



## PALM SUNDAY

### MEETING AIM

To reflect on the highs and lows of following Jesus.

### BIBLE PASSAGE

Luke 19:28-44

### BACKGROUND

These sessions are designed for you to do online in a group video call (on something like Facetime or Zoom). Make sure you have parental permission to do this, as well as following your church's safeguarding procedure.

It might seem strange to be exploring the Easter story in August, but there are advantages to this strangeness! It allows young people to encounter the story in all its fulness (at Eastertime, parts of the story are missed – you might even jump from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday without ever hearing about Good Friday). In this session, people cheer Jesus, but the Pharisees threaten him. How much is our spiritual journey one of celebration and difficulty?

### JOINING THE SESSION 5 MINS

As people join you online, ask them to share what they have been doing during the past seven days. Go on to think about celebrations: has anyone been part of a victory parade, or seen one on television? What was it like? Did they feel safe as part of the crowd, or was it unnerving?

### INTRO ACTIVITY 10 MINS

**You will need:** pictures of donkeys, horses, zebras and ponies

Before the session, search for different pictures of donkeys, horses, zebras and ponies. Show these to the young people (print them out or share your screen). Challenge the young people to decide whether they are donkeys, horses, zebras and ponies. Do they know the difference?

### BIBLE EXPLORATION 10 MINS

**You will need:** Bibles; newspaper; scissors and sticky tape

Make sure everyone has newspaper, scissors and sticky tape. Show the group how to roll a sheet of newspaper into a tube and secure with sticky tape. Roll another sheet around that tube and secure that with tape too. Continue with two more sheets. Make some cuts down halfway down the tube. The young people should then be able to pull the inside of the roll upwards to create a much longer tube that looks like a palm branch.

Read Luke 19:28-44 out to the group (or ask a confident reader to do so), allocating parts to the group as you go along, so that they can act out the story as you go, as best they can on your video calling software. Everyone should wave their palm branches as Jesus rides into Jerusalem. They can shout phrases praising God for Jesus.

Tell the story again, but swap the parts around. Stop the action at different points and ask the various characters what they are thinking and why they are doing what they're doing. Stop after verses 31, 36, 38 and 41.

### CHATTING TOGETHER 5 MINS

Ask the group these questions, making sure everyone has the chance to contribute:

- Who in the story do identify with most?
- What do you make of the way Jesus entered Jerusalem? What words would you use to describe it?
- Why did the Pharisees tell Jesus to "rebuke his disciples"?
- Read verses 41 to 44. What do you think Jesus is talking about here?
- What does this whole story tell you about Jesus?

### CREATIVE RESPONSE 10 MINS

**You will need:** large sheet of paper; marker pens

Ask the group to come up with times in their lives when they have celebrated Jesus and their relationship with him. This could have been at a festival such as Soul Survivor, at a youth group session or at home in their room. Write

these down on one half of the paper.

Now ask the group to think about the times when following Jesus has been challenging. When have people like the Pharisees in the Bible story challenged their faith? Write these down in another colour on the other side of the paper.

Break the group into pairs or threes (as your video calling software allows, or work as a whole group, if you don't have many young people), and ask them to create some short dramas from the examples they have written down. Give them some time to practise and then encourage them to perform them to the whole group. After everyone has performed, ask the group how they might take their celebrations into the rest of their lives. How can they confront the challenges of others?

### PRAYER 5 MINS

**You will need:** palm branches from 'Bible exploration'; felt-tip pens; joyful worship music and the mans to play it

Make sure everyone has their newspaper branch and a felt-tip pen. Ask the young people to write down on the 'leaves' anything they want to talk to God about in response to what they have discovered today. This could be something about challenges to their faith, words of praise to Jesus or thanks to God for sending Jesus. Have a time of silence where the group can bring these things to God.

Play the worship music and encourage the group to join in, singing and perhaps waving their palm branches (if they don't feel too self-conscious!). After a song (or however long your group are happy to sing), say a prayer of thanks to God for sending Jesus to be our king. Ask him to help us when people act like the Pharisees and demand that we be quiet about our faith.

### ALEX TAYLOR

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## THE LAST SUPPER

### MEETING AIM

To explore the symbolism of the Last Supper.

### BIBLE PASSAGE

Luke 22:7-23

### BACKGROUND

These sessions are designed for you to do online in a group video call (on something like Facetime or Zoom). Make sure you have parental permission to do this, as well as following your church's safeguarding procedure.

