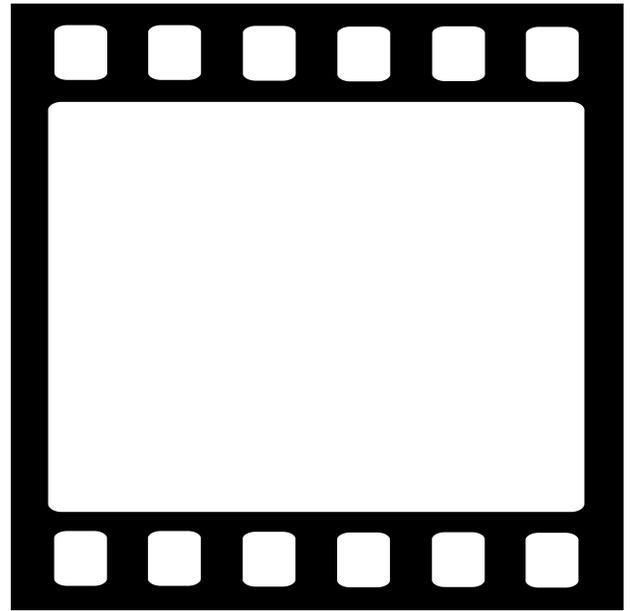
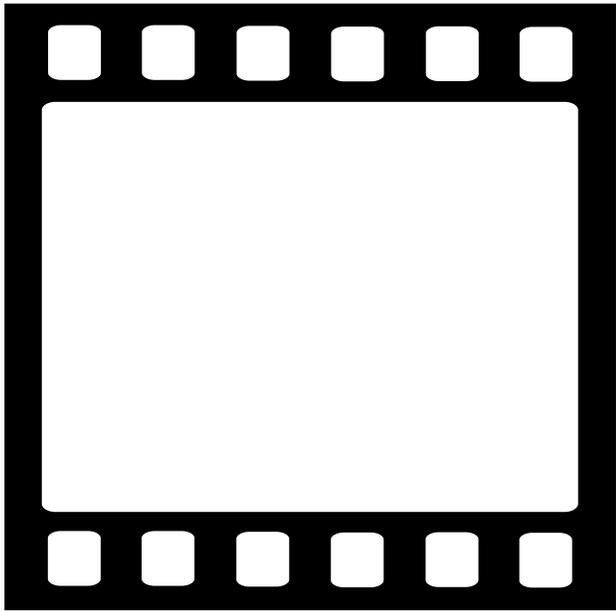
After hearing today's scripture reading, use the blank filmstrip to draw pictures of what happens to the seeds that fall along the path, along rocky soil, among the thorns, and in the good soil. Ask yourself: *What do you think Jesus was trying to say with this parable?*

ACTIVITY 2: PIPE CLEANER PLANTS

Use pipe cleaners to create plants that are growing. Ask yourself: *What helps plants grow? What helps our bodies grow? What helps our minds and hearts grow? Who gives us what we need for our minds and hearts to grow?*

ACTIVITY 3: BIBLICAL IMAGINATION

Look up Psalm 24:1 in a Bible and read it to yourself. Using your white board, draw the images or write the keywords that come to mind as you read and think about this verse. Ask yourself: *What images come to mind? Which word or phrase stands out to you? Why?*



THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

Family Worship Experience

SCRIPTURE

Mark 5:1–20

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- Activity 1: Before/After printable handout
- Activity 1: Markers, crayons, or colored pencils
- Activity 2 & 3: White board
- Activity 2 & 3: Dry erase marker
- Activity 3: Bible or Bible app

ACTIVITY 1: BEFORE/AFTER

Create before-and-after pictures of the man who meets Jesus in this passage. Fold your paper in half. On one side, draw what he looks like walking between the tombs. On the other side, draw what he looks like talking to his townspeople. Ask yourself: *What did Jesus do for this man that was so amazing?*

ACTIVITY 2: HOW MANY PIGS?

