

SESSION 1: BREATHTAKING BAY

EPIC SCRATCH PAD DISCUSSION GROUPS FOR 4-7s

Bible passage: Mark 1:1, 16-34

Main aims

- Children will know that Jesus has authority over everything.
- Children will understand that Jesus is God's Son.

Introduction

- Start by introducing yourself and asking the children their names.
- If this is part of a holiday club or vacation Bible school, you may also want to ask them what they have liked best so far... and maybe share with them your favourite bit too!
- Explain how this part of the session will work, eg: "We're going to be talking together about the bit of the Bible we've just looked at. We will work through some questions, but it would be great if you ask your own questions too, as we explore. And it's absolutely fine to say: 'I don't get it' or 'Why?' or 'I don't think I agree'."
- Explain that no one will be asked to read out loud, pray or answer a question if they don't want to.

Scratch Pad

If there's time and it's one of your chosen introductory activities, turn to page 4 of the *Scratch Pad* and complete "All about me"*. (See page 61 of this Leader's Guide for how to run this activity.)

**For the first question, ask the children to circle the shade they prefer. The instruction simply says: "I like this one best". We phrased it this way so that children wouldn't get confused by the "wrong" spelling of favourite/favorite and colour/color!*

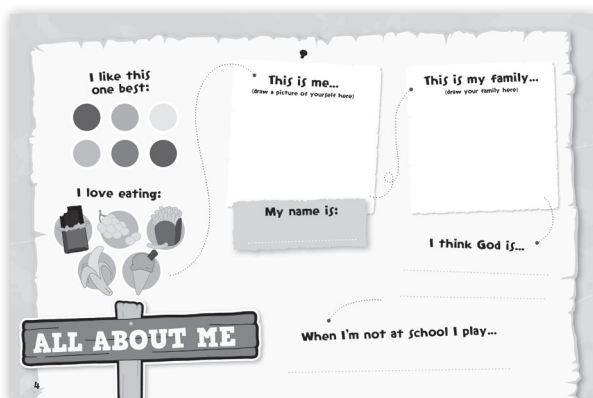
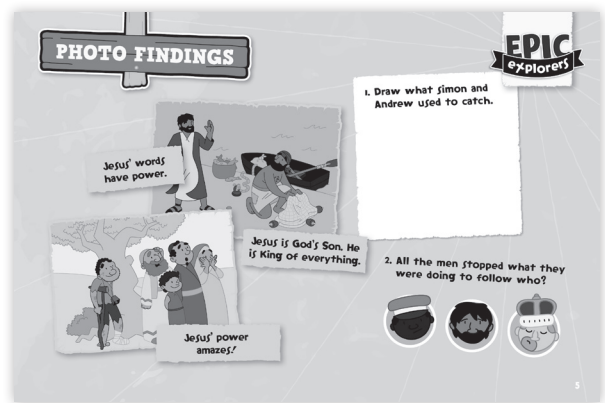


Photo findings

The recap below (called "Photo findings") appears on page 5 of the *Epic Scratch Pad*. It is a simple storyboard with the teaching summarized.

- Jesus' words have power.
- Jesus is God's Son. He is King of everything.
- Jesus' power amazes!

As you look at the pictures, if you have time, you could ask the children to tell you if they remember what is happening.



Questions

Use the questions on pages 5 and 6 to encourage discussion.

1. Draw what Simon and Andrew used to catch.

Question 1 is pretty straightforward as the children just need to draw fish. Don't forget to sell it to them, eg: "Who here is clever enough to remember from the story?"

2. All the men stopped what they were doing to follow who?

The options are: a police officer, a king, or Jesus, God's Son.

Afterwards explain that they listened to and obeyed Jesus because he is in charge. He is more important than a police officer and more powerful than a king. He is in charge of the whole world because he is God! That's why the fishermen were willing to leave their jobs and their families immediately.

3. Jesus showed lots of power in the way he spoke and acted. He taught and helped lots of people. How did they feel?

The people were amazed as Jesus showed his authority and power in the story, eg: in commanding the evil spirit, in healing the people who were ill, and in his teaching.

Write in the blanks that Jesus' power shows us that he is **God**.

After they've written their answer, ask if the children know any other ways that Jesus showed his authority and power. For example, he fed 5000, stopped a storm, etc.

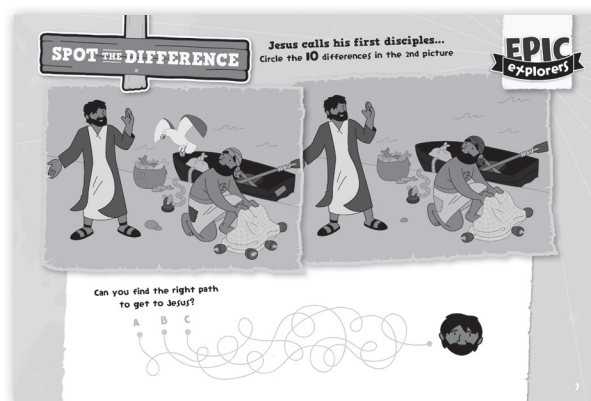
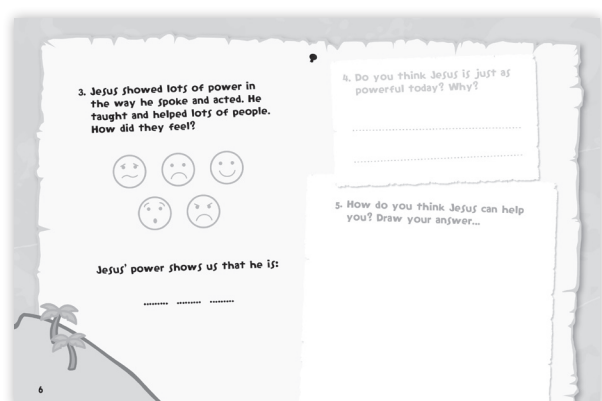
4. Do you think Jesus is just as powerful today? Why?

Most children will just be able to write "yes" or "no", but use further questions to see if they are able to explain why. They may say they don't know. As the sessions go on, they may change their opinions and go back to change their answers. You may want to share with them one reason why you believe Jesus is still just as powerful.

5. How do you think Jesus can help you? Draw your answer...

There is nothing wrong if the children draw Jesus making them better etc., but why not ask further questions to discover if your group understand anything of the gospel message? Eg:

- *Does anyone know how Jesus can rescue us?* We're going to be thinking about that in the next few sessions; or
- *Does anyone know how we can be God's friends?* We're going to discover how in the next few sessions.



If you have time, you may want to let the children do the puzzles on page 7, with some informal chat. If this is part of a holiday club or vacation Bible school, then the puzzle time is also a good opportunity to practise the memory verse and to plug any upcoming events or regular clubs.

Conclusion

Finish by encouraging your group members to come back next time. Tell them: "We've seen some of the incredible things Jesus said and did. Next time we're going to explore why he came."

Evaluate

- Jot down the name of each child in your group on a separate note card. Add anything you remember about their interests, as well as their level of understanding. Use the cards as prompts to pray for the children between sessions. You can add to them as the course goes on.
- Consider the different personalities in the group and if you need to change the way in which you facilitate discussion to draw everyone in.
- Pray that God will unveil their eyes so they will see who Jesus is.

(A downloadable version of these leader's notes for discussion groups is available from www.ceministries.org/epic.)

SESSION 1: BREATHTAKING BAY

EPIC LOGBOOK DISCUSSION GROUPS FOR 8-11s

Bible passage: Mark 1:1, 16-34

Main aims

- Children will know that Jesus has authority over everything.
- Children will understand that Jesus is God's Son.

Introduction

- Start by introducing yourself and asking the children their names.
- If this is part of a holiday club or vacation Bible school, you may also want to ask them what they have liked best so far... and maybe share with them your favourite bit too!
- Explain how this part of the session will work, eg: "We're going to be talking together about the bit of the Bible we've just looked at. We will work through some questions, but it would be great if you ask your own questions too, as we explore. And it's absolutely fine to say: 'I don't get it' or 'Why?' or 'I don't think I agree'."
- Explain that no one will be asked to read out loud, pray or answer a question if they don't want to.

Booklet

If there's time and it's one of your chosen introductory activities, turn to page 4 of the *Logbook* and complete "All about me". (See page 61 of this Leader's Guide for how to run this activity.)

