Sexplore it

The worshipping wise men



Bible verses:

Matthew 2:1-12; James 1:17 Wise men come to visit Jesus



Aim:

To learn, just like the wise men did, that worship is an essential part of following God



Today's fruit: Goodness



In today's session we will learn more about the wise men's journey and discover the importance of worshipping God in our own lives.

The wise men were educated, thoughtful people who had spent their lives carefully studying and learning about the world. When they saw the star, they knew there was something different about it and put their faith in where it would take them. God guided them to the place where King Jesus was born so that they could worship him.

God's goodness is shown in the way that he protected the wise men from Herod, guiding them to safety.

Each child will need:

- Thunks handout, cut out
- Memory verse wristband
- Three strips of the same coloured paper (3.5 x 30 cm), scissors, glue sticks, more sheets of coloured paper, pens
- A pencil to keep (optional)
- Worship dice handout
- Pens
- Explore It ideas handout

You will need:

- To watch *DIY Star Pencil Topper* (origami star pencil topper) by kids crafts (2:14) and perhaps practise making it
- Today's fruit sign: Goodness
- A flip chart and pens



🗀 Start it

Say:

Today we are discovering more about the wise men who travelled to see Jesus. Before we do that, let's get your brains working by thinking about some 'thunks'.

The following 'thunks' can be used in a number of ways. You could think about them as a whole group or divide the children into smaller teams.

Thunks

- If there was a magic pill that meant you could never fail, would you take it?
- If you borrow a million pounds, does that make you a millionaire?
- Is there more happiness or more sadness in the world?
- If I composed a piece of music but it was never played, would it still be music?
- If we moved our church building to the other side of town, but left everything and everyone here, where would our church be?
- What colour would a zebra be if it lost its stripes?
- Can I be accused of cheating if I don't know the rules?
- What is the most important part of a fork?

Say:

The people in our story today did a lot of thinking. They were wise men who were well educated; they had been studying for years. They placed their faith and trust in following a special star so that they could meet Jesus.



Say:

In our Bible story today we meet the wise men as they came to worship Jesus. We're going to join the wise men and sing a song full of praise as we worship Jesus.

Song

'Praise' by Maverick City and Elevation Worship, video created by Kid Kardia (3:33)



🖉 Tell it

Say:

When we read the Christmas story or take part in Nativity plays, the wise men often arrive at the same time as the shepherds. But that's not what the Bible tells us about what happened.

Video

Wise men, smart move: the story of happy Magi and unhappy Herod by The Biggest Story (4:03)

Ask:

- What do we not know about the wise men?
- What did the wise men bring with them?
- Why did the wise men travel to see Jesus?
- What was guiding them on their journey?

Read:

'Jesus was born in the town of Bethlehem in Judea during the time when Herod was king. After Jesus was born, some wise men from the east came to Jerusalem. They asked, "Where is the baby who was born to be the king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east. We came to worship him."

'When King Herod heard about this new king of the Jews, he was troubled. And all the people in Jerusalem were worried too. Herod called a meeting of all the leading priests and teachers of the law. He asked them where the Christ would be born. They answered, "In the town of Bethlehem in Judea. The prophet wrote about this in the Scriptures:

'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,

you are important among the rulers of Judah.

A ruler will come from you.

He will be like a shepherd for my people, the Israelites.'"

'Then Herod had a secret meeting with the wise men from the east. He learned from them the exact time they first saw the star. Then Herod sent the wise men to Bethlehem. He said to them, "Go and look carefully to find the child. When you find him, come and tell me. Then I can go and worship him too."'

(Matthew 2:1-8 *ICB*)

Ask:

- Why do you think Herod was unhappy about the birth of Jesus?
- Why did King Herod send the wise men to Bethlehem?

Read:

'The wise men heard the king and then left. They saw the same star they had seen in the east. It went before them until it stopped above the place where the child was. When the wise men saw the star, they were filled with joy. They went to the house where the child was and saw him with his mother, Mary. They bowed down and worshipped the child. They opened the gifts they had brought for him. They gave him treasures of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. But God warned the wise men in a dream not to go back to Herod. So they went home to their own country by a different way.'

(Matthew 2:9-12 ICB)

Ask:

- What did the wise men do when they saw Jesus?
- How did the wise men know that they shouldn't return to King Herod?
- How were King Herod and Jesus different?

Say:

The wise men knew that Jesus was the only king worth worshipping. They remained faithful to God as he guided them by the star.

Say:

Our memory verse for this month reminds us what it means to have faith in God. Let's share it together.

Hand out the memory verse wristbands.

Memory verse

'Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.'

(Hebrews 11:1 NIV)

Say:

Just like the wise men, we can trust God to guide us throughout our lives, even when we are not certain where it will take us.

= C> Action it

The children are going to make their own star pencil toppers to remind them of the story of the wise men. The clip can be used with the children to teach them how to make the pencil topper. An optional idea is to give each child a pencil to put their star topper on. TIP: when folding the star, you may wish to lightly glue down the ends of the long strip.

Video

DIY star pencil topper (origami star pencil topper) by kids crafts (2:14)



Say:

Herod wanted to be worshipped by the people and was jealous of anyone who took that attention away from him.

Ask:

- Do you think King Herod deserved to be worshipped? Explain your answer.
- Why is God worthy of our worship?

Display the Goodness sign.

Say:

Throughout the Bible we are reminded that we serve a good God.

