



Easter Sunday

MEETING AIM

To encounter the risen Jesus!

BIBLE PASSAGE

John 20:1-18

BACKGROUND

If you have been around church for any amount of time, this story will be very familiar. However, we do well not to get too used to the incredible truth of the story and what a life-changing difference it makes to us today. Take the opportunity to allow the truth to become fresh again and communicate this 'alive truth' to the children, young people and adults in the service.

SIGNING IN

5 MINS

As people join your service, welcome them and ask them about their week.

WELCOME

5 MINS

OPTION ONE: Praise and worship

You will need: simple songs that speak of Jesus' resurrection

Before the service, select some songs about Jesus' resurrection. Be careful to choose a good mix of songs, including ones that the children, young people and adults will know.

Enjoy singing these songs together. Perhaps you could invite some of the children or young people to teach 'their' songs to the rest of the congregation.

OPTION TWO: Who's that?

You will need: photos of celebrities that have been doctored so it's difficult to make out who they are

Before the service, prepare your photos, making sure you have a mix of people that different generations will have heard of.

Show the photos by sharing your screen and invite everyone to guess who all the celebrities are in the pictures. After you have finished, ask for some feedback on how easy it was to recognise someone they probably knew.

BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

You will need: a volunteer to play the part of Mary; biblical costume

It's important for your volunteer to be able to rehearse this role-play before the service. Ideally, they'd be able to learn their lines to give a smooth performance. As you thank people for coming along to your special service, Mary Magdalene should start shouting, trying to attract your attention.

Mary: Have you heard?

Leader: Heard? Heard what?

Mary: It's Jesus!

Leader: It's Jesus what?

Mary: JESUS! HE'S ALIVE!

Leader: I'm sorry, I think I'm missing something. Who are you?

Mary: Oh, sorry, getting carried away. My name's Mary Magdalene.

Leader: Really? *The Mary Magdalene?*

Mary: Well, I think so. I'm not sure how many other people are called Mary Magdalene!

Leader: This is great! Welcome, Mary! What's all this about Jesus? He's alive?

Mary: Yes! Yes! He was dead, but now he's alive! I've seen him with my own eyes!

Leader: Woah! Slow down! Start from the beginning...

Mary: Yes, that's a very good place to start. Or so I hear. Right. The beginning. Well, a week ago, Jesus had arrived in Jerusalem to the shouts of the crowd – everyone welcomed him into the city, waving palm branches and cheering and shouting...Jesus was on a donkey, which seemed a bit strange, but it showed everyone that he was a king!

Leader: I think I heard about that. Not everyone was so happy with Jesus, were they?

Mary: No, not at all. All the religious leaders were very jealous that people were listening to Jesus. He made them look stupid in front of the crowds and now they wanted him dead!

Leader: Dead? Really?

Mary: Yes! They started plotting to kill Jesus. And they even recruited one his friends, Judas, to help!

Leader: No!

Mary: I know! The long and the short of it was that Jesus was arrested and put to death – crucified, even though he had done nothing wrong. We took his body down from the cross and put him in a tomb. Well, this morning, I went to the tomb to put spices on Jesus' body but when I got there, the stone had been rolled away and the tomb was empty.

Leader: Where had Jesus body gone?

Mary: I didn't know, so I went to get Peter and John. They came to see, but they didn't know what happened either. They left as confused as when they'd arrived. But then two men in white – angels, I suppose – appeared.

Leader: Wait a minute...you saw angels? This morning?

Mary: Yes, I promise you! They asked me why I was crying, and I told them: "Well...Jesus!" Then I realised there was someone standing behind me. I thought it was the gardener. But then he said my name and I knew who it was.

Leader: Jesus!

Mary: Yes! Jesus! He's alive! I'm just one my way to tell all his friends all about it! I can't wait to see their faces! Bye! *She rushes off.*

Leader: Bye, Mary!

**SMALL GROUPS**

10 MINS

If your software allows, send everyone off into different breakout rooms made up of a few households. Put these questions into each group's chat box:

- What do you think Mary said to the disciples when she went back?
- What would you say to Jesus if you were Mary?
- What do you think is important about this story?
- What difference does this story make to you?

Give the groups time to chat about these questions, referring to the Bible passage if they need to.

