



death and resurrection.

Beginning at sundown on Good Friday (or after your Good Friday service) your teenagers will read the Bible aloud from the pulpit, starting with Matthew 1:1 and continuing until Easter morning—just prior to the morning service (if your readers finish the New Testament before Sunday morning, have them continue reading starting with Isaiah 1:1). Anyone who wants to sit in the sanctuary and listen at any time, day or night, is welcome. In addition, your kids will set up and help guide people through four prayer stations. Here's how to do it.

reading logistics

Your teenagers will read aloud in 30-minute increments from the pulpit. They'll need to sign up in advance for the time slots they want. They'll be living in the church during this time (this is not a lock-in, but more on that later). If a teenager is scheduled to read from 8:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. he or she will need to be in the sanctuary 30 minutes prior to that slot to follow the passages that precede his or her own—its like a relay race... without the race part. So when a teenager stands up to read at 9 p.m., the next one who's scheduled for 9:30 p.m. should be in the sanctuary, ready to follow along. About 30 minutes prior to your Easter Sunday service, all your kids should be gathered in the sanctuary to listen to the last reader.

this is not a lock-in

Explain to your kids that they'll be sleeping in the church, but this experience will not be like a lock-in. They can listen to music, play quiet games, pray for the participants, or talk with their friends, but there will be no collective games. This weekend they'll be more like monks in a monastery—it's all about connection and prayer.

The time between Good Friday and Easter Sunday is dark and quiet—as dark and quiet as Jesus' tomb. Honor the spirit of this "interim" time of darkness by leading your congregation in a round-the-clock worship experience.

The 24-7 Prayer Movement started when a youth pastor in Britain couldn't

get kids to show up for a 30-minute prayer meeting; but when he challenged them to pray all day, every day for several months, kids came out of the woodwork to join in (www.24-7prayer.com). In the spirit of this "unceasing prayer" phenomenon, invite your kids into a 24/7 Vigil they can offer to your congregation during the gap between Jesus'

Encourage kids to sit silently in the sanctuary and listen to the Word of God even when it isn't their turn. Their sleeping bags and quiet rooms should be in another part of the building, away from the sanctuary and prayer stations (see below). Create a quiet, calming atmosphere by using as many candles as possible. No television allowed! Emphasize to your teenagers that they're leading an important worship experience for your congregation. Of course, there will be occasional giggle-fests brought on by sleep deprivation, but remind them to "keep the quiet" as much as possible.

get the congregation involved

Advertise this event to your congregation way in advance. Invite people to stop by at 2 a.m. Emphasize that this is not a performance; it's a journey through the Bible that corresponds to the time Jesus spent in the tomb between his crucifixion and resurrection. Ask other groups in the church (women's ministry or men's ministry, for example) to serve your kids breakfast on Saturday and Sunday mornings. Or simply ask folks to stop by to encourage your teenagers or give them shoulder rubs.

music suggestions

Play light background music in the sanctuary while your kids are reading. It should be nothing obtrusive or overwrought—aim for instrumental or choral-style music. You can use some of the same music as background at the prayer stations (more on that below). A few suggestions:

■ *Just George* by Lost And Found—This is a collection of mellow George Winston-style arrangements of Lost And Found tunes. You can order it from www.speedwood.com.

■ *Vespers and Benediction* by Jeff Johnson—These are collections of airy spirituals that have a Celtic feel and work on your ears like a breeze on your skin.

■ *Chant* by the Benedictine Monks of Santo Domingo De Silos—This is the strangely super-popular album of chants

from the early '90s.

■ *All-Night Vigil* by Rachmaninov, performed by the Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir—This is considered one of the finest recordings ever of the great composer's set of songs for Vespers and Matins.

prayer stations

If possible, set up each of the following prayer stations in different rooms (if not, choose the largest available room and set them up apart from each other). Play light music in each room. When you advertise your 24/7 Vigil, invite people to visit a couple of prayer stations before and after they listen to the readings in the sanctuary.

Assign prayer-station monitors to greet people as they arrive, answer questions, and explain what to do at each station. Scatter lots of pillows and chairs around each station, and illuminate each one with only candles if possible. Post instructions on the wall by each station or on small cards near the center of the activity. There is no set time limit for any of the activities—people can stay for as long as they please.

1 Highlights Station—Place a Bible on a small table covered with a nice tablecloth and scatter highlighter markers around the table. Instruct people to open the book at random and read quietly until they come to a particular verse or passage that sticks out or speaks to them in some way. Using a marker, they should highlight this passage then pray through it by personalizing it in some way (replacing *you* or *my* with their own name, for example). Instruct them to ask God to make it clear why the highlighted passage stands out to them. Use only one Bible for this station—by the end of the weekend it will be full of highlighted passages. Place a note in the Bible explaining what it was used for and keep it in the church library.

2 Covered in Prayer Station—Spread several newspapers on a large table. On the table place several small dishes of finger paint and a tub of diaper wipes for cleanup. Instruct visitors to sit at the table and read the newspapers. When they come across a story that moves them in some way, have

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them pray for those involved in the story. Once they've prayed, they should dip their fingers in the paint and cover the story completely. As the event goes on, have station monitors hang these sheets of newspaper up in the room.

3 The Love Chapter Station—On a small table covered with a nice tablecloth, open a Bible to 1 Corinthians 13. Create an alternate version of the chapter by printing the verses on a piece of paper with a blank line—"_____"—in place of the word *love* wherever it appears. You'll need lots of copies of this paper stacked and scattered on the table. Instruct people to take two sheets of the paper. On the first, they should write *God* in the blank space then reread the passage silently. On the second, they should write their own name in the blank and reread the passage. Instruct them to each tape their second passage to the wall—they can take the first sheet (with *God* substituted for *love*) with them.

4 Washed-Away Station—Place a large bucket of stones and a large bucket of water on the floor, surrounded by rugs and pillows. Print John 13:1-11—the passage where Jesus washes his disciples' feet—on a piece of paper, photocopy it many times, and pile the copies at the station. Instruct visitors to choose a stone and clench it tightly in their hands, then think about the stone and how it feels. Have them concentrate on one thing (not a list of sins) that is distracting them in their relationship with God. Encourage them to use their imagination to "force" this distraction into the stone—as they do they should imagine the stone is getting heavier and heavier. After a few moments they should drop the stone into the water. ■