

01. Beginnings



BIBLE STORY / REFERENCE

Genesis 1:1

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Psalm 90:2

Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the whole world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.



AIMS

To introduce the children to the Bible and what it teaches about God

To encourage them to reflect on what comes to mind for them when they think about God and what they would like to ask or find out about him

The Bible tells us that everything started with God, and the Bible is one way we can find out about God and get to know him. This session covers a brief introduction to the Bible - who wrote it, when it was written and how it is structured.



PREP FOR LEADERS

Read the Bible verses for this session, and reflect:

- If everything started with God, what implications does that have for our lives today?

Take some time to pray for your group.



GAMES / INTRO ACTIVITIES

Play a game to help your group get to know one another or to introduce the theme. Three examples are listed below, and some further ideas for icebreaker games can be found at <https://www.activityvillage.co.uk/ice-breaker-games>.

▶ Beanbag Game

You will need: four mini beanbags

Get everyone to stand in a circle. Unless all the group already know one another's names, go around the circle getting each person to say their name. One person starts, holding a mini beanbag. They call out the name of someone

else in the circle and then throw the beanbag to that person. That person then calls out another person's name and throws the beanbag to them. This continues with the beanbag travelling back and forth across the circle. Once the children are comfortable with this you can gradually add in more beanbags so that there are two, three or four beanbags being passed at the same time. See how long they can go before a beanbag is dropped.

▶ People Bingo

You will need: People Bingo sheet for each child, pens or pencils

This game works best with a larger group. Give each child a sheet. (See additional document: *People Bingo*) The aim of the game is to wander around the room and mingle until they can find

(continued overleaf)

someone who matches up with each of the facts listed on their sheet. They must find a different person to sign each box on their sheet, and the first person to get a signature in every square is the winner.

▶ Quiz

You will need: pens or pencils and paper, answer cards and blue tack, or slips for matching game depending on which method you choose for the quiz

Get the children to identify the titles of various books from the opening sentence(s).

There are various options for running the quiz depending on the size of your group and the space you have:

- Divide the children into small teams. Read out the sentences from the books and get them to write down the answers.
- Have the answers on cards which are stuck around the room and get the children to stand by the sign which they think has the correct answer for each question. This works best if you include a few extra answers as decoys. (See *additional document: Book Titles*)
- Have sets of slips of paper with the individual sentences and book names on them. Divide the children into small groups and give each group a set. See which group can be the quickest to match up the sentences with the book names. (See *additional document: Slips for Book Quiz*)

1. In a hole in the ground, there lived a hobbit. (The Hobbit by JRR Tolkien)

2. Mr Stink stank. He also stunk. And if it is correct English to say he stinked then he stinked as well. He was the stinkiest stinky stinker who

ever lived. (Mr Stink by David Walliams)

3. My name is Tracy Beaker. I am 10 years, 2 months old. My birthday is on 8th May. (The Story of Tracy Beaker by Jacqueline Wilson)

4. Mr and Mrs Dursley of number 4 Privet Drive were proud to say that they were perfectly normal, thank you very much. They were the last people you'd expect to be involved in anything strange or mysterious because they just didn't hold with such nonsense. (Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone by JK Rowling)

5. Once there were four children whose names were Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy. (The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe by CS Lewis)

6. Dorothy lived in the midst of the great Kansas prairies with Uncle Henry, who was a farmer, and Aunt Em, who was the farmer's wife. (The Wonderful Wizard of Oz by Frank L Baum)

7. First of all let me get something straight: this is a JOURNAL not a diary. I know what it says on the cover but when Mom went out to buy this thing I SPECIFICALLY told her to get one that didn't say "diary" on it. (Diary of a Wimpy Kid by Jeff Kinney)

8. My earliest memories are a confusion of hilly fields, and dark, damp stables, and rats that scampered along the beams above my head. But I remember well enough the day of the horse sale. The terror of it stayed with me all my life. (War Horse by Michael Morpurgo)

9. In the beginning, God... (The Bible)

The beginning of a book is important because it's what catches your attention and makes you want to read

more. It also usually tells you what it's going to be about. In a lot of the examples in the quiz the first few sentences mentioned the main characters. It's the same with the Bible. It starts off - "In the beginning, God..." because that's who it is about. He is the main character.



EXPLORING THE BIBLE

▶ What do you know of what God is like?

You will need: whiteboard/ flipchart paper, pens

The Bible opens with the words, "In the beginning, God..." but it doesn't say a lot right at the start about who he is or what he is like. I wonder what comes to mind for you when you think about God?

Let the young people share some ideas about what they know or think of God. This could be words that describe God's character, things they know he has done, what they think he looks like or that they're not sure if he's real. Write them on a whiteboard/ flipchart paper.

Especially if you are working with a new group of children this will help you to find out more about how much previous knowledge they have. Accept all the answers that the children give, not worrying about answers that may seem incorrect. The aim is for them to reflect on what they think about God now as a foundation for exploring more of what the Bible tells us about God as they continue to attend the group.

▶ The Bible

You will need: Bible, Bible symbols, Bible box, Bible bookcase chart

The Bible tells us everything started with God - he has no

beginning and no end.

Read Psalm 90:2 - "You have always been God - long before the birth of the mountains, even before you created the earth and the world." (CEV)

Christians believe that God chose to make himself known to us and one way he does this is through the Bible. Each week at SU Group we'll be looking at the Bible to find out more about who God is and how we can know him.

The Bible is made up of lots of different kinds of writing.

Symbols representing the different kinds of writing in the Bible are included in an additional document: Bible symbols. You could print these to use as a visual aid. You could have them inside a book box (reasonably cheap ones are available from Baker Ross - <http://www.bakerross.co.uk> - search for secret keepsake boxes) which you have decorated to look like a Bible.

Alternatively, if you want to make the activity more active, you could have the symbols hidden around the room before the children arrive and get them to go and find them.

There are adventure stories, love stories, poems, letters, history, God's laws and lots more. It was written by around 40 different people over a period of about 1500 years, but Christians believe that it's God's Word - that God inspired the people who were writing it to know what to say, that even though it was written a long time ago it still has things to say to us today, and that we can get to know God as we read it.

The Bible is one book made up of 66 smaller books. It is divided into two main sections - does anyone know what they are called?

The Old Testament and the New Testament.

(Bible bookcase charts are included in an additional document: Bible bookcase. These can be printed or displayed on PowerPoint.)

The Old Testament is where we read about events before Jesus was born as a baby and the New Testament is where we read about events after Jesus was born. Christians believe that Jesus existed even before he was born as a human - that he was with God in the beginning.

There are 39 books in the Old Testament and 27 in the New but they all tell one big story. All through the Old Testament there are clues pointing ahead to Jesus and what he came to do.

We won't have time to look at everything in the Bible, but throughout our time at SU we're going to go through the main things that happened and try to find out what God's big story is and what that means for us today.



REFLECT & RESPOND

► Questions

You will need: post-it notes, pens or pencils, whiteboard/ flip chart paper

Pass out post-it notes and pencils and get them to write down their question. You could display a large question mark on a white board or sheet of flip chart paper and allow them to stick their answers around it if they want to. You could tell them that you will keep a note of the things they wanted to find out and come back to them in a few weeks to see how many have been answered.



ADDITIONAL IDEAS

► Song: 66 Books, One Author by Dave Godfrey

You will need: equipment to play music

This song fits well with the session, introducing the children to the books of the Bible. You can find it on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z2hJgU0QDi8>.

