



JOURNEY TO THE CROSS FOR KIDS

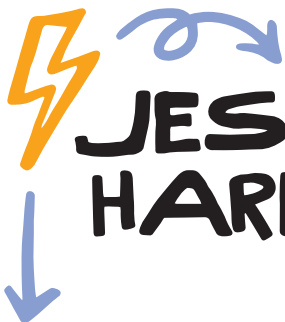
ADULTS:

The journey to the cross is NOT an easy one...and not really a “kid friendly” journey in the traditional sense. However, we believe it is vitally important to explain and show kids about Jesus’ sacrifice at every level they are able to comprehend. With that said, these stations have subject matter that is heavy and can be difficult for children.



We’ve done our best to explain it in a way they can handle in this book; however, you know your child best and what they will understand and what is too much for them. This book is written with an upper elementary student in mind. (3rd-6th grade) If your child is younger than that, you may need to modify for them. There is also a lot of content in here. Your child probably won’t get through it today. We hope that you will take this home and have some great conversations over meals, talking about Jesus together. We are praying that this experience is eye-opening and helps adults and kids alike appreciate Jesus’ sacrifice more fully!

KIDS:


We are so glad you want to learn more about what Jesus went through on the cross. It was definitely NOT easy. Learning from Jesus’ example, we’ll see that when OUR lives get hard, we can turn to Him. Jesus knows what we’re going through and how we’re feeling because he has also been through it.



JESUS PRAYED HARD PRAYERS



READ: Matthew 26:36-46



Then Jesus went with his followers to a place called Gethsemane. He said to them, "Sit here while I go there and pray." He told Peter and the two sons of Zebedee to come with him. Then he began to be very sad and troubled. Jesus said to Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, "My heart is so heavy with grief, I feel as if I am dying. Wait here and stay awake with me." Then Jesus went away a second time and prayed, "My Father, if I must do this and it is not possible for me to escape it, then I pray that what you want will be done."

THINK ABOUT IT:

Because Jesus was so close with his Heavenly Father and because Jesus was God, Jesus knew what was going to happen to him the next day. He knew it wasn't going to be easy...in fact it would be the hardest, most painful thing he'd ever have to go through. He knew it was the very thing he was born for. His whole mission on earth was to show people what God is like by living a perfect life, and then dying on a cross, to pay for the sins...all the wrong and hurtful things, of all people.

However, Jesus was also fully human...which means he felt pain and sadness, and loneliness...just like you and me. So, he was NOT looking forward to tomorrow. In fact, he was BEGGING God to find another way.

Jesus was feeling very stuck. He wanted to accomplish his mission. He wanted God's will to happen. HOWEVER, he also didn't want to feel all that pain and sadness.

Have you ever felt that way? You wanted to do the right thing...but you also knew that the right thing was going to be very hard? How did you choose?

In the Bible we see what Jesus chose after he very hard prayers. He said, "If it's not possible for me to escape it, then I pray that what you want will be done."

PRAY:

Jesus,

Like you, I've had to make the very hard choice between doing the right thing, and doing the easy thing. I don't always make the right choice like you did. When I have to do a hard thing, I know I can pray to you and you will understand, because you prayed hard prayers like that too. Thank you for making the right, hard choice to continue your journey to the cross.

Amen.

TAKE A CUP.

This cup represents all that God has planned for you to do, and who he planned you to be. Doing everything that God wants you to do, will NOT be easy.

With a sharpie and with help from a grown-up, write the words, "hard things" on your cup and take it with you to the next station.



JESUS IS BETRAYED



READ: [Matthew 26:14-16](#)

Then one of the twelve followers went to talk to the leading priests. This was the follower named Judas Iscariot. He said, "I will hand Jesus over to you. What will you pay me for doing this?" The priests gave him 30 silver coins. After that Judas waited for the best time to hand Jesus over to them.

[Matthew 26:47-50](#)

While Jesus was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve apostles came there. He had a big crowd of people with him, all carrying swords and clubs. They had been sent from the leading priests and the older leaders of the people. Judas planned to do something to show them which one was Jesus. He said, "The one I kiss will be Jesus. Arrest him." So he went to Jesus and said, "Hello, Teacher!" Then Judas kissed him. Jesus answered, "Friend, do the thing you came to do." Then the men came and grabbed Jesus and arrested him.

THINK ABOUT IT:

Have you ever had someone who you thought was a good friend, but then they did something so mean or hurtful to you that made them seem like more of an enemy? That's what it means to be betrayed.