I like these things best:

Chocolate bar

Sport

Movie

Toy

Animal

School subject

Hobby

In my family, there is...

If I were on a desert island I would take:

1

2

3

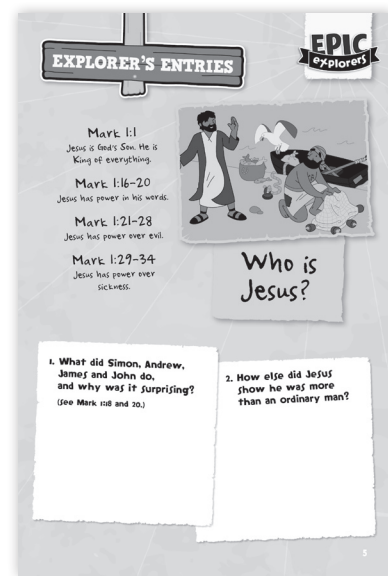
One word to describe me is...

ALL ABOUT ME

Explorer's entries

The recap below (called "Explorer's entries") appears on page 5 of the *Epic Logbook*. If you have time, you may want to read through and summarize.

- Mark 1:1 – Jesus is God's Son. He is King of everything.
- Mark 1:16-20 – Jesus has power in his words.
- Mark 1:21-28 – Jesus has power over evil.
- Mark 1:29-34 – Jesus has power over sickness.



Questions

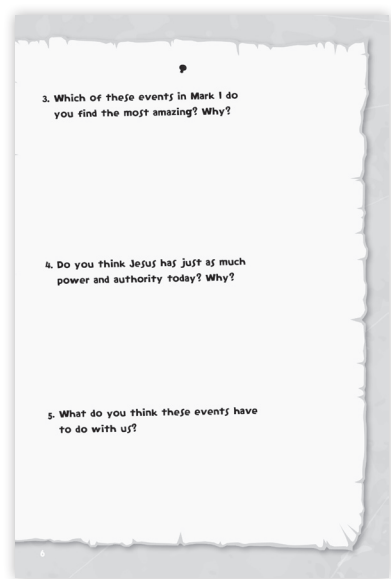
Use the questions on pages 5 and 6 to encourage discussion.

1. What did Simon, Andrew, James and John do, and why was it surprising? (See Mark 1:18 and 20.)

The children are likely to answer easily that the men stopped fishing, left everything and followed Jesus. They may struggle initially to identify the surprise, so you may want to ask the group how they think *they* would have responded in the same situation. It is surprising because the men didn't protest or try to delay. Rather, they were willing to leave their jobs, families and security immediately.

2. How else did Jesus show he was more than an ordinary man?

Help the children think how Jesus showed his authority and power in the story, eg: in commanding the evil spirit, in healing the people who were



ill, and in his teaching straight from God. After they've written their answers, ask if the children know any other ways that Jesus showed his authority and power? For example, he fed 5000, stopped a storm, etc.

3. Which of these events in Mark 1 do you find the most amazing? Why?

This question is to encourage the children to think more deeply about the miracles described in Mark 1. Help them to understand that Jesus wasn't performing tricks, but rather, doing things that only God can do. Jesus' miracles are signposts to who he is. Be prepared to answer questions on evil spirits if anyone asks.

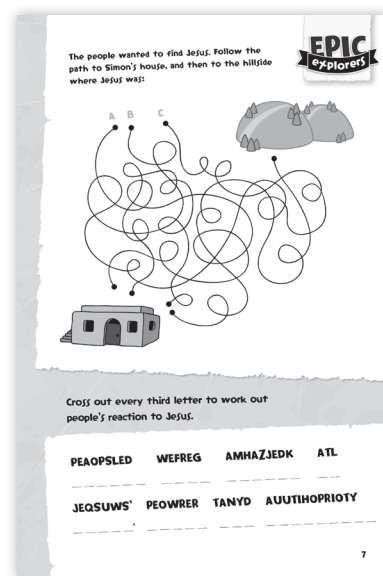
4. Do you think Jesus has just as much power and authority today? Why?

Use this question as an opportunity to check your group's spiritual temperature and understanding. They may well answer that they don't know. As the weeks go on, they may change their opinions and go back to change their answers. You may want to share with them one reason why you believe Jesus is still just as powerful.

5. What do you think these events have to do with us?

The children may say "nothing at all" but point out that God wants most of all for us to love him and follow him. The children may be amazed at Jesus' power, intrigued to find out more, or wanting to obey him by doing what he says, even if that means stopping doing something else.

If you have time, you may want to let the children do the puzzles on page 7, with some informal chat. If this is part of a holiday club or vacation Bible school, then the puzzle time is also a good opportunity to practise the memory verse and to plug any upcoming events or regular clubs.



Conclusion

Finish by encouraging your group members to come back next time. Tell them: "We've seen some of the incredible things Jesus said and did. Next time we're going to explore why he came."

Evaluate

- Jot down the name of each child in your group on a separate note card. Add anything you remember about their interests, as well as their level of understanding. Use the cards as prompts to pray for the children between sessions. You can add to them as the course goes on.
- Consider the different personalities in the group and if you need to change the way in which you facilitate discussion to draw everyone in.
- Pray that God will unveil their eyes so they will see who Jesus is.

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SESSION 2: DISCOVERY DENS

EPIC SCRATCH PAD DISCUSSION GROUPS FOR 4-7s

Bible passage: Mark 2:1-17

Main aims

- Children will know that we don't treat God as we should and that our biggest problem is our sin.
- Children will understand that only Jesus has power to forgive sin and can rescue us.

Introduction

- Welcome the children back.
- Learn the names of any new children.
- Remind them of your name.
- Recap on previous session, eg: "Last time, we saw how Jesus showed incredible power in the way he spoke and the things he did. He showed that he is God's only chosen King and Son. But why did he come to earth? That's what we're going to start to think about today."

Booklet

If there's time and it's one of your chosen introductory activities, complete "Who has the power?" on page 10 of the *Scratch Pad*. (See page 76 in this Leader's Guide for how to run this activity.)

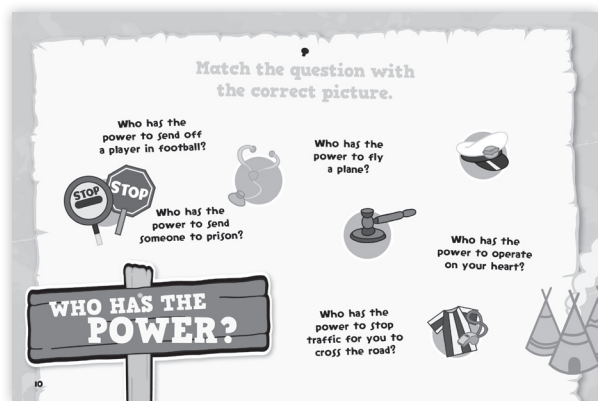
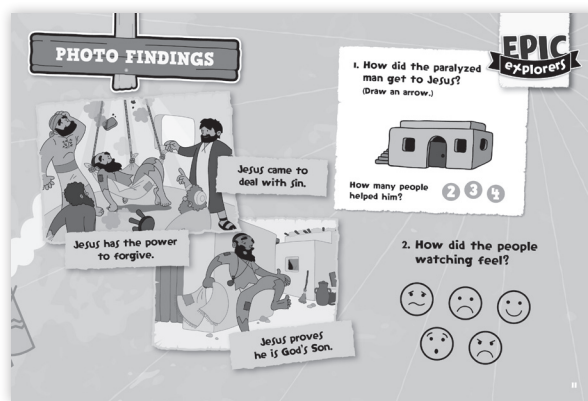


Photo findings

The recap below (called "Photo findings") appears on page 11 of the *Epic Scratch Pad*. It is a simple storyboard with the teaching summarised.

- Jesus came to deal with sin.
- Jesus has the power to forgive.
- Jesus proves he is God's Son.

As you look at the pictures, if you have time, you could ask the children to tell you if they remember what is happening.



Questions

Use the questions on pages 11 and 12 to encourage discussion.

1. **How did the paralyzed man get to Jesus?** (Draw an arrow.) **How many people helped him?**

There's a picture of a house so the children just need to draw an arrow to the roof. Why not get your group to act out carrying their friend up some steps, digging and lowering him down?

