



Christian faith

The **Christian Faith** zone provides additional topics and activities for devotions to complement those in the 3 programme zones.

Devotional Ideas

Aim: To share the gospel with your young people.

Introduction:

The following is a series of devotional ideas to use with your young people.

Activity 1 A Special Birthday Invitation



5 mins



Any

Aim: To get the young people to think about what Christmas should be about.

Instructions:

As you well know, we are getting closer to my birthday. Every year there is a celebration in my honour and I think that this year the celebration will be repeated. During this time there are many people shopping for gifts, there are many radio announcements, TV commercials, and in every part of the world everyone is saying that my birthday is getting closer and closer. It is really very nice to know that at least once a year, some people think of me. As you know, the celebration of my birthday began many years ago. At first people seemed to understand and be thankful of all that I did for them, but in these times, no one seems to know the reason for the celebration. Family and friends get together and have a lot of fun, but they don't know the meaning of the celebration.

I remember that last year there was a great feast in my honour. The dinner table was full of delicious foods, pastries, fruits, assorted nuts and chocolates. The decorations were exquisite and there were many, many beautifully wrapped gifts. But, do you want to know something? I wasn't invited. I was the guest of honour and they didn't remember to send me an invitation! The party was for me, but when that great day came, I was left outside, they closed the door in my face..... and I wanted to be with them and share their table. In truth, that didn't surprise me because in the last few years all close their doors to me.

Since I was not invited, I decided to enter the party without making any noise. I went in and stood in a corner. They were all drinking; there were some who were drunk and telling jokes and laughing at everything. They were having a great time. To top it all, this big fat man all dressed in red wearing a long white beard entered the room yelling Ho-Ho-Ho! He seemed drunk. He sat on the sofa and all the children ran to him, saying: "Santa Claus, Santa Claus"... as if the party were in his honour!

At 12 midnight all the people began to hug each other; I extended my arms waiting for someone to hug me and ... do you know.... no one hugged me. Suddenly they all began to share gifts. They opened them one by one with great expectation. When all had been opened, I looked to see if, maybe, there was one for me. What would you feel if on your birthday, everybody shared gifts and you did not get one? I then understood that I was unwanted at that party and quietly left. Every year it gets worse. People only remember to eat and drink, the gifts, the parties and nobody remembers me.

This Christmas I would like you to allow me to enter into your life. I would like you to recognise the fact that almost two thousand years ago I came to this world to give my life for you, on the cross, to save you. Today, I only want you to believe this with all your heart. I want to share something with you. As many didn't invite me to their party, I will have my own celebration, a grandiose party that no one has ever imagined, and a spectacular party! I'm still making the final arrangements. Today I am sending out

many invitations and there is an invitation for you. I want to know if you wish to attend and I will make a reservation for you and write your name with golden letters in my great guest book. Only those on the guest list will be invited to the party. Those who don't answer the invitation, will be left outside.

Do you know how you can answer this invitation? It is by extending it to others whom you care for... I'll be waiting for all of you to attend my party this year... See you soon.... I love you!

– Jesus

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, as we approach this special time of year we remember that you came to us as a gift over 2000 years ago, but often that gift is forgotten as we get caught up in the commercialism of Christmas. As we give and receive presents this year let us remember the true meaning of the celebration and ensure that you are not left out in the cold. You are welcome to join in our celebration, although not just for Christmas Day but every day throughout the year. In your precious name we pray, Amen.

Activity 2 A Time for Everything



10 mins



Any

Aim: To allow reflection on what we really prioritise in life and how we use our time.

Equipment:

Visual Aids:

- See through plastic tube with 3 or 4 tennis balls
- Rice or sand, sufficient to fill $\frac{1}{2}$ of the tube

Instructions:

- Ask the young people what they like to do in their spare time when not at school or BB. Hold up the empty plastic tube, which represents our lifetime and then pour in the rice/sand, representing the spare time activities the young people have come up with. The tennis balls represent the important things in our life. The first represents family and friends and is placed in the tube, next is school/university or work and is also placed in the tube. Your youth group can be included in this ball if there are only 3 but if 4 the next would be the BB, as it is what brings us all together. The BB is a Christian organisation, with God at the head and therefore the last ball represents God. Now try and put the lid on the tube and you will find that it doesn't go. It looks as though there's not enough time in our life to do all the things we want to do so let's reorganise. Empty the tube.
- Let's refill it but this time put in the important things first. If God is the head of our organisation we should put him in first, followed by family and friends, as they will look after us throughout our life. Then school/university/work is what will pay the bills at the end of the month so put that in next. If you have four balls add the BB in next. There's still a bit of space at the top of the tube so we can add in some of our spare time activities. As you pour the rice/sand in, it will slip down past the tennis balls and fill up the gaps. You should manage to get all the rice/sand in and be able to close the lid.
- By putting God first in our lives and through careful planning we can manage to do all that we want in our lives. Look back at the tube, there is still more room available, so the next time we say we don't have time to do that let us think about how if we put God first and ask for his help, we will be able to organise our lives in order that we can do that little extra.

In the Bible we are shown that there is a time for everything that we want to do:

Reading: Ecclesiastes 3: 1-12

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, so often we feel that there is not enough time to do everything that we want to in our lives. There are so many things pulling on what seems like a scarce resource but if we organise our lives properly we can find a time for everything. Our time here on earth is a gift from you, help us to use it wisely, not only in our pursuit of enjoyment but in ways that are pleasing to you. Allow us to make the best use of the short time that we have here on earth, fulfilling the plan that you have for each of us. All this we ask in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen.

Activity 3 Why Change?



10 mins



Any

Aim: To share the idea that in life things progress.

Equipment:

Visual Aids:

- 78rpm record
- Vinyl LP
- CD
- Mini Disc
- mp3 player/iPod

(It is not essential to have them all)

Instructions:

- Hold up the 78rpm record and ask if anyone knows what it is? Does anyone have them at home and still use them? When they were first introduced they were great, bringing the live music sound into homes, making singing stars of the day more accessible to everyone. Hold up the vinyl record, hopefully this may be more recognisable, although with the age group they may not. What is the difference, they both look the same? Its not as heavy, a bit more flexible, and a bit better quality. The CD will be well recognised. Again the same shape but a great deal smaller and far better quality, the vinyl record was prone to scratching which led to the needle jumping. Comparing the CD to the 78 record there are far more songs on the CD, so although it has become smaller, technology has improved. When we get to the mp3 player or iPod we have something which is even the fraction of a CD but can hold hundreds of tracks, with again increased quality.
- New advances in technology have led to many things which we take for granted these days. Take modern computers and laptops, they can be easily carried around and have far greater capacity than the original computers, which almost needed a whole room just to store the components to make it work. So why change? Well would you rather have a portable music centre which fits in your top pocket or have to wait until you get home and have to wind up the Gramophone to play one song, before you have to manually change the record to hear the next one?
- The success of the BB is down to change as well. Sometimes the idea of change does not go down well but most of the time it is for the best and making sure that the organisation is as relevant for the 21st Century young person as it was for William Smith's first company back in 1883. One thing that is unchanging about The BB though is that it remains unashamedly Christian. The object is as relevant now as it was back in 1883, 'The advancement of Christ's kingdom...' The other thing that remains unchanged is God's love for each and everyone of us, it is the same today as it was in the past and will continue to be into the future, and what is even better is that God does not put any conditions on his love, it is there for us, we only have to ask.

Reading: Hebrews 13: 7-9

Prayer:

Loving Lord, we thank you that you are the same today as you were yesterday and that you will continue to be the same forever. So many things in our lives change daily and it is good to have a constant. We give you thanks for the advances in modern technology, which help us in our daily tasks. In a world of change guide and direct us so that we don't just change for the sake of it but that we can see a benefit to ourselves and the organisation that we are all privileged to be a part of. In your name we pray, Amen.

Activity 4 Collision Course



10 mins



Any

Aim: To prompt the young people to be prepared to depend on God rather than themselves.

Instructions:

- This is the transcript of the actual radio conversation of a US naval ship with Canadian authorities off the coast of Newfoundland.

Canadians – please divert your course 15 degrees to the South to avoid a collision

Americans – recommend you divert your course 15 degrees to the North to avoid a collision

Canadians – negative. You will have to divert your course 15 degrees to the South to avoid a collision

Americans – this is the Captain of a US Navy ship. I say again, divert YOUR course

Canadians – No. I say again, you divert YOUR course

Americans – This is the aircraft carrier U.S.S. Lincoln, the second largest ship in the United States Atlantic Fleet. We are accompanied by three destroyers, three cruisers and numerous support vessels. I demand that you change your course 15 degrees north; I say again, that's one five degrees north, or counter measures will be undertaken to ensure the safety of this ship

Canadians – This is a lighthouse. Your call.

- Think about a situation that you have got yourself into; hopefully it won't be as serious as the ship in the story. How easy is it to admit that you are wrong or that it is your action that should be changed? We can all be strong willed at times, not wanting to back down, as we feel it might be a sign of weakness. All too often backing down will be the exact opposite, it is admitting that you are strong enough to stand up and say, "I was wrong". Even if you know you are right, is there a point to continue arguing about something or will it be better if the two parties can sit down and talk things through? Throughout the Bible there are many stories of people who have thought they were right and were not prepared to back down, but like them we need to consider what God would have us do. What faith do we have in him to guide us through a particular situation? When you find yourself in this position think about what God would want and take the situation to him in prayer and find the better way to a solution.

Reading: Romans 12: 1-3

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, when we are strong willed and not willing to back down on a situation help us to bring the challenge to you, to share our thoughts with you but whilst we do this help us to listen to the answer you give. We know that through the faith we have in you that you will always guide us along the right path and walk with us, or carry us, when the going gets tough. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Activity 5 P.U.S.H.



10 mins



Any

Aim: To teach the young people to rely on God and pray until something happens.

Instructions:

A man was sleeping at night in his cabin when suddenly his room filled with light, and the Lord appeared and told him that he had work for him to do, and showed him a large rock in front of his cabin. The Lord explained that the man was to push against the rock with all his might. This the man did, day after day. For many years he toiled from sun up to sun down, his shoulders set squarely against the cold, massive surface of the unmoving rock, pushing with all his might. Each night the man returned to his cabin sore, and worn out, feeling that his whole day had been spent in vain.

