



Faith Adventures

Easter Encounters

*Committed to URC Children Together:
enabling everyone to grow more like Jesus
together in the home, church and beyond.*

Find our other resources – Faith Adventures:
Children Together and Faith Adventures: Youth
Resource on https://bit.ly/FACT_resource

Introduction: The purpose and design of this resource

This resource is a supplement to your regular Faith Adventures: Children Together resource. Our free weekly resource provides only for one session to focus on Easter and it is impossible to cover all aspects of the events of this important season in one short session. This supplement is designed to provide some material for each part of the story – based loosely on the concept of the Stations of the Cross – and also some overarching materials for approaching the story as a whole.

This is not prescriptive in any way – it is very much a pick-and-mix resource. You may want to use some of the material in prayer stations, you may want to pick a few key characters or events from the story and focus on them, you may want to do something that takes you through the story, maybe as part of an intergenerational service. It is up to you. It is not envisaged that you will do everything in this pack – Holy Week is far too short for that!

The Faith Adventures theme for the month of March in 2024 is 'People' and so this supplementary resource focuses on the people of the Easter Story – at each stage we will encounter somebody new who was part of the story. The first section has:

- our regular “What’s in the box?” which is mainly designed for the under fives but could also be used with any age
- a prayer which is again aimed primarily at those under five
- a reflective story covering the main points of the story
- two video clips that retell the story
- some suggestions of activities and prayer
- wondering questions to use with the reflective story but also with each story in the resource

The second part of this supplementary resource has a section for each stage of the story, focusing on the people involved. In each section there will be a short story, account or poem from the point of view of the character, a short written prayer, and an activity or craft or recipe connected to the theme.

The Easter Story

Resources for experiencing, exploring and expressing the whole story

What's in the box? *Place the objects on a pathway, to depict a journey through easter with different encounters on the way. Maybe use some play figures to represent the people who encountered Jesus.*

- Perfume bottle – Mary anointing Jesus with perfume. Talk to the children and how much Mary loved Jesus and she wanted to give him something precious to show it.
- Bread and wine or glass and plate – The last supper with the disciples (explain that this is Jesus showing us a way we can remember him).
- Praying figure or praying hands - Jesus prays in Gethsemane (talk about Jesus talking to God when facing difficult times).
- Tissues – the tears of those who watch the story unfold (share with the children about how sad people were watching Jesus be arrested, tried, and then carrying the cross on the road).
- Heart – the love that people on the way had for Jesus (as Jesus journeyed on the road to Gethsemane people showed their love to him).
- Heart shape cut into two – the broken hearts of Mary and John when Jesus died on the cross (Mary and John were broken hearted as they sat while Jesus was on the cross).
- 3 Crosses (2 small and one larger) – the thieves on either side of Jesus (Jesus wasn't alone - there were thieves with him at Gethsemane, and he even had time to comfort them).
- Empty egg shell – the women who came to the empty tomb on Easter Sunday (the women went to the tomb but were amazed when it was empty).
- An image of a smile (they were so happy and they ran to share the Good News 'Jesus is Alive').
- A set of play people to act out the story or random shapes/bits you can move around to make pictures from the story as you tell it (e.g. stones, felt, twigs etc)

Colours of Easter – A prayer for younger Children

This prayer can be built up with the story or used as a single prayer. You will need a square of felt or card in the different colours. As you say each line of the prayer, lay down the square of colour or encourage the children to find the colour from a box and place it down as you pray.

Brown for the donkey and the dusty road, palm branches waving -

Jesus, we give our praise to you.

Green for the garden where Jesus prayed -

Jesus, we thank you that we can talk to you.

Blue for the water and feet being washed -

Jesus, thank you that you love and comfort us.

Red for the crown of thorns and the cross Jesus carried -

Jesus, thank you for dying to save us.

Black for the Saturday when everyone was sad and afraid -

Jesus, thank you for being with us when we are worried or lonely.

Yellow for the stone rolled away: Jesus is alive!

Jesus, help us to celebrate and share the good news of Easter.
Jesus is alive, hooray! Amen

A

Reflective Story for Holy Week

This is a reflective story led by the leader that quickly visits each part of the Easter story, including the bits that are so often missed. In the following sessions you can choose which person you want to revisit using the materials provided. Feel free to tweak it and make it shorter if needed due to your group or timings.

You will need to set up the story journey beforehand and have the box of items ready to add as you go along. It works best in an area small enough for you to easily move through the whole scene without too much fuss. The items needed are in brackets, the actions for the storyteller are in green. Where items are written in red, they are things that will be needed for the Easter Wreath craft.

Jerusalem gate (a block or box or something to represent the start of the trail, Jesus, a donkey)

Place Jesus on a donkey at the gate

This is the gate to Jerusalem. Jesus knew that his time was nearly come for his final mission. He sent his disciples ahead telling them to bring a donkey for him to ride on.

Palm Sunday – (people lining the streets with palm branches)

Move Jesus through the people and wave some of the paper branches

It was festival time in Jerusalem and people were everywhere, making their way to the temple. When they saw Jesus riding on a donkey, they waved branches and placed their coats on the floor like a carpet.

The people shouted Hosanna, Jesus is the King of the Jews. It was a happy celebration.

Anointing of feet – (Mary and Judas, a jug full of paper waterdrops)

Bring Jesus to the house and have Mary be at his feet, use the jug to wash his feet

When Jesus and his friends came to the house, they sat and rested.

Mary came to the house bringing a jug of expensive perfume.

She cracked the jar over Jesus's feet and washed them, using her hair to dry them.

Judas thought this was a waste. He said Mary should stop.

Jesus thanked Mary. She loved Jesus very much.

Last supper – (disciples, some bread and small glass of juice, paper bread shapes)

Place Jesus and the disciples in a circle or rectangle and show the bread and juice, placing a little in front of each disciple

It was Passover, the time when Jews gather to share a meal and remember when God saved them from slavery in Egypt.

This meal was going to be different.

At the end of the meal Jesus took bread and prayed over it.

He gave each disciple a piece, saying, "Eat this and remember me."

He took a glass of wine and prayed over it.

He passed the cup to each disciple saying, "Drink this and remember me."

Jesus was preparing them for the time when he would die. He said, "Every time you eat and drink this bread and wine, remember me."

The disciples didn't understand what this meant.

Gethsemane – (Jesus, a few paper trees and nothing else)

Simply place Jesus in the garden area, alone. As you say the words, cup your hands around Jesus to show how close God was to him

After the meal, Jesus and his friends went to the garden of Gethsemene.

Jesus wanted to pray. He knew tonight he would be arrested and his final mission would begin.

Jesus asked his friends to be with him, but they were so tired they fell asleep.
 Jesus felt alone.
 God in heaven came close to Jesus and Jesus came close to God.
 Jesus was scared.....Jesus cried.....Jesus prayed.

Arrest and betrayal – (Judas, soldiers, **paper chains**)

Bring Judas close to Jesus and place the paper chains around Jesus

Once Jesus had prayed, he heard people coming into the garden.
 It was his friend Judas with Roman soldiers.
 Judas had betrayed Jesus. He told the soldiers where they could find Jesus and arrest him.
 Judas did what he was meant to do. Judas kissed Jesus on the cheek.
 The soldiers took Jesus away.
 Judas felt guilt and regret.

Trial – (Pilate, Pilates Palace, bowl of water, **paper question marks**)

Place Pilate in position and Jesus in front of him, place question marks around the scene

The priests brought Jesus to the governor Pontious Pilate to be judged.
 Pilate asked Jesus many questions. He didn't see any guilt in Jesus.
 He was confused.
 Who are you? Why are you here? Is it true that you say you are the King of the Jews?
 Jesus stayed silent.
 Pilate wanted to set Jesus free, but the priests and the people shouted 'crucify him'.
 Pilate agreed to have Jesus punished and crucified.
 Pilate knew Jesus was innocent but felt he had no choice. He washed his hands.

Crown of thorns – (Herod, Herod's Palace, a crown, a crown of thorns and **paper crowns**)

Place Herod in his palace and stand Jesus in front of him. Place a crown in front of Herod and a crown of thorns in front of Jesus

Pilate sent Jesus to be judged by the ruler Herod Antipas. This was the son of Herod in the Christmas story.
 Herod was ruler in Jerusalem. He knew that people were calling Jesus, King of the Jews.
 How could there be two rulers, two kings?
 One of them needed to go.
 Herod wanted Jesus dead.

