

# Open the Book

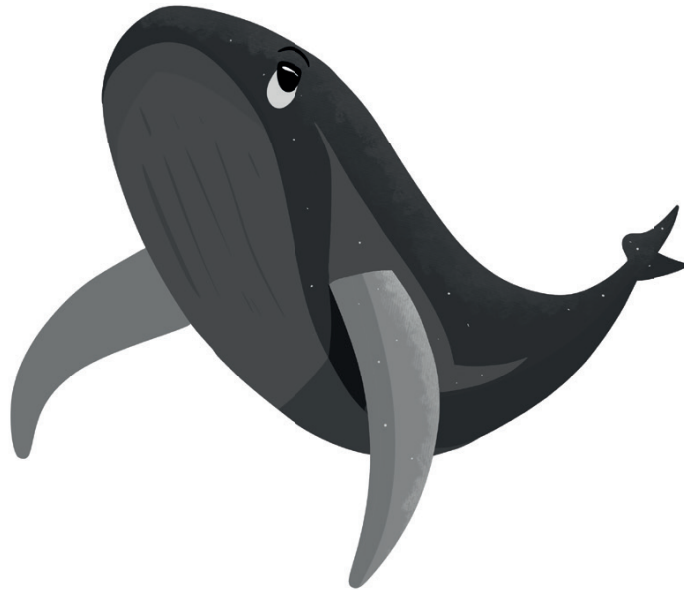


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# Open the Book



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# Welcome to Open the Book!

A Bible story well told has the power to spark the imagination, inspire exploration, give hope, create a smile, teach important lessons and connect generations.

## Everything you need for a Bible story, well told.

### What is Open the Book?

Open the Book is an exciting storytelling project where Bible stories are shared with children in a way that is fun, interactive and memorable. As invited guests in school, storytelling teams use the Open the Book programme to prepare and present a 10 to 15-minute scripted Bible story to a school assembly, involving the children as much as possible. The presentation can stand alone, or it can be part of a wider school assembly.

### Why do we do Open the Book?

Open the Book's vision is to share Bible stories with all children, everywhere, through the power of storytelling. Our biblical underpinning is taken from Psalm 78.1–7. We are continuing the Christian tradition of intergenerational storytelling, and even sowing seeds for future unborn generations.

### Who is involved?

Storytelling teams are made up of trained and safely recruited volunteers from local churches and organisations, who sign up to follow the Open the Book Code of Practice. Storytelling teams liaise with their school contact regarding the day and time of their visit, as well as the school's usual customs, security and safeguarding.

### What do I need?

Each Storyteller has a copy of the *Open the Book Storytelling Bible* and this Handbook. The *Storytelling Bible* includes 90 stories, beginning at Genesis and going all the way through to Revelation. This Handbook then provides everything you need to say, in order to make it into a full assembly. There is a welcome and introduction before the story is read, and afterwards a quiet moment to reflect and wonder, plus a prayer to offer, with an introduction. The Handbook also gives a list of essential and additional characters.

Optional songs to use, as well as more ideas on how to make the story more interactive, can be found on our website: [biblesociety.org.uk/get-involved/open-the-book](http://biblesociety.org.uk/get-involved/open-the-book).

Open the Book is a scripted programme and we ask all Storytellers to stick to the script. Staff in schools value Open the Book because they know exactly what has been said and can answer with confidence any questions they may be asked about the content of the assembly. Great care and attention have been paid to ensuring that the stories and assembly scripts are acceptable and accessible to the widest possible audience. The script also allows children of all faiths and those with no faith to decide if they would like to join in with the prayer or not.

**What do I do first?**

Before visiting a school, all Storytellers must attend Open the Book training, be safely recruited by their church or sending organisation and sign the Open the Book Code of Practice. Open the Book teams also need to nominate a Team Leader.

**Safeguarding**

All Storytellers must be safely recruited by their church or sending organisation. It is neither the role nor the responsibility of Open the Book or Bible Society to undertake recruitment. Open the Book Storytellers are eligible to apply for an Enhanced DBS Check (without a check of the barred list). Some schools may require this check to be carried out before volunteers visit the school as Open the Book Storytellers.

All Storytellers must have an Open the Book safeguarding guide. The guide lists what to do and whom to contact if a Storyteller has a concern about a child or adult.

No Storyteller should be on their own with schoolchildren; they should always be in sight of other team members. Storytellers must be accompanied by members of staff during assemblies and rehearsals.

It is the Team Leader's responsibility to ensure that all Storytellers are safely recruited, trained and registered with Open the Book before going into a school.

**Relationship with the school**

Communicating well with the school is crucial. Team Leaders should liaise closely and sensitively with school staff, being mindful of the school's context and educational environment. They should make minimal demands, being aware that Open the Book teams are invited guests.

