



Buried Treasure?

Unearth God's riches this Bible Sunday

ACTIVITIES FOR JUNIOR CHURCH

These ideas provide a 'Pick and Mix' menu for activities with children aged 4 to 10 on Bible Sunday. Approximate timings have been given to help you plan your session. Select the activities that will be most suitable for your group, bearing in mind their ages and abilities. Some will require advance preparation.

MAKE YOUR OWN HIDDEN TREASURE (20 mins)

Explore the idea of a time capsule, where we place things (pictures, objects, letters, books, etc.) in a box that will be buried in a safe place and not opened until a long time in the future – maybe a hundred years or more.

Now take that idea and use it to make a *God's People Capsule*.

What pictures/objects/books would you put inside? Will it include prayers/thank-you notes as well as pictures of the good things in your life God has given to you? Which Bible story or Bible passage would you want to include?

Talk about your choices. What would the things you put in the box say about God's people/the things we do/the things we believe/the things we think are important, etc.?

Then seal the box and hide it in a safe place. How long will you wait before opening the box? A few weeks/a month/a year/longer?

Will you share the hidden treasures in your capsule with other members of the church family before you seal it or when you re-open it?

HIDDEN TREASURE

(5 mins for a simple reading, plus 5–10 mins depending on your choice of follow-up activity)

Once there was a woman who fell asleep for a very long time. For years and years she slept and no one could wake her. The weeds in her garden grew very tall and wild. The hedge grew across the gate and the small apple trees around her house grew into a thick orchard, but there was no one to pick the apples, so

when they were ripe they fell into the long grass and the wild pigs from the forest came and ate them.

Inside her bedroom spiders spun soft grey webs so that soon the whole room was hung with huge sheets of soft grey and the bed was one soft grey pillow. And everything was quiet.

Then suddenly, one day the woman woke up. And oh, she was so stiff from lying still for such a long, long time and she struggled to get out of her bed and clean up her spidery room. And she struggled to make a path from her door to the garden gate but she was too weak to cut down the hedge which blocked her gate. She tried to call for help, but it was so long since she had spoken that her voice was dry and cracked and she could hardly make a sound. Sadly she walked slowly back into her house and sat down by the fireplace. There were small sticks and big logs all ready on the hearth, so she lit a fire and sat sadly staring into the flames.

Down in the village people saw the smoke rising from her chimney and one by one they came to the high hedge around her garden and then they broke the branches that blocked the gate and went inside.

Now it wasn't just the arms and legs and voice of the woman that had grown stiff and creaky with not being used. It was her memory too. All the time she had been asleep she had dreamed dreams and now her mind was full of them. She had dreamed she was a bird or a fish, she had dreamed she lived in a palace in the clouds, but clearly that was not so. She had dreamed her name was Queen Wilhelmina, she had dreamed she was called Forest Runner, but clearly that was not so either. Slowly her memory began to wake up too, but it was as stiff and wobbly as her legs had been. Rose, she thought, I am called Rose. But *who* was she? And *what sort of a person* was she? She had no idea.

So the villagers searched her house for clues. They found a box full of sewing silks and needles. They found beautiful pictures sewn from coloured thread. 'You are a *needlewoman*,' they said. 'See what fine things you have made.'

They found a drawer full of fancy biscuit cutters. 'Look,' they said, 'You were a baker. You used these to make biscuits!'

Rose nodded. Yes, she thought she remembered those things. Then from deep inside her mind another memory stirred. She pointed towards the bookcase. 'Treasure...' she whispered.

The villagers stared. *Treasure?* There was no gold on the bookcase. They looked very carefully. There were no jewels. They tapped the wooden shelves and shook their heads. There were no secret drawers.

'Perhaps there's a map!' a tall man said. But there was no map.

Then Rose said it again, louder. She pointed to the bookcase and croaked 'Treasure!'

