

BREATHTAKING BAY: TALK IDEA 1

Suitable for a holiday club or vacation Bible school, ages 4-11 or 8-11

You will need:

- A crown
- The Island map visual
- The “Breathtaking Bay” coloured visual to stick up

This talk outline can also be downloaded from www.ceministries.org/epic

March on wearing a crown; then continue to march on the spot while barking out orders...

Attention! On your feet, right away and march. That’s right, up two, up two, up two, up two. Now halt! Stretch up! Sit down! Salute! At ease.

Relax voice

Well done – brilliant obeying. But why did you do what I asked? (pause) **It was because I was in charge; I had power and authority** (flex muscles) **over you. I said something and it happened.**

Well, today’s true story is all about the person with the most power and authority (flex muscles). **We find it in the New Testament part of the Bible** (hold up Bible). **Mark begins by telling us that Jesus** (crown shape) **has power and authority** (flex muscles) **over everything** (sweep arms in front of you) **because he is God’s** (point up) **chosen King and Son. Then Mark gives loads of examples in the beginning of his book just to make sure we’ve got it.**

So we’re going to go to Breathtaking Bay (point to on map) **to see what Jesus** (crown shape) **does. Every time I say “Jesus”, I want you to make a crown shape; every time I say “authority”, I want you to flex your arms; every time I say “God”, I want you to point up; and every time I say “everything”, I want you to sweep your arms in front of you.**

Give the children a chance to practise the actions as you say each of the four words.

Peter and his friends were getting ready to go on another fishing trip. It’s what they did, day in, day out. Get the nets ready, sail out on Lake Galilee, fish until they caught enough, then come back to shore to sell it. It was their job, their way of making money and surviving. But that was about to change. Forever. For that particular day was no ordinary day.

That particular day, Jesus (crown shape) walked up to them on the sand and said: **“Hey guys! Come on, leave everything and follow me! I’ve got plans for you to work with me.”** Leave everything! Their family, their work, the lot. Do you know what they did? (pause) They dropped their nets on the beach, and they followed Jesus (crown shape). All of them. Right away. No questions, no arguments.

Peter and his friends could tell that Jesus (crown shape) was important. They could see he had authority (flex muscles) over everything (sweep arms in front of you) just by the way he spoke. And so if Jesus (crown shape) said follow, they knew they had to follow.

Well, they followed Jesus (crown shape) to a place called Capernaum, where they listened to him teach about God (point up) and watched impossible things happen. They saw all sorts of ways that Jesus (crown shape) has authority (flex muscles) over everything (sweep arms in front of you).

He knew more than anyone else. He could make people better just like that (click fingers), even people who had evil spirits inside them. His power showed he was God’s (point up) Son. Wow! Peter and his friends were amazed at Jesus’ (crown shape) authority (flex muscles) and they weren’t the only ones; everyone else was, too.

And then, Peter suddenly had a thought (pause). His mother-in-law was really ill. She had an awful fever, all hot, sticky and shaky. He could take Jesus (crown shape) to meet her, to help her – and so that’s what they did.

They left the synagogue and went to Peter’s house. Jesus (crown shape) went straight up to Peter’s mother-in-law and took hold of her hand. As he did, God’s (point up) power worked in her and made her better right

away. She was even able to get up and cook. **Jesus** (crown shape) **had healed her!** It was **amazing; it was awesome; it was EPIC!**

And she wasn't the only one **Jesus** (crown shape) **healed that night. As soon as the news spread, loads of ill people flocked to Peter's house. Jesus** (crown shape) **was able to heal them all – he even drove out some evil spirits, just like that** (click fingers)!

Jesus (crown shape) **really does have authority** (flex muscles) **over everything** (sweep arms in front of you). **He really is God's** (point up) **Son.**

Peter and his friends kept following Jesus (crown shape) **after that. As they watched and learned from him, they began to work out who Jesus** (crown shape) **is. They started to understand more and more that Jesus** (crown shape) **is God's** (point up) **chosen King and Son – not just a good man or a clever miracle worker.**

Stick "Breathtaking Bay" coloured section on the map.

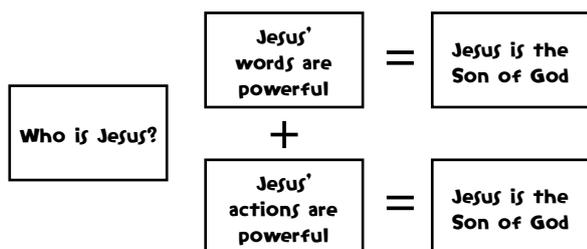
I wonder, who do you think Jesus (crown shape) **is? Over the next few sessions, we're going to hear about some more of the fantastic things Jesus** (crown shape) **did and said, and we're going to have a chance to see what it means to follow him as God's** (point up) **chosen King and Son.**

BREATH TAKING BAY: TALK IDEA 2

Suitable for a mid-week club or children's Christianity Explored course, ages 8-11

You will need:

- A bandage or sling
- The *Epic Logbook*
- The Explorer Notebook (see page 156)
- The following visual aids ready to display as you go through the talk



This talk outline can also be downloaded from www.ceministries.org/epic

I wonder, who do you think Jesus is?

Display the question: "Who is Jesus?"
You could use a flip chart or PowerPoint.

Maybe you think he was a really cool magician or a clever teacher. Maybe you imagine him to have been a kind man or a genie granting wishes. Or maybe you just think he's made up and never existed.

Lots of people have different ideas about Jesus, so it's important that we explore for ourselves, by examining the evidence of his life and death.

And to do that, we are going to look at Mark's book in the Bible. Mark spent lots of time with people who knew Jesus, and he wrote his discoveries down, because he wanted us to be able to answer the question: **Who is Jesus? Mark begins straight away with the answer: Jesus is God's chosen King and Son.**

- Read aloud Mark 1:1

Note: Read from the same Bible version you are using with the children. Epic Explorers uses the 2011 edition of the

New International Version (NIV), but you may want to adapt the talk to whatever version the children will be using in their discussion groups.

Mark spends the rest of his book explaining why he believes this is true, and why it's good news that Jesus came. So let's explore some of the things Jesus said and did, and see what they show about Jesus.

1. Jesus' words are powerful because he is the Son of God

- Read aloud Mark 1:16-20, asking the children to listen carefully for anything Jesus did that was amazing.

Did you spot what amazing thing Jesus did? (Take responses.)

Jesus gave a command and immediately, Simon, Andrew, James and John obeyed. Just like that (click fingers or do something similar). **There was no ignoring or delaying. No excuses or "Do I have to?". It wasn't like when your mum asks you to tidy your room.**

Nope. They were willing to do what Jesus asked right away. Even though that meant leaving their families and their jobs.

Imagine if I came up to you and said: "Hey, I want you to leave school, forget your family and let me take you wherever I choose". Would you do it? Of course not; not really. I'm not important.

So why did these four leave everything for Jesus? Well, they could tell he was powerful and important from what they had seen and heard about him, and from him. If Jesus said: "Follow", they knew they had to obey.

As the fishermen followed Jesus, they heard Jesus' powerful words again and again. Listen to verses 21-22:

- Read aloud Mark 1:21-22, again asking the children to listen carefully for anything Jesus did that was amazing.

Did you spot the amazing thing Jesus did this time? (Take responses.)

The fishermen heard Jesus teach about God in an amazing way that no one else taught. Jesus' words are powerful.

In fact, his words were so powerful that he was able to heal a man who had an evil spirit. Just like that (click fingers). When Jesus told the evil spirit to leave the man, the spirit obeyed – it had no choice. Jesus' words are powerful.

Why are his words so powerful? How can he just speak, and the impossible happens – and not just here, but all through Mark's book? Well, it's because Jesus is the Son of God, and God has power over everything. He made everything and rules over everything.

Stick up: "Jesus' words are powerful = Jesus is the Son of God"

2) Jesus' actions are powerful because he is the Son of God

But it's not just Jesus' words that are powerful; his actions are as well. Mark gives even more evidence that Jesus is the Son of God.

Can I have a volunteer for a minute?

Bandage the volunteer's arm, or put it in a sling.

I want you to imagine that _____ (volunteer's name) has broken their arm.

Can I make it better just like that?

Click fingers and encourage the children to respond to the question.

Can a doctor make it better just like that?

Click fingers and again encourage the children to respond to the question.

Of course we can't; we don't have that kind of power – but Jesus does. So in Mark 1, when Jesus went back to Simon's house, where Simon's mother-in-law was ill, guess what he did? (Take responses.)

Yes, that's right, Jesus healed her. Just like that (click fingers).

And then lots of others came to the house; many who were sick, many who had evil spirits in them. Guess what Jesus did this time? (Take responses.)

Yes, Jesus healed them. Just like that (click fingers). No disease was too difficult for Jesus – absolutely nothing was incurable.

We see that in the rest of Mark's book too – time and again Jesus made blind people see, deaf people hear and lame people walk. He cleaned up people's skin, he stopped people's bleeding – he even brought people back from the dead.

Jesus' actions are powerful; he can do the impossible, because he made everything and rules over everything. Jesus is the Son of God.

Stick up: "Jesus' actions are powerful = Jesus is the Son of God"

As we discover more about Jesus, we'll keep a record of those discoveries in this Explorer Notebook.

Show page 1 of the Explorer Notebook: "Jesus is God's Son..."

So as we've explored Mark chapter 1, we've seen that Jesus can say and do things that only God has the power to do. This is why Mark believes Jesus is God's chosen King and Son.

But what about you? I wonder, who do you think Jesus is?

Hold up the *Epic Logbook* and show page 3: "Jesus is God's Son"

That's what we'll be thinking about when we split into our small groups.

DISCOVERY DENS: TALK IDEA 1

Suitable for a holiday club or vacation Bible school, ages 4-11 or 8-11

You will need:

- Simple costume for each character being interviewed*:
 - Eyewitness – Sunglasses and wig
 - Paralyzed man – A bed roll and hat
 - Levi – Baseball cap and money bag
 - Professor – White lab coat
- The Island map visual with the “Breathtaking Bay” coloured visual attached (see pages 152-154)
- The “Discovery Dens” coloured visual

** If you only have two actors, one could play the eyewitness and Levi, with a very quick costume change, and the other could play the paralyzed man and professor. It is also possible for one actor to play all four parts.*

This talk outline can also be downloaded from www.ceministries.org/epic

Reporter: Welcome to Capernaum News. It seems that Jesus of Nazareth has been doing more amazing things. Earlier we reported on the events at Breathtaking Bay (point to the map). Once again Jesus has been healing people and speaking with God’s authority.

We’re going to be talking to some men who were in the Discovery Dens (point to the map), and we’ll be asking the question: what really matters to Jesus? So without further ado, let me introduce you to our first guest.

On walks the first eyewitness.

Reporter: Good evening and thanks for being here. I wonder – can you fill us in on the day’s happenings?

Eyewitness: Yes of course. It all began when I heard that Jesus was back in Capernaum. I was desperate to see him in action and so I went to the house he was visiting, as did every man and his dog, it seemed. We all packed in, watching and listening.

Then, above us, there was loads of banging and bits of the roof started crumbling. I looked up – and I saw four guys peering through a hole in the roof!

Reporter: You’re joking? People were so keen to see Jesus that they destroyed a roof? Why?

Eyewitness: Well, it seemed they had brought their paralyzed friend to see Jesus, but couldn’t get to him because of the crowds. However, they were so convinced that Jesus would heal their friend, they wouldn’t give up. They had this genius idea to lower him on his mat through the roof and land him in front of Jesus!

Reporter: Amazing! What faith these guys had in Jesus’ power! So what happened next? Did Jesus heal him immediately?

Eyewitness: Not quite. Jesus turned to him and said: “Your sins are forgiven”.

Reporter: He said what?

Eyewitness: “Your sins are forgiven!”

Reporter: He never! The man was paralyzed – that’s why his friends had taken him – so Jesus could heal him! Does Jesus think that the forgiveness of sin matters more than walking?

Eyewitness: Yes, he must do – and the religious leaders weren’t happy about that, let me tell you. They didn’t think Jesus was able to forgive sins because they know that only God can forgive sins. But what the leaders didn’t realise is – Jesus IS God.

Reporter: Wow! To find out what happened next, we’ve invited the paralyzed man himself to come into the studio.

In walks the paralyzed man.

Reporter: Great to have you here. Now, obviously you’ve just walked in, so can you tell us what happened after Jesus said he’d forgiven you?

Paralyzed man: Well, he proved that he IS God. First, by pointing out what the leaders were thinking; and then he told me to get up with my mat and walk home. And that's exactly what I did. Everyone was flabbergasted!

Reporter: Incredible. So Jesus proved that he is God, both in his actions and in his words; and he showed that the forgiveness of sins really matters.

We've more evidence of this from another incident today. And so I've asked Levi the tax collector to come and share that evidence. Levi, welcome.

Levi walks in. Give him a strong regional accent to add some fun to his account.

Reporter: Levi, please tell us about your meeting with Jesus.

Levi: Sure. Well, there I was, collecting in everyone's money to pass on to the Romans, when up walks Jesus. Now, I don't mind telling you – I was a little bit surprised. No one likes hanging round with guys like me. We're the lowest of the low, you know, cheats'n'all.

But anyway, he comes up to me and tells me to follow him. Spoke with such authority, I had to. And then, I invited him back to my place to have a meal with some of my friends. Well, that didn't sit right with the religious leaders. They were really cross that Jesus was hanging out with us.

Reporter: I'm sure they weren't impressed. So, what did Jesus say?

Levi: Well, to sum it up, he basically said that he'd come to save sinners. That's it in a nutshell. Amazing!

Reporter: So again we see that the forgiveness of sin really matters to Jesus. To help us understand why it's such a big deal, we've invited an expert on this issue of sin.

Professor enters.

Reporter: Professor, why do you think sin matters so much to Jesus?

Professor: It's like this: we all sin – all of us do things wrong, say things wrong and think things wrong – and as a result we are cut off from God. And the only way for us to be friends with God again is to be forgiven by him.

It appears that Jesus came to earth to make a way for us to be forgiven and saved from the punishment we deserve.

Reporter: Well, that really is good news. We've discovered our forgiveness is what really matters, because otherwise we're separated from God. And Jesus has come to make our forgiveness possible.

Stick up "Discovery Dens" visual with an amazed face.

Reporter: Amazing! That's all from us here at Capernaum on this historic day. Join us again tomorrow for the latest on Jesus, the Son of God. But for now, good night.

DISCOVERY DENS: TALK IDEA 2

Suitable for a mid-week club or children's Christianity Explored course, ages 8-11

You will need:

- 6 large story picture cards (or these can be on PowerPoint if you're teaching a big group) – available to download from www.ceministries.org/epic
- Visuals from session 1, already displayed as a reminder of what we learned last time
- The Explorer Notebook (see page 156)
- Depending on illustration choice, either a "Shove off God, I'm in charge, Not you" visual or a Treasure Island map with a treasure chest on it, an "X" to stick on, a blindfold and the phrase "Sin is missing God's mark"
- 3 arrows and 3 slips of paper with "It spoils", "It separates" and "We're stuck" written on them

This talk outline can also be downloaded from www.ceministries.org/epic

What do you think your biggest problem is? Is it the fact you have to sit next to the class bully? Or that you haven't been picked for the school team? Maybe it's something to do with your family or friends. Well, in chapter 2 of Mark's Gospel, we see that Jesus thinks we have a bigger problem. A problem that *spoils* and *separates*. A problem that gets us *stuck*.

Let's go back to Capernaum:

Show picture 1: A house where you can see people through the doorway and window, and surrounding the outside of the house.

There you are, rammed in the crowded house and I mean rammed! People are squashed into every nook and cranny, packed into every space possible, inside the house and outside. You see, Jesus is there and everyone is desperate to hear him speaking. You all know that his words are powerful.

Point to the "Jesus' words are powerful" visual from session 1.

Show picture 2: Inside the house, with a hole in the roof and the paralyzed man being lowered down.

All of a sudden, bits of the roof start bouncing off your head. You look up and see a gaping hole, with four men lowering their friend down on his mat. They have brought him to Jesus to be healed. They believe that Jesus can help because they know his actions are powerful.

Point to the "Jesus' actions are powerful" visual from session 1.

As the man lands right in front of Jesus, the friends are watching, you're watching, the man's waiting... What would you expect to happen next? (Take answers.)

But listen to what actually happened:

- Read aloud Mark 2:5

Show picture 3: Inside the house, the crowd with shocked faces and a speech bubble saying: "Your sins are forgiven".

Jesus doesn't heal the man right away – he doesn't do what everyone's expecting – instead Jesus forgives the man's sins. But why? We need to make sure we understand what sin is to see why.

So what is sin?

Note: Use one of the two illustrations below to explain what sin is. The first one is especially useful for church children as it is more relational and will help them see that sin is not merely about actions.

Illustration 1:

Sin is when we don't treat God as we should. It's like we're saying: "Shove off God. I'm in charge, Not you!"

Stick up: **S**hove off God
I'm in charge
Not you!

Sin isn't just the wrong things we say or do, but it's also to do with our attitude towards God. Sin is when we make ourselves...

Point to the "I" in the visual aid.

... more important than God, even though he is in charge and wants the best for us.

So when you disobey God's commands and do what *you* want instead, such as lying to someone or taking something that doesn't belong to you, it's as if you are saying: "Shove off God – your rules are wrong, I'm in charge, not you!"

And when you forget about God, or love things like sport or TV or friends more than God, it's as if you are saying: "Shove off God – you don't matter, I'm in charge, not you!"

The Bible says that all of us sin and that there are serious consequences for our sin.

Illustration 2:

Sin basically means missing God's mark.

Stick up "Sin is missing God's mark" and then ask for a volunteer to stick an "X" on your treasure map, where the treasure chest is. But blindfold them before they try. Comment on whether or not they meet the mark by putting the "X" in the correct place.

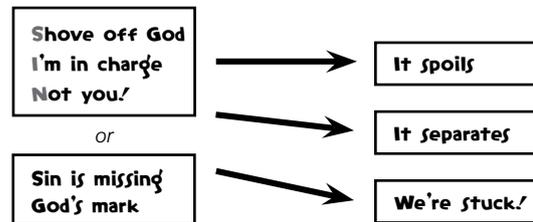
You see, God has set a mark for us. It's to "love the Lord your God with all your heart" and "love your neighbour as you love yourself". But none of us manage to do this all the time, so none of us manage to meet God's mark.

Sometimes we miss his mark by not bothering to speak to him or considering him in our decisions. Or sometimes we disobey his instructions – like the time you lied to your mum. All of us say, think and do things that are wrong. All of us ignore God. This is a lot more serious than missing the treasure in the game, as it has serious consequences...

Note: Whichever illustration you have used, the talk continues from this point.

What are the consequences of sin?

Stick up an arrow going from your definition of sin, as explained in your chosen illustration, and then add "It spoils". Build the visual aid up each time so that it looks like this:



1. It spoils

Imagine you're playing inside with a tennis racket, despite being told not to. As you sweep your arm back to hit the ball, you hit your TV instead and smash the screen to pieces. What would happen next? (Take one or two answers.)

I imagine you would be sent to your room or punished in another way as you've spoiled things – the TV *and* your family relationships. In fact, any time we sin, it spoils something. If we foul in soccer, we spoil the game. If we lie, we can spoil people's trust in us.

But the most serious consequence of sin is that it spoils our relationship with God and deserves punishment.

Stick up another arrow going from the definition of sin; then add: "It separates".

2. It separates

You see, God is angry with us when we don't live in a way that pleases him. It wouldn't be fair if God just said: "It doesn't matter" when we do something unkind or we don't treat him as we should. And so, we deserve to be punished.

God's punishment is a bit like when we're sent to our room after smashing the TV; then we are separated from our family, but God's punishment is much more serious, as it's separation from him and his perfect kingdom for ever. In fact, the Bible's name for this eternal separation from God is hell. That's why sin is such a serious problem.

