



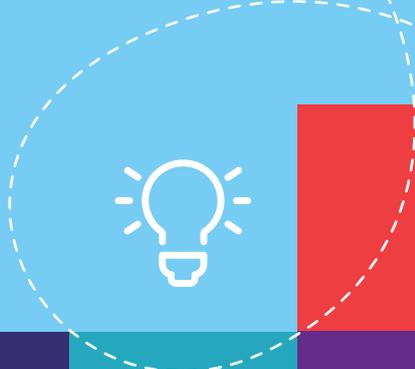
Youth and
Children's
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**A SPIRITUAL PROGRAMME
FOR CHILDREN'S EVENTS**



Introduction

The Salvation Army is actively seeking to be more effective in God's mission. Working together we are committed to delivering the renewed vision which has four mission priorities that spell out the word TIDE.

Transformation

We are a 'new creation'

Integration

The whole Army with the whole message to the whole person

Discipleship

If we've stopped learning, we've stopped following

Effectiveness

We need to be 'fit for mission'

This means: bringing about lasting **Transformation** in lives and communities blighted by spiritual and social poverty; engaging every aspect of our movement in our **Integrated** mission of physical, emotional and spiritual health for every person; nurturing and equipping people in our faith to commit to lifelong **Discipleship** and **Effectiveness** in how we support and deliver mission.

'Our fellowship is focused on making disciples, growing one relationship at a time. We encourage our folk to talk about Jesus and to engage with each other in small group work.'

Within the resource there are five sessions. Each session can stand alone. Each session covers a different area of discipleship, exploring different elements which need to be present in a disciple to develop a deeper understanding and relationship with God, the Church and the community. This helps the children to consider their own relationship with God, their church and the community where they live.

The children start their journey by considering how Jesus called the disciples and what that means for us today. What do we need to do to be a disciple of Jesus? Next they move into disciplines which need to be developed and nurtured on their journey as a follower of Jesus. The children will explore: how to pray – to connect with God; how to be – with the help of the Holy Spirit; how to live – considering how we act and speak. Finally we look at how to grow – looking at how church community has an important role within the life and journey of a disciple.



Outline of Resource



LEADER'S REFLECTION

This section is a space for self-reflection for the leader on the subject they will be exploring with the children. It helps them to think about the context of their own lives and how the theme and chosen Scripture passage speaks to them, considering what may apply to them. What is it saying? What is encouraging, challenging and affirming?



SESSION AIMS

These are points to guide the learning outcomes for the children from the chosen Scripture passage, to help when preparing the session.



MEMORY VERSE

This is a Bible verse that captures the theme for the session. It is not necessarily directly linked to the Bible story. When a disciple is able to memorise Scripture, they are able to recall verses throughout their daily life, and this is a great tool of power and encouragement.



SCRIPTURE

These are the verses of the Bible story chosen to help explore the subject of the session. The translation can be different for different sessions. Using Bibles within your session will help the children practise searching and exploring their Bible, and this will help when they are at home with their own private study time.



LEADER'S TEACHING NOTES

This section enables the leader to understand some of the context of the selected verses and be able to give the background, the where, why, and how of what happened. If necessary, it may include what happened before and after the selected verses, and if required, may supply some history of the culture at that time and a description of the people involved in the story.



TELL THE STORY

This part suggests other ways to tell the story. Godly Play can be used along with films/clips, books that may help to narrate the passage in a different way, drama, and even the option of asking the children to rewrite the story in their own words.



I WONDER

This is a list of 'I wonder' questions designed from the Scripture reading and teaching. Many times there are no right or wrong answers to a 'wondering' question, for it depends on how the child feels and sees the world around them. The questions help the child connect to the truths of the story in their own lives. The questions can be asked during the story or used at the end as a 'wondering time'. Give time to wonder, so don't be afraid of silence if they are still thinking; a child does not need to voice their thoughts. All the questions can be used or just select a few.



IDEAS AND ACTIVITIES

This section has a selection of suggestions with descriptions which may include activities, physical or intellectual, experiments and craft or videos.



CREATIVE SPACE

This is different from a response time or prayer time. It is exactly what it says it is – some space and time for the children to be guided through some creative mind space, using different senses while they lie down and relax. Help them to consider their own thoughts on what they have been exploring and sharing.



PRAYER TIME

This is an activity for the prayer and response time to help the children explore the Scripture through prayer. Any additional prayer activities are listed under the session on an additional page at the back of the resource.

Spiritual Formation

In Rebecca Nye's book *Children's Spirituality – What it is and Why it Matters*, the author explores the child's spiritual formation. Rebecca mentions six criteria, using them as a checklist to see how well a child's spirituality is being supported – and all six are equally important.

Rebecca states: '...at the core of achieving a "best practice" policy for spirituality in day-to-day children's work... the idea is that in every situation you could use these criteria...'

Here are the six criteria as the acrostic '**SPIRIT**' to help make it easier to recall them:

Space

Crossing a threshold to come into a safe and sacred place and the response time for connecting with God.

Process

Spirituality is more about process than product. Our spiritual life is an ongoing piece of work, not something to be seen as 'completed'.

Imagination

Spirituality depends on our being open and willing to go deeper. Imagination and creativity can facilitate this.

Relationship

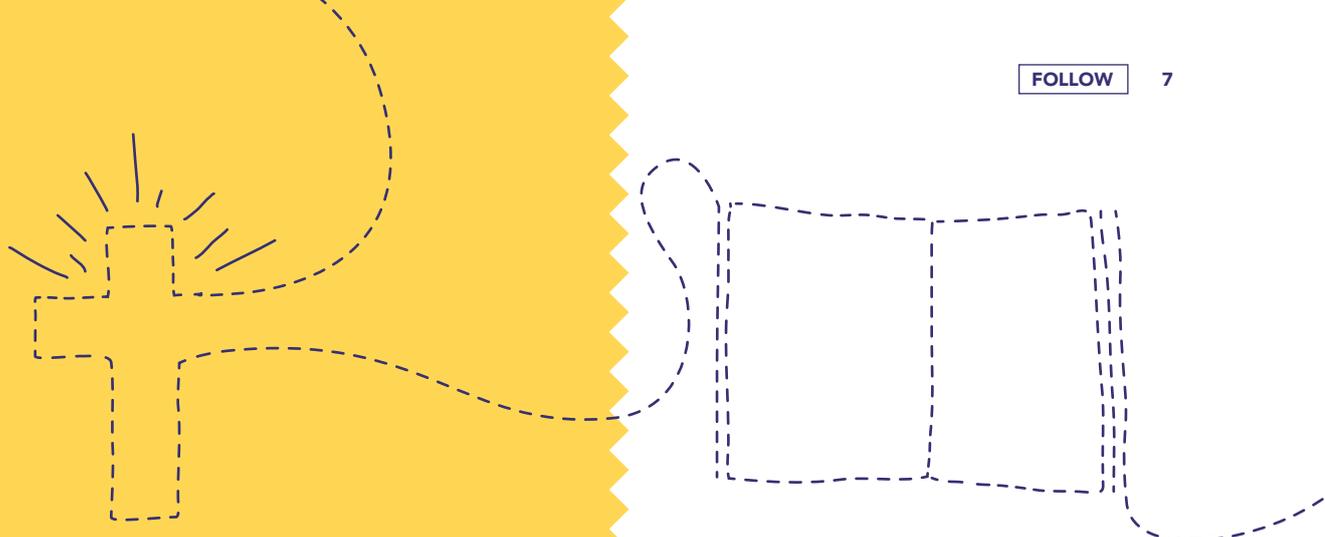
Offering authentic models of relating to one another is right at the core of spirituality.

