

Cross over

Introduction

This series of notes has been written by our Youth Leader, Jonathan Masters...

During Lent, we are looking at the Easter Story. We are hoping this will challenge and inspire you to continue in your walk for Jesus and grow in love for God and others.

The Easter story is a crucial part of the Christian faith. Through exploring it together hopefully we will begin to discover new facets and details previously unnoticed, as well as growing in understanding and applying Christian faith throughout our lives.

The Book of Matthew

The book of Matthew is one of four gospels about Jesus' life. It is the first book in the New Testament and has a focus on Jesus being King.

Lots of the stories found in Matthew can be found in Mark and Luke as well.

Further Reading

Matthew for Everyone by Tom Wright

The Cross of Christ by John Stott

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1: Handling guilt in relationships

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...

Take it in turns to answer the following question with reasons for the answer: Would you rather be able to sing or to dance?

WORSHIP

Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...

Read Psalm 22 as a group. Before reading ask everyone to look out for similarities to the Easter story.

WORD

This series is about the Easter Story. We will be thinking about some of the events leading up to Easter, the Crucifixion and the Resurrection.

Read Matthew 26:31-27:10 (this is a long passage)

Discuss your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)

- Jesus knows he is going to be betrayed. How do you think he felt about this?

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- Jesus asks his friends to come and pray with him. He shares that he is overwhelmed and troubled. He asks them to keep watch with him. Would you be willing to do this for your friends?
- How would you feel if your friends fell asleep whilst they were meant to be helping you at a difficult time?
- How would you feel if you were the one to fall asleep?
- Judas betrays Jesus to the Sanhedrin. What do you think motivated him to do this?
- Judas realises he has done wrong and hangs himself. Do you think he did the right thing to hang himself? Why or why not?
- Peter is adamant he would never betray Jesus, but just hours after he denies even knowing him. Peter realised his error and wept. When have you made a mistake in relationships that has caused you to weep?
- In John 21:15-19 we read about the reinstatement of Peter when Jesus asks Peter if he loves him three times. This echoes the three times Peter denied Jesus. Why do you think Jesus does this?
- How can we find reconciliation with those we have betrayed or those who have betrayed us in our lives?

WHAT NEXT?

- Think about a time when you have let someone down. Have they forgiven you for it? How will you help bring reconciliation?
- Think about a time when someone has let you down. Have you forgiven them for it? How will you help bring reconciliation?
- Look through the Church notices (can be found online) and pray for any upcoming events and people you would like to invite
- Pray for each other and record what you pray for (confidentially)

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2: God's will or ours?

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...

Share what your favourite season of the year is. Why is this?

WORSHIP

Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...

Read Psalm 23 as a group. Then give out paper and pens/pencils and ask people to draw out their favourite verse(s) from the Psalm. Share with the group and explain why this is your favourite verse.

WORD

Read Matthew 26:36-56

Discuss your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)

- What is your most prized possession?
 - * Would you give this away if you felt God wanted you to?
- Jesus knows what he is about to go through. He knows he will go through tremendous pain and suffering. Can anyone in the group relate to this?

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- What does Jesus mean when he says 'may this cup be taken from me'?
- Why do you think Jesus asks for the cup to be taken from him three times?
- Why is God's will more important than Jesus'?
- Can you think of an example in your life when you submitted to God's will above your own?
- What do you think is the most remarkable thing about this passage?
- How can you grow in knowing God's will in your life?
- Why was it important that the writings of the prophets were fulfilled?
- What does it mean to serve God?

WHAT NEXT?

- Look at last week's prayer record. Have any prayers been answered? Take some time to thank God in your prayer time if so.
- Think about God's will compared to our own. If you have felt challenged to place God as your first factor in decision making, as individuals, or as a group, how are you going to do that in the next two weeks?
- Pray for each other and record what you pray for

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3: The End

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...

Make a short quiz and take part in pairs.

WORSHIP

Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...

