



Journeys in the Spirit

inward outward upward downward

Children's work edition Issue 59 January 2012



Some Bible stories - a new series - an introduction

Getting ready

This issue is the first in *Journeys in the Spirit* children's work edition series 7 – 'Some Bible stories'. The Bible is a Big Book. It's full of stories, poetry, parables and song. Good, sometimes astonishing, things happen in the Bible. Bad, sometimes terrible, things also happen in the Bible - just like ordinary life. It is full of people's struggles and difficulties, joys and sadness.

Both new and old Testaments have stories about people with little power or influence: the young, women, impoverished people, and slaves. There are stories about people who are rejected, disliked or on the margins who challenge power or conventions. Such stories expose the weakness or vulnerability of people with power - this can be empowering, exciting and validating for children to hear and engage with.

The Quaker way has deep roots in the Bible – old and new testaments. The culture that we live in, outside of our Quaker lives, is full of references to stories and values drawn from the Bible. This is a rich heritage that children can learn from and explore in the context of their own lives.

This short series intends to help open the treasure chest of these stories in a Quaker context. We hope it offers new ways of looking at well known stories and episodes. We also hope it might equip adults working alongside children to aid them in exploring some of the big issues and hidden treasure in the Bible.

Journeys in the Spirit offers resources and ideas to Quakers engaging with children and young people.

This children's work edition comes out monthly. It offers resources and ideas to Quakers engaging with 5–12 year olds in a Quaker setting.

It provides opportunities for exploring, creating and learning in an atmosphere of worship in partnership on our shared journey in the spirit.

Gather

Telling our own story. Once everybody has arrived sit altogether in a circle on the floor or around a table. If children already have a journal place them where the children are going to sit or put the box containing the journals in the middle of the circle or table. If children don't, as yet, have a journal, place a plain covered, spiral bound notebook in front of where each child will sit. Lay out pencils with the journals or notebooks.

Sit together in stillness and worship for a few moments. Welcome everybody. Say that today you are going to talk about one of the biggest books of stories ever written. Say that before you do this you want everybody to think about or remember a time when someone was kind to them or when they were kind and helpful to another person or a creature of some sort.

After a few moments tell everybody to, either pick up their journal from the floor or box or pick up and open the notebook in front of them. Then, just using the pencil, with help if necessary, tell everybody to write draw or sketch something about what they just remembered or thought of. When you judge that this is complete ask if anybody would like to say anything about what they thought of or have drawn or written. Listen and move on.

Underpinning references

Advices & queries 1.02.5

Take time to learn about other people's experiences of the Light. Remember the importance of the Bible, the writings of Friends and all writings which reveal the ways of God.

Engage

The Bible is a Big Book. *Resources: the biggest Bible that you can find; a brightly coloured cloth; cut out copies of Bible story pictures from Additional Resource 59.B, stick them on card if possible – tuck them in different places in the Bible – have their edges just poking out so you can see where they are. A selection of different Bibles – some with pictures. See sidebar for suggestions about where you can get these.*

After Gather say that just now everybody thought about and put something in their book about their story. Lay the Bible on the floor on a brightly coloured cloth. As you do this repeat that this is one of the biggest books ever written. Say that it is a book that is full of lots of different books that are full of other people's stories - the stories are very, very old. As you say this lay down a copy of the Bible Bookshelf picture from *Additional Resource 59.A* - if you can, print this as an A3 sized copy (there are A4 and A3 versions available online). Say here is a picture of a bookshelf with all the different books of the Bible on it. Read some of the names out and explain a bit about the different groups of books.

Say again that it is packed with stories - as you say this pull out the Bible story pictures (*Additional Resource 59.B*) and lay them around on the floor or table. Ask if anybody can guess what the stories are or knows a story that is in the Bible. Listen to the answers – ask children to tell the story they have thought of (as best they can). Make your own suggestion if you would like to. Ask the children to choose which picture they like and why.

