



# Easter Sunday

## MEETING AIM

Easter Sunday

## BIBLE PASSAGE

John 20:1-18

## 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.

If you have been around church for any amount of time, this story will be very familiar. However, we do well not to get too used to the incredible truth of the story and what a life-changing difference it makes to us today. Take the opportunity in this session to allow the truth to become fresh again and communicate this 'alive truth' to the children.

## STARTING OUT

5 MINS

Start your time together with some simple refreshments (if you can) and ask what the children know about Easter. If you have already looked at some of the other events of Easter week, chat through what they remember. Ask the children about their favourite Easter eggs – you could do a survey to find the most popular one!

## PLAY

10 MINS

**You will need:** coins; a prepared coin magic trick

Beforehand, search for a 'disappearing coin' trick on YouTube. Provide a coin and instructions for each child and teach them this simple 'magic trick'. Give them time to practise and then perform to the rest of the group or in pairs if preferred. Encourage them to add in some showbusiness to make the trick as entertaining as possible!

## BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

**You will need:** two adults dressed as Peter and Mary Magdalene; white material for 'burial linens'; a photograph of a stone rolled away from a tomb; 'selfie' of Mary Magdalene with the 'gardener'; pens and paper

Before the session, brief the volunteers who will be Peter and Mary Magdalene about what they will need to do. Encourage

them to read the Bible story thoroughly, so that they are ready to answer questions that the children will ask them about the story. Take a selfie of Mary Magdalene and another leader pretending to be Jesus.

Divide the children into 'detective teams' or do this all together. Provide the children with their brief, access to the witnesses and evidence. They must come up with questions to interview the witnesses, inspect the evidence and come to a conclusion about what has happened to the body. When they have made their conclusions, they can present their findings to the rest of the group.

### Brief:

A body has gone missing from the tombs in Jerusalem. Using the evidence and witnesses provided, your detective team must work out what has happened to the body.

### Witnesses:

Mary Magdalene;  
Peter the fisherman

Produce a set of your own questions and interview the witnesses.

### Evidence:

Set of worn burial linens;  
Photograph of the stone rolled away;  
Photograph of Mary Magdalene with the gardener

When you have solved the mystery, write some notes and present your findings to your fellow detectives.

Give the children time to look at the evidence and question the two witnesses.

Once they have examined everything, give the children Bibles and direct them to John 20. After a few minutes of chat and making notes, invite the detective teams to present their ideas to the rest of the group. Make sure the groups have enough help and support from leaders, but let the children lead their own investigation – don't be tempted to take over!

## CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

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

- How do you think Mary felt when she realised the body was missing?
- What would you have done?

- Why do you think Jesus waited for Mary to recognise him instead of telling her who he was?
- What does this story tell us about God?
- What difference does it make for us today?

## CREATIVE TIME

10 MINS

**You will need:** bowls; wooden spoons; ingredients (one cup of salt, two cups of flour, three-quarters cup of water per pair); clean-up and cover-up equipment

Divide the children into pairs with the equipment and ingredients. Show the group how to mix together the salt and the flour, and add the water gradually until the mixture forms a dough. Help any pairs who might need a bit of assistance to do this.

Halve the dough between the pair and invite each child to make their own version of the story or one aspect of it that stood out for them. Ask them to explain their choice either in pairs or to the whole group. They can take these models home and bake them in the oven or leave them to air-dry.

If you're working online, then make sure the children have the ingredients before you start. Alternatively, deliver some playdough to the children before the session, and just do the second part of the activity.

## PRAYER

5 MINS

**You will need:** pens and paper

Invite the children to write a prayer on a small piece of paper. This can be a thanksgiving, praise or even a repentance prayer. Using the principles from the coin disappearing trick from earlier in the session, encourage them to, one at a time, say their prayer aloud whilst 'disappearing' the paper.

At the end of the session, some of the children might want to chat about the story and what Jesus means to them. Make sure that you allow time and space for this to happen. Have some resources to help, if you like (you could try these).

## HELEN HODGSON

leads the children's and youth work at Grace Church Bromsgrove and is a freelance writer.



# Jesus and Thomas

## MEETING AIM

To allow the opportunity for children to understand that doubting is part of faith and to bring their doubts to Jesus.

