

# THE MYSTERY OF EASTER

AN AT HOME EASTER EXPERIENCE

BY ERIC VERSLUIS



# THE MYSTERY OF EASTER

Welcome to The Mystery of Easter: An At Home Easter Experience. Included in this guide is everything you will need to help your household prepare for Easter by engaging with the story of Jesus in a different way.

## WHAT IS IT?

The Mystery of Easter is made up of six interactive Experiences. Each Experience includes a play-based learning activity, as well as a guided "What You Say" portion that focuses on a story from Jesus' life to help your household answer the question, "Why was Jesus killed"?

For some Experiences, we give you multiple activity options to choose from, depending on the supplies you have on hand, the amount of prep time you want to put in and the skills/interests of the people you are doing the experience with. Every Experience has at least one option that can be done with very basic supplies that you almost definitely already have at home. Each Experience also includes some "Background Texts" from the Bible for you to read for yourself outside of the Mystery of Easter Experience.

The suggested activities and the "What You Say" section for each Experience are just there to serve as a foundation that you can then shape to suit your own personality and context. Feel free to adapt it however you need so that it works for you and the people in your home!

## WHO IS IT FOR?

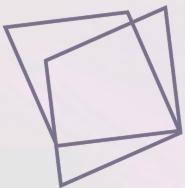
During this Covid season where many of our usual Easter activities might look different, the Mystery Of Easter is designed to work with just the people in your household. Whether you have kids, live with a group of roommates or are a couple, this experience should work for you. It could also be easily adapted to work with friends and family across Zoom or, you could do the activities and readings on your own, like a devotional, if you live by yourself.

Children in SK or younger will probably need to work alongside a parent for some of the activities and the themes of the content will probably make the most sense for kids in elementary age or older, though younger kids will pick up on some themes and benefit from participating in shared family activities.

## HOW DOES IT WORK?

While we suggest that you do go through all 6 Experiences in the order they are presented here, the timing of when you do each Experience is up to you! You could do one Experience a week throughout the season of Lent or two experiences a week for the three weeks leading up to Easter. Conversely, you could do one experience a day for each day of Holy Week or, with some planning and preparation, you could do them all in one day! It's really up to you.

Our only suggestion would be that you complete the entire experience on or before Good Friday. The Mystery of Easter focuses on the life of Jesus and the events leading up to his crucifixion. While it ends on a positive note, it does not follow the story through to the resurrection and Easter Sunday. So we'd suggest making sure you engage with what your local church is doing to celebrate that day well!



# THE MYSTERY OF EASTER

## WHAT ARE WE LEARNING?

The question most often asked about Good Friday is "Why did Jesus die?" The standard answer to this question is that God loved humanity so much that he was willing to give up his life to set us free from sin. And it's true! But if all Jesus did was come to forgive sins, why would people want to kill him?

The concept of The Mystery of Easter is that by simply changing the question from "Why did Jesus die" to "Why was Jesus killed", we can begin to understand the life, death and message of Jesus in a broader, more comprehensive way.

It is only when we consider the whole of Jesus' life and teachings that we begin to see how Jesus was far more radical and revolutionary than we often imagine him to be. Jesus' message wasn't just about transforming individual lives but about changing the way the entire world worked! In this regard, Bruxy Cavey's "Gospel in 30 Words" is helpful:

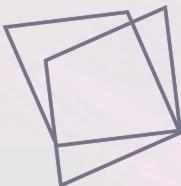
**"Jesus is God with us, come to show us God's love, save us from sin, set up God's kingdom, and shut down religion, so we can share in God's life"**

This summary of the gospel includes both God's love and his desire to liberate humanity from sin, but also encompasses Jesus announcement of a new kingdom to rival the political powers of his day and his dismantling of oppressive religious practices. It also begins to explain why Jesus made some people angry, especially the political and religious leaders.

The goal of The Mystery of Easter is to bring the Gospel in 30 Words to life in a way so both children and adults can understand how radical and revolutionary the life and teachings of Jesus actually were.

Jesus had the audacity to claim that not only was he God, but that God loved everyone, God longed to forgive everyone and that God wanted to set up his alternative kingdom of peace here on earth. Even crazier, Jesus announced that you no longer required religious rituals to participate in God's kingdom or earn God's favour. That is the kind of message that people in power found so threatening that they had Jesus killed.

The invitation of The Mystery of Easter is to see this radical message of Jesus from a different perspective; not as a threat to our way of life but as an invitation to a new and better way of living and relating to God. While many people in Jesus day heard this message as offensive, the hope is that through this experience, you will begin to see it for what it really is; good news for every one of us!



# THE 6 EXPERIENCES

## Experience #1 - Jesus Claimed To Be God With Us

Big Idea: Jesus shows us what God is like.

Activity: Create a drawing of what you imagine when you try to picture what God is like.

Background Texts: John 10:22-39, Hebrews 1:1-4, John 1:1-18

## Experience #2 - Jesus Came To Shut Down Religion

Big Idea: When religion kept people out, Jesus made room for everyone to come in.

Activity: Solving an impossible maze.

Background Texts: Mark 11:15-18, Isaiah 56:1-8, Jeremiah 7:1-9 Hebrew 8:1-10:18

## Experience #3 - Jesus Came To Show Us God's Love

Big Idea: Love is the most important rule!

Activity: Baking a simple flat-bread recipe.

Background Texts: Matthew 12:1-14, Matthew 22:36-40, 1 John 4:7-21, 1 Corinthians 13

## Experience #4 - Jesus Came To Set Up God's Kingdom Of Peace

Big Idea: God's Kingdom is not like any other kingdom in history because God's Kingdom is a Kingdom of Peace!

Activity: Participants will learn how to fold origami doves

Background Texts: Matthew 5:38-48, Luke 22:47-53

## Experience #5 - Jesus Came To Save Us From Sin

Big Idea: Jesus forgives everyone

Activity: Participants will create a "stained glass mosaic" by colouring a piece of paper, using sidewalk chalk on pavement, or by painting a window or large piece of glass.

Background Texts: Luke 23:26-43, Mark 2:13-17

## Experience #6 - Jesus Invites Us To Share In God's Life

Big Idea: How will we respond to the invitation of Jesus?

Activity: Participants will make a meal together and then finish this experience with a toast.

Background Texts: Mark 1:15, Luke 14:15-24

I would love to hear how your household engaged with this experience and I'd be happy to hear your thoughts about it. Feel free to find me on Twitter ([@ericversluis](https://twitter.com/ericversluis)), Instagram ([@ericversluis](https://www.instagram.com/ericversluis)) and Facebook or send me an email at [ericjversluis@gmail.com](mailto:ericjversluis@gmail.com)



# JESUS CLAIMED TO BE GOD WITH US

## BIG IDEA:

Jesus shows us what God is like

## BACKGROUND TEXTS:

John 10:22-39, Hebrews 1:1-4, John 1:1-18

## LEARNING ACTIVITY:

Create a drawing of what you imagine when you try to picture what God is like.