The tall man picked up the largest book. He flicked through the pages. Sure enough there was money there! Paper banknotes slipped between the pages of the book. 'Here you are,' he said as he handed the money to Rose. 'Here's your treasure.'

Rose smiled – a creaky sort of smile – and then she shook her head. 'The money's good,' she said. 'But there's another treasure too.'

The tall man looked again. 'Ah!' he said. 'I see, there are photographs between the pages too – your family photographs. Now you'll know who you are!' Rose smiled and nodded. 'Look again,' she said. 'There is more treasure.'

So the tall man looked, but he could find nothing else hidden in the book.

'Read the words,' Rose whispered. 'Read the words.'

'It's a letter,' the tall man said. 'about how to be one of God's people.'

'Read it to me,' whispered Rose.

'God's people must be kind.

God's people must be gentle and patient.

God's people mustn't be full of themselves – they must care about others.

God is always ready to forgive us when we've done wrong things and we must be ready to forgive too.

God's people must be the friends of the world, they must be the friends of the people who get picked on.

God's people must give up quarrelling, they must be fair and make peace.

God's people must learn to see the good things around them and then they must say thank-you for them.'

As the man read these words to Rose, her creaky smile grew.

'That's who I am,' she said at last. 'I am one of God's people.'

The man thought about the three kinds of treasure he had found – the money, the family pictures and the book itself – which was full of stories and messages from God himself. 'A very great treasure indeed,' he said as he gave Rose her Bible.

Follow-up activities

- Use simple mimes of falling asleep, plants growing, people pointing at distant smoke, cutting the hedge down, woman waking up, stretching, etc. in fact all of the actions in the story. Then tell it again while the children provide the illustrations for the story by miming the actions. (5 mins practising actions, 5–8 mins redoing the story.)
- Talk about your 'precious things', things that you keep to remind you of wonderful times or special people.
- Talk about where you like to keep your precious things.
- What precious things do people keep in books?
- Why is the Bible a precious book?

MAKE TREASURE (20 mins)

Using gold and coloured card make giant treasure (large gold coins, goblets, crowns, etc.) Write/paste printouts of Bible verses on the treasure then display it spilling out of a treasure box/make a collage. (You could make a giant necklace and put linked verses on each bead.) Make some extra pieces of treasure so some can be taken home.

DISCOVER HIDDEN TREASURE (10 mins+ depending on how many children there are and how many layers!)

Prepare a pass-the-parcel that has 'good news verses'/'good news statements' (e.g. *God loves us/God lives in our hearts/Pass on God's love*, etc.) between each layer of paper along with a treat (*chocolate coins would be good*). When a layer is removed and the treat claimed, the phrase is read too before the music starts up again. The treasure at the centre should be a Bible story along with the treat. (Allow extra time for reading whichever Bible story you have put at the centre.)

If you are working with more than one group, the older children might prepare the parcel for the younger ones as part of the activities, or it could be prepared on an earlier occasion. (Print out a selection of Bible verses in advance, but allow the older ones to choose from a selection and to talk about their choices. *Approx 10 mins.*)

MAKE TREASURE BOXES (15-20 mins)

Use coloured paper, stickers etc to decorate match boxes. Draw little pictures of people you love, family pets, etc. and put them inside the box. Take a printed Bible verse and draw a beautiful border round it. Put it inside the box with your other treasures. When you go into church choose someone to share your hidden treasure with. Show them what you have hidden in your treasure box.

SPELL IT OUT...

Make posters with acrostic poems, so the first letter of every line spells a word. Decorate the first letters to make them special – like illuminated letters . You could write your own acrostics using TREASURE, HIDDEN (or both!). They can be simple lists of things we might find in the Bible, or reasons why the Bible is so precious to us.

Alternatively, use one of ours.

Here in this book
I can find
David and Daniel
Dancing and Lions
Everything I need to know
Nothing left out.

Take this book
Read it carefully
Every story
All the messages
Sending love
Under angel-filled skies
Right into your heart
Each time you read them.