## BIBLE PASSAGE

John 20:19-31

## 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.

Doubting is a normal part of the Christian faith. As we see Jesus answer our prayers and spend time with him, we grow in our faith. This session allows the children to safely explore and voice their doubts.

## STARTING OUT

5 MINS

Start your time together with some simple refreshments (if you can) and discuss the latest superhero or action film. Compare the heroes in different films. Which is best?

## PLAY

10 MINS

**You will need:** pictures and brief descriptions of Robin Hood, King Arthur, Atlantis, Loch Ness Monster and Bigfoot (add your own if there are some local stories or legends); a chart with two columns: one with each legend's name and the other headed: "Real of fake?"

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## BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

**You will need:** bingo sheets containing the twelve key words in bold; keys; nails; washing-up or latex gloves

Before the session, blow up the gloves and secure the ends. Hide these, the keys and nails around the room. (Or somewhere slightly visible behind you, if you're online.) Make up bingo sheets using the bold words.

Give out the bingo sheets and challenge the children to listen out for the words in the story. When they hear the words 'key', 'nails' or 'hand', they have to go

and find (or spot) that item before crossing it off their sheet. Go on to tell this story:

Hi there, my name is **Thomas**. You may have heard of me before. Some people call me 'Doubting Thomas'. I know why, but I don't think it's very fair. I just like to see stuff before I can believe it, that's all!

The first part of my story I can only tell you because others have told me about it. My mates, the rest of Jesus' squad (otherwise known as the **disciples**) won't stop talking about it!

After Jesus had died, we were all pretty freaked out. **Scared** was an understatement. We thought the Jewish leaders would be coming for us next! And three days later, the squad had locked themselves away in a room so that they wouldn't be found.

Apparently, while they were all hiding away, right into the middle of the room walked Jesus! I mean, Jesus, who was dead! Walking! Unbelievable! He showed them his **scars** and they just couldn't believe their eyes. But they did. Believe their eyes, I mean.

Well, when they told me about it I thought they'd lost the plot. Maybe all this fear and worry had gone to their heads! I said to them there and then that I wasn't going to believe that kind of nonsense. Unless I saw with my own eyes the nail marks and put my finger where the **nails** were, and put my hand into his side, I was not going to believe it.

I mean, how could I? I know Jesus had done some unbelievable and impossible things when he was with us, but this was just a step too far. Coming back to life after that kind of awful death? I thought they'd gone **crazy**.

That is, until a week later. We were hiding again. I'd locked the doors with the **keys**. I knew those doors weren't going to be opened without that **key**. We were safe. Or so I thought.

Without even unlocking and opening the **door**, Jesus appeared in the middle of the room!

Woah. I'd seen some crazy things, but this just topped it off. I didn't know what to say. Thankfully, Jesus did.

He showed me his **hands**. They had holes in them. He told me to put my finger right into the hole. I regretted my words then! And then he showed me the hole in his side where the spear had pierced him. Almost my whole hand went in there! That was one of the most horrible things I've done. But Jesus

told me to stop **doubting** and believe.

I was speechless and totally amazed. The only words I could squeak out were: "My Lord and my God!"

It really was him. He really had come back to life. The rest of my squad looked pleased with themselves and I heard a few of them muttering: "**I told you so.**"

Jesus spoke to me again then: "Because you have seen me, you have believed," he said. "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have **believed.**"

Well, I couldn't imagine not seeing Jesus and believing in him but I guess that's where you guys come into the story...

## CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

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

- If you'd been the rest of the disciples, how would you have tried to convince Thomas that Jesus had really appeared?
- What would you have done if you'd heard about Jesus appearing but hadn't yet seen him?
- What does this tell us about Jesus?
- In what ways are we like Thomas?

## CREATIVE TIME

10 MINS

**You will need:** wax candles; watered-down paint; sheets of white paper or card

Invite the children to respond to this story by thinking about what they want to say to Jesus. Is there something they need help to believe? Or perhaps they need to see an answer to a prayer.

Ask each child to write their message to Jesus on the paper with the wax candle. Then show them how to paint over the paper, revealing the words. (If you're online, ask parents or carers to provide the materials, or drop off a resource pack to each household before the session.)

