

# Growing in God's Love

A Story Bible Curriculum

## Last Things





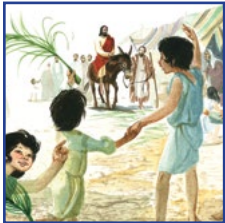
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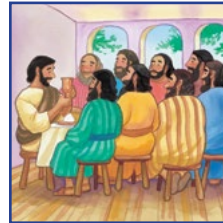
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### Last Things

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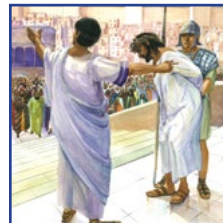
Jesus Visits Jerusalem  
*Luke 19:29–40*



A Passover Meal  
*Luke 22:1–20*



Remember to Love!  
*Matthew 22:36–40*



Jesus Dies  
*Luke 23:1–49*



Seeing Jesus  
*Matthew 25:31–46*

The free At-Home Kit Guide provides instructions and suggestions for at-home faith formation. Download it at [www.pcusastore.com/StoryBibleCurriculum](http://www.pcusastore.com/StoryBibleCurriculum) or [www.thethoughtfulchristian.com/StoryBibleCurriculum](http://www.thethoughtfulchristian.com/StoryBibleCurriculum). Click on the unit title, and then click on the download button found at the bottom of the product page for this unit.

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✦ **Goal:** To consider the implications of Jesus' unusual entry into Jerusalem.

### Connecting with the Biblical Text

We hear this text read every year, though the Gospel accounts do differ. Luke omits the hosannas that are included in the other Gospels. John describes people waving palm branches. In Luke, the disciples are sent to find a colt, not a donkey. This entry or procession into Jerusalem has a royal feel to it. People line up, praising God and adding a blessing for Jesus, whom they address as king. Some of the Pharisees object to this political language and instead call Jesus teacher. When they ask Jesus to silence the crowd, he responds with words that indicate he knows what he is facing as he enters Jerusalem for the last time. If he told them to be quiet, even the stones would shout. This story invites us to consider some questions: Where are we in the story? Where is God at work in this story? What picture of Jesus do we see here? What would shouting stones say?

For additional commentary help, see [bit.ly/Luke19Commentary](http://bit.ly/Luke19Commentary).

### Connecting with the World

- ✦ Where do you see God at work in the world?
- ✦ Stones as markers of holy places are a familiar symbol in the Old Testament when God's people went through the wilderness and then entered the promised land. Shouting stones is a new image. Stones for memory, stones for celebration: think about stones as visible reminders of God's presence in the world. Find a good size stone. Place it near a door of your home. Decide what your stone will say to the world. What will it help you remember?

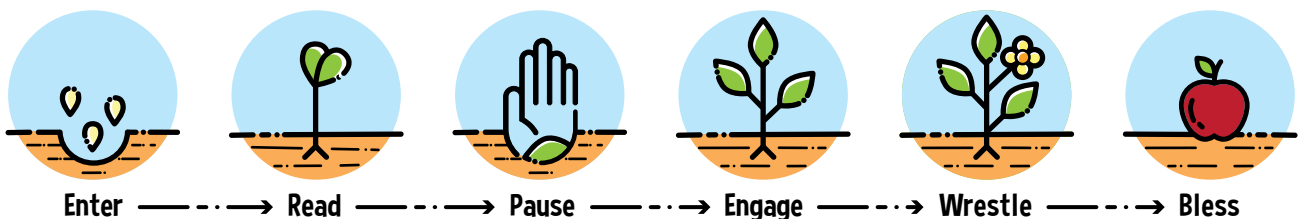
### Connecting with the Spiritual Lives of Children

Nearly every Christian church celebrates Palm Sunday with palms. Oftentimes there is a parade of children waving palms. Children know there is something celebratory going on in this story. The story contains foreshadowing and deeper nuances when we know what the coming week in Jesus' life will bring. Live in the moment with children, just as the crowds celebrated and waved palms for Jesus as he entered Jerusalem. Wonder together what you would shout if you saw Jesus riding in front of you on a colt. If he paused in front of you, wonder what you would say or ask. Then consider the stones. If the stones along the road could shout, what would they say?