► Consequences Game

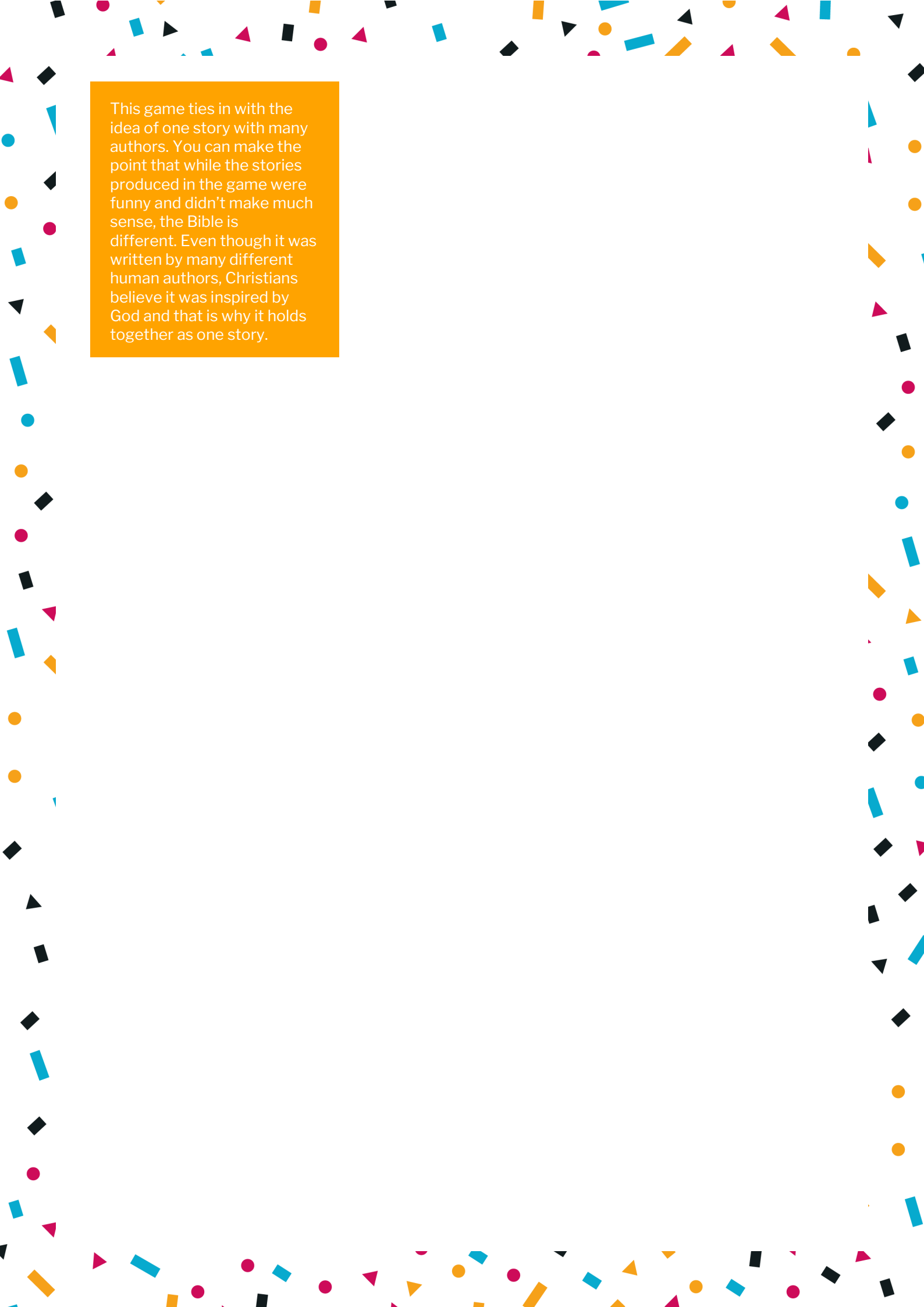
You will need: pens and paper

Each player starts with a piece of paper. The players each write a phrase as the first step in a story, and then fold the paper to hide the phrase before passing it to the next player.

The steps are as follows, where the things in brackets should be replaced by the chosen words or phrase:

- (boy's name)
- met (girl's name)
- in/at/on (where they met)
- He said (what he said)
- She said (what she said)
- He (what he did)
- She (what she did)
- The consequence was (what happened)

When the players have completed all eight steps, the pieces of paper are unfolded in turn, and the players read out the completed, usually funny, stories.



This game ties in with the idea of one story with many authors. You can make the point that while the stories produced in the game were funny and didn't make much sense, the Bible is different. Even though it was written by many different human authors, Christians believe it was inspired by God and that is why it holds together as one story.

02. Creation



BIBLE STORY / REFERENCE

Genesis 1:1-2:4

Psalms 139:13-14

God creates the world



AIMS

To help the children understand that everything, including themselves, was designed and created by God

To encourage them to reflect on how that makes them feel

God made the world and saw that it was good. Humans are a special part of God's creation, individually designed and made in his image.



PREP FOR LEADERS

Read the Bible verses for this session, and reflect:

- What does it mean to be made in God's image?
- How does it make you feel to know that you are designed and created by God?

Take some time to pray for your group.



GAMES / INTRO ACTIVITIES

Choose one of the following activities to introduce today's theme:

► Dress a chair relay

You will need: sets of clothes, balloons, marker pens

Divide the children into teams for a relay race. You will need a chair and a set of clothes (e.g. trousers, top, jacket, scarf, pair of shoes) for each team. The children take it in turns to run and get an item of clothing, which they must use to dress their team's chair and create a character. Once all the clothes have been put on the chair, you could give them a balloon and a marker pen to create a face for their character.

► Model-making

You will need: plasticine or playdough for each child

Give the children a piece of plasticine or playdough each and get them to make something that represents themselves. It could be a model of themselves, something representing a gift or talent they have, an activity they enjoy, or what they are like as a person. Put all the finished models on a table and take a minute or two to admire them and chat about them.



EXPLORING THE BIBLE

► Recap

Last week we talked about how everything began with God. We talked about the idea that through the Bible we can get to know him.

Today we are going to begin looking at the story of the Bible. It all starts at the very beginning with the creation of the world.

▶ Creation Story

You will need: cards numbered 1-7 and props for each day as listed below

Tell the story of Creation (possible script below): involve seven children, each holding a card with a number on it from 1-7. (See *additional document: Creation number cards*)

As their number is mentioned, get them to turn the card around so the number is visible to the group, describe what was made on that day of creation and give them a prop to hold symbolising what was made on that day.

Get children to join in with response - when you say, "God looked at what he had made", they respond, "and he saw that it was good."

Day 1: In the beginning the earth was dark and empty. Then God said, "Let there be light" and there was light. (Give child 1 a torch to shine) **God separated the light from the darkness. He called the light "day" and the darkness "night."**

Day 2: God said, "Let there be a space to separate the waters of the earth from the waters of the heavens." That is what happened, and he called the space "sky". (Give child 2 a card with a picture of the sea and sky. See *additional document: Sea and sky picture*)

Day 3: God commanded the waters on the earth to flow together so that dry ground could appear. He called the dry ground "land" and the water "sea." Then he caused the earth to sprout with every kind of plant and tree. (Give

child 3 flowers/plant (real or artificial.)) **God looked at what he had made, and he saw that it was good.**

Day 4: God said, "Let great lights appear in the sky to separate day and night and to mark off the seasons, the days and the years." So God made two great lights - the sun to light the day and the moon to light the night. He also made smaller lights called stars. (Give child 4 sun, moon and stars picture. See *additional document: Sun, moon and stars*) **God looked at what he had made, and he saw that it was good.**

Day 5: Then God said, "Let the waters be filled with every type of fish and sea creature and let the skies be filled with every kind of bird. Let them multiply and produce more of their own kind." (Give child 5 toy fish and bird) **Once again God looked at what he had made, and he saw that it was good.**

Day 6: God created every kind of animal - livestock, small animals and wild animals - every kind you could think of. (Give child 6 animal toys) **God looked at what he had made, and he saw that it was good.**

He also made human beings, both men and women, and he asked them to rule over the earth and its creatures and to look after it. Again, God looked at what he had made, but this time it is slightly different. The Bible says he saw that it was very good.

Day 7: God had finished creating everything, so he rested from his work. (Give child 7 a pillow)



REFLECT & RESPOND

▶ The best bit of creation

You will need: a Bible

Get the children to think about what they like best in God's creation - it could be a favourite kind of animal, a favourite place, etc.

Ask what they think is God's favourite thing that he created.

God liked everything he had made. Each time he made something, he looked, and he saw that it was good. But when he made human beings, this time he looked and saw that it was very good. We are a special part of God's creation because the Bible says we are made in God's image - we are made to be like God and to know God.

The Bible also says that God designed and created each one of us individually.

Read Psalm 139:13-14: "You are the one who put me together inside my mother's body, and I praise you because of the wonderful way you created me. Everything you do is marvellous!" (CEV)

God made each one of us different and exactly how he wanted us to be.

Just like you individually created your models at the start and they're all different, the Bible says God designed each of us individually.

▶ Reflection/ Prayer

You will need: emoji cards, pens

Get children to think - how does it make you feel to hear that God designed you and created you?

You could have cards available

with different emojis and let the children choose one which they think most suits their response. (See additional document: *Emoji Cards*)

If you print the document double-sided you will have the verses from Psalm 139 on the back. There is also a sheet with blank circles for the children to draw their own emojis if you prefer. They can take the cards with them to remember what they have been hearing about in the group.

Lead the group in prayer, giving thanks for the world God has created and for one another.



ADDITIONAL IDEAS

▶ Song- Creator God by Nick and Becky Drake

You will need: equipment to play music

This song ties in well with the session, helping children reflecting on God as Creator. You can find it on YouTube here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ywkquREnrq0>

03. Sin



BIBLE STORY / REFERENCE

Genesis 3

Adam and Eve sin



AIMS

To help the children reflect on the destructive power of sin and the impact it has had on the world, to understand that this is not something we can fix by ourselves, but that God had a plan for restoration

When Adam and Eve disobeyed God, his perfect creation was spoiled and their friendship with God was damaged. We all sin too but God still cares for us and has a plan to sort it out.



PREP FOR LEADERS

Read the Bible verses for this session, and reflect:

- What were the consequences of Adam and Eve's actions? (Consider their relationship with God, with one another, and with the world.)
- Where do we see signs of God's grace in this chapter despite their sin?

Take some time to pray for your group.



GAMES / INTRO ACTIVITIES

Play a game relating to the theme of obedience, for example:

▶ Simon says...

Give a set of instructions, such as touch your head, run on the spot, jump up and down etc. The children have to follow your instructions but only when they are preceded by "Simon says". If children do what you ask when you haven't said "Simon says," they have to sit out.

▶ Do this, do that

Similar to the above but this time they have to copy what you do when you say, "Do this" but not when you say, "Do that."

▶ Head or catch

You will need: a ball

The children stand in a circle and a leader in the middle of the circle throws the ball to each child in turn. As they throw it, they say either "Head" or "Catch".

The children have to react quickly but do the opposite of what the leader has said. If they make a mistake they sit down in the circle. The winner is the last child still standing up.



EXPLORING THE BIBLE

▶ Recap/ discussion

You will need: whiteboard/ flipchart paper, pens

We learned last week that God made the world and it

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was good. Is the world good now? There are lots of good things but there are also lots of things that are not good.

Make a list together of things that are wrong with the world using a large sheet of flip chart paper or on a whiteboard.