Stick up an arrow going from the definition on sin; then add "We're stuck".

3. We're stuck!

The third problem is that we can't get rid of our sin ourselves – we're stuck.

Some people think that we can fix our sin problem ourselves by making sure we don't do anything unkind or selfish, or by going to church and doing loads of good stuff instead. They think we can make ourselves okay with God.

But that's just like sticking black paper over your TV to try and cover up the damage. We maybe able to hide the smashed screen, but it doesn't deal with the real problem – the TV is still broken.

In the same way, doing good stuff doesn't deal with our biggest problem – our sin still spoils, and it still separates us from God. Which is why we need someone to help us. So is Jesus that person? Let's go back to Mark 2 and find out.

Show picture 4: Inside the house, the Pharisees looking very unhappy, with a thought bubble coming from their heads: "Only God can forgive sins".

As you look around after Jesus' shocking statement, you see the religious leaders scowling furiously. They think only God can forgive sins, and do you know what? They're right!

Show picture 5: Inside the house, with a speech bubble saying: "Which is easier for people to see? If he has been forgiven, or he has been healed?"

Jesus knows exactly what they are thinking because he's God's Son.

Point to the "Jesus is the Son of God" visual from session 1.

So Jesus asks them if it's easier to say: "Your sins are forgiven" or to say: "Get up and walk". The answer has to be "Your sins are forgiven" because you can just say it and no one will know if it's true or not. There's no way of actually seeing if someone's sins have been forgiven.

But if you say: "Get up and walk" to a paralyzed man, then of course you can see if they're healed – if it's true, they'll start walking around.

Show picture 6: Inside the house, with the paralytic man standing up and everyone looking amazed.

The next thing you know, Jesus proves that he has authority over sin and over sickness by telling the man to get up and go home... and he does. How incredible is that?! Jesus speaks and the man is forgiven; Jesus acts and the man is healed.

Jesus' words are powerful (point to the "Jesus' words are powerful" visual from session 1).

Jesus' actions are powerful (point to the "Jesus' actions are powerful" visual from session 1).

Can you imagine how amazed you would be to see this?

And the great news is, Jesus didn't just come to forgive the man's sin but ours too (show page 2 of the Explorer Notebook).

He is able to do so because he is God's Son (show page 1 of the Explorer Notebook).

Next time we'll see exactly how Jesus deals with the way our sin *spoils* and *separates*. We'll see the rescue he offers so we don't have to be *stuck*.

MYSTERIOUS MOUNTAINS: TALK IDEA 1

Suitable for a holiday club or vacation Bible school, ages 4-11 or 8-11

You will need:

- A Roman soldier's costume to wear
- Sword
- Rope
- Chair, centre stage
- The Island map visual
- The "Breathtaking Bay" coloured visual
- The "Discovery Dens" coloured visual
- The "Mysterious Mountains" coloured visual*

* If you are combining sessions 3 and 4, you will also need the "Crown Cave" coloured visual.

This talk outline can also be downloaded from www.ceministries.org/epic

March on, centre stage.

I'm a soldier, in charge of nearly 100 men, I'll have you know! And boy, I've seen a lot. The toughest place Caesar sent me was Jerusalem – not an easy job, believe me!

I mean, there was this one week which started off on a real high – tons of people turned out on the streets to...

Wave the rope in the air, like a sports supporters scarf.

... cheer on a guy called Jesus. He had been travelling round for a few years showing incredible power...

Stick up "Breathtaking Bay" visual.

... forgiving people...

Stick up "Discovery Dens" visual.

... and teaching about God. It seemed everyone loved him and yet, before the week was up, we were putting him to death on the Friday. Crazy!!!

We were brought in after the Jewish leaders had arrested Jesus during the night.

Wrap rope round your wrists, and sit on the chair.

They didn't like the things Jesus was saying and doing, or the fact that he was so powerful and popular – and so they captured him and tried to find something they could punish him for. But do you know what? They couldn't – because he'd never done anything wrong!

However, when Jesus said he was God's chosen King and Son...

Stand up, leaving the rope on the chair, and tap the crown on the "Breathtaking Bay" visual with the sword.

... the Jewish leaders decided he was lying, and could be punished for that. And so they started to beat him and laugh at him – and then they dragged him to see Governor Pilate.

Move to the left side of the stage.

Stand upright, with sword in front of chest and one hand cupped around your ear.

As I stood guard, I listened to Pilate questioning Jesus. But Jesus just remained quiet. Then he and another prisoner, called Barabbas, were taken onto the balcony.

Step forward, to the very front of the stage.

By this time, there was quite a crowd gathered.

Wave arm in front of you.

They were all keen to see...

Stand on tiptoe, shielding eyes.

... what would happen to Jesus. Pilate silenced them.

Finger on lips.

Then he gave them a choice – they had to choose who they wanted let go...

Hold out right hand to your side.

... and who should be killed.

Hold out left hand to your side.

In my mind it was a stupid thing to ask. Why on earth would they want Jesus killed? He hadn't done anything wrong. Why should he die in place of Barabbas, who was a thief and murderer?

But the crowd began to shout.

Punch the air with your fist when talking about the crowd.

"Free Barabbas, kill Jesus! Free Barabbas, kill Jesus!" They got angrier and angrier. And Jesus...

Stand with hands by your side.

... he just stood there, saying nothing. It was as if he knew what was going to happen.

My boss, Pilate, ordered that Jesus be killed, and so we led him away...

Move back to centre stage.

... and gave him a beating.

Pick up the rope and begin to whip.

When we were tired of whipping Jesus and mocking him, we tied a wooden beam to him.

Drape the rope over your shoulders.

Then we lead him to a hillside.

Drag the chair with you to the right side of the stage.

There, we nailed Jesus to a wooden cross...

Stand on the chair, with arms outstretched.

... between two criminals, and gambled for his clothes to see who could keep them.

Now, I've seen many a man die on a cross – but never as Jesus did. He didn't scream or swear.

Shake head.

Instead he forgave those who were being cruel to him. It was incredible. From the things I had heard, Jesus must have had the power to stop it all, to save himself, but he didn't. He stayed put.

He didn't deserve to die, but what could I do? It was my job to follow orders and so...

Climb off the chair and stand upright in front of it, tapping sword on your hand.

... I stood guard and I waited. I waited for him to die.

Pause.

Stopping tapping sword and slowing down speech for the next phrase:

And then the weirdest thing happened...

It was daytime, but all of a sudden it went pitch black. Total darkness in the middle of the day. For three hours!

Clutch sword in front of you, looking nervous.

None of it made sense, until Jesus cried out in a loud voice: "My God! Why have you turned away from me?"

God had turned away from his Son. Jesus took our punishment for the wrong we have done, and in doing so he was separated from his Father.

It should be us who are cut off from God, because we don't treat him the way we should. But Jesus died in our place. He died so that we can be forgiven friends with God for ever.

Stick "Mysterious Mountains" coloured visual on the map.

As Jesus took one last deep breath, he said: "It is finished" and died. The ground shook and a big, thick curtain in the temple tore in half. It was then I knew for certain that Jesus really was the Son of God.

*Note: If you are combining sessions 3 and 4, use the alternative ending at the * below.*

Move back to centre stage.

I wonder – who do you think Jesus is? Do you believe he's God's Son? Do you understand why he had to die?

* Alternative ending if you are combining sessions 3 and 4.

Pilate checked with us that Jesus was definitely dead. Then we gave his body to his friends, who wrapped him up and buried him in a tomb – a cave cut out of solid rock. A huge stone was pushed in front.

Mime pushing a stone.

Some of us soldiers were sent to guard the tomb.

Stand to attention.

There was no way anyone could get in or out. And yet, Jesus did.

You see, a couple of days after he had died, Jesus came to life. Came as a bit of a shock to us all, I can tell you!

Sit on chair, looking surprised.

Jesus had promised it would happen, but no one really understood what he meant. Early on the Sunday morning, some women who were friends of Jesus discovered that the stone had been rolled away and his body had gone. An angel told them that Jesus had risen!

Stick up "Crown Cave" coloured visual.

He had done the impossible. He had died so we could be forgiven, and he had beaten death, showing us we can have life for ever with him. Jesus really is the Son of God.

Move back to centre stage.

I wonder – who do *you* think Jesus is? Do you believe he's God's Son? Do you understand why he had to die and then come to life?

MYSTERIOUS MOUNTAINS: TALK IDEA 2

Suitable for a mid-week club or children's Christianity Explored course, ages 8-11

You will need:

- Three story-picture cards (available to download from www.ceministries.org/epic):
 - 1: Jesus hanging on the cross
 - 2: the temple curtain ripping
 - 3: the Roman centurion
- A picture of a large calendar, with circled dates, to which you will add the 3 talk titles (download as above)
- A mobile/cell phone, with a "No Entry" sign on the back of it
- Items for your chosen method for telling the story (see below)
- "Sin" visuals from session 2 (see page 74), already displayed as a reminder of what we learned last time
- The Explorer Notebook (see page 156)

This talk outline can also be downloaded from www.ceministries.org/epic

Choose one of these three story options:

- *Either* show the Australian Bible Society videos on Mark 15 (there are two). Go to <http://wild.biblesociety.org.au>. Click on "Wild Teacher Resources" and then "Video Library". Watch both videos together, one after the other.
- *Or* have leaders perform an animated reading of Mark 15:22-39 with different leaders reading the parts of the various characters. Use whichever Bible version you are using with the group.
- *Or* summarize the verses and tell the story with some Bible pictures (download as above), eg:
 1. Jesus was led up the hill dragging a cross, like a criminal, even though he had never done anything wrong. They nailed him to the cross, between two criminals, and gambled to win his clothes.
 2. Then some of the people watching began to mock Jesus saying: "Ha, he said he was going to rescue others, but he can't even rescue himself" and: "Why don't you climb down

and prove you're the Son of God?" Even those hanging on the crosses on either side joined in the insults.

3. In the middle of the day, when the sun should have been shining, the sky went dark and stayed dark for three hours. Jesus yelled out in an anguished voice: "My God, my God, why have you turned away from me?"
4. As Jesus breathed his last breath, the temple curtain ripped into two. The Roman centurion thought about all he had seen and heard, and he said: "Surely this man was the Son of God".

Hold up mobile/cell phone.

Imagine this phone has all the bad things I've ever done recorded on it. Or all the bad things you have ever done.

All the times you've lied and been rude to your parents. All the times you've picked on people, had a selfish thought and not treated God as you should. All your sin recorded. Imagine if I now uploaded it to YouTube! The embarrassment it would cause; the friendships it would spoil.

We heard last time that sin spoils our relationship with God (point to "It spoils") and it separates us from God (point to "It separates"). I'm going to show you why.

Imagine this hand is me – and the ceiling is where God is.

Put the phone on one hand.

This phone, which shows all my sin, is getting in the way between me and God. Our sin separates us from being God's friends and there's nothing we can do about it (point to "We're stuck").

Last time, we thought about the man who was lowered down through the roof, and we saw that Jesus forgave the man's sin. Jesus can do this because he is God's Son. But how can Jesus rescue us and forgive our sins? Well, it's all to do with the very special day when Jesus died.

1. A planned day

Stick up by the first circled date: "A planned day".

The day Jesus died was planned by God. There are lots of Bible verses that show us, but we'll stick with Mark. In Mark 8:31 it says: "He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again."

Jesus knew that he was going to die. It wasn't an accident. He wasn't surprised when the religious leaders arrested him. He wasn't surprised when they handed him over to the Romans to be killed. He knew when and why he was going to die. He knew that it was part of God's rescue plan to save us from being stuck with the punishment we deserve.

Let's watch the videos/read the story before we think about why Jesus' death was the only way to save us.

Tell the story using one of the three story options on page 89.

2. A sad day

Stick up by the next circled date a label saying: "A sad day".

Hold up story picture 1.

What a shocking sight.

- **The one who had taught about God with authority...**
- **The one who had healed so many...**
- **The one who had forgiven the paralyzed man...**
- **The one who had done nothing wrong – EVER...**

... was being killed alongside two criminals.

Jesus didn't deserve to be punished but he chose to die in our place. He chose not to rescue himself, so we can be rescued.

Remember this phone with all my sin on, and how it separates me from God?

Hold up the phone and lay it flat on the same hand as before.

Now imagine this other hand is Jesus.

Hold up your other hand.

He never did anything wrong so there's nothing separating Jesus and his Father, God. But when Jesus died, he took all my sin...

Transfer phone from one hand to the other.

... and all of God's anger at sin was poured on his own Son, instead of on me.

That's why Jesus cried out: "God, why have you turned away from me?" God turned away from his Son for the only time ever as Jesus paid for our sin. It was the only way our sin problem could be fixed.

Now, look at my other hand. There's no barrier now – I'm no longer separated – because Jesus has taken my sin. That is how Jesus rescues us.

3. A happy day

Stick up by the last circled date: "A happy day".

The day Jesus died was a sad day because Jesus died a horrific death, but we call it "Good Friday" because it was also a happy day. It's happy because, through his death, Jesus did something amazing and wonderful.

Hold up story picture 2.

When Jesus died, the huge curtain in the temple ripped in two. God was using it as a big signpost to show us that now our sin has been dealt with, we can be God's forgiven friends. You see, in the past that big curtain had been like a giant "No Entry" sign into a place where people could meet God.

Show phone again, pointing to the "No Entry" sign on the back of it.

But when Jesus died, God tore the curtain to show that he had accepted Jesus' payment for our sin. Now, instead of being punished, we can be forgiven. Instead of death, we can know life. Instead of being stuck as God's enemies, we can be God's friends. All because of what Jesus has done.

Hold up story picture 3.

Some people in the crowd thought Jesus' death was a mistake. The religious leaders thought it was unnecessary. But the Roman soldier who was watching said that Jesus must be God's Son. I wonder what you think of Jesus' death?

The day that Jesus died was a *sad day* because Jesus, God's perfect Son, took our punishment. It was a *happy day* because Jesus died so that all who believe in him can be his forgiven friends. And it was a *planned day* – planned by God, as he'd always known it was the only way to rescue us.

Show page 3 of the Explorer Notebook:
"and died in our place..."

*Note: If you are combining sessions 3 and 4, use the alternative ending at the * below.*

And another planned day was going to follow on the Sunday, because Jesus had promised he would come back to life on the third day. We'll think about that planned day next time.

* Alternative ending if you are combining sessions 3 and 4.

Another planned day was soon to follow on the Sunday, as Jesus had promised he would come back to life on the third day – and he did!

After Governor Pilate checked that Jesus was definitely dead, some good friends took Jesus' body away. They wrapped him in cloth and laid him in a tomb, which was blocked by a large stone and guarded by Roman soldiers.

Early on the Sunday morning, which was the third day, some of his friends returned to the tomb to put spices and perfume on Jesus' body. They would have felt as if it was another sad day...

Point to the visual of "a sad day".

... as they trudged towards the tomb, wondering how they could move the stone. But they didn't need to worry. It had already been moved! And it wasn't a sad day – it was a gloriously happy day...

Point to the visual of "a happy day".

... as they soon learned from an angel that Jesus had come back to life, just as he promised.

Point to the visual of "a planned day".

When Jesus came back to life, it showed again that Jesus is God's King and Son. He has the power to do what none of us can do. He can do the impossible, because nothing is impossible for God.

Jesus died and came alive, showing us that he is God's rescuing King, and showing us that one day he will return as God's judging King. He rules over everyone and he rules over everything, including death. Because Jesus beat death, we can beat death and live for ever.

This happy, planned day reminds us that his payment for our sin has been accepted, and now we can be God's forgiven friends. We'll find out how next time.

**CROWN CAVE:
TALK IDEA 1**

Suitable for a holiday club or vacation Bible school, ages 4-11 or 8-11

You will need:

- Two actors to play the Roman centurion and Mary Magdalene
- Detective's costume with magnifying glass
- Detective's notebook
- Large "stone" (large beach ball or something bigger if possible)
- Fold-up cardboard spear
- White cloth
- Perfume bottle
- Briefcase, which has all the clues in apart from the stone
- Soldier's costume
- Headscarf for Mary
- The Island map visual with the "Breathtaking Bay", "Discovery Dens" and "Mysterious Mountains" coloured visuals all stuck on
- The "Crown Cave" coloured visual.

This talk outline can also be downloaded from www.ceministries.org/epic

Detective tiptoes on wearing costume, carrying a briefcase and magnifying glass, peering around.

Detective: A-ha, what do we have here? Children – and lots of them! Fantastic, you can help me solve the mystery of the missing body. Have you heard that Jesus has died?

Point to the "Mysterious Mountains" section on the map.

Well, his body was buried in a stone tomb, a bit like a cave – but now it's been reported that Jesus' tomb is empty. But how's that possible? Has his body been stolen? Did he not really die? Or has he actually come to life?

I've been using my detective skills to collect clues from around the tomb.

Pop open the briefcase and start pulling the clues out.

So, we have here a spear, white rags, a perfume jar and a big rock (roll out from the set nearby). **But I must admit, I can't really make sense of the evidence. What I need is to interview some people who were actually there – some eye-witnesses.**

Enter Roman centurion, wearing the same costume as in talk 3, and marching.

Roman centurion: Left, right, left, right, left, right.

Stops and salutes the detective.

Detective: Good day, sir. How very nice to meet you. I was wondering if you could help me? I'm trying to solve the mystery of Jesus' missing body. Can you tell me – did Jesus definitely die?

Roman centurion: Well of course he did, young man. No doubt about it. We Romans are excellent executioners, you know, and we weren't about to make a mistake this time. We double checked, by sticking a spear through his heart, before we sent word he was dead.

Detective: Ok, so Jesus definitely died – but what happened next? Was his body definitely put in the tomb?

Roman Centurion: Oh yes. After Governor Pilate spoke with me, Jesus' body was wrapped up and taken away by an important-looking fellow. Joseph was his name. He put the body in a brand-new tomb, which some of my men were sent to guard – making sure no one could get in.

Detective: (musing) Interesting... So that would explain why there is a spear there. But then what happened? Where's the body?

Roman centurion: I don't know – but one thing I do know is Jesus is the Son of God, so he had the power to do any-

thing. Anyway, best be off – orders to give, places to march. Left, right, left, right, left, right.

Roman centurion departs, and Mary Magdalene runs on, looking excited and as if she's trying to find people.

Detective: Er, excuse me, madam. I wonder if you could help me? I'm trying to find out what has happened to Jesus' body. I have some clues here but I don't really know what they mean.

Mary Magdalene: (excitedly) Jesus' body? I can tell you! I was there when Joseph wrapped him in cloth and buried him. See this stone (point at it)? The Romans rolled this into the entrance to make sure no one could get in.

Detective: Really? You saw him dead and buried? You saw this rock in front of his tomb? What did you say your name is?

Mary Magdalene: My name is Mary Magdalene, and oh yes, he was dead. That's why my friends and I collected together our money so we could go and buy some spices and perfume (point to the bottle) to put on the body.

Detective: Thank you Mary. Let me just get this straight... you're telling me that Jesus' body was placed in the tomb, and as well as soldiers standing guard, this big stone was put in front? But this stone wasn't in front of the tomb when I found it.

Mary Magdalene: (in an excitable voice) Well, of course it wasn't! When Mary, Salome and I went to the tomb very early on Sunday morning, we were worried about how we would move the heavy stone. But when we got there, it had already been rolled away.

Detective: So what did you do?

Mary Magdalene: We went in. Can you imagine our amazement when we discovered Jesus' body was no longer there? There were just these cloths he'd been wrapped in (hold up the cloths). We

were even more amazed when we saw a man in white sitting there. He was an angel, who...

Detective: Wait. Hold fire. You saw an angel? You all actually SAW an angel?!

Mary Magdalene: Yes, and we spoke with him too. He knew we were looking for Jesus but he told us Jesus wasn't in the tomb as he had risen from the dead! And then the angel reminded us that Jesus had promised this would all happen.