If you can't put people into breakout rooms, ask individual households to discuss them, and link up those who live on their own using another messaging or video-calling app.

REVIEW

5 MINS

Get some feedback from 'Small groups', encouraging everyone to take part who wants to.

RESPONSE ACTIVITIES

10 MINS

Invite people to do one of these activities in breakout rooms to respond:

OPTION ONE: Reflection

Play some music and lead the group in this short meditation:

Imagine you are standing next to the tomb. The stone is not there and the tomb is empty. Then imagine you hear a voice behind you, calling your name. It's Jesus. You turn around and see him. What do you want to ask him? Imagine that you're asking him that question. What does he say in reply? Imagine you're having a conversation with Jesus now. What things does he say to you? Leave some time for people to imagine this.

When you log off church today, what thoughts and ideas are you going to take away with you? Leave some time for people to think about this.

OPTION TWO: Art response

You will need: art materials

Ask the group to use create a picture or collage about what God is saying to them. Encourage them to chat with God as they create.

OPTION THREE: Discussion

Ask a couple of people to lead a discussion about the story today and people's response to it. You could review the questions from 'Small groups' as well as any questions that the people in the group may have.

CLOSING

5 MINS

Bring everyone back together and ask if anyone would like to share anything from the response time. Thank everyone for taking part and say an appropriate blessing to close the service.

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“No way, man. It did not happen,” Alfie said, as he fought off another ogre. Green blood splattered across the screen.

Freddie put down the controller and looked at his brother.

“I’m telling you it did! I was at the ground and he was there!”

“You must have been dreaming or something,” replied Alfie.

“That’s just wishful thinking.”

“But Kofi and Chelsea were there – they saw him as well. You can ask them!” Freddie fumbled with his phone before managing to FaceTime Kofi. His friend’s face appeared on screen.

“Oi, oi!” cried Kofi. “What’s up?”

“Kofi, did we or did we not see Alonso Jesus de Maria at Manchesterford Stadium yesterday?”

“Yeah man, it was sick! They must have signed him again.”

“Rubbish!” Alfie shouted at the phone. “You’re having me on.”

“No! It was definitely him! Back from the dead! Well, back from Arsenal, which is as good as.”

“See?” Freddie said to his brother. “Thanks Kof, that’s all I wanted to ask.”

“Oh, OK man, see you tomorrow.” The screen went blank.

“Nah, it’s all lies. Atletico would never sign him again – they sacked him, remember? They accused him of loads of stuff – partying the night before a game, flying back to Spain when he should have been at training.”

“Why don’t you believe me?” Freddie leapt on Alfie and wrestled him off the couch. They rolled around a couple of times, before Freddie pinned his brother to the floor and shouted in his ear.

“WE SAW HIM! HE WAS THERE!”

The door opened and their mum came in.

“Get up, boys! If you smash anything, you pay for it.” She tried to pull them apart, but teenage lads are difficult to manoeuvre.

“Anyway, I want to watch the news.”

She picked up the TV remote and the green ogre blood

turned into the pulsing BBC news theme tune and the face of a serious-looking news reader.

“This evening on BBC news...”

Brexit, recession, politics, the latest royal scandal – the headlines washed over Alfie and Freddie until...

“And in sport, the football world is in shock this evening as Atletico Manchesterford dramatically re-sign the renegade striker Alonso Jesus de Maria.”

Alfie sat open-mouthed.

“Believe me now?”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Chat about the story, what everyone liked and didn’t like. You could use some of these questions in your discussion:

- Who do you trust? How easily do you believe others?
- Can you remember a time when evidence and proof made you think differently about something?
- What do you find difficult to believe? Is there something about faith or life that you struggle with?

This story is based on John 20:24-29. If you’d like to add a more explicit faith element to your discussion, then read this passage together. Think about the similarities and differences between the Bible story and this one. Encourage your family to think about this Bible story in a new way.

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Easter part two

This year, Easter falls at the very start of April so we've been taking the time to explore the whole Easter story over March and April. Whatever the lockdown restrictions in your area, you can do these activities with your own family, make activity packs for other families, or enjoy them in children's groups. (If you missed part one, it's in February Vol 4.)

