



On your marks

The following simple illustration could be used to explore the heart of the Easter story, when God allows Jesus to absorb all the hatred of the world and turn it into love through the mystery of the cross. This same miraculous change is now available for all who put their trust in Jesus.

This activity could be used with a group to explore the meaning of Easter or, on a larger scale, as part of an all-age service for Good Friday or Easter Day.

Get set

If you are doing this activity on a small scale, you will need three thick, red party straws for each member of the group along with pairs of scissors.

If you doing it on a larger scale, you can either use the photos below projected on to a screen or scale up the twelve straw sections as thick pieces of red felt which can be attached by Velcro to a fabric screen.

Key Bible verse:

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21, NIV).

Quote about the cross:

*Every act and miraculous energy of Christ is very great and divine and marvellous, but the most amazing of all is his precious cross. For death was not abolished by any other means... hell was not emptied and robbed... resurrection was not given to us... the gates of paradise have not been opened... human nature was not given the place of honour at the right hand of God... we did not become children and inheritors of God... **except by the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ alone.** All these have been achieved by the death of the Lord on the cross.*

St John of Damascus c. 657-749

Go!

1. Explain to your group or congregation that you are about to explore the mystery and power of the cross using just three simple, red straws.
2. Cut the straws up into twelve pieces: six should be 6 cm long and 6 should be 3 cm long.
3. With these twelve pieces, you are now going to spell one very 'cross word' - HATE (as shown in the picture).



4. Hate represents the complete breakdown of relationships between people. It is one word that sums up the brokenness of our world and is the cause of much suffering and pain between people. It's a sad and ugly word that spoils God's creation, and spoils us as his children.
5. At Easter, God took this hatred seriously and allowed his son Jesus to meet it head on in a battle to the death. All the brokenness and pain of the world focused itself on Jesus when he was put to death on a cross.
6. Reshape the twelve pieces to make a cross as shown in the picture: use four 6-cm pieces as the upright, two 3-cm pieces either side for the crosspiece, and the other pieces to create the steps below.



7. But hate did not have the last word. God raised Christ from death on Easter Day by the power that can turn HATE into LOVE.
8. Now reshape the twelve pieces to spell the word LOVE (as shown in the picture).



9. God's love is stronger than death. God's love can reach into the deepest pit and bring out life. God's love can transform us back into the people God made us to be.
10. As Archbishop Desmond Tutu said: Good is stronger than evil; love is stronger than hate; light is stronger than darkness; life is stronger than death. Victory is ours, through him who loves us.