Since the man was showing signs of discouragement, the Devil decided to enter the picture by placing thoughts into the man's weary mind: "You have been pushing against that rock for a long time, and it hasn't budged. Why kill yourself over this? You are never going to move it." This gave the man the impression that the task was impossible and that he was a failure. These thoughts discouraged and disheartened the man. "Why kill myself over this?" he thought. "I'll just put in my time, giving just the minimum effort; and that will be good enough." And that is what he planned to do, until one day he decided to make it a matter of prayer and take his troubled thoughts to the Lord. "Lord," he said, "I have laboured long and hard in your service, putting all my strength to do that which you have asked. Yet, after all this time, I have not even budged that rock by half a millimetre. What is wrong? Why am I failing?"

The Lord responded compassionately, "My friend, when I asked you to serve me and you accepted, I told you that your task was to push against the rock with all your strength, which you have done. Never once did I mention to you that I expected you to move it. Your task was to push. And now you come to me with your strength spent, thinking that you have failed. But is that really so? Look at yourself. Your arms are strong and muscled, your hands are callused from constant pressure, and your legs have become massive and hard. Through opposition you have grown much, and your abilities now surpass that which you used to have. Yet you haven't moved the rock. But your calling was to be obedient and to push and to exercise your faith and trust in My wisdom. This you have done. I, my friend, will now move the rock."

At times, when we hear a word from God, we tend to use our own intellect to decide what He wants, when actually what God wants is just simple obedience and faith in Him.... By all means, exercise the faith that moves mountains, but know that it is still God who moves the mountains. The man in the story had picked up the wrong end of the stick but when he came to God in prayer he discovered what God really wanted.

Reading: John 14: 12-14

As Jesus promised that he would do anything that we asked for in his name through prayer, let us pray:

Prayer:

When everything seems to go wrong ... help us to P.U.S.H.!

When the job gets us down ... help us to P.U.S.H.!

When people don't react the way we think they should ... help us to P.U.S.H.!

When it feels like people just don't understand us... help us to P.U.S.H.!

Heavenly Father in everything we do help us to P.U.S.H – Pray Until Something Happens!

In Jesus' name, Amen

Activity 6 Problems or Challenges?



10 mins



Any

Aim: To allow young people to see beyond a problem to a solution.

Instructions:

- Ask the young people how many of them have problems, it could relate to things at school, at home or in the BB. Now ask them again, how many of them are problems or are they challenges that need a bit of extra work to solve. Perhaps they are looking for the easy option, which isn't there and the alternative is not appealing due to the extra effort that will be required. If we face up to our challenges they often bring us the most satisfaction when the task is complete and in some cases can lead to an improvement in the way we approach something in the future. Here's a story which will help to illustrate this point:

In ancient times, a king had a boulder placed on a roadway. Then he hid himself and watched to see if anyone would remove the huge rock. Some of the king's wealthiest merchants and courtiers came by and simply walked around it. Many loudly blamed the king for not keeping the roads clear, but none did anything about getting the stone out of the way. Then a peasant came along carrying a load of vegetables. Upon approaching the boulder, the peasant laid down his burden and tried to move the stone to the side of the road. After much pushing and straining, he finally succeeded. After the peasant picked up his load of vegetables, he noticed a purse lying in the road where the boulder had been. The purse contained many gold coins and a note from the king indicating that the gold was for the person who removed the boulder from the roadway. The peasant learned what many of us never understand. Every obstacle presents an opportunity to improve our condition.

Reading: Galatians 6: 1-10

- The next time you think you have a problem with something, take a step back and consider whether it is a problem or more of a challenge, which may provide an opportunity for you in the future. Whatever the challenge we face in our lives we are safe in the knowledge that we don't have to face it alone, we may have family or friends we can turn to for help but more importantly we have God to turn to for guidance. God will not ask us to do something which he knows we will not be able to do and will be there to support us along the way, sometimes providing help in the unlikeliest of places. Share your challenges with God and He will show you the opportunities they provide.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, we thank you that you are with us at all times and that you will share in the challenges that face us throughout our lives. We know that you won't turn your back on us; no matter how bad things may get and that you won't ask us to do anything, which you know is beyond our abilities. Guide and direct us in everything we do and reveal to us the opportunities that may be there for us when a challenge is complete. All this we ask in Jesus' name. Amen



Tips / Advice:

- Be sensitive to young people who may be facing challenges that appear hopeless.

Activity 7 The Brick



10 mins



Any

Aim: To help young people to be aware of those around us and how God wants to use us.

Instructions:

A young and successful executive was travelling down a neighbourhood street, going a bit too fast in his new Jaguar. He was watching for children darting out from between parked cars and slowed down when he thought he saw something. As his car passed, no children appeared. Instead, a brick smashed into the Jag's side door! He slammed on the brakes and reversed the Jag back to the spot where the brick had been thrown. The angry driver then jumped out of the car, grabbed the nearest child and pushed him up against a parked car shouting, "What was that all about and who are you? Just what did you think you were doing? That's a new car and that brick you threw is going to cost a lot of money. Why did you do it?"

The young boy was apologetic. "Please, mister...please, I'm sorry but I didn't know what else to do," He pleaded. "I threw the brick because no one else would stop..." With tears dripping down his face and off his chin, the youth pointed to a spot just around a parked car. "It's my brother," he said. "He rolled off the kerb and fell out of his wheelchair and I can't lift him up." Now sobbing, the boy asked the stunned executive, "Would you please help me get him back into his wheelchair? He's hurt and he's too heavy for me." Moved beyond words, the driver tried to swallow the rapidly swelling lump in his throat. He hurriedly lifted the disabled boy back into his wheelchair, then took out a linen handkerchief and dabbed at the fresh scrapes and cuts. A quick look told him everything was going to be okay. "Thank you and may God bless you," the grateful child told the stranger.

Too shaken up for words, the man simply watched the boy push his wheelchair-bound brother down the footpath toward their home. It was a long, slow walk back to the Jaguar. The damage was very noticeable, but the driver never bothered to repair the dented side door. He kept the dent there to remind him of this message "Don't go through life so fast that someone has to throw a brick at you to get your attention!" God whispers in our souls and speaks to our hearts. Sometimes when we don't have time to listen, He has to throw a brick at us. It's our choice to listen or not.

Reading: Matthew 24: 42-44

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, in a fast moving world, where we sometimes don't appreciate all that is around us, keep us focused on our surroundings. Where others are in need, prepare us to be of help to them. Help us to appreciate that all we see and touch, has been given by you and that for much of it we are only custodians, looking after things for future generations. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Activity 8 The Centre of the Bible



10 mins



Any

Aim: To suggest that the Bible provides a guide to living our lives.

Instructions:

What is the first thing you do when you get a new gadget? You play with it trying to see what it does and how it works. Most gadgets come with instruction books but we are so intent on having a go that the instructions become more of a last resort, when we can't get something to work. By taking a bit of time at the start we could find out exactly how to do everything. Wouldn't it be great if we had an instruction book for our lives, something that would make things easier and guide us in the right direction?

Well we have, it's called the Bible, 1500 years in the writing, 44 authors, 2 testaments, 66 books, 1189 chapters, 31,173 verses and 773,692 words. The Bible is an amazing book, so many great stories in one place, and so many practical examples of how to live our lives, advice on many different situations we may find ourselves in. It's great to come up with so many statistics about the Bible but we mustn't forget about the content, what lies at the centre of this great book. This leads to a few more statistics:

The shortest chapter in the Bible is Psalm 117, with only 2 verses.

The longest chapter in the Bible is Psalm 119, with 176 verses.

The chapter between them is Psalm 118

Prior to Psalm 118 there are 594 chapters

After Psalm 118 there are 594 chapters

So this must be the centre of the Bible

If we add the number before and after we get 1188

And if we read that as 118 verse 8 then we find the verse

'It is better to trust in the Lord than put confidence in man'

Wise words indeed. When we go in search of the centre of the Bible, it should be no surprise that we find God, just in the same way that if we look to the heart of the BB we find God. If we need reminding of how God feels about us all then we only need turn back to the shortest chapter:

Reading: Psalm 117

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank you for the gift of our instruction manual for life and for all the wonderful things that it contains. Help us to get to know you better through regular study of your Word. At times we may struggle with the meaning of a particular passage but through sharing our experiences with each other we can reach a better understanding. Through our time in the BB may we fulfil our object and continue to advance Christ's kingdom. And it is in his name that we offer you this prayer, Amen.

Activity 9 What Goes Around, Comes Around



10 mins



Any

Aim: To suggest to young people that we should never underestimate the power of a kind act.

Instructions:

Ask the group if they have ever done a good deed for someone? How did it make them feel? Did anything special happen to them as a result of their action? Here's a story about someone who did a good deed:

His name was Fleming, and he was a poor Scottish farmer. One day, while trying to make a living for his family, he heard a cry for help coming from a nearby bog. He dropped his tools and ran to the bog. There, mired to his waist in black muck, was a terrified boy, screaming and struggling to free himself. Farmer Fleming saved the lad from what could have been a slow and terrifying death. The next day, a fancy carriage pulled up to the Scotsman's sparse surroundings. An elegantly dressed nobleman stepped out and introduced himself as the father of the boy Farmer Fleming had saved.

"I want to repay you," said the nobleman. "You saved my son's life." "No, I can't accept payment for what I did," the Scottish farmer replied waving off the offer. At that moment, the farmer's own son came to the door of the family hovel. "Is that your son?" the nobleman asked. "Yes," the farmer replied proudly. "I'll make you a deal. Let me provide him with the level of education my own son will enjoy. If the lad is anything like his father, he'll no doubt grow to be a man we both will be proud of." And that he did. Farmer Fleming's son attended the very best schools and in time, graduated from St. Mary's Hospital Medical School in London, and went on to become known throughout the world as the noted Sir Alexander Fleming, the discoverer of Penicillin. Years afterward, the same nobleman's son who was saved from the bog was stricken with pneumonia. What saved his life this time? Penicillin. The name of the nobleman? Lord Randolph Churchill. His son's name? Sir Winston Churchill.