## PRAYER

5 MINS

**You will need:** paintings from 'Creative time'

Divide into pairs or threes. Using their secret messages, invite the children to pray for one another. If you're online, ask the children to hold their pictures up to the camera and all pray together.

## HELEN HODGSON

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## On the beach

### MEETING AIM

To help the children understand that Jesus is with them throughout their whole days and nights, just as he appeared to the disciples at breakfast, and to discover what difference this makes.

### BIBLE PASSAGE

John 21:1-19

### 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.

We all have good days and bad days. Sometimes our days can have trickier moments. Knowing the presence of Jesus in these moments is vital to grow our faith and our dependence on him. This session allows the children the space to think through their daily lives and invite Jesus to be with them.

### STARTING OUT

5 MINS

Start your time together with some simple refreshments (if you can) and chat about the last time the children had a barbecue. What is their favourite food cooked on a barbecue? What's the most unusual thing the group has had that has been barbecued?

### PLAY

10 MINS

**You will need:** four children's fishing nets; two bags full of 'fish' (plastic balls, screwed-up newspaper, balloons etc); two boxes

Divide the children into two teams. Give each team two fishing nets and a bag full of 'fish'. Some of the team are throwers and some are catchers. When you shout 'go', the throwers launch the fish into the air and then catchers must catch as many as possible and deposit them into a box. The fish should not be removed from the box, but if the fish fall to the floor without being caught, the throwers can pick them up and throw them again. The team with the most fish in the box wins the game.

If you're online or don't have much space, put together a fish picture quiz. Find pictures of distinctive sea creatures, such as sharks, starfish and jellyfish, and challenge the children to name all the different fish.

### BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

**You will need:** one washing-up bowl / large bucket per team; story fish (one set per team, see below); fishing rods (string with a magnet attached at the end, one per team); Bibles

Before the session, make the story fish. Cut out fish shapes from coloured paper (use a different colour for each team) and write out fragments of the story on each one:

**Fish 1:** Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, the sons of Zebedee and two other disciples were together. "I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said: "We'll go with you."

**Fish 2:** So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

**Fish 3:** Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realise that it was Jesus.

**Fish 4:** He called out to them: "Friends, haven't you any fish?" "No," they answered.

**Fish 5:** He said: "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

**Fish 6:** One of the disciples said to Peter: "It is the Lord!"

**Fish 7:** As soon as Simon Peter heard him say: "It is the Lord," he wrapped his outer garment round him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred metres.

**Fish 8:** When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread. Jesus said to them: "Bring some of the fish you have just caught."

**Fish 9:** So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn.

**Fish 10:** Jesus said to them: "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples dared ask him: "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord.

**Fish 11:** Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

Laminate the fish and attach a paper clip to the mouth end of each one.

Split the children into teams and scatter the fish over the floor. Give the teams a fishing rod and challenge them to catch all their fish. They then have to put all the story fragments into the right order.

Give out Bibles to help them do this.

When finished, read the story together.

If you're working online, put the story fragments on a PowerPoint slide and challenge the children to unscramble them.

### CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

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

- Why do you think the disciples didn't recognise Jesus?
- How do you think the disciples felt when Jesus told them to try again on the right-hand side of the boat?
- What do we learn about Jesus?
- What difference would it make to us to know and recognise that Jesus is with us at all times of day and night?

### CREATIVE TIME

10 MINS

**You will need:** wooden barbecue skewers; cubes of different fruit

Allow the children some time to respond to this story and the presence of Jesus in our everyday lives. Give out the skewers and invite each child to make their own fruit kebab. (If you're online, encourage the children to use whatever fruit they have. All the chunks can come from the same apple or banana – that's OK!)

Each cube of fruit represents a different section of their day (eg breakfast, go to school, playtime, lunchtime, come home, tea time, bedtime, night). Each time you add another layer, ask the children to think about what it would be like to have the presence of Jesus with them. What difference would it make?

### PRAYER

5 MINS

**You will need:** pens and paper

Invite the children to draw out a 'daily planner' with the same routine as above in two columns. On one side of the column, write the times of the day. Leave the second column blank. Allow the children to think through their days again and write a prayer for each time of the day. This could be a thanksgiving prayer, or if there are certain moments in the day that they find more difficult, they could ask Jesus to help them.

