

WEEK 1
LESSON GUIDE

FULL BLOOM

BIG IDEA

God sent Jesus
to save us.

BIBLE

Jesus Anointed at Bethany:
John 12:1–8; Genesis 3:1–24

ABOUT THIS WEEK

One of the best parts of walking through a garden is smelling all of the flowers as they bloom. This week, we'll hear about how Mary anointed Jesus with perfume during a dinner party. Mary's actions show us that she picked up on a really important part of Jesus' mission on earth—**God sent Jesus to save us.**

LARGE GROUP TIME

Hey there, welcome to our amazing garden that's bursting with life—*Full Bloom!* Picture this: colorful flowers stretching high as skyscrapers, grass so tall it feels like towers, and the sweet smell of nectar all around. It's like being tiny bugs in a huge, beautiful world—just like when we think about our super-awesome God.

Today's story is about someone larger than life itself. Get ready to explore this incredible Bible story about someone really, really big.

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

ACTIVITY | Name That Smell

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this activity, you will need several foods with strong scents, such as grapefruit, orange, mint, lavender, lemon, strawberries, apple, or basil. Cut the food in halves or wedges and place it on a covered tray. To play, invite two kids per round and have them each wear a blindfold. Have them smell the item at the same time (have a volunteer hold the item up to their noses). The first person to correctly identify the smell wins. If neither gets it, have them remove the blindfold to see. Repeat with new players.*
 - ✂ **ALLERGY ADVISORY:** *When preparing this activity, note it contains allergens in its original form. Be mindful of allergies and provide alternatives for the fruit, such as [scratch 'n sniff stickers](#).*
 - ✂ **ACCESSIBILITY HACK:** *Place the scents on cotton balls (squeeze the juice, place a drop of the essential oil) so that kids can smell it without being blindfolded.*
- There are so many wonderfully fragrant things to be found in a garden, from fresh strawberries to blooming roses. A lot of these natural scents are mixed into the products we use, like shampoo, lotions, and perfume or cologne. Today we'll learn about a very special bottle of perfume and how it was used.

ACTIVITY | Garden Dig

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this activity, fill a kiddie pool or large container with soil, kinetic sand, or uncooked beans*

and rice. Bury small items like toys, erasers, crayons, and other items on hand. Use multiples of each item to help the game move quickly. Using plastic gardening tools (or plastic serving spoons), kids will take turns sifting through the “dirt” to find as many items as possible until all are found. Invite two to four kids to play at a time. Hide the items again and invite more kids to play.

✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** Turn this into a relay race to make it more interesting for preteens. Call out an item the players of each team need to find and return to their team’s bucket or plastic pot before tagging in the next player.

✂ **ACCESSIBILITY HACK:** If possible, have kids go outside to any place nearby that has nature, like grass, flowers, plants, and trees. Ask them what their favorite thing there is. Encourage them to feel the textures and take in the scents.

- There are so many great things for us to discover in the garden. When we look closely, we can rescue the lost toys and tools that get left behind when we have too much fun playing.
- Today’s Bible story will remind us God saw that so many people were lost and in need of a savior, so God decided to do something about it.

POLL | Which smell is better?

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Poll your kids on the following questions by having them move to opposite sides of the room to respond to each answer choice or hold up one or two fingers to indicate their choice.
- **Which smell do you think is better?**
 - Flowers or freshly cut grass?
 - Lemons or strawberries?
 - Bubble gum or chocolate?
 - Crayons or a library book?
 - Shampoo or hand sanitizer?
- There are so many different scents out in the world. When we smell something we love, we can feel like we want to bottle it up and keep it forever.
- Some smells can connect us to our favorite memories and people, and in today’s Bible story, everyone was connected by this one wonderful smell.

SO WHAT? Why does it matter to God and to us?

SCRIPTURE | John 12:1–8 (Jesus Anointed at Bethany)

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Invite kids to sit on the ground on top of picnic (or regular) blankets as you share today’s Bible story. You may want to borrow from members of your ministry in advance. Optional: prepare images of the [Summer Palace](#) and the [Gardens of Versailles](#) to show.
- There have been lots of famous gardens throughout history, like the Summer Palace Gardens in China and the Gardens of Versailles in France. One garden comes to mind right away above them all ... the Garden of Eden.
- In the Garden of Eden, God and the first people, Adam and Eve, were able to walk through the garden together. They could take in all of the beauty of the plants and animals. But suddenly, things changed when Adam and Eve made the choice to ignore God’s rules. They had to leave this beautiful garden until someone could come bring them back one day.
 - Whenever you need help, you might look for an adult or a community helper. Thankfully, God sent someone who could help our communities and the whole world—God’s own son. His name is Jesus, and he did some amazing things.
 - Jesus came to earth to help us go back to the beautiful garden God created for us. It’s not just

about the garden, though. It's about being able to walk side-by-side with God again!