There is an old saying, "What goes around comes around." Father Fleming saved the boy because he was in danger of losing his life. I am sure he didn't stop to think, "What can I get out of this?" I am also sure that he could never have imagined that his son would benefit from a good education and go on to discover something, which we take for granted nowadays or that the boy, whose life he saved, would also be saved again by his own son, as a result of the medicine he had discovered. Jesus, when teaching used parables and one was about separating the sheep from the goats and here's part of that parable:

Reading: Matthew 25:34-40

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, we thank you that you provide everything that we need in life. Continue to watch over us, keep us safe from harm and help us to be mindful of the needs of others. We do not know what will become as a result of a kind act. When things happen in our lives we know they are not a coincidence but all part of the plan that you have for each of us. Show us what you have planned for each of us when the time is right and help us to walk in the path which Christ has prepared for us, in his name we pray, Amen.

Activity 10 What can I bring?



10 mins



Any

Aim: To make young people aware of the skills and abilities that they have to offer.

Equipment:

- Visual Aid: 1 Muffin (any flavour)
- 2oz (50g) soft brown sugar
- 8oz (225g) self raising flour
- 2oz (50g) margarine
- 2 beaten eggs
- 6flox (175ml) milk

Instructions:

When you consider this list of ingredients it doesn't seem much as it stands but by mixing them together in a particular way and baking it for 15 to 20 mins then the individual ingredients take on a completely different appearance and whilst you may not consider eating the ingredients individually you may not think twice about eating this muffin. You may have eaten many of these in the past but have you considered just what was inside them. With some food if you did know what was inside you probably wouldn't even consider eating it. The recipe for muffins has probably been passed down over many years and there will have been much experimentation with different additional ingredients to produce different flavoured results, but at some point in the past someone must have experimented with combining the ingredients in a specific way to make the original muffin – perhaps it was an accident whilst trying to make something else.

All the ingredients in a recipe will be there for a different purpose. It may be to add flavour, to bind the dry ingredients together, to add body to the mixture or make the final product rise. Whatever their purpose they are all required, too much or too little of one type would be disastrous. If we think of it in terms of a BB football team for example, where would the team be if there were 11 goalkeepers or if everyone was in defence or midfield? It would lead to a fairly boring game. The teams we have are made up of the right people for the right job, allowing them to use the skills they have to make the game exciting. The leaders in your group are a bit like that as well, each of them will have a strength they can bring to the group, something they are good at and can share with you to make your time in the BB more interesting. Whether we are in the football team or on a leader in the BB the skills we can bring to the team are as a result of gifts that have been given to us by God. We may have skills that we don't know about yet but will become apparent when the time is right, but whenever we discover them we should use them as God wants us to.

Reading: Romans 12: 3-8

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank you for the gifts that you have given us and help us to use them as you would want. We thank you that we have all been created differently and that as individuals with different skills we can come together and work as a team. In all that we do help the results to be pleasing to you and be with us as we continue to advance Christ's kingdom among the people we meet. All this we ask in Jesus' name, Amen.

Activity 11 Whoever takes the son...?



10 mins



Any

Aim: To teach the young people that through accepting Jesus into our lives we get the greatest reward.

Instructions:

A wealthy man and his son loved to collect rare works of art. They had everything in their collection, from Picasso to Raphael. They would often sit together and admire the great works of art. When the war broke out, the son went off to fight. He was very courageous and died in battle while rescuing another soldier. The father was mortified and grieved deeply for his only son.

About a month later, just before Christmas, there was a knock at the door. A young man stood at the door with a large package in his hands. He said, "Sir, you don't know me, but I am the soldier for whom your son gave his life. He saved many lives that day, and he was carrying me to safety when a bullet struck him in the heart and he died instantly. He often talked about you, and your love for art." The young man held out this package. "I know this isn't much. I'm not really a great artist, but I think your son would have wanted you to have this." The father opened the package. It was a portrait of his son, painted by the young man. He stared in awe at the way the soldier had captured the personality of his son in the painting. The father was so drawn to the eyes that his own eyes welled up with tears. He thanked the young man and offered to pay him for the picture. "Oh, no sir, I could never repay what your son did for me. It's a gift." The father hung the portrait over his mantle. Every time visitors came to his home he took them to see the portrait of his son before he showed them any of the other great works he had collected.

The man died a few months later. There was to be a great auction of his paintings. Many influential people gathered, excited over seeing the great paintings and having an opportunity to purchase one for their collection. On the platform sat the painting of the son. The auctioneer pounded his gavel. "We will start the bidding with this picture of the son. Who will bid for this picture?" There was silence. Then a voice in the back of the room shouted, "We want to see the famous paintings. Skip this one." But the auctioneer persisted. "Will somebody bid for this painting? Who will start the bidding? £100, £200?" Another voice angrily. "We didn't come to see this painting. We came to see the Van Gogh's, the Rembrandts. Get on with the real bids!" But still the auctioneer continued. "The son! The son! Who'll take the son?" Finally, a voice came from the very back of the room. It was the long time gardener of the man and his son. "I'll give £10 for the painting." Being a poor man, it was all he could afford. "We have £10, who will bid £20?" "Give it to him for £10. Let's see the masters." The crowd was becoming angry. They didn't want the picture of the son. They wanted the more worthy investments for their collections. The auctioneer pounded the gavel. "Going once, twice, SOLD for £10!" A man sitting on the second row shouted, "Now let's get on with the collection!" The auctioneer laid down his gavel. "I'm sorry, the auction is over." "What about the paintings?" "I am sorry, when I was called to conduct this auction, I was told of a secret stipulation in the will. I was not allowed to reveal that stipulation until this time. Only the painting of the son would be auctioned. Whoever bought that painting would inherit the entire estate, including the paintings. The man who took the son gets everything!"

Reading: John 3: 16-21

God gave His son 2000 years ago to die on the cross. Much like the auctioneer, His message today is: "The son, the son, who'll take the son?" Because, you see, whoever takes the Son gets everything.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, we thank you that you loved us so much that you gave Jesus to die on the cross for us. This is a debt that we can never repay but just as Jesus gave up his life for us so we give our lives to you, shape us and mould us in the way you would have us be and let us show love for one another in the same way you show us your love. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Activity 12 Let the Children Come to Me



10 mins



Any

Aim: To inform young people that God is never too tired or busy to listen to us.

Equipment:

- Bible

Instructions:

- Are there times when you have felt that someone is too busy to listen to you, be with you, or to help you with something?
- Can you remember instances or how you felt? Because they are only human, our parents, our teachers and even our friends do at times appear too busy or even too tired for us.
- Do you ever feel it is because you are a young person that you don't get listened to and that if you were an adult you might get more attention?

Read: Luke 18 v 15-17

- In the reading Jesus is about to have a well-earned rest and his disciples are trying to protect him from interruptions.
- But people are desperate to see him and to bring their children to him.
- The disciples tell the people off for disturbing him, but Jesus actually calls to the children to come over – he wants to see them and be with them.
- Jesus is never too tired or too busy to listen to us or just to be with us.
- Jesus stands up for the young people and actually tells the adults that God's Kingdom belongs to young people and that they are very important and that sometimes their attitude can help older people learn about God.

Prayer:

Thank you God that you think each one of us here is so important and that you value the qualities of our youth and love us for them. Thank you that you are never too busy for us and in a short moment of silence we share with you now a worry we have or a happy moment we want to remember with you, knowing that you are listening to each one of us. Amen.

Activity 13 A Dream of Heaven



10 mins



Any

Aim: To share with the young people a vision of heaven.

Equipment:

- Bible

Instructions:

- What do you imagine heaven to be like?
- What do you think Christians imagine heaven to be like?
- What things would you like to think do not exist in heaven?
- What things would you like to think did exist in heaven?
- John had a dream – a 'revelation' that this is what heaven is like.

Read: Revelation 21 v 1-4

- Did you include no tears, no mourning, no crying and no pain?
- What things in the world today, would we be better off without?

Prayer:

Dear God

You want us to hope and dream for a time when things that hurt and sadden and destroy are no more. We pray that one day this hope and vision of heaven may come about on earth. Amen.

Activity 14 Things the Lord Hates



10 mins



Any

Aim: To explore what God hates.

Equipment:

- Bible

Instructions:

- What do you think are the worst things that people do?
- Make a list of them.
- In Proverbs it says that there are 7 things which are an abomination to God.

Read: Proverbs 6 v 16-19

- Do any things in the reading agree with those on your list?
- Are you surprised by any?

Prayer:

Dear God,

We pray for the coming of your Kingdom when there will be no more trouble, no killing, no evil, no fighting. Help us to do your will and show your love to the world. Amen.

Activity 15 God as Father



10 mins



Any

Aim: To share with the young people that God is their Father.

Equipment:

- Bible

Instructions:

- What do you find embarrassing about your dad?
- What things would you admit are really good about your dad?
- How can we begin to understand what God is like?
- We are stuck using human language and ideas for something that is beyond our understanding. Christians have to try to work out at least something about what God is like if they are to be able to relate to him.

Read: Luke 11 v 2

- One picture Jesus gave of what God is like is the idea of a Father. He taught his followers to call God 'Our Father'.
- For many people this is not a helpful image because their fathers may have been far from perfect.
- In fact no-one's father is perfect.
- But, if God is like an ideal father, what does that say he is like?
- Think back to the things you might admit are really good about your dad (e.g. He loves you and looks after you).
- If God is like the perfect Father then, what is he like?
- Does that help your picture of God at all?

Prayer:

Dear God,

We pray for all who have had or have a difficult relationship with their fathers. Thank you that we can understand a little of what you are like when we think of you as our Father.

We say the Lord's Prayer together

'Our Father....'

.....Amen.

**Tips / Advice:**

- Be sensitive towards those who might not have positive experiences with their father.

Activity 16 If you could have anything at all what would you have?



10 mins



Any

Aim: To encourage young people to desire the important things in life.