After circling how many people helped (4), tell the children it wasn't really important how the lame man got into the house or how many helped. What mattered was the fact that he was taken to Jesus.

2. **How did the people watching feel?**

Ask the children to show you the people's expressions first by acting them out. Then, after they've circled one or more expressions, explain that some people were cross because they didn't understand who Jesus was.

3. We can't do miracles, but Jesus can. He can forgive sins because he is...

Discuss with the children the fact that we can't just make things happen. Maybe have a go at commanding snow to fall or making yourself taller! Remind them that no ordinary person can control everything, so Jesus must be someone special. After the children have filled in the blanks ("God"), ask them to tick their answer to what Jesus has power over:

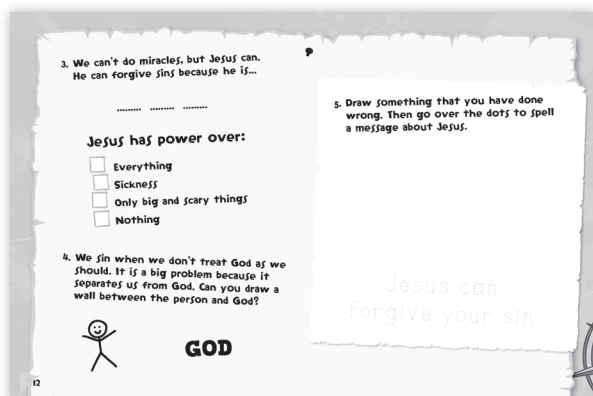
- ☐ Everything
- ☐ Sickness
- ☐ Only big and scary things
- ☐ Nothing

Point out that Jesus is the King of everything and always has been. He made everything and has power over everything. Nothing is bigger or better than Jesus.

4. We sin when we don't treat God as we should. It is a big problem because it separates us from God. Can you draw a wall between the person and God?

After the children have drawn the wall, talk about how our sin is a barrier between us and God. It cuts us off from him. You may want to consider with the children that when they get sent to their room, it's because they have done something wrong and spoilt things with their parents. They are separated from their parents as a punishment. We deserve to be punished for ever by God.

5. Draw something that you have done wrong. Then go over the dots to spell a message about Jesus.



After the children have done a quick drawing and written "Jesus can forgive our sin", explain that

in the next session we will see how Jesus can forgive us. Ask if any of them think they know how Jesus can rescue us and forgive us from the wrong things we do.

If you have time, you may want to let the children do the puzzles on page 13, with some informal chat. If this is part of a holiday club or vacation Bible school, then the puzzle time is also a good opportunity to practise the memory verse and to plug any upcoming events or regular clubs.

Give out invitations to your family event.



Conclusion

Finish by encouraging your group members to come back next time. Tell them: "We've seen what sin is and why it is such a problem, but we've also discovered that Jesus came to deal with our problem. Next time we'll look at how he does that, so make sure you come back to explore the good news!"

Evaluate

- Is there anything you could add to your prayer cards? Was there anyone from the previous session missing today? You may be able to contact them and encourage them to come next time. If not, pray that they will return even without being contacted.
- Do you need to think about how to respond to any particular questions? Make sure you find time to plan your answer.
- Pray that the children will be convicted of their sin and their need of a Saviour.

(A downloadable version of these leader's notes for discussion groups is available from www.ceministries.org/epic.)

SESSION 2: DISCOVERY DENS

EPIC LOGBOOK

DISCUSSION GROUPS FOR 8-11s

Bible passage: Mark 2:1-17

Main aims

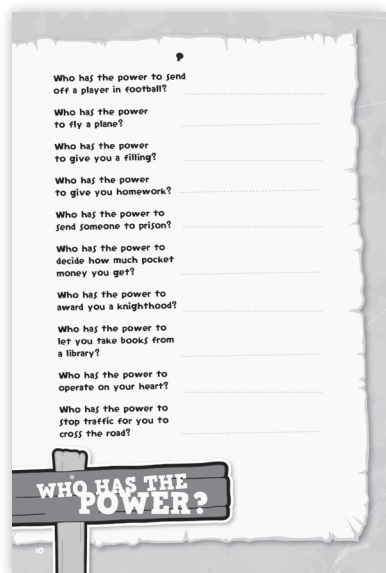
- Children will know that we don't treat God as we should and that our biggest problem is our sin.
- Children will understand that only Jesus has power to forgive sin and can rescue us.

Introduction

- Welcome the children back.
- Learn the names of any new children.
- Remind them of your name.
- Recap on previous session, eg: "Last time, we saw how Jesus showed incredible power in the way he spoke and the things he did. He showed that he is God's only chosen King and Son. But why did he come to earth? That's what we're going to start to think about today."

Booklet

If there's time and it's one of your chosen introductory activities, complete "Who has the power?" on page 10 of the *Logbook*. (See page 76 in this Leader's Guide for how to run this activity.)



Explorer's entries

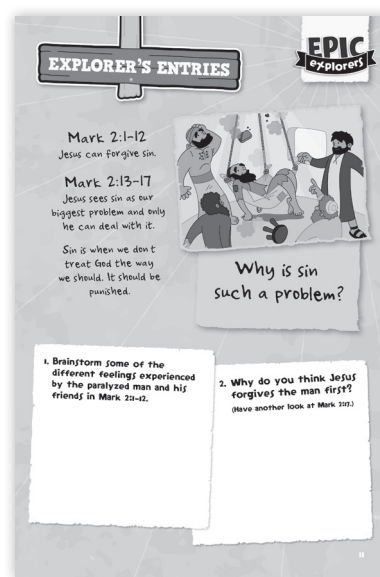
The recap below (called "Explorer's entries") appears on page 11 of the *Epic Logbook*. If you have time, you may want to read through and summarize.

- Mark 2:1-12 – Jesus can forgive sin.
- Mark 2:13-17 – Jesus sees sin as our biggest problem and only he can deal with it.
- Sin is when we don't treat God the way we should. It should be punished.

Questions

Use the questions to encourage discussion.

1. **Brainstorm some of the different feelings experienced by the paralyzed man and his friends in Mark 2:1-12.**

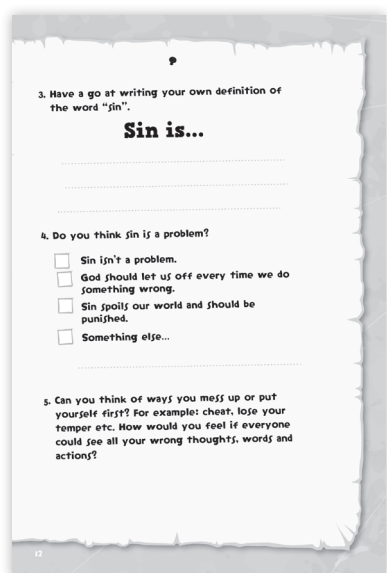


Just take a few suggestions, rather than running through the whole story, eg: nervous, helpless, confused, amazed.

Afterwards, explain that in all those different feelings, Jesus was fully in control. It's the same for us – we don't need to be afraid or impatient, and we can trust even when we don't understand, because Jesus is with us and has power over everything.

2. **Why do you think Jesus forgives the man first? (Have another look at Mark 2:17.)**

We would expect Jesus to have healed the man first, but Jesus knows that the man has a bigger problem. His greatest need is for his sins to be forgiven, so Jesus deals with this first. That is the main reason Jesus came – to provide a way for us to be forgiven instead of being punished as we deserve.



3. Have a go at writing your own definition of the word "sin". Sin is...

Help the children see that sin isn't just about the wrong things we say and do, but it's also about our attitude towards God – the way we ignore him and disobey him, the way we don't treat him as we ought. If it has been used in the talk, you may want to refer back to the acrostic for sin:

Shove off God,
I'm in charge
Not you!

Sin is our biggest problem because it cuts us off from God.

4. Do you think that sin is a problem?

- ☐ Sin isn't a problem.
- ☐ God should let us off every time we do something wrong.
- ☐ Sin spoils our world and should be punished.
- ☐ Something else...

