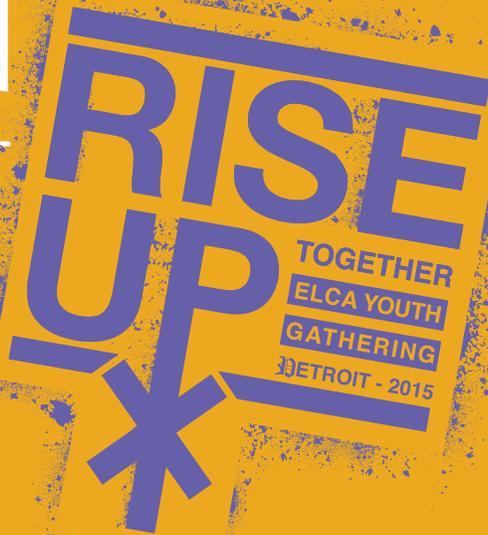


ELCA YOUTH GATHERING

Getting Ready
Materials

— 2015 —



LESSON TWO

DYING AND RISING UP TOGETHER
An Introduction to the Theology of the Cross

#RiseUpELCA



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

OVERVIEW	3
LEARNING OBJECTIVES	3
BACKGROUND MATERIAL	3-5
PREPARATION	5
EXTRA RESOURCES	6
LESSON PLAN	7-9
PART 2: STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS	10-14

LEADER GUIDE

Please read this leader guide in its entirety before continuing on to the lesson plan. The leader guide is essential to prepare you to teach lesson two to your group.

OVERVIEW

We are all theologians whenever we make claims about who God is and how God works in our world. The Theology of the Cross is a specific way in which we go about making claims about God and God's work. A theologian of the cross constantly views the world in light of Christ's death and resurrection. This way of being a theologian will be important for those of us heading to Detroit for the 2015 ELCA Youth Gathering. Detroit has experienced brokenness, oppression and marginalization at levels many people cannot imagine. It will be important for us to see this brokenness for what it is. Not a sign of Detroit's unfaithfulness but a result of evil and sin — racism, classism, corruption, etc. Not as a sign of God's absence from Detroit, but the very place in which God shows up and brings life out of death. This is the way we will think and act in Detroit. This lesson will help us be theologians of the cross.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Participants will know the key dynamics of Luther's Theology of the Cross.
2. Participants will learn to think like theologians of the cross by using these dynamics.
3. Participants will value approaching faith and life as a theologian of the cross.

BACKGROUND MATERIAL

The Theology of the Cross is one of the key components to Martin Luther's theology yet the term never appears in his writings. There is a potential danger in using this term as it runs the risk of becoming a doctrinal idol rather than a way of understanding God, scripture and the human experience through the lens of the death of Jesus Christ. Therefore, it is more appropriate to talk about being "theologians of the cross" rather than using the term "theology of the cross."

Luther describes a theologian of the cross most clearly in his Heidelberg Disputation (see below). A theologian of the cross stands in direct contrast to a theologian of glory. A theologian of glory assumes that beauty and bounty are obvious signs of God's favor and blessing that result from our own efforts and choices. A theologian of the cross has a hard time accepting this. Martin Luther said a theologian of glory would call something bad "good" and something good "bad" while a theologian of the cross will call a thing what it is. A theologian of glory will think that power and wealth are signs of God's blessings. A theologian of the cross would never make this assumption and would warn against the dangers of both power and wealth; they easily lead to corruption and not God's blessing.

BACKGROUND MATERIAL (CONTINUED)

Being a theologian of the cross has some implications on how we live our lives. Please remember that these implications have nothing to do with earning God's favor. The work that comes from these implications is not done for God's sake, but for our neighbors' sake.

What does it mean to believe in a God who died on the cross and what are the implications for how we live?

1. It means we believe that Christ completed the work of redeeming creation and bringing us back into a right relationship with God on the cross.

There is nothing we can do to negate or enhance the work Christ has done on our behalf. Thesis #26 of Luther's Heidelberg Disputation states, "The law says, 'do this', and it is never done. Grace says, 'believe in this', and everything is already done."

- Therefore, we are free from worrying that something we've done or left undone will separate us from God's love in Christ.
- Therefore, we are free from assuming that anyone's salvation is our responsibility.
- Therefore, we are free to serve our neighbor for our neighbor's sake rather than serving our neighbor to please God or to make ourselves feel better.