I didn't know what to make of it at first. In fact, I was so scared I ran away. But Jesus is alive! It's incredible; it's amazing; it's fantastic. I hope you don't mind, but I have to go. I need to tell the others, especially Peter – the angel asked me to pass on this great news.

Mary Magdalene dashes off.

Detective: Wow! Astonishing. I now feel I have enough evidence to solve the mystery of the missing body. There's only one explanation – Jesus really has risen from the dead!

Stick up the "Crown Cave" coloured visual.

And if Jesus has the power to do that – to beat death, to do the impossible – he really must be God's Son and the King of everything.

Look at notebook.

So let me get this right. On the Mysterious Mountains, we saw that Jesus died to take our punishment; and now at Crown Cave, God is showing he's accepted that rescue by giving Jesus new life. Woah, hang on! That means, if our punishment's been taken by Jesus, we can be forgiven and not separated from God, which means... we can have new life too; we can live for ever with God. Amazing! I've got to find out more right now...

Detective runs off.

CROWN CAVE: TALK IDEA 2

Suitable for a mid-week club or children's Christianity Explored course, ages 8-11

You will need:

- 2 "crime scene" pictures – the illustrations for this talk are all available to download from www.ceministries.org/epic
- The Explorer Notebook (see page 156)
- A table
- 3 box files, each with one of these questions stuck onto it: "Was Jesus dead?", "Was Jesus alive?" and "Does it really matter?"
- Labels to stick onto the box files saying: "Definitely dead", "Definitely alive", and "Definitely matters"
- **In the "Was Jesus dead?" file:**
 - A helmet with a tag saying: "Brilliant executioner"
 - Some white strips of cloth, tied with a tag saying: "Tightly bound, and buried by friends"
 - A picture of some soldiers guarding the tomb, labelled: "The Romans made sure"
- **In the "Was Jesus alive?" file:**
 - A large stone with a tag saying: "The stone had been moved"
 - An angel Christmas decoration, with a tag saying: "The angel said so"
 - Lots of figure people (eg: Lego, Playmobil), with a sign to place by them saying: "People saw him and were prepared to die for him"
- **In the "Does it really matter?" file:**
 - A crown with a tag saying: "Jesus is God's Son. He is King of everything."
 - A victory poster with the label: "Jesus beat death"
 - A pocket mirror with a tag saying: "We can beat death"

This talk outline can also be downloaded from www.ceministries.org/epic

How good are you at solving mysteries? Look at the picture – can you work out what has happened?

Have on the screen a picture of a "crime scene", eg: a room turned upside down.

Take a few responses. Then ask:

What about this picture? Can anyone tell me one unusual thing?

Show a picture of the empty tomb, and take a couple of responses. If it appears a child wants to retell the whole account, then gently interrupt and thank them for their contribution.

A good detective needs to be someone who can carefully examine the scene, follow up what the eyewitnesses saw, and use clues to solve the mystery.

That's what we're going to do today. We're going to examine the scene of Jesus' tomb, discover what the eyewitnesses saw, and then use the clues to work out if Jesus came alive, and why it matters so much. But before we do, let's remind ourselves of our discoveries so far.

Hold up the Explorer Notebook and turn to the appropriate pages while you recap.

We have seen so far that Jesus is the Son of God, who is able to forgive sins and died in our place. And yet in the 2nd picture, the tomb was empty; there was no body there. So, was Jesus definitely dead when they put him inside?

Hold up box file 1 with the question "Was Jesus dead?" stuck on the outside.

1. Definitely dead

On the Friday night, after Jesus had died, an important man called Joseph of Arimathea went to see Governor Pilate and asked to bury Jesus' body.

- Read Mark 15:44-45

Who did Pilate check with to make absolutely certain that Jesus was dead? (Take responses.) **That's right, he asked the Roman centurion, who had seen Jesus die with his very own eyes.**

Pull out either a centurion's helmet or a picture of a centurion, with a tag saying: "Brilliant executioner" and hold it up.

Pilate believed the centurion, because he knew his soldiers were brilliant executioners (show tag) – they didn't make mistakes. So, Pilate agreed that Joseph could take the body.

But here's more evidence to help answer the question: Was Jesus dead?

Pull out strips of white cloth, with a tag saying: "Tightly bound, and buried by friends".

Joseph wrapped Jesus' body tightly in cloth, like an Egyptian mummy, and placed him in the stone tomb. To make sure no one could get in, Pilate had a huge stone pushed across the entrance. All of this was seen by Jesus' friends, the two Marys.

So was Jesus dead? Well, he had been killed by a brilliant executioner (hold up clue 1), he had been buried by good friends (hold up clue 2), and there's one more thing...

Take out the picture of Roman soldiers guarding the tomb.

Highly trained Roman soldiers were sent to seal the tomb and guard it with their lives. They were to make sure that no one went in or out of the tomb. So, was Jesus dead?

Hold up box file 1.

Yes! Definitely!

On top of the question: "Was Jesus dead?", stick the statement: "Definitely dead".

Now usually, this is where a book about someone's life would finish. The next words we'd expect to find would be: "The end". Except

this is no ordinary story; this is no ordinary man. We've already seen this in the life Jesus led and in the death he died. And now, we're about to see it all over again as we start the final chapter of Mark and we try to answer our next question: Was Jesus alive?

Hold up second box file, showing the question: "Was Jesus alive?"

2. Definitely alive

It was dawn on the Sunday morning when three women crept to the tomb. That's the scene in our picture earlier. They wanted to put spices on Jesus' dead body to stop it smelling, even though they weren't sure how they could move the huge stone. But it turned out they didn't need to worry.

- Read Mark 16:4

As the women arrived, they saw that the stone had been rolled away.

Pull out a stone from the box file with a tag attached saying: "The stone had been moved". Have a volunteer read the tag.

Why is it incredible that the stone had been moved? (Take ideas, eg: it was so heavy, the Romans were guarding it, etc.)

But that wasn't the only thing the women saw, because now they could see into the tomb and there was a surprising sight. Listen to verse 5 and try to spot what that was.

- Read Mark 16:5

The women saw an angel – a messenger from God.

Pull out an angel Christmas decoration from the box with the tag: "The angel said so".

The angel told them (show tag) that Jesus had risen from the dead just as he had promised he would. He was alive and they would soon see him. In fact, we read in other eyewitness accounts that lots of people saw Jesus after he died and came to life.

Take out from the box lots of little people figures (eg: Playmobil) one after another.

Put a sign in front of the play figures saying: "People saw him and were prepared to die for him".

People talked and walked with Jesus, ate with him and hugged him. They were so certain that Jesus was alive that they told everyone – and many of them were even prepared to die for insisting he was alive. How amazing is that?

So was Jesus alive? Well, we know the stone was moved; an angel was in the tomb and said Jesus had risen just as he promised; and people saw Jesus and died for him. Was Jesus alive?

Yes! Definitely!

Stick the statement: "Definitely alive" over the question: "Was Jesus alive?"

Jesus definitely died and definitely is alive, but why does it matter?

Hold up third box file, showing the question: "Does it really matter?"

3. Definitely matters

Pull out a crown, with the tag saying: "Jesus is God Son. He is King of everything."

When Jesus rose from the dead, it showed again that he is God's Son and King of everything (show page 1 of the Explorer Notebook). **If he had stayed dead, his death would be like the normal death of any human. But in rising again, Jesus shows he is both fully man and the Son of God, with the power to rise from the dead. Nothing is impossible for Jesus, because he rules over all.**

Pull out a victory poster.

We thought last time about how Jesus took our punishment; how he paid the price for our sin by dying (show page 3 of the Explorer Notebook). **If Jesus had stayed dead, he would still be under the punishment for our sin, but**

in Mark 16, God shows he has accepted that payment by bringing Jesus to life (show page 4 of the Explorer Notebook). **Jesus had victory over sin and death!**

Pull out a pocket mirror, with the tag: "We can beat death". Hold it in front of a few children so they can see their reflection.

And that's not all. Just as God gave Jesus new life, he also promises new life to those who believe Jesus died for them and who live his way. Through Jesus, we can be forgiven and know God's power – the same power that raised Jesus – at work in us.

We deserve to be separated from God for ever, but Jesus rising again shows us that God will give us life after we die; life for ever with him. That's why the angel told the women to go and tell others.

So does it really matter that Jesus definitely died (tap first box file) **and is definitely alive** (tap second box file)?

Yes! Definitely!

Stick over the question on the third box file, the statement: "Definitely matters".

It absolutely matters because:

- **we see God's power**
- **we see that Jesus' payment for our sin has been accepted and he has victory over death**
- **and we see that through him, we can live with him for ever.**

**ROCKY ROAD:
TALK IDEA 1**

Suitable for a holiday club or vacation Bible school, ages 4-11 or 8-11

You will need:

- Large-scale map of Adventure Island. (Gradually add the following visuals to the map through the talk, see page 118 - the visuals are on pages 154-155.)
- Coloured visuals of each location
- Labels with the following phrases:
 - “God’s power and authority”
 - “Can forgive sin”
- Army camp with soldiers
- A large cross and 3 large ticks/check marks
- A speech bubble with: “Forget about ourselves, pick up our cross, and follow Jesus” written in it

This talk outline can also be downloaded from www.ceministries.org/epic

Children vote: Stop at different points during the story and ask children a question that has a “yes” or “no” answer. Ask them to show their answer by giving a “thumbs up” for “yes”, and a “thumbs down” for “no”.

What an amazing leader they had! For nearly three years, the disciples had followed Jesus and seen him do loads of incredible things. At Breathtaking Bay, we saw that the disciples had their breath taken away as they saw everyone stopping and listening when Jesus talked, because he spoke with authority. They saw him healing people with all sorts of illnesses.

Add to the map: “Breathtaking Bay” coloured visual and, under the crown, the phrase: “God’s power and authority”

In Discovery Dens, we discovered that the disciples saw how important forgiveness of sins is to Jesus.

Add to the map: “Discovery Dens” coloured visual and, under the speech bubble, the phrase: “Can forgive sin”.

Jesus had stopped storms and brought people back to life. It was no wonder everyone wanted to see him; he was the talk of every town.

So when Jesus asked them: “What are people saying? Who do people think I am?”, do you think the disciples could answer? Vote now. (Children vote.)

Yes, they could. That day, as they walked to Caesarea Philippi, the disciples told Jesus that everyone was talking about him but no one could agree who he actually was. People thought he was some kind of special messenger from God.

But then Jesus asked his disciples a tougher question: “But what about you? Who do you say that I am?”

Well, they all had a ponder. Maybe they scratched their heads or twiddled their beards. Maybe they thought about some of the things they had seen and heard.

Point to the map.

Eventually Peter spoke up: “I know! You’re the Christ, the Messiah, the King promised and chosen by God!”

Point to the crown on the “Breathtaking Bay” visual.

Who thinks Peter is right? (Children vote.)

Peter was right – kind of. You see, Peter knew Jesus was God’s chosen King, but he didn’t understand what kind of King. Peter probably thought that Jesus was going to be a warrior king, who would defeat the Romans and rule over everyone.

Stick up the picture of the army camp on top of the mountains on the map.

But that wasn’t the way God had planned to rescue his people.

Jesus wanted his disciples to know God's rescue plan, and so he told them exactly what would happen to him. He said that he would be treated badly by the religious leaders, and even be killed – but after three days he would rise again.

Stick up the "Mysterious Mountains" and "Crown Cave" coloured visuals (a cross and a magnifying glass).

Do you think the disciples believed that Jesus would be a different kind of King; a suffering King? Vote now. (Children vote.)

No way! "No Jesus, you're wrong!" Peter shouted. He didn't believe what he'd just heard. Jesus, the one who had done so many amazing things, the one who had shown such power, the one who had never done anything wrong? Surely he wouldn't suffer and die?

Hover a tick/check mark over the mountains and the cave.

Peter couldn't see how Jesus dying would bring rescue for his people – but was Jesus telling the truth? Vote now. (Children vote.)

Yes. Jesus always tells the truth.

Add the tick/check mark between the mountains and the cave.

We've seen in the last few days how Jesus suffered, died and rose again. It was all part of God's rescue plan for his Son, the promised King, to die in our place and deal with our sin problem. Jesus knew he had to take our punishment to make it possible for us to be forgiven and become friends with God for ever.

I wonder, do you believe that? Do you believe that Jesus is God's Son and the promised King, who can forgive us? Have a think in your heads.

Add a tick/check mark to both the crown and the speech bubble (with an exclamation mark in it). Then point at the cross by Mysterious Mountains.

Do you believe Jesus died and rose again to rescue us?

I want you to vote – but this time just quietly in your heads. (Children vote.)

So, how can we receive this gift of forgiveness and be friends with God? Well, just after Jesus told Peter and the others about God's rescue plan, he explained to them what it means to be his follower.

Point at the Rocky Road on the map; then stick on the "Rocky Road" coloured visual (a gift).

Jesus said that we must "forget about ourselves, pick up our cross, and follow him".

Stick speech bubble on by the gift.

"Forget about ourselves" means that we should want to please Jesus and live God's way, not just please ourselves. We should say sorry for the times we're selfish, for the times we say, think and do wrong.

"Pick up our cross" means that we are prepared to go through difficult times just because we love God. We may be teased or ignored, or people may even try to make us give up living God's way.

"Follow" means that we are thankful that Jesus died in our place, and we want to copy the way Jesus lived and loved. We choose to obey him as the King, even when we don't feel like it, because he has done so much for us.

God promises to forgive us and help us live his way, if we believe Jesus is his Son and the promised King, who died to rescue us. I wonder, are you ready to follow Jesus?

Vote one last time, again in your head. (Children vote.)

If you voted "yes", then make sure you chat to your group leader about it. They'll talk to you a little more about what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

ROCKY ROAD: TALK IDEA 2

Suitable for a mid-week club or children's Christianity Explored course, ages 8-11

You will need:

- The visual from week 1 (see page 58)
- A flip-chart pad on a stand, prepared in advance as shown on page 122
- The Explorer Notebook (see page 156)
- Marker pen
- 10 laminated crosses (see page 155) and Blu-tack re-useable adhesive
- A wrapped-up gift with something small in it, eg: a packet of sweets/candies

This talk outline can also be downloaded from www.ceministries.org/epic

Show page 1 of the flip chart.

What are you like when it comes to making choices? I wonder would you rather:

- Always lose?
- Never play?

Have the children vote by making an "X" with their arms to show their choice; then ask one volunteer to come up and stick a cross in the check box voted for by the majority.

Repeat with a couple of other choices on pages 2 and 3.

We make choices all the time. Just think about all the choices you've made even today. What to have for your breakfast... Whether you'll listen to your mum...

I wonder how important your choices were. Do you think they will affect you tomorrow? And the next day? And the day after that?

Well, since some of us are just starting to explore what the Bible says about Jesus, we're going to look at a true story from before Jesus died.

It's when Jesus' first followers had to make a choice about who they thought Jesus was

and what he came to do. It was an important choice and one that would affect them every single day. And it's one that helps us see what it means to be a Christian – to be someone who follows Jesus.

1. A Christian is someone who understands who Jesus is

In Mark 8, we're told that Jesus' followers were walking along a road with Jesus, when all of a sudden he asked them who they thought he was. Which answer do you think they chose?

Show page 4 of the flip-chart pad. Ask someone to come and stick a cross in the check box by the option they personally think the disciples said.

- Read Mark 8:29b

How did Peter describe Jesus? (Take answers)

That's right, Peter said that Jesus is the Messiah/Christ.

Note: "Messiah", in Hebrew, and "Christ", in Greek, are the same title. Choose whichever one is used in the Bible version you are looking at in the discussion groups.

Can I have a volunteer to come up and cross out all the "X's" in the puzzle to help us see what it means?

When the volunteer crosses out all of the "X's", ask them to read out what it now says: "God's promised chosen King".

Peter was right, but Jesus wasn't just God's chosen King; he was also God's Son (show page 1 of the Explorer Notebook). **Time and again in Mark, we've seen Jesus showing authority that only God has. That's why he was able to teach powerfully, heal people, forgive sins and beat death.**

Point to week 1's visual.

A Christian is someone who believes Jesus is God's Son.

Prepare the following flip-chart sheets if you are using talk idea 2.

1

- Always lose
- Never play

2

- Be born with an elephant trunk
- Be born with a giraffe neck

3

- Accept a gift
- Reject a gift

4

*(depending on Bible version)

A Christian understands who Jesus is

- A kind man
- A good teacher
- A messenger from God
- The Messiah/ The Christ*
- God's Son

**XGXOXDS PXROXMXIXSXED
CXHXOXSXEXN KXIXNXG**

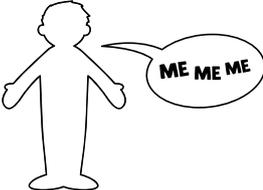
5

A Christian understands why Jesus died and rose again



6

A Christian is someone who follows Jesus



7

A Christian is someone who says "yes" to Jesus' free gift

- Keep finding out more by coming along to

(fill in the name of your weekly children's group)

- Ask a leader some more questions to help you understand
- Leave it for now
- Ready to "ABCD"

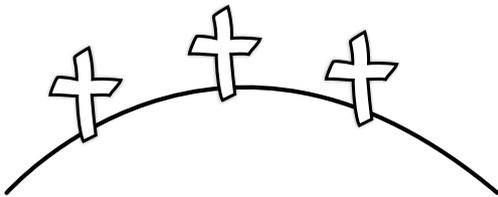
2. A Christian is someone who understands why Jesus died and rose again

Just after Peter has realized who Jesus is, Jesus tells his followers that they can't let anyone else know. And then he explains why.

- Read Mark 8:31

Jesus told his followers that he was going to be killed, but would rise to life on the third day.

Show page 5 of the flip chart, and, as you're explaining about Jesus predicting his death, stick three crosses onto the mound.



Peter was so shocked to hear that Jesus would die that he told him off! He probably thought that Jesus, as God's chosen King, was going to rescue them from the Romans. But that wasn't the kind of rescue Jesus had come for.

Jesus silenced Peter because he knew he must die; he had to die. We've seen in the last two sessions* that Jesus died and rose again because it was the only way he could solve our sin problem (show page 2 of the Explorer Notebook) and rescue us from the punishment we deserve (turn to page 3 of the Explorer Notebook, and then page 4).

Do you believe that, through Jesus' death, we can be forgiven and be brought back into friendship with God?

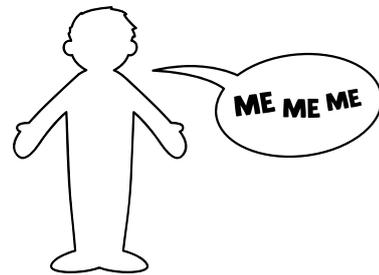
*If you combined sessions 3 and 4, say: "last session" here.

3. A Christian is someone who follows Jesus

But listen – a Christian isn't just someone who understands who Jesus is and why he came. A Christian is also someone who wants to do things God's way – not their own.

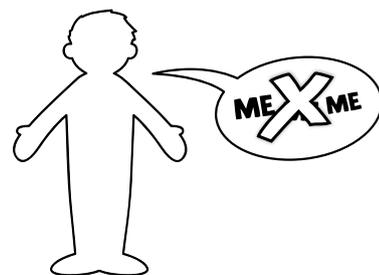
- Read Mark 8:34

Turn to page 6 of the flip-chart pad.



The verse says we should deny ourselves. That means we no longer make our choices just on what we want to do, and we no longer think we matter more than other people or God.

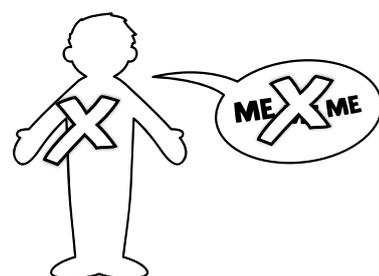
Put a cross over the words "Me, me, me".