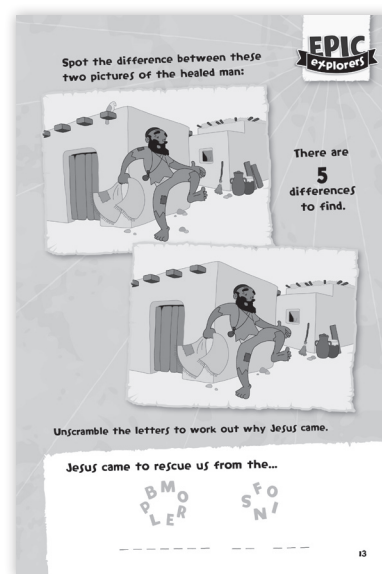
After they have ticked a box, ask the children to think about the problems they have with their friends, or about bigger problems such as war etc. We hurt people by our selfish behaviour. This is sin in action.

5. Can you think of ways you mess up or put yourself first? For example: cheat, lose your temper, etc? How would you feel if everyone could see all your wrong thoughts, words and actions?

The aim of this question is to help the children understand that sin is a problem for them personally, as well as for others, and that God should rightly judge it.

If you have time, you may want to let the children do the puzzles on page 13, with some informal chat. If this is part of a holiday club or vacation Bible school, then the puzzle time is also a good opportunity to practise the memory verse and to plug any upcoming events or regular clubs.

Give out invitations to your family event.



Conclusion

Finish by encouraging your group members to come back next time. Tell them: "We've seen what sin is and why it is such a problem, but we've also discovered that Jesus came to deal with our problem. Next time we'll look at how he does that, so make sure you come back to explore the good news!"

Evaluate

- Is there anything you could add to your prayer cards? Was there anyone from the previous session missing today? You may be able to contact them and encourage them to come next time. If not, pray that they will return even without being contacted.
- Do you need to think about how to respond to any particular questions? Make sure you find time to plan your answer.
- Pray that the children will be convicted of their sin and their need of a Saviour.

SESSION 3: MYSTERIOUS MOUNTAINS

EPIC SCRATCH PAD DISCUSSION GROUPS FOR 4-7s

Bible passage: Mark 15

Main aims

- Children will know that Jesus' death was planned. He took the punishment we deserve for our sin.
- Children will understand that through Jesus' death, there's now a way for us to be forgiven friends with God.

Introduction

- Welcome the children back.
- Learn the names of any new children.
- Remind them of your name.
- Recap on previous session, eg: "Last time, we saw that Jesus came to deal with our biggest problem, our problem of sin. We thought about the fact that *all* of us sin – all of us do things wrong, say things wrong and think things wrong. All of us disobey God, ignore him and don't treat him as we ought to. We also began to think about the fact that sin is such a serious problem because it separates us from God for ever. We deserve the punishment of hell, but Jesus came to rescue us from the punishment we deserve."
- "This time we're going to find out what happened when Jesus died and how he rescues us."

Booklet

If there's time and it's one of your chosen introductory activities, complete "Hat quiz" on page 16 of the *Scratch Pad*. (See page 92 of this Leader's Guide for how to run this activity.)

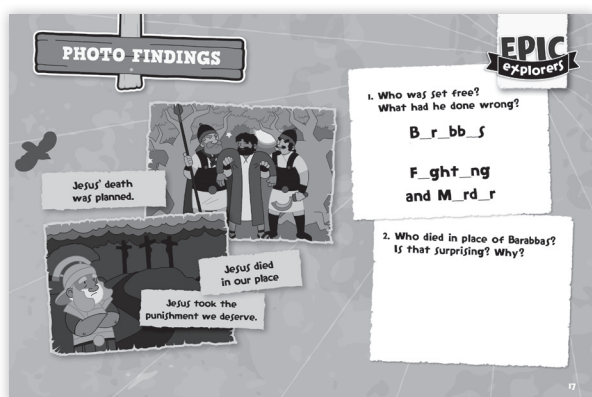


Photo findings

The recap below (called "Photo findings") appears on page 17 of the *Epic Scratch Pad*. It is a simple storyboard with the teaching summarized.

- Jesus' death was planned.
- Jesus died in our place.
- Jesus took the punishment we deserve.

As you look at the pictures, if you have time, you could ask the children to tell you if they remember what is happening.

Questions

Use the questions to encourage discussion.

1. Who was set free? What had he done wrong?

Ask the children if they can remember who the baddie in the story was, who was then set free. You may need to prompt them, eg: "sounds a bit like 'Barry'". After the children have filled in what Barabbas had done wrong, it would be good to point out that even though we may not be exactly the same, we do still do wrong things... AND think wrong things... AND say wrong things... AND disobey God... and so we deserve to be punished by God. Link to when we disobey our teachers or parents – they punish us because we deserve it.

2. Who died in place of Barabbas? Is that surprising? Why?

A nice, easy question that pretty much everyone should be able to answer... JESUS! Ask the children to think about why it is surprising. For the previous two sessions we've focussed on the fact Jesus is God's Son, the miracle worker, who cares for our needs and is hugely popular – and now he's been arrested and killed. Even though he has so much power, he didn't struggle or stop the arrest. Then explain it wasn't a surprise to Jesus – he actually knew about it all. It was planned to the tiniest detail since before time began!

3. Who did Jesus die for? Why?

Use this question to help children understand that we *all* deserve to be punished. No one is so "good" that they don't need forgiveness; and no one is so "bad" that they can't be forgiven. Jesus took God's punishment for everyone who trusts in him. He died in our place, so we can be forgiven and become his friend for ever.

A visual illustration will help the children understand why we need to be forgiven – see below or page 100. (If you used Talk Idea 2 (page 89), this will be a recap of the phone illustration.)

Show the group your right hand. Explain that your hand stands for you, and the ceiling stands for God. Show a book (not the Bible) and ask them to imagine it contains a record of your sin – every time you have said, thought or done things that are wrong. Put the book flat on your hand.

Ask: "What does the book do?" (It separates us from God and stops us knowing him as our friend.)

Now hold up your left hand – this stands for Jesus. Explain that Jesus lived a perfect life; he never sinned – so there was nothing separating him from God. Explain that, as Jesus died on the cross, the sin of the whole world was put onto him. Transfer the book from your right to your left hand to show this.

Ask: "What is there between Jesus and God?" (The book that lists all your sin.) This is why Jesus died – it was to take the punishment for all our sin. Then look at your right hand and ask: "What is there between me and God?" (Nothing!)

When Jesus died on the cross, he took the punishment for our sins so that we can be forgiven. This means that there is nothing to separate us from God anymore. This was God's rescue plan for us!

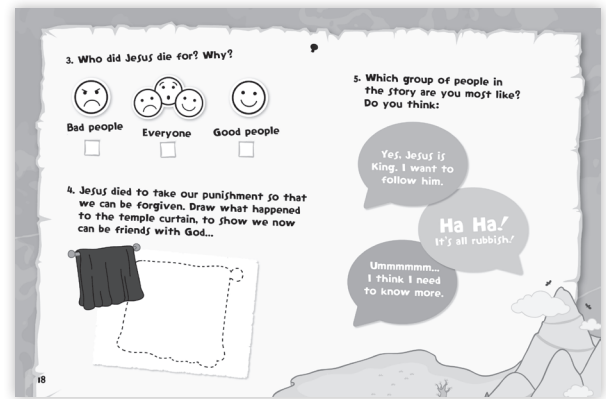
4. Jesus died to take our punishment so that we can be forgiven. Draw what happened to the temple curtain, to show we now can be friends with God...

After the children have drawn a rip in the temple curtain, discuss with them the fact that there is no longer a barrier between us and God (refer back to previous session). Hold a piece of paper in front of your face. Talk about how you are separated from the children. But then rip it in half. What is getting in the way now? Nothing! And as a result of Jesus paying the price for our sin, nothing need get in the way between us and God.

5. Which group of people in the story are you most like? Do you think:

- ☐ Yes, Jesus is King. I want to follow him.
- ☐ Ha Ha! It's all rubbish!
- ☐ Ummm... I think I need to know more.

After they have chosen their response, ask if any of the group want to share their answer. Be prepared to open up the discussion or revisit it tomorrow. Again, this question gives you the opportunity not only to see where the children are at, but also to share something of your own testimony.



If you have time, you may want to let the children do the puzzles on page 19, with some informal chat. If this is part of a holiday club or vacation Bible school, then the puzzle time is also a good opportunity to practise the memory verse and to plug any upcoming events or regular clubs.

Give out invitations to your family event.

Conclusion

Finish by encouraging your group members to come back next time. Tell them: "We've seen why Jesus' death is so important to Christians. But what happened next? Well, the Bible tells us that Jesus came back to life. Next time we're going to think a little more about that and why it matters."

