

Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday

Welcome to Large Group Openings for the Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday Rotation. Enjoy your time (about 10 minutes) with kids as you sing, learn, and pray together. Choose a song or two to get things started, move into the object lesson that introduces kids to the story, invite kids to discuss a question with their Shepherds, and finish up your time with a prayer.

Spark Songs

Use one or more of the following Spark Songs during your Large Group Opening. Use them in the order that suits your group's size, format, and time frame.

I've Got the Joy, Joy, Joy (Track 10, Songbook page 55)

Here's a perfect song to express your group's Easter joy. Make the song extra special by adding the words, "I've got the Easter joy that Jesus loves us, down in my heart."

Jesus Loves Me (Track 14, Songbook page 76)

All of Holy Week rests on this message, "Jesus loves us." From the high of a Palm Sunday procession to the low of Jesus' suffering on Good Friday, Jesus always loves us. Sing this song as you remember all of the Holy Week events and celebrate the love Jesus has for all people.

Spark My World (Track 1, Songbook page 4)

Jesus' love for us, lived out in his death and resurrection, is the spark that sends us out to love others. Sing this song together as you celebrate the spark in your life and the spark you can spread to others.

Spark Resources

Spark Song CD
Spark Songbook
Spark Song Lyrics Sheets or
Slides



Supplies

CD player

Introduce the Story

Hi, everyone! Today, we're talking about Holy Week. Holy Week is the time in the church when Jesus dies and rises again. Holy Week starts with Palm Sunday. On Palm Sunday Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. Boys and girls and moms and dads waved their palm branches and welcomed Jesus. They called Hosanna, Hosanna. It was a day of celebration! Use the dry-erase marker to draw a dot on the whiteboard at the left-hand side, about 1/3 of the way from the top.

After the joy of Palm Sunday, events in Holy Week started to go downhill. On the whiteboard, draw a slightly diagonal line down from the place you started toward the bottom of the board. **Jesus had to go before the rulers of Jerusalem and they didn't believe that he was God's Son.**

The week turned sad. Continue drawing the line across the bottom of the board. **On Maundy Thursday, Jesus shared his last supper with his disciples. The next day, on Good Friday, Jesus was arrested and he died on a cross.**

Spark Resources

None

Supplies

Whiteboard
Dry-erase marker

Three days after Jesus died, on Easter morning, four women went to the tomb.

Begin to draw the line diagonally upward to the right. **The women didn't find Jesus in the tomb. Jesus was gone! He rose from the dead. Jesus found Mary in the garden and called her name. She saw the risen Jesus and it was the happiest moment of her life.** Line on the board now rises to the same point as Palm Sunday. Essentially, you have drawn a cup shape.

Here is the shape of Holy Week. It begins up here on Palm Sunday, then goes

down here on Good Friday, then ends up here on Easter. Draw a line from the starting point to the ending point, curving the line slightly down. Draw a cup base and stem under the bottom line.

This shape of the events of Holy Week looks like something we see in church.

What does it look like? (a cup) Yes! The shape of Holy Week looks like a communion cup. When we take communion in church, we gather at the altar to remember Jesus. We remember this special week called Holy Week and all that Jesus shared with us: his life, death, and resurrection.

Shepherd Questions

Pose one or more of these questions to the large group and invite the Shepherds to discuss them with the kids in their small groups. If your group is already small, choose one of the questions and ask the whole group to discuss it together.

- What is your favorite part of the Easter story?
- When was a time that you felt both sad and happy?
- How did Jesus try to help his friends, the disciples?

Closing Prayer

The shape of Holy Week in our picture also reminds me of the cup we can make with our hands. Let's make a cup with our hands for the prayer.

Holy God,

Here is a space for you. Help us to hold a little part of the love you shared with us during Holy Week. Thank you for loving us more than we could ever imagine.

Amen.