Equipment:

- Bible

Instructions:

- If you could have anything at all in the world, what would it be?
- How would it change and improve your life?
- If you could have any ideal quality of character what would you like?
- How would that make a difference to your life?
- God told Solomon to ask for anything at all.

Read: 1 Kings 3 v 3-14

- How helpful would wisdom be in life?
- In retrospect might you ask for wisdom instead of any earlier things you thought of?
- What problems would 'wisdom' solve?

Prayer:

Dear God

Please show us what are the important things in our lives and give us those qualities of character that will help us to live in peace, love and happiness with others. Amen.

Activity 17 The Lord is My Shepherd



10 mins



Any

Aim: To reveal what God is like.

Equipment:

- Bible

Instructions:

- Why would God be likened to a shepherd? What characteristics of a shepherd can be compared to how God cares for us?
- What can we learn about God from this description?

- What other jobs could you substitute for a shepherd and get helpful meanings and an understanding about what God is like from? E.g. The Lord is my gardener (i.e. God tends me, helps me to grow, feeds me spiritually, cares for me, prunes/corrects me...).

Read: Psalm 23

- You may like to try and write your own Psalm.
- Use it as your own private prayer.

Prayer:

Dear God

We thank you for wonderful Psalms, which although they are so many years old, help us to remember that they are inspired by your great love for us today. Amen.

Activity 18 Ups and Downs



10 mins



Any

Aim: To reveal that Jesus is with us throughout the good and bad times.

Equipment:

- Bible

Instructions:

Read: Mark 9 v 2-8

- Imagine how the disciples felt.
- They wanted to stay on the mountain top as long as they could: it was such an amazing experience.
- What times and occasions can you think of that you have just wanted to go on and on and not stop?
- Why were they so special?
- In a moment of quiet, recall those times before God and thank him for them.
- The moment with Jesus on the mountain didn't last long, and immediately the disciples and Jesus went down from the mountain they were confronted with a situation where a father was asking Jesus' disciples to cast out a spirit from his son – but the disciples could not do it. Jesus questioned their faith. So the disciples came from a real high to a real low.
- What really low moments can you remember?
- Why were they so bad?
- The experience of Jesus and the disciples shows us that this is the way life is – we have highs and lows and less dramatic times in between. It is not odd. It is the way life is.
- Notice how for the disciples Jesus was with them in both the highs and the lows.

Prayer:

Dear God,

Thank you for those really special moments in our lives. Help us to value them. Thank you that you share those times with us. Thank you that you are with us in the lower moments of our lives. Give us the strength to cope with them and learn from them. Amen.

Activity 19 Helping Others, Helping Jesus



10 mins



Any

Aim: To share with young people that by helping someone else it is as if we are actually helping Jesus.

Equipment:

- Bible

Instructions:

- Can you think of something you have done today for someone else?
- Anything in the past week?

Read: Matthew 25 v 31-45

- What might the reading suggest about the significance of what you did?
- The parable says that, whenever you feed the hungry or welcome a stranger etc., you are feeding and welcoming Jesus.
- Think of a person you have helped.
- Is it strange to think of your actions as helping and welcoming Jesus?
- What does it imply about those who are in need?
- It is odd to think of other people having Jesus within them?
- How does it follow then that Christians should treat other people?

Prayer:

Dear Jesus,
Help us to respect and to care for those in need. Remind us that even the smallest thing we do for others is something we are doing for you. Help us to look at others and see you in them. Amen.

Activity 20 Be Angry But Do Not Sin



10 mins



Any

Aim: To get the young people to think about how we can use anger constructively.

Equipment:

- Bible

Instructions:

- What sort of things make you angry?
- For each of those think about what you do as a result of that anger.

- What are hurtful responses to anger?
- Can you think of a time when you have felt angry and reacted badly as a result?
- What happened?
- How easy is it to be angry and yet not to react badly?
- What do people get angry with you about?
- And what do they do with that anger?
- Could they deal with it in another way or is their way OK?
- Is it easy to control anger?
- What things should we get angry about?
- How should we use that anger to best effect?

Read: Ephesians 4 v 26

- Paul says 'do not let the sun go down on your anger'.
- Why do you think he said that?

Prayer:

Dear God

You know that we are only human and cannot help getting angry, but give us the wisdom to know how to use that anger and help us not to upset or hurt others as a result. Show us the things we should be angry about and help us to fight for justice and peace in a way that will show your love. Amen.

Activity 21 God Shows No Favouritism



10 mins



Any

Aim: To show that God values everyone and their differences.

Equipment:

- Bible

Instructions:

- Do any of your teachers at school have 'favourites'?
- Can you think of any examples when you are treated differently to someone else?
- Can you think of examples of people who might not get chosen for certain jobs because of other reasons than their ability?
- Can you think of any other instances where favouritism is shown?

Read: Acts 10 v 34-35

- Peter says in Acts that God has no favourites.
- What does this say about how God thinks of you?
- What does this imply about how Christians should regard all people?

Prayer:

Dear God,

Thank you that you love each one of us equally, and have no favourites, whatever our age, our position in society, our race, our abilities as long as we try to serve you. Help us treat others in the same way. Amen.

Activity 22 The Paralysed Man



10 mins



Any

Aim: To provide the opportunity to bring their concerns to Jesus.

Equipment:

- Bible

Instructions:

Read: Mark 2 v 1-12

- Jesus was teaching in a house in Capernaum.
- So many people were there that there was no more room in the house.
- Four men had carried a paralysed man to Jesus, but since they could not get into the house, they went onto the roof and removed the tiles above him and lowered the paralysed man down to Jesus through the roof.
- When Jesus saw their faith he healed the paralysed man, and he was able to get up and walk.
- Think of someone you are concerned about – someone who is ill maybe, or worried or unhappy or what ever.....
- Imagine placing that person in front of Jesus and asking him to help.....

Prayer:

Dear Jesus,

We know that you care for everyone and that you don't like to see anyone suffer in any way. Please be with those we are concerned about now and give them your peace and love. In silence we bring to you somebody we would wish you to help. Amen.

Activity 23 John the Baptist



10 mins



Any

Aim: To encourage the young people to share with others the blessings that they have.

Equipment:

- Bible

Instructions

Read: Luke 3 v 10-11

- John the Baptist said these words when he was asked how people should get ready to meet the Christ – Jesus.
- How would you expect Christians to behave and live?
- What would you expect Christians to do?

- What would make them stand out?
- John tells people to share what they have with people who have not got enough – to share food and clothes. Giving money to help the poor would be included in this.
- Do you think this is what a Christian should do?
- Are you aware of Christians or organisations that do this?
- What else could Christians give, apart from food, clothes, money? Perhaps time and talents.

Prayer:

Dear God,

John the Baptist encouraged those who were trying to follow God to share what they had with those who did not have enough. Please help us to be grateful for the many things that we have and time to give some of what we have to those in need. Amen.

Activity 24 The Angels and the Shepherds



10 mins



Any

Aim: To think of situations that need God's peace.

Equipment:

- Bible

Instructions:

Read: Luke 2 v 8-14

- The angels came with the message to the shepherds that a Saviour had been born and they sang praises to God. Saving the world seemed to include bringing peace to the world – they sang 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men...'
- Jesus came to bring peace.
- Think of how peace in all sorts of situations today would change and transform the world.....
- Can you think of a problem or situation that would be resolved or made better if there was peace between the parties involved?
- What situations at home, at school, in the world do you think need peace?

Prayer:

In a moment of silence we bring before God all the situations we can think of where peace would change things for the better.....

Father let your loving hand be seen in these situations.

Glory to God in the highest and peace to his people on earth. We pray that Jesus will bring peace on earth today. Amen.

Activity 25 The Choosing of the Disciples



10 mins



Any

Aim: To help young people be grateful for their friends.

Equipment:

- Bible

Instructions:

Read: Luke 6 v 12-16

- How many disciples' names can you remember from the reading?
- Think of all your friends one by one, thinking about what you like about them and why you enjoy their company and why you chose them to be your friends?
- Why do you think people have chosen you to be their friend?
- Jesus was not only choosing people to learn from him, but he was choosing people to be his companions, to go around with him, to be his friends.
- People he could talk to and share things with.
- People he wanted especially to be with.

Prayer:

Thank you God for my friends. Friendship is a wonderful thing. Thank you that you understand how important friends are. Privately we name our friends giving thanks for them and all that they mean to us. Amen.

Activity 26 Creation



10 mins



Any

Aim: To explore how we should treat God's creations.

Equipment:

- Bible

Instructions:

Read: Genesis 1 (Select and read out just the relevant parts)

- The point of the Creation story is to state the belief that God made the world – not to make any scientific claims about how long it took to create.
- Another point is that God gave humans the responsibility of ruling over the earth.

- What do good – ideal – rulers do?
 - Do they want the best for everyone in their care?
 - Try to treat everyone fairly?
 - Make sure no one is exploited?
 - Use their power to help everyone?
- So – how should Christians then carry out their responsibility to rule the earth?
 - Look after Creation – don't pollute
 - Do not abuse/exploit animals
 - Do not do things that only help humans
- In what ways can you see that people today are fair rulers of Creation?
- Is there any thing we can do ourselves to be part of ruling the earth in a way that God would want?

Prayer:

Dear God

Thank you for the wonderful world that you have created. Help us to understand our responsibility to care for everything that is in it. Help each one of us to do what ever we can, however small, to respect and care for your world. Amen.

Activity 27 Still Small Voice



10 mins



Any

Aim: To make young people aware of a way that God might be speaking to them.

Equipment:

- Bible

Instructions:

- How would you expect God to make himself known to the world?
- How would you expect God to make people listen to him?
- What signs might you expect to see to know that God is here?

Read: 1 Kings 19 v 9-13

- Elijah had been having a difficult time.
- Everyone seemed to have turned away from God and he was scared, so he ran off to hide.
- He stood on a mountain top and wanted God to come to him.
- A great strong wind came, but God was not in it.
- An earthquake came but God was not in that either.
- A fire came – still no God.
- Then a small voice spoke and that was God speaking to Elijah.
- In what 'small' ways does God speak in the world today?
- What good/caring/loving things are happening in the world, in your school, at Brigade, among your friends, in your home?
- All these are ways in which God speaks and shows His presence.
- Look out for the still small voice of God.

