



Easter: The Rest of the Story

How does it apply to my life and what more should I understand?

Scriptures

Passages from: John 3; Matthew 4; Romans 8; John 4; Matthew 28; Romans 5
(Consider using multiple translations of the Bible, including *The Message*)

Purpose

Provide avenues for the participant to grow and learn beyond the stories of Easter, and encourage the move to action that the Easter story assigns to Disciples, followers of Jesus Christ.

Items you may need

Pencils and paper

Bibles

Hymnals (or print words to the songs)

Or CD player and CD's with selected worshipful songs

Suggestions for the Leader

This program moves from study right into worship and can be adapted for a chair circle, around a table or in a more formal setting. If you select to create a worship area, you might include a cross, candle and possibly Easter lilies if they are available. For this program it would be a good time to share elements of communion.

Read the program, make necessary copies for your readers and collect supplies. Give your participants their parts and instruction prior to the event in order that they are prepared and the program can run smoothly. Be prepared to be the time-keeper to move the group in and out of brief small-group sessions. Suggested time is five to seven minutes depending on how long you have planned your session.

Introduction

Open with prayer inviting in the Holy Spirit.

(You may ask a member of the group to prepare this ahead of time)



Facilitator to read to the group to set the stage -

As Disciples, we are encouraged to read and study the scriptures ourselves in order that we can better understand the message. This book [the bible] holds so many of the stories we have heard for years – “Noah’s Ark,” “Jonah and the Whale,” “Nicodemus up in a Tree.” “The Christmas Story,” and, of course, “The Easter Story.” We know these stories well – some have known them since childhood. The question is – do we know them the same way as we did as children, or do we know “the rest of the story?”

While in grade school, we were taught to use the dictionary to look up words for their meaning and a better understanding. In this time together we will have two vocabulary words. Let’s begin with the first, and that word is **Savior**. Webster’s Dictionary gives these definitions: 1) one that saves from danger or destruction 2) one who brings salvation (for even more clarity, Webster’s defines salvation as: deliverance from the power and effects of sin).





Foundation for Understanding

Reader 1

In the bible story of Nicodemus (John 3), Nicodemus asked Jesus questions and Jesus had answers for him. When he asked "How can a man be born when he is old?"

⁵Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. ⁶Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit^[b] gives birth to spirit. ⁷You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You^[c] must be born again.' ⁸The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."

John 3: 5-8

In a small groups of 2 or more: Read John 3: 9-15 and discuss the following:

What does this passage say about faith and belief?

What is the last sentence of this passage speaking of?

Reader 2

¹⁶"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son,^[f] that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

John 3: 16-17

Reader 1

¹Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. ²After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." ⁴Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'^[a]"

Matthew 4: 1-4

In the same small groups of 2 or more: Read Matthew 4: 5-11 and discuss the following:

What happened next?

How did Jesus respond to each temptation?

Facilitator

There are stories in the bible where only a select few believed and had faith and only they were saved. Examples would be the Noah's Ark story (*Genesis 7:1*) or the story of Lot and his family (*Genesis 19: 12-26*). The good news is, God loves us so much that God sent us a Savior – Jesus Christ, to bear our sins and to die for us (*John 3: 16*).

In same small groups of 2 or more:

Read Romans 8: 31-37 and discuss the following:

In this passage, there is a question

"Who shall separate us from the love of God". What is the answer?

Why does this passage refer to us a conquerors?

Reader 1 and 2 together

³⁸For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons,^[m] neither the present nor the future, nor any powers,³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8: 38-39

The Woman at the Well

Reader 1

²¹"Believe me, woman, the time is coming when you Samaritans will worship the Father neither here at this mountain nor there in Jerusalem. ²²You worship guessing in the dark; we Jews worship in the clear light of day. God's way of salvation is made available through the Jews. ²³But the time is coming—it has, in fact, come—when what you're called will not matter and where you go to worship will not matter.

"It's who you are and the way you live that count before God. Your worship must engage your spirit in the pursuit of truth. That's the kind of people the Father is out





looking for: those who are simply and honestly themselves before him in their worship.
²⁴God is sheer being itself—Spirit. Those who worship him must do it out of their very being, their spirits, their true selves, in adoration.” *John 4: 21-24 (The Message)*

In same small groups of 2 or more: Read John 4: 23-24 and discuss the following:

In this passage do you see any information you have not known before?

What are the instructions?

In this passage it infers that God is seeking – what?

Reader 2

²⁵The woman said, “I know that Messiah” (called Christ) “is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.”

²⁶Then Jesus declared, “I who speak to you am he.”

²⁷Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, “What do you want?” or “Why are you talking with her?” *John 4: 25-27*

Reader 1

²⁸Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, ²⁹“Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ^[bl]? ” ³⁰They came out of the town and made their way toward him. *John 4: 28-30*

In same small groups of 2 or more:

Read John 4: 39-41 and discuss the following:

In this passage a woman delivers information to whom? And why is this significant?

As a result, what happened next?

Reader 2

⁴²They said to the woman, “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.” *John 4: 42*

Song of transition: *Were You There When the Crucified my Lord (Chalice Hymnal – #198)*

Optional: Based on time and preference, at this point, you can read the whole story of Jesus’ crucifixion from the bible in Matthew 27: 11-54, or divide it in segments and have the women take turns reading the story.

The Resurrection

Reader 2

¹After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. *Matthew 28: 1*

In same small groups of 2 or more:

Read Matthew 28: 2-4 and discuss the following:

What happened? Could it happen today?

Would you be afraid?

Reader 1

⁵The angel said to the women, ‘Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. ⁶He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. ⁷Then go quickly and tell his disciples: ‘He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.’ Now I have told you.’ *Matthew 28: 5-7*





Reader 2

⁸So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹Suddenly Jesus met them. “Greetings,” he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. ¹⁰Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”

Matthew 28: 8-10

Reader 1

¹¹While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. ¹²When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, ¹³telling them, “You are to say, ‘His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.’” ¹⁴If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.” ¹⁵So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day.

Matthew 28: 11-15

Read by Facilitator (including the definition):

The exercises and sharing we have done so far in this program have been designed to help us know how blessed we are to have a savior and to understand how great that is. Because God loves us so much and is willing to forgive our sins through Jesus Christ, who has suffered for us – we owe God honor and praise.

Webster's Definition: Worship: 1) to honor or reverence as a divine being or supernatural power
2) to regard with great or extravagant respect, honor, or devotion

Worship

Sing opening prayer: *I Love You, Lord (and I lift my voice), (Chalice Praise Hymnal - #60)*

Reader for the Great Commission

¹⁶Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in^[a] the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Matthew 28: 16-20

Litany of Peace and Joy *(From Romans 5: 1-11)*

Leader

¹Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we^[a]have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.

People

And we^[b] rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. ³Not only so, but we^[c] also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

Leader

⁶You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Facilitator: In silence, we now bring our offerings to the table





*Song of Communion Worship: Jesus, name above all names, or
There's Something About that Name (Chalice Hymnal - #115)*

Share the elements of Communion while the following is being read:

Reader for Communion (*words of institution*):

And at the Last Supper, Jesus said:

"Take this and divide it among you. ¹⁸For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."



¹⁹And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me."

²⁰In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you." *Luke 22: 17-20*

All Read Together

⁹Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! ¹⁰For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! ¹¹Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Romans 5: 9-11

Closing Song:

*Shout to the Lord (Chalice Praise - #35) or
Yes God is Real*



Other Available Graphics

