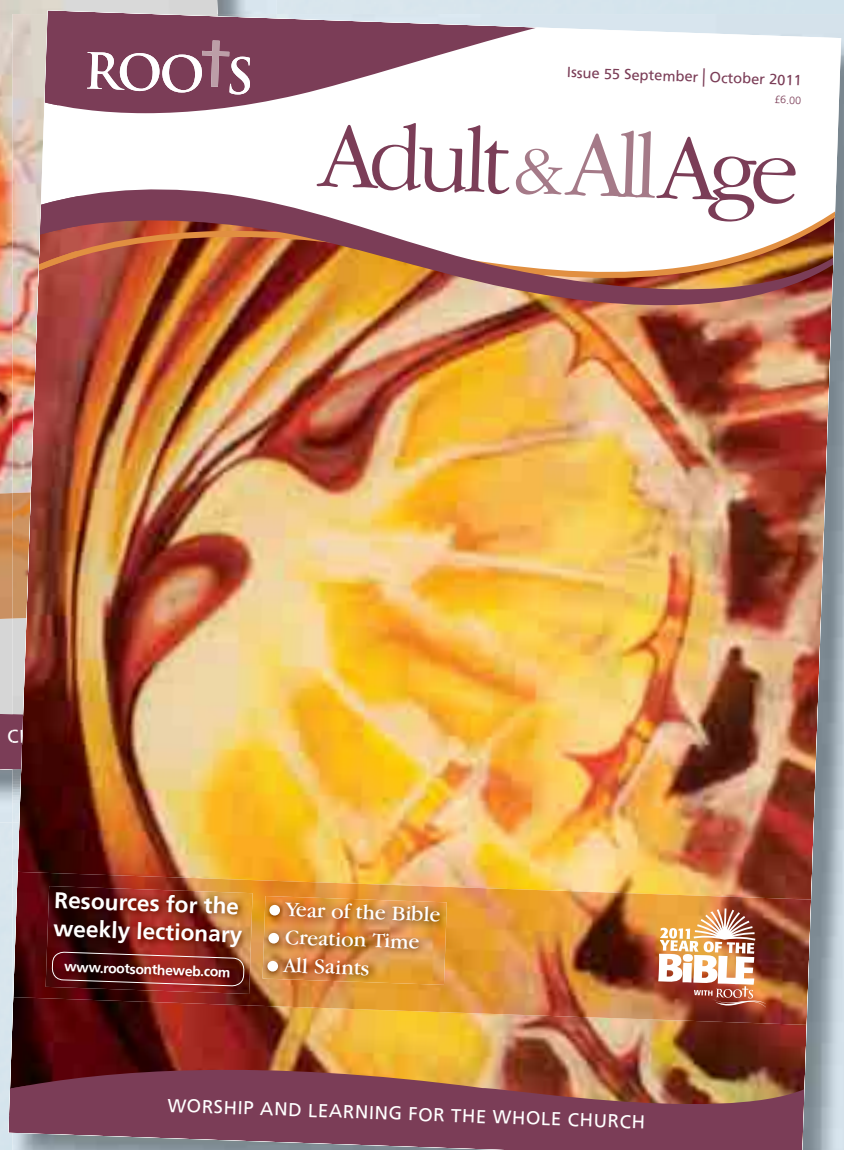
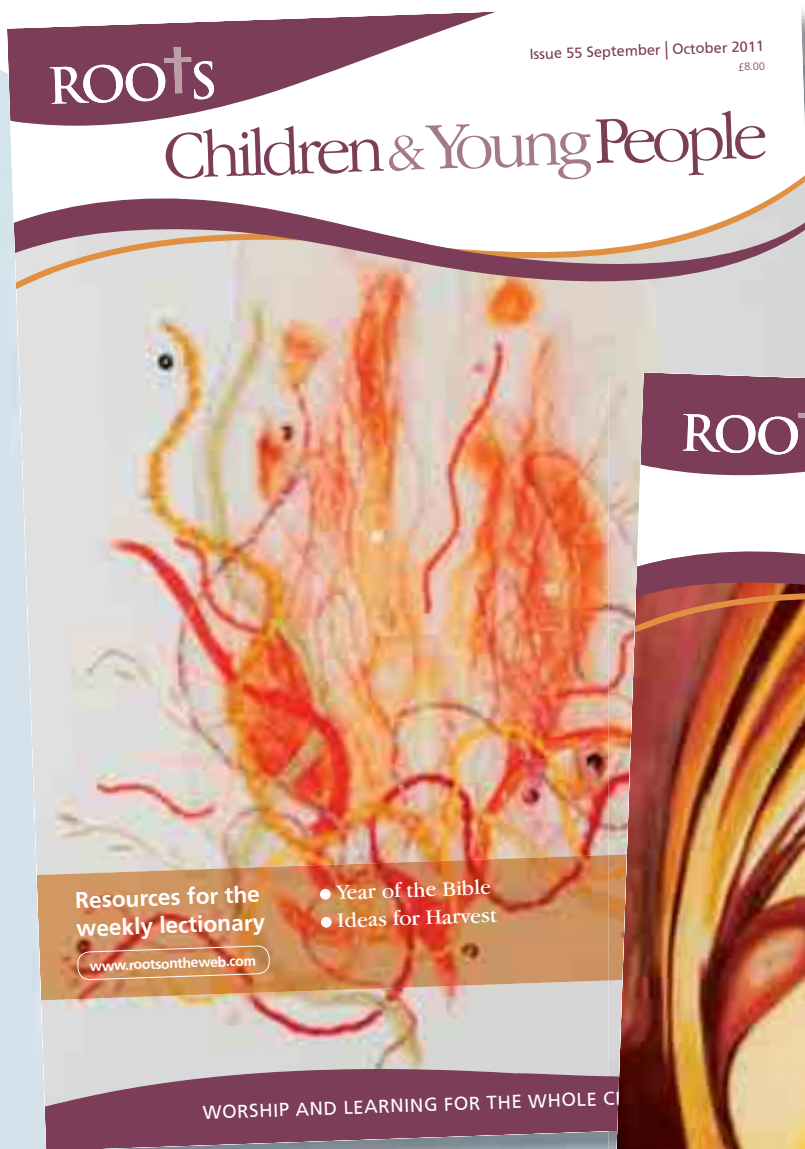


Essential resources for worship and learning



FREE SAMPLE MATERIALS

Do you need materials for leading a children's or youth group?