Intimacy

To create a safe environment where children can come closer to God, delve deeper, take risks and pursue passions.

Trust

Being comfortable with different kinds of knowing, and not knowing.



Faith Formation

In his book *Growing Upwards – The Faith Journey of Christian Young People*, Colin Bennett says: ‘Christian young people grow holistically. In my work with young people I have developed and used a holistic methodology based on Numbers 13. In our post-Christian Western world, I believe young people need help as ‘SPIES’ in the land.’

SPIES, in the context of growth and development, stands for Spiritual, Physical, Intellectual, Emotional and Social. Bennett continues: ‘Within faith formation young people need help to be SPIES. While spirituality is important, if as a Church family we do not nurture the other elements within Christian living, how are we equipping them to live out their Christian lives within their communities?’

Bennett adds: ‘Young people need space and encouragement to grow as rounded individuals, and engaging them in these other areas will have spiritual implications.’

Spiritual

Physical

Intellectual

Emotional

Social

Further Reading



Children’s Spirituality – What it is and Why it Matters by Rebecca Nye (Church House Publishing; 2009)



Growing Upwards – The Faith Journey of Christian Young People by Colin Bennett (Grove Books Limited; 2016)



Through the Eyes of a Child by Rebecca Nye, Anne Richards and Peter Privett (Church House Publishing; 2009)



Being Disciples - Essentials of the Christian Life by Rowan Williams (Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge; 2016)

Session 1

HOW JESUS CALLED

Luke 5:1-11 (International Children's Bible)



LEADER'S REFLECTION

Can you recall the day that you decided to follow Jesus? Perhaps for some of us it was when we were young, for others it was in our teens or later in life. I'm sure if we shared our experiences they would all be different, just as when Jesus called the disciples. We find in Scripture Jesus seeking out each disciple, meeting them where they were at, walking into their everyday lives.

You have probably heard the expression 'Give your life to Jesus.' What does that mean to you? What does it look like for you? When was the last time you considered what impact this has made in your everyday life?

In Luke 5 we read how Jesus gets into one of the boats and asks the owner, Simon, to push off and anchor a short distance from the beach. Jesus then sits down and begins to teach the people standing on the beach. Simon had to stop what he was doing to take Jesus on board the boat, and he was willing to do that. He was not able to do his work, but by just stopping and listening he understood the calling that Jesus was asking of him too, which we know he willingly accepted.

Stop. Meet with Jesus. Listen. Receive a greater understanding of what Jesus is calling you to. We don't need to know all the answers, we just have to be open to the Holy Spirit's guidance, to step forward and follow. What does that look like for you?



SESSION AIMS

- To help the children explore what being a disciple means
- To understand how Jesus called the first disciples and how he still calls children today



SCRIPTURE: LUKE 5:1-11 (INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S BIBLE)

¹ One day Jesus was standing beside Lake Galilee. Many people were pressing all around him. They wanted to hear the word of God. ² Jesus saw two boats at the shore of the lake. The fishermen had left them and were washing their nets. ³ Jesus got into one of the boats, the one which belonged to Simon. Jesus asked Simon to push off a little from the land. Then Jesus sat down in the boat and continued to teach the people on the shore.

⁴ When Jesus had finished speaking, he said to Simon, 'Take the boat into deep water. If you will put your nets in the water, you will catch some fish.'

⁵ Simon answered, 'Master, we worked hard all night trying to catch fish, but we caught nothing. But you say to put the nets in the water; so I will.'⁶ The fishermen did as Jesus told them. And they caught so many fish that the nets began to break. ⁷ They called to their friends in the other boat to come and help them. The friends came, and both boats were filled so full that they were almost sinking.

⁸⁻⁹ The fishermen were all amazed at the many fish they caught. When Simon Peter saw what had happened, he bowed down before Jesus and said, 'Go away from me, Lord. I am a sinful man!' ¹⁰ James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were amazed too. (James and John were Simon's partners.)

Jesus said to Simon, 'Don't be afraid. From now on you will be fishermen for men.'¹¹ When the men brought their boats to the shore, they left everything and followed Jesus.



LEADER'S TEACHING NOTES

The theme for this material is discipleship, and what it means and looks like to live a life that follows Jesus. In this first session we will look at how Jesus called his first disciples and the way they responded. We will introduce the idea that Jesus still calls us to follow him today, and the responsibility we each have to respond to that question.

In order to talk about disciples we need to know what being a disciple means. The Oxford English Dictionary defines a disciple as 'a follower or pupil of a teacher, leader or philosopher'. A disciple is someone who learns from someone else, who follows what they say and sometimes even where they go. Jesus was not the first person we hear of having disciples. John the Baptist had his own disciples as he travelled, telling them of Jesus who would come after him.

When Jesus called his disciples he said just two simple words: 'Follow me.' His disciples left their homes, families and jobs to follow him, to learn from him and to live like him. Today we are not often asked to leave behind homes and families. Being called is now a different experience. Jesus is no longer a physical being we can see, touch and physically follow. So what does following Jesus look like? How can we be his disciple today? It involves learning from his teachings and trying to live the way he would.

Jesus went to where the people were; he travelled. He didn't expect people to come and find him. He met them exactly where they were, in their fishing boat, in their town or with their family. In the calling of the first disciples he spends time with them. He speaks to them first and shows them his power in the catching of the fish. After

hearing him and seeing this, Peter, Andrew, James and John leave everything behind to follow him. Jesus calls Matthew from his tax booth. The first disciples didn't have to go to find Jesus; he came to where they were and asked them to follow him. How they responded was up to them. Jesus asks us the same question today. He still asks us to follow him, from where we are, and our responsibility is how we answer that question.

Jesus had many disciples, but he chose 12 to be his closest followers. These men were not the most respected or important. Some of them were simply fishermen, so were likely to be uneducated and possibly unable to read or write. However, Jesus also called Bartholomew, who is said to have been from royal blood and a scholar in the law. He would have been highly educated. Matthew was a tax collector, which means that he would have been hated and even considered as a criminal by some.

Their personalities varied too. Andrew was quiet, but his main purpose was to bring others to Christ. James the elder was courageous and James the younger was feisty. Judas was outspoken, Peter failed, but still managed to show integrity. Philip could be pessimistic, Simon could show great hate but also great love, and Thomas doubted. They fought about who was the greatest, and questioned Jesus a lot about the things he said and did. They didn't always do what was expected of them. None of these men was perfect – but Jesus never asked them to be perfect, and he never asks us to be. He asks us to follow him, with all our flaws and limitations, from the place that we are in, whatever our personality is and however educated we are. He simply asks us to follow him, just as we are, and in doing so learn from him and live the best way we can.



