

# Why does Easter matter?



*DVD-based family and group studies for Lent*

*Biblical content by **Revd. Stephen Gaukroger**  
with activities for groups including family groups!*



**FRIENDS  
AND  
HEROES**

# Why does Easter matter?



## Introduction and Course Guide

Specimen Only  
Subject to Change

# Why does Easter matter?

## Introduction

## Why does Easter matter?

*“Every human being has two great fears. ‘Will I ever be loved?’ and ‘Will I ever be able to love?’”*  
Josh McDowell

Easter provides the answer to how we can be loved and so how we can truly love others.

The Easter Story is a vivid, life-changing demonstration of how much God loves human beings and what he was ready to sacrifice so that they may come back to him.

But this story isn't just told in the concluding three days when Jesus was nailed to the cross and then rose from the dead and appeared to the disciples. It begins much earlier than that when Jesus came into the world and as he began and continued his teaching and healing ministry.

In this five session course, we will use Bible stories from Friends and Heroes which show the happenings of Easter week. We will consider what it all means, why it happened and what we should do about it today.

We will do this by watching the stories, reading the Biblical narrative and then asking ourselves questions. Some of us might even play games! We will be guided by the introductory material created by **Rev. Stephen Gaukroger** as he points out the background and cultural factors which we need to know in order to understand the whole story.

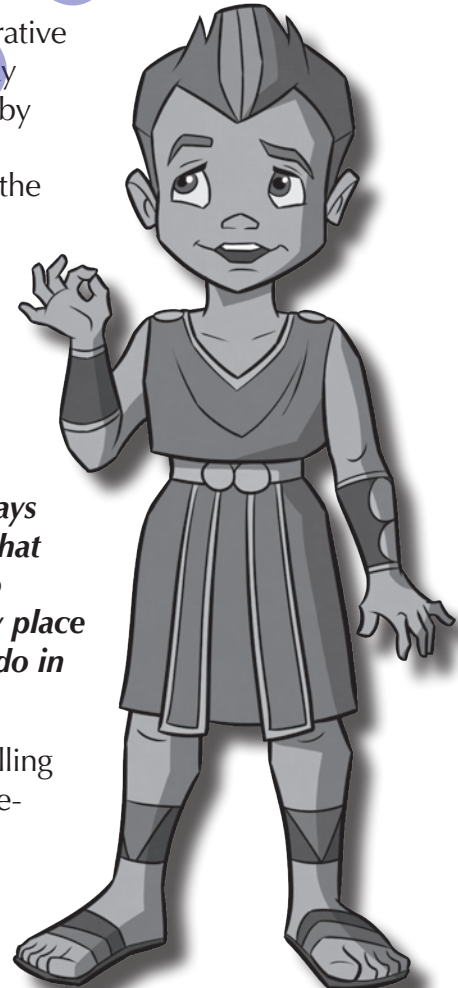
It will be like being right there, seeing the events of Easter unfold before your eyes, but we need to remember that this was all for a purpose.

One young adult wrote this:

*“Even if my friends stop liking me, I have a huge argument with my parents, and I feel I have no-one to talk to, I can always count on Jesus. He loves me so much that he gave his life so that I might live for ever. There is nothing anyone could ever do to convince me more of their unconditional love than to take my place in death and die for me so that I might live. And all I have to do in return is believe.”*

We hope that you, your friends and your family will enjoy travelling with us as we walk this Easter path and that you might find a life-changing message becomes real again.

“It will be like being right there, seeing the events of Easter unfold before your eyes”



# Why does Easter matter?

## Course Guide



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### Who is this course for?

Everyone! We have created this material with everyone in mind but in particular we have created it for groups of people who are meeting together to meditate in some way on the Easter story.

What is unique about this course is that it includes children. This makes it ideal for a family or even a group of families to use together.

Much of what we have included after the core material is optional but, if you have more time or you have folk of the right age for the activities, they will really add to the fun of the session!