Carrying the cross – (Simon of Cyrene, a wooden cross, **paper crosses**)

Give Jesus his cross and begin to move him towards the place of crucifixion. Simon will meet him on the way

Jesus was forced to carry his cross. He carried it through the streets to the place of crucifixion.
 He carried it through the crowds.
 The people who had shouted Hosanna, now shouted 'crucify him!'
 Jesus was beaten, thirsty and tired. Jesus stumbled a few times under the heavy cross.
 The solidiers looked in the crowd for someone to carry Jesus' cross.
 They chose Simon, a Jew from Cyrene who was in Jerusalem for the Passover Festival.
 Simon carried Jesus' cross the rest of the way. Simon helped Jesus.

Road to calvary – (Veronica and the women, **strips of cloth**)

Bring the women to Jesus and use a cloth to wipe Jesus' face

Not everyone in the crowd hated Jesus. Not everyone wanted to see him dead.
 There was a women called Veronica who saw Jesus and she felt compassion for him.
 She wanted to help, she wanted to show him she cared.
 She stepped forward and used her cloth to wipe his face.
 She cared for him on his last journey.

Crucified – (soldiers, dice, sponge, a crucifix, **paper crucifixes**)

This is the second to last stop. Bring everyone to this place. Place a crucifix

When they reached the place called The Skull, they put Jesus on a cross.

The cross was lifted high for all to see.

The soldiers began to call Jesus names.

They placed a sign over his head that read: here is the king of the Jews.

They saw Jesus was thirsty and offered him a drink on a sponge.

They rolled a dice to win his clothes.

Foot of the cross – (Mary and John, a red heart, **paper chain people in pairs**)

Bring Mary and John to stand by the cross, place a red heart between them

At the cross, watching and praying was Jesus' mother, Mary.

Some of Jesus' friends were also there, including John, the one he loved.

Jesus saw his mother and spoke.

He said to Mary: here is your son.

He said to John: here is your mother.

John looked after Mary. He stood with her and cared for her like a son.

Making a way – (Two more crosses, **small paper invitations**)

Place a cross either side of Jesus' cross, place an invitation between one cross and Jesus

There were others crucified that day.

They were being punished for breaking the laws.

Near to Jesus there were two thieves being crucified.

One of them began to mock Jesus, shouting, "If you really are God, get down from your cross and save yourself."

The other thief saw who Jesus was and spoke.

"Remember me, a sinner, today Jesus."

Jesus promised the thief: today you will be with me in heaven.

This invitation is for all, not just one. All we need to do is believe.

Tomb – (Joseph, strips of cloth, a rock, **paper rocks**)

Wrap Jesus in the cloths and place him in the tomb, place the rock to seal it

Jesus died.

There was a rich man called Joseph who was a member of the council that ordered Jesus death, but he was also a secret follower and believer.

He knew that something needed to be done.

He went to Pilate and bravely asked permission to take Jesus' body for burial.

He took Jesus, wrapped him in cloths and laid him in his own tomb.

Joseph had shown love for Jesus and had courage.

Resurrection – (Two Marys, a sign saying he is risen, **lots of small signs**)

Bring the two Marys to the tomb. Remove the stone and place a sign saying "He is risen"

A few days later Mary Magdaline and some friends went to the tomb to anoint the body with spices.

When they arrived, they saw the stone had been rolled away.

An angel sat on the stone and said, "Why are you looking for Jesus here in a tomb? Jesus is not here. He is risen."

The women were amazed. They ran back to the disciples and told them what they had seen and heard.

Jesus was alive again.

Clips

The whole story of Easter as a cartoon by Saddleback Kids

https://youtu.be/4VtcF_fOoWY?si=2b9FGz13mjiqxEwM

The Easter week story of Jesus song by Saddleback Kids

https://youtu.be/Rn84AYtFUSM?si=4J5dwV18iFepdFT_

Whole Story Activity – An Easter Story Wreath

You will have noticed that in the story there were some items in each area (highlighted in red). This craft provides the children with the opportunity to revisit each area of the story and bring the items together on their own Easter Story craft. It could be stuck on a large circle/disc to create an Easter trail wreath or simply on a timeline to take home. Children can choose to use all the items for the complete story or younger children might like to just use some key ones along the way. Encourage conversation as they revisit the story together and consider using the wondering questions at this point.

When the wreaths are finished, encourage the group to tell each other the story again in pairs, remind them to share the story with others.

Game: Easter Hopscotch

It would also make for a fun version of hopscotch if you wanted to turn it into a game. Simply draw a large hopscotch on the floor and place the items from each station in each hopscotch square – invite the children to play.

Prayer – Pray along the way

Give the children small pieces of paper or post-it notes and invite them to draw or write their prayers and add them to the scene, reflecting on the different parts of the story. E.g. They might like to pray for those who feel alone and place their prayer in the garden of Gethsemane or pray for those who have to make decisions and place it in Pilate's palace.

Stations of the cross reflective prayer led by children for children by Evangelistic Brisbane

https://youtu.be/Yp8c0IV56JU?si=PM0uYS3sDy8_LL0r

Wondering

Which part of this story do you like the best and why? Which part did you not like or find uncomfortable and why?

Is there any part of the story that we could take away and still have the Easter story?

Where do we see God's plan in this story?

Palm Sunday

The people gathered in Jerusalem for Passover

Matthew 21:1-11 Palm Sunday story from Daniel the Donkey

Hi, my name is Daniel but nobody ever calls me that, usually I am just ignored. People sometimes laugh at me and say I am stubborn and slow. All they want me to do is to carry their heavy loads, bales of hay, bundles of wood for the fire and sometimes even smelly rubbish. "Load up Dan," they shout! Pushing and shoving me in all directions – well, they do say I am stubborn!

I live in a cattle stall on the outskirts of town, working in the dusty streets getting smelly and dirty. I never get to do anything special, just carrying stuff all day long. I know that some donkeys get to carry people, but not me... except, on this particular day, that was all about to change.

There I was, standing tied to a post minding my own business, when along came two men. They untied my rope and walked off with me. I didn't know what was going on, my owner just let them take me away. They put coats on my back and then, it's never happened before, there was a man on my back. No kicking or shoving or shouting; this was different.

I could see ahead of us, on the road to Jerusalem, crowds waving and shouting, 'Hosanna! Welcome to the king!' They were shouting and cheering at my rider. Palm branches were waving in the air, coats being thrown in front of me making a soft path for me to walk on. This was something amazing, I just knew it. Everyone had come to welcome my special rider, but who was he? The crowds shouted king but he was so gentle and unassuming. I have carried some heavy loads in my time but this was different. The man they called Jesus was no burden. This was the most important thing I would ever carry.

Prayer

Jesus, our King,
 we offer you the praise of our hands,
(wave hands)
 we offer you the praise of our voices,
(shout 'Hosanna!')
 we offer you the praise of our feet,
(stamp feet)
 we offer you the praise of
 our minds and our hearts.
(place hands on hearts)
 Hosanna to the Son of David!
 Amen.



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Activity – hand print palm leaf

You will need:

- Green card in different shades
- Wooden craft sticks or garden sticks
- Glue or double sided tape

Choose different shades of card. Place your hand on the card and draw around it, then cut the handprints out. You will need six handprints in total.

Start with one hand print, fingers up, to make the base of the leaf. Next lay two handprints on top with the fingers angled outwards and glue in place. Repeat with the next two handprints and then add the final handprint at the top to create the top of the palm leaf. Once the hand prints are glued together, place a stick onto the back of them to form the stem. If using crafts sticks, you may need to stick three together to make the stem long enough. You now have a palm leaf to wave.



Discussion/Wondering

- Imagine the scene. I wonder what you might see? What you might smell? What you might hear? What you might be touching?
- I wonder have you ever been in a crowd of people all cheering? What were you shouting and how did it feel?
- I wonder how Jesus was feeling as he rode into Jerusalem?
- The disciples were asked to fetch the donkey and heard the crowds shouting for a king. I wonder how they were feeling and what were they thinking?