MEMORY VERSE

**'Come, follow me,'
Jesus said.**

Mark 1:17a (NIV)



TELL THE STORY

- You could read the passage as you walk around the room, asking groups of children to follow you and allowing them to walk with you as you continue to tell it.
- You could act out the story, either as a team or with the children. You could use props as you tell the story.
- Other stories of Jesus calling his disciples can be found in Matthew 9:9-13 and John 1:43-51.

? I WONDER

- I wonder what Simon thought when Jesus got into the boat?
- I wonder what Jesus spoke about when he got into the boat?
- I wonder why Simon decided to put the nets in as Jesus said?
- I wonder how the fishermen felt when they saw the fish they caught?
- I wonder why Simon, James and John followed Jesus?
- I wonder why Jesus chose fishermen?
- I wonder how their families felt?
- I wonder what you would have done if you were there?
- I wonder how Jesus calls us today?
- I wonder if you've heard Jesus call you?
- I wonder how you have responded?



IDEAS & ACTIVITIES

Following the Leader

Arrange the group into a circle. Ask one person to leave the room (they will be the 'guesser') while someone from the circle is chosen to be the leader. The leader will discreetly lead the group in some wacky movements (eg clapping, jumping, singing a song, dancing, patting the head etc) for that round that others will follow. If the 'guesser' identifies the leader, they will be the 'guesser' for the next round and a new leader is chosen.

Catch the Followers

Choose two or three children to be 'catchers'. The aim of the game is for them to catch as many 'followers' as they can. When caught, the follower joins on behind the catcher and goes along with them. The winner is the catcher with the most followers.

Footprint painting

With washable paint, try footprint painting, either individually or as a group on a large piece of paper. Write the memory verse on the picture.

What makes a follower?

Have a list of characteristics and get the children to decide which ones would make a good disciple or follower. Compare these with some of the characteristics of the disciples.



CREATIVE SPACE

Ask the children to find a space on the floor and to lie down, relax and close their eyes. Everything you are going to ask them to do they just need to think about in their mind, with no need to talk.

Say to them: *I am going to read the Bible story. I want you to think who are you in the story. Are you one of the crowd? Are you Peter? Are you one of the other disciples? How do you feel about what's happening? What do you think? What would you say?* Read Luke 5:1-11. Now with your eyes shut, think about how you would feel, and think about what you have just seen and heard. Would you say anything?

Within a sensible timeframe, sense the atmosphere in the room; then say, *When I say 'Go' you can get up quietly.* Count down from 3... 2... 1... Go.



PRAYER TIME

Give each child a cut-out human figure. Get them either to draw themselves on it, or write on it their characteristics and things about themselves. Allow some time and space for them to pray or think about their response to Jesus' call to follow him. Ask team members to be prepared in case any of the children need to talk or pray with someone. You could have a net for the children to place their paper people in if they want to make the decision to follow Jesus.

Session 2

HOW TO PRAY

Matthew 6:9-13 (International Children's Bible)



LEADER'S REFLECTION

How is your prayer life? For a disciple, prayer is a spiritual discipline. This reflection time is not for you to consider prayer and beat yourself up about not doing it regularly enough or not being intentional enough. Nor is it something to skip over if you already have a rhythm of prayer in your life. This time of reflection is for you to stop and unpack: what does prayer mean to you as a disciple? What does it look like in your life? How much does it impact your life? How much of your prayers are about petition and how much about listening? Is prayer *naturally* part of your daily life?

Have you considered what is the best way for you to connect with God? Are your methods working? Is the morning or evening better? Do you need to write or discuss something with others? Do you need to be inside or outside?

Sometimes we try to fit God into the rhythm of our lives and our connection with him can be fragmented, limited and sometimes frustrating. We need to flip over our thinking and consider how we can submerge ourselves into God's rhythm for our lives – this is through prayer and Scripture. How exciting is this, what an adventure! Take some time to consider how you can do this, and invite God in to help reveal his rhythm for you.



SESSION AIMS

- To help children explore what prayer is and why we should pray
- To help children experience different ways to pray



MEMORY VERSE

'Pray continuously, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.'

1 Thessalonians 5:17-18 (NIV)



SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 6:9-13 (INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S BIBLE)

⁹ 'So when you pray, you should pray like this:

'Our Father in heaven, we pray that your name will always be kept holy.

¹⁰ *We pray that your kingdom will come. We pray that what you want will be done, here on earth as it is in heaven.* ¹¹ *Give us the food we need for each day.*

¹² *Forgive the sins we have done, just as we have forgiven those who did wrong to us.*

¹³ *And do not cause us to be tested; but save us from the Evil One. The kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours forever. Amen.'*



LEADER'S TEACHING NOTES

In this second session we will continue to explore what it means and looks like to live life as a follower of Jesus. We will be discovering what prayer is and why as disciples of Jesus we should pray. The children will have an opportunity to experience different ways to pray and then reflect on what style of praying they preferred and what God was saying to them.

Jesus' disciples followed him. They ate with him, travelled with him, spoke with him, asked him questions and watched him. They saw what was important to him and they wanted to be like him. They will have watched Jesus pray and seen the importance of prayer to him. The disciples will have also seen when he took himself away to a quiet place to pray. One day one of his disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray (Luke 11:1).

Jesus needed to communicate with his heavenly Father; he wanted to be in relationship with God by talking to and listening to him. In times of great trial he cried out to him, when he was weary and scared he prayed, when he needed strength and power he talked to God.

Seeking solitude was an important priority for Jesus. He made room in his busy schedule to be alone with his Father (Matthew 14:23). Spending time in prayer with God nurtures a vital relationship and equips us to meet life's challenges. If Jesus needed to schedule time to

talk to God, then how much more should we set aside time? As disciples we need to develop the discipline of spending time alone with God, so helping us mature spiritually and become more and more like Christ.

Jesus' pattern for prayer for his disciples (including us) is simple (see Matthew 6:9-13). We need to acknowledge that God is holy, to ask for God's plan here on earth, to thank him for the food he gives us, to say sorry for the things we have done wrong and forgive those who have hurt us. We need help not to think or do wrong things, and for protection from the evil one. Jesus gave us this prayer so that we are able not to just speak the words back, but use this as a model to shape all of our communication through prayer.

The disciples were so eager to learn how to pray. They wanted to share in the same experience as Jesus and desperately wanted to be like him. Are we as eager as the disciples to spend time in prayer, spending quality time with God, not just talking but listening to the One who loves us most?

Even if we don't know how to pray or what to say, God knows our hearts. He'll understand what we are trying to say. We can give our worries, thanks, joys, hopes and dreams to God in prayer. We need then to listen to what he has to say to us in return.



