



Mere You There?

- Large and Small Group Sessions for Kindergarten-Grade 3 and Grades 4-8
- 2 Dramas
- 2 Options to the Dramas
- Songs and CD
- Complete Easter Program
- Crafts, Games, and Other Photocopiable Resources

LEADER'S GUIDE K-8 EASTER BOOK 4

Were **You** There?



Grand Rapids, Michigan

Any questions or comments about this unit?
We'd love to hear from you:

Faith Alive Christian Resources
1-800-333-8300
E-mail: editors@faithaliveresources.org

RCA Children's Ministry Office
1-800-968-3943
E-mail: childrensministry@rca.org

Presbyterians for Renewal
1-502-425-4630
E-mail: office@pfrenewal.org

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Walk With Me

Grades K-8

Easter Book 4: Were You There?

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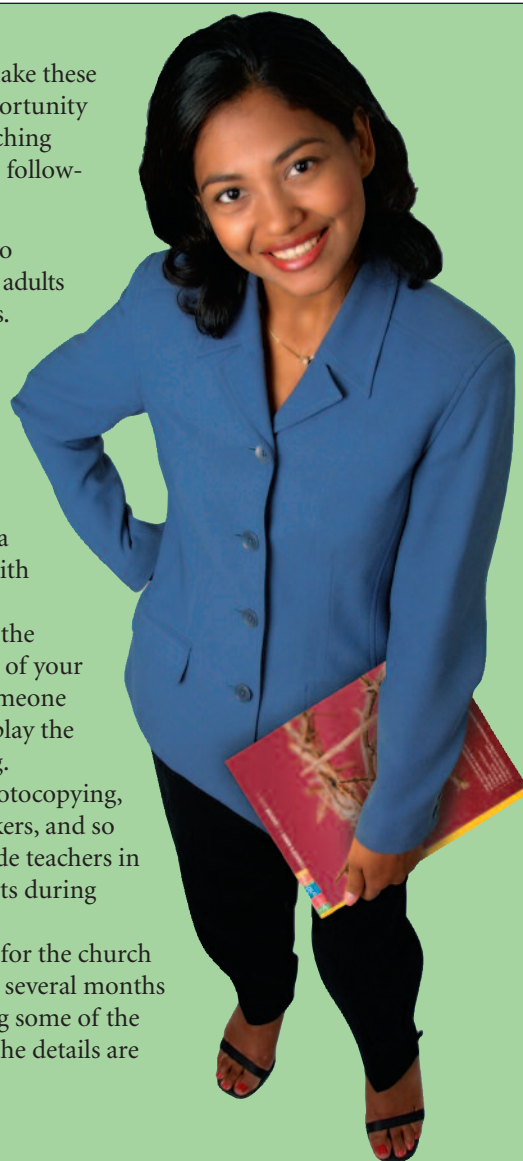
Contents

Getting Started	4
Week 1: We Saw Him Die for Us	8
Large Group Session	8
Small Group Session, Kindergarten-Grade 3	12
Small Group Session, Grades 4-8.	22
Week 2: We See Him Live for Us	30
Large Group Session	30
Small Group Session, Kindergarten-Grade 3	34
Small Group Session, Grades 4-8.	44
Dramas	51
Songs	59
Easter Program Ideas	72
Reproducible Pages.	74
Leader's Evaluation.	95

Ways to Get Others Involved

You'll need the talents of many people in your congregation to make these two sessions come alive for your children. What a wonderful opportunity to involve adults and teens who usually don't take part in the teaching ministry of the church! Consider using volunteers in some of the following ways:

- *Drama Team.* You'll want to find actors to play the roles in the two dramas. Your middle school kids could take these roles. Or invite adults and older teens to prepare and present one or both of the dramas.
- *Sets Person(s).* Whether you want a very simple set with a few props for the dramas or a more elaborate backdrop and set, you will probably want to find one or more people who have artistic gifts to plan and prepare these for you. If you plan to use any kind of lighting, you'll want to find a volunteer to manage that too.
- *Costume Gatherer.* Simple costumes will add a lot to the drama presentation. Look for a volunteer who'd be willing to work with others or alone to plan and prepare what the actors will wear.
- *Musicians.* Whether you plan to present an Easter program to the church and community or just to enjoy songs together as part of your opening worship on these two Sundays, you'll want to find someone with musical gifts to teach the songs to children, someone to play the accompaniment (or the CD), and someone to lead the singing.
- *Materials Gatherers:* Look for people who are willing to do photocopying, gather craft materials such as pipe cleaners, paper punch, stickers, and so on, cut flags out of fabric—anything you might need to provide teachers in the small groups as they work with children on specific projects during these two weeks.
- *Program Planners.* If you have the children present a program for the church and community, you'll want to appoint a planning committee several months ahead of time—people who will take responsibility for making some of the content decisions, scheduling rehearsals, and making sure all the details are attended to.



How to Use This Book

Easter is the highlight of the church year, a time to remember that God's Son loved us so much that he laid down his life for us. We pray that the leaders, children, and all who participate in the sessions and in the Easter program will come to know Jesus. To help meet this goal, we'll focus on the theme "Were You There?" and listen to eyewitness accounts of Jesus' suffering and resurrection. We'll be reminded that, just as Christ laid down his life for others, so we too should give his love away.

This book offers a variety of ideas and options for large group sessions, small group sessions, and an Easter program. Use the ideas and options that work best with your church school. Ideally, the large group session would take about 15-25 minutes; then the children would break up into their small groups for about 30-40 minutes. You may also need to schedule an extra practice time or two if your church is planning on doing the program.

Finding time to do everything in this book may be difficult. You may want to skip or abbreviate the small group Hello and Know steps if your children have heard the story and participated in singing in the large group session. Choose what you think your group will be able to handle. You will need one copy of this book for each of your leaders. As the purchaser of this book you are granted permission to photocopy the dramas and the patterns and activities on reproducible pages 74-93.

Getting Started

Because these materials suggest a different format and approach than the regular *Walk With Me* units, you'll want to spend some extra time planning and preparing to teach these sessions. Although each church situation is unique, you may find some of the following suggestions helpful:

- In early winter, appoint a small committee to read through this book and decide which of the many suggestions would work best for your church.
- After the committee makes its recommendations, recruit actors, song leaders, accompanists, and teachers, as needed.
- Recruit volunteers who are willing to gather and prepare materials for these special sessions. Give them plenty of time for this task (a month or two) since they will likely want to ask the congregation to save and/or gather some of the items.
- Schedule rehearsals for the drama team.
- If you're planning an Easter program, you'll want to begin teaching and rehearsing the new songs early—beginning in late winter so kids will know the words well by Easter. Schedule a final rehearsal that includes drama, singing, recitation, and so on.

Large Group Sessions and Easter Program

The large group session materials in this book contain a drama for each week and suggestions for songs that the whole group can learn. (The songs are also recorded on the CD that accompanies this book.) Each drama takes about ten minutes and requires five actors. The costumes may be as simple or elaborate as you would like (see pages 10 and 32 for suggestions).

You'll probably want to choose middle schoolers or a team of older teens or adults to play these roles. Be sure to schedule ample rehearsal time.

Alternately, if assembling a drama team committed to rehearsals is not an option, adults can present the story in dramatic monologues, or your older students can do a reader's theater of the Scripture passages.

The dramas and songs can be used not only for the large group sessions but also for an Easter program. You'll find a sample program along with ideas for organizing and producing it on pages 72-73.

Small Group Sessions

Small group sessions will give you the opportunity to help apply the story to the children's lives. If you are unable to present the story as a drama in the large group setting, you can still use another form of the story in the small group setting. It's a story you want children to hear!

Each small group opens with a Hello step designed to catch the children's interest and get them thinking about the lesson's theme.

Next comes the Know step (telling the story). If the children have already heard the story in the large group session, you'll want to use this time for a brief review. If you did not participate in a large group session, use the second Know option to present the story to the group (see sessions for suggestions).

The Grow step will help children understand what the story means for their lives, and the Show step will guide them to respond to what they learned in this session.

The small group session includes options for activities and crafts that leaders (or the committee you appointed earlier) should carefully consider well ahead of teaching these materials. Once you've decided which crafts and activities to use, you may want to appoint two or more volunteers (possibly parents of children in the group) who will spend the time needed to gather the materials, cut out patterns, and assemble all the items you'll need. Having a helper in the classroom is also a plus when doing crafts and other activities with young children.