### What is in this course?

Your course material comprises:

Two Friends and Heroes DVDs containing Episodes 35-39

Group/Family Study material provided on CD-ROM

A Public Display Licence – needed for groups meeting on Church Premises (Study or Services)

### What happens in a session?

Using the Course Guide almost anyone can take a group through the material. Leading a group is about acting as a guide – not as a preacher. You simply steer the group or family through the material. So you might choose to have a different leader from the group members for each session – a child could lead you through this material with just a little help. There is just one session content plan which includes the all-age material and it can be used by any group whether in a family or a church. The optional content is provided afterwards, clearly marked in each session.

### How to use this material?

This Lenten course is five sessions long and we have provided you with five episodes of Friends and Heroes. However, showing one 25 minute episode per session may take more time than you have available. Actually only seven of the Bible stories in these five episodes are part of the traditional Holy Week narrative. The two DVDs contain the following stories – the traditional Easter Story narratives are in bold:

Ep 35: **Jesus rides into Jerusalem**; *Jesus and the Moneylenders*; *Jesus heals a Paralysed Man*

Ep36: *The Parable of the Tenants in the Vineyard*; *Jesus and the Widow's Offering*; *Jesus and the Roman tax*

Ep37: **Jesus washes the Disciples' feet**; *Jesus and the Lepers*; **The Last Supper and Jesus' Arrest**

Ep38: **Jesus before Pilate**; **Jesus carries his cross**; **The Crucifixion**

EP39: **Jesus seen on the road**; *Jesus and the Rich Young Man*; *Moses and the Ten Commandments*

If you are pressed for time, you can use the edited section which we mention in each session and not lose anything – but watching a whole episode, especially if you have children in the group, is much more fun!

### Session outline:

**Opening prayer** – why not ask different group members to begin in prayer each session?

**Introduction** – from the core material

Showing of Friends and Heroes content (full episode or edited highlight/s)

**Bible reading** – the Bible story in the episode

**Question time**

**Optional extras** – if you chose to use them

**Let's ask for God's help!** Prayer – again why not ask different group members to conclude each session?

# Why does Easter matter?

## Course Guide



### As course leader, how do I prepare?

Make sure you are familiar with the session's material well in advance, and that you have assembled all the materials you have chosen to use. Some tips are given below. Remember, though, that when the session takes place it is your task to steer the group through the session, not do all the talking yourself! You also need to be aware of the session length and so steer the group towards the end of the session at the appropriate time.

“ See and hear the extraordinary events in Jesus's life leading up to, and including, his resurrection ”

- **Session Preparation and materials needed**

It is really useful to watch the Friends and Heroes episode yourself in advance. At the very least, watch the relevant Bible story by selecting the appropriate scene from the DVD's Scenes menu. Also you must make sure that you give yourself enough time to assemble the additional materials together that you are planning on using (for instance, in a group/family craft activity). We have tried hard to limit the number of suggested extra materials or resources necessary, but if you don't plan ahead you could find yourself unable to do something that you would like to, simply because you haven't got an item that you could easily have obtained from a local store, or your attic or elsewhere! Always do your preparation a few days ahead: don't leave it to the last minute.

- **Getting started**

It is entirely up to you how you settle your group before you start each session. But in putting this course together we have envisaged a time of both

fun and contemplative learning for a wide age-range group. We think the course will work best in relaxed environments where everybody is at their ease and feels they can voice their view, no matter what their age, understanding, or position in faith at the moment. We believe the material will suit family groups and all-age house-groups very well indeed; but we are not placing any strictures on this. You can make it work in the environment of your choosing. Just make sure that the group you are leading know that they are going to experience something a little bit different. If you choose to watch all the episodes all the way through, adults will be sharing a special time with children. You will be amazed at how engrossed the children become in the animated adventure (they will almost certainly be better at answering the quiz questions about the adventure than the adults!). But also interwoven into this adventure are Biblical truths. Adults and children alike will see and hear the extraordinary events in Jesus's life leading up to, and including, his resurrection. It will be a special and rewarding time. Just make sure your people are relaxed and have an idea what to expect. (There is more detail about how the Friends and Heroes animated adventure series are structured, and how they work, on page 7 at the end of this Course Guide.)