TELL THE STORY

- *Prayer* by Kore UK is one video that briefly explores what prayer is and why we should pray. (www.youtube.com/watch?v=aoQISJBNRJw)
- For children familiar with the Lord's Prayer, you may wish to say the prayer, but pause and leave out words, asking someone in the group to fill in the missing words. Alternatively, ask the group if they want to share a line each.
- For those not familiar, you could still share a line each, but ask the leaders to say the lines.
- Highlight that Jesus showed us the model of what prayer looks like, but also what to pray and how to pray.



CREATIVE SPACE

Ask the children to find a space on the floor and to lie down, relax and close their eyes. Everything you are going to ask them to do they just need to think about in their mind, with no need to talk.

I want you to imagine your favourite place and sit down there in your mind. Imagine God is sitting right next to you, just like when you sit and chat with your friends. What would you say to him? What would you tell him about your day? Would you talk about the things you like doing? Would you ask him any questions? Would you talk about someone you know? God is sitting beside you now – have a chat with him in your mind.

Within a sensible timeframe, sense the atmosphere in the room; then say: *When I say 'Go' you can get up quietly. Count down from 3... 2... 1... Go.*



I WONDER

- I wonder what prayer is?
- I wonder why we as disciples of Jesus need to pray?
- I wonder what is the most important part of the Lord's Prayer?
- I wonder what is the best part of the Lord's Prayer?
- I wonder how you pray?
- I wonder where is your favourite place to pray?
- I wonder what you like about prayer?
- I wonder what God thinks of our prayers?
- I wonder what God's prayers would be?
- I wonder how much we should pray?



IDEAS & ACTIVITIES

Actions

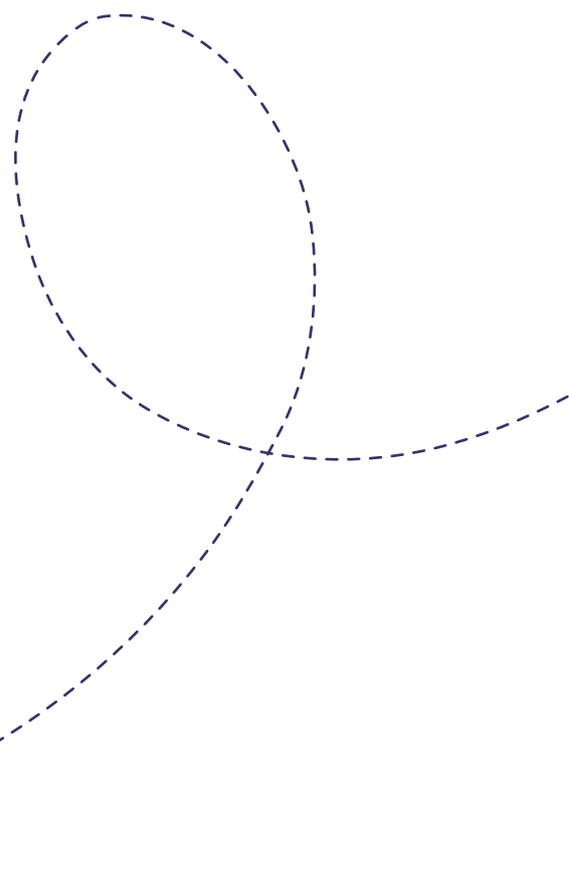
In groups, give different lines of the Lord's Prayer to each team, and explore this together. Get the group to come up with actions for their part and/or spend time rewriting each line individually. Share together what this looks like at the end (you could tie this in with the Prayer Time section).

Prayer List

Individually or in groups, pull together a list of things that you think are on God's prayer list. You may want to use newspapers to take out headlines. Then create your own list, and see how they match up.

Unwrapping!

Take a large blanket or sleeping bag, and give it to one of the children. Get them to try and unwrap a sweet at the same time as holding the blanket. In the same way that it is hard to do something with other things in our hands, emphasise that it is hard to pray when we have lots of distractions getting in the way.





PRAYER TIME

Prayer Walk

As a group, take a walk. Look around at the beauty and creativity you see. Find a serene spot, stop and pray. (Please consider Safe & Sound practices when doing this activity.)

Prayer Event

Organise a prayer event. 24/7 Prayer's video 'Why Pray?' explores prayer further, and gives some examples of different prayer events. Get the group to think about what a prayer event could look like for them when back at home - www.youtube.com/watch?v=QVHUx_EJnUs. (Emphasise that a 24-7 prayer event is just one way people can come together to pray.)

Prayer Stations

Using prayer stations is a great way to explore different styles of prayer for young people and to find a style that works for them.

Set up a number of prayer stations, laying out materials where necessary.

Using examples that the Bible shows us, get the children at each station to think of these and engage with a different method of prayer at each spot. You may wish to move between these as a group, or allow the children to move freely. Either way, make sure there is space for children to try out prayer in different ways, and that as much as possible it is not leader-led.

1. Out Loud Prayers – Jesus would pray out loud. His prayers did not need to be said out loud, but sometimes he just did it (John 11:41-43). Encourage the children not to be afraid to speak prayers out loud. They may feel they are talking to nobody, but God hears, and talking out loud will allow them to focus on what it is they want to pray about.

2. Reading Prayer – In the same way that Jesus went to the synagogue to pray and read Scripture, we are able to use this as a method of prayer. At this prayer station, encourage the children to read through prayers, either from children's prayer books, from online resources (www.faithandworship.com is a great place to start) or from the Bible itself. Taking Scripture to pray from is a great way for any cognitive

thinkers in your group to engage with prayer. Some examples you may want to guide them towards are Psalm 23, 1 John 5:14-16 and Romans 12:1-2.

3. Visualising prayer – Jesus used imagery as a way to teach the crowds he met. The story of the widow's offering (Luke 21:1-3) is a good example of Jesus seeing something and teaching about it. In the same way, we can pray based on what we see. Place on the floor a number of photos with a varied selection of faces, places and other images you think could be useful. Use the images to write or draw prayers, maybe in a cartoon style, using all the elements of the Lord's Prayer.

4. Express your prayer through writing – Paul's prayer for the Ephesians is a great example of a written prayer (Ephesians 3:14-21). Use a graffiti wall as a space for children to write key words from this prayer, or create a post box for the prayers to be placed into once they have been written on a postcard.

5. Prayer through song – Just like Mary's song in Luke 1:46-55, music is a great way to connect with prayer. Create a space to allow children to write their own song, or listen to some music and pray as part of this.

6. Prayer Bubbles – Use bubbles to reach God through prayer. Jesus would often place his hands on those he was healing, and would do this through prayer (Matthew 19:13). In groups of three or four, gather children together in a circle, lock arms, and ask them to pray with one another in their own 'bubble'. Once they have done this, ask them to turn around and 'blow bubbles' outwards, sending their prayers to God. Other types of kinaesthetic prayer activities that you can use can be found on websites like Pinterest or www.prayerspacesinschools.com.

Make sure you give the group enough time to engage in each space. Reflecting on what styles worked for each person will be important, and you could use the 'I wonder...' questions to explore this further. Make sure to emphasise that these styles are not definitive and there are other styles available which they may want to explore.