Read:

'Every good action and every perfect gift is from God. These good gifts come down from the Creator of the sun, moon, and stars. God does not change like their shifting shadows.'

(James 1:17 ICB)

Ask:

Where did you see God's goodness in today's Bible story?

Say:

The wise men trusted in God as they followed the star to the place of Jesus' birth. They came to worship the newborn King, and we are going to think about all the different ways we can worship as well.

Discuss

Discuss with the children all the different ways that we can worship God. List as many as the group can think of on a flip chart. Here are some worship ideas to get you started: sing, get creative, write a poem, draw a picture, show kindness, read the Bible, pray, say thank you ...

Give each member of the group a *Worship dice* handout: the net of a cube to make a worship dice. As the music plays, ask the children to choose six worship ideas they would like to do and write one in each square of the net of their dice.

When the music finishes, give out the *Explore It ideas* handout and talk through the dice activity.

Listen

'Good Good Father' (official lyric video) by Kids Version (4:52)



Remember to send home the Explore It ideas for children and families.



Explore It is produced by the Children and Youth Department in collaboration with Kay Moorby (soulwithaview)



Explore it

The worshipping wise men

Here are some ideas for you to explore at home.



Bible verses: Matthew 2:1-12; James 1:17



Aim: To learn, just like the wise men did, that worship is an essential part of following God



Today's fruit: Goodness



Ask someone at home to help you make your worship dice using scissors and glue. Perhaps you could try out the first worship activity together.

Worship

In our session this week, you wrote down six ways that you would like to worship over the coming week. Each day roll the dice and try a different way to worship God.

+ Song for + + + + the week

'Praise' by Maverick City and Elevation Worship, video created by Kid Kardia



'Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.'

(Hebrews 11:1 NIV)



Kids Alive! Online - salvationarmy.org.uk/kidsalive

Kids Alive! The UK's only weekly Christian comic - is filled with jokes, competitions, Bible-based cartoons and much more... and is now available to read online!





The worshipping wise men



Bible verses: Matthew 2:1-12



Aim: To learn that we can worship God is different ways



Today's fruit: Goodness

💭 Memory verse

'Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.'

(Hebrews 11:1 NIV)

🛱 Start it

What is the best gift you have ever received?

The wise men followed the star and travelled a long way to meet Jesus. They brought Jesus precious gifts as they came to worship him.

⁄ Tell it

Share a child-friendly version of Matthew 2:1-12 or watch the following clip.

The story of the three wise men (the Christmas story for kids) by Minno Bible Stories for Kids (3:42)

Sit in a circle and ask the group to share together:

- Why were the wise men excited about meeting Jesus?
- How did King Herod feel about the birth of baby Jesus?

- Do you think King Herod was telling the truth about wanting to worship Jesus? Explain your answer.
- How did God keep the wise men safe?
- How did God keep Mary, Joseph and Jesus safe?
- What gift could you bring to Jesus?

🖉 Sing It

'If I were a butterfly' (lyrics and music) 'The butterfly song' by Brian Howard, uploaded by Unreached Corners (3:09)

'Wonderful Lord' (official video) by Doug Horley (3:13)

≡⊂∕> Action it

Games and activities to reinforce the Bible passage:

- Choose a partner and act out giving them an amazing gift.
- Draw a picture of what you imagine the gifts from the wise men looked like.
- See who can pull the best face that shows Herod's anger and jealousy.
- Think of three ways that you could worship God this week.

Explore it Thunks

If there was a magic pill that meant you could never fail, would you take it?

If you borrow a million pounds does that make you a millionaire?

Is there more happiness or more sadness in the world?

If I composed a piece of music but it was never played, would it still be music?

If we moved our church building to the other side of town, but left everything and everyone here, where would our church be?

What colour would a zebra be if it lost its stripes?

Can I be accused of cheating if I don't know the rules?

What is the most important part of a fork?