### Connecting with the Spiritual Lives of Adults

We read this story knowing what's going to happen. Like Jesus, we know what he is facing. But for a moment, we celebrate the triumphal entry of one recognized as a king coming in the name of the Lord. How do people respond to Jesus in this story? What does it mean to you to recognize Jesus coming into the world? Where are you in this story? Knowing what lies ahead of him, how is this story of Jesus entering Jerusalem alike or different from the birth narrative?

*Gracious God, we join with those who lined the streets of Jerusalem and give thanks for your living presence among us. Amen.*



## Gathering Supplies

Based on your choices, you will need:

- ✓ *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*
- ✓ Floor pillows, cushions, beanbag chairs
- ✓ Purple cloth
- ✓ 5 battery-operated candles
- ✓ Drawing supplies, such as crayons, markers, colored pencils
- ✓ Palm frond strips
- ✓ Internet-connected device
- ✓ Four towels
- ✓ Copies of Resource Page 1
- ✓ Rhythm instruments
- ✓ Streamers
- ✓ Construction paper

## Preparing to Lead

Read Luke 19:29–40. Then read “Jesus Visits Jerusalem” from *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible* (p. 270). Since this is a familiar story, pay particular attention to anything new that stands out to you. Immerse yourself in the sights, sounds, and smells of the scene. Listen to the crowd cheering. Feel the dust kicked up by the donkey. Consider trips you've been on, and remember the thrill of entering a new city.

- ✓ What, if anything, did you hear differently in the biblical text?
- ✓ What stands out to you about this version of the story?

Even though we know the crowds would turn on Jesus just a few days later, the people of Jerusalem welcomed Jesus much like a king. Think about how you can welcome the children in your group. How can you make the physical space hospitable to them? Do you know of any children with special needs who might need particular arrangements? Recall the names and faces of the children you will teach. What do you know about them? Pray for them and for you as you prepare for your time together.



### Enter into sacred space together.

As children gather, invite volunteers to create a comfortable seating area with floor pillows, cushions, or beanbag chairs in a circle. Place a purple cloth on the floor with five candles. Invite the children to gather in the seating area.

Turn on all five candles. Invite the children to repeat after you as you pray:

Lord of kings /  
and little children, /  
we welcome you /  
into our holy space. /  
Amen. /

Point out the drawing supplies. Encourage everyone to use them during the session for anything they are hearing or considering as they engage with the story of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem.

Explain the significance of the candles. Suggest that you are learning about the last things Jesus did and said before he died. Tell them that for this session and the next four, you'll light one less candle as you get closer to learning about the end of Jesus' life on earth.



### Read a story of God's people.

Invite the children to listen to how Jesus' followers welcome him to Jerusalem. Read the first paragraph of “Jesus Visits Jerusalem” (pg. 270), pausing after each question to allow the children to answer.

Read the rest of the story.



### Pause to let God's Word enter into hearts and minds.

Encourage the children to use their curiosity and imagination as they ponder this story silently. Suggest that they picture in their minds what they see, hear, and smell in the story. Point out the drawing supplies and note that they may sit quietly and illustrate a word, image, or feeling from the story.



### Engage curiosity and imagination with God's story.

Engage the children's curiosity in the story. Have a conversation using the following prompts:

- ✓ What was unusual about the way Jesus came into Jerusalem?
- ✓ Why do you think Jesus chose to ride a donkey?
- ✓ How did the crowd seem to feel toward Jesus?
- ✓ Why were the religious leaders upset?
- ✓ How do you think they felt toward Jesus?

