

FREE to GO

The Bible – God's love liberating lives

This varied programme includes Bible storytelling, games, movement, prayers, and craft activities. You won't have time to use them all. We recommend you use or adapt the Story which covers the biblical material. Apart from this, feel free to pick and mix the other ingredients that will work best for your group and the time available.

Intro to story [3 mins]

Begin with a Bible – the bigger the better. Talk about how special the Bible is because the stories in it are about our friendship with God. They are stories about what God is like and stories about how God loves us. The people who wrote the book loved God and God loved them. Reading the book, or listening to the stories from the book, is a way of being close to God. Carefully show how thin the pages are. (Maybe they could stroke the pages and feel how smooth they are/lift the book to feel its weight). If the pages of your Bible have gold edges, you can say that's because the stories in this book are very precious.

Props/actions for the story [5 mins to demonstrate and rehearse actions with group]

Before beginning to tell the story divide the group into 'prisoners' and 'rescuers'.

- To visit prisoners – and unlock their prison door:

Prisoners hold up their hands, wrists touching, as if in handcuffs.

Rescuers do hand mime and tongue-click sound effect of turning key in lock. Then prisoners' hands are released.

- He has chosen me to help blind people see:
Prisoners cover eyes with hands.
Rescuers repeat unlocking mime and sound; prisoners take hands from eyes.
- To visit all who suffer – and to set them free:
Prisoners fold their arms tightly across their chests and bow their heads.
Rescuers repeat unlocking mime and sound; prisoners unfold and sit normally.

Alternatively, you could do these actions as part of telling the story ...

Story [5 mins]

One day Jesus visited a town called Nazareth. It was the town where he grew up – and this is what happened.

Jesus went to the meeting place where people gathered to read the special book full of God stories. Jesus began to read to all the people. He was reading from Isaiah's book – the bit where Isaiah says that God would send someone special to set the whole world free.

This is what Isaiah wrote:

The Lord's Spirit fills my heart and mind,
The Lord is good, the Lord is kind.

I am to tell good news to all the poor.

To visit prisoners – and unlock their prison door.
He has chosen me to help blind people see
To visit all who suffer – and to set them free.

People of God, listen and hear.
This is the Lord's time, his chosen year.*

When he'd finished reading Jesus said: 'Those things Isaiah wrote have all come true today.'

Well, everybody looked at him. They stared and stared. Whatever did he mean? What had come true? Did he mean that *he* was the one sent to set the whole world free? *What a big-head! What a cheek!*

'That's just Jesus,' they said. 'He's Joseph the carpenter's son. He used to live in our street. He's not special. He's just too big for his boots!'

And Jesus sighed. 'Just because I grew up here,' he said, 'you all think you know me. You think you know everything about me. But you don't.'

'Come on then,' they shouted. 'Show us a miracle!'

But Jesus wouldn't.

'See - he's trying to make out he's better than the rest of us. But he's not. He's just a bloke from Nazareth - he can't do anything we can't do!'

'You're wrong,' Jesus said. 'The things I do aren't party tricks. But whatever I do here, you'll find a way of turning it against me. Prophets are never liked in their home towns.'

*You could use Luke 4.18-19 instead of this rhyme.

Free to move [5-15 mins depending on how many things you try]

A) What do you think it's like to be a prisoner? Curl up into a tight ball. Close your eyes. Imagine always being in a small space. Imagine always being in the dark, day after day after day. Now uncurl. Stretch. Wriggle. Move. Open your eyes. Look around. See the colours.

B) (Also suitable for 7-10s.) Sometimes not being able to move properly stops us from doing things - stops us from being free. Try some of these things:

Put thick gloves on and then try to a) open an envelope, b) fasten a coat with zip/buttons,

c) turn the pages of a magazine/book, d) put Lego bricks together.

Now take the gloves off and try to pick up (and eat) Smarties with chopsticks. (Remember to wash the chopsticks between users!)

