

spill the beans

worship and learning resources for all ages

issue 42

lent, easter to pentecost
2 march to 5 june 2022

sampler

A resource with a Scottish flavour for
Worship Leaders, Sunday Schools, Junior
Churches and Youth Leaders based on the
Revised Common Lectionary.

www.spillthebeans.org.uk
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introduction

Welcome to the tenth issue of a three year collection of Spill the Beans. We returned to the Revised Common Lectionary for 2019-2022 with new material as we take another tour through that lectionary.

Who Are We?

At the beginning of 2009 a conversation began amongst a couple, then a few, then a group about collaboratively creating resources that enabled us to tell the story of faith in a worship context and within age groups for younger people and teens. Spill the Beans was born as the result of that conversation and has grown and developed over the intervening years.

The ethos has remained the same, however. It is all about story. For we believe story is the lifeblood of faith. In story we can tell the truth and speak with honesty about things for which there are not yet words. Story contains mystery and is the poetry that forms faith. Stories grow as we grow and can reveal new truths at different times in our lives.

So we believe giving stories to people is one of the most important things we can do in sharing our faith. Children and adults hold stories in their being and keep coming back to them throughout life. Our culture is stored in story. The same is true for our faith.

Spill the Beans is a work of love. None of the contributors are paid for their contributions, these contributions are written and prepared with our own congregations in mind. Instead of working in isolation, we bring this work together, give it some spit and polish, and share it with others. This is how we can keep the cost so low.

In addition, we regularly pay it forward by using surplus monies to support other new ministries and projects.

Collaboration

The team is delighted that we are in creative collaborations with Fischy Music (www.fischy.com) and the Scottish Bible Society (<https://scottishbiblesociety.org>).

Archive Revised Common Lectionary and Narrative Lectionary Resources

We have two Overspill packages that provide complete sets of past issues that give a huge library of resources for both the Revised Common Lectionary and Narrative Lectionary.

The Revised Common Lectionary Overspill Pack

Issues 1-12

1,536 pages

£50

Purchase through this link: <https://pul.ly/b/108820>

The Narrative Lectionary Overspill Pack

Issues 13-27 (plus summer extra) in higher quality render

2,082 pages

£60

Purchase through this link: <https://pul.ly/b/207215>

The Road Less Travelled Overspill Pack

A lectionary created by the team and users, exploring parts of the

Scriptures less frequently travelled in either RCL or NL

Issues 28-32 in higher quality render

806 pages

£25

Purchase through this link: <https://pul.ly/b/262757>

You are downloading a compressed archive of files which need to be unpacked so we recommend downloading these to a desktop or laptop computer rather than phone or tablet. Note that depending on future years there may not be resources for some Sundays depending on the timing of Easter and changes to the readings as a result.

Using Issue 42

In this issue of Spill the Beans you will find an extensive collection of things to use each week. Because each piece is written with specific congregations in mind there may be the need to be a little creative yourselves in adapting and evolving some of the ideas to suit your own place and culture and congregation. That is entirely purposeful.

Of course, if you are creative and would like to share what you have done, then have a look at our Facebook page <http://www.facebook.com/spillbeansresources> and the associated Facebook group that provides space for discussion and support. On our blog at <https://www.spillthebeans.org.uk/> you will find PowerPoint backgrounds for most weeks.

Each week we provide a selection of words, ideas and creative moments to take the theme and the passage a little further. We do not provide a ready made service or perfect prayers but ideas and pointers that hopefully scratch at your own creativity and provoke heaven's imagination within you.

Here are some tips to guide your use of the material in age groups:

1. It presumes some introduction to the story will have taken place in worship together or will play a part in the service when children join it later.
2. Depending on the make-up of your own groups of children you will need to remain flexible in how you use the material.
3. Each idea has been given a guide age range to help your planning, but this is only a guide so use your own judgement about what will work with your group.
4. Before the sit-down activities if you have a group of young children or lots of boys, you may want to add a run-around type game to expend some energy.
5. Use the gathering time exercise with the whole group to get into the story together across the ages.
6. We encourage you to retell the story together.
7. Follow that by choosing as many or as few activities your space and time allow. You could offer a number of activities each at different stations all at the same time for all ages to self-select with a teacher staffing each one, or have traditional classes.
8. During activities, ask children to retell the story to you and ask about their week, what was happy and what was sad and if this week's story reminds them of other biblical and personal stories.
9. The intention is not to complete "the tasks" brilliantly, but rather to provide opportunities to begin conversations, build relationships, retell the story of the day, and talk about what it means for us today.
10. There are many websites that provide handout-type sheets that will have images, crosswords and word searches for the story of that week. They can be helpful in an emergency, but try to be more creative as leaders, the rewards are worth it.

Information

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Sleepless Nights Publications

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spill the beans resource team

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Key to Abbreviations

In the worship ideas section the following abbreviations may be used to indicate different sources of worship music:

ATAS	All the Assembly Songs You'll Ever Need
CG	Common Ground
CH4	Church Hymnary, 4th Edition
CH3	Church Hymnary, 3rd Edition
JP	Junior Praise
MP	Complete Mission Praise
SGP	Songs of God's People
WGP	Wild Goose Publications



holy week gatherings

ideas for inter-generational conversations for holy week



Introduction

Here we provide ideas for five simple inter-generational Bible chats based around five Holy Week stories from John's Gospel. This could be used in a variety of settings, either on their own or added into your Holy Week gatherings or used during the season of Lent. You could use all of them or just one or two.

