



Easter Sunday

MEETING AIM

To discover what the hope of Easter means for us today.

BIBLE PASSAGE

John 20:1-18

BACKGROUND

This session is 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.

Easter Sunday is a key moment in the Christian story! The session helps the group grasp the meaning and significance of the first Easter, and to remember that first fresh hope, and what that might mean for us today. Bear in mind the members of your group that might be in particular need of hope, and consider their pastoral needs as the group discusses the ideas. There are some creative activities, so take some time to gather the materials that you might need ahead of time.

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: "What is the best news that you've ever been given?" or "What's the best news you could ever be given?"

INTRO ACTIVITY 5 MINS

You will need: paper; pens and pencils

Share your screen and show a news website, such as the BBC. Talk about some of the headlines you can see. What do they tell you? Explain that today you'll be talking about good news instead, and ask the group to design their own good news homepages. On a sheet of paper, encourage them to let their imaginations loose! Give them five minutes (depending on how much time you have with the group) and then ask them to share their webpages with each other.

BIBLE EXPLORATION 10 MINS

You will need: Bibles; large sheet of paper and marker pen, or whiteboard feature; pens and paper

Ask the group if they've heard people talk about the 'good news' as a Christian term. This is the original moment where the 'good news' was first discovered!

Go through John 20:1-18 and ask the group to shout out the different characters mentioned in the story. Write them down on the paper or whiteboard, then talk about their perspectives on the story – how do they think they'd tell the story from their point of view? Ask the group to think about how the different people written about must have felt at different points of the story. They can write down words they might use to describe how they felt. Discuss these words, and let that lead you into 'Chatting together'.

CHATTING TOGETHER 5 MINS

Chat about the story using these questions, encouraging everyone to join in if they want to:

- What do you think it was that made Mary recognise Jesus?
- Why do you think Jesus revealed himself in the way that he did?
- What did it mean for the disciples that Jesus was alive again?
- What does it mean for us that Jesus rose again?

CREATIVE RESPONSE 10 MINS

You will need: glass jars; grey paper; scissors; PVA glue; tea lights

This passage is a defining moment for Christians and what we believe. It takes the moment where everything feels lost and ruined, the very worst thing that could happen has happened – God came to earth as a person and died – and then everything turns around as Jesus' friends realise that he's alive again. Everything is different, and everything is possible! It's that critical moment where Jesus shows that death is no longer the end of the story, that God performs the miraculous where it feels that all hope is lost.

Sometimes it's important for us to remember the hope of the resurrection; we have times where we hear about

hopeless-sounding things, or we go through our own difficulties, and that's when it's so helpful to remember that Jesus rose again!

To make your own reminders of the resurrection, make sure each member of the group has a glass jar and a strip of grey paper. Wrap the paper around the outside of the jar, but cut the paper to look like a cave, with the opening of a tomb, and paste it around the glass jar with PVA glue. Give each young person a tea light and explain that when the disciples went to the tomb they were expecting Jesus' body, but instead they found unimaginable hope and light. When they need hope, they can look at their jar and remember the resurrection, and light the tea light so that light shines out of what seemed to be a particularly hopeless situation.

(You may need to deliver packs of materials to members of your group before the session, if parents and carers don't have everything you need.)

PRAYER 5 MINS

You will need: pebbles; permanent marker pens

Make sure everyone has a pebble and a pen. These stones represent the stone that was rolled away from the tomb. Ask the group to consider what Jesus being risen means to us, and as they consider it to write these ideas down on stones (maybe just one word that sums it up) and to place it in front of their camera. They can use many stones for different ideas. After a moment of quiet, say a prayer of thanks, and ask that God would continue to remind us of the hope of the resurrection when we need it most.

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Jesus and Thomas

MEETING AIM

To weigh up the evidence of Jesus' resurrection and make an honest and considered response to it.

BIBLE PASSAGE

John 20:19-31

BACKGROUND

This session is 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.

In this session, we see Jesus' resurrection through the eyes of Thomas, the 'doubter', a man we can probably identify with! Be aware that different members of the group are likely to have different responses to Jesus' resurrection, and try to make it a safe space for them to be able to honestly share where they're at, without being frightened or reactive to people honestly sharing their doubts.