Are you looking for ideas for worship with all ages?

ROOTS resources offer you stimulating ideas for worship preparation.

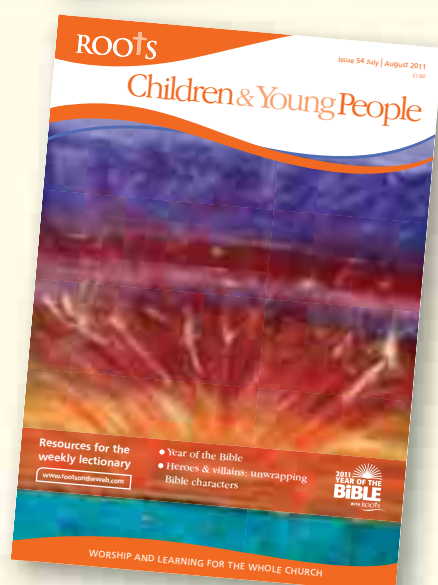
What is ROOTS?

ROOTS publishes two ecumenical, bi-monthly magazines: **Adult & All Age** and **Children & Young People**, plus a free website, www.rootsontheweb.com.

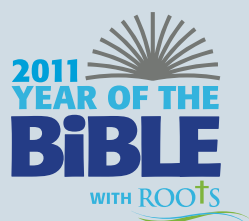
ROOTS weekly resources are based on the *Revised Common Lectionary*, with alternative resources for the *Common Worship Lectionary* where it differs. ROOTS is a joint Churches' initiative, a partnership of denominations and Christian organisations.

Why subscribe to ROOTS?

- Weekly resources for every Sunday of the year, easily adapted to suit different traditions and a wide range of patterns and styles of worship, written by experienced lay and ordained practitioners
- Materials for across the whole age range, so that everyone can explore the same Bible reading
- FREE ONLINE RESOURCES – your subscription gives you access to a huge bank of resources on the ROOTS website
- The ROOTS magazines are delivered to you two months in advance of the dated material, giving you plenty of time for planning and preparation



See sample material on pages 4 to 11, and see the online material at www.rootsontheweb.com



2011 marks the four hundredth anniversary of the publication of what became known as the King James Version of the Bible. In addition to the weekly and seasonal materials, ROOTS is offering ideas to bring the Bible to life in worship. In **Adult & All Age** there are sermon notes on key passages, including Genesis 1 and John 1. A series of articles explore the impact of the Bible in English, including its influence on literature and hymns. **Children & Young People** includes Holiday Club material on Bible 'heroes and villains', what the Bible reveals to us about God, and how the Bible can speak in today's world.

ROOTS and the lectionary

The *Revised Common Lectionary (RCL)*, used by many denominations across the world, is a common framework from which to read the Bible on Sundays. The *RCL* provides a three-year cycle offering a reading from the Old Testament, a psalm, a reading from a Gospel and a reading from one of the letters or Acts each week.

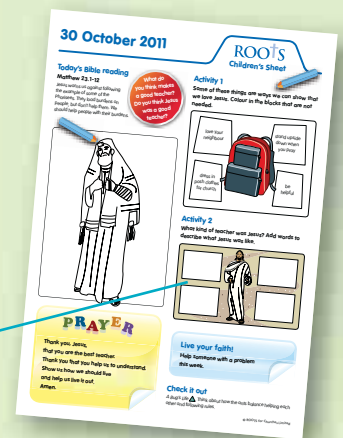
The ROOTS resources usually focus on one of the readings, exploring a common theme across the two magazines. Alternative *Common Worship* resources are offered online.

You can see the readings and the themes that we are exploring during 2011 by going to our website, www.rootsontheweb.com.

www.rootsontheweb.com

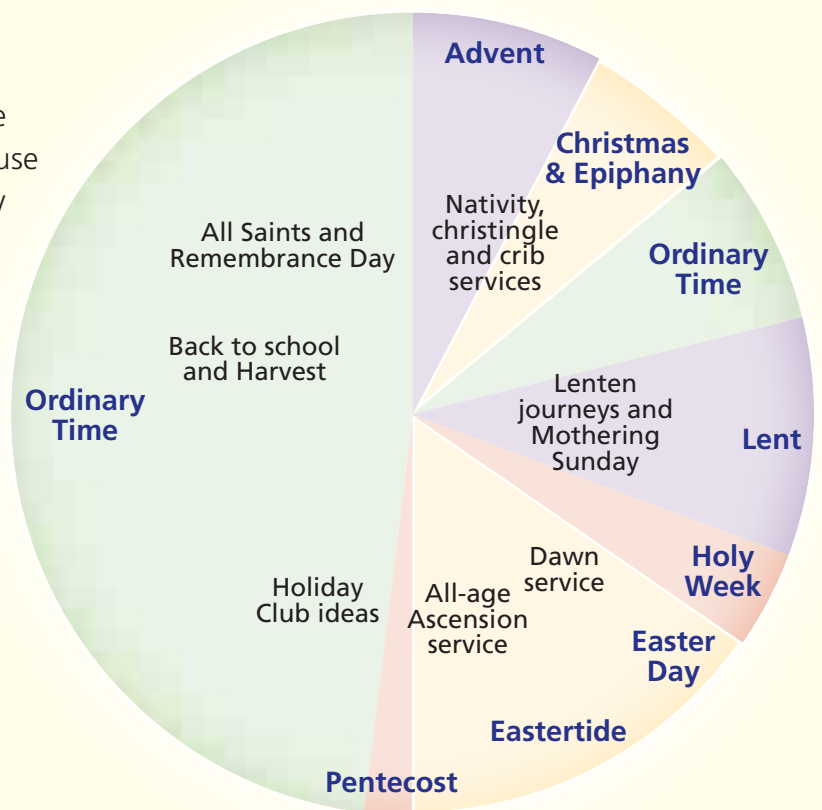
A subscription to either or both of the ROOTS magazines gives you free access to all the related website material. This gives you:

- The text of the Bible notes, prayers, drama scripts, craft templates and other parts of the magazine to print or adapt to your own situation
- A weekly *Postscript* linking the readings with current events
- Additional weekly resources
- A weekly *Children's Sheet* to use during or after a service
- A bank of searchable past materials from previous issues of ROOTS



Seasonal resources

ROOTS also offers resources to celebrate the seasons and festivals of the church year, to use in one-off services or to complement weekly worship. Here's a flavour of ideas from both magazines.



Practise what you teach

Planning

LECTIONARY

Micah 3.5-12, Psalm 43,
1 Thessalonians 2.9-13, **Matthew 23.1-12**

Context We move, this week, to the opening of Matthew 23, a chapter in which Jesus laments much that has gone wrong in the practice of faith in his day. Our reading does not run to the minutiae but opens up the context into which Jesus is speaking. The heart, for us, is in the last two verses of our passage.

Common thread – Practise what you teach (Matthew 23.1-12) Casual reading of the Gospels, including today's passage, can lead to a simplistic perception of the Pharisees and scribes playing the 'baddies' to Jesus the 'goody'. More careful attention to biblical Judaism is needed to correct this misconception. Today we consider our approaches to learning and teaching, and the avoidance of hypocrisy. *An alternative thread, Working day and night, concludes the series on 1 Thessalonians.*

Seasonal pages Introduction to the Bible notes p.1; The Bible in English p.2; Words we have loved p.3; All-age services: Milk and honey, a Creation Time service pp.4-5; For all the saints [WEB](#).

Special Sunday Some churches use readings for All Saints today. Resources to support this are on the [WEB](#).

PLUS

Hymns and songs See opposite page.

ROOTS resources Look at ROOTS *Children & Young People* magazine for further ideas.

Previous issues [WEB](#) See the *Week by week* page and follow the links in *From the resources bank*.

Children's sheet [WEB](#) Downloadable activities for during and after the service.

Music *Tubular Bells*, Mike Oldfield.

Websites *Good Will Hunting*: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Good_Will_Hunting; *Crackerjack*: www.bbc.co.uk/cult/classic/crackerjack/intro.shtml. Hyperlinks are on the [WEB](#).

Gather

Prepare the space

Display pictures and brochures of schools and teachers. It would be useful to find pictures of Orthodox Jews wearing shawls and phylacteries. Obtain a backpack and fill it with some stones (make sure it can be lifted – just). If your church has some grand chairs, arrange for one to be placed prominently in front of the congregation.

Gathering words

Jesus teaches us not only always to try to do what we say but also to be aware of the implications of not doing what we say we will.

Call to worship

Jesus our teacher says, 'Let the greatest among you be your servant, for all who exalt themselves will be humbled and all who humble themselves will be exalted.'

Prayer

Prayers of intercession, a personal prayer for the week, and further prayers are on the [WEB](#).

A prayer of approach

Based on Psalm 43

O Lord my God,
send out your light and truth
to lead me.

Let them bring me to your holy house
and to this time of worship.
I will come before your altar with joy;
I will come and sing your praises.
Nothing will stand in my way,
for my hope is in you, O my God.
I shall praise you, for you are
my help and my God.
Amen.

Material for the All Saints readings can be found on the [WEB](#).

Different types and styles of prayer which relate directly to the Bible passages and the direction of the week's material.

A prayer of thanksgiving

Based on 1 Thessalonians

We give you thanks, O God,
for those who have influenced us
on our journey of faith:
parents who first took us to church;
teachers who told stories of your love;
sermons that spoke directly to us;
faith stories shared by other believers.
We thank you that we hear your word
through other voices –
hymn writers, poets and preachers.
Again and again, O God,
we give you thanks
for those who have influenced us
on our journey of faith.
Amen.

A prayer of confession

Lord God, we ask your forgiveness
for the times we have let others down,
knowingly or unknowingly.
We ask forgiveness for the times
when our words or actions
have caused distress
adding to another's burdens.
We ask forgiveness for the times
when the example we have set others
has not been that of Jesus.
Forgive us, Lord.
Lead us into situations where
we can show your love.
Amen.

Sending out prayer

Lord Jesus, lead us this week
into opportunities where
we can serve you by serving one another.
Help us walk the week humbly
with our God,
uplifted by your presence,
guided by your Spirit,
and cherished in your love.
We go in peace.
Amen.

Ways into prayer

Invite people to try this prayer activity during the week, as a way of symbolising their release from burdens. Collect seven twigs or small sticks (cocktail sticks would do). You could have these available in church for people to take away. Fasten them together with elastic bands. Each morning people take one twig out and say a prayer about something of concern, giving that burden to God, for example,

'Lord God, I am worried/concerned about...I leave it with you. Hold...in your ever-loving arms.' Then let the twig go: sticks gathered from the ground could be cast back to the ground. Cocktail sticks might be added to a compost heap or green bin.

Bible notes

The links between the readings

In humility, be brothers and sisters and shun status-seeking.

Old Testament Micah 3.5-12

Micah was a contemporary of Isaiah who prophesied at the end of the eighth century BC. Isaiah was a royal official who was concerned with religion and politics, while Micah was perhaps more rural and offered social criticism. Having criticised the rulers of Israel (3.1-4), he turns to the prophets (vv.5-8).