## Leading

- ✦ What do you think Jesus will do in Jerusalem?
- ✦ What did Jesus mean when he said that even the stones would “shout out”?

Choose one or both options:

- Palm Crosses
  - ✦ Encourage the children to make crosses with palm frond strips by following the step-by-step directions found at [bit.ly/HowToFoldAPalmCross](https://bit.ly/HowToFoldAPalmCross). Explain that we often make a connection between palms and crosses because, though the people celebrated Jesus’ arrival into Jerusalem by waving the palms, he would die on a cross a few days later.

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If you have older children in your group, consider pairing an older child with a younger child to make their palm crosses together. Encourage the older children to lead the younger children in making crosses by demonstrating and assisting and not by taking over the process.

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- Holding a Parade
  - ✦ Jesus’ procession was much like a parade: people lined the streets, cheering and celebrating. Hold your own parade. Hand out palm branches and, if you choose, rhythm instruments and streamers. Lead the children in singing a simple praise song or saying, “Praise Jesus! All hail King Jesus!” Give each child a chance to lead the procession.

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Invite other groups—children, youth, and adults—to join your parade.

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### Wrestle with our place in God’s story.

Help the children think about the meaning of the story. Wonder together:

- ✦ What was important about Jesus’ visit to Jerusalem?
- ✦ What do you think he taught his disciples and followers by entering the city this way?
- ✦ What do you think he meant when he said the “rocks would cry out”?

Choose one or more options:

- Donkey Thoughts
  - ✦ Invite the children to retell the story from the perspective of the donkey. Hand out copies of Resource Page 1 to help the children think through the donkey’s experience of the procession. Encourage the children to use their imaginations as they fill in the boxes.
- Making an Entrance
  - ✦ Watch the YouTube video “Aladdin (2019) Prince Ali—Will Smith Scene” ([bit.ly/PrinceAliVideo](https://bit.ly/PrinceAliVideo), 3:35). Engage the children in conversation using the following questions:
    - How did Jesus’ and Prince Ali’s entries into town differ? How were they the same?
    - Why do you think Jesus chose to enter the way he did?
    - How do you think the crowd reacted to Jesus’ procession—like the crowd in the video or in a different way?
    - Which entry would you prefer for you? For someone who is going to lead you?
- Sharing Art
  - ✦ Invite the children to share any art they made during the session.



### Bless one another with God’s grace.

Bless each child individually. Have the children form a parade line. As each child passes by you, have them pause. Ask if you may touch them on the arm or hold their hand and say, “(Name), you are a child of God worthy of celebrating.”

Close with the following prayer, inviting the children to repeat after you:

Dear God, /  
help us follow where you lead /  
every day /  
in every way. /  
Amen.

Encourage the child to remind their family members that they are each a child of God worthy of celebrating!



## Grow with more.

### ○ Cloak Challenge

- ✦ People laid down their cloaks in the road as a way to honor Jesus, helping him and the donkey stay clean from the dirt and dust of the road. Use the following directions to play the cloak challenge:
  - Sort the children into two teams.
  - Give each team two towels.
  - Designate a starting line and a finish line.
  - Challenge the children to work together to get their group from the start to the finish line by standing on one “cloak,” without touching the ground, and by placing the other one in front of them, moving to that cloak, and then repeating.
  - If anyone on the team touches the ground outside the towel, the team must start over.

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If you have a larger number of children, you may need to form three or more groups.

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### ○ Praise Signs for Jesus

- ✦ When attending exciting sporting events or parades, people sometimes make signs as a way of cheering for their team. Think about what Jesus’ followers might have put on such signs. Provide construction paper and markers. Invite the children to design and decorate their own signs using words or pictures, thinking about what they would say to praise Jesus. Encourage the children to share their signs with the group.

What did the donkey THINK?

What did the donkey FEEL?

What did the donkey SEE?

What did the donkey HEAR?

What did the donkey SMELL?