The Bible and us. *Resources: the biggest Bible that you can find; a brightly coloured cloth; cut out copies of the pictures on Additional Resource 59.C – stick them on separate pieces of card if possible.*

After Gather place the Bible with care onto the colourful cloth. Say that it is one of the biggest books of stories ever written and that the stories are very, very old. Ask if anyone knows of any stories that are in the Bible. Listen and acknowledge what is said. Go on to say that in the Bible there are lots of Kings and Queens, people in charge of big churches and temples and Generals in charge of armies. But, and this is really important, there are lots of people like you and me – mums and dads, children, grandmas and grandads, aunts and uncles, friends, soldiers, people who are in trouble, happy, sad, lonely, angry or having fun. People going to school, work, out to play, helping other people and there's lots and lots of eating. As you say all this lay out cut out pictures from *Additional Resource 59.C*.

The Bible and children. *Resources: the biggest Bible that you can find; a brightly coloured cloth.*

After Gather place the Bible with care on to a colourful cloth. Open it at Mark 10:13 – 14 - the story of Jesus and the children. Read this version of the story:

“Once upon a time, a long time ago, there was a man called Jesus. He was so close to God and God was so close to him that he knew what God wanted him to do. One day he was busy helping grown-ups. They wanted to talk with him about some problems they had. Lots of mums and dads wanted to bring their children, just like you, to see Jesus because he was special. They wanted Jesus to say special words like prayers to their children and gently put his hands on their heads. Jesus had some friends and helpers called disciples. They got cross with the mums and dads and told them to go away. Jesus saw this and got very angry. He told the disciples to let the children come to him. He said that children know more about God, are closer to God than grown-ups. He said the disciples had to learn this by being kinder to children and listening to them. The disciples were shocked and a bit frightened so they did as they were told. The children came forward; the mums and dads smiled. Jesus gently touched the children and said quiet prayers with them.”

After the story ask these ‘wondering questions’. Leave pauses for children to answer if and when they want to: ‘I wonder: How do you think the children felt? How do you think the mums and dads felt? Would you like to have been there?’

References & other resources

Ask your Meeting if it will buy a Bible for each child.

The Quaker Bookshop has a selection to buy: 0207 6631030 or www.quaker.org.uk/shop

Advices & queries 1.02.4

The Religious Society of Friends is rooted in Christianity and has always found inspiration in the life and teachings of Jesus. How do you interpret your faith in the light of this heritage? How does Jesus speak to you today? Are you following Jesus' example of love in action? Are you learning from his life the reality and cost of obedience to God?

The additional resources listed in the text are available at:

<http://www.quaker.org.uk/resources-children>

References & other resources

To download a copy of *Journeys in the Spirit with children aged 0 to 4* go to:

www.quaker.org.uk/journeys/special-issues-children

For a free paper copy contact Children and Young People's work team on 0207 663 1013 or bevelies@quaker.org.uk



A3 books can be bought from arts and craft shops or from Hobbycraft at: <http://tinyurl.com/ck9c2n2> or from Mothercare or the Early Learning Centre at: <http://tinyurl.com/czwojta>

The additional resources listed in the text are available at:

<http://www.quaker.org.uk/resources-children>

Respond

The Bible is a Big Book. *Resources: Drawing and colouring equipment; journals or notebooks; some Bibles with pictures; the pictures that you pulled from the Bible in Engage – from Additional Resource 59.B.*

This activity encourages children to make Bible stories their own, making their own sense of them by thinking, drawing and, maybe, writing. Spread out the story pictures on the table or floor. Following on from the conversation had about different stories (see *Engage on page 2*) direct children to where drawing, colouring and writing things are set out. Also point out where there are picture books to look at. Simply ask children to draw, write or colour in their journals or notebooks something about one or more stories from the Bible that they know or has been talked about. They might also have a favourite. Say that if anybody doesn't know a story or wants some help with one you are very happy to help them. Check that you know something about the stories that you have put out. If you are asked for help try to keep the description of a story as simple and free of your own interpretation as possible. If there is time come back together as a group for children to share, if they want to, a little of what they have done.