These men were not the canonical prophets we are familiar with; they were communal, professional prophets, members of a guild, probably earning their living in Jerusalem (see 1 Kings 22). Micah was not one of them; he stands out as a brave individual resisting the tradition. (Prophets, seers and diviners all seem to be the same in vv.6-7.)

The prophets are criticised on two counts: for only prophesying when they have been paid, and for tailoring their prophecies according to the needs of the customer (v.5). Micah says that they will be denied divine revelations (v.7). They chose to ignore the trouble that was brewing and the religious and moral causes of it.

Micah then attacks the whole religious and political establishment – rulers, priests and prophets – and predicts the consequent fall of Jerusalem (vv.9-12). This did not happen in Micah's time when Jerusalem was threatened by the Assyrians, and he was no doubt regarded as a false prophet. But Jeremiah remembered Micah's words (Jeremiah 26.18) to support his own prophecies, and both proved to be true prophets in 597 BC when the Babylonians finally took Jerusalem. The key point is the moral failure of the recognised religious leaders of the time.

Psalm 43

This psalm could have been prayed by Micah or any of the great prophets, especially Jeremiah who suffered terribly for going against the majority view. It is a private entreaty to God and it is hard to imagine it forming part of the official cult in the Temple, even though there is a reference to the author going 'to your holy hill...to your dwelling...to the altar of God' (vv.3-4). Maybe that is where his final vindication would take place. This is a criticism of his own nation – the 'enemy' of verse 2 is probably his own people. Finally the psalmist expresses hope in God, for there seems to be no hope from those Israelites who should provide it.

New Testament 1 Thessalonians 2.9-13

Judging by verse 9 and also by the way Paul was supported materially by the Christians in Philippi while he was establishing a church in Corinth (2 Corinthians 8), he wanted to preclude any accusation that he was 'sponging off' his new communities. 'Working night and day' probably means that Paul worked to support himself and his mission to spread the gospel. Judging by his own testimony, Paul's practice was in marked contrast to the prophets above and the Pharisees in the next reading.

Gospel Matthew 23.1-12

The Pharisees were a group of laymen who earned their living by day and assiduously studied the Torah in their own time. As they were literate, they were also scribes who could perform legal tasks for the illiterate population. As students of the law, they were consulted by the populace for legal judgements and, while there were different schools of Pharisaic thought, they tended to be less severe than the Sadducees. After the destruction of the Temple in AD 70, they became the rabbis of the second century and beyond, and the leaders of Judaism. Josephus says there were around 6,000 in Jesus' day.

The Gospels show the Pharisees as the main butt of Jesus' criticism. In reality, their religious views had much in common (for example, on the resurrection) with Jesus' teaching, but perhaps we tend to argue most vigorously (and sometimes violently) with those close to us. A careful reading of the first three Gospels shows that Jesus' criticism is not so much of the Pharisees' teaching, but their hypocrisy.

They say one thing and do another. They impose religious practices on others that they are not prepared to shoulder themselves. They keep the required religious conventions but are spiritually bankrupt (see Luke 18.9-14, which has the same conclusion as here). They are like sepulchres, gleaming and freshly whitewashed on the outside, but a heap of dust and dead bones on the inside (23.27).

Here they are not like Micah's corrupt prophets because Jesus accepts that what they teach is right – they stand in the place of Moses. But they love the status that goes with this. They wear ostentatious prayer shawls and phylacteries (short scriptural texts held in a small box and bound to the forehead and arm by leather straps). Refusing to be called 'teacher' or 'father' need not be taken literally. The point is that we have to be equal as brothers and sisters, servants (*diakonoi*) of each other, in humility, not seeking status above others. (See also Matthew 6.2-6, 16-18 and the rest of Matthew 23.)

A different voice in each issue draws out the links between the lectionary passages and provides a brief exploration of each reading, offering worship leaders additional insights to broaden their perspectives

HYMNS AND SONGS

Songs in *italics* are suitable for all ages.

All my hope on God is founded
 Be thou my vision
Father, we adore you
If you want to be great (CFW, JP)
 Give thanks with a grateful heart
 Jesus, all holy
 O Jesus I have promised
O Lord, all the world belongs to you
 There's a wideness in God's mercy
 Through all the changing scenes of life
 To God be the glory!
 We have a gospel to proclaim

See inside front cover for key to abbreviations.

Word & response

WITH ADULTS

Practise what you teach

Matthew 23.1-12

Jesus, the supreme teacher, urges us not to heap burdens on each other but rather to help one another.

- A teacher usually tries to encourage students, but in the 1997 film, *Good Will Hunting* (see *Planning*), a professor leaves a problem on a chalkboard as a challenge posed to his students, hoping someone might find the solution by the end of the semester. When it is solved quickly and anonymously, he posts a much more difficult problem – one that took him and his colleagues years to prove – imposing an impossible burden on his students.

- Some may recall being faced with, say, a piece of homework that proved so difficult that even a parent could not solve the problem. The Pharisee group referred to in many of the Gospel accounts was a group trying to interpret the law and make it applicable to day-to-day living, but they tended to say one thing and to do another. They imposed religious practices on others that were well-nigh impossible to keep, or in some cases that only they themselves had the wherewithal to observe. How can we teach others in ways that release potential rather than create burdens and feeling of guilt?

- Perhaps the best teaching of all is in the way that we live our lives. A family once made the decision to live and work on a British Forces overseas base because they reckoned that everyday opportunities in these close-knit societies afforded some of the best ways to witness to the love of God.

- The scribes and the Pharisees were people living everyday lives who studied the law part-time. Nevertheless they managed to accommodate their demanding religious observance. This was clearly not always so easy for the people they sought to teach. In what ways do Christian practices impose burdens – for example on young families, commuters or shift workers?

Another angle

An RAF plane navigator was retraining to join a helicopter crew. In order to build up his body strength, sessions of weightlifting were arranged. Attempting to bench press

a heavy weight, he struggled to lock his arms out. After words of none-too-gentle encouragement, the instructor pushed the weight up with one finger. Sometimes when we are struggling to cope with heavy burdens, to the point of failure, God's finger is there for us!

