

One person, one purpose...

THREE DAYS

Preparing for Easter



THREE DAYS

Introduction

The 'Three Days' resource pack contains 5 films and 5 Bible studies.

It can be used with a group in your chapel/church, or at home, or individuals may use it to learn more about Easter and its implications.

If you wish to invite others to reflect on the Easter message with you, flyers are available to download for distribution. There is also a poster available which can be edited so that details such as time and meeting place can be added. These are available from www.ebcpcw.cymru or www.beibl.net

The resource pack is freely available to use on condition that the central message of the Christian Easter is presented:

1. Jesus Christ is the Son of God:

And a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:17)

2. Jesus died on the cross for our sins:

God made him who had no sin to be sin (or a sin offering) for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

3. He rose again and lives today in heaven:

That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms. (Ephesians 1:19b-20)

...regarding his Son, who as to his earthly life was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 1:3b-4)

General guidelines

To ensure that the Bible studies run smoothly, leaders should prepare beforehand by familiarising themselves with the study materials.

Suggestions on how leaders can prepare:

- Preview the films; read through the study materials, noting the main aim and objectives; read the guidelines for ideas and background information; select the questions to be discussed.

The films – free downloads are available from the

- Presbyterian Church of Wales website (www.ebcpcw.cymru);
- beibl.net YouTube channel
- or on CD, email: gwyn@ebcpcw.cymru to request a copy

Other preparations –

1. **Publicise** the series of studies beforehand. Choose a day and a time which is convenient for most people; use it as a Sunday School syllabus or as a midweek study. It can also be used as a basis for a series of sermons in the weeks leading up to Easter.
2. **Timing:** each study is expected to last an hour. It is important to divide the time wisely, allocating time for everyone to arrive and settle down; listen to the presentation; listen to (or participate in) the readings; watch the film and then discuss the various topics.
3. **Resources:** a white screen or wall will be required, a computer or television or overhead projector (depending on your choice of technology); Bibles (the NIV is used in the films but everyone is welcome to use the version most familiar to them); copies of the studies.
4. **Venue:** it is important to ensure that the venue is welcoming and that chairs are set out in a way that makes it possible for everyone to see the film. What about providing tea and biscuits during the meeting?
5. **Preparations re: Bible readings:** readings from the Bible are included in each of the study materials, so there is a need to consider how they are to be presented. Will the leader read the verses or will others volunteer to read? It's important to remember that not everyone is willing to read publicly, however small the group.

THREE DAYS

It can also be embarrassing for people if they are unable to find the verses in the Bible. Should Bible references be printed out for the group or should the page number be given before it is read? On the other hand, it can be argued that having to find Bible references helps people to become more familiar with the Bible.

6. **Prayer** – praying before the meeting is vital. Prayers are found within the studies so that everyone is given an opportunity to be still and focus on the Lord.

Notes on the guidelines and studies:

We have taken into account that the usual length of midweek meetings or Sunday services is about an hour. It isn't possible to include everything about Easter in 5 short films and 5 studies! We have concentrated on the most significant events of the Easter period, namely the Last Supper, Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, the court appearance before Pilate, the Crucifixion and the Resurrection.

Our hope and prayer, is that the films and studies – on the basis of what is written in the Bible – give people the opportunity to seriously consider the real meaning of Easter and the significance of those events in their lives.

The events of those three days had **one purpose** – God was preparing the way for the people of the world to be saved.

Only **one person** could fulfil that purpose – Jesus Christ, the Son of God

Terms used in the studies

Blasphemy/to blaspheme – to misuse God’s name or do something which insults Him. This was punishable by death in the Old Testament (Leviticus 24:10-23).

Easter / Passover / The Festival of Unleavened Bread – The Hebrew word for Easter, *pesach*, means ‘to pass over’.

In the book of Exodus (chapter 12), God issues detailed instructions on killing the Easter Lamb and keeping the Festival of Unleavened Bread. The blood of the lamb was to be smeared on the sides and top of door-frames. When the angel saw the blood, he would pass over that house (1 Peter 1:18-19). Obedience to these instructions would be an expression of faith in God by the people of Israel. Unleavened bread (bread without yeast) was used because yeast was a symbol of sin (1 Corinthians 5: 6-8).

Glorify – God’s glory is something which appears (Exodus 16:10), is revealed (Isaiah 40:5), or is witnessed (Numbers 14:22). In John 17:5, Jesus refers to the glory that he experienced with the Father before the world began. The words ‘honour’ and ‘splendour’ are also used to convey the same concept.

Herod – (not the same Herod as seen in the Nativity story). This is Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great. He became ruler of Galilee and Perea following the death of Herod the Great (4BC to 39AD). He is called king in the Gospels of Mark and Matthew.

