

# CHILDREN

## BIBLE NOTES

### DEALING WITH THE BIG STUFF

#### The Gospel John 12.20-33

Jesus has arrived in Jerusalem. His ministry to the villages of Galilee is over, and his last earthly journey is beginning.

John introduces the teaching of Jesus through some Greeks requesting to meet Jesus. They don't actually seem to meet him, but they represent Gentiles everywhere. The Good News is not only for the Jews.

Jesus' thoughts focus on his death. Pain and suffering have to be faced and there is fear in his soul. Yet this is why he has come, and when he is 'lifted up' on the cross, God will be glorified, Satan and evil will be overruled and he will draw all people to himself.

#### The Old Testament Jeremiah 31.31-34

This prophecy is set in the context of the hope that Israel will be delivered from exile and restored to her own land. There is a journey to be made, leading the people to repentance and faithfulness. Forgiveness and a renewing of the

covenant relationship – jeopardised because of disobedience – are ahead for them.

Jeremiah was thinking of his own nation in relation to this promise. The young church will see its fulfilment in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

#### The Epistle Hebrews 5.5-10

The writer of Hebrews sees Jesus as the one who intercedes for us with God. He is compared to the priests in Judaism who offered sacrifices for the sins of the people. It was not a role Christ took upon himself, but he was appointed by God who called him, 'my Son'.

Christ is well qualified for this role. He understands human weakness, temptation, suffering and fear. He knows what is involved in being obedient to God's will. Thus he becomes the source of salvation for all who obey him.

*(A full version of these notes can be found on the web site at [www.rootsontheweb.com](http://www.rootsontheweb.com))*

## SET THE SCENE

Display all, or some, of the items below.

- Seeds of plants of different kinds. You will need ones of different colours for some of the craft activities, so include different coloured grains and dried peas and beans.
- If possible, include some packets of vegetable seeds – to contrast what is inside with the picture of the grown product on the outside.
- Just before the session, cut open a few pieces of fruit to display the seeds or pips inside.
- Pictures of plants and trees ready to be harvested – fruit trees, fruit bushes, fields of wheat and so on.
- A pot of earth or compost.

## GET STARTED

### 1 Let's grow

Let the group imagine they are seeds. They need to find a space. When everyone is quiet ask them to drop suddenly to the ground. The seeds have dropped off the plant. There, they curl up tight and keep very still. What has happened? Are the seeds dead when they stay in the ground all winter? Now the spring has come and the sun is shining. Gradually the seeds begin to grow towards the sun, up and up. When they are full grown, they sway in the breeze, and eventually produce more grain. No new plant would have come if the seed hadn't fallen.

### 2 Different seeds

Pass round the packets of vegetable seeds from the display. Cut open an apple and look at the seeds. Look at potatoes. Talk about all the different kinds of fruit and the way they all have seeds. What do you have to do to make the seeds grow? All of them have to go into the dark earth. For a long time they do nothing, until the spring comes. In today's story, Jesus talks about a seed going in the earth.

### 3 What's important?

Ask the children to think of one object that is important to them. If they had to give up everything and just keep one belonging, what would it be and why?

To encourage people to think about this, the leaders can each bring something of their own to show the group and explain why it is important to them.

### 4 I don't want to

Ask the children about the things they hate doing. Having a bath? Going to bed? Washing up? Tidying their rooms? Doing their homework? Write up a big list. Then say that today's story is about Jesus saying, 'I don't want to ... but I will.'

### 5 Follow my leader

Have a quick and energetic game of 'follow my leader', making sure you do some fun things and some things that are harder – maybe like crawling under tables. Return to this game in *Be creative 1*.





## USE THE BIBLE

### 1 Build a picture

The Gospel reading for today is not easy to use with children. It will help to have some visual aids. On a large sheet of paper, draw a background of land and sky – or stick on coloured paper. Draw the relevant pictures – or photocopy and enlarge the pictures on pages 27-9, colour them, and cut them out. Add sticky tack to the back and stick on to a board at the relevant points in the story.

One day, some people wanted to meet Jesus, (Picture 1, Jesus,) but it seemed that Jesus had other things on his mind. (Picture 2, Jesus' friends.) He told his friends that the time had come for him to do what God wanted him to do. 'It's like this,' he said. 'Unless a grain of wheat goes into the ground and dies, it stays as just one seed. (Picture 3, a grain of wheat.) But if it goes into the ground, it eventually grows lots of fruit.' (Picture 4, a stalk of wheat.) Then he said something else. 'If you want to serve me, and follow me, you must go where I go and do what I do. (Picture 5, children playing 'follow

my leader'.) Sometimes it will be hard. But if you do it, God will be very, very happy with you.'

After he had said that, Jesus started to pray. (Replace the picture of Jesus with one of him praying, no.6.) He said something like this. 'Dear Father, I don't want to do the next bit. It will be hard. I want to ask you to rescue me. But, actually, I know that I have to do it, because I want everyone to know how wonderful you are.'

At that moment, the crowd was surprised, because God spoke to Jesus from heaven. (Add a speech bubble, with God's words, coming from the sky.) Some people said it was thunder. Others thought it was an angel.

