

Jesus Forgives the Thief on the Cross

Never Fear, Jesus Is Here!

Luke 23:32-49

Bible Point

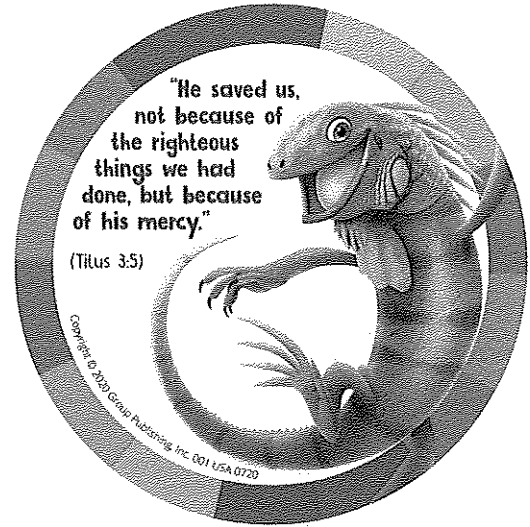
Jesus rescues us.

Purpose

Watch any movie or read any book and you'll see "good guys" and "bad guys." For the most part, we root for the good guys and hope in the end the bad guys get what they deserve.

Jesus died on the cross with "bad guys"—two criminals who had done wrong. People who saw them, there on crosses beside Jesus, probably thought they'd gotten what they deserved. And yet, for God's Son, Jesus, they were two more lives to rescue. Jesus' love was for them, too, and simple belief rewrote one criminal's eternity.

When young kids do wrong, they may feel bad or ashamed. With this lesson, help them discover Jesus' never-stopping love. Jesus doesn't label kids—or grown-ups, for that matter—as "good" or "bad." When they believe in him, he calls them friends. When we imprint Jesus' compassionate grace during kids' earliest developing years, we give them a gift like no other.



Prayer

God, thank you that you look at us with love, even when we've messed up. Help me share your message of forgiveness today. In Jesus' name, amen.

Prep

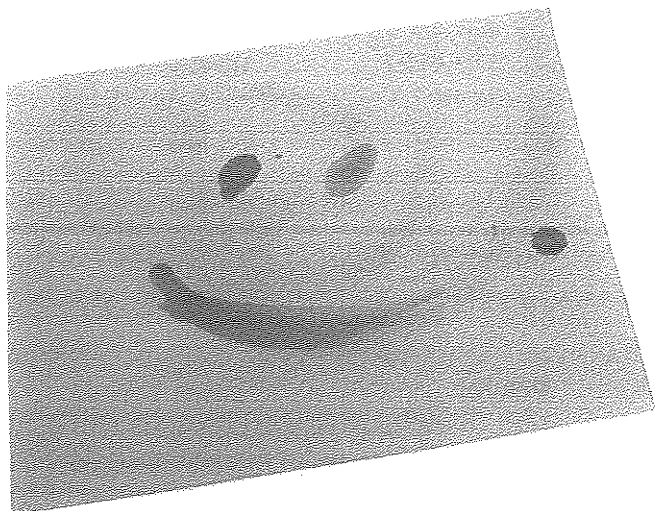
Opening Options	Sing & Play	Bible Discovery & Goodbye Circle	Apply-It Options
<input type="checkbox"/> Option Cards* <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Water Wonder</i> : waterproof containers, water, paper <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Knock It Down</i> : building blocks	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Music CD</i> * <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Music Video DVD</i> * <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Buddy Video DVD</i> * <input type="checkbox"/> Guac Bible Memory Buddy poster* <input type="checkbox"/> media player <input type="checkbox"/> Bible (bookmark Titus 3:5)	<input type="checkbox"/> "Jesus Forgives the Thief on the Cross" Bible Story poster* <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Music CD</i> * <input type="checkbox"/> Guac Bible Memory Buddy stickers* (1 per child) <input type="checkbox"/> media player <input type="checkbox"/> Bible (bookmark Luke 23:34a, 42-43) <input type="checkbox"/> 3 chairs <input type="checkbox"/> 2 drawings on separate pieces of paper: 1 smiley face and 1 frowning face <input type="checkbox"/> half sheets of paper	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Game</i> : no supplies <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Food-n-Friendship</i> : snack, napkins, hand cleanser, <i>Music CD</i> *, media player <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Coloring Creation</i> : "Jesus Forgives the Thief on the Cross" Coloring Creation pages* (1 per child), crayons, glitter, glue sticks, <i>Music CD</i> *, media player

* in your **Simply Loved Kit**



Opening Options

Set up one—or both—of these intro activities to start your time together. Each activity connects kids to the Bible Point and to each other. Cut apart these Option Cards, and place one by each activity you choose. Crew Guides will follow the directions and build friendships with kids as they make discoveries together!



Water Wonder

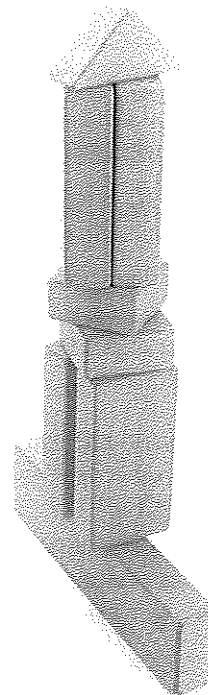
Supplies

- waterproof containers, water, paper

Wet your finger, then draw with it on paper. Wave the paper in the air like a fan to make the drawing disappear.

? What did your “water” draw on the paper?

Your water drawings were there...and then they disappeared! Today we'll find out that **Jesus rescues us** from the wrong things we do. When Jesus forgives us, it's like the wrong things we've done disappear!



Knock It Down

Supplies

- building blocks

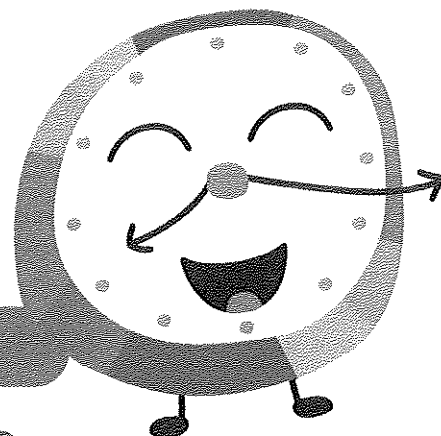
Build towers, knock them down, then start fresh again.

? Tell about a big mess you've made.

Each time we made a mess with the blocks, we got to have a clean start and try again. When we do something wrong in real life, we can ask Jesus to forgive us and he'll give us a new start. **Jesus rescues us** from the wrong things we do.

Opening

Now's a great time for Opening Options. Choose one—or both—to introduce today's Bible discoveries.