Prayer:

Dear God,
You are alive and working amongst us all the time in every good and loving thing that happens, help us to look out for you in our everyday lives. Amen.

Activity 28 Mary's Song – The Magnificat



10 mins



Any

Aim: To help young people feel excited about that God has done for them.

Equipment:

- Bible

Instructions:

- Think back to times and occasions when you have felt absolutely over the moon..... amazed at how lucky you are..... really, really happy... glad that you are you and no-one else...
- What type of things make you feel so on top of the world?
- And what do you do when you feel like that? How do you show your excitement? (Ring friends.. spend money!... Can't stop smiling?)

Read: Luke 1 v 46-55

- Mary was told that she had been chosen by God to give birth to His Son. A very frightening and exciting job..... Her response was to sing this song to God all about the wonderful things He has done.
- Can you remember any things she says?
For example:
 - She praises God because He asked someone as humble as her.
 - God does think that the poor and humble people in the world are important.
- Think again of those special moments when you felt elated..... enjoy the thought of them and thank God for them!

Prayer:

Dear God,
Thank you that Mary felt so excited and proud to be the Mother of Jesus. Thank you for those times when we feel excited. Our moments may not be anything like as important as Mary's but we know that you enjoy them with us. Amen.

Activity 29 Peter Walks on Water



10 mins



Any

Aim: To share with young people that we are never alone and that God is there for us.

Equipment:

- Bible

Instructions:

- Do you ever worry about things you have to do?
- Are there things that you think you will not be able to do?
- Do you ever worry about homework? Or things you have to do at Boys' Brigade?
- Do you worry about what you will do in the future in terms of education or a job?

Read: Matthew 14 v 22-33

- Peter saw Jesus walking on the sea and right away got out of the boat and started to walk on the water himself.
- When he realised what he was doing he became afraid and started to sink, but Jesus rescued him by taking his hand.
- Shut your eyes and imagine yourself in a comfortable place. Now think of one of those things that you worry about.... Imagine stepping out yourself! Picture Jesus coming towards you and taking your hand... What do you hear Jesus saying to you?
- Many Christians imagine Jesus stepping out to help them when they are attempting something unknown or different.

Prayer:

Dear Jesus,

Help us to remember that we are never alone and whatever we do we can put our hand out and ask you to be with us. Amen.

Activity 30 Dwelling in Unity



10 mins



Any

Aim: To think about how we should all live together.

Equipment:

- Bible

Instructions:

- What images can you think of that are really beautiful? How can you describe perfection? (Your favourite chocolate bar, your football team winning the cup final, a cool drink on a hot day.....?)
- What things in the world are not perfect?

- One major problem is when people disagree and argue or fight.
- What things do you think cause people to argue?
- What is the result of arguing and falling out?
- How would the world be if people did not fall out?

Read: Psalm 133

- The psalmist compares the perfection of people living in peace with oil and dew!
- Read the Psalm again substituting one of your own images.

Prayer:

Dear God,

Our world needs so much for people to live in peace together. We pray that problems of racism, jealousy, need for power, greed for money will be resolved so we can live in unity. Amen.

Activity 31 Jesus the Light of the World



10 mins



Any

Aim: To reveal to young people that Jesus brings hope to places of darkness.

Equipment:

- Bible

Instructions:

Read: John 8 v 12 & John 1 v 5

- John's Gospel shows Jesus as the light that has come into the world to get rid of darkness.
- Think of things that you associate with darkness...fear, sadness, being alone.....
- Think of situations that could be thought of as 'dark' e.g. people who have no homes, no food, no water, people at war, people who are lonely (are there any lonely people at your school or at Brigade?).....
- If Jesus is the light of the world where would you want him to shine – where would you want him to get rid of the darkness?
- Is there anything that is close to home in your life you feel is 'dark' that you would like to be lighted up?

Prayer:

Jesus, light of the world, please come into our world and into our lives today. In the world we ask you especially to bring hope, life and light to the places where there is darkness. Amen.

Activity 32 Sin



10-20 mins



Any

Aim: To explain the concept of sin and forgiveness.

Equipment:

- Freshly laundered white handkerchief
- Tincture of Iodine (Iodine solution)
- Photographic Fixer (diluted)
- Large plain glass
- Large clear glass jug / jar of plain water

You should be able to get tincture of Iodine in a pharmacy.

Photographic Fixer is a chemical used in the processing of monochrome (Black & White) films and photographic papers. You may need to visit a specialist photography store to source this. The chemical as sold is normally highly concentrated – you will need very little each time, so buy the smallest amount you can. The colour process bleach-fix is not suitable.

The chemicals can be removed from glass by thorough washing, but you may wish to source glassware specifically for this purpose and dispose of it, or mark as “not for food use” afterwards.

Instructions:

- Start by asking the group what they think sin is. Be careful that the discussion doesn't run away into a list of examples; try to focus on the fact that sin is anything that is wrong / unholy / against God's perfect plan for us.
- At this stage, produce the clean white handkerchief. Explain that, when we are born, our life is perfect and clean – but soon sin creeps in. At this point, mention some of the sins that we have all committed – lying, cheating, stealing etc. – each time, staining the handkerchief with the iodine (this leaves an ugly brown stain). Show how all the sin stains our life.
- Then say how we try to get rid of the stains – perhaps by doing good, going to Church (or BB), trying to be “nice”. As you explain this, attempt to wash the handkerchief in the plain water. The handkerchief by this stage will have turned an unpleasant shade somewhere between grey and navy blue – as will the water! Say how all our efforts are in vain, and attempts to cover it up often make matters worse!
- Now speak about how Jesus came into the world to take away our sins; focus on how God cannot bear the sight of our sin and ruined life; but speak about how Jesus' blood can wash us clean, and if we accept His forgiveness, he can take away our sins. Now take the handkerchief and put it right into the glass containing the fixer – it will instantly turn white. Lift it out, squeezing off any excess fixer into the glass.
- Now say a little about how we are called to go into the world and spread the Good News to others around us – and that they too can come to know forgiveness. Now touch the grey liquid in the jug with the corner of the handkerchief and watch it clear.



Tips / Advice:

- This talk relies upon several chemical reactions, and won't work without the ingredients listed.
- Make up the fixer solution in advance (follow the instructions that come with it and make up a solution to the concentration for photographic papers – you may wish to source a glass measuring jug for this purpose), and keep in a dark coloured, clearly marked non-metallic bottle, Do not re-use the container for foodstuffs.

- It is a good idea to practise in advance. Have a tray to put all the equipment on to save spillage, and have a basin of warm water, soap and a towel nearby to wash your hands afterwards. Dispose of all the chemicals safely afterwards; rinse out the handkerchief, and put in a polythene bag for washing later; rinse all the glassware thoroughly, and wash in hot water afterwards.
- Iodine turns blue in the presence of starch – when you dab it on the hankie, it will be dark brown / black due to the concentration of iodine. When you try and “wash” it, the iodine and starch (from washing the hankie) will be spread by the water giving the blue/grey colour to the hankie and water.
- Photographic fixer “washes” un-developed silver iodide from photographic media, and will readily react with iodides, turning them colourless; when you dip the hankie in this solution, it will appear clean almost instantly. The residual fixer on the hankie will react with the iodides in the jug with the same effect.

Safety Issues / Risk Assessment:

- Take care with the chemicals – and make sure they don’t spill onto clothing or surfaces. Iodine stains clothes, porous surfaces and skin. Fixer leaves white stains.
- Use in a well ventilated area – fixer has a strong smell. Some people with sensitive skin, or skin complaints such as eczema should not handle fixer as it is an irritant. In all cases, ensure you can wash your hands afterwards. Do not ingest any of the chemicals. If swallowed, seek medical advice, if splashed in the eye, wash under running water and seek medical advice.

Activity 33 A Christmas Devotion – ‘Christmas at the Supermarket’



10-20 mins



Any

Aim: To retell the story of Christmas.

Equipment:

- All the different foods / chocolates mentioned in the story below.

Instructions:

For some young people some Bible stories have lost their magic because of their familiarity. By retelling using product names, the young people listen more acutely. Here the names are mainly chocolates and sweets that can be shared afterwards.

Mary and Joseph were travelling to Bethlehem.

Mary was heavily pregnant and the couple were looking for somewhere to stay.

It was a **CHILLI** night and there were a few **FLAKES** of snow.

It was **TWILIGHT** as they approached the town and finding accommodation was no **PICNIC**.

Most of the inns were full to overflowing and there was no room anywhere.

As they went from inn to inn, Mary and Joseph grew tired, but eventually an Innkeeper allowed them to stay in his stable and be**TWIX** the **DAIRY MILK** cattle, Mary gave birth to a baby boy and laid him in a manger.

There was certainly no **SILVER SPOON** in this infant’s mouth.

There were shepherds in nearby fields.

Suddenly the air became filled with song as though **MINSTRELS** were singing.

The shepherds looked up to the **GALAXY**.

They saw the **MILKY WAY** and **MARS** shone brightly.

The angels told the shepherds to go to Bethlehem and worship the baby Jesus.

Meanwhile, men from the east, **FULL of EASTERN PROMISE** saw a new **STARBURST** upon the sky.

The wise men (real **SMARTIES**) travelled to Jerusalem to find the new king.

They missed the last **DOUBLE DECKER** so had to travel by camel and it was well **AFTER EIGHT** by the time they arrived.

They found the palace on a real **QUALITY STREET**.

A **RIPPLE** of excitement went through the city, but Herod said that no new king was there.

He told the wise men to return to him once they had found the child so he too could worship him.

The wise men found the infant **LION** in a manger and presented their gifts to the baby Jesus, but did not return to Jerusalem and **SKITTLED** Herod's plans.

Herod was furious and put a **BOUNTY** on the child's head.

Many people finish the story there, but the baby grew up to be every **MAR'S DELIGHT**.

Will Jesus be the **HIGHLIGHT** of your Christmas this year?

