
Sunday School Lesson: Dying to Live

Jesus Explains His Purpose (John 12:20-33)

During His time on Earth, Jesus provided people with many intriguing analogies and explanations regarding who He was and why He came. Some of these can be challenging for young children to understand, but they can also be helpful to describe as we seek to go deeper into the life and

significance of Christ. He was much more than a simple

flannel-graph figure or miracle worker. He gave up His life for our sake, and because of that we have eternal hope.

Lesson focus: This simple lesson explores a passage of scripture in which Jesus is approached by Gentiles wanting to know more about Him. He foreshadows His future death as He describes what He has come to Earth to do, and is affirmed by a Heavenly voice promising glory. Through this, we recognize the power in Christ's identity. This lesson encourages children to seek and follow Jesus, and communicates to them why He had to give His life for something greater, just as we must sometimes sacrifice for greater things.

Passage: John 12:20-33

Target Audience: Kindergarten-6th grade (adaptable, but some concepts might be best for older students)

Materials Needed: Magnets, metal objects, construction paper, scissors, decorations, glue, string, hole punch, paper cups, pipe cleaners, oats or grain, tape, markers, crayons, Bible (optional, depending on crafts and activities of choice).

More Teaching Ideas:

- Watch the [video demonstration of this message](#) and related [craft ideas](#)
- Compare our [Sunday School Lesson on John 12:20-33](#)
- Compare the [children's sermons from rfour.org](#) and [sermons4kids](#) on this passage.
- See all our latest [children's sermons](#), [Sunday School Lessons](#), and [Sunday School curriculum](#)



Games and Lesson Introduction

Lesson Opening: This lesson features people being drawn to Jesus, as well as His own explanations about who He was and why He came to Earth. It involves a plant analogy and foreigners asking questions about the Messiah.

Here are some activities to get kids thinking... (select the best ones for your audience and age group):

- Magnetic attraction...Jesus said He would draw people to Him, and He certainly did. Use magnets to demonstrate what it means to be drawn to something. Observe different items to evaluate which ones stick to the magnet and which ones do not.
- Seeds and plants...look at pictures and types of various plants. Discuss and describe how they grow, emphasizing how many plants are buried or die in a sense, in order to come back to life and produce things that we can use.
- How many seeds? Explore various fruits, especially those containing many seeds (pomegranates are great for this activity). Have students predict how many seeds are contained within the fruit, and then open it up to find out the total. This can turn into a fun math and science project as well!
- What's that sound? The passage studied in this lesson involves God's voice from Heaven, announcing Jesus as Lord. Play a sound identification or voice recognition with kids, inviting them to guess what voice or sound they hear when different options are given. For extra challenge, blindfold students one at a time to guess the sounds.

Explain that people in Jesus time often wondered about who He was or why He was doing certain things. They didn't understand or believe that He was God's son, and they certainly didn't expect Him to die and come back to life. Jesus tried to tell questioners about Himself, and often used parables or metaphor illustrations to do so. Jesus knew He was going to have to suffer and die, and He described that for His disciples and others around Him, though they didn't comprehend.

Ask: How would you respond if someone asked you about Jesus? How would you describe Him? What does He mean to you?

Sunday School Lesson (John 12:20-33) Jesus Died to Give Life

Bible Lesson: This passage contains mostly conversational elements as Jesus talks with others and describes His purpose. If you have a few children willing to act out elements, you could create a dialogue to read through. Additionally, you might have older kids take turns reading, or you could read the passage and pause along the way for clarifying questions.

*Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. ²¹So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” ²²Philip went and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus.
-John 12:20-22*

Set some context for this passage. Explain that this encounter took place right after Jesus rode into Jerusalem (what we celebrate with Palm Sunday). People were in town for the Passover celebration, and some of these people were Greeks. They might have been Jewish converts or students of elements of Judaism. They had obviously heard about Jesus, because they asked to see Him. They must have been curious about who He was and wanted to find out more for themselves.

Ask: How do we “seek Jesus”? What kinds of things can we do to find out more about who He is? (Pray, read God’s Word, go to church and Sunday school, etc.).