**How does Open the Book benefit schools?**

- It gives the school a link with the community
- It provides opportunities to build cross-generational relationships
- It provides a time of quiet reflection that schools are required to build into their school day
- It makes a good school assembly
- It has been positively viewed in official school reports
- It is free to the school
- It requires no extra work or planning from school staff
- It is successful in multi-faith contexts

**Telling the Bible story**

The aim of Open the Book is to equip people to share Bible stories with children in an accessible and enjoyable way for those of all faiths and none, and to tell Bible stories in ways that enable children to engage imaginatively with the text.

We have created timelines that help storytelling teams decide what stories they might like to tell and when. One example is given below. Additional timelines, along with a list of themes and values, can be found in the Members' area of the Open the Book website: [biblesociety.org.uk/get-involved/open-the-book](http://biblesociety.org.uk/get-involved/open-the-book)

### **Our aims**

- To enable the sharing of Bible stories in an accessible and enjoyable way for children, everywhere, of all faiths and none
- To engage children imaginatively with the biblical text
- To train volunteer Storytellers, so that their Bible confidence is increased and they are equipped to deliver good-quality assemblies
- To assist primary schools in providing good assemblies
- To contribute to the children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural education
- To contribute to the biblical literacy of each new generation
- To encourage links between school, church and home

### **Our Code of Practice**

All Storytellers agree to:

- Stick to the script and present the story simply, following the Open the Book Handbook
- Allow each story to speak for itself, as a Bible story, not as a sermon
- Liaise closely and sensitively with schools, being mindful of the school's context and educational environment
- Make minimal demands on schools and be aware that they are invited guests
- Show respect and sensitivity to those of other faiths and to those with no faith
- Fulfil relevant safeguarding requirements as outlined in the Open the Book Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct
- Attend Open the Book Core Training before going into school for the first time, and then attend refresher training every three years
- Always be accompanied by members of staff during all storytelling sessions
- Uphold the copyright of Open the Book materials
- Keep records of team and schools up to date with Bible Society

**If you have any questions or queries, please do contact us.**

**Email: [contactus@biblesociety.org.uk](mailto:contactus@biblesociety.org.uk)**

**Website: [biblesociety.org.uk/get-involved/open-the-book](https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/get-involved/open-the-book)**

# Weekly storytelling timeline

Other timelines can be found on our website.

## Autumn Term

- 1 Story 1: Creation
- 2 Story 2: Rebellion
- 3 Story 3: The Flood
- 4 Story 4: Abraham
- 5 Story 9: Joseph the Dreamer
- 6 Story 11: Joseph the Ruler
- 7 Story 12: Joseph the Brother (optional)
- 8 Story 13: A Basket full of Baby
- 9 Story 14: A Burning Bush
- 10 Story 15: Plagued! and/or Story 16: Free at Last
- 11 Story 21: Jericho (optional)
- 12 Story 25: Samuel (optional)
- 13 Story 29: David and Goliath

## Christmas time

- 14 Story 47: The Annunciation
- 15 Story 49: On to Bethlehem and/or Story 50: Shepherds and Angels

## Spring term

- 16 Story 35: Shepherd Song or Story 30: Solomon
- 17 Story 38: Jonah
- 18 Story 43: Daniel in the Lions' Den
- 19 Story 44: Nehemiah
- 20 Story 51: Star Watchers (to remind children of Jesus' birth)
- 21 Story 52: Where's Jesus?
- 22 Story 53: John the Baptist

- 23 Story 54: Temptation
- 24 Story 55: Calling Disciples
- 25 Story 56: Four Good Friends

## Summer term

- 26 Story 61: Storm!
- 27 Story 62: Picnic on the Mountain
- 28 Story 60: Come and Follow Me or Story 65: Lost
- 29 Story 64: Upside-Down
- 30 Story 66: Love Your Enemies
- 31 Story 71: The Triumphal Entry
- 32 Story 75: Last Supper
- 33 Story 77: Crucifixion and Story 78: Resurrection
- 34 Story 81: Ascension
- 35 Story 82: Pentecost
- 36 Story 90: New Heaven and New Earth

# Story 55: Calling Disciples

## NOTES:

Jesus went from town to town, telling people about the kingdom of God. They were impressed by what he taught, and wanted to hear more.

So by the time he came to Capernaum, a city that sat on the edge of Lake Galilee, the crowd was enormous!

Jesus needed to find a way that he could be both seen and heard. And when he saw two fishing boats, floating at the water's edge, he had an idea.

The boats were empty and the fishermen were washing their nets, after a night out on the lake.

**'Could I borrow one of your boats?'** Jesus asked one of the fishermen, whose name was Simon.

**'Sure,'** Simon replied.

When Jesus climbed into the boat, he asked the fisherman to row the boat just a little way out from the shore.

And having put a little distance between himself and the crowd, and having made sure that everyone could now see and hear him, Jesus began to teach.