Holy Spirit – the third person of the Trinity. God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Jesus had promised that his spirit would be sent to the world after he had returned to his Father in heaven (John 14:15-17)

Israelites/ the Jews – God’s special people. God had chosen them as his own people. (Deuteronomy 14:2)

Offering – similar to the idea of sacrifice as seen above, together with the notion of something which is given.

Pilate – a Roman who was appointed Prefect of Judea by the Emperor Tiberius. He went there to live, accompanied by his wife. As prefect, he ruled the region with the might of the Roman army. He had the authority to sentence people to death.

THREE DAYS

Priests – the descendants of Aaron (Numbers 3:1-10), appointed to offer sacrifices to God on behalf of the people, and teach His law to the people. The priests stood between God and the people. By the time of Jesus Christ, hundreds of rules and interpretations had been added to the Law of God and many priests were corrupt and self-righteous.

Prophecy – foretelling what is to happen. It has been defined as “miraculous information, a statement or description of something to come, beyond human natural power to foresee, or discover, or speculate.”

Resurrection – Jesus brought many people back from death to life, e.g. Lazarus, Jairus’ daughter, the son of the widow from Nain. This is not the same thing as resurrection. Lazarus (and the others) came back to mortal bodies, which would eventually die “again”. Resurrection is when our spirit is united with a body that will never die.

Sacrifice – in Old Testament times, God commanded his people to sacrifice (give and kill) an animal or bird as payment for their sins. The animal or bird would be slaughtered, and the blood splashed on the altar before the body was burned. This was a daily occurrence. The ritual came to an end when Jesus came as the ‘Lamb of God’ – the final sacrifice offered for all sinners (Hebrews 10:11-12).

Salvation – because Jesus died and rose again two days later, God offers forgiveness for sins and everlasting life to all who believe in Him. Information: the term ‘third day’ follows the Jewish way of counting days. They referred to today as the first day, tomorrow as the second day, and the day after as the third day. Jesus was crucified and buried on Friday, he remained in the grave on the Saturday (the Jewish Sabbath) and rose early on the Sunday, two days after his death.

Sin – doing that which is the opposite of God’s will. Not just ‘obvious’ sins, such as murder, but also lies, malice, jealousy, losing one’s temper etc. Everyone sins and are therefore sinners. (Romans 3:23)

1. The Last Supper

Background and guidelines for leaders

3. Introduction.

The purpose of the introduction is to act as an icebreaker, allowing people to settle down and chat informally before the study proper begins. In this introduction we discuss the celebration of important events – something common to all families. It is hoped that this can then be linked to the Jewish Easter – which was/is an important occasion celebrated with a special meal

6. Discussion Questions.

Leaders should choose the topics most suitable for the group. It is possible to discuss every question – but keep an eye on the clock!

Background:

- The History of the Jews as slaves in Egypt and then gaining their freedom.**
Exodus 1 – the Jews are treated badly in exile; the Pharaoh's plan to kill every newborn Jewish son.
Exodus 3 – God calls Moses to save his people.
Exodus 12 – the tenth plague – the killing of the first-born son, and God's specific instructions to save the sons of the Israelites.
- Jesus, the Lamb of God: what is the connection between the events?**
 The blood of a perfect lamb (an unblemished lamb) saved the people from death in Egypt. Jesus' blood on the cross saves people from their sin and allows them to have a real and meaningful relationship with God.

Verses to support and further develop the question:

... Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die.'
 (John 11: 25–26)

But when this priest (the Messiah) had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. (Hebrews 10:12)

Other verses on the same theme: John 1:29; Acts 8:32; 1 Peter 1:18–19; Revelation 7:14, 17

THREE DAYS

- **Jesus as bread:**

Familiar food; everyday food. Here we have a simple, easily understood image. However, we must remember that it is only an image! Jesus is so much better than our daily bread because He never goes mouldy or stale!

Comparing Jesus to bread also reminds us of the manna, the heavenly bread provided by God to feed the Israelites during their time roaming the desert. Manna was sent from heaven and was their daily sustenance, given fresh every morning – as is Jesus! The background information can be found in Exodus 16 (NB verse 7).

- In Luke 22:19 Jesus says that his body is 'given for' us on the cross. What does this suggest about Jesus' love towards us? Here are some verses to give guidance (there are many more verses about God's love in the Bible).
 - Sacrificial love: Romans 5:8
 - 'Voluntary' love: John 10:17-18;
 - Never-ending love: Ephesians 3:18-19
 - God takes the first step: 1 John 4:19

- **Preparing for Communion:** 1 Corinthians 11:27-29

We should not take Communion in a thoughtless manner. Communion symbolises an act of such magnitude and importance, namely the death of Jesus, and his sacrifice on the cross, that everyone should search their own hearts and question whether they understand what they are doing. The guidelines in 1 Corinthians 11 are very clear.