We trust that you and your congregation will experience the special comfort of God's promises this Easter. By listening to eyewitness accounts, we participate in the wonderful story of God's love and respond with joyful hearts.

Scheduling Rehearsals

1. Let cast members know rehearsal times when you ask them to participate. Stress that agreeing to participate means making a commitment to come to all practices.
2. Schedule two to four well-planned all-cast rehearsals.
3. Request that all lines be memorized by the first rehearsal.
4. Build community at rehearsals. Pray, practice, and enjoy a snack together.
5. If you are presenting the dramas as part of an Easter program, use your final rehearsal to go through the entire program including music, recitations, and so on.
6. Transitions can be tricky, so make a special point of practicing how you will move from one aspect of your program to another.

Introducing a New Song

The way you introduce a new song is crucial. Of course you'll want to know it well yourself. But you'll also want to think through how you'll introduce it to your group. Here are a few ideas to keep in mind:

- Many kids learn mostly by rote and repetition. Listen to the CD or play the tune, and encourage kids to join in on a line or phrase that is repeated often.
- To help kids remember the words, make up motions to go along with simple words like *step*, *Jesus*, and so on.
- Be enthusiastic! Model your love of singing instead of being concerned about your performance.

Tailoring Your Sessions to the Ways Children Learn

How do children learn? The answer to that question can be almost as varied as the kids in your group. Some learn best through words. Others through music. Still others through nature or through movement.

Sessions in the *Walk With Me* curriculum try to respect the many ways kids learn. *Walk With Me* sessions include a wide range of activities that speak to kids with the following types of intelligence (based on Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences). Within each session, the icons below highlight the learning styles represented by each activity. As you teach, you'll begin to get a sense for how the kids in your group learn best. Young people who are



Word Smart

learn best through verbal activities (listening, reading, or speaking), including discussions, worksheets, writing, reading, storytelling, and word games.



Number Smart

learn best by exploring patterns and relationships through activities such as problem solving, logical puzzles or games, making charts and graphs, or putting things in sequence.



Picture Smart

learn best by visualizing concepts. These kids enjoy viewing maps, slides, pictures, videos, and diagrams; making jigsaw puzzles; and expressing their ideas with shape, color, and design.



Body Smart

learn best by using their bodies, acting things out, using puppets, moving—anything hands-on.



Music Smart

learn best through sound, music, and rhythm—playing musical instruments, writing their own songs and raps, listening to recordings, singing, and so on.



People Smart

learn best through doing things with others, cooperating and working in small or large groups, role playing, conversations, brainstorming, and other interactive exercises.



Self Smart

learn best by working independently through such things as writing in a journal, meditating, reading, and reflecting.



Earth Smart

learn best through activities connected to living things and natural phenomena, through nature walks, examining plants and animals, nature experiments, and activities that focus on ecology.

—The ideas on this page are based on material from the following resources: *Multiple Intelligences in the Classroom* by Thomas Armstrong, © 2000, and a chart prepared by Donald L. Griggs, Livermore, California.

We Saw Him Die for Us

Scripture

Matthew 26:47-75; Mark 15:21-47

Memory Challenge

1 John 3:16

Focus

Jesus suffered and died to save us.

WORDSearch

Think About It

It's a custom in some church traditions to read through the complete passion account of one of the gospels on Palm Sunday. In fact it's not called Palm Sunday but Passion Sunday, or Palm/Passion Sunday. The palms get dropped pretty early in the service, as the congregation settles in for the long reading, often done in the form of a dramatic reading with a narrator and various members taking the speaking parts. At various points the congregation joins in with an outcry of "Crucify him!"

I hope you'll take the time to read it again, the whole long account, slowly, and with your imagination fully engaged. It will be the best possible preparation for conveying the drama, horror, and ultimate glory of the story to your students.

Notice again the treachery that surrounds Jesus: Religious leaders who are more concerned to preserve their own status than search out the truth. Bureaucrats like Pilate who are more worried about maintaining the peace than seeking justice.

Disciples, friends, companions like Peter, whose loyalty melts away at the first whiff of personal danger. Mockers at the cross, who, like celebrity reporters, smell the acrid odor of failure and pile on their ridicule.

