



RE Easter Planning for Primary

Session 1

Ask pupils why they think Easter is important to Christians. Collect their responses at this stage.

Explain that Easter is a festival that occurs in spring to remember a very important part of the Bible. Remind pupils that Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus at Christmas. Christians believe that Jesus is God come to Earth. The life of Jesus and many things he said and did are found in the Gospels in the Bible. The Easter story is one of sadness, followed by great happiness.

Tell the Easter story, right through from Palm Sunday to the Resurrection using a children's Bible or the International Children's Bible on Bible Gateway (start at Matthew Chapter 21). You can have children join in for some of it (waving palms they have made, washing each other's feet, sharing the last supper) but it would be respectful to not role play the more sombre elements of the story.

Younger Children:

Use the images in the accompanying resource sheet to re-tell the story or invite children to do their own drawings on the re-tell template.

For a fun activity, create a 'pass the parcel' with this on the top layer:



At each layer that is unwrapped, insert a picture (use those on the resource sheet) so that they unwrap them in this order:

- Palm Sunday
- The Last supper
- The Garden of Gethsemane

- The Trial of Jesus
- The Crucifixion
- The Resurrection

When they get to the image of the resurrection at the centre, you may want to also include some small chocolate eggs. Eggs are a symbol of new life, as seen in the resurrected body of Jesus.

This is also a good time to talk about the symbolism of Hot Cross Buns (if you can get any!) and their meaning at Easter time.

Older Children:

Explain that they are going to be writing a diary for Mary, the mother of Jesus, for three important days in Holy Week: Jesus entering Jerusalem (Palm Sunday), the day Jesus died (Good Friday), and the day Jesus came back to life (Easter Sunday). Retell the story again simply. After each part of the story, stop and discuss what Mary might think about this. How does she feel and how did the disciples feel? What do people think about her son at this part of the story? What about the events surprised her? Ask them to come up with some questions to ask Mary. Write the diary entries for each part of the story from Mary's perspective. How did it make them feel to write this? Is there a difference between how Christians and people with other religious or non-religious worldviews respond to this story?

You could also do this task choosing Peter instead of Mary.

Session 2

Younger Children:

Discuss what they find happy and sad about the story of Easter. Discuss some other emotions; for example, angry, excited, surprised, worried, scared. Encourage them to show these using their faces and bodies and talk about times when they feel each one. Show pictures of the six parts of the story. Can they match at least one emotion to each part of the story? You can use the feelings and emotions emoji sheet for this.

Give them time to reflect on the way the story changes from sadness to happiness, or from darkness to light. Give them a chance to paint some dark marks on a page, perhaps listening to some quiet music, then to paint some bright colours, with joyous music accompanying. Ask them to talk about what it might feel like when something good happens after something sad.

For very young pupils just use 'happy' and 'sad'.

Talk about the Christian belief that Jesus rises from his tomb (resurrection) and even appears and speaks to people that he used to know (starting with the women who have come to his tomb to anoint his body with herbs and perfumes, and then his disciples). Explain that Jesus rising from his tomb shows Christians that after they die, they can also have a new life, a life with God in heaven.

Look at different decorated eggs (Google these or use natural dyes such as red onion, blueberries, etc to create your own decorated eggs) and talk about the symbolism of these at Easter as indicating new life. Paint/draw own decorated eggs. Countries with Orthodox Christians make great use of decorated eggs in their observance of Pascha Easter and a Google search will turn up some beautiful examples that could be recreated to capture the joy of the resurrection.

Older Children:

Ask them to think of a time in their life when they felt joy, another time when they felt sadness and another time when they were excited or full of hope. What made them feel like this? How long did these times last? Did they do anything because of these feelings?

Now is a good time to watch the film '*Inside Out*', which explores emotions vividly!

For Christians there are three parts to the story of Easter, moving from joy (triumphal entry) to sadness/despair (crucifixion) to hope (resurrection). Look at examples of different crosses on the internet and ask them to create a triptych (see template), designing a cross to match each of the 3 emotions (joy/sadness/hope).

Session 3

Younger children:

Look at some artworks depicting the last days of Jesus' life. This is a useful site for that: <https://thevcs.org/> Invite children to do their own drawings to represent different parts of the story.

Older Children:

Explore the 'stations of the cross', a series of images depicting Jesus on the day of his crucifixion. For information on each one see:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stations_of_the_Cross

Invite children to make their own stations to stick up around the house or to create a book.

Session 4

Younger children:

Introduce the word 'salvation' and explain that this means 'to be saved'. Show the salvation graphic and explain the Christian belief that when Jesus died on the cross he bridged the gap between humans and God, bringing them back together again. The resurrection shows that Jesus has overcome death and made eternal life with God possible.

When Jesus died he showed people what God is like. His final words on the cross 'Father forgive them for they know not what they are doing'- tell us a lot about Jesus. If you want to, make the link to the words 'Father Forgive' on the ruined wall of Coventry Cathedral and discuss times when we are called to follow Jesus' example and forgive when people hurt us.

Older children:

Discuss the Christian idea of Jesus's death being a sacrifice for others, giving his life to save them from their sins and bring them back to God. Explain that Christians remember Jesus' death and resurrection throughout the year, through the celebration of Communion/Mass/Eucharist. This is a good link for looking at this:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/clips/zwcd2hv>

Finish your Easter sequence with some quiet reflection using the Holy Week Labyrinth (see resource sheet). A labyrinth is a prayer tool used by Christians.