- **Purpose and outcome of session**

The purpose of the session is to engage everyone – at least with their own thoughts about the story of Easter. But hopefully the participants will also engage with one another, in both fun activities and in serious talk. The outcome will also be both a personal one and a community one. Each participant should have explored, maybe re-explored, their own understanding of the week of Jesus's life leading up to his resurrection – and importantly what that resurrection actually means in all its earth-shaking, glorious resonance. And also they will have shared and swapped thoughts with one another – hopefully, shared and swapped laughter too – and become closer through the process.

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“ Always do your preparation a few days ahead: don't leave it to the last minute ”

- **Involving all ages**

Involving all ages was undoubtedly one of the key motivations to our putting this Lenten course together. We know we have a wonderful Christian resource that children take to and relate to extremely well. We know because many children across the world have written to us to let us know – as well as their parents, their teachers and their spiritual leaders! We also believe that sharing joy and life with children is one of the greatest blessings anyone can experience. Our saviour Jesus Christ loved being with children. He rebuked his disciples for stopping the children getting through to him (Luke 18:15-16). This course has been put together with this in mind. We would like all ages to share it together. After all, Jesus brought God's word for everyone; and we have much to learn from children themselves (Luke 18:17).

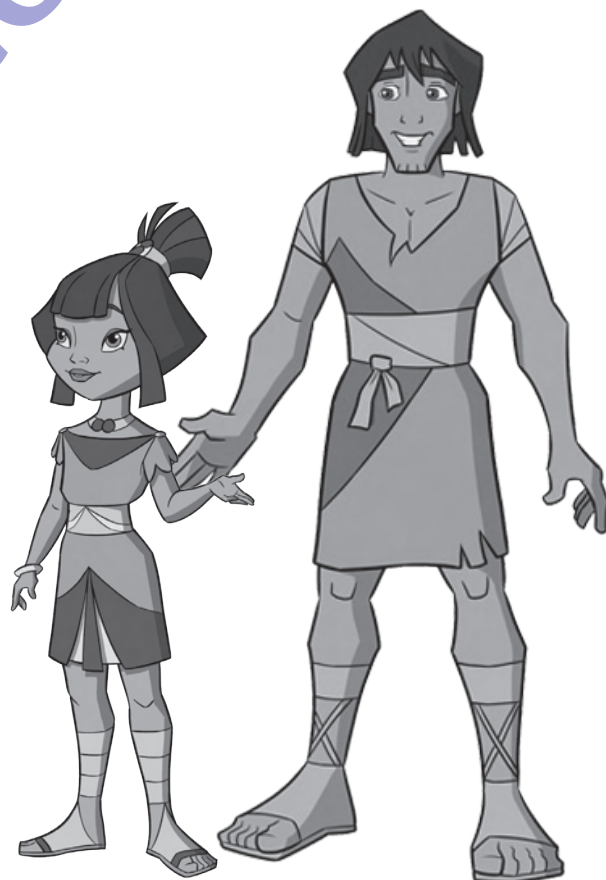
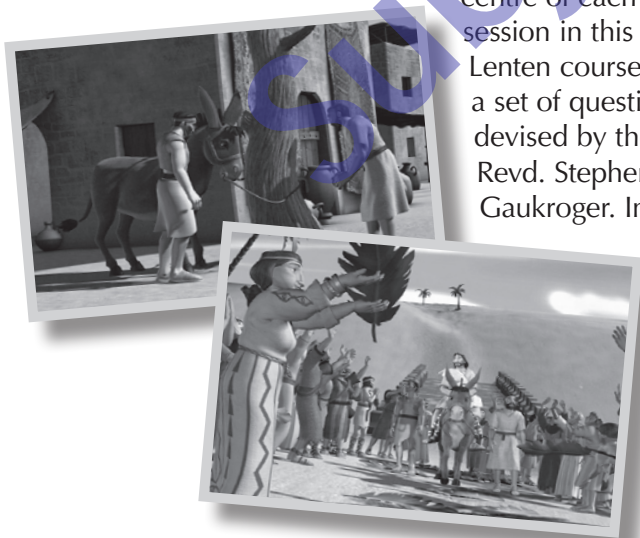
- **Asking questions**