## WHAT YOU NEED:

- “The Mystery Of Easter” Notebook (you can use any piece of paper if you don’t want to print out the notebook)
- Pencils, Markers, Crayons, Paper

## WHAT TO PREP:

- Lay out all drawing supplies
- Draw your own image of God to use as an example to get people’s creative juices flowing

## WHAT TO DO:

- Read the Intro text
- Hand out the Notebooks and go through Section #1 of the What You Say material
- Give people a few minutes to draw what they picture when they think of God
- Go through Section #2 of the What You Say material



# JESUS CLAIMED TO BE GOD WITH US

## WHAT YOU SAY:

### INTRO

Welcome to the Mystery of Easter; an interactive experience where we will work together to answer the question, "Why was Jesus killed"?

This is a mystery because by all accounts, Jesus was a good man who healed people, taught us to love others and taught people to live a good life.

In fact, the majority of Christians believed that Jesus lived a perfect life without ever doing anything wrong.

Even most people who don't identify as Christians would agree that Jesus was a wise spiritual teacher and a good man.

So how does a good man like that make people so angry that on the last day of his life, a whole mob of people shouted "Crucify him! Crucify him!".

How does someone who never did anything wrong find himself convicted as a criminal and executed.

Adding to the mystery is the fact that people had been trying to kill Jesus long before his crucifixion on Good Friday.

Throughout the stories of Jesus found in the Bible, there are a surprising number of times where people plotted to kill Jesus.

On several occasions crowds of people tried to beat Jesus to death with rocks.

One time, Jesus' audience got so angry that they tried to throw him off the edge of a cliff.

Why?

What did Jesus do or say that made people so upset?

Why was Jesus killed?



# JESUS CLAIMED TO BE GOD WITH US

## Section #1: Introduce The Notebooks

(Hand out Notebooks to everyone)

To solve the mystery of Easter, we are going to journey through 6 experiences. Each experience will offer a possible motive for why Jesus made people angry enough to kill him.

To help us keep track of the clues we collect, we've been given a Notebook that we can use to take notes and write down what we learn.

All we have to do is fill in the blanks for each experience and hopefully by the end of this investigation, we'll have a better understanding of the mystery of Easter!

### The Investigation Begins:

To start our investigation into why Jesus was killed, we need to ask ourselves another question: what do we picture when we think of God?

Do we picture an old man with a white beard? An angelic figure sitting on a cloud? A bright light? A muscly he-man like Zeus? A judge sitting in a courtroom?

What does God look like to us?

Why don't we take a moment to reflect on this question and then draw whatever image comes into our mind when we think of God.

There is no right or wrong answer, so feel free to be as creative as you like! Let's grab our art supplies and get drawing!

**(With older kids or adults, you can wait until everyone has finished their drawing and give everyone a chance to share what they drew and what it means to them before moving on to reading Section 2. With younger kids, you can read through the Section 2 material while the kids work on their drawings and get them to share what they drew at the end of this experience).**



# JESUS CLAIMED TO BE GOD WITH US

## WHAT YOU SAY:

### SECTION #2: How People Pictured God

Throughout history, people have pictured God in lots of different ways

A lot of the people who lived in Jesus' day pictured God as a mighty warrior who would come and destroy their enemies.

Some people thought of God as a strict principal, giving the Ten Commandments to Moses and making sure that people follow the rules.

May people pictured God as a powerful King who demanded that everyone serve him

When other people thought of God, they thought of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, where God was a mysterious figure hidden behind a curtain that only a select few special people could ever really see.

### Jesus Shows Us What God Is Really Like

But when Jesus came and started teaching about God, he didn't say that God was like any of those things.

Jesus said that if people wanted to know what God was really like, they just had to look at him.

Jesus said that anyone who had seen Jesus had seen God.

Jesus went so far as to claim that he was God with us, come to show us exactly what God was like.

### God Can't Come From Nazareth, Can He?

This made a lot of people upset, because it was considered a crime to claim that you were God.

Even worse, Jesus did not look like a mighty warrior or a powerful king like people expected.

Jesus wasn't wealthy. He wasn't a king or a general or even the mayor of a town.

He was just, Jesus from Nazareth...a seemingly regular dude like everyone else.

What kind of God would choose to be born in a manger instead of a palace?



# JESUS CLAIMED TO BE GOD WITH US

## SECTION #2 Continued:

### **Jesus Did Things Only God Could Do:**

But even though Jesus didn't look like people expected God to look, Jesus did things that only God could do.

Jesus healed people who had deadly diseases, turned 5 loaves and 2 fish into a meal for 5,000 people and brought dead people back to life.

Jesus' teaching about how people should live seemed so wise and true that even his words seemed kind of seemed miraculous.

### **Divided Opinions:**

And so people were divided: some saw the miracles that Jesus did and believed he really was God. They decided to think about God in a new way..

Other people decided that Jesus could not be God because he did not look the way they expected God to look.

Since Jesus wasn't a mighty warrior or a mighty King, he couldn't be God.

To those people, Jesus was a dangerous liar whose radical ideas about God needed posed a threat to their power.

And that's the first motive for why some people wanted to kill Jesus, that we can write down in our notebooks.

Jesus was killed, because JESUS CLAIMED TO BE GOD WITH US.

That's right, JESUS CLAIMED TO BE GOD WITH US

You see, if Jesus was really God with us, then that meant that a lot powerful people who claimed to be experts about God were wrong. It meant that their picture of God was way off.

That would have been embarrassing for them. It would mean that they would have had to admit they made a mistake. It would mean that their position as God experts would be questioned and they could lose their jobs!

They didn't want that to happen so they started plotting to get rid of Jesus, to prove to everyone that he wasn't really God!

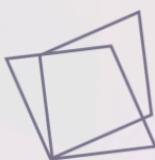
So that's the first possible answer to the question of why Jesus was killed: Jesus claimed to be God with us.

Later, we'll go through Experience #2 and we'll keep trying to uncover the mystery of Easter.



# HOW DO YOU PICTURE GOD?

Use this page to draw whatever image comes to mind when you try to picture God



## CONVERSATION STARTERS

Want to keep the conversation going after each Experience is over? Here are some questions you can talk about with your household to explore these themes further!

- 1) If Jesus shows us exactly what God is like, how does that change your understanding of how you connect with God?
- 2) Can you think of any ways that religion is used to exclude or hurt people in our world today? What are some things you can do to make sure that everyone feels like they belong?

- 3) Can you think of any rules in our world that keep some people from getting the help they need? Can you think of some rules that benefit certain groups of people but aren't very loving towards other people? How would these situations be different if we acted like love was actually the most important rule?

- 4) Jesus called his followers to be Peacemakers. Can you think of a situation in your school, neighbourhood, family or world where you could help bring peace to a situation experiencing conflict? How?

- 5) In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus teaches us to pray, "Forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us." Is there anyone that you are having a hard time forgiving today? What steps can you take to find it in your heart to forgive them? What about people who have not acknowledged the hurt they have done to you and refuse to apologize? What would it look like to forgive them while still wanting them to be held accountable for the wrong they have done?