Pray [2 mins without actions, 5 mins with]

Italics below suggest actions to be used in the prayer. You need not rehearse them, simply say, for example, 'Let's stand up and stretch to enjoy the freedom God gives us ...', etc.

Loving Lord, thank you for our freedom, thank you for space to move in and space to grow in.

(Stand and stretch.)

Loving Lord, thank you for our bodies, for eyes to see and ears to hear.

(On 'bodies' give yourself a hug; on 'eyes and ears', point to them.)

Loving Lord, thank you for our world, for our families and friends.

(Look right, look left. Shake hands with the person next to you.)

Loving Lord, thank you for the stories in the Bible that tell us about you.

(Sit in a circle around the Bible.)

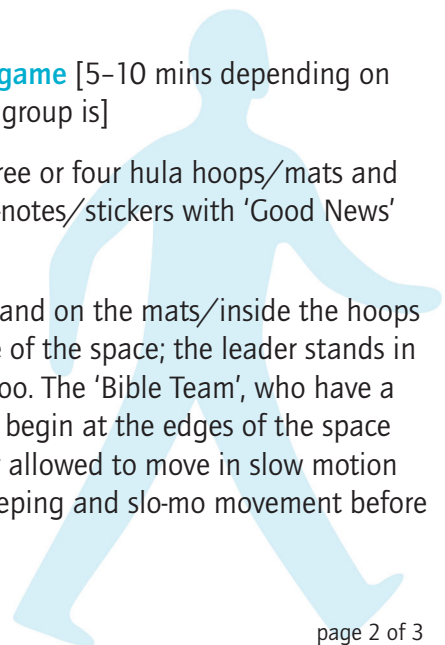
Lord Jesus, please be with all the sad and lonely people; be with people who are not free; and be with us as our friend.

Amen.

Good news game [5-10 mins depending on how big the group is]

You need three or four hula hoops/mats and some post-it-notes/stickers with 'Good News' written on.

'Prisoners' stand on the mats/inside the hoops in the centre of the space; the leader stands in the middle too. The 'Bible Team', who have a sticker each, begin at the edges of the space and are only allowed to move in slow motion (practise creeping and slo-mo movement before



you start), and can only move when the leader is not looking. So if the leader has their back to you, you can move. When they can see you, you must freeze. The leader turns, saying names of those that can be seen (e.g. 'Freeze, Matthew, Carol', etc.). Once you think you can't be seen it's safe to move. The object of the game is to release the prisoners by putting 'Good News' stickers on them.

Bible keys [10-15 mins]

Why keys? To unlock and set free. We have Jesus as a freedom key and the Bible as a freedom key. The Bible tells us that we are God's family and that Jesus showed us how much God loves us. God wants all his people to know that they are special to him and to live free and happy lives. Jesus showed us that God's love is for everyone, so we should look after each other. Everyone should be free.

Cut out large key shapes from card. (Pre-cut for the youngest children, make a template for the older ones.) Colour/decorate them. On one side write/draw 'Jesus', on the other write/draw 'Bible'. You could make a mobile by hanging these from wire coat-hangers, or simply string/peg them on a line across the room. You might attach keys like this to lengths of ribbon to use as page markers in the Bible in church (ribbon inside page, key hanging down). This could be a gift from the children to the congregation. Make the keys as beautiful as possible.

If you want to display the keys on a frieze or notice-board, cut out coloured letters to spell 'Freedom' and intersperse them with the keys.

Closing activity [2 mins]

Use the rhyme from the storytelling as a separate thing. Read it out, then read it again, pausing before the last word in each couplet to let the children fill in the rhyme. E.g. You say: 'The Lord's Spirit fills my heart and mind. The Lord is good, the Lord is ———.' The children will join in on the last word.

These activities are written by **Jan Dean**. Jan is a widely published children's poet, fiction writer, festival performer and frequent writer-in-schools.