We also said last time that God made human beings as a special part of his creation and that he said we are very good but look at the list of things that are wrong with the world. How many of those things are caused by human beings?

Mark them on the paper/ board.

▶ **Adam and Eve story**

You will need: equipment to show PowerPoint or printed pictures, Bibles

Today we're going to hear the story of how God's good creation was messed up.

Below is an outline to tell the story using the pictures from Free Bible Images (free to download here: <http://freebibleimages.org> - search on the 'Character' tab for Adam or Eve) You could use these on PowerPoint or print them out. The numbers on the script correspond with the slides in the presentation.

You can either read the script that is provided or have some of the children read the account from the Bible as the pictures are displayed. Verse numbers are indicated after each slide number to show which verses match with which picture.

An alternative script for telling the story from the perspective of Eve is also included. (See *additional document: Adam and Eve - 1st person story*)

1. God created Adam and Eve and he gave them a beautiful garden to live in called the Garden of Eden. It was a lovely place to live. They were

told to look after the garden, but it didn't take a lot of work. The trees gave them delicious fruit to eat so they never went hungry, and every evening God would come into the garden and talk with them. Everything was perfect. But there was one little thing that started to bother them. God had told Adam that they could eat as much as they wanted from any tree in the garden except one. There was a tree in the middle of the garden and the fruit looked the best of all, but God had said to Adam that they must not eat any of the fruit from that tree - if they did, they would die. God had given them so many good things they really should have been happy with what they had, but I'm sure you can relate to how Adam and Eve must have felt. If there's something you want, and you know you're not allowed to have it, sometimes it can make you want it more and more. Instead of being thankful for all the good things God had given them, Adam and Eve started to think that God was being unfair. They didn't see how you could die from eating fruit that looked so good and they wanted to taste it to see if it was as good as it looked.

2. (v1) One day the serpent came to Eve. It was really the devil in disguise - and he asked, "Did God really say you must not eat fruit from any tree in the garden?"

3. (v2-3) "Of course not," Eve said. "He said that we can eat fruit from any tree except the one in the middle of the garden. We can't eat that fruit or even touch it, or we will die."

4. (v4-5) "You won't die," said the serpent. "God only said that because he knows that if you eat the fruit you will be like him and you will know both good and evil." Eve wondered if the serpent was right. Maybe God

was just holding back something good from them.

5. (v6) She took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she called Adam and let him taste it too. It was only then their eyes were opened and they realised that they were naked. They had always been naked, but they had never felt shame before.

6. (v7) Now they felt very ashamed and they rushed into the bushes and sewed some fig leaves together to cover themselves up.

7. (v8-11) That evening when God came into the garden they hid. Usually they were pleased to see him but now they felt guilty. God called out, "Where are you?" Adam answered that they hid because they were naked and they were afraid. God said "Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat the fruit from the tree I told you not to?"

8. (v12-13) Adam tried to blame it on Eve. He said, "It was this woman you put here with me. She gave me the fruit and I ate it." "Well it wasn't my fault," Eve said. "It was the serpent. He tricked me into eating the fruit."

9. (v14-15) God was very angry. He said that serpent would be cursed and from that point on it would crawl on its belly in the dust.

10. (v16) He told Eve that when she gave birth to children it would be with a lot of pain.

11. (v17-19) He told Adam that from now on he would have to work hard to grow crops and get food to eat. He also said that they were going to die. It wouldn't happen right away but one day they were going to die.

12. (v20-24) Although God was angry, he was also kind to Adam and Eve. He made them clothes from animal skins to cover themselves up, but then he sent

them out from the garden and said that they had to go and live somewhere else - they could never go back there. Everything had changed. The perfect world they had had was well and truly messed up.



REFLECT & RESPOND

▶ Reflection

If God is the one who made the world, then Adam and Eve should have obeyed him. Because they didn't everything went wrong. When we do things that are wrong, which go against what God wants, we call that sin.

Sin has consequences - because Adam and Eve sinned they had to leave the garden where they were living, their friendship with God was damaged, their friendship with one another was damaged and the whole world was messed up. Now every person that is born in the world sins - that means sin is part of us and we all do things that are wrong. It's a big problem and we can't sort it out ourselves. Even if we try really hard only to do good things, sooner or later we always do something that is wrong.

But God has an answer - he didn't abandon Adam and Eve - he made clothes from animal skins to cover them up, and that's the first clue to the plan that we'll hear about as we go through the Bible - God's plan to sort out the problem of sin forever. God doesn't give up on us either. He knows that we sin, but there is always a way back. The Bible tells us how he did something to enable us to be forgiven. For us it wasn't animal skin clothes - it was something even better.

▶ Prayer

You will need: world picture, pens, tape, scissors

Ask the children to take a moment to think about anything bad they see in the world that they would like to ask God to sort out, or anything they have done wrong that they feel bad about.

Take a picture of the world (see *additional document: World Picture*) and tear it into pieces, one for each child, as a reminder of how sin destroyed God's good world.

Give a piece to each child and get them to write on it something that is wrong with the world that they would like to see fixed. You can refer back to the list you made at the beginning of the session.

Collect all the pieces and then pray, bringing those things to God, as you tape the picture of the world back together, acknowledging that we can't sort it out by ourselves, that only God can restore what is broken.

if you used that activity, show it to everyone and talk about how good it is, then squash it. (Obviously pick carefully which child's model you choose to do this with!) Talk with the children about how it feels when something beautiful you have created is destroyed.

▶ Video

You will need: equipment to play video

This video from Crossroads Kids Club tells Adam and Eve's story in around four minutes and sets it in the context of God's big story: <http://crossroadskidsclub.net/gods-story-the-fall/>



ADDITIONAL IDEAS

▶ Rule-breaker

Play a game the children are familiar with but have one of the leaders breaking all the rules and doing what they like. Use it to discuss with the children why rules are important and how destructive it can be if we don't stick to the rules.

▶ Creation Destroyed

You will need: plasticine model from Session 2

You could keep one of the best of the plasticine models created in session 2

04. Flood



BIBLE STORY / REFERENCE

Genesis 6-9

God sends a flood but saves Noah and his family



AIMS

To help the children reflect on the fact that God takes sin seriously and to understand that all of us sin

To help them understand that God saved Noah not because he was perfect, but because of his faith

Sin is a big problem which God can't just ignore - here he acts to deal with it, but he saves Noah and his family because of Noah's faith. Today he still saves people who have faith in him.



PREP FOR LEADERS

Read through the Bible passage for this session. If you have limited time you might want to focus on Genesis 6:5-22 and skim through the rest of the story. Reflect:

- Why is it important that God takes sin seriously?
- How did Noah find favour with God?

Take some time to pray for your group.



GAMES / INTRO ACTIVITIES

Choose one of the following activities to introduce today's theme:

▶ Animal Game

Get the children to stand in a circle. Demonstrate four animal actions that will be used in this game.

Lion, monkey, crocodile and snake are four animals that you can easily create distinct actions for, but feel free to invent your own!

One person starts as the leader. They count 1, 2, 3... and then everyone has to do one of the four animal actions. They can do any one they choose but everyone has to do their action at the same

time. Anyone doing the same action as the leader is out and has to sit down in the circle. The leadership passes round the circle with each turn so that the next child who is still standing takes on the role. Continue playing until you have a winner.

▶ Parachute Games

If you are using a parachute to tell the story, you could take the opportunity to play some parachute games, for example:

▶ Cat and Mouse

You will need: parachute

Have all the children sitting in a circle round the parachute, holding on to the edge. Choose two children to be mice - they go underneath the parachute. Choose a child to be a cat - they take off their shoes and go on top of the

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parachute. While the rest of the children shake the parachute, the mice crawl about underneath the parachute, trying to escape from the cat who is crawling about on top of the parachute trying to catch them.

▶ **Ball Game**

You will need: parachute, soft ball

Have the children standing round the parachute, holding onto the edge, and divide the circle in half so that they are in two equal teams. Place a soft ball in the middle of the parachute. The aim is for the children to shake the parachute to try to get the ball to go off the edge of the parachute at the opposing team's side, while making sure it stays on the parachute at their side. Award a point for each time the ball goes off the parachute.

▶ **Switching Game**

You will need: parachute

Have the children standing round the parachute, holding on to the edge. Together raise the parachute as high as you can and then allow it to drop. Tell the children that whenever you raise the parachute you will call something out, and if it applies to them they must run under the parachute and find a new space before the parachute drops.

Some suggestions for phrases to call out are: people wearing blue, people in P6, people who like football, people who play a musical instrument etc.



▶ **Recap**

So far, we've heard how God created the world and it was good, but then Adam and Eve

disobeyed God, sin entered the world and the perfection of the world was spoiled.

▶ **Noah's Story**

You will need: parachute, black foam spots of various sizes (cut from foam sheets - available from craft shops), ball, paper raven, paper dove, (images for these are enclosed in the additional documents for this session), rainbow streamer

Continue with the story, using a parachute. (If you don't have access to a parachute or space to use one, an alternative suggestion for telling the story is included in an additional document)

Get the children to hold the parachute taut at waist height. ***The parachute is going to represent the world that God had made. At first it was perfect, but things started to go wrong. Adam and Eve sinned.***

Get helper to put small foam spot on the parachute. ***It might have just seemed like a little sin at first but the problem got worse and worse. Adam and Eve had two sons called Cain and Abel but one day Cain got jealous of Abel and he killed him.***

Get helper to put larger foam spot on the parachute and to keep adding more as you talk. ***Things got even worse. People were getting violent, hurting each other, doing whatever they wanted and completely ignoring God. It made God really sad and he decided that he had to do something about it, so he decided to send a flood.*** Get the children to shake the parachute until all the foam spots are off.

