



cell outlines
EASTER

These Cell Outlines are written by Youth and Children's Ministries. They are available every month from our web site. For more information and other Cell resources, visit [salvationarmy.org.uk/children-and-youth-resources](https://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/children-and-youth-resources)

INTRODUCTION

This time last year, as the country entered the first lockdown, we produced our very first online cell outline – in time for Easter 2020. Those sessions may well have been the first time that youth leaders took their first tentative steps in running their cell groups via Zoom. If you didn't have chance to use them last year, the notes are still available here:

<https://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/resources/discipleship-resources/cell-outlines>.

And here we are at Easter 2021, one year on and a full complement of 12 months' online cell notes are now on the website! And the Government's roadmap out of lockdown looks hopeful that we may soon be able to meet in person again with our young people (with all appropriate safety measures in place).

This month, as we look to celebrate Easter 2021, these cell outlines have again been written for an online platform. However, many activities would be easily adaptable if you are beginning the move to face-to-face work again. The first session 'Celebrate Easter' suggests some fun activities to celebrate together, as well as an opportunity to pause and reflect on the real Easter story. The following three sessions use the usual cell format of Scripture reading, discussion and activities, looking at three stories following the Easter account: The Road to Emmaus, Doubting Thomas and the Recommissioning of Peter.

CELEBRATE EASTER

These cell outlines suggest a break from the usual cell format and allow some time to celebrate Easter together. There are a number of fun activities suggested that you can choose from, as well as an opportunity for a short reflection on the real story of Easter.

Choose from any of the following activities:

1. Group Colouring

Share a screen of an Easter colouring image. As group members join the meeting they can use the annotate button to start colouring in the picture.

2. Virtual Easter Egg Hunt

Prepare a virtual Easter Egg Hunt by taking a selection of photos of an Easter egg out and about in your community, town, city! Share the photos and ask group members to guess where the photo was taken.

You could also ask each group member to take part by taking two or three photos themselves before your meeting, and then taking it in turn to share the photos and guess. (You could even have given them an Easter egg specifically for this purpose.) You could then collate all the photos and provide the completed virtual Easter Egg Hunt for the whole corps to enjoy.

3. Egg Tower

Ask each group member to come prepared with some newspapers, a roll of tape and a small Easter egg. The task is for each person to try to build the tallest tower that will support the egg in a given time limit, using only the newspaper and tape. (They may need to rope in some family members to help!)

4. Hot Cross Bun Bake-Off

Find a suitable hot cross bun recipe and distribute to your group ahead of the session so they can prepare all the ingredients. (Be aware of any group members that may need the ingredients provided for them, or those with allergies.) You could either 'bake off' live during the session, or ask group members to pre-bake their hot cross buns and show them during the session. Video or photographic evidence can be presented, as well as the finished article! As you enjoy eating the hot cross buns together you could chat about the origin of hot cross buns and the significance of the cross at Easter.

5. Easter Story Bible Scavenger Hunt

This is a Zoom scavenger hunt with a difference. Group members need to look up the Scripture reference before they know what object to find. The scavenger hunt is sourced and adapted from:

[Easter Scavenger Hunt family tradition \(arabahjoy.com\)](http://arabahjoy.com)

1. Something outside the same colour as the item in John 12:12-13
2. Either of the food items in Mark 14:12
3. The kitchen item in Luke 22:17
4. Something related to the body part in Luke 22:50
5. The item in Mark 14:13
6. A piece of cloth the same colour as the item in Mark 15:17
7. Something representing what Jesus carried in John 19:17
8. The same number of identical items as the number in Matthew 26:14
9. Something you would use to complete the same action as in Matthew 27:24
10. What the women were carrying in Mark 16:1
11. The item in Mark 16:4

6. Review the Easter Story using these short videos

The Crucifixion of Jesus: Luke 19-23 (4 mins)

▶ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_unHmAf7INK

The Resurrection of Jesus: Luke 24 (5 mins)

▶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vb24Lk1Oh5M>

7. He gave his only Son

Display the following Scripture on a whiteboard.

This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life. God didn't go to all the trouble of sending his Son merely to point an accusing finger, telling the world how bad it was. He came to help, to put the world right again.

— John 3:16-17 (MSG)

Read it aloud together.

Ask each person to underline or highlight the part of this Scripture that stands out to them, and then share why they chose that part.

Ask group members to do an internet image search for John 3:16-17 after your meeting. Ask them to scroll through the images and pick one that inspires them and perhaps shows something of the real meaning of Easter. Ask them to download or screenshot the image and set it as their home screen / lock screen / profile picture for the coming week.