- 6) How does the Good News of Jesus inspire you to live a more abundant life today?

## THE MYSTERY OF EASTER

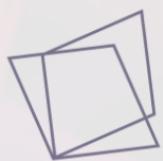
### WHY WAS JESUS KILLED?

NOTEBOOK

If you want to explore the concepts presented in *The Mystery of Easter* further, a great starting point is the book *re(union): The Good News of Jesus for Seekers, Saints & Sinners* by Bruxy Cavey, from which the outline of this experience was taken.



# WHY WAS JESUS KILLED?



## EXPERIENCE #1:

JESUS WAS KILLED BECAUSE: \_\_\_\_\_

**Background Texts:** John 10:22-39, Hebrews 1:1-4, John 1:1-18

**Big Idea:** Jesus shows us what God is really like.

## EXPERIENCE #2:

JESUS WAS KILLED BECAUSE: \_\_\_\_\_ TO BE \_\_\_\_\_

**Background Texts:** Mark 11:15-18, Isaiah 56:1-8, Jeremiah 7:1-9 Hebrews 8:1-10:18

**Big Idea:** When religion kept people out, Jesus made room for everyone to come in.

## EXPERIENCE #3:

JESUS WAS KILLED BECAUSE: \_\_\_\_\_ TO \_\_\_\_\_'

**Background Texts:** Matthew 12:1-14, Matthew 22:36-40, 1 John 4:7-21, 1 Corinthians 13

**Big Idea:** Love is the most important rule.

## EXPERIENCE #4:

JESUS WAS KILLED BECAUSE: J E S U S C A M E T O \_\_\_\_\_ G O D ' S \_\_\_\_\_ O F \_\_\_\_\_

**Background Texts:** Matthew 5:38-48, Luke 22:47-53

**Big Idea:** God's Kingdom is not like any other kingdom in history!

## EXPERIENCE #5:

JESUS WAS KILLED BECAUSE: \_\_\_\_\_ TO \_\_\_\_\_

**Background Texts:** Luke 23:26-43, Mark 2:13-17

**Big Idea:** Jesus forgives everyone

## EXPERIENCE #6:

J E S U S I N V I T E S U S T O S H A R E I N G O D ' S L I F E

**Background Texts:** Mark 1:15, Luke 14:15-24

**Big Idea:** How will we respond to the invitation of Jesus?



EXPERIENCE  
TWO

# JESUS CAME TO SHUT DOWN RELIGION

## BIG IDEA:

When religion kept people out, Jesus made room for everyone to come in

## BACKGROUND TEXTS:

Mark 11:15-18, Isaiah 56:1-8, Jeremiah 7:1-9 Hebrew 8:1-10:18

## LEARNING ACTIVITY:

Solving An Impossible Maze

## HOW TO CREATE AN IMPOSSIBLE MAZE:

### Option #1: Chalk Maze

Create a maze on your driveway or at a nearby park or empty parking lot. You can use your own creativity to design a maze that will fit your unique space or simply Google "Maze" and copy any of the patterns of your choosing.

Make sure the maze that you create does have a path that leads to the exit, but then be sure to draw a chalk line across that path, blocking anyone's ability to solve the maze. This line should be relatively easy to remove with a wet cloth at the key point during the "What You Say" portion of the Station.

### Option #2: Tape Maze

If you have a large room with clear floor space, you can use masking or painters tape to build a maze in your house.

Just lay strips of masking tape on the floor in such a pattern that it creates a maze for people to walk through. If you want it to look extra fun, try and order in some rolls of coloured masking tape!

You can use your own creativity to design a maze that will fit your unique space or simply Google "Maze" and copy any of the patterns of your choosing. If you need more ideas of what is possible, a quick search for "Tape Maze" or "Tape Labyrinth" should get you headed in the right direction.



# JESUS CAME TO SHUT DOWN RELIGION

Make sure the maze that you create does have a path that leads to the exit, but then be sure to draw a chalk line across that path, blocking anyone's ability to solve the maze. This line should be relatively easy to remove with a wet cloth at the key point during the "What You Say" portion of the Station.

## Option #3: Printed Maze

If you don't have access to a driveway/floor space or you just want to ensure that this experience will be accessible for everyone, you can just print out the "Maze Activity Page" included here or print out one that you find online, and have people use pencils to try to find the solution. Draw a line with a pencil to "block" the solution to the Maze that you can erase at the key point during the "What You Say" portion of the Station.

### WHAT YOU DO:

- Read through Section 1 of the "What You Say" portion of this Experience.
- Invite people to see if they can solve the maze.
- Make sure you allow people enough time trying to solve the maze that they begin to realize that the maze is impossible and to potentially express frustration that they can't solve it.
- Once it is clear that people can't solve the maze, move on to reading Section 2 of the "What You Say" content. If you are doing the Chalk or Tape Maze options, feel free to let people stay standing in the maze while you read.



# JESUS CAME TO SHUT DOWN RELIGION

## WHAT YOU SAY:

**SECTION #1:** So in our first Experience we learned that one reason people wanted kill Jesus was that Jesus claimed to be God with us.

Now, we're going to hear another story about how Jesus did something that made people angry. Here it goes.

"One day, Jesus went to the city of Jerusalem to visit the Temple, which was the place where people went to worship God, like a church! In the temple courts Jesus found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. Jesus didn't think what was happening in the Temple was right, so he made a whip out of cords, and drove the animals out of the temple. He also scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. While he did this, he said, "Is it not written: 'My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it 'a den of robbers.'" The temple priests and religious leaders heard this and began looking for a way to kill Jesus, for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching."

That's a pretty wild story! Why do we think Jesus acted the way he did?

(Take time for responses)

"Those are some really thoughtful answers. Before we get to the second clue about why Jesus was killed, we need to try to solve this maze we created."

(Invite people to work through the maze and see if they can solve it. Make sure you allow people enough time trying to solve the maze that they begin to realize that the maze is impossible and to potentially express frustration that they can't get out.)



# JESUS CAME TO SHUT DOWN RELIGION

## WHAT YOU SAY:

**SECTION #2:** So we were trying to get from there to here, right? (Point at Start and Finish of the maze)

That seems pretty straightforward, but the point of a maze is to make something simple become really complicated. There's all these twists and turns and dead ends you have to navigate. I'm not sure this maze can even be solved!

### **Religion Made It Hard To Connect To God (Like A Maze)**

That's what the religious leaders in Jesus' day were doing: turning something simple into something really complex, like a maze.

You see, in Jesus' day, the Temple was supposed to be a place where people could come and connect with God.

For example, people were believed they could connect with God by offering a sacrifice as an act of worship.

But instead of letting people bring their own animals from home to be sacrificed, the religious leaders twisted the rules so that the only animals good enough to be sacrificed, were the ones for sale in the Temple.

And in order to buy an animal from the Temple, people had to use special money, that was only ever used in the Temple. That's what all the money changers were there for.