Use your white board to draw 2,000 pigs (or as many dots or symbols as you can). Ask yourself: *Can you imagine 2,000 pigs running down a hill into the water? How do you think the owner of the pigs felt?*

ACTIVITY 3: BIBLICAL IMAGINATION

Look up Psalm 93:1–4 in a Bible and read it to yourself. Using your white board, draw the images or write the keywords that come to mind as you read and think about this verse. Ask yourself: *What images come to mind? Which word or phrase stands out to you? Why?*

BEFORE

AFTER

THIRD SUNDAY: 2 of 2

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

Family Worship Experience

SCRIPTURE

Mark 8:11–21

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- Activity 1: Blank paper
- Activity 1 & 3: Colored pencils, markers, or crayons
- Activity 2: Piece of string, about 6 inches in length
- Activity 3: Bible or Bible app
- Activity 3: Speech bubbles printable handout

ACTIVITY 1: WHO ARE YOU?

Imagine that everyone is required to wear a sign to tell others something about who they are. Use paper and drawing supplies to create your own sign. Ask yourself: *What would your sign look like? What would it say? Why?*

ACTIVITY 2: DON'T FORGET!

Once upon a time, people used to use a piece of string tied with a bow on their finger or wrist (not too tight) to serve as a sign of something they needed to remember. Think about some of the ways God has provided for you and your family. Then tie the string on your finger or your wrist. You may need to ask an adult for help. When you see it throughout the day, remember the ways God has provided for your family. Ask yourself: *How has God provided for you and for people you know? What signs have you seen that God is at work in the world?*

ACTIVITY 3: BIBLICAL IMAGINATION

Look up Psalm 66:1–4 in a Bible and read it to yourself. Then use the speech bubbles to show what the words from these verses are saying and how they're said. Ask yourself: *If you could shout any words to the Lord God, what would they be? Why?*



FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

Family Worship Experience

SCRIPTURE

Mark 8:31–9:1

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- Activity 1: Blank paper
- Activity 1: Colored pencils, markers, or crayons
- Activity 2: Small plastic bottles or Ziploc bags filled with:
 - Rice and small toys, buttons, or beads (other ideas include nuts, bolts, coins, game pieces, charms, keys, balls, miniature figurines, toy jewelry, small rocks, etc.—be creative!).
 - Include a small cross if you can.
 - Make a separate list of the items in the bottle or bag for kids to search for, or invite them to share with you how many items they find in their container. They will search by turning it over and around to shift the rice to reveal the items hidden inside. They will not be opening the bottle or bag, so once you have them assembled, tape or superglue them closed.
- Activity 3: Bible or Bible app
- Activity 3: White board
- Activity 3: Dry erase markers

ACTIVITY 1: DRAW THE CROSS

Draw a picture of a cross. Ask yourself: *Why are some crosses fancy decorations? In what ways is the cross more like a tool for killing people (like the electric chair or a hanging noose)?*

ACTIVITY 2: I SPY

Search for the items in your “I Spy” container. Ask yourself: *What do you see hidden in your container? In this scripture from Mark, how does Jesus say we will lose our lives? How does Jesus say we will find our lives?*

ACTIVITY 3: BIBLICAL IMAGINATION

Look up Psalm 145:8–13 in a Bible and read it to yourself. Using your white board, draw the images or write the keywords that come to mind as you read and think about this verse. Ask yourself: *What do you imagine when you read this passage from Psalm 145? Which word or phrase stands out to you? Why?*

PALM SUNDAY

Family Worship Experience

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 21:12–17

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- Activity 1 & 3: Blank paper
- Activity 1, 2, & 3: Colored pencils, markers, or crayons
- Activity 2: Speech bubbles printable handout
- Activity 2: Popsicle sticks (4–5 per child)
- Activity 2: Scissors
- Activity 2: Gluestick
- Activity 3: Bible or Bible app
- Activity 3: White board
- Activity 3: Dry erase markers

