

Easter Pageant 2023

Scripture: Passages taken from all four gospels of the passion and resurrection of Jesus!

Memory Verse: Matthew 28:6 *“He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.”*

Lesson Focus: We will immerse the kids into the passion and resurrection of Jesus Christ by having them silently act out different stages of the story. Pastor Doug will pretend to be a Roman soldier that was an eyewitness of the events narrating the whole story while each grade acts out a different portion of the account.

Teachers: See each stage of the story assigned by grade below. After some brief instructions from pastor Doug (or “Cornelius”), you and the kids in your class will be responsible for silently acting out your portion of the story as it is narrated. You will have 15 minutes to prepare and then each class will have about 5 minutes to perform their section. There will be a separate adult volunteer who will act out Jesus. He will begin with the 5th grade and then pastor Doug, as Cornelius, will escort “Jesus” through each stage clockwise as he narrates ending up in 2nd grade with the empty tomb.

NOTE: During preparation you won’t have this adult volunteer “Jesus” (or pastor Doug) with you! We recommend one of the leaders narrate and play pastor Doug’s part and the other pretend to be Jesus as you practice. We are also recruiting youth students to help so you may have a 6th-12th grader in your class!

We encourage you to bring in props/supplies and to come up with your own motions/designs as a class (ask the kids for their input!). You can also use whatever you can find in the resource room! There is plenty of action in each story for the kids to act out. In case you are drawing blanks on ideas, see some of the suggestions we provided. We will also provide you with some poster board and tape * in which you can design a sign that identifies your location. Have fun! We did this activity last year for the first time and thought it was worth doing again this year as the kids who were here last year will get to act out a different part of the story being a year older!

Schedule:

- 1) Please bring kids into the main sanctuary 5-10 minutes after service starts which is 5 minutes EARLIER than usual (we will start countdown earlier).
- 2) After some shortened worship, we will provide instructions and then dismiss you back to your classes to prepare your skit.
- 3) After 15 minutes of prep you will come back out and beginning with 5th grade we will work our way through each class in Summit Room clockwise.
- 4) We will wrap it up with some final words and dismiss you back to the classrooms.

Room Time Afterwards: All classes will have a special wordless gospel necklace craft. See instructions on last page about this. Also consider going through your class’s portion of the Biblical account in-depth and review and talk through what happened.

Introduction (Pastor Doug)

My name is Cornelius and I am a Roman Soldier! I am a Senior Centurion in the Roman army. Pastor Doug invited me this weekend to share with you something crazy that I got to see with my own eyes: **the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ!**

Pastor Doug tells me that this weekend you are celebrating a holiday called Easter where you remember Jesus's death and resurrection. Right? Well, almost 2000 years ago now I was there to actually see almost all of it! Today you have this book called the Bible that records what happened. You might not know this, but the Bible talks about a Roman centurion and soldiers that arrested Jesus, led Him to the cross, and guarded His tomb. Guess what! I was that centurion and those soldiers were under my watch!

So I want to invite you to come back in time with me 2000 years to experience these events yourself. Each of your classes has been assigned a different part of the history that is now recorded in the Bible. * Have fun working together!

Teachers: At this point we will dismiss you to your classes to prepare your skits. After 15 minutes you will come back out and setup your stage. After every stage is ready, we will then begin with Jesus in Gethsemane (5th grade) and I will escort Him through each station clockwise.

Garden of Gethsemane (5th grade)

Needed Character Parts:

- Judas
- Peter (**note he is needed in 4th grade skit also!**) *
- High priest's servant who gets ear cut off and healed
- Group of followers of Jesus (good guys)
- Angry mob (bad guys)

Suggested Props:

- Have the kids draw a garden or a Gethsemane sign
- Weapons/torches for the angry mob
- Peter's sword (we will provide)
- A fake ear (we will provide)
- A fancy garden sign that says "Gethsemane" on it *

Some ideas:

- Separate most of class into two groups (Jesus's followers and angry mob)
- Set the stage with Judas and the mob holding pieces of scrap paper in their hands as weapons off in the corner and have Jesus's group listening intently to Jesus in front of 5th grade doorway
- Have the mob dramatically fall down when Jesus says "***I AM***"
- Have Peter dramatically strike one of the members of the mob with a pretend sword
- Have some fun with the fake ear we provide!
- Have Jesus's followers dramatically run away at the end

Garden of Gethsemane (5th grade) Script

- Matthew 26:47-56, Mark 14:43-52, Luke 22:47-53, John 18:2-12

Narrator: So it was around this time of year about 2000 years ago that I had received orders to arrest a man named Jesus. I had heard about this man, but I had never seen him. I was told that the Jewish leaders had struck a deal with a man named Judas, who would lead us to the place where we could arrest Jesus. So, I put on my armor, grabbed my sword, and met Judas who came with an angry mob of people. He led me to a garden called Gethsemane. I knew that this must be an important mission, to have so many people needed to arrest one man. So, I was prepared for battle...I just was not prepared for what actually happened!