8. Videos for Reflection and Prayer

Watch either of these two videos in an attitude of reflection, prayer and worship.

'Why Does My Heart Feel So Bad?' (Moby) - *The Miracle Maker*

▶ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5q8BRdXdZJI>

Easter Anthem: 'Who Do You Say I Am?'

▶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M4m11MOy7eQ>

Share a whiteboard and ask everyone to add their own feelings about the amazing, forgiving, life-giving resurrection of Jesus, eg 'amazing', 'I can't believe it', 'wicked!', 'thank you so much', 'I'm free'.

Then use these thoughts and words in a prayer of thanks and praise for all Jesus went through for us.

9. Worship Tracks

'Resurrection day' – Rend Collective

'Happy Day' – Tim Hughes

LUKE 24: 13-35 – THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

WELCOME

Play one or both of these games to start the session and ‘break the ice’:

1. What changed?

All group members except one person turn off their cameras, change one thing about their appearance, and then turn their camera back on. The group member who remained has to guess what each one has changed. Take it in turns to be the guesser.

Ask: How easy was it to notice what was changed? How observant did group members feel? Were some members of your group more observant or alert than others?

OR

2. Celebrity voice quiz

Play snippets of celebrities talking and ask group members to guess who they are. You can find these on YouTube, or create your own.

Ask: How do we recognise the people we know?

Say: In this session we are going to read about two people who took a journey with Jesus without even recognising him. They were so focused on their disappointments and problems that Jesus had to point out to them the significance of history’s greatest event that had just unfurled before their eyes!

WORD

The Salvation Army Youth and Children’s Ministries Unit has a regular podcast called All Terrain. Guests are invited on to the podcast to talk about their journey as a Christian. As part of their interview they can make four choices about a hypothetical journey they may take:

- Where are we walking?
- Who is coming with us (one living, one dead, one fictional)?
- What’s on the playlist?
- What’s in the snack bag?

Ask each person to answer these questions: to think of a journey (adventure) they would love to take, who with, their playlist for the journey and the all-important snacks! You could share a whiteboard and ask group members to annotate on it, or split into breakout rooms and discuss in smaller groups.

Then read Luke 24:13-35.

Additional: Share a map of the Holy Land at the time of Jesus that shows a possible route between Jerusalem and Emmaus. The Bible tells us Emmaus was about seven miles from Jerusalem. Help the group visualise what seven miles is by working out how far it is from your location to a known landmark. You could also look on Google Earth. [NB It’s not clear exactly where biblical Emmaus was. At least four locations have been suggested.]

Additional: Split the young people into threes and ask them to role-play these three people on the journey to Emmaus. Two of them take the role of the two disciples who are confused and upset about what has been happening. How do they respond when a man they don’t recognise doesn’t seem to know anything about the crucifixion of Jesus? How do they feel and what did they say/do when they realised it was Jesus all along? Bring the group back together and ask for a summary of what they have discovered through this activity.

Use any of the following questions as you discuss:

- 🗣️ What do you think the two disciples thought about a stranger joining them as they walked and taking part in their conversation?

SESSION TWO

- 🗨️ Jesus' death would have been a national incident. What do you think the disciples would have thought about the stranger's apparent lack of knowledge about it?
- 🗨️ Why do you think they invited the stranger to stay for a meal with them?
- 🗨️ What is meant by 'burning hearts' in verse 32? What made the two disciples' hearts burn?
- 🗨️ How did Jesus help them understand all that had happened to him?
- 🗨️ What do you think the disciples wanted to say to Jesus when they realised it was him, but he had disappeared? What did they do next?
- 🗨️ How and why had their emotions changed from the beginning of the journey?
- 🗨️ Sometimes in times of disappointment, frustration or pain, we can't see or hear God with us. Why is this and what can we do about it?

ACTION

Share your screen with a picture depicting a scene from this Scripture. Ask group members to annotate on to the picture what they would talk to Jesus about if they were walking with him. Discuss as appropriate.

Say: The road to Emmaus account is all about journeys, meals and friends. Aren't those some of the good things in life? Journeys – travelling to different and interesting places; food – we all appreciate a good meal; and friends – companions along the way, to whom we can open our heart.

These are the some of very things that may have been missing from our lives this last year.

Ask group members to choose one of the following actions and commit to doing it in the coming week.