7. From a different perspective.

- Different responses are to be expected. Leaders should think about what they themselves are going to say and prepare beforehand.

It is perhaps worth noting some of the remarks made by the disciples during the Last Supper: Luke 22:33; John 14:9; John 16:17-18. These verses reinforce the fact that none of the disciples fully understood what was about to happen nor did they understand the real meaning of Jesus' words. This might help when considering the situation.

Bible Study 1: The Last Supper

1. Aims and Objectives.

- To learn more about Jesus' Last Supper with his disciples and to understand the significance of the bread and wine.
- To understand the connection between the first Passover, when the Jews escaped from Egypt, and what is remembered at Communion.

2. Opening Prayer.

(loosely based on Psalm 25)

O LORD, we turn to you in prayer. No one who trusts in you is ever disappointed. We want to follow your paths, LORD, and learn more about you. You are the LORD who saves. Open our eyes so that we understand the meaning and purpose of the Last Supper. Help us to remember the sacrifice made by Jesus Christ, your son on the cross as we learn more about his final meal on earth, and the symbolism of the bread and wine. Amen!

3. Introduction.

- How do you remember or celebrate important events in your family e.g. birthdays? Do you invite anyone to these events? If so, who and why?

4. Bible Reading - Luke 22:7-23

In Jesus' day, as well as today, Jews remembered an important event in their history by gathering for a special meal, the *Passover* meal. The Passover is a special event which commemorates God freeing the Jews from slavery in Egypt in the time of Moses and giving them a new land and a new life.

The Passover feast was the final meal that Jesus had with his disciples before his crucifixion. During this meal, Jesus told his disciples that they should continue to come together to eat bread and drink wine to remember - not the escape from Egypt - but his crucifixion. This is why churches and chapels hold Communion services today.

We are now going to watch a film to learn more about Jesus' Last Supper with his disciples.

5. Film: The Last Supper

THREE DAYS

6. Discussion Questions.

There is no need to discuss every question. Choose the topics which appeal most, or are most suitable for you as a group.

1. The Jews were saved in Egypt because they painted the blood of an unblemished lamb on the doorframes of their houses. In John 1:29 Jesus is called 'the Lamb of God'.
 - a. Jesus says in Luke 22:20 that his blood is poured out for us. What is the connection between Jesus' words during the Last Supper and what happened to the lamb in Egypt?
2. Jesus compares himself to bread in Luke 22:19 and John 6:32-35. After reading the verses, consider how Jesus is similar to bread.
3. Jesus says in Luke 22:19 that his body is given for us. What does this suggest about Jesus' love for us?
4. The disciples prepared for the Passover. Do we need to prepare ourselves for Communion? Read 1 Corinthians 11:27-29 for guidance.

7. A different perspective.

Try to put yourself in the scene.

How would you respond to Jesus' words saying that he will die i.e. his body will be broken, and his blood poured out for you?

8. Closing Prayer.

Our Father, thank you for this opportunity to look at the Last Supper together, and to remember Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. We thank you that we've had the opportunity to remember that Jesus gave his body and poured out his blood for us. We pray that you, the true God, will help us live together in peace as we learn more about you. Amen!

2. The Garden of Gethsemane

Background and guidelines for leaders

3. Introduction

An icebreaker which gives people an opportunity to settle down and chat informally before the study proper begins. In this introduction we talk about gardens. As the study focuses on the events in the Garden of Gethsemane, this provides an opportunity for people to think about the setting of the story and to realise that everything happens in the open air, in a public place.

6. Discussion Questions.

Leaders should choose the topics most suitable for the group. It is possible to discuss every question – but keep an eye on the clock!

Background:

The events in the Garden of Eden (also known as the 'Fall') – how people broke God's rules, rebelled against Him and turned their back on Him can be found in Genesis 3. (The snake/serpent – the devil, the arch-enemy of God and humanity).

6 (1)

Adam: 'condemnation for all people' (Romans 5:18)

Jesus: 'eternal salvation' (Hebrews 5:9)

Two events, two gardens – two sets of consequences in complete contrast to each other.

By nature, we are 'children of Adam' – with our sin separating us from God.

Through faith in Jesus, we become 'children of God' – our sins are forgiven, and we are therefore able to call God father and draw near to him.

Verses to support and further develop the question: Romans 5:19; 1 Corinthians 15:22; 45-49

6(2)

Spiritually, Jesus suffered greatly. He sweated blood and knew that he would have to drink from the cup of God's wrath and anger. His spiritual suffering was worse than his physical suffering. He was facing separation from his Heavenly Father. The weight of the world's sin was on his shoulders and he knew what lay ahead of him. It could be suggested that the seriousness of the situation drove him to his knees.