TOGETHER SESSION ONE

Seed bombs



You will need: a large mixing bowl; shredded paper; water; a food processor or hand-held processor, two or three tablespoons of wildflower seeds; kitchen roll or paper towels. a sieve; a tray

This is a fun but slightly messy way to celebrate the new life of the resurrection. Just like in the Easter story, there will be a little waiting time before you see the new life!

Soak the shredded paper in the water for ten to 15 minutes and then squeeze out as much of the water as you can. A sieve might help with this part. Put the wet paper into a food processor and process it into a pulp. You might need to do this in batches. Put the pulp into the mixing bowl and mix the seeds into it. With your hands, make ping pong ball-sized balls of the paper and seed mixture. Put some paper towels on a baking tray and put the balls on top. Leave them to dry for 24 hours. When the seed bombs are dry, plant them or just place them in the garden where you would like the seeds to grow and watch nature take its course.

TOGETHER SESSION TWO

Sensory mazes



You will need: playdough or wet sand; marbles

This is a really simple but, fittingly, very tactile activity.

Flatten out some playdough or some damp sand and use your finger or a pen to create tracks or a labyrinth. Roll a marble along the tracks you have made. As you are rolling the marble, think about when your sense of touch is useful. When does touch help you to figure out what something is? Why do you think Thomas found it tricky to believe Jesus was alive without being able to see or touch him? What would your response have been if you were Thomas?

TOGETHER SESSION THREE

Toasting marshmallows



You will need: tea lights or a cooker hob; heat-resistant mats; forks; marshmallows; chocolate pieces; biscuits

The risen Jesus cooks some bread and fish over a fire and invites his friends to eat with him again. This craft recalls the image of cooking together and sharing food, and is a great opportunity to talk about the responses children have to the story.

Stick a marshmallow on the end of a fork and toast it carefully over the flame of a tea light. Supervision will be needed for younger children! A much quicker way of toasting is to turn on one of the rings of a cooker hob and toast over that, but it might be more difficult to get several people in position at the same time. Either eat the toasted marshmallow just as it is, or put it between two biscuits with a piece of chocolate and eat it that way. As you are eating, talk about the story and how it feels to cook and eat with friends.

TOGETHER SESSION FOUR

Ascension bubbles



You will need: a plastic bottle or glass jar; water; vegetable or baby oil; food colouring (optional); antacid or sterilising tablet