- Jesus would often visit a town called Bethany because he had some really good friends there. Lazarus, Mary, and Martha, who were brothers and sisters. In fact, they were such good friends that when Lazarus got very sick—so sick he died—Jesus then did something amazing. Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead.
- The next time Jesus came to their town, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus threw him a dinner party. Martha was serving everyone—making sure everyone had plenty to eat. Lazarus was sitting at the table with Jesus... but where was Mary? Mary was about to do something unexpected.
- **Let's read John 12:1–3.**
 - Mary pulled out a pint of pure nard, which is a very expensive perfume, and poured it on Jesus' feet. The sweet scents filling the air. It was a way for her to honor Jesus with the best she had to offer. In doing this, she showed her love and gratitude for Jesus.
 - She then started to wipe Jesus' feet with her hair. While most people could see just how much she loved Jesus, it wasn't all sunshine and roses for someone else...
- **Let's read John 12:4–8.**
 - One of Jesus' disciples, Judas, was really upset by what Mary did. He wanted the perfume to be sold and the money to be donated to people who needed it. But Judas was only thinking about himself.
 - He was known as the bag's keeper, meaning he would handle the money. Sometimes, though, Judas would help himself with the money even though it didn't belong to him.
 - Jesus knew how much Mary always wanted to be close to him. A similar thing happened at a previous dinner party where Mary chose to sit at Jesus' feet and listen to him teach the entire time.
 - Jesus wouldn't let anyone criticize what Mary did. Instead, he was grateful that Mary had given up such a precious thing, especially because he knew that he would die very soon.
- Think of Jesus as this larger-than-life gardener. He came to earth to repair the garden—our broken world—so that people could be connected to God like before.
- Jesus was changing things and rescuing people, and the disciples needed to be ready for what was next. God was ready to bring everyone's faith into *full bloom*.

BIG IDEA | God sent Jesus to save us.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Cut out the flowers in the [printable](#) provided. Gently fold the edges of each flower toward the center. Take a large bowl filled with water and place each flower into the bowl. As they absorb water, the flowers will slowly begin to unfold and "bloom." Pass the bowl around for kids to see. Consider creating more than one bowl for large groups. Hang the Big Idea flowers to dry using clothespins on a line. Check out [this tutorial](#) to see how this works.
- When these flowers bloom, they won't release a great scent, but they will show us this week's Big Idea.
- Let's say it together: **God sent Jesus to save us.**

VIDEO | Clip From "A Bug's Life"

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Show [this clip](#) (0:24–1:36) from "A Bug's Life." We always suggest viewing the clip beforehand to make sure you think it's a video that will be a good fit for your context! For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#)
 - ✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** Show [this clip](#) or [this clip](#) (starting at 0:25) from "Honey I Shrank the Kids" where the kids are lost in the grass and must escape the dangers around them.
- When you're in such a large garden, the giant plants can make it easy to get lost. A leaf or stick could block our path and we need someone to come and save us.
- Just like these ants, we can have a hard time seeing what's ahead of us. When we feel like we're lost in the

garden, we might start to wonder what to do next.

- **Have you ever felt lost before?**
- **How did it feel when someone came to save you?**
- Even if you've never been lost before, the Bible says that all of us were lost and separated from God at one point. I'm really grateful God gave us Jesus, who can save us and lead us back on track. **God sent Jesus to save us!**

ACTIVITY | Earthworm Race

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** For this activity, follow [this tutorial](#) to help kids make their own paper earthworms. You might want to precut the paper into strips in advance to save time. After drawing a face on their worms, hand out straws and show them how to blow on the paper to make their worms wiggle. Have kids race their worms across a flat surface.
 - ✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** Split your group into teams. Have teams roll one player up in a flat bedsheet. That player must wriggle their way across the room, unroll themselves, and run back to their team to help roll up the next player.
- One of the really cool things about worms is how they can take the trash we throw away and turn it into healthy, nutritious soil for plants and flowers. From that soil, our garden can bloom and be full of incredible plants and flowers!
- Jesus came into the world to do something like that, too. Jesus came to rescue us and help us live full, vibrant lives with God.
- **God sent Jesus to save us.**

SCRIPTURE | Genesis 3:1–24

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read or paraphrase this Scripture for kids. We've highlighted a few key verses you may want to read aloud if you are not reading the whole passage together.
- In the beginning, Adam and Eve lived together in the Garden of Eden with God and were good friends. This garden was the place where God created humanity. Things were good here! Adam and Eve got to spend time with God and have a great relationship.
- One day, Adam and Eve no longer lived the way God wanted them to. They wanted something that didn't belong to them, leading them to make a choice that negatively impacted their relationship with God.
 - **Read Genesis 3:1–7.** When they took the fruit from the tree God had warned them not to eat from, it showed they didn't fully trust God. What they did was an act of sin, which makes it harder to be close to God. Adam and Eve had a hard time owning up to what they did and could no longer live in the garden.
 - **Read Genesis 3:21–24.** Even though their relationship with God changed, God still cared for Adam and Eve. God made them clothes when they felt shame and helped them get ready for their new journey.
- God wasn't done with people, though. God sent someone to save us to help us get back into a place like the Garden of Eden. God sent Jesus to rescue us all and show us how to make things right with God.
- God sent Jesus to make a way for us back to God. When we believe in Jesus and put our trust in him, we can be close to God again, just like Adam and Eve were in the garden.
- **God sent Jesus to save us.**

