

47. Fulfilment



BIBLE STORY / REFERENCE

Matthew 27:11-54

Jesus dies on the cross



AIMS

To help the children understand why Jesus' death on the cross is so important to Christians, and to help them consider what that means for them.

Jesus was crucified, and he died. This was what God had sent him to do. His death took the penalty for sin and provided the way for people to know God.



PREP FOR LEADERS

Read through the Bible passage for this session and reflect:

- What are some of the reasons why Jesus' death is so significant?
 - How could you explain its importance to the children?
- Take some time to pray for your group.



GAMES / INTRO ACTIVITIES

Choose one or more of the following activities to introduce today's theme:

► **Bridge The Gap**

You will need: two ropes

Lay the ropes down in the middle of the hall, parallel to one another with a small gap between them. Get the children to line up along one of the ropes. Explain that when you give the signal, they have to cross the gap without stepping in between the ropes. Once they have done this, move the ropes slightly further apart and let them try again. Any child who steps in the gap has to sit out. Continue to increase the distance between the ropes after each crossing and keep going until you have a winner.

Point out that in the end all of them stepped in the gap because it got too wide. Sin creates a gap between us and God and it is so wide that none of us can cross it by ourselves, but God provided a solution by sending Jesus.

► **Get Rid Of Your Sins Game**

You will need: pieces of paper (A4 or A5 size), pens, timer

Give the children lots of pieces of paper and get them to write an example of a sin/ something that people do wrong on each one. You could ask for some suggestions to help those who are not sure to get started, also drawing out the fact that sin includes not only what we consider major things such as murder or stealing, but also things that seem smaller such as unkind words or disobedience. If the children have been part of the group for a while you could remind them of the definition of sin given in One Big Story

(continued overleaf)

Session 13, and that ultimately it is saying no to God. It doesn't matter if the same sin is written on multiple pieces of paper.

Once they have finished writing, get them to crumple the paper into balls. Divide the children into two groups and divide the balls of paper so that each group has an equal amount. Position each group on one side of the room with a line down the middle.

Whether these sins seem big or small, none of them are good, so the challenge is to try to get rid of them.

Set a timer for a minute or two minutes and tell the children that their task is to get rid of the sins on their side of the room by throwing them to the other side.

When the time is up, see which team has the least balls of paper on their side. If you have time you could even up the number of pieces of paper and let them try again.

At the end of the game you could point out that no-one really won the game because no side was completely clear of the sins. No matter how much effort you made to get rid of them it was impossible. It's the same in life. None of our efforts to be good or try to get rid of our sins are good enough. We can't fix it by ourselves, but God provided a solution to this in sending Jesus.



▶ Jesus' Crucifixion

You will need: nine plastic Easter eggs filled with the items listed below. You can print the question mark and the speech bubble from additional document: Items for eggs. Cut out the two speech bubbles and glue them together so that Jesus' enemies' words are on one side and the centurion's

words are on the other. If you are unable to find any of the other items, you could use pictures instead. The plastic eggs can normally be found in shops such as Poundland in the run-up to Easter.

1. Small piece of bread, and grape
2. Flower
3. Silver coins
4. Small piece of rope or chain
5. Question mark
6. Purple material and piece of thorny branch
7. Nails
8. Speech bubble
9. Stone

Before the children arrive, hide the eggs around the room. You may want to attach stickers to them with numbers 1-9 to ensure that they will be opened in the correct order to tell the story.

Explain to the children that you have hidden eggs around the room, each containing an item relating to the part of the Bible you will be looking at today. Get them to go and find the eggs but tell them not to open them yet.

Once they have found all the eggs, gather the children together and get them to open the eggs one at a time as you tell the story. If you have children who are familiar with the Easter Story, you could try to get them to work out the link between the objects and the story for themselves. The first four eggs contain items to recap on last week's lesson so more of the children should be familiar with this part of the story.

1. Last time we heard about Jesus having the special meal with his friends. He gave them bread and wine. Can you remember what he said about them? He said the bread represented his body being given, and the wine represented his blood being

poured out. He knew that he was going to die, and he was pointing ahead to what was about to happen.

2. After the meal, Jesus and his friends went out to the garden, and Jesus spent time praying to God.

3. Judas, one of Jesus' disciples, had already agreed to betray him to his enemies, and he was going to receive money if he led them to Jesus at a time when he was not surrounded by a crowd.

4. So, after Jesus had finished praying, Judas arrived with some men who arrested Jesus and took him away.

5. Jesus was taken and put on trial. First, he was taken to the High Priest, and eventually he was brought before Pilate who was the Roman Governor. He had the final decision to make about what would happen to Jesus. Pilate asked questions and people came and told lies about Jesus, but Jesus didn't say anything to defend himself. Pilate wasn't sure what to do. He didn't think Jesus had done anything wrong, so he decided to ask the crowd a question and let them make the choice. During the Passover celebrations there was a custom that one prisoner could be freed and the crowd could choose who it would be, so Pilate gave the crowd the choice to free Jesus or to free Barabbas who was known for being a violent criminal. He was sure the crowd would choose to free Jesus, but the religious leaders and Jesus' enemies persuaded the crowd to do what they wanted, and the crowd ended up shouting for Barabbas to be freed and for Jesus to be crucified. Eventually Pilate gave in and did what the crowd wanted.