"The Cleanup Song" (*Music CD track 1*)

Help kids transition by cleaning up before sitting with their Connect Crews. A Connect Crew is a smaller group of kids with one Crew Guide.

Sing & Play

Welcome

Hello, friends! We're going to have so much fun today! Let's sing our welcome song.



"Hello, My Friends" (*Music CD track 2*)

Let's say hello to our Crew Guides. They're our go-to friends who are here to have fun and learn along with us.

- Kids give their Crew Guides hand hugs. (Place hands together, then wrap thumbs around the other person's hand.)

Bible Point

Today we'll find out **Jesus rescues us**. Every time you hear the words "**Jesus rescues us**," hold out your arms at your sides (demonstrate) and say, "**Yay, Jesus!**" Let's try that together.

Repeat the Bible Point several times, inviting kids to follow along.

When we hold out our arms, our body is in the shape of a cross. In Bible times, a cross was made out of two pieces of wood. Make a cross shape with your index fingers for kids to see. We'll hear more about what happened on a cross later in our Bible story.

Repetition cements learning, so be sure to say today's Bible Point A LOT. Have fun with it! Kids will love listening for it and responding with "**Yay, Jesus!**"

Supplies

- Bible
- Music CD
 - "Hello, My Friends"
- Music Video DVD
 - "Doxology" music video
 - "Rescue Me" music video
- Buddy Video DVD
 - Guac Bible Memory Buddy video (Week 3)
- media player
- Guac Bible Memory Buddy poster

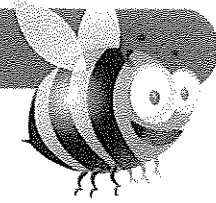


Yay, Jesus!

Jesus is always with us, ready to help us. So we can be brave with Jesus by our side! Let's sing a song to celebrate. Since Jesus rescues us, (*Yay, Jesus!*) we praise him!



"Doxology" music video



Bible Memory Buddy & Verse

It's time to talk to our friend Buzzly Bee. He helps us *beee* close friends with Jesus! Let's call for Buzzly. Do what I do!

- Flap hands quickly like a bee.
- Make buzzing sounds.



Guac Bible Memory Buddy video (Week 3)

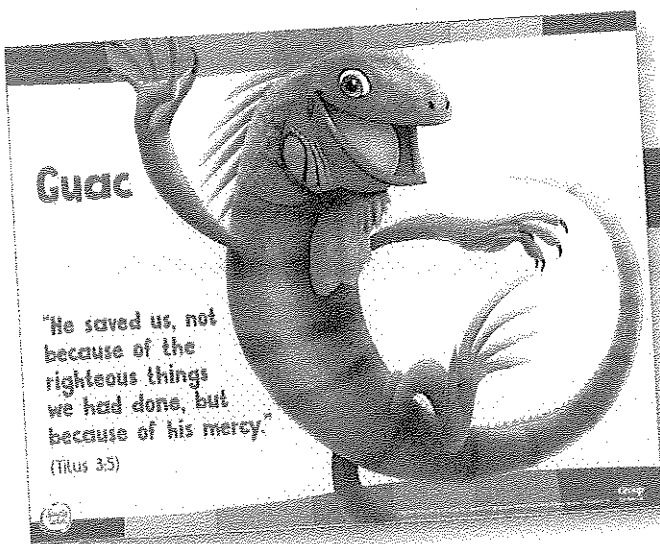
Show the Bible Memory Buddy poster. Guac is an iguana. Iguanas hop from tree to tree. Let's hop to a few friends and tell them **Jesus rescues us!** (*Yay, Jesus!*) Do this with me!

- Hop toward a friend and say, "**Jesus rescues us!**"
- Wait for the friend to say "*Yay, Jesus!*"
- High-five that friend.
- Hop toward another friend, and repeat.



Show the Bible. The Bible is God's true story of love! Our Bible Memory Verse comes from the Bible. Let's say our Bible verse together. I'll say a line, and then you repeat after me.

"He saved us, (*extend arms out at your sides to form a cross*)
not because of the righteous things we had done, (*shake head no*)
but because of his mercy." (*give yourself a hug*)
(Titus 3:5)



This verse is talking about Jesus! Jesus loves us no matter what we do. Let's sing another song. It's a prayer, asking Jesus to rescue us and help us.



"Rescue Me" music video

Bible Discovery

Hold up a Bible. **Today our Bible story tells about one big way Jesus rescues us. (Yay, Jesus!)**

- Have everyone get comfy and sit in knee-to-knee circles with their Connect Crews.
- **Tell about a hero or rescuer you've seen in a book or in a movie.** Invite Crew Guides to share first.
- Crew Guides give thumbs-up when everyone has shared.

Some heroes are pretend, and others are real. Let's act out some ways real-life people rescue. Do this with me.

- Pretend to climb a ladder to save a scared cat from a tree.
- Pretend to hold a fire hose to put out a fire in a house.
- Pretend to toss a rope and pull it up to rescue someone stuck down below.

Rescuers save people from danger. Jesus rescues us, too. (Yay, Jesus!) Jesus is the greatest rescuer of all. In today's Bible story, Jesus was in some danger himself. He had been arrested even though he never did anything wrong.

- **Tell about a time you got in trouble for something you didn't do.**
- Take a few kids' answers.

Our Bible story takes place near the town of Jerusalem. Jesus and two criminals were taken to a hill outside of town.

- Have everyone move to a far corner of your room.
- Set out the three chairs.
- Invite Crews to sit in front of the chairs.


The people in charge had decided that Jesus and the criminals should die. The criminals were "bad guys" who had broken the law. But Jesus, God's Son, was a "good guy." Actually, he was the *best* guy! Jesus had never done anything wrong. Still, the soldiers put him on a wooden cross to die. It was very sad.

- Sit in the center chair, and explain that Jesus was in the middle.

And they put the two criminals on crosses, too.

- Move to each of the other chairs, explaining that the two criminals were on each side of Jesus.
- Count the chairs aloud with the kids.

Jesus could have been mad and upset. He wasn't a bad guy! He was God's perfect Son who only loved people. But Jesus wasn't mad. Let's read what he said when he was on the cross.


 Read aloud Luke 23:34a.

Supplies

- Bible
- "Jesus Forgives the Thief on the Cross" Bible Story poster
- 3 chairs
- 2 drawings on separate pieces of paper: 1 smiley face and 1 frowning face
- half sheets of paper (1 per person)

We call helpers Crew Guides. If you lead a small class, you can be the Crew Guide. Simply gather kids in a cozy circle around you. If you have helpers, form smaller groups so each child can be known—and so kids can befriend your helpers, too!

Welcome a few responses. Be sure to summarize what kids say so everyone can hear.

 Read the verse from the Bible. You're showing kids that God's Word is special. Don't worry—we've kept the verses short for young attention spans.