2. It means that we believe in a God who suffers with and for those who are broken, oppressed and marginalized.

Thesis #20 of Luther's Heidelberg Disputation states, "[One] deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross."

- Therefore, we all must be honest about the times when we are broken, oppressed and marginalized as well as the times when we are the breaker, the oppressor and the center.
- Therefore, we are called to follow Christ into the suffering of those who are broken, oppressed and marginalized not to be the Savior (that victory has been won) but to be in solidarity with the broken, oppressed and marginalized. In this act, both the oppressor and the oppressed can find wholeness.



BACKGROUND MATERIAL (CONTINUED)**3. It means that we believe life comes out of death.**

This is not naïve optimism but an honest appraisal of our reality and its finitude. Everything must die. But death is not the end. Everything must die to live.

- Therefore, we must recognize and name evil as evil, expose the human causes of the evil, and live out our callings to counteract and root out the evil.
- We don't run from evil and places of death, rather we walk into them. This is where God is at work and this is where God will bring new life.
- That which is evil we will call evil. That which is death-dealing we will call death-dealing. But in the face of evil and death we will also proclaim and practice resurrection.

PREPARATION

The lessons in the Getting Ready Materials are not the type of lessons that allow you to “grab and go.” You cannot print these off and run into your group's meeting. They will require you to spend some time preparing.

Please follow these steps in preparing to lead this lesson.

1. Read over the lesson thoroughly, making sure you know what your responsibilities are at each turn. Consider the length of the lesson and the time you have available with your group. You might want to add to or subtract from the lesson provided.
2. Find ways to make the lesson work for your group. Every group is different and it is impossible to write one lesson that will work for every group. Please feel free to rework this lesson to fit your needs.
3. Consider consulting some of the Extra Resources listed in this document, especially the Heidelberg Disputation.
4. Be sure to have all materials gathered and prepped beforehand for both the Faith, Hope and Love exercise and the Solidarity, Suffering, Reality and Resurrection exercise.
5. Go over the lesson again, imagining how the lesson might progress and how you might transition between each activity in the lesson.
6. Pray that God's Spirit empowers you and moves through you and your group as you engage this lesson, that you might all begin to see the world as theologians of the cross.

EXTRA RESOURCES

Here are some extra resources that you and your group may wish to use.

Click on each resource title to find it online.



This month's Getting Ready lesson was written by Jeremy Myers. Jeremy teaches in the Religion Department at Augsburg College in Minneapolis, where he oversees the college's [youth and family ministry degree program](#). He is especially grateful to Dr. Hans Wiersma from Augsburg College for his expert help on this lesson.

[“Heidelberg Disputation” by Martin Luther](#)

This is the primary document in which Luther argues for being a theologian of the cross as opposed to a theologian of glory. It is a series of 28 theses that were originally intended to be an expansion of Luther's argument against indulgences. This is a link to the actual writing.

[“The Cross in Our Context: Jesus and the Suffering World” by Douglas John Hall](#)

In this book, Hall explores what it means to claim faith in a crucified God in today's postmodern world. He claims that Christ is known most fully in our suffering. This is a link where you can purchase the book.

[“On Being a Theologian of the Cross” by Gerhard Forde](#)

Forde is a Luther expert who interprets Luther's Heidelberg Disputation and its implications in this text. This is a link where you can purchase the book.

The listed commentaries are worth reading. You might have some of these in your church library.

[“Peace, Peace ... Cross, Cross: Reflections on How Martin Luther Relates the Theology of the Cross to Suffering” by Timothy Wengert](#)

In this article, Wengert argues “the theology of the cross does not bless suffering but proclaims the God who declares the nothingness of suffering and death to be life and grace. The Christian lives and prays under suffering and cross and yet possesses ears filled with promises of resurrection in Christ.” This is a link to the actual article.

[“The Lutheran Handbook”](#)

This book gives you a humorous but very helpful and accessible explanation of certain aspects of Lutheran theology, including the Theology of the Cross (pages 170-173). This is a link where you can purchase the book.

LESSON PLAN

INTRODUCTION

(5 minutes)

1. RITUAL

Begin your time together in a way that is meaningful for your group. Maybe you have a song you like to sing together, or a prayer you like to say.

2. GOALS

Tell your group that Martin Luther claims the cross as our primary source of knowledge about God. Remember how, in Mark's gospel, no one was able to see Jesus as the Son of God until his death when the Roman soldier says, "Truly this man was God's Son!" (Mark 15:39). This lesson will introduce us to something called the Theology of the Cross and will help us become theologians of the cross.