Living faith

Consider: In the course of everyday living, can we become more aware of the ways in which our lifestyles impose burdens on others?

Alternative thread

Working day and night

1 Thessalonians 2.9-13

Faith is about down-to-earth holiness, not an escape from a harsh world.

- The language of labour runs through this letter like a golden thread (alongside v.9 see 1.3, 4.11, 5.12-13), and offers a glimpse of the possible setting of some of Paul's missionary work in Thessalonica. It has been suggested that some converts were drawn from Thessalonica's manual workers, whose homes and workshops were found in high-rise tenement buildings. Paul shared the gospel with them as he worked alongside them, cutting and sewing leather for the tents he made. Faith turned these hand labourers into extended messianic families (notice Paul's use of family language throughout the letter) who shared everything, supporting one another financially as they lived, worked and ate together. They were very poor, yet their faith made them remarkably generous towards those outside their number (see 4.10; 2 Corinthians 8.1-5).

- One of the marks of the ministry of Paul and his co-workers was their financial investment in this family of faith, rather than relying on the generosity of others. Working 'night and day' meant going beyond the normal twelve hours, into the time after the community's evening meal (see 2 Thessalonians 3.6ff). Paul saw this hard manual labour as a sharing of themselves, not simply the gospel message – an act of gentle, tender and profound care towards those who had become 'very dear to us' (2.7,8); a demonstration of

fatherly concern and management for the family. As 'p' h 'k' create a way to escape from a harsh world.

Questions to provoke thinking and action to live out our faith as Christians during the week

- Not everyone in the Thessalonian church agreed with Paul. Some believed that the arrival of God's kingdom in the enthusiasm and intensity of Spirit-fuelled experience left no room for the responsibilities of marriage or work (see 4.1-8; 5.12-14; 2 Thessalonians 3.6ff), and allowed 'idlers' to live off the generosity of the rest. Paul rejected this blissful, escapist mentality. It subverted the God-given order, and confused those believers who experienced hardship and bereavement (see 4.13ff).

- How easy is it to see work as an expression of faith and a labour of love in a culture dominated by individualistic capitalism? For many people, earning money is part of a hand-to-mouth existence in which low wages reflect low prices in highly competitive economies. At the other extreme, high wages can be used to feed an unsustainable self-indulgence that, in its own way, is as escapist as the spirituality Paul rejected. His communitarian vision of working and earning may seem so idealistic as to be unrealistic, but here and there we may catch glimpses of it in our world. Even if we don't, there is surely a challenge to evaluate some of the most basic elements of our experience – work, money, eating, belief, sexuality, family, community, ageing and death – in the light of this letter, particularly verse 12.

A second set of jumping off points for sermon preparation reflecting on another of the week's readings

An idea or question which might lead into new areas of exploration and reflection

A way of making the Bible passage accessible and meaningful to a mixed age group

Word & response

WITH ALL AGES TOGETHER

Practise what you teach Matthew 23.1-12

Open the Word

The children's TV programme *Crackerjack* included a game called 'Double or drop', in which the contestant had to carry more and more objects without dropping them, usually as questions were asked. Cabbages were given for wrong answers, but prizes for the right answer, and contestants took home whatever they were holding at the end of the game.

As the passage from Matthew is read out, you could give items to the reader at regular intervals to 'burden' them. The reader might pretend to drop most of the objects by verse 11, and perhaps those who have been adding the burdens could pick them up and stand alongside the reader for the final verses.

Explore the Word

A good teacher supports rather than demands.

Sometimes when we find something easy to do, we are not aware of how difficult it is for others. You might invite a musician to play something (or a juggler to juggle or a gymnast to jump) and invite a generous volunteer to try to copy them. Then invite someone who is good at a different sort of practical task (such as icing a cake) to help and support a novice try out the skill. It seems from the story as though the Pharisees were behaving more in the way of the first demonstration, showing what they could do and placing unrealistic burdens upon others. By contrast, Jesus always seeks to empower. Jesus was often called 'Teacher'. A good teacher is one who, while offering challenge and urging learners to try their best, does not burden them with unrealistic expectations and impending failure.

An idea for demonstrating the meaning of the passage with everyone

Respond to the Word

Role play: Invite someone to pretend to be about to go on holiday with a rucksack on their back. Each time they are about to depart, someone introduces an extra item they must take. Continue until the rucksack becomes too bulky to carry at all (ensure the rucksack is not so heavy that it hurts – use light items such as plastic plates and cups, or quilts).

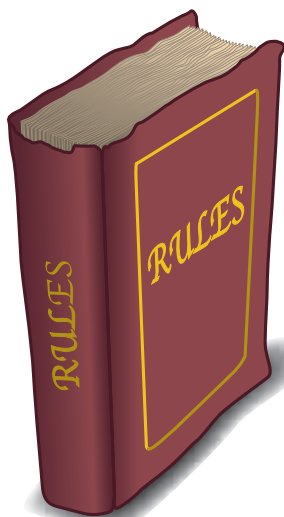
Role play: Ask people to act out various everyday roles like shopping, cooking or even praying, first in the manner of someone who is quiet and unassuming, and then in the manner of someone trying to show off.

Play: Ask people to act out various everyday roles like shopping, cooking or even praying, first in the manner of someone who is quiet and unassuming, and then in the manner of someone trying to show off.

Play: Ask people to act out various everyday roles like shopping, cooking or even praying, first in the manner of someone who is quiet and unassuming, and then in the manner of someone trying to show off.

Think: Invite people to identify a teacher who pressured or burdened them (no names) and then contrast that experience with lessons they really enjoyed. What made the difference?

Play: Think up a game that has lots of instructions, for example, stand on one leg while winking and holding your right hand in the air. In each round, those who do not follow the instructions are 'out'.