There was only one man on earth who was trying to follow God. That was a man called Noah. Before God sent the flood, God told Noah to build an

ark, which was like a big wooden boat. He had to take his family inside - his wife, his three sons and their wives - and also pairs of every kind of animal. It seemed like a strange instruction, but Noah obeyed God and he built the ark. He and his family and the animals went inside and then the rain started to fall. It fell for 40 days and 40 nights.

Use a ball to represent the ark. Get the children to shake the parachute to represent the waves but try to keep the "ark" from falling off.

Eventually the rain stopped and the floodwaters covered the whole earth.

Get the children to hold the parachute taut again and to work as a team to try to roll the ball round the edge of the parachute to represent the ark floating on the water.

So Noah and his family were safe inside the ark, but I wonder what it would have been like inside.

Get the children to make a mushroom with the parachute and all sit inside, pretending you are inside the ark - helper stays outside.

Ask the children what they think it would have been like. Hot? Smelly? Cramped?

Noah and his family were in the ark for a long time until the flood water went down. They could tell that it had gone down a bit when the ark came to rest on the side of a mountain. After a while Noah sent a bird out to see if there was any dry land yet. He sent out a raven. Give paper raven to a child to pass through the hole in the centre of the parachute to give to the helper.

The raven didn't come back. A little while later Noah sent out a dove. Give paper dove to a child to pass through the hole in

the centre to give to the helper

The dove couldn't find anywhere to land, so it came back to the boat. *Helper passes paper dove back through hole in parachute.*

Noah waited a bit more time and sent it out again. Give it to a child to pass through the hole to a helper once again. **This time it came back with an olive leaf in its beak,** (Helper passes dove with olive leaf through hole) **so Noah could see that the water had gone down a lot.**

Before too long it was time to leave the ark. *Get children to come out from under the parachute and sit in a circle with the parachute on the floor in the middle.*

Noah and his family and the animals came out of the ark and Noah thanked God for keeping them safe. God made Noah a promise that he would never again send a flood to destroy the whole earth and as a reminder of this promise he put a sign in the sky - a rainbow. Use a streamer with rainbow coloured ribbons (or pieces of crepe paper) to show the rainbow.

Whenever we see a rainbow it can remind us of Noah's story and God's promise.



REFLECT & RESPOND

► Reflection

In some ways this can be a hard story to think about - it's difficult to think of God sending a flood to destroy the whole earth.

What it does show us is that God takes sin very seriously. Something has to be done about it - it's not something

that he can just ignore - and that's a good thing.

Think about how you feel if someone's mean to you - if someone bullies you or hurts you or says nasty things about you. If you go to speak to a parent or teacher about it, you want them to do something about it because it matters to you. You would feel even worse if they ignored you or said just to forget about it.

God always takes sin seriously. It's something that causes a lot of problems and it's something that must be dealt with.

But, like we said last week, God didn't give up on people - he had a plan to sort out the problem of sin for good.

► Prayer

You will need: black foam spots

Like we said last week, all of us have done things that are wrong, but God promises in the Bible that he will always forgive us if we tell him that we're sorry. He promises to forgive us and give us a chance to start again.

Noah had sinned too - he was good, but he wasn't perfect, and he was saved from the flood because he trusted in God.

Give each child one of the black spots that represented sin on the parachute.

Give them a minute to think individually about whether there is something they want to say sorry to God for.

Let them lay down the black spots, bringing that thing to God. Lead the children in prayer.



ADDITIONAL IDEAS

► Video

You will need: equipment to play video

This video from Crossroads Kids Club sums up the story of Noah in around four minutes and sets it in the context of God's big story: <http://crossroadskidsclub.net/gods-story-noah/>

05. Promise



BIBLE STORY / REFERENCE

Genesis 12:1-3, 15:1-17, 17:15-19, 21:1-3

Matthew 19:26

God promises Abraham many descendants



AIMS

To help the children understand God's faithfulness to his promises and to relate this to seemingly impossible situations in their own lives

God made a promise to Abraham that seemed amazing but impossible. Abraham had to wait a long time, but God kept his promise, showing that he is always faithful and that nothing is impossible with God.



PREP FOR LEADERS

Read the Bible verses for this session, and reflect:

- Where have you seen God's faithfulness to his promises?
- Where have you had to trust God while waiting to see him to keep his promises?

Take some time to pray for your group.



GAMES / INTRO ACTIVITIES

Choose one of the following activities to introduce today's theme:

► Impossible Challenges

You will need: wool/string, scissors, paper

Provide some challenges for the children to try. They will seem impossible at first, but there is a way to do them when you know the secret:

Tie a knot: Provide the children with a piece of wool or string each. Their challenge is to take hold of one of the ends in each hand and then to tie a knot without letting go of either end.

(The secret to this is to fold your arms in front of you and then to pick up the ends of the wool or string. If you keep hold of the ends as you unfold your arms, it will create a knot!)

Hole in paper: Give the children a piece of A4 paper and a pair of scissors each. Their challenge is to cut a hole in the piece of paper that is big enough for them to step through.

(An explanation of how to do this, along with a diagram, can be found at <http://www.pleacher.com/mp/puzzles/tricks/hole.html>)

► "How many...?" Quiz

You will need: pens and paper or signs with numbers, small prize for the winning team

There are different ways you could run this quiz depending on the size of your group and

(continued overleaf)

the space available. You could simply divide the children into small teams and get them to write down their answers, or you could make it more active by having numbers on signs around the room and getting them to go and stand by the answer they think is correct.

Promise a small prize for the winning team but make them wait until after the story to receive it, to tie in with Abraham having to wait for God's promise to come true.

1. How many pieces in total are used in a game of chess? 32
2. How many states are there in the USA? 50
3. How many seconds are there in 5 minutes? 300
4. How many days are there until Christmas? (Search on Google for a Christmas Countdown Clock)
5. How many books in the Old Testament of the Bible? 39
6. How many keys are there on a full-sized piano? 88
7. How many balls are used in a game of snooker? 22
8. How many gold medals did Team GB win at the 2016 Olympics? 27

Announce which is the winning team but don't give them the prize yet!



▶ Recap

Recap previous weeks - God made the world and it was good, people sinned, and it got so bad that God destroyed the whole world and started again with Noah and his family. We talked about how sin was a big problem and still is today, but that God had a plan to sort that out.

▶ Abraham's Story

You will need: Bibles, jar of brown sugar

After the flood was over Noah's family grew and before long there were many people on the earth again. We're going to jump ahead today quite a few years to a time when God spoke to a man called Abraham. He lived in a place called Ur, but God told him to leave his homeland and to go to a land that God would show him.

He made Abraham some amazing promises - read them from Genesis 12:2-3. (If you have a set of Bibles available you could get the children to look these up.)

"I will bless you and make your descendants into a great nation. You will become famous and be a blessing to others. I will bless anyone who blesses you, but I will put a curse on anyone who puts a curse on you. Everyone on earth will be blessed because of you." (CEV)

(You will need to explain words like "descendant" and "blessing" and make sure the children understand.)

Later, God promised Abraham again that he would have lots of descendants - God said there would be more than the number of stars in the sky or the number of grains of sand on the seashore.

Show the children a jar of brown sugar. Ask the children how many grains of sand they think are in there and take some guesses. They will see that it is impossible it is to try to count the number of grains. Tell them that you know the exact number of grains of sand in the jar - then reveal that the exact number is zero because it is sugar!

The problem for Abraham when God made the promise

was that, at that point, the number of descendants he had was just as easy to count - it was zero - he and his wife Sarah didn't have any children and they were both getting old.

Even after God made the promise to them they waited for years and years and they didn't have any children. Eventually it reached the point where Abraham was sure it was never going to happen as he was 100 years and Sarah was 90 years old!

God promised again that they would have a baby and Sarah laughed when she heard, but eventually it did come true. Sarah gave birth to a son and they called him Isaac.

Keep your promise to give a prize to the winning team from the quiz.



REFLECT & RESPOND

▶ Reflection

Think together, what can we learn about God from this story? Get the children to give some answers.

Two things we can learn are:

• **God keeps his promises. It might not have happened straight away, but his promise to Abraham did come true and we'll see as we go throughout the Bible that God always keeps his promises.**

• **God can do things that are impossible. We would never think a 90 year old woman could have a baby but God can do amazing things that wouldn't be possible without him.**

There's a verse in the Bible where it says, "With man this is impossible, but with God all

things are possible." (Matthew 19:26)

▶ Prayer Activity

You will need: slips with God's promises to us, cardboard stars, pens, glue, glitter

God always keeps his promises today and he can still do things that seem impossible.

Give the children a moment to think about any "impossible" situations they might be facing.

Provide slips of paper with Bible verses containing some of God's promises to us today. (See additional document: *God's promises*) Allow them to choose one that encourages them or links with their situation.

If you have time you could provide some stars made of coloured card and the children could stick the promise they have chosen onto a star and decorate it with pens and glitter to keep as a reminder of God's promise. (See additional document: *Stars*)

Lead the children in prayer, thanking God for his faithfulness and asking for his help.



ADDITIONAL IDEAS

▶ Video

You will need: equipment to play video

This video from Crossroads Kids Club tells the story of Abraham in around four minutes and also highlights the link with Jesus coming from Abraham's family line: <http://crossroadskidsclub.net/gods-story-abraham/>

06. Faith



BIBLE STORY / REFERENCE

Genesis 22:1-19

Hebrews 11:1

God tests Abraham's faith by asking him to sacrifice his son



AIMS

To help the children consider that faith is not just believing, but it involves acting

To help them think about why Abraham was able to trust and to reflect on how easy or difficult they find it to trust God

This is a difficult story, so be careful not to over-dramatize it, and allow time to deal with any questions the children may have.