Instead, we should want to please Jesus and live God's way – whether it's how we speak to our parents, how we treat our friends or how we spend our time. And it means we say sorry for the times we're selfish, and for the times we say, think and do wrong.

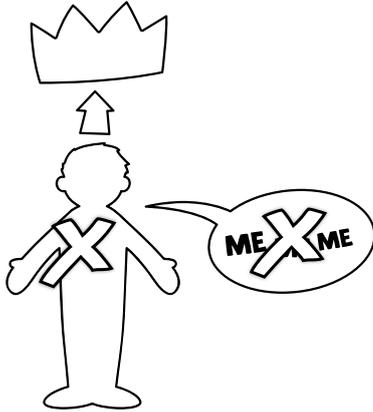
But the verse mentioned a cross – a symbol of suffering. It may be that people tease or ignore us, and even try to make us give up living as a Christian. But if we follow Jesus, we should be prepared to go through difficult times just because we love God. Jesus called it "taking up our cross".

Stick a cross on the body of the stick man.



Jesus also said: "Follow me". A Christian is someone who is thankful that Jesus died in our place and therefore wants to copy the way Jesus lived and loved.

Draw an arrow upwards from the stick man, and then a crown above the arrowhead.



A Christian is someone who chooses to follow and obey Jesus as the King, even when they don't feel like it.

"Deny, suffer and obey"! You might be thinking: "That sounds hard. Why bother?" Well, Jesus warned us that if people choose to reject him, then he will reject us. But if we follow Jesus, he will save us. Jesus promises that he will help us live his way. And he promises that if we are forgiven by him, we will live with him for ever.

Show page 5 of the Explorer Notebook.

So a Christian is:

- **Someone who understands that Jesus is God's Son.**
- **Someone who understands that Jesus died to take our punishment.**
- **Someone who follows Jesus and lives his way.**

4. A Christian is someone who says "yes" to a free gift from Jesus

But there's one more thing that a Christian is...

A Christian is someone who says "yes" to a free gift from Jesus. I have an amazing gift here that I want to give away.

Hold up wrapped gift.

Would you like my free gift?

Offer the gift to a child – let them take it and open it.

All you had to do for that gift to be yours was accept it from me. You didn't need to do anything else.

Jesus offers us the free gift of forgiveness and forever friendship with him. We don't have to do anything for it; we just need to accept what Jesus did on the cross to rescue us. The way you can do that is to:

- **ADMIT your sin. Tell God that you are sorry that you don't treat him as you should. Ask him to forgive you.**
- **BELIEVE that Jesus died to take the punishment you deserve, and that he rose to life, and he is alive today.**
- **CONSIDER the cost of living as Jesus' follower from now on, with him in charge. Remember what we've just learned – it won't always be easy putting God first. Ask him to help you.**
- **DO something about it! Will you choose to accept Jesus' free gift and choose to live in a way that pleases him from now on?**

I wonder, at the end of this course/club, what choice will you make?

Show page 7 of flip-chart pad and as you talk through the options, hover a cross over each tick/check box:

- Keep finding out more by coming along to _____** (fill in the name of your weekly children's group)
- Ask a leader some more questions to help you understand**
- Leave it for now**
- Ready to "ABCD". Let a leader know if that's you!**

SUMMARY TALK FOR FAMILY SERVICE

Suitable for an all-age service at the end of a holiday club or vacation Bible school

Note: This summary is divided into three short talks. See page 135 to see how they fit within the plan for the whole service.

For the three talks you will need:

- The giant map of the island, with five labels stuck on the 5 related locations: Mark 1, Mark 2, Mark 15, Mark 16, Mark 8.
- The coloured visuals for each location
- Five extra labels to add to the map:
 - “Son” for Breathtaking Bay
 - “Forgiver” for Discovery Dens
 - “Died” for Mysterious Mountains
 - “Rose” for Crown Cave
 - “Follow?” for Rocky Road

This talk outline can also be downloaded from www.ceministries.org/epic

to you leave absolutely everything – not just your work, but your homes, your families, the lot. Are you so keen now? I thought not. We would probably just ignore them or think they were joking. And yet, at Breathtaking Bay, we read this...

“As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” At once they left their nets and followed him. When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.” (Mark 1:16-20)

Show pictures of the story while the passage is read – available to download from www.ceministries.org/epic

TALK 1: WHO IS JESUS?

(Jesus is God’s Son. He is the King of everything.)

Do you like exploring? Checking out new places? Discovering new things? We’ve been on an epic adventure this week as we’ve explored true stories from the Bible about Jesus. We started in Mark 1:

Stick up “Breathtaking Bay” visual.

At “Breathtaking Bay” we began to discover evidence that Jesus is God’s Son, and the King of everything, just as Mark claimed at the beginning of his book.

Have up on the screen Mark 1:1.
“The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God.”

I wonder what you’d be like if someone walked into your workplace or school tomorrow and told you to get up and leave immediately. That’s what happened to two brothers called Simon and Andrew.

Some of you may be thinking: “That’d be great!” But what if that person then asked

When Jesus told the fishermen to leave everything, they obeyed. Immediately. No delaying, arguing and ignoring. They upped and left because they knew he had the authority to say this. They knew if Jesus commanded them to follow, they had to follow.

Can you imagine having such authority when you speak? “Tidy up” and it happens immediately; “Be quiet” and instantly the arguing stops; “Give me chocolate” and they do; “Buy me” and it’s in your hand as quick as a flash. But these things don’t happen. Our words are not powerful like Jesus’ words were. He spoke, and right away things happened.

And it wasn’t just when he told people to follow him. As we continued on our expedition in Mark 1, we had our breath taken away time and again.

- Jesus spoke – and evil spirits fled.
- Jesus spoke – and people were healed.
- Jesus spoke – and the crowds were amazed.

How could he do all these things? The amazing claim is that Jesus has such power over everything and everyone because he is the one who fuels the sun and drives the rotation of the planets. He is the one who created and controls all things.

When the explorer Christopher Columbus arrived in the Bahamas, he called the locals “Indians” because he was convinced he was in Asia. He had mistaken their identity. But there’s no mistaken identity in Mark 1. At Breathtaking Bay, we saw that Jesus is God’s King and Son.

Add “Son” to the map under the crown on “Breathtaking Bay”.

And at Breathtaking Bay we had a glimpse of a land far greater than has ever been explored; of a kingdom where there will be no suffering, fear or death; of a place where Jesus will reign as King.

The other stories we looked at showed us how we can be in that kingdom. More about that later...

TALK 2: WHY DID JESUS COME?

(Jesus can forgive sins. He died to make that possible.)

In our second session, we navigated our way to the “Discovery Dens” – homes in which Jesus amazed people as he revealed why he had come.

Stick up “Discovery Dens” coloured visual.

The first home was crammed full as crowds gathered to hear Jesus! It was so packed that when four men arrived carrying their paralyzed friend, they couldn’t even get through the door. However, they came up with a plan to dig a hole in the roof and lower him down on his mat. But then the most astonishing thing happened – instead of healing the man, Jesus told him his sins were forgiven.

Have on screen Mark 2:5.
“When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven.’”

The friends probably stared through the hole with their mouths wide open. The crowd probably stood still in stunned silence. And the paralyzed man? Well, he probably lay there thinking: “What?! I’ve not done any-

thing to you. My problem’s my legs. It’s them I need fixing, not my sin!”

But we’ve discovered this week that *sin* is our biggest problem. Sin means we put ourselves first – we know God is in charge, but we don’t treat him as we should. When we do, say or think wrong things – which we all do – we are going against God. We’re saying “no” to his ways and his rule.

And the Bible teaches us that sin has serious consequences, because it cuts us off from friendship with God. Sin must be punished. That’s why Jesus chose to forgive the man first, rather than healing him.

The religious leaders in the crowd were furious with Jesus, thinking: “He can’t do that! He doesn’t have the authority!” But he did have the authority. We heard earlier that Jesus is God’s Son with God’s power – and that includes power to forgive, for all sin is against God.

Jesus knew what the religious leaders were thinking, and knew they couldn’t see if he’d actually forgiven the man’s sin or not. So Jesus proved he’s God by healing the man. The man who was *carried in, walked out*, much to the amazement of the onlookers.

So at Breathtaking Bay, our breath was taken away as we heard Jesus’ authority in his words and saw it in his actions. Then at the Discovery Dens, we gathered yet more evidence to show us Jesus is God. And we discovered that, because Jesus is God, he has the power to forgive sins too.

Add “Forgiver” under the surprised face at “Discovery Dens”.

But how can Jesus forgive us? Well, that’s what we discovered at the next place on the island.

Stick up “Mysterious Mountains” coloured visual.

Jesus’ words and actions had power. But listen to something really surprising that happened in Mark 15.

Have verses on the screen.

"At noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice ... 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' ... With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last." (Mark 15:33-34, 37)

Jesus' followers must have felt as if they had those glasses with the eyes that pop out. They had heard and seen proof that he is God's Son:

- They saw him heal and forgive people.
- They saw him hero-worshipped.
- They had heard God say: "This is my Son, whom I love".

But then they saw Jesus get beaten, mocked and hung on a cross like a criminal.

And what's more, he had just cried out that God had turned away from him.

Why was Jesus God-forsaken? Why had God turned away from him? Jesus was doing a swap with us, because we should be God-forsaken. Our sin means we deserve to be punished. But Jesus, the innocent one, swapped places with us and took our punishment.

Use the following phone illustration to explain what happened when Jesus died. There's a simplified version, with diagrams, on page 100.

Imagine someone's managed to record all the bad things I've ever done, or you've ever done, on this phone (hold up mobile/cell phone) – such as the lies you've told, the time you let someone down or gossiped behind someone's back. All the times you've lost your temper, had a selfish thought or not treated God as you should. All your sin caught on film. You definitely wouldn't want it on *YouTube*!

Now imagine this hand is me – and the ceiling is where God is. (Put the phone on one hand.) **This phone, which shows all my sin, is getting in the way between God and me; my sin separates me from being God's friend.**

(Hold out other hand.) **Imagine this hand is Jesus. He never did anything wrong so there's nothing separating Jesus and his Father, God. But when Jesus died, he took all my sin** (transfer phone from one hand to the other) **and the full weight of God's anger at sin was poured out on his own Son, instead of on me.**

That's why Jesus cried out in anguish. He was cut off from God's friendship and goodness. Like a headmaster doing our detention, or a judge going to prison on behalf of a prisoner, Jesus took our punishment. He paid the price so our sin could be dealt with, so we can be forgiven friends of God.

Look at my other hand. There's no barrier now. There's nothing separating me from God, because Jesus has taken my sin. That's what happened when he died.

Add "Died" under the cross on "Mysterious Mountains".

The early explorers often acted out of self-interest as they looked for precious spices, silks and jewels. Jesus acted out of love, despite the fact we rebel against him. He gave his life and sacrificed everything as he travelled to earth, to trade his perfection for our sin; to offer us treasure that far outweighs anything else – life with Jesus, in his kingdom for ever.

But we hadn't finished exploring the island yet. There was more to come...

TALK 3: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO FOLLOW JESUS?

(Jesus rose to show our sins can be forgiven. We need to choose if we will follow him.)

When we left the Mysterious Mountains, we started to explore Mark 16.

Stick up the coloured visual for "Crown Cave".

We've seen that Jesus died to forgive sins. But death wasn't the end for Jesus. After he was killed, he was laid in a tomb with a large stone wedged in front. But three days later, people made the best discovery ever – the stone had been moved, the tomb was empty and Jesus had risen.

It was incredible! Jesus had beaten death and was alive, just as he had promised. And because the price he paid for our sin has been accepted by God, we no longer need to be separated from God. We can have new life through Jesus instead – for ever!

Add "Risen" next to the magnifying glass on "Crown Cave".

So, is that the end of the story? After our mind-boggling, binocular-focusing discovery that Jesus died in our place and rose again, surely that's our adventure with him over.

But it isn't. There was one more part of the island to visit as we explored Mark 8.

Stick up the coloured visual for "Rocky Road".

Jesus stayed with his friends for forty days and then returned to heaven. But the Bible promises that one day he will return as King of everything, and the whole world will be under his rule. And we can trust that promise because:

- **Jesus said he would be killed (in Mark 8:31), and he was.**
- **Jesus said he would rise again (in Mark 8:31), and he did.**
- **So, when Jesus said he will come back again (in Mark 8:38) – we can trust that he will! And we should be ready. But how?**

Mark 1:15 says we can be ready by repenting and believing the good news of Jesus.

Display Mark 1 v 15 on the screen:
"The time has come," Jesus said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"

***Repenting* means admitting we have done wrong; that we've disobeyed and ignored God. It means we're sorry and now want to live God's way, with him in charge.**

***Believing* means we trust that Jesus is God's Son and died in our place. He has done everything we need for us to be forgiven and live as his friends for ever in his perfect kingdom.**

I wonder, will you repent and believe? Will you accept his gift of rescue? Will you follow Jesus?

Add "Follow?" by the gift on the "Rocky Road" visual.

We finished our explorations with this verse from Mark 8:

"Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.'" (Mark 8:34)

Being a follower of Jesus is not always easy as it means living to please Jesus and not ourselves, making him the most important. It means we may suffer or be teased for following God. But it also means we know our sins are forgiven, we know God is with us helping us, and we know the secure promise of heaven.

David Livingstone explored much of Southern Africa and discovered the spectacular waterfall of "Victoria Falls". He was also a follower of Jesus. Following the death of his wife and his own ill-health, he said this:

"Anxiety, sickness, suffering, or danger ... may make us pause, and cause the spirit to waver, and the soul to sink; but let this only be for a moment. All these are nothing when compared with the glory which shall be revealed in and for us."

David Livingstone knew it was hard to be a follower of Jesus, but he believed it to be worthwhile. Do you?

- **Jesus, God's Son, lived among us.**
- **Jesus died – so our sin can be dealt with and we can be forgiven.**
- **Jesus is alive and can give us life that lasts for ever.**
- **And Jesus will come back again! So we should be ready!**

Maybe you would like to explore things a little further. Why not chat to some of the leaders or take a Mark's Gospel as you leave, and think about things a little more? Maybe you would like to start exploring these things by signing up to our *Christianity Explored* course, which is starting... (give date and plug the course).

SUMMARY TALK FOR FAMILY EVENT

Main aim:

- To meet the perfect pioneer, consider the rescue and discover the good news for yourself

You will need:

- A handout for people or a PowerPoint that looks like an Explorer's diary (see page 157). Each point to have a picture of the Bible passage on it with the Bible reference.
- Props for the opening game: hat, sleeping bag, water bottle, compass, binoculars, map and backpack.

This talk outline can also be downloaded from www.ceministries.org/epic

Here are some clues to a person's job – can you guess what it is?

Hold up a backpack and pull the items out, in this order:

- Hat
- Sleeping bag
- Water bottle
- Compass
- Binoculars
- Map

That's right – an explorer. Now, whether you think of the cartoon character, Dora the Explorer; or Christopher Columbus, the European explorer credited with discovering America; or Neil Armstrong, who went to the moon – when you think of explorers, all of them are people who have wanted to find out more and so have set off on adventures, seen amazing sights and discovered new things.

That's exactly what we've been doing too in *Epic Explorers*. We've set off on an adventure, have seen amazing sights and discovered new things, as we've looked not beyond the next mountain or river, but rather, at the life of Jesus. And so, I'd just like to share with you a few of our exciting findings from the Bible book of Mark.

1) Meet the Perfect Pioneer

Show first diary entry.

In 1915 Ernest Shackleton's ship had been trapped in floating ice and sunk; he and his crew had travelled by ice and lifeboats for two months; but Shackleton, the great explorer, was not about to give up. He was determined to rescue his men, and so for 16 days he sailed through stormy seas and trekked over mountains to find help. Shackleton was on a rescue mission for his people. And Jesus was like this. He was on a rescue mission.

How do we know that Jesus can rescue people? Well first, as he began travelling around, he did groundbreaking things – he performed miracles. He wasn't doing it to make money or impress the crowds. Nor was he just trying to show us that he was a nice, caring teacher. Far from it. Jesus was the Perfect Pioneer, performing miracles to show us that he can do things only God can do; that he has power over everything, because he is God's Son.

So, through the amazing sights of Jesus' miracles, we have seen more and more who he is:

- In Mark 1, we saw how he had authority to teach people. We saw too that he had power over illness and over evil.
- If we had read further, we would see in Mark 4 that Jesus also has power over nature. He didn't just *calm* a storm, he stopped it *immediately* with his words.
- In Mark 5, Jesus shows he's our loving life-giver; he has power over death. He didn't just *heal* people; he also brought some *back to life*.
- In Mark 6, we would discover he's the great and generous provider. He didn't just *feed* the 5000; he had bread and fish *left over*.
- And back in Mark 2, we saw that Jesus, God's Son, had power and authority over sin. He didn't just heal the man's *legs*; he dealt with the far bigger problem of the man's *sin* by forgiving him.

Shackleton longed to rescue his men from Elephant Island – Jesus longs to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. He longs to forgive us. All of us need this rescue because all of us fail to treat God as we should, whether it's the way we are selfish in our decisions, or disobedient in our actions, or we simply ignore him. We deserve to be punished for our sin, and that's why we need rescuing by the Perfect Pioneer: the one who is God.

2) Consider the rescue

Show second diary entry.

Shackleton succeeded in reaching a whaler's station, and with the help of a team of men and a Navy tug boat, he rescued his 22 men. They were saved, having spent four and a half months on Elephant Island. He returned to Britain a national hero. But he became a heavy drinker, and died five years later while on another Antarctic expedition.

While Shackleton's rescue was undoubtedly heroic, it was also limited – he saved 22 lives. Jesus' rescue was so much greater than this. Jesus came to provide a way of rescue for everyone. He came to forgive sins.

And yet his rescue plan seemed to go so wrong. Jesus – the perfect, powerful Son of God – was arrested and sentenced to death. He was nailed to a cross and left to die. And there wasn't a Hollywood hero who took him down from the cross. Jesus died.

But the amazing thing is that this was all part of the rescue plan. He died in our place, taking God's punishment for all the wrong we ever say, think and do; for the times we lie and we lose our temper with our brother or sister. For the times we gossip or we cheat our employers. For the times we don't treat God as we should.

We read in Mark 15 that Jesus chose to take what we deserve – separation from God's friendship and goodness – so he could offer his perfection to us and make a way possible for us to be forgiven. Jesus didn't just come to show us he was the Son of God, but also how we can *know* God.

We discovered in Mark 16 that Jesus' death was not the end – that just as he had promised, he came alive three days later. Many saw him, spoke with him and ate with him. He showed that his words can be trusted, that his power conquers all, and that there is now a way for us to be friends with God for ever. That's why no one else is better and why his rescue is the greatest – it's everlasting and offered to everyone.

3) Discover the good news for yourself

Show third diary entry.

Shackleton's Antarctic expeditions were driven by his desire to discover. On his final trip, he had heard about some lost islands and so went to find them.

As we've been exploring the life of Jesus in the book of Mark, we've heard about the good news of "Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God" (Mark 1:1). We've not only seen Jesus revealing that he's the Son of God, and all that he offered, but we've also discovered how people responded to him. Some chose to ignore him; others felt threatened; but still others believed and were changed. They thanked him and followed him, even though it wouldn't always be easy.

I wonder how you respond to Jesus.

- Think about who he is – we've discovered he is none other than God Almighty. He's powerful and full of authority.
- Think about what he's like – he loves you enough to rescue you, by dying for you. So why wouldn't you want to follow him?
- And think about why following him is such a good thing – because he wants to rescue you.

Are you driven by a desire to discover? Would you like to find out more? Why not chat to some of the leaders tonight or take a Mark's Gospel as you leave and think about things a little more? Maybe you would like to start exploring things by signing up to our *Christianity Explored* course, which is starting... (give date and plug the course).