Ideas for preparing different elements of worship when all ages are together

Listen: Listen to a piece of music like Mike Oldfield's 'Tubular Bells' (see *Planning*) where more and more instrumental voices are added to the piece. As you listen think of the ways that we sometimes add to our own worries or those of our loved ones, and ask God to help you to keep in tune with what Jesus teaches.

Don't forget the Children's sheet [WEB](#) which has activities that can be used during the service and at home.

Suggestions for ways of making a response to the passage together and suited to different learning preferences and styles

A prayer for all ages together

> USE DIFFERENT GROUPS OF VOICES TO SAY THIS PRAYER.

Lord God,
we give you thanks
for the ways we learn from each other.
 Children teach us about joy and spontaneity;
young people teach us about the courage to start out and about challenging the world;
 parents teach us about caring and nurturing;
older people teach us about the value of looking back and reflecting on what we have done.
Help us to share our gifts and to avoid burdening one another.
Amen.

Practise what you teach

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

Planning

LECTIONARY

Micah 3.5-12, Psalm 43,
1 Thessalonians 2.9-13, **Matthew 23.1-12**

Context The religious leaders at the time of Jesus had added layers of rules and regulations to the practice of their faith that had the capacity to become more important than faith itself.

Common thread – Practise what you teach (Matthew 23.1-12) This week we consider the need for rules without them becoming a burden that weighs us down. We look at the danger of power corrupting and turning us away from equality, and the fair treatment of others.

Special Sunday Material for All Saints Day can be found on the [WEB](#).

Seasonal pages See pp.2–5 for season setting and material for the Year of the Bible.

ROOTS resources ROOTS *Adult & All Age* magazine has additional ideas.

Previous issues [WEB](#) See the *Week by week* page and follow the links in *From the resources bank*.

Songs and music Father God, I come to you (KS); Father, we adore you; From heaven you came; Give thanks with a grateful heart; God is our Father (KS); He's got the whole wide world; I, the Lord of Sea and Sky; I danced in the morning; Lord of all hopefulness; Thank you Lord for this good day; We're God's family; Will you come and follow me; 'I got the power' by Snap! on *World Power*; 'Up and Up' (acoustic) by Relient K on *The Bird and the Bee Sides*.

CHILDREN

Children's sheet [WEB](#) Downloadable activities to use during the session and at home.

Websites www.orthodox-jews.com/jewish-phyllacteries.html; www.kidscraftykits.co.uk/gb/cotton-plain-bag.html; Marine Conservation Society: www.mcsuk.org

YOUNG PEOPLE

Films *The Emperor's New Groove* [U](#); *The Lion King* [U](#).

Websites www.spotify.com (Huge playable music database).

i Ideas on these two pages can be used with children and young people aged about 3–16. Activities to respond to this week's Bible reading are on the next two pages.

Gather

i Ideas linked to today's theme to gather the group at the start of the session.

Prepare the space

Today's session explores the kind of teacher Jesus was. Think about your own experiences of teachers.

Ways to hear and engage with the Bible reading, which may include a story, drama, reflections or narrations

If you have a screen, show a video of a teacher and a prayer for the children to look at, or show pictures [WEB](#).

Gathering activity

■ Ask the children what they think makes a good teacher. Play a game where you, the leader, read out different qualities of a teacher, and the children have to decide if each quality represents a good or a bad teacher, by putting their thumbs up or down. The qualities could include: the teacher explains things clearly; the teacher shouts a lot; the teacher makes learning fun. Explain that, when Jesus lived on earth, a person who taught the people about God was called a 'rabbi', which means 'teacher'. The rabbi's job was to try to help people live God's way, but some rabbis loaded people up with too many rules.

Gathering prayer

Lord, as we come to learn more of you, help us to hear what you teach and accept all people as your people.
Amen.

Tip of the week

Try to keep discussions about teachers fairly positive and avoid getting into discussions about individual teachers.

Open the Word

Based on Matthew 23.1-12

i A way of presenting this week's Bible reading to your group.

Notes on the Bible reading

Pharisees' rules

Although the Gospels show the Pharisees as the main butt of Jesus' criticism, in reality their religious views had much in common. A careful reading of the first three Gospels shows that Jesus' criticism is not so much about the Pharisees' teaching, but their hypocrisy. Jesus accepts that what they teach is right. However, it is the fact that they love the status that goes with 'standing in the place of Moses' that counts against them. The point is that we have to be equal as brothers and sisters, in humility, not seeking status above others.

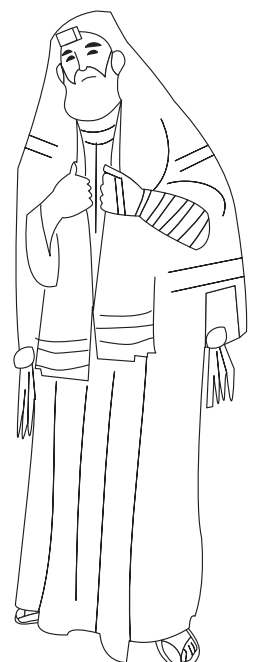
With children

A visual illustration of someone being burdened by rules.

You will need: two backpacks; different rules written out on paper and wrapped around something heavy (beanbags or stones work well) – they could be held in place with an elastic band; someone to play Jesus.

■ You will need a volunteer from your group to put on one of the backpacks. It would be good if it was someone quite small so they would quickly feel the heavy burden of the backpack (but not someone with a bad back!).

■ Read the following story to the group.



CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

Material to use across the whole age range

“I have a backpack here, and in this backpack, I am going to put all the things that you need to do to know God. So, can I have someone to put this backpack on please?”

> INVITE YOUR VOLUNTEER TO COME UP SO YOU CAN PUT THE BACKPACK ON HIM/HER. LOAD EACH ‘RULE’ STONE OR OBJECT INTO THE BACKPACK AS YOU READ OUT THE ‘RULE’ WRITTEN ON IT.