When his talk was finished, Jesus spoke to Simon again.

**'Let's go out into the deep part of the lake,'** Jesus said, **'and catch some fish.'**

Simon was puzzled.

**'Sir,'** he said, **'my friends and I were out on the lake all night. And we didn't catch a thing. But, hey, if that's what you want, we'll have another go.'**

So off they sailed – Jesus and Simon and his fishermen friends. And when they had reached the deepest part of the lake, Jesus said, **'Lower your nets!'**

The fishermen did what Jesus said. Down went the nets.

And soon those nets were full of fish! Fish flipping and flapping and flopping! Nets so full that they looked like they would break.

Simon called for help from a nearby boat. And his friends, James and John, rowed over to him and pulled on the nets, as well.

And soon both boats were full of fish. Fish flipping and flapping and flopping. So full, in fact, that they looked like they might sink.

Simon looked at Jesus. This was no ordinary man, and that huge and unexpected catch of fish proved it.

Frightened, he fell to his knees, as if he was falling before God, and said to Jesus, **'Go away, please. I'm a man who has done lots of wrong things, and I don't deserve to be in your presence.'**

Jesus smiled at him. And then he said, **'Don't be afraid. I have a job for you – and for your friends. I want you to become different kinds of fishermen. Fishers of women and men!'**

So when they returned to the shore, Simon and his brother Andrew and their friends, James and John, followed Jesus.

They became his disciples – determined to go where he went, watch what he did, and learn as much as they could from him.

And, so, they left everything else behind.

Their boats.

And their nets.

And that great catch of fish, flipping and flapping and flopping!



# Story 55: Calling Disciples

## Welcome and preparation

*Make your greeting as inclusive and accessible in your setting as possible.*

*Include here any instructions to the children about how you want them to interact with the story. This is one idea:*

**Has anyone ever been fishing? What did you use to catch the fish?** *(Take some answers from the children.)*

The way they caught fish in Jesus' time was with great big nets. They would throw the nets out into the water, wait for the fish to come swimming in, and then pull those great, mighty nets back up out of the water.

It was work that needed you to be rugged and strong. It was also smelly work, dealing with fish, and cleaning and mending the fishing nets.

In today's story, when you hear about fishing, I want you to imagine those great big nets. And when you hear about the fish 'flipping and flapping and flopping', you can make fish faces and flip, flap and flop about.

Now, make yourself comfortable. It's time to begin.

## Introduction

Have you ever been going along, having a perfectly normal day, when something wonderful and unexpected happened?

Today's story is about a group of fishermen that this happened to, and it changed their lives for ever.

Let's OPEN THE BOOK to the Bible story called 'Calling Disciples'.

## Story

*Read the story called 'Calling Disciples'.*

**Our Bible story has come to an end. Let's stop and think for a moment. Put your hands in your lap and take a deep breath, in ... and out.**

## Quiet moment to reflect and wonder

That Bible story had a couple of surprises in it, didn't it! One surprise was that when the fishermen did what Jesus asked them to do and threw their nets back out, they caught so many fish that they had to get help from nearby boats to pull in the nets.

Another surprise was that this group of men, who caught fish for a living, decided to give up their fishing business and follow Jesus.

*Close your eyes (or provide a focal point at the front for the children to look at).*

After a long night of fishing and catching nothing, I wonder how it felt to catch so many fish when they threw their nets back in, as Jesus asked them to. *(Pause for a moment.)*

I also wonder what it was about Jesus that made these men give up their business and jobs, right then and there, and choose to follow him.

*Give time to reflect. Starting with 10, silently count back slowly to 1.*

## Prayer intro

Now I'm going to say a prayer. If you want to make it your prayer, say, 'Amen' (which means, 'I agree') at the end after me. (If not, you can sit quietly and think about what you've heard today.)\*

*\* Use bracketed words in schools where appropriate.*

## **Prayer**

Dear God,  
Help me to know when it's time to change  
something in my life, and give me the  
courage to make that change.  
Amen

*Essential characters:* Narrator, Jesus,  
Peter, other disciples

*Additional characters:* Fishermen in  
another boat

SAMPLE

# Story 38: Jonah

## NOTES:

Nineveh was the biggest city in the world – capital of the Assyrian Empire, the world's greatest power, and a threat to every other nation.

Israel was one of those nations. That's where the prophet Jonah lived. Then, one day, God gave Jonah a message to take to the people of Nineveh.

**'Tell Nineveh that I have seen their evil ways. And if they do not change, I will destroy them.'**

Jonah was terrified. Partly because he was scared to go there. And partly because he actually wanted the Ninevites to be destroyed and was afraid that God might forgive them.

So away he ran. He stopped off at Joppa and hopped aboard a ship bound for Tarshish – a place as far from Nineveh as he could go.