Judas was Jesus' friend and had been following him for years. As Jesus did more miracles, he became more popular and that made the religious leaders nervous. They were scared that more people would follow Jesus than them, so they wanted to get rid of Jesus. But, Jesus had never really done anything wrong. They needed one of Jesus' friends to tell lies about him so they could arrest him.

Judas agreed to be the one to betray Jesus.

WHY? Was Judas just a really bad guy? Well...yes and no.

Judas knew that Jesus came to earth to save everyone. However, Judas thought that meant starting a war and taking power to be in charge...like a king. He never thought that Jesus DYING would be what saved the people.

So Judas chose what HE wanted over Jesus. And he got 30 silver coins for doing this. This was about how much money he would have made in 4 months.

PRAY:

Jesus,

Like you, I've had friends who have hurt my feelings and turned their back on me. I know you understand how bad that feels. Thank you for being a friend to me that will always be there.

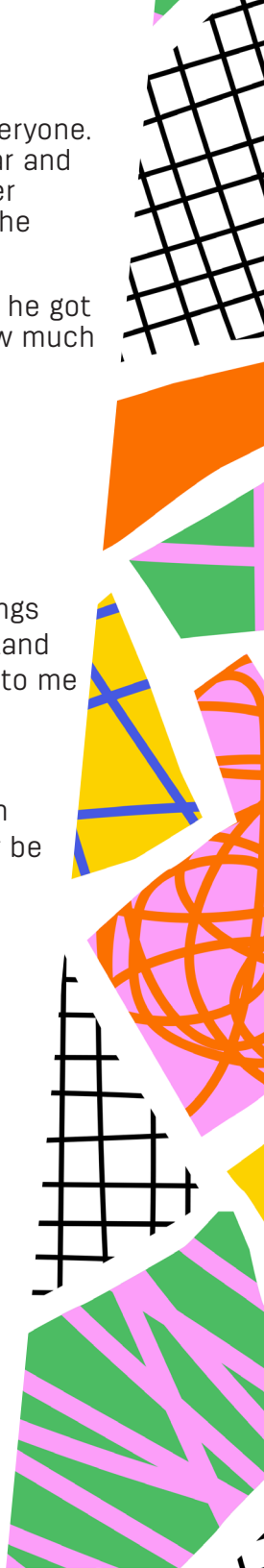
I'm sorry for the times that I have chosen other things over you. You are the best thing and worth so much more than anything else I could earn or be given.

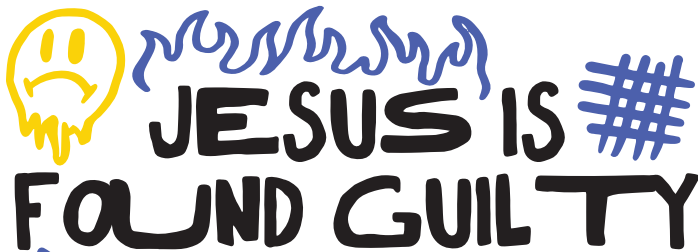
Amen.

TAKE A COIN.

Only take ONE please.

This coin represents the coins that Judas was paid to betray Jesus. When you see it, let it be a reminder that Jesus know what it's like to be hurt by a friend. Let this coin also remind you to ALWAYS choose Jesus...even when it's hard, even when Jesus doesn't answer prayers how you want him to, and even when it costs you something.





JESUS IS FOUND GUILTY



READ: [Matthew 26:59-61, 65-66](#)

The leading priests and the high council tried to find something against Jesus so that they could kill him. They tried to find people to lie and say that Jesus had done wrong. Many people came and told lies about him. But the council could find no real reason to kill him. Then two people came and said, "This man said, 'I can destroy the Temple of God and build it again in three days.'"

When the high priest heard this, he tore his clothes in anger. He said, "This man has said things that insult God! We don't need any more witnesses. You all heard his insulting words. What do you think?" The Jewish leaders answered, "He is guilty, and he must die."

[Matthew 27:22-23](#)

Pilate asked, "So what should I do with Jesus, the one called the Messiah?" All the people said, "Kill him on a cross!" Pilate asked, "Why do you want me to kill him? What wrong has he done?" But they shouted louder, "Kill him on a cross!"

THINK ABOUT IT:

When you read about Jesus being arrested, found guilty, and sentenced to die, you can see how INCREDIBLY unfair the whole thing was! The people in charge were BEGGING people to lie about Jesus so they could find him guilty.

When you read about the unfairness, how does it make you feel?

Can you imagine a whole crowd of people yelling out, "Kill him!"