PART ONE Is/Is Not

(30 minutes)

1. EXERCISE

Split your participants into three groups. Assign each group one of these three slogans.

- **Live life by ... Faith not Sight**
- **Live life by ... Hope not Consummation**
- **Live life by ... Love not Power**

Explain to them that these word pairs are used to help differentiate between a Theology of Glory and a Theology of the Cross¹. Tell each group that they are in charge of a "Live Life" ad campaign. They have 10 minutes to design a full-page ad for their assigned slogan. Their ad should include words and images. Provide them with paper, markers, crayons, etc. *You may invite youth to design ads on their phones or laptops if that is a more comfortable medium.*

2. PROCESS

At the end of 10 minutes, give each group a few minutes to present their ads to the group.

¹Your group does not need this information, but you should know that this method of differentiating the Theology of the Cross from a Theology of Glory comes from the work of Douglas John Hall.

LESSON PLAN

PART ONE

(continued)

3. DISCUSS

Ask the participants to share their thoughts on this question: How are our lives different when we live by faith, hope and love rather than by sight, consummation and power?

4. TEACH

Tell your group that these three things — Faith, Hope and Love — are the products of four important acts of God.

- **Solidarity:** God actively pursues solidarity with humanity in Christ.
- **Suffering:** Christ intentionally suffers with, for and because of us.
- **Reality:** Christ's solidarity and suffering exposes the reality of evil.
- **Resurrection:** In Christ, God redeems, bringing new life from suffering and death.

The Theology of the Cross is based on these four acts of God which result in our ability to live life by faith, hope and love.

PART TWO Solidarity, Suffering, Reality and Resurrection

(45 minutes)

1. TEACH

We are now going to create a mural using these four claims (solidarity, suffering, reality, resurrection), their three products (faith, hope, love), and the four days of Holy Week (Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Saturday, Easter Sunday) in order to come to a deeper understanding of what it means to be a theologian of the cross.

Use the “Solidarity, Suffering, Reality and Resurrection Step-by-Step Instructions” to lead this section. When you have completed **Step 4: Resurrection**, proceed to the Final Five

LESSON PLAN



FINAL FIVE

(5 minutes)

1. REFLECTION

Stand in a circle as a group. Go around the circle, allowing each person to say one word or sentence that he/she thinks describes what it means for him/her to be a theologian of the cross in his/her daily life.

1. PRAYER

Have everyone place one hand on the mural you've created as someone prays these words.

Lord, your cross and your solidarity with us in our suffering and in our reality have set us free and have brought life out of death. For that we are grateful. Continue to open our eyes, our hearts, our minds and our lives so that we, too, might enter into solidarity with those who suffer. Help us to proclaim resurrection into the brokenness and suffering of our reality. Show us how you are bringing life out of death in your world. In your name we pray. AMEN.

It might be a bonus exercise to ask your group to rewrite this prayer in their own words.

SOCIAL MEDIA

After the lesson, take a few photographs of the mural your group has created to post on [the ELCA Youth Gathering Facebook page](#). We'd love to see your group's mural and what they shared under each dynamic (Solidarity, Suffering, Reality and Resurrection).