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## Ascension

### MEETING AIM

To explore the unknown nature of God and to know that even when we can't see what he is doing, we can always trust him.

### BIBLE PASSAGE

Acts 1:1-11

### 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.

Following Jesus is full of surprises and the unexpected. We don't always know what God is going to do but we do know that he gives us power through the Holy Spirit to follow him. This session gives the children the opportunity to express their 'unknowns' and to find security in knowing that God gives us all we need to face those uncertainties.

### STARTING OUT

5 MINS

Start your time together with some simple refreshments (if you can) and encourage the children to share stories from their lives when they didn't know what was happening or what would happen.

### INTRO ACTIVITY

10 MINS

**You will need:** items to create an obstacle course; blindfolds

Before the session, set up an obstacle course across the room using whatever equipment you can access. Risk-assess the course to make sure the children can undertake it safely.

Divide the children into pairs. One of them will be blindfolded and the other must help them navigate the course, by using instructions and any other help they need. If you have time, they can swap around too.

If you're online, put the children into pairs or small groups. Share a picture with one child in each pair or group and encourage them to describe that picture to the others, who have to draw it. If they all speak at the same time, that will make it very tricky (and more fun).

### BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

**You will need:** large piece of cardboard (you could tape smaller pieces together); marker pens; white paint; roller and roller tray; clean-up and cover-up equipment

Divide the children into smaller groups.

Challenge each group to work on a different scene of the storyboard. Depending on the size of your group, you may wish to have a few storyboards or one large one.

**Scene 1:** Group of disciples, sitting and eating a meal together.

**Scene 2:** Jesus talking with disciples.

**Scene 3:** Disciples sitting, Jesus ascending into the sky.

**Scene 4:** Disciples staring into sky, shocked.

**Scene 5:** Two men dressed in white, talking to disciples.

As you tell this story, they can be working on their section of the picture. When you read about the cloud hiding Jesus from view, they can use the roller to paint over the picture of Jesus:

After Jesus had risen from the dead, he spent six weeks appearing to his followers and teaching them.

One time, they were eating together and Jesus explained to his disciples that they needed to wait in Jerusalem. He reminded them that his Father had promised a gift and that whilst John had baptised with water, they would be baptised with the Holy Spirit.

Of course, yet again they had no clue what he was talking about! "Are you going to give the land back to Israel and rescue us from Roman rule?" they asked him.

"My Father knows what he is doing!" Jesus replied. "He's the one who sets the time and dates. But when the Holy Spirit comes, you will receive power and will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

And then, to their utter shock, Jesus began rising in the air. He rose up into the sky and a cloud hid him from their sight.

They stared for what felt like forever. What had just happened?

They leapt out of their skins as two men dressed in white clothes suddenly appeared next to them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen

him go into heaven."

The disciples would never forget this day. Their lives had been utterly changed by Jesus.

### CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

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

- How do you think the disciples felt when Jesus kept appearing to them?
- If you had been there, what would you have done with the rest of your life?
- When do you sometimes feel like Jesus is hidden from view?
- How does the Holy Spirit give us power today?

### CREATIVE TIME

10 MINS

**You will need:** medium-sized stone; some craft googly eyes; PVA glue; marker pens

Explain that the disciples couldn't quite believe their eyes. They kept staring for so long into the sky! Give each child a stone and two googly eyes. They can stick the eyes onto the stone and make a 'staring stone', drawing on the rest of the face with a marker pen. (If you're online, the children can draw on eyes, rather than using googly eyes.) On the other side of the stone, they can write one word which helps them remember the most important thing from the story (this will be different for each child). Encourage them to share with the rest of the group why they have chosen this word.

### PRAYER

5 MINS

**You will need:** storyboard from 'Bible story'; marker pens

Invite each child to write or draw their prayer over the dried white paint, where Jesus used to be in the storyboard you created for the Bible story. Ensure there is adequate space for each child. What do they want to say to Jesus?

When everyone has written or drawn what they want to say, thank God for everything the children have prayed and give thanks for the Holy Spirit. Ask God to help us tell people about Jesus wherever we go.

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