



SUNRISE EASTER HIKE

GROUP FACILITATION TEMPLATE

Use this template to create intention on an Easter sunrise (or whenever!) hike. It is written with the idea that you'll begin the hike in darkness, but not totally necessary – do it when you can!

I have given lots of space on each page so you can write your own notes and ideas for bringing the group into worship. Each section is broken up into its own page so you don't have to bring it along if you'd like to forgo that section. Each part is centered around scripture with the flexibility for you to share what's on your heart, or simply to allow the Word of God to speak for itself.

Make it yours! Keep it simple with the prayer of bringing others into a closer relationship with God. If you are nervous to lead something like this: remember most people won't remember if you "mess up," but they'll remember the experience with the heart and soul you put into leading them. If it works for others in your group to participate, ask them to share in some of the scripture readings.

All verses are written out in the ESV version.





INTRO & WELCOME

– If the group doesn't know each other super well, start by **having everyone introduce themselves** and **sharing a sweet Easter memory or tradition** if they have one. If not, maybe a fond thought about springtime.

– **Share what you hope to get** out of this shared experience with everyone, focusing on the significance of celebrating the Lord's resurrection.

(This template is written with Christ's victory over death and darkness as a theme, but feel free to take it in any direction that works for you and the group's needs).

– **Read 1 Corinthians 15:17-26** aloud to the group:
"And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, but a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death."

– Say a quick prayer and **begin your hike!**





OPTIONAL PAUSE & REFLECTION

If you'd like to stop along the way to share verses leading up to the resurrection, here are some suggestions:

- John 13:1-17 (Jesus washes the disciples' feet)
- Matthew 26:36-46 (Jesus prays in Gethsemane)
- Matthew 26:47-56 (Jesus' arrest)
- John 18:12-27 (Peter denies Jesus)
- Matthew 27:27-31 (Jesus is mocked and beaten)
- Luke 23:26-43 (Jesus is crucified)

If you'd like to add in reflective questions for journaling, group conversation, or personal thought, here are some ideas (feel free to present in any way that works best for the trail and group):

- What does the story of Jesus washing the disciples' feet mean to you?
- How do you think the disciples felt during these moments leading up to Christ's crucifixion?
- Have you ever had a time in your life when you may have felt like Jesus did as he was praying in Gethsemane?
- How do you think you would have reacted if you were there when Jesus was arrested?
- What can you learn from Jesus' response to the mob that came to arrest him?
- Reflect on a moment when you denied your faith or compromised your beliefs in order to fit in or avoid conflict.
- How does Jesus' response to mockery challenge your understanding of patience and forgiveness?





QUICK PAUSE BEFORE THE SUMMIT

– Now you can choose when you'd like to pause and begin this section, but I would shoot for **about 5-10 minutes before the summit/destination** and ideally before the sun rises.

– Stop and gather the group, read Matthew 27:27-51:

“Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor’s headquarters, and they gathered the whole battalion before him. And they stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on his head and put a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” And they spit on him and took the reed and struck him on the head. And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him and led him away to crucify him.

As they went out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. They compelled this man to carry his cross. And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall, but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. And when they had crucified him, they divided his garments among them by casting lots. Then they sat down and kept watch over him there. And over his head they put the charge against him, which read, “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.”

Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left. And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, “You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.” So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying, “He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him. For he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’” And the robbers who were crucified with him also reviled him in the same way.

Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” And some of the bystanders, hearing it, said, “This man is calling Elijah.” And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, and put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink. But the others said, “Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.” And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit.

And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split.”





QUICK PAUSE BEFORE THE SUMMIT

- **Offer a moment of pause** for this heavy passage
- Now encourage the group to **finish the hike in complete silence**, contemplating the mockery Jesus experienced in the hours leading up to his death.

Optional:

If you'd like to have them think about a specific question, here are a few examples you could use:

- What kind of a person does this passage make Jesus out to be?
- Think about all the scathing adornment and words the crowds threw on Jesus; consider the contrast between how they treated him versus what his true identity is.
- What does Jesus' response show you about his character?
- Does Jesus' sacrifice have an impact on you? How does his willingness to endure such persecution give you strength?





HE HAS RISEN! TIME TO CELEBRATE!

Ideally, you will reach the summit just as or right before sunrise. Every group and journey is different, though, so be flexible with your plans and execution. Once you reach the high point/destination, be sure to **give some space** for everyone to settle in, admire the view, and feel proud of their achievement. Take a few minutes, then begin to share:

– **Read** Matthew 28:1-10:

“Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you.”

So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. And behold, Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.”

– **Read** Hebrews 10:12-14:

“But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.”

– **Read** 1 Corinthians 15:51-57:

“Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?’ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”





HE HAS RISEN! TIME TO CELEBRATE!

Now it's time to celebrate the biggest win in history!

At this point, you could sing a hymn or share your story of victory in Jesus. You could also prepare a couple other participants beforehand and ask them to share their story of salvation if desired. Choose to celebrate this moment however fits the group best.

Another idea is to say that from here on out, whenever anyone in the group says, "**He has risen!**," everyone can enthusiastically respond with "**He has risen indeed!**" I love the idea of marching down a hike together with such a victorious chant :)

Here are some ideas for hymns you could sing together:

Victory in Jesus
Jesus Paid it All
His Mercy is More
In Christ Alone
Living Hope

Or, raise your hands and sing the doxology:

**Praise God, from Whom all blessings flow
Praise Him, all creatures here below
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost**





CONCLUSION

– After the summit celebration winds down to a close and the group is ready to head back, **have hikers partner up**. This can be completely random, friends with friends, couples with spouses, or however you'd like to set it up. These partners will be hiking down together and **have a question to answer and discuss together**. You can come up with your own question prompt, or use one of the following:

- How does Christ's victory over death inspire hope in your own life?
- In what areas of your life do you need to experience victory? How does Christ's resurrection encourage you?
- How can I share the message of Christ's victory with others in my daily life?
- What is a practical way you can daily live in the reality of Christ's victory?

– **Hike down** and enjoy quality time with your buddy!

– At the end of the hike, gather one last time and **read 1 Peter 1:3-8**:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory."

– You may conclude your time together with a prayer or consider the passage above your commissioning prayer.