The religious leaders weren't making it easier for people to connect with God, they were making it harder.

### **Religion Kept Certain People Out**

In fact, they made it so hard, they kept some people from connecting with God at all.

If you weren't a Jew and you wanted to come and connect to God, there were rules that the only place you could worship in the Temple was a space called the Court of the Gentiles, which was like the Temple lobby.

But guess where the religious leaders kept all the animals for sacrifice? Guess where all the money changers had their tables set up to do business?

In the Court of the Gentiles.

So even if outsiders wanted to come to worship God in the temple, when they got there, they would not find a quiet place to pray, but a busy marketplace full of animals and people.



# JESUS CAME TO SHUT DOWN RELIGION

**WHAT YOU SAY:**

**SECTION #2 Continued:**

## **Jesus Wanted Everyone To Connect With God**

This is why Jesus acted the way he did. Because the religious leaders were preventing people from connecting to God and this upset Jesus!

While the religious leaders wanted to keep people out, Jesus wanted to make room for everyone to come in!

So Jesus got rid of the animals, kicked out the money changers and reminded the people that the Temple was supposed to be a house of prayer for people from all nations, not just the Jews.

**(Go ahead and remove the piece of tape/line that is preventing people from getting out of the maze and invite people to make their way out of/solve the maze)**

## **Jesus Shut Down The Maze of Religion**

In a way, Jesus shut down the maze of religion so that you and I and every person in the world could connect with God directly.

So, that's the second reason that Jesus was killed that you can write in your Notebooks: Jesus was killed because JESUS CAME TO SHUT DOWN RELIGION.

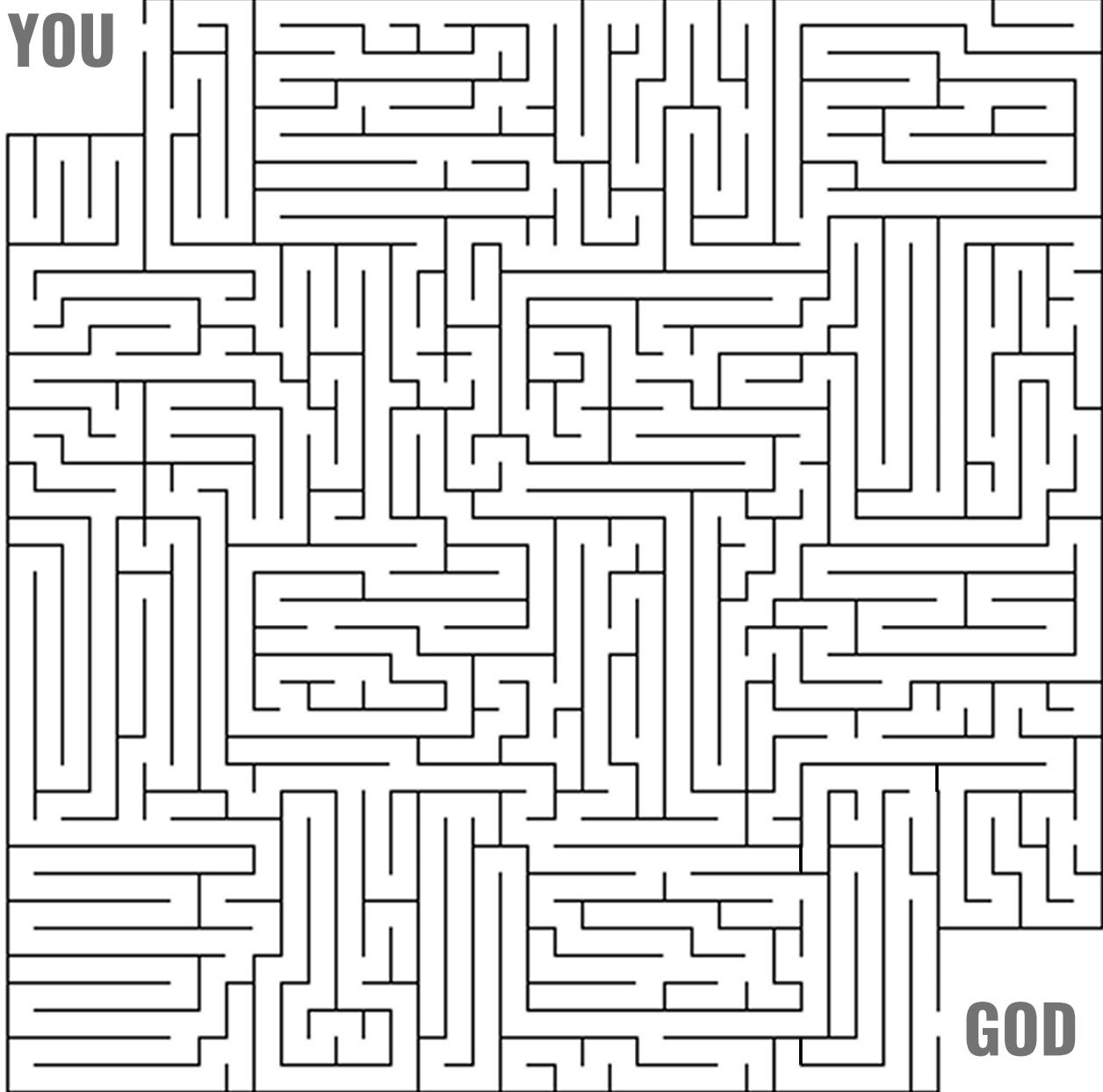
Jesus and his followers taught that you didn't need the Temple religious system to connect with God. Instead, they said that through Jesus, anyone and everyone could have relationship with God, regardless of their race, gender or nationality.

Jesus took all the complicated rules and rituals of religion and said that there was only one rule that mattered: to love God and to love your neighbour as yourself.

And for the religious leaders, who got all their power from being able to control people's access to God, this was a reason to have Jesus killed!



# CAN YOU SOLVE THE MAZE?





## EXPERIENCE THREE

# JESUS CAME TO SHOW US GOD'S LOVE

### BIG IDEA:

Love is the most important rule!

### BACKGROUND TEXTS:

Matthew 12:1-14, Matthew 22:36-40, 1 John 4:7-21, 1 Corinthians 13

### LEARNING ACTIVITY:

Baking Simple Flat-Bread

### WHAT YOU NEED:

- Flour
- Vegetable Oil
- Salt
- Water
- Measuring Cups
- Mixing Bowls
- Mixing Spoons
- Recipe Cards
- Oven
- Baking Sheets
- Parchment Paper
- Oven Mitts

The recipe you make does not have to be the flat-bread recipe suggested here. In fact, you could choose to make any recipe you like. The point is to use the rules based nature of a recipe as a contrast to the more nuanced ethic of love that Jesus taught. Whatever recipe you use, work on it together, while pausing to take time to read through the various "What You Say" sections.