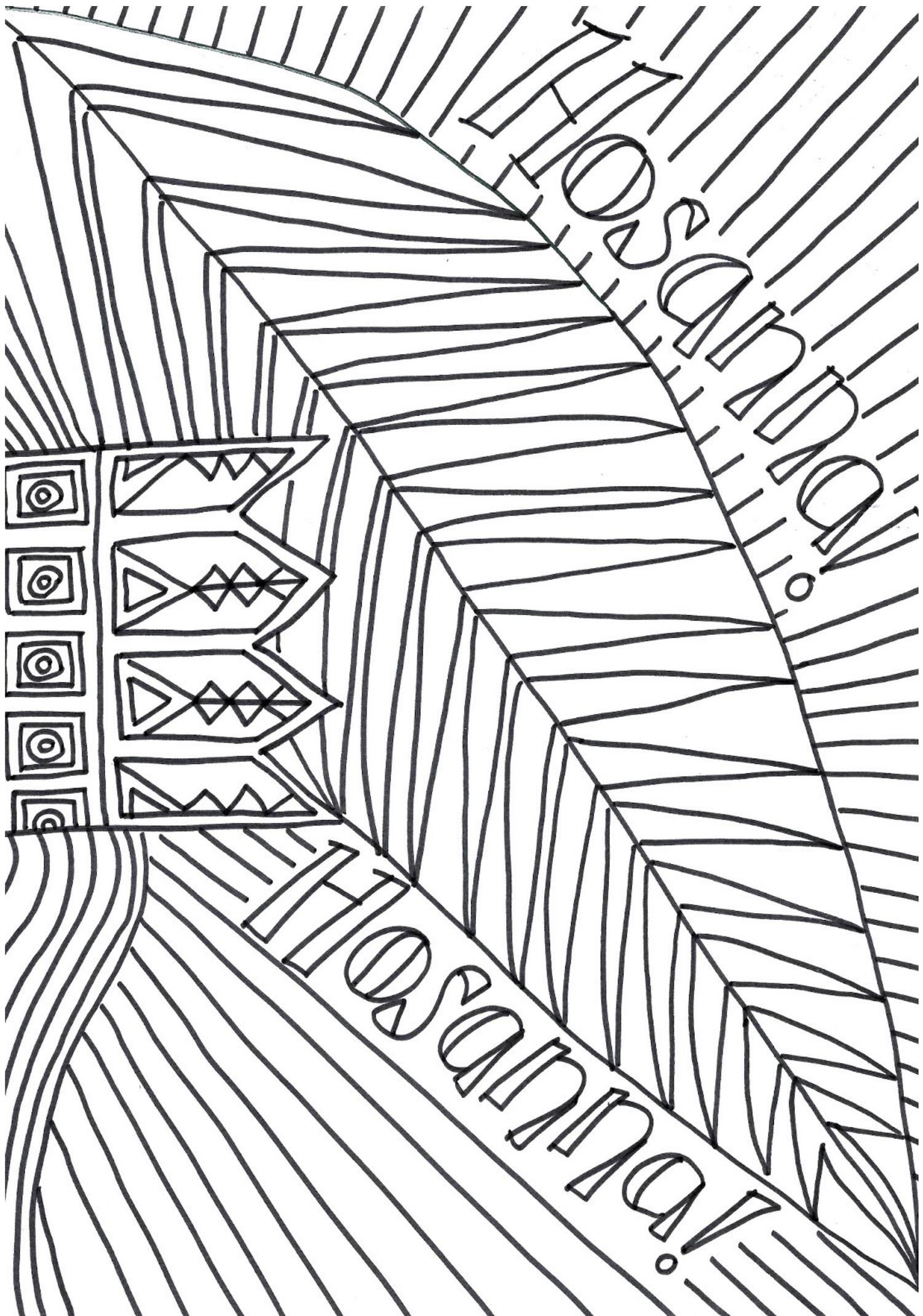
This is a lovely, visual craft that children can do individually or as a larger group and really brings to life the idea of 'ascension.'

Fill a bottle or jar half-full with water and mix in some food colouring (if you wish). Now pour oil into the bottle until it is about three-quarters full. The oil will separate from the water into a separate layer.

Drop an antacid or sterilising tablet (or try a quarter or half at a time if they are large tablets) into the bottle and watch as bubbles of water start to rise up through the oil layer in the style of a mini lava lamp! Watch the bubbles and think about the sight of Jesus ascending into heaven. What might that have meant for the disciples? What might they have been thinking and feeling? What does it feel like to wait for something, as the disciples had been told to go and wait for the Holy Spirit to come?

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Youth group games night

For months, we've been struggling with trying to run games online with things that young people have in their houses. This month, we've put together a set of games that require certain items, which you will need to deliver to each young person before your session. However, they are all low-cost and small, so you won't need to haul huge boxes of expensive items around your neighbourhood!

You could keep a running points total and award a prize to the overall winner.

THE GAMES PACK

To play these games, these are the items that you'll need to put in each pack:

Penne pasta; spaghetti; a few After Eight mints (or similar); a random item in a paper bag (such as a balloon, a small soft toy, or a whisk); playdough (bought or homemade); small pack of tissues; five elastic bands

PASTA PARTY

You will need: penne pasta; spaghetti

Ask each young person to lay out both kinds of pasta in front of them. Challenge the young people to thread the penne onto a stick of spaghetti using only their mouths. The person with the most penne on spaghetti at the end of a certain time limit is the winner. You could deduct points for broken spaghetti or excessive drool!

AFTER-EIGHT GAME

You will need: After Eight mints

An absolute classic. Each player puts their mint on their forehead and tries to move the mint into their mouth without using their hands. If the mint falls off, they players have to put it back on their forehead and start again. Make sure you keep an eye out for illegal use of the hands! The first person to succeed is the winner, though you could award points for style and the most interesting facial expressions.

SURPRISE SKETCH

You will need: a random item in a paper bag

Ask each player to get the paper bag and open it. They then have ten seconds to think of a use for the item which is not its actual use. You could do this one by one, or ask all the players to open their bags at the same time. If you do the latter, then ask the more confident members of your group to demonstrate their ideas first (surreptitiously giving others more time to come up with their idea). Award points for ingenuity, comedy, outlandishness...