Session 3

HOW TO BE

Matthew 5:1-10 (International Children's Bible)



LEADER'S REFLECTION

How to be a disciple? A common response to such a question is to follow Jesus, but sometimes we need to explore a little deeper, such as: How are you being? Are we doing instead of being? Sometimes we may feel that we need to be or do so much more to show Jesus to others. By 'doing' we are equipping ourselves, whereas it is actually 'being' that equips us, staying close to the Lord.

Read Matthew 5:1-10 in The Message paraphrase about the Beatitudes.

What does this passage mean for you personally? Spend some time in prayer, asking God to help you with the things this passage highlights for you.

The Lord has chosen you for a purpose. He knows you and knows everything about you. What do you need to consider to enable you to be more what the Lord intended you to be?



SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 5:1-10 (INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S BIBLE)

¹ Jesus saw the crowds who were there. He went up on a hill and sat down. His followers came to him. ² Jesus taught the people and said:

³ 'Those people who know they have great spiritual needs are happy. The kingdom of heaven belongs to them.

⁴ Those who are sad now are happy. God will comfort them.

⁵ Those who are humble are happy. The earth will belong to them.

⁶ Those who want to do right more than anything else are happy. God will fully satisfy them.

⁷ Those who give mercy to others are happy. Mercy will be given to them.

⁸ Those who are pure in their thinking are happy. They will be with God.

⁹ Those who work to bring peace are happy. God will call them his sons.

¹⁰ Those who are treated badly for doing good are happy. The kingdom of heaven belongs to them.

¹¹ People will say bad things about you and hurt you. They will lie and say all kinds of evil things about you because you follow me. But when they do these things to you, you are happy. ¹² Rejoice and be glad. You have a great reward waiting for you in heaven. People did the same evil things to the prophets who lived before you.'



SESSION AIMS

- To help children to know that they are accepted by Jesus just as they are
- To remind children that Jesus promises to be with us by his Holy Spirit
- To help children to understand that we can be effective disciples with God's strength



MEMORY VERSE

'Rejoice and be glad. You have a great reward waiting for you in heaven.'

Matthew 5:12a (ICB)



LEADER'S TEACHING NOTES

This session is all about 'How to Be'. In the past these words have been creatively referred to as the 'BE Attitudes'. So, what better place is there to start in working out how Jesus wants his followers to be? In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus was firstly encouraging his closest disciples, then the wider hearers in his audience, to understand that the things of God's Kingdom are not the same as the things of this earth. Jesus was at his most provocative when challenging the ways of the world and turning its values upside down.

In this session it will be helpful to give the children an opportunity to listen to Jesus' words. Then they can explore some creative ways to better understand what Jesus is saying. There are moments in this session which will really challenge the children to discover what Jesus means by happiness – which means more than just having a good attitude when things are going wrong. There are also some solemn moments of reflection. Be sensitive to the needs of your children.

We encourage you to use the 'wondering' questions and give the children as much space and time as possible to talk about what it means to be a disciple. Above all, this session should be lots of fun. Remind the children that we can have hope. Jesus promises to be with us in everything we do and everywhere we go.



TELL THE STORY

- Choose an adult to enact the passage as if they are amidst the crowd, on their tiptoes, trying to see Jesus and listen to his words. The adult will then read the first beatitude from Matthew 5:1-10 (International Children's Bible). Explain to the children beforehand that each time a beatitude is read out they need to shout out 'What is he saying? What does it mean?!' as if they were also there, seeking to hear and understand. Ask another adult then to explain that particular beatitude. Repeat this for each one.
- Alternatively you could use the paraphrase below or the material at the following link - www.dltk-bible.com/cv/sermon_mount.htm
Blessed are those who know they need God; Heaven belongs to them.
Blessed are those who are sad and upset; God will help comfort them.
Blessed are those who are humble and don't show off; God will give them the earth.
Blessed are those who want things to be fair; God will help them succeed.
Blessed are those who forgive, because they will also be forgiven.
Blessed are those who are pure and good in their hearts and minds, because God will be with them.
Blessed are those who try to bring peace and happiness, because they are God's children.
Blessed are those who get into trouble for doing good things; Heaven belongs to them. (Connect Plus 2018)
- While each beatitude is told, it may be helpful to create a symbolic action/mime or a facial expression that represents that specific statement. Read it again and ask the children to join in with the chosen creative expression.
- Show the video The Beatitudes - through the voice of a child www.youtube.com/watch?v=EAvz1LUFHPI – then ask the children to reflect and share in the 'I wonder' questions below.



I WONDER

- **I wonder which part of the story you liked best?**
- **I wonder which part is the most important?**
- **I wonder if there are any parts we could leave out and still have everything we need?**
- **I wonder if there are any parts that you would add?**
- **I wonder which part felt it was specially for you?**
- **I wonder what the people thought when they heard Jesus say these words?**



IDEAS & ACTIVITIES

Blessing jar

Prepare and decorate a 'Blessing Jar'. Provide lots of coloured paper slips and ask the children to write down ways in which they have been blessed (either by God, or by others). Invite the children to share with a partner (or their group) and then spend some moments filling the 'Blessing Jar'. You may want to keep adding to this in further sessions or use the blessings as a starter for prayer.

Creative beatitudes

Split the children into four groups and assign each group two of the beatitudes. Challenge the children to retell the two beatitudes they have been given in their own way, applying it to their personal situation. They might create a poem (eg an acrostic or a poem with or without rhyme) or a song using a well-known tune. You may then want to give the children the opportunity to perform their work for the whole group.

Photo challenge

Again, in groups or teams, issue a 'Photo Challenge' where the children need to find objects which symbolise their given beatitude(s). Each group will need access to a camera to create their images which can be downloaded to a computer and displayed for everyone to see. Alternatively, each group might work together to spell out words using their bodies, or create a short sketch or tableau which depicts the things which Jesus talked about in the Sermon on the Mount – the possibilities are endless!

Happiness mask

Provide the children with a blank mask (you can make simple masks from white card or buy plastic

ones which can be decorated) and a range of colourful craft materials such as feathers, sequins, tissue paper, foam shapes and felt-tipped pens. Challenge the children to decorate the mask to represent 'happiness'. Try not to be too directive, allowing the children to express their own interpretation. This activity should be lots of fun. Once the children have finished their designs, invite them to lay out their masks in the centre of the room. Give opportunity for those children who want to, to describe their design. You might also ask the following questions: I wonder what happiness looks like? What makes us truly happy? I wonder if there is anything we have missed out?

Ask the children to collect their masks and split into groups. Invite the children to work together to create a dance or mime which they can perform wearing their 'happiness masks'. You may want to choose a suitable piece of music (such as 'Happy' by Pharrell Williams) or something which has a totally opposite feel to it. Explain beforehand that at different moments the music will be turned off and they will have to shout out the Bible verse, then carry on dancing.