It's so terrible, I don't even want to think about it.

There is so much goodness and kindness from people in the world. But humans can also be so, so mean and unfair.

Have you ever had someone say something about you that wasn't true? What did you do?

Like we learned at the last station, the religious leaders were scared of Jesus getting too much power and taking it away from them. In some ways, they were right. Jesus was going to shake things up! Jesus also cared A LOT about the people who felt left out and forgotten, like the poor, the sick, and the orphans. He did things differently and it got him into trouble...even though he was doing good things.

PRAY:

Jesus,

I'm sorry that so many people lied about you and wanted to see you found guilty. That was really unfair and you didn't deserve that. When I go through things that are really unfair will you help me stay strong and kind and still do the right thing.

Amen.

WRITE WHAT JESUS DID

Everyone was trying to make Jesus seem like a criminal...but he wasn't dangerous, or mean, and he never really did anything wrong, yet he still got in trouble.

Write on this wall something that Jesus actually did while he was alive. Some examples:

Forgiving sin.

Being everyone's friend.

Caring about kids.

Healing the sick.





JESUS IS MADE FUN OF



READ: Matthew 27:27-31

Then Pilate's soldiers took Jesus into the governor's palace. All the soldiers gathered around him. They took off Jesus' clothes and put a red robe on him. Then they made a crown from thorny branches and put it on his head, and they put a stick in his right hand. Then they bowed before him, making fun of him. They said, "We salute you, king of the Jews!"

They spit on him. Then they took his stick and kept hitting him on the head with it. After they finished making fun of him, the soldiers took off the robe and put his own clothes on him again. Then they led him away to be killed on a cross.

Isaiah 62:4

You will never again be called 'The People God Left.' You will be called 'The People God Loves.' because the Lord loves you.

THINK ABOUT IT:

The soldiers in this part of the story treated Jesus like he was less than human. They treated him like he was worthless.

If you know who Jesus ACTUALLY is, you know that he is GOD! He was there when everything was created! He is called the Lord of lords and the King of kings! And here we see soldiers slapping Jesus and even SPITTING on him! Can you believe it?!

Why do you think these men were SO mean to Jesus?

Have you ever been made fun of? Has anyone ever called you a mean name or said something mean about you? What did you do? Did you believe what they said?

Have you ever made fun of someone else? Why did you do that? Were you feeling bad about yourself and thought putting

someone else down might make you feel better or more powerful? I don't want you to think about it just to make you feel bad. We all have been mean at some point. The good news is that if we are truly sorry and want to learn from our mistakes, Jesus ALWAYS forgives us!

PRAY:

Jesus,

Being made fun of is the worst! It hurts me to think of how mean those soldiers were to you. I've been made fun of before too and it made me feel bad about myself for a while. Help me to remember exactly who I am and how loved I am by you! You tell me that I am important to you, that you created me uniquely and that I am your masterpiece! Help me to see myself like you do!

Amen.

REMEMBER WHO YOU ARE

Take two name tags. On one, write "not good enough" to show how you might feel when someone makes fun of you. Then on the other name tag, write a word for how God sees you. Some examples:

Loved.

Forgiven.

Free.

Masterpiece.

Child of God.



JESUS IS GIVEN THE CROSS



READ: Matthew 16:21-26

Then Jesus said to his followers, "If any of you want to be my follower, you must stop thinking about yourself and what you want. You must be willing to carry the cross that is given to you for following me. Any of you who try to save the life you have will lose it. But you who give up your life for me will find true life. It is worth nothing for you to have the whole world if you yourself are lost. You could never pay enough to buy back your life."

Philippians 3:7-9

At one time all these things were important to me. But because of Christ, I decided that they are worth nothing. Not only these things, but now I think that all things are worth nothing compared with the greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Because of Christ, I lost all these things, and now I know that they are all worthless trash. All I want now is Christ. I want to belong to him.

THINK ABOUT IT:

Do you remember the first station when Jesus prayed really hard prayers asking God to find another way to save all people? A way that didn't make Jesus have to suffer so much? Well, it turns out, there was no other way. Jesus had to accept that and accept his cross.

Jesus knew this was going to happen. In fact, he told his followers that they would ALSO have to carry a cross. But, what does that mean? Don't worry, it DOESN'T mean an actual cross like Jesus had to carry. Jesus said we must stop thinking so much about ourselves and what WE want all the time.

Let's be honest. We all can be very selfish. We want to do what we want and we don't want to share. We want to play video games instead of helping with chores. We want our friends to play the games WE want to play.