Now, let’s load this up and this will help you to know God. So, we have:

- 1 Coming to church. Well, I think that’s fairly reasonable!
- 2 Coming to church dressed in your very best clothes.
- 3 Coming to church walking on your hands at 2.3mph.

Hmm, I’m not so sure about some of these. Oh well, if it’s the rules! Let’s carry on...

- 4 Pray. Now, this one definitely helps you to know God, that’s a good one.
- 5 Pray 23 times a day.
- 6 Pray standing on your head.
- 7 Pray loudly so everyone can hear you.

I’m really not sure how helpful these are! Is this getting too heavy for you? Well, I’m sorry, but there’s more!

- 8 Have a day of rest.
- Well, I think that makes sense otherwise we all get very tired and grumpy, don’t we?
- 9 Don’t walk anywhere on that day.
 - 10 Don’t speak to anyone.
 - 11 Don’t look at anyone out of your left eye.

Now, come on. I don’t think this is helping anyone at all. This poor person is getting bogged down with all this. If rules get out of hand they stop us from doing the very thing we should be doing.”

> ASK THE PERSON PLAYING JESUS TO COME AND TAKE THE FULL BACKPACK OFF THE VOUNTEER’S BACK, AND THEN OFFER TO PUT HIS OWN LIGHT BACKPACK ON HIM/HER INSTEAD.

On the **WEB**

Short story to use with children before or after the Bible reading.
Children’s sheet to use during or after the session.
Reflection for young people.

With young people

Human ‘Pharisee’ spaghetti

■ This game is a variation on ‘Human spaghetti’. The aim is to go from being a tangled mess of arms, to untangling into a circle. The game is split into two parts.

Part 1

- Designate one person as ‘The Pharisee.’
- Explain to the group that this game requires listening and patience.
- Ask the group (minus ‘The Pharisee’) to stand in a tight circle (shoulder-to-shoulder), and put their arms straight out. Ask each person to grab the hands of two other people. In order for the game to work, there are certain rules: you cannot hold two hands of the same person; you cannot hold a hand of a person next to you in the circle.
- Once ‘The Pharisee’ is happy with the setup, he or she will now give instructions to help the group untangle themselves, for example, ‘Joe and Lucy, lift your arms up so David and Kim can walk underneath.’

- People are not allowed to move or talk unless instructed to do so by ‘The Pharisee’.
- When people have either successfully untangled themselves, or if it appears that they are stuck, move on to part 2.

Part 2

- This time have ‘The Pharisee’ in the circle as well. Although they are with the leader, this time the group can move and talk freely. They must remain together.
- When people have either successfully become untangled, or if it appears that they are stuck, ask them to sit down and read Matthew 23.1-12.
- Ask the young people:
Was it easier for ‘The Pharisee’ when he was in or out of the group?
Was it easier for the group when ‘The Pharisee’ was in or out?
Why does Jesus emphasise the need for equality in the passage?

Talk about

i Discussion starters to help the group explore the Bible reading.

Discuss with children

When people go on camping trips, they take big backpacks with lots of stuff that they need, in order to sleep, eat, travel and keep warm. This means that these bags can be quite heavy! Sometimes we carry around hurt feelings, things that we are worried about, that can be just as heavy to carry.

What would you take with you on a camping trip?

If you had a bag that you could put things that you were worried about into, what would you put in it?

Can you give this bag to anyone else to carry?

Discuss with young people

Role models

The Pharisees were looked up to for advice and counsel. You could say that they were role models for the population. This passage, however, shows that they were good at giving advice, but not so good at getting their hands dirty!

Who is/are your role models and why?

What is the difference between Jesus’ attitude and the Pharisees’ attitude towards helping others?

Can you think of times when people have helped you out practically? How did it make you feel?

True power

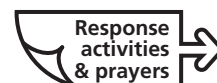
Jesus and The Pharisees were noted as people of authority, who had power to change circumstances. They went about this in different ways though.

Who do you consider as people of authority today?

Why does Jesus say that the ‘greatest among you will be your servant’?


How can you show power and authority?

Questions to help you discuss links between the reading and the group’s own experience



Respond to the Word

WITH CHILDREN

i Activities, games and prayers to respond to the Bible reading – see previous page for ways of presenting it. The  icon shows activities suitable for 3s–5s. Activities more suited to 11s–16s are on the next page.



Practise what you teach

Based on Matthew 23.1-12

Jesus objected to the Pharisees' hypocrisy rather than to their teaching. They say one thing and do another. They keep the required religious

Indicates an activity which is suitable to use with very young children

...at we have ... and sisters, in humility, not seeking status above others.

Burden game

A fun game to show what it is like to be burdened.

You will need: of a variety of objects, such as hats, bags, books, suitcases, cuddly toys. Identical sets of cards, one set for each team. On each card draw/print a picture of one of the objects and add a few cards with a picture of Jesus. Each set should have a picture card for every object plus a few pictures of Jesus.

- Divide your group into teams depending on its size.
- Each team must choose one person from their team to be the 'carrier'.
- The children in each team take it in turns to choose a card, and whatever is on the card is the item they need to give their team's 'carrier' to hold.
- This continues around the circle with the 'carrier' being loaded down.
- If someone chooses a 'Jesus' card, then that person can go and share the burden with the 'carrier'.
- The winning team is the one carrying things, no matter how many people are carrying them.

Carrying the load

A simple game.

You will need: a heavy object for each person to hold (a small bag of flour, a book). Ensure the objects are a suitable weight for the children's age and size.

- Invite the children to hold their hands out palm downwards.
- Place the heavy object on the back of each person's hand.
- Ask them to keep it there for as long as they can.
- You might have a discussion about the reading as they do this – or discuss the *Talk about* questions.
- You might also have some activity where they have to move round the room with the weight on their hands.
- When all have removed the weights, discuss the idea that we can carry things around that stop us doing other things. The Pharisees had the weight of the law – originally there to help them but layered with too many rules and regulations.