Each day is designed to use few physical resources and to take about 20 to 30 minutes (depending on how much people chat). The Scottish Bible Society has produced a magazine style version of John's Gospel ("Light and Life Gospel"). This would be an excellent gift to give to people as they use these Holy Week Gatherings and explore the Easter Story together.

Day 1

Reading: John 12:1-8

Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, 'Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?' (He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.) Jesus said, 'Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me.'

Get Going

Imagine you were having a big meal in your house for lots of people.

- Who would you want to be there and what would you have to eat?
- What gift would you give everyone to show them that you loved them?

Read John 12:1-8 out loud for everyone to hear.

While you are listening draw some of the things that are happening.

Show your pictures to each other.

Chat about...

- What was your favourite bit?
- Were there any parts you did not like?

Then add yourself to the picture.

- Where would you be?
- With Martha serving the food, with Mary worshipping Jesus, with Judas complaining, or somewhere else?

Think Deeper

How Mary behaved would have been shocking to everyone at the meal. Women didn't uncover their hair in public let alone use it to wipe a man's feet with perfume. Chat about why Mary did what she did. Jesus tells everyone to leave Mary alone. What could we do just now to worship Jesus? To show him how much we love him. Get as many ideas as you can and then do one of them together.

Take Time

You might not have any expensive perfume around but maybe you will have some hand gel. Take turns putting a little hand gel on your finger and then drawing the shape of the cross on the back of someone else's hand. As you do that say, "Thank you Jesus for dying for us." This was what Mary was doing when she put perfume on his feet, she was getting him ready for what was going to happen to him in a few days' time and thanking him for his sacrifice.

Day 2

Reading: John 12:20-26

Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, 'Sir, we wish to see Jesus.' Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honour.

Get Going

- Who would you most like to meet?
- If you met that person, what would you ask them?
- What would you hope to find out about them?

Read John 12:20-26 out loud so that everyone can hear.

Place a piece of paper in the middle of the group and ask someone to draw wheat growing. The picture should show what happens above and below the ground. Help each other to label all the different parts of the drawing and add bits that are missing.

Chat together about what has to happen to a seed to make the wheat grow.

Think Deeper

Wonder together about what the Greek people in the story found out about Jesus.

- How is what happened to Jesus when he died like a grain of wheat going into the ground?

Take Time

Draw around one of your feet onto a piece of paper and then cut out your foot shape. Write your name on your paper foot and place all your paper feet in the middle of where you are gathering.

Pray this prayer together...

Leader: Lord Jesus, thank you that you gave up your life for us.

All: **Help us to follow you.**

Leader: Thank you that means we can live with you for ever.

All: **Help us to follow you.**

Leader: Thank you that other people will meet you when we serve you.

All: **Help us to follow you.
Amen.**

Take someone else's paper foot home with you and pray that they would keep following Jesus.

Day 3

Reading: John 13:21-32

After saying this Jesus was troubled in spirit, and declared, 'Very truly, I tell you, one of you will betray me.' The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he was speaking. One of his disciples—the one whom Jesus loved—was reclining next to him; Simon Peter therefore motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. So while reclining next to Jesus, he asked him, 'Lord, who is it?' Jesus answered, 'It is the one to whom I give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.' So when he had dipped the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas son of Simon Iscariot. After he received the piece of bread, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, 'Do quickly what you are going to do.' Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. Some thought that, because Judas had the common purse, Jesus was telling him, 'Buy what we need for the festival'; or, that he should give something to the poor. So, after receiving the piece of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night.

When he had gone out, Jesus said, 'Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once.'

Get Going

Ask everyone to write their name on a piece of paper. Give all the names out to the group so that everyone has someone else's name. Ask everyone to write or draw something on the piece of paper that encourages that person and give it back to them. Chat about friendship and why friendship matters. Today's story from the Bible is about a time when Jesus and his closest friends were having a meal together.

Invite someone to read out loud John 13:21-26. At this point share some bread together. You could have some nice spreads to add to your bread. Enjoy eating your bread.

When you are all finished ask someone to read out loud John 13:27-30.

Think Deeper

Jesus and his friends are together when one of them heads out into the night. Chat together about what Judas was going to do.

- Why do you think he did what he did?

Take Time

This is a very dark and sad story. In this story we discover that Jesus knew what it was like to be let down by his closest friend. Chat together about the dark and sad things in our world and our lives today.

Place three candles in the middle of your group. Ask someone to read out this prayer and prepare other people to light the candles.

Lord Jesus,
what Judas did to you makes us sad.
It was a very dark time.

We thank you that you are the light of the world.

Light candle 1

We think of things in our world that are dark and sad.
Please help us to shine your light in those places.

Light candle 2

When we feel dark and sad
please bring your light into our lives.

Light candle 3.

Amen.

Day 4

Reading: John 13:31-35

When he had gone out, Jesus said, 'Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, "Where I am going, you cannot come." I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.'

Get Going

Listen while someone reads out loud John 13:31-32. Count how many times Jesus says the word "Glory" or "Glorified" in this bit of the Bible.

Write the word Glory in big bubble letters in the middle of a piece of paper. Decorate it to look glorious.

As you do that talk about what the word "Glory" means.

- What is Jesus saying God is going to do to Jesus (try and answer this question without using the word "Glory")?

Think Deeper

Play a game of hide and seek.

- How long did it take for everyone to be found?

The next bit of the Bible we are going to read sounds as if Jesus was going to hide and his friends would not be able to find him. Listen carefully while someone reads John 13:33. Chat together about what Jesus was talking about, and what is going to happen to him.

Take Time

As someone reads John 13:34-35 draw a big love heart in the middle of a piece of paper. Inside the heart draw or write all the things you can think of that we can do to love one another.