Abraham showed faith by trusting God and obeying him even when he was asked to do something very hard that he didn't understand. God is someone that we can trust and have faith that he has a good plan for us and he won't let us down.



PREP FOR LEADERS

Read the Bible verses for this session, and reflect:

- Why was Abraham able to trust God and obey him when he was asked to do something so difficult?
- When have you had to show your faith in God by taking action? Take some time to pray for your group.



GAMES / INTRO ACTIVITIES

Choose one of the following activities to introduce today's theme:

▶ **Blindfold Obstacle Course**

You will need: blindfolds

Get the children to split into pairs and give a blindfold to one child in each pair.

Set up an obstacle course (this could be as simple as chairs placed around the middle of the room) and let the children with blindfolds take it in turns to get around the obstacles to the other side of the room by following directions from their partner.

Once all the children have completed it, switch roles so that the other person in the pair can have a turn.

Discuss how they felt about having to do this task without being able to see where they were going. Was it easy or difficult to trust their partner?

▶ **Trust Game**

You will need: a blindfold

Ask for a volunteer to play a trust game.

Blindfold the child, and then get them to fall back while you stand behind them and catch them.

Once you have done this, say you're going to do it again, but this time move in front of them before telling them to fall back (another leader should be told in advance to

(continued overleaf)

move behind them at that point ready to catch them). If they need reassurance, ask the other children to tell them if it's safe to fall back.

Discuss how easy/ difficult it was for them to trust that they would be ok when they could tell by your voice that you were not standing behind them.

Highlight that what really showed how much they trusted was whether or not they took action. It's one thing to say you trust someone, but its another to take action to show that you trust.

EXPLORING THE BIBLE

▶ Recap

Remind the children of what they heard last week - for a long time Abraham had to trust God's promise when it looked like it would never come true, but eventually it did come true and Abraham and Sarah had a son. Later, Abraham had to face an even bigger test of his faith.

▶ Abraham's Story

You will need: equipment to show PowerPoint or printed pictures, Bibles

Below is an outline to tell the story using the pictures from Free Bible Images (free to download here: <http://freebibleimages.org/illustrations/abraham-isaac/>) You could use these on PowerPoint or print them out. The numbers on the script correspond with the slides in the presentation. This part of the story begins at slide 6 in the presentation, but you could use slides 1-5 to recap last week's lesson.

You can either read the script that is provided or have some of the children read the account from the Bible. Verse numbers

are indicated after each slide number to show which verses match with which picture.

6. (v1-2) God spoke to Abraham again and he said, "Abraham, I want you to take your only son Isaac and go to the land of Moriah. When you get there, I want you to give Isaac to me as a sacrifice on the mountain I will show you."

Abraham must have been horrified! What a horrible message! God was asking him to kill his son! How could God ask him to do something so awful? It didn't make any sense that God would ask such a thing. And remember God's promise to Abraham - God had said Abraham would have millions of descendants, but right now, Isaac was the only descendant Abraham had and God was asking him to kill him?

7. (v3) Abraham's heart must have been breaking but he trusted God and he knew he had to obey God. The next morning, he got his donkey ready and he chopped wood for the sacrifice. He got Isaac and two of his servants and set off for the place God told him to go.

8. (v4-5) When they got close to the place, Abraham told his servants to stop there. He said, "Isaac and I will go on a little further to worship God and then we will come back."

9. (v6) So they walked on together.

10. (v7-8) As they walked, Isaac said, "We have the wood and we have the fire, but where is the lamb for the sacrifice?" Abraham said to him, "God will provide a lamb."

11. (v9) When they reached the place God showed him, Abraham built an altar with some stones and arranged the wood on it. Then he tied Isaac up, placed him on top of the altar and took out his knife to

kill him.

12. (v10-12) At the moment he was about to bring his hand down, plunging the knife into Isaac, he heard a voice. It was an angel. "Abraham, stop!" it said. "Don't harm the boy. Now I know that you really trust God because you have not held back even your only son from him."

13. (v13) Then Abraham looked up and he saw a ram caught in a bush by its horns. It was not an accident - God had placed it there. Abraham sacrificed the ram in place of Isaac and so the father and son were able to go home together. Abraham thanked God for providing the ram to die in Isaac's place.

14. (v14-18) Do you think God really wanted Abraham to kill his son? Why would he ask him to do this? It was a test of his faith, to see if Abraham would do anything God asked him to even something really hard. Abraham passed the test and proved that he really had faith in God and that he would be willing to do anything God asked him to.

15. (v19) Abraham named the place "The Lord will provide" because God had provided a sacrifice - an animal to die in place of Isaac.



REFLECT & RESPOND

▶ Reflection

Discuss together: Why do you think Abraham was willing to do what God asked? How do you think he would have felt about it?

If we're going to follow God, he wants us to have faith like Abraham did.

▶ Invisible Ink

You will need: card prepared with message in invisible ink, Bible, paintbrush, dark coloured juice

Tell the children that you are going to look at a verse from later on in the Bible which talks about faith. Show them what looks like a blank piece of card but tell them the verse is there.

(You will need to have prepared for this in advance by writing the message in invisible ink. To make this, mix equal quantities of bicarbonate of soda and water. Then dip a cotton bud into the mixture and use it to write the message on the cards)

The verse is: "Faith means being sure of the things we hope for and knowing that something is real even if we do not see it." (Hebrews 11:1 NCV) - you can either write the whole verse or just write the reference and then look it up in the Bible once it is revealed.

To reveal the message let one of the children paint over the card with dark coloured juice, e.g. grape juice or blackcurrant squash.

Give the children a moment to reflect that sometimes things are really there even when you can't see them.

▶ Prayer

Abraham was sure that he could trust God and that God had a good plan for him, even though it didn't look like it from what he was being asked to do. Sometimes if we are following God we may be asked to do things that are hard, but we can trust that God is with us, he will help us, and he has a good plan for us.

Think for yourself about how much you think you can trust God. You might really trust him

like Abraham, you might trust him a bit, you might not be sure yet that you can trust him at all. That's a decision you'll have to make for yourself as you find out more about God.

Give the children a moment to reflect, and then lead them in prayer, asking for God's help to trust him in situations where it is difficult.



ADDITIONAL IDEAS

▶ Video

You will need: equipment to play video

This video from Max 7 includes the text of Genesis 22 being read from the CEV along with animation:
<https://www.max7.org/en/resource/abrahamtested>

07. Encounter



BIBLE STORY / REFERENCE

Genesis 28:10-22
(brief summary of
Genesis 25:19-26 and
27:1-46)

Psalm 139

God meets with Jacob at
Bethel



AIMS

To help the children reflect on Jacob's encounter with God and the idea that, though, like Jacob, they may not realise it, he is there everywhere they go too

Jacob had cheated his brother and had to run away, but although he had done things that were wrong God still cared and Jacob was changed by his meeting with God. Like Jacob, we may not always realise he is there, but God promises to be with his people today too.



PREP FOR LEADERS

Read the Bible verses for this session, and reflect:

- What does Esau and Jacob's story show us about God?
- When did you first encounter God?
- What difference does it make in your daily life to know that God is there?

Take some time to pray for your group.



GAMES / INTRO ACTIVITIES

Choose one of the following activities to introduce today's theme:

▶ Walk about, talk about

You will need: equipment to play music

This works with a larger group and helps them to mix. Play some music and get the children to walk about the room as it plays. When the music stops, give them a number and they have to get into groups of that number of people. Give them a question to talk about or a challenge to try in their groups. Repeat this several times and encourage

them to mix with different people. Have a mixture of some challenges and questions that are just for fun, and some linking in with the theme for the day, for example:

- Can you stick out your tongue and touch your nose?
- Which group can come up with the funniest joke?
- Have you ever met someone famous? If not, who would you like to meet?
- Who in your group can whistle for the longest?
- If you met God, what would you like to say to him?

▶ Who am I? Game

You will need: post-it notes with names of famous people/

(continued overleaf)

characters

Give each child a post-it note with the name of a famous person/character on it. Stick it to their back and let them move around asking each other questions to discover their identity. They must be questions which can be answered yes or no, e.g. Am I a man? Am I on TV? etc. See who is first to discover the name they have been given.

Get the children to think - if you could meet any famous person or character (real or made-up, alive or dead) who would it be? Take a few answers. Today we're going to hear about a very special and unexpected meeting.



EXPLORING THE BIBLE

▶ Recap

Recap the story of Abraham - God promised to bless him and give him lots of descendants. For a long time, Abraham and Sarah had no children but eventually they had a son Isaac. We heard last time about the big test of Abraham's faith - God asked him to kill his son but at the last minute provided a ram to take Isaac's place.

▶ Esau and Jacob's Story

You will need: Esau and Jacob puzzle cards, hairy material for Esau, picture of Jacob's dream, Bibles

Summarise the story of Jacob and Esau. A suggested script is below, involving two of the children as the two brothers.

Today we're going to jump ahead in the story. Isaac grew up, got married and had two sons.