PLAYDOUGH-TIONARY

You will need: playdough; list of objects, people and places

Send the first player the first word on your list via the chat function. This player has to make that word out of their playdough. The other players have to guess what it is. The first one to do so gets a point. Keep going around the players until you run out of words on your list. The player with the most points is the winner. You could also award points for the most outlandish modelling skills or the guess furthest from the actual answer.

TISSUE TEASING

You will need: small pack of tissues; five elastic bands

In a given time limit, the players have to make a statue out of the tissues and elastic bands. Once the time is up, ask everyone to display their statues in front of their cameras and explain what their statues are. Award points for accuracy, innovation and artistic flair.

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Moxie (12)

Watch the whole film together or concentrate on the clip: 00:08:45 to 00:11:13

SYNOPSIS

Fed up with the sexist and toxic status quo at her high school, a shy 16-year-old called Vivian finds inspiration from her mother's rebellious past and anonymously publishes a school magazine, called *Moxie*, that sparks a school-wide, coming-of-age revolution.

Moxie is a film that isn't afraid to tackle difficult issues of gender, race, body image and ethnicity head-on, while being aware enough that it doesn't have all of the answers. The key message of women not having to accept inappropriate behaviour from men should hopefully fuel important discussions among young and the not-quite-as-young that recent events have started.

DISCUSS

Begin by showing the trailer to *Moxie* – have any of your young people seen the whole film? Ask them to reflect on the following:

From the trailer, what issues do they think are covered in the film?

Does the premise of the film make them feel uncomfortable in any way? Why?

In this clip we see a class discussion about *The Great Gatsby*. After a patronising start from the teacher and in a response to the question: "How are women portrayed?" a new student called Lucy responds by questioning why the book is still being studied and read when it is written by "some rich white guy about a rich white guy who we are supposed to feel sorry about because he's obsessed with the only girl he can't have". Lucy suggests that, to fully understand the American dream, books on immigration or the working class should be studied. While exploring her idea,

she is interrupted by a male student who speaks over her and says that the book is a classic, before reinterpreting her idea to fit his own agenda. He then accuses her of not listening to him when she tries to engage in debate. Later we see Vivian shopping with her mother. While at the till, Vivian's mother is patronised by an older male.

After showing the clip as a stimulus, break into smaller discussion groups or discuss together the following questions:

- How should we respond to media (books, films, etc) that display outdated and inappropriate views by modern standards?
- How do you think Vivian feels in this clip?
- Have any of the females in your group been in a similar situation to Vivian before?
- Is the teacher to blame for allowing the male character to dominate the lesson?

Read 1 Corinthians 11:3-15. This discussion is obviously going to raise some issues with those taking part, and there are many different views around this passage. However, it is an important discussion to be had with young people.

- Do you think that the Bible and Christianity view women as secondary to men?
- If this passage is to be viewed culturally and historically, should Christians take passages on themes such as sexuality in a similar fashion?
- Should Christians ignore this passage altogether?
- What would gender equality within Christianity look like?

Moxie is available on Netflix.

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Supermarket flowers

ARTIST: Ed Sheeran SUITABLE FOR: over-13s

INTRODUCTION

This song was written by Ed Sheeran following the experience of losing his grandmother. It was recently announced that the song has been adopted by Marie Curie for their day of reflection on 23 March to mark the first anniversary of lockdown, remembering all those who have been lost this year. This session is written to help groups hold a time of reflection and remembrance together, and to help young people to talk about their experience of loss and bereavement. You may like to have other resources available to support young people through this.

LISTEN AND DISCUSS

How you begin this session may vary, depending on your intentions. If you are planning to hold a special time of remembrance or reflection, it may be helpful to prepare your group for this in advance. If this is a more general discussion-type session, you can begin by checking how your young people are, introducing the theme and giving the group the opportunity to talk about their own experiences of loss, as they are comfortable to do so. Remind your group that this may be a difficult subject, but it is also an important one and it is very helpful for us to talk openly about it.

