



The man through the roof

MEETING AIM

To celebrate with the people as Jesus arrives in Jerusalem.

BIBLE PASSAGE

John 12:12-19

BACKGROUND

This session plan is designed to be used in a home setting or online using video-calling software. You could also run it in person, if restrictions allow.

Younger children may not understand the significance of how Jesus enters Jerusalem, but they will be familiar with the joy and celebration that accompanies his arrival. Help children to experience this celebration and then remember it when you come to explore the sadder story of Jesus' trial and death.

STARTING OUT

5 MINS

Start your time together with some simple refreshments (if you can) and ask them to think about the last time they arrived somewhere – was it exciting? Did it take a long time to get there? Under lockdown, this might only have been to the shops or the park, but celebrate the small outings!

PLAY

10 MINS

You will need: green tissue or crepe paper; child-safe scissors; sticky tape; newspaper; pictures of palm trees (optional)

Before your session, draw and cut out large leaf shapes from the tissue or crepe paper, several layers at a time. Roll several sheets of newspaper into a tight tube and secure them with a piece of tape. Make sure you have enough rolls of paper for everyone in your family to have one. If you're working online, then you could turn this into a fun activity that families could do together before your session starts.

Give each child a newspaper roll and help them to attach the leaves to the sticks with tape. Next, show everyone how to cut slits down the sides of the leaves so they swish satisfyingly when waved (help any children who might find this difficult). During this activity chat about what palms

look like and where they grow. If you have any pictures of palm trees show them to the children as you chat.

BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

You will need: palm branches from the 'Starting out'; toy donkey; pieces of fabric, rugs or throws

Practise waving the branches with the children and, if you're at home, organise your family so that they're sitting in two rows facing each other, holding their palms. Tell this story:

Jesus was travelling into Jerusalem for the Passover, a very important festival. Lots of other people had travelled to Jerusalem and the city was full! When they heard Jesus was coming they got very excited. They broke palm branches off trees to wave like flags! *Encourage the children to stand up and wave their branches.*

When Jesus arrived, he was riding on a donkey. A long time ago, a man called Zechariah had written that this would happen. It was in the scriptures that the people read in their synagogues, though they didn't remember at the time. *Move the toy donkey up and down the 'road' between the two lines of people. If any children want to have a go walking the donkey up and down, let them do so. If you're online, walk the donkey along in front of your camera.*

The people began to wave their palms and shout: "Hosanna!", "Praise God!" and "Bless the one God has sent!" *Practise shouting these three phrases, as loud as you can! If you know a simple song that praises God like this, sing that too. As they do this, walk with the donkey along the 'road' or in front of your camera.*

Some people even took off their coats and cloaks, and put them on the floor in front of Jesus! *Ask a few children to put down their palm branches and help you to lay out some fabric, rugs or throws in front of the leader and the donkey.*

The people were so happy to see Jesus! Everyone cheers together.

CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

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

- What was your favourite part of the story?

- What does it feel like when you see someone you love?
- How do you welcome others when they come to your house?
- How did the people feel when they saw Jesus?

CREATIVE TIME

10 MINS

You will need: paper leaves; felt-tip pens; the outline of a branch drawn on paper; glue sticks

Ask the children how they felt when they were singing and cheering. How did they think the crowd was feeling? What did they think about Jesus? Who did they think he was? Write all the words on small paper leaves and ask the children to stick them on the branch one by one. If you're working online, encourage the children to stick their leaves up in their homes.

Explain that the important Jewish leaders were also watching the crowd and saying to each other: "Nothing is going right for us, everyone is following Jesus." Talk about how they were feeling. The children may understand words like 'sad' and 'cross', but you may need to explain trickier emotions such as jealousy and frustration. Add these words to the outside of your picture.

PRAYER

5 MINS

You will need: palm branches from 'Starting out'; upbeat praise music and the means to play it (optional)

Ask everyone to be quiet for a moment (try this for as long as the children can manage). Then go on to say this prayer:

Thank you, Jesus, that we can celebrate you together. Help us to worship you in the fun times but also the sad times. Amen.

End your prayer time by getting your palms out and praising Jesus. If you have any praise music, play it as the children wave their palm branches around.

XANA RIDLEY

is an early years specialist and lives with her two daughters and their pets, including a bearded dragon.