6. He handed Jesus over to the soldiers and they whipped him

and beat him. Then they started to make fun of him. Because he had said he was a king, they put a purple robe on him, and they made a crown out of thorn branches and put it on his head. They bowed down to him and mocked him, calling out "Hail, King of the Jews." Some of them also hit him on the head with a stick and spat in his face. They treated him really horribly. When they had finally had enough of making fun of him, they took off the purple robe, put his own clothes back on him and led him off to be crucified.

7. They made Jesus carry his own cross, though someone had to help him because he was so weak by this point. Everyone walked outside the city to the place where the crucifixions were done. There were three people being crucified that day - Jesus and two thieves, one on either side. As Jesus was being nailed to the cross, he prayed and asked God to forgive the soldiers for what they were doing.

8. Lots of people came to watch the crucifixion. Many of Jesus' enemies came and made fun of him as he was hanging on the cross. They said, "If you really are the Son of God, why don't you come down from there and save yourself?" The priests and teachers of the law mocked him too. There were also many people who loved Jesus and who were heartbroken to see what was happening to him.

About noon, the sky went dark although it was the middle of the day. Jesus cried out to God, saying, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" Later, he cried out, "It is finished!" - he had finished the work God had sent him to do. Then he gave up his spirit to God, and he died.

As the centurion, the Roman

soldier who was in charge of the crucifixion, saw what had happened, he said, "This man really was the Son of God." Once Jesus was dead, everyone started to go away, thinking about what had happened, but some of the women who were Jesus' friends waited to see what would happen to his body.

9. A man called Joseph asked Pilate for permission to bury Jesus' body and this was granted, so he took Jesus' body to a tomb he owned. It was like a cave carved out of rock. Jesus' body was put inside and a huge stone was rolled across the entrance to seal it. The women saw where Jesus' body was taken and then they went home because it was almost time for the Sabbath, the day of rest. They planned to come back once the Sabbath was over, with spices and perfumes to put on Jesus' body.

That's where we're going to stop in the story today, and it sounds like the end of Jesus' story, but it's not! The part of the story we have been thinking about today is difficult, but important. Next time we'll think about how the story continues, and it becomes much happier!



REFLECT & RESPOND

► Reflection

You will need: four large sheets of paper labelled: Jesus' enemies, Jesus' friends, Crowd, and Centurion, pens or pencils, post-it notes (optional)

Get the children to imagine what it would have been like for the different groups/ people to witness Jesus' crucifixion. What would they have been thinking and how would they have been

feeling?

You could give them some time to talk about this together, then let them draw or write their responses.

Have four sheets of paper around the room, labelled:

- Jesus' enemies
- Jesus' friends
- Crowd
- Centurion

If you have a small-medium group, you could allow the children to move round the room, going to each sheet in turn and writing or drawing their responses directly onto the sheets of paper. If you have a large group, you may want to give them post-it notes to write or draw on and then let them stick those onto the sheets once they are finished.

These events caused lots of different thoughts and emotions for people who were there, but they also have a big impact on people today.

Christians remember these events on the Friday before Easter, which we call Good Friday. It doesn't sound like what happened that day was very good, but Christians believe that Jesus' death was part of God's plan.

Refer back to Romans 3:23-25a (which were included in Session 41) to explain this (See Session 41 additional document: Romans 3)

"Everyone has sinned and fallen short of God's glorious standard, and all need to be made right with God by his grace, which is a free gift. They need to be made free from sin through Jesus Christ. God sent him to die in our place to take away our sins. We receive forgiveness through faith in the blood of Jesus' death."

Christians believe that Jesus' death was to make a way that

those who follow him can be right with God, that they can be forgiven, and that they can know God and be close to him.

If you have time, you could see if the children have any questions about what they have been hearing.

► Prayer

You will need: large sheet of paper labelled "People today", pens or pencils, post-it notes (optional)

Give the children a few moments to write or draw their own response (as in the reflection above). It could be a prayer, a question, something about how Jesus dying on the cross makes them feel, or something about what it means to Christians.

Once they have done this, lead the children in prayer, thanking Jesus for his sacrifice.

► Miracle Maker Video Clip

You will need: equipment to show video

You could use a clip from the film "The Miracle Maker" to recap the story, or as an alternative way of telling it. (This was also included in One Big Story Session 20.)

The section covering Jesus' crucifixion runs from 1:10:07 - 1:13:26. (It is also available on YouTube here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=88vJ5A_oLRM)



ADDITIONAL IDEAS

► Easter Cross Craft

You will need: cross outlines and pictures printed from <https://craftingthewordofgod.com/2016/03/25/easter-picture-cross/> coloured pens or pencils, glue sticks, scissors

This is a craft that the children could make over Sessions 45-48 as they explore the Easter Story. Each week they can colour the corresponding picture(s) to add to their cross. By the end of the four weeks they will have an Easter decoration to take home which will remind them of the story.

For this session, they should add pictures B and C.