Play the track, distributing lyrics for the young people to follow if appropriate, and as a group, discuss:

- How do you feel about this song?
- Which lyrics stood out to you?
- How do you relate to this?
- Is there anything else you want to share?

It is important during this session not to plan too much to discuss but rather to allow time and space for the young people to share their own feelings and experiences.

Distribute Bibles amongst the group and look together at Revelation 21:1-4 and explain that this is a wonderful promise of God, that he will wipe away every tear from our eyes.

You may like to prepare a particular activity to help the young people to continue to reflect and remember together, such as decorating photo frames or a memory stone. As you do so, take the opportunity to continue the conversation together.

As you draw the session to a close, you may like to play the song again or hold a minute of silence together before praying for the young people, for all the issues raised and that they would know God's comfort at this time.

For further resources see:

- The Church of England
- Parenting for Faith blog
- Child Bereavement UK
- The Church Army

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The playlist of my life

I heard some sad news this week that Lou Ottens, the Dutch inventor of the cassette tape (and co-inventor of the CD), had died aged 94. I could probably identify all the significant moments in my childhood purely by the artists and tracks I was listening to on C90s during those years! I'm sure you can identify with that, whether you are growing up finding new music on TikTok or whether (like me) it was more about creating mixtapes by pausing record during the *Chart Show* on Sunday night.

One of my earliest significant memories (in a mentoring frame) was going out for a drive with my sister's boyfriend Kevin when I was barely ten years old. He had a red Ford Escort and 'Summer in the city' was the soundtrack to that particular day whizzing round the sunny Essex countryside. I really looked up to him and he had quite an impact on me. Like him, my first car was also a Ford Escort. And like him, I care about listening to young people and creating space where they can feel listened to and create significant moments and memories that help shape them. That's mentoring.

This week a moment with one of my mentees was rather sadder as they cried at the pain of change and heartache and upheaval. I didn't know what to say. Which is good because sometimes (OK, most of the time) you just need to stay silent and let them talk. They expressed there was a particular track that they have listened to a lot lately that calmed and focused their feelings. Often music can say things and help us feel things that we cannot articulate or access on our own. This is why worship music is such a powerful and extraordinary gift (God is 'Enthroned in the praises of [his people]', Psalm 22:3, NKJV) and is especially true for young people – due to the process of their (volatile and turbulent) physiological and mental development. More on that another time, just remember that music is a powerful force for young people. It can give words to their feelings and can also inform and exacerbate their experiences. Understanding this can allow us into a significant aspect of their worlds.

ACTIVITY

Ask them to create you a playlist of tracks with lyrics that mean something to them or are just significant in their life for some reason. I'm doubtful there's a teenager who wouldn't be able to do this (younger ones might just need to talk it through; maybe include TV programmes or do it verbally). It could help to have Spotify, or whichever platform you have access to, open to search and browse a bit. You could even do it over a messaging service or text, as these platforms allow direct sharing of tracks, playlists or albums. If you are not familiar, free (ad-sponsored) accounts are available. What an amazing insight you'll get into their life and where they are at. And no doubt you'll also discover loads of great new music! It's a great place to start a mentoring conversation...

Try framing your lists like this:

- Name a song that makes you happy.
- Name a song or artist that you go to when you are angry.
- Name three songs with sunshine in the title or lyrics.
- Has a song ever made you cry? Why?
- Which lyrics best sum up what you feel at the moment?
- Make a playlist (or just a list) of tracks that might help someone with anxiety.

Journey through John 3:16

For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life. John 3:16

Trace around the cross with your finger and follow the reflections as you go.

4.

"...may not die but have eternal life."
Continue along the green line and thank God for his amazing gift of Jesus. Think of five more things that you are thankful to God for, and list them here:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

1.

"For God loved the world..."
As you trace along the red line, spend some time thinking about God's love. What is something that you really love and care about? Write or draw it here:

3.

"...so that everyone who believes in him..."
As you follow along the blue line, consider that this good news is not just for me and you, but for everyone! Think of one person you know that you would really like to know the love of God. Write their name down here:

2.

"...that he gave his only Son..."
Trace your finger along the yellow line and think of the best gift you've ever received. What was that gift? Write or draw it here:

extra activity:

If you have time, colour in the cross in bright colours and patterns as you reflect on the resurrection.