BREATH TAKING BAY: TALK IDEA 1

Suitable for a holiday club or vacation Bible school, ages 4-11 or 8-11

You will need:

- A crown
- The Island map visual
- The "Breath-taking Bay" coloured visual to stick up

This talk outline can also be downloaded from www.cemministries.org/epic

March on wearing a crown; then continue to march on the spot while barking out orders...

Attention! On your feet, right away and march. That's right, up two, up two, up two, up two. Now halt! Stretch up! Sit down! Salute! At ease.

Relax voice

Well done – brilliant obeying. But why did you do what I asked? (pause) **It was because I was in charge; I had power and authority** (flex muscles) **over you. I said something and it happened.**

Well, today's true story is all about the person with the most power and authority (flex muscles). **We find it in the New Testament part of the Bible** (hold up Bible). **Mark begins by telling us that Jesus** (crown shape) **has power and authority** (flex muscles) **over everything** (sweep arms in front of you) **because he is God's** (point up) **chosen King and Son. Then Mark gives loads of examples in the beginning of his book just to make sure we've got it.**

So we're going to go to Breath-taking Bay (point to on map) **to see what Jesus** (crown shape) **does. Every time I say "Jesus", I want you to make a crown shape; every time I say "authority", I want you to flex your arms; every time I say "God", I want you to point up; and every time I say "everything", I want you to sweep your arms in front of you.**

Give the children a chance to practise the actions as you say each of the four words.

Peter and his friends were getting ready to go on another fishing trip. It's what they did, day in, day out. Get the nets ready, sail out on Lake Galilee, fish until they caught enough, then come back to shore to sell it. It was their job, their way of making money and surviving. But that was about to change. Forever. For that particular day was no ordinary day.

That particular day, Jesus (crown shape) **walked up to them on the sand and said: "Hey guys! Come on, leave everything and follow me! I've got plans for you to work with me." Leave everything! Their family, their work, the lot. Do you know what they did?** (pause) **They dropped their nets on the beach, and they followed Jesus** (crown shape). **All of them. Right away. No questions, no arguments.**

Peter and his friends could tell that Jesus (crown shape) **was important. They could see he had authority** (flex muscles) **over everything** (sweep arms in front of you) **just by the way he spoke. And so if Jesus** (crown shape) **said follow, they knew they had to follow.**

Well, they followed Jesus (crown shape) **to a place called Capernaum, where they listened to him teach about God** (point up) **and watched impossible things happen. They saw all sorts of ways that Jesus** (crown shape) **has authority** (flex muscles) **over everything** (sweep arms in front of you).

He knew more than anyone else. He could make people better just like that (click fingers), **even people who had evil spirits inside them. His power showed he was God's** (point up) **Son. Wow! Peter and his friends were amazed at Jesus'** (crown shape) **authority** (flex muscles) **and they weren't the only ones; everyone else was, too.**

And then, Peter suddenly had a thought (pause). **His mother-in-law was really ill. She had an awful fever, all hot, sticky and shaky. He could take Jesus** (crown shape) **to meet her, to help her – and so that's what they did.**

They left the synagogue and went to Peter's house. Jesus (crown shape) went straight up to Peter's mother-in-law and took hold of her hand. As he did, God's (point up) power worked in her and made her better right away. She was even able to get up and cook. Jesus (crown shape) had healed her! It was amazing; it was awesome; it was EPIC!

And she wasn't the only one Jesus (crown shape) healed that night. As soon as the news spread, loads of ill people flocked to Peter's house. Jesus (crown shape) was able to heal them all – he even drove out some evil spirits, just like that (click fingers)!

Jesus (crown shape) really does have authority (flex muscles) over everything (sweep arms in front of you). He really is God's (point up) Son.

Peter and his friends kept following Jesus (crown shape) after that. As they watched and learned from him, they began to work out who Jesus (crown shape) is. They started to understand more and more that Jesus (crown shape) is God's (point up) chosen King and Son – not just a good man or a clever miracle worker.

Stick "Breathtaking Bay" coloured section on the map.

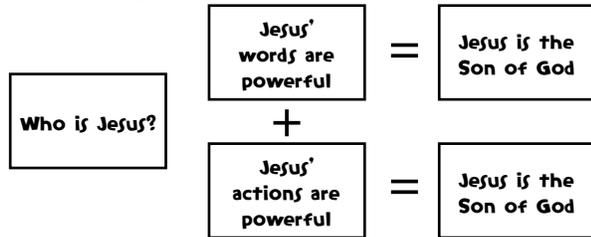
I wonder, who do you think Jesus (crown shape) is? Over the next few sessions, we're going to hear about some more of the fantastic things Jesus (crown shape) did and said, and we're going to have a chance to see what it means to follow him as God's (point up) chosen King and Son.

BREATH TAKING BAY: TALK IDEA 2

Suitable for a mid-week club or children's Christianity Explored course, ages 8-11

You will need:

- A bandage or sling
- The *Epic Logbook*
- The Explorer Notebook (see page 156)
- The following visual aids ready to display as you go through the talk



This talk outline can also be downloaded from www.ceministries.org/epic

Note: Read from the same Bible version you are using with the children. Epic Explorers uses the 2011 edition of the New International Version (NIV), but you may want to adapt the talk to whatever version the children will be using in their discussion groups.

Mark spends the rest of his book explaining why he believes this is true, and why it's good news that Jesus came. So let's explore some of the things Jesus said and did, and see what they show about Jesus.

1. Jesus' words are powerful because he is the Son of God

- Read aloud Mark 1:16-20, asking the children to listen carefully for anything Jesus did that was amazing.

Did you spot what amazing thing Jesus did? (Take responses.)

Jesus gave a command and immediately, Simon, Andrew, James and John obeyed. Just like that (click fingers or do something similar). There was no ignoring or delaying. No excuses or "Do I have to?". It wasn't like when your mum asks you to tidy your room.

Nope. They were willing to do what Jesus asked right away. Even though that meant leaving their families and their jobs.

Imagine if I came up to you and said: "Hey, I want you to leave school, forget your family and let me take you wherever I choose". Would you do it? Of course not; not really. I'm not important.

So why did these four leave everything for Jesus? Well, they could tell he was powerful and important from what they had seen and heard about him, and from him. If Jesus said: "Follow", they knew they had to obey.

As the fishermen followed Jesus, they heard Jesus' powerful words again and again. Listen to verses 21-22:

I wonder, who do you think Jesus is?

Display the question: "Who is Jesus?"
You could use a flip chart or PowerPoint.

Maybe you think he was a really cool magician or a clever teacher. Maybe you imagine him to have been a kind man or a genie granting wishes. Or maybe you just think he's made up and never existed.

Lots of people have different ideas about Jesus, so it's important that we explore for ourselves, by examining the evidence of his life and death.

And to do that, we are going to look at Mark's book in the Bible. Mark spent lots of time with people who knew Jesus, and he wrote his discoveries down, because he wanted us to be able to answer the question: Who is Jesus? Mark begins straight away with the answer: Jesus is God's chosen King and Son.

- Read aloud Mark 1:1

- Read aloud Mark 1:21-22, again asking the children to listen carefully for anything Jesus did that was amazing.

Did you spot the amazing thing Jesus did this time? (Take responses.)

The fishermen heard Jesus teach about God in an amazing way that no one else taught. Jesus' words are powerful.

In fact, his words were so powerful that he was able to heal a man who had an evil spirit. Just like that (click fingers). **When Jesus told the evil spirit to leave the man, the spirit obeyed – it had no choice. Jesus' words are powerful.**

Why are his words so powerful? How can he just speak, and the impossible happens – and not just here, but all through Mark's book? Well, it's because Jesus is the Son of God, and God has power over everything. He made everything and rules over everything.

Stick up: "Jesus' words are powerful = Jesus is the Son of God"

2) Jesus' actions are powerful because he is the Son of God

But it's not just Jesus' words that are powerful; his actions are as well. Mark gives even more evidence that Jesus is the Son of God.

Can I have a volunteer for a minute?

Bandage the volunteer's arm, or put it in a sling.

I want you to imagine that _____ (volunteer's name) has broken their arm.

Can I make it better just like that?

Click fingers and encourage the children to respond to the question.

Can a doctor make it better just like that?

Click fingers and again encourage the children to respond to the question.

Of course we can't; we don't have that kind of power – but Jesus does. So in Mark 1, when Jesus went back to Simon's house, where Simon's mother-in-law was ill, guess what he did? (Take responses.)

Yes, that's right, Jesus healed her. Just like that (click fingers).

And then lots of others came to the house; many who were sick, many who had evil spirits in them. Guess what Jesus did this time? (Take responses.)

Yes, Jesus healed them. Just like that (click fingers). **No disease was too difficult for Jesus – absolutely nothing was incurable.**

We see that in the rest of Mark's book too – time and again Jesus made blind people see, deaf people hear and lame people walk. He cleaned up people's skin, he stopped people's bleeding – he even brought people back from the dead.

Jesus' actions are powerful; he can do the impossible, because he made everything and rules over everything. Jesus is the Son of God.

Stick up: "Jesus' actions are powerful = Jesus is the Son of God"

As we discover more about Jesus, we'll keep a record of those discoveries in this Explorer Notebook.

Show page 1 of the Explorer Notebook: "Jesus is God's Son..."

So as we've explored Mark chapter 1, we've seen that Jesus can say and do things that only God has the power to do. This is why Mark believes Jesus is God's chosen King and Son.

But what about you? I wonder, who do you think Jesus is?

Hold up the *Epic Logbook* and show page 3: "Jesus is God's Son"

That's what we'll be thinking about when we split into our small groups.

DISCOVERY DENS: TALK IDEA 1

Suitable for a holiday club or vacation Bible school, ages 4-11 or 8-11

You will need:

- Simple costume for each character being interviewed*:
 - Eyewitness – Sunglasses and wig
 - Paralyzed man – A bed roll and hat
 - Levi – Baseball cap and money bag
 - Professor – White lab coat
- The Island map visual with the “Breathtaking Bay” coloured visual attached (see pages 152-154)
- The “Discovery Dens” coloured visual

** If you only have two actors, one could play the eyewitness and Levi, with a very quick costume change, and the other could play the paralyzed man and professor. It is also possible for one actor to play all four parts.*

This talk outline can also be downloaded from www.ceministries.org/epic

Reporter: Welcome to Capernaum News. It seems that Jesus of Nazareth has been doing more amazing things. Earlier we reported on the events at Breathtaking Bay (point to the map). Once again Jesus has been healing people and speaking with God’s authority.

We’re going to be talking to some men who were in the Discovery Dens (point to the map), and we’ll be asking the question: what really matters to Jesus? So without further ado, let me introduce you to our first guest.

On walks the first eyewitness.

Reporter: Good evening and thanks for being here. I wonder – can you fill us in on the day’s happenings?

Eyewitness: Yes of course. It all began when I heard that Jesus was back in Capernaum. I was desperate to see him in

action and so I went to the house he was visiting, as did every man and his dog, it seemed. We all packed in, watching and listening.

Then, above us, there was loads of banging and bits of the roof started crumbling. I looked up – and I saw four guys peering through a hole in the roof!

Reporter: You’re joking? People were so keen to see Jesus that they destroyed a roof? Why?

Eyewitness: Well, it seemed they had brought their paralyzed friend to see Jesus, but couldn’t get to him because of the crowds. However, they were so convinced that Jesus would heal their friend, they wouldn’t give up. They had this genius idea to lower him on his mat through the roof and land him in front of Jesus!

Reporter: Amazing! What faith these guys had in Jesus’ power! So what happened next? Did Jesus heal him immediately?

Eyewitness: Not quite. Jesus turned to him and said: “Your sins are forgiven”.

Reporter: He said what?

Eyewitness: “Your sins are forgiven!”

Reporter: He never! The man was paralyzed – that’s why his friends had taken him – so Jesus could heal him! Does Jesus think that the forgiveness of sin matters more than walking?

Eyewitness: Yes, he must do – and the religious leaders weren’t happy about that, let me tell you. They didn’t think Jesus was able to forgive sins because they know that only God can forgive sins. But what the leaders didn’t realise is – Jesus IS God.

Reporter: Wow! To find out what happened next, we’ve invited the paralyzed man himself to come into the studio.

In walks the paralyzed man.

Reporter: Great to have you here. Now, obviously you've just walked in, so can you tell us what happened after Jesus said he'd forgiven you?

Paralyzed man: Well, he proved that he IS God. First, by pointing out what the leaders were thinking; and then he told me to get up with my mat and walk home. And that's exactly what I did. Everyone was flabbergasted!

Reporter: Incredible. So Jesus proved that he is God, both in his actions and in his words; and he showed that the forgiveness of sins really matters.

We've more evidence of this from another incident today. And so I've asked Levi the tax collector to come and share that evidence. Levi, welcome.

Levi walks in. Give him a strong regional accent to add some fun to his account.

Reporter: Levi, please tell us about your meeting with Jesus.

Levi: Sure. Well, there I was, collecting in everyone's money to pass on to the Romans, when up walks Jesus. Now, I don't mind telling you – I was a little bit surprised. No one likes hanging round with guys like me. We're the lowest of the low, you know, cheats'n'all.

But anyway, he comes up to me and tells me to follow him. Spoke with such authority, I had to. And then, I invited him back to my place to have a meal with some of my friends. Well, that didn't sit right with the religious leaders. They were really cross that Jesus was hanging out with us.

Reporter: I'm sure they weren't impressed. So, what did Jesus say?

Levi: Well, to sum it up, he basically said that he'd come to save sinners. That's it in a nutshell. Amazing!

Reporter: So again we see that the forgiveness of sin really matters to Jesus. To help us understand why it's such a big deal, we've invited an expert on this issue of sin.

Professor enters.

Reporter: Professor, why do you think sin matters so much to Jesus?

Professor: It's like this: we all sin – all of us do things wrong, say things wrong and think things wrong – and as a result we are cut off from God. And the only way for us to be friends with God again is to be forgiven by him.

It appears that Jesus came to earth to make a way for us to be forgiven and saved from the punishment we deserve.

Reporter: Well, that really is good news.

We've discovered our forgiveness is what really matters, because otherwise we're separated from God. And Jesus has come to make our forgiveness possible.

Stick up "Discovery Dens" visual with an amazed face.

Reporter: Amazing! That's all from us here at Capernaum on this historic day. Join us again tomorrow for the latest on Jesus, the Son of God. But for now, good night.

DISCOVERY DENS: TALK IDEA 2

Suitable for a mid-week club or children's Christianity Explored course, ages 8-11

You will need:

- 6 large story picture cards (or these can be on PowerPoint if you're teaching a big group) – available to download from www.ceministries.org/epic
- Visuals from session 1, already displayed as a reminder of what we learned last time
- The Explorer Notebook (see page 156)
- Depending on illustration choice, either a "Shove off God, I'm in charge, Not you" visual or a Treasure Island map with a treasure chest on it, an "X" to stick on, a blindfold and the phrase "Sin is missing God's mark"
- 3 arrows and 3 slips of paper with "It spoils", "It separates" and "We're stuck" written on them

This talk outline can also be downloaded from www.ceministries.org/epic

What do you think your biggest problem is? Is it the fact you have to sit next to the class bully? Or that you haven't been picked for the school team? Maybe it's something to do with your family or friends. Well, in chapter 2 of Mark's Gospel, we see that Jesus thinks we have a bigger problem. A problem that *spoils and separates*. A problem that gets us *stuck*.

Let's go back to Capernaum:

Show picture 1: A house where you can see people through the doorway and window, and surrounding the outside of the house.

There you are, rammed in the crowded house and I mean rammed! People are squashed into every nook and cranny, packed into every space possible, inside the house and outside. You see, Jesus is there and everyone is desperate to hear him speaking. You all know that his words are powerful.

Point to the "Jesus' words are powerful" visual from session 1.

Show picture 2: Inside the house, with a hole in the roof and the paralyzed man being lowered down.

All of a sudden, bits of the roof start bouncing off your head. You look up and see a gaping hole, with four men lowering their friend down on his mat. They have brought him to Jesus to be healed. They believe that Jesus can help because they know his actions are powerful.

Point to the "Jesus' actions are powerful" visual from session 1.

As the man lands right in front of Jesus, the friends are watching, you're watching, the man's waiting... What would you expect to happen next? (Take answers.)

But listen to what actually happened:

- Read aloud Mark 2:5

Show picture 3: Inside the house, the crowd with shocked faces and a speech bubble saying: "Your sins are forgiven".

Jesus doesn't heal the man right away – he doesn't do what everyone's expecting – instead Jesus forgives the man's sins. But why? We need to make sure we understand what sin is to see why.

So what is sin?

Note: Use one of the two illustrations below to explain what sin is. The first one is especially useful for church children as it is more relational and will help them see that sin is not merely about actions.

Illustration 1:

Sin is when we don't treat God as we should. It's like we're saying: "Shove off God. I'm in charge, Not you!"

Stick up: **S**hove off God
I'm in charge
Not you!

Sin isn't just the wrong things we say or do, but it's also to do with our attitude towards God. Sin is when we make ourselves...

Point to the "I" in the visual aid.

... more important than God, even though he is in charge and wants the best for us.

So when you disobey God's commands and do what you want instead, such as lying to someone or taking something that doesn't belong to you, it's as if you are saying: "Shove off God – your rules are wrong, I'm in charge, not you!"

And when you forget about God, or love things like sport or TV or friends more than God, it's as if you are saying: "Shove off God – you don't matter, I'm in charge, not you!"

The Bible says that all of us sin and that there are serious consequences for our sin.

Illustration 2:

Sin basically means missing God's mark.

Stick up "Sin is missing God's mark" and then ask for a volunteer to stick an "X" on your treasure map, where the treasure chest is. But blindfold them before they try. Comment on whether or not they meet the mark by putting the "X" in the correct place.

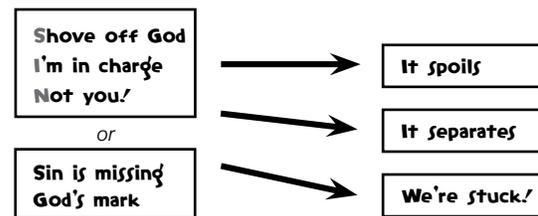
You see, God has set a mark for us. It's to "love the Lord your God with all your heart" and "love your neighbour as you love yourself". But none of us manage to do this all the time, so none of us manage to meet God's mark.

Sometimes we miss his mark by not bothering to speak to him or considering him in our decisions. Or sometimes we disobey his instructions – like the time you lied to your mum. All of us say, think and do things that are wrong. All of us ignore God. This is a lot more serious than missing the treasure in the game, as it has serious consequences...

Note: Whichever illustration you have used, the talk continues from this point.

What are the consequences of sin?

Stick up an arrow going from your definition of sin, as explained in your chosen illustration, and then add "It spoils". Build the visual aid up each time so that it looks like this:



1. It spoils

Imagine you're playing inside with a tennis racket, despite being told not to. As you sweep your arm back to hit the ball, you hit your TV instead and smash the screen to pieces. What would happen next? (Take one or two answers.)

I imagine you would be sent to your room or punished in another way as you've spoilt things – the TV and your family relationships. In fact, any time we sin, it spoils something. If we foul in soccer, we spoil the game. If we lie, we can spoil people's trust in us.

But the most serious consequence of sin is that it spoils our relationship with God and deserves punishment.

Stick up another arrow going from the definition of sin; then add: "It separates".

2. It separates

You see, God is angry with us when we don't live in a way that pleases him. It wouldn't be fair if God just said: "It doesn't matter" when we do something unkind or we don't treat him as we should. And so, we deserve to be punished.

God's punishment is a bit like when we're sent to our room after smashing the TV; then we are separated from our family, but God's punishment is much more serious, as it's separation from him and his perfect kingdom for ever. In fact, the Bible's name for this eternal separation from God is hell. That's why sin is such a serious problem.