ACTIVITY 1: CHANGE OF PERSPECTIVE

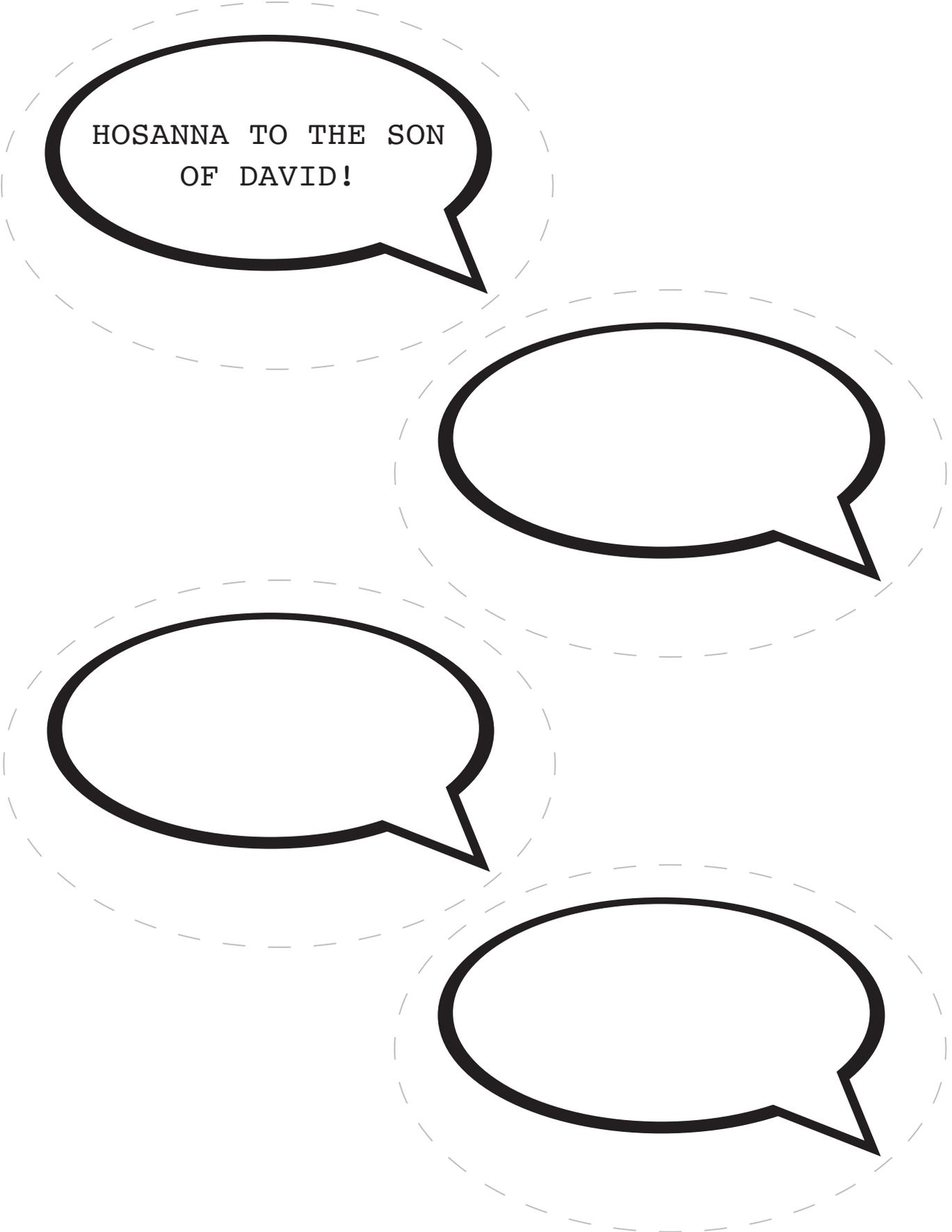
Draw a picture of a face. Then turn it upside down. Now, while it's upside down, make a few tweaks to the image to make it look like a face in the upside down position as well. Ask yourself: *How does turning your picture upside down change it?*