Wow! Jesus asked God to forgive the mean people who were hurting him. When we forgive someone, we let go of our anger and choose to love instead. Let's talk about forgiveness in our Connect Crews.

- Have Crews return to their knee-to-knee circles.
- Tell about a time someone forgave you or a time you forgave. Invite Crew Guides to share first.
- Crew Guides give thumbs-up when everyone has shared.

Jesus asked God to forgive the people who were hurting him. What was happening to Jesus was wrong. People weren't nice to Jesus. They even put up a sign to make fun of him, and the soldiers stole his clothes. But Jesus wasn't mad and didn't yell. He was loving and forgiving.

- Have everyone give themselves a hug and think of Jesus' love.

One of the criminals made fun of Jesus, too. He said, "If you're really God's special Son, get down from that cross and save me, too."

- Place the paper with the frowning face on one of the outside chairs.
- Have kids frown, cross their arms defiantly, and turn their backs on the middle chair.

But the other criminal was different. He didn't turn away from Jesus. He knew he needed Jesus' help. He scolded the other bad guy and said, "We deserve to be punished, but Jesus hasn't done anything wrong." This criminal wanted to be friends with Jesus. He wanted forgiveness for the wrong things he'd done. So he turned to Jesus.

- Have kids turn toward the chairs again.
- Place the paper with the smiley face on the other outside chair.
- Have kids smile and reach a hand toward the middle chair as if reaching to hold Jesus' hand.

Let's read to see what this criminal said to Jesus.

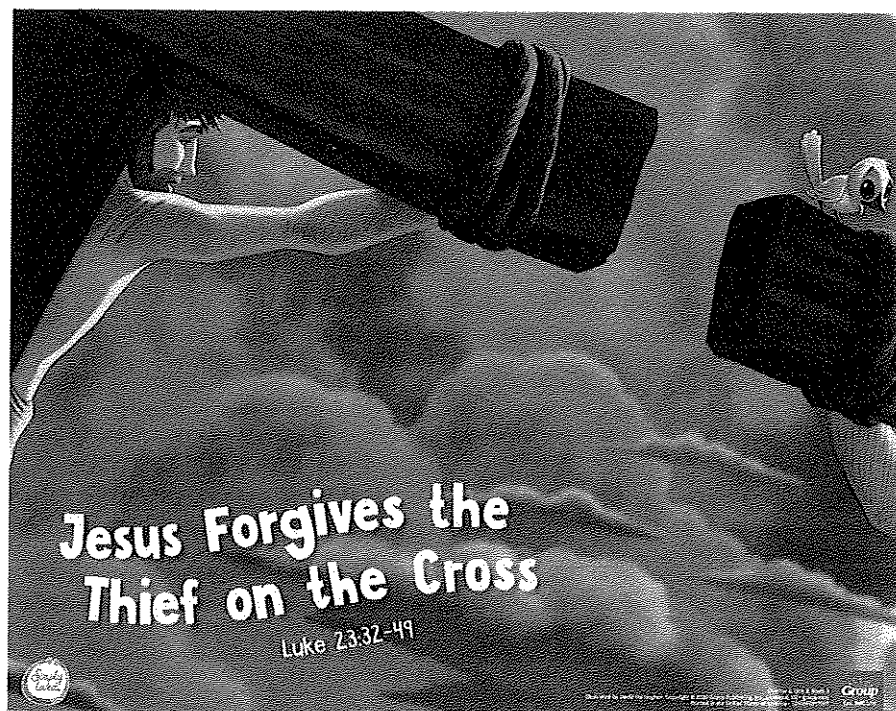


Read aloud Luke 23:42-43.

Show the Bible Story poster. Jesus and the other bad guy were talking. This criminal asked Jesus for forgiveness, and Jesus gave it to him. He let the man know that they'd be forever friends. Death wouldn't be the end. They'd be together in heaven! When Jesus looked at him, he didn't see a "bad guy." He saw a friend! Jesus rescued him, and Jesus rescues us. (*Yay, Jesus!*)

Jesus wants to be our forever friend, too. When we believe Jesus is God's Son and ask for Jesus' help, he'll forgive all the wrong things we'll ever do. Jesus rescues us! (*Yay, Jesus!*)

- Pray, thanking Jesus for rescuing us.



Jesus died on the cross, and it was very sad. Even though it was daytime, it became dark outside. And then a special curtain in God's special church, the Temple, tore right down the middle. The curtain ripping might seem strange, but it's important. Do something with me to think about it.

- Give everyone a half sheet of paper.
- **Before Jesus died, only certain special people could spend time with God. And they had to go behind the big special curtain in the church. Let's circle up in your Connect Crews and do something together.**
- **Hold up your paper between yourself and your neighbor like you're blocking that person.**
- Wait as everyone holds their hands high, as if in frozen high-fives, with the papers sandwiched between hands.
- **When Jesus died, the big curtain ripped. Rip your paper. Jesus made a way for everyone to be with God all the time!**
- Have everyone rip their papers and then hold hands freely around the circle.

That's one way Jesus rescues us. (Yay, Jesus!) When he died, he made it so we can be best friends with God. But Jesus didn't stay dead. No way! Jesus is the best hero ever. The good news is, Jesus came back to life a few days later. He beat death! Jesus is the greatest rescuer of all!

- Lead kids in cheering.
- Have everyone rip paper into smaller pieces and throw them in the air like confetti.

Now's a great time for Apply-It Options. Choose one or more that fit your time frame to support today's Bible discoveries before the closing Goodbye Circle.

Apply-It Options

Choose one—or all—of these activities to support kids' learning after Bible Discovery.

Game

Play a version of Red Rover.

- Leader and Crew Guides start on one side of the room, and the kids begin on the other side.
- Leader and Crew Guides call kids over by saying, "Jesus will rescue, so [child's name], come on over!"
- The child called runs over to the other line and is enveloped by a group hug.
- If time allows, line up again, and have kids call the leader and Crew Guides!

Just as Jesus forgave the criminal on the cross and welcomed him into friendship with God forever, Jesus rescues us. (Yay, Jesus!) Jesus welcomes us to be his forever friends.



Food-n-Friendship

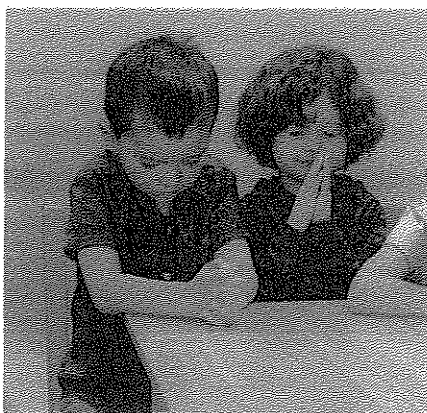
Supplies: snack, napkins, hand cleanser, *Music* CD, media player

- Give a napkin to a friend and say, "Jesus rescues us." (Yay, Jesus!)