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Introduce the Story

Hi, everyone! I brought some plants with me this morning. Pick up the fern frond. **These plants want to tell us the story of Holy Week. Here's a fern frond. It's sort of like the palms that the people waved on Palm Sunday when Jesus rode through Jerusalem on a donkey. The people loved Jesus because he was their leader. Jesus was like the center stem of this plant. The people were like these leaves that came from the stem.** Pass the frond around for kids to examine.

Pick up the rose. **We have to be careful with this one. It's a rose. What's on the stem of this plant? (thorns) What happens when you get poked with a rose thorn? (it hurts, you bleed) Did you know that Jesus wore a whole crown of thorns when he went to the cross? My head hurts just thinking about it. We feel sad for Jesus.** Pass around the rose for kids to examine.

Hold the Easter lily. **What's this plant called? (Easter lily) On Easter Sunday, we fill our church with Easter lilies. The smell of Easter lilies seems to come straight from heaven! The smell of Easter lilies reminds us of the happy news of Easter. Jesus rose from the dead and promised us that we would live with him in heaven.**

Spark Resources

None

Supplies

Rose or other plant with
thorns
Fern frond or any leaf with a
spine and veins extending
out from it
Easter lily

Shepherd Questions

Pose one or more of these questions to the large group and invite the Shepherds to discuss them with the kids in their small groups. If your group is already small, choose one of the questions and ask the whole group to discuss it together.

- Which plant is your favorite?
- What kind of plants have you grown before?
- How can plants teach us about new life?

Closing Prayer

Place the three plants in the center of the prayer circle.

**Dear Jesus,
You are the vine and we are the branches.
You are the one who gave your life for us.
May we hear and touch and smell your Easter story.
Amen.**

Tear here for easy use!



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Introduce the Story

Before class, print one labyrinth per kid. Learn a simple Taize chant, "Jesus, Remember Me."

Good morning, kids! I'd like to talk a little about prayers this morning. Did you know that Holy Week was full of prayers? Jesus prayed for his disciples. Jesus prayed for his enemies. Jesus prayed to God in the Garden of Gethsemane.

We can pray, too! Sometimes we pray to feel close to God. Sometimes we pray to ask for help. Sometimes we pray to say thank you. There are lots of ways to pray. Have you ever heard of a labyrinth? A labyrinth is a place where people can walk and think about God. It's called a walking meditation. We can use a labyrinth like we use a prayer—we can use it to feel close to God.

Labyrinths are really big, so we don't have one in this room, but we have the next best thing. Each of you has a labyrinth design. You can use your finger to follow

Spark Resources

None

Supplies

Labyrinth design, 1 per kid
(readily available online)

the labyrinth path. Start at the opening on the outside edge. Follow the labyrinth path with your finger until you get to the center of the labyrinth. Then follow the path back out to the edge. Chant *Jesus, Remember Me* several times.

Shepherd Questions

Pose one or more of these questions to the large group and invite the Shepherds to discuss them with the kids in their small groups. If your group is already small, choose one of the questions and ask the whole group to discuss it together.

- Why doesn't everyone pray in the same way?
- What prayer did Jesus teach us?
- How can God hear so many prayers at the same time?

Closing Prayer

As a closing prayer, walk slowly in a large circle around the room as a walking meditation and chant *Jesus, Remember Me* a few times before saying "Amen."

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Introduce the Story

Loss and saying good-bye are important Holy Week themes. In the church, we have unique opportunities to teach kids about grief. Invite your pastor and other church leaders to join your group and share a healed-grief story. Kids will get a lot from the hearing real-life stories about experiencing the death of a friend or family member and then finally finding joy again.

Before your guests come to class, meet with the kids and brainstorm some questions that you could ask the visitors. For example, "What is like to say good-bye?" "Do you ever stop feeling sad?" "Should we be afraid of someone dying?" "How did God help you when you felt sad?" "What surprised you about losing someone?" Encourage your guests to bring a picture and a joyful story about their loved one.

