20. Easter

BIBLE STORY / REFERENCE

Matthew 26:36-56, Matthew 27:11-56, Matthew 28:1-10, John 3:16

Jesus dies on the cross, but rises again on the third day

AIMS

To help the children understand the events of the Easter Story and to reflect on their significance for our lives today

Jesus was arrested and crucified, but his death on the cross was not the end of the story. He rose to life, and he promises forgiveness and eternal life for those who trust in him.

PREP FOR LEADERS

Read through the Bible passages for this session and reflect:

- Why are Jesus' death and resurrection important for us today?
- Think through what they mean to you and how you can best communicate that to the children.

Take some time to pray for your group.

GAMES / INTRO ACTIVITIES

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

Egg Game

Teach the children actions associated with different kinds of eggs as follows:

Runny egg - run around the room

Scrambled egg - spin round

Poached egg - put their arms out to the side and pretend they are floating in water

Fried egg - lie down

Hard boiled egg - stand up straight and freeze

Egg and soldiers - march around like a soldier

Chocolate egg - rub their tummy and say, "Mmmm..."

Once the children have got used to the actions, call them out in a random order, gradually getting faster, and see if they can keep up. This game is just for fun and to let them run off some energy.

Egg Hunt

You will need: plastic Easter eggs (filled in advance with slips from additional document: Egg Hunt Slips)

Hide plastic eggs around the room before the children arrive - each containing an Easter fact, joke or question. (If the school will allow you, you could include a small chocolate Easter egg along with the slip of paper, but do check with the school first and be aware of any allergies.

(continued overleaf)

Make sure you have enough for each child.)

Divide the children into teams and get each team to hunt for a particular colour of egg and see which team can find all of their eggs first.

Once they have found them give them a few minutes to talk about the things inside/tell each other the jokes/answer the questions etc.

Egg and Spoon Race

You will need: plastic or chocolate eggs, spoons

Divide the children into teams and give each team an egg and a spoon. (Use a plastic egg or a chocolate egg rather than a real one!) Get them to run a relay race with each child in turn placing the egg onto their spoon and going to the other side of the hall and back. If the egg falls off their spoon they have to pick it up and continue from the place where they dropped it. The first team to complete the race wins.

Easter Verse Hunt

You will need: John 3:16 egg printouts (see additional document: Easter Verse Hunt) cut into pieces and hidden around the room

Print out the eggs with John 3:16 on them, cut each egg into six or seven pieces and hide the pieces around the room before the children arrive. (There are six different colours of egg in the document so you can have up to six teams.)

Divide the children into small teams and get each team to hunt for the pieces of a particular colour. Their aim is to be the first team to find all the pieces and assemble their egg so that they can read the Bible verse.

EXPLORING THE BIBLE

Recap

Last week we began thinking about Easter and Jesus telling his friends he was going to die, as a sacrifice so that people's sins could be forgiven. Today we're going to think about that a bit more.

Choose one of the following methods to tell the story.

Easter Story

You will need: printed pictures or equipment to display images on PowerPoint

Show children pictures, either printed out or on PowerPoint to go through the Easter story. Links to pictures from http://www.bricktestament.com are provided for each section of the story, and suggestions for alternative images from http://freebibleimages.org are listed at the end of this section.

Picture 1: **Last time we talked about the special meal that Jesus and his friends shared together. Jesus broke some bread and passed it round for his disciples to eat.** (See if the children can remember what Jesus said - "This is my body which is broken for you.")

Picture 2: **Then he took some wine and gave it to them to drink, saying, "This is my blood which will be poured out for you." Jesus was saying that through his death, many people would be forgiven for the things they have done wrong.**

Picture 3: **After the meal, Jesus and his disciples went out into a garden. Jesus went off by himself for a while to pray to God. He was upset and troubled because he knew what was going to happen next and he knew it was going to be really difficult and painful, but he also knew he had to go through with it because it was an important part of God's plan.**

Picture 4: **After Jesus finished praying he went back to join his disciples. Then some men came to arrest him. They were led by Judas, one of Jesus' close friends who had betrayed him to the people who hated him.**

Picture 5: **Jesus was tied up and taken away. His disciples were scared and so they ran away.**

Picture 6: **Jesus was taken and put on trial first before the High Priest and then before Pilate who was the Roman Governor. Jesus hadn't done anything wrong, but people were angry because he had said that he was from God and some of them came and told lies about Jesus to try to get him into trouble. Pilate couldn't see any reason for Jesus to be killed but he decided to let the crowd make the choice. It was during the Passover celebration and the tradition was that one prisoner could be freed at that time of year, any prisoner chosen by the crowd. Pilate was sure that the crowd would choose to free Jesus, but his enemies turned the crowd against him and they shouted for Jesus to die and someone else to be freed instead.**

Picture 7: **Jesus was handed over to the soldiers who had him whipped and beaten. They made fun of him by putting a crown of thorns on his head and bowing down to him, pretending to worship him as king. Some of them hit him and spat on him and treated him really badly. Then it was time for him to be crucified. They made Jesus carry his own cross to the place where he would be killed, but because he**

was so weak from having been beaten a man called Simon had to help him.