Being self-less is not easy. In fact, there will probably be things God asks you to do that you really don't want to do. You may feel like you should befriend someone who doesn't have many friends. You may feel God encouraging you to use your hard-earned money to pay for someone's lunch. God may show you that some of the things you spend your time on like watching shows or playing video games aren't good for you and you should give that up for a while. All of these things are ways that we "carry our cross". It's heavy...BUT the Bible tells us that ALL the things we "give up" are worthless compared to knowing and following Jesus!

PRAY:

Jesus,

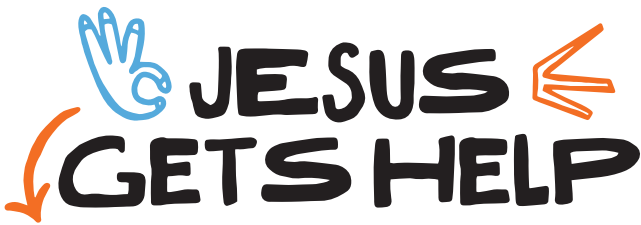
It is so easy to think about myself and what I want. It doesn't always come natural to me to think about others. But I want to know and follow you! I want the best life that you have planned for me, even if that means I have to give some things up or spend my time caring for others.

Amen.

PICK UP A BRICK

This brick is pretty heavy, right?! It's nothing compared to the cross Jesus had to carry. If you are able, take this brick with you to all the rest of the stations. When it's uncomfortable or annoying, remember what Jesus had to carry...for you! If it gets too heavy...it's ok to ask for help. In fact, that's exactly what we're going to learn about at the next station!





JESUS GETS HELP



READ: Matthew 27:32

The soldiers were going out of the city with Jesus. They saw a man from Cyrene named Simon, and they forced him to carry Jesus' cross.



Galatians 6:2-3

Help each other with your troubles. When you do this, you are obeying the law of Christ. If you think you are too important to do this, you are only fooling yourself.

THINK ABOUT IT:

Sometimes it's hard for us to think of Jesus as being completely human. We like to think of the strong God-version of him who can tell the storms what to do! However, it's really important that we remember that Jesus was also very human. In the Bible we see Jesus hug people, cry, eat, get tired...even SPIT! Jesus, because he was human, experienced all the good, beautiful, confusing, and hard things that we humans go through. We've already learned a lot about the things he went through on the Prayer Walk.

In this part of the journey to the cross, we see Jesus do something VERY human. He got help from someone else, Simon from Cyrene. We don't know a lot about Simon...only that he was from Cyrene (a place in Africa) and that it wasn't really his choice to carry Jesus' cross. He was probably a stranger. And yet, he played a role in the story of Jesus! I bet this experience really changed Simon. To look into the eyes of another person who is tired and suffering and help them on their journey. It really affects the way you see others.

Have you ever been able to help someone in need? Maybe you helped a friend who fell off their skateboard. Maybe you and your family bought groceries and delivered them to our New Life Pantry to help families in need.

How did helping someone else make you feel?

Have you ever NEEDED help from someone. Sometimes it's hard to ask for help. It's not easy to admit that you can't do something on your own. Maybe you had trouble with math and needed to ask a friend or your teacher for extra help. Maybe your family was going through a difficult time and you had to ask someone to pray for you. Maybe you simply needed help tying your shoe.

The truth is: all of us need each of us. Whether we like it or not, we carry one another.

PRAY:

Jesus,

It's hard to ask for help sometimes. I am so thankful that I can always count on you to help me! It makes me feel better knowing that you also got help from someone else when you were tired, in pain, and struggling to carry your cross. Help me to see other people who need help and give me the strength and love to be able to help them.

Amen.

BE THERE FOR SOMEONE

At this station, you get to write a card! Think of someone who helped you when you needed it and send them a card to say "thank you."

OR...think of someone who is going through a hard time right now or maybe who feels lonely. Write them a card to let them know you're thinking about them.



JESUS LOSES EVERYTHING



READ: Matthew 27:35-37

Then they threw dice to divide his clothes between them. The soldiers stayed there to guard him.

Philippians 2: 5-8

[Jesus] was like God in every way, but he did not think that his being equal with God was something to use for his own benefit. Instead, he gave up everything, even his place with God..

John 8:12

Later, Jesus talked to the people again. He said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never live in darkness. They will have the light that gives life."

THINK ABOUT IT:

Everything the soldiers did was to hurt and make fun of Jesus. Here they take from him the last thing that he has...the clothes off his back. That must have been really hard!

