



# Jesus Dies and Is Buried

**Goal:** To hear the story that Jesus died.

## RECOGNIZING GOD’S GRACE . . .

### . . . In Mark 15:33–(39) 47

So often, we jump from the exhilaration of Palm Sunday to the joyous celebration of Easter, especially with children who may not attend a Maundy Thursday or Good Friday service. Knowing the full story, that Jesus died, allows the resurrection to make sense. While the crucifixion of Jesus is a hard, complex, and violent story, we can learn about it in an age-appropriate way.

We are faced with a grim truth: those who rejected Jesus—and his message of truth, healing, justice, and love—simply wanted him dead. Mark’s spare account moves from one brutal detail to the next as Jesus cries out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

As Christians, we know that the story does not end here. Jesus’ death is the fulcrum point of the salvation story, the tipping point of our redemption. The rest of the story is foreshadowed by the details the gospel provides. First, the Roman centurion, who has observed everything, standing at the foot of the cross, says, “Truly this man was God’s Son!” Then we see those who loved Jesus, at no small risk to themselves, take his body and place it in the tomb. Mark is careful to let us know that Joseph of Arimathea “rolled a stone against the door of the tomb,” and that the two Marys were witnesses. Jesus has died, but the story is not over. It is just about to begin anew.

### . . . In Your Children’s Experiences

Adults, with more life experience, may not be as shocked by this story as children, who can be overwhelmed by it. Children, who have a fine-tuned sense of fairness, may wonder aloud when they hear this story: “What?! How could they do that?! He didn’t do anything wrong! Where were his friends?!” This story may be troubling to hear, especially for very young children. It will be important to help them experience their feelings of sadness, but also to remind them that the story does not end here, and that Jesus does not stay in the tomb. Take care to help them understand that the most wonderful thing happened on Easter: God brought Jesus back to life!

### . . . In Your Relationships with the Children

One of the most important aspects of your role as a teacher is your relationship with the children you teach. Your genuine self, shared with them, is as valuable as any Bible lesson they might learn. So give yourself and the children permission to explore the grief and sadness this story stirs up; take time to listen to the children if they share their feelings. Acknowledge their feelings, and listen to their questions. If they ask a question you cannot answer, honestly admit it and suggest that the two of you might ask someone who would be able to help you understand.

*Loving God, may I be present with the children in my care as we hear the sad story of Jesus’ death. Amen.*



## Supplies

**Music & Melodies**  
(MM) 2023–2024

**Stories, Colors & More**  
(SCM) i–iv, 4, 15, 17

basic supplies  
(see p. vii)

blanket or mats

snack

## Guided Play

choice 1: copies of **Grace Notes (GN) 1**, copies of **GN 2**

choice 2: strips of construction paper or card stock (2" x 7" and 2" x 5")

## Exploring

choice 2: for each child: small box, such as a jewelry box, that will hold all the other items; 2" sprig of greenery; pipe cleaner; 2" x 1" white cloth; small stone; 2" wooden peg doll or interlocking block person

choice 3: card-sock copies of **GN 3**, stone for each child cut from copies of **GN 4**

choice 4: copies of **GN 5**

## GATHERING IN GOD’S GRACE

### Before the Children Arrive

Designate a story corner and lay out a blanket or individual mats for the children so their backs will be to the door.

Post **SCM i–ii**, “Your Visual Schedule.” Cut out and glue the arrow marker onto a clothespin. Use the schedule to provide clear expectations and a visual cue for the group.

See **SCM iii–iv** for the key to icons (for example, **LG** **T**) and ways to adapt for children who have special needs or disabilities.

Select the activities that will work best for you and for your children. You do not need to do everything suggested!

“Exploring God’s Grace” choice 2 requires more prep.

### Welcoming and Guided Play



Greet the children as they arrive and say, “Grace and peace be with you.” Prompt them to respond, “And also with you.” Be sensitive to any children who might be coming for the first time. Introduce yourself to parents/caregivers you do not know personally. Tell them that today’s story is about when Jesus died and was buried, but we know that is not the end of the story!

Invite the children to choose a guided-play activity to start:

- 1. Palms and Hosannas**—Provide copies of **GN 1** and **GN 2**. Invite the children to color the palm leaves green and the “hosannas” any color(s) they choose. Encourage the children to cut out the palm leaves and “hosannas” along the cutting lines. Have the children write their name on the back of each. Assist with cutting and writing as needed. Set aside for “Hearing the Story.”
- 2. Crosses**—Provide strips of construction paper or card stock and show children how to glue a shorter strip and longer strip together to make a cross. Invite them to decorate their cross with stickers, markers, or crayons. When finished, punch a hole at the top and have the children thread a piece of yarn or cord through it to hang up the cross.
- 3. Music**—Play music such as “Were You There”—**MM 17**. Wonder how the music makes them feel. Invite children to respond to the music with movement.

