



On your marks

So much happens in the Bible story of Holy Week that there is no shortage of material to draw on for your group to use or for storytelling in all-age worship. The following outline focuses on one event for each of the days, starting with Palm Sunday, as we follow the footsteps of Jesus through the drama of the week right up to and including the surprise of the Easter morning. The approach is active and uses simple actions to connect up the story. As such, it could be used as a way to lead an all-age congregation up to the events of the cross on Good Friday. Each section could, of course, be expanded further but this activity is designed to help your group or congregation get an overview of the week.

Get set

You can read the stories in the Bible in: Matthew 21 - 28, Mark 11 - 16, Luke 19:28 - 24:53, John 12 - 20.

Go!

1. Welcome everyone and use the theme of feet for a number of warm-up activities. For example, explain that we are all now on a journey to Jerusalem to discover the story of Easter. We are following Jesus' footsteps to a special feast or celebration. Ask them if their feet are ready to follow. Challenge everyone to walk on their feet in various ways in small circles, where they are standing: on tiptoe, on their heels, on the side of their feet, one foot in front of the other, standing on one foot and turning in a circle, using small jumps with their feet 'glued' together, linking toes and heels in a group of five or six to make a circle, hopping on one foot and then the other.

If there is time, continue this warm-up theme with similar ideas, such as practising having dancing feet or trying some 'Riverdance' footwork, skipping, or running on the spot, fast and then slow.

2. Today we are going to follow Jesus' footsteps through Holy Week - eight days of drama that Christians believe changed the world!

During this special week, excited feet soon become sore feet; tired feet become smelly feet; and sad feet do eventually become dancing feet. This is the most amazing week ever! Set them thinking about this special week with these open-ended questions:

- I wonder why this week is so special for Christians that they call it 'Holy Week'.
- I wonder why the Bible has so many stories about this one week.
- I wonder what it felt like to be there that week, following Jesus.
- I wonder what we will discover about Jesus and who he is, as we follow the footsteps of the week.

3. The following chant is designed to be used as you move through the story one day at a time. Learn the special words to a clapping rhythm by calling out each line and inviting the congregation to copy what you've said. Use this as you link the days in the story that follows.

We're on a special journey

Of footsteps to the feast.

Jesus comes to rescue us:

The last, the lost, the least.

4. What follows is a simple action-based story for the whole of Holy Week. In between each of the days, use the chant above to move the story on. Here are the actions for each day:

- Palm Day: *wave hands high with fingers splayed.*
- Pigeon Day: *link thumbs and flap the other fingers to represent the wings of a bird.*
- Perfume Day: *waft hands towards your nose as if catching a beautiful smell.*
- Parable Day: *put one finger in front of your lips to call for silence and careful listening (to a story).*
- Passover Day: *pretend to eat and drink with your hands.*
- Painful Day: *point with the index finger to each wrist, one at a time (this is sign language for Jesus). Alternatively, put hands in front of face because you're not able to look at something terrible.*
- Prayerful Day: *put hands together in prayer.*
- Promised Day: *hold out hands wide in excitement, because a miracle has happened.*

For each day, the congregation should demonstrate the action as you very briefly tell what happened:

- **Palm Day:** The week began with the crowds cheering and waving palm branches as Jesus came into Jerusalem. They were hoping he would be a new king but, to their surprise, he was riding on a donkey. He was going to be king, but not the sort of king they expected.
- **Pigeon Day:** Soon after this, Jesus visited the temple and was angry at how it had become a market place. People were even buying and selling pigeons. It should have been a place of prayer. He pushed over the tables and the pigeons flew everywhere.
- **Perfume Day:** In the evenings, Jesus spent time with his friends outside the city. At one meal, Mary came and poured perfume on to his feet to show how much she loved him. It was expensive perfume and some people were angry at the waste, but Jesus said that she was preparing him for his death. The smell of the perfume filled the whole place.
- **Parable Day:** Each day at the temple, Jesus would tell stories. He was such a wonderful storyteller that people listened intently, but they didn't always understand what he was saying. These were special stories called 'parables', which were meant to help people discover truths for themselves and to help them draw closer to God.
- **Passover Day:** On the Thursday of that week, Jesus went with his friends to an upstairs room



in the back streets of the city for a special meal. They were remembering how God had rescued them long ago. Jesus broke bread and poured out wine and told his friends to do this to remember him in future, because now he too was about to rescue them. They were very puzzled.

- **Painful Day:** That night, in a garden, Jesus was arrested and put on trial. People said terrible things about him and early the next day they took him outside the city to kill him. They nailed him to a cross and by the afternoon he was dead. No one expected this to happen. It was a sad day but, strangely, it is called Good Friday.
- **Prayerful Day:** Next day, Saturday, it seemed as if everything stood still. Jesus' friends were shocked and frightened. What would happen now? All they could do was hope and pray.
- **Promised Day:** Early in the morning on Sunday, some women went to the tomb, which was a cave in a garden, but the stone was rolled away. They saw angels who told them that Jesus was alive, and later they saw him for themselves. Jesus was king after all - a different sort of king who had beaten death and who could now be with everyone, everywhere, for ever!