Stick up an arrow going from the definition on sin; then add "We're stuck".

3. We're stuck!

The third problem is that we can't get rid of our sin ourselves – we're stuck.

Some people think that we can fix our sin problem ourselves by making sure we don't do anything unkind or selfish, or by going to church and doing loads of good stuff instead. They think we can make ourselves okay with God.

But that's just like sticking black paper over your TV to try and cover up the damage. We maybe able to hide the smashed screen, but it doesn't deal with the real problem – the TV is still broken.

In the same way, doing good stuff doesn't deal with our biggest problem – our sin still spoils, and it still separates us from God. Which is why we need someone to help us. So is Jesus that person? Let's go back to Mark 2 and find out.

Show picture 4: Inside the house, the Pharisees looking very unhappy, with a thought bubble coming from their heads: "Only God can forgive sins".

As you look around after Jesus' shocking statement, you see the religious leaders scowling furiously. They think only God can forgive sins, and do you know what? They're right!

Show picture 5: Inside the house, with a speech bubble saying: "Which is easier for people to see? If he has been forgiven, or he has been healed?"

Jesus knows exactly what they are thinking because he's God's Son.

Point to the "Jesus is the Son of God" visual from session 1.

So Jesus asks them if it's easier to say: "Your sins are forgiven" or to say: "Get up and walk". The answer has to be "Your sins are forgiven" because you can just say it and no one will know if it's true or not. There's no way of actually seeing if someone's sins have been forgiven.

But if you say: "Get up and walk" to a paralyzed man, then of course you can see if they're healed – if it's true, they'll start walking around.

Show picture 6: Inside the house, with the paralytic man standing up and everyone looking amazed.

The next thing you know, Jesus proves that he has authority over sin and over sickness by telling the man to get up and go home... and he does. How incredible is that?! Jesus speaks and the man is forgiven; Jesus acts and the man is healed.

Jesus' words are powerful (point to the "Jesus' words are powerful" visual from session 1).

Jesus' actions are powerful (point to the "Jesus' actions are powerful" visual from session 1).

Can you imagine how amazed you would be to see this?

And the great news is, Jesus didn't just come to forgive the man's sin but ours too (show page 2 of the Explorer Notebook).

He is able to do so because he is God's Son (show page 1 of the Explorer Notebook).

Next time we'll see exactly how Jesus deals with the way our sin *spoils* and *separates*. We'll see the rescue he offers so we don't have to be *stuck*.

MYSTERIOUS MOUNTAINS: TALK IDEA 1

Suitable for a holiday club or vacation Bible school, ages 4-11 or 8-11

You will need:

- A Roman soldier's costume to wear
- Sword
- Rope
- Chair, centre stage
- The Island map visual
- The "Breathtaking Bay" coloured visual
- The "Discovery Dens" coloured visual
- The "Mysterious Mountains" coloured visual*

* If you are combining sessions 3 and 4, you will also need the "Crown Cave" coloured visual.

This talk outline can also be downloaded from www.ceministries.org/epic

March on, centre stage.

I'm a soldier, in charge of nearly 100 men, I'll have you know! And boy, I've seen a lot. The toughest place Caesar sent me was Jerusalem – not an easy job, believe me!

I mean, there was this one week which started off on a real high – tons of people turned out on the streets to...

Wave the rope in the air, like a sports supporters scarf.

... cheer on a guy called Jesus. He had been travelling round for a few years showing incredible power...

Stick up "Breathtaking Bay" visual.

... forgiving people...

Stick up "Discovery Dens" visual.

... and teaching about God. It seemed everyone loved him and yet, before the week was up, we were putting him to death on the Friday.

Crazy!!!

We were brought in after the Jewish leaders had arrested Jesus during the night.

Wrap rope round your wrists, and sit on the chair.

They didn't like the things Jesus was saying and doing, or the fact that he was so powerful and popular – and so they captured him and tried to find something they could punish him for. But do you know what? They couldn't – because he'd never done anything wrong!

However, when Jesus said he was God's chosen King and Son...

Stand up, leaving the rope on the chair, and tap the crown on the "Breathtaking Bay" visual with the sword.

... the Jewish leaders decided he was lying, and could be punished for that. And so they started to beat him and laugh at him – and then they dragged him to see Governor Pilate.

Move to the left side of the stage.

Stand upright, with sword in front of chest and one hand cupped around your ear.

As I stood guard, I listened to Pilate questioning Jesus. But Jesus just remained quiet. Then he and another prisoner, called Barabbas, were taken onto the balcony.

Step forward, to the very front of the stage.

By this time, there was quite a crowd gathered.

Wave arm in front of you.

They were all keen to see...

Stand on tiptoe, shielding eyes.

... what would happen to Jesus. Pilate silenced them.

Finger on lips.

Then he gave them a choice – they had to choose who they wanted let go...

Hold out right hand to your side.

... and who should be killed.

Hold out left hand to your side.

In my mind it was a stupid thing to ask. Why on earth would they want Jesus killed? He hadn't done anything wrong. Why should he die in place of Barabbas, who was a thief and murderer?

But the crowd began to shout.

Punch the air with your fist when talking about the crowd.

"Free Barabbas, kill Jesus! Free Barabbas, kill Jesus!" They got angrier and angrier. And Jesus...

Stand with hands by your side.

... he just stood there, saying nothing. It was as if he knew what was going to happen.

My boss, Pilate, ordered that Jesus be killed, and so we led him away...

Move back to centre stage.

... and gave him a beating.

Pick up the rope and begin to whip.

When we were tired of whipping Jesus and mocking him, we tied a wooden beam to him.

Drape the rope over your shoulders.

Then we lead him to a hillside.

Drag the chair with you to the right side of the stage.

There, we nailed Jesus to a wooden cross...

Stand on the chair, with arms outstretched.

... between two criminals, and gambled for his clothes to see who could keep them.

Now, I've seen many a man die on a cross – but never as Jesus did. He didn't scream or swear.

Shake head.

Instead he forgave those who were being cruel to him. It was incredible. From the things I had heard, Jesus must have had the power to stop it all, to save himself, but he didn't. He stayed put.

He didn't deserve to die, but what could I do? It was my job to follow orders and so...

Climb off the chair and stand upright in front of it, tapping sword on your hand.

... I stood guard and I waited. I waited for him to die.

Pause.

Stopping tapping sword and slowing down speech for the next phrase:

And then the weirdest thing happened...

It was daytime, but all of a sudden it went pitch black. Total darkness in the middle of the day. For three hours!

Clutch sword in front of you, looking nervous.

None of it made sense, until Jesus cried out in a loud voice: "My God! Why have you turned away from me?"

God had turned away from his Son. Jesus took our punishment for the wrong we have done, and in doing so he was separated from his Father.

It should be us who are cut off from God, because we don't treat him the way we should. But Jesus died in our place. He died so that we can be forgiven friends with God for ever.

Stick "Mysterious Mountains" coloured visual on the map.

As Jesus took one last deep breath, he said: "It is finished" and died. The ground shook and a big, thick curtain in the temple tore in half. It was then I knew for certain that Jesus really was the Son of God.

Note: If you are combining sessions 3 and 4, use the alternative ending at the * below.

Move back to centre stage.

I wonder – who do you think Jesus is? Do you believe he’s God’s Son? Do you understand why he had to die?

* Alternative ending if you are combining sessions 3 and 4.

Pilate checked with us that Jesus was definitely dead. Then we gave his body to his friends, who wrapped him up and buried him in a tomb – a cave cut out of solid rock. A huge stone was pushed in front.

Mime pushing a stone.

Some of us soldiers were sent to guard the tomb.

Stand to attention.

There was no way anyone could get in or out.

And yet, Jesus did.

You see, a couple of days after he had died, Jesus came to life. Came as a bit of a shock to us all, I can tell you!

Sit on chair, looking surprised.

Jesus had promised it would happen, but no one really understood what he meant. Early on the Sunday morning, some women who were friends of Jesus discovered that the stone had been rolled away and his body had gone. An angel told them that Jesus had risen!

Stick up “Crown Cave” coloured visual.

He had done the impossible. He had died so we could be forgiven, and he had beaten death, showing us we can have life for ever with him. Jesus really is the Son of God.

Move back to centre stage.

I wonder – who do you think Jesus is? Do you believe he’s God’s Son? Do you understand why he had to die and then come to life?

MYSTERIOUS MOUNTAINS: TALK IDEA 2

Suitable for a mid-week club or children's Christianity Explored course, ages 8-11

You will need:

- Three story-picture cards (available to download from www.ceministries.org/epic):
 - 1: Jesus hanging on the cross
 - 2: the temple curtain ripping
 - 3: the Roman centurion
- A picture of a large calendar, with circled dates, to which you will add the 3 talk titles (download as above)
- A mobile/cell phone, with a "No Entry" sign on the back of it
- Items for your chosen method for telling the story (see below)
- "Sin" visuals from session 2 (see page 74), already displayed as a reminder of what we learned last time
- The Explorer Notebook (see page 156)

This talk outline can also be downloaded from www.ceministries.org/epic

Choose one of these three story options:

- *Either* show the Australian Bible Society videos on Mark 15 (there are two). Go to <http://wild.bible-society.org.au>. Click on "Wild Teacher Resources" and then "Video Library". Watch both videos together, one after the other.
- *Or* have leaders perform an animated reading of Mark 15:22-39 with different leaders reading the parts of the various characters. Use whichever Bible version you are using with the group.
- *Or* summarize the verses and tell the story with some Bible pictures (download as above), eg:
 1. Jesus was led up the hill dragging a cross, like a criminal, even though he had never done anything wrong. They nailed him to the cross, between two criminals, and gambled to win his clothes.

2. Then some of the people watching began to mock Jesus saying: "Ha, he said he was going to rescue others, but he can't even rescue himself" and: "Why don't you climb down and prove you're the Son of God?" Even those hanging on the crosses on either side joined in the insults.
3. In the middle of the day, when the sun should have been shining, the sky went dark and stayed dark for three hours. Jesus yelled out in an anguished voice: "My God, my God, why have you turned away from me?"
4. As Jesus breathed his last breath, the temple curtain ripped into two. The Roman centurion thought about all he had seen and heard, and he said: "Surely this man was the Son of God".

Hold up mobile/cell phone.

Imagine this phone has all the bad things I've ever done recorded on it. Or all the bad things you have ever done.

All the times you've lied and been rude to your parents. All the times you've picked on people, had a selfish thought and not treated God as you should. All your sin recorded. Imagine if I now uploaded it to YouTube! The embarrassment it would cause; the friendships it would spoil.

We heard last time that sin spoils our relationship with God (point to "It spoils") and it separates us from God (point to "It separates"). I'm going to show you why.

Imagine this hand is me – and the ceiling is where God is.

Put the phone on one hand.

This phone, which shows all my sin, is getting in the way between me and God. Our sin separates us from being God's friends and there's nothing we can do about it (point to "We're stuck").

Last time, we thought about the man who was lowered down through the roof, and we saw that Jesus forgave the man's sin. Jesus can do this because he is God's Son. But how can Jesus rescue us and forgive our sins? Well, it's all to do with the very special day when Jesus died.

1. A planned day

Stick up by the first circled date: "A planned day".

The day Jesus died was planned by God. There are lots of Bible verses that show us, but we'll stick with Mark. In Mark 8:31 it says: *"He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again."*

Jesus knew that he was going to die. It wasn't an accident. He wasn't surprised when the religious leaders arrested him. He wasn't surprised when they handed him over to the Romans to be killed. He knew when and why he was going to die. He knew that it was part of God's rescue plan to save us from being stuck with the punishment we deserve.

Let's watch the videos/read the story before we think about why Jesus' death was the only way to save us.

Tell the story using one of the three story options on page 89.

2. A sad day

Stick up by the next circled date a label saying: "A sad day".

Hold up story picture 1.

What a shocking sight.

- The one who had taught about God with authority...
- The one who had healed so many...
- The one who had forgiven the paralyzed man...

- The one who had done nothing wrong – EVER...

... was being killed alongside two criminals.

Jesus didn't deserve to be punished but he chose to die in our place. He chose not to rescue himself, so we can be rescued.

Remember this phone with all my sin on, and how it separates me from God?

Hold up the phone and lay it flat on the same hand as before.

Now imagine this other hand is Jesus.

Hold up your other hand.

He never did anything wrong so there's nothing separating Jesus and his Father, God. But when Jesus died, he took all my sin...

Transfer phone from one hand to the other.

... and all of God's anger at sin was poured on his own Son, instead of on me.

That's why Jesus cried out: "God, why have you turned away from me?" God turned away from his Son for the only time ever as Jesus paid for our sin. It was the only way our sin problem could be fixed.

Now, look at my other hand. There's no barrier now – I'm no longer separated – because Jesus has taken my sin. That is how Jesus rescues us.

3. A happy day

Stick up by the last circled date: "A happy day".

The day Jesus died was a sad day because Jesus died a horrific death, but we call it "Good Friday" because it was also a happy day. It's happy because, through his death, Jesus did something amazing and wonderful.

Hold up story picture 2.

When Jesus died, the huge curtain in the temple ripped in two. God was using it as a big signpost to show us that now our sin has been dealt with, we can be God’s forgiven friends. You see, in the past that big curtain had been like a giant “No Entry” sign into a place where people could meet God.

Show phone again, pointing to the “No Entry” sign on the back of it.

But when Jesus died, God tore the curtain to show that he had accepted Jesus’ payment for our sin. Now, instead of being punished, we can be forgiven. Instead of death, we can know life. Instead of being stuck as God’s enemies, we can be God’s friends. All because of what Jesus has done.

Hold up story picture 3.

Some people in the crowd thought Jesus’ death was a mistake. The religious leaders thought it was unnecessary. But the Roman soldier who was watching said that Jesus must be God’s Son. I wonder what you think of Jesus’ death?

The day that Jesus died was a *sad day* because Jesus, God’s perfect Son, took our punishment. It was a *happy day* because Jesus died so that all who believe in him can be his forgiven friends. And it was a *planned day* – planned by God, as he’d always known it was the only way to rescue us.

Show page 3 of the Explorer Notebook:
“and died in our place...”

Note: *If you are combining sessions 3 and 4, use the alternative ending at the * below.*

And another planned day was going to follow on the Sunday, because Jesus had promised he would come back to life on the third day. We’ll think about that planned day next time.

* Alternative ending if you are combining sessions 3 and 4.

Another planned day was soon to follow on the Sunday, as Jesus had promised he would come back to life on the third day – and he did!

After Governor Pilate checked that Jesus was definitely dead, some good friends took Jesus’ body away. They wrapped him in cloth and laid him in a tomb, which was blocked by a large stone and guarded by Roman soldiers.

Early on the Sunday morning, which was the third day, some of his friends returned to the tomb to put spices and perfume on Jesus’ body. They would have felt as if it was another sad day...

Point to the visual of “a sad day”.

... as they trudged towards the tomb, wondering how they could move the stone. But they didn’t need to worry. It had already been moved! And it wasn’t a sad day – it was a gloriously happy day...

Point to the visual of “a happy day”.

... as they soon learned from an angel that Jesus had come back to life, just as he promised.

Point to the visual of “a planned day”.

When Jesus came back to life, it showed again that Jesus is God’s King and Son. He has the power to do what none of us can do. He can do the impossible, because nothing is impossible for God.

Jesus died and came alive, showing us that he is God’s rescuing King, and showing us that one day he will return as God’s judging King. He rules over everyone and he rules over everything, including death. Because Jesus beat death, we can beat death and live for ever.

This happy, planned day reminds us that his payment for our sin has been accepted, and now we can be God’s forgiven friends. We’ll find out how next time.

CROWN CAVE: TALK IDEA 1

Suitable for a holiday club or vacation Bible school, ages 4-11 or 8-11

You will need:

- Two actors to play the Roman centurion and Mary Magdalene
- Detective's costume with magnifying glass
- Detective's notebook
- Large "stone" (large beach ball or something bigger if possible)
- Fold-up cardboard spear
- White cloth
- Perfume bottle
- Briefcase, which has all the clues in apart from the stone
- Soldier's costume
- Headscarf for Mary
- The Island map visual with the "Breathtaking Bay", "Discovery Dens" and "Mysterious Mountains" coloured visuals all stuck on
- The "Crown Cave" coloured visual.

This talk outline can also be downloaded from www.ceministries.org/epic

Detective tiptoes on wearing costume, carrying a briefcase and magnifying glass, peering around.

Detective: A-ha, what do we have here? Children – and lots of them! Fantastic, you can help me solve the mystery of the missing body. Have you heard that Jesus has died?

Point to the "Mysterious Mountains" section on the map.

Well, his body was buried in a stone tomb, a bit like a cave – but now it's been reported that Jesus' tomb is empty. But how's that possible? Has his body been stolen? Did he not really die? Or has he actually come to life?

I've been using my detective skills to collect clues from around the tomb.

Pop open the briefcase and start pulling the clues out.

So, we have here a spear, white rags, a perfume jar and a big rock (roll out from the set nearby). **But I must admit, I can't really make sense of the evidence. What I need is to interview some people who were actually there – some eye-witnesses.**

Enter Roman centurion, wearing the same costume as in talk 3, and marching.

Roman centurion: Left, right, left, right, left, right.

Stops and salutes the detective.

Detective: Good day, sir. How very nice to meet you. I was wondering if you could help me? I'm trying to solve the mystery of Jesus' missing body. Can you tell me – did Jesus definitely die?

Roman centurion: Well of course he did, young man. No doubt about it. We Romans are excellent executioners, you know, and we weren't about to make a mistake this time. We double checked, by sticking a spear through his heart, before we sent word he was dead.

Detective: Ok, so Jesus definitely died – but what happened next? Was his body definitely put in the tomb?

Roman Centurion: Oh yes. After Governor Pilate spoke with me, Jesus' body was wrapped up and taken away by an important-looking fellow. Joseph was his name. He put the body in a brand-new tomb, which some of my men were sent to guard – making sure no one could get in.

Detective: (musing) Interesting... So that would explain why there is a spear there. But then what happened? Where's the body?

Roman centurion: I don't know – but one thing I do know is Jesus is the Son of God, so he had the power to do anything. Anyway, best be off – orders to give, places to march. Left, right, left, right, left, right.

Roman centurion departs, and Mary Magdalene runs on, looking excited and as if she's trying to find people.

Detective: Er, excuse me, madam. I wonder if you could help me? I'm trying to find out what has happened to Jesus' body. I have some clues here but I don't really know what they mean.

Mary Magdalene: (excitedly) Jesus' body? I can tell you! I was there when Joseph wrapped him in cloth and buried him. See this stone (point at it)? The Romans rolled this into the entrance to make sure no one could get in.

Detective: Really? You saw him dead and buried? You saw this rock in front of his tomb? What did you say your name is?

Mary Magdalene: My name is Mary Magdalene, and oh yes, he was dead. That's why my friends and I collected together our money so we could go and buy some spices and perfume (point to the bottle) to put on the body.

Detective: Thank you Mary. Let me just get this straight... you're telling me that Jesus' body was placed in the tomb, and as well as soldiers standing guard, this big stone was put in front? But this stone wasn't in front of the tomb when I found it.

Mary Magdalene: (in an excitable voice) Well, of course it wasn't! When Mary, Salome and I went to the tomb very early on Sunday morning, we were worried about how we would move the heavy stone. But when we got there, it had already been rolled away.

Detective: So what did you do?

Mary Magdalene: We went in. Can you imagine our amazement when we discovered Jesus' body was no longer there? There were just these cloths he'd been wrapped in (hold up the cloths). We were even more amazed when we saw a man in white sitting there. He was an angel, who...

Detective: Wait. Hold fire. You saw an angel? You all actually SAW an angel?!

Mary Magdalene: Yes, and we spoke with him too. He knew we were looking for Jesus but he told us Jesus wasn't in the tomb as he had risen from the dead! And then the angel reminded us that Jesus had promised this would all happen.