The servant king

MEETING AIM

To explore how Jesus calls us to be servants.

BIBLE PASSAGE

John 13:1-20

BACKGROUND

This session plan is designed to be used in a home setting or online using video-calling software. You could also run it in person, if restrictions allow.

As with Palm Sunday, there is plenty of symbolism here that younger children won't understand. However, they will appreciate the idea of someone doing something kind for them, and also that Jesus did something that someone as special as he was would not normally have done. Exploring these stories at a basic level will provide the building blocks for children to understand them more deeply when they return to them later in life. As long as we don't teach children anything that they will have to unlearn later, we're laying a good foundation of faith.

STARTING OUT

5 MINS

Start your time together with some simple refreshments (if you can) and ask the children if anyone did anything special for them this week. Perhaps someone made them a cake or surprised them with a video call. How does it feel? Tell the group about a time when someone did something special for you, or when you did something special for someone else.

PLAY

10 MINS

You will need: tray; flour mixed with cocoa powder; flip-flop; leader wearing shoes and socks who is happy to show off their feet!

Show the children how dusty the disciples' feet would have been by asking one of your household to take off one of their shoes and put a flip-flop on their foot instead. Explain that everyone wore sandals in Jesus' time. Put the flour / cocoa powder mix into the tray. Ask your volunteer to put both feet in the tray and wiggle them about as if walking. When they remove the flip-flop from one foot and

their shoe from the other, the children will see how dirty your feet get walking in the dust in sandals compared to shoes and socks. Describe how servants would wash the feet of guests. Now you are ready to tell the story but don't let your volunteer wipe their foot just yet.

BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

You will need: pitta bread (and gluten-free alternative, if needed); a bowl of warm water; a towel; the member of your household with a floury foot; another volunteer from your household

Arrange your family on chairs in a semicircle. Be ready to tell part of the story kneeling down, as it's effective for the children to see an adult below them. If your online, then make sure the children can see you kneeling down, and that they have some bread. Tell this story:

Jesus was eating dinner with his friends. *Share out the pitta bread with the children.* He knew the time was coming for him to put God's big plan into action.

He got up from the table, put a towel around his waist and took a bowl of water. *Do this as you speak.* He began to wash the feet of his disciples. *Kneel and wash your volunteer's floury foot. Stay kneeling if you can.*

Jesus came to his friend Simon Peter. *Kneel in front of another member of your household.* Simon Peter said: "You can't wash my feet! You're Jesus!" *Get the person to say Simon Peter's words.*

Jesus told him: "You don't understand yet, but you will. If you want to be my friend, you will let me wash your feet."

Simon Peter wanted this more than anything, so he let Jesus wash his feet. *Wash the person's feet.*

Then Jesus got up and said to all his friends: "You call me Teacher and Lord, but I have just done the job of a servant. That is how it should be because in God's kingdom the master is not more important than the servant. We must serve each other."

It would be nice at this point to allow the children to wash each other's feet. This may depend on practicalities, such as the type of flooring you have and, if you're online, the parent or carer's attitude to mess! You may prefer to wash plastic dolls.

CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

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

- What was your favourite part of the story?
- What do you think about what Jesus did?
- When has someone done something kind for you?
- Has Jesus done anything kind for you?
- When have you done something kind for someone else?

CREATIVE TIME

10 MINS

You will need: paper; scissors; felt-tip pens

Explain that we are going to think of ways we can serve the people we know. Perhaps helping with the tidying at home, fetching something for Mummy or finding Granny's glasses. Ask the children to share their own ideas. Encourage children to draw around their foot and cut it out. On the cut-out, your children can draw a picture of something they could do to serve someone else. Talk about how we feel when someone does something kind for us.

PRAYER

5 MINS

You will need: foot shapes from 'Creative time'

Gather all the paper feet together and stand around them in a circle. Ask everyone to put a foot into the circle. If you're meeting online, ask the children to wave their paper feet in front of their camera. Say this prayer:

Thank you, Jesus, that you came to earth to show us that the smallest and weakest are important in your kingdom. Help us to serve others at home, at school and at play. Amen.

Encourage the children to put their cut-outs somewhere where they'll be seen regularly.

XANA RIDLEY

is an early years specialist and lives with her two daughters and their pets, including a bearded dragon.