Spark Resources

None

Supplies

None

Shepherd Questions

Pose one or more of these questions to the large group and invite the Shepherds to discuss them with the kids in their small groups. If your group is already small, choose one of the questions and ask the whole group to discuss it together.

- Who can you talk to when you're sad?
- What did Jesus do when he felt sad?
- How long will Jesus love us?

Closing Prayer

Share a benediction prayer with your guests and the group.

May God bless you and keep you and the ones you love, now and forever. Amen.

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Introduce the Story

Hi, kids! I'm so glad you're here today! We've got something really important to talk about. It's so important that I'm going to need a volunteer to help me today. Is anyone willing to help? Select a volunteer.

We've been talking a lot in Sunday school about Holy Week. Holy Week is full of happy things, but it also has a lot of this not-so-happy thing: suffering. What's suffering? (*someone getting hurt and feeling really bad*) **Jesus doesn't want us to be afraid of suffering. In fact, Jesus wants us to see who is hurting.**

But we don't like to look at suffering. We say, "That's too hard!" or "That's too gross! I won't look!" Wrap a bandage around the volunteer's eyes so that they can't see. **We don't want to see suffering.**

In the Bible, God says, "I have heard the cries of my people." We like to hear people talking and singing and laughing, but we don't like to hear people crying. Wrap another bandage around the volunteer's head that covers up the ears. **"No thanks, God. We don't want to hear suffering."**

Spark Resources

None

Supplies

Lightweight rolled gauze
bandages

Jesus healed people and talked to people and stayed with people. Sometimes we know that we could help someone who is suffering, but we get scared. We tell God, "Sorry, my hands are tied." Use another gauze bandage to tie a bow around the volunteer's hands.

When Jesus died on cross, love won. Jesus gave his love to us, and Jesus will help us give his love to other people! Jesus will untie our hands. Remove the bandage. **And open our ears.** Remove the bandage. **And uncover our eyes.** Remove the bandage. Ask for a second volunteer to come up and pretend to be hurt. **Jesus helps us see and hear and touch other people who need our help. Jesus helps us bind their wounds.** First volunteer wraps the second volunteer's arm or leg with the bandages.

Shepherd Questions

Pose one or more of these questions to the large group and invite the Shepherds to discuss them with the kids in their small groups. If your group is already small, choose one of the questions and ask the whole group to discuss it together.

- Who do you know who is suffering?
- Who cares for you when you are sick?
- When did Jesus suffer?

Closing Prayer

Close with a prayer of Mother Teresa, a woman who knew about suffering.

**Dear Jesus,
Stay with me and then I shall begin to shine as you shine, so to shine as to be a light to others.
Amen.**



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Supplies

CD player

Introduce the Story

Distribute bells to kids. In the spirit of Easter Sunday, kids will practice this Easter call and response they might hear in church.

Group 1: Christ is risen.

Group 2: Christ is risen indeed.

Everyone: Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia. (kids ring their bells during the Alleluias)

Before you begin the call and response, divide the kids into two groups. Invite Group 1 to come up with a unique way to say "Christ is risen." Let Group 2 know that they will have to say "Christ is risen, indeed" just like Group 1 says their part. Invite Group 1 to say their piece, then have Group 2 mimic and respond before you all say "Alleluia" together. Have the groups switch roles and play again.

Spark Resources

None

Supplies

Jingle bells strung onto pieces of string or ribbon, 1 per kid

Shepherd Questions

Pose one or more of these questions to the large group and invite the Shepherds to discuss them with the kids in their small groups. If your group is already small, choose one of the questions and ask the whole group to discuss it together.

- If you went to the tomb and Jesus was gone, what would you think?
- What was the happiest day of your life?
- How many times can you say “Alleluia” in a row?

Closing Prayer

Sing or say this hymn as a closing prayer.

**Goodness is stronger than evil;
Love is stronger than hate;
Light is stronger than darkness;
Life is stronger than death;
Victory is ours, victory is ours,
Through God who loves us.
Amen.**

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