



# Jesus Explains Why God Sent Him

John 3:12-21



► **Bible Point**  
Jesus came to save us.

**Key Verse**  
“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

**Weaving Faith Into Life**  
Children will better understand Jesus’ mission on earth and will grow in their relationship with him.

Third- and fourth-graders no longer see the world in strictly egocentric terms. Unlike very young children, they know that the world really doesn’t revolve around them. They’ve met other kids who are smarter, faster, and more popular, and as a result, many kids at this age already feel somewhat insecure. Use this most important lesson to teach kids that God loves them so much—and thinks they’re so important—that he was willing to sacrifice his own Son to ensure them a place in heaven.

LESSON	WHAT CHILDREN DO	SUPPLIES	EASY PREP
<b>1</b> Getting Started	<b>Rescue Me</b> <i>(about 10 min.)</i> Play a game about getting saved, and learn the Key Verse.	Bible	
<b>2</b> Bible Exploration	<b>Are You Condemned?</b> <i>(about 20 min.)</i> Act out a courtroom scene based on John 3:12-21.	Bibles, pens, paper	Set your room up like a courtroom with a judge’s bench, a witness stand, a chair for the defense attorney, and a chair for the prosecutor.

*Bold text within the lesson is spoken text.*



LESSON	WHAT CHILDREN DO	SUPPLIES	EASY PREP
<b>3</b> Weaving Faith Into Life	<b>Scales of Justice</b> <i>(about 20 min.)</i> Use a scale to compare our good deeds with Jesus' gift of love.	Bible Truth Sleuth, pens, book, marker, lightweight rock, heavy rock, 10 or more cotton balls, CD player, copies of the lyrics page (at the end of this lesson) <b>Teacher Pack:</b> CD	Tear out the Lesson 3 pages from each Bible Truth Sleuth student book.
	<b>Cross Necklace</b> <i>(about 10 min.)</i> Create a cross necklace.	yarn, markers, hole punch, scissors <b>Teacher Pack:</b> crosses	
<b>4</b> Lasting Impressions	<b>Daily Challenges</b> <i>(about 5 min.)</i> Choose a Daily Challenge to apply God's Word.	Bible Truth Sleuth, pens	
	<b>Weaving Faith at Home</b> <i>(about 2 min.)</i> Talk about how to share what they learned with their families.		

*Bold text within the lesson is spoken text.*

# Jesus Explains Why God Sent Him

John 3:12-21

**BIBLE BACKGROUND  
FOR LEADERS**

## Nicodemus Sought Jesus

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In this passage, Jesus is talking with Nicodemus, a Pharisee and a member of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish religious ruling council. Jesus launched into the conversation by making it clear that new birth is the only way to God’s kingdom. For Nicodemus, a strict follower of the Law who thought obedience to a set of rules was his ticket to heaven, the concept of a “new birth” was tough to grasp. He had trouble accepting that all his good works and intentions wouldn’t get him into God’s kingdom.

## Jesus Summarized God’s Plan of Salvation

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Jesus’ reference to Moses’ lifting up the snake in the desert refers to a time God sent poisonous snakes among the Israelites to punish them for rebelling against him. Those who had been bitten were dying. But God in his mercy instructed Moses to make a snake of bronze and lift it up on a pole where all could see it, promising safety to all who looked upon it. All who believed God and looked at the snake were spared from death. In the same way, Jesus would be lifted up on the cross, and as people looked to him in faith, they would be spared from eternal death for their sins.

Why did God send his own Son to die an agonizing death on the cross? The answer is clear in verse 16: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” In this sentence, Jesus summarizes God’s entire plan of salvation. What amazing love!

## We Must Respond in Faith

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Jesus’ message for Nicodemus and for us today is that following religious rules won’t win us God’s favor.

God has a different plan, because all the good we can ever do won’t wipe out a single sin. Only Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross, which paid the death penalty for us, makes it possible for us to enter heaven. And only our response in faith to that gift and to the Holy Spirit working in our lives will seal the deal.

## The Jesus Connection

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There are many awesome “benefits” of a relationship with Jesus, but this is the ultimate one: We can be born again! A new life, a fresh start, a clean slate!

John 3:16 is so familiar that it’s tempting to skim it without taking its full meaning to heart. So stop for a moment and reread it. How do Jesus’ words impact you? What questions do you have? Pray about your thoughts and questions. You can write your prayer here.

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## Rescue Me Supplies

Bible

# 1 GETTING STARTED

## Rescue Me

### What You'll Do ■■■■■■

Welcome kids warmly as they arrive, and ask them how their week went.

Choose one child to be a Shark and three kids to be Rescuers. Have the rest of the kids form a circle.