I followed this Judas into the garden and he walked up to a normal looking Jewish man and greeted him (it was arranged beforehand that this would be the signal; that the one he would call Rabbi and greet, would be the one I was to arrest). I thought to myself, *“arrest this guy? He was so average looking, no weapon, no band of outlaws around him, just an ordinary group of nobodies.”* But as I stood there wondering, Jesus walked right up to me and asked me, **“Whom are you seeking?”** I answered, *“Jesus of Nazareth.”* And he said to me, **“I AM”**.

I didn't understand it and it didn't make any sense, but...when that man Jesus said **“I AM,”** a mysterious power drew me and the mob back and knocked us to the ground, literally! I don't know if I can convey the power of those words. I have never experienced anything like that before or since.

After we got up, Jesus said again, **“Whom are you seeking?”** He just stood there and so I sheepishly answered Him again, *“Umm...Jesus of Nazareth?”* Whew! No mysterious power this time...He just said again that He was this man and He asked us to let His followers go.

Now right about this time one of His followers, Peter I think it was, drew his sword and swung it at the high priest's servant. He was NOT much of a swordsman! We were about to retaliate, but Jesus said **“STOP!”** and touched the servant's ear and it was immediately healed!! I didn't understand how, but it was completely restored! Then He told Peter to put his sword away and said, **“Do you not know that I can pray to my Father and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?”** WHOA! That freaked me out a little!

My mind was reeling! Not only was I puzzling over this mysterious power that knocked me down and the ear healing thing, but now I was wondering if this army of angels were going to come! But I had my orders so I pulled myself together and I arrested Jesus. He was so calm and did not resist us! Oh, and as we led him away, all of His followers (His so-called friends) ran off in every direction!

Jewish Religious Council (4th grade)

Needed Character Parts:

- Peter will come over from 5th grade and hang around on the periphery
- Religious council (the high priest and other religious leaders)
- Witnesses called by council
- Three people accusing Peter
- Soldiers who beat up and blindfold Jesus
- Rooster

Suggested Props:

- Paper bag for Jesus's blindfold
- A sheet or cloth for the high priest to "wear and tear"
- A fancy chair for the high priest to sit in (we will provide)
- A table and other chairs for other religious leaders
- A fancy sign that reads "Jewish Religious Council"

Some Ideas:

- Set the stage with a table and chairs for high priest and religious leader council. Have the rest of the group off to the side and pastor Doug will bring Jesus in from 5th grade area to face the high priest.
- Have witnesses come in one-by-one pointing fingers at Jesus
- Have Peter's three accusers go out and one-by-one point their fingers at him
- The rooster should be really loud and funny
- Have the high priest wear some sort of cloth from resource room and dramatically tear it when Jesus claims He is the Son of God
- Put a paper bag on Jesus's head and have some kids have fun pretending to beat up Jesus

Jewish Religious Council (4th grade) Script

- Matthew 26:57-75, Mark 14:53-72, Luke 22:58-65, John 18:25-27

Narrator: So I took Jesus to the Jewish religious leaders who were waiting for us. And as I stood there they brought in many witnesses that told of things that Jesus supposedly had said. They asked Jesus if these things were true....but Jesus said NOTHING! I don't know about you, but I would have wanted to defend myself. It was obvious that these religious leaders were jealous of this man but He just stood there silently, listening to them.

Meanwhile, I noticed Peter (remember the horrible swordsman?) was sort of creeping around in the background keeping an eye on Jesus. I had my eye on him in case he was planning some sort of mischief! Then I overheard three different people ask him if he was a follower of Jesus. One by one they came and asked him if he was with Jesus and you know what he did? He denied it each time! And around that same time I heard a rooster crow! Immediately afterwards, I noticed Jesus looked directly at Peter and he immediately ran away VERY sad and upset.

Meanwhile, the religious leaders were getting nowhere with Jesus so the high priest finally asked Him directly if He was the Son of God. And you know what He answered? ***"Yes, I AM!"*** I was amazed. I mean, who can say "yes" to that? This made the religious leaders furious! The high priest even tore his clothes and they all condemned Him to death.