The last supper

MEETING AIM

To experience the events of Jesus eating with his friends before his arrest.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Mark 14:12-26

BACKGROUND

This session plan is designed to be used in a home setting or online using video-calling software. You could also run it in person, if restrictions allow.

There is more symbolism here, in Jesus' actions with the bread and wine. Again, much of this will go over the children's heads, but introducing these symbols – ones which play such a large part in the life of the Church – will start the children on the road to renewed revelation about what Jesus has done for them. As ever, when using food in a session, be aware of food hygiene and allergy issues.

STARTING OUT

5 MINS

Start your time together with some simple refreshments (if you can) and ask them what their best meal was this week. What is their favourite food? Chat together about what food they would like to have as a special meal, such as their birthday.

PLAY

10 MINS

Ask the children to think of something that describes someone else in your family or group. Ask for a volunteer and ask them to tell everyone else their thing that describes someone else. Children might choose hair colour, something nice that the person did or that they can sing nicely. Everyone else has to guess who the volunteer is describing. Take turns in describing people and guessing.

BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

You will need: tablecloth or placemats; plastic plates and cups; play food; bread rolls; jug of squash or water

Sit the children around a table and tell this story:

The time had come for Jesus and his friends to celebrate the Passover. This

meant they would have a special meal together. The disciples asked Jesus where they would have this meal. He told them about an upstairs room in the city and they set off to prepare it.

Bring out a tablecloth and ask the children to help you spread it on the table. Together, lay the table with plastic plates and cups, play food, a basket of bread and a jug of squash. If you're meeting online, ask the children to arrange their bread and cup of water or squash in front of their cameras so that everyone can see.

As they were eating, Jesus said: "One of you is going to let me down. They are going to tell the people who want to hurt me where I am."

The disciples were very shocked and sad. Each one said: "Surely you don't mean me?"

Jesus answered: "One of you eating here with me will betray me and it will be terrible for that man."

Jesus picked up the bread, he said thank you to God for it and shared it with his friends. He said: "This is my body." *Break a bread roll open as you say this. Share it out, or encourage the children to eat the bread they have with them.*

Then he took the wine. *Hold the jug of squash.* He said thank you to God again and all his friends drank some. *Pour out some squash or water into the cups and all drink together.*

Jesus explained that the wine was a sign of a new agreement between God and his people. Then Jesus and his friends sang a song praising God. *Ask the children to choose their favourite praise song and sing it together.*

CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Still sitting at your Passover table, ask the children these questions, making sure everyone has the chance to contribute:

- What was your favourite part of the story?
- How do you think Jesus' friends felt as they ate the meal together?
- How do you feel when you eat a special meal?
- Do you want to say anything to Jesus after hearing this story?

CREATIVE TIME

10 MINS

You will need: play food; bread rolls and drink from 'Bible story'

Stay seated at your Passover table (if you're doing this at home). Ask the children if sitting at a table reminds them of anything. They might mention Sunday lunch or Christmas dinner and you can talk about how that is similar to families gathering to celebrate Passover together.

Talk about when they might see bread and wine in church. Explain the Communion traditions of your church and take them back to the part of the story where Jesus tells us to use bread and wine to remember him.

You may wish to share the bread and drink with the children. Allow them to role play the last supper with the play food, bread and drink. Allow as much time as you can for this – as children play with a story, their understanding of the events and their significance grows.

You could take them into church to watch or take part in Holy Communion, or watch one online, depending on what seems appropriate to your setting.

PRAYER

5 MINS

You will need: bread rolls and drink from 'Bible story'; cups

Give each child a piece of bread and a cup with some squash or water. Ask them to think about today's story and talk to God about anything that they'd like to say. Allow as long as the children can stay settled. Then say this prayer:

Thank you, Jesus, for giving your body for us. Hold up your pieces of bread.
Thank you, Jesus, for giving your blood for us. Hold up your cups.
Help us to remember you always. Amen.

The children can then eat their bread and drink their squash or water, if they wish.

XANA RIDLEY

is an early years specialist and lives with her two daughters and their pets, including a bearded dragon.



Good Friday

MEETING AIM

To encounter the story of the crucifixion appropriately.

BIBLE PASSAGE

John 18-19

BACKGROUND

This session plan is designed to be used in a home setting or online using video-calling software. You could also run it in person, if restrictions allow.