January 2025 session 1

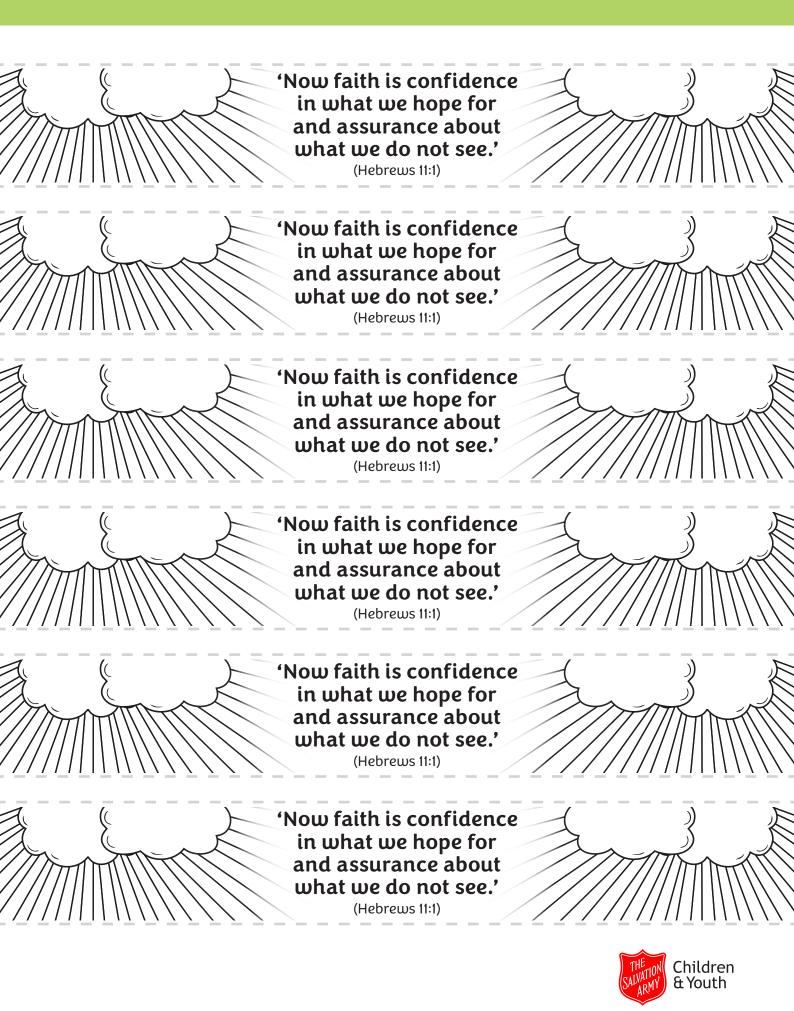


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Second Explore it

Sexplore it

Resources January: Memory Verse Wristband



Sexplore it

'Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.'

(Hebrews 11:1)

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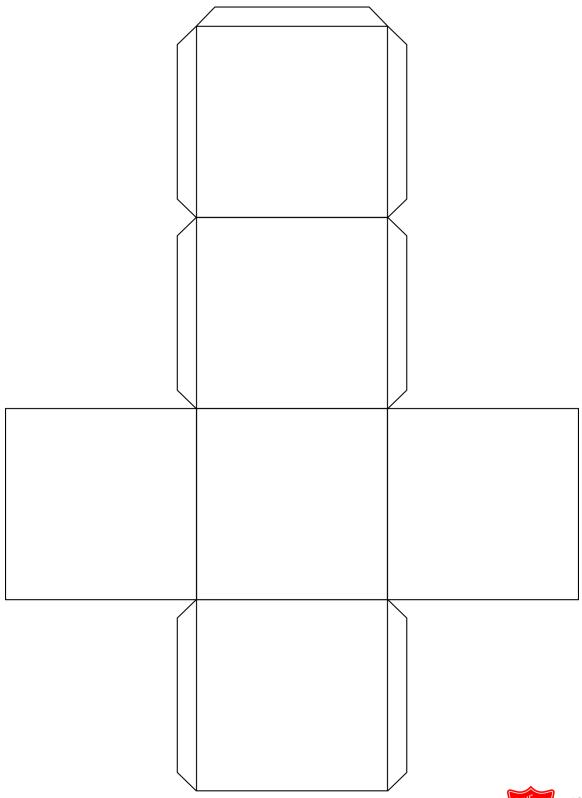
'Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.'

(Hebrews 11:1)



BExplore it Worship dice

- Make this dice with someone at home.
- Each day roll the dice and try a different way of worshipping God.
- On the first day, try doing the worship activity with someone at home.





Sexplore it

Step up, stand out



Bible verses: Luke 2:22-40 Jesus is presented in the Temple



Aim: To understand that God keeps his promises and is faithful



Today's fruit: Faithfulness



Today's story is packed full of promises.

We meet two elderly people, Simeon and Anna, who obeyed God throughout their lives. God promised them that they would meet the coming Messiah – and he kept that promise. We also see Mary and Joseph obediently taking Jesus to the Temple just as God commanded. As we celebrate Covenant Sunday the children will have an opportunity to think about how they can 'step up, stand out' for Jesus.

COVENANT SUNDAY

Simeon and Anna faithfully served God throughout their lives, and God showed his faithfulness when he kept his promise that they would meet the coming Messiah, who was Jesus.

Each child will need:

- A4 paper/card, pens/pencils and glue
- Paint and clean-up wipes / towels (optional) see Action it
- All-age accessible Covenant Sunday card
- Explore It ideas handout

You will need:

- Today's fruit sign: Faithfulness
- *Bible promises* handout, a few copies cut up so children can choose their favourite verse



🟳 Start it

Today's session is all about stepping up and standing out. Ask the children to guess the Disney/

Pixar character from a picture of their feet. This clip is 8 minutes 45 seconds long so it can be used in different ways.

- Play the clip as the children arrive, and hopefully by the end they will all have settled down and joined in the quiz.
- Use the first 1-20 questions and complete the quiz together.

The answers are provided below so that you can help the children with clues if needed. Not all of them may be familiar!

Video

Can you guess the Disney character by the feet? by Disney Quizzy (8:45)

1.	Cinderella	11. Flynn Rider	21. Vanellope
2.	Stitch	12. Princess Jasmine	22. Sully
3.	Buzz Lightyear	13. Goofy	23. Mr Incredible
4.	Gaston	14. Captain Hook	24. Hercules
5.	Minnie Mouse	15. Woody	25. Mushu
6.	Tarzan	16. Ember	26. Donald Duck
7.	Cruella de Vil	17. Moana	27. Kristoff
8.	Jiminy Cricket	18. Quasimodo	28. Winnie the Pooh
9.	Peter Pan	19. Russell	29. Pocahontas
10.	Mirabel	20. Judy Hopps	30. Li Shang



Say:

In our story today we see lots of examples of people trusting in God and his faithfulness. Our memory verse for this month reminds us of what it means to have faith in God. Let's share it together.