Evaluate

- Is there anything you could add to your prayer cards? Was there anyone from the previous session missing today? You may be able to contact them and encourage them to come next time. If not, pray that they will return even without being contacted.
- Do you need to think about how to respond to any particular questions? Make sure you find time to plan your answer.
- Pray that the children will understand why Jesus had to die and what this amazing rescue plan means for them.

SESSION 3: MYSTERIOUS MOUNTAINS

EPIC LOGBOOK DISCUSSION GROUPS FOR 8-11s

Bible passage: Mark 15

Main aims

- Children will know that Jesus' death was planned. He took the punishment we deserve for our sin.
- Children will understand that through Jesus' death, there's now a way for us to be forgiven friends with God.

Introduction

- Welcome the children back.
- Learn the names of any new children.
- Remind them of your name.
- Recap on previous session, eg: "Last time, we saw that Jesus came to deal with our biggest problem, our problem of sin. We thought about the fact that *all* of us sin – all of us do things wrong, say things wrong and think things wrong. All of us disobey God, ignore him and don't treat him as we ought to. We also began to think about the fact that sin is such a serious problem because it separates us from God for ever. We deserve the punishment of hell, but Jesus came to rescue us from the punishment we deserve."
- "This time we're going to find out what happened when Jesus died and how he rescues us."

Booklet

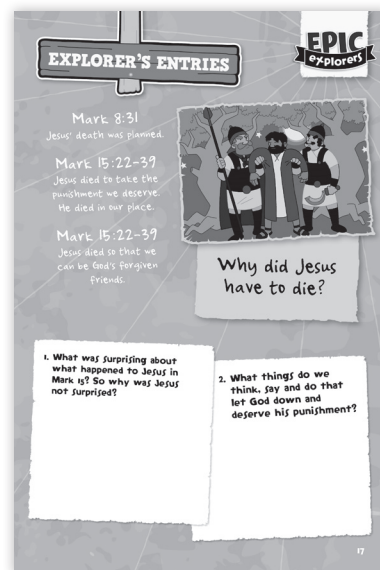
If there's time and it's one of your chosen introductory activities, complete "Hat quiz" on page 16 of the *Logbook*. (See page 92 of this Leader's Guide for how to run this activity.)

Explorer's entries

The recap below (called "Explorer's entries") appears on page 17 of the *Epic Logbook*. If you have time, you may want to read through and summarize.

- Mark 8:31 – Jesus' death was planned.
- Mark 15:22-39 – Jesus died to take the punishment we deserve. He died in our place.

- Mark 15:22-39 – Jesus died so that we can be God's forgiven friends.



Questions

Use the questions to encourage discussion.

1. What was surprising about what happened to Jesus in Mark 15? So why was Jesus not surprised?

Jesus – the perfect one, God's Son, the miracle worker followed by crowds – was arrested and killed. This surprise should contrast sharply with the fact that Jesus didn't struggle, and actually knew about it all in advance. It was planned to the tiniest detail since before time began!

2. What things do we think, say and do that deserve God's punishment?

The children may write a few things or lots. Either way, it's good to point out that we all still do wrong things... AND think wrong things... AND say wrong things... AND disobey God... and so we deserve to be punished by God – leaders as well as children. Link to when they disobey their teachers or parents, or when we get caught speeding by a policeman. They punish us because we deserve it (an opportunity to recap on yesterday).

3. How would you feel if someone else deliberately took the punishment for something you had done?

- ☐ Smug – they're a fool for taking the blame.
- ☐ Guilty – I should have been punished instead.

- ☐ **Bad – for the person who suffered.**
- ☐ **Grateful – thankful for the person who took my punishment.**
- ☐ **Or a mix of these?**

Afterwards, you may want to discuss with the children how they would feel if it was a really serious punishment, eg: going to prison. This should help them begin to think about guilt, fairness, responsibility, etc. There is therefore no need to comment on their replies.

4. What brilliant things will happen when Jesus takes the punishment for someone's sins?

Answers may include:

- They will see God's love and power at work.
- They will be forgiven .
- They will become God's friends.
- They will look forward to living with God in heaven for ever.

If you have done the talk with the phone illustration and the "no entry" sign (page 89), you could recap on that now.

If you have had the soldier's monologue (page 86), then a visual illustration here would be helpful to make sure the children understand why we need to be forgiven – see below or page 100.

Show the group your right hand. Explain that your hand stands for you, and the ceiling stands for God. Show a book (not the Bible) and ask them to imagine it contains a record of your sin – every time you have said, thought or done things that are wrong. Put the book flat on your hand.

Ask: "What does the book do?" (It separates us from God and stops us knowing him as our friend.)

Now hold up your left hand – this stands for Jesus. Explain that Jesus lived a perfect life; he never sinned – so there was nothing separating him from God. Explain that, as Jesus died on the cross, the sin of the whole world was put onto him. Transfer the book from your right to your left hand to show this.

Ask: "What is there between Jesus and God?" (The book that lists all your sin.) This is why Jesus died – it was to take the punishment for all our sin. Then look at your right hand and ask: "What is there between me and God?" (Nothing!)

(A downloadable version of these leader's notes for discussion groups is available from www.ceministries.org/epic.)

When Jesus died on the cross, he took the punishment for our sins so that we can be forgiven. This means that there is nothing to separate us from God anymore. This was God's rescue plan for us!

5. Which of the reactions to Jesus' death is most like your own? Why?

- ☐ **The confused crowd – you don't understand.**
- ☐ **The religious leaders – you don't need Jesus' help .**
- ☐ **The Roman Soldier – wow! Jesus must be God!**

After the children have chosen their responses, ask if any of them want to share their answer. Be prepared to open up the discussion or revisit it tomorrow. This question gives you the opportunity not only to see where the children are at in their understanding and response, but also to share something of your own testimony.

If you have time, you may want to let the children do the crossword on page 19, with some informal chat. If this is part of a holiday club or vacation Bible school, then the puzzle time is also a good opportunity to practise the memory verse and to plug any upcoming events or regular clubs.

Give out invitations to your family event.

Conclusion

Finish by encouraging your group members to come back next time. Tell them: "We've seen why Jesus' death is so important to Christians. But what happened next? Well, the Bible tells us that Jesus came back to life. Next time we're going to think a little more about that and why it matters."

Evaluate

- Is there anything you could add to your prayer cards? Was there anyone from the previous session missing today? You may be able to contact them and encourage them to come next time. If not, pray that they will return even without being contacted.
- Do you need to think about how to respond to any particular questions? Make sure you find time to plan your answer.
- Pray that the children will understand why Jesus had to die and what this amazing rescue plan means for them.

The book/phone illustration

This illustration can be helpful when explaining what happened when Jesus was dying on the cross.

What to do

Hold up a book (not the Bible) or a mobile/cell phone in your right hand.



What to say

Imagine that someone has written about your life in this book (or filmed your life on this mobile/cell phone) – but they've just chosen the bad stuff. Every time you've told a lie. Each time you let a friend down or were rude to your mum or dad. All the times you laughed at someone behind their back or took something that wasn't yours.

So this is a record of your sin – every time you have said, thought or done things that are wrong.

Hold your left hand out, with your palm facing the ceiling.



Imagine that this hand is me, and that the ceiling is where God is.

Take the book/phone and put it flat on your hand.



This book/phone shows all the wrong stuff I've ever done – it shows my sin.

Ask: "But when I put it here (*on your hand*), what does it do?" (It gets in the way between me and God.)

It stops me from knowing God and living as his friend. That's why sin is such a problem – it separates us from God.

Hold out your right hand, facing up. Your left hand should still have the book/phone.



Imagine that this hand is Jesus. He was perfect. He never did anything wrong – he never sinned. That means that there was nothing at all between Jesus and his Father, God. They had a perfect, loving relationship.

But when Jesus was dying on the cross, this is what happened:

Now transfer the book/phone from the left hand to the right hand.



Ask: "What is there between Jesus and God?" (The book/phone that lists all your sin.)

This is why Jesus died – it was to take the punishment for all our sin.

Refer to your left hand, now empty, still facing upwards.



But look back at my other hand for a moment.

Ask: "What is there between me and God?" (Nothing!)

