

SP301

Age 11-14

Easter

## Bible Verses:

The accounts of the crucifixion and resurrection in all four gospels - essential background reading, particularly for the activities that involve piecing together evidence. Also 1 Corinthians 15:1-8, 12-14, 17-19; Exodus 12:1-42; Psalm 103:8-12;

**To understand the significance of Easter at the heart of the Christian faith.**

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## Leader's notes

Unlike any other major religion, Christianity stakes its credibility on a single historical event. If you can disprove Jesus' death and resurrection, you can discount Christianity. Over the years many people have attempted to assemble the evidence to do just this. All of them have failed and many have come to faith in Jesus themselves as a result.

And yet, there are many misconceptions about the Christian Easter story. There is good hard historical evidence that a man called Jesus was executed by the Romans about 2000 years ago, and that his followers were soon claiming that he had risen from the dead. These claims were strong enough for thousands to join the followers, and for most if not all of the original disciples to face torture and death rather than go back on their story. If we accept the Gospels as historically reliable documents (and in terms of the age of the documents and the number of copies that have survived, any serious historian would have to accept them as excellent historical sources), then the simplest explanation for these historical events is that Jesus did precisely what he said he was going to do - to die and then be raised from the dead three days later. If we accept that he did this, then we also have to accept his explanation as to why he would be able to do so - that he was and is the Son of God in human form.

Many young people regard the story of Jesus as being something along the lines of a fairy tale - a story they were told as children but which bears no relation to real life today or to anything that actually happened. Your group may never have thought of Jesus as a real person in history, or the events of the gospel as things that really happened. They need to understand that not only are they genuine events, but that the entire Christian faith depends on the fact that those events really did take place. Once we have considered the evidence for this, it provides a great reassurance - we have a faith that isn't dependent on how we feel on any particular day, and it doesn't depend on a vague notion of spirituality that cannot be measured. Our faith rests on a firm bedrock of historical fact. These things happened, and because they happened we can be sure that we are saved.

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## Hot Cross Bunnies

Warming Up

10 mins

 Game

An Easter-themed variation on the old favourite chubby bunnies.

Two or more players compete against each other, taking it in turns to put a hot cross bun (or part of a hot cross bun, unless your buns are very small) in their mouth and say 'Hot cross chubby bunnies'.

The challenge is to get as much food in your mouth as possible while still retaining the ability to speak coherently and not either spitting the food out or being sick.

For those who don't know, the original version of the game is played with marshmallows - you might want to break up the buns into suitably sized chunks beforehand.

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### ***Equipment***

A large number of hot cross buns (cold, not toasted) and a bucket.

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## **Easter News! - A Sketch about 'Easter'**

Getting Started

10 mins

 Sketch

Two leaders or young people should perform the sketch, then all discuss the questions shown at the bottom of the PDF.

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### ***Equipment***


Script (see PDF)

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## **Who Said That? Part 2**

Digging In

15 mins

 Bible Study

Read [Luke 23:32-49](#) with the group. Go through the passage a second time, holding up cards to indicate everything that anybody (other than Jesus) says to or about Jesus. Ask the young people to decide if each comment is for or against Jesus. You should have one card for each of the following comments:

the rulers in v35

the soldiers in v37

the written notice in v38

the first criminal in v39

the second criminal in v40-42

the centurian in v47

Ask the group why they think Jesus provoked such different responses.

Point out that the people mocking Jesus seem to doubt his ability to do anything about his situation, and to think that he is nothing special. The people who are more positive towards him seem to

recognise that, even when nailed to a cross, there is something special about Jesus (see vv40-42, or v47 for example). The centurion was likely to be somebody who had seen a lot of crucifixions, so his comment shows that there was something remarkable about Jesus' death.

Ask the group if they can see God's comment in all this. You may have to point out vv44-45. It's remarkable for the sky to go black just because someone has died, but the seemingly irrelevant detail of a torn curtain is even more significant. Explain that the curtain of the temple separated the 'holy of holies' from the rest of the temple. The curtain symbolised the barrier that our sin creates between us and God, and nobody was allowed through the curtain apart from the high priest, and him only once a year. God's comment on Jesus' death is the tearing of the curtain.

If you can arrange to have large (and unwanted) old curtain hanging somewhere in the room, invite members of the group to try to tear it as it hangs. If you don't have any old curtains, an old sheet or blanket would do, but make sure that it is something that won't tear too easily, and which can be securely hung up somewhere in your meeting room. Even if the young people succeed in tearing the curtain, they will probably agree that it was a tough job, and they will probably have torn it from the bottom up. [Mark 15:38](#) records the additional detail that the curtain was torn from top to bottom. Point out that if the curtain had been torn by people, the tear would almost certainly have been from bottom to top. The tearing of the curtain is another comment from God on what Jesus' death has achieved - the problem of our sin cutting us off from God has been dealt with, so God tears up the symbolic barrier.

**The Point:** Draw these threads together: Different people have different responses to Jesus; some people recognise that Jesus was a righteous man who had done nothing wrong, and who had power even after his own death; God recognised Jesus death as the solution to the problem of human sin.

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## Equipment


Bibles, cue cards (PDF/PowerPoint)

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## Roll Away the Stones

Response

5 mins

 Memory Verse

Read Luke 23:43

*Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise".*

Write a word on each empty toilet roll tube.

Get the group to repeat the memory verse as you roll away the 'stones' (cardboard tubes) one by one.

The Point: To encourage young people to learn the Bible.

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## Equipment

Several inner tubes from empty toilet rolls.