Say: **You're trapped in the water, and the Rescuers are coming to save you. You can only move if you link arms with a Rescuer. Once you link arms, the Rescuer will lead you as fast as possible to the safe area.** (Designate a part of the room as the safe area.) **The Shark will be trying to tag the rescued people before they get to the safe area. However, the Shark can't camp out in front of the safe area.**

Give kids a few minutes to play.

### Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- What made it difficult to get rescued?
- Tell about a real-life rescue you've seen or heard about.
- In those situations, why did the people need a rescuer?

Say: **We all need a rescuer. And God wants to rescue us in real life, because he loves us. In fact, he loves us so much that he sent his one and only Son, Jesus, to live and experience life just as we do. Our Key Verse, John 3:16, reminds us that ► JESUS CAME TO SAVE US.** Read John 3:16 aloud: **"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).** Let's look at the verses around this to understand more about why Jesus came to earth.

## 2 BIBLE EXPLORATION

# Are You Condemned?

### What You'll Do

Have kids form groups of three, and make sure each group has a Bible, a pen, and paper.

Say: **Today we're going to pretend we're in a courtroom. I'll be the judge. In your groups, decide who will play the defendant, or the person trying to get into heaven. Also choose a defense attorney, who will try to persuade me that the defendant should get into heaven. The third person will play the part of the prosecutor and will try to persuade me that the defendant shouldn't get into heaven. The only witness will be the defendant. The prosecutor will have a chance to question the defendant first, and then the defense attorney will question the defendant. If the defendant wishes to offer any additional information that might help his or her case, the defendant must ask my permission to speak. Please read John 3:12-21. Both sides can choose to use anything from this passage to build your case.**

Give groups a few minutes to decide who will play each part. Then have groups read John 3:12-21 together and write out questions they'll be asking the defendant. Ask groups to come up one at a time to present their cases. Allow time.

Say: **It appears that there is a way for all of us to get into heaven—even though I don't think any of us deserves it! This man, Jesus, has paid for all the sins, or the bad things, we have all done.**

### Talk With Kids

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- **How are we all like the defendant in this case?**
- **If we're not condemned, does that mean there are no consequences? Why or why not?**
- **Why do you think believing in Jesus is required for us to have eternal life?**

Say: **It's not my place to condemn anyone who believes in Jesus. You all can have eternal life because of Jesus! ► JESUS CAME TO SAVE US.** God, out of his great love for us, sent Jesus to live on earth because he wanted us to be able to spend eternity with him. God sent Jesus to die on the cross for our sins so we would not be condemned but have eternal life. By believing in Jesus, God's Son, we have eternal life.



### Are You Condemned? Supplies

Bibles  
pens  
paper

### Are You Condemned? Easy Prep

Set your room up like a courtroom with a judge's bench, a witness stand, a chair for the defense attorney, and a chair for the prosecutor.



### Scales of Justice Supplies

Bible Truth Sleuth  
pens  
book  
marker  
lightweight rock  
heavy rock  
10 or more cotton balls  
CD player  
copies of the lyrics page  
(at the end of this  
lesson)

#### Teacher Pack

CD: "God So Loved the  
World" (John 3:16)  
(track 4)

### Scales of Justice Easy Prep

Tear out the Lesson 3  
pages from each Bible  
Truth Sleuth student  
book.

## 3 WEAVING FAITH INTO LIFE

# Scales of Justice

### What You'll Do ■■■■■■

Say: **We're going to use a scale to weigh a few things.**

Place the marker under the middle of the book. Take the lighter of the two rocks and place it on one side of the book so the book tilts at an angle.

Say: **This rock represents sin. To get into heaven, some people think they need to do good things to outweigh their sins. Let's explore that idea.**

Distribute pens and this week's Bible Truth Sleuth pages, and have kids turn to the "Scales of Justice" activity. Have them fill in every blank line with all their good deeds. These could be things they've done, things they want to do, or qualities they have that they think are good.


After they're done writing, have willing kids say some of the things on their lists out loud. For each thing mentioned, place one of the cotton balls on the scale. Point out how the scale doesn't move.

Ask:

- **How does this activity relate to our ability to get into heaven?**
- **If we can't get into heaven by being good, how *can* we get there?**

Say: **Throughout his life, Jesus showed us how he wants us to live. Then he gave his life for our sins so those of us who believe in him would have eternal life. That's the ultimate expression of love to each one of us: that ► JESUS CAME TO SAVE US. We can sing the words to this verse as a song to help us remember them.**

Pass out copies of the lyrics page, and play "God So Loved the World" (John 3:16) (track 4 on the CD). Lead the children in singing along with the CD several times.