 "God, You Are So Good"
(*Music* CD track 3)

- Eat snack together.
- When we pray, we talk with Jesus. Who has something we can talk with Jesus about?
- Pray together.

Jesus rescues us. (Yay, Jesus!)
Let's rescue all our friends from this trash by picking it up and throwing it away.



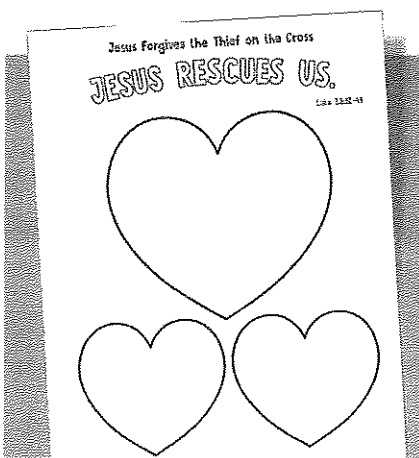
Coloring Creation

Supplies: "Jesus Forgives the Thief on the Cross" Coloring Creation pages (1 per child), crayons, glitter, glue sticks, *Music* CD, media player

Jesus loves us so much he died for us. Jesus rescues us. (Yay, Jesus!) Jesus' forgiveness brightens our hearts! We can shine Jesus' love to our friends and families. Let's add glitter to make these hearts shine.

- Count the hearts on the picture.
- Trace the outside of the hearts with crayons.
- Add glue and glitter to the inside of the hearts.
- Carefully shake off extra glitter.
- Play music as kids create.

 "His Mercy"
(*Titus* 3:5a)
(*Music* CD track 7)



Goodbye Circle

It's almost time to say goodbye! Let's sing our goodbye song as we join hands and make one big circle!



"Goodbye, My Friends" (Music CD track 4)

Jesus rescues us. (Yay, Jesus!) **Jesus died on the cross and came back to life so we can be his forgiven, forever friends!**

- Show the Bible Memory Buddy poster, and remind kids that Guac helps us remember **Jesus rescues us.** (Yay, Jesus!)
- Have kids hold their hands over their hearts.
- Invite Crew Guides to say to each child, "**Jesus rescues you,** [child's name]."
- When kids hear their Crew Guide call their name, they'll extend their hands to receive a Guac sticker to wear or keep for later.
- Once all kids have received a sticker, huddle together for a group hug.

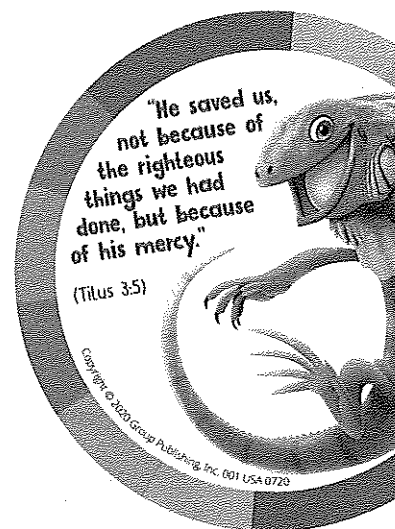


"His Mercy" (Titus 3:5a) (Music CD track 7)

- Do Bible Memory Verse motions and move to the music!

Supplies

- Music CD
 - "Goodbye, My Friends"
 - "His Mercy" (Titus 3:5a)
- media player
- Guac Bible Memory Buddy stickers (1 per child)



Saying each child's name in a loving way helps kids simply experience God's love through you!



Jesus Forgives the Thief on the Cross

Never Fear, Jesus Is Here!

Luke 23:32-49

Bible Point

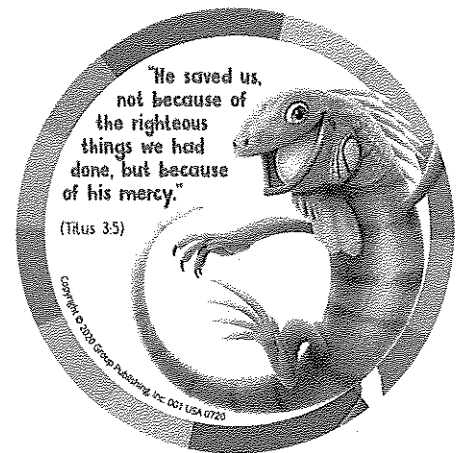
Jesus rescues us...even when we don't deserve it.

Purpose

Part of raising good citizens in society involves helping kids understand justice. We want them internalizing the standard, "If I follow the rules and make good choices, then I won't be punished. But if I break a rule, there will be consequences." These concepts order and sustain classroom, cities, and nations.

Perhaps the criminals who were tried and crucified with Jesus never had someone instruct them in the ways of justice. Or maybe they did, but they chose a criminal's life anyway. But Jesus? Condemning God's perfect Son was not just. But it was grace. Jesus' death rescued *us* from sin, *and* that undeserving criminal, too. Why? Because God so loved the world.

Kids can tell if they've been labeled "the bad kid." But to Jesus, they are loved kids. On the other hand, some kids work hard to please, to be seen as "the good kid." The "perfect kid." But they don't have to work to be rescued by Jesus because *he* did all the work when he died on the cross. Use this lesson to help kids and volunteers simply rest in Jesus' gracious and rescuing love today.



Prayer

Jesus, your grace is enough for me. Thank you for loving and rescuing me, though I don't deserve it. Help me show your grace to kids in my care today. In your name, amen.

Prep

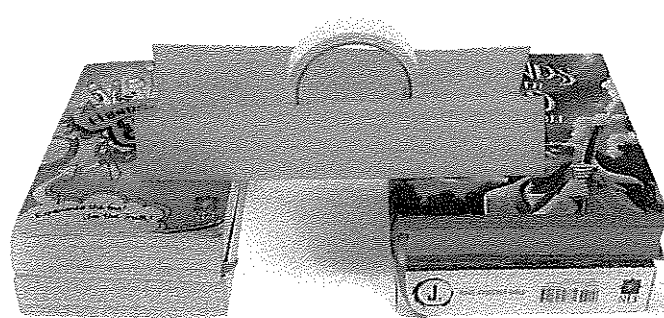
Opening Options	Sing & Play	Bible Discovery & Friendship Finale	Apply-It Options
<input type="checkbox"/> Option Cards* <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Ping-Pong Keep Away</i> : ping-pong balls <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Paper Bridge</i> : paper, classroom objects (like Bibles or blocks), masking tape	<input type="checkbox"/> countdown video* <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Music Video DVD</i> * <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Buddy Video DVD</i> * <input type="checkbox"/> Guac Bible Memory Buddy poster* <input type="checkbox"/> media player <input type="checkbox"/> Bible (bookmark Titus 3:5)	<input type="checkbox"/> "Jesus Forgives the Thief on the Cross" Bible Story poster* <input type="checkbox"/> Guac Bible Memory Buddy stickers* (1 per child) <input type="checkbox"/> Take-It-Home Flyers* (Unit 3, Week 3) (1 per child) <input type="checkbox"/> Bible (bookmark Luke 23:32-33, 34, 43) <input type="checkbox"/> masking tape <input type="checkbox"/> chairs <input type="checkbox"/> sticky notes <input type="checkbox"/> pencils <input type="checkbox"/> piece of paper	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Explore More</i> : Bibles, light-colored paper, child-safe scissors, red washable paint on small plates, paper towel tubes (1 for every 4 kids) <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Game</i> : no supplies