- **What is prayer?**

Quite simply – speaking with God.

THREE DAYS

- **What is the purpose of prayer?**

There are many possible responses. Without regular prayer it isn't possible to have a healthy, fruitful relationship with God, e.g. if we stop speaking to a friend or family member, it indicates that there are problems within the relationship. In the same way, if we don't speak with God, that is a sign that all is not well with us spiritually.

By praying we are able to come near to God; to thank him; to praise him; to ask for help; to pray for others and so on. There is much that can be said about prayer.

- **The word 'earnest':** can be defined in many ways, it can be used to convey a sense of urgency; it can mean pressing, insistent and persistent. The purpose of the question is to indicate that prayer is a privilege, as it allows us to speak with God and it should not be taken lightly. The Lord is more likely to respond to earnest, heartfelt prayers.

Other verses on the same theme: Matthew 6:7; Ephesians 6:18; 1 Timothy 2:1; James 1:6; James 4:3; James 5:16; Psalm 66:18

- **Which difficult experiences was Jesus facing?**

- Public humiliation – being arrested and dragged in front of the Sanhedrin; hanging naked on a cross.
- Physical suffering – being whipped; being beaten; spat upon; crucified.
- Mental anguish – being insulted; being belittled.
- Spiritual suffering – being separated from his Heavenly Father; being made a curse for us.

6(3)

Isaiah 53:5, 7-8 / Mark 14:63-65

Here you should work through the prophecy and compare it with what happened to Jesus. Every word of the prophecy came to pass.

Personal response – this will be different for each person. Remember that the word **before** is important here. The story of the crucifixion may be familiar to some but often what happened to Jesus in the days and hours before He was crucified is less well known.

7. From a different perspective

Again, a variety of responses can be expected. Leaders should be ready to contribute and to point out that there is no 'wrong' answer. Honesty is required here!

Bible Study 2: The Garden of Gethsemane

1. Aims and objectives.

- To learn more about Jesus' suffering in the garden.
- To think about Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane and ponder on it.
- To consider the actions of the disciples after Jesus was arrested.

2. Opening Prayer.

O God, you give us life, and life in all its fullness. Help us to study your word and learn more about the time Jesus spent in the Garden of Gethsemane. We thank Jesus for giving his life for us. Amen!

3. Introduction.

Are you interested in gardens? Do gardens have a specific purpose? Have you ever taken a trip to a special garden e.g. Aberglasney; Bodnant; Dyffryn? What appeals to you about a garden? Is a garden a place of work or of relaxation?

4. Bible Reading – Mark 14:32-50

5. Film: The Garden of Gethsemane

6. Discussion Questions.

There is no need to discuss every question. Choose the topics that appeal most to you as a group.

1. Read Romans 5:18/ Hebrews 5:9

- What happened as a result of Adam's disobedience in the Garden of Eden?
- What happened as a result of Jesus' obedience in the Garden of Gethsemane?

2. Read Luke 22:39-44

- Why do you think Jesus went on his knees to pray? (This was not the usual practice of Jews at the time – Luke 18:11,13).
- What is prayer? What is the purpose of prayer?

THREE DAYS

- Have you tasted a bitter tasting drink e.g. soured milk / lemon juice? How did you respond to the sour taste?

The image of the 'bitter cup' is used several times in the Bible. Jeremiah 25:15 / Isaiah 51:17 / Revelation 14:10 – the bitter cup contains the anger or wrath of God.

We use the phrase 'bitter cup' when we face difficult experiences such as the death or serious illness of a loved one. Drinking from the cup is a symbol of suffering.

What difficult experiences were awaiting Jesus?

Being without sin means being completely faithful and obedient to God. Only Jesus is totally without sin, as he was faithful and obedient to his death.

3. Read Isaiah 53:5,7-8 / Mark 14:63-65

- Isaiah was a prophet who lived around 700 years before Jesus was born. Which parts of his prophecy are seen to come true in these words from Mark's gospel?
- How do you respond to all the physical and spiritual suffering experienced by Jesus **before** he was crucified?

7. A different perspective.

Try to put yourself in the scene.

- After the arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane would you have followed Jesus from afar, would you have run away or would you have remained in the garden? Explain why.
- At Caiaphas' house, how would you have responded to the accusation, "You also were with Jesus of Galilee." Explain why.

8. Closing Prayer.

We thank you, Father, for Jesus' obedience in the garden of Gethsemane. We pray that you, through the Messiah Jesus, will help us to do that which pleases you. You are worthy of our praise forever! Amen!