If you have grown up in church, Communion or Eucharist (or whatever your tradition calls this) can seem a familiar thing. This session should help your group (and you) to understand some of the depth of meaning of what Jesus does here. The symbolism echoes back to the Passover, a landmark event in the story of the people of God and what Jesus does here could have been inflammatory to his enemies.

### JOINING THE SESSION 5 MINS

As people join you online, ask them to share what they have been doing during the past seven days. Ask the group to think about a time when someone has done something controversial - what did they do in response? What did they say?

### INTRO ACTIVITY 10 MINS

**You will need:** internet access; concordances and study Bibles; Prince of Egypt and the means to play it; pens and paper  
Challenge the group to find out all they can about Moses, the Exodus and the first Passover. You could do this by searching the internet, looking through concordances and other Bible study guides – you could even watch the relevant clips from the Prince of Egypt!

After a few minutes (don't spend too long on this, otherwise it'll turn into a school lesson), share what you have found out. Try to draw out that God rescued his people from slavery, that he commanded them to celebrate this event through the Passover festival and that the festival was central to the Jews'

view of who they were and how God loved them.

If you have time, ask if the young people have any stories that are central to their lives? If could be a story of their birth or an important event. Alternatively, it could be the story of their faith.

### BIBLE EXPLORATION 10 MINS

**You will need:** Bibles; flat breads; grape juice; horseradish; Romaine lettuce; charoset (grated apple mixed with cinnamon and walnuts), roasted lamb bone (or a picture of one); hard-boiled egg; parsley; salt water; paper cups and plates  
Set out all the elements of the Passover meal and briefly explain what they would have meant to Jesus and his disciples as they came to celebrate the festival:

- **Flat bread:** bread without yeast, bread made quickly as the Hebrews had to leave Egypt in a hurry.
- **Horseradish and Romaine lettuce:** bitter herbs symbolising the bitterness of slavery.
- **Charoset:** represents the mortar used by the Hebrews to build in Egypt.
- **Egg:** symbolises the pre-festival offering made in the temple.
- **Parsley:** represents the back-breaking work done by the Hebrews.
- Salt water: the tears of the Hebrews.

Read Luke 22:7-23, making sure all the elements of the Passover meal are in shot. Re-enact what Jesus does with the flatbread and wine (grape juice). Remind the group that the disciples had been together for around three years by this point. Ask the young people how they would have reacted when Jesus used these very potent symbols of the Jewish story to refer to himself. Do they think the disciples would have understood what Jesus was saying about himself?

Then ask the group what the disciples would have thought when Jesus said someone at the table would betray him. After three years, do you think they would suspect who it might be?

### CHATTING TOGETHER 5 MINS

Ask the group these questions, making sure everyone has the chance to contribute:

- What do you think Jesus is trying to say when he took the bread and wine?
- If you were one of the disciples, would you have understood what was going on? Why? Why not?
- Why did Jesus use symbols of the Passover to describe what was going to happen?
- What does this whole story tell you about Jesus?

### CREATIVE RESPONSE 10 MINS

**You will need:** cracker recipe; ingredients; one or two toppings; access to oven; clean-up and cover-up equipment  
Before the session, search for an appropriate cracker recipe on the internet. Send it to the group and ask them to get all the necessary ingredients (you might need to deliver these to them, if they can't get hold of them themselves).

Have a go at making crackers. As you make them, take the chance to chat to the young people about the story you have explored and what they have discovered.

Once the crackers are baked, eat them with any toppings you have. You will need to risk assess this activity.

### PRAYER 5 MINS

**You will need:** grape juice and flat breads

Make sure everyone has a cup of grape juice and flat bread or cracker. Read out Luke 22:17-20, with the young people eating and drinking when Jesus' words indicate it. As they eat and drink, ask them to chat with Jesus about his sacrifice and this reminder of the significance of what he did.

(Depending on your church tradition, you might need to make it clear that you are not formally celebrating Communion. If your church is happy with a more informal celebration, then continue as you are.)

### ALEX TAYLOR

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## GOOD FRIDAY

### MEETING AIM

To explore the story of Jesus' death.

### BIBLE PASSAGE

Luke 22:47-23:56

### BACKGROUND

These sessions are designed for you to do online in a group video call (eg Facetime or Zoom). Make sure you have parental permission to do this, as well as following your church's safeguarding procedure.