(Choose children to be the two sons, give them Esau and Jacob name puzzle cards

(see additional document: *Esau and Jacob puzzle cards*) and get the children to guess their names by working out the puzzles)

Esau and Jacob were twins but they were very different. Esau was red and hairy (you could have hairy material to put on Esau's hands and neck) **and he liked hunting and being outdoors. Jacob was much quieter and liked to cook. The two brothers didn't get on well with one another at all as they were growing up. Although they were twins Esau had been born just before Jacob which meant that he had special rights as the eldest son, but Jacob was cunning and devious, and he tricked his father Isaac into giving him the blessing for the eldest son instead of Esau. Jacob dressed up as Esau and pretended to be him and because Isaac was old and almost blind he didn't notice the difference.**

Esau was furious when he found out and decided he was going to kill his brother, so Jacob had to run away to save his life.

Jacob travelled towards his uncle's house. It was a long journey so when it was getting dark he found a place to set up camp for the night. He found a stone to use as a pillow and lay down to sleep. He began to dream, and he dreamed of a stairway that reached from the earth to heaven. He saw angels going up and down the stairs.

(Show a picture of this (see additional document: *Jacob's Ladder picture*)

God stood at the top of the staircase and he spoke to Jacob. What do you think he said? (Get some answers from the children - they may suggest that God told him off for cheating Esau etc.)

Read Genesis 28:13-15. (If you have a set of Bibles available, you could get the children to look this up)

God makes some great promises to Jacob - to give him lots of descendants, to give his family the land, that everyone on earth would be blessed through his family and that God would always be with him and protect him. Is that how you would expect God to react to someone who has cheated his brother and run away?

Read Genesis 28:16.

Jacob said, "Surely the Lord is in this place and I didn't realise it." He realised that God was with him, and despite the things he had done wrong, God cared. When he got up in the morning, he took the stone that he had used as a pillow and stood it up to make a pillar to leave as a memorial to his encounter with God and a place to worship God. He decided that he was going to follow God from now on.

We're not going to have time to look at all the rest of Jacob's story but if you read in the book of Genesis you'll see that from this point on Jacob was different. He was much more honest and didn't lie or cheat anymore.

The Bible is full of stories of God caring for people who don't deserve it. Jacob had certainly sinned, but God still loved him and wanted to help him. Jacob realised that God cared, and that God would always be with him.

All through the Bible God promises to be with his people.



REFLECT & RESPOND

▶ Reflection and prayer

Encourage the children to take a moment to think: how does it make you feel to think that God is always there?

Sometimes, like Jacob, we don't realise it, but the Bible teaches us that God is everywhere.

Encourage them to think about the places they will go this week - home, school, other places they will visit.

Either read Psalm 139 or use the song "You're Everywhere" by Jodie and Joff Alexander-Frye (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ng3ewkKvDrw>) and encourage the children to keep those places in mind as they listen or as they join in with the song.

Lead the children in prayer, thanking God that he is everywhere and asking for awareness to notice him there this week.

08. Trouble



BIBLE STORY / REFERENCE

Genesis 37, 39

Joseph is hated by his brothers, sold into slavery and unjustly put in prison



AIMS

To help the children reflect on the idea that God is with them in difficult situations they might face and to encourage them that they can pray to God and ask for his help

Lots of things happened to Joseph which were difficult and seemed unfair, but God was still with him and helped him in these times. Like Joseph we have a choice about how we react when things are hard - we can ask God for help in these situations.



PREP FOR LEADERS

Read through the Bible passages for this session and reflect:

- Where do we see signs of God at work in Joseph's story?
- Where have you known God helping you in a difficult situation?

Take some time to pray for your group.



GAMES / INTRO ACTIVITIES

Choose one of the following activities to introduce today's theme:

► Musical Plates

You will need: paper plates, equipment to play music

Lay out paper plates on the floor (one less than the number of children). Get the children to move around or dance while the music plays. When the music stops they have to stand on a paper plate (one person per plate). The person who doesn't have a plate to stand on is out. Keep doing this, removing one or two plates each time until there is a winner.

► Chain Tig

Choose one child to be the catcher. The others spread out across the room and try to avoid being caught. When a child is caught, they link arms with the catcher and the two of them run together to try to catch more children. Each time a child is caught they join onto the chain. If the chain of children becomes too long you can split it in half. The last child who has not been caught is the winner.



EXPLORING THE BIBLE

► Recap

You will need: family tree diagram

Show a family tree diagram (see additional document:

(continued overleaf)

Family tree) to recap the story of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

God had promised to bless Abraham and give him lots of descendants. Eventually he had a son called Isaac and he had twin boys, Esau and Jacob, that we heard about last time.

Today we're going to think about Jacob's family. He had twelve sons and one daughter and over the next two weeks we're going to focus on one of Jacob's sons who was called Joseph.

▶ Joseph's Story

You will need: robe to represent Joseph's coat, picture of Joseph's dreams (you could use slides 3 and 5 from the collection of pictures here: <http://freebibleimages.org/illustrations/joseph-dreams/>), chains (you can get plastic ones in fancy dress shops or in supermarkets/pound shops around Halloween or you could make your own by linking strips of grey cardboard), cloth and cleaning spray, prison bars (cut from cardboard)

Tell the story of Joseph. You could have a child to represent Joseph and give him different props to tie in with different parts of Joseph's story.

Jacob had twelve sons, but Joseph was his favourite. One day Jacob decided to give Joseph a special gift- a beautiful robe. (Give the child playing Joseph coat to wear) **You might have heard it talked about as a coat of many colours or a technicolour dreamcoat but we don't really know what it looks like - the Bible just says it was a beautiful robe.**

Joseph's brothers were very jealous - they hadn't been given anything. Imagine how you would feel if your brother or sister got a really special present and you got nothing. The brothers were very angry

about it.

Then things got worse for Joseph. He started to have dreams.

(Give the child playing Joseph a picture of the dreams)

He dreamed that he was out in the fields with his brothers gathering up bundles of grain when all the brothers' bundles of grain bowed down to his. Then he dreamed that the sun, the moon and 11 stars all bowed down to him as well.

The brothers were even more angry. "So you think you're going to be someone great and we're all going to bow down to you, do you?" they said. "That's not going to happen."

One day the brothers were out in the fields when Jacob sent Joseph to see how they were getting on. They saw him coming from a distance and recognised him because of his robe. One of the brothers said, "Here comes Joseph. Let's get rid of him. Let's kill him." Most of them wanted to, but Reuben the eldest brother persuaded them not to kill Joseph but instead to throw him down an empty well.

When Joseph arrived, they took his beautiful robe off him and threw him down the well. They were planning just to leave him there but then some traders came by. They were on their way to Egypt taking things to sell so one of the brothers had an idea - they could sell Joseph to the traders as a slave. They pulled Joseph out from the well and sold him to the traders. He was taken off to Egypt. (Put chains on child playing Joseph)

The brothers put some animal blood on Joseph's coat. They took it home to Jacob and told him they had found it on the road and that Joseph must have been killed by a wild animal. Jacob was heartbroken

at the thought that Joseph was dead.

In Egypt, Joseph was sold to a man called Potiphar and put to work in his house. (Give child playing Joseph a cloth and cleaning spray) **Joseph worked hard at his job and it says in the Bible that God was with him. Soon Potiphar realised that Joseph was responsible and trustworthy and put him in charge of running the household. Now Joseph wasn't just a slave - he had an important job to do.**

But soon things went wrong again. Potiphar's wife decided to get Joseph into trouble. She told her husband that Joseph had tried to attack her. It wasn't true at all, but Potiphar believed his wife and had Joseph thrown into prison. (Give child playing Joseph prison bars to hold)

It can't have been very nice for Joseph but again God was with him and he worked hard at the job he was given in prison and was given more responsibility. He must have felt that he had been forgotten about - although he hadn't done anything to deserve it he had to stay in prison for many years.



REFLECT & RESPOND

▶ Reflection

Joseph had a lot of things go wrong in his life that weren't really his fault.

How do you think he would have felt about being bullied by his brothers, sold as a slave and put in prison?

Have you ever been in a situation where it's felt like lots of things were going wrong?

Have there been times when life has seemed unfair?

The Bible tells us that God was with Joseph even in the difficult times.

Remember what we heard about last week and God's promise always to be with his people.

That doesn't mean that life is always easy. We all have times when it feels like life doesn't make sense, or bad things happen, or it seems unfair.

We have a choice about how we deal with those times. Joseph dealt with them by trusting God and by keeping on doing the right thing even when it was hard.

▶ Prayer

You will need: bubble wrap

Give the children pieces of bubble wrap and get them to think about difficult situations they or their friends or family are facing, situations where they might feel under pressure.

Get them to pop a bubble on the bubble wrap for each thing they are thinking of as they bring that situation to God and ask for his help.

Lead them in prayer for all these things. You could give them a piece of bubble wrap to take with them to remind them to continue to pray.



ADDITIONAL IDEAS

▶ Song – Only A Prayer Away

You will need: equipment to play music

This song ties in well with the theme for this session and could be played for the children to listen to as they pray and respond, or they could join in singing the song. You can find it on YouTube here.: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fq_BSFkxHys

09. Plan



BIBLE STORY / REFERENCE

Genesis 40-50
(summary)

Romans 8:28

Joseph interprets Pharaoh's dreams, becomes ruler of Egypt, meets his brothers again and forgives them



AIMS

To help the children see how God was working for good through the events of Joseph's story and to reflect on their own situations

To encourage them that God sees the big picture and that he has a plan for good

Even though Joseph's brothers had meant to harm him, God had a plan and things turned out well in the end. God has a plan for our lives too - he can help us in the hard times and even bring good things out of them if we trust him.