VIDEO | Full Bloom, Episode 1

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Play this week's episode of [Grow TV](#).

NOW WHAT? *What does God want us to do about it?***REFLECTION | Garden Time With God**

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Use this time to have kids calm down and think about what they learned today. You can do this as a large group or sort kids into small groups with a leader in each group. You may choose to use an oil diffuser with fragrances like lavender, lemon, or orange during this time.
 - ✂ **ACCESSIBILITY HACK:** In activities with self-reflection, present clear, explicit directions, let them know what they're expected to do, model how to do it, and guide them at each step of the activity.
- Close your eyes and breathe deeply. Imagine you are in a garden, and you are the size of a small bug. All the blades of grass are taller than you!
- **Name one thing you smell.**
- As you think about being in this garden, turn your thoughts to God. God created everything in the garden and helped it to grow ... including us. Let's talk about some ways we can grow today.
 - **When was the last time you talked with God? What did you talk about?**
 - **Is there anything you want to say "thank you" to God for?**
 - **Is there anything you want to say "I'm sorry" to God for?**
 - **What is something you can ask God to help you with? Who else can you ask for help?**
- Always know that God is listening to you and loves spending time with you. After all, **God sent Jesus to save us** so we can spend forever together!

RESPONSE | Flowery Gifts

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give each kid a copy of the [printable](#). In the middle, have the kids write about or draw something meaningful or valuable to them that they could give to Jesus as a gift. This could be their time, a skill or talent, money, or something else. Afterward, they can color in their flowers and then place them into a basket at the front of the room to give Jesus their gifts.
- Mary wanted to honor Jesus by giving him something valuable. Each of us has something we can give to Jesus, too. It can be our way of thanking Jesus for saving us and bringing us back to how things were in God's garden.
- **What's something you could give to Jesus as a gift?**
 - **Is it a skill you have?**
 - **Can you tell people about Jesus?**
 - **Your time?**
 - **Your money?**
 - **Your trust?**
- All of these are great gifts we can give to Jesus. We give them to say, "Thanks for saving me, Jesus!" It's so special to know God loves us and **God sent Jesus to save us.**

MEMORY VERSE | 2 Peter 3:18a (NIV)

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Learn the memory verse together using any combination of the resources provided: [memory verse coloring page](#), [sign language motions](#), or choose from [this list](#) of our favorite memorization techniques!
- **"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."**

PRAYER

- God, thank you for sending Jesus to save us. Thank you for rescuing us and giving us a chance to grow again. You love us so much, even when we make mistakes. Help us to become more like Jesus. Amen.

SMALL GROUP TIME

DISCUSSION

● SCRIPTURE QUESTIONS

- **What did Mary do to show her love for Jesus?** *Mary poured expensive perfume on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair.*
- **Why was Judas upset about the perfume?** *Judas wanted to sell the perfume and steal some of the money.*
- **What did Jesus say to Judas?** *Jesus told him to leave Mary alone. He knew he would not be with them for much longer.*
- **Read Genesis 3:21. How does this verse show that God still cared for Adam and Eve, even though they had just disobeyed God?** *God gave them what they needed.*

● APPLICATION QUESTIONS

- **If you could be in a garden with God like Adam and Eve, what would you want to do together?**
- **Mary gave her very best to Jesus. What are some things you could give to Jesus? Is that your very best, or is there more?**
- **What is something you can do this week to thank God for sending Jesus to us?**

ACTIVITY | Perfume Jars

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this activity, give each kid a [terracotta pot](#), a permanent marker, paints, and paintbrushes. You could also use [baby food jars](#) and stickers. Using a permanent marker, write the Big Idea on the jar. Have the groups design their "perfume jars" however they'd like!*
 - ✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** *This week, take some time to talk with preteens about what salvation is and about their relationship with Jesus. What does "being saved" mean to them? What questions do they have about Jesus and his saving work on earth?*
- Back in Bible times, perfume was most likely stored in clay jars. Jars are great for storing valuable things, and they're also perfect for adding in a little soil and seeds to grow something wonderful!
- Let's take some time to decorate this jar to remember what Mary did in today's Bible story to show her love and thankfulness. We can do the same because **God sent Jesus to save us.**