Memory verse

'Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.'

(Hebrews 11:1 NIV)

Say:

Our song for today will help us to remember our memory verse.

Song

'Hebrews 11:1' (a discovery kids worship cover, lyrics & motions) by SBC Discovery Kids (2:33)



Ask the children to recap the story we looked at last week.

Ask:

- What happened when the wise men went to visit Herod?
- What did they do next?
- How did they escape King Herod after they visited Jesus?
- Where did Mary, Joseph and Jesus go to find safety?

Say:

In this week's story we join Mary, Joseph and Jesus after they had escaped from King Herod.

Read:

'The time came for Mary and Joseph to do what the law of Moses taught about being made pure. They took Jesus to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. It is written in the law of the Lord: "Give every first-born male to the Lord." Mary and Joseph also went to offer a sacrifice, as the law of the Lord says: "You must sacrifice two doves or two young pigeons."'

(Luke 2:22-24 ICB)

Say:

Right back in the book of Leviticus in the Old Testament, God instructed his people to give their gifts and offerings in the Temple. Mary and Joseph did not have much money, but they obeyed God and gave an offering of two birds.

Ask:

Why do you think it was important for Mary and Joseph to do what God had asked them and give their offering to him at the Temple?

Say:

Even though they didn't have much, Mary and Joseph wanted to be faithful to what God had asked them to do. There are others in our story today who also listened carefully to what God asked them to do and followed his instructions.

Video

God's Story: Anna and Simeon by Crossroads Kids' Club (3:56)

Watch: 0:00-2:13 'Now that the Rescuer was here, he was ready to die in peace.'

Ask:

- What promise had the people been waiting for God to fulfil all these years?
- How would you describe Simeon?
- What was special about Simeon being able to talk to the Holy Spirit? Who can talk to the Holy Spirit now?
- What did the Holy Spirit tell Simeon? What did Simeon do in response?
- How did Simeon react when he saw Jesus?

Say:

Here is what Simeon said in the Temple when he met Jesus.

Read:

'Now, Lord, you can let me, your servant, die in peace as you said. I have seen your Salvation with my own eyes. You prepared him before all people. He is a light for the non-Jewish people to see. He will bring honour to your people, the Israelites.

'Jesus' father and mother were amazed at what Simeon had said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, "Many in Israel will fall and many will rise because of this child. He will be a sign from God that many people will not accept. The things they think in secret will be made known. And the things that will happen will make your heart sad, too."

(Luke 2:29-35 ICB)

Ask:

Why do you think Simeon said that he was now willing to die in peace?

Say:

It might seem like a strange thing for Simeon to say, but he had waited to meet Jesus his entire life. God had kept his promise to Simeon and to all those who waited for the arrival of the Messiah.

Watch: 2:14-3:14 'All because they had faith that God keeps his promises.'

Ask:

- What had Anna spent her life doing in the Temple?
- How were Anna and Simeon similar? Who could they both talk to?
- What did Anna do when she met Jesus?

Watch: 3:14-end.

Say:

Simeon and Anna served God throughout their lives. They made promises to obey God's commands and listened carefully to what the Holy Spirit had to say.

Ask:

What can Simeon and Anna teach us about how to follow Jesus in our everyday lives?

Say:

Anna and Simeon weren't the only ones in this story to faithfully do what God had asked them to do.

Read:

'Joseph and Mary finished doing everything that the law of the Lord commanded. Then they went home to Nazareth, their own town in Galilee. The little child began to grow up. He became stronger and wiser, and God's blessings were with him.'

(Luke 2:39-40 *ICB*)

Display the Faithfulness sign.

Discuss

Discuss examples in today's story where God and the main characters were faithful to their promises.

Say:

Anna and Simeon both listened carefully to the Holy Spirit and faithfully followed what they were asked to do. The Holy Spirit can grow that same fruit of faithfulness in our hearts when we listen and obey God's instructions.



Say:

Covenant Sunday is a special day in The Salvation Army when we remember the promises God has made to us and the promises we have made to him. Today we are going to focus on the amazing promises God has made to us as his followers.

Say:

God does not expect us to be faithful to him on our own. He walks with us every step of the way and gives us the Holy Spirit to help us. Also, the amazing thing is that even when we do make a mistake, God is always ready to forgive us and let us start again. So don't worry if you feel like you've not lived up to what God wants. He knows that you're trying, and he loves you no matter what you do or don't do.

Discuss

Part of Covenant Sunday is thinking of what it means to 'step up, stand out' for Jesus. Discuss with the children what that they think it means.

🖁 Explore it

Footprint

Ask the children to create their own footstep/print and each receive a promise from God. Depending on what you would prefer, they can either create a paint footprint (the messy option) or draw around their foot (the less messy option!). If they draw around their foot, then they can decorate the inside with colourful patterns using felt-tips.

Once the children have completed their footstep/print, ask them to choose a Bible promise from the Bible promises handout to add to their sheet. After they have completed their picture, perhaps each child could read out their promise from God.



Say:

We have spent time looking at the many promises God has made to us in his word. Now, as part of Covenant Sunday we will think of the promises we have made to God.

Spend time reading through the *All-age accessible Covenant Sunday card* together, ensuring that the children understand what each part of it means. Give the children time to reflect on the contents of the card and, if they feel comfortable doing so, they can sign it as part of their covenant promise to God.