PREP FOR LEADERS

If you have time, read through the whole of Joseph's story from the Bible. If not, skim through Genesis 40-50 to remind yourself of the key events. Read Genesis 50:14-21 and Romans 8:28 and reflect:

- Where do you see God working for good through the difficult events in Joseph's story?
- Where have you seen God working good in your life in difficult times? Take some time to pray for your group.



GAMES / INTRO ACTIVITIES

quickly the others are able to guess. Alternatively, you could simply talk about it and ask the children to share some of their ideas.

Choose one of the following activities to introduce today's theme:

▶ Plans for the future

You will need: pens and paper

Get the children to think briefly about the plans they have for their life - e.g. what they want to do when they leave school, what they'd like to be doing in 10 years' time etc.

You could let them take turns to draw it Pictionary-style, either in one group or split into small groups, and see how

I don't know what Joseph's plans for his life were when he was your age but I'm sure he wasn't planning on how things turned out. At the point where we left his story last week his life looked like a big mess.

Jigsaw Game

You will need: Joseph pictures cut into pieces

Have pictures illustrating the different parts of Joseph's story from last week cut into pieces like a jigsaw. (See *additional document: Joseph pictures*) Put all the

(continued overleaf)

pieces mixed together in a big pile on the floor or on the table.

Split the children into teams of three or four. Ask each team to find the pieces for one picture and to put it together. You can print multiple copies if necessary.

When all the pictures are completed, see if the children can put them in order to tell the story of Joseph so far.



▶ Recap

You will need: Joseph pictures

Use the pictures from the jigsaw game above (*additional document: Joseph pictures*) to recap Joseph's story - he was his father's favourite son and he had dreams of people bowing down to him, but then he was sold as a slave by his jealous brothers, taken off to work in Egypt and then put in prison for many years for a crime that he hadn't committed.

I wonder what Joseph's plans for his life were at that point - maybe he thought he'd be stuck in prison for the rest of his life, but God had a different plan.

▶ Joseph's Story continued

You will need: equipment to show PowerPoint or printed pictures, Bible

Tell the second part of the story of Joseph. You could use pictures from www.thebricktestament.com to illustrate the story on PowerPoint or by printing the pictures out. Links to the specific pictures can be found at the start of each section of the script.

Picture 1: While Joseph was in prison, two of the other prisoners had strange dreams and God helped Joseph to tell

them the meanings of their dreams. One of the men was released from prison shortly after that - he went back to his old job working for Pharaoh and he forgot all about Joseph until...

Picture 2: One night, Pharaoh had some strange dreams. He wanted to know what they meant, and he asked all his wise men and advisors, but no-one could tell him. That was when the man who had been in prison remembered Joseph's talent for explaining dreams.

Picture 3: He told Pharaoh and he sent for Joseph, so he could tell him about his dreams.

Picture 4: Pharaoh said, "I dreamed that I was walking along down by the River Nile when seven fat cows came out of the river. Then behind them came seven skinny cows. As I watched the skinny cows ate the fat cows. Then I had another dream. I dreamed that I saw seven fat ears of corn growing on a stalk, then seven skinny ears of corn grew and again the skinny ones ate up the fat ones.

Picture 5: I've asked all my wise men and advisors what the dreams mean but no-one can tell me."

"Well I can't tell you either," said Joseph, "but God can.

Picture 6: The two dreams mean the same thing.

The seven fat cows and the seven fat ears of corn mean that there will be seven years of really good crops in the land of Egypt. The seven skinny cows and the seven skinny ears of corn mean that after that there will be seven years of famine when not many crops are able to grow. God is showing you what will happen in the future, so you can prepare. If you organise to store crops during the good years the people will have

enough to eat during the famine."

Picture 7: Pharaoh thought about it and he said, "You are obviously wise and intelligent, and God is obviously helping you, so you are just the man for the job."

Picture 8: He promoted Joseph to be the governor of the whole land of Egypt (imagine a really important job like being prime minister) and put him in charge of organising the crops. So, Joseph worked hard and organised a plan for storing crops so that all the people of Egypt had enough during the years of famine.

Picture 9: When the famine came it didn't just affect Egypt - it affected the other lands round about - and so people started coming from other lands to buy food in Egypt.

Picture 10: One day Joseph saw a group of people that were very familiar - it was his brothers! He recognised them but they didn't recognise him in his Egyptian clothes. They came and asked to buy some food and they bowed down before him - Joseph's dream from years earlier was coming true! It took a bit of time and we don't have time to go into the full story but Joseph realised that his brothers were sorry for what they had done and that they had changed.

Picture 11: Eventually he told them who he was and that he forgave them.

Picture 12: He invited the whole family to come and live in Egypt so the brothers went home and got their father Jacob and their wives and their children and brought them to Egypt so the whole family was back together again.

Read Genesis 50:20 - Joseph says to his brothers, "You intended to harm me, but God

intended it all for good. He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people.” (NLT)

Think about it - if Joseph hadn't been in Egypt he wouldn't have been able to tell Pharaoh the meaning of his dreams, so no-one would have stored food for the famine and lots of people would have died! So, although Joseph's brothers had done something wrong, God used it as part of his plan for good.



REFLECT & RESPOND

▶ Reflection and prayer

You will need: jigsaw, permanent markers

Sometimes our lives can seem a bit of a mess like Joseph's. It can be hard to understand why things happen. Sometimes it's only when we look back that we can see that something good came out of something bad. Sometimes we don't see it at all, but here's one of God's promises from the Bible - "We know that in everything God works for the good of those who love him." Romans 8:28 (NCV)

If you have an old children's jigsaw with large pieces, or you are able to find one in a charity shop, you could give one to each of the children and let them copy the Bible verse onto the back of the jigsaw piece in permanent marker. They can take this with them as a reminder that even when the individual pieces of our stories don't make sense, God can see the big picture and he can work even those things for good if we trust him.

Lead the children in prayer, thanking God for his good plan for our lives and asking for help to trust him when things look bad.



ADDITIONAL IDEAS

▶ Video

You will need: equipment to play video

This video from Crossroads Kids Club summaries Joseph's story in around four minutes and highlights that it is also part of God's big story: <http://crossroadskidsclub.net/gods-story-joseph/>

▶ Beanbag Game

You will need: small beanbags

Divide the children into four teams with one team in each corner of the room. Place a pile of around 15 small beanbags in the centre of the room. Each team sends one child at a time to pick up a beanbag and take it back to their base. At first they take beanbags from the pile in the centre, but once those have all been taken they can take a beanbag from another team's base instead. The first team to get six beanbags at their base wins.

This game can be linked with Joseph's story as it works better if the children have a plan and keep sight of the big picture - e.g. deciding strategically which team's base to take a beanbag from on each turn.

10. Immanuel



BIBLE STORY / REFERENCE

Luke 1:26-38

Matthew 1:18-25

God promises Mary and Joseph they will have a son who is to be called Jesus



AIMS

To help the children understand that Jesus coming at Christmas was part of God's plan to deal with sin

To reflect on his coming as Immanuel, God with us

We have talked a lot this term about God being with his people - Noah, Abraham, Jacob and Joseph. Jesus was called Immanuel (God with us) and Christians believe Jesus was God come to live on earth as a human being. Just like with Abraham, God made a promise to Mary which seemed impossible, but she had faith and trusted what God said.



PREP FOR LEADERS

Read the Bible verses for this session and reflect:

- What links are there between the Christmas Story and the stories from Genesis we have been looking at this term?
- Take some time to pray for your group.



GAMES / INTRO ACTIVITIES

Choose one of the following activities to introduce today's theme:

▶ Christmas Pictionary

You will need: pens and paper

Divide the children into teams and get each team to choose one member of the team to begin the game. The representative from each team comes to the leader and is given a Christmas-themed word, which they have to go and draw for their team. When someone guesses the word, a different member of the team comes to the leader to get the

next word. This is repeated until they have reached the end of the leader's list of words. The first team to do this wins.

Some possible words you could use are: holly, reindeer, shepherd, turkey, star, Christmas pudding, Christmas carols, angel, tinsel, cracker.

▶ Baby Names

You will need: baby name book

Ask the children if any of them know the meanings of their names. You could bring a baby names book to let them look this up or do a search online.

In the Bible meanings of names are very important and today we are going to

(continued overleaf)

hear about a baby whose name had a very special meaning.

▶ **Waiting for Christmas**

You will need: Waiting for Christmas cards

You may want to incorporate this activity as part of the introduction within the Exploring the Bible section below.

Get the children to match up things that need to be prepared for Christmas with the number of weeks before Christmas these things need to happen. You could give them cards to match up (*see additional document: Waiting for Christmas*) or have the numbers of weeks around the room and get them to move to the number they think is correct for each question.

The correct answers are:

Shops order Christmas cards - 48 weeks

Farmers start fattening up their turkeys - 15 weeks

Shops put up their Christmas displays - 8 weeks

Last date to post Christmas cards - 1 week



▶ **Introduction**

Today we're going to jump ahead in the Bible to events that take place over 1800 years after the story of Joseph which we were thinking about last week. As we get ready for Christmas we're going to take a look at why it's so important to Christians and how it fits into God's plan.

Just now we're in the time of advent - the time when we're waiting for Christmas. Lots of people have advent calendars to count down the days to

Christmas, and sometimes it can be hard to wait.

(You could incorporate the Waiting for Christmas introductory activity here)

If you think it's hard to wait for Christmas, the people waiting for the first Christmas had to wait much, much longer. For hundreds of years the Jewish people had been waiting for a rescuer, someone powerful who would save them from their enemies.