Some of my men couldn't believe He said it either and started to make fun of Him and beat Him up. They actually blindfolded Him demanding that He tell us which one of us hit Him if He really was this Son of God. I am ashamed to admit that I allowed it and even laughed at Jesus a little myself. But I also knew deep down inside that something was wrong about all of this and after a while I told my men to stop. Afterwards, they had me take Him to the governor, a man named Pontius Pilate.

Pontius Pilate's Palace (3rd grade)

Needed Character Parts:

- Pontius Pilate
- Barabbas
- Pilate's servant
- Group of Jewish religious leaders
- Pilate's soldiers who scourge Jesus

Suggested Props:

- A fancy chair for Pontius Pilate (we will provide)
- A table for Pilate to sit behind
- A fan for a servant to wave at Pilate
- A crown of thorns and purple blanket or large piece of cloth
- A jail cell sign for Barabbas to hold up
- A sign that reads "Crucify Him" and another that reads "Barabbas" for Jewish religious leaders
- A fancy sign that reads "Pontius Pilate's Palace"

Some ideas:

- Have most of the class be the Jewish religious leaders and a few others be Pilate's soldiers
- Set the stage with Pilate sitting in a fancy chair behind a table and have a servant pretend to wave a fan at him. Have Barabbas off to the side "behind bars" with Pilate's soldiers. Have the Jewish religious group opposite Pilate. We will bring Jesus in from the 4th grade area between them facing Pilate.
- Have Pilate look annoyed as he is talking to Jesus
- Have the soldiers bring Barabbas from "jail" placing him next to Jesus and having them both facing the Jewish religious group
- Have Barabbas do a victory dance when he is set free
- Have the same soldiers pretend to whip Jesus and bow down to Him. Consider throwing paper balls at Jesus. Have others put the crown of thorns and purple robe on Him.
- Have the Jewish religious group hold up signs that read "Barabbas" and "Crucify Him!" at each part of the story.

Pontius Pilate's Palace (3rd grade) Script

- Matthew 27:11-26, Mark 15:1-15, Luke 23:1-25, John 18:28-19:15

Narrator: So, we took Jesus to Pontius Pilate's palace and he was not pleased to see us. Now everyone knew that Pilate was a sleaze bag...you know, one of those spineless types who is in charge somehow, but no one actually respects him. Anyway, Pilate looked at Jesus and asked Him if He was the King of the Jews. And Jesus just calmly said, *"It is as you say."* After some more back and forth, Pilate was clearly annoyed and wanted to get this over with as soon as possible. So, he spoke with the Jewish leaders and told them that he could find nothing wrong with Jesus. And to be honest, I couldn't either. By now, I wasn't sure why this man was on trial.

Pilate and the Jewish leaders then started talking about this tradition they had to release a prisoner every year around this time, and he asked them if they would want Jesus released. That made sense to me, but the Jewish religious leaders yelled, "Release Barabbas!". What? This Barabbas was a vicious criminal, a murderer even! And the people wanted that guy set free instead of Jesus? I couldn't believe it and was sure Pilate would convince them otherwise. But Pilate did what the crowd wanted setting Barabbas free instead of Jesus. What a bad governor! Where is there justice in this? So, after they released Barabbas he had Jesus scourged even though he had not found anything wrong with Him.

By the way, a Roman scourging is not a pretty picture. As they were beating and whipping Jesus, some of the soldiers made a crown of thorns and put it on Jesus' head. They also put a purple robe on Him, making fun of Him and pretending to bow down before Him as the King of the Jews.

It was a vicious beating...you could hardly even recognize Jesus afterwards. Pilate then brought Jesus back out in front of the Jewish leaders hoping that the beating would be enough punishment, but I couldn't believe it... the people cried out "Crucify Him, Crucify Him!" So, Pilate handed Jesus over to me to be crucified.

Golgotha (1st grade)

Needed Character Parts:

- Simon who helps Jesus carry the cross
- Two other criminals crucified with Jesus along the wall
- Soldiers who help Cornelius nail Jesus to cross and gamble over Jesus's clothes
- Crowd in the streets

Suggested Props:

- Cross for Jesus to carry and two other crosses (we will provide!)
- A hammer to nail Jesus to the cross with (we will provide!)
- A sign that says Golgotha with a skull on it
- A sign that reads "King of the Jews"
- Dice for "gambling" (we will provide!)
- Some clothes that the soldiers "gamble" over
- A piece of cloth to tear from top to bottom

Some ideas:

- Have most of the class be part of the crowd that watches Jesus carry the cross
- Set the stage with the crowd of kids in two lines across the Summit Room so Jesus can proceed from the 3rd grade area in between them. Have a boy ready who will help Jesus carry the cross. Have two other crosses setup along the wall with the two criminals pretending to be on them. Have space for Jesus's cross to be in the middle and have the soldiers waiting there.
- Have the kids rub their eyes and pretend to be sad as Jesus walks through the crowd with the cross
- Have the soldiers ready to assist Cornelius with nailing Jesus to the cross
- Have the soldiers pretend to play dice games to win Jesus's clothes
- For the earthquake have all of the kids shake really hard. If possible, we may add sound effects! *
- If possible, we will try and turn the lights off for the time darkness
- Have two kids walk up in front of Jesus and tear the cloth representing the curtain in the temple being torn

Golgotha (1st grade) Script

- Matthew 27:31-56, Mark 15:20-41, Luke 23:26-49, John 19:30

Narrator: I led Jesus through the streets to the place of crucifixion called Golgotha (the place of a skull). There was a large crowd of people watching, many of them very sad. As was the Roman tradition for those being crucified, He had to bear His own cross! It was very heavy and He was already so very weak that He could hardly bear it Himself. Therefore, I grabbed a man out of the crowd to carry His cross. We slowly, slowly, slowly made our way to Golgotha and as we arrived, we nailed Jesus to that cross in between two criminals that were also condemned to die. And then Jesus said something that I'll never, ever forget as we finished crucifying Him, ***“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.”*** Such words of kindness and compassion! Oh, how those words haunted me as I watched this man who appeared to be innocent suffer on that cross. How could He want ME forgiven when I was nailing Him to the cross? Anyway, my men also put a sign above the cross that said “King of the Jews.”

At this point, my men and I just had to wait for Jesus and the two other criminals to die. My men were bored so they took Jesus' clothes and were gambling for them while they waited. Jesus could not and did not say much while up there, but one thing that I heard Him say that made me wonder was, ***“It is finished.”*** I thought, *“What was finished?”* * Very soon after that Jesus cried out again, ***“Father into Your hands I commit My spirit.”*** And then He seemed to die.

Now around that time something crazy happened I will never forget. It was about lunchtime when Jesus was dying and it suddenly became totally dark...not just kind of dark, but TOTALLY dark. At the same time there was this huge earthquake! And I was told later that the heavy curtain in the Jewish temple was torn in two (the one that separated man from the presence of God). I couldn't suppress the truth anymore. There was something about this Jesus guy. The miracles, the earthquakes, His calmness, but most of all His kindness. And I blurted out words that are now recorded in your Bible, ***“Truly this Man was the Son of God.”*** (Mark 15:39) * At this moment, my life began to change. I was very confused and didn't even really know what I had meant when I said that, but it was what happened next that not only changed me for good, but also changed the whole world!

The Tomb (2nd grade)

Needed Character Parts:

- Joseph of Arimathea
- Two soldiers to help move Jesus's body and guard the tomb
- Two angels to move the rock and open the tomb
- Women and men who run back and forth from the empty tomb
- Jewish religious leaders

Suggested Props:

- Play money (we will provide)
- Sheets (or toilet paper) with which to wrap Jesus's body
- White sheets for the angels (we will provide) *
- Salt and pepper to be the "spices"
- A rock that you roll in front of the door (we will provide)
- A fancy sign for the classroom door saying "Jesus's tomb"

Some Ideas:

- Have most of the class be either the group of followers running to and from the tomb or the group of Jewish religious leaders and have them off to the side away from the tomb in two groups at the beginning.
- Use the classroom as the tomb and set the stage with it "open" and the rock off to the side. The two soldiers and Joseph will need to be ready to help pull Jesus's body down off the cross from the 1st grade area and "bury" Him in the classroom.
- For the earthquake have all of the kids shake really hard. If possible, we will add sound effects! *
- Have the two guards faint dramatically
- Dress the angels with some white sheets and have them proudly roll away the stone and open the classroom door
- Have the group of Jesus's followers dramatically run back and forth from their area to the tomb looking confused and excited
- Have the group of religious leaders ready and looking grumpy with huge piles of play money to handout.