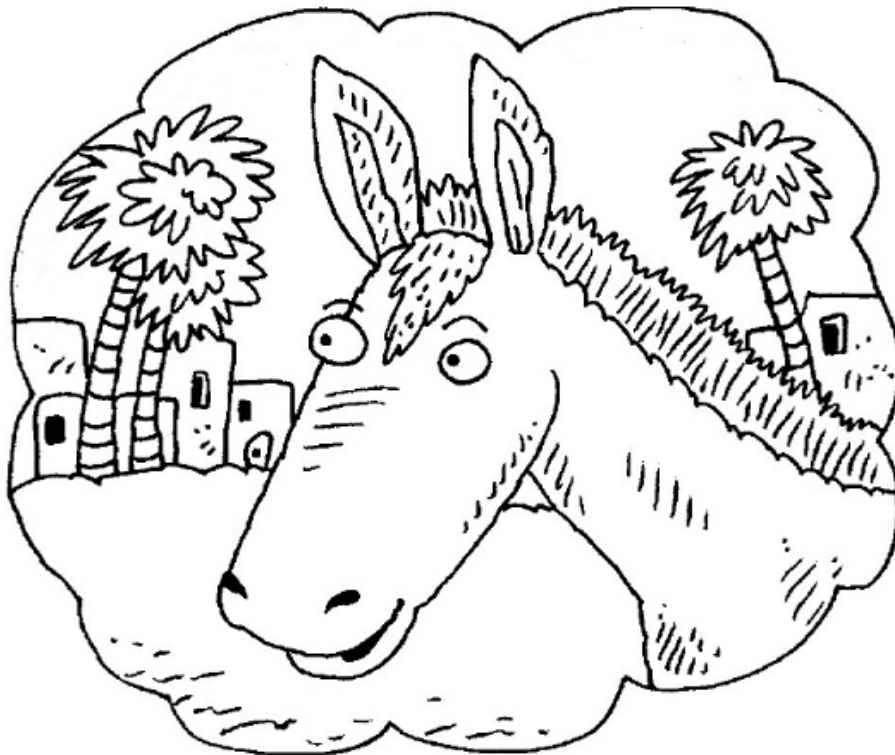


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Anointing the feet of Jesus

Mary and Judas

John 12: 1-8 Anointing of Jesus - Mary and Judas

I remember that day,
It was just before the Passover festival and my brother Lazarus and sister Martha were there.
Jesus and his friends were visiting, and Martha was serving some food.

I remember the overwhelming feeling of having to do something extra special for Jesus.
I was sitting listening to him talk, mesmerized by all he had to share with us like it was the last thing he had to say.

I got my perfume and poured it over his feet.

I remember the smell of the perfume filling every part of the room.
It was perfume I had saved. It was expensive, but I didn't care about that, Jesus was worth it.

It was the custom to wash your visitors' feet as they came into your home, but this was much more than that.

I poured the fragrance over his feet and dried it with my hair.

That was when the shouting began, Judas! The one always thinking about money.
I knew that the perfume was expensive, but he was going on about selling it and giving it to the poor.
But Jesus just raised a hand to stop him and said "Leave her alone! This perfume is for my burial.
You won't always have me with you, but there will always be the poor."

What did he mean? Fear filled my heart - was Jesus going to die soon?
I remember, I loved, and I anointed the one who loves me.
I gave him a gift more fragrant than perfume...my gift to Jesus is myself.

Activity – Reed diffusers

You will need:

- Bowl
- Small funnel
- Small bottle or vase
- 20 to 25 drops of your favourite essential oil
- 1/4 cup unscented baby oil, or unscented almond oil or jojoba oil
- 3 tablespoons surgical spirit (that is at least 90% isopropyl)
- Bamboo skewers cut to size or old diffuser reeds

(Why not ask the congregation to keep old reed diffusers for you to recycle?)

What you do:

Put 1/4 cup of unscented oil into to a small bowl.

Next measure out three tablespoons of surgical spirit and pour it into the bowl. The surgical spirit will help the scent flow up the diffuser rods better.

Carefully add 20 to 25 drops of your favourite essential oil to the bowl.

Pour the mixture into a bottle using a funnel so that the bottle is 3/4 filled with the scented oil mixture. You want a bottle that is slightly wider at the base and has a small opening at the top to minimise the evaporation of the liquid.

Depending on the size of the vase, trim the ends off the skewers or reeds with scissors so that they only stick out of the vase a 12-15cm

Place three to six wooden skewers or reeds into the bottle.

Prayer

Rub lotion into each other's hands, or your own hands if you don't want others to touch your hands.

As you rub the cream in, think of what gifts you want to offer to God this Easter season and give thanks for God's love for all. Say this short prayer whilst rubbing in the cream:

May God bless your hands, that you may always work for good and bless your heart, that you may be filled with the love of God.

Discussion/wondering

- I wonder why Mary had kept the perfume instead of using it?
- I wonder what gift we can give to Jesus?
- I wonder how other people in the room reacted to Mary anointing Jesus?
- I wonder what is the most valuable or precious thing you own and how you would feel about giving it to Jesus?

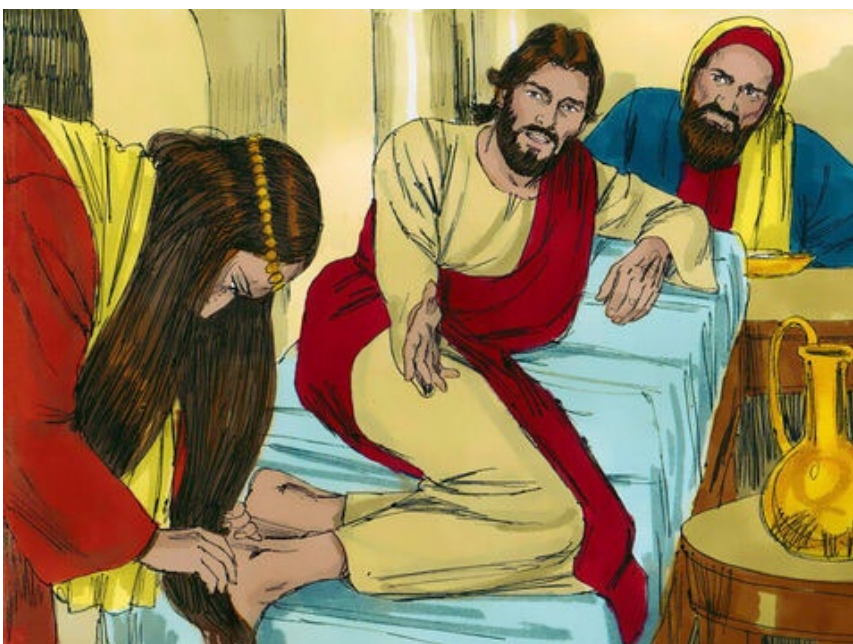


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The Last Supper

The disciples are gathered together

Matthew 26: 17-30 - The Last Supper

It was the first day of the Passover festival. We went to Jesus to ask where we should prepare our Passover meal. Jesus told us to go into the city and meet a man carrying a jar of water. Jesus said we should tell this man 'Our teacher says "My time has come! I want to eat the Passover meal with my disciples in your home."

What does he mean? What is he talking about?

We did as Jesus told us to. We prepared the meal. We all came together ready to eat. While we were eating Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me."

What does he mean? What is he talking about?

Jesus took some bread in his hands. Jesus blessed the bread, he broke it. He gave some bread to each of us. Jesus said, "Take this and eat it, this is my body."

What does he mean? What is he talking about?

Jesus picked up a cup of wine and gave thanks to God. Jesus gave the wine to each of us. Jesus said, "Take this and drink it, this is my blood, which will be poured out for many to begin the new agreement from God to his people."

What does he mean? What is he talking about?

Jesus said "I want you to know, from now on I will not drink any wine, until I drink new wine in God's kingdom."

What does he mean? What is he talking about?

Then our meal came to an end. We sang a song and went out to the Mount of Olives.

What does this all mean? What was Jesus talking about?

Prayer – A reflective prayer using grapes.

Hold the grape between your fingers. Thank you for this grape, which helps remind us of the special meal that Jesus shared with his friends, the Last Supper.

Help us to remember you Lord.

Like the vine the grape grows on, we are all interconnected, each one of us a unique part. Bring us together into a community of love and grace, just like at that special meal.

Help us to remember you Lord.

The protective skin of the grape reminds us of your protection and shelter. When we face difficulties, help us trust in you as our protector.

Help us to remember you Lord.

Bite into the grape. As we feel the skin of the grape burst and break, we remember the bread broken and shared at the last supper. Thank you that you died for us.