We've been thinking about things that happened at the start of the Bible this term and if you remember we heard that God made the world and it was good, but then people disobeyed God and it was messed up. Ever since then the people had been waiting for a solution, and the events that happened at Christmas are an important part of God's plan to sort things out.

It begins with a visit from the angel Gabriel to a young lady called Mary.

▶ **Gabriel visits Mary**

You will need: script and wings for Gabriel, script and headscarf for Mary, Bible

Tell the story of Gabriel appearing with a message for Mary.

You could have two children dress up as Gabriel and Mary and act the story out, reading their lines. The costumes can be simple - a headscarf for Mary and a set of wings for Gabriel (available from fancy dress shops or pound shops, especially in the run-up to Christmas).

Possible Script: (copies for the children to use are included as additional documents: Script for Mary and Script for Gabriel)

Gabriel: Greetings! The Lord is with you.

Mary: But...who are you? What does this mean?

Gabriel: Don't be afraid, Mary. God is pleased with you. You are going to have a baby. You will give birth to a son and you must call him Jesus. He will be someone very great, the Son of the Most High, and he will be king over Israel forever. His kingdom will never end.

Mary: But how can this happen? How could I possibly have a baby?

Gabriel: The baby that is born to you will be the Son of God. Nothing is impossible with God.

Mary: I am God's servant. Let everything you have said come true.

Gabriel makes some amazing promises about Mary's baby - he will be very great, he will be the Son of the Most High, his kingdom will never end. It seemed impossible to Mary that this promise could come true. Does that remind you of any other stories we've heard this term?

Make the link with the story of Abraham.

God promised Abraham and Sarah a child and that seemed impossible, but it did happen. Abraham showed faith by obeying God and here Mary does the same - she agrees to God's plan even though she doesn't really understand it.

It wasn't easy for Mary. She was engaged to a man called Joseph (make sure the children know this is not the same Joseph we talked about in the last session) and when she told him she was expecting a baby he was upset. He knew it wasn't his baby and so he made plans to break off their engagement. But then an angel spoke to him in a dream.

Get Gabriel to read the words: (*part 2 in additional*)

document: Script for Gabriel)

Joseph, don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife. Her child is from God. You must call him Jesus because he will save his people from their sins. It is happening just as God said - "a virgin will give birth to a son and they will call him Immanuel, which means God with us".

So Joseph was reassured and he agreed to go ahead with his marriage to Mary.

The angel said two really important things about Jesus - he will save his people from their sins, and he will be called Immanuel which means "God with us".

We've talked a lot already this term about God being with his people - he was with Jacob and he was with Joseph.

When Jesus was born, Christians believe that he was God born as a person. Although he was God who is mighty and powerful and made everything, he chose to come and live as a person as part of that creation.

Read Luke 2:6-7 from the Bible



REFLECT & RESPOND

► Reflection

Encourage the children to take a moment to think: why would God choose to do that? If he is the mighty, powerful God who made everything, why would he come to earth as a tiny baby?

The Bible tells us that Jesus came to sort out the problem of sin, to save the people from their sins, just like the angel said.

► Prayer

You will need: prayer cards, pens

Give the children a moment to reflect on what they want to say to God as they think about him sending Jesus. It may be a prayer of thanks, a question, or something else. You could give out cards (*see additional document: prayer cards*) and give them a few minutes to write or draw their response on the back.

Lead the children in prayer, asking God to help us understand more this Christmas about what it means that he is Immanuel - God with us - and asking him to help us have faith to trust him like Mary and Joseph did.



ADDITIONAL IDEAS

► Video

You will need: equipment to play video

This video from Crossroads Kids Club tells the Christmas Story in around four minutes and also explains how it fits into God's big story: <http://crossroadskidsclub.net/gods-story-jesus-is-born/>

► Song - All The Angels Sing by Dpug Horley and Mark Read

You will need: equipment to play music

This is a lively song celebrating Jesus' birth and the chorus includes the refrain "Immanuel, Immanuel, God is with us," so it would tie in well with this session. You can find it on YouTube here.: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Klq8oYLUmo>

11. Party



BIBLE STORY / REFERENCE

Luke 2:1-20, Matthew 2:1-12 (summary)

The shepherds and the wise men visit Jesus



AIMS

To celebrate the end of term and to help the children continue to reflect on Jesus' birth and its significance

This session is slightly different from the others as it is an outline for an end of term party. There will be more time for games than usual, but there is also a pass the parcel game which will help to fill in the details of the Christmas story not covered in the previous session and help the children to continue to reflect on the significance of Christmas.



PREP FOR LEADERS

Read the Bible verses for this session and reflect:

- Where have you seen God at work in your SU Group this term?
- What are your hopes for next term?

Take some time to pray for your group.



GAMES / INTRO ACTIVITIES

pick it up and stick it back on before they can continue. The team which has all its members complete the relay first wins.

▶ Rudolph Relay

You will need: red paper circles and Vaseline

Divide the children into teams and have each team stand in a line. Give each child a circle of red paper to be their reindeer nose and give each team a tub of Vaseline. The first team member should use the Vaseline to stick on their reindeer nose and then run to the other end of the hall and back to their place. Each team member then does the same in turn. If their reindeer nose falls off at any point, they must

▶ Penguin Waddle

You will need: balloons

As with the previous game, have the children divided into teams with each team standing in a line. Give a balloon to the child at the front of each team. They must put it between their knees and waddle like a penguin to the other end of the hall and back before passing the balloon to the next child in the team.

If they drop the balloon at any point, they must pick it up and put it back in position before they continue. The team which

(continued overleaf)

has all its members complete the relay first wins.

▶ Musical Statues

You will need: equipment to play music

Play some music and let the children dance and move around. When the music stops they must freeze in position. Anyone the leaders spot moving is eliminated. Continue until you have a winner.

▶ Snowball Fight

You will need: white paper

Divide the children into two teams and have them on opposite sides of the hall with something to mark the line in the middle of the hall between the teams. Give each team some sheets of white paper. When the time starts they can scrunch the paper into "snowballs" and throw them at the other team. They can also pick up the snowballs that have been thrown at them and throw them back. Give a countdown and then tell the children to stop throwing. The team that has the least snowballs on their side of the hall wins.

▶ Snowman Competition

You will need: white toilet roll, hats, scarves etc

Divide the children into teams. Give each team white toilet roll and have some clothes, such as hats and scarves, available. Challenge them to choose one member of their team to dress as a snowman. Give them a time limit and see which team can create the best snowman.

▶ Name that tune

You will need: equipment to play music

Using a Christmas CD or playlist, play a few seconds from various Christmas songs and see how many the children

can identify.

EXPLORING THE BIBLE

▶ Pass the Parcel Game

You will need: equipment to play music, parcel wrapped as described below

Children play a game of Pass the Parcel with a present wrapped in various types of paper as detailed below. Each time they open a layer, take a moment to talk about the next layer of paper and get them to see if they can work out the link with the Christmas Story. There is also a short paragraph in the script below for each layer, which will help a leader explain.

(You will need to prepare by wrapping the prize (Celebrations chocolates) with the layers of paper in this order: star paper, newspaper, brown paper, new baby paper, birthday paper, Christmas paper. If you have children with nut or dairy allergies you can include an alternative treat for them along with the Celebrations. If the school would not want you to give the children sweets or chocolates, you could include something else associated with a celebration, e.g. a balloon for each child, instead.)

Top layer - Christmas paper

One of the things most people love about Christmas is the presents. We have a Christmas present here, and we're going to play a game of Pass the Parcel. As we go, we're going to use the present to help us remember what Christmas is all about.

(Music - let children pass the parcel and when the music stops the person holding it unwraps one layer.)

2nd layer: birthday paper

Inside the first layer of the present, we have Happy Birthday paper. To a lot of people today, Christmas is just about presents and parties and Santa. These things are all fun, but Christians believe that the most important thing about Christmas is that it's Jesus' birthday.

(Music)

3rd layer: New baby paper

The next layer has paper that is used for a present for a new baby. Jesus was born as a baby at Christmas time. Christians believe that he wasn't just an ordinary baby, but he was God's son. Before he was born, an angel appeared to Jesus' mum, a lady called Mary, and he told her that her baby would be someone very special. One of the names used for Jesus is "Immanuel", which means "God with us."

(Music)

4th layer: brown paper

The next layer of paper is plain brown. It doesn't look as fancy or as expensive as the other types of paper. This can remind us that Jesus was born into a poor family. Although he was a king he didn't live in a palace. In fact, he was born in a place where the animals were kept and laid down to sleep in a manger which was an animals' feeding box.

(Music)

5th layer: newspaper

Next, we have newspaper. On the night Jesus was born, an angel appeared to some shepherds in a field and told them that Jesus' birth was good news for everyone in the whole world. The Saviour that God had promised to send had come. Christians believe it is still good news for everyone today.

(Music)

6th layer: paper with stars on

Next, we have paper with stars on it. There was a very important star in the Christmas story. It appeared in the sky to show that a new king had been born. Wise men followed it so that they could find their way to Bethlehem to worship Jesus and bring him gifts.

(Music)

7th layer: Celebrations
Chocolates

Finally, we have Celebrations. We all enjoy lots of celebrations at Christmas time, but for Christians the important thing that we are celebrating is Jesus - that he came to earth to be a Saviour for everyone and to make a way for us to know God.

We hope that as you open your presents this Christmas you'll remember what it is that we're celebrating.



REFLECT & RESPOND

▶ Prayer

Lead the children in a short prayer thanking God for sending Jesus at Christmas.