

# SESSION 10: NEW

**TOPIC:** Why Jesus? pt. 3

## GOAL

The goal of this session is to show the teens how the Paschal Mystery — Jesus' Passion, death and Resurrection — was news that changed the entire world.

## KEY CONCEPTS

Jesus' death at Passover is a direct connection to the original Passover and Exodus of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. Just as the Israelites were slaves, humanity was enslaved to sin and death.

Jesus' death defeated the power of sin and death. By His blood on the cross, we are freed from slavery, just as the Passover lamb saved the Israelites from death.

Christ's Resurrection proved that death had been defeated. Death no longer has power over us.

## KEY TERMS

**Exodus:** God's saving intervention in history by which He liberated the Hebrew people from slavery in Egypt, made a covenant with them, and brought them into the Promised Land.

**Gospel:** The "good news" of God's mercy and love revealed in the life, death, and Resurrection of Christ.

**Idolatry:** The worship of idols.

**Paschal Mystery:** Christ's work of redemption accomplished principally by his Passion, death, Resurrection, and glorious Ascension.

**Worship:** Adoration and honor given to God, which is the first act of the virtue of religion. Public worship is given to God in the Church by the celebration of the Paschal Mystery of Christ in the liturgy.

## SCRIPTURE

1 Corinthians 5:7

1 Corinthians 15:14

Acts 2:29-36

Exodus 7-14

John 19:36

Romans 6:15-23, 8:2-4

Romans 9:20-10:4

## CATECHISM

571-582

599-618

638-658

## ABOUT THIS SESSION

The Gather is a newspaper headlines search for good news. The Proclaim explains how Jesus' death on the cross changed the course of history for the entire world. During the Break, the teens discuss how Christ's victory over death impacts their everyday life. The Send allows the teens to venerate the cross and pray the rosary.

## ENVIRONMENT

Hang newspapers on the walls of the main meeting space. Also include signs that say, "Breaking News," "This Just In," and "News!" Have the Core Team dress up as news reporters and hand out newspapers.

## MEDIA SUGGESTIONS

"At the Cross (Love Ran Red)," Chris Tomlin (*Love Ran Red*, sixstepsrecords, 2014)

"Christ Is Risen," Matt Maher (*Alive Again*, Essential Records, 2009)

"Messiah," The Bible Project ([youtube.com/watch?v=3dEh25pduQ8](https://youtube.com/watch?v=3dEh25pduQ8))

"Nailed to the Cross," Rend Collective (*Good News*, Universal, 2018)

"Read Scripture: Exodus Ch. 1-18," The Bible Project ([youtube.com/watch?v=jH\\_aojNJM3E](https://youtube.com/watch?v=jH_aojNJM3E))

"The Cross Has the Final Word," Cody Carnes (*The Darker the Night/The Brighter the Morning*, Capitol Christian Music Group, 2017)

## AS YOU GET STARTED

*For an alternative Send*, consider inviting your parish priest and music minister to lead the teens in Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Gather the teens in the chapel or church sanctuary, or set up the main meeting space for Adoration. Allow for a time of Eucharistic Adoration, closing with Benediction and the Divine Praises.

## GATHER

*Welcome and Opening Prayer (5 min)*

Gather the teens in the main meeting space. Welcome them to the session and begin in prayer.

*Good News (15 min)*

Gather the teens in the main meeting space and instruct them to remain with their small groups. Give each group a newspaper and have them look for headlines that exemplify good news. Once they find a headline, they cut it out and discuss it. Use the following questions to facilitate a discussion:

- How does this headline exemplify good news?
- How does this story impact society as a whole? How does it impact you, personally?
- Is this story good news to everyone or could some people interpret it as bad news?

## **PROCLAIM**

*“New” Teaching (20 min)*

### **Breaking News**

Have you ever received big news? Not like the daily news but BIG NEWS? We receive news every day through TV, radio, social media, friends, family, the internet, etc. But most of the time it is just ICYMI (In Case You Missed It) or FYI (For Your Information). The facts relayed may be nice to know, but they do not necessarily change anything about your life or day. But what if someone came running in right now yelling, “Good news! You will never guess! The greatest news you can imagine!” and it actually meant something?

*Share a personal story about a time when you were the recipient of big news that impacted your life.*

The word “gospel” means “good news.” This word was originally used during Roman times to announce victory in war. Picture this: Julius Caesar has been assassinated. His best friend, Antony, and his son, Octavian, team up to defeat Caesar’s enemies but soon turn on each other, which leads to 13 years of civil war. A crucial naval battle takes place off of the coast of Greece in 31 B.C. You are a Roman citizen. Even though the battles are taking place far from you, the city is full of division, anxiety, and fear. If Octavian were to win, it would be good news for you; if Antony were to win, it would be bad news and you may even have to flee for your life. Finally, a messenger brings the news that Octavian is victorious! He is now master of the entire Roman world! This news changed everything!

*Consider replacing the story of Caesar with the story of a president who was assassinated if you feel your teens will relate better to that scenario.*

### **A New Development**

The apostles proclaimed Jesus’ Passion, death, and Resurrection as Gospel — as good news.

