



SESSION **1**

Palm Sunday



MEETING AIM

To reflect on the highs and lows of following Jesus.



BIBLE PASSAGE

Luke 19:28-44



BACKGROUND

It might seem strange to be exploring the Easter story in November, but there are advantages to this strangeness! First, it allows young people to encounter the story in all its fullness (at Easter-time, parts of the story are missed - you might even jump from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday without ever hearing about Good Friday) and secondly, it helps young people go into Christmas with the Easter story fresh in their minds. In this session, people cheer Jesus, but the Pharisees threaten him. How much is our spiritual journey one of celebration and difficulty?

GATHERING TIME



Get the group together and share out the refreshments you have brought. Try to get a mix of healthy and a little more indulgent! As you eat and drink, chat about your week and share any highs and lows you have all had. 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?

GAME



You will need: pin the tail on the donkey picture (see youthandchildrens.work/links); scissors; Bluetack; blindfold; marker pen

Before the session, print off and enlarge the pin the tail on the donkey picture and cut out the tail (or make your own picture). Stick the picture to the wall and put a blob of Bluetack on the back of the tail.

Enjoy playing the party game together. Blindfold a volunteer and turn them around a few times. Give them the tail but, as they try to stick the tail on, encourage the rest of the group to shout out false instructions. When they are happy with their attempt, mark where they placed the tail with their initials.

Once everyone has had a go who wants to, see who managed to get the closest. Was it easy when people were giving you instructions that could have been wrong?

BIBLE EXPLORATION



You will need: Bibles; blankets or rugs; newspaper; scissors and sticky tape; brown material

Give out the 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. Throw the brown material over a young person willing to be a donkey. Wave your palm branches and throw blankets or rugs in front of the donkey as Jesus rides into Jerusalem.

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



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

- Who in the story do they 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



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 (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



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

Make sure everyone has a 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 two or three songs (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.

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