The Bible and us. *Resources: The Bible and cloth from the Engage activity; a spiral bound, A3 sketch pad or scrap book (see sidebar); drawing and colouring equipment; glue sticks; copies of the 'face circle' with tab on Additional Resource 59.D these may work best if stuck on card.*

Keep the Bible on the cloth. Next to it lay down the A3 book. Say that this is going to be our big story book. Say that you want everybody to think of two things. The first is a story that is special to them, that they like a lot – it can be any story from any time of their life. The second is, if possible, a story from the Bible that they know or that they like. Hold up one of the cut out 'face circles'. Say that everybody will have two of the circles - one circle is for each story they have chosen. On one side of the circle you want everybody to quickly draw a face to show how the story they have chosen makes them feel – maybe happy, sad, angry, strong or something else. On the other side of the circle should be written the name of the story and a drawing of something from the story or that illustrates what the story is about. Younger ones may need help with this. Once these are complete invite any one who wants to to share what they have thought and done. The circles can then be stuck into the big book of stories using the tab and people's names added underneath each one. See *simple plan for all worship for a way to do this with the whole Meeting – here is the web address for the page:*

<http://www.quaker.org.uk/sites/default/files/Journeys-Issue-59-all-age-worship.pdf>

The Bible and children. This activity is drawn from *Journeys in the Spirit with children aged 0 to 4*. See sidebar for details of how to obtain a copy.

A big picture of children and adults: *Resources: Pictures of children and adults cut out of magazines; book covering sticky backed plastic; masking tape; plain sheets of sugar or large paper.*

Say that everyone is going help make a big picture of lots of children and adults together in a Meeting for Worship – say that, just like the story of Jesus and the children told in Engage on page 2, the adults have to be kind to the children and make sure they can join in. Spread out an assortment of cut out pictures of children and adults. Position a piece of book covering sticky backed plastic on a table with the sticky side up. Use *masking tape to stick down the corners*. Encourage children to choose a few pictures to place on the sticky paper. Cover all the sticky spaces. Talk about the choices and decisions the children make as they do it. When finished stick the pictures onto the large sheet of paper and label it with a title; ask children what they would call it.

Reflect

At the end of the Respond activity come back together for a little quiet time. Say something like:

'Before the stories in the Bible were first written down on paper made from dried reeds picked by rivers and then on paper a bit like we have today people would sit in circles on the ground and tell stories – just like we do. Telling stories helped them. Hearing stories they had heard before was comforting, sometimes cosy. They also remembered the things the old stories taught them. Hearing or making up new stories could be exciting, sad, happy, interesting and helpful in understanding problems or getting through hard times. So, after a long, long, long time people, just like us, are still sitting together like people in the Bible listening to, telling and sharing stories – about ourselves and other people and things.'

Now say, *'Let's just sit very still together for a few moments and imagine, think about all the people sitting together for hundreds, even thousands of years and hearing stories...and there are lots more to come.'* End by shaking hands with each other.



Review

Reviewing can happen at the time or later, and may be particularly helpful where a series of activities is planned around the same themes. Some useful questions to consider are:

- What went well, and why?
- What didn't go so well, and why?
- What might you do differently another time?
- What were children's responses to the Bible?
- Are you and the children ready to look at some Bible stories that will be in the next few issues of *Journeys in the Spirit*?

This issue was written by Chris Nickolay and edited by Howard Nurden. Walter Storey wrote the Topical activity.

Issue 60 is about a range of ways to look at and explore the Creation story. This will be available on February 1st 2012.

Issue 61 explores the story of David and Goliath – how the smallest can challenge what appears to be very powerful. This will be available on March 1st 2012.

Issue 62 explores the story of the prodigal son – a story about families that has power and meaning today. This will be available on April 2nd 2012.

Materials available online are:

Current issue additional Resources Sheets

An easy to use plan for a Children's Meeting

A simple plan for an all age Meeting for Worship

A topical activity – more about planting trees

Also a 'How to use *Journeys in the Spirit*' guide; a link to special issues; an archive of previous issues; a discussion forum and a link to the *Journeys in the Spirit* Youth edition.

Go to:

www.quaker.org.uk/journeyschildren and choose from the range of links in the sidebar.

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