Explain that Jesus began to talk about Himself after Philip and Andrew found Him. We don’t know His exact audience but it is likely the Greeks were still there within earshot.

And Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. ²⁵Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him. -John 12:23-26

Jesus gives a word picture here that has some prediction as to His upcoming death. He uses a plant analogy (which He did often) to describe how a grain of wheat has to “die”, in a sense, in order to come up out of the ground and grow and bring plants and food to many. Jesus knew that He was like that wheat, and that He would have to die and give up His life in order to help others. Through His death, we have life!

“Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. 28 Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven: “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” 29 The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” -John 12:27-29

Everyone who was around heard this voice. They might have been puzzling, wondering what Jesus was talking about. But then they heard a thundering promise from Heaven that God’s name would be glorified. We know that the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus brought that glory to God.

Ask: Can you think of other times that God’s voice was heard? (Consider the baptism and transfiguration of Jesus). How can we bring glory to God in our lives?

Jesus knew that the people around Him would still not fully understand who He was, but that God’s voice had been spoken aloud for their benefit. He knew His purpose, and how powerful it would be for all the world. He came to drive out darkness, death, sin, and the devil, and to do that, He knew He’d have to die.

Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not mine. 31 Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. 32 And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” 33 He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die. -John 12:30-33

Ask: What do you think Jesus means? How was Jesus “lifted up” in multiple ways?

Explain that with this, Jesus affirmed who He was and solidified for doubters His status as the Son of God who would be glorified. On the cross, Jesus was literally lifted up for all to see. After His death, He was lifted up in resurrection. All who look to Him, then, are lifted up by God and will live with Him forever.

Close with a prayer thanking God for Jesus, and recognizing His power and authority. As God for help trusting in Him and seeking to follow Him always.

Crafts: Consider crafts that coincide with the story details or the person of Jesus:

- “Pop-up card” with seeds and plants
- “Grain Collage” with glued-on items
- “Pop-up Plant in a Cup”
- “Drawn to the Cross” Refrigerator Magnets (decorated crosses attached to magnet backs)

In John 12, Jesus is approached by a group of Greeks who want to know more about Him. He uses an agrarian analogy to describe how He must die in order to give others life, just as grain must fall to the ground in order to produce wheat. A glimpse of Christ's glory is seen as the crowd hears this explanation. These crafts echo that passage. A pop-up card uses textured materials and "popping up" plant art to recall the reference to wheat. A "pop-up plant" features a paper seed and flower in a cup to consider how planted items go down into the ground in order to grow up, just as Jesus was brought low in death, and came back to life for our eternal hope.

Verses or Captions to Consider... (Main Text: John 12:20-33)

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."-John 3:16

Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. -John 12:24

Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him. -John 12:25-26

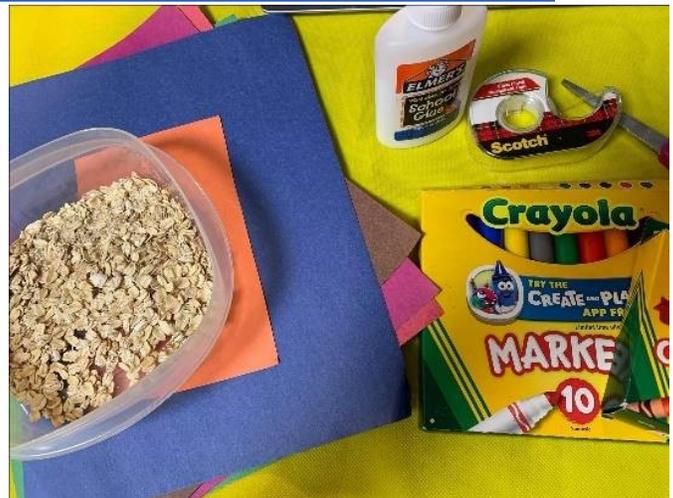
The seed goes down...the plant comes up! And gives life to many.

Jesus gave His life for us...I can make small sacrifices to gain something greater.