**T** *The session plans for Growing in Grace & Gratitude follow a common flow. This helps in planning an effective schedule with transitions to help decrease the number of behavior issues.*



## Transitioning to Story Time

T

When you sense the children are ready to move into group time, call them to the story corner, playing and singing “Lord, I Want to Be a Christian”—**MM 13; SCM 15**. Repeat words and phrases as appropriate.

## Hands Go Up

L MS

Invite the children to repeat each line after you and follow your motions.

Hands go up. (*raise hands in air*) /  
Hands go down. (*move hands to sides*) /  
I can turn myself around. (*turn around in a circle*) /  
I can stand on one shoe. (*stand on one foot*) /  
I can listen, so can you. (*cup hand by ear, then point to another*) /  
I can sit, I'll show you how. (*sit on floor*) /  
Bible time is starting now. (*point finger to wrist*) /

## Praising God

L

Invite the children to follow your motions as you say the poem.

One little mouth to speak, (*point to mouth*)  
one little nose, two little cheeks, (*point to nose and cheeks*)  
two little eyes to see, (*point to eyes*)  
all my ten little toes. (*point to toes and wiggle toes*)

One, two, three, four, five. (*hold up fingers one at a time on one hand*)  
Six, seven, eight, nine, ten. (*hold up fingers one at a time on the other hand*)  
Ten fingers and two hands. (*hold up hands and clap*)  
We can praise God! Yes, we can! (*raise hands in the air and wave them*)



Today's story can be found in *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*, edited by Elizabeth F. Caldwell and Carol A. Wehrheim (Louisville, KY: Flyaway Books, 2018), [www.pcusastore.com](http://www.pcusastore.com).

## Hearing the Story

L B

Open the Bible to Mark 15 so the children know the story comes from the Bible. Tell the children that they are going to hear a story about when Jesus died and was buried, but we know that is not the end of the story!

Read **SCM 4** without the comments in bold and wondering questions. Let the children hear the story. Express the emotions of the story in your voice, gestures, and facial expressions. Conclude the story by prompting the children to say, “Amen.”



Give the children the palms and hosannas they made in “Guided Play” choice 1. Read the story again, inviting the children to wave their palms and “hosannas” at the beginning of the story; pause to read the bold comments and the wondering questions.

## EXPLORING GOD’S GRACE

### 1. Putting Away the Hallelujahs

A M VI T

Wonder together what are some words that might show how people feel about the story of Jesus’ death. Then print “HALLELUJAH!” on a large sheet of mural paper. Ask the children if they know what the word is. Explain that the word is “Hallelujah!” and it is an exclamation of joy and praise, especially to God.

Invite everyone to draw or color on it. Make sure everyone’s name is on the paper. Suggest that this is not a word that comes to mind when we think about Jesus’ death. At a time like this, we put away our Hallelujahs. Tell the children that you are going to put the Hallelujah away until Jesus is raised on Easter. Have them help you roll the paper up and put it away in a drawer, box, or closet.

Talk together about what will happen on Easter. Tell the children that, on Easter Sunday, they should remind you to get the Hallelujah out and let everyone shout: “Christ is alive! HALLELUJAH!”

**M** *Some children need to move more than others, which makes sitting still a difficult task. Set clear expectations with boundaries for appropriate movement to meet the needs of the child while not disrupting the rest of the group.*

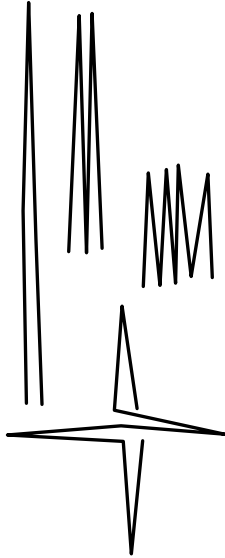


### 2. Holy Week Box

A L LD LG T

Place all of the items for each child by you so that you may hand them out as needed. Tell the children they are going to make a memory box about the week Jesus came to Jerusalem. Use the following directions to make the memory boxes:

- ▼ Give each child the wooden peg doll or interlocking block person. Wonder together who this may be. Affirm that it is Jesus (no matter what the doll or block person looks like). Ask the children what happened when Jesus came into Jerusalem.
- ▼ Give each child a sprig of greenery and have them wave it at Jesus. Tell them that the people had a parade, welcoming Jesus with palm branches waving.
- ▼ Have them put down their palm branches and give them the small box with the lid on. With a marker, draw a simple cup and bread shape on the lid of the box. Invite the children to put Jesus on one side of the box. Wonder together what this reminds us of. Affirm that it was the last supper Jesus had with his disciples



- when he shared bread and a cup of wine and asked them to remember him when they ate the bread and drank the wine.
- Give each child a pipe cleaner and show them how to fold it into a cross shape by folding it in half, in half again, and in half one more time. Then open the last fold and take each loose end and bend each one outward at the center fold, forming the arms of the cross. Have them place Jesus by the cross. Wonder together about some of the words and feelings that they shared about Jesus' death.
- Invite the children to move Jesus away from the cross, wrap the white cloth around the figure, and place it in the box. Tell the children that the box is like the tomb Jesus was laid in. Have them put the lid on the box and place a small stone on top of the lid.
- Wonder together what will happen next! Have the children move the stone, take Jesus out of the box, and leave the white cloth in the box. Invite the children to say, "Hallelujah! Jesus is risen!"

You may want to walk through the items and story a couple of times so that the children can tell it to their families. When you are finished, have the children put all the items in their box. Be sure to put each child's name on their box. Encourage them to tell the story at home.

### 3. The Tomb

FM

Remind the children that Jesus' friend, Joseph of Arimathea, wrapped Jesus in linen cloths and laid him in a tomb. Explain that the tomb probably would have looked like a small cave, and a big stone would have been rolled in front of the entrance.

Give each child a card-stock copy of **GN 3** and a stone from **GN 4**. Invite the children to color the tomb scene and the stone. While they are coloring the stone, cut along the dashed line in the tomb scene.

Have the children tape a craft stick to their stone. Show them how to insert the craft stick into the slit and roll the stone in front of the tomb and then away from the tomb.

### 4. Coloring Page

C L

Hand out copies of **GN 5** and crayons. Invite the children to color the picture of the soldier at the cross. Engage the children in conversation as they color, using the following wondering questions:

- I wonder, "Where were Jesus' friends?"
- I wonder, "How did the Roman soldier feel?"
- I wonder, "What will happen next?"

Use "wonder" questions that do not force a child to remember facts. Wondering questions help a child think aloud. Answers are neither right nor wrong. They help teach children to speak from their hearts.



## LOVING AND SERVING GOD



Call the children together, playing and singing “Tell Me the Stories of Jesus”—**MM 16; SCM 17**. Repeat words and phrases as appropriate. Wonder together what stories everyone remembers about Jesus. Comment that, even though today’s story was sad, it is not the end of the story or the end of stories about Jesus. Easter Sunday is coming with an exciting story!