There is space on the card for the children to write two ways that they will be faithful to God this year: one by getting to know God better and one by showing his love to others. The children could fill these in now, with their own ideas, or they could do it with a trusted adult like a prayer partner, family member or children's leader who knows them well.

You may wish to use the song below as part of this reflection time.

Listen

'Faith' by Lifetree Kids (stop at 3:13)

When the song has finished, pray with the children, asking God to give them the courage to 'step up, stand out' for him.



Remember to send home the *Explore It ideas* for children and families.



Explore It is produced by the Children and Youth Department in collaboration with Kay Moorby (soulwithaview)



Explore it

Step up, stand out

Here are some ideas for you to explore at home.



Bible verses: Luke 2:22-40



Aim: To understand that God keeps his promises and is faithful



Today's fruit: Faithfulness

Reflect

This week you created your own footprint.

Which of God's promises did you choose for your footprint?

Read the promise each day and think about what it means for you as you follow Jesus.



Ask the people at home to help you make a pair of these amazing walking feet. As you make the feet together, tell your helper everything you have learned about stepping up and standing out for Jesus.

HPL craft: walking feet by Houston Public Library



'Hebrews 11:1' (a discovery kids worship cover, lyrics & motions) by SBC Discovery Kids



'Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.'

(Hebrews 11:1 NIV)

Kids Alive! Online - salvationarmy.org.uk/kidsalive

Kids Alive! The UK's only weekly Christian comic - is filled with jokes, competitions, Bible-based cartoons and much more... and is now available to read online!





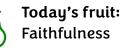
Step up, stand out



Bible verses: Luke 2:22-40



Aim: To understand that God keeps his promises and is faithful



💭 Memory verse

'Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.'

(Hebrews 11:1 NIV)



In our story today we meet Simeon and Anna who had waited their whole lives to meet Jesus. Their story teaches us that God keeps his promises and is faithful.

🖉 Tell it

Share a child-friendly version of Luke 2:22-40 or watch the following clip.

Simeon and Anna (Bible story for kids) by Trueway Kids (1:07)

Sit in a circle and ask the group to share together:

- Why did Mary and Joseph travel to the Temple?
- Have you ever made a promise? Did you manage to keep it?
- What promise had God made to Simeon?
- How did Simeon react when God kept his promise?

- Who did Simeon and Anna believe Jesus was?

🖉 Sing It

'The wise man built his house upon the rock' by Tiny Tree Tunes uploaded by Lithos Kids. Just the first two verses (1:35)

'All through history' Nicky & Becky Drake by Worship For Everyone (3:36)

=⊂> Action it

Games and activities to reinforce the Bible passage:

- Think of a moment when you were excited, like Simeon and Anna. Act it out for the rest of the group to see if they can guess why you were so excited.
- Imagine you are Simeon and Anna and you have just met Jesus. What would you say to him?
- Do a dance of celebration that God keeps his promises.
- Draw a picture of Anna and Simeon when they met Jesus.



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Sector Explore it

Bible promises

'The Lord is good to everyone. He is merciful to all he has made.' (Psalm 145:9)

'The Lord himself will go before you. He will be with you. He will not leave you or forget you. Don't be afraid. Don't worry.' (Deuteronomy 31:8)

'I leave you peace. My peace I give you. I do not give it to you as the world does. So don't let your hearts be troubled. Don't be afraid.' (John 14:27)

'Remember that I commanded you to be strong and brave. So don't be afraid. The Lord your God will be with you everywhere you go.' (Joshua 1:9)

'Trust the Lord with all your heart. Don't depend on your own understanding. Remember the Lord in everything you do. And he will give you success.' (Proverbs 3:5-6)

'So don't worry, because

I am with you.

Don't be afraid, because

I am your God.

I will make you strong and

will help you.

I will support you with my

right hand that saves you.'

(Isaiah 41:10)

'Thank the Lord because he is good. His love continues forever.' (1 Chronicles 16:34)

'The Lord is close to everyone who prays to him, to all who truly pray to him.' (Psalm 145:18)

'I am the light of the world. The person who follows me will never live in darkness. He will have the light that gives life.' (John 8:12)

'But if any of you needs wisdom, you should ask God for it. God is generous. He enjoys giving to all people, so God will give you wisdom.' (James 1:5)

'And God can give you more blessings than you need. Then you will always have plenty of everything. You will have enough to give to every good work.' (2 Corinthians 9:8)

'Yes, I am sure that nothing can separate us from the love God has for us. Not death, not life, not angels, not ruling spirits, nothing now, nothing in the future, no powers, nothing above us, nothing below us, or anything else in the whole world will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.' (Romans 8:38-39)



Sexplore it

John the Baptist



Bible verses: Luke 1:5-17; Matthew 3:13-17 Jesus is baptised by John



Aim: To learn about John the Baptist's self-control and obedience



Today's fruit: Self-control



In today's story we meet John the Baptist, who can teach us a lot about self-control and obedience.

As we continue to discover more about the life of Jesus, we meet John who was born around the same time as Jesus. John was given the task of preparing the people to hear the message of God's love. He carefully followed God's instructions, which led to a rather unusual lifestyle.

John the Baptist trusted Jesus and showed self-control by doing exactly what he was asked to do.

