



# Exploring Christian Scripture in RE with GideonsUK

**Ideas for members of GideonsUK to use in lessons or assemblies From RE Today**

## Lesson Plan:

**Easter: Why do Christians call the day of Jesus' death 'Good Friday'?**

### For the user of these ideas

**If you are invited to be involved in an Assembly or an RE lesson as a visitor to school from GideonsUK, make sure you have read and shared the guidance which GideonsUK provide for schools about how we work. Liaison with the teacher is a key to success in this.**

This lesson can be used in February / March / April, in the run up to Holy Week and Easter, exploring the significance of crucifixion and resurrection for Christians and in Scripture. The question about 'Why Good Friday?' focuses on not just the historical description of the events of 'Holy Week and the First Easter' but also on the theology of love and forgiveness, and the miracle of resurrection which Christians believe. In this assembly / lesson strong visual materials are used to examine what the Bible says happened and then some thinking activities enable learners to explore what these events meant at the first Easter, and what they mean to Christians today. Pupils will write for themselves about the concept of 'Good Friday'.

## Assemblies and Lessons: two different opportunities

**These ideas have been developed to help members of GideonsUK to respond to offers from schools to lead a school assembly or to take part in an RE lesson. It is of course still common for Gideons visiting schools to take an assembly. The ideas and strategies offered here can be used in one format for assemblies and in another for lessons. Preparation is crucial for either an assembly or a lesson: you can 'adopt' the ideas here and use them exactly as they are described, but of course you can also 'adapt' the ideas to suit your own personal style.**

**These questions are worth thinking about in preparation:**

- 1. How can I select materials and ways of communicating and make them suitable for the occasion, so that everyone – in assemblies or lessons – learns something?** In lessons, pupils in groups of up to 30 are learning, often by doing as well as listening, often for periods of 45 minutes or an hour. In assemblies, they often sit and listen, in a large group of a hundred or more, for 10-15 minutes.
- 2. How much material can be communicated clearly to this group of young people?** We are often over-ambitious here: remember to tune in to the world of the 11 year old, and remember that many of your audience may know very little of Christianity or the Bible. Assemblies may be best when a small amount of information is used. Lessons need time for pupils to think about it for themselves.
- 3. What are the main points I want to communicate in the time available?** There is wisdom in the idea that communication is best when points are made, then elaborated and then restated. Jesus Himself seems to do this for His disciples on many occasions. Plan to say it simply, three times!

**IF you are doing a lesson:** you might begin with the activities described on page 3, and then ask pupils to discuss, in pairs or threes, the six explanations of the death of Christ on page 4 (provide a copy of this page one between two). The page gives some learning activities for the pupils to complete in pairs. You might then invite willing pupils to share their responses, reading them out and joining in discussion. The page with the big 'think bubble' is for pupils to write their own thoughts and ideas: give them a limit of 200 words. You could follow on with 'Activity 3' referring to testimonies from the GideonsUK website [www.gideonsuk.com](http://www.gideonsuk.com). You could suggest that pupils create a work of art for their homework which expresses their answer to the question 'Why Good Friday?'

**IF you are doing an assembly:** you might introduce the question: it is rather surprising that Christians call the day Jesus died 'Good Friday'. What was good about the crucifixion? Then use the PowerPoint of pupils' art, asking the pupils to think for themselves about the idea of Jesus as a Saviour. When you offer the Testaments, explain that the Bible inspired Christian belief in God's plan for us all shown in Jesus' death and resurrection. It would not be "Good Friday" without Easter Sunday.



## Stimulus: getting interested

Good lessons and assemblies start with something to stimulate interest. Here the stimulus comes from the question: Why Good Friday? This is reinforced by the use of excellent pupil art work answering the question. You might put a basket of Easter eggs on a table at the front of the hall when taking assembly: if you set a homework challenge to pupils then these could be prizes.

### What's the lesson about?

This assembly and lesson outline explores the meaning of Holy Week and Easter for Christians, and focuses on the way that Jesus' crucifixion and death is not seen as merely sad, but the realisation of God's plan for salvation.

### Values in schools – and in the Bible

All schools promote many of the values of the community, including individual liberty, respect for all, tolerance, democracy and the rule of law (these five examples are often referred to in schools as 'British Values').

Contributions from the Gideons to school life can often highlight positive values from the Christian Scriptures, including drawing attention to our 'Bible Helps' section. Here are some examples related to the ideas in this topic:

- ✓ What do pupils think about the idea that good can come out of evil, as the events of 'Good Friday' show?
- ✓ How do pupils respond to the Bible's teaching that God forgives everyone who trusts in Him?

### The values and ethos of the school

When members of GideonsUK visit schools, they recognise that every school is different, but all UK schools promote spiritual development for their pupils.

In relation to this topic, the opportunities for spiritual development come from considering the meaning of Easter, and especially the ideas that 'light may come out of darkness' and 'love is stronger than death.'

### Aims: teachers often express the aims of lessons in these kind of terms

This lesson idea aims to enable pupils to:

- ✓ Reflect thoughtfully on ideas about the death of Jesus
- ✓ Learn that, for Christians, the Bible is inspired by God and can explain God's plan for humanity
- ✓ Understand why Christians see Jesus and the Bible as sources of wisdom, inspiration and salvation

### Flexibilities: all good lesson plans are Flexible

The learning ideas in this lesson can be used in many different ways. You might adjust the work to meet varied pupils needs, concentrating on understanding the art with lower achieving pupils. They might need additional time to think about the meaning of the events of Good Friday.

### Good learning: what's working well here?

These lesson ideas use the pupils' skills in creativity, thinking, choices and giving reasons to support judgements. Young people are given the chance to choose and discuss ideas to agree and disagree with key ideas from Christian belief. Good learning makes young people think and respond for themselves, so these lesson activities don't announce right answers, rather they open up possible ways of understanding Christian belief.