- ▶ Take a walk with someone this week – ask them how they are and encourage them.
- ▶ Share a meal with someone – your treat – and make sure they know how much you appreciate them. (This may need to be a picnic or a takeaway pizza as Covid guidance allows!)
- ▶ Open your heart to a trusted friend about the disappointments/difficulties or questions you have about your own journey with Jesus.

PRAYER

Allow some time of personal reflection for group members to chart their own journey with Jesus on a large sheet of paper. They can include times of despair, disappointment, pain; times of faith; times when they have learned or experienced something new about Jesus; times of community with other believers; times of grace. They can choose the period of time, eg their whole life, the last year, the previous week. If appropriate, group members could share their timelines with each other and pray for each other, thanking Jesus for the journey and committing to what is to come.

Additional: Play some reflective music and lead the group in the following meditation/prayer (Prayer Activations and Encounters, River Kids 2nd edition):

Close your eyes.

I want you to imagine you are walking on a path. This path is to represent how you feel life is going right now. What does your path look like? Is it winding or straight? What are your surroundings? Are you in an open space or going through something?

Now I want you to imagine Jesus. He is definitely there. Can you see him? Where is he? Is he walking with you? Are you walking to him?

Close in prayer.

Open your eyes.

JOHN 20:24-29 – JESUS APPEARS TO THOMAS

WELCOME

Choose from any of the following games to start your time together.

1. The classic 'two truths and a lie'. Tell group members beforehand to come to the session with three prepared statements about themselves. Two are true and one is a lie. Each person takes it in turn to tell the group their three statements and the rest of the group must try to guess which one is a lie.
2. Using the chat function, individually message some participants: 'Act as if you believe everything that is said', and a few other group members: 'Act as if you don't believe anything that is said.' Ask a couple of other people (who have not received either message) to tell the group what they have been doing during the week (or any other topic). Let the discussion play out for a while! Then come clean and tell the group members what was happening. Ask the speakers how frustrating it felt when other people didn't believe what they were saying.
3. Tell the group that you are going to read them a statement and you want them to think about how sure they are that the statement is true. They should answer with a percentage figure between 0 per cent = 'I am really unsure'; to 100 per cent = 'I am completely sure'. They can display their answer by writing it on a piece of paper to hold up to the camera, or use the chat function (or if you are really familiar with Zoom you could create a poll with 0, 20, 40, 60, 80 and 100 per cent options). After each statement ask for the group members to explain why they chose as they did.

Statements:

- * The earth is not flat.
- * Vatican City is the smallest city in the world.
- * No piece of square paper can be folded more than seven times in half.
- * It is impossible to sneeze with your eyes open.
- * Climate change exists.
- * A man walked on the moon for the first time in 1969.
- * God created the world in seven days just like the Bible says.
- * God loves you.

Discuss:

- 💬 What kind of reasons did people give when they were very sure that something was true?
- 💬 What kind of doubts did people have when they were very unsure about whether something was true?

(Activity adapted from Energize <https://www.energize.uk.net/meeting-plans/125>)

Introduce the theme of the session: the story of a disciple named Thomas, who doubted that Jesus came back to life. Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to his other disciples, but Thomas wasn't with them; he didn't see Jesus. Thomas said he would not believe that Jesus was alive unless he could see Jesus with his own eyes and touch him.

WORD

Read John 20:24-29

Say: Thomas is often referred to as 'Doubting Thomas'. He had doubts about whether or not the story of Jesus' resurrection was true. Thomas had seen Jesus do many miracles. He had even seen Jesus raise the dead. But he struggled to believe what he could not see. He wanted Jesus' physical presence. Jesus wasn't cross or disappointed with Thomas for his doubts. He knew exactly what Thomas needed. And the minute Thomas saw Jesus his doubts transformed into faith.

SESSION THREE

Use any of the following questions to discuss the story. You could split into breakout rooms to do this if preferred.

- 🗣️ How do you think the disciples felt when Thomas didn't believe what they were telling him – that Jesus was alive?
- 🗣️ Why do you think Thomas found it so hard to believe?
- 🗣️ Do you think you would have believed the other disciples? Why/why not?
- 🗣️ What did Jesus say to Thomas?
- 🗣️ How do you think Thomas felt when he saw Jesus standing before him, along with the very wounds that Thomas had said he needed to see and touch to believe?
- 🗣️ What do you think about Thomas's need to see in order to believe? Do you understand where he was coming from, or do you think he lacked faith by not believing what he was told?
- 🗣️ How do you think Thomas changed after this encounter?
- 🗣️ Do you think it is fair that Thomas is now known as Doubting Thomas?