3. Jesus, Pilate, Barabbas

Background and guidelines for Leaders

3. Introduction:

The presentation this time is more generalised to allow people to look back at all that has happened and ensure that everyone is aware of the chronological sequence of events

6. Discussion Questions.

6(1)

- **Barabbas** –
a murderer; a terrorist; in jail.
- **The chief-priests and the Jewish leaders** –
had been 'persuading' the crowd to ask for Barabbas' release – underhand, deceitful and dishonest behaviour. They wanted to see Jesus killed. Jealousy was at the root of both their actions and accusations against Jesus.

6(2)

- **'Look, here is the man'** –
think about what had happened to Jesus physically since leaving the Garden of Gethsemane – he had been whipped; a crown of thorns had been placed on his head; he had been beaten (additional verses, John 18:22; Matthew 27:67).

6(3)

- **He refused to answer his accusers:**
thus, fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy. Note that he answered Pilate but not his accusers. Nor did he answer Herod.

Various answers could be suggested but it's certain that Herod had no interest in Jesus as the Son of God nor as Messiah. Herod wanted only to be entertained, Luke 23:8-9.

In the same way, the Jewish leaders weren't looking for the truth and wouldn't have listened had Jesus spoken to them. Their lie-based conspiracy had led to the 'court case'. Jesus was both innocent and fulfilling the will of God, therefore there was no need for him to argue his case with his accusers, Matthew 7:6.

THREE DAYS

6(4)

- **Jesus' suffering** – without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. In Hebrews 9:13-14, reference is made to the Old Testament system whereby the Jewish priests made a daily sacrifice for the sins of the people. This sacrificial system came to an end with Jesus' sacrifice on the cross.
- **The result of Jesus' sacrifice:** salvation; deliverance; forgiveness – John 3:16-17; Hebrews 9:12; John 14:6

7. From a different perspective –

Remember that Pilate's wife had sent him a message, saying, *"Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him."* (Matthew 27:19)

Pilate knew that jealousy was the motivation for the accusations against Jesus. He knew that he was condemning an innocent man because he was afraid of the crowd. How would he have justified his actions? Would he have admitted that he was at fault? Would he have said that he had avoided a riot and quelled the mob? Would he have said that it wasn't important – what was the big deal about one man so far away from Rome, the centre of authority? What would he have said in response to his wife's nightmare?



Bible Study 3. Jesus, Pilate and Barabbas

1. Aims and Objectives.

- to learn more about Jesus' suffering.
- To learn more about the court case when Jesus appeared before Pilate.
- To learn why Barabbas was released.

2. Opening Prayer.

(loosely based on Psalm 36)

Our Father, you are the fountain of life; your light allows us to see. Jesus suffered so that we could come to know you, the one true God. Help us as we think more about the life and death of Jesus. Amen!

3. Introduction.

Summary of the events up to this point.

We have learnt more about the Last Supper and Jesus' arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus was betrayed by Judas, the disciples abandoned him and Peter denied knowing him. We know that he faced an unfair court case and suffered violence.

Today's events begin events as a new day dawns – the day we call Good Friday.

4. Bible Reading – Matthew 27:1, 11-26.

5. Film: Jesus, Pilate and Barabbas

6. Discussion Questions:

There is no need to discuss every question. Choose the topics that appeal most to you as a group.

1. Read Matthew 27:20; Mark 15:6-11

- What do you learn about Barabbas?
- What do you learn about the high-priests and Jewish leaders?

2. Read John 19:1-5

- Jesus suffered physically. When Pilate said to the crowd, "Look, here's the man!" can you see in your mind what the crowd would have seen?

THREE DAYS

3. Read Matthew 27:11-14; Luke 23:8-9; Isaiah 53:7

- Why do you think Jesus refused to answer his accusers (the Jewish leaders)?

4. Read Hebrews 9:22; 26b-28

- Why did Jesus 'have to' suffer?
- What does Jesus' sacrifice mean for us?

7. A different perspective.

Try putting yourself in the scene.

- *'I do not find him guilty of any crime,' said Pilate to the Jewish leaders (Luke 23:4).* After returning home that night and speaking with his wife, how do you think Pilate would have justified his decision to hand Jesus over to be executed?

8. Closing Prayer.

(loosely based on Hebrews 9:26-28)

We thank you, God, for Jesus' obedience. He suffered so much in our place. Jesus came once and for all to defeat sin by sacrificing himself. Just as everyone dies once, and after that faces judgement, Jesus was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people so that they might receive forgiveness. We give thanks for his sacrifice on the cross and the promise of new life given through his resurrection. Amen!