* in your **Simply Loved Kit**



Opening Options

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Ping-Pong Keep Away

Supplies

- ping-pong balls

Put the balls in the middle of a table. Gather around the table and try to blow the balls off the other side. Watch out! Try to keep them from dropping off the table near you, too!

? Tell about a time you tried to get rid of something, but it kept coming back.

Imagine the ping-pong balls are like sin in our lives. We can't get rid of sin on our own. We need Jesus. Today we'll discover how Jesus rescues us from sin.

Paper Bridge

Supplies

- paper, classroom objects (like Bibles or blocks), masking tape

Make a paper bridge over two objects. Can you make it sturdy enough to roll the masking tape across?

? Tell about a time you went over a bridge. Where did it lead?

A bridge keeps us from being stuck on one side of an obstacle, like water or a ravine. Friendship with Jesus keeps us from being stuck away from God. Jesus rescues us.

Opening

Now's a great time for Opening Options. Choose one—or both—to introduce today's Bible discoveries.



countdown video (1 minute)

Help kids transition, clean up the activities, and sit with Connect Crews. A Connect Crew is a small group of kids with one Crew Guide.

Sing & Play

Hi there! Seems like a good time to celebrate God's goodness. Let's sing a song of praise.



"God Is Good" music video

Bible Point

God is so good that he sent his Son, Jesus, to be our forever friend. Jesus rescues us. That's our Bible Point today, so every time you hear someone say, "Jesus rescues us," you'll respond in a certain way. Do what I do!

- Extend your arms at your sides as you look up, smile, and say, "Yay, Jesus!"
- Repeat several times.

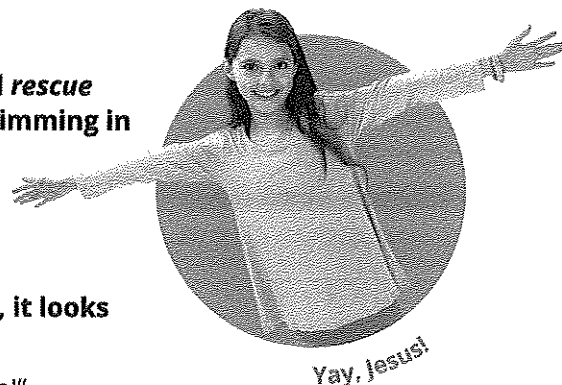
Repetition cements learning, so be sure to say today's Bible Point A LOT. Have fun with it! Kids will love listening for it and responding with "Yay, Jesus!"

When you rescue, you help or save someone. You know, the word *rescue* makes me think of a lifeguard. Let's imagine we're at a beach, swimming in the ocean. Do this with me.

- Stand and pretend to swim and jump a few waves.
- Point to an imaginary sign.
- **That sign over there says "No swimming." But I have to admit, it looks fun out there. Let's swim beyond the sign anyway.**
- Pretend to swim, get hit by a wave, go under water, then say "Help!"
- Freeze.

Supplies

- Bible
- media player
- *Music Video* DVD
 - "God Is Good" music video
 - "Rescue Me" music video
 - "Doxology" music video
- *Buddy Video* DVD
 - Guac Bible Memory Buddy video (Week 3)
- Guac Bible Memory Buddy poster

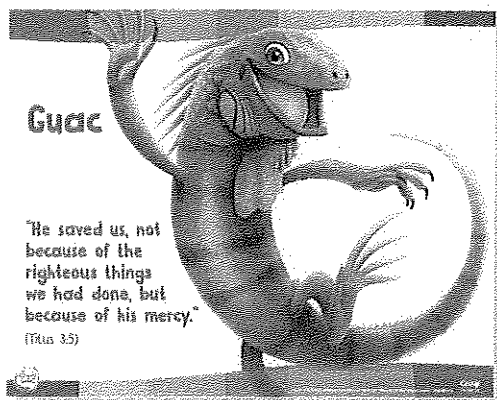


Welcome a few responses. Be sure to summarize what kids say so everyone can hear.

- ❓ Do we deserve to be rescued? Why or why not? Invite a few responses from the group.
- ❓ Do you think the lifeguard will rescue us, even though we broke the rule? Why or why not? Invite a few responses from the group.

Jesus rescues us. (*Yay, Jesus!*) He knows that sin gets the best of us and that we mess up sometimes—a lot of times, actually. And yet, even though we don't deserve it, he rescued us from sin when he died on the cross. That's amazing grace and amazing love. Let's tell Jesus "thank you" by singing this song.

🎵 "Rescue Me" music video



Bible Memory Buddy & Verse

Guac the iguana is our Bible Memory Buddy. How much do you know about these little creatures? Let's find out with a This-or-That Challenge! You'll hear two fun facts about iguanas. It's up to you to decide which is true—this fact or that!

- ❓ Do iguanas spend most of their time in the water or in trees?
- Have everyone pretend to swim to vote for *this* (in the water) or extend their arms like tree branches for *that* (in trees).
- Make a drumroll sound by patting your thighs or the floor.
- Dramatically give the answer: Iguanas spend most of their time in tree canopies! Let's find out more.
- Watch the Bible Memory Buddy video.

🎥 Guac Bible Memory Buddy video (Week 3)



Show the Bible. The Bible is God's true story of love! It's a book that's been helping people grow closer to God for *thousands* of years and can help us *today!* Our Bible Memory Verse is Titus 3:5. Let's say the verse together. I'll say a line, and then you repeat after me.

"He saved us, (*extend arms out at your sides to form a cross*)
not because of the righteous things we had done, (*shake head no*)
but because of his mercy." (*give yourself a hug*)
(Titus 3:5)

When we have mercy on someone, we forgive them. We may even take away a punishment they deserve. Jesus rescues us. (*Yay, Jesus!*) His death on a cross took away our sin once and for all. We're free to be friends with God! Let's celebrate with another song.