ACTION

- * Explain that to doubt is to be unsure, to have questions.

Doubt, however, is not the opposite of faith – unbelief is the opposite of faith.

Doubt can lead to your faith being stronger if you deal with your doubts. However, if it's not dealt with, it can undermine your faith.

- * Share a whiteboard and ask group members to write up the times in our lives when we might doubt God or our faith.

Discuss as appropriate.

Ask: How can we deal with our doubts?

Say: Doubts are OK because they cause us to sit down and question our faith and belief, rather than simply blindly living out what we have been told is true. All of us have moments of doubt. We wonder if God is listening, if God cares, or if God is even there. But it's through these times of doubt that our faith becomes stronger.

Sometimes we need to doubt in order to grow. Doubt can lead to questions, questions lead to answers, and if answers are accepted, then doubt has done good work. Doubt can help us relook at what we have always believed to be true, doubt can take us back to the Bible to prove and demonstrate and believe God's truth for ourselves.

With God's help, our doubt will be transformed into faith. It's not wrong to have doubts and it's not wrong to express doubts. As we take our doubts to God he will help us work through them and use them to help deepen our faith.

PRAYER

Ask each person to write out the following Bible verse on a piece of paper (this needs to be big enough to roll up into a tube – or you could use a toilet roll tube). Allow a few moments for each person to reflect on what these words mean. You could look it up in different translations too. If you would like music as you reflect, you could play either of the two songs indicated below.

'The people who have faith in me without seeing me are the ones who are really blessed!'

— John 20:29 (CEV)

Ask group members to roll their paper into a narrow tube. Then look through the tube with one eye. Hold your free hand up against the tube with your palm facing you, a couple of inches away from your face. Now look straight ahead with both eyes and you'll see that apparently a hole has formed in your hand!

SESSION
THREE

After you've finished looking at the 'holes' in your hand, explain that the holes Jesus showed Thomas weren't illusions; Thomas had seen the nails driven in. But seeing wasn't the point; believing was what mattered then, and what still matters today.

Say: Everyone has doubts about God from time to time. That's not a bad thing. That's just how it goes. We worship a God we cannot see with our eyes. We can't touch him with our hands, and we can't hear his voice with our ears. It's only natural that we would have our doubts that there's someone up in Heaven listening to our prayers who loves us and cares for us. But God is with us now in the form of the Holy Spirit, and he can be as real to us now as he was to Thomas. God gave Thomas what he needed to help him with his doubts and questions, and while different, he gives us today what we need, too.

Say the following prayer out loud together a few times.

'Lord I believe; help my unbelief.' (Mark 9:24 NKJV)

Additional: If you would like to finish with a song you could play 'This I Believe' (Hillsong) or 'We Believe' (Newsboys).

JOHN 21:15-19 – JESUS AND PETER

WELCOME

1. In the Scripture passage for this session Jesus cooked breakfast for his disciples, so it could be fun to start this session with some cereal art. Ask each group member to create a piece of art with some breakfast cereal, using glue, paper, tape etc.

Or

2. **Ask:** If you could have breakfast with anyone, dead or alive, who would you choose and why?

Split your group into teams of three (using the breakout rooms function) and ask each three to come up with as many things that come in 'three' as possible, eg three legs on a stool; three sides on a triangle; three wise men; three books in the Hunger Games series; three musketeers; three bags full (baa baa black sheep); three bones in the human ear; three members of the Trinity; the Jonas brothers; a three-piece suit; three cheers; three colours in traffic lights; three chipmunks (Alvin, Theodore and Simon); rock, paper, scissors; the three bears (Goldilocks); three little pigs...

The three with the most correct threes is the winner!

Say: One other thing that comes in three is the number of times that Peter denied that he knew Jesus, just a few days back from where we are reading today.

Today we are looking at another 'three' that we find in this Scripture passage.

WORD

 Read John 21:15-19

Ask: What 'three' do you notice in this passage?

Say: In the Bible passage that we have just read, Simon Peter was back home in Galilee with some of the other disciples, doing his old job as a fisherman. How do you think Peter was feeling, a few days after he had let Jesus down so badly?

Read out the following scenarios to your group members and ask each person to rate themselves on according to how 'bad' they would feel. You could use the reactions on the Zoom platform. Or you could use thumbs up / thumbs down.