This did not escape God's attention. Of course it didn't!

So God sent a storm that threatened to wreck that ship.

The storm blew. The boat rocked. And the sailors prayed to their gods to rescue them. But Jonah slept quietly in the hold.

When the captain found him, he shouted, **'Wake up, sleepyhead! Call out to your God to save us!'**

**'I'm pretty sure my God is the reason we're in this mess,'** Jonah confessed. **'He is the God who made heaven and earth, and I am his prophet. He gave me a message to pass on to Nineveh, but I am running away.'**

The storm blew harder. The boat rocked back and forth.

**'Tell us what to do!'** the sailors cried.

**'Throw me into the sea,'** Jonah sighed. **'And you will be saved.'**

The sailors didn't want to do that. But in the end, reluctantly, they dropped Jonah into the sea.

And the storm stopped.

NOTES:

Their troubles were over. But Jonah's had just begun. For up from the bottom of the sea swam a great fish that swallowed Jonah whole!

For three days, Jonah stayed in the belly of that fish. And for as long as he stayed, he prayed.

God heard his prayers.

God spoke to the fish.

And the fish vomited Jonah up on to the shore.

Then God spoke to Jonah. Again.

It was the very same message.

**'Tell Nineveh that I have seen their evil ways. And if they do not change, I will destroy them.'**

Off Jonah went to Nineveh. It was the biggest city in the world – remember? It took three days to walk across it! And as Jonah walked, he shouted out God's message.

What happened? The people of Nineveh said they were sorry. And the king did, as well!

They promised to change their ways. They took off their fine clothes and put on rough garments made of sackcloth, to show that they meant it. And God forgave them.

Jonah's mission was a success! He should have been happy. But, in his heart, he actually wanted Nineveh to be destroyed. So all he could do was complain.

**'I knew this would happen!' he grumbled. 'It's why I ran away. You are a forgiving God, and that's exactly what you have done!'**

Out of the city Jonah went – to sit and to sulk. So God grew a little tree over him to give him shade. And then God sent a worm to kill the tree, and Jonah sweated in the sun.

**'Why have you killed the tree?'** Jonah moaned.

**'The tree?'** God replied. **'You're upset because I showed no pity for the tree? Then listen to this:**

**Don't I have the right to have pity on the 120,000 people who live in the city of Nineveh? And on their animals? Don't I have the right to show them all my mercy?'**

We don't know what Jonah said next. All we can hope for is that he learned to love the Ninevites just as much as God did!

# Story 38: Jonah

## Welcome and preparation

*Make your greeting as inclusive and accessible in your setting as possible.*

*Include here any instructions to the children about how you want them to interact with the story. This is one idea:*

**We'd like your help with the story today. When we say the words 'the storm blew', I wonder if you can make a sound like a howling wind. (Practise.)**

**When we say the words 'the boat rocked', can you very carefully rock from side to side. Let's try that. (Practise.)**

**Now, make yourself comfortable. It's time to begin.**

## Introduction

When I was little, grown-ups often asked me to do tasks that I just didn't want to do, like tidy my toys away or do my homework.

In today's story, we meet a man who had a very special task to do for God but ... uh oh ... he just didn't want to do it.

Let's OPEN THE BOOK to the Bible story called 'Jonah'.

## Story

*Read the story called 'Jonah'.*

**Our Bible story has come to an end. It's time to stop and think for a moment. Put your hands in your lap and take a deep breath, in ... and out.**

## Quiet moment to reflect and wonder

**God had given Jonah a very special but difficult task to do, and Jonah decided to run away, didn't he? Running away**

**from things because they are difficult is sometimes the worst thing you can do.**

**Close your eyes (or give the children something to focus on at the front) and sit quietly. I wonder what kind of things you find difficult. (Pause for a few seconds.)**

**Maybe you need to own up to something you've done wrong. Or maybe you need to ask for help from someone you trust, with something that you're finding difficult. Or maybe you need to say 'sorry' to a friend.**

*Give time to reflect. Starting with 10, silently count back slowly to 1.*

## Prayer intro

**Now I'm going to say a prayer. If you want to make it your prayer, say, 'Amen' (which means, 'I agree') at the end after me. (If not, you can sit quietly and think about what you've heard today.)\***

*\* Use bracketed words in schools where appropriate.*

## Prayer

**Dear God,  
When I feel like running away from things that I find difficult, give me the courage to ask for help.  
Amen**

*Essential characters: Narrator, Jonah, captain*

*Additional characters: Voice of God, additional sailors (could be children)*

# Open the Book

## Sharing Bible stories with children everywhere, through the power of storytelling.

A Bible story well told has the power to spark the imagination, inspire exploration, give hope, create a smile, teach important lessons and connect generations.

Open the Book is an exciting storytelling project where Bible stories are shared with children in a way that is fun, interactive and memorable.



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