



‘The Last Days of Jesus’

Materials Needed: *Jesus Lives*, nametags, instrumental music, crosses cut out of poster board, candle, Bible, crucifix, paper, pencils and crayons.

Schedule (90 minutes):

- Welcome, Set the Environment (10 minutes)
- Opening Activity (5 minutes)
- Getting Started (15 minutes)
- Read the Story (10 minutes)
- Discuss the Story (10 minutes)
- Together Time Activity (30 minutes)
- Closing Ritual (10 minutes)

Objectives: To review Jesus’ life by remembering favorite stories about Jesus.
To recognize that Jesus had enemies who wanted to stop the Good News.

Theme: Jesus’ life was an example to us: He lived the Good News all through his life, even to his death.

- 3) This session is a tough one in many ways, since it deals with the passion and death of Jesus. But it is also the source of our understanding of the Eucharist and of our salvation. It will be mostly prayerful reflection, and you will need to judge how best to encourage this for your gathering.

Set the Environment. Welcome all the participants and ask them to wear nametags. Ask some of the families to help you set up a prayer table with a candle, a Bible and a crucifix.

Opening Activity. To maintain a quiet and prayerful mood, invite everyone to sit comfortably in an area around the prayer table. Have quiet instrumental or classical music playing in the background.

Getting Started. Have each family discuss: If you could live over one day in your life, what day would it be? Why?

Read the Story. Have the families read the material appropriate to the ages of their young people.

Discuss the Story. Staying in the family groups, discuss the material shared.

Background for Program Leaders:

- 1) Read “The Last Days of Jesus” in both Storybooks.
- 2) Read the commentary, Theme and Optional Activities for “The Last Days of Jesus” on the Grown-up’s Pages in the Activity Books.
 - 1) Do you have any questions about this reading?
 - 2) Why do you think people wanted to get rid of Jesus?
 - 3) Jesus knew his enemies were in Jerusalem. Why do you think he went there anyway?

Together Time Activity. Give each family a cross made of poster board. Have them sit quietly with their eyes shut as you lead them through this meditation with soft music in the background. Pause about twenty seconds between phrases. This is meant to be slow and deliberate. People need time to create the images you suggest.

“Breathe deeply and slowly. Feel the air go into your body and come out through your mouth.

“Imagine yourself walking down a path in a lush green forest. You come to a small bench in a sunny spot and sit down. As you look down the path you see a woman walking toward you. This woman is Mary, the mother of Jesus. Greet her any way you wish.

“Mary has come to share her favorite memory of Jesus with you. Sit with her on the bench and listen as she speaks to you. This memory may be happy or sad, but it is meant just for you.” *(At this point, take a few minutes of silence.)*

“Now it is your turn. Tell Mary your favorite memory of Jesus. Think back over all the stories, the friendships and miracles you have learned about this year. What do you want to tell Mary?” *(Again allow a few minutes of silence.)*

“Open your hand and hold it out to Mary. Imagine she places a gift in your hand. What is it?

“When you are finished, leave Mary and walk back down the path of the forest. When you are ready, open your eyes.”

After this guided meditation, ask each family to fill in the cross in front of them with words, drawings, images or phrases that came to them during this meditation, and the gift they received from Mary. Have them bring the crosses with them to the Closing Ritual.

Closing Ritual. Place the crosses in front of each family as you sit in a circle (this means the crosses will be in the center of the circle). Have everyone raise their right hands over the crosses. Ask everyone to join you silently in blessing these crosses as you pray:

“Jesus, we know you have asked us to remember you. We remember your life and your death. We remember your joy and your sorrow. Most of all, we remember how you loved us, how you love us now and how we love you. Bless these crosses of memory and bless all of us who take them to our homes today. We ask this of God through the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

Ask each family to keep the cross in a place of honor at home until you gather again. End with the Our Father.

Dismissal. Remind everyone to read “Arriving in Jerusalem” and “How Jesus Died” and to complete the activity pages for these stories before the next gathering.