

# starter

## jesus life line

### AIM

To get the group thinking about the life of Jesus as they remember it.

### INTRODUCTION

This is a good activity

- for people of all ages and abilities to do together;
- at the end or beginning of the liturgical year;
- as an introduction to the remembered Bible method.

It goes well on the Feast of Christ the King (Last after Pentecost) but can also be good to do at other times.

A group doing this activity need to

- be prepared to move around a bit (this does not mean that people with mobility difficulties can't do this, but you may need to think ahead to see how everyone can be included);
- be ready to have fun and enjoy a bit of creative chaos.

It can be done with a group of almost any size, and has been completed successfully by groups from half a dozen people to over two hundred. It will take between 15 and 30 minutes depending on the size of the group, how many join in and how long the group wants to go on for.



*Photo shows the Jesus Life Line activity using string at Shiregreen United Reformed Church*

It's not ideal for a group who think the Bible is so serious that we can't laugh together whilst we think about it or who want their worship space and time to be kept neat, orderly and quiet.

There are a number of ways making a Jesus life-line: a visual representation of the life of Jesus as the group remembers it. This can be done using string, paper or wood, or anything else you can think of that produces the same effect (fabric, cardboard, etc.).

### For the string method

*What you need:*

- a very, very, very, long piece of string, enough to stretch across the widest part of the space you are using, or down the middle;
- a lot of clothes pegs, at least enough for each member of the group to have one.

Explain that the string represents Jesus' life. Have someone hold one end of the string explaining this end is his birth. Have someone else hold the other end of the string and explain this end is his death, resurrection and ascension. In case there are any members of the group who want to argue that Jesus existed before he was born or has an existence in

# starter

## jesus life line

the Godhead now, makes sure the piece of string is long enough for both people to hold a bit of spare.

Invite the group to take a peg and to peg it on the string at the place they think their example happened in Jesus life, saying what it represents. Thus up the 'birth' end of the string you should have things like conception, birth in Bethlehem, growing up in Nazareth, visit to the temple as a boy, etc. At the 'death' of the string you should have the events of holy week and the 50 glorious days after the resurrection.

In the middle you might have all sorts of things. For example, someone might say 'When he was a young man he cured a blind person. I think he was about twenty so I'll put it there', placing the peg in the middle of the string. See this as an opportunity rather than a mistake. It should be considered alongside such apocryphal tales as 'the healing of Andrew's Mother in Law' (who says he didn't have one), or the healing of the 12 lepers (or whatever memorable number seems to have come to mind) or 'the time Jesus knocked on the doors of the houses and told people that he loved them' (all of these examples have really happened in groups doing this activity).

Carry on putting pegs on the string until everyone who wants to has had a go, or you run out of pegs. Some contributions may be duplicates. This doesn't matter either. It does help you to build up a picture of what bits of the gospels people have found the most memorable. In a group of mixed abilities it's useful to encourage people to work together so that everyone can take part.

When everyone has added their peg to the strong try to give a resume of the events from Jesus life that have been remembered by going briefly along the string and calling out some of the ones that have been remembered.

### For the paper method

*What you need:*

- replace the piece of string with a very, very, very long piece of paper.
- put a line down the middle of the paper and give out marker pens to the group members.

Having established which end of the paper is which (or else it might be a bit too muddled), invite participants to write or draw events they remember from Jesus life. Again you might get duplicates but this provides interesting material for later discussion. You can put the paper on a long wall afterwards to remind people what they remembered which can be useful if this is to be the first part of a series of 'remembering the Bible' activities. The piece of paper could be replaced by cardboard or fabric (use fabric pens and iron it to fix the colours).



*Photos show RN and RAF Chaplains doing the Jesus Life Line activity on a long piece of paper*

Remember to offer a resume of what appears on the paper for the whole group to appreciate what has been remembered. If you display this on the wall you could invite people to continue to add to the life-line at a later stage (i.e. after the session has formally ended). This can be helpful for people who are not so confident or who take a while to remember stuff.

# starter

## jesus life line

### Piece of wood method

What you need:

- one or two pieces of wood either an old plank or pieces of 4x4 (not a car, a piece of wood) or something that has been hanging around in the cellar for a long time with little purpose;
- some nails, hammers, cardboard tags, and pens (and a saw if necessary).

Arrange the wood so that we're all clear about which end represents which part of Jesus life, or thing could get a bit too messy (remember you're going to be banging in nails here). Invite people to take the tags and write or draw a remembered incident from Jesus life on each one. Then they can bang a nail into the wood with the tag attached where they think this happened in Jesus life. When this is all done, saw the wood into two pieces (one a bit smaller than the other), unless you already have two pieces. Then nail the two pieces together in a cross shape, leaving the other tags and nails on the cross.

This can be a good activity for all ages for Good Friday, or at any other time when you want to remember the cross-wise movement of Jesus life, and do a bit of woodwork. The cross can become the centrepiece for a Good Friday meditation and be garlanded with flowers on Easter Sunday. Do have health and safety in mind when doing the hammering or the sawing.

### EVALUATION

Please try to answer these questions for yourself and for others who will use this material:

1. What was the most helpful thing?
2. What was the least helpful thing?
3. What would you like to try now?

### THE NEXT STEP

If you want more starters please revisit the menu. If you want to do onto a main course 'Remembering him' is a Bible study that includes some remembering activities. For Desert try Kennings and Cookies. If you want to know more about Remembering the Bible see the document in the Training section of the website. There are other main course Bible studies available.

### Acknowledgements

An earlier version of the piece of string method appeared in *Word of Mouth* by Janet Lees, published by Wild Goose in 2007.