Help us to remember you Lord.

Taste the juice of the grape. As we taste the juiciness of the grape, we remember the wine poured out and shared at the last supper. Thank you that you died for us.

Help us to remember you Lord.

Just like the sharing of that special meal, may our lives share in your passion and generosity. May we be a source of joy, spreading the blessings that you have given us, and sharing these with everyone.

Help us to remember you Lord.

Amen.

Activity - Communion Collages

You will need: magazines or newspapers, scissors, glue, paper, felt tip pens, paints, paper cups, paper plates.

What you do: Use magazines and newspapers with a variety of pictures of food, people and symbols relating to the Last Supper.

Reflect on the themes that stand out from the Last Supper and how these relate to our own lives. Take a paper plate or cup and decorate this, using the materials provided. Draw and paint or cut out and stick images and shapes onto the chosen object, creating a collage that visually represents the Last Supper. After completing the craft, allow time to show and discuss their creations if they wish to.

Wondering questions

I wonder what your favourite meal is?

I wonder if you can think of any meals that are particularly memorable for you?

I wonder what you might have seen, felt, heard, smelt and tasted if you had been present at the last supper?

I wonder how the disciples felt when they shared this meal together with Jesus?

I wonder what the last supper means for us?



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The garden of Gethsemane

Jesus

Matthew 26: 36-46 - Jesus prays in the Garden of Gethsemane

A reflective story

You will need:

- green fabric or felt to create a story space
- wooden figures or play figures to represent Jesus and his friends
- small wooden trees or play trees and green leaves
- flowers or symbols of things growing
- something that reminds you of prayer eg. praying hands

Speak each phrase of the reflection slowly and pause for moment after each item has been placed down.

Green is a soothing colour. It's a peaceful colour, a colour that helps us to relax.

Lay the green cloth out as a story space.

Green is the colour of growth. It's the colour of grass, shrubs, and new leaves on the trees in the spring. Green is the colour of things that are growing and alive.

Place some flowers or symbols of growth onto the fabric.

Green is the colour of the leaves on the olive trees in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Place the trees and leaves in the garden.

The Garden of Gethsemane is the place where Jesus went with his friends after they had shared supper together.

Add a figure for Jesus and figures for his friends on the cloth.

Gardens are such a great place to get away and relax. We can be peaceful and let go of our troubles. Green can help us clear our minds.

Jesus went into the garden to pray. He had a lot on his mind. He needed a place of peace and quiet.

Place the praying hands or the object you have chosen in the centre of the cloth and move Jesus away from his friends.

Jesus prayed and wept. He knew that he had to face difficult things. He asked God to help him. As he prayed, the friends fell asleep.

Gently lay the friends figures down.

When he was finished praying, Jesus joined his friends and woke them. Then the Temple guards came out of the shadows and took Jesus away with them into the night.

Remove Jesus from the cloth.

His twelve friends disappeared into the darkness as well.

Remove the friends.

Prayer can give us comfort when we are troubled. Prayer can also help us to grow in our faith. You may not have a quiet garden, but you can pray anywhere, any time. Jesus will be there, and he will give you the comfort and peace you need.

Prayer - Tears!

You will need a shallow tray filled with sand.

Jesus wept as he prayed. He was worried, fearful and sad. He prayed to God to help him. I wonder have you ever felt sad? Perhaps you 'put on a brave face'? It is ok to feel sad and God is with us in our sad times.

Draw tear shapes in the sand with your finger. As you draw, talk to God about the things that make you sad and ask God to be with you.



Dear God, Please help me not to feel sad and wipe away my tears. Amen

Activity: Garden of Gethsemane

Create your own garden of Gethsemane scene.

Here are some different ideas to try:

Moulding with playdoh or plasticine,

Building with lego or construction toys

Collage using lots of different textures and materials

Or if you have a garden or green space you could go on a sensory walk.

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Discussion/Wondering

- I wonder if a friend has ever disappointed you? How did it make you feel?
- I wonder what feelings Jesus was experiencing, especially when he felt alone while his friends, the disciples, slept?
- I wonder, how do you think God feels when we are sad and sorrowful?

Betrayal and Arrest

Judas

Matthew 26: 14-16 and 47-56 – Betrayal by Judas and Arrest

Have you ever been let down by a friend? It's a horrible feeling, isn't it?

My name's Judas and I am one of the twelve disciples – or rather, I was. I felt let down, well and truly, by Jesus. All my life I'd believed God would send the promised one who would free us from oppression. When Jesus turned up, I thought he was finally here. I thought he'd gather an army and we'd be free of the beastly Romans once and for all.

Jesus wasn't a softie, as such, but the more he talked, the more I realised he was no soldier. I couldn't believe it – all his talk of peace and loving your enemy. And he kept talking about dying – that wasn't the talk of a strong leader.

I was let down, I tell you. That was the reason I did what I did. People say I did it for the money, but what do they know? Though I wasn't going to turn down thirty, I mean, thirty silver coins, was I? I'm not stupid! I promised, in return, to betray Jesus to the chief priests and the elders.

The weirdest thing was that Jesus knew. We were all there eating and drinking together and he suddenly says "One of you here will betray me - go and quickly do what you have to do." That shook me up a bit, you know. I'd expected to do it all unnoticed, but Jesus knew... and then all the rest of my friends knew too. Not only was Jesus a let-down as a friend, but he'd turn all my other friends against me too, saying things like that.

He was there in the garden when I got there with the soldiers who were going to arrest him. I had made a plan – if I greeted him like a friend, it might not look as though I had betrayed him, it might look like a coincidence and the others might not think badly of me. But the soldiers would know which man to arrest. So I went up to him and kissed him.

Then, as the soldiers stepped forward to seize him, he went without resistance. When Peter tried to defend him, he told Peter to put down his sword and even healed the soldier who had been injured. So this was what he meant by loving your enemies. I think he even still loved me in that moment.

Have you ever let a friend down? I have – big time. It's a horrible feeling, isn't it?

Prayer

Jesus, when we are let down or hurt by others,

You know what that feels like, and more.

Help us, like you, to love courageously.

You know, too, that sometimes we hurt or let down the people who love us.

Forgive us, and help us say sorry and put things right.

Help us, like you, to love courageously.

Amen

Activity – coin rubbing

You will need:

- a bag of coins
- paper – not too thick (perhaps with the outline of a coin bag drawn on)
- wax crayons

What you do:

Choose a coin. Place the paper over the coin and hold down firmly with the fingers of your non-dominant hand to each side of the coin to prevent the coin slipping around under the paper. Using the wax crayon, rub the paper fairly firmly all over on top of the coin and right to the edges of the coin. The image of the coin will appear on the paper.

Discussion/Wondering

- I wonder if you have ever let down or been let down by a friend? How was it made right, if at all?
- I wonder how Jesus felt about sharing a meal with Judas when he knew that Judas was going to betray him?
- Do you think Jesus was weak or strong?
- I wonder what the disciples said to each other or thought to themselves when Judas left the room?
- If God's plan was for Jesus to be betrayed and arrested, was Judas guilty or innocent?



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The trial

Pilate and his wife

Matthew 27:1-2, 11-26 Jesus appears before Pilate

It's not easy being the Roman governor of a province in Jewish Judaea, you know. It doesn't make me Mr Popular amongst the locals, and it's not an important enough province to buy me much status amongst my fellow Romans. But I do the best I can to keep law and order and keep everybody happy. And because I get to appoint the Jewish High Priest, at least Caiaphas and his cronies in the Jewish Sanhedrin, the decision makers and leaders of the Jewish people, back me up in dealing with the people here.

It wasn't the case with the recent hearing, though. They brought me this chap Jesus. They said he'd been stirring up trouble amongst the crowds. I'd heard of him before – in fact, the things I'd heard hadn't been that bad, mostly about him teaching and healing, feeding the hungry and hanging out with a bunch of fishermen. But the Sanhedrin had tried him and found him guilty of claiming to be God's son. They wanted him dead, a decision only I could make as governor. Jesus just stood there, just silently accepting all that was happening, wouldn't even answer my questions. My wife had told me she had dreamed he was innocent, and I didn't need much persuading – I saw nothing to justify killing him.