SOLIDARITY, SUFFERING, REALITY AND RESURRECTION

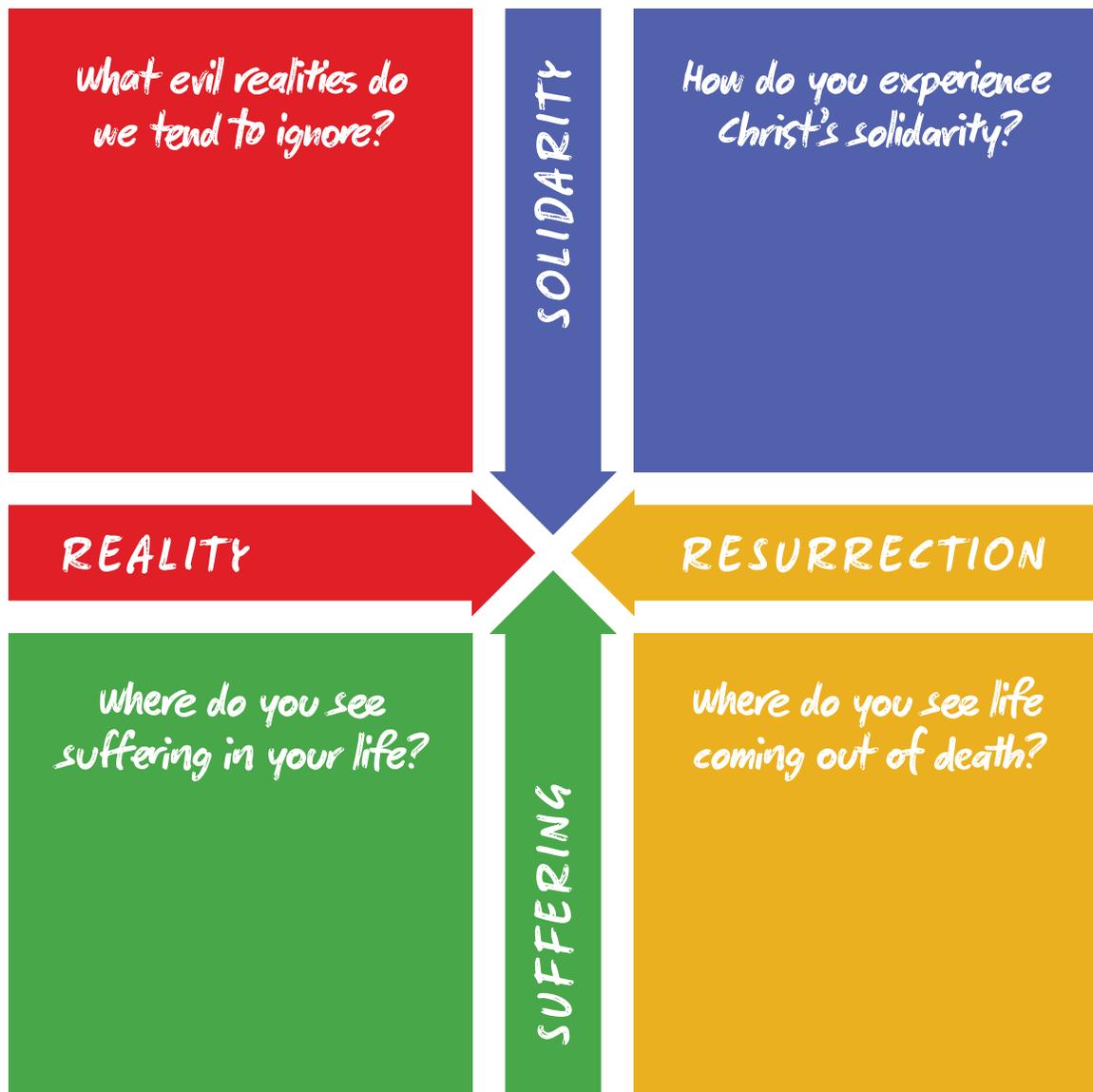
STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

For this section, your group will be creating a mural similar to what you see here. These instructions will guide you through this step by step.

First you will need to purchase four pieces of poster board in four different colors to make

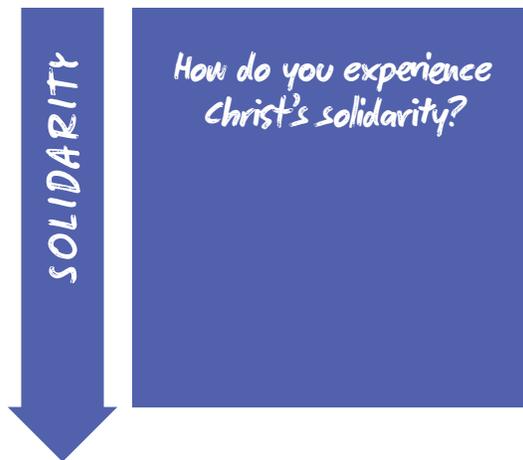
the arrows and boxes as shown below. It does not matter what colors you use.

Cut out four identical arrows and four identical squares from the poster board and label them as shown.