Each child will need:

- White card, white paper, orange/yellow card, pencil/pens, a CD/DVD to draw round, scissors, glue and cartoon eyes / googly eyes (optional)
- A paper straw, grey/blue and white card, a stapler (all optional) see Action it
- Explore It ideas handout

You will need:

- Today's fruit sign: Self-control
- To watch *The Holy Spirit Dove* by Kelly Hahn and perhaps make your own version
- A craft knife to help children with their craft activity
- A flipchart, paper and pens
- Self-control prayer poster



🖁 Explore it

🛱 Start it

Today's session is all about self-control and how we all need to follow God's instructions carefully. Our starter activity is a little unusual (just like John the Baptist) but will be lots of fun once the children get going. Play the clip and see if the children, and leaders, can follow the clapping instructions.

Video

Bim, bum (a clapping game song) by Visual Musical Minds (4:06)



Say:

In today's session we are learning about John the Baptist. John followed Jesus throughout his life, preparing the way for God's love to be shown to the world. John placed his faith in God, even though he didn't know exactly what the future would hold. Our memory verse for this month helps us to understand what it means to put our faith in God.

Let's share it together.

Memory verse

'Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.'

(Hebrews 11:1 NIV)

Say:

We're going to sing a song that will help us to remember our memory verse for this month.

Song

'Faith' (Hebrews 11:1) by Lantern Music (3:13)



Say:

Throughout December and January we have been learning about the birth of Jesus. However, another baby was born around the same time.

Ask:

Which other baby was born around the same time as Jesus?

🛿 Explore it

Read:

'During the time Herod ruled Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah. He belonged to Abijah's group. Zechariah's wife came from the family of Aaron. Her name was Elizabeth. Zechariah and Elizabeth truly did what God said was good. They did everything the Lord commanded and told people to do. They were without fault in keeping his law. But Zechariah and Elizabeth had no children. Elizabeth could not have a baby; and both of them were very old.

'Zechariah was serving as a priest before God for his group. It was his group's time to serve. According to the custom of the priests, he was chosen to go into the Temple of the Lord and burn incense. There were a great many people outside praying at the time the incense was offered. Then, on the right side of the incense table, an angel of the Lord came and stood before Zechariah. When he saw the angel, Zechariah was confused and frightened. But the angel said to him, "Zechariah, don't be afraid. Your prayer has been heard by God. Your wife, Elizabeth, will give birth to a son. You will name him John. You will be very happy. Many people will be happy because of his birth. John will be a great man for the Lord. He will never drink wine or beer. Even at the time John is born, he will be filled with the Holy Spirit. He will help many people of Israel return to the Lord their God. He himself will go first before the Lord. John will be powerful in spirit like Elijah. He will make peace between fathers and their children. He will bring those who are not obeying God back to the right way of thinking. He will make people ready for the coming of the Lord.""

(Luke 1:5-17 ICB)

Ask:

The angel said lots of special things about John and what would happen when he grew up. What were they?

The following clip and discussion questions will help the children understand more about the story of John the Baptist and his life of obedience.

Video

God's Story: John the Baptist by Crossroads Kids' Club (4:04)

Watch: 0:00-1:34 'But don't worry, you don't have to eat bugs to follow Jesus.'

Ask:

- What did Isaiah say about John the Baptist, hundreds of years before he was born?
- Why was John called John 'the Baptist'?
- What did the angel say to John's dad, Zechariah, before John was born?
- Why was John important?
- How were John and Jesus related?
- How was John unusual?

Watch: 1:35-2:49 'Well, even though John told everybody about Jesus, he was actually waiting for the rescue too.'

Ask:

- Why did John come back from the desert?
- What did he tell the people about Jesus?

Say:

Some of the people thought John was the Messiah they were waiting for, but John knew that it was Jesus who was on the way to rescue them.

Ask:

- What point did John make about Jesus' feet?

Watch: 2:50-end.

Ask:

- What did Jesus ask John to do? How did John respond?
- What happened when John baptised Jesus?

Read:

'At that time Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan River. He came to John and wanted John to baptise him. But John tried to stop him. John said, "Why do you come to me to be baptised? I should be baptised by you!"

'Jesus answered, "Let it be this way for now. We should do all things that are right." So John agreed to baptise Jesus.

'Jesus was baptised and came up out of the water. Heaven opened, and he saw God's Spirit coming down on him like a dove. And a voice spoke from heaven. The voice said, "This is my Son and I love him. I am very pleased with him."'

(Matthew 3:13-17 ICB)

Display the *Self-control* sign.

Say:

John didn't feel that he was worthy to baptise Jesus. It would have been easy for John to refuse and decide to do his own thing. Instead, he trusted Jesus and showed self-control by doing exactly what he had been asked to do.





Say:

Both Jesus and John the Baptist experienced the power of the Holy Spirit in today's story.

Ask:

What bird was the Holy Spirit described as in today's Bible story?

Explain to the children that it is only through the power of the Holy Spirit that John the Baptist was able to show self-control and be obedient to God.

Dove craft

To remind them of the power of the Holy Spirit descending like a dove, the children are going to make their own dove. A clip is provided for the leader's use to explain how to make the dove. If you don't have cartoon or googly eyes, the children can draw their own. For safety reasons, the leader should use the craft knife to make the slits for the wings.

The clip also shows how to make clouds, but you may want to just make the paper dove.