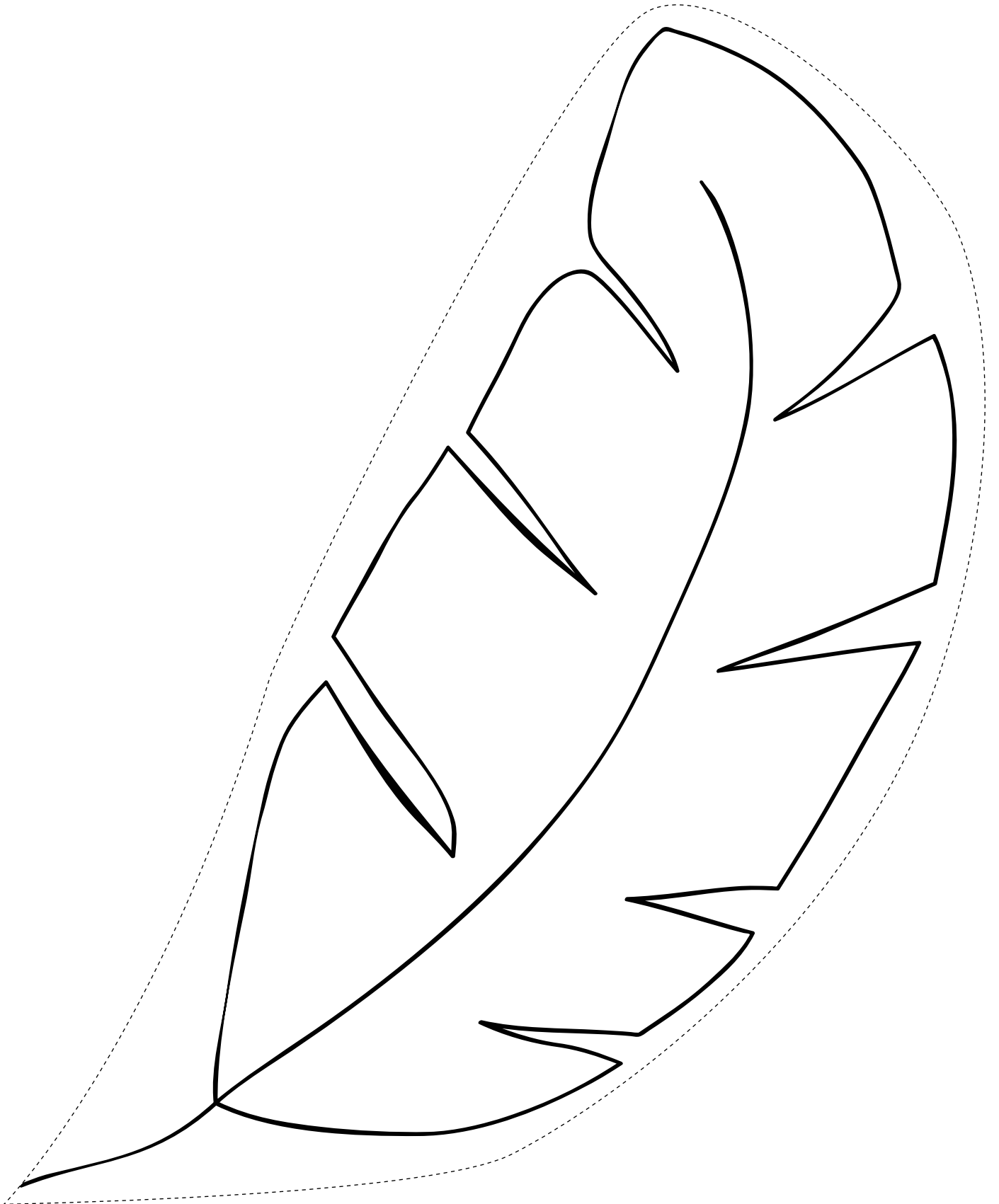
If you would like to share a snack, now would be a good time. Invite the children to repeat after you and follow your actions as you pray:

For food to eat (*raise hands to mouth*) /  
and friends to share, (*hold hands out*) /  
for those we love everywhere, (*place hands over heart*) /  
we thank you, God. (*put hands together in prayer*) /

As the children leave, bless them: “(Name), Jesus loves you always. The grace of God is with you.”