I didn't know what to make of it at first. In fact, I was so scared I ran away. But Jesus is alive! It's incredible; it's amazing; it's fantastic. I hope you don't mind, but I have to go. I need to tell the others, especially Peter – the angel asked me to pass on this great news.

Mary Magdalene dashes off.

Detective: Wow! Astonishing. I now feel I have enough evidence to solve the mystery of the missing body. There's only one explanation – Jesus really has risen from the dead!

Stick up the "Crown Cave" coloured visual.

And if Jesus has the power to do that – to beat death, to do the impossible – he really must be God's Son and the King of everything.

Look at notebook.

So let me get this right. On the Mysterious Mountains, we saw that Jesus died to take our punishment; and now at Crown Cave, God is showing he's accepted that rescue by giving Jesus new life.

Woah, hang on! That means, if our punishment's been taken by Jesus, we can be forgiven and not separated from God, which means... we can have new life too; we can live for ever with God. Amazing! I've got to find out more right now...

Detective runs off.

CROWN CAVE: TALK IDEA 2

Suitable for a mid-week club or children's Christianity Explored course, ages 8-11

You will need:

- 2 "crime scene" pictures – the illustrations for this talk are all available to download from www.ceministries.org/epic
- The Explorer Notebook (see page 156)
- A table
- 3 box files, each with one of these questions stuck onto it: "Was Jesus dead?", "Was Jesus alive?" and "Does it really matter?"
- Labels to stick onto the box files saying: "Definitely dead", "Definitely alive", and "Definitely matters"
- **In the "Was Jesus dead?" file:**
 - A helmet with a tag saying: "Brilliant executioner"
 - Some white strips of cloth, tied with a tag saying: "Tightly bound, and buried by friends"
 - A picture of some soldiers guarding the tomb, labelled: "The Romans made sure"
- **In the "Was Jesus alive?" file:**
 - A large stone with a tag saying: "The stone had been moved"
 - An angel Christmas decoration, with a tag saying: "The angel said so"
 - Lots of figure people (eg: Lego, Playmobil), with a sign to place by them saying: "People saw him and were prepared to die for him"
- **In the "Does it really matter?" file:**
 - A crown with a tag saying: "Jesus is God's Son. He is King of everything."
 - A victory poster with the label: "Jesus beat death"
 - A pocket mirror with a tag saying: "We can beat death"

This talk outline can also be downloaded from www.ceministries.org/epic

How good are you at solving mysteries? Look at the picture – can you work out what has happened?

Have on the screen a picture of a "crime scene", eg: a room turned upside down.

Take a few responses. Then ask:

What about this picture? Can anyone tell me one unusual thing?

Show a picture of the empty tomb, and take a couple of responses. If it appears a child wants to retell the whole account, then gently interrupt and thank them for their contribution.

A good detective needs to be someone who can carefully examine the scene, follow up what the eyewitnesses saw, and use clues to solve the mystery.

That's what we're going to do today. We're going to examine the scene of Jesus' tomb, discover what the eyewitnesses saw, and then use the clues to work out if Jesus came alive, and why it matters so much. But before we do, let's remind ourselves of our discoveries so far.

Hold up the Explorer Notebook and turn to the appropriate pages while you recap.

We have seen so far that Jesus is the Son of God, who is able to forgive sins and died in our place. And yet in the 2nd picture, the tomb was empty; there was no body there. So, was Jesus definitely dead when they put him inside?

Hold up box file 1 with the question "Was Jesus dead?" stuck on the outside.

1. Definitely dead

On the Friday night, after Jesus had died, an important man called Joseph of Arimathea went to see Governor Pilate and asked to bury Jesus' body.

- Read Mark 15:44-45

Who did Pilate check with to make absolutely certain that Jesus was dead? (Take responses.)
That's right, he asked the Roman centurion, who had seen Jesus die with his very own eyes.

Pull out either a centurion's helmet or a picture of a centurion, with a tag saying: "Brilliant executioner" and hold it up.

Pilate believed the centurion, because he knew his soldiers were brilliant executioners (show tag) – **they didn't make mistakes. So, Pilate agreed that Joseph could take the body.**

But here's more evidence to help answer the question: Was Jesus dead?

Pull out strips of white cloth, with a tag saying: "Tightly bound, and buried by friends".

Joseph wrapped Jesus' body tightly in cloth, like an Egyptian mummy, and placed him in the stone tomb. To make sure no one could get in, Pilate had a huge stone pushed across the entrance. All of this was seen by Jesus' friends, the two Marys.

So was Jesus dead? Well, he had been killed by a brilliant executioner (hold up clue 1), **he had been buried by good friends** (hold up clue 2), **and there's one more thing...**

Take out the picture of Roman soldiers guarding the tomb.

Highly trained Roman soldiers were sent to seal the tomb and guard it with their lives. They were to make sure that no one went in or out of the tomb. So, was Jesus dead?

Hold up box file 1.

Yes! Definitely!

On top of the question: "Was Jesus dead?", stick the statement: "Definitely dead".

Now usually, this is where a book about someone's life would finish. The next words we'd expect to find would be: "The end". Except this is no ordinary story; this is no ordinary man. We've already seen this in the life Jesus led and in the death he died. And now, we're about to see it all over again as we start the final chapter of Mark and we try to answer our next question: Was Jesus alive?

Hold up second box file, showing the question: "Was Jesus alive?"

2. Definitely alive

It was dawn on the Sunday morning when three women crept to the tomb. That's the scene in our picture earlier. They wanted to put spices on Jesus' dead body to stop it smelling, even though they weren't sure how they could move the huge stone. But it turned out they didn't need to worry.

- Read Mark 16:4

As the women arrived, they saw that the stone had been rolled away.

Pull out a stone from the box file with a tag attached saying: "The stone had been moved". Have a volunteer read the tag.

Why is it incredible that the stone had been moved? (Take ideas, eg: it was so heavy, the Romans were guarding it, etc.)

But that wasn't the only thing the women saw, because now they could see into the tomb and there was a surprising sight. Listen to verse 5 and try to spot what that was.

- Read Mark 16:5

The women saw an angel – a messenger from God.

Pull out an angel Christmas decoration from the box with the tag: "The angel said so".

The angel told them (show tag) **that Jesus had risen from the dead just as he had promised he would. He was alive and they would soon see him. In fact, we read in other eyewitness accounts that lots of people saw Jesus after he died and came to life.**

Take out from the box lots of little people figures (eg: Playmobil) one after another.

Put a sign in front of the play figures saying: "People saw him and were prepared to die for him".

People talked and walked with Jesus, ate with him and hugged him. They were so certain that Jesus was alive that they told everyone – and many of them were even prepared to die for insisting he was alive. How amazing is that?

So was Jesus alive? Well, we know the stone was moved; an angel was in the tomb and said Jesus had risen just as he promised; and people saw Jesus and died for him. Was Jesus alive?

Yes! Definitely!

Stick the statement: "Definitely alive" over the question: "Was Jesus alive?"

Jesus definitely died and definitely is alive, but why does it matter?

Hold up third box file, showing the question: "Does it really matter?"

3. Definitely matters

Pull out a crown, with the tag saying: "Jesus is God Son. He is King of everything."

When Jesus rose from the dead, it showed again that he is God's Son and King of everything (show page 1 of the Explorer Notebook). **If he had stayed dead, his death would be like the normal death of any human. But in rising again, Jesus shows he is both fully man and the Son of God, with the power to rise from the dead. Nothing is impossible for Jesus, because he rules over all.**

Pull out a victory poster.

We thought last time about how Jesus took our punishment; how he paid the price for our sin by dying (show page 3 of the Explorer Notebook). **If Jesus had stayed dead, he would still be under the punishment for our sin, but in Mark 16, God shows he has accepted that payment by bringing Jesus to life** (show page 4 of the Explorer Notebook). **Jesus had victory over sin and death!**

Pull out a pocket mirror, with the tag: "We can beat death". Hold it in front of a few children so they can see their reflection.

And that's not all. Just as God gave Jesus new life, he also promises new life to those who believe Jesus died for them and who live his way. Through Jesus, we can be forgiven and know God's power – the same power that raised Jesus – at work in us.

We deserve to be separated from God for ever, but Jesus rising again shows us that God will give us life after we die; life for ever with him. That's why the angel told the women to go and tell others.

So does it really matter that Jesus definitely died (tap first box file) **and is definitely alive** (tap second box file)?

Yes! Definitely!

Stick over the question on the third box file, the statement: "Definitely matters".

It absolutely matters because:

- **we see God's power**
- **we see that Jesus' payment for our sin has been accepted and he has victory over death**
- **and we see that through him, we can live with him for ever.**

**ROCKY ROAD:
TALK IDEA 1**

Suitable for a holiday club or vacation Bible school, ages 4-11 or 8-11

You will need:

- Large-scale map of Adventure Island. (Gradually add the following visuals to the map through the talk, see page 118 - the visuals are on pages 154-155.)
- Coloured visuals of each location
- Labels with the following phrases:
 - “God’s power and authority”
 - “Can forgive sin”
- Army camp with soldiers
- A large cross and 3 large ticks/check marks
- A speech bubble with: “Forget about ourselves, pick up our cross, and follow Jesus” written in it

This talk outline can also be downloaded from www.ceministries.org/epic

Children vote: Stop at different points during the story and ask children a question that has a “yes” or “no” answer. Ask them to show their answer by giving a “thumbs up” for “yes”, and a “thumbs down” for “no”.

What an amazing leader they had! For nearly three years, the disciples had followed Jesus and seen him do loads of incredible things. At Breathtaking Bay, we saw that the disciples had their breath taken away as they saw everyone stopping and listening when Jesus talked, because he spoke with authority. They saw him healing people with all sorts of illnesses.

Add to the map: “Breathtaking Bay” coloured visual and, under the crown, the phrase: “God’s power and authority”

In Discovery Dens, we discovered that the disciples saw how important forgiveness of sins is to Jesus.

Add to the map: “Discovery Dens” coloured visual and, under the speech bubble, the phrase: “Can forgive sin”.

Jesus had stopped storms and brought people back to life. It was no wonder everyone wanted to see him; he was the talk of every town.

So when Jesus asked them: “What are people saying? Who do people think I am?”, do you think the disciples could answer? Vote now. (Children vote.)

Yes, they could. That day, as they walked to Caesarea Philippi, the disciples told Jesus that everyone was talking about him but no one could agree who he actually was. People thought he was some kind of special messenger from God.

But then Jesus asked his disciples a tougher question: “But what about you? Who do you say that I am?”

Well, they all had a ponder. Maybe they scratched their heads or twiddled their beards. Maybe they thought about some of the things they had seen and heard.

Point to the map.

Eventually Peter spoke up: “I know! You’re the Christ, the Messiah, the King promised and chosen by God!”

Point to the crown on the “Breathtaking Bay” visual.

Who thinks Peter is right? (Children vote.)

Peter was right – kind of. You see, Peter knew Jesus was God’s chosen King, but he didn’t understand what kind of King. Peter probably thought that Jesus was going to be a warrior king, who would defeat the Romans and rule over everyone.

Stick up the picture of the army camp on top of the mountains on the map.

But that wasn’t the way God had planned to rescue his people.

Jesus wanted his disciples to know God's rescue plan, and so he told them exactly what would happen to him. He said that he would be treated badly by the religious leaders, and even be killed – but after three days he would rise again.

Stick up the "Mysterious Mountains" and "Crown Cave" coloured visuals (a cross and a magnifying glass).

Do you think the disciples believed that Jesus would be a different kind of King; a suffering King? Vote now. (Children vote.)

No way! "No Jesus, you're wrong!" Peter shouted. He didn't believe what he'd just heard. Jesus, the one who had done so many amazing things, the one who had shown such power, the one who had never done anything wrong? Surely he wouldn't suffer and die?

Hover a tick/check mark over the mountains and the cave.

Peter couldn't see how Jesus dying would bring rescue for his people – but was Jesus telling the truth? Vote now. (Children vote.)

Yes. Jesus always tells the truth.

Add the tick/check mark between the mountains and the cave.

We've seen in the last few days how Jesus suffered, died and rose again. It was all part of God's rescue plan for his Son, the promised King, to die in our place and deal with our sin problem. Jesus knew he had to take our punishment to make it possible for us to be forgiven and become friends with God for ever.

I wonder, do you believe that? Do you believe that Jesus is God's Son and the promised King, who can forgive us? Have a think in your heads.

Add a tick/check mark to both the crown and the speech bubble (with an exclamation mark in it). Then point at the cross by Mysterious Mountains.

Do you believe Jesus died and rose again to rescue us?

I want you to vote – but this time just quietly in your heads. (Children vote.)

So, how can we receive this gift of forgiveness and be friends with God? Well, just after Jesus told Peter and the others about God's rescue plan, he explained to them what it means to be his follower.

Point at the Rocky Road on the map; then stick on the "Rocky Road" coloured visual (a gift).

Jesus said that we must "forget about ourselves, pick up our cross, and follow him".

Stick speech bubble on by the gift.

"Forget about ourselves" means that we should want to please Jesus and live God's way, not just please ourselves. We should say sorry for the times we're selfish, for the times we say, think and do wrong.

"Pick up our cross" means that we are prepared to go through difficult times just because we love God. We may be teased or ignored, or people may even try to make us give up living God's way.

"Follow" means that we are thankful that Jesus died in our place, and we want to copy the way Jesus lived and loved. We choose to obey him as the King, even when we don't feel like it, because he has done so much for us.

God promises to forgive us and help us live his way, if we believe Jesus is his Son and the promised King, who died to rescue us. I wonder, are you ready to follow Jesus?

Vote one last time, again in your head. (Children vote.)

If you voted "yes", then make sure you chat to your group leader about it. They'll talk to you a little more about what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

ROCKY ROAD: TALK IDEA 2

Suitable for a mid-week club or children's Christianity Explored course, ages 8-11

You will need:

- The visual from week 1 (see page 58)
- A flip-chart pad on a stand, prepared in advance as shown on page 122
- The Explorer Notebook (see page 156)
- Marker pen
- 10 laminated crosses (see page 155) and Blu-tack reusable adhesive
- A wrapped-up gift with something small in it, eg: a packet of sweets/candies

This talk outline can also be downloaded from www.cemministries.org/epic

Show page 1 of the flip chart.

What are you like when it comes to making choices? I wonder would you rather:

- **Always lose?**
- **Never play?**

Have the children vote by making an "X" with their arms to show their choice; then ask one volunteer to come up and stick a cross in the check box voted for by the majority.

Repeat with a couple of other choices on pages 2 and 3.

We make choices all the time. Just think about all the choices you've made even today. What to have for your breakfast... Whether you'll listen to your mum...

I wonder how important your choices were. Do you think they will affect you tomorrow? And the next day? And the day after that?

Well, since some of us are just starting to explore what the Bible says about Jesus, we're going to look at a true story from before Jesus died.

It's when Jesus' first followers had to make a choice about who they thought Jesus was

and what he came to do. It was an important choice and one that would affect them every single day. And it's one that helps us see what it means to be a Christian – to be someone who follows Jesus.

1. A Christian is someone who understands who Jesus is

In Mark 8, we're told that Jesus' followers were walking along a road with Jesus, when all of a sudden he asked them who they thought he was. Which answer do you think they chose?

Show page 4 of the flip-chart pad. Ask someone to come and stick a cross in the check box by the option they personally think the disciples said.

- **Read Mark 8:29b**

How did Peter describe Jesus? (Take answers)

That's right, Peter said that Jesus is the Messiah/Christ.

Note: "Messiah", in Hebrew, and "Christ", in Greek, are the same title. Choose whichever one is used in the Bible version you are looking at in the discussion groups.

Can I have a volunteer to come up and cross out all the "X's" in the puzzle to help us see what it means?

When the volunteer crosses out all of the "X's", ask them to read out what it now says: "God's promised chosen King".

Peter was right, but Jesus wasn't just God's chosen King; he was also God's Son (show page 1 of the Explorer Notebook). **Time and again in Mark, we've seen Jesus showing authority that only God has. That's why he was able to teach powerfully, heal people, forgive sins and beat death.**

Point to week 1's visual.

A Christian is someone who believes Jesus is God's Son.

Prepare the following flip-chart sheets if you are using talk idea 2.

1

- Always lose
- Never play

2

- Be born with an elephant trunk
- Be born with a giraffe neck

3

- Accept a gift
- Reject a gift

4

**(depending on Bible version)*

A Christian understands who Jesus is

- A kind man
- A good teacher
- A messenger from God
- The Messiah/ The Christ*
- God's Son

**XGXOXDS PXROXMXIXSXED
CXHXOXSXEXN KXIXNXG**

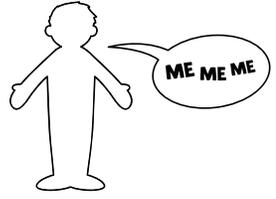
5

A Christian understands why Jesus died and rose again



6

A Christian is someone who follows Jesus



7

A Christian is someone who says "yes" to Jesus' free gift

- Keep finding out more by coming along to

(fill in the name of your weekly children's group)

- Ask a leader some more questions to help you understand
- Leave it for now
- Ready to "ABCD"

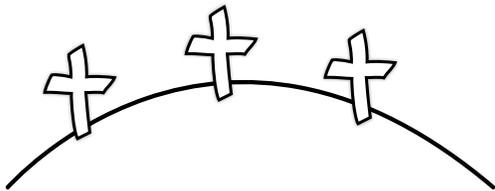
2. A Christian is someone who understands why Jesus died and rose again

Just after Peter has realized who Jesus is, Jesus tells his followers that they can't let anyone else know. And then he explains why.

- Read Mark 8:31

Jesus told his followers that he was going to be killed, but would rise to life on the third day.

Show page 5 of the flip chart, and, as you're explaining about Jesus predicting his death, stick three crosses onto the mound.



Peter was so shocked to hear that Jesus would die that he told him off! He probably thought that Jesus, as God's chosen King, was going to rescue them from the Romans. But that wasn't the kind of rescue Jesus had come for.

Jesus silenced Peter because he knew he must die; he had to die. We've seen in the last two sessions* that Jesus died and rose again because it was the only way he could solve our sin problem (show page 2 of the Explorer Notebook) and rescue us from the punishment we deserve (turn to page 3 of the Explorer Notebook, and then page 4).

Do you believe that, through Jesus' death, we can be forgiven and be brought back into friendship with God?

*If you combined sessions 3 and 4, say: "last session" here.

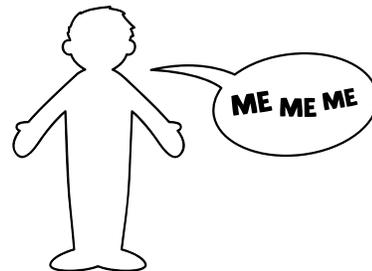
3. A Christian is someone who follows Jesus

But listen – a Christian isn't just someone who understands who Jesus is and why he came.

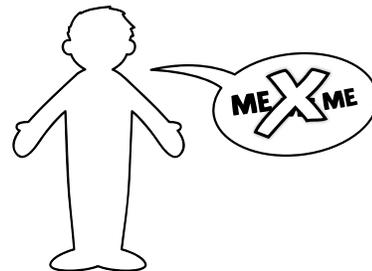
A Christian is also someone who wants to do things God's way – not their own.

- Read Mark 8:34

Turn to page 6 of the flip-chart pad.



The verse says we should deny ourselves. That means we no longer make our choices just on what we want to do, and we no longer think we matter more than other people or God.

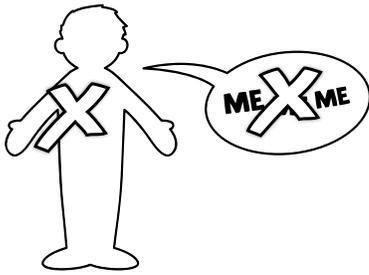


Put a cross over the words "Me, me, me".