ACTIVITY 2: WELCOME TO JERUSALEM

Inside two or three of the speech bubbles on the handout, write the words that you or other kids might have said as Jesus rode into Jerusalem in today's Scripture reading. In the remaining bubbles, write something the adults were saying. Cut out the speech bubbles and glue them to the popsicle sticks. Ask yourself: *What did the kids know that the adults hadn't figured out yet?*

ACTIVITY 3: BIBLICAL IMAGINATION

Look up Psalm 103:1–5 in a Bible and read it to yourself. Using your white board, draw the images or write the keywords that come to mind as you read and think about these verses. Ask yourself: *What images come to mind? Which word or phrase stands out to you? Why?*



HOSANNA TO THE SON
OF DAVID!

MAUNDY THURSDAY

Family Worship Experience

SCRIPTURE

John 17

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- Small bowl of water & towel per family unit
- Communion elements

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE: READ JOHN 17

Today is Maundy Thursday. Don't confuse the word "Maundy" with Monday. "Maundy" comes from the Latin word for "command." It refers to Jesus's commandment to the disciples to "Love one another as I have loved you." On this day of Holy Week in particular, we remember the Last Supper in which Jesus washed his disciples' feet, ate the Passover meal with them, and then served them the Communion meal of the bread and the cup. Jesus showed his great love for his disciples in the way he served them by doing the humble job of washing their feet. In just a matter of days, Jesus would show the great extent of his love for his disciples and for all people by dying on the cross.

Our Gospel passage from John 17 takes place just after this important Passover meal and foot washing. This passage is a prayer. In this chapter, we get to be flies on the wall as Jesus prays first for himself, then for his disciples, and finally for all believers—us included. As we pay attention to Jesus's prayer, we learn a lot about Jesus's relationship with God and how Jesus views our role in the world.

Jesus doesn't pray that his followers will be taken out of the world so that we won't have to deal with the hard, messed-up, sinful, broken things in the world. Instead, he prays that God the Father would protect us *as we are in the world*. He prays that we would be set apart by and equipped with the truth of God *as we are sent* into the world. We are on a mission with the triune God to redeem the world!

That mission begins with the command that we remember on this Maundy Thursday. "Love one another as I have loved you." Jesus invites us to serve each other just as he served his disciples. Tonight, we'll have the opportunity to experience and remember that love as we wash one another's feet (or hands), and as we participate in the Lord's Supper.

Would you help me in leading the congregation in a prayer of response?

Leader: Lord Jesus, on this Maundy Thursday, we confess that we often forget your command to love one another as you have loved us.

Congregation: Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us, for we are sinners.

Leader: Loving includes serving people, and sometimes that is hard and undesirable, just like washing the disciples' feet must have been for you.

Congregation: Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us, for we are sinners.

Leader: Help us to lay down our lives in loving service for the neighbors who look like us and talk like us, as well as for the ones who look different and talk differently.

Congregation: Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us, for we are sinners.

Leader: Help us to find our place on mission with you as you redeem the world!

Congregation: Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us, for we are sinners.

*Note: Foot/hand-washing and Communion instructions are included in the Maundy Thursday Sermon Outline of the Pastor's Resource Download.

GOOD FRIDAY

Family Worship Experience

SCRIPTURE

John 13:36–38; 19:38–42

SUPPLIES NEEDED

The Good Friday Service Outline in the Pastor's Resource download makes several suggestions for the use of candles, black fabric, and art as symbols for this service. Including these elements will help engage young worshipers and create a multisensory experience for all participants.