4. The Crucifixion

Background and guidelines for leaders

3. Introduction: The introduction this time underlines the gravity and seriousness of this part of the Easter events.

6. Discussion Questions.

6(1)

- Luke 23:34 – Who was around him? The Roman soldiers; the Jewish leaders; the mocking crowd.

Jesus' emphasis was on forgiveness and therefore we should also be able to forgive, e.g. what is said about forgiveness in the Lord's Prayer. Do we forgive? How easy is it to forgive our enemies?

- Luke 23:43 – one thief continued to mock and curse Jesus while the other acknowledged that Jesus was innocent. One was ready to admit that he was guilty and deserved his punishment while the other was completely unrepentant before God.

John 19:26 – his practical care towards his mother and his dear friend. These two people, so loved by Jesus, would provide comfort for one another. Jesus trusted his friend to look after his mother, and John in turn responded obediently, taking her into his home. Here we see the practical side of Jesus' love, even in the midst of his suffering.

- Mark 15:34, 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:22-23; Psalm 22:1 – God turns his back on his son/ leaves his son on the cross:

Jesus had been made 'sin' / a sacrifice for sin. The punishment for sin is death (Romans 6:23), both physical and spiritual. The final price was being paid for the sins of the world. God allowed his son to suffer and die on the cross. Jesus had to suffer and die so that we (those who believe in him) can have a relationship with God and so that death loses its hold on us. We can never understand nor imagine how much the Lord Jesus suffered when he was separated from his Father.

THREE DAYS

- John 19:28, Jesus' thirst underlines not only His suffering, but the fact that He had left his glory in heaven and had come to earth to face the same temptations as us, and that he was 'truly human', experiencing the same needs as us, even though he was also God. Here are a few additional verses on the subject: Hebrews 2:14-15.

6(2)

It is finished (John 19:30, Romans 5:6, 8-10):

Jesus was the final sacrifice for the sins of humankind. He paid the price, once and for all, and by believing in him, it is possible to enter into a full relationship with God. The Greek word for 'It is finished' is 'tetelestai', which means "payment in full". Jesus paid in full the price for sin, writing off the debt for ever.

Illustration: in olden days, people used to buy goods 'on credit' – the shopkeeper's book would show that there was a debt to pay. When the debt was paid, the record would be crossed out in the book. Jesus' action can be compared to someone other than the debtor going to the shop with money to pay off the debt. A well-known Welsh hymn '*Wele cawsom y Meseia*' – no.441 which can be found in the hymn book *Caneuon Ffydd* – makes use of this image in the second verse '*croesi biliau'r nef*' (crossing out the debts owed to heaven).

6(3).

Luke 23:46, John 10:17

People will most certainly respond in differing ways, but for most people, knowing that the cross is not the end of the story gives them comfort. After his death, Jesus' spirit was safe with God the Father. He would be resurrected. Jesus gave himself voluntarily because he lives to please his Father and is completely obedient to him.

Additional verses: Matthew 27:50; 1 Corinthians 15:55-57; Psalm 18:5-6.

6(4).

Again, there is likely to be a variety of responses. Here are some facts to note: the Jewish leaders had been plotting against Jesus for some time; they had paid Judas to betray him; they had agitated the crowd against him; they wanted him to die quickly and wanted his legs broken to make certain of this. Their minds refused to accept the possibility that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God. Their hearts were hardened against him. We can only assume that the soldier at the foot of the Cross was seeing everything with fresh eyes. He saw Jesus hanging on the Cross and heard his final words. His conscience must have been stirred and his eyes opened to realise that Jesus truly was the Son of God.

7. From a different perspective

There is no 'wrong' response. Looking at the evidence, it is obvious that the women knew Jesus well and had spent much time in his company whilst travelling through Galilee. They had chosen to follow, and care, for him. They were friends with his mother and knew the disciples. They were certainly among the people crying at the side of the road as Jesus walked towards Golgotha. They were filled with sadness; disbelief; fear and fright; despair... there are so many things that could be said.

8: In conclusion

What does Jesus' death on the cross mean to you?

There will be many different responses – it may not mean much to some, but to others it will mean everything. This is perhaps an opportunity to share personal experiences – about becoming a believer for the first time, about understanding the meaning of the Cross. There is no 'wrong' answer as the question demands a personal response.



Bible Study 4: The Crucifixion

1. Aims and objectives.

- To learn more as to why Jesus died on the cross.
- To learn more about the effect his death had on those present at the time.

2. Opening Prayer.

(loosely based on John 3:16)

Our Father help us as we think more about Jesus' death on the cross. Help us to understand the great truths we will encounter during our time together. We want to understand the greatness of your love for us. In John's gospel, we learn that you so loved the world that you gave your only Son, so that everyone who follows Him can have eternal life. Help us meet your son possibly for the first time, or help us to know him better, by learning more about his crucifixion. Amen!