As this verse in Philippians tells us, Jesus was like God in EVERY way...and yet he still willingly gave everything up, for us.

Losing things is hard. Having things that we love taken away from us is no fun at all. However, sometimes the stuff we have and the things we do can actually hide who we really are.

Jesus said that he is the Light of the world. Can you think of a few things light does?

Light helps us see.

Light makes us feel safe in the dark.

Light shows things that are hidden.

Most of the time, we love to be in the light.

But sometimes we don't like the light because it can show things we want to keep hidden.

Have you ever lied or been sneaky trying to take something you shouldn't? Were you afraid someone would find out. We've all done that at some point.

It can be scary to have the light shine in the areas we might be embarrassed by or feel ashamed of. However, I have good news for you! When we do come into the light, Jesus meets us with SO MUCH LOVE, and he is quick to forgive us and make sure we no longer feel ashamed. Like he said in John, "this light gives LIFE!"

PRAY:

Jesus,

I've done things that I didn't want anyone to know about. I've felt ashamed about it. However, I know that I feel so much better when I let God shine a light into those areas and then I can even tell someone I trust.

The things I've done wrong, or the stuff I love too much can cover up the real me. The real me is the boy or girl you created me to be! Help the real me to shine through....even if it means giving up some things or asking for forgiveness

Amen.

LET THE REAL YOU SHINE!

Look in the mirror. Now, use an expo marker to cover up your image. As you do, think of the things that can cover up the true you. Now, erase everything to let that masterpiece shine through! Thank God for creating you so unique!



JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS



READ: Matthew 27:45-46

The soldiers nailed Jesus to the cross. At noon the whole country became dark. The darkness continued for three hours. About three o'clock Jesus cried out loudly, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" This means "My God, my God, why have you left me alone?"

THINK ABOUT IT:

Have you ever heard the word "EXCRUCIATING"? Well, it comes from the word "crucifixion" which means dying on a cross. Being nailed to a cross was so painful that they invented a whole word to describe it.

No matter how hard we try, we can not avoid pain in life. We fall down and we scrape our knees. You may have even broken a bone before! Jesus felt pain, just like us...and much, much worse. So when you get hurt, Jesus knows how to comfort you.

When Jesus was on the cross, he also felt a different kind of pain. He felt loneliness. When Jesus paid the price for all the bad things humans will ever do, he felt like he was cut off from his Heavenly Father. He even yelled out, "My God, why have you left me alone?"

Have you ever felt lonely before? Jesus has too.

However, because Jesus was nailed to the cross, we now are NEVER actually alone. Jesus went through this WHOLE painful thing SO THAT you could be with God forever! That means in heaven, but it also means right now!

Sometimes it can feel like God doesn't hear our prayers. That's

ok and normal to feel like that sometimes. In these times, it's important to remind ourselves of the truth.

GOD IS ALWAYS WITH US!

PRAY:

Jesus,

Thank you for being with me ALWAYS...especially when I feel lonely or left out. You felt a lot of pain on the cross AND you felt really lonely. I am so thankful that you were willing to go through all that so that we could be together forever. I love you!

Amen.

BE WITH JESUS ON THE CROSS

Take a nail with a little tag attached.

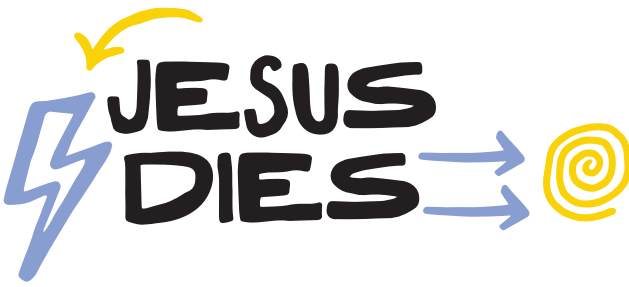
Write your name or your initials on the tag.

Then spend a moment thanking Jesus for what he did for you on the cross.

Next, with help from a grown-up, hammer your nail into the "wood". As you see your name on the cross, remind yourself that God loves you and that he wanted to be with you forever. You're not forgotten and you're not alone!



JESUS DIES



READ: Matthew 26: 27-29

Then he took a cup of wine, thanked God for it, and gave it to them. He said, "Each one of you drink some of it. This wine is my blood, which will be poured out to forgive the sins of many and begin the new agreement from God to his people.