Sharing the load

Make a shopping bag.

You will need: plain cotton bags (see *Planning*) or you could encourage members of the congregation to get involved by making plain bags for your group; fabric pens.

- The ...
- Encourage each child to decorate their own shopping bag.
- You may want to write something like 'sharing the load' on each bag.
- As you do this, talk about the 'burdens' people have. In what ways could we help them in sharing the load?

Prayers to say are clearly shown in blue.

- You could take this opportunity to talk about the negative environmental effects of plastic bags and how we should lessen the burden we place on the earth. The Marine Conservation Society (see *Planning*) has lots of information about how our waste affects the earth's oceans.

Practise what you teach!

A game of 'spot the teacher'.

- Choose one person to leave the room.
- Then choose another person to be the 'teacher'. He/she must instruct the rest of the group to move round the room in a certain way, for example, hopping on their left leg.
- The 'teacher' must then do something slightly different from the rest of the group, such as hopping on his/her right leg.
- The person who was out of the room comes back in and tries to spot the 'teacher', who is not practising what he/she teaches!

Sharing the prayer

The leader should start walking round the room, reading the prayer. Every time the phrase in bold is read out, a few others should come and walk with the leader, and join in with the bold phrases.

Jesus, the load you ask us to carry is light.
Help us to share the load.
 Help us to know what you ask us to do.
Help us to share the load.
 May we see where others are weighed down.
Help us to share the load.
 Quietly, humbly, with you as our teacher,
help us to share the load.
Amen.

Send out

i Gather the children together, give them a copy of the *Children's sheet* and pray:

May we be good pupils, who listen to our teacher, Jesus, and do what he teaches.
 May we help people with the things they find difficult and not add to their difficulties.
Amen.



Respond to the Word

WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

i Activities, games and prayers to respond to the Bible reading – see page 39 for ways of presenting it. Activities more suited to 3s–10s are on the facing page.

Practise what you teach

Based on Matthew 23.1-12

Jesus' objected to the Pharisees' hypocrisy rather than to their teaching. They say one thing and do another. They keep the required religious conventions, but are spiritually bankrupt. It is the fact that they love the status that goes with 'standing in the place of Moses' that counts against them. The point is that we have to be equal as brothers and sisters, in humility, not seeking status above others.

Carry the weight

A simple game.

- Leaders should stand around the edge in this activity. Be aware of all health and safety implications.
- Invite the young people to stand in a circle. All should then turn to their right.
- Ask them to close in so that there are no gaps between them.
- They place their hands on the shoulders of the person in front of them.
- On a countdown, they all sit down on the knees of the person behind them.
- Once they are balanced, they should be able to raise their hands in the air.

Spin it rich

Make and play a game.

You will need (for one board): a copy of the board template and assembly instructions **WEB**; split pin paper fasteners; permanent marker pens (various colours); pens and pencils; glue sticks; scissors; ruler(s); four coins or objects as markers to play the game.

- Create a board for the young people to play a game of forfeits and rewards.
- There is a template and instructions on the **WEB**. You might prepare the boards beforehand, or the young people might make their own.
- Around the edge of the board there are forfeit and reward squares. Players choose a 'home' corner and work their way around the board. The winner is the first person back to their 'home'.
- If a player lands on a reward square they should give an example of a good way of living.
- If the group agree it is a good thing then they move forward one space.
- If a player lands on a forfeit square they have to identify an unhelpful act. If the group agrees, the player moves back one space.
- If the spinner lands on 'Spiritually rich', they move to the next reward square. If it lands on 'Spiritually bankrupt', they move to the next forfeit square.

A rough guide to how long the activity might take

- The aim is to get back to the starting place.

Burdens

An interactive visual prayer reflection.

You will need: a large empty rucksack; a chair; items of varying size and weight – enough for two or three per group member; a copy of the poem (see below); a copy of the track 'Up and up' (see *Planning*).

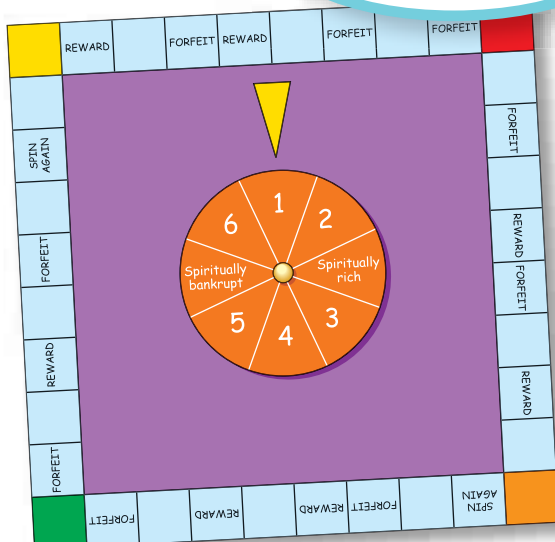
- Ask the young people to stand in a circle and give each young person two to three items.
- Place the rucksack on a chair in the middle of the room.
- Explain that after you have read out a short poem they are to take an item, one at a time, and place it in the rucksack.
- Read out the following: 'The objects in our hands are our burdens. Some of them we have made ourselves. Some of them we have been given by others. These objects in our hands are our burdens. Burdens we long to see no more. Burdens we long to pass on. Look at your burden – what do you see? Pain, stress, anger, tears? Look at your burden – do you long to be free? Rely on him, the man who will be, The one to take your burden and set you free.'
- Play the track 'Up and up' while the young people take their item to the rucksack.

A short prayer to bring the session to a close

Send out

i Gather the group and close your time together by sending them out to live the message of the session. End with a prayer.

Lord, thank you for showing us what you require. Help us to be humble in all we do and say, being servant-hearted, looking for opportunities to help others. Give us the strength to persevere in doing this. Amen.



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