You might have some in the group for whom the theme of death is very personal. However, most will find it difficult to relate. We tend to hide death and it may be late into life before we face the death of a close relative. Be aware of those in your group for whom this is not the case.

### JOINING THE SESSION 5 MINS

As people join you online, ask them to share what they have been doing during the past seven days. Ask: have you ever been accused of something you didn't do? How did it make you feel?

### INTRO ACTIVITY 10 MINS

**You will need:** equipment for your chosen games; prizes; list of forfeits

Play some games where there is a cost related to losing. If the young person succeeds send them a prize. If not, give them a forfeit. The young person must accept the challenge themselves; you must not demand that they take part. The choice here is important.

### BIBLE EXPLORATION 10 MINS

**You will need:** materials to make props, Bibles

Create a news report of the events surrounding the death of Jesus. Get young people to make signs for the news station, microphones and even dress up the characters interviewed. Perform the following sketch on your video calling software; encourage the group to read the Bible passage too.

**Anchor:** Welcome to JNN, the Jerusalem News Network. The only way to stay

in touch with what's happening in your Promised Land. We're getting reports of an incident involving Jesus, the preacher from Galilee. Let's go to our reporter, Ben.

**Ben:** I'm here with Simeon, a Temple Guard. What happened last night?

Simeon: Repeating the words as if he's memorised them. I can categorically deny that there was an arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane.

**Ben:** So, there was an arrest? Jesus from Galilee?

**Simeon:** Again, as if memorised. There is no truth in the rumour that Judas, one of Jesus' followers led the Temple Guards to arrest him.

**Ben:** What about reports that someone was injured?

**Simeon:** Again, as if memorised. No one left that Garden injured... Now surprised. And that's the strangest thing, one guy did have his ear cut off but then, it was almost like a miracle, he was fine! Serious again. But of course, none of that happened.

**Ben:** There you have it. The authorities as open and clear as usual.

**Anchor:** Thank you. Now to our royal reporter, Nic, for an update.

**Nic:** I'm here at Herod's residence in the city. The Galilean known as Jesus was brought to Herod earlier. It looks like Herod, having heard of Jesus miracles, wanted to see something magical for himself.

**Anchor:** It seems things are getting quite noisy in Jerusalem. Let's return to Ben for the latest. Ben?

**Ben:** Chaotic scenes here. Governor Pilate was being asked to charge Jesus with sedition as Jesus was claiming to be the King of the Jews. However, he couldn't find any evidence for this. The crowd got agitated. They began to demand Pilate find Jesus guilty. Then they demanded that he release Barabbas, a known revolutionary and murderer. Things were getting rowdy. I think Pilate thought there could be a riot, so he released Barabbas and charged Jesus. The teacher from Galilee is now being led away to be crucified. I'm actually in a state of shock, is this justice?

**Anchor:** Well, there you have it. The Passover celebrations have been tinged with this apparent tragedy of injustice. Were the crowd stirred up by the priests who have been after Jesus for a while?

### CHATTING TOGETHER 5 MINS

Ask the group these questions, giving everyone the chance to contribute:

- What surprises you about the story of Jesus' trial and death?
- Why do you think this is such an important story for many people?
- What do you want to say to Jesus?

### CREATIVE RESPONSE 10 MINS

Use this meditation to enable a quiet, personal response:

Imagine you are watching the procession of Jesus being led to be crucified.

You see Simon of Cyrene. He carries the cross. Jesus is too weak to carry it.

You see people who have travelled with Jesus from Galilee, his followers. They thought Jesus was something special, yet here he is. A condemned criminal.

You see the thieves crucified next to Jesus. They were guilty of their crimes.

You see the priests from the temple. They have been upset with what Jesus has been saying and doing.

You see a centurion, who despite carrying out the punishment believes Jesus to be a righteous man.

You see the women who have followed Jesus. They are clearly upset. They cry and weep for their teacher.

Where do you place yourself in this scene? How do you feel?

Give the group time and space to reflect silently. Explain that there is no need to respond out loud, unless they want to.

### PRAYER 5 MINS

We all have dark moments. When we remember the events leading up to the cross and the crucifixion of Jesus, we know that he has been through dark moments too. Use the following prayer to close.