Matthew 27: 50-56

Again Jesus cried out loudly and then died. When Jesus died, the curtain in the Temple was torn into two pieces. The tear started at the top and tore all the way to the bottom. Also, the earth shook and rocks were broken.

1 Peter 1:19

You were bought with the precious blood of Christ's death. He was a pure and perfect sacrificial Lamb.

THINK ABOUT IT:

Death is really hard to think about. When God first created humans, he created us to live FOREVER. Death was not a part of God's original plan. That's probably why it's so hard to think about.

Sin (choosing our own way, hurting others) is what brought death into our world. Sin is what separated God from the people he loved. And, like we learned in the last station, God wants to be with us forever. So how can he fix this problem? Because sin is a big, big problem. That's where Jesus enters this story.

Death is the result of sin. Either we had to die forever, or Jesus had to die in our place.

Jesus knew he was going to die. He knew that it had to be done in order for death to be defeated once and for all, so we can live forever in heaven, with God

When Jesus finally died on the cross, he gave up the final thing he had, his Spirit. Immediately, strange things began to happen.

Earthquakes and darkness. In the main temple, where God actually met with people. The thick, heavy curtain that separated God from the people tore all the way apart. Can you think of why?

Because now, NOTHING would separate us from God anymore! God lives WITH his people that he loves.

PRAY:

Jesus,

Thank you for giving up so much, EVEN YOUR LIFE, for me! I will never be able to say thank you enough! Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! I am so glad that I can be with you forever in heaven!

Amen.

RECEIVE COMMUNION

The day before Jesus died, as he was sharing a meal with his friends, he talked about the sacrifice he was going to have to make and the price he was going to have to pay for our sin. During that “last supper” this is what he told them to do in order to honor and remember him.

Take a cracker. This cracker represents Jesus’ body that was broken for you. If the grown-up you came with says it’s ok, eat it and remember.

Now fill your cup from the first station with a little bit of grape juice. This represents Jesus’ blood that was poured out for you.

Drink the juice and remember Jesus.

Take your cup with you to the final station.



JESUS IS BURIED



READ: Matthew 27: 57-61

That evening a rich man named Joseph came to Jerusalem. He was a follower of Jesus from the town of Arimathea. He went to Pilate and asked to have Jesus' body. Pilate gave orders for the soldiers to give Jesus' body to him. Then Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a new linen cloth. He put Jesus' body in a new tomb that he had dug in a wall of rock. Then he closed the tomb by rolling a very large stone to cover the entrance. After he did this, he went away. Mary Magdalene and the other woman named Mary were sitting near the tomb.

Colossians 2:12-14

When you were baptized, you were buried with Christ, and you were raised up with him because of your faith in God's power. God's power was shown when he raised Christ from death. You were spiritually dead because of your sins and because you were not free from the power of your sinful self. But God gave you new life together with Christ. He forgave all our sins. 14 Because we broke God's laws, we owed a debt—a debt that listed all the rules we failed to follow. But God forgave us of that debt. He took it away and nailed it to the cross.

THINK ABOUT IT:

Burial usually feels like the end. When we bury something really deep we don't expect to see it again. I bet you've lost a lot of sand toys at the beach!

When Joseph buried Jesus in the tomb, he never expected to see him again. When Mary, and Jesus' mom watched the stone being rolled in front of the tomb, they lost all hope. All of their hard work, their tears, and their hopes for Jesus came to a very sad and confusing end.

However, **WE** know that this was not the end of the story! We know that 3 days later, Jesus came back to life!! That's what the word "resurrection" means. As painful and sad as death and burial

is, there cannot be resurrection without death first. Jesus needed to die to save us for our sins and Jesus needed to be buried in order to show the world the miracle of resurrection!

PRAY:

Jesus,

It is so amazing that burial was not the end of your story! It reminds me that in my own life, I can still have hope when things feel over and done. The Bible tells me that you are making all things new! Even me! Things that seemed buried will sprout up and grow. New life is coming!

Amen.

WAIT FOR NEW LIFE

Take your cup. Yes! The same cup you've had all this time. Put your coin in the bottom of the cup. Remind yourself that the times you've chosen other things over Jesus are in the past and over!

Take your name tag that says "not good enough". Rip it up into small pieces because that's NOT who you are! Put the pieces in your cup too.

Now, fill your cup with a scoop of soil and plant a radish seed in it. Not too deep...just about a half-inch. Next, give it a bit of water. Cover up the words you wrote on the cup with the "new life" sticker because that's what this little seed represents.

Take your cup home and watch new life spring up!

Before you leave, let go of that heavy brick and leave it here. You are free!!

