

The aim of this session is to show the importance of Easter.

Leader's notes

There is no question that this year Easter is going to look and feel very different. In this time of social distancing Easter will not have the community shared sense, we normally feel. However, it would be good to explain to the children that even though we cannot see each other, we can experience the goodness of the resurrection. This session looks at the fact that God tore the curtain in the temple in two. Until that point, God's presence had been limited to one place and once a year. This moment in History changed everything we can rejoice that He is with us!. Perhaps, this is a great time to emphasize this to our young children that even though they can't see friends and family at this time. We can rejoice that God is with us, He is our Emmanuel.

What's Behind The Curtain?

Warming Up

10 mins

 Game

Have a curtain or screen set up. You could just use a drying rack draped with a sheet if you like.

Choose someone to go behind the screen with an object. They should make noise with the object, and the children have to guess what it is. They can ask up to 10 questions that can be answered with a "yes" or a "no" to help them.

Have objects like musical instruments – easy to start with – or toys with distinctive sounds, such as Baby Annabel or a build a bear with a sound. Move on to harder objects, like spoons, pens which you can draw with, alarm clocks and so on.

Let a number of children make the sounds.

The Point: Just for fun.

Equipment

Objects that can make weird noises, a screen or curtain to hide things behind.

Mix It Up

Getting Started

10 mins

Illustrations

Begin with your bottle half filled with water. Say that in the beginning, God created the world and people and everything was good. Just like this water is clear and pure, there was no wrong in the world and God and people lived together as friends. In fact, this water is a bit like God - he is completely pure and clear and good. There's nothing wrong about him and he never does bad stuff. But pretty soon, people started to do wrong things. (Pour a couple of centimetres of oil into the bottle and close the lid again.) Ask the children what the oil has done. It's messed up what was in the bottle, but can they see what has happened? The oil is just floating on top of the water - it's not mixed with the water. The oil is a bit like the bad things in the world - they can't mix with God. You can shake the bottle and show that the oil always floats to the top. This means that, because we all do stuff that is wrong, we can't mix with God anymore.

Say that God hates that this is the case. He wants to be friends with us and mix together like we did at the beginning. In fact, God hates this situation so much that he decided to make a rescue plan to fix things. Read the Easter story from a children's story Bible.

Say that Jesus died on the cross to take the punishment for every bad thing anyone has ever done. Pour a centimetre or so of washing up liquid into the bottle and replace the lid. Give the bottle a good shake. Ask the children what has happened. All three liquids have mixed together. That's what Jesus does - he lets us mix together with God again.

The Point: To show why the Easter story is important.

Equipment

Plastic bottle (transparent), water, oil, washing up liquid, children's story Bible.

Ripped

Teaching Time

10 mins

 Bible Study

Before the story, rig up the curtain in front of one of the doors in your house.

Ask the children if they know what we remember at Easter? Allow them to explain the story – you may need to use questions to get them thinking in the right order. Say that when Jesus died some odd things happened. Have any of the children heard about these? They might have heard about the sky being darkened and the earthquake. If not, mention these now. Say that one more amazing thing happened: A curtain ripped in half!

Ask the children, if they recognise anything different if they haven't already spotted the curtain, explain that this curtain is a less well-known part of the Easter story.

Say that in the temple - which was what the Jews called their church – there was a very special place called the Holy of Holies. That was God's special place and no one could go in. Only once a year a Priest was allowed in to perform special ceremonies. But all the rest of the year, no one could go in. And then – right at the very moment that Jesus died – the curtain ripped! Not from bottom to top, like you would expect, but from top to bottom. Like this! (Rip your fabric.)

What do the children think this means? Is the holy of holies private anymore?

No! Anyone can see in and anyone can go in!

Ask the children if they can guess why God did that? It was to show that now anyone can come to God. Because Jesus has taken the punishment for our sin, anyone can come to God now. Any time!

Perhaps you could have a small Easter Egg inside the curtain?

The Point: To see that when the temple curtain ripped, it symbolised the fact that the way to God had been opened. This is an activity for children who know the Easter story already.

Equipment

Old fabric and a way of attaching it to a door in your house.

Easter In Me

Response

10 mins

 Prayer

As you lay out your pathway, remind the children of the basic Easter chronology. Lay out a piece of paper and write on it, "God lives with people". As you do this, remind the children that in the beginning God walked with Adam and Eve. Ask them what happened next?

Agree that men did things wrong. Say that since then, all men have done bad things, so we can't be God's friends any more. Lay out some of your footprints in a line. Now put down another large piece of paper and write on it "Jesus dies". (If you did "ripped", and your doorway is secure enough, put this beyond the paper.) Ask the children if they remember why Jesus died? That's right, to take the punishment for all the things we do wrong, so we can be God's friends again.

Carry on laying out footprints and then put down your last piece of paper, writing on it, "Men live with God".

Say that when we say sorry for our sins, Jesus forgives us and then we can be part of God's family again – he can live in our hearts and talk to us!

Invite the children to walk along the pathway quietly. When they get to the middle piece of paper, if they like they can ask Jesus to forgive them for their sins. Ask anyone who says this prayer to come and speak to you about it.

Note: It might be safer to tape down the papers so that children don't slip.

The Point: To walk out the Easter story and see how it fits in history. To allow an opportunity to respond to God.

Equipment

A set of footprints cut out of large paper, 3 pieces of flip chart paper (or similar), and marker pens. If you did the "Ripped" Bible activity, use the curtain from that.

Reflection Bottles

Get Creative

10 mins

 Craft Ideas

Get rid of the labels on the bottles. Fill each bottle up to about $\frac{3}{4}$ full with water. Then pour a small bottle of glitter glue into each bottle and add 4-5 table spoons of glitter (use a paper cone as a funnel). Then have an adult superglue the lid on.

The bottle can now be shaken up to mix the glitter and then watched as it takes 5 minutes or so to settle. This is a great time-out tool for parents to give their child in stressful moments or whilst they are sitting on the naughty step. They might even connect it up with how Jesus takes our place on the naughty step from the story activity.

The Point: A take home reminder.

Equipment

Clear plastic drink bottle, small tube of glitter glue, extra glitter - all per child; you'll also need superglue.

Jesus, Superhero

Revisiting The Story

5 mins

 Music

Enjoy singing the song together. Actions can be found at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jSSBvT23fTY>

You could suggest that parents try to do this song at home with their child in the coming week.

The Point: To round off the session.

Equipment

The YouTube Video attached and the means to display it