### Learning Activity 1: Why Good Friday?

Draw the pupils' attention to the idea that it is strange to call the day Jesus died 'GOOD'. Using the PowerPoint of Good Friday art, introduce different ways of understanding what happened at the Cross, including the idea that Jesus' love and forgiveness were tested there, and were victorious. Which pictures do pupils value most? If they made a picture called 'Why Good Friday?' what would theirs show?

### Learning Activity 2: Six connected ideas about Good Friday

Show the pupils (one between two) page 4, and ask them to discuss the six ideas they are given about the meaning of Jesus' crucifixion. They select three that explain 'Why Good Friday?' best, and give reasons for their choices. This is a written activity, which the class teacher may supervise.

Share briefly and simply your own reasons for calling the day Jesus died 'Good.'

Invite pupils to read out some of their answers for discussion.

### Learning Activity 3: What difference does the Bible account of Good Friday make?

Give pupils the chance to think over this idea: 'If Jesus died to show us God's love, then all His followers can learn from what happened on Good Friday.'

Ask pupils to consider questions like these: what might Christians today learn from Good Friday? Why might they think it is a good day?

You could use one or two of the testimony stories from the GideonsUK website: [www.gideonsuk.com](http://www.gideonsuk.com)

✓ This is a good example of someone who found the Testament they were given as a 12 year old useful 20 years later:

[www.gideons.org.uk/testimonies/pamela](http://www.gideons.org.uk/testimonies/pamela)

✓ In this example a person in prison describes his understanding of what Jesus' death means to him:

[www.gideons.org.uk/testimonies/martin](http://www.gideons.org.uk/testimonies/martin)

Read the letters with the class, and ask them whether these letters help them to understand why the Bible is given away freely by the Gideons.

### Learning Activity 4: Art work of your own

You might get the co-operation of the teacher you are working with to set a homework task for pupils:

✓ Create your own image or work of art to answer the question 'Why Good Friday?' You can include ideas from Christianity studied in the lesson, and your own ideas as well. You might refer to the text of the Bible – you can look it up in your new Gideon New Testament.

The teacher and pupils might appreciate you calling back at school in a week and showing an interest in results of this homework. Such links with schools reinforce the relationship between your Gideon branch and your local schools in very positive ways.

### Additional resources on this topic:

The Gideons' website has some inspiring testimony stories about the impact of the Bible – ask pupils to look up some of these and consider: what impact did the Bible have on these people?

[www.gideons.org.uk/testimonies](http://www.gideons.org.uk/testimonies)

[www.request.org.uk](http://www.request.org.uk) is a well resourced website for pupils to learn about the Bible and Christian prayer, purpose built for the RE classroom.

## Six connected ideas about Good Friday:

discuss each idea and see which ones you most agree with. Put them in order, 1-6

**"Maybe it was just a tragic death"**

Jesus was only a young man, and He had done nothing deserving death. He was a victim of jealous politicians. What a sad and tragic death."

**"It was the most amazing 'forgive' ever"**

Jesus prayed for those who nailed Him to the cross: 'Father, forgive them, they don't know what they are doing.' That is pretty amazing. Worth remembering."

**"It is very sad, but I don't see what else you can say"**

"The Romans crucified thousands of people they thought were a threat. Jesus was, sadly, in the wrong place at the wrong time."

**"Jesus showed on the cross that love wins"**

"Jesus taught 'love your enemies'. When He was crucified, He proved it was possible. He showed love is stronger than death."

**"Imagine how the freed thief Barabbas must have felt"**

"Barabbas, a murderer was released, and Jesus killed in his place. He must have felt that Jesus died for him personally. Many Christians feel the same."

**"Christians believe Jesus' death was God's plan to save humanity."**

"Evil people thought they could get rid of Jesus. But it was God's plan all along to show at the cross that humanity can be saved from all evil, even death. Christians thank God for dying on the cross."

**When you have discussed and ranked the six ideas about Jesus' crucifixion, then work alone. Select the three reasons you think explain why the day Jesus died is 'Good Friday' to Christians. Note them down. For each one, give two reasons why you chose it.**

## Good Friday: Good idea?



### What's good about 'Good' Friday?

I think...

## Bible Helps in the Gideon Bible

Anyone who looks at a Gideon Bible will find a section of 'Bible Helps' at the front.

This little section includes some features that 11 year olds often find fascinating.

The Bible is a large text, and it can be hard to find your way around it, so these Bible Helps can be seen as 'navigation aids' for the reader.

It is always good when presenting the Bible to school pupils to offer them some idea about how to read it, and in these lesson and assembly ideas, we always refer to relevant sections of the 'Bible Helps'. Examples help pupils to look into the Bible themselves, and make the book less confusing for beginners. These 'Helps' make sense of the Bible to new readers.

**Inside the front cover of a Gideon Bible is written:**

**"The Bible deals with every experience in life. It gives advice and help, instruction and warning, comfort and hope, correction and direction, predictions and promises."**

## Where to Find help when...

The first section of Bible Helps suggests readings from the Scriptures which relate to many circumstances of life.

In this lesson, with its themes of salvation, forgiveness and the love of God, it might be good to draw pupils' attention to sections headed:

- Doubting
- Needing Peace

It might interest pupils to draw their attention to the Bible's ancient wisdom, for example:

- Mark 15: 1-15 – the story of Barabbas
- Luke 23: 26-43 – the crucifixion

## About the Bible, Guidance in Life and 'What the Bible says about...'

These sections are useful reference points for pupils who may be just beginning to discover what the Bible says and means.

In these lessons, teachers might particularly draw attention to the sections on faith, forgiveness and salvation.





