



LESSON 3

JESUS AND THE CHILDREN

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: Jesus Loves Us

SCRIPTURE: [Mark 10](#)

GOD'S BIG STORY: Jesus welcomes little children, taking them in His arms and blessing them. He teaches that His kingdom belongs to those who are like little children.

WORD OF WONDER: 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. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. —[John 3:16–17 \(NIV\)](#)

FOUNDATION BUILDING BLOCKS

WHO?

During the time of Jesus, children entered adulthood around age 12. Girls would plan for marriage, and boys would either continue studying the Torah (Jewish Scriptures) or enter into their father's trade. The children who came to Jesus would probably have been fairly young.

WHAT?

The disciples were likely trying to protect Jesus' time so He could teach and heal those who they deemed important. But Jesus makes it clear that people must accept the kingdom of God like little children, who realize it is a gift from God, not something that can be gained through worldly knowledge or wisdom.

WHERE?

Jesus was in southern Israel and across the Jordan River. He was surrounded by crowds, including some of the Pharisees, who were constantly testing Jesus because they were suspicious of His teachings. He wasn't necessarily in friendly territory—His teachings and actions were being closely watched.

WHEN?

Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem for the final time—it is there He would eventually face His death. After welcoming the children, Jesus continued to teach about the kingdom of God and how it operates in ways opposite the world.

CONNECTING TO GOD'S BIG STORY

Shortly before Jesus blessed the children in [Mark 10](#), He took a child in His arms and taught that welcoming little children in His name is the same as welcoming Him (see [Mark 9:33–37](#)). Multiple times during His ministry, Jesus cared for children, noticing, healing, and blessing them.

Curiosity

Spark curiosity and get kids thinking about the wonder of God.

Welcome Question

At your start time ...

Give an energetic welcome to all the kids in your group! Ask if anyone would like to share their answers to the Welcome Question: **Who is one person you like to hang out with? Why do you like being with that person?**

It's fun to hang out with friends and family members! Today we'll hear a story from the Bible about a time when some kids, just like you, got to hang out with Jesus! But first, it's time to be curious!

Curiosity Questions

I'm curious ...

- How do you think people in the Bible felt when they were with Jesus?
- Has there been a time when you weren't able to be with someone you love? Tell us about it.

Leader Tip: This question may invite a kid to share about the death of a loved one. It is OK and healthy for kids to share about their loved ones who have died. Provide a listening ear and caring heart as they share about their grief.

Elementary Interactive Game: Action-Packed Red Light, Green Light

Gather the kids. Have kids stand side by side at one end of the room. Stand facing them at the opposite end.

Let's play Action-Packed Red Light, Green Light! As usual, you will move forward when you see green paper and stop when you see red paper. However, you may only move forward by doing the actions I call out.

Stand at least 10 feet away from the kids and hold the red and green sheets behind your back. Instruct kids to move toward you when you raise the green sheet and to continue moving until you raise the red sheet. The first kid to reach you wins! Play several rounds, and at the start of each round, instruct the kids to use one of the actions listed below. Change the action each round.

Make the game more dynamic by raising the red sheet frequently in the beginning rounds, creating an exaggeratedly slow pace for the kids to move forward! In the final round, don't raise the red sheet at all, making it easy for kids to come toward you.

Actions

Jump
Walk backward
Crawl like a bear
Waddle like a penguin
Walk on your knees
Dance like a ballerina
Walk on your heels
Choose your own movement

Leader Tip: Consider kids' clothing when calling out actions. For example, if there are girls in dresses, you might have kids walk on two legs like an angry grizzly bear rather than crawl.

Gather kids back together. **Wow! There are lots of ways to move, but it isn't always fun when we're told to stop. The good news is—unlike our game where we had to stop frequently—when we move toward Jesus, we never have to wait or stop. In fact, the opposite happens. When we move toward Jesus, He will move toward us.**

Jesus welcomes us into His arms because, like today's Wonder Truth states, **JESUS LOVES US.**

Make It Inclusive: Invite kids with limited mobility to help you by calling out the actions for each round.