Beatitudes challenge

Provide the children with lots of recycled objects (plastic cups, card, paper, foil, lollipop sticks, cardboard, toilet roll/ kitchen roll tubes, plastic bottles, foil, tissue paper, etc). Ask the children to use the materials to make something which reflects an element of what they have learned. See the link below for some idea of what other children have made: <http://flamecreativekids.blogspot.co.uk/2013/04/responding-to-beatitudes-with-junk-box.html>



CREATIVE SPACE

Ask the children to find a space on the floor and to lie down, relax and close their eyes. Everything you are going to ask them to do they just need to think about in their mind – no need to talk. Say to them:

Jesus is with us in everything we do and everywhere we go. Outstretch your arms in front of you as if you are waiting to receive a present that someone is going to give you. Jesus has given you the gift of his presence in the Holy Spirit to be with you all the time. He has given you the gift of his unfailing love. Grab these gifts and hold them close to your heart. Pause for a moment. How does it make you feel? Pause for a moment. Is there anything you would like to give back to Jesus?

Within a sensible timeframe, sense the atmosphere in the room; then say, *When I say 'Go' you can get up quietly.* Count down from 3... 2... 1... Go.



PRAYER TIME

Get hold of some gel beads, the ones which are used in flower displays. They are soft and clear and are almost invisible when added to water. Provide a large clear bowl or vase filled with water. Hand each child a few beads and ask them to hold them gently in their hand. Ask the children to imagine that these beads represent tears – the things which make us sad. Remind the children that Jesus promises us that one day we will go to Heaven and be with him for ever and that there will be 'no more tears' (see Revelation 21:4). Play some music and invite the children to place their 'tears' in the water. Marvel together at how the tears have disappeared! You could play a song such as 'Blessings' by Laura Story, or 'Heaven in my heart' by Hillsong Kids while doing this.

Session 4

HOW TO LIVE

John 13:1-17 (New Living Translation)



LEADER'S REFLECTION

As disciples I am sure that we know and understand the way we should live. I'm sure we are able to quote verse after verse of the teaching and advice Jesus gave to many different situations and how as disciples we should respond.

Jesus showed the disciples how to live, challenging them in many different situations. John 13:1-17 was one of the most powerful actions witnessed by the disciples. Jesus' act of humility actually cleansed their hearts of selfish ambition, killed their pride, and taught them a lesson of love. Jesus washed the feet of the disciples that he might teach them to think nothing was below them. He showed that those who are spiritually washed by Christ, have a part in Christ.

So many times Peter would ask the questions that, if we were there, perhaps we would have asked too! 'Lord, are you going to wash my feet?' (v6). Shocked by the implications of the actions within their culture, Peter couldn't quite understand. Jesus answered, 'Unless I wash you, you won't belong to me' (v8). Peter got it right away and knew that meant he wanted Jesus to have all of him. He replied, 'Then wash my hands and head as well, Lord, not just my feet!' (v9).

Jesus asks for the whole of us; our words, thoughts, actions, passions, relationships – every part of our lives. Take this time to consider if there is anything you need 'spiritually washed' to enable you to be fully part of Christ's mission.



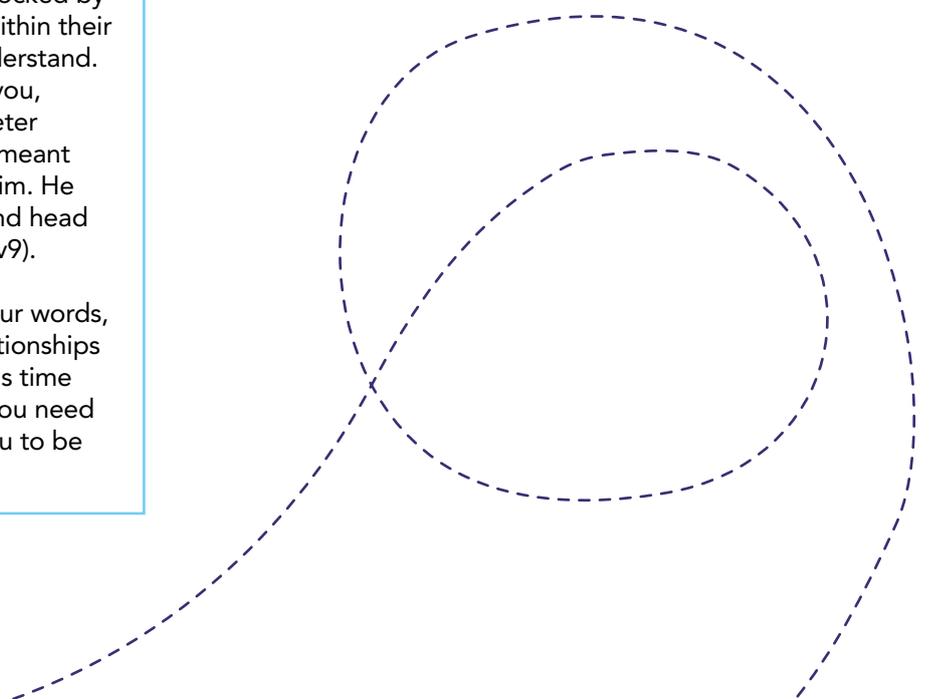
SESSION AIMS

- **To teach children how they can serve like Jesus even in the small, the mundane and the everyday things**
- **To help children understand humility: not trying to be big and have all the attention, but putting others before yourself**



MEMORY VERSE

'I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you.'
John 13:15 (NLT)





SCRIPTURE: JOHN 13:1-17

(INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S BIBLE)

¹ Before the Passover celebration, Jesus knew that his hour had come to leave this world and return to his Father. He had loved his disciples during his ministry on earth, and now he loved them to the very end. ² It was time for supper, and the devil had already prompted Judas, son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. ³ Jesus knew that the Father had given him authority over everything and that he had come from God and would return to God. ⁴ So he got up from the table, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist, ⁵ and poured water into a basin. Then he began to wash the disciples' feet, drying them with the towel he had around him.

⁶ When Jesus came to Simon Peter, Peter said to him, 'Lord, are you going to wash my feet?' ⁷ Jesus replied, 'You don't understand now what I am doing, but someday you will.' ⁸ 'No,' Peter protested, 'you will never ever wash my feet!' Jesus replied, 'Unless I wash you, you won't belong to me.' ⁹ Simon Peter exclaimed, 'Then wash my hands and head as well, Lord, not just my feet!' ¹⁰ Jesus replied, 'A person who has bathed all over does not need to wash, except for the feet, to be entirely clean. And you disciples are clean, but not all of you.' ¹¹ For Jesus knew who would betray him. That is what he meant when he said, 'Not all of you are clean.'

¹² After washing their feet, he put on his robe again and sat down and asked, 'Do you understand what I was doing?' ¹³ You call me "Teacher" and "Lord," and you are right, because that's what I am. ¹⁴ And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. ¹⁵ I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you. ¹⁶ I tell you the truth, slaves are not greater than their master. Nor is the messenger more important than the one who sends the message. ¹⁷ Now that you know these things, God will bless you for doing them.'



LEADER'S TEACHING NOTES

The account of Jesus washing his disciples' feet is such a beautiful picture. As leaders we are called by Christ to serve, and children need to see what humility looks like from adults.