After you have done this gather round the heart and say really loudly together three times, "Love one another!" Ask Jesus to always help you love one another!

Day 5

Reading: John 19:38-42

After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, though a secret one because of his fear of the Jews, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission; so he came and removed his body. Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds. They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews. Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

Get Going

Chat together about what happened when Jesus died.

- What do you remember?

Once you have chatted together ask someone to read out loud John 19:38-41. Listen out for the two people who look after Jesus' body once he is dead. Draw a picture of them on a piece of paper.

Chat together about what you think they were like and write words to describe them around the pictures.

Nicodemus once had a big chat with Jesus. Read John 3:14-13 to find out one of the things Jesus said to Nicodemus in that conversation.

- What do you think Jesus was talking about?

Think Deeper

Nicodemus bought some very expensive ointments for Jesus. He must have loved Jesus very much. We cannot buy Jesus expensive ointments as Nicodemus did. Chat together about what we can do to show that we love Jesus.

Take Time

Using masking tape create the shape of a cross on a piece of paper. Then all take a pen and make a big mess all over the paper, pretending the cross isn't there. Ask someone to pray this prayer:

Jesus,
the story of how you died is very sad.
We are glad that Nicodemus and Joseph
looked after your body.

They had to wait the rest of Friday and all-day Saturday
until you came alive again.

We wait just now and say thank you
for loving us so much.

Pause for a few seconds

When you died you took away all the sin in the world.

*At this point ask someone to peel off the tape, revealing
the shape of the cross in the middle of the mess.*

Thank you.

*Chat together about what the picture of the cross you
have created makes you think and feel.*



through the season

Introduction

As a visual stimulus for this season we suggest that you create a hanging line in your worship space. This could be a clothes-line strung across the chancel area or perhaps along the sides of the sanctuary. If you have columns in your worship space you could wrap the line around the columns and use each gap for hanging items.

As we delve into the Word of God each week, the visual addition we suggest would be a section of that week's Bible passage. This could be done in a number of ways.

1. If you have some old large print lectern bibles, which churches often accumulate over the years, one of these could be re-purposed, giving up the relevant page(s) to be hung on the line. Invite people to highlight or circle words in the reading that are particularly meaningful.
2. Photocopy and enlarge the reading from a bible. If you have the facility you could go really big. You could pick some particular phrases to enlarge more than others.
3. Print or create your own hanging using parts of the bible text. This could be collaborative asking a different family or group to choose and decorate a hanging for each week.

In addition to the text, you could add an image to the hanging, either using the artistic abilities of those in your congregation or finding a suitable image online that illustrates the theme.

Week By Week

Lent

2 Mar Ash Wednesday

Scripture: Joel 2:1-2,12-17

Title: Dust And Ashes

Image: Pile of ash

6 Mar Lent 1

Scripture: Luke 4:1-11

Title: Tempted And Tested

Image: Stones shaped like loaves

13 Mar Lent 2

Scripture: Luke 13:31-35

Title: Foxes And Hens

Image: Fox by a hen house

20 Mar Lent 3

Scripture: Luke 13:1-9

Title: Fate And Faith

Image: Fig tree

27 Mar Lent 4

Scripture: Luke 15:1-3,11b-32

Title: Pigs And Pride

Image: Sack of pig feed

3 Apr Lent 5

Scripture: John 12:1-8

Title: Perfume And Poverty

Image: Jar of perfume

10 Apr Palm Sunday

Scripture: Luke 19:28-40

Title: Palms And Provocation

Image: Palm branches

Sampler





Holy Week

- 11 Apr Monday**
 Scripture: Isaiah 42:1-9
 John 12:1-11
 Title: Grace And Giving
 Image: Feet
- 12 Apr Tuesday**
 Scripture: Isaiah 49:1-7
 Luke 12:20-36
 Title: Grain And Glory
 Image: Seeds falling from a hand
- 13 Apr Wednesday**
 Scripture: Isaiah 50:4-9a
 John 13:21-32
 Title: Bread And Betrayal
 Image: Bread and dish of dip
- 14 Apr Maundy Thursday**
 Scripture: Exodus 12:1-14
 John 13:1-17,31b-35
 Title: Remember And Retell
 Image: Lamb
- 15 Apr Good Friday**
 Scripture: Isaiah 52:13-53:12
 John 18:1-19:42
 Title: Tried And Crucified
 Image: Cross
- 16 Apr Holy Saturday**
 Scripture: Matthew 27:57-66
 Title: Dead And Buried
 Image: Stone and tomb

Easter

- 17 Apr Easter Sunday**
 Scripture: John 20:1-18
 Title: Risen And Rejoicing
 Image: Flowers
- 24 Apr Easter 2**
 Scripture: John 2:19-31
 Title: Thomas And Trust
 Image: A closed door
- 1 May Easter 3**
 Scripture: John 21:1-19
 Title: Fire And Fish
 Image: Many fish
- 8 May Easter 4**
 Scripture: John 10:22-30
 Title: Belief And Belonging
 Image: Flock of sheep
- 15 May Easter 5**
 Scripture: John 13:31-35
 Title: Love And Longing
 Image: Open hands reaching out
- 22 May Easter 6**
 Scripture: John 14:23-29
 Title: Promise And Peace
 Image: Dove
- 29 May Easter 7**
 Scripture: John 17:20-26
 Title: Unity And Understanding
 Image: Celtic triquetra symbol
- 5 June Pentecost**
 Scripture: Acts 2:1-21
 Title: Amazed And Astonished
 Image: Flames



dust and ashes

Introduction

This service outline offers breathing exercises to help continually centre ourselves. It uses breath as a way of reflecting and being forgiven. This act becomes a rhythmic prayer. There are no spoken prayers as such, just the act of using the pattern of breathing as a way of knowing God's forgiveness, presence and renewal.