The springboard to the understanding we achieve is the questions we ask and address.



At the centre of each session in this Lenten course is a set of questions devised by the Revd. Stephen Gaukroger. In

one way they are very simple questions: they are composed by using just a few, very easy to understand words. But in another way they are very deep-searching questions: they are asking you to explore your personal thoughts, opinions, ideas, feelings and beliefs about God and Jesus and your own relationship (or lack of a relationship) with the divine. Sometimes you might need to explain the vocabulary, depending on the ages and level of understanding of the children present. We don't give the answers. We can't give the answers for your group. They are personal to your group. In the process of discovering answers, members of your group may hit on questions that they feel the need to float with other members of the group. Don't discourage this. This is after all a sharing time. But don't let questions swamp your discussions. Questions are important, but answers are more so. Search hard for your answers.



# Why does Easter matter?

## Course Guide

### Friends and Heroes animated adventure – What we do and how we do it...

The aim of all three series of Friends and Heroes is to get God's word in front of today's children, in a way that is immediately accessible and natural to them. It's an animated adventure series that follows the adventures of two teenagers in the first century AD, Macky and Portia. They are thrown together by circumstance, but their experiences of the world to date have been radically different.

Macky is from a simple, hard-working Jewish family, who have taken onboard the messages of Jesus and are trying to pursue a Christian way of life (even though they would not, at this time, call themselves 'Christians'; instead they regard themselves as 'Friends of Jesus').

Portia, on the other hand, comes from a privileged, rich family background. She is a Roman, but she is young enough (just like

Macky) not to have ingrained prejudices.

They are teenagers, still finding out about the world, and trying to find what is right and good. Along the way they have many scrapes and adventures. They encounter prejudice and wrongs against the Friends of Jesus, and they try to puzzle out what is the right thing for them to do in these situations.

To help them, Macky and others retell Bible stories which seem appropriate at the time. These stories are shown in our series in 3D animation, to mark them out from the 2D animation of the adventure story. There are real dilemmas for Macky, Portia and others to face. And there is real advice to be found in the scriptures.

The Friends and Heroes adults and children's websites can provide further background



information on the series and resources available plus additional or follow-up material for this course including quizzes, puzzles etc. You can link to them at: [www.friendsandheroes.com](http://www.friendsandheroes.com) and [www.friendsandheroes.tv](http://www.friendsandheroes.tv) respectively.

“ The aim of all three series of Friends and Heroes is to get God's word in front of today's children, in a way that is immediately accessible and natural to them ”

# Why does Easter matter?



## Session 1

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# Why does Easter matter? Session 1

Lenten focus: Jesus rides into Jerusalem

*Friends and Heroes Episode 35: Conflict*



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## Things you need

- This session guide
- A DVD player and Friends and Heroes Episode 35

## Things you will need if you do all the optional extras

- A timer, or mobile phone with timer or alarm clock functions
- Craft materials: Green paper and card, scissors and glue
- Printouts of the Puzzle Page for Episode 35 – see page 12



## Prayer time

Open in prayer, and dedicate this time and session to our Father God and his son, our Saviour King. You might also like to incorporate something similar to the following, which is based on *Psalm 118 verses 25 and 26*:

Please, LORD, save us.

Please, LORD, give us success.

We praise the one who comes in the name of the LORD.