But why? Why did the apostles believe that Jesus’ death and Resurrection changed everything? To them, Christ’s death on the cross and subsequent Resurrection were like the news of a conquering emperor; they were events that changed their very reality. There had been a battle going on for centuries and they were expectantly awaiting the news — the good news — of a savior who would return victorious and usher in a new era.

Just like the news of Octavian’s victory would not mean much without the full context of Caesar’s assassination and the ensuing civil war, we have to understand Christ’s death on the cross in terms of the bigger picture. We have to understand that the cross came as a development to a story already taking place — that it changed everything.

### **New Exodus**

Jesus died during Passover for a reason. The original Passover took place during the Exodus. The Israelites were slaves in Egypt. As such, they were constantly working hard. God appeared to Moses and sent him to Pharaoh to demand that he let the Israelites go into the wilderness for three days to worship their God.

*CCC 571-582; Exodus 5:1*

When Pharaoh stubbornly refused, God sent plagues upon Egypt. These plagues intentionally targeted areas of “power” the Egyptians believed their gods possessed. God was showing the Egyptians that He was the only true God. The final plague was the death of the firstborn. The Israelites were instructed to sacrifice a young, “unblemished” lamb. Remember that — it will be important. They were then to take the blood of the lamb and paint it on the wooden beams of their door frame in order to mark that they worshipped the true God. The angel passed over the houses with blood on them, so no one was killed in those homes. After this plague, Pharaoh finally relented and let the Israelites go free. He later changed his mind and tried to pursue them, only to run his chariots into the Red Sea.

*Exodus 12:7-13*

The meal of unleavened bread shared that night of the final plague became the Passover meal. The Israelites celebrated this meal every year to remember how God freed them from slavery in Egypt, so they could be free to worship Him in the Promised Land.

*Exodus 7-14*

### **At the Last Supper, Jesus Does Something Different**

When Jesus and His disciples celebrated Passover, Jesus did something new. He said the cup of wine is to be filled with His blood and is to usher in a New Covenant, or relationship, with God. He left the meal unfinished, saying that He would not drink the wine again until He was in the Kingdom with the Father.

*Matthew 26:26-29*

Jesus was taken from the Garden of Gethsemane, brought before Pilate, and sentenced to death. The day of His Crucifixion was the same day people would have brought their Passover lambs to be sacrificed at the temple. On the cross, Jesus said, “I thirst,” and was given cheap wine to drink. Upon tasting it, He announced, “It is finished.” When the soldier saw that Jesus was dead, he decided not to break His legs — the normal custom— thus preserving Him “unblemished,” a true Passover sacrifice. In His death, we see another Passover and exodus into freedom. His blood was spread upon the wooden beams of the cross to save us from slavery and death.

*1 Corinthians 5:7; John 19:36*

But we are still slaves. Humanity traded Pharaoh for sin. We are made in the image and likeness of God, which means we are meant to worship and praise Him and reflect His image to the world, however, we fail to do this daily. Sin holds us captive and the wage of sin is death. When we reflect sin into the world and lift it up as god, we are not free to worship God.

*Genesis 1:27*

The prophets of the Old Testament constantly condemned Israel for failing to live up to their vocation. They constantly fell into idol worship and sin, and yet, the prophets promised that there would come a day when God would accomplish what we cannot. This is accomplished through Jesus on the cross. He was not simply taking our punishment; He was battling against the powers of darkness that held us captive. His death on the cross defeated sin and death. We are no longer slaves to sin. Hell has no victory. Death has no sting.

*CCC 599-618; Romans 6:15-23, 8:2-4, 9:30-10:4*

It is as if someone threw a wrench into the gears of a machine. The gears cannot break the wrench, but rather, the wrench breaks the gears. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI said: “While it is usually the case that anything unclean touching something clean renders it unclean, here it is the other way around: when the world, with all the injustice and cruelty that make it unclean, comes into contact with the infinitely pure one — then he, the pure one, is the stronger.”  
*Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week, pg. 231*

## **Real News**

All of this is confirmed by Christ’s Resurrection on the third day. Without the Resurrection, Jesus’ death on the cross would simply be another tragedy of a wise teacher or failed revolutionary. On that third day when the women came running to the apostles with news that Jesus had risen, they realized everything had changed. The world became a different place. Nobody had ever died and risen from the dead of their own power. This was not supposed to happen.

*CCC 638-658; 1 Corinthians 15:14; Acts 29-36*

Many people today still question the Resurrection, but there are a couple of key points that reassure us that it is not fake news — it is reality.

- 1) The Roman Seal: A seal was placed upon the stone that blocked the tomb and a guard was set. To break the seal would be punishable by death. The Roman soldiers were the best and most feared military units in the world. In order to steal Jesus’ body, someone would have had to sneak by or subdue the elite, war-hardened soldiers and break the seal.
- 2) The Empty Tomb: The reality is that Jesus’ bones have not turned up. It was common practice for Jews to make a memorial out of loved ones’ graves and this certainly would have happened with Jesus’ body. However, no tomb has been found with human remains that states, “Here lies Jesus of Nazareth.” If the apostles failed to steal the body, why would the Jewish authorities or Roman rulers not have simply made it known where His body was, or opened the tomb and shown everyone the body? Not to mention the empty tomb was discovered empty by women. In the ancient world, women were not considered reliable witnesses. If the apostles were making the story up, they would not have chosen women to be their key witnesses.
- 3) To the Death: Every one of the apostles (except John) were brutally martyred. Every one of the martyrs in the early Church went to their gruesome deaths proclaiming Jesus Christ resurrected. If they had been lying, it is doubtful they would have so willingly been beheaded, burned, stoned, crucified, or eaten by lions.