You will need: a circle of candles in the centre of worship (battery powered), a sheet of paper and a pen for everyone, ashes for the worship leader.

Gathering

All: In the silence of this evening,
in the quiet of the day,
in the peace of this place
we come
with dust and ashes
from which we came
and will return
and pause for breath.

Leader: Please take a deep breath and exhale slowly.

All: In the silence of this evening,
in the quiet of the day,
in the peace of this place
we come
with dust and ashes
from which we came
and will return
and pause for breath.

Leader: Please take a deep breath and exhale slowly.

All: In the silence of this evening,
in the quiet of the day,
in the peace of this place
we come
with dust and ashes
from which we came
and will return
and pause for breath.

Leader: Please take a deep breath and exhale slowly.

Play some suitable, reflective ambient music. This music should play for the rest of the service.

Reading

Joel 2:1-2

Blow the trumpet in Zion;
 sound the alarm on my holy mountain!
 Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble,
 for the day of the Lord is coming, it is near—

a day of darkness and gloom,
 a day of clouds and thick darkness!
 Like blackness spread upon the mountains
 a great and powerful army comes;
 their like has never been from of old,
 nor will be again after them
 in ages to come.

Reflection

All: **In the silence of this evening,
 in the quiet of the day,
 in the peace of this place
 we come
 with dust and ashes
 in penitence and confession
 seeking forgiveness and renewal
 and we pause.**

Leader: Please take a deep breath and exhale slowly.

All: **In the silence of this evening,
 in the quiet of the day,
 in the peace of this place
 we come
 with dust and ashes
 in penitence and confession
 seeking forgiveness and renewal
 and we pause.**

Leader: Please take a deep breath and exhale slowly.

All: **In the silence of this evening,
 in the quiet of the day,
 in the peace of this place
 we come
 with dust and ashes
 in penitence and confession
 seeking forgiveness and renewal
 and we pause.**

Reading

Joel 2:12-13

Yet even now, says the Lord,
 return to me with all your heart,
 with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;
 rend your hearts and not your clothing.
 Return to the Lord, your God,
 for he is gracious and merciful,
 slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love,
 and relents from punishing.

Reflection

All: **In the silence of this evening,
 in the quiet of the day,
 in the peace of this place
 we come
 with dust and ashes
 finding our way here
 in the presence of forgiveness
 and we pause.**

Leader: Please take a deep breath and exhale slowly.

All: **In the silence of this evening,
 in the quiet of the day,
 in the peace of this place
 we come
 with dust and ashes
 finding our way here
 in the presence of forgiveness
 and we pause.**

Leader: Please take a deep breath and exhale slowly.

All: **In the silence of this evening,
 in the quiet of the day,
 in the peace of this place
 we come
 with dust and ashes
 finding our way here
 in the presence of forgiveness
 and we pause.**

Leader: Please take a deep breath and exhale slowly.

Reading

Joel 2:17

Between the vestibule and the altar
 let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep.
 Let them say, "Spare your people, O Lord,
 and do not make your heritage a mockery,
 a byword among the nations.
 Why should it be said among the peoples,
 'Where is their God?'"

dust and ashes

Reflection

All: In the silence of this evening,
in the quiet of the day,
in the peace of this place
we come
with dust and ashes
in thanksgiving and praise
in hope and in peace
and we pause.

Leader: Please take a deep breath and exhale slowly.

All: In the silence of this evening,
in the quiet of the day,
in the peace of this place
we come
with dust and ashes
in thanksgiving and praise
in hope and in peace
and we pause.

Leader: Please take a deep breath and exhale slowly.

All: In the silence of this evening,
in the quiet of the day,
in the peace of this place
we come
with dust and ashes
in thanksgiving and praise
in hope and in peace
and we pause.

Leader: Please take a deep breath and exhale slowly.

Action

In the centre of the worship space create a circle of candles preferably battery powered ones, but unlit.

Invite people to take a small sheet of paper and write a word or a prayer or a confession on it.

Invite everyone to breathe a few times in the way that has been followed throughout the service and take the sheet to the circle of candles. Invite them to tear the sheet two or three times and scatter the pieces in the circle of candles.

Once they have done that, before they return to their seats, invite them to switch on a candle.

Poem

May the dust of the Saviour's stories
mark us for this journey.

May the dust of the roads he travelled
guide us on this lenten path.

May even the dust of the words of love
be enough to hold us through this darkness.

And in such dust,
where footsteps are left,
may we place our sins
and our shadows,
our hurts
and our alleluias
folded away
until the dawn of life.

May the dust from the cross
call us
and leave footprints on the way.

Imposition of Ashes

Invite people to come forward to receive ashes. In doing so, these words can be said to each person.

You are but dust.
Now in repentance walk the way of the cross
for God in love promises to lift you
into new life.

Breathing Prayer

As people return to their seats, invite them to breath out, letting go of all that hurts and corrupts, and then breath in the new life of the spirit and promise of God.

This can be done as many times as each person wishes.

Leave Taking

In the silence of this evening,
in the quiet of the day,
in the peace of this place
we now go
with dust and ashes:
forgiven and renewed;
forgiven and loved again;
forgiven and companions on the way.

Blessing

Go in peace.
Travel in peace.
Share God's peace.

Ash Wednesday In Church

The hens have stopped laying.
Yesterday we used up all the eggs
in one enormous pancake.