We praise you from our house, the house of the LORD

## Background for this session

*Jesus rides into Jerusalem*  
(Mark 11:1-11)

Jesus had been with Mary, Martha and Lazarus in Bethany. Many ordinary people were thrilled that Lazarus was back from the dead, but the religious authorities were not happy. Jesus was becoming more popular by the day and it would soon be impossible for the 'threat', which Jesus posed to these

authorities, to be ignored. Worse was to come! It was only a couple of miles from Bethany to Jerusalem, but the crowds cheered Jesus every step of the way. Riding a humble donkey (not the usual impressive stallion of a Roman conqueror) he acknowledges the praise of the crowd. Using *Psalm 118:25-26* as a rallying cry, they cheer him all the way into the city.

### ***This story shows us:***

1. Jesus is not just a teacher but also a king (N.B. a servant king – note the arrival on a donkey, not a horse; and the absence of any mention of pomp and splendour – (e.g.) royal robes, military guard, etc.)
2. Jesus comes as 'saviour' (N.B. Hosanna means "save us". This event points to the salvation which is about to come through the death and resurrection of Jesus)
3. Jesus is the fulfilment of prophecy (N.B. this event fulfils what the prophet Zechariah saw in the future, by God's power – Zechariah 9:9)
4. Jesus is divine (N.B. How else could he know of the existence of the donkey, where to find it and the fact that the owner would let it be used in this way?!)

# Why does Easter matter? Session 1

Lenten focus: Jesus rides into Jerusalem

Friends and Heroes Episode 35: Conflict



## Friends and Heroes Episode 35

Watch together 'Spies and Lies' (Episode 35)

As this is the first episode for this Lenten course, it's worthwhile sketching in a little background.

Portia and Macky are really good teenage friends, who have been brought up in completely different cultures during the first century AD. Portia is a Roman and Macky is a Jew, who accepts that Jesus is God's only son. How the two friends met is a long story – and one that you can check out in the first series of Friends and Heroes. Their adventures have taken them to different places, and currently they are in Rome – where Macky is a servant/slave of Senator Antonius. Antonius is a good man, and he's also a covert believer in Jesus as the risen saviour of mankind. It's dangerous for him to declare his beliefs openly, as Christians (known throughout the series as 'The Friends of Jesus') are actively being persecuted by the authorities. He is trying to do his best for the Friends of Jesus in several different ways, and he's often helped by Macky – who, in turn, is regularly helped by Portia. Along the way, Portia is learning more and more about the kingdom of God, as Macky and Antonius recount Bible stories that help them to find their way through testing times.

In this episode, you will also encounter the devious Senator Marcus, who is a particularly strong advocate for the persecution of the Friends of Jesus.

Sit back and enjoy the adventure!

“ Along the way, Portia is learning more and more about the kingdom of God ”

At the end, use the Scenes option in the DVD's main menu to replay the section showing Jesus's entry into Jerusalem. (You will have to stop the DVD yourself after this section, as the DVD doesn't do this automatically.) Now move on to the words of scripture below.

## Bible reading

Mark Chapter 11 Verses 1-11  
(New Living Translation)

### Jesus' Triumphant Entry

1 As Jesus and his disciples approached Jerusalem, they came to the towns of Bethphage and Bethany on the Mount of Olives. Jesus sent two of them on ahead. 2 "Go into that village over there," he told them. "As soon as you enter it, you will see a young donkey tied there that no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. 3 If anyone asks, 'What are you doing?' just say, 'The Lord needs it and will return it soon.'"

4 The two disciples left and found the colt standing in the street, tied outside the front door. 5 As they were untying it, some bystanders demanded, "What are you doing, untying that colt?" 6 They said what Jesus had told them to say, and they were permitted to take it. 7 Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their garments over it, and he sat on it.

8 Many in the crowd spread their garments on the road ahead of him, and others spread leafy branches they had cut in the fields. 9 Jesus was in the center of the procession, and the people all around him were shouting,

"Praise God!

Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the LORD!

10 Blessings on the coming Kingdom of our ancestor David!

Praise God in highest heaven!"

11 So Jesus came to Jerusalem and went into the Temple. After looking around carefully at everything, he left because it was late in the afternoon. Then he returned to Bethany with the twelve disciples.

# Why does Easter matter? Session 1

Lenten focus: Jesus rides into Jerusalem

Friends and Heroes Episode 35: Conflict



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## Question time

1. Jesus comes as 'saviour'. In what way do you think we need rescuing?
2. If Jesus could use a donkey then why can't he use you? Why do you sometimes feel too old, too young or not special enough to be used by God?
3. Put yourself in the position of the different groups in this story. How were they all feeling on this amazing day...
  - The disciples?
  - The crowd?
  - The religious leaders?
  - (The donkey?!)

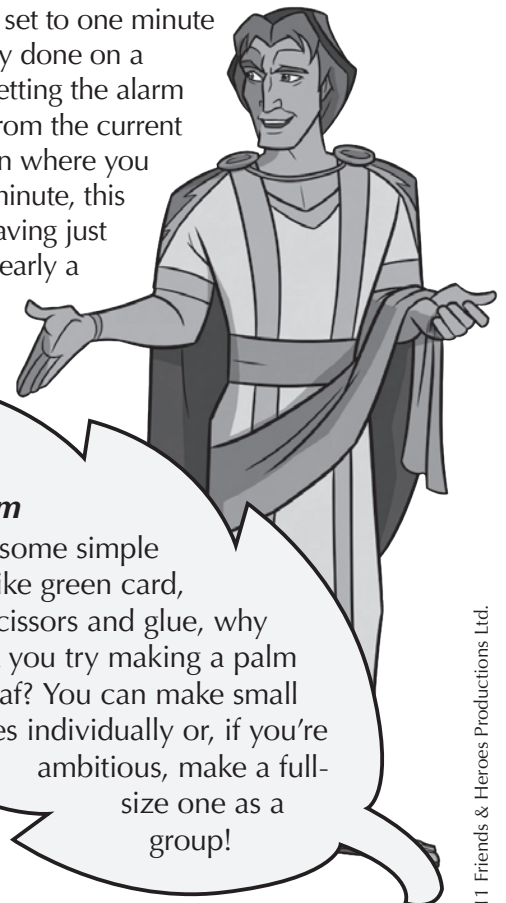
the group follows the established direction; if however they choose 'Riding on a donkey' the direction of flow reverses. The fun is to be had by going as fast

“The fun is to be had by going as fast as possible”

as possible, and watching for slip-ups. These could be – saying more than just one syllable, hesitating too long, and speaking when it's not your turn. These last two types of slip-up tend to feature when the group is going at speed and the direction is reversed.

A forfeit for slip-ups could be making tea and coffee for the group, or washing up or tidying away after your event.

If your group gets really good and slip-ups are rare, set a timer (such as a timer or alarm clock on a mobile phone). The two people who are interacting when the timer sounds are 'the chosen ones'! It's best to have timers set to one minute or less. This is easily done on a mobile phone by setting the alarm to one minute on from the current time. Depending on where you are in the current minute, this will result in you having just a few seconds or nearly a whole minute.



## Craft

### Make a Palm

**Leaf.** Using some simple materials, like green card, paper, scissors and glue, why don't you try making a palm leaf? You can make small ones individually or, if you're ambitious, make a full-size one as a group!

## Optional extras for all-age groups

### Game

#### Riding on a Donkey

This is a 'syllable bouncing' or 'syllable thread' game. It uses the words 'Hosanna', and 'Jerusalem' and the phrase 'Riding on a donkey'.