It was customary for a guest at a person's home to have his/her feet washed – this was a menial task often done by a servant. But by putting the towel around his own waist, Christ made himself look like a servant.

Jesus came to show us how we should live. One of the lessons that Jesus wanted us to learn was how to be a servant to others. You can explain to the children that a servant is a person who does the work for another. When a parent cooks them something to eat, that parent is being a loving servant towards them – they don't expect anything in return. Jesus likewise said to his disciples who desired to be great: 'For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others...' (Matthew 20:28 NLT).

Jesus wanted the disciples to know that being a servant is more important than gaining wealth, power, or position. A servant does not receive a lot of praise or credit – they work solely for the lives of others. Jesus, the King, became a servant to show his love for his disciples and for us.

In order to fulfil the mission of spreading the gospel, the disciples would need to learn to serve. Pride and arrogance would ruin the disciples' relationship to God, to each other, and to the people they were trying to save. Humility and service to others is the evidence of love. It's an important lesson for us as well. People line up to do the tasks that are considered important, glamorous or respected. But Jesus showed humility by doing the task that no one wanted to do. He washed the disciples' feet – a dirty job usually performed by the lowest ranking person in the room. Was Jesus the lowest ranking person? No. He was Lord and Teacher. He knew he would soon be at the Father's side in Heaven. Did he think it was too lowly a task for him to do? No. Are there tasks that we're not willing to do because they are lowly? Because they are dirty? Because they are unpleasant or hard? Quite often those are the jobs that most need to be done.

We need to be willing to do whatever is needed. Jesus was not only willing, he prepared himself to do this service. Have we made plans to serve others?

Encourage the children to think about what they can do to prepare to serve others. What talents, resources and services can they provide?



TELL THE STORY

Act out

Explain to the children: *In the story we are going to be talking about being a servant. What does that word mean?*

Prepare a basin with water and a towel. If possible, get the children to sit on chairs (it will be easier to wash if their feet are easily accessible). Ask an adult to play the part of Jesus, and either have the team members or the children (if they are comfortable with this) to be the disciples who will have their feet washed. While someone reads out the story, the adult playing Jesus should go around the group and wash the 'disciples' feet. Finish with the words *'Jesus taught us to love one another by being a servant. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.'*



I WONDER

- I wonder what you think the disciples would have said to each other when Jesus started washing their feet?
- I wonder what you would have said if you were there and Jesus went to wash your feet?
- I wonder how you would feel if you had to wash someone else's feet, especially if they were dusty from wearing sandals?
- I wonder who in your house would wash the feet of visitors that came?
- I wonder what is the worst job that someone could ask you to do? Would you do it? Would you do it for Jesus?
- I wonder when was the last time you served someone without moaning or asking for something in return?
- I wonder what can you do to serve others?



IDEAS & ACTIVITIES

Walking Game

Have the children join in pretending to walk in different situations – for example: walking on hot ground, walking where it is muddy and feet are getting stuck, walking with a sore foot, walking like soldiers on parade, walking up a steep hill, walking on tiptoes, walking backwards. Link the activity to the story and how important feet are, and therefore how much more important it was for Jesus to wash the disciples' feet.

'Master Says'

A game based on 'Simon says' but instead using the words 'Master says', linking it to a master giving helpful instruction to servants.

Thank you cards

Give opportunity for the children to make a thank you card for someone who does or has done something for them but who they wouldn't normally think about saying thank you to. Try and encourage them to think of all those who do the everyday things that actually make a difference, eg lollipop lady, school bus driver, dinner lady etc.



PRAYER TIME

Ask the children to think about their own family, friends and neighbours and how they might serve them. Make time for them to share. Give everyone a template of a foot and get them to write something they will commit to doing to be a servant. Pray together about *these things*, asking for God's help.



CREATIVE SPACE

Ask the children to find a space on the floor, take their shoes and socks off and then lie down, relax and close their eyes. Everything you are going to ask them to do they just need to think about in their mind, no need to talk.

Feet are funny things; we use them all day. We keep them covered up and warm when it's cold, and uncovered and cool when it's hot. Our feet feel and move. Wiggle your feet, wiggle your toes, think of all your toes, the tops of your feet, your soles – the

bottom of your feet – your heels. Where have your feet taken you today? Where will your feet take you tomorrow? Everyone's feet are totally different and we are all different too but God has a job for you to do for him. I wonder what that could be? Take some time to think what God is asking you to do for him.

Within a sensible timeframe, sense the atmosphere in the room; then say, *When I say 'Go' you can get up quietly. Count down from 3... 2... 1... Go.*

Session 5

HOW TO GROW

Acts 2:42-47 (Good News Bible)



LEADER'S REFLECTION

Life as a disciple may be coloured by so many things. We receive blessings in so many ways: through prayer and studying the Scriptures, through attending worship and experiencing God's creation. Another element is our relationships with other believers. Acts 2:42-47 gives some great examples of how the early Christians supported each other within their discipleship journey. In doing so, everyone was amazed at what God was doing. They praised God and enjoyed each other's company. 'And every day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved' (Acts 2:47). Their attitude is cause for reflection. Take some time to consider these questions for yourself:

- How often do we open our Bibles with fellow believers and study God's word?
- How often do we make time to have a coffee or share a meal with others?
- How often do we take time to pray with other believers?
- How often do we share with our fellow believers what the Lord is doing in our life and how we see him at work?



SESSION AIMS

- To help children discover what was most important to the people in the Early Church
- To explore how children can grow as disciples in a community of believers



SCRIPTURE: ACTS 2:42-47 (GOOD NEWS BIBLE)

⁴² They [the believers] spent their time in learning from the apostles, taking part in the fellowship, and sharing in the fellowship meals and the prayers.

⁴³ Many miracles and wonders were being done through the apostles, and everyone was filled with awe. ⁴⁴ All the believers continued together in close fellowship and shared their belongings with one another. ⁴⁵ They would sell their property and possessions, and distribute the money among all, according to what each one needed. ⁴⁶ Day after day they met as a group in the Temple, and they had their meals together in their homes, eating with glad and humble hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God, and enjoying the good will of all the people. And every day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved.



MEMORY VERSE

'They spent their time in learning from the apostles, taking part in the fellowship, and sharing in the fellowship meals and the prayers.'

Acts 2:42 (GNB)



LEADER'S TEACHING NOTES

These verses in Acts 2:24-47 describe the practical ways the first Christian community enjoyed fellowship together. We get a glimpse of what was most important to them and how serious they were about their faith. The verses also describe their blueprint for growth in their personal faith, which also led to a growth in numbers. What do we learn about their way of life in these verses?

- They were eager to learn how to be disciples of Jesus.
- They ate together in each other's homes (sharing fellowship meals).
- They prayed together.
- They looked for any opportunities to do miracles in Jesus' name, and took those opportunities.
- They became close, like a big family, hanging out together and enjoying each other's company.
- They were aware of each other's needs and were generous to each other, sharing what they had where it was most needed.
- They went to the Temple courts to worship together often.
- They witnessed to the public – showing their belief and acts of faith to all – and they grew in favour with the non-believers.