I cannot see any Alleluias
on the service sheet this morning,
and it is not a funeral,
but the priest is wearing a purple stole.

I remember this from last year.
We had to line up twice.
Once when the priest smeared dirt
on our faces,
and again for communion.
It was strange.

There were words too,
about dust and death,
and everyone was really quiet,
nobody whispered
or passed sweets along the pew.

We walked out of the church
with dirty faces,
and no-one told us
to go and wash.
Nobody smiled.

It has a name this day,
I've just remembered.
And it has got something to do with
turning around
and listening to Jesus.

It is called Ash Wednesday.
And it is here again.

sampler





lent 1
sunday 6 march 2022

tempted and tested

bible notes

Deuteronomy 26:1-11

Psalm 91:1-2,9-16

Romans 10:8b-13

Luke 4:1-13

What If...

The film 'Sliding Doors' (1998) has two parallel plot lines, depending on whether or not the lead character, played by Gwyneth Paltrow, manages to board a London underground train before the doors slide shut. We might speculate how different the story of Jesus, and the subsequent history of the Church might have been if he had accepted the tempting offers presented to him in the wilderness just as his public ministry was about to begin. Could the excruciating agony of the last week of his life, presented in graphic detail in Martin Scorsese's film 'The Last Temptation of Christ' (1998) have been avoided? Might he have lived to a ripe old age, leader of a prosperous cult, pulling the strings of government through his wealthy devotees?

There is no need to postulate a supernatural Devil for the choices to be real ones on Jesus' part. He clearly had the charisma to draw people to him and he could, had he so chosen, have used that power to exploit people financially, emotionally, politically or sexually. He could have talked himself into believing that it was really for the good of the Kingdom that his movement should have the financial resources to reach more people and the political clout to make a difference for good. Perhaps that is what fourth century Christians were thinking when the Edict of Milan (313 AD) ended 250 years of persecution and the Edict of Thessalonica (380 AD) made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire. The history of Christendom from then until now can be seen either as a God-given opportunity or as a betrayal of everything that Jesus stood for. Giles Fraser explores this in depth in his compelling theological memoir 'Chosen' (Allen Lane, 2021).

The period of 40 days is, of course, highly symbolic, recalling the 40 years of wilderness wandering for the Jewish people before they were allowed to enter the

promised land (Exodus 16:38; Numbers 32:13; Deut. 29:5). Were it to be taken literally, 40 days is well beyond the length of time that a person can survive without water (1-2 weeks) and approaching the maximum survival time without food (1-2 months). Either way, Jesus was hungry—very hungry—when he was beset by his three temptations, each of them offering, in different ways, a quick fix or an easier path than the one he believed God had chosen for him.

Few of us will have experienced real hunger. Fasting has gone out of fashion as a spiritual practice, though in the New Testament it goes hand in hand with prayer, and many of the more extreme visions of the medieval mystics may be attributed to lack of food. We will know, however, what it is like to be at our lowest ebb, physically, emotionally and spiritually. Those are the times when our judgement tends to be skewed and we are prone to making poor choices. Not for nothing did the angel encourage Elijah to eat and rest before even thinking of resuming his vocation as a prophet (1 Kings 19: 4-8).

It may be worth stopping at this point to ponder what it is that we truly hunger for: love and acceptance? a sense of purpose? And what substitutes we use: food? drink? sex? money? power? to try to fill the void inside.

The account of Jesus' temptation, included in all three Synoptic gospels, not only sets out the nature of Jesus' mission right from the start, it also links the beginning and end of his story, setting out a marker that whatever becomes of this idealistic young man, he is not heading for earthly power and glory. For struggling Christians of every generation, including our own, this portrayal of his inner spiritual conflict makes it much easier to identify with Jesus, who was "tested in every way as we are yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15).

the story

Led Into The Wilderness

*Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit,
was led by the Spirit from Jordan into the wilderness...*

Lent. Week One.

It is time for that story again.

The one set in the desert with Jesus and the devil.

The one where Jesus gets tempted
to come up with a lot of quick fixes
and miraculous solutions.

The one where Jesus chooses to say
no to the devil
and yes to God.

Hungry?

These stones around you,
turn them into bread,
easy-peasy,
problem solved.

The world?

You want to change it?

It is mine, but I'll give it you.

Just abandon God
and worship me instead.

Miracles?

No problem.

Jump from the top of a tall building
and the angels will catch you.

Impressive, eh?

- How many times have you heard this story?
- What do you think it is about?
- Maybe it's a one-off opportunity for Jesus to sort out his plans and priorities?
- Do you wonder what kind of life Jesus would have had if he had said yes to the devil rather than no?
- Does your upbringing and culture colour your picture of the devil?
- Do you think it is a helpful story or a confusing one?

*Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit,
was led by the Spirit from Jordan into the wilderness..
and when the devil had finished testing him,
he left him alone..
for a while.*

Retelling For Young People

Joseph's Problem

Joseph had a problem. He'd promised to meet Michael on Saturday morning to think about the project they were working on in school. It was a really sunny morning and Joseph was tempted to go fishing. Joseph's dad had said that the river was running high and it might be dangerous on the river bank. It might be very slippery.

Joseph could have decided not to go fishing on Saturday because it might be dangerous.

Joseph could have rung Michael to see if he wanted to go fishing too.

He could have gone to meet Michael and worked on their project and gone fishing another day.

He could have texted Michael and pretended he didn't feel very well.

He could have not bothered to contact Michael and just gone fishing.

- Why do you think Joseph wanted to go fishing?
- How do you think Joseph solved his problem?
- If you were Joseph, what would you have done?