In a circle, one person turns to their neighbour and says "Ho". This second person then turns to their next neighbour and says "san"; and the third person completes the word by saying "na" to the next person along. This person in the group then has the choice of starting 'Hosanna' again, or changing to 'Jerusalem' or 'Riding on a donkey'. They must, however, only use the first syllable to start the next sequence. If they choose 'Hosanna' or 'Jerusalem', the sequence round

# Why does Easter matter? Session 1

Lenten focus: Jesus rides into Jerusalem

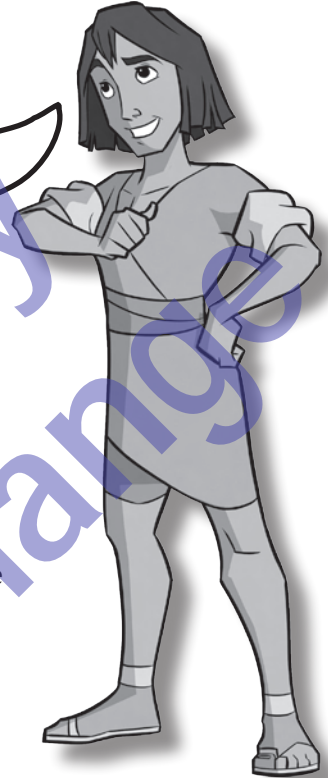
Friends and Heroes Episode 35: Conflict



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## Puzzle

Sometimes it's hard making the right choice. Antonius first chose to Keep quiet in the Senate, and then he chose to speak out. Portia and I then struggled with how best to help Antonius when he was unjustly arrested. Sometimes it takes time to find the right way. Jesus, however, Knew exactly the right way to enter Jerusalem. He did it humbly, riding on a donKey. In the next few sessions together, we're going to learn a lot about (and a lot from!) Jesus.



Below is a fun puzzle about choosing the right words. You might want to do it with an adult. Can you choose the right word from the Word Bank below, to fill in each of the blanks? The chosen word will make a well-known new word or phrase with the words on either side of it. For instance, the answer to the first one puzzle is 'bread' (it makes 'gingerbread' and 'bread-stick'). Some of them are harder than others. If you are working on your own, you might like to test out some adults with the hard ones (and to make it especially hard for them, don't show them the possible answers until they've had a bit of a think first!).

- ginger \_\_\_\_\_ stick
- open \_\_\_\_\_ seeds
- torch \_\_\_\_\_ touch
- mobile \_\_\_\_\_ home
- cream \_\_\_\_\_ grater
- happy-go \_\_\_\_\_ star
- Roman \_\_\_\_\_ time
- postage \_\_\_\_\_ out
- strawberry \_\_\_\_\_ fish
- curly \_\_\_\_\_ spray
- river \_\_\_\_\_ organ
- play \_\_\_\_\_ pepper
- stickle \_\_\_\_\_ ground
- city of \_\_\_\_\_ artichoke
- Easter \_\_\_\_\_ machine
- donkey's \_\_\_\_\_ old
- palm \_\_\_\_\_ mould
- Jesus is \_\_\_\_\_ David

### Word Bank

mouth	back	Jerusalem	bread	years	jelly
King	sesame	cheese	hair	leaf	lucky
time	ground	phone	light	stamp	bath

### Answers

1 bread 2 sesame 3 light 4 phone 5 cheese 6 lucky 7 bath 8 stamp 9 jelly 10 hair 11 mouth 12 ground 13 back 14 Jerusalem 15 time 16 years 17 leaf 18 King

# Why does Easter matter? *Session 1*

Lenten focus: Jesus rides into Jerusalem

*Friends and Heroes Episode 35: Conflict*



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## Quiz

### Macky's Quiz

Macky presents a quiz on the DVD for each episode which you can access through the Extras menu! You will want to use this quiz at some point in the evening – or use it to recap the last session at the beginning of the next one!



## Let's ask for God's help

Round off the session with a contemplative time of prayer. Remember how Jesus chose to enter Jerusalem. He was, and is, the King – but he chose to be our servant-king.

