

Activity 1

THE CROSS (Younger kids)

WHAT YOU NEED: white cardstock for each child, masking/painter's tape, scissors, sidewalk chalk, water, plastic cups

- Give each child a piece of cardstock.
- Give each child two pieces of tape—one about four inches long and one about eight inches long. Make sure to cut the pieces instead of tearing them so the ends are straight. Instruct them to place the tape onto the page to form a cross. (The four-inch piece will be the horizontal part of the cross, the eight-inch will be the vertical piece.)
- Pour some of the water into each of the cups.
- Put two or three pieces of sidewalk chalk in each cup to wet the ends of the chalk.
- Have the kids use the wet chalk to color the white cardstock in any pattern they choose around the tape.
- Encourage them to be creative and draw lines or shapes or patterns around the cross.
- Set aside to dry.

WHAT YOU SAY:

It's hard to talk about what happened to Jesus on the cross, isn't it? It's hard for us to imagine the pain that He faced. And it wasn't because He had done anything wrong. Jesus died on the cross because of our sin—the things we do that are wrong. God is perfect and when we do things that are wrong, it hurts our relationship with Him. Because Jesus took our punishment for our sin, we can have a relationship with God and that is GOOD NEWS! That is the best reason to have hope. Next week, we will hear how the most amazing event in all of history took place because of what Jesus did for us on the cross. Something good WILL come out of something really, really bad. This isn't the end of the story.

Whatever happens, remember God is still at work.

Activity 2

GOOD OUT OF BAD

WHAT YOU NEED: Paper, crayons or markers

- Before passing out the paper and crayons, brainstorm some ideas for bad situations. These could be someone pushing a friend, breaking something, or anything that would make them sad or angry.
- Pass out the paper and ask the kids to draw a bad situation. (Something mentioned or an idea of their own.)
- When they're finished, have kids explain what's happening in their picture. If you have more than one child have them switch drawings or you can switch with you child or they can keep their own.
- Flip drawings over to the back, and draw something good that could happen as a result of this bad situation. (You may need to help give them some specific ideas if they're having trouble coming up with a way that something good can come out of something bad. This activity is attempting to take an abstract concept and make it more concrete.)

WHAT YOU SAY:

Sometimes when something bad happens, it's hard to believe that anything good can come out of it, but look at these pictures. Amazing. That's why hope is so important. We can have hope and believe that something good can come out of something bad when we trust in Jesus. He loved us so much that He was willing to face the pain of the cross and take our punishment. I know things seem bad now because we've only heard the bad side of Jesus' story—like the front side

of your pictures. But I promise that God is still at work. And something amazingly awesome is coming next!

Whatever happens, remember God is still at work.

(If you want, Make It Personal. Tell kids about a time when something bad happened to you, but something good happened in the end. Remind them that even when bad things happen, they can always hope for something good in the end because God is still at work.)

Activity 3

VERSE VOICES

WHAT YOU NEED: Scrap paper

- Tear up the scrap paper into five or six pieces. On each piece of paper, write a different voice (like opera, Mickey Mouse voice, cheerleader, giant, etc.)
- Review the memory verse;

“In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” John 16:33b, NIV

- Repeat the verse two or three times together.
- Fold the pieces of scrap paper in half and place them in a pile.
- Have a child to draw a slip of paper and say the verse in the voice chosen. (This may need some help.)
- Repeat again until you have said the verse using all the voices.

WHAT YOU SAY:

Those were some super crazy voices! What does the first part of the verse say? In this world you MIGHT have trouble? Or you COULD have trouble? Nope. It says you WILL have trouble. But guess what? Jesus’ death on the cross isn’t the end of the story. God isn’t done yet! In the end, He wins! So, we can have hope that even when we do have trouble, God has really won the battle. We don’t have to worry because He is in control.

Whatever happens, remember God is still at work.

PRAY

WHAT YOU NEED: Kids’ cross drawings from

- Ask the kids to think about a situation they’re unsure about.
- Have them carefully remove the tape from their cross drawings to reveal the picture they created.
- Remind them that even in the situation they’re unsure about, that God is still in control and He is still at work.

WHAT YOU SAY:

“Your cross drawings are SO beautiful. I’m SO thankful that this cross was not the end. I want you to hang these in your room. Each time you look at this cross, I want you to remember that this is not the end of the story. God is still at work. And next week we’ll celebrate what happened AFTER Jesus died, which is our ultimate reason for hope! I want us to pray and remember that even in these situations where we are unsure, God is still working and He is with you always.

Whatever happens, remember God is still at work.

“Dear God, thank You for hearing us when we pray. Thank You for sending Jesus to pay the price for us on the cross. And thank You that His death is not the end of the story. I pray for every situation that my friends are worried about today. We trust that whatever happens, we will remember that you are still at work. You are an awesome God. Thank you so much for Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross for us. We can’t wait to celebrate what happens next week. In Jesus’ name we pray, amen.”

Activity 4

TAKE THE PUNISHMENT (Older Kids)

WHAT YOU NEED: Item a kid can hold as a shield, paper wads or foam balls

- Have one child hold the shield while the others throw the balls or paper wads at him or her.
- Take turns with as many kids as you have so everyone gets a turn to hold the shield.

WHAT YOU SAY:

“This shield took a lot of punishment for you when you were getting things thrown at you. Imagine if instead of paper wads (*or balls*) like these it was baseballs? What about softballs? You’d really need some serious protection then, wouldn’t you? **This shield was designed to take some punishment, but today we learned about a person who took our punishment, and He did it without any shields or protection.**

Challenge

- Extend this older group’s thinking by playing the “What If” game.
- The crucifixion (and next week’s resurrection) is the climax—the big moment in the story God’s been writing since the beginning of time. To get kids thinking differently about its importance, ask them what would have happened IF Jesus hadn’t died on the cross? What IF He didn’t keep His promise? What IF He decided at the last moment it was too hard and He went into hiding, like many of His disciples did? How would that have changed history?
- After a few minutes of discussion, don’t feel like you need to correct; this is experimental. But be sure to bring things back to what did happen. To what Jesus did for us.

Activity 5

IT’S NOT FINISHED!

WHAT YOU NEED: Timer

- Challenge kids to make up a story as a group. If you don’t have more than one child make it a family activity.
- Use a timer to set how long each person should talk (about 30-60 seconds).
- The first person starts by telling a story where something is going wrong.
- The next person takes over, continuing the story so that the problem is solved or gets better, and something good happens as a result.
- The next person tells how things turned bad again, with some other problem or difficulty.
- The next person turns that story around with something good resulting from it, or with the bad thing reversing itself.
- Continue the story in this pattern over and over—something bad is happening, but something good results from it.

WHAT YOU SAY:

God is with us through our whole story of our lives, but our lives will have ups and downs. There will be times when things seem perfect and everything is going our way, but then there will be times when it seems that everything is going wrong and bad things keep piling up. We need to remember that no matter what is happening in the story of our lives, God is with us and is for us. No matter what happens in our lives, God is at work, using the good and the bad to do amazing things and to help us to grow into people who live and love like His Son, Jesus.

Whatever happens, remember God is still at work.

Challenge:

- Discuss with kids that in the story, some people had the job of making the story turn around and get better.
- We call these people “upstanders”—they stand up for what’s right, even when it’s hard. People who just sit around watching, even when others need help, are bystanders.
- Ask them to share about a time when they were going through some difficulty or problem and someone did something that helped turn their story around. Did they ever thank this upstander?
- Challenge them to find ways to be the kind of people who turn others’ stories around for the better.