The amazing thing is not how terribly they all acted, but how much they're like us. Religious leaders still seek status rather than proclaim truth. Bureaucrats still find the path of least resistance. Friends still place personal safety or reputation over loyalty. Crowds still love to celebrate the failure of others—the more famous the better. Jesus was surrounded with the sort of garden-variety sinfulness and

treachery, the sort of pride and venality that are the stuff of everyday life.

Jesus was not crucified by monsters, but by the ordinary, banal criminality which we

Pray About It

Sometimes our stumbling words seem inadequate to the enormity of God's saving love. As you prepare this lesson, here's a prayer you might find expresses your own love and worship:

O Christ, who forsook no one but was forsaken by the closest of friends, and who committed no crime yet was sentenced to a criminal's death, I come into your presence in awe and adoration. On that Good Friday centuries ago, you could have saved your life, but you refused to betray the purpose for which you had been born. You had come into the world to love God and neighbor as yourself, and when that love required you to shoulder a cross, you summoned the strength to bear it. Today, O Christ, teach me its meaning once again and help me to take up my cross and follow you. Amen.

(Adapted from *The Worship Sourcebook*, Faith Alive Christian Resources, p. 608.)

Tell About It

As children respond to the injustice and cruelty Jesus endured, suggest some of the ways in which even kids like them sometimes say and do things that hurt and mock others. Help them to see that it wasn't only those cruel people but we who crucified Jesus by our sins. And then remind them that Jesus still says, "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34).

can all identify in our lives. That's important to recognize because it places us there. "Were you there?" the old spiritual asks again and again. Yes, we were there, not just in some folds of our memory but in the behaviors and attitudes we sinners display every day. It's in realizing this that we understand more deeply that truly Jesus died for us.

Perhaps this is not too sophisticated a concept for your students to grasp as well. Haven't they joined in mocking some unfortunate victim on the playground? Haven't they felt afraid to stand up for a friend when it might be too costly? Haven't they cheated rather than facing their inadequacy?

Jesus did not only die for us in the sense that he bore all our sins, savingly true as that is. Jesus died for us by enduring the very sins we commit every day. He endured them, he forgave them, and he ultimately defeated them. Now when we read that whole terrible story once more, we not only see ourselves there, but we also hear afresh the call for new life in the Holy Spirit—a life of truth and justice, of courage and loyalty, of mercy and sympathy.

Planning the Session

In today's large group session the children will hear the stories of three people who witnessed Jesus' death: Peter, Mary, and Joseph of Arimathea. This is a sad story, full of strong emotions, but it ends with hope and a promise. The crucifixion is not the end of the story; in actual fact, it is the beginning of a new story, one that is continuing today.

The outline and suggestions that follow will help you plan and schedule the 15-20 minutes you have together. You'll need to decide which suggestions would work most effectively for your group and then set the plan in motion.

A possible schedule for your session might look like this:

- Singing (5-10 minutes)
- Drama (10 minutes): The Day Jesus Died

If you are planning to present an Easter program, you may want to use the large group session each week (in addition to other rehearsals as needed) to help the children prepare. You'll find suggestions for program planning on pages 72-73.

The suggestions in this large group session assume that you'll be presenting the drama "The Day Jesus Died" (pp. 51-54) to children and young teens and preparing them to respond to it in their small groups. If you are not able to assemble and present the story as a staged drama, consider one of these options for presenting the story to the large group:

- Invite three adults to represent Peter, Mary Magdalene, and Joseph of Arimathea using "Yes, I Was There," the dramatic monologue on reproducible page 76. Provide them with ribbons or with sheets of posterboard or construction paper in shades of the following: green, gray, yellow, brown, blue, red, tan, black. (Peter will use the green, gray, and yellow colors; Mary will use the brown, blue, and red colors; and Joseph will use tan and black). Invite them to present the script, using the ribbons or colored paper to demonstrate the colors the characters refer to.
- Have the oldest students and other volunteers present the Scripture readings as a reader's theater. You will need eleven different readers for the roles in Matthew 26: Judas (v. 49); Jesus (vv. 50, 52-54, 55-56, 64, 73); two witnesses (v. 61); High Priest (vv. 62, 63, 65-66); Sanhedrin (vv. 66, 68); Peter (vv. 70, 72, 74); servant girl 1 (v. 69); servant girl 2 (v. 71); courtyard guards (v. 73); and narrator (all other passages). You will need at least six readers for the roles in Mark 15: bystanders (vv. 29-30, 35); chief priests and teachers of the law (vv. 31-32); Jesus (v. 34); the sponge-bearer (v. 36); the centurion (v. 39); and the narrator (all other passages). Roles can be doubled if you do not have enough readers. Coach your



