**FIRST STEPS TOGETHER:** FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

Session 4 of 4

# Good Friday

### MEETING AIM

To celebrate with the people as Jesus arrives in Jerusalem.

### BIBLE PASSAGE

John 18-19

### BACKGROUND

This session plan is intended for use either in-person or online, depending on how you’re meeting. Adapt the activities to fit your particular situation.

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.

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### 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 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 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, making sure everyone has the chance 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 TIME – 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 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.

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