When Jesus died on the cross, he took the punishment for our sins so that we can be forgiven. This means that there is nothing to separate us from God anymore. This was God's rescue plan for us!

SESSION 4: CROWN CAVE

EPIC SCRATCH PAD DISCUSSION GROUPS FOR 4-7s

Bible passage: Mark 16:1-8

Main aims

- Children will know that Jesus really did die and rise again.
- Children will understand that, because Jesus has beaten death, we can know life in him.

Introduction

- Welcome the children back.
- Learn the names of any new children.
- Remind them of your name.
- Recap on previous session, eg: "Last time, we saw that Jesus died in our place to take the punishment we deserve. He paid the price for our sin so we can be rescued. Jesus' death has made a way for us to be forgiven and accepted by God, and be friends with him for ever. We also saw some of the different ways that people reacted to Jesus' death."
- "This time we're going to think about Jesus rising from the dead. Did he really? And why does it matter?"

Booklet

If there's time and it's one of your chosen introductory activities, complete "Spot the difference" on page 22 of the *Scratch Pad*. (See page 108 of this Leader's Guide for how to run this activity.)



Photo findings

The recap below (called "Photo findings") appears on page 23 of the *Epic Scratch Pad*. It is a simple storyboard with the teaching summarized.



- Jesus definitely died.
- Then Jesus was alive!
- Jesus had promised these things.

As you look at the pictures, if you have time, you could ask the children to tell you if they remember what is happening.

Questions

Use the questions to encourage discussion.

1. Draw where Jesus' body was put after he died.

After the children have drawn the tomb and the stone, chat to them about how we know Jesus had definitely died.

- Pilate checked with the Roman centurion, who said it was true.
- Joseph of Arimathea then wrapped Jesus' body up like a mummy and buried it.
- And all this was witnessed by Mary and Mary.

However, not even death is stronger than Jesus.

2. What had moved when the women arrived at the tomb on Sunday?

The children have a choice of circling a tree, a stone or perfume.

When they have circled their answer, remind them that not only had the stone been moved, but the women also saw that Jesus was not there. An angel appeared to them and told them that Jesus had risen from the dead; that he was alive.

Explain that hundreds of people saw, touched and ate with Jesus. Jesus proved lots and lots of times that he is alive.

3. The woman shouldn't have been surprised that Jesus died and was then alive. It was all part of:

The children need to go over the lettering to reveal "God's rescue plan".

Explain that the women should have expected Jesus to be alive because Jesus had told them that it was going to happen.

4. Jesus is alive. How does that make you feel? Fill in this face...

Can you tell your leader why?

Ask the children to think about how they feel about Jesus coming back from the dead; and then get them to look up and show you that face. Once they have filled in the face outline in the booklet, ask them to tell you why, eg: "It makes me happy because I know that nothing is more powerful than Jesus", "It makes me confused because I don't understand how Jesus could do that", "It makes me surprised as I've never heard of anyone else coming back to life".

5. How important is it that Jesus died and is alive? Draw a stick man above your answer.

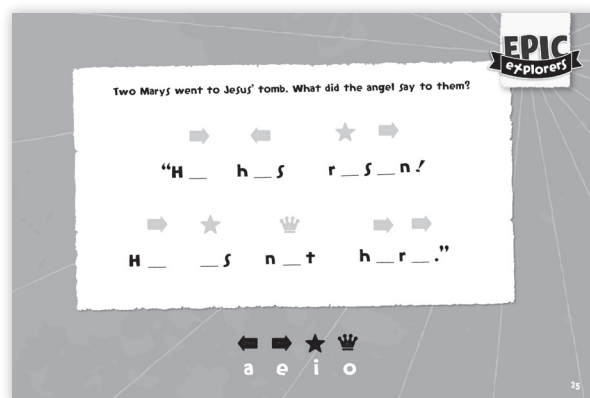
Explain that it is important that Jesus came alive because once again Jesus proves he is a promise-keeper as well as a promise-maker. We can trust his word. But more than that, because of his resurrection, we can know that God accepted Jesus' payment for our sin, and that death has been defeated as Jesus rose.

Jesus is now reigning in heaven and will one day return. He rules over everything, including life and death. Because our punishment has been taken,

we can be forgiven and not separated from God, which means we can have new life too; we can live for ever with God.

If you have time, you may want to let the children do the puzzle on page 25, with some informal chat. If this is part of a holiday club or vacation Bible school, then the puzzle time is also a good opportunity to practise the memory verse and to plug any upcoming events or regular clubs.

Give out invitations to your family event.



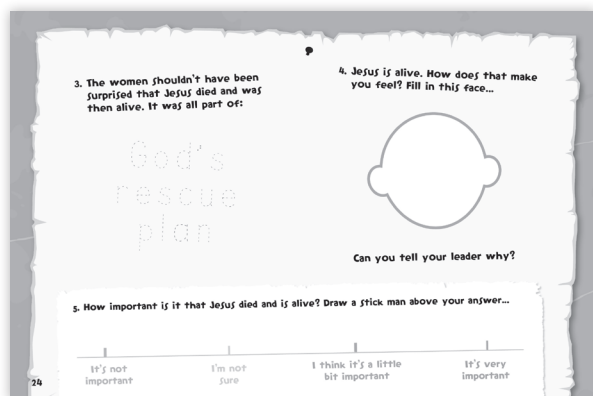
Conclusion

Finish by encouraging your group members to come back next time. Tell them: "We've seen why Jesus' resurrection matters to Christians. Next time, we're going to think about how we can know God's forgiveness and what it means to follow him."

Evaluate

- Is there anything you could add to your prayer cards? Was there anyone from the previous session missing today? You may be able to contact them and encourage them to come next time. If not, pray that they will return even without being contacted.
- Do you need to think about how to respond to any particular questions? Make sure you find time to plan your answer.
- Pray that the children will understand that, though they deserve punishment for their sin, God graciously offers them eternal life through Jesus.

(A downloadable version of these leader's notes for discussion groups is available from www.ceministries.org/epic.)



SESSION 4: CROWN CAVE

EPIC LOGBOOK DISCUSSION GROUPS FOR 8-11s

Bible passage: Mark 16:1-8

Main aims

- Children will know that Jesus really did die and rise again.
- Children will understand that, because Jesus has beaten death, we can know life in him.

Introduction

- Welcome the children back.
- Recap on previous session, eg: "Last time, we saw that Jesus died in our place to take the punishment we deserve. He paid the price for our sin so we can be rescued. Jesus' death has made a way for us to be forgiven and accepted by God, and be friends with him for ever. We also saw some of the different ways that people reacted to Jesus' death."
- "This time we're going to think about Jesus rising from the dead. Did he really? And why does it matter?"

Booklet

If there's time and it's one of your chosen introductory activities, complete "Spot the difference" on page 22 of the *Logbook*. (See page 108 of this Leader's Guide for how to run this activity.)



Explorer's entries

The recap below (called "Explorer's entries") appears on page 23 of the *Epic Logbook*. If you have time, you may want to read through and summarize.

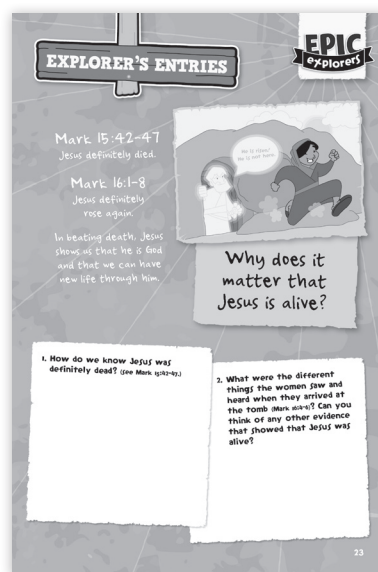
- Mark 15:42-47 – Jesus definitely died.
- Mark 16:1-8 – Jesus definitely rose again.
- In beating death, Jesus shows us that he is God and that we can have new life through him.

Questions

Use the questions to encourage discussion.

1. How do we know Jesus was definitely dead? (See Mark 15: 42-47.)

From Mark 15:42-47, we know that Jesus was definitely dead because Pilate checked with the Roman centurion, who confirmed it. Joseph of Arimathea was also convinced enough to take Jesus' body, wrap it and bury it – and all this was witnessed by Mary and Mary. However, not even death is stronger than Jesus.



2. What were the different things the women saw and heard when they arrived at the tomb (Mark 16: 4-6)?

Can you think of any other evidence that showed that Jesus was alive?