- * Your friend was absent from school and your teacher asked you to let them know that you had a French test in the next lesson. You forgot to tell your friend, who then had to take the test unprepared.
- * Your dad was working a long day and he asked you to empty the dishwasher before he got home, so he could get right on with cooking dinner. You didn't do it.
- * You joined in with a negative conversation on social media about one of your close friends, and your friend found out what you'd said.
- * Your friend applied for a job that he/she really wanted, but you decided to apply for it as well. You got the job.
- * You were with a group of friends who started picking on someone younger. You stood and watched and didn't do anything.
- * You forgot to let the dog out in the garden at lunchtime and there was a puddle on the floor when your parents got home from work.
- * You promised a friend that you would go along to the first performance of a show he/she had a starring role in, but on the night you just couldn't be bothered.
- * You told your team coach that another team member was injured and couldn't play in the team (which wasn't true) so you could get in the team instead.

SESSION FOUR

* Your friend asked you if you believe in Jesus, go to church and all that – and you said no.

Explain: However bad we feel about the mistakes we have made in the past, this encounter of Peter with Jesus shows us that Jesus can and will forgive us and set us back on track with him.

Back to Peter on the beach. **Ask:**

- 🗣️ What do you think Jesus meant when he said, 'Feed my lambs'?
- 🗣️ What do you think Jesus meant when he said, 'Take care of my sheep'?
- 🗣️ Why do you think Jesus asked Peter three times if he loved him?
- 🗣️ What is forgiveness? How did Jesus show forgiveness to Peter?

Summarise: Through this conversation on the beach, Jesus leads Peter through an experience that would remove the cloud of his denial, of his failure and of his disloyalty. Three times Peter had disowned Jesus. Three times Jesus asked Peter whether he loved him. When Peter repented and answered, 'Yes, you know that I love you', Jesus told Peter to feed his sheep. Peter's failure wasn't the end of the story for him but the beginning of a new story, a new life of opportunity, a life with renewed purpose.

ACTION

Everyone will need a banana, a table knife and some tape

Ask the group members to peel a banana and chop into pieces.

Explain that they now need to try and put their banana back together using tape and any other resources they want to use.

After a few minutes, ask everyone to share their 'fixed' bananas. How do they feel about how successful they have been putting it back together? Most likely it won't be successful at all!

Explain to your group about the Japanese art of Kintsugi. This is the repairing of broken pottery with gold. The philosophy treats the breakage and repair as part of the history of the object, rather than something to disguise. The restoration of the broken pots emphasises the imperfections and sees them as part of the beauty of the object, instead of trying to hide the cracks. The shimmering gold holds the broken pottery together, giving it new beauty and value. The piece is in fact more beautiful for having been broken. Show the group some pictures from an internet image search of this type of repair.

Ask them what they think of it.

Discuss:

- 🗣️ How is this repair different from what we may expect?
- 🗣️ Do the cracks detract from the beauty of the piece or add to it?
- 🗣️ Do the flaws take away the pot's usefulness?
- 🗣️ Discuss how we can apply the principle of Kintsugi to our own lives as followers of Jesus.

Summarise: As we journey through life we can get chipped and broken, we can make mistakes, fail, crash out. In our culture, we often go to great lengths to cover up these things in our lives and try to present ourselves as perfect to the world. But life – this following Jesus life – means trusting that Jesus holds all our imperfections and failures and he can, and will, restore us.

Everyone makes mistakes. If God only used perfect people, whom could he use? Peter's failure wasn't the end of the story for him but the beginning of a new story, a new life of opportunity, a life with renewed purpose. In Peter we see that we don't have to be faultless or flawless, but we do need to keep returning to Jesus, asking for forgiveness and allowing the power of the Holy Spirit to keep transforming us into the disciple that Jesus longs for us to be.

PRAYER

Say: Jesus commissioned Peter to 'feed my sheep' and 'follow me', and in doing so refocused Peter back to his purpose, his vocation, his calling as a disciple and follower of Jesus. We have learnt from Peter's story that Jesus still wants us to be part of his big plan for the world. Jesus will use people who love him. Not people who love him with some super-human love, but those who simply love him as much as they can. Each of us has our own unique part to play in God's story for the world.

Allow some time for personal reflection and prayer:

If you were on the beach with Jesus, what would his commission be to you? What has he called you to do for him?

Encourage group members to say sorry for the times they have messed up, to receive Jesus' forgiveness and to respond by saying, 'Yes, Lord, I love you.'

Two reflective tracks you could use are 'Life' or 'All My Life', both by Hillsong. Or for something more upbeat try 'This Is Living Now'.