### WHAT TO PREP:

- Pull out all your ingredients

### WHAT TO DO:

- Have everyone wash their hands
- Lead people in preparing the Unleavened Bread Recipe while you share from the What You Say section of this Experience



# JESUS CAME TO SHOW US GOD'S LOVE

**WHAT YOU SAY:**

**SECTION #2 Continued:**

## **Jesus Broke The Sabbath Rules To Obey The Rule of Love**

Let me tell you a story to show you what I mean: One day, Jesus went to Synagogue on the Sabbath, which was like us going to church on a Sunday.

While he was there, a group of religious leaders, called the Pharisees, tried to get Jesus in trouble

Now, the Sabbath was a very special day meant for resting and worshiping God

There were lots of rules about what you could and couldn't do on the Sabbath, but the most important rule was that you weren't supposed to do any work on the Sabbath.

Jesus had a reputation for healing all of the sick people he met and the Pharisees knew that healing someone would count as work, which meant Jesus would break the Sabbath rule.

So the Pharisees came to Jesus and showed him a man who had a disabled hand that didn't work properly and asked Jesus if Jesus thought it was ok to heal someone on the Sabbath. And you know what Jesus said?

Jesus said, "It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath" and then he healed the man's arm so that it worked perfectly, just like his other arm.

Jesus believed that the Sabbath rules were supposed to help people, not keep them from being helped, and so when a rule got in the way of doing the right thing, Jesus broke the rule.

**(Pause and show people how to roll their dough into balls and flatten it out into flat bread)**

**SECTION #3 (Love is the Most Important Rule)**

Jesus knew that rules about not working on the Sabbath were not the most important rules to God.

One day Jesus was asked what the most important rule in the world was, and Jesus answered that we should love God and love other people.

Jesus taught that LOVE was the most important rule.



# JESUS CAME TO SHOW US GOD'S LOVE

**WHAT YOU SAY:**

## **SECTION #1 (Rules Are Important):**

Before we begin, we are going to talk about rules.

Can we think of some examples of a situation where it's really important to have rules?

(Allow time for people to share different examples. If someone says, "Making a recipe", use that as the jumping off point to keep going.)

Those are great answers. One situation where it can be really important to have rules is when we're baking or cooking in the kitchen. We always need to be extra careful to follow every step of the recipe just right, because if we don't follow the rules of the recipe, who knows what is going to happen!

So today, we're going to follow a recipe for flat-bread that many churches use in their communion ceremonies. The fact that it is "unleavened" (which means without yeast) also reminds us of the bread that Jesus would have eaten at the Last Supper before he was killed.

**(Lead people to measure out all their ingredients, add them into a mixing bowl and then start stirring the dough)**

## **SECTION #2 (Some Rules Are More Important Than Others)**

Rules are important for baking and for lots of other situations in life,

But sometimes we have to break certain rules to follow more important rules

Let me tell you a story to show you what I mean: One day, Jesus went to Synagogue on the Sabbath, which was like how people go to church on a Sunday.

While he was there, a group of religious leaders, called the Pharisees, tried to get Jesus in trouble

Now, the Sabbath was a very special day meant for resting and worshiping God

There were lots of rules about what you could and couldn't do on the Sabbath, but the most important rule was that you weren't supposed to do any work on the Sabbath.

So the Pharisees came to Jesus and showed him a man who had a disabled hand and asked Jesus if he thought it was ok to heal someone on the Sabbath



# JESUS CAME TO SHOW US GOD'S LOVE

## WHAT YOU SAY:

### SECTION #2 Continued:

The Pharisees were trying to get Jesus in trouble.

And you know what Jesus said?

Jesus said, "It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath" and then he healed the man's arm so that it worked perfectly, just like his other arm.

Jesus believed that the Sabbath rules were supposed to help people, not keep them from being helped, and so when a rule got in the way of doing the right thing, Jesus broke the rule.

(Pause and show people how to roll their dough into balls and flatten it out into flat bread)

### SECTION #3

Jesus knew that rules about not working on the Sabbath were not the most important rules to God.

One day Jesus was asked what the most important rule in the world was, and Jesus answered that we should love God and love other people.

Jesus taught that LOVE was the most important rule.

The Bible says that you can follow all the rules perfectly, but if you don't have love for other people, all your rule following is a waste of time

That's why Jesus knew that it was wrong to follow the rule and leave the man with the disabled hand in pain...that wouldn't be very loving.

Instead Jesus knew that God wanted him to do the loving thing, to heal that man, even though it broke the rule about working on the Sabbath.

This made the Pharisees angry and they began to plot about how they could kill him.

So that's the third reason why Jesus was killed that you can write in your Notebooks; JESUS CAME TO SHOW US GOD'S LOVE

Jesus taught that love is the most important rule of all because God is love!

So Jesus showed us that we should love each other, because God loves us first.

(Give instructions for putting the bread on pans and put them in the oven to cook)

# SIMPLE FLAT-BREAD RECIPE

## Ingredients:

- 1 Cup of Flour
- 1/3 Cup of Vegetable Oil
- 1/8 Teaspoon of Salt
- 1/3 Cup of Water

## Directions:

- Preheat oven to 425 degrees F (220 degrees C)
- Lay parchment paper on baking sheet
- Mix flour, oil, and salt together in a bowl;
- Add water and mix using a pastry cutter until dough is soft.
- Form dough into 6 balls and press into disks onto the prepared baking sheet using your hands.
- Bake in the preheated oven until bread is cooked. 8 to 10 minutes.



## EXPERIENCE FOUR

# JESUS CAME TO SET UP GOD'S KINGDOM OF PEACE

### BIG IDEA:

God's Kingdom is not like any other kingdom in history because God's Kingdom is a Kingdom of Peace!

### BACKGROUND TEXTS:

Matthew 5:38-48 & Luke 22:47-53

### LEARNING ACTIVITY:

Learning how to fold origami doves

### WHAT TO PREP:

- Cut the white paper into 8.5 x 8.5 squares
- Fold and prepare an example dove, with hole punched and string attached so that people can see what they are trying to create.
- Print off Instruction Sheets for people to look at as you guide them through the origami process

### WHAT YOU DO:

- Give each everyone a piece of paper and a string
- Show them an example of what a completed dove looks like and then demonstrate how to fold an origami dove. Point out the Instructional Sheets they can refer to for help.
- Lead them in the process of folding and creating a dove
- After everyone has made their first dove, invite them to work on folding more doves as you share Section 1 of the "What You Say" material with them. Be prepared to repeat or clarify folding instructions as needed.
- Show people how to punch a hole in the back of the dove and cut a piece of string. Then have them thread it through the hole and tie it so it creates a loop for hanging on the branch.
- Have them attach strings to their doves while you read Section 2 of the What You Say material.
- At the end of that section, have everyone hang their doves on a curtain rod or light fixture to serve as an art piece you can display in your home throughout the Easter season.