Video

The Holy Spirit dove (Baptism of Jesus Sunday school crafts) by Kelly Hahn (3:06)



Discuss with the children the times and areas where they find it difficult to show self-control. Jot them down on a flip chart so that the children can refer to them. Spend some time praying together as a group. The children could take it in turns to pray the following prayer (display the *Self-control prayer* poster):

Dear Jesus,

I struggle to show self-control when _____.

Help me to ______ so that I can be obedient to you.

Amen

Video

The Self-Control Song by Cheeky Pandas TV (3:01)

Finish with a prayer together.

Say:

Dear God,

Thank you that you are always with us. Thank you that you are growing the fruit of self-control in each one of us. Help us to live a life of obedience like John the Baptist did. May everything we do point to Jesus and tell others about his love.

Amen.



Remember to send home the Explore It ideas for children and families.



Explore It is produced by the Children and Youth Department in collaboration with Kay Moorby (soulwithaview)



🛿 Explore it

John the Baptist

Here are some ideas for you to explore at home.

Today's fruit:

Self-control



Bible verses: Luke 1:5-17; Matthew 3:13-17



Aim: To learn about John the Baptist's self-control and obedience



Watch the clip to find out more about self-control.

Skuppets at the Farm (Self-control) by Saddleback Kids



'Faith' (Hebrews 11:1) by Lantern Music





This week we discovered that John the Baptist liked to eat locusts and honey. There are no locusts in this recipe, but why don't you and an adult at home have a go at making some delicious honey flapjacks to share with others.

Easy honey flapjacks by BBC Good Food

www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/easyhoney-flapjacks



'Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.'

(Hebrews 11:1 NIV)

Kids Alive! Online - salvationarmy.org.uk/kidsalive

Kids Alive! The UK's only weekly Christian comic – is filled with jokes, competitions, Bible-based cartoons and much more... and is now available to read online!





John the Baptist



Bible verses: Matthew 3:13-17



Aim: To learn about John the Baptist's self-control and obedience



Today's fruit: Self-control

Memory verse

'Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.'

(Hebrews 11:1 NIV)



John the Baptist was chosen by God to let everyone know that Jesus was coming. John carefully followed what God had asked him to do. In today's story we hear about the moment that John baptised Jesus.



Share a child-friendly version of Matthew 3:13-17 or watch the following clip.

The baptism of Jesus by Saddleback Kids (1:50)

Sit in a circle and ask the group to share together:

- What did John the Baptist tell everyone he met about Jesus?
- Why didn't John want to baptise Jesus?
- How did Jesus change John's mind?

- What amazing thing happened when John baptised Jesus?
- What do you think is the most special thing about Jesus?



'Great big God!' Vineyard Kids, Vineyard Worship UK and Ireland (2:51)

'Jesus song' by Saddleback Kids (2:45) This song tells us about the amazing thing Jesus did.

=⊂∕> Action it

Games and activities to reinforce the Bible passage:

- Pretend to be John the Baptist and shout to everyone that Jesus is coming.
- Act out being baptised and splash about in the water to celebrate.
- Imagine you are the dove coming down from Heaven to land on Jesus and act it out.
- Use lots of different colours to draw a picture of what it might have looked like when the heavens opened above Jesus.



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Sexplore it



so that I can be obedient to you. when Help me to Dear Jesus, I struggle to show self-control Amen

Self-control prayer

Explore it

🖁 Explore it

Jesus calls the disciples



Bible verses: Matthew 4:1-11,18-22 Jesus chooses some followers



Aim: To understand how Jesus calls each one of us to share his love with others



Today's fruit: Love



In today's story we continue following the journey of Jesus from his birth in the stable to his ministry as a grown man.

After Jesus was baptised by John, he spent time in the wilderness. The devil came to tempt him, but Jesus stood firm. Jesus then began his work loving God's people and calling them to follow him. We will also learn how Jesus called the first disciples and how he is calling us today.

Just as God shows his love to us, we can show his love to others.

Each child will need:

- Pens/pencils and paper
- Explore It ideas handout

You will need:

- A beach ball
- A flip chart and pens
- Today's fruit sign: Love
- To consider showing the children's play to the wider church community see Action it



Say:

In our session today we will be looking at all the different ways Jesus showed his love to others. One of the ways Jesus loved others was by spending time with them. So we are going to play a game to help you to get to know each other even more than you already do.

Stand the children in a circle and choose a child to start; give them a beach ball to hold. They throw the ball to someone and say their name. The person who catches it repeats their name and says one thing about themselves, eg 'I'm Lydia and I love drawing.' Next, they say the name of someone else and throw it to another person in the group.

As they are playing the game, jot down the responses from the children.

When each child has had a turn, including the child who started with the beach ball, play a guessing game and ask the children to point to the child who is the answer to the question. For example ask, 'Who loves drawing?' In response the children would point to Lydia.



Say:

Throughout this month our memory verse has reminded us of the importance of faith. Let's share it together.

Memory verse

'Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.'

(Hebrews 11:1 NIV)

Say:

Our song for today is based on the words of Hebrews 11:1.

Song

'Hebrews 11:1' (motions) by Saddleback Kids (1:24)



Ask:

- Which Bible character did we learn about last week?
- What important job did God ask John the Baptist to do?

Say:

John the Baptist told everyone he met that Jesus, the rescuer, was on his way. We're going to watch a clip that recaps the story from last week and continues it into the life and work of Jesus.



