

Luke 23:26-46

The Finish Line

Scripture: Luke 23:26-46

Memory Verse: Luke 23:43 “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”

Lesson Focus: After several weeks of following Jesus to the cross He finally crosses the finish line with His crucifixion. And as He finishes we will see God’s amazing grace and mercy poured out on the repentant thief on the cross and challenge the kids to consider their own need for this same grace and mercy.

Activities and Crafts: Crucifixion Coloring Picture, Word Search of different terms from lesson, Bring it Home Discussion for 3rd – 5th.
Craft for 1st/2nd Grade: Cross with a Heart

Starter Activity: To Finish or Not to Finish

First have some discussion with the kids to get them thinking about what it means to finish something. Ask them for some common things that people finish. See some ideas below. To make the discussion more fun share some personal stories of things that you have finished and how finishing them made you feel.

- 1) Races *
- 2) School Year *
- 3) Books *

Q: How do you usually feel when you finish some of these things? Pretty good, especially if it was something that you had to work hard at!

Then ask the kids to think of things that they often start, but then DON’T finish. Also ask them WHY they don’t finish these things. Some ideas:

- 1) Supper (maybe because you are a picky eater) *
- 2) Chores (maybe because we don’t like doing them)
- 3) Loaf of bread (the end slices are not as appetizing for some reason)
- 4) Puzzles (too hard, or just gets too boring) *

We typically don’t finish these things because we don’t like them or we get distracted by something else!

Well, we’ve been following Jesus on His long and hard trek to the cross. Is He going to finish or give up? Let’s see what happens today as we open our Bibles!

Bible Study:

Last week we saw how Jesus was declared innocent by the Roman governor, yet the Jewish mob won out with shouts of...? CRUCIFY HIM! Now the cross awaits Him. (**Teachers:** We will leave a large wooden cross in your room that you can use however you like. See some of our suggestions sprinkled throughout the lesson) *

Luke 23:26: It was customary back in Roman times for criminals to carry their own cross to the place they would be crucified. * Yet Jesus was already so weakened by the whipping and torturing we read about last week that He needed someone to help Him carry it. (**Teachers:** Consider calling up a couple of volunteers and have them pretend to carry the cross across the room together with one pretending to be very weak)

Luke 23:27: It was very busy in the city since people had come to celebrate the Passover and crowds were curious about what was happening. * But there were some women who were particularly sad. *

Luke 23:28-31: But instead of letting them feel sorry for Him, He is feeling sorry for them! Jesus has already warned about the coming destruction of Jerusalem (**Luke 19:41-44**) for their rejection of Him and he warns these women again that they might repent.

Luke 23:32-33: Jesus now reaches His final destination: Calvary. * But He is not alone!
Q: How many others were crucified with Him? A: Two! (**Teachers:** Consider leaning the cross against the wall and have three volunteers pretend to be crucified with their arms extended, one on the cross. Have another volunteer pretend to nail their hands and feet.)

Luke 23:34a: What? How can these words come out of Jesus's mouth at this moment?
Q: What are they doing to Jesus right now? A: Nailing His hands and feet to the cross.
Q: What does Jesus say in response? A: Praying for their forgiveness! *

Jesus is experiencing tremendous agony and suffering on the cross and yet He is not thinking about Himself, but others! Behold, the amazing grace and lovingkindness of Jesus Christ, the Son of God!

Luke 23:34b-38: Imagine the shame and the humiliation. So many people are mocking and making fun of the One sent by God to rescue them. The crazy thing is that He IS the King and He COULD save Himself.

Q: Why doesn't He just flex His superhero muscles and come down from the cross? (let the kids chew on this a little bit)

A: Because His death on the cross is what He came to do! He had to **finish** His mission!

Read Luke 22:41-42, which is Jesus' prayer in the garden the day before. He knew how hard this was going to be. He cries out to God the Father something like, "*Papa, if there is any other way for people to be rescued from their sin and punishment, please show Me!*" But yet He knows there is no other way and quickly adds, "*not My will, but Yours be done!*" Jesus was nearing the finish line and He certainly couldn't quit now!

Luke 23:39: Now we get to hear from the two criminals being crucified on either side of Him. The first one joins in with the crowds that are mocking Him.

Luke 23:40-41: But notice what the guy on the other side says!

Q: Was he mocking Jesus? A: NO! In fact, he defends Jesus and tells the other guy off. He admits that the two of them are getting exactly what they deserve: punishment!

(Teachers: Consider bringing in three buckets. Two of them should be labeled “punishment” or “hell” on them. With a helper, suspend those buckets over the heads of the “volunteer” criminals for a moment to demonstrate that they are about to get what they deserve) *

Luke 23:42: Then this guy looks to Jesus in faith asking for mercy and grace.

Q: Does this guy deserve mercy and grace? A: NO! He is guilty and deserves the punishment that is coming to him for his crimes against God and man. *

Luke 23:43: What? How could Jesus say this? He was guilty of **horrible** crimes!

(Teachers: Now bring out the third bucket labeled “reward” or “paradise”. * Suspend this bucket over the volunteer playing Jesus on the cross)

Because of this man’s faith and trust in Jesus, a little “switcheroo” happens here. Jesus takes the criminal’s punishment upon Himself while giving the criminal His own reward!

(Teachers: Switch the two buckets to demonstrate this!) This is what we call **mercy** (not getting what you deserve) and **grace** (getting something wonderful you don’t deserve!)

Luke 23:44-46: And ***BOOM***, Jesus crosses the finish line. In the gospel of John, He records that one of the last things Jesus says is that “IT IS FINISHED!” (**John 19:30**)

Q: What is finished? A: His mission. His perfect life that earns the reward of eternal paradise and His perfect sacrifice on the cross that makes a way for this reward to be shared with ALL who believe in Him. Behold, the amazing love of God for you and me! (**John 3:16**) *

Boys and Girls: Let’s make this a little more personal now.

Q: Which “bucket” do you think YOU deserve?

A: Perhaps none of you have sinned as greatly as the criminal that was crucified next to Jesus, but you have still sinned nonetheless. Have you ever lied? Have you ever disrespected your parents? Have you ever said or thought anything nasty to your brother or sister? God knows! You deserve punishment!

Key Point: This is why you NEED Jesus! Trust in Him today just like the criminal did and not only will your sins be washed away, but you will receive the same reward that he received!

Aren’t you so glad Jesus **finished** and that He didn’t get distracted or give up because it was too hard? Without His great **finish** all of us would still be under the “punishment” bucket! Praise Him and follow Him this week grateful for His mercy and grace!

BRING IT HOME

Read Luke 23:35-37
Why didn't Jesus just
come down from the
cross?

Parent Signature:

Parent Challenge:
What did the thief on
the cross deserve?
What did he receive?

Read John 19:30
What did Jesus
"finish"?