Preteen STEM Activity: Magnetic Quest

Gather the kids. Help kids form groups of 2–4 and give each group a magnet, blank sheet of paper, and writing utensil. **Let's go on a Magnetic Quest to discover how many objects in this room are magnetic! As a team, your job is to find as many objects as you can that are attracted to your magnet. List each magnetic object you find on your paper, and whichever team has discovered the most magnetic objects when the countdown video hits zero, wins!**

When you say, "Go," start a 2-minute or 5-minute timer. When the timer hits zero, have kids put their writing utensils down and collect their magnets. Invite each group to count how many magnetic items they found and to share a couple of their favorite discoveries. Congratulate the team who found the most items!

Wow! You all did an amazing job finding items that are magnetic! Magnets have an invisible, natural force called magnetism. Magnetism pulls on things made of certain metals, like iron or nickel. These magnetic objects are drawn toward magnets. Today in God's big story we'll hear about a different type of force that draws Jesus to kids just like us—His love!

Today's Wonder Truth is **JESUS LOVES US.**

Declaring God's Wonder

Thank You, God, that You are good! (Kids repeat.) **You made me on purpose, for a purpose.** (Kids repeat.) **And when I follow Jesus, I am Your kid!** (Kids repeat.) **You know me, love me, and lead me.** (Kids repeat.) **You loved me before I knew You,** (Kids repeat.) **You love me more than I can imagine!** (Kids repeat.) **My life can tell of Your wonder!** (Kids repeat.)

Faith

Help kids see the wonder of God's story and how it connects to their own story.

Word of Wonder Activity

WORD OF WONDER

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.

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

—John 3:16–17 (NIV)

Today in God's big story, Jesus took the children in His arms and blessed them. Why? Because Jesus loves us! Let's say our Word of Wonder together and remember God's amazing love for us! Open your Bible to [John 3:16–17](#). If possible, display the Word of Wonder Slide [NIV](#) or watch the [Elementary Word of Wonder Video](#). Read [John 3:16–17](#) several times together.

Let's play a game to practice our verse! Invite kids to form a circle. Explain that they will take turns bouncing the ball, and while the ball is in the air, the person who bounced the ball will say as much of the verse as he can before the ball hits the ground. When the next person bounces the ball, she can start saying the verse wherever the previous person left off. If your group is mostly younger kids, kids can take turns bouncing the ball, but everyone can say the verse together. For preteens, add challenge by having them catch the ball again before it hits the ground. For even more challenge, put a pile of small objects (jacks, buttons, interlocking bricks, etc.) in the center of the circle and encourage the person bouncing the ball to try picking up as many of the objects as possible before the ball hits the ground—all while saying the verse!

Elementary Questions

- **In today's part of God's big story, who came to Jesus while He was teaching?** (*Many people gathered around Jesus when He taught. On this day, parents brought their children to Jesus.*)
- **Who tried to stop the children from visiting with Jesus?** (*the disciples*)
- **How did Jesus feel when the disciples didn't allow the children to come to Him? Why do you think He felt this way?** (*He was angry.*)
- **What did Simon and his friends do when Jesus called them to follow Him?** (*They left everything and followed Jesus!*)
- **What did Jesus do for the children?** (*He took them in His arms and blessed them, which means He spoke God's love and favor over them.*)
- **Jesus loves all of you! What are some things you think Jesus loves about you?**

You are like the kids in today's story! You can come to Jesus anytime. He is always waiting and ready to talk to you. Let's spend some time today talking with Jesus in prayer.

Preteen Questions

- **Why do you think the parents in today's part of God's big story brought their children to see Jesus?** (*Possible answer: So that Jesus would bless them by speaking God's love and favor over them.*)
- **The disciples tried to stop the children from visiting with Jesus. Why do you think they did this?** (*Possible answers: They may have thought Jesus was too important to spend time with little children; they may have been trying to protect Jesus' time so He could do more important things.*)
- **What did Jesus do for the children?** (*He took them in His arms and blessed them, which means He spoke God's love and favor over them.*)
- **What did Jesus say before He blessed the children?** (*"Let the little children come to me. Don't keep them away. God's kingdom belongs to people like them"* [[Mark 10:14](#)].)
- **In God's kingdom, God is in charge and the broken parts of the world are being fixed. What do you think it means that the kingdom belongs to people who are like children?**
- **Jesus loves all of you! What are some things you think Jesus loves about you?**

Jesus loves us, and just like He did with the children in today's part of God's big story, He welcomes us and wants us to come to Him! Let's take some time to talk with Jesus in prayer.