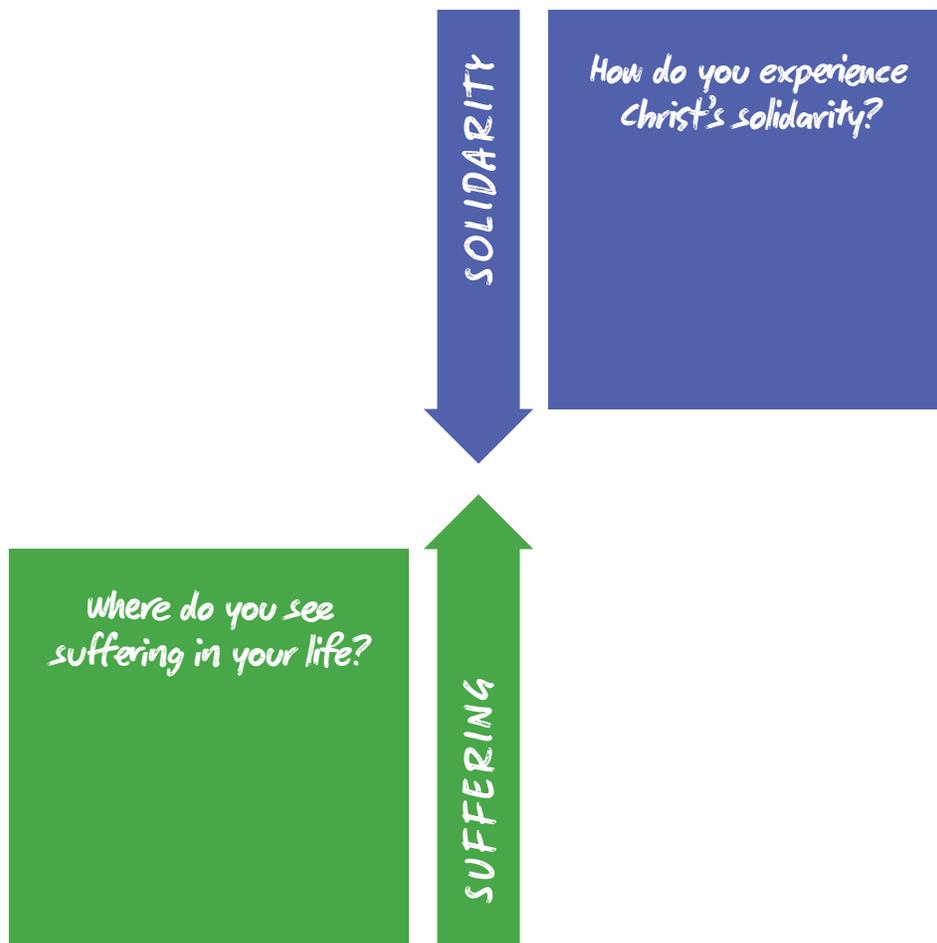
STEP ONE: SOLIDARITY

- 1.** Tape the Solidarity arrow on the wall and say to the group, “One thing the cross shows us is that God actively pursues solidarity with humanity through Christ. Believing in a God who dies on a cross means we believe in a God who enters into our world to be with us.”
- 2.** Have a volunteer read the Maundy Thursday narrative (Mark 14:22-42) out loud and ask for the group to listen for how Christ shows solidarity.
- 3.** Discuss how Christ shows solidarity with humanity. Point out the giving of his body and blood in the last supper and Holy Communion.
- 4.** Give each student several sticky notes and ask them to take a few minutes to write down ways they’ve experienced Christ’s solidarity. Tape the Solidarity square on the wall (as shown below) while they are working. Then ask the students to stick their sticky notes on the Solidarity square.
- 5.** Ask for volunteers to share how they’ve experienced Christ’s solidarity in their lives.