When someone wants to do something that they think might be wrong or unwise, we say that they are tempted to do something.

There is a story in the bible about Jesus being tempted. It is a story that is often read in churches at this time of year, which we call Lent.

In the story there is a character called Satan or the devil who tries to tempt Jesus to do things that Jesus knows to be wrong.

Satan asks Jesus to turn stones into bread, to worship him and to jump from a high building. Read the story and find out what Jesus says to Satan.

You can find the story in Luke's Gospel, chapter 4.



worship ideas

Weekly Imagery And Gathering Activity

The image for this week that you could add to your display of the biblical text, as per the Through the Season idea found on [page 8](#), is of stones shaped like loaves.

Take some time as you prepare to worship to consider the things that have been a temptation to you during this week.

- What was tempting about the things you bring to mind?
- How did you respond to those temptations?

Call To Worship

On the first Sunday in Lent we gather,
we come to remember and
celebrate the good news of Jesus,
who came to reveal God's love
and who invites us to walk in his way.

We come as we are,
beloved children,
to worship God.

Let us come close to God,
as God comes close to us.

All-Age Prayer

Loving God,
we come to you today
with the question that grown-ups
love to ask children,
while secretly wondering
if they could answer it themselves:
"What do you want to be when you grow up?"

What do we want to be?
Rich? Famous? Successful?
Kind and generous and thoughtful?
Do we have to choose?
Can we not have both?
What will make us happy?
Most importantly of all,
who do you want us to be...
and can you help us to get there?

Thank you for Jesus,
who was so close to you that he knew
exactly how you wanted him to live
and what would get in the way.
But that does not mean that it was easy
for him to make the choices that he did.

Help us to follow his example,
and to start by getting to know you so well
that when the time comes for us to make
hard choices, we will know which way is best,
and know that you are with us.
Amen.

Prayer Of Adoration And Confession

Eternal God, unfathomable mystery,
so different and seemingly distant from us
and yet familiar too,
for we are made of the same essence.
Our lives are part of your life in the world;
our destiny, so far as we can understand it,
is to live in this world
by the values of your kingdom,
working and praying for a time
when there will be no distance between them,
for all shall be well and all shall be one.

But in the meantime, O God,
we have to worship you,
as it seems, from afar,
and that can be hard.
Hard enough to know how to reach you
and what to say;
harder still to know
which of the many voices in our heads
is coming from you.
And then, trickiest of all,
how to be sure that we are living
in a way that furthers
the cause of your kingdom,
and does not work against it.

Living God,
as the season of Lent begins,
may we take time to reassess,
as Jesus did,
where our lives are heading,
and what may need to change.
Are we working for the wrong goals?
Have we got sucked into believing
that money or success,
fame or even family
will fill the empty spaces inside?
Are we worshipping you, and you alone,
or are our words saying one thing
and our actions another?

And if there are gaps,
as certainly there will be,
between what we want
and what you want for us,
may we not waste time feeling guilty,
but get on with doing better from now on.
Bring to our minds the words of scripture
that will help us;
put us in touch with others
who can be our companions on the way;
and, above all, fill us
with your spirit of grace and truth,
generosity and joy
as we continue our journey of discipleship,
following Jesus wherever his way may lead,
knowing that he will be with us to the end.
Amen.

Prayers For Others And Ourselves

Week by week, day by day perhaps,
we pray to you, dear God in heaven,
asking for your name to be honoured,
for your kingdom to come,
and for things to be done here on earth
the way you want them to be.
Day by day, hour by hour,
we see the prayer and the reality
growing ever further apart.

The rich nations grow richer at the expense of the poor;
wars are fought over land, resources and religion;
people are evicted from their homes
or flee in terror of their lives
and no-one will take them in.
We talk endlessly about what needs to be done
to reverse the process of climate change,
and words never seem to turn into action.
And the church, which should be different,
a shining example of kingdom values
put into practice, is the same as all the rest.

God of endless patience and steady hope,
we remind ourselves that the prayer
which Jesus gave us was for daily use.
He knew that it would not be answered
instantly with a thunderclap from heaven.
it would be needed day by day, hour by hour,
moment by moment, as people just like us
tried and failed and tried again;
as we lost our way and had to be found again;
as we gave in to the same old temptations;
as our vision faded and had to be rekindled.

So our prayers today are not for the world
so much as for ourselves, as part of
a system that can only be changed by those
who are part of it, once choice at a time.

Help us, when temptations come our way,
to recognise them for what they are
and hold fast to what we most truly believe.
If we are unsure about the right way to go,
may we not rush but take the time we need
to reflect and pray and ask for help.
If we have made poor choices, may we not
compound them by keeping going regardless.
And may there be joy as well as duty in doing
the right thing, as we discover that peace
which is beyond all human understanding
and which comes directly from you.

So many other petitions we could make,
so many people and situations that need
the support of our prayers,
but we take our guidance from Jesus
who gave us deceptively simple words
to use when our own words failed us:
"Our Father in heaven...
may your kingdom come here on earth
and may things be done your way, not ours."
And to his prayer we give our heartfelt... Amen.

Reflective Prayer

Leader: Living God,
we gather here, most of us
well-fed and deeply grateful for that privilege.
We are not hungry,
but are we fully satisfied with what we have...
all we thought we ever wanted?

In the safety and comfort of this sanctuary
let us take a step or two towards the desert,
the dry, empty place that is not outside,
but deep within us all.

What is it that we truly hunger for?
Acceptance? Love? Security?
A purpose in living?
Hope in the face of death?
What will fill up the emptiness inside?