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE: READ JOHN 13:36–38; 19:38–42

Take a moment to look around our worship space today. What do you notice? [*Kids may notice dimmer lights, lit candles, black fabric on the cross, art that has been projected or hung, etc.*] What do you think these symbols mean? [*Allow time for various answers.*]

Today is Good Friday. Although we can look ahead in the story and see that what happens on Sunday is what makes Good Friday good, it's really important that we don't rush there too quickly. This is a hard, sad day. This day does not end happily. After Jesus was put on trial and beaten, he was forced to carry his cross, even though he was weak and tired, to the hill where the crucifixion took place. There, Jesus was stripped of his clothes and nailed to the cross. It was physically painful, but it was also something that caused a lot of shame.

Most of Jesus's disciples had scattered and hidden. It was hard to watch, and they also did not want to be caught and arrested. But Jesus's mother and some of the other women who had supported Jesus's ministry were watching nearby.

After several hours, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and died. It seemed that with those words, the hope that Jesus's followers had held onto was extinguished as well. They had no idea what to do. This wasn't the end they expected. Their hearts were heavy with fear, shame, sadness, and grief.

Joseph of Arimathea, a wealthy man who was secretly a disciple of Jesus, asked Pilate for Jesus's body. Joseph and another friend named Nicodemus took Jesus's body to a tomb that Joseph owned, wrapped his body, and covered it in spices according to the traditional burial customs. Then they laid Jesus in the tomb and walked home with heavy hearts. There was nothing more they could do. Nothing more they could hope for.

On Good Friday, we recognize that in Jesus's death, God enters into the darkest, hardest places of human experience: abuse, humiliation, shame, violence, and death. There is nowhere God will not go. There is nowhere God has not been. There is no length to which God would not go for us.

When we leave today, we'll leave quietly and with heavy hearts. Much like Jesus's friends, we won't get to experience a happy ending today. It's important for us to make room for that experience, even if it's hard or uncomfortable.

Would you please help me lead the congregation in response to this message?

Leader: This week we celebrated the waving of palm branches and said, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! But many wanted a Messiah who would display military might rather than one who would lay down his life.

Congregation: Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us, for we are sinners.

Leader: This week, we remember that you washed the disciples' feet and gave us the command to love one another in the same way that you have loved us, but still we resist the undesirable work of loving our neighbors in the way that we serve them.

Congregation: Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us, for we are sinners.

Leader: This week, we remember that the crowds shouted, "Crucify him!" and that Jesus's disciples denied him and hid, but we have more in common with the people in the crowds and with the disciples than we often admit.

Congregation: Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us, for we are sinners.

Leader: This week, we remember that Jesus, completely innocent and undeserving, was taken to the cross and crucified. But it wasn't just any man who was nailed to the cross. It was Immanuel—God with us—who willingly gave up his life for us.

Congregation: Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us, for we are sinners.

Leader: Jesus cried out, "It is finished." Together, we cry out:

Congregation: Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us, for we are sinners.

EASTER SUNDAY

Family Worship Experience

SCRIPTURE

John 1:1–18; 20:19–23

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- Activity 1: Blank paper
- Activity 1: Colored pencils, markers, or crayons
- Activity 2: Pipe cleaners
- Activity 3: Bible or Bible app
- Activity 3: White board
- Activity 3: Dry erase markers

ACTIVITY 1: SURPRISE APPEARANCE

Draw a picture of what you think the disciples' faces might have looked like when Jesus suddenly entered the locked room where they were hiding, said, "Peace be with you," and breathed on them. Ask yourself: *How do you think Jesus's followers felt when they saw him for the first time since his death? Why?*

ACTIVITY 2: EASTER SYMBOLS

Use pipe cleaners to create symbols or objects that represent Easter and resurrection. Ask yourself: *What are some symbols of Easter? What do those things symbolize about Easter for you?*

ACTIVITY 3: BIBLICAL IMAGINATION

Look up Psalm 150:1–6 in a Bible and read it to yourself. Using your white board, draw the images or write the keywords that come to mind as you read and think about these verses. Ask yourself: *What images come to mind? Which word or phrase stands out to you? Why?*