JOINING THE SESSION 5 MINS

As people join you online, ask them to share what they have been doing during the past seven days. Start a conversation about things that are too good to be true. Do the group know what that means? Have they ever had moments that were so wonderful, or got some news that was so good that it felt too good to be true? Have you ever been told something that was so great that you didn't believe it at first?

INTRO ACTIVITY 10 MINS

Play the game 'two truths and a lie' with the group, to introduce the theme of believing the unbelievable! This game works where people take turns to say three things about themselves. Two of these statements have to be true but one of them has to be a lie. Other people have to guess which one is the lie. It's also a good game to get to know each other. It might be helpful to prepare your statements and go first to give an example. This gives the group time to prepare their statements!

BIBLE EXPLORATION 10 MINS

You will need: Bibles

Read the story of Jesus and Thomas together. You could help the group engage a bit better with the story by asking them to take in turns reading out a verse each – that way they have to follow the passage!

Then split the group in half and ask them to role-play a debate between disciples who have seen Jesus alive again, and those who haven't and don't believe. You might want to set some rules about how you manage listening to each other, or act like a 'chair' to the debate, to make sure that they hear each other. Ask the disciples who've seen Jesus to try to convince them that Jesus is risen, and ask the other half to make it hard for them to convince them by arguing back with different points.

CHATTING TOGETHER 5 MINS

Ask the group a series of discussion questions to unpack the story in more depth:

- Why do you think would it be hard to believe that Jesus had risen again?
- If you were one of the disciples, do you think you'd believe that Jesus had risen again without seeing him? What would it take to convince you?
- How do we still see this debate going on today? Which side of the discussion do you feel you sit on most usually? (Bear in mind that this could be a vulnerable question to ask within a Christian context, and it will take a lot of bravery to share if a member finds it difficult to believe in Jesus' resurrection. It might be more appropriate to allow space for members to share than try to convince them.)
- What are the things that make it hard to believe in Jesus' resurrection?

CREATIVE RESPONSE 10 MINS

You will need: paper; felt-tip pens

Make sure each group member has a piece of paper and ask them to draw around their hands onto their paper. These are representations of Jesus' hands.

Ask them to consider what reasons or evidence they have to believe that Jesus is alive, and to write these on Jesus' hands. It might be to do with facts, or people who've told them, or moments that they've felt connection with Jesus alive in the

world today. Feel free to continue this activity in the atmosphere of discussion if you feel that that's more helpful to the group, or alternatively in silence with some music playing to give individuals space to consider their own thoughts. At the end you might ask the group if they'd like to share the reason that they have for believing Jesus died and rose again.

PRAYER 5 MINS

Lead the group on a guided meditation, using their imaginations to think about what Jesus might say to them today. Encourage the group to close their eyes and sit or lie down comfortably as you read out:

You're in the room with the disciples, still reeling from the shock of losing Jesus, feeling fragile and afraid now that the person you'd put all your hope in has died. The atmosphere is sombre, and you're worried about what other people might think of you now that you've lost Jesus.

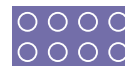
Some friends come to you filled with a strange kind of energy and euphoria. They tell you that they've seen Jesus. They look like they believe it, but it's hard to imagine. Are they lying to you? Are they crazy with grief? Or could they be telling the truth? Is that just too impossible to be real? What would it mean if they were telling the truth? A strange kind of longing for hope stirs in you.

As you mull it over, is it true or is it too crazy, Jesus walks into the room, even though the doors are locked. In his gentle way he walks over to you and kneels next to you, so that you're both at eye level, and he gives you that piercing stare into your eyes that had become so familiar. He's there in front of you, but it's still almost too much to believe. But then he speaks...what does he say to you?

Give the group some space in the quiet to listen to and imagine what Jesus would say to them in that moment. When you feel they've had a good amount of time to ponder and think over how Jesus might respond, maybe a few minutes, finish the time of silence with a prayer out loud so that the group know that the time is ending, and to help them conclude this time.