"Our Father, we face lots of difficulties and pain in our lives. Give us the strength to cope. Walk with us. Bring us safely out of the dark and into your light. Amen."

**DARREN HILL**

tells stories at [thecreativeminimalist.com](http://thecreativeminimalist.com).



## EASTER SUNDAY

### MEETING AIM

To think about how people encountered the risen Jesus.

### BIBLE PASSAGE

Luke 24:1–12

### BACKGROUND

These sessions are designed for you to do online in a group video call (on something like Facetime or Zoom). Make sure you have parental permission to do this, as well as following your church's safeguarding procedure.

After the sadness of Good Friday, we often think about that first Easter Sunday being a happy time. And it was, but it must have also been a confusing time too! This session, we will explore this confusion and use it to help our group start to make sense of the climax of the most important story in history.

### JOINING THE SESSION 5 MINS

As people join you online, ask them to share what they have been doing during the past seven days. Ask what is the most amazing thing they have heard or seen since they last met.

### INTRO ACTIVITY 10 MINS

**You will need:** pots; compost; seeds; water

Jesus' resurrection signifies a new start and a growing seed is a visual representation of that. Make sure everyone has pots, some compost and seeds (you may need to deliver these before the session). Get them to plant the seeds and then water them. Explain you need to plant, water and watch, to see the new growth.

### BIBLE EXPLORATION 10 MINS

**You will need:** Bibles; pens; paper; art materials

Ask a confident reader to read the passage. Make sure everyone can see the Bible text and encourage the group to reread the passage to get to know exactly what happens.

Explain that you are either going to rewrite the passage or create a comic strip from a first-person perspective (so the story comes from the viewpoint of one of the characters).

Tell the story from the perspective of Mary Magdalene, one of the other women or Peter. Depending on the biblical knowledge of your group you could let them use the other accounts of the resurrection from Matthew, Mark and John. However, you don't want to get into any deep discussion about the chronology of the events. This is about how the people involved felt.

As the group write or draw, explain that they are to focus on what the person sees as they go and arrive at the tomb. How do they feel, both on the journey, when they get there and after? What do they think, again before, during and after: although they see the empty tomb, do they believe and understand? Finally, they should think through the implications of Jesus not being there. What does a living Jesus mean for them and the world?

Once the young people have written their stories ask for volunteers to read them out / show them. There should be no criticism of the style or level of writing or artwork, but encourage discussion on what they have written concerning the feelings of the narrator to their story.

### CHATTING TOGETHER 5 MINS

Ask the group these questions, making sure everyone has the chance to contribute:

How would you have felt if you had seen Jesus' empty tomb?

What does Jesus' empty tomb mean to you?

### CREATIVE RESPONSE 10 MINS

**You will need:** large piece of paper and marker pens (or use the whiteboard facility on your video app, if it has one)

Explain that you are going to have a critical discussion and debate. There are no wrong or right answers, the aim is to explore how we and others have responded to today's Bible passage.

Divide your paper into four sections. In the first section write 'Liars'. Explain

that it has been said that Mary and the other disciples made up what happened. The religious leaders claimed that the disciples had stolen Jesus' body.

In the second section write 'Lunatics'. Explain that it is possible that Mary and the disciples were so upset with Jesus' death, they thought they saw him.

In the third section write 'Legend'. Explain that here there are bits and pieces of truth. However, over time the story was elaborated, embellished and a man who had died was now resurrected.

In the final section write 'Lord'. Explain that it might be just as the Bible tells us. Jesus was alive. What Mary and the other disciples saw was what happened.

Ask for the group to feedback on each of the sections. What do they think of the explanation of each 'L'? One thing to encourage the group to think about during the discussion is why. Why would they lie, why would they be lunatics, why would a legend be created and why should there be a Lord?

There is no need to ask for a verbal response, however leave the group with the question: which 'L' do you believe is right?

### PRAYER 5 MINS

**You will need:** stones large enough to write on; marker pens

When the women arrived at the tomb, the stone had been rolled away. This was the beginning of a new stage in people's relationship with Jesus. Explain that prayer, though often seen by people as a shopping list for God, it is more about developing our relationship. The more we talk to God, the more we change and do things.

Make sure each group member has a stone. Explain that they should write a prayer on it. The prayer isn't about something they want, but about something they will do in their relationship. It could be a promise, or a praise phrase they will use. Encourage the young people to keep the stone somewhere they can see it

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