This book is bursting with messages,
Riches, wonders.
Every story
Alive with love
Sending that love to us
Us. Ordinary us.
Right from God's heart into ours...
Everlasting, faithful love.

You could use an illuminated letter acrostic to make dust jackets for the Bibles in your church or to take home.

BURIED TREASURE

A script to act, read like radio drama or for use with puppets.
(10 mins for a simple reading, 20 mins for a prepared one, plus pick and mix from the follow up discussion/improvisation which will take another 10–20 mins depending on your choices.)

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<p><i>At one side of the acting space Seb and Izzie sit in their garden. They have nice garden furniture and nice things to eat and drink. On the other side of the acting space Abi, Cal and Dev are digging/weeding, etc. Then they down tools and begin to eat a poor lunch of bread and water as the Narrator introduces the story.</i></p>	
Narrator	This is the story of <i>The Village of Sighs</i> and the strange thing that happened there.
Abi	Our village was called <i>The Village of Sighs</i> , because life there was hard. We worked and worked, but life never got any easier. And when the wind blew through the trees on our hilltop the leaves shushed like slow, sad breathing.
Cal	Those leaves sighed . Just like us. As if they were as tired and sad as we were.
Narrator	But not everyone in the <i>Village of Sighs</i> was sad.
Dev	<i>(Pointing into the distance)</i> Is that a new fence?
Abi	<i>(Looking where Dev points)</i> Yeah. And a new shed.
Cal	<i>(Also)</i> And it looks as if they've got a new well too.
Dev	Well somebody's doing all right then, aren't they? I mean, new fences don't grow on trees.
Cal	Actually I think you'll find they do. They are wooden after all.
Abi	Oh, ha-ha. Very funny. Not.
Cal	Sorry.
Abi	I'd like a new shed. Only this year we've only grown enough food to eat – there hasn't been any left to sell. So we can't buy any new stuff at all.
Narrator	And that was true for everyone in the <i>Village of Sighs</i> . They only ever had enough to get by. There was never any spare money.
Dev	You know what I'd like? Skin cream.
Cal	What? Like make-up?
Dev	No. Like medicine. I've got eczema.
Abi	And the skin cream would cure it?
Dev	Well – it'd stop it itching.
Cal	I wonder how many tubes of eczema cream you could get for the price of a shed?
Narrator	Meanwhile, behind the new fence, near the new shed, next to the new well, a very different conversation was taking place...
Seb	<i>(Looking very happy and smiling)</i> Shall we have a party?
Izzie	<i>(Seems very anxious and nervous)</i> I don't know. Maybe...
Seb	Oh go on. We can afford it. Come to think of it, we can afford almost anything.
Izzie	Oh can we? Well I don't want to start flashing my money around. You never know when we might need it. We should save it for a rainy day.
Seb	You are sooooo boring.

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Izzie	Besides. If word gets out that we've got money, people might come and try to rob us.
Seb	Who? Who'd try to rob us? We know everyone who lives round here. They're good people. They wouldn't steal from us.
Izzie	Huh. You never know what people will do when there's money involved.
Seb	Well. What shall we do with it then?
Izzie	Keep it safe. Just use it for stuff we really need. And not let anybody else know we've got it!!!
Seb	I think that's going to be very hard.
Izzie	Of course it isn't. We'll spend it carefully and keep the rest hidden in a place where no one will find it.
Seb	Where?
Izzie	We'll bury it.
Seb	You're nuts! We've only just dug it up and now you want to bury it!
Izzie	And stop smiling . If you keep going around smiling like that people will know there's something funny going on.
Seb	But I'm happy. We found diamonds in our field. Lots of diamonds. And gold. I've got all this amazing treasure – and you want me not to smile!
Izzie	I've told you – people will get suspicious.
Narrator	And people did get suspicious.
Cal	<i>(Pointing at Seb)</i> There's something weird about him.
Abi	What sort of weird?
Dev	Yeah. Do you mean good weird or bad weird?
Cal	I mean weird weird. He's too happy.
Dev	Is that possible?
Cal	Well – what's he got to be happy about? We're farmers and we live in a place with poor soil and terrible weather – only half of what we plant ever grows. The river floods in winter and dries up in summer. And everything we need to buy costs more than we can afford. So why is he so happy???
Abi	You're right. It is suspicious. <i>(Dev, Cal and Abi narrow their eyes and stare at Seb and Izzie)</i>
Izzie	I told you this would happen. Any minute now our secret will be out.
Seb	Good.
Izzie	No. Not good. BAD.
Seb	Listen. It's great that we've got enough money so that our lives are better.
Izzie	It's fantastic. But now it's all going to end because you couldn't keep it to yourself.
Seb	I don't want to keep it to myself. I want to share it.
Izzie	I used to think you were mad, now I know you are.
Seb	Give it a rest, Izzie. You know what is mad? Keeping something