🎵 "Doxology" music video

Bible Discovery

Circle Up & Connect

Let's circle up and spend a little time simply getting to know each other in smaller groups called Connect Crews.

- Have kids form Connect Crews with one helper—or Crew Guide—per group.
 - Invite kids to sit in knee-to-knee circles with their Connect Crews.
 - Have kids give their Crew Guides and each other fist bumps with fireworks.
 - Have kids take turns saying their names and answering this question. Crew Guides go first.
- ❓ **Tell about a time you were nice to someone who didn't deserve it. What made you decide to be nice?**

Experience the Bible Story

Prior to the story, use masking tape to make three cross shapes on the floor at the far corner of your room. Place a row of chairs, like a city wall, between where the kids initially gather and the crosses.

Today's Bible story comes from the book of Luke in the Bible. Jesus had lived on the earth for more than 30 years. And now it was time for him to do what he came here to do. It was really hard, and it's a hard story to hear about. But it's so important because it tells how Jesus rescues us. (Yay, Jesus!)

Instead of just listening to this story, though, you'll play an active part. So be ready to dive in and follow along.

Now, most every story has a good guy and a bad guy. Well, this one has two bad guys and one better-than-all-the-rest-because-he-is-God's-Son-guy. Whisper as if telling the secret ending. That's Jesus.

The story takes place outside of Jerusalem—a pretty big city for Bible times. Shout out some big cities you've been to before. Welcome a few responses.

Well, we're going back in time to Jerusalem. I'm no longer [your name] your leader. Instead, I'm a Roman guard who witnessed everything that went down with Jesus that day. The Bible doesn't mention my name. So tell me, what should my name be? Invite a few responses, then pick one—that isn't too silly.

Face away from the kids, then turn back to them. **Well, hello there, visitors. I'm [your Roman guard name]. I work for the emperor of Rome, trying to keep the peace around here. I deal with criminals most every day and see that justice is served. It's not easy, but I do my best. Sigh. Wish your visit to Jerusalem could have come at a happier time. But I'll fill you in on what's been happening.**

Supplies

- Bible
- "Jesus Forgives the Thief on the Cross" Bible Story poster
- masking tape
- chairs
- sticky notes
- pencils
- piece of paper

We call helpers Crew Guides. If you lead a small class, you can be the Crew Guide. Simply circle up with the kids. If you have helpers, form smaller groups so each child can be known—and so kids can befriend your helpers, too!

Point toward the tape crosses. Outside Jerusalem is a place called The Skull. Creepy, huh? A Jewish man named Jesus has been arrested and sentenced to die there. The Jewish leaders don't like him, and the Roman leaders don't want him to make trouble. Me? I'm not sure he did anything wrong.

Did you bring a Bible with you from the future? Wait for kids to locate a Bible. Great. It tells this story. Let's read about it.



Read aloud Luke 23:32-33.

Let's head over to The Skull. It's already an upsetting day, and I don't want us drawing attention to ourselves, so please move quietly.

Walk over past the chair "wall" and have Crews sit in front of the crosses on the floor.

Like the Bible says, one criminal was there. Point to the cross on the left. And one was there. Point to the cross on the right. Jesus was in the middle. He'd been betrayed, arrested, beaten, and lied about. It was awful. Jesus said some things when he was on the cross, and even after all they'd done to him, his words were filled with love rather than hate. Listen to what he said.



Read aloud Luke 23:34.

Look sheepish. Yeah. We did. It's what Roman soldiers do, I suppose. While Jesus was forgiving, we were stealing.

People nearby weren't behaving too well, either. They said terrible things to Jesus. I heard someone shout something like, "If you're really the rescuer sent from God, then rescue yourself!" Mean words hurt. Let's talk in our Crews.

- Have Crews sit in knee-to-knee circles.
- Tell about a time someone said something mean to you. How did you feel? Invite Crew Guides to share first.
- Crew Guides give thumbs-up when everyone has shared.

Words can really hurt—especially if you haven't done anything to deserve them! Here, by the crosses, it was hard to hear everything people said. It sounded like a big, grumpy, yucky, mean-fest. Do you know what I mean? If you do, make cranky growling noises, and I'll tell you if you're close. Pause while kids growl and mutter. Not bad. But *you all* seem to be friends with Jesus. It must hurt your heart to think of people being so cruel to him. It hurts mine now.

Let's pause for a second and think in our minds what kind words we'd say to Jesus to make him feel better...something like "I love you" or "You are brave."

- Distribute sticky notes and pencils.
- If you could have said something to Jesus when he was on the cross, what would it be? Give kids one minute to quietly think and write their responses.

I'm sure those words would have meant a lot to Jesus, especially since everyone else was saying such mean things. I heard the other guys on crosses talking, too. The criminals. Believe me, they were bad guys through and through. Based on our Roman laws, they deserved to die.

Stand by the cross on the left. This guy shouted at Jesus, "So you're the Messiah, are you? Prove it by saving yourself—and us, too, while you're at it!"

Stand by the cross on the right. But the other guy? He gave his criminal buddy a piece of his mind. He said something like, "Don't you respect God, even right before you die? We deserve to die, but *he's* done nothing wrong." Turn and look at the middle cross. Then he said to Jesus, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom."

I don't want to mess up this next part, so I'll read it to you. Move to the middle cross. Here's what Jesus said.



Read aloud Luke 23:43.

Paradise? Now I know you mostly speak English, but in my Greek language, that word is similar to the word for a garden. Maybe it's like the garden in the beginning of God's story, when God lived with his people. Jesus said, "You'll be with me in paradise." It made me think of a beautiful place people go after they die, and they're with God. Jesus said he was going there and the criminal would be there, too.

- ❓ How do you think the criminal felt after hearing Jesus' response? Invite a few responses from the whole group.

Hope. Peace. Relief, even. The criminal didn't deserve it, but Jesus rescued him from forever death and offered him forever life. What did I hear you saying earlier? "Jesus rescues us?" (Yay, Jesus!)

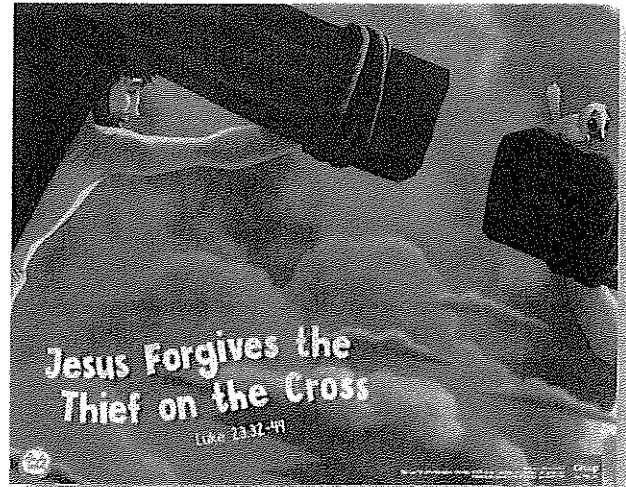
You'll never guess what happened next. Hold on to your hats...or hair, I guess. Hold your head, and have everyone else do the same. It got dark outside in the middle of the day. Everyone, close your eyes so it's dark. Pause. A curtain in the Temple ripped in two. With kids' eyes still closed, rip a piece of paper. And Jesus said one more thing to his Father, God. He said something like, "Father, I trust you." And then he died. Pause for a few moments of silence. Then it was as if the eyes of my heart were opened. Go ahead and open your real eyes. And I said, "Surely this man was innocent."