Pause

**All: Lord Jesus, you are the bread of life.
Satisfy our hunger.**

Leader: And what is it that we thirst for,
like parched animals longing for water?
A loving family?
A satisfying career?
Religious faith?
Or something much less tangible?

Pause

**All: Lord Jesus, you are the living water.
Quench our thirst once and for all
and give us life in all its fullness.
Amen.**

Prayer Of Dedication

With gratitude, O God,
for your commitment to us,
we bring these gifts to be used
for the church's work in the world.
Much more hesitantly,
and with more than a little trepidation,
we offer our commitment
to following in the way of Jesus,
with his unwavering commitment
to doing your will.
We know where that took him;
we fear where it may take us;
and yet we are here, O God,
and this is our solemn prayer.
Amen.

worship ideas

Reflection

Fresh from the waters of baptism
with the voice of God ringing in his ears,
knowing himself beloved of God,
Jesus retreated to the wilderness
taking his fill of communion with God
knowing that, all too soon,
everything would be changed forever,
realising that as soon as he stepped back onto
the treadmill of life—
even before that—
the opportunity for solitude,
for rest,
for soaking up the pleasure of God,
would be lost forever.

And sure enough
even before he emerged from the wilderness
he was offered the temptations
of comfort, wealth and power
that sought to sabotage his mission
before it even began.

On those days when our status
as beloved of God
rests on a shaky nail
(for us—not for God!)
when we are vulnerable,
ready to give in,
when it seems
that it would be easier to use our power,
to assert our authority
in ways that trample on others' dreams
and that would take us further
from communion with God
may we be stopped in our tracks
by the God who offers retreat
in the midst of life.

And may we know that God,
resourcing and enabling us
to choose hunger over comfort
and compassion over power
and love over everything
that seeks to diminish
the heart of God
that beats deep within us,
connecting us
with the source of all life.



Take Home Ideas

Lent is often associated with being a time when people give something up.

This Lent, think about something that you could take on. It could be a time of volunteering, visiting or calling someone each day to see how they are, a creative activity... the choices are endless!

As you travel through each day, remember that God is by your side and walking with you.

Sending

Leader: Forty days of questions,
forty days of wonder,

All: angels are very near.

Leader: Forty days of praying,
forty days of action,

All: God is in our midst.

Leader: Through these days of Lent

All: may we walk God's way.

Praise/Hymns

And Jesus said	CH4 344
Anytime, anywhere	ATAS 18
Forty days and forty nights	MP 160 / CH4 337
God we long for our own comfort	online at https://www.carolynshymns.com/god_we_long_for_our_own_comfort.html
I want Jesus to walk with me	CH4 539
If I go to the furthest place	ATAS 124
Jesus Christ, our living Lord	CH4 524
Jesus tempted in the desert	CH4 338
Lord I pray	CH4 541
May the God of peace	CH4 786
O Lord all the world belongs to you	ATAS 183
Our Lord, you were sent	online at https://www.carolynshymns.com/our_lord_you_were_sent.html
Safe in the shadow	MP583 / CH4 55
We rest on thee	MP 735
When the wheel of fate is turning	<i>Known Unknowns</i> , WGP 94
Yield not to temptation	online at https://hymnary.org/text/yield_not_to_temptation

age group ideas

gathering

40 Days Search

all age

You will need: stones, sand, footsteps, groundsheet, numbers 1–40 written or printed out on paper (one number per sheet of paper).

Open the groundsheet and spread it out on the floor. Ask the children to spread out some sand, to lay out some stones and to put the numbers out in the correct order. Use this as a visual introduction to the season of Lent and to today's story.

crafts

Stone Bread

age 3-8

You will need: smooth, fist sized stones, poster paint, paint brushes, painting aprons/shirts, yoghurt pots, paper plates, covering to protect working surface.

Ask the children to put on painting apron/shirt. Ask the children to choose a stone they like. Put a small blob of three or four colours of poster paint on paper plates so that each child has easy access to a plate. Ask the children to paint their stone using a variety of colours. Colours will start to mix and blend. Ask the children to sit their stone in a yoghurt pot to allow it to dry.

Find the date for six weeks ago and for six weeks forward. Talk with the children what they have been doing over the last 40 days. Can they imagine what it would be like not to eat for all that time? Talk about the story and the situation Jesus faced. Talk about how Jesus didn't give in to the easy way but trusted God.

Not So Black And White

age 9-12

You will need: A4 card (two sheets per child), broad tipped felt tip pens, scissors, rulers, pencils, glue sticks.

Give each child two sheets of card. Ask them to completely cover one of the sheets with a pattern coloured in using a variety of colours. Ask the children to make a frame from the other sheet by measuring about 2.5 cm in from the edge on all sides and then cutting out the centre section. Note that you could have frames prepared already to save some time. Ask the children to make a black and white border on the frame. Ask the children to stick the frame onto the coloured pattern sheet using glue sticks.

Talk about the contrast between the picture and the frame. Talk about people using the phrase 'black and white' when they mean that there is a clear distinction or choice between one thing and another. Talk about how many choices are not so clear cut and there are shades of grey. Use these ideas to talk about the story and the temptations Jesus faced and the choices the children have to make day by day.



Bread Rolls

all age

Check for any food allergies, you may need a gluten free option.

You will need: bread rolls, fillings (jam, spreading cheese, ham), plates, knives, wet wipes.

Ask the children to clean their hands. Give each child a plate and ask them to choose a roll they like. Ask the children to make a filled roll using food provided. Older children can help the younger children

Gather the children round tables or round the 'wilderness' groundsheet you used earlier or round picnic mats and ask they eat their rolls, discuss the story or use the prompt questions in the retelling on page.

age group ideas

games

Goalkeeper

age 6-12

You will need: any object that the children need to keep safe (small or large), soft balls or bean bags.