Craft one: "Pop-up Wheat" Card

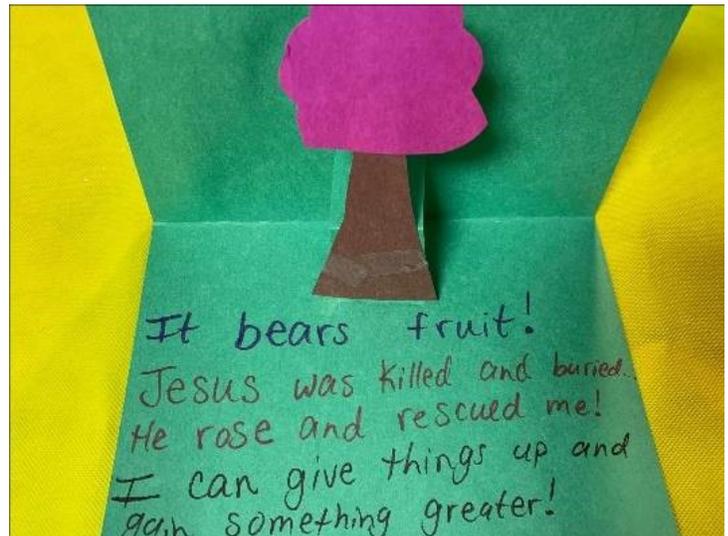
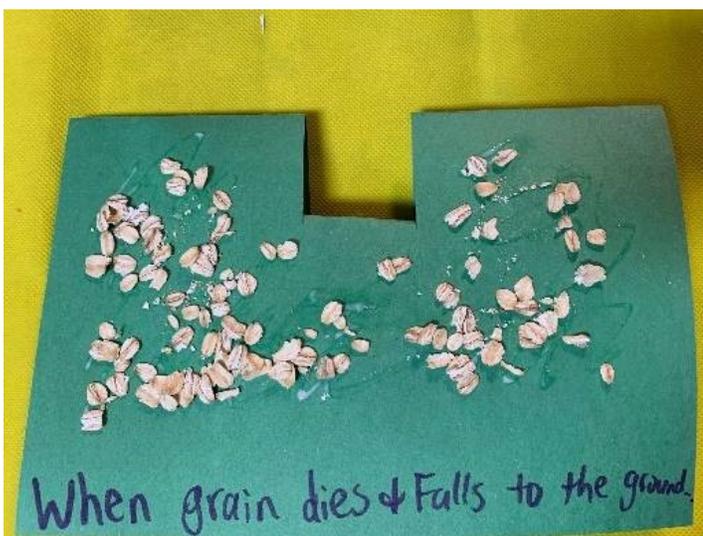
You will need:

- Oats, grain, or flour (optional)
- Construction paper
- Markers or crayons
- Scissors
- Glue or tape



Procedure:

1. Fold a piece of construction paper or cardstock in half. Make a large slit in the center of the paper, pulling it inward to form the base of the pop-up feature.
2. Use construction paper to cut out a plant, tree, or stalk of wheat.
3. Glue or tape the "plant" onto the pop-up stand inside the card.
4. Add verses or captions to both sides of the card, decorating to remember the Bible passage discussed.
5. If desired, glue wheat or oats to the outside of the card for a textured reference to the story and plant analogy.



Craft Two: “Pop-up Plant in a Cup”

You will need:

- Pipe cleaners or popsicle sticks
- Paper or Styrofoam cups
- Paper (construction)
- Markers or crayons
- Glue and/or tape
- Cupcake liners or coffee filters
- Scissors
- Extra decorations



Procedure:

1. Decorate the cup with stickers, colors, and verse references.
2. Use the cupcake liners or coffee filters (or construction paper) to make a flowering plant and a seed pod. Alternatively, use actual seeds and/or fake plants.
3. Attach the “seed” and “flower” to pipe cleaners or popsicle sticks.
4. Poke the sticks or pipe cleaners into the cup. Pull down on the seed to mimic the action of planting seed into the ground, and push or pull up on the flower to watch the plant come up.
5. Add extra verses or decorations as desired. If you wish, attach a magnet or string to display the cup.