The Good Friday story is a hard one and we need to find a way to tell it age-appropriately without losing the truth. You will need to watch the reactions of your group in case any of them are finding it upsetting.

STARTING OUT

5 MINS

Start your time together with some simple refreshments (if you can). Chat about what the children have done this week.

PLAY

10 MINS

You will need: card crosses; felt-tip pens; stickers

Before the session, cut out some crosses from thick card. Give each child a cross and encourage them to decorate it with felt-tip pens and stickers. If you're working online, ask a parent or carer to cut out a cross, or draw one on a piece of paper. Chat together about what they already know about the cross. Do they know why it's a symbol for Christians? Knowing this should help you with exactly how to pitch the story.

BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

You will need: a large blanket; artificial flowers; a book; the decorated crosses from 'Play'; three cushions, one of which is round

Explain to the children that you're going to make an Easter garden as you tell the story. First, spread the blanket on the floor and gather the children around it (or make sure everything you do is in full view of your camera). Ask the children to help you place the flowers in one corner. Then go on to tell this story:

This is the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus came here with his friends to pray. He knew that God's big plan was about to get difficult. Judas, one of his friends, had run off earlier. He had gone to tell Jesus' enemies where he was. Judas came into the garden, bringing soldiers to find and arrest Jesus. Simon Peter took out his sword to defend Jesus. But Jesus said: "No! I have to go and carry out God's plan." The soldiers took Jesus to the high priest.

Place the book in the opposite corner of the blanket to symbolise law and authority.

The high priests asked Jesus lots of questions. They wanted to know what Jesus had been saying. He answered them simply. He said: "Ask the people who came to listen to me, they will tell you what I said."

The high priests took Jesus to the house of Pilate. Pilate was a Roman and he was in charge of the whole country. The high priests hoped that Pilate would deal with Jesus. Pilate said he could not find anything that Jesus had done wrong. But he offered Jesus to the crowd and they shouted: "Kill him!"

Invite the children to put their crosses in the third corner of the blanket.

So, it was decided Jesus was going to die. He was going to die on a cross. The soldiers laughed at Jesus. They were cruel to him and took his clothes. Mary, his mother, and Mary, his friend, stayed near as Jesus died.

Make a 'tomb' in the final corner of the blanket by propping the two cushions together and placing the round cushion in front of it as the stone.

After Jesus had died, his friends took his body and cared for it. They buried him in a tomb in a different garden.

Roll the 'stone' over the tomb and place some of the Gethsemane flowers around it.

Let the children play with the story items and retell the story to each other, if you're doing this session at home. Help them if they ask you to, otherwise let the children play and retell the story however they like.

CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Ask the children these questions, encouraging everyone to take turns to contribute:

- How do you think Jesus' friends are feeling at the end of the story?

- How did the story make you feel?
- What do you think will happen next?
- Do you have any questions about the story?

CREATIVE RESPONSE

10 MINS

You will need: art materials (such as crayons, paint and paintbrushes, felt-tip pens); paper; clean-up and cover-up equipment

Give the children a sheet of paper (A3 would be ideal) and show them the art materials you have gathered. Encourage them to create a picture of today's story. It can be a scene from the story or something that depicts how the story made them feel. They could also create a picture of something that they heard God say or that is going through their mind.

Doing this sort of 'free craft' gives space for children to process their thoughts. Their focus isn't on completing a set craft, rather they can think about what they God might be saying to them through the story. It also gives children who might be upset by the story some processing time, so that they can start to come to terms with what has upset them.

As you work, chat about the story. Let the conversation be led by the children, rather than telling them your own interpretation (unless they specifically ask you). If you're working online, then ask the children to use whatever they have available to create their picture.

PRAYER

5 MINS

You will need: pictures from 'Creative time'

Place all your pictures in the middle of the room and sit or stand around them. Encourage the children to look at all the pictures and think about what they have discovered today. Then say this prayer:

Thank you, Jesus, that you loved us so much that you died for us. Thank you that this isn't the end of the story and that the best part is still to come. Amen.

Remind the children that God keeps his promises and the story will have a happy ending.

XANA RIDLEY

is an early years specialist and lives with her two daughters and their pets, including a bearded dragon.