

Sunday Home Sessions – Spring/Summer 2020

5th April 2020: The Sun Stops Shining (The Crucifixion – Matthew 27, Mark 15, Luke 23, John 19)

HOW TO USE THIS MATERIAL:

This is designed to be a straightforward session that you can do with your children in about 15mins at home. It will start with a Bible story from *The Jesus Storybook Bible*, and then there will be a suggestion for a simple craft activity and/or an easy game to play. The session rounds off with a suggested prayer you can pray together, and some discussion questions you can use, either at the time or later in the day/week.

Before we go onto the suggested session plan, please have a quick read of the **parents' overview** below. This includes a single-sentence summary of what we are learning (**big idea**) and some **Bible story background**, to help you get familiar with the story we'll be looking at.

PARENTS' OVERVIEW:

Big idea: When Jesus died, everyone thought He had failed, but He had actually achieved our rescue!

Bible story background: Jesus was sentenced to death by the Jewish authorities, but they had to request that the occupying Roman forces carried out the execution as they were not legally permitted to do it themselves. The reasoning they gave to the Roman governor was that Jesus was a pretender to Caesar's crown, proclaiming Himself King over the Jewish nation. Of course, Jesus really *is* the King. And so it was strangely fitting that the Roman governor ordered the notice, "King of the Jews", to be attached to the cross above Jesus' head (where they normally wrote a sign indicating the crime for which someone was being executed – Mark 15:26).

There were several different reactions from those around Jesus as He was crucified:

1. The soldiers responsible for carrying out the execution just kept their heads down and did their duty, caring more about who would get to keep His clothes than the person they were killing (Mark 15:24)
2. The Jewish leaders (and many in the crowd, and at least one other person being executed at the same time) hurled insults at Jesus, jeering that He claimed to have such incredible power and authority, and yet He couldn't even save Himself from this (Matthew 27:38-44).
3. Luke reports that one of the others being crucified had a different attitude – looking to Jesus in trust in his last moments. Jesus was able to comfort him with the incredible promise that he would be headed to paradise that very day! (Luke 24:40-43)
4. Mark records that the centurion overseeing the executions also had a very different view as he saw how Jesus died – he proclaimed that Jesus must have been the Son of God (Mark 15:39)

There are two other points in the story that show us there was more going on than a routine execution:

1. We read that at noon (what the Romans called the sixth hour) darkness fell for the next three hours (Mark 15:33). In the Bible, darkness in the daytime is always a sign of God's anger at sin and evil (e.g. the 9th of the 10 Plagues in Exodus 10). On the cross, God was choosing to direct His righteous anger at human sin and evil at Jesus, instead of us. That's why Jesus cries out (quoting Psalm 22 from the Old Testament), "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34).
2. Mark adds that, at the moment Jesus died, the Temple curtain was torn from top to bottom. This curtain separated the place the people came to worship from the part they called the "most holy place", where God symbolically 'lived'. The significance is clear: the barrier between us and God is removed, as Jesus dies to take away our sin.

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SESSION IDEAS:

Bible story:

- Read the story, “The Sun Stops Shining”, from *The Jesus Storybook Bible* if you have a copy, OR
- Watch an animated reading of the story at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7j-O4wonvg0> (just the section from 3:15:00 to 3:19:53)

Craft activity:

Make a colourful picture of the cross, to remind ourselves that Jesus won the victory for us when He died:

- On a piece of paper or card, make a cross shape in the middle out of masking tape
- Colour or paint all over the page, and then carefully peel away the masking tape to leave a white cross in the centre

A simple prayer you can pray together with your child:

“Father God,

Thank You so much for sending Jesus to die for us. Thank You that Jesus could have saved Himself and come down off the cross, but He stayed there because He loved us so much. Thank You that when Jesus died it wasn’t because He had failed – He actually succeeded in rescuing us as He died. Please help us to feel safer, knowing that Jesus has rescued us.

Amen.”

A couple of simple questions to chat through with your child afterwards:

1. Why didn’t Jesus get down off the cross?
2. Why did Jesus shout, “It is finished!” before He died?

If you have extra time:

Why not listen, or even sing along, to the song *Super Saviour*? You can find a video with lyrics here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TclGT1utHhE>