### WHAT YOU NEED:

- Plain white paper.  
(Enough for a couple sheets per person)
- White string or clear fishing line
- Hole punch
- Origami Dove Instructional Sheets



# JESUS CAME TO SET UP GOD'S KINGDOM OF PEACE

## WHAT YOU SAY:

### Recap:

We are working as detectives to solve the mystery of why Jesus was killed. So far, we've learned that Jesus was killed in part because Jesus said he was God, because Jesus shut down the temple religion and because Jesus taught that love is the most important rule! But those aren't the only things Jesus did that made people upset!

### Life Under Roman Rule

Jesus lived in the country of Israel, which had been violently invaded by the Roman Empire about 60 years before Jesus was born.

The people in Israel hated living under Roman rule.

### Rome = The Empire

Think of the Romans like the Empire in Star Wars. They came in, took over your planet, and then left their Storm Troopers behind to make sure you knew the Empire was in charge.

If the Empire took over your planet, you'd probably be pretty upset and want to fight back, just like the Rebel Alliance does in Star Wars

In the same way, there were a lot of people in first-century Israel that wanted to form their own Rebel Alliance and get rid of the Romans

### What People Thought Jesus Meant:

In Jesus day, there were many people who believed that one day God would send his chosen leader to raise up an army and get revenge on the Romans

Throughout his life, Jesus talked regularly about how the "Kingdom of God" was at hand and how he had come to start God's Kingdom now!

We can imagine that when Jesus said this, most people thought that he was talking about starting a revolution to overthrow the Roman Empire.

(Pause here to help finish folding the doves that everyone is working on and show them how to punch a hole in the back of the dove and attach the string. Let them work on that while you keep reading)



# JESUS CAME TO SET UP GOD'S KINGDOM OF PEACE

## WHAT YOU SAY:

### **Jesus Taught A Kingdom Of Peace**

But while Jesus definitely planned on starting a new kingdom, he said this kingdom would come to power, not by fighting its enemies but by loving them

A lot of people were probably confused when Jesus taught that instead of hurting your enemies, you should be kind to them and pray for them.

Jesus also said that when someone hit you on the face, instead of hitting them back, you should creatively disrupt the cycle of violence by offering to let them hit you again. Talk about a wild idea!

But Jesus didn't just talk about a Kingdom of peace, he lived it too!

### **Jesus Arrested: No More Of This**

On the night when Jesus was arrested, the story says that the authorities sent soldiers to arrest Jesus because they were worried that Jesus and his disciples would get violent.

And a couple of Jesus' disciples did. They pulled out swords and started fighting back to protect Jesus. One disciple, Peter, even chopped someone's ear off.

And you know what Jesus said? He said, "No more of this!". He told them to stop fighting and to put their swords away. Then he healed the ear of the man who had been injured.

Instead of hurting his enemies, he did good to them just like he had taught.

Jesus followed the way of peace his whole life.

His refusal to lead a violent revolution against Rome upset a lot of people who felt that loving a Roman soldier was an act of treason against their country.

If Jesus wasn't willing to fight their enemies, he must be one of their enemies!



# JESUS CAME TO SET UP GOD'S KINGDOM OF PEACE

## WHAT YOU SAY:

### Wrap Up:

We can write this in our Notebooks; One reason that Jesus was killed was that JESUS CAME TO SET UP GOD'S KINGDOM OF PEACE

It's easy for us to shake our heads at people being upset by Jesus' teachings about peace, but how easy do you and I find it to forgive the people who hurt us instead of trying to get even with them?

How often is our first instinct to fight back when someone says something mean to us?

How often do we think the way to make the world better is to just "cancel" the people we see as our enemies?

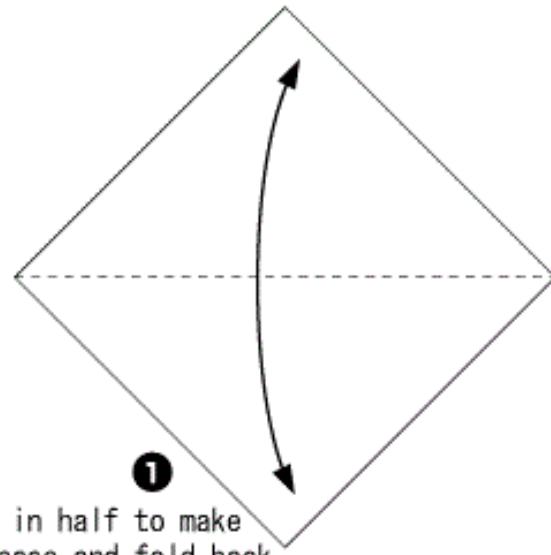
That's not how Jesus called us to respond. To be a follower of Jesus is to be a person of peace, even when that feels impossibly hard.

Today we have made our origami doves, because the dove is the symbol for peace.

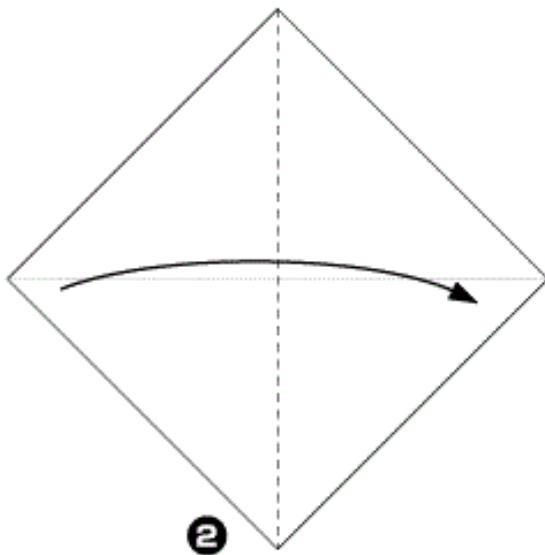
Now, we're going to hang our doves on this tree branch, to serve as a reminder that Jesus came to set up God's Kingdom and, unlike all the other kingdoms that have existed in history, God's Kingdom is A Kingdom of Peace



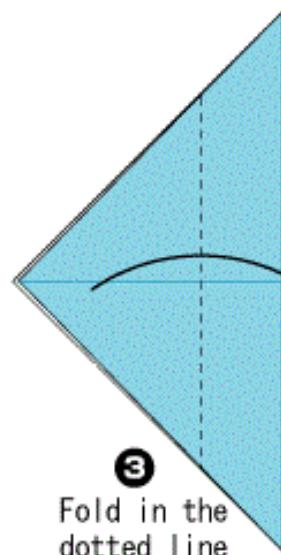
# JESUS CAME TO SET UP GOD'S KINGDOM OF PEACE: ORIGAMI DOVE INSTRUCTIONAL SHEET



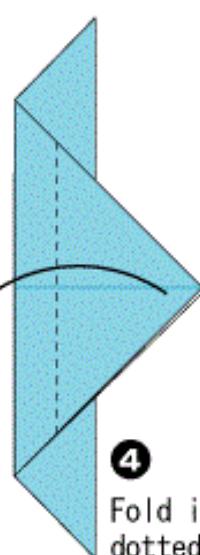
①  
Fold in half to make  
a crease and fold back