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On the beach

MEETING AIM

To capture something of the extraordinary Jesus, who is with us in the ordinary.

BIBLE PASSAGE

John 21:1-19

BACKGROUND

This session is 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.

This passage is such a wonderful example of Jesus being completely extraordinary, but also sharing in something as ordinary as breakfast with us. The session aims to capture something of both the extraordinary, understanding better who Jesus is through his miracles, and the amazing things that he did with the disciples that are echoed in this passage, but also that Jesus is still with us today in our own ordinary lives that begin with breakfast, just like they did for the disciples all of those many years ago! Open the session with breakfast foods together if you can, and enjoy the novelty and disruption of it, and the bizarreness of having breakfast with Jesus after the resurrection.

JOINING THE SESSION 5 MINS

As people join you online, ask them to share what they have been doing during the past seven days. Chat about the different breakfasts you have had before joining the call. What breakfast food is people's favourite?

INTRO ACTIVITY 10 MINS

Play a game of 'Halibut or hairstyle'. This list is a mixture of fish and hairstyle names. The group has to decide which is a fish and which is a hairstyle. You could split into two teams and deliver prizes to the winners.

Dab (fish), pompadour (hairstyle), silver pomfret (fish), gooseneck (fish), fauxhawk (hairstyle), beehive (hairstyle), grey mullet (fish), tonsure (hairstyle), John Dory (fish), ducktail (hairstyle), kingklip (fish), fishtail

(hairstyle), Ivy League (hairstyle), pouting (fish), bouffant (hairstyle)

BIBLE EXPLORATION 10 MINS

You will need: study Bibles

The passage in John 21 is so resonant of other Bible stories, and everything that happened in it would have been so packed with meaning for the disciples, based on their time with Jesus before his death and resurrection. Read the passage together and split the group up into smaller groups to do a forensic study, thinking back to other Bible stories that help us understand this passage better. Make sure the groups have Bibles with good indexes in, and encourage them to use them, thinking about the different parts of the passage that give us clues about or remind us about other things that Jesus is drawing on in these stories. Alternatively, they can search the internet for background information.

Ask the groups give feedback and share the other stories that they thought of and why they might be better linked to this passage. How do these other stories help us understand who Jesus is? What might be going on for the disciples as they remember the things that have happened before.

It might be helpful to fill in the gaps with this list of other stories that today's passage overlaps with:

- The disciples' calling to follow Jesus with the first miraculous catching of fish (Luke 5:1-11)
- Peter walking on water (Matthew 14:22-33)
- The three times Peter denied Jesus (John 18:15-18;25-27)
- Peter's denial of Jesus foretold with shepherd imagery (Matthew 26:31-35)
- Shepherds visiting Jesus (Luke 2:8-20)
- Jesus' metaphor of being a shepherd to lost sheep (John 10)
- King David of the Old Testament was a shepherd (Psalm 23)

CHATTING TOGETHER 5 MINS

Explore the story further using these questions:

- What do you think the miraculous catch of fish says about Jesus?
- Why do you think Jesus appeared to

the disciples while they were fishing?

- What do you think Jesus was asking of Peter in their conversation? How do you think Peter would have felt about that?
- What would have changed for the disciples after that encounter with Jesus?
- What would you talk about with Jesus if you had breakfast together on a beach?

CREATIVE RESPONSE 10 MINS

You will need: credit-card sized cards with a fish outline drawn on one side and a lamb on the other; pens

In this passage we see the metaphors of fish and lambs. At the start of their journey together, Jesus asked the disciples to become "fishers of men" (NKJV), and here he asks Peter to become a shepherd. If he didn't mean that literally, what did he mean?

Ask the group to consider who might be the 'fish' and 'lambs' that Jesus would ask us to fish for and shepherd (respectively) today?

Ask the group to take a pen and write the names of people or groups on the card that they might consider metaphorical fish or lambs in the world today, and to tuck the card away somewhere like a wallet or pocket as a reminder of who Jesus asks us to be to these people as his disciples today.