I was worried – I didn't want a riot on my hands, and the Jewish leaders and the High Priest were pretty insistent, but at the same time it didn't seem right what they were asking me to do. But I'm no fool – I took advantage of one of their rules. Every Passover I can release one prisoner, so I gave the crowd the choice. I could free this gentle, inoffensive man or... let's make the decision easy... I could free the most violent and aggressive murderer currently held under arrest and awaiting the death sentence. Surely they'd want Jesus released and I wouldn't have to kill what seemed to be an innocent man. Problem solved....

... or it should have been. I was not expecting them to choose to free Barabbas and to shout for Jesus to be crucified. But the people had spoken – what else could I do but sentence him to death and send him to Herod for crucifixion? I washed my hands – I knew I was doing the wrong thing, but nobody could blame me. It's not easy being the Roman governor in an occupied land.

Prayer

Jesus, I know that sometimes we take the easy path

Make excuses or try to lay responsibility at someone else's door.

We could do or say things to make a difference, to make things better,

But we don't feel brave enough.

Help us to take a stand for justice, even when it feels uncomfortable. Amen

Activity – Clay plaque

Pilate wrote a sign to put on the cross. The priests wanted him to write “This man says he is the king of the Jews” but Pilate actually wrote “King of the Jews” and refused to change it.

You will need: Air-dry clay and something to use as a stylus e.g. cocktail stick or skewer, or pencil

What you do: Roll out a piece of air-dry clay and form it into a rectangle shape. You may want to put two holes centrally in the top of the rectangle to hang it up by once it's dry. In the centre of the rectangle use your stylus to write the words “Jesus is king” or “Jesus is my king”. Decorate around the outside of the rectangle, making patterns with your stylus or drawing the outline of a crown around the words. Allow your plaque to dry, then use string to hang it up.



Wondering/Discussion

- I wonder what Pilate really thought about Jesus?
- I wonder why Jesus remained silent and didn't answer Pilate's questions?
- I wonder how you decide what to believe?
- I wonder whether peer pressure ever affects your choices or your faith?

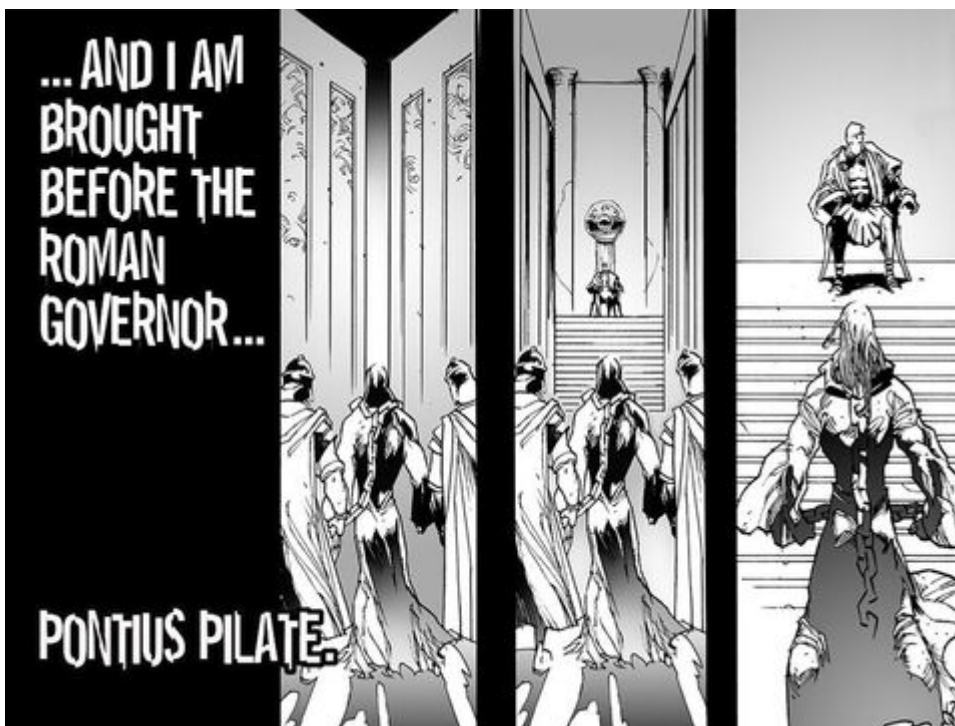


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The crown of thorns

Herod

Luke 23:6-12 and Mark 15: 16-20 Herod and the crown of thorns

Does he know who I am?

I'm aggressively angry,
I'm magnificently mad,
At this 'nobody' trickster,
This joker, this fad!

I'm increasingly irritable,
I'm furiously frustrated,
It would just take one miracle,
Then I'd be placated.

I'm cantankerously cross,
I'm wilfully wild,
I've been known for my temper,
Since I was a child.

He won't entertain me,
What is his plan?
I'm beginning to wonder,
Does he know who I am?

Prayer

Dear God,
In times of calm and times of chaos;
Help us to be more like Jesus.
In times of routine and times of uncertainty;
Help us to be more like Jesus.
In times of sadness and times of celebration;
Help us to be like Jesus
Amen

Activity: Crown of Thorns

Herod and his soldiers mocked Jesus when the chief priests and teachers of the law accused him of claiming to be king of the Jews. They sent him back to Pilate wearing a fine robe like a king, and the soldiers there beat him and put a crown of thorns on his head.

You will need:

- brown paper
- scissors
- stapler

What you do:

Cut strips of brown paper, approximately 10cm wide by 40cm long.

Cut along the length of each strip to divide it into three parts, leaving about 2cm at the end uncut. Plait the three strands of paper loosely until you reach the end, then staple to secure it. Then do the same with the next strip of paper and staple it to the first to make a longer strip. Continue until you have enough to go round a head, then staple it into a circle.

Take your scissors and make small diagonal cuts into the side of the paper at various points around the circle to create the effect of thorns. You may need to bend them out slightly. (Be careful not to tear them off).

Wondering questions

- I wonder whether Herod thought about Jesus after they met?
- I wonder whether the meeting changed him?
- In what ways would you like to be more like Jesus?
- I wonder why people like Herod felt threatened by Jesus?



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Carrying the cross

Simon of Cyrene

Matthew 27:32 Simon of Cyrene is forced to carry the cross.

"I wasn't doing anything – I was just there. I'd only just got into Jerusalem and there was a big crowd lining the road and I wanted to see what was going on so I pushed to the front. There was a man who looked very tired and weak carrying a wooden cross while Roman soldiers laughed at him and beat him.

The people around me were shouting really nasty things at him.

His knees were dirty so he had obviously fallen down and didn't look as though he could go much further.

I didn't know him, but I felt sorry for him. Maybe the soldiers saw that in my eyes, or thought that, because I wasn't joining in with the crowd, I was a friend or a follower of the man.

Whatever it was, I suddenly found myself grabbed by a soldier and pulled into the road where they took the cross off the man and made ME carry it! It was really heavy and it bruised my shoulders. The man (I found out that his name was Jesus) was relieved that he didn't have to carry that burden any more but I could tell that he felt sorry for what I was being made to do for him.

I was made to carry the cross all the way to a hill outside the city walls where I eventually laid it down. Jesus was put on the cross and left there to die. I wouldn't wish that on anybody."

Prayer:

Lord Jesus

You helped everyone who needed it.

You cured the blind and the lame and the lepers.

You have helped us and we can help you.

We can't carry your cross, but we can share your good news with our friends.

Give us the strength to be your hands, feet and voice as we help those who need it today.

Amen

Activity: Rocky Road

Jesus fell three times whilst carrying the cross from his trial to where he was crucified. This was because the cross was heavy – and the road surface was uneven making him more likely to stumble. We are going to remember the rocky road that Jesus walked by making some Rocky Road that you can share with others in your church or group.

You will need:

- 200g of digestive or Rich Tea biscuits
- 135g of butter or margarine
- 200g of cooking chocolate (milk or plain – it doesn't matter)
- 2-3 tbsp golden syrup
- 100g mini marshmallows (or chopped regular marshmallows)



- icing sugar to dust – if you want a dusty Rocky Road. (Remember how Jesus washed the feet of his disciples? That was because their feet would have been dusty after walking!)

You can also add extra ingredients to add flavour and texture such as:

- sultanas, raisins, dried cranberries or any dried fruit
- nuts
- popcorn
- honeycomb, broken into small pieces



What you do:

Take an 18cm baking tin and grease it, then line it with baking paper.

Put 200g of digestive or Rich Tea biscuits in a freezer bag and bang the bag on a table until they break into a collection of different sizes - everything between dust and 50p-sized lumps. Set aside.