Listen to Martyn Joseph's song Strange Way. This can be found on youtube. This is a song about the Crucifixion with some interesting comparisons in it. You could place a cross or crucifix in the middle of the group whilst you listen to the song to provide a focal point for your thoughts.

WORD

Read Matthew 27:27-61 Leave a couple of minutes quiet at the end.

Discuss your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)

- Why do the soldiers mock Jesus?
- Do you know anyone who mocks Jesus as the soldiers did?
- Does anyone in your group know about the process of execution called crucifixion? If not, you could look it up. It is one of the most

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horrific forms of execution humanity has ever devised. You could get some pictures of the crucifixion to provoke discussion about what it was like.

- Why does Pilate place the sign saying 'This is Jesus, King of the Jews' above his head?
- Jesus is mocked by those who pass by. They use Jesus' own words against him about destroying the temple and rebuilding it in three days. What did Jesus actually mean by this?
- For three hours in day time darkness covered the land. How would you feel if this happened today?
- Jesus quotes Psalm 22 which was we looked at a few weeks ago. Jesus feels abandoned by God. Have you ever felt like this?
- When Jesus died the curtain in the Temple split into two. Why is this significant?
- Other people rose from the dead when Jesus died (although they didn't come out until after he was resurrected, maybe they were resurrected with him). What do you think about this? How would you feel if that happened in Alsager?
- The Centurion and those with him saw this and declared, 'Surely he was the Son of God!' Do you agree with him?
- When Jesus was buried a large stone was rolled across his tomb. Why is this important?
- Which part of the crucifixion story touches your heart most greatly?
- How does Jesus' death bring us closer to God?

WHAT NEXT?

- Look at last time's prayer record, and the time before. Have any prayers been answered? Spend some time thanking God..
- Tell someone in the next couple of weeks about who you believe Jesus is.
- Pray for one another and record what you pray for.

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4: The Resurrection

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...

Ask each member of the group: What is the best sporting comeback you have witnessed?

WORSHIP

Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...

Choose a song we sing at church, print off the lyrics, play it on a CD or MP3 and sing it together.

WORD

Read Matthew 27:57-28:15

Discuss your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)

- Why did the Pharisees want guards on the tomb?
- Why were the guards ineffective?
- After the angel spoke to the women they were 'afraid yet filled with joy'. Have you ever felt like this?

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- The women are hurrying on their way to tell the other disciples about Jesus. They get interrupted on the way. How do you feel when you get interrupted?
- The interruption the women experience on the way to the disciples is Jesus talking to them. They notice his greeting. Do you think we sometimes miss out on Jesus greeting us because we are in a rush?
- The women echo the Magi in Matthew 2:11. They bow down and worship Jesus. How do we bow down before Jesus in our every day lives?
- We can assume the women felt a bit scared as well, because Jesus tells them not to be afraid. Are there any fears you have which you would like Jesus to tell you not to be afraid of?
- Jesus tells the women to go and tell their friends about him. How many of your friends have you told about Jesus?
- The chief priests pay the soldiers to lie. Why do they do this?
- Why do the chief priests not realise the truth once Jesus has been resurrected? Who is this like who you know?

WHAT NEXT?.

- Read through the prayer record. Remember to thank God for answered prayers.
- Jesus is alive! Choose how you are going to celebrate this.
- Who are you going to tell about the Resurrection?

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Extra Stuff!

If you'd like to spend more time on the Easter Story as a group or as individuals, you could try this...

- Read through a book on the Easter Story together.
- Look at different theories of atonement and discuss them as a group
- Learn two or three verses from the Easter Story each day for the next couple of months so that eventually you can recite it by heart.
- Read through the whole Easter Story and use Ignatian prayer (look it up) to explore it more deeply.
- Take one thing which has challenged you in the past few weeks and tell someone about it, and tell that person what you're going to do about it. Ask the person to check you have done it to make sure you then do it!