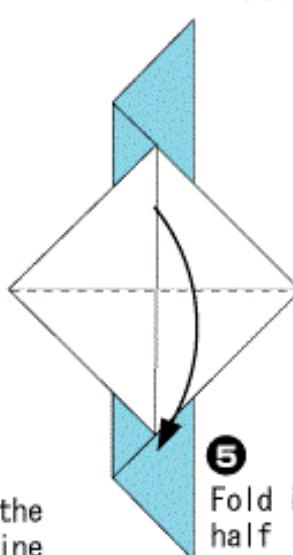
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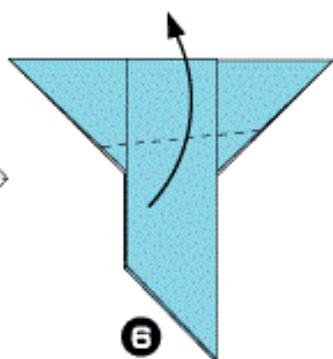
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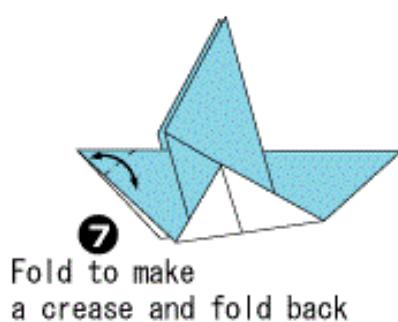
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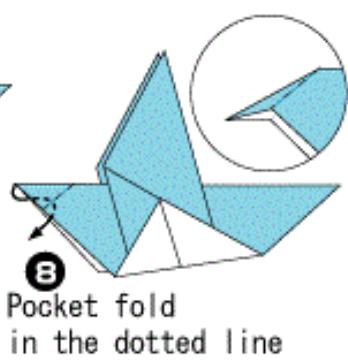
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too



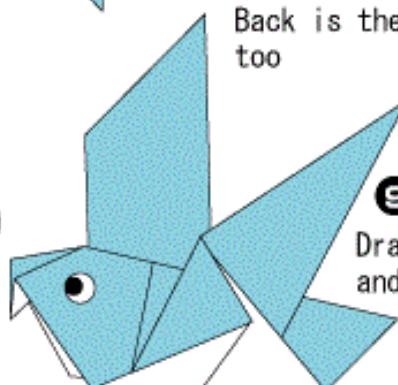
⑥



⑦  
Fold to make  
a crease and fold back



⑧  
Pocket fold  
in the dotted line



⑨  
Draw eyes  
and finished



# JESUS CAME TO SAVE US FROM SIN

## BIG IDEA:

Jesus forgives everyone.

## BACKGROUND TEXTS:

Luke 23:26-43, Mark 2:13-17, Romans 6: 6-7

## LEARNING ACTIVITY:

Participants will create a “stained glass mosaic” by colouring a piece of paper, using sidewalk chalk on pavement, or by painting a window or large piece of glass.

## WHAT YOU DO:

### Option 1: Paper Stained Glass

There are a couple ways you can do this. You can create your own stained glass picture by penciling in a design on a blank piece of paper and colouring it in. You can Google “stained glass cross colouring page” and print out and colour in whatever design you like. Or, you can purchase the absolutely stunning “Stations of the Cross” colouring pages by Illustrated Children’s Ministry (12.99USD for the set) and colour those in (Stations 10 and 11 fit perfectly with the theme of this Experience).

### Option 2: Chalk Stained Glass

Use painters tape to lay out a stained glass pattern on your driveway. You can make just a mosaic of colors or you can create shapes to form a picture or scene. It’s relatively simple to have a “cross” shape at the centre of your stained glass, so that’s an easy “picture” to use if you want.

Remember stained glass is usually cut in random 3 or 4 sided shapes or sections divided by strips of lead. The sections do not follow a pattern, however the use of color is what creates the pictures and patterns.

Once your tape is all laid out, have everyone start filling the shapes with colour as you read the What You Say material. When all the shapes are colour in, remove the tape.



# JESUS CAME TO SAVE US FROM SIN

## OPTION 3: PAINTED WINDOWS

This is by far the most involved of the three options but the end result is a gorgeous window that you can admire for days, weeks or months until you are ready to wash the paint off.

### What You Need:

- A glass window
- Electrical Tape
- Foam Paint Brushes
- Acrylic Paint
- Clear School Glue
- Plastic cups
- Drop cloth or plastic sheeting
- Paper towel
- Aprons or paint clothes

### What To Prep:

- Clean the glass surface so that it is clear of dust and smudges.
- Lay down drop cloth or plastic sheeting to prevent paint from getting on the floor.
- Use electrical tape to make the divisions for the stained glass. (Pro Tip: split the electrical tape to make it thinner by slicing the roll with a utility knife)
- You can make just a mosaic of colors or you can create shapes to form a picture or scene. It's relatively simple to have a "cross" shape at the centre of your stained glass, so that's an easy "picture" to use if you want.
- Remember stained glass is usually cut in random 3 or 4 sided shapes or sections divided by strips of lead. The sections do not follow a pattern, however the use of color is what creates the pictures and patterns.
- Select a color scheme for your paint colours.
- Add a small amount of acrylic paint to clear school glue to make translucent paint. (there are many DIY videos and instructions online to walk you through this step).
- For consistency of color mix up larger amounts of your selected paint colors and poured small amounts into plastic cups for everyone to hold onto more easily and reduce the chance of massive spills.

EXPERIENCE  
FIVE

# JESUS CAME TO SAVE US FROM SIN

## OPTION 3: PAINTED WINDOWS

### What You Do:

- Hand out painting supplies. Give each person a brush and a cup of paint.
- Have people start painting in the different sections of the tape mosaic you have created. Remember, only one colour per “square”.
- Once progress has a nice rhythm to it, read through the What You Say material as people work.
- You will need to have tissue or paper towel on hand to clean off the drips and brush marks on the black tape.
- Especially if you’re working with kids, touch-ups and clean-ups will be needed! However perfection is not the purpose. In fact, the idea of us not getting it “right” but it still turning into something beautiful anyways is a wonderful illustration of how God loves us in our imperfection and uses our “whole story” (even the messy parts) for something good!





# JESUS CAME TO SAVE US FROM SIN

## WHAT YOU SAY:

### **Jesus Is Sentenced To Die As A Criminal**

In the last Experience, we heard a story about how Jesus was arrested for setting up God's Kingdom of Peace.

After the soldiers came and arrested Jesus, he was put on trial, beaten and eventually sentenced to death.

The Roman soldiers decided to execute Jesus by nailing him to a cross but Jesus wasn't the only person who was being put to death that day.

Two other criminals were also being executed and so Jesus' cross was placed in between theirs; one criminal on his left, the other on his right.

### **Friend of Sinners**

Jesus was used to being around people that society looked down on

In fact, Jesus spent so much of his time hanging out with people that society thought were no good that the religious leaders had nicknamed him a "friend of sinners".