Put the butter or margarine, chocolate and 2-3 tbsp golden syrup in a large saucepan and melt over a low heat stirring all the time until all (or most of) the chocolate has melted. Remove from the heat. Leave to cool – but not set.

Stir into the chocolate mixture all the added extras (dries fruit, marshmallows, nuts, etc.) until everything is completely covered.

Tip the mixture into the lined baking tin, and spread it right to the corners. Chill for at least 2 hours then dust with icing sugar and cut into 12 fingers.

Discussion/Wondering

- I wonder why the soldiers took the cross off Jesus and gave it to someone else to carry?
- I wonder how this experience affected Simon afterwards?
- I wonder why Simon was in the crowd?
- I wonder how we can do Jesus's work today?

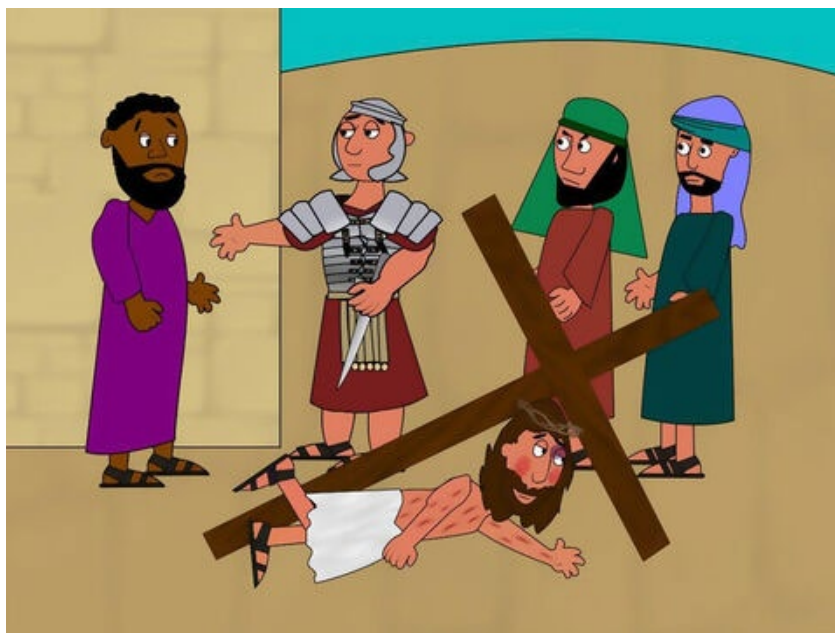


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The road to Calvary

Veronica and the women of Jerusalem

Story Some women are chatting to their grandchildren while making or eating food. (There are 4 speaking parts) C1 and C3 are children and G2 and G4 are grandmothers

C1 Tell us, Grandmother, tell us everything you remember about that Jesus man.

G2 Well I will try, it was a long time ago now.

C3 Yes do tell us. You remember, don't you nanna? Surely you do?

G4 Gosh yes, every detail, as though it were yesterday.

G2 You've always had a better memory than me! Now, where to begin?

C1 At the start (giggling from the children)

G2 Yes, thank you child.....there were many of us together that day. We were all so sad, weeping and crying. We had to hold each other up, do you remember Veronica?

G4 I do, we couldn't believe it when we heard that Jesus was going to be taken to be killed. I still hear the chants of the crowd....'Crucify him, crucify him'

C3 Why, what had he done wrong?

G2 Well that's just it, I didn't think he'd done anything wrong. In fact, many of us didn't. But not everyone felt that way.

G4 You're right, some people, like the priests and some of the people in the town, didn't like the things Jesus had been doing and saying at the time.

G2 That's right. It's shocking. Anyhow, on the day of the crucifixion Jesus was given a heavy wooden cross to carry and was made to walk with it to the spot where they were to crucify him.

G4 It was dreadful, so sad, he was in so much pain. And the soldiers.....

G2 Yes, the soldiers.....

C1 The soldiers? What about them?

G2 Oh, my child, it was dreadful. They poked Jesus, shouted horrible things at him and some people even spat on him.

G4 It was awful. I couldn't believe my friend was being taken away to die. I was sobbing so hard.

C3 Its ok, nanna. Here's a handkerchief to dry your tears.

G4 Thank you my child. It reminds me of the cloth I used to wipe my tears that day. When Jesus fell under the weight of the cross and was sweating with the effort of carrying it, I used my handkerchief to wipe the sweat from his forehead and show someone cared what was happening to him.

G2 Do you remember the words he said to us, Veronica? Those words.....

C3 Jesus spoke to you – gosh, what did he say?

G4 Women of Jerusalem don't cry for me. Cry for yourselves and for your children too.

C1 What does that mean?

G2 At the time I wasn't sure, I mean, of course I was going to cry. We had all thought Jesus was going to save us and be our king.

C3 He did though, didn't he?

G4 Yes but we didn't realise that at the time. All we could see right then was that hope was gone. He was going to be taken from us.

G2 Then he looked us right in the eyes and said, "If you act like this now when life is good, what will happen when bad times come?"

C1 Hold on! This *was* bad, wasn't it? I can't believe he said life was *good!*

G4 Ah, that's what we thought at the time too. But Jesus knew this wasn't the end - he would be resurrected. We didn't understand that at the time but I think that's what he was trying to tell us.

G2 Telling us not to be sad because something good was soon going to happen.

C3 My teacher at school said that something good maybe coming out of something bad is called hope.

C1 Yes, hope sounds about right.

G4 So although we wept and were so sad to watch Jesus suffer....

G2a few days later we heard he was alive again. God had brought him back from the dead. We knew that hope that Jesus was our king, after all.

C3 I love hearing this story.

C1 Me too.....tell us again.....who else was there?

Prayer

Prayer labyrinth

This prayer response could be an individual activity or a whole group one. For a whole group response create a large prayer labyrinth on the floor in a space large enough for a few people to wander round at the same time. Some groups have used the floor space of their main meeting area itself and moved chairs to the edges of the room. Remember that a labyrinth differs from a maze because there is only one route which leads to the centre, there are no false routes to lead you astray.

Masking tape or similar is a good way of marking out the lines, which can be as simple or as detailed as is appropriate. Slowly follow the labyrinth round: some people may find a prayer prompt sheet helpful, or instructions on the ground at certain points of the route. Focus on the weeping and sorrow felt by the women and the hope they have in Jesus.



As an individual activity a finger labyrinth may be more appropriate.

1. Start by taking deep breaths, to help bring focus and to relax.
2. Choose your dominant pointer finger to trace the path slowly and intentionally.

3. Follow along stopping at certain points along the way (perhaps place some coloured dots on the labyrinth) following the instructions to help lead you as you chat to God.
4. Once you reach the centre, take time to relax. Focus on your breathing.
5. Retrace your way out of the labyrinth at your own pace.
6. Breath, relax and consider how you are feeling when you have retraced your way out of the labyrinth.

Activity: Veronica's cloth

You will need:

- A piece of white material
- Felt tips (fabric pens if possible)

What you do:

Use the felt tips to decorate the material, taking time to write or draw images and words which depict the story. If ideas are not flowing, a suggested phrase could be.....'When we weep, Jesus dries our tears' and some images of tear drops.

Discussion/Wondering

- I wonder how you would have felt if Jesus had said those words to you? *Women of Jerusalem, don't cry for me. Cry for yourselves and for your children too.*
- I wonder why these women were crying for Jesus? I wonder who the women were? Would they have reacted differently if they understood what was going to happen next? (Resurrection)
- What might your response have been to seeing Jesus carrying that big, heavy wooden cross?