To ensure a smooth presentation, photocopy the Bible passage for each reader and use a highlighter to outline the individual's speaking role.

readers to read smoothly and with expression in order to make this a moving and effective presentation.

Singing

You may want to ask someone with musical gifts to lead the singing and teach new songs to the children during these two weeks. Be sure to share the tips in the box “Introducing a New Song” (p. 5) with that person.

Most of the songs you choose will likely be the well-known Lent and Easter songs that children know and love. The following songs (included on pages 59-65 of this book and on the CD) are among those you may want to sing in this session. They were selected for their ties to the themes of the drama. **We strongly suggest that you end your time of singing this week with the song “Were You There,” which will introduce the context of the drama.**

- “Amen” (p. 59; CD, track 1)
- “Hosanna” (p. 60; CD, track 2)
- “Were You There” (p. 61; CD, track 3)
- “This Is How We Know” (p. 62; CD, track 4)
- “Above All” (p. 63; CD, track 5)



If you are planning to use these songs as part of an Easter program, you will probably want to start teaching them to the group in early winter so that children know them well by the time you present the program. The songs are also included on the unit CD.

Drama

Rehearsing and presenting a drama can be a fun and rewarding experience—both for the actors and for the people who view the drama. For this week’s drama, “The Day That Jesus Died,” you will need five actors. You’ll want to find a team of actors, either teens or adults, and begin working with them early. Note that the children (Nate and Lee) can be either boys or girls—although, if Nate is a girl, you’ll need to change his name and also change some lines in the script that refer to “boys” or “guys.” Since the parts of Pete, Maggie, and Joe involve a lot of lines, you may wish to recruit adults for these roles, although mature teens should also be able to handle them. (See tips for scheduling rehearsals on p. 5.) You’ll also want to begin thinking about costumes and props—consider asking someone to help you gather the things you will need.

Costumes

Plan early for costumes, but remember that they don’t have to be fancy. All the characters should be dressed as Israelites. A simple tunic made by cutting a hole in the middle of a length of fabric (4’-6’ or 1.5-2 m) can be slipped over the actor’s head and tied with a rope. Add an extra touch by cutting a fabric sash (12” x 4’ or 30.5 cm x 1.2 m) in a contrasting color and hanging it over the actor’s shoulder, pinning it under the opposite arm.

If you would like a more elaborate costume, patterns for Israelite clothing are available at your local fabric store.

Here are some general principles to remember:

- Use a variety of fabrics with different textures to create interest.
- Keep the colors in earth tones—brown, tan, moss green, rust, taupe, and so on.



Background

The drama takes place outdoors. The characters gather one by one as they are leaving a Palm Sunday service at the local synagogue, and before they go to their home outside of town. Basically, all that's needed is a garden bench or some stools disguised with plastic garbage bags to look like rocks on which the actors can sit.

The script makes suggestions for other touches that will make the scenery more interesting—potted palms and shrubs, rocks, and buildings or signs, but all of these are optional.

Props

Very few items are needed for props. Each of the five characters should carry a palm branch. The branches need to be sturdy enough so children can use them in play-acting sword fights and other activities. See suggestions included in the script. Maggie also needs to carry a ribbon or piece of craft foam (about 1" x 18" or 2.5 cm x 46 cm; the longer the better for visibility). She will fold it into a palm cross in the drama, so she'll need to review and practice the instructions found on page 85 for this activity.

Small Groups

After the drama, children will meet in small groups. If your regular leaders are present for these two weeks, it would probably work best to have children meet with their groups as usual or to combine several groups together. Note that we have only included two session plans—one for children in grades K-3 and another for children in grades 4-8. Each leader will need to adapt the plan to the needs of his or her children.