As we join in the **CELEBRATIONS**, let us all remember the true meaning of Christmas and be ready to serve.

Parables

Aim: To explore some different New Testament parables.

Introduction:

The following are Ideas to use in devotional times.

Activity 1 The Unforgiving Servant Matthew 18:25-35



20-30 mins



Any

Aim: To understand that Jesus' love is all encompassing and that the things we do wrong can be forgiven by God and we should do the same to other people.

Equipment:

- Newspapers
- Pens
- Paper
- Bible
- 'Which things are more difficult to forgive' template

Instructions:

- Are some things really difficult to forgive?
- Select a topical news story where forgiveness would be really difficult.
- Hand out the template.
- Young people are asked to rank examples of things that might require forgiveness. They could do this as an individual or in pairs and then compare with others in the group.
- Would the exercise have been different if you were personally involved?

Read: Matthew 18:2-35.

- Emphasise that having been forgiven, the servant was expected to forgive.
- Are there things that we find difficult to forgive?
- On a piece of paper write one thing you need to be forgiven for on one half and one thing you need to forgive someone else for on the other half.
- Are we willing to hand them over to God?
- Place on a paper cross on the floor and then shred them to signifying committing them to God.

Activity 2 The Prodigal Son

Luke 15:11-32



20-30 mins



Any

Aim: To show that we are totally accepted by God no matter what we do to reject him.

Equipment:

- Paper
- Pens
- Bible

Instructions:

In one group to start with:-

- Have sheets for individuals or pairs to complete 6 questions regarding ages. E.g. at what age can you buy cigarettes? At what age can you vote?
- Why does the law say you have to be a certain age to do certain things?

Split into groups

- Within the group there are going to be young people from different ages. Discuss the rules that parents set regarding certain issues.
- In a grid write up at what age should you not expect to tell your parents where you are going and what time you will be home?
- If you were a parent, at what time would you want children to be home?
- Is it different for boys and girls?
- What has been the reaction if you're home later than you said? What about your older siblings? **Why do parents react like this?** (emphasise that they care about you and want the best for you)

Read: Luke 15:11-32

Emphasise:

- the Father could have not given the inheritance
- the Father would have felt totally rejected by the son who wished he was dead
- the Father waited for his return
- the son expected a bit of humble pie and to be received as a servant not as a son
- the older brother was unhappy that the younger son was treated so well

Come back to larger group

- Why did the Father look for the son every day? What would have happened if the older brother had met them first? Have we ever allowed ourselves to be the older brother?
- Emphasise how we are accepted totally by God, who is always looking for us to return to him.

Activity 3 The Rich Fool Luke 12:16-21



20-30 mins



Any

Aim: To understand that acquiring possessions for their own sake will not provide contentment.

Equipment:

- Newspapers
- Glue
- Scissors
- Paper
- Pens
- Bible

Instructions:

- What makes a successful lifestyle in 21st century Britain?
- You could make a collage of images from a magazine, or write down, or highlight images that represent this?
- Alternatively – could ask young people what would they like to be/job etc. What are the reasons for choosing a particular career? Is it to do with the associated salary/lifestyle?
- Would you do a job you disliked if it paid far more than a job you loved?
- Why are people seen as successful by having material things? Would you have selected the same things if asked what makes you happy in 21st Century Britain?

Read: Luke 12:16-21.

- Emphasise that the man believed security came purely from wealth.
- Ask a leader or member of the Church to tell where their contentment comes from.
- What things are more important to us than wealth and success?
- Thank God for the things that we have.

Activity 4 The Good Samaritan Luke 10:30-37



20-30 mins



Any

Aim: To show that we have a responsibility for everyone, no matter what their background.

Equipment:

- 'Anytown' template
- Paper
- Pens
- Bible

Instructions:

- Working in small groups, make a street plan of a fictional town onto which the young people have to plot features of the community from the 'Anytown' template. These could include different types of housing, shops, leisure facilities, and some building that may be the cause of controversy, e.g. hostel for the homeless/ asylum seekers, youth club, centre for young offenders, or something that is topical.
- Allow time for discussion of where they have put the items.
- Challenge why they have made their various decisions. (It might be that they have put the controversial item well out of the way etc.)
- A young person from each group could report on what they have done – the emphasis being on where they placed the hostel etc.

Read: Luke 10:30-37.

- Emphasise that Jesus challenges us to overcome our own stereotypes and prejudices.
- How does that relate to where you placed the controversial item at the beginning of the session?
- Reflect on the story and how it was that the unexpected person stopped to help.

Activity 5 The Talents Matthew 25:14-30



20-30 mins



Any

Aim: To appreciate that everyone is unique and that we all have different gifts and abilities, but that we are expected to use them.

Equipment:

- Paper
- Pens
- Bible

Instructions:

- Three of the leaders say two facts about themselves relating to a talent that the young people would not know e.g. swam the channel, play the oboe. One of the facts should be true, the other false. The young people have to determine which is the false fact.

OR

- All of the leaders say they can do a particular thing that in fact only one of them can do. The young people have to ask questions to determine who is telling the truth.
- Discuss what talents they have.
- Some young people will feel that they have very few talents and so be aware of sensitivities.
- Are we ever envious of another person who seems much more talented than us?

Read: Matthew 25:14-30.

- Why did the person with the one talent not do anything with it?
- Have you ever thought that someone else has more gifts than you?

- Does that stop you from using the gifts you have been given?
- Emphasise that we are the people who we are and that each of us is special and unique.
- Does anyone relate to any of the servants?
- Ask for three volunteers.
- Give each of the young people money – £5, £3, £1
- Emphasise that the one with the most hasn't the most talent: Tell them that in a month's time they will have to give an account for what they've done with it (there may be an expectation from the young person that they need to return it but it can't be guaranteed!)

Christian faith +

The Simpsons

Aim: To use the Simpsons to explore the bible.

Introduction:

The following devotions are based around an extract from the Simpsons, which can then be used to provoke discussion. A Bible verse, and questions are suggested.

Activity 1 What brings true happiness?



20-30 mins



Any

Aim: To help the young people realise what true happiness is.

Equipment:

- Episode: "Simpson and Delilah" Season 2 (Chapter one – 05:43)

Instructions:

- Show the following clip from the Simpsons:
"Simpson and Delilah" Season 2 (Chapter one – 05:43)
Homer lies to his company health plan in order to get a drug that restores his hair.
- Use Philippians 3:7-11
"The very credentials these people are waving around as something special, I'm tearing up and throwing out with the trash—along with everything else I used to take credit for. And why? Because of Christ. Yes, all the things I once thought were so important are gone from my life. Compared to the high privilege of knowing Christ Jesus as my Master, firsthand, everything I once thought I had going for me is insignificant—dog dung. I've dumped it all in the trash so that I could embrace Christ and be embraced by him. I didn't want some petty, inferior brand of righteousness that comes from keeping a list of rules when I could get the robust kind that comes from trusting Christ—God's righteousness. I gave up all that inferior stuff so I could know Christ personally, experience his resurrection power, be a partner in his suffering, and go all the way with him to death itself. If there was any way to get in on the resurrection from the dead, I wanted to do it."
- What do you think makes you happy or content?
- Do you ever think if you had one more thing that would be the key to happiness or contentment?
- Do you think these are really the key to being "happy or content"?
- I realised that...

Resources:

<http://www.thesimpsons.com>

Activity 2 What is important in life?



20-30 mins



Any

Aim: To help the young people decide on priorities in their lives.

Equipment:

- Episode: "Simpson and Delilah" Season 2 (Chapter one – 05:43)

Instructions:

- Show the following clip from the Simpsons:

"One Fish, Two Fish, Blowfish, Bluefish" Season 2 (Chapter 3 05:55-11:10)

Homer orders a Blowfish that if not cut perfectly can be poisonous. An apprentice sushi chef believes he has cut the fish incorrectly. Homer is rushed to the hospital and told he has 24 hours to live. Homer thinking he is going to die makes a "to do" list.

- Use Luke 12: 16-21

"Then someone called from the crowd, "Teacher, please tell my brother to divide our father's estate with me." Jesus replied, "Friend, who made me a judge over you to decide such things as that?" Then he said, "Beware! Don't be greedy for what you don't have. Real life is not measured by how much we own." And he gave an illustration: "A rich man had a fertile farm that produced fine crops. In fact, his barns were full to overflowing. So he said, 'I know! I'll tear down my barns and build bigger ones. Then I'll have room enough to store everything. And I'll sit back and say to myself, My friend, you have enough stored away for years to come. Now take it easy! Eat, drink, and be merry!' "But God said to him, 'You fool! You will die this very night. Then who will get it all?' "Yes, a person is a fool to store up earthly wealth but not have a rich relationship with God."

- Use John 14:6

"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the father except through me."

- What did you think about Homer's priorities?
- What would your list of priorities be?
- How do they differ to Homer's?
- My priorities are...



Resources:

<http://www.thesimpsons.com>

Activity 3 What difference has Jesus made?



20-30 mins



Any

Aim: To help the young people see the difference that Jesus can make in their lives.

Equipment:

- Episode: "Treehouse of Horror V – Time and Punishment" Season 6 (Chapter 4 08:39-13:57)

Instructions:

- Show the following clip from the Simpsons:
"Treehouse of Horror V – Time and Punishment" Season 6 (Chapter 4 08:39-13:57)
Homer tries to fix a toaster and winds up altering the fabric of time itself.
- Use 2 Corinthians 5:14-17 (this shows that the death of Christ altered the whole of history):
"Whatever we do, it is because Christ's love controls us. Since we believe that Christ died for everyone, we also believe that we have all died to the old life we used to live. He died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will no longer live to please themselves. Instead, they will live to please Christ, who died and was raised for them. So we have stopped evaluating others by what the world thinks about them. Once I mistakenly thought of Christ that way, as though he were merely a human being. How differently I think about him now! What this means is that those who become Christians become new persons. They are not the same anymore, for the old life is gone. A new life has begun!"
- Use Jeremiah 29:11-14 (... but we can also change the whole of history by what we do):
"For I know the plans I have for you," says the LORD. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. In those days when you pray, I will listen. If you look for me in earnest, you will find me when you seek me. I will be found by you," says the LORD. "I will end your captivity and restore your fortunes. I will gather you out of the nations where I sent you and bring you home again to your own land."
- What did the death of Jesus achieve?
- Do you think you'll change the future?
- I believe...