PRAYER 5 MINS

You will need: A5 paper and pens

The idea of Jesus sharing breakfast with us on a beach is so beautiful. Through the Holy Spirit, we can share breakfast with Jesus in prayer, and join in the celebration of Jesus being alive with us today, but also to begin the day starting with a reminder that Jesus has left us his work to carry on with.

Ask the group to write their own breakfast prayers in response to everything you've spoken about today, on sheets of A5. Ask them to stick the prayers somewhere they'll encounter daily in their morning routines, like a mirror or on their cereal box! Encourage them to write prayers that capture some of the joy of sharing breakfast with Jesus, but also prayer that Jesus would help them continue the work he's left for us since his resurrection.

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Ascension

MEETING AIM

To explore what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Acts 1:1-11

BACKGROUND

This session is 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.

This session explores the ascension of Jesus, a truly bizarre story for us to imagine! As the story is situated after the Gospels, in Acts, this passage marks the beginning of a new chapter for the disciples, the moment Jesus ascends to heaven and leaves the disciples with jobs to do!

The activities planned are to try to better imagine the event, and also its implications on what it means to be a follower of Jesus after he has physically left us.

JOINING THE SESSION

5 MINS

As people join you online, ask them to share what they have been doing during the past seven days. Encourage them to think about historic people and actions who've changed their lives today, and how the impact that influential people have had throughout history has changed the world for better or worse today.

INTRO ACTIVITY

10 MINS

Ask for two volunteers to begin acting out a scene between two people. It might help to give them a scenario to start off with (like two children having a picnic, or Prince William and the Prime Minister having a conversation in an office). The couple act out the scenario, improvising as they go, until someone else shouts: "Freeze!" At this point, the person who's shouted out chooses one of the actors to replace in the scene. They then have to begin a completely new scenario, which the remaining actor has to join in with!

BIBLE EXPLORATION

10 MINS

You will need: Bibles; large sheets of paper; art materials; pictures of the ascension

Make sure everyone has some art materials, even if it's just felt-tip pens. Read out the Bible passage and ask the group to interpret what the ascension might have looked like by drawing the scene. It might be helpful to show the group images of Renaissance paintings of the ascension. It's a completely bizarre event to try to picture, so allow them to think creatively, elaborately and bizarrely!

It might be helpful to read the passage out again as they create, or to talk or discuss what it might have looked like. If Renaissance painting feels a bit too aspirational, you could encourage them to think about colour, abstract images, or even cartoon-style pictures!

CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Encourage the group to reflect on the passage by chatting about it, using the following questions as prompts for discussion:

- How did the disciples feel about Jesus leaving them and beginning a new chapter?
- How do you think Jesus felt about it?
- Why do you think Jesus chose to say the words he did in the passage as the final words before he ascended?
- What do you think it would have been like for the disciples once Jesus had disappeared from view? What would they have done next?

CREATIVE RESPONSE

10 MINS

You will need: large sheet of paper and marker pen, or whiteboard feature; Bibles

Draw out a grid on a large sheet of paper, or in the whiteboard feature. On the left side, write the heading: "Things that Jesus had taught the disciples" and on the right the corresponding heading: "How the disciples were meant to use these lessons to continue his work".

Ask the group to think about the different things Jesus taught his disciples. Write these in the left-hand column, and then discuss how the disciples may have continued to use these lessons even

once Jesus had ascended. If the group is struggling to think of examples, you could pinpoint them to stories like the feeding of the 5,000, or moments of teaching like Jesus' parables or the Beatitudes. It might be helpful to give the group some easy-to-use youth Bibles or a website like Bible Gateway to hunt for moments that feel relevant. You could begin with the two final things that Jesus tells his disciples in this passage: to wait for the Holy Spirit and to continue to be his witnesses throughout the world.

PRAYER

5 MINS

Ask the group to find a place where they can lie down on the floor outside or at least in view of the sky through a window. Encourage them to reflect on what they have heard and to chat about it all to God.

Ask the group to lie down and look at the sky a couple of times this week as a reminder to them that after Jesus ascended into heaven, the disciples were reminded to get on with his work. This is the task for all of us today!

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