Picture 8: **When they reached the place, Jesus was nailed to the cross by his hands and feet. There were two thieves being crucified as well. A huge crowd came to watch. Some of them were Jesus' friends and were really upset as they saw what happened; others were Jesus' enemies and they made fun of him, telling him to come down and save himself if he was really the Son of God. As Jesus hung on the cross the sky went dark across the whole land even though it was the middle of the day. After three more hours, he called out "It is finished." He had completed the task God had given him to do. He gave up his spirit to God and he died.**

Picture 9: **Jesus' body was taken down from the cross and buried in a tomb. It was like a cave carved out of a rock with a stone that rolled across the entrance. Some women who were Jesus' friends watched where his body was taken. They wanted to take oils and spices to put on his body, but it was time for the Sabbath, their day of rest, and so they had to go home and wait until the Sabbath was over.**

Picture 10: **Early on the Sunday morning, the women returned to the tomb. As they walked they wondered how they were going to move the stone away.**

Picture 11: **But when they got there, they got a surprise - the stone was already rolled away, and the tomb was open!**

Picture 12: **Then an angel appeared and told them that Jesus was alive. He had risen from the dead! The women were very confused and frightened. They didn't know whether to believe the angel's message. They went to find Jesus' disciples to see if they knew what was going on.**

Picture 13: **Later that day, they got to see for themselves that the angel's message was true. Jesus appeared and they saw him for themselves. They got to touch the wounds in his hands that had been made by the nails and they saw that it wasn't a ghost. It was really him. He was alive! This is what Christians celebrate on Easter Sunday. We believe that Jesus died on the cross but he rose again. He showed that his power is stronger than the power of death. Christians believe that Jesus is still alive today, that we don't worship someone who is dead but someone who is alive forever.**

Show the children John 3:16. You could look it up in a Bible or, if you used PowerPoint to display the images for the story you could add it as a final slide. If you used the Easter Verse Hunt activity earlier, you can refer back to this.

This verse sums up what Christians believe - that God sent Jesus to earth to take the punishment for all the wrong things in the world so that we can be forgiven, and that he rose to life again and he promises life that goes on forever for everyone who puts their trust in him.

Last term in One Big Story, we thought about the problem of sin and how that led to death. Jesus was God's solution to that problem - he came to sort it out and to deal with sin and death forever.

Alternative images:

Slides 7 and 9 from http://freebibleimages.org/photos/last-supper/

Slides 3, 12 and 20 from http://freebibleimages.org/photos/jesus-gethsemane/

Slide 1 from http://freebibleimages.org/photos/jesus-pilate/

Slide 7 from http://freebibleimages.org/photos/jesus-crucified/

Slides 8 and 17 from http://freebibleimages.org/photos/jesus-dies/

Slides 1, 2, 3 and 15 from http://freebibleimages.org/photos/jesus-alive/

Story using props

You will need: props or pictures to place around the room as detailed below

Another way to tell the story is to have props around the room and to move round with the children, stopping at each prop to tell the next part of the story. You could use the script above along with props as follows: bread and wine, garden, silver coins, bowl of water, crown of thorns, cross, tomb, folded cloth. (A few of these may need to be pictures rather than the item itself.)

Miracle Maker Video Clip

You will need: equipment to show video

An alternative method of telling the story is to use a clip from the film "The Miracle Maker". 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)

The clip does not include the Resurrection story, so you could follow it up by reading Matthew 28:1-10 from the Bible, or using images as detailed in sections 9 -13 above.

REFLECT & RESPOND

Questions

You may want to give the

children the chance to ask any questions they have after hearing this story.

Reflection

You will need: a parachute, folded sheet

Get the children to stand round the parachute, holding onto the edge. Then get them to lift it up and pull it down behind them, so that everyone is sitting under the parachute. Have the sheet in the middle to represent Jesus' body and help the children to reflect on the fact that Jesus had died and his body was in the tomb.

What would it have been like for Jesus' friends and followers to witness his death?

Why was it part of God's plan for Jesus to die? (You can refer back to some of the things you talked about in the last session.)

What difference does it make to our lives today?

Christians believe that Jesus died to take the punishment for all the sin in the world, and that by trusting in him we can be forgiven and we can know God. But Jesus' death wasn't the end of the story...

Get the children to come out from under the parachute and reflect on Jesus' resurrection.

What would it have been like for Jesus' friends and followers to see him alive again?

What difference does it make for us today to know that Jesus is alive?

Christians believe that because Jesus conquered death by rising to life again, we can have eternal life too by trusting in him. That is what Christians celebrate at Easter.

Lead the children in prayer, thanking God for Jesus' death and resurrection.

Prayer Activity

You will need: post-it notes, pens or pencils, images of cross and empty tomb (see additional document: Prayer activity pictures)

Give the children two post-it notes each, along with a pen or pencil. Get them to think about Jesus' death, what it means to them and what they would like to say to God. Give them a moment to write or draw it on one of the post-it notes and then stick it round the picture of the cross.

Get them to think about Jesus' resurrection, what it means to them and what they would like to say to God. Give them a moment to write or draw it on the second post-it note and then stick it round the picture of the empty tomb.

Lead the children in prayer, incorporating some of the things they put on their post-it notes.