Place the object in an area near the end of your meeting space or between two chairs. Split the children into two teams with one team designated to protect the object and another to try to hit it with the balls/bean bags. You could give a time limit for each team and see how many 'hits' they score. Then switch over and reverse teams.

Talk about what tactics they children used to protect the object and whether they were tempted to copy the ideas of the other team.

Clock In The Tower

age 6-12

Have the children sit in a circle. One child is designated 'IT' and goes into the middle. Number all the other children either 1, 2, or 3. If it is a big group add 4 too. The children say the rhyme "Clock in the tower strikes the hour..." at which point 'IT' claps their hands once, twice, or thrice. Those children with the same numbers as claps then have to run around the outside of the circle and get back to their space and touch 'IT'. The first person to do so then becomes 'IT' for the next round.

Talk about how there is often a right time and a wrong time for certain actions in life. Sometimes we can rush into doing something when it is better to wait and make sure what we are going to do is right. Often we need to listen carefully before we decide on action. Jesus listened carefully and acted wisely.

Your Choice

all age

You will need: a list of options to call out (such as "mashed potatoes or fries", "chicken nuggets or cheese bites", "vanilla or strawberry ice cream", "apple or orange juice", "peas or beans", "cheese or tomatoes", and so on).

Have the children all stand in the middle of your meeting space. Give them your two options indicating clearly which side of the space you designate with each option. Then have them split to show their choice. If you wish, you can have the children offer up their own choices. For older children you could have four options, using each wall in the meeting space.

Talk about how there are so many options in life today, many more than there used to be in the past. Talk about how that can make life more complicated. Talk about Jesus' example of how he chose to do the right thing even when confronted with very tempting alternatives.

activities

Yes Or No

age 6-12

You will need: A4 or A3 sized cardboard signs (one marked YES, and one marked NO), a list of closed questions with a moral twist (such as "If you saw someone in a shop put sweets in their pocket without paying would you tell someone in the shop?" or "If someone asks you to make fun of someone, would you do it?")

Go through the questions you have devised and ask the children to choose which sign they would raise in response to the question: YES or NO. For older children you can make the questions a bit more complex.

Talk about how we choose what we do and the different ways we can either say YES or NO to the opportunities that come up. Some of these will be good, some might be harmful. Talk about the positive choices that the children think God would ask us to take.

Don't Eat It!

all age

Check for allergies.

You will need: sugar-coated ring donut (one per child), or some other food item.

Give each child a donut and instruct them not to eat it. Then start describing in detail your donut, and encourage each child to do the same about theirs. They can describe how it feels, how it smells, what it looks like, how they imagine it might taste, and so on.

After teasing with this, let them take a single bite, but instruct them that they are not allowed to lick their lips. Watch carefully and see how they manage.

Talk about the feelings of temptation to do something, especially when it is right in front of us and we are told we cannot have it. Talk about what the children find to be distracting temptations in their lives. Remind them that Jesus knows how that feels.

Temptation

all age

You will need: your favourite treat (savoury or sweet), flip chart or screen.

Show the children your favourite treats. Describe in detail why you like them. Then open it up for the children to tell each other about their favourite treats. Write them all up on the flip chart/screen. Talk about what might be the good or bad effects of eating too much of the treats.

Talk about whether there can be good and bad temptations (sweet fruit might be a good temptation, whereas a whole bar of chocolate might be bad, for instance).

discussion starters for teens

ooh, that's tempting



Preparation

For the Opening Activity it could be useful to have a flip chart or computer with big screen/projection.

Opening Activity

What Tempts You?

Invite everyone to share with the group what is a food that they find a real temptation whenever they see it. You may want to start this off as a leader so that they get the idea.

Talk about what is tempting about that particular food item.

- How does it make you feel when you succumb to the temptation to eat that food?
- How easy is it to share that food with others? Could you give up the last one?

Once everyone has had the chance to share their food, choose the most interesting suggestion and work together to create a plan for how that food could be advertised. Get everyone to think about how they could tempt others to want to try that food. The ideas could be drafted up on a flip chart or on screen.

Talk about the power of advertising as you do this and how advertisers very cleverly push the buttons of temptation in us, even if we are not always aware of what they are doing.

The Word

Read Luke 4:1-13 together. You could use a dramatic retelling of the passage and ask two of the group to be, respectively, the voices of Jesus and the Tempter (devil).

Activity/Discussion

While in some ways the reading seems somewhat otherworldly with its talk of the devil tempting Jesus, your group will no doubt soon realise that the temptations that Jesus were confronted are as relevant to today as they would have been to someone contemplating taking a leadership role in their community in Jesus' time.

- In turn, what do you make of each of the options with which Jesus is presented?
- What similarities do you find between them and modern choices that are made in the world today?
- Can you think of examples of leaders you know who have succumbed to temptations like these?
- How do you think you might respond if presented with options like these?

It is now a well-established part of established democracies such as those of the United Kingdom and United States of America that money is a corrupting force in politics. Donations to politicians and their parties leads to a corruption of their decision-making as they are tempted to choose outcomes that are detrimental to the people they represent but beneficial to those who are donors.

- What can we do to protect ourselves (and our nations) from the corruption of these kinds of temptations?

Living It Out

Think carefully this week about each and every option you have presented to you. Think about why you feel attracted to one decision or another. And, before you decide what to do, ask whether anyone else will be harmed by your decision.

sampler

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