Jesus didn't deserve to die. But he did. Sigh. There's still a lot of mess to clean up here. Thanks for listening to my story, but you all had better hurry and go back to where you came from. Usher kids back around the "wall" and to their original seats.

The Heart of the Matter

It's me, [your name]. I'm back! Show the Bible Story poster. Jesus didn't rescue only this criminal that day; he rescued all of us. Even though we don't deserve it, Jesus rescues us! (*Yay, Jesus!*)

Friends, it's okay if you're not perfect. Sin happens, and Jesus knows it. But he still loves you. And his death on the cross can give *you* hope and peace, too.



If you have a large group, consider printing extra Bible Story posters from your Plus Digital USB drive for each Crew, and do this activity in Crews rather than with the whole group.

Briefly tell about when you first believed and became friends with Jesus.

Because of Jesus, sin doesn't win anymore! Love does. We get to be Jesus' friends right now. And someday, we'll be in paradise with him, too.

Earlier you thought about what you'd say to Jesus on the cross. Let's tell him right now. Let's put our sticky notes on the poster, then huddle up for a prayer. Invite everyone to place their sticky notes on the poster.

If you're Jesus' friend, or *want to be*, pray this prayer with me. Do what I do.

Jesus, when we needed help, (*lift your arms in the air*)

You came to earth. (*brings arms down.*)

You gave up everything for us. (*make an "X" with your arms, then push arms down to your sides*)

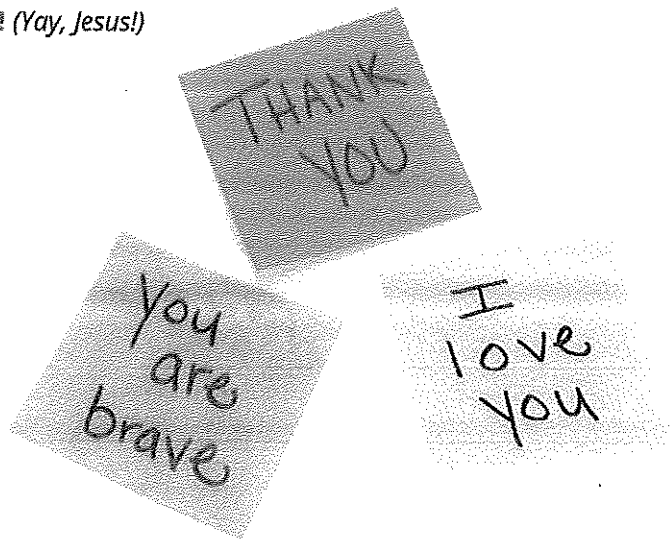
There is nothing we can do to deserve your love. (*shake your head no*)

But you give it to us anyway. (*hug yourself*)

Read some of the responses on the sticky notes.

Jesus, you rescue us! (*Yay, Jesus!*)

Now's a great time for Apply-it Options. Choose one—or both—of the following reinforcement activities to support today's Bible discoveries before the Friendship Finale.



Apply-It Options


Choose one—or both—of these activities to support kids' learning after Bible Discovery.

Explore More

Supplies

- Bibles, light-colored paper, child-safe scissors, red washable paint on small plates, paper towel tubes (1 for every 4 kids)

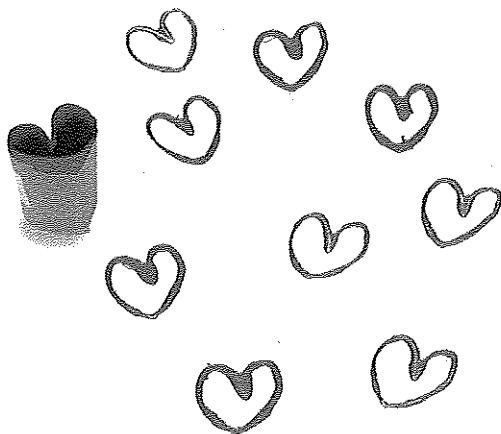
Paradise with Jesus sounds great! Jesus told his friend John more about paradise, and John wrote it down in the book of Revelation in the Bible. Let's read what Jesus said.

 Distribute Bibles, and help kids find and read Revelation 4:3-6a.

- 🗣️ **Wow! According to these verses, what do you think will make paradise so great?**

We don't know all the details, but we *do* know God will be there with his people. Sadness won't be there, and everything will be new. God's world got messed up because of sin, but thanks to Jesus, messes can become something new and beautiful! Jesus rescues us. (*Yay, Jesus!*) Let's make something beautiful with something not-so-beautiful.

- Dump paper towel tubes on a table.
- Cut the tubes so every child has a small section.
- Show everyone how to gently squeeze the tube into a heart shape.
- Dip one end of the heart shape in paint, then press it on paper to make a heart stamp.



Game

- Form two teams.
- Have teams face each other. Designate the wall behind each team as its "jail."
- **If someone from the other team tags you, you must go to the other team's "jail" for the rest of the game.**
- **If a teammate can successfully run to the other team's "jail" and high-five a teammate, then all the "prisoners" go free.**
- Continue playing as time allows.
- 🗣️ **How did it feel to set your friends free?**

Jesus loves rescuing us, too! He loves it when people believe he's their Rescuer and become his forever friend. In this game, you couldn't free yourself, but you received the gift of freedom and a second chance. And even though we still struggle with sin, Jesus' death on the cross gives us freedom and second chances. Jesus rescues us. (*Yay, Jesus!*)

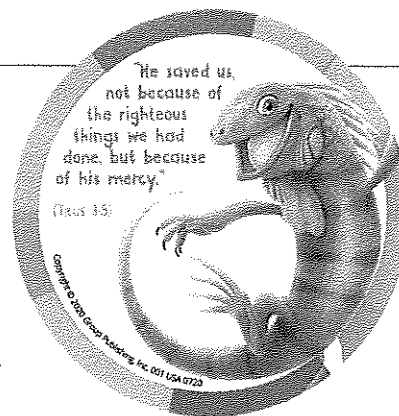


Supplies

- Guac Bible Memory Buddy stickers (1 per child)
- Take-It-Home Flyers (Unit 3, Week 3) (1 per child)

Friendship Finale

Invite kids to sit in knee-to-knee circles with their Connect Crews.