 **I believe in God  
'Cause what he says is true.  
I believe that Jesus died  
To save me and save you.**

**I believe in God  
And all that he came to do.  
I believe that Jesus died  
Because he loved both me and you.**



*(Chorus)*

**For God so loved the world  
He gave his one and only Son,  
That whoever believes in him  
Shall not perish.**

**For God so loved the world  
He gave his one and only Son,  
That whoever believes in him  
Will have eternal life.**

*(Repeat from the beginning; then repeat chorus.)*

**Will have eternal life, will have eternal life.**

“God So Loved the World” (John 3:16) by Ben Glover. © 2005 Group Publishing, Inc. All rights reserved.

Have kids form pairs and discuss their answers to the following question.

Ask:

- **What does the verse John 3:16 really mean to you?**

After sharing with their partners, have kids come back together as a large group. Ask for willing kids to share their answers.

Say: **No matter how many good things we do, it isn't enough to get into heaven. Our good deeds don't take away our sin. Only Jesus can do that, and ► JESUS CAME TO SAVE US.** Hold up the heavier rock. **This rock represents Jesus. Let's see what happens when we put it on the scale.**

Place the heavier rock on the side with the cotton balls so the weight shifts.

Say: **Jesus has the ability to get us into heaven. He outweighs our sin, and if we believe in him, he will pay for us to get into heaven. We can't ever be good enough to get into heaven, but through Jesus we *can* get into heaven!**

### **Talk With Kids** ■■■■

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- **Why is sin so “heavy” in our lives?**
- **Why aren't good things we do good enough to tip the scales?**

Say: **Jesus is the only way we can tip the scales. God knew that, and that's why ► JESUS CAME TO SAVE US.**



### Cross Necklace Supplies

yarn  
markers  
hole punch  
scissors  
**Teacher Pack**  
crosses

### Daily Challenges Supplies

Bible Truth Sleuth  
pens

## Cross Necklace

### What You'll Do ■■■■■■

Give each child a cross and a length of yarn long enough to make a necklace. Have children punch a hole at the top of their crosses. Distribute markers, and on one side of the cross have each child write "John 3:16." On the other side of the cross, invite kids to write "I believe in Jesus" if this reflects their beliefs. Have kids decorate their crosses using the markers.

### Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- Why is the cross such a symbol of hope for Christians?
- How does Jesus' sacrifice on the cross affect how you see other people who are different from you?
- What difference do you want the cross to make in your life this week?

Say: The cross is a symbol of death, but it's also a symbol of hope for Christians. ► **JESUS CAME TO SAVE US** by dying on the cross, and all we have to do is believe in him in order to be saved.

## 4 LASTING IMPRESSIONS

## Daily Challenges

### What You'll Do ■■■■■■

Say: No matter how many good deeds you've done, it's still not enough to get into heaven. The only way you can get into heaven is by believing in Jesus; it is very easy and so simple to do. Believing that ► **JESUS CAME TO SAVE US** is all you have to do.

Have kids find this week's Daily Challenges on their Bible Truth Sleuth pages and choose one to do this week. They can choose one or more of these three options:

- Talk to a Christian adult about how he or she became a Christian.
- Ask a Christian leader or parent to pray with you as you ask Jesus to forgive your sins.
- If you've already accepted Jesus' gift of eternal life, spend some time getting to know Jesus better: Read the Bible or spend time in prayer.

Make sure you choose a Daily Challenge as well, and tell the kids what you chose. Kids will be more inclined to follow through on their commitments when they see you doing the same.



## Talk With Kids

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- **What's a practical way you're going to do your Daily Challenge? Include a time, a place, and other ideas.**

Say: **Take your cross with you and wear it—or hang it somewhere in your room—to remind you that ► JESUS CAME TO SAVE US. Let's close by thanking God for eternal life through Jesus Christ.**

## Weaving Faith at Home

Encourage kids to talk with their parents about the Daily Challenges they chose and what they learned about Jesus' gift of eternal life. Kids can also do the activities in the "HomeConnect" section of their Bible Truth Sleuth pages with their families.

Talk to your Director about emailing the FREE FamilyConnect to all your church's families. Available at [group.com/digital](http://group.com/digital).

Have kids pray a short prayer of thanks for God's gift of eternal life.



**Lyrics** ■■■■**God So Loved the World (John 3:16)**

I believe in God  
'Cause what he says is true.  
I believe that Jesus died  
To save me and save you.

I believe in God  
And all that he came to do.  
I believe that Jesus died  
Because he loved both me and you.

*(Chorus)*  
For God so loved the world  
He gave his one and only Son,  
That whoever believes in him  
Shall not perish.

For God so loved the world  
He gave his one and only Son,  
That whoever believes in him  
Will have eternal life.

*(Repeat from the beginning; then repeat chorus.)*

**Will have eternal life, will have eternal life.**

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