Just as the Romans were anxiously awaiting news of the battle between Antony and Octavian, man anxiously awaited the revelation of God’s rescue of humanity. We finally have the news that not only has the battle been decided, but our God is victorious! We are no longer slaves to sin and death. Christ has bought our freedom with His blood and leads us in a new exodus to freedom in Him forever.

## **This Is All Big News, but What Exactly Makes it Good?**

We now have a certain future! We are not left wondering who will win the battle for our souls. Christ has already won. He has secured our victory through His death at Passover. We have been freed from our slavery to sin by Christ's blood on the wood of the cross, just as the Israelites were saved by the blood of the Passover lamb on the wood of their doorposts. We can now live in the freedom of Jesus, which is exactly what the apostles and early Church did and what the Church continues to do today.

Are you living no longer as a slave, but as a free son or daughter of God?

## **BREAK**

*Small Group Discussion (20 min)*

Divide the teens into their small groups. Begin in prayer and then use the following questions to facilitate a discussion:

- What is the best news you have received? How did it affect you?
- What was the last thing you shared with someone? (*A funny video, a meme, a new song, a good Netflix show, etc.*)
- What do you think of when you think of Jesus on the cross?
- *Invite a teen to read John 20:1-10.*
  - What stands out to you from this passage?
  - How did each person (Mary Magdalene, Peter, and John) respond to the empty tomb?
  - How would you have reacted?
  - What did this news mean to them? How did it alter their experience of Jesus' death?
- What does the fact that Jesus not only took on your punishment, but also defeated death for you, mean to you?
- In 1 Corinthians 15:55, St. Paul asks where is death's sting and victory, implying that Christ had conquered it through His sacrifice. What does it mean that death has no sting or victory? How would living out this truth change your day-to-day life?

## **SEND**

*Broken Video (5 min)*

Play the video "Broken" as a reflection before the Veneration of the Cross and Glorious Mysteries.

*Veneration of the Cross (10 min)*

Place a large cross in the front of the main meeting space. Create a prayerful environment by dimming the lights and playing instrumental music in the background. Gather the teens in the main meeting space and use the following to introduce the time of prayer:

*On Good Friday, we venerate the cross as a way of acknowledging Christ's sacrifice and victory on the cross. Just as God went to battle against the false gods of Egypt in order to free the Israelites, Jesus went to battle for you. He fought against the powers of evil and the devil for your soul. In His victory, we have the freedom to live with Him in this life and be united with Him*

*in heaven in the next. As you come forward to venerate the cross, remember Christ's sacrifice for you and pray for the grace needed to live out this freedom.*

Invite the teens to come forward, one by one, to venerate the cross. They can kneel before it, kiss it, or simply touch the wood. After everyone has venerated the cross, transition into praying the rosary.

*The Glorious Mysteries (10 min)*

Explain that although Christ suffered and died, He rose from the dead — He was victorious over sin and death. It is through His Resurrection that we come to have eternal life. The Glorious Mysteries of the rosary are a way to proclaim this victory. Close the session by praying the first Glorious Mystery, the Resurrection. Use the *Glorious Mysteries* handout to lead this prayer. If the teens are not familiar with the rosary, provide a brief explanation before entering into the prayer.

## **Handout: Glorious Mysteries**

### The First Glorious Mystery: The Resurrection

**All:** Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy Will be done, on Earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

**Leader:** "Amen, amen, I say to you, that you shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy." (John 16:20)

**All:** Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

**Leader:** "For I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no one shall take from you." (John 16:22)

**All:** Hail Mary...

**Leader:** "But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices which they had prepared." (Luke 24:1)

**All:** Hail Mary...

**Leader:** "And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone, and sat upon it." (Matthew 28:2)

**All:** Hail Mary...

**Leader:** "Do not be afraid; for I know that you seek Jesus, who was crucified." (Matthew 28:5)

**All:** Hail Mary...

**Leader:** "He has risen, He is not here; see the place where they laid Him." (Mark 16:6)

**All:** Hail Mary...

**Leader:** "...He is going before you to Galilee; there you will see Him. Lo, I have told you." (Matthew 28:7)

**All:** Hail Mary...

**Leader:** "So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell His disciples." (Matthew 28:8)

**All:** Hail Mary...



**Leader:** “Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live.’” (John 11:25)

**All:** Hail Mary...

**Leader:** “And whoever believes in me shall never die.” (John 11:26)

**All:** Hail Mary...

**All:** Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. O my Jesus, forgive us our sins; save us from the fires of hell; lead all souls to heaven, especially those in most need of your mercy. Amen.