- They were full of joy and constantly praised God.
- They brought others into the faith and grew in number daily.

They grew in faith because they exercised it daily. Their faith wasn't just a belief, it was an active way of life; it was their priority – more important than anything else. And it was not a hardship to do so, but a real joy.

In this session we will explore with the children the importance of being in fellowship with other Christians as we grow as disciples. You will need to check the children's understanding of what fellowship is – ie a community of people with a shared interest, activity, feeling or experience. The Greek word used here is *koinonia*. The basic idea of *koinonia* is sharing, but also intimacy and fellowship. In the New Testament it meant the unique sharing that Christians have with other Christians and with God.

With the children we will imagine what it would have been like to be part of this early fellowship of believers, and we will encourage them to think about how they can be an active part of a Christian fellowship today, and even how they can make better the fellowship to which they may already belong!



TELL THE STORY

1. Hand out Bibles and read together Acts 2:42-47. Keep them open at this page for later.

2. Watch this short (2:20) animation on YouTube which tells of what the early believers did together and how we should be like them too: Bible Theater: Acts – The Early Church. It will help to watch it twice so it sinks in. www.youtube.com/watch?v=rms6KePjZ8

3. In twos or threes, and using Bibles, get the children to make a list of things that the fellowship of believers did together. (Refer back to the list in the Leader's Notes if necessary.) When they are finished, ask them to share what they have written and think about how they can live out these things in their daily lives.



I WONDER

- **I wonder what you liked best about the Early Church?**
- **I wonder what the most important thing was about being part of that Early Church?**
- **I wonder what you would most enjoy about being part of a fellowship like that today?**
- **I wonder what you would find hardest if you were part of a fellowship like that today?**
- **I wonder why the disciples were so full of joy?**
- **I wonder why they did so much together?**
- **I wonder which of the things that they did together would help you grow as a disciple?**



IDEAS & ACTIVITIES

Create a piece of wall art

Get everyone to draw a different thing that the Early Church did together, such as eating, worshipping, learning, sharing money or possessions, praying, doing miracles, etc. Cut out their individual pictures and stick them on to a large sheet of paper. Add a heading 'The fellowship of believers', or similar.

Picturing a new church

In advance, on a large sheet of paper (A3 or bigger), draw the outline of a modern church building. Give out coloured pieces of paper, glue sticks, scissors and pens to the children.

Ask the children to imagine they were creating a new church fellowship. Their task is to write down or draw the things that they think are the important values, ideals and activities of their new fellowship, eg praying together, worshipping together, friendship, love, generosity, serving the poor etc. The children then need to cut out their drawings or words and glue them on to the paper within the outline of the church building – until the shape is full.

If you prefer, you could use wooden bricks (like Giant Jenga bricks) to build a 3D model, and the children could glue their words or drawings to the bricks.

Play dough church

Give each child a tub of play dough or lump of plasticine. They have to create a model representing one activity that the fellowship of believers did together. Make sure that all of the things that first church did together are covered. When everyone has finished, make an exhibition of the work by bringing all the play dough creations together. Gather the children around the models and talk about the different things they are doing.

If you have the time and capability you could take this idea further by making a stop motion animation using the children's play dough models. There are apps to help you do this on an iPad, and videos on YouTube offer advice, like this one: [How to make stop motion animation - www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pw80ki6kc-k](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pw80ki6kc-k)

'True or False' Game

If you have space to run, mark one end of the hall TRUE and the other end FALSE. Have all the children stand in the middle of the room. When you call out one of the following statements about how the people in the Early Church grew in faith, the children have to run to either the TRUE end or the FALSE end of the hall. (If you only have a small space, use masking tape on the floor to make a dividing line and just get the children to jump from one side to the other.) True statements:

- They ate together
- They prayed together
- They shared possessions
- They were generous to each other
- They were joyful
- They always praised God
- They worshipped together
- They learned about following Jesus

False statements

- They squabbled with each other
- They had a Facebook group
- They hung on to what was their own stuff
- They were Christians in secret
- They were grumpy
- They avoided people who weren't Christians
- They only met in the Temple

Write a Song

Individually or in small groups, write a song, rap or poem. The theme of the song could be:

- How they lived in the Early Church
- Growing as a disciple, especially within a fellowship of believers
- What they think church should be like
- The good things about the church they already belong to

You could use an app such as Autorap by Smule to turn the children's words into a rap.



CREATIVE SPACE

Ask the children to find a space on the floor and to lie down, relax and close their eyes. Everything you are going to ask them to do they just need to think about in their mind, no need to talk.

Think of your friends – can you see their faces in your mind? What colour hair do they have? How many of your friends love Jesus? Have you ever asked if they love Jesus? What do you think is

the best way to talk to your friends about Jesus? What could you do for your friends that would show them that you love Jesus?

Within a sensible timeframe, sense the atmosphere in the room; then say, When I say 'Go' you can get up quietly. Count down from 3... 2... 1... Go.



PRAYER TIME

Reflection using photos

This is a quiet activity that offers time and space for children to think and hear God's voice in the stillness using pictures of people. The idea is that the children may start to wonder about how they can be a good disciple of Jesus by following Jesus' example of being good news to others, especially the poor, vulnerable and hurting.

In advance search the internet for lots of pictures of people in different contexts (photos rather than drawings) and print these on paper or card.

You'll need at least double the amount of pictures to the number of children in your group. The pictures should show a diverse range of locations, people, emotions and activities that capture the children's imagination.

Ask the children to sit in a circle and spread the pictures on the floor in the middle of the circle. Invite the children to pick up a picture that speaks to them or that they are drawn to and then wonder about the person or people in the picture. Ask them to silently think about some of the following questions as they look at the people in their chosen picture:

- Where are the people (or person) in the picture – what country or area?
- What are they doing?
- How are they feeling and why?
- What might they need?
- What can they offer their community?
- What do you want to say to them?
- What does God want to say to them?
- If Jesus was there what would he be doing?
- If you were there what would Jesus want you to do?
- How might your church be able to be good news for that person or people?

It would help to have these questions displayed for reference.

After the silent time, allow some time for children to talk about their reflections if they want to.

Finally, just as the Early Church prayed together, allow time for the children to pray together for the people in the photographs (or the people groups they represent). Encourage spoken prayer as well as silent prayer.

Prayers using our artwork

If the children created some artwork or play dough creations earlier, bring this in front of the group and use it to spark a prayer time. You could encourage prayers of thanks for the different ministries and programmes at their church; prayers asking for God's blessing on the different ministries that take place and the leaders of those; or prayers asking God to help make their church more like the joyful, generous, sharing, Spirit-filled church of the early believers we have read about.

Praying with sweets

Use coloured sweets for this activity. Designate a colour to each prayer category that the children have to pray about when they eat it. You can choose your own ideas for the group to follow, but these are examples related to today's teaching:

- Red = Thank God for people in your church that help you follow Jesus.
- White = Ask God to help your church to be filled with the joy of the Lord.
- Green = Say sorry for times when you are reluctant to share what you have.
- Yellow = Ask God to bless your friends and to help you lead them to him.

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