Instead, we should want to please Jesus and live God's way – whether it's how we speak to our parents, how we treat our friends or how we spend our time. And it means we say sorry for the times we're selfish, and for the times we say, think and do wrong.

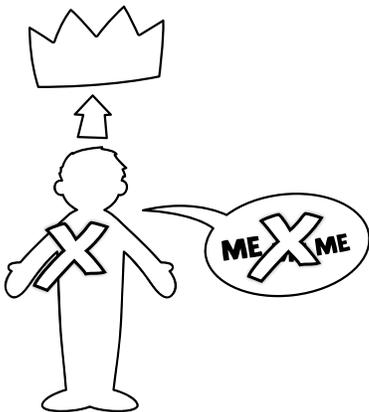
But the verse mentioned a cross – a symbol of suffering. It may be that people tease or ignore us, and even try to make us give up living as a Christian. But if we follow Jesus, we should be prepared to go through difficult times just because we love God. Jesus called it "taking up our cross".

Stick a cross on the body of the stick man.



Jesus also said: "Follow me". A Christian is someone who is thankful that Jesus died in our place and therefore wants to copy the way Jesus lived and loved.

Draw an arrow upwards from the stick man, and then a crown above the arrowhead.



A Christian is someone who chooses to follow and obey Jesus as the King, even when they don't feel like it.

"Deny, suffer and obey"! You might be thinking: "That sounds hard. Why bother?" Well, Jesus warned us that if people choose to reject him, then he will reject us. But if we follow Jesus, he will save us. Jesus promises that he will help us live his way. And he promises that if we are forgiven by him, we will live with him for ever.

Show page 5 of the Explorer Notebook.

So a Christian is:

- Someone who understands that Jesus is God's Son.
- Someone who understands that Jesus died to take our punishment.
- Someone who follows Jesus and lives his way.

4. A Christian is someone who says "yes" to a free gift from Jesus

But there's one more thing that a Christian is...

A Christian is someone who says "yes" to a free gift from Jesus. I have an amazing gift here that I want to give away.

Hold up wrapped gift.

Would you like my free gift?

Offer the gift to a child – let them take it and open it.

All you had to do for that gift to be yours was accept it from me. You didn't need to do anything else.

Jesus offers us the free gift of forgiveness and forever friendship with him. We don't have to do anything for it; we just need to accept what Jesus did on the cross to rescue us. The way you can do that is to:

- **ADMIT** your sin. Tell God that you are sorry that you don't treat him as you should. Ask him to forgive you.
- **BELIEVE** that Jesus died to take the punishment you deserve, and that he rose to life, and he is alive today.
- **CONSIDER** the cost of living as Jesus' follower from now on, with him in charge. Remember what we've just learned – it won't always be easy putting God first. Ask him to help you.
- **DO** something about it! Will you choose to accept Jesus' free gift and choose to live in a way that pleases him from now on?

I wonder, at the end of this course/club, what choice will you make?

Show page 7 of flip-chart pad and as you talk through the options, hover a cross over each tick/check box:

- Keep finding out more by coming along to _____** (fill in the name of your weekly children's group)
- Ask a leader some more questions to help you understand**
- Leave it for now**
- Ready to "ABCD". Let a leader know if that's you!**

SUMMARY TALK FOR FAMILY SERVICE

Suitable for an all-age service at the end of a holiday club or vacation Bible school

Note: This summary is divided into three short talks. See page 135 to see how they fit within the plan for the whole service.

For the three talks you will need:

- The giant map of the island, with five labels stuck on the 5 related locations: Mark 1, Mark 2, Mark 15, Mark 16, Mark 8.
- The coloured visuals for each location
- Five extra labels to add to the map:
 - “Son” for Breathtaking Bay
 - “Forgiver” for Discovery Dens
 - “Died” for Mysterious Mountains
 - “Rose” for Crown Cave
 - “Follow?” for Rocky Road

This talk outline can also be downloaded from www.ceministries.org/epic

Some of you may be thinking: “That’d be great!” But what if that person then asked to you leave absolutely everything – not just your work, but your homes, your families, the lot. **Are you so keen now? I thought not. We would probably just ignore them or think they were joking. And yet, at Breathtaking Bay, we read this...**

“As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” At once they left their nets and followed him. When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.” (Mark 1:16-20)

Show pictures of the story while the passage is read – available to download from www.ceministries.org/epic

TALK 1: WHO IS JESUS?

(Jesus is God’s Son. He is the King of everything.)

Do you like exploring? Checking out new places? Discovering new things? We’ve been on an epic adventure this week as we’ve explored true stories from the Bible about Jesus. We started in Mark 1:

Stick up “Breathtaking Bay” visual.

At “Breathtaking Bay” we began to discover evidence that Jesus is God’s Son, and the King of everything, just as Mark claimed at the beginning of his book.

Have up on the screen Mark 1:1.
“The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God.”

I wonder what you’d be like if someone walked into your workplace or school tomorrow and told you to get up and leave immediately. That’s what happened to two brothers called Simon and Andrew.

When Jesus told the fishermen to leave everything, they obeyed. Immediately. No delaying, arguing and ignoring. They upped and left because they knew he had the authority to say this. They knew if Jesus commanded them to follow, they had to follow.

Can you imagine having such authority when you speak? “Tidy up” and it happens immediately; “Be quiet” and instantly the arguing stops; “Give me chocolate” and they do; “Buy me” and it’s in your hand as quick as a flash. But these things don’t happen. Our words are not powerful like Jesus’ words were. He spoke, and right away things happened.

And it wasn’t just when he told people to follow him. As we continued on our expedition in Mark 1, we had our breath taken away time and again.

- Jesus spoke – and evil spirits fled.
- Jesus spoke – and people were healed.
- Jesus spoke – and the crowds were amazed.

How could he do all these things? The amazing claim is that Jesus has such power over every-

thing and everyone because he is the one who fuels the sun and drives the rotation of the planets. He is the one who created and controls all things.

When the explorer Christopher Columbus arrived in the Bahamas, he called the locals “Indians” because he was convinced he was in Asia. He had mistaken their identity. But there’s no mistaken identity in Mark 1. At Breathtaking Bay, we saw that Jesus is God’s King and Son.

Add “Son” to the map under the crown on “Breathtaking Bay”.

And at Breathtaking Bay we had a glimpse of a land far greater than has ever been explored; of a kingdom where there will be no suffering, fear or death; of a place where Jesus will reign as King.

The other stories we looked at showed us how we can be in that kingdom. More about that later...

TALK 2: WHY DID JESUS COME?

(Jesus can forgive sins. He died to make that possible.)

In our second session, we navigated our way to the “Discovery Dens” – homes in which Jesus amazed people as he revealed why he had come.

Stick up “Discovery Dens” coloured visual.

The first home was crammed full as crowds gathered to hear Jesus! It was so packed that when four men arrived carrying their paralyzed friend, they couldn’t even get through the door. However, they came up with a plan to dig a hole in the roof and lower him down on his mat. But then the most astonishing thing happened – instead of healing the man, Jesus told him his sins were forgiven.

Have on screen Mark 2:5.
“When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven.’”

The friends probably stared through the hole with their mouths wide open. The crowd probably stood still in stunned silence. And the paralyzed man? Well, he probably lay there thinking: “What?! I’ve not done anything to you. My problem’s my legs. It’s them I need fixing, not my sin!”

But we’ve discovered this week that *sin* is our biggest problem. Sin means we put ourselves first – we know God is in charge, but we don’t treat him as we should. When we do, say or think wrong things – which we all do – we are going against God. We’re saying “no” to his ways and his rule.

And the Bible teaches us that sin has serious consequences, because it cuts us off from friendship with God. Sin must be punished. That’s why Jesus chose to forgive the man first, rather than healing him.

The religious leaders in the crowd were furious with Jesus, thinking: “He can’t do that! He doesn’t have the authority!” But he did have the authority. We heard earlier that Jesus is God’s Son with God’s power – and that includes power to forgive, for all sin is against God.

Jesus knew what the religious leaders were thinking, and knew they couldn’t see if he’d actually forgiven the man’s sin or not. So Jesus proved he’s God by healing the man. The man who was *carried in*, *walked out*, much to the amazement of the onlookers.

So at Breathtaking Bay, our breath was taken away as we heard Jesus’ authority in his words and saw it in his actions. Then at the Discovery Dens, we gathered yet more evidence to show us Jesus is God. And we discovered that, because Jesus is God, he has the power to forgive sins too.

Add “Forgiver” under the surprised face at “Discovery Dens”.

But how can Jesus forgive us? Well, that’s what we discovered at the next place on the island.

Stick up “Mysterious Mountains” coloured visual.

Jesus' words and actions had power. But listen to something really surprising that happened in Mark 15.

Have verses on the screen.

"At noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice ... 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' ... With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last." (Mark 15:33-34, 37)

Jesus' followers must have felt as if they had those glasses with the eyes that pop out. They had heard and seen proof that he is God's Son:

- They saw him heal and forgive people.
- They saw him hero-worshipped.
- They had heard God say: "This is my Son, whom I love".

But then they saw Jesus get beaten, mocked and hung on a cross like a criminal.

And what's more, he had just cried out that God had turned away from him.

Why was Jesus God-forsaken? Why had God turned away from him? Jesus was doing a swap with us, because we should be God-forsaken. Our sin means we deserve to be punished. But Jesus, the innocent one, swapped places with us and took our punishment.

Use the following phone illustration to explain what happened when Jesus died. There's a simplified version, with diagrams, on page 100.

Imagine someone's managed to record all the bad things I've ever done, or you've ever done, on this phone (hold up mobile/cell phone) – such as the lies you've told, the time you let someone down or gossiped behind someone's back. All the times you've lost your temper, had a selfish thought or not treated God as you should. All your sin caught on film. You definitely wouldn't want it on *YouTube*!

Now imagine this hand is me – and the ceiling is where God is. (Put the phone on one hand.) This phone, which shows all my sin, is getting in the way between God and me; my sin separates me from being God's friend.

(Hold out other hand.) **Imagine this hand is Jesus. He never did anything wrong so there's nothing separating Jesus and his Father, God. But when Jesus died, he took all my sin (transfer phone from one hand to the other) and the full weight of God's anger at sin was poured out on his own Son, instead of on me.**

That's why Jesus cried out in anguish. He was cut off from God's friendship and goodness. Like a headmaster doing our detention, or a judge going to prison on behalf of a prisoner, Jesus took our punishment. He paid the price so our sin could be dealt with, so we can be forgiven friends of God.

Look at my other hand. There's no barrier now. There's nothing separating me from God, because Jesus has taken my sin. That's what happened when he died.

Add "Died" under the cross on "Mysterious Mountains".

The early explorers often acted out of self-interest as they looked for precious spices, silks and jewels. Jesus acted out of love, despite the fact we rebel against him. He gave his life and sacrificed everything as he travelled to earth, to trade his perfection for our sin; to offer us treasure that far outweighs anything else – life with Jesus, in his kingdom for ever.

But we hadn't finished exploring the island yet. There was more to come...

TALK 3: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO FOLLOW JESUS?

(Jesus rose to show our sins can be forgiven. We need to choose if we will follow him.)

When we left the Mysterious Mountains, we started to explore Mark 16.

Stick up the coloured visual for "Crown Cave".

We've seen that Jesus died to forgive sins. But death wasn't the end for Jesus. After he was killed, he was laid in a tomb with a large stone wedged in front. But three days later, people made the best discovery ever – the stone had been moved, the tomb was empty and Jesus had risen.

It was incredible! Jesus had beaten death and was alive, just as he had promised. And because the price he paid for our sin has been accepted by God, we no longer need to be separated from God. We can have new life through Jesus instead – for ever!

Add "Risen" next to the magnifying glass on "Crown Cave".

So, is that the end of the story? After our mind-boggling, binocular-focusing discovery that Jesus died in our place and rose again, surely that's our adventure with him over.

But it isn't. There was one more part of the island to visit as we explored Mark 8.

Stick up the coloured visual for "Rocky Road".

Jesus stayed with his friends for forty days and then returned to heaven. But the Bible promises that one day he will return as King of everything, and the whole world will be under his rule. And we can trust that promise because:

- **Jesus said he would be killed (in Mark 8:31), and he was.**
- **Jesus said he would rise again (in Mark 8:31), and he did.**

- **So, when Jesus said he will come back again (in Mark 8:38) – we can trust that he will! And we should be ready. But how?**

Mark 1:15 says we can be ready by repenting and believing the good news of Jesus.

Display Mark 1 v 15 on the screen:
"The time has come," Jesus said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"

Repenting means admitting we have done wrong; that we've disobeyed and ignored God. It means we're sorry and now want to live God's way, with him in charge.

Believing means we trust that Jesus is God's Son and died in our place. He has done everything we need for us to be forgiven and live as his friends for ever in his perfect kingdom.

I wonder, will you repent and believe? Will you accept his gift of rescue? Will you follow Jesus?

Add "Follow?" by the gift on the "Rocky Road" visual.

We finished our explorations with this verse from Mark 8:

"Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.'" (Mark 8:34)

Being a follower of Jesus is not always easy as it means living to please Jesus and not ourselves, making him the most important. It means we may suffer or be teased for following God. But it also means we know our sins are forgiven, we know God is with us helping us, and we know the secure promise of heaven.

David Livingstone explored much of Southern Africa and discovered the spectacular waterfall of "Victoria Falls". He was also a follower of Jesus. Following the death of his wife and his own ill-health, he said this:

"Anxiety, sickness, suffering, or danger ... may make us pause, and cause the spirit to waver,

and the soul to sink; but let this only be for a moment. All these are nothing when compared with the glory which shall be revealed in and for us.”

David Livingstone knew it was hard to be a follower of Jesus, but he believed it to be worthwhile. Do you?

- Jesus, God’s Son, lived among us.
- Jesus died – so our sin can be dealt with and we can be forgiven.
- Jesus is alive and can give us life that lasts for ever.
- And Jesus will come back again! So we should be ready!

Maybe you would like to explore things a little further. Why not chat to some of the leaders or take a Mark’s Gospel as you leave, and think about things a little more? Maybe you would like to start exploring these things by signing up to our *Christianity Explored* course, which is starting... (give date and plug the course).

SUMMARY TALK FOR FAMILY EVENT

Main aim:

- To meet the perfect pioneer, consider the rescue and discover the good news for yourself

You will need:

- A handout for people or a PowerPoint that looks like an Explorer's diary (see page 157). Each point to have a picture of the Bible passage on it with the Bible reference.
- Props for the opening game: hat, sleeping bag, water bottle, compass, binoculars, map and backpack.

This talk outline can also be downloaded from www.ceministries.org/epic

Here are some clues to a person's job – can you guess what is it?

Hold up a backpack and pull the items out, in this order:

- Hat
- Sleeping bag
- Water bottle
- Compass
- Binoculars
- Map

That's right – an explorer. Now, whether you think of the cartoon character, Dora the Explorer; or Christopher Columbus, the European explorer credited with discovering America; or Neil Armstrong, who went to the moon – when you think of explorers, all of them are people who have wanted to find out more and so have set off on adventures, seen amazing sights and discovered new things.

That's exactly what we've been doing too in *Epic Explorers*. We've set off on an adventure, have seen amazing sights and discovered new things, as we've looked not beyond the next mountain or river, but rather, at the life of Jesus. And so, I'd just like to share with you a few of our exciting findings from the Bible book of Mark.

1) Meet the Perfect Pioneer

Show first diary entry.

In 1915 Ernest Shackleton's ship had been trapped in floating ice and sunk; he and his crew had travelled by ice and lifeboats for two months; but Shackleton, the great explorer, was not about to give up. He was determined to rescue his men, and so for 16 days he sailed through stormy seas and trekked over mountains to find help. Shackleton was on a rescue mission for his people. And Jesus was like this. He was on a rescue mission.

How do we know that Jesus can rescue people? Well first, as he began travelling around, he did groundbreaking things – he performed miracles. He wasn't doing it to make money or impress the crowds. Nor was he just trying to show us that he was a nice, caring teacher. Far from it. Jesus was the Perfect Pioneer, performing miracles to show us that he can do things only God can do; that he has power over everything, because he is God's Son.

So, through the amazing sights of Jesus' miracles, we have seen more and more who he is:

- In Mark 1, we saw how he had authority to teach people. We saw too that he had power over illness and over evil.
- If we had read further, we would see in Mark 4 that Jesus also has power over nature. He didn't just *calm* a storm, he stopped it *immediately* with his words.
- In Mark 5, Jesus shows he's our loving life-giver; he has power over death. He didn't just *heal* people; he also brought some *back to life*.
- In Mark 6, we would discover he's the great and generous provider. He didn't just *feed* the 5000; he had bread and fish *left over*.
- And back in Mark 2, we saw that Jesus, God's Son, had power and authority over sin. He didn't just heal the man's *legs*; he dealt with the far bigger problem of the man's *sin* by forgiving him.

Shackleton longed to rescue his men from Elephant Island – Jesus longs to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. He longs to forgive us. All of us need this rescue because all of us fail to treat God as we should, whether it's the way we are selfish in our decisions, or disobedient in our actions, or we simply ignore him. We deserve to be punished for our sin, and that's why we need rescuing by the Perfect Pioneer: the one who is God.

2) Consider the rescue

Show second diary entry.

Shackleton succeeded in reaching a whaler's station, and with the help of a team of men and a Navy tug boat, he rescued his 22 men. They were saved, having spent four and a half months on Elephant Island. He returned to Britain a national hero. But he became a heavy drinker, and died five years later while on another Antarctic expedition.

While Shackleton's rescue was undoubtedly heroic, it was also limited – he saved 22 lives. Jesus' rescue was so much greater than this. Jesus came to provide a way of rescue for everyone. He came to forgive sins.

And yet his rescue plan seemed to go so wrong. Jesus – the perfect, powerful Son of God – was arrested and sentenced to death. He was nailed to a cross and left to die. And there wasn't a Hollywood hero who took him down from the cross. Jesus died.

But the amazing thing is that this was all part of the rescue plan. He died in our place, taking God's punishment for all the wrong we ever say, think and do; for the times we lie and we lose our temper with our brother or sister. For the times we gossip or we cheat our employers. For the times we don't treat God as we should.

We read in Mark 15 that Jesus chose to take what we deserve – separation from God's friendship and goodness – so he could offer his perfection to us and make a way possible for us

to be forgiven. Jesus didn't just come to show us he was the Son of God, but also how we can *know* God.

We discovered in Mark 16 that Jesus' death was not the end – that just as he had promised, he came alive three days later. Many saw him, spoke with him and ate with him. He showed that his words can be trusted, that his power conquers all, and that there is now a way for us to be friends with God for ever. That's why no one else is better and why his rescue is the greatest – it's everlasting and offered to everyone.

3) Discover the good news for yourself

Show third diary entry.

Shackleton's Antarctic expeditions were driven by his desire to discover. On his final trip, he had heard about some lost islands and so went to find them.

As we've been exploring the life of Jesus in the book of Mark, we've heard about the good news of "Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God" (Mark 1:1). We've not only seen Jesus revealing that he's the Son of God, and all that he offered, but we've also discovered how people responded to him. Some chose to ignore him; others felt threatened; but still others believed and were changed. They thanked him and followed him, even though it wouldn't always be easy.

I wonder how you respond to Jesus.

- Think about who he is – we've discovered he is none other than God Almighty. He's powerful and full of authority.
- Think about what he's like – he loves you enough to rescue you, by dying for you. So why wouldn't you want to follow him?
- And think about why following him is such a good thing – because he wants to rescue you.

Are you driven by a desire to discover? Would you like to find out more? Why not chat to

some of the leaders tonight or take a Mark's Gospel as you leave and think about things a little more? Maybe you would like to start exploring things by signing up to our *Christianity Explored* course, which is starting... (give date and plug the course).