The Tomb (2nd grade) Script

- Matthew 27:57-28:15, Mark 15:42-47, Luke 23:50-56, John 19:38-42

So, as I was trying to make sense of all of this craziness that had happened my duties as a soldier required me to pull myself together! For later that day I was commanded to give Jesus's dead body to a rich man named Joseph of Arimathea. So, my men and I helped Joseph take the body of Jesus down from the cross. His body was wrapped in fine linen and Joseph sprinkled some spices on Him to prepare His body for burial. Afterwards we helped him place Jesus's body in a new tomb and we sealed the tomb with a huge rock. Now I was given very serious orders to make the tomb as secure as possible, so I placed some of my best guards at the tomb and sealed it to make it secure from thieves. I stood guard there with them. *(At this point, "Jesus" will quietly exit the classroom, leaving the grave linens, and make His way back stage to await the big conclusion)*

Now you'd think that this was the end of the story. Jesus was dead, His followers had scattered, the tomb was sealed with this huge rock, and after a few days me and my team would be sent home. But that is NOT what happened. It was early morning on the third day, the sun was just starting to come up, and all of a sudden there was ANOTHER great earthquake. I was thinking, *"Oh no, not again!"* Then these two brighter than bright dudes appeared and....I'm telling you, I can't express how scared I was. As a matter of fact I don't even remember a lot after seeing those bright dudes, because I'm embarrassed to say....that me and my men fainted. Yes, we actually fainted! Passed out cold! Hey..... I've been in major wars and have seen many battles....but never this. I have never been more afraid. The last thing I remember seeing was the bright dudes rolling the huge stone away from the tomb all by themselves! And when we woke up later that day, the tomb was empty!

Now there were some women and other followers of Jesus running back and forth going in and out of the tomb. At first, I thought they had stolen Jesus's body, but they looked just as confused as we were! My men and I ran to the city and reported all that had happened to the Jewish religious leaders that had us guard the tomb. And do you know what they did? They offered us a large sum of money and told us to tell this lie that His followers came and stole His body while we slept! While at the time I had no idea what happened, I knew THAT wasn't the truth. But I also knew I was in BIG trouble and will probably die because I failed in my duty to guard the tomb. The religious leaders knew this so they promised they would smooth it all over with our bosses if we took the money and spread the lie. I am especially ashamed to admit that I did this now, because later I learned what actually happened. Do YOU know what actually happened? *(We will end the skit here and pastor Doug will wrap up with a conclusion and brief teaching)*

Conclusion (Pastor Doug)

That's right! Jesus actually rose from the dead! (*At this point, "Jesus" will jump out onto the stage from the back where he was waiting to some cheers!*)

I never actually saw the risen Jesus back then, but I couldn't help but wonder what actually happened. There was something about this man that changed me from the inside-out and I sought out His followers many months later to see if I could discover the truth.

And you know what I found? They were no longer these cowardly wimps! After seeing the risen Jesus, something had changed inside of them too. They were now men of virtue and courage and there was a whole lot more followers of this Jesus guy. In fact, over 500 people saw Him! They were telling everyone to repent of their sins and believe in Him as their Lord and Savior. In fact, they said that Jesus's death and resurrection was God's plan from the beginning to rescue sinners from punishment and hell. They called this the gospel, the good news.

For in another book of the Bible it says "*God demonstrated His love for us that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*" (Romans 5:8) And "*if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved*" (Romans 10:9)

I then became a believer and a follower of Jesus Christ. Those words were true then and they are still true today.

Do you believe them? *

Teachers: At this point we will dismiss you back to your classes for follow-up activities.

Wordless Gospel Necklace Instructions

Back in your classrooms after the skit, please walk the kids through the wordless gospel necklace craft that we have for each of them. Give each kid a bag which will have a cross on a string and ten beads, 2 each of black, red, white, yellow, and green.

As a class put each color pair on the necklace one by one as you explain what each color represents (and consider reading the supporting Bible verse). Discourage the kids from racing ahead so that they will listen and learn together as a class. Make sure you put them on in the right order as described below:

- 1) **Black** = Sin (**Romans 3:23**) All have sinned!
- 2) **Red** = Blood (**Ephesians 1:7**) Jesus's blood pays our debt
 - Refer to the crucifixion in the skit where Jesus shed His blood
 - Point out blood only pays for those who repent/believe in Jesus!
 - Unbelievers must pay for their sins on their own! (hell)
- 3) **White** = Pure (**Isaiah 1:18**) Jesus washes away our sin!
- 4) **Gold** = Heaven (**John 3:16**) Believers receive eternal life!
 - Consider inviting kids to repent and believe in Jesus!
- 5) **Green** = Grow (**2 Peter 3:18**) Grow in your devotion to Jesus!

After all ten beads are on, the two loose strings will need to be tied together either by you or the kid. See a picture of the completed necklace below.



BRING IT HOME

Read 1 Corinthians 15:14
What point is Paul trying
to make in this verse?

Parent Signature:

Parent Challenge:
How many people saw
the risen Jesus?

Read John 20:30-31
Why did John write his
gospel about the life &
death of Jesus?