	this good to yourself. These people are our friends and neighbours. And there's more than enough treasure to go round. We have a new well on our land. But with all this money the whole place could have new wells. We could build flood barriers for the winter storms. No one here need be poor any more.
Izzie	But it's only a small treasure.
Seb	No it isn't. It's a huge treasure. If we tried to spend it all it'd take forever. No we need to share it. We need to go round and make sure everyone who lives here comes to collect their share.
Izzie	Hang on. Let me get this straight. Not only do you want us to give our treasure away but you want us to go round making sure everyone knows that it's on offer? You are seriously off your head. You want us to work at giving away the best thing we've ever had?
Seb	Yes. I do. Before we found this treasure we were as hard-up as everybody else. This treasure has made a real difference to us. And I want to pass that on. Don't you?
Izzie	Mmm, sort of.
Seb	It's the right thing to do. You know it is. So do it.
Izzie	<i>(Goes across to Cal and the others and whispers)</i> Want some money?
Cal	<i>(Unable to hear the whispers)</i> Sorry?
Izzie	<i>(Still whispering)</i> Money. You can have some money.
Abi	<i>(To Cal)</i> What's she saying? <i>(To Izzie)</i> What do you want?
Izzie	Nothing. Nothing. Sorry to have bothered you. <i>(Goes back to Seb)</i>
Dev	That was a bit odd.
Seb	Well? What did they say?
Izzie	Nothing. They don't want it.
Seb	Seriously?
Izzie	Mmm.
Narrator	It was a shaky start, but in the end Seb got his way. He was right. There was enough treasure. Not enough for everyone to be stinking rich, but enough so that no one in that village ever felt poor again. It was a strange thing
Abi	A remarkable thing
Cal	And our village is no longer known as the <i>Village of Sighs</i>
Seb	Our hilltop is known as Gold Hill and the sound of the wind in the leaves up here sounds like the shush of water in the new wells that have made our farms fertile.
Dev	I think those leaves sound like the shush of the posh doors on the new medical centre where I get my eczema cream!
Abi	We prosper here. We do well.
Narrator	Because of a hidden treasure that was found and shared.

Some things to talk and think about:

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- Why was sharing the treasure the right thing to do? What things might have happened if it hadn't been shared?
- Can you think of times when sharing things has been difficult, or hard work?
- Make up your own scene when Abi, Cal and Dev have been given a share of the treasure and take it home to their families.
- Make up two video diary scenes where Izzie explains her worries about sharing before they give treasure away, and her reactions after the sharing has transformed the village.

***Now watch the DVD about the Jamaican Children's Project. (2½ mins in total). We recommend that the DVD is more suitable for this age group if you show just the second half to the end, starting at time code 2 mins 31.**

- Why is sharing the Bible the right thing to do?
- What hard work might be involved in the sharing?
- The Bible is a treasure too – talk and think about why it is precious and why it needs to be shared.
- Share with each other any thoughts and feelings that have come from watching the DVD.

*Although this is suggested as a follow-up to the script, it could easily be an activity in its own right.

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