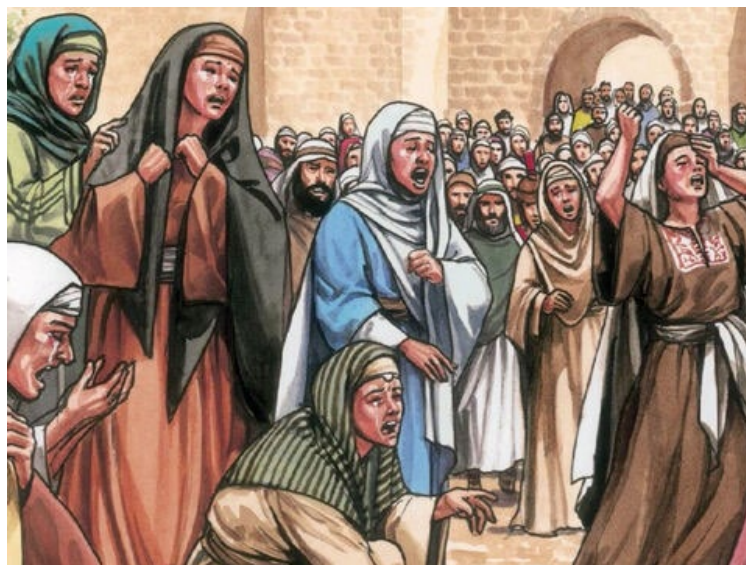


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At the foot of the cross

John and Mary, the mother of Jesus

Foot of the cross - John and Mary

Using play figures and emoji's to retell the story.



Here is Mary, and here is John. They stand at the foot of the cross, with broken hearts.



From the cross, Jesus looks at His mother with love.

He remembers the times that she comforted Him in His childhood.

Jesus knows how hard all of this is on her.

Joseph has been dead for some time now. Mary is a widow. When Jesus dies, Mary will be alone.



Jesus worries. Who will take care of her?

Jesus thinks of His mother, even when he is on the cross and speaks to her.

At the sound of his voice, Mary lifts her face to her Son.



"Here is your son," Jesus says, looking toward John.

Then Jesus adds, "Here is your mother".



Jesus loves John and knows that John will be like a son to Mary and she will be cared for.



Here is Mary, and here is John. They stand at the foot of the cross, with broken hearts.

Playdough Prayers

Mark out a cross shape on a piece of paper. Think how Jesus' friends would have felt when they saw the cross – they may have felt empty and lost as well as sad.

Use play dough to fill in the cross shape. As you place the playdough into the shape of the cross, think about people who are sad, lonely or have lost someone special. As the cross is filled, say together: **In all our sadness God comforts us.**

Activity: Box of hearts

You will need:

- a small box
- some card or felt
- a heart template



What you do:

Create a box of hearts to help recreate the story at home. Make hearts with bandages, a broken heart and a heart with hands to hug. Including different coloured hearts to reflect the different emotions.

Discussion/Wondering

- I wonder why Jesus thought John would be the best person to care for Mary?
- I wonder what the other disciples felt about John being given this to do?
- I wonder if you have ever had to look after someone who is sad?
- I wonder how we can best help people who are sad?



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The crucifixion

Two thieves crucified with Jesus

Thief 1: I was so silly stealing that bread, why, why did I do it? Oh I know why.....my children were hungry, starving really. What choice did I have. I had to do it, but then I shouldn't have done it. What else could I have done, maybe I should have asked my neighbour? Well, it's done now, no point in going over and over it is there?! (Turn head to look at Jesus) But how come **he's** here though, all I've heard is good things about this man, this man they call Jesus. They say he's said and done things to upset the priests and the pharisees, but I don't get it. He seemed to be saying only good things. I need to say something to him, I want to be with him, I feel such an urge, I must, I must say something.....Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. I feel a sense of calm and peace, he answered me, he told me I'd be with him in paradise. I can breathe.

Thief 2: I was so silly getting caught, I got sloppy, I took too many risks. How was I to know that there was someone still home, they have so much money and I so little, it seemed only right to share it (Nasty laugh) But then, I'm here, about to die, I cannot believe it. This isn't fair, I see I'm not the only one here today, here for their sins. This man Jesus, he's all I've heard people talk about. I wonder if the rumours are true, has he really raised people from the dead and healed sick people. Then he can save us to, surely. Hey, hey you, if you are so mighty and you are a messiah save yourself and us?! What's he got to do with it, Jesus didn't even have a chance to answer, and he has the audacity to shout at me, huh, a criminal, I wouldn't describe myself as that, more of a sharer of wealth (laugh) yes I like that. But I've lost my chance now, it looks as though Jesus is breathing his last. My turn soon.

Prayer

Each person will need:

- A long shoelace or similar
- 3 beads which large holes, a white one, a red one and a green one

What you do:

A prayer theme is to be used for each coloured bead. As that colour is slid onto the shoelace the following prayer prompt could be led.

Red: As we slip the red bead onto the string think quietly of the things, we want to say sorry to God for.

God of love, we are sorry for the things we have said, done and thought this week.

White: As we slip the white bead onto the string we will think quietly as we say sorry and think of a new start with God.

God of forgiveness, thank you that we can come to you no matter what we have done and that if we are truly sorry you will forgive us.

Green: As we slip the green bead onto the string we will think quietly of what a friendship with God might be like.

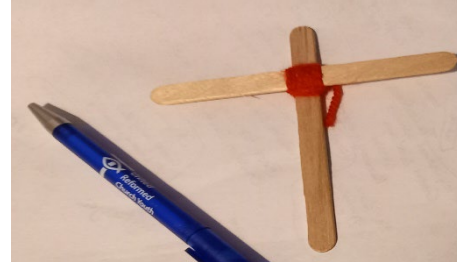
God our friend, help us to grow a good friendship with you, one which feels happy and safe.

*Thank you for taking all the things we have done and ever will do that upsets you, that we can have a new start with you. Help us build a good friendship with you.
Amen*

Activity: A simple cross

You will need:

- two lolly sticks
- a piece of wool
- pens or Sharpies



What you do:

Wrap the wool round the two sticks to make it into a cross. Secure by tying the wool or tucking it inside itself. Use the pens to decorate and write words from the story onto both sides of the cross.

Discussion/wondering

- I wonder what you might have said if you were one of the thieves?
- I wonder why these two thieves are in the story?
- If you were one of the crowd watching this happening what would you say to Jesus?
- Jesus said the thief would be with him in paradise, what do those words mean to you?



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It is finished

Soldiers crucifying Jesus and gambling for his clothes

Matthew 27: 35-37, 45-51, 54 – The death of Jesus

I won it – a lovely purple robe, with just a few tiny blood stains on it. They'll wash out, I'm sure – and if not, they'll just be like a badge of honour. The gods were really smiling on me when I rolled those dice, that's for sure.

We get to do that whenever we crucify someone, we divide their clothes up between us gambling for them if there's anything a bit special. It's usually a few rags the prisoner was wearing, rather than this rather luxurious kingly robe. He doesn't look like a king, this man hanging on the cross, although the sign above his head says "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews".

He said he was a bit thirsty, so I dunked a sponge in some cheap wine, stuck it on the end of my spear and held it up to his lips, but he had the sense not to drink that foul-tasting muck. I think being thirsty was the least of his troubles. Some people were saying he was the son of God, though if he were, you'd have thought he'd be safe from this painful and very public punishment, wouldn't you?

It usually takes ages for them to die on cross, but this one was quick – just three hours. He cried out to God and then that was it. Or rather, that wasn't it. It was so so strange, what happened next. Coincidence? I don't know. The sky went black – and I mean utterly black, like the darkest night. And then the ground began to shake. As that Jesus breathed his last breath, there was an earthquake which split the rocks and I heard later that it was so strong that the curtain in the Jerusalem temple was torn in half! It was the scariest thing – and I'm not easily scared.

You could even believe the things they said about him were true!

Prayer

Sometimes it's hard to believe.

Sometimes we miss every reminder, even though your power and your love are all around.

The wonder of creation points to you, creator God.

Our care one another points to you, loving Jesus.

Your comfort and encouragement surrounds us and fills us, Holy Spirit.

Forgive us when we take you for granted or forget you,

Help us see you in all we do, wherever we go. Amen.

Activity: Scratch cards

You will need:

- Coloured pencil crayons, felt tips or paints
- paper
- black wax crayon
- stylus (could be a cocktail stick, skewer or sharp pencil to scrape wax away)

or

- pre-made scraper board and stylus

What you do:

Use coloured pencil crayons, felt tips or paint to fill the piece of paper with colour. As you do, think of all the good gifts God has given us, including the gift of Jesus. Think of the beauty and colour of creation, your amazing body, the people who make our lives better, the skills and talents you've been given, the love of Jesus and the promise of life with Jesus for ever.

Next use the black wax crayon to cover everything with a layer of black. This reminds us that Jesus died and the sky went black. Think about the things that spoil our relationship with God, the temptation to do things that are not God's way, the things that distract us from putting God first or encourage us to ignore God.