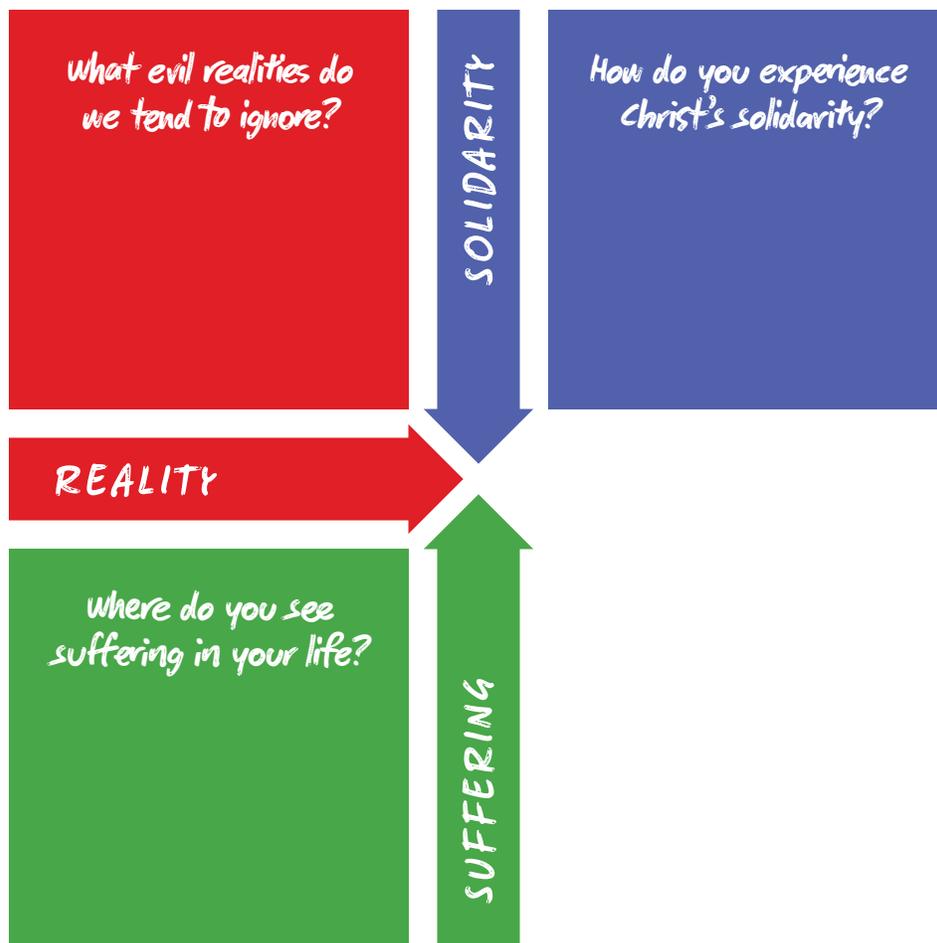
STEP TWO: SUFFERING

1. Tape the Suffering arrow on the wall and say to the group, “Another thing we learn in the cross is that God suffers with us and for us. Human suffering might be the place where Christ is most present and active.”
2. Have a volunteer read the Good Friday narrative (Mark 15:1–39) out loud and ask the group to listen for how Christ suffers with and for us.
3. Ask the group to share how they heard Christ’s suffering with and for us in the story.
4. Give each student several sticky notes and ask them to take a few minutes to write down where they see suffering in their lives. These could be ways they suffer personally, suffering they see in lives around them, or global suffering. Tape the Suffering square on the wall (as shown below) while they are working. Then ask the students to stick their sticky notes on the Suffering square.
5. Ask for volunteers to share how they see suffering in their lives.



STEP THREE: REALITY

- 1.** Tape the Reality arrow on the wall and say to the group, “The cross shows us the depth and reality of evil. It prevents us from sugar-coating or ignoring the evil we see in our world. It demands our attention.”
- 2.** Point out that Mark’s gospel does not talk about the Saturday between Good Friday and Easter Sunday. The disciples could not sugar-coat the reality of Christ’s death, they had to sit with it and face it. Even the gospel’s author couldn’t face it.
- 3.** As a group, discuss what reality would have been like for the disciples on that Saturday.
- 4.** Give each student several sticky notes and ask them to take a few minutes to write down how they think society is ignoring the brokenness or evil of reality (e.g., poverty, racism, global warming, etc.). Tape the Reality square on the wall (as shown below) while they are working. Ask the students to stick their sticky notes on the Reality square.
- 5.** Ask for volunteers to share the brokenness of reality that they identified.



STEP FOUR: RESURRECTION

1. Tape the Resurrection arrow on the wall and say to the group, “The cross also teaches us that life comes out of death. The world sees the cross as a defeat, but we see it as a victory.”
2. Have a volunteer read the Easter narrative (Mark 16:1–18) out loud and ask the group to listen for how people in this story experience life out of death.
3. Ask the group to share how they hear the experience of life out of death in the story (e.g., Christ’s resurrection, overcoming fear, overcoming disbelief, etc.).
4. Give each student several sticky notes and ask them to write down examples of where they see life coming out of death. Tape the Resurrection square on the wall (as shown below) while they are working. Ask the students to stick their sticky notes on the Resurrection square.
5. Ask for volunteers to share where they see resurrection.