3. Introduction.

We have followed Jesus' journey from the Last Supper to the Garden of Gethsemane; from Caiaphas' house to Herod's palace and on to Pilate's headquarters. Today we follow him on his path to the cross. This is the most intense and serious part of Jesus' life as we see Him suffering to the utmost.

4. Bible Reading - Mark 15:21-32.

5. Film: The Crucifixion

6. Discussion Questions: There is no need to discuss every question. Choose the topics which appeal most to you as a group.

1. Read Luke 23:34; Luke 23:43; John 19:26; Mark 15:34; John 19:28;

These are some of Jesus' final words

- Luke 23:34 - Who was Jesus forgiving at the time? How are these words relevant to us today?
- Luke 23:43 - what was the main difference between the two thieves i.e. why is it that only one of them was allowed to go to paradise?
- John 19:26 - What do we learn from these words spoken to Mary and John (the disciple whom Jesus loved)?

THREE DAYS

- Mark 15:34; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:22-24; Psalm 22:1 – Jesus suffered greatly, not only physically but also spiritually. He was separated from God his Father because of the weight of sin on his shoulders. Why did God forsake (or turn his back on) Jesus on the cross?
 - John 19:28: Jesus' thirst is noted – why is it important to underline Jesus' human side?
2. Read John 19:30; Romans 5:6, 8-10.
 - What work was finished by Jesus; what was completed by his death on the cross?
 3. Read Luke 23:46 and John 10:17
 - What comfort can we derive from the horrific situation we read about in these verses?
 4. Read John 19:31; Matthew 27:54, 62-64
 - When Jesus died, the world went dark, the earth shook, and boulders were split. The Roman captain and Jewish religious leaders had seen Jesus crucified and were close enough to hear his words. Why was the soldier's response so different from that of the religious men?

7. A different perspective.

Try to put yourself in the scene.

Several women watched the crucifixion from afar, including Mary, Jesus' mother, Mary Magdalen and Salome. *In Galilee these women had followed him and cared for his needs* (Mark 15:41). Put yourself in one of these women's shoes. What would it have been like to stand nearby and see Jesus killed?

8. In conclusion.

What does Jesus' death mean to you?

Prayer.

(based on Hebrews 2:14-15, 4:15)

Our Father, we thank you for Jesus. He came to live amongst us, a person of flesh and blood. Jesus' followers need not fear death. Everyone who believes in him has the promise of life everlasting in heaven. He sympathises with our weaknesses. He is worthy of our praise and honour. We thank him for bearing our sins on the cross so that we can enjoy a full relationship with You, because our sins are forgiven. Amen!

5. The Resurrection

Background and guidelines for Leaders

3. Introduction:

The purpose of this introduction is to highlight the Resurrection as a cause for celebration! It is an opportunity to note the promise of everlasting life in heaven, a promise given to everyone who believes in the living Jesus.

6. Discussion Questions.

6(1)

Isaiah 53:5-12:

700 years before Jesus' incarnation as a baby in Bethlehem, this prophecy refers to his death and resurrection. Every word of this incredible prophecy was fulfilled. The prophecy is part of the evidence that proves that this was all God's plan and that everything is under His authority/governance.

6(2)

Acts 17:2-3:

The Jews were fully versed in / knew / were familiar with the 'Old Testament' (the holy writings). By reading these with them, Paul was able to show that Jesus fulfilled the prophecies about the Messiah. This is important as it shows the perfection of God's plan and that the crucifixion and resurrection did not occur by accident. By using their history and experiences as a nation, Paul was able to show that everything was part of God's plan and that the Messiah had indeed come into the world.

6(3)

Mark 8:31, 9:30-32, 10:33-34

Here again we see God's plan at work. The cross was no 'surprise', it wasn't unexpected. This was the whole purpose of Jesus' life on earth; he came to fulfil all the Old Testament prophecies and to open a way for all who love him to reach heaven. He told the disciples so that they would remember his words after his death. After his resurrection, His words would then make perfect sense to his followers. They would see for themselves that Jesus had foretold the events of Easter. Those words of warning would become words of encouragement and comfort. We could say that the disciples were in a period of training – they were being taught to trust Jesus' words. They would be encouraged by the knowledge that what had happened was not because of Pilate, Herod or the Jewish leaders. A 'good teacher' does not have the ability to describe events in the future in such detail.

6(4)

Romans 6:9; 1 Corinthians 15:50-57

(Additional reference: Isaiah 25:7-8)

To put it simply, God is more powerful than everyone and everything. His power is stronger than the power of death. For us mortals, death is a certainty. Discussing death is still largely taboo, but there is no way to avoid the inevitable; we will eventually experience physical death. Death has a firm hold on humanity.