Finally, use the stylus to draw or write on the paper by scratching away the black wax and letting the colours shine through. This reminds us that the temple curtain was split and that Jesus had to die in order to stop things coming between us and God's love. What could you write or draw in response to that?

Discussion/wondering

- I wonder if this experience changed the way the soldiers thought or acted after that?
- All four gospel writers tell this story – some details are the same and some are different. I wonder why?
- I wonder why God lets sad things happen?
- I wonder what it's like to experience an earthquake?

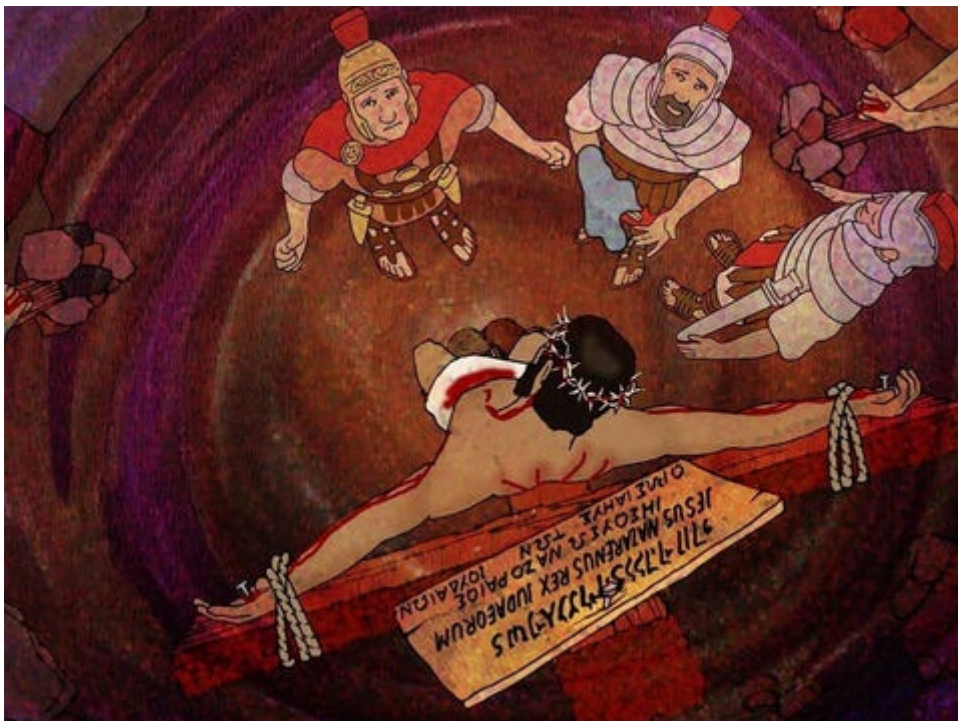


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Laid in the tomb

Joseph of Arimathea

Matthew 27: 57-60 Joseph of Arimathea

Have you heard the phrase “You can’t take it with you”? It means that, it doesn’t matter how much money, or how many things, you have – when you die it all gets left behind. We know this – and so did Joseph of Arimathea. Joseph is mentioned in all four of the Gospels.

In the Gospels of Mark and Luke we are told that he was an important member of the Council in Jerusalem and did not agree with what was happening to Jesus. We know that Joseph was a follower of Jesus. We don’t know how that came to be – maybe he’d heard Jesus preaching somewhere or seen him perform a miracle, or maybe he just felt that there was something different about Jesus and followed him to find out more.

What we do know is that, when Jesus died on the cross, Joseph gave up the only thing that would be his after he died – the place where he was to be buried – so that Jesus could rest in peace.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus

We pray that when we someone in need

We will do what we can to help them

Even if that means giving something up that we were saving for ourselves.

Amen.

Activity: waiting for new life

Jesus was put into a grave and a stone was rolled in front of the entrance to protect his body. We know that, three days later, when the women came to the tomb, the stone was rolled away and Jesus was not there because he had risen from the dead.

You will need:

Small plant pots

Potting compost

Some plant seeds (beans work well)

What you do: ‘Bury’ a seed in some potting compost, making sure that you cover the seed well. Lightly water the compost and take it home. Put it on a window sill. And wait...

Discussion/Wondering

- I wonder why Joseph offered his family tomb for Jesus to be buried in?
- I wonder what happened during the three days Jesus was in the tomb?
- I wonder what you would be prepared to give up for a friend?
- I wonder what you would be prepared to give up for Jesus?

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The Resurrection

The Marys

Luke 24: 1-11 - Women at the tomb

(Written as an interview, with Mary's answers to questions about what happened on the Sunday morning.)

There wasn't anyone there! I'm not sure what else to tell you.

And of course I'm happy to go over it again – though I'm not wild about you calling this 'my story', it's what happened.

We'd prepared everything on Friday night, so we could be ready to leave as soon as the sun came up. We had cloths, water, spices and strips of linen packed neatly in bags to help us get him ready for being buried. Everyone's feelings were weirdly mixed; sadness and worry, frustration and fear, no one could quite believe that things had ended like this. It was risky, going back to the tomb, but we couldn't just leave him there!

The morning felt subdued, like it was still recovering from too much drama. Though maybe that was just us. We didn't really chat like we normally would on morning walks to fetch water or go visiting. It didn't feel like the time for small talk. We weren't looking forward to it – but we loved him and it needed to be done.

When we arrived, the tomb was empty and two angels told us we shouldn't be looking for him with the dead. I think that's pretty clear!

No. Nobody asked us to do this but I suppose it is always assumed that somebody will.

No. Nobody packed our bags for us.

No. We weren't followed – on the way or the way back but I'm sure the angels who spoke to us knew exactly where we planned to go.

Yes I am Mary – but the other one. We don't find it confusing at all – we've been friends for years.

Of course I'm happy to answer your questions but there's nothing else to add, it's really very simple:

We went to the tomb.

We were told he wasn't there.

We were told he wasn't dead.

We came straight here to tell you.
Is there anything else you need to know?

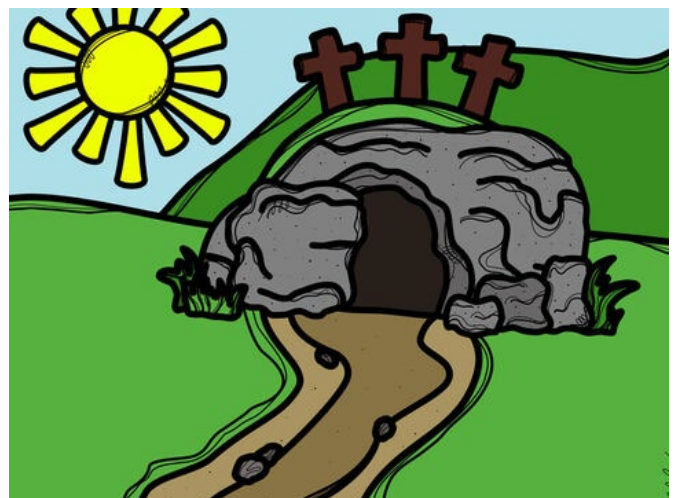


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Prayer

Jesus, it's an amazing story.
 Like the people who were there, help us love you.
 Like the people who were there, help us look for you.
 Like the people who were there, help us trust you.
 Like the people who were there, help us celebrate,
 That you are alive and always with us,
 Just like you promised.
 Amen.

Activity: Scented Herb bags

The herbs and spices remind us of the important job the women knew was ahead of them, cleaning Jesus' body ready for burial. They couldn't do any preparations as soon as Jesus had died because the Sabbath started when the sun went down on the Friday evening. After that, no one was allowed to do any work. That is why they got up so early on the Sunday morning.



You will need:

- Circles or squares of material
- Scissors
- Ribbon or wool
- Dried herbs, lavender or spices (Fresh herbs also work well but mean that the bags will not last as long)

What you do:

Each person will need a piece of material and a piece of ribbon or wool. Lay out a selection of dried herbs and spices - as well as fresh herbs if you decide to use them. Each person can choose their own combination of herbs and spices to place on their material then gather the material up around the contents and tie with the wool or ribbon. Be careful not to overfill as this will make it difficult to tie the herb bag securely

Discussion/Wondering questions

- It isn't always easy to wait, what is the hardest thing you've ever had to wait for?
- I wonder what the women thought would happen next?
- How will you celebrate that Jesus is alive?
- Who will you share the good news with today?



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