Video

The Story chapter 23 The beginning of Jesus' Ministry by Nicky Waters (3:01)

Ask:

- What happened to Jesus when he went into the wilderness?
- Who showed up and what did he try and make Jesus do?

Say:

Jesus refused to give in to temptation and do what Satan asked him to do. Instead, he committed his life to following God, but he didn't do it on his own.

Read:

'Jesus was walking by Lake Galilee. He saw two brothers, Simon (called Peter) and Simon's brother Andrew. The brothers were fishermen, and they were fishing in the lake with a net. Jesus said, "Come and follow me. I will make you fishermen for men." At once Simon and Andrew left their nets and followed him.

'Jesus continued walking by Lake Galilee. He saw two other brothers, James and John, the sons of Zebedee. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets to catch fish. Jesus told them to come with him. At once they left the boat and their father, and they followed Jesus.'

(Matthew 4:18-22 ICB)

Ask:

- What do you think Jesus meant when he said, 'I will make you fishermen for men'?

- Do you think he expected the disciples to use giant fishing nets to catch men?

Say:

Jesus wanted the disciples to tell as many people as they could about God, so that they would believe and follow him as well. Jesus had an amazing message for the people that they were deeply loved by God.

Display the Love sign.

Say:

One of the fruits of the Spirit is love. Just as God shows his love to us, we can show love to others.

Ask:

- Think about the clip we watched about the life of Jesus. What were the different ways that Jesus showed his love to the people he met?
- How can we show love to those we meet?

🖁 Explore it

=⊂∕ Action it

Read through again with the children the story of Jesus calling the disciples, Matthew 4:18–22, and jot down the main events.

Ask the children to make up a short play that tells the story of Jesus calling the first disciples. They also need to incorporate the message that Jesus calls every one of us to follow him as well.

It is up to the children how they want to tell the story, but they need to make sure the main message comes across. You may want to develop their small play to show the wider church community.



Say:

In today's session we discovered how Jesus loved others and calls us to do the same. We're going to spend time asking God for his help so that we can love in the same way.

Watch the following clip with the children and ask them to remember the different ways that we can show love to others. When the clip has finished, then jot down all the ideas the children can remember.

Video

Love in action (Bible Story) by LifeKids (2:14)

Give the children a piece of paper and ask them to choose three ways from the list that they can try and love others. They can then write a short prayer asking God to help them love others and share it with the rest of the group.



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Explore it

Jesus calls the disciples



Bible verses: Matthew 4:1-11,18-22



Aim:

To understand how Jesus calls each one of us to share his love with others

Here are some ideas for you to explore at home.



Today's fruit: Love



Flick through the book of Luke in the New Testament. See if you can find three examples of the way Jesus loved others.



'Hebrews 11:1' (motions) by Saddleback Kids





Part of following Jesus is praying to him regularly. Watch the Minno animation below all about the sleepy polar bear with someone at home. Discuss together the questions at the end of the clip.

Introduce your kids to morning prayer (5-minute family devotional) by Minno -**Bible Stories for Kids**



'Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.'

(Hebrews 11:1 NIV)

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Jesus calls the disciples



Bible verses: Matthew 4:18-22



Aim: To understand how Jesus calls each one of us to share his love with others



Today's fruit: Love



'Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.'

(Hebrews 11:1 NIV)



Today we are going to hear about Jesus just before he started to travel around teaching people and healing them. Jesus gathered together a group of friends, also known as disciples, who helped him to share God's love with everyone.



Share a child-friendly version of Matthew 4:18-22 or share the following clip.

Jesus calls Peter by Saddleback Kids (2:52)

Sit in a circle and ask the group to share together:

- What did Jesus ask Simon and Andrew to do?
- What did Jesus say they were going to fish for?
- What do you think Jesus meant when he said that Simon and Andrew would be fishers of men?

- What new name did Jesus give to Simon?
- Would you like to follow Jesus and tell everyone just how much he loves them? If so, why would you like to do that?

🖉 Sing It

'Shine! (from the inside out)' by Nick Jackson uploaded by Tangy Crayfish (2:20)

'Holy Spirit' for children by Ayi and her friends. Sing only the chorus (0:44-1:15)

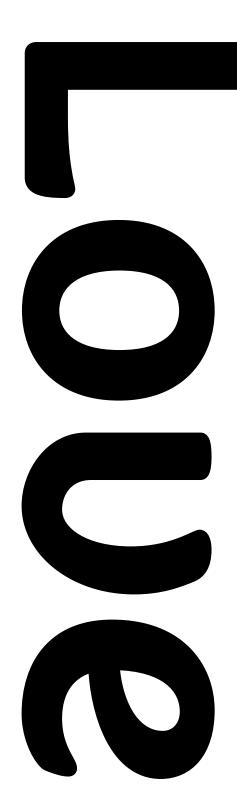
=⊂∕> Action it

Games and activities to reinforce the Bible passage:

- Pretend you are a fish swimming about in the sea. What other creatures can you see?
- Gather all your friends together and get on to an imaginary boat. Act out what it feels like to be on the water.
- Imagine that you are fishing on a big boat. Your net is full of lots of fish. Act out pulling the huge, full net back into the boat. You might have to ask a friend to help.
- Cut out the shape of a fish and decorate it with lots of hearts. This will remind you to be like Peter and tell everyone that God loves them.



January 2025 session 4



8 Explore it