- They saw that the stone had been moved.
- They saw that Jesus was not there.
- They saw an angel and heard him say that Jesus had risen from the dead; that he was alive.

Explain that hundreds of people saw, touched and ate with Jesus. You may want to tell the children that many of Jesus' followers were put to death for insisting that he had risen from the dead. They wouldn't have been willing to die for something they weren't sure of.

3. Should the women have been surprised that Jesus rose from the dead? (Look at Mark 16:7 and then Mark 8:31.)

They shouldn't have been surprised, but rather, they should have expected it because Jesus had told them that it was going to happen.

4. Do you believe that Jesus died and came to life? Draw a stick man on the scale...

Let the children draw their stick man on the scale and then ask them to share their answers. Gently probe as to why they chose that point. You may need to go over the evidence once again or get them to think through alternatives if they say "no", eg:

- He fainted? But he had been tortured, crucified and stabbed through the heart with a spear by the Romans, who were expert killers!
- The body was stolen? Yet the tomb was guarded, a large stone covered it, a body was never found and he was seen by lots of witnesses.

5. Why is it important that Jesus rose again? Or isn't it?

It is important that Jesus rose again because once again Jesus proves he is a promise-keeper as well as a promise-maker. We can trust his word. But more than that, because of his resurrection, we can know that God accepted Jesus' payment for our sin, and that death has been defeated. Jesus is now reigning in heaven and will one day return. He rules over everything, including life and death.

And that's not all – as God gave Jesus new life, he also promises new life to those who believe Jesus died for them and who live his way. We deserve to be separated from God for ever, but Jesus rising from the dead shows us that God will give us life after we die; life for ever with him.

If you have time, you may want to let the children do the puzzles on page 25, with some informal chat. If this is part of a holiday club or vacation Bible school, then the puzzle time is also a good opportunity to practise the memory verse and to plug any upcoming events or regular clubs.

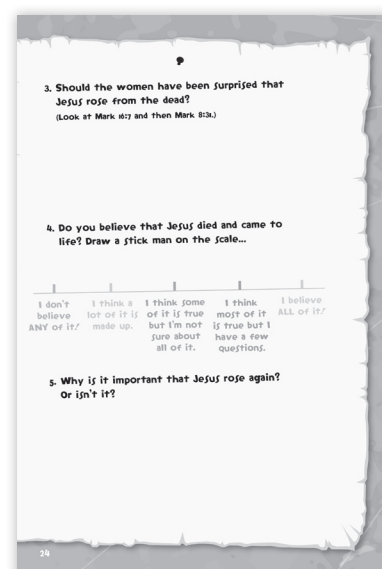
Conclusion

Finish by encouraging your group members to come back next time. Tell them: "We've seen why Jesus' resurrection matters to Christians. Next time, we're going to think about how we can know God's forgiveness and what it means to follow him."

Evaluate

- Is there anything you could add to your prayer cards? Was there anyone from the previous session missing today? You may be able to contact them and encourage them to come next time. If not, pray that they will return even without being contacted.
- Do you need to think about how to respond to any particular questions? Make sure you find time to plan your answer.
- Pray that the children will understand that, though they deserve punishment for their sin, God graciously offers them eternal life through Jesus.

(A downloadable version of these leader's notes for discussion groups is available from www.ceministries.org/epic.)



SESSION 5: ROCKY ROAD

EPIC SCRATCH PAD DISCUSSION GROUPS FOR 4-7s

Bible passage: Mark 8:27-38

Main aims

- Children will know that Jesus is God's Son and came to rescue us.
- Children will understand that following Jesus means putting him first even when it's tough.

Introduction

- Welcome the children back.
- Learn the names of any new children.
- Remind them of your name.
- Recap on previous session, eg: "Last time we saw that Jesus didn't stay dead. He died on a Friday, but rose to life on the Sunday. Jesus had said he would come to life – and he did! This shows that Jesus' words always come true, and also that God accepted the price Jesus paid for our sin. Jesus is still alive today, reigning as King in heaven. One day he will return again."
- "This time we're going to think about God's rescue plan, and what it means to follow Jesus."

Booklet

If there's time and it's one of your chosen introductory activities, complete "Jigsaw" on page 28 of the *Scratch Pad*. (See page 126 of this Leader's Guide for how to run this activity.)

Photo findings

The recap below (called "Photo findings") appears on page 29 of the *Epic Scratch Pad*. It is a simple storyboard with the teaching summarized.

- Jesus is God's Son. He is King of everything.
- Jesus had to die to take our punishment.
- Following Jesus is hard but worth it!

As you look at the pictures, if you have time, you could ask the children to tell you if they remember what is happening.

Questions

Use the questions on pages 29 and 30 to encourage discussion.

1. Jesus asked: "Who am I?" Peter thought Jesus was the...

Once the children fill in "king" and draw a crown, ask them if they can remember different ways in which we've seen that Jesus is God's Son and the promised King. Explain that, like the disciples, the more time we spend looking at Jesus, the more evidence we will see showing us who he is and why he came.

2. Who do you think Jesus is?

- ☐ Jesus is a good, kind man
- ☐ Jesus was a special teacher
- ☐ Jesus is a made-up person
- ☐ Jesus is God's Son and King
- ☐ Someone else

How the children answer will give you insight into how their thinking has developed over the sessions. You may even want to point that out to them.

3. What did Jesus have to do so that we can be forgiven? Draw it below...

As they are drawing the cross, say that Jesus paid for our sins by dying on the cross.

After they have finished, explain that the Bible tells us that God accepts us, not because of anything we have done, but because of what *Jesus* has done. God's perfect Son died on the cross in our place.

4. Jesus died and came to life so that we can be his forgiven friends. We need to...

The children need to cross out the "X's" to spell "TURN" and "SORRY".

It's a bit like accepting an invitation. Jesus says that if we follow him, we will suffer too – but he promises to help us.

When we have seen how much God has done for us, and how he longs for the best for us, we should want to turn from living *our* way to living *his* way. We need to realize that we have done wrong and we desperately need his rescue. We need to say sorry, and ask for his forgiveness and free gift of eternal life.

You could illustrate this by standing facing the wall, with your arms folded – and point out this is like when we ignore and disobey God. Then turn around and march on the spot. Explain this is like when we turn around and want to start listening to God and following his ways.

Offer a sweet to someone. Ask what they have to do to make it their own. They have to take it – it's no good just looking at it or knowing about it; they need to accept it and make it their own.

Go through ways of accepting Jesus' invitation to be his friend, and how we can start living with Jesus as our rescuing King:

1. Say "sorry" to God for not treating him as you should.
2. Say "thank you" to God for sending Jesus to die so that you can be forgiven.
3. Ask God to please forgive you, and help you to turn and live his way.

Ask the children to let you know at the end if they would like to find out more about following Jesus and becoming God's friend.

5. Do you have any questions about what it means to follow Jesus?

Use this as a time to answer any unanswered questions. If there are children in your group who are already Christians, you may want to ask them to share what it's like for them to follow Jesus.

If you have time, you may want to let the children do the puzzles on page 31, with some informal chat. If this is part of a holiday club or vacation Bible school, then the puzzle time is also a good opportunity to practise the memory verse and to plug any upcoming events or regular clubs.

Give out invitations to your family event.

Conclusion

Finish by thanking the children for coming along and encourage them to keep attending groups run by your church.

Depending on where you feel the majority of your group are spiritually, and your understanding of their parents, you may want to encourage them to respond to what they've learned and put their trust in Jesus.

They may want to do this now, in which case you can remind them what it means to "ABCD" (if you included this in the talk), or to pray "sorry, thank you, please". Give the child an opportunity to say their own prayer asking God to forgive them, thanking him for sending Jesus, and asking him to help them live as a follower of Jesus from now on. Or they may prefer to talk to someone about this away from the group later – you, another leader or their parents.

Alternatively you may want to pray a more general prayer with the group, eg:

Dear God, thank you so much for the Bible and all we've been able to look at in Mark's Gospel. Thank you that you want us to understand who Jesus is and why he came. I still have so many questions, so please will you help me to discover the answers, and help me see how much you love me. Amen.