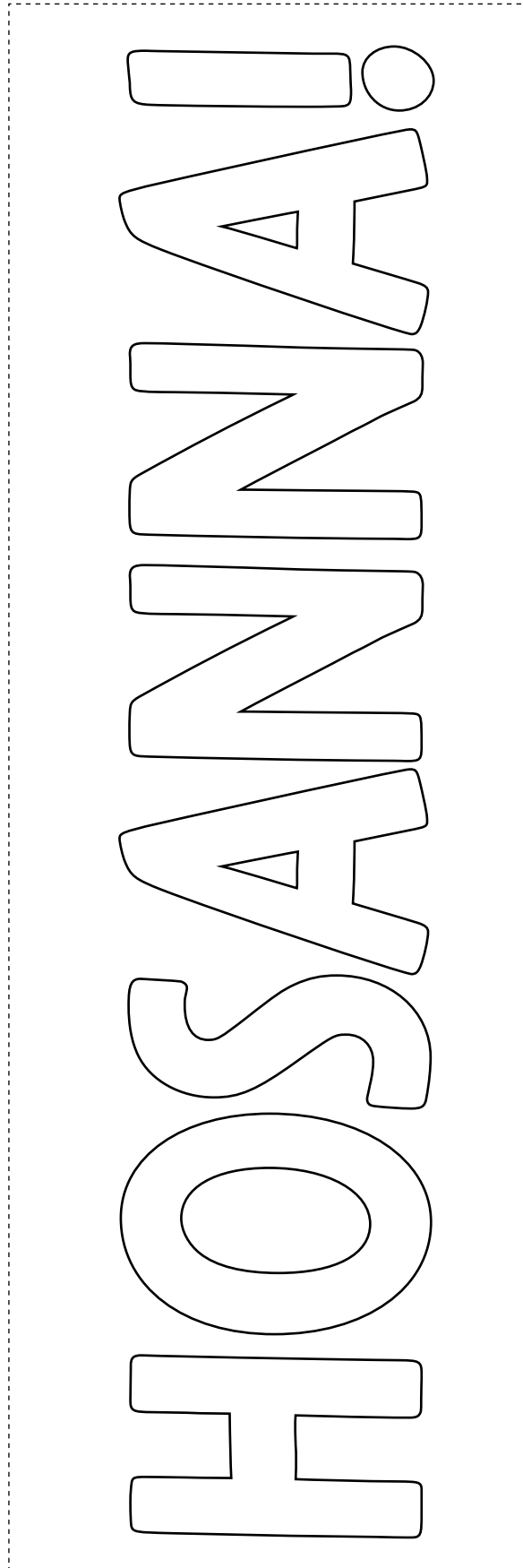


Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so you can send the Grace Sightings link, or invite them to visit [www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads](http://www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads). Remind the parents and caregivers about the story audio (see p. vii).