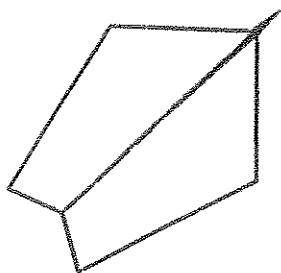
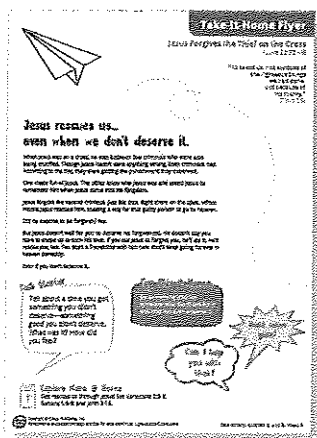
Guac, our Bible Memory Buddy, helps us remember Jesus rescues us. (Yay, Jesus!) You'll each receive a Guac sticker to remind you of Jesus' love and forgiveness throughout your week. You can wear it now or take it home to save. I'm sure you creative friends can think of a new use for your sticker! Crew Guides will give each person a sticker like this.

- Ask a willing person to help you demonstrate the following actions.
- Have the person stand beside you, and give a side-hug shoulder squeeze as you give the sticker.
- As Crew Guides give each child a Bible Memory Buddy sticker in the same way, they will say, "Jesus loves and rescues you, [child's name]."
- Crew Guides give thumbs-up when everyone has received a sticker.

Saying each child's name in a loving way helps kids simply experience Jesus' love through you!

I'd like to read you something about our friend Jesus. As you listen, close your eyes and hang your head—as if you've just been busted for cheating on a test or saying something really mean to a family member. Now freeze where you are, and listen to what our friend Jesus does for you.

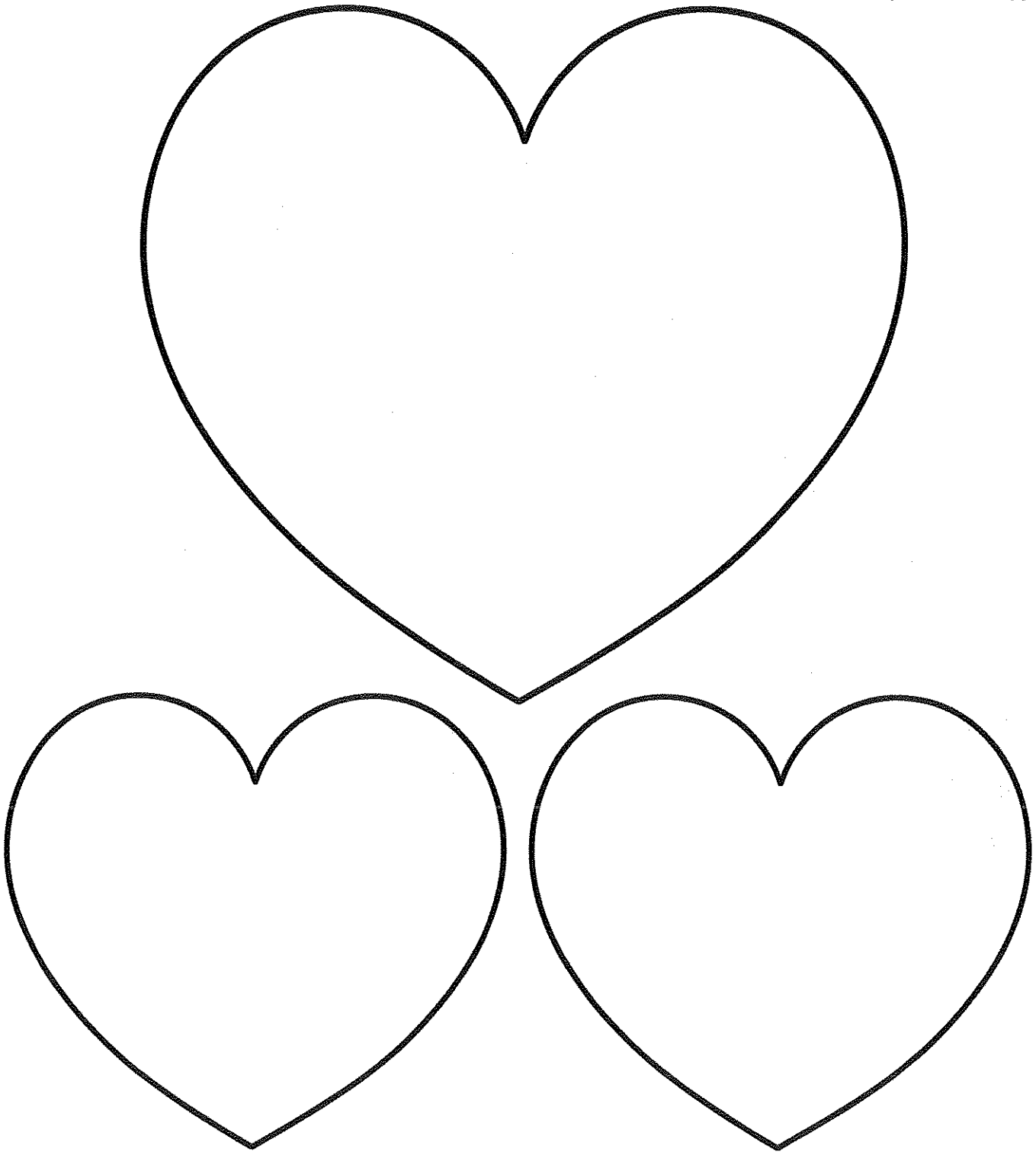
- Read the first section of the Unit 3, Week 3 Take-It-Home Flyer.
- Now I'll give you one of these flyers to help you talk about Jesus' love in your Connect Crews and at home, too. Think of this as a practice time for talking about Jesus with your family at home.
- Distribute Take-It-Home Flyers to Crew Guides, and have them share about their own friendship with Jesus as they discuss the "Talk Starter" question together with their Crews.
- Kids share prayer requests—things they'd like to tell Jesus—in their Connect Crews.
- Connect Crews pray together.
- Crew Guides distribute Take-It-Home Flyers and follow the directions to help kids fold the paper to "fly" home. ○



Jesus Forgives the Thief on the Cross

JESUS RESCUES US.

Luke 23:32-49



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Pre-K & K, Quarter 2, Unit 3, Week 3

**"He saved us, not because of the
righteous things we had done,
but because of his mercy."**

(Titus 3:5)

GUAC