Small Group Prayer Time

Invite kids to join you in a circle to spend time talking to Jesus. Ask whether anyone has a question, something they would like to share with Jesus, or a prayer request. Give each kid a chance to participate, then close in prayer, remembering to thank Jesus for loving us!

Leader Tip: Let kids know that prayer is simply talking with God. Often, we pray with our eyes closed and heads bowed to help us focus on God. However, we can talk with God anywhere and in any position: sitting, standing, riding in a car, and with our eyes open!

Identity

Create space for God to remind kids they are known, loved, led, and their lives can tell of God's wonder.

Elementary Responding in Worship: Hanging Out with Jesus

During this activity, kids will spend time “hanging out with Jesus” as they pray and reflect at activity stations. Ahead of time, gather the materials for these activity stations:

Art Station: coloring utensils, paper, paint (optional), glitter (optional), stickers (optional)

Journal Station: paper, writing utensils

Building Station: interlocking bricks and/or other blocks and building materials

Prayer Station: no supplies needed

Gather the kids together. **In God's big story today, we heard about Jesus welcoming the little children into His arms. Why do you think He did this?** Allow kids time to answer. **Yes! Jesus welcomed the children because Jesus loves kids, and He loves you too! Jesus will never ignore you or dismiss you. Jesus is thinking about you all the time, even when you aren't thinking about Him. We are always on His mind because Jesus loves us.**

What kind of activities do you think Jesus would enjoy doing with you? Encourage every kid to share one idea.

God gives the Holy Spirit to every person who follows Him. The Holy Spirit is God's loving presence with us! That means that even though Jesus is not with us physically, like He was with the kids in today's story, through the Holy Spirit, we can hang out with Jesus!

Let's spend some time with Jesus as we think about how amazing He is! Today you can choose an activity station where you'll get to hang out with Jesus!

Explain how each station works and then invite kids to choose a station to spend time hanging out with Jesus. Play the song “God Loves Us So” from the [Hanging Out with Jesus Elementary Spotify playlist](#) while kids worship and respond creatively.

Art Station: Kids can use the art supplies to draw a picture for Jesus of something they would enjoy doing with Him.

Journal Station: Kids can journal their thoughts, questions, prayers, and concerns to Jesus. Kids may also choose to write a short story, song, or poem.

Building Station: This is a time for kids to be creative and have fun with Jesus through building things.

Prayer Station: This is a time for kids to sit and talk with Jesus. They can offer silent prayers or pray aloud in a quiet voice.

If there's time, you can give a signal and allow kids to move to additional stations. Otherwise, gather kids back together after several minutes at their stations.

Blessing Your Kids

Blessing: May you remember Jesus is always with you wherever you go. He loves you always, no matter what! May every step you take in life move you closer to Him, and may your lives show others how much Jesus loves them.

GAME 3: FIND SOMETHING YOU LOVE

In this relay-style game, kids will take turns choosing pictures of something they love and taping them to their team's posters.

Make It Inclusive: If there are kids in your group with limited mobility, have kids gather around the Something I Love posters at tables or on the floor. Rather than run to the posters, kids can simply take turns choosing pictures of something they love and taping them to their team's posters.

Ahead of time, print the [Something I Love Printable](#), and cut apart the pictures. You'll need at least one picture for each kid in your group. Use a marker to write "Something I Love" on both posterboards or sheets of paper, and tape each to the wall at kid-level. Set out the pictures from the printable along with some tape on the floor near the poster. Also set several markers on the floor.



Divide your group into two teams. Have each team line up across the room from one of the Something I Love posters.

Today's game is called Find Something You Love. When I say, "Go," one person from each team will run to your team's "Something I Love" poster and find a picture from the pile on the floor that shows something they love. They'll get a small piece of tape and tape it to the poster. If you don't see anything pictured that you love, you can use a marker and draw or write something you love on the poster. Then run back and tag the next player from your team, who will do the same thing. Keep going until everyone on your team has gone.

When everyone is ready, begin the activity by having the first kids in line on each team run to their team's poster and add the things they love to their team's list.

Wow! You all came up with full lists of things that you love. Today in God's big story, we're talking about love and the love Jesus has for us—especially for children.