They meant it as an insult but Jesus took it as a compliment; saying "Those who are healthy don't need a doctor. Sick people do. I have not come to get those who think they are right with God to follow me. I have come to get sinners to follow me."

So as Jesus hung between the two criminals, he was surrounded by exactly the sort of people that he had come to share God's good news with!

Before he died, one of the criminals hanging next to Jesus turned to him and said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom."

And instead of telling this criminal that he was too late, that he had done too many bad things in his life to ever be forgiven, Jesus simply said, "I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise."

### **Jesus Forgives Everyone**

It wasn't just this criminal that Jesus forgave on the cross.

As he died, Jesus forgave everyone, praying "Father, forgive them for they don't know what they are doing."

One of the reasons Jesus was killed was that JESUS CAME TO SAVE US FROM SIN (Encourage people to write that in their Notebook!)



# JESUS CAME TO SAVE US FROM SIN

## WHAT YOU SAY:

The religious leaders got mad at Jesus because they accused him of forgiving unforgivable people, people who didn't deserve God's grace or forgiveness!

And thank God they were right, because that means Jesus forgives you and me too.

You see, it's easy for us to be like the religious leaders and point fingers at people like the criminals on the cross and label them as bad people or sinners, so that we can feel better about ourselves.

But the Bible says that if we're honest, all of us have made mistakes and all of us have hurt others.

But what Jesus showed us on the cross is that none of us have to earn God's forgiveness. God offers it to us before we've done anything to be worthy of it.

The Bible says, while we were still far from God, Jesus died for us!

We no longer need to feel shame or believe that we have done things that are too bad for God to ever forgive us.

The book of Romans says, "We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin."

On the cross, Jesus saves us from the shame of sin because Jesus forgave everyone, and that includes you and me!

**(Whatever option you chose, you should have lots of colouring still left to do by the time you're done reading the What You Say material. That extra time is a really great moment to engage in conversation about Jesus' death and what it means to be forgiven and set free from shame.)**



## EXPERIENCE SIX

# JESUS INVITES US TO SHARE IN GOD'S LIFE

### BIG IDEA:

How will we respond to the invitation of Jesus?

### BACKGROUND TEXTS:

Mark 1:15, Luke 14:15-24

### LEARNING ACTIVITY:

Participants will make a meal together and then finish this experience with a toast.

### WHAT YOU NEED:

- Food (Can be as simple as some crackers or as complicated as a full dinner)
- Something to drink

### WHAT TO DO:

- Work together to prepare some food to eat. It can be a simple snack of crackers and water or a full dinner, like you're having a party with friends!
- When the food is all ready, sit down and begin to eat.
- Go through Section #1 of the What You Say material as you're eating together.
- Close the experience by having a toast!

### WHAT TO PREP:

- Gather any food items you will need for your meal
- You might want to have upbeat, party music ready to play at the end of the toast.



# JESUS INVITES US TO SHARE IN GOD'S LIFE

## WHAT YOU SAY:

Jesus once told a story about a man who was throwing a party and sent out invitations to all the important people in town.

Just like we've done, he prepared the food and got everything ready to have a meal with his guests.

But when the time came for the party, all of the people who were invited refused to come because they had other things to do.

Whether they couldn't fit it in their calendars, felt like they were too cool to go or just didn't feel like it, they all chose not to accept the invitation.

So the man who was throwing the party decided to invite anyone and everyone he could find. The poor, the sick, the disabled, the outcasts...all the people who normally didn't get invited to these sorts of events.

To these people, the invitation to the party was good news indeed. One after another they said yes to the party and were so happy to be included in the wonderful celebration.

Everyone got the same invite but not everyone responded the same way.

### Good News In 30 Words:

If we had to sum up the message that got Jesus killed in 30 simple words, it would sound something like this:

**Jesus is God with us, come to shut down religion, show us God's love, set up God's kingdom and save us from sin, so we can share in God's life.**

It was like Jesus was inviting people to be a part of a party that he was throwing; a banquet where God welcomed everyone to the table, regardless of the mistakes they've made and with no religious maze to get through.

For some people, this sounded like the best party ever.

But there were lots of other people who didn't hear Jesus' message as good news, they heard it as an inconvenience to their plans or even a threat to their power.

If you were a religious leader, the idea of shutting down religion wouldn't sound like good news.

If you were a person who's security and power were maintained through military force, a Kingdom of peace would feel too risky.



# JESUS INVITES US TO SHARE IN GOD'S LIFE

## WHAT YOU SAY:

Jesus said that in his Kingdom, the people who were last would be first and people who were first would be last.

If you were one of the people “on top” of the world, then those words would sound pretty scary.

That's why those people decided to get rid of Jesus and his message.

## Many Heard It As The Best News Ever:

But for lots of people, the message of Jesus' did sound like good news!

For the people who pictured God as angry or distant, it was Good News to hear that God is with us!

For the outsiders who couldn't worship God in the temple, it was good news to hear that you didn't need religious rituals to connect with God.

For the man with the shrivelled hand, it was Good News that God loves you so much that He would do anything to help you, including even break the rules.

For the victims of violence and war, it is Good News that God's kingdom was a Kingdom of Peace.

For all of us who have ever made mistakes and hurt others, it is Good News that God forgives everyone and we don't have to feel shame!

## How Will You Respond To The Message of Jesus?

We started our Experience by asking the question, “Why Was Jesus Killed?” but we will end our Experience by asking ourselves one more question:

“How will we respond to the invitation of Jesus?”

In some ways, Jesus is like God's messenger, inviting us all to a party that God is throwing.

Jesus described this party as a place of “abundant life” where tired people can come and experience deep rest and things like goodness and mercy never run out.

It's a party where we can all be our true selves and where God invites us to partner with him in making the world a more loving, more peaceful, more just place.



# JESUS INVITES US TO SHARE IN GOD'S LIFE

## WHAT YOU SAY CONTINUED:

So how will we respond to the news that Jesus really is God with us, come to shut down religion, show us God's love, set up God's kingdom and save us from sin, so we can share in God's life?

Will we hear that message as a threat to our comfortable lives, or will we be willing to let go of everything in order to say YES to the invitation to God's party?

Because if the message of Jesus is really true, it means the God is not far away, but here with us.

It means that anyone, anywhere can experience God's love.

It means that we are set free from cycles of violence and feelings of shame.

It means that you and I can share in the abundant, joyful life that God created each of us to experience!

If that sounds like good news to you, why don't we finish our experience with a toast?

Let's all raise our glasses and I'll read the toast and then when I finish, we'll all give a cheer of "Let's Party!"

### The Toast:

"Jesus, I want to say yes to the party you are inviting me to. I trust that you show us how God has always loved us and will always love us. I'm glad that you welcome everyone to your party and that you don't hold our mistakes against us. I hear your message of love as good news. I want to be a part of your Kingdom of Peace and share in God's life with you! Jesus, help me to learn how to live like you did. I accept the invitation to your party. And with all that said, LETS PARTY"

Everyone: "Let's Party!"