Resources:

<http://www.thesimpsons.com>

Activity 4 Why bother with Church?



20-30 mins



Any

Aim: To discuss all aspects of Church.

Equipment:

- Episode: "Homer the Heretic" Season 4

Instructions:

- Show the following clip from the Simpsons:

"Homer the Heretic" Season 4

While getting ready for Church, Homer splits his trousers and decides not to attend. The family suffer through the surface. Homer has such a good time that he decides to stop attending church altogether.

- Use Revelations 4:11

"You are worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honour and power. For you created everything, and it is for your pleasure that they exist and were created."

- Use Romans 10:17

"Yet faith comes from listening to this message of good news—the Good News about Christ."

- What image of church do you have?
- Do you feel that you have to go to church?
- Is attending church compulsory?
- Why is it important?
- I go to church because...



Resources:

<http://www.thesimpsons.com>

Activity 5 What's the point of prayer?



20-30 mins



Any

Aim: To gain an understanding of prayer.

Equipment:

- Episode: "Bart Gets an F", Season 2

Instructions:

- Show the following clip from the Simpsons:

"Bart Gets an F", Season 2

Bart is told that if he doesn't pass the test, he'll be held back in the fourth grade for another year. The night before the test he realises he is not ready, so he prays that God will create a reason for school to close. During the night it snows, and when Bart wakes up he finds that the school has been closed.

- Use Matthew 6:5-13

"And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. "This, then, is how you should pray:" "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

- Why do you pray? What's the point?
- What can you pray about?
- How do you pray? Bringing in Lord's Prayer
- My experience of prayer is...
- Perhaps get the young people to write a prayer or pray in groups



Resources:

<http://www.thesimpsons.com>

Activity 6 Why should I believe?



20-30 mins



Any

Aim: To discuss belief.

Equipment:

- Episode: "Lisa the Sceptic" Season 9

Instructions:

- Show the following clip from the Simpsons:

"Lisa the Sceptic" Season 9

When a development company breaks ground for a new mall, Lisa is concerned that an archaeological survey has not been done in the area. The developers agree to a survey, but during it they find a human skeleton with wings. People assume it is an angel. However Lisa doubts this and seeks a rational explanation. The skeleton turns out to be a hoax designed to promote a new mall.

- Use John 20:24-29

"One of the disciples, Thomas (nicknamed the Twin), was not with the others when Jesus came. They told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he replied, "I won't believe it unless I see the nail wounds in his hands, put my fingers into them, and place my hand into the wound in his side."

Eight days later the disciples were together again, and this time Thomas was with them. The doors were locked; but suddenly, as before, Jesus was standing among them. He said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Put your hand into the wound in my side. Don't be faithless any longer. Believe!" "My Lord and my God!" Thomas exclaimed. Then Jesus told him, "You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who haven't seen me and believe anyway."

- What is a sceptic?
- What are you sceptical about?
- Why is it sometimes difficult to believe in God?
- Why do you believe? Creation – Romans 1:20, Personal experience – Revelations 3:20,
- I believe because...



Resources:

<http://www.thesimpsons.com>

Activity 7 What about suffering?



20-30 mins



Any

Aim: To discuss suffering.

Equipment:

- Episode: "And Maggie Makes Three" Season 6

Instructions:

- Show the following clip from the Simpsons:

"And Maggie Makes Three" Season 6

Homer asks that everything be frozen in place as his life seems perfect.

- Use Job 1:10, 20-21

"Job is an upright man who has it all. Satan suggests Job is only so upright because God has given him everything and he has it so good. "Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face."

... but Job's response is "At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship and said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised."

- Use 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

"Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."

- Have you ever thought life is great and I wish it could stay like this forever?
- What does Job teach us about suffering?
- I can think of times in my life when...



Resources:

<http://www.thesimpsons.com>

Christian faith +

WWJD

Aim: To get young people to think about what Jesus would do in different situations.

Activity 1 What would Jesus do? Asking Questions



20-30 mins



Any

Aim: To realise that Jesus asks each of us to acknowledge him.

Instructions:

- Play a variation of a game requiring the young people to ask pertinent questions.
- One person thinks of a famous person. Others have to identify by asking questions that can only be answered yes or no. e.g. Is the person alive? Is he a sportsman etc.? Count the number of questions required to identify the person.

OR

- Place the name of a different famous person on a sticky label and place one on each person's back (They can see other people's but not their own). Group have to walk around and ask yes/no questions as above to identify who they are. When they have identified themselves, they can sit down.
- Who was the winner?
- Were there better types of questions to ask?
- Person can usually do better if they ask the right questions, but also need to ask the right person. (If the person questioned didn't know of the famous person, they couldn't answer the question.)
- What sorts of questions did Jesus ask people?

Reading: Matthew 16 v 13-20

- Emphasise that Jesus wasn't concerned with what other people said about him. What did the person questioned say?
- Who do we say that Jesus is?
- What questions do we need to ask to find out?
- Are there particular people it would be helpful to question?
- Give time for the young people to reflect on what they think. Finish with a suitable prayer.

Activity 2**What Would Jesus Do?
Being Let Down**

20-30 mins



Any

Aim: To look at our reactions to being let down even by those who are closest to us.**Instructions:**

- Ask young people of situations in which they have been let down?
- If someone breaks a trust it is difficult to trust him or her again

Possible scenarios to discuss:

- You have arranged to go to the cinema with a close friend. They telephone you to say that they are ill and can't go. Later you find that they did go to the cinema, but with someone else. How do you react when you see them again?
- You have been friends for a long time. You have gone through school together, but then a new classmate arrives. Your friend is more interested in them and begins to ignore you. What do you do?
- Jesus knew what it was like to be let down. After his arrest all his followers fled and Peter even said that he never knew him.

Bible reading: Mark 14 v 30-31, 66-72

- When Jesus rose from the dead he confronts Peter and asks him three times if he loves him (John 21 v 15-17)
- Why ask three times?
- Jesus doesn't want revenge or feel angry for being let down; he simply wants the relationship to start again.
- In silence reflect on those who have let us down and those whom we have let down. Conclude with prayer.

Activity 3**What would Jesus do?
Temptation / Honesty**

20-30 mins



Any

Aim: To show that Jesus himself faced temptation, but overcame them and that we too can overcome our temptations**Instructions:**

- Arrange for young people to enter room where you normally meet before you do and leave them for a few minutes.
- Leave out something that is tempting (Money, chocolate biscuits etc.)

OR

- Arrange that on the week prior to your session that the tuck shop will not be staffed and that young people are to get their own sweets and put in the correct money.
- Was anyone tempted to take anything or not put in the correct amount of money at the tuck shop?
- If we were tempted, did we succumb?
- If we resisted temptation, what stopped us?
- What other things can be great temptations? This might be to do with perceived lifestyles or seeking to appear older or be one of the crowd etc.
- It might be appropriate to bring in scenarios regarding honesty and temptation at this point. E.g.
 - You are walking across the camp field when you see a £2 coin lying in the grass. It has just been camp bank and the coin is on the way from the bank to the canteen. What do you do?
 - You pay for something in the shop with a £5 note. The cashier gives you change from a £10 note. What do you do?
- What would Jesus do?

Reading: Luke 4 v 1-13

- Although Jesus was tempted, he resisted by quoting scripture.
- What would help us to overcome temptations?
- Reflect on the things that we find difficult to resist (I can resist everything except temptation –Oscar Wilde).

If appropriate pray for each other or leader pray for the situations that face each of us.

What would Jesus do? Decision Making



20-30 mins



Any

Aim: To see how we can involve Jesus in the important decisions we have to face.

Instructions:

- Ask young people to devise a list of 5 or 10 things about which decisions have to be made. They could be anything from what to have for dinner, what to wear etc. to choosing a career.
- When you have the list ask who, if anyone, would help you with those decisions.
- Possible scenario – choosing subjects for GCSE, A' levels or a career. How did we decide? Did anyone influence us? How do we know we have made the right decision?
- It would be helpful if at this point the group leader could talk about a really difficult decision that they have had to make.

Reading: Luke 9 v 51-62

- Jesus points out that important decisions can involve letting go of the past in order to get to a better place.
- When we have a really difficult decision, have we thought about praying about it and asking God's guidance? Jesus promises that he will always be with us.
- Remember: The most important decision we can make is what we think about Jesus.

Christian faith +

“I am” Sayings Devotions

Aim: To get young people to look at the famous “I am” sayings.

Activity 1 Bread of Life – John 6



20 mins



4-20

Aim: To try and get the young people to experience God for themselves.

Equipment:

- Bibles
- Chocolate cake
- Flan base
- Dog food

Instructions:

- Ask the group to identify which of the following statements are true?
 - In Tokyo, a bicycle is faster than a car for most trips of less than 50 mins!
 - The king of hearts is the only king without a moustache on a standard playing card!
 - A 'jiffy' is an actual unit of time for 1/100th of a second!
 - Porcupines float in water!
 - Cat urine glows under a black-light!
 - Slugs have 4 noses!
- In fact all of them are supposedly true (according to www.strangefacts.com).
- How can you be certain about anything and know that it is true?
- Read John 6:1-12. Could you believe this story to be true?
- Place three different foods on three different containers (one could be a large chocolate cake, one a flan base, and one a tin of dog food). Ask the group to choose which one they would like to eat, and then give it to them.
- Read verse 26, and state that we don't believe because we just see things, but because we've experienced things for ourselves and know that they satisfy. Hence we've tasted the chocolate cake and know that it tastes good.
- How could you find out if what we tell you about Jesus is true?
- Read John 6:35. Jesus promises us that if we trust our lives to him we will never want for anything else. That doesn't mean in life that we never suffer or experience hard times, but that in Jesus we have everything we need to get through these experiences.
- Challenge the group to pray every day for a week or to read a part of a gospel (try and suggest an accessible passage) in order to try God out for themselves.

