

## Easter Story: The Crucifixion

**Text:** Luke 23:13-56

**Aim:** To teach that Jesus died in our place.



### Preparation

**Read Luke 23:13-56. Answer the following questions:**

- What had Jesus been found guilty of? (23:14-15, 22, 41)
- What two signs accompanied Jesus' death? (23:44-46)
- How are these significant? (See Exodus 26:31-33; Leviticus 16:2; Joel 2:31)
- When he saw how Jesus had died, how did the centurion respond? (23:44-47)

Darkness in the Bible is a sign of God's judgment. Jesus experienced God's judgment on the cross as he died for our sin. His death opened the way for us to be friends with God. Before his death only the high priest could have access to the presence of God behind the curtain on the Day of Atonement. At the point of Jesus' death that barrier (caused by sin), was removed. Anyone can now be friends with God by trusting in Jesus and his death on the cross in their place. He took our punishment so that we can be friends with God.

It is important that we teach children from the youngest possible age that they, like everyone else, are sinners who need the forgiveness that Jesus offers. Pray for each of the children you teach, asking God to help you teach this important lesson.

Pray that they would trust Jesus to forgive their sin so that they can be friends with God.



### Visual Aids

**Before your lesson, gather the following visual aids:**

- Pieces of blank paper (about 1/4 of an A4 sheet), one for each child.
- Pictures of things children like e.g. tractor, rabbit, flower, boat, (enough for one for each child).
- A Children's Bible containing the story of the crucifixion with age-appropriate pictures.



## Lesson

Remind the children that they have been learning wonderful things about Jesus. See if they can remember some of them. Who is Jesus? Jesus is God. Remind them about Jesus entering Jerusalem on a donkey.

Give each of the children a piece of blank paper. Tell them that you have a piece of paper too – show them the pictures you have. Ask the children if any of them would like to swap their blank piece of paper for one of your pictures. If they say ‘Yes’ they must give you their piece of paper in exchange. Talk about why they wanted to swap. Which one was better? Did they like one more?

Today’s true story from the Bible is about someone who made a swap. But this person swapped something very good for something very bad. Retell the story simply, showing the children the pictures from the Children’s Bible.

“Jesus taught many people the truth about God. The priests became very angry because the people listened to Jesus and did not listen to them. So the priests sent soldiers to arrest Jesus. They told lies about Jesus and said that he had done bad things, but Jesus had never done anything wrong. Can the children think of some of the kind things Jesus did for people?

Then they took Jesus’ cloak. They hit him and they killed him [children will take their cue from you. It is fine (and necessary) to relate the facts of Jesus’ death simply and honestly without being too graphic or sensational]. When Jesus died the whole sky went dark. The sun stopped shining to show that Jesus (who had never done anything wrong), was being punished for all the wrong and bad things that people do. Then Jesus’ friends put his body in a tomb and rolled a big stone in front so no-one could get in.”

Talk to the children about times when they are naughty. (Young children will be reluctant to admit that they get things wrong so you will need to prompt them!) Do they ever take things that aren’t theirs? Are they rude to their friends? Do they sometimes shout at their mummies and daddies? Explaining that you sometimes do these things will help them to admit their own sin.

What happens when they are naughty? Do they get told off? Do they have to say sorry? Explain that when we are naughty it makes our mummies and daddies sad and it makes God sad too. The Bible calls that sin and it stops us being friends with God.

Jesus never did anything wrong. He never hurt people. He was never mean. He always loved God.

Jesus didn’t deserve to be punished, but he was punished for all the naughty things that we do. He swapped his friendship with God for our punishment so that we can be friends with God. That was a very kind thing for Jesus to do!

Are the children happy that Jesus did such a kind thing for them?



## Activity

Choose either Activity A or Activity B.

**Activity A** – For a simple craft print Activity A from the Media section of this webpage onto paper for each child. The children colour in the picture. Remind the children that when Jesus died the curtain was torn in two to show that we can now be friends with God.

**Activity B** – Print Activity B from the Media section of this webpage onto paper for each child. The children colour in the picture. Also provide each child with a rectangle of blue or purple cloth the same size as marked on the page. Only glue the bottom, left and right edges of the cloth to the page as marked. Then as you remind the children of the story cut each curtain down the middle so that it looks like it's been torn from top to bottom (Mark 15:38). Could the priest have torn the curtain? No, God tore the curtain to show that we can now be friends with him because Jesus died on the cross.



## Game Idea

**Option 1: Stick or Swap?** Give each child a small toy e.g. building block, toy car, shaker. Show the children a large opaque bag you have brought with you and filled with other items e.g. a shower cap, banana, doll, cuddly bear, toy boat, spoon. (They don't all have to be better!) Tell them they can swap their toy for something in the bag without looking. Offer each child the chance to swap in turns – all they must do is give you the toy they already have in return.

If none of the children want to swap at first try showing them one of the better items from in the bag.

Talk to the children about why they wanted to swap. Which one was better/worse? Remind them that Jesus swapped his place in heaven for death on the cross so that we could be friends with God.

**Option 2: Stuck in the mud.** The children move around the room and one child is chosen to tag the others. When a child is tagged they need to stand still and wait to be rescued. The leader touches them on the shoulder to free them.

Remind the children that Jesus died so that we could be free from the punishment for the naughty things we do think and say.



## Prayer

*Thank you, Jesus, that you died on the cross so that we can be friends with God. Amen.*

You could also encourage the children to pray. They might each say in turn, "Thank you,

Jesus, that I can be friends with God.”

## Reinforcement

Print the Reinforcement Slip page from the Media section of this webpage and give one slip to each child to take home. This will encourage parents to reinforce today's lesson. Alternatively, you could copy the text below and edit as appropriate for your context. This can then be printed or emailed to parents.

### **Today your child learned that Jesus died in our place.**

To reinforce this lesson this week:

1. Use times when your child is naughty to explain that this makes Mummy and Daddy sad and it makes God sad too. They need to say sorry/ask forgiveness. Jesus died to take the punishment we deserve so that we can be forgiven when we say sorry.
2. Try to get across the idea of 'swapping' with someone else e.g. with our toys when playing; with our food/snacks; with the book we are reading. Talk about why they want to swap and what it involves. Remind your child that Jesus swapped places with us and took our punishment on the cross so that we could be friends with God.

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