You may want to give the children a gospel tract, eg: "Who will be King?" or "Why did Jesus die?" (available from The Good Book Company websites), and encourage them to read it through with their parents. This helps to avoid parents feeling as if they are being alienated or that their children are being pressurized. It also gives the parents an opportunity to think through the gospel for themselves!

Evaluate

- Is there anything you could add to your prayer cards? Keep these safe and keep praying for the children that have been in your group.
- Do any of the children need information on regular groups run by the church? Make sure you send them the details this week.
- Praise God for all of the children in your group and the privilege it has been to share the good news of Jesus with them.
- Pray for those who are not yet Christians – ask that they will be convicted of their need to accept God's gift of forgiveness.
- Pray for those who are followers of Jesus, that they will grow in grace and understanding, and that they will be bold in telling their friends about Jesus.

(A downloadable version of these leader's notes for discussion groups is available from www.ceministries.org/epic.)

SESSION 5: ROCKY ROAD

EPIC LOGBOOK

DISCUSSION GROUPS FOR 8-11s

Bible passage: Mark 8:27-38

Main aims

- Children will know that Jesus is God's Son and came to rescue us.
- Children will understand that following Jesus means putting him first even when it's tough.

Introduction

- Welcome the children back.
- Learn the names of any new children.
- Remind them of your name.
- Recap on previous session, eg: "Last time we saw that Jesus didn't stay dead. He died on a Friday, but rose to life on the Sunday. Jesus had said he would come to life – and he did! This shows that Jesus' words always come true, and also that God accepted the price Jesus paid for our sin. Jesus is still alive today, reigning as King in heaven. One day he will return again."
- "This time we're going to think about God's rescue plan, and what it means to follow Jesus."

Booklet

If there's time and it's one of your chosen introductory activities, complete "Jigsaw" on page 28 of the *Logbook*. (See page 126 of this Leader's Guide for how to run this activity.)

Explorer's entries

The recap below (called "Explorer's entries") appears on page 29 of the *Epic Logbook*. If you have time, you may want to read through and summarize.

- Mark 8:29 – Jesus is God's Son. He is King over everything.
- Mark 8:31 – Jesus had to die to provide the way for us to be forgiven.
- Mark 8:34 – If we love God, we should want to live his way even if it's hard.

Questions

Use the questions to encourage discussion.

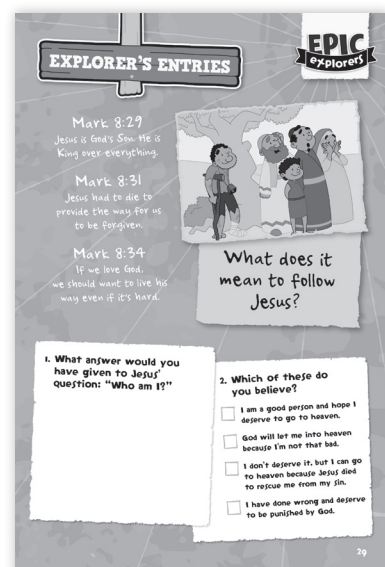
1. What answer would you have given to Jesus' question: "Who am I?"

How the children answer will give you insight into how their thinking has developed over the sessions. You may even want to point that out to them. Explain that like the disciples, the more time we spend looking at Jesus, the more evidence we will see showing us who he is and why he came.

2. Which of these do you believe?

- ☐ I am a good person and hope I deserve to go to heaven.
- ☐ God will let me into heaven because I'm not that bad.
- ☐ I don't deserve it, but I can go to heaven because Jesus died to rescue me from my sin.
- ☐ I have done wrong and deserve to be punished by God.

This question should highlight any misconceptions there still are regarding their salvation. The children may tick more than one box. After they have shared their answers, chat with them about the fact that the Bible teaches us that none of us deserve to go to heaven and none of us can earn our way there, no matter how we behave. However, consider with them the fact that even though we don't deserve it, God longs for us to be in his family, to be forgiven by him.



3. How does the Bible say we can be accepted and forgiven by God?

The Bible tells us that God accepts us, not because of anything we have done, but because of what *Jesus* has done. God's perfect Son died on the cross in our place. We need to realize that we have done wrong and we desperately need his rescue. We need to ask for his forgiveness and the free gift of eternal life.

Offer a sweet/candy to someone. Ask what they have to do to make it their own.

They have to take it – it's no good just looking at it or knowing about it; they need to accept it and make it their own.

When we have seen how much God has done for us and how he longs for the best for us, we should want to turn from living *our* way, to living *his* way.

You could illustrate this by standing facing the wall, with your arms folded – and point out this is like when we ignore and disobey God. Then turn around and march on the spot. Explain this is like when we turn around and want to start listening to God and following his ways.

Go through ways of accepting Jesus' invitation to be his friend, and how we can start living with Jesus as our rescuing King. If you had the talk with the "ABCD" illustration in, you may want to recap on that:

- ADMIT your sin. Tell God that you are sorry that you don't treat him as you should. Ask him to forgive you.
- BELIEVE that Jesus died to take the punishment you deserve; that he came to life; and that he is alive today.
- CONSIDER the cost of living as Jesus' follower from now on, with him in charge. Remember what we saw earlier – it won't always be easy putting him first. Ask God to help you.
- DO something about it! Will you choose to accept Jesus' free gift and to live in a way that pleases him from now on?

Alternatively you may want to simply explain that we can:

1. Say "sorry" to God for not treating him as we should.
2. Say "thank you" to God for sending Jesus to die so that we can be forgiven.
3. Ask God to please forgive us, and help us to turn and live his way.

Ask the children to let you know at the end if they would like to find out more about following Jesus and becoming God's friend. There are some suggestions in the conclusion about what you should do if a child does speak about becoming a Christian.

4. "Being a Christian is just not worth it. You end up having no fun and having no friends. What's the point?" Which bit of this statement seems true? Why do you want/not want to follow Jesus?

This will help unpack the cost of being a Christian, as for many children that will be a new idea. Help consider with them that sometimes it can be difficult to live God's way – it may mean saying "no" to some things and being teased; at other times, it may be harder still. However, if we are Christians, then we are not on our own. We have God with us now, longing to help us and change us, and we have the promise of living with him for ever when we die.

If the children say that they need more time, encourage them to keep coming along to your church groups and to keep exploring.

5. Do you have any questions about what it means to follow Jesus?

Use this as a time to answer any unanswered questions. If there are children in your group who are already Christians, you may want to ask them to share what it's like for them to follow Jesus.

If you have time, you may want to let the children do the puzzles on page 31, with some informal chat. If this is part of a holiday club or vacation Bible school, then the puzzle time is also a good opportunity to practise the memory verse and to plug any upcoming events or regular clubs.

Give out invitations to your family event.

Conclusion

Finish by thanking the children for coming along and encourage them to keep attending groups run by your church.

Depending on where you feel the majority of your group are spiritually, and your understanding of their parents, you may want to encourage them to respond to what they've learned and put their trust in Jesus.

They may want to do this now, in which case you can remind them what it means to "ABCD", or to pray "sorry, thank you, please" (page 132). Give the child an opportunity to say their own prayer asking God to forgive them, thanking him for sending Jesus, and asking him to help them live as a follower of Jesus from now on. Or they may prefer to talk to someone about this away from the group later – you, another leader or their parents.

Alternatively you may want to pray a more general prayer with the group, eg:

Dear God, thank you so much for the Bible and all we've been able to look at in Mark's Gospel. Thank you that you want us to understand who Jesus is and why he came. I still have so many questions, so please will you help me to discover the answers, and help me see how much you love me. Amen.

You may want to give the children a gospel tract, eg: "Who will be King?" or "Why did Jesus die?" (available from The Good Book Company websites), and encourage them to read it through

with their parents. This helps to avoid parents feeling as if they are being alienated or that their children are being pressurized. It also gives the parents an opportunity to think through the gospel for themselves!

Evaluate

- Is there anything you could add to your prayer cards? Keep these safe and keep praying for the children that have been in your group.
- Do any of the children need information on regular groups run by the church? Make sure you send them the details this week.
- Praise God for all of the children in your group and the privilege it has been to share the good news of Jesus with them.
- Pray for those who are not yet Christians – ask that they will be convicted of their need to accept God's gift of forgiveness.
- Pray for those who are followers of Jesus, that they will grow in grace and understanding, and that they will be bold in telling their friends about Jesus.

(A downloadable version of these leader's notes for discussion groups is available from www.ceministries.org/epic.)