Activity 2 Living Water – John 4



20 mins



4-20

Aim: To demonstrate that not everything that appears to be satisfying is.

Equipment:

- Bottle of pepsi, coca-cola, supermarket own brand.
- Cups

Instructions:

- Play the Pepsi challenge. Pour out a bottle of Pepsi, Coca – Cola, a supermarket own brand cola, and a value cola into cups. Line them up so that in each row there is a sample of each type of cola. Label each type A-D. Ask volunteers or the whole group to taste a cola, without knowing which type it is.
- On a piece of paper ask the young people to identify which cup (A-D) is which cola (Pepsi, Coca-Cola, Virgin Cola, supermarket value cola).
- Ask for their results. Which was their favourite?
- In small groups ask them to discuss how do you know what makes a good cola?
- Tell the group, “sip tests” such as the Pepsi Challenge involve drinkers being given small samples (less than a can or bottle’s worth) to try out. Research has suggested that what people say they like in these tests may not reflect what they will actually buy to sit at home and drink over a week or so.¹ For example, although many consumers react positively to the sweeter taste of Pepsi when drinking it in small volumes, it may become unattractively sickly when drunk in quantity. Coke, on the other hand, may be more attractive for drinking in volume, precisely *because* it is less sweet.
- In small groups ask what makes a good life? Suggest that it isn’t always those things that bring instant gratification.
- Read John 4:5-15.
- Give each person a cup of coca-cola, and instruct them that they can drink it over the next two mins.
- Whilst this is occurring read out John 4:42, and tell the group that they might have just heard about Jesus from leaders but encourage them to look into it themselves. Share how you came to know Jesus for yourself.
- Encourage the group to sit in silence and say their own personal prayers. Finish with a prayer.

1. Gladwell, Malcolm, *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking* (Little Brown: New York, 2005), pp. 155-166

Activity 3 I am the Good Shepherd – John 10



20 mins



4-20

Equipment:

- Blindfolds
- Bibles

Introduction:

- Ask for two volunteers, and blindfold one of them. Holding hands, the blindfolded person is lead gradually from a slow walk up to fast running along the length of a hall.
- Tell the group that you are now going to do another exercise and read out the following:

"While flying over a remote part of the world your plane suddenly lost power and came spiralling down to earth. Miraculously none of you were killed in the crash but as you crawled away from the wreckage you all looked back at the plane just as it exploded in a blinding flash of light. Everyone was blinded. Everyone is blind but you must reach help. As you were flying over you spotted a small mission in the area ... if only you can reach it you'll be okay. Now as luck would have it two local representatives of the Nabu-nobu tribe saw your plane crash and have rushed to the site to help you. The only problem is that this tribe doesn't speak any known language, instead they use a series of clucks, whistles, chirps, claps, etc., to communicate. Because you are all experts in anthropology you also know that no one outside of the tribe may touch a tribe person, upon threat of death.
- Now you have to get the blindfolded group from the starting point to the end point safely.
- Select an area for the Sherpa Walk. It could be done outdoors or in a hall provided there are enough challenges and obstacles in the way. However, be sure that there are no stumps, broken branches, etc., that could cause injury. Everyone must be wearing a blindfold. Select one or two people to be the Nabu-nobu tribe's people and have them take off their blindfolds. Pick people who are likely to play the role well and safely. Have the rest of the group sit down for a moment while you lead the tribes people aside to show them the route and discuss safety. You can have a few rope barricades for the blind participants to pass under, logs to step over, trees to go around, etc. Your Nabu-nobu guides are now ready to guide the blind crash victims to the mission. There is no physical contact allowed between the tribe's people and the blindfolded participants. There is no conversation between the tribe's people and the blindfolded participants. The tribe's people can only make their sounds in order to try and guide.

AND/ OR

- Record voices of celebrities, BB or Church leaders onto a CD player. In pairs ask the young people to identify who they are. Once all the voices have been identified get the whole group to put the names in order of those that they trust most. Ask them why?
- Read John 10:1-5. Ask the group who do they trust?
- Tell the group that Jesus is a good person to trust. Read John 10:11, and state that we can listen to Jesus because he loves us so much that he gave his life for us.
- Share with the group a time when you have trusted God with something and how that worked out for you.
- Get the group into pairs and ask them to share with each other things that they want to trust God with in their lives.

Safety Issues / Risk Assessment:

Make sure that you discuss blindfold safety with the entire group before beginning this task. You need to make sure that their hands are up and that they are not moving very fast. Whacking their head into a pole is sure to destroy any positive feelings of trust that you are trying to generate with this activity. As the facilitator, you need to act as a spotter and step in to protect the participants if they are looking as if they might run into something.

Activity 4 I am the Light of the World – John 8



20 mins



4-20

Aim: To demonstrate that although we can often think we can see and understand things, sometimes we don't.

Equipment:

- Bibles
- 'Optical Illusion' template

Instructions:**Activity Based Introduction:**

- Give each member of the group an 'Optical Illusion' template.
- Ask the following questions relating to the images
 1. What do you see here? A vase or two men looking at each other? See if you can find them both.
 2. Find a black dot.
 3. Are the long diagonal lines bending? No, *they are actually parallel. They only look like they are bending because the small lines are sending a confused message to the brain.*
 4. Which is bigger? The top figure or the bottom one? *They're both the same!*
 5. Of the two centre circles, which one is bigger? *Actually they are the same size. The circle surrounded by smaller circles usually appears larger than the one surrounded by large circles.*
 6. Which line is longer? AB or BC? *They're the same.*
 7. Find the top step. When – and if – you find it, start looking for the bottom step. *This stairway is actually impossible.*
 8. Are the horizontal lines parallel? Yes, *but they appear not to be.*
 9. Are the stairs right side up or upside down? *They can be both.*

Teaching:

- Read John 9:5, and then summarise the subsequent story in John 9 to the young people:

"Today we are going to be looking at John 9. In it Jesus spits on the ground, shoves mud in a blind man's face and then has the audacity to tell him to go and have a wash. Did he smell? Anyway the guy gets his sight back, but some of the religious leaders aren't too pleased! If you were to read this story you might think it's about the healing of a man born blind, as probably the title in your Bible states. Yet if that's all we see in this story then we've missed the point. Something far more fundamental has happened." Read John 9: 13-34.

- Get a young person to read the following passage from John 9:39:

Jesus says "I came into the world to bring everything into the clear light of day, making all the distinctions clear, so that those who have never seen will see, and those who have made a great pretence of seeing will be exposed as blind."

- Ask the group what they think this means. Tell the group that just like in the optical illusions we can think that we are seeing one thing but when we look closer in reality it is something else. Just like in a "Magic Eye" picture you can think that you are looking at some random dots of colour, but upon closer inspection a picture can appear (You could use a "Magic Eye" picture as an example of this <http://www.magiceye.com>)
- Ask the group who in the story really could see?
- The irony of the story is that those who thought they could see, who thought they had everything sorted, and knew what God was all about, actually knew and saw NOTHING! Instead it was the man who couldn't see that in the end saw. Confused?!
- Being able to know Jesus has nothing to do with physical sight, but accepting him into our lives. The real miracle was not the healing of the man, but the healing the man received from knowing Jesus. Only then did he get a true understanding of life and get to live it in all its fullness. We need to let Jesus throw a mud pie in our face today too and let him shows us what life is all about! Christianity isn't about outside appearances, saying, or doing the right thing but receiving God's healing grace.

Response:

- Read out the following prayer:

"Dear God, where sometimes we think that we know it all I pray that you will show us that you are the only one who sees the whole picture. Help us not to rely on our own understanding, but look to see what you are telling us. Amen."

Activity 5 True Vine – John 15



20 mins



4-20

Aim: To get the young people to reconnect with God.

Equipment:

- Leaves
- Tape
- Appropriate music

Instructions:

- Obtain the leaves from various trees and plants. Have some green leaves, some dried ones, big ones, small ones, different shapes, wilted ones, etc. Then get the young people to identify the plants from which the leaves come from. You could number the leaves and then have the young people identify each leaf by number.
- Explain that the leaves dry up and die when disconnected from the tree. Our spiritual lives will also dry up if we are disconnected from Jesus. Without Jesus we cannot even grow. John 15 describes this relationship between Christ and Christians as similar to that between a vine and branches. Read John 15: 1-17.
- Place a garden cane in a pot so that it stands upright. Then get the young people, as you play some appropriate music, to come forward and stick the leaves that they previously identified onto the garden cane. Tell the group that this is a prayer space to reconnect to God.
- Finish with a prayer.

Activity 6 The Way, the Truth and the Life – John 14



20 mins



4-20

Aim: To show that following Jesus is the way to guide us through our lives.

Equipment:

- Paper

Instructions:

- Draw a grid representing floor tiles on a piece of paper. You may choose to have a 15 by 15 square grid or larger. Mark a path through the grid of squares with each successive step touching the one before it either adjacent or diagonally. Count the number of squares for the correct path and make a piece of paper with a Bible scripture written on it for each square. For the rest, rewrite some of the scriptures so that they are not correct.
- Lay out the pieces of paper on floor tiles according to your grid. Divide the group into two teams. The object is for each team to get its members through the mine field without losing people. The group to get the largest number of young people across wins. Young people decide whether a square is a mine by reading the scripture verses and deciding if it is correct or not. If it is correct it is a safe square to step on. If it is not correct it is a mine. If they step on a mine, they lose one member and another young person can try. The first team to get across with least casualties wins. Get the teams to take it in turn. You might like to have alternative scriptures to replace those that have been stepped on.
- Tell the group that Scripture is our guide through life's minefield. Wrong choices injure us. Correct choices lead us closer to God! Read John 14:6-7 and ask the group what they think it means. Suggest to the group that if they follow what Jesus says and the teachings of the Bible then they will be able to navigate through life's minefields.
- Get the group to write up all the different questions that they have about God and Christianity. Over the subsequent weeks follow up these questions in your devotions. Tell the group that you believe that if in our lives we trust God and follow his way then he promises to be there for us.