The Bible is clear that there are two deaths – physical death and spiritual death. It isn't possible to avoid the first. But, through faith in the Lord Jesus and his resurrection from the dead, we can have a new spiritual life and be freed from the fear of spiritual death.

Everyone who trusts in Jesus receives the promise of everlasting life in heaven. Jesus has shared his victory over sin and death with every believer. (I wonder whether the phrase 'body and soul' is still in use today among your group? There is more to a person than just a body.)

6(5)

1 Corinthians 15:3-8; Romans 1:2-4; John 20:26-28

The question requires a personal response and therefore one would expect different answers. Some may be surprised that so many people saw Jesus after his resurrection. Others may be dubious of those verses and will refuse to accept the evidence.

7. Put yourself in the picture

Again, a variety of responses are to be expected.

8. In conclusion.

What does Jesus' resurrection mean to you?

Once again, people will respond in different ways, as the questions demands a personal response. Some will rejoice and give thanks that the Lord Jesus is alive in heaven, listening to, and interceding on behalf of his people. It is entirely possible that some will refuse to accept that Jesus was resurrected and will claim that it's all nonsense (1 Corinthians 1:18). In Philippians 3:7-11, one can read Paul's response to Jesus' resurrection, and how this resulted in his profound change.



Bible Study 5: The Resurrection

1. Aims and objectives.

To learn about the importance of the Resurrection by understanding that it

- fulfils the prophecies of the Old Testament.
- shows God's power and leads to new and eternal life
- provides solid evidence that Jesus lives today.

2. Opening Prayer.

(with reference to John 11:25)

Father, help us to celebrate the resurrection together. Help us to understand the glorious message of Jesus' victory over death given in your word. The resurrection is the promise of new life. Help us to believe in Jesus' words, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die."

Thank you, Heavenly Father, that we have a living Saviour! Amen!

3. Introduction.

Jesus was resurrected, He is alive!

When a baby is born, we celebrate by sending cards and gifts because a new life is something to be treasured and welcomed. The resurrection is a cause for celebration because it's connected to the promise of everlasting life in heaven; a new life lived on a new level. The resurrection means that death has lost its hold on every one of Jesus' followers. Can you imagine a life of joy beyond the grave? This is the promise that comes with the resurrection. Here is a verse that we should treasure:

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

4. Bible Reading - Luke 24:1-12

5. Film: The Resurrection

6. Discussion Questions.

There is no need to discuss every question. Choose the topics that appeal most to you as a group.

The prophecies of the Old Testament were fulfilled when Jesus was resurrected. The resurrection also confirms what Jesus said about himself.

THREE DAYS

1. Read Isaiah 53:5-12

- The prophet Isaiah's book was written around 700 years before the birth of Jesus Christ. What's amazing about what we read in it?

2. Read Acts 17:2-3

- Paul discusses the Holy Scriptures, (what we call the Old Testament) with the Jews of Thessalonica in the synagogue. What could Paul prove by explaining the Old Testament texts to the Jews? Why was this important?

3. Read Mark 8:31, 9:30-32; 10:33-34

- Jesus told his disciples three times that he would die and come back to life. Why did he tell them? How does this prove that he is more than a good teacher?

4. Read Romans 6:9; 1 Corinthians 15:50-57

- The resurrection shows God's power over death. What do these verses teach us about God's power?

5. Read 1 Corinthians 15:3-8; Romans 1:2-4; John 20:26-28

- The resurrection provides strong evidence that Jesus is still alive. How do you respond to the evidence of the eyewitnesses?

The Bible clearly states that Jesus Christ is alive. Jesus is in heaven, seated at the right hand of God and caring for his people.

7. Try to put yourself in the scene.

Acts 2:36-37

Imagine that you are in the crowd listening to Peter's words. How did the crowd respond? How would you have responded?

8. In conclusion.

Revelation 1:17b-18a

What does Jesus' resurrection mean to you?

9. Prayer.

Our Father, we thank you that we have been able to study your word and learn more about Jesus Christ's resurrection. Through the crucifixion and the resurrection, you have shown your power and your love. We give thanks that we no longer live in fear because you are the Beginning and the End, the living one. Hallelujah, Jesus is risen - He is alive! Amen!

Script
Gwenda Jenkins

Translated by
Robin Bryn Williams
(PCW translator)

THREE DAYS production team
Gwenda Jenkins
Catrin Roberts
Nia Wyn Williams
Gwyn Rhydderch

Cover and interior design
Gwyn Rhydderch



Eglwys Bresbyteraidd Cymru
The Presbyterian Church of Wales