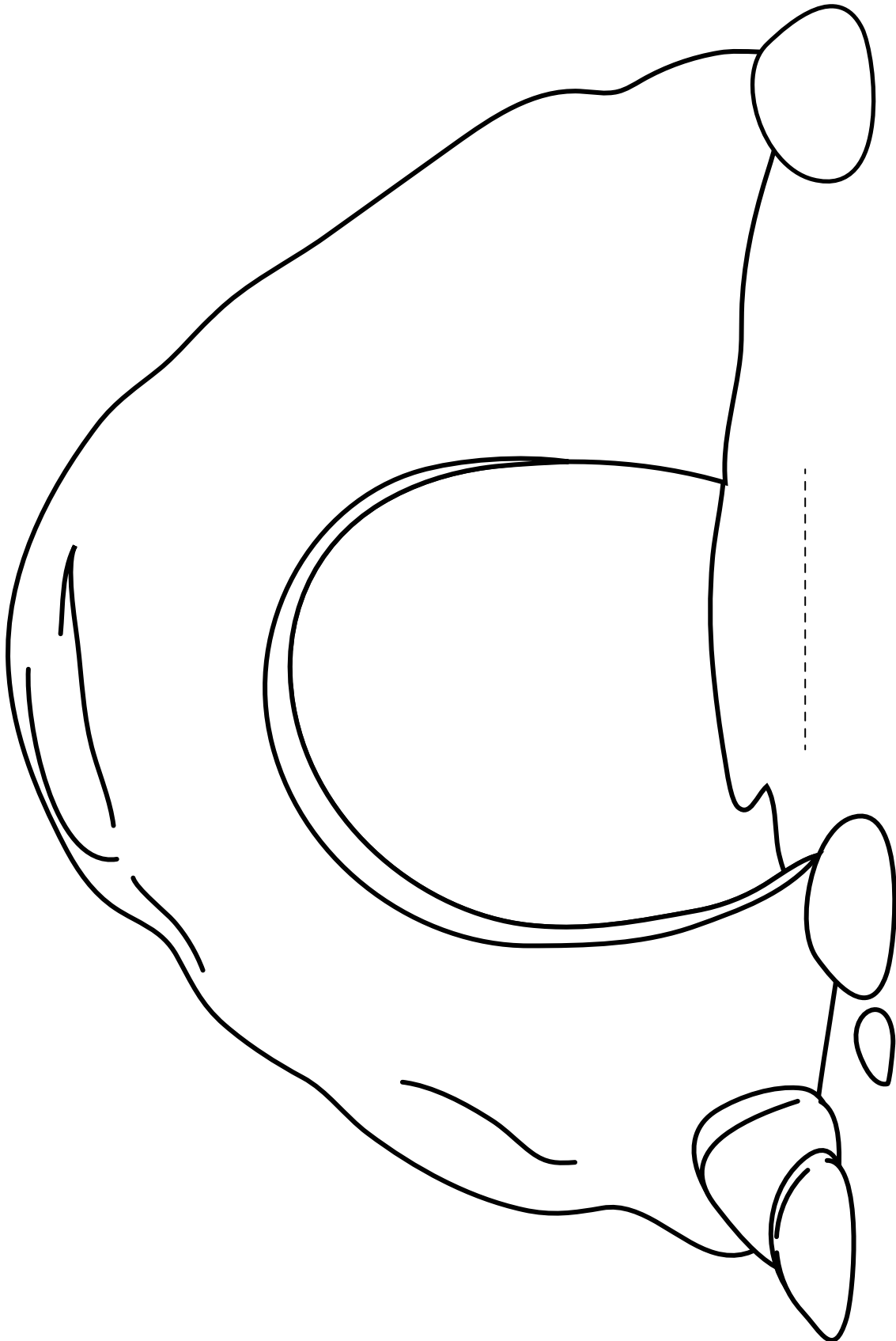




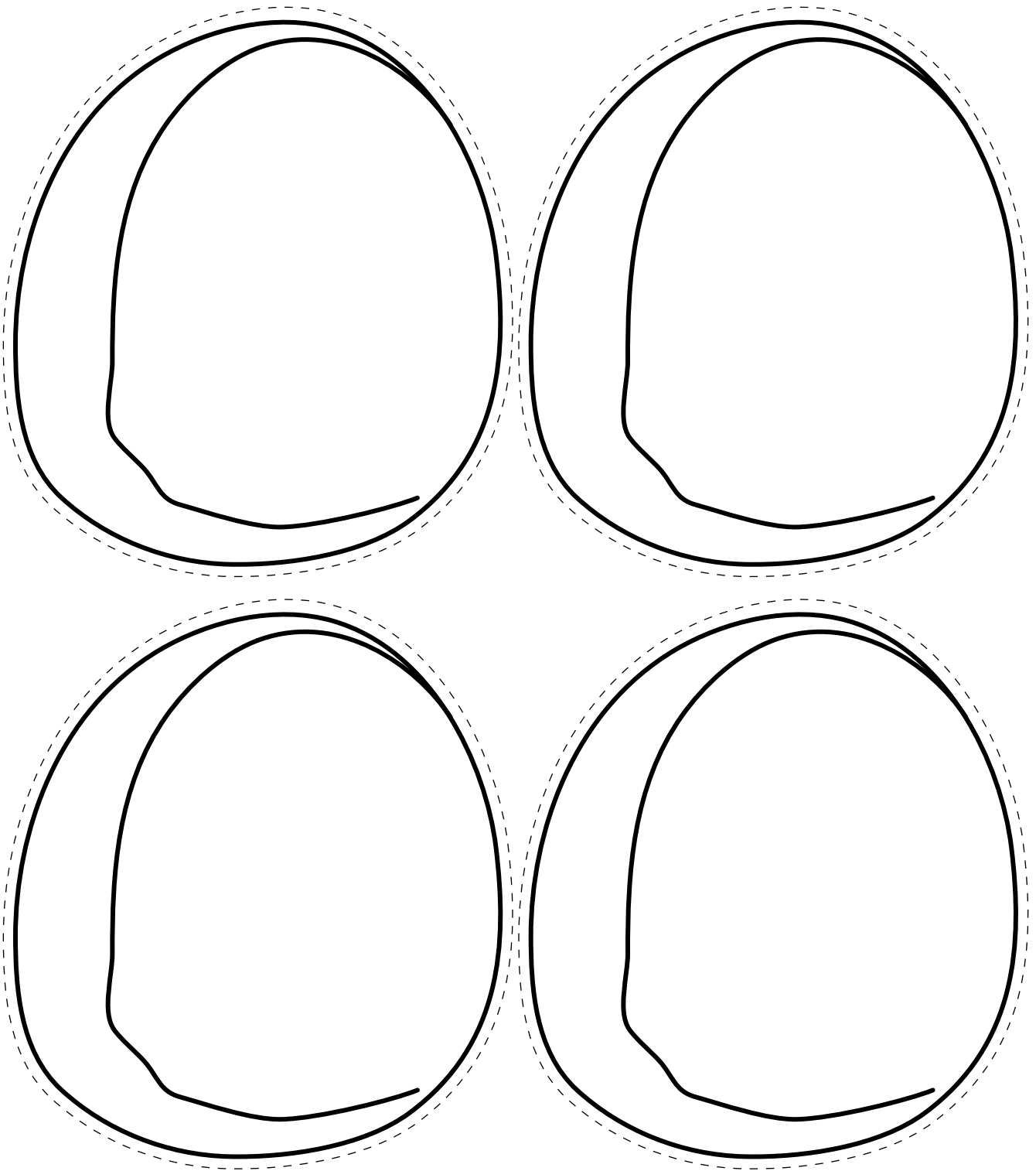














## Jesus Dies and Is Buried



It was very sad when Jesus died on the cross.  
The soldier realized that Jesus was God's son.