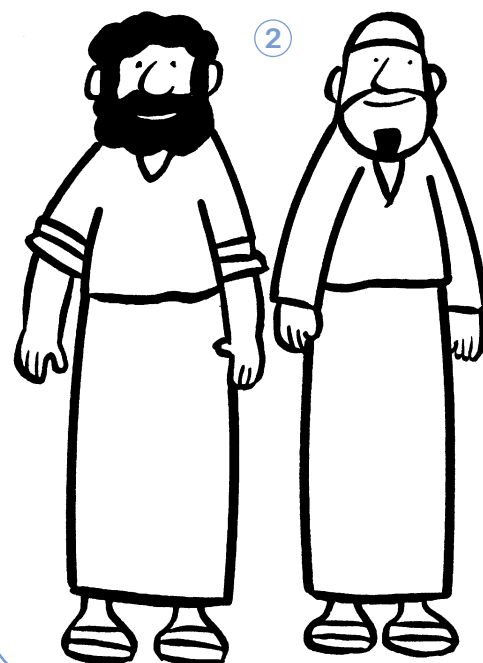
God said: 'I have glorified my name and I will glorify it again.'

While they were wondering about it, Jesus told his friends: 'That voice came to help you. Not me.'

Then he said that the time had come for him to fulfill his mission. He knew that he was going to die. His friends did not understand all that he said then, but when he died and came alive again, everything began to make sense.

### 2 Challenge

When you have told the story, maybe twice through, challenge the older children to tell it again from memory, and put up the pictures in the right order. The younger children could draw pictures of themselves to add in to the crowd, as if they had been there. What would it have been like to be there that day? Do you think God's voice sounded like thunder? What would an angel's voice sound like? Some of the crowd thought it had been an angel.



## BE CREATIVE

### 1 Follow my leader

Play 'follow my leader' again, with one of the leaders at the front of the line. End up with everyone sitting down together, and the leader turning to everyone and saying, 'Well done! You followed me very carefully, and went everywhere I went.' Jesus said in the reading that, if we followed him and served him, God would be very pleased with us. With the older children you might want to ask what it might be like to be 'honoured' by God (v. 26).

### 2 Seed pictures

Provide a range of colours and sizes of grains and seeds; red and yellow lentils, brown and white rice, dried green peas, and so on. Make patterns or pictures by gluing them on paper. The younger ones will want to do random patterns. Older children could make a mosaic of Jesus speaking to the crowd.

### 3 Seed cards

On the outside of a folded piece of A5 card, write 'Unless a seed falls into the earth and

dies, it remains just a single seed ...' Stick one apple seed in the middle of the card and decorate around it with dark colours representing the earth.

Inside the card, stick lots and lots of drawn, coloured and cut out apples. Write 'but if the seed dies, it bears much fruit', and decorate round the apples with bright, sunny colours.

### 4 Sing a song

Learn and sing this song. It works very well in a round, and would be a good offering of worship to bring to the rest of the church. The children might want to march, or do actions as they sing.

Tune *Frère Jacques*

We will follow, we will follow  
God's own son, God's own son  
Showing him we love him, showing him we love him,  
Day by day, day by day.

### 5 Dares

Prepare a list of dares – but ones that are safe to do (like singing a note until you run out of breath, patting your head and rubbing your tummy simultaneously, keeping still while

someone tickles you, and so on). Each child rolls a die. If they throw a 6 or a 3, it is their turn to do a dare. Choose ones that are appropriate to the age of the child. Younger ones might like to play in pairs and do the dares together. Clap each attempt enthusiastically.

These things are fun. But Jesus was being challenged to do something he was going to find very hard – and he did it. God was really pleased with him.

### 6 Questions

Divide the older children into two groups. Give one group a copy of John 12.20-26, and the others, John 12.27-33. Ask each group to go through their verses and write any questions they might have about what Jesus said, and what happened. Then swap readings and questions, and start thinking about possible answers. Discuss both questions and answers together.

## WORK IT OUT

### 1 Being afraid *Younger children*

There are times when we feel unsure and sad. That is just how Jesus was feeling, wasn't it? He tried to let people know what was going to happen but they didn't seem to understand. So, Jesus turned to the one person who would know how he felt – God. And God helped him.

Talk about what it is like when your friends don't understand you. Just like Jesus, we need people we can talk to when we are afraid or unhappy. Sometimes, mum or dad, or a teacher can help. Sometimes we need to pray as well, as Jesus did.

### 2 Digging deep

Dig deep in your thinking together as to how afraid and uncertain Jesus felt about the next stage of his life. Is it encouraging that Jesus faced things that made him want to escape?

What makes us frightened? How do we cope with it? Or what about when we just don't want to do something? God can help us see beyond our own misery. For example, visiting a relative in an old people's home may seem boring, but to the visitor it can make all the difference. Why did Jesus want to glorify God's name above all things (v. 28)? What does it mean to glorify God?

## PRAY IT THROUGH

### 1 Seed prayer

Look together at the seed pictures or cards from *Be creative 2 and 3* if you made them, as a focus for prayer.

Wonderful God,  
thank you for seeds,  
small and dry,  
waiting to go in the earth.  
In the dark earth, the rain comes,  
the warmth comes,  
and the seeds start to grow.  
Life bursts out, and  
out of the tiny seeds come  
new plants, and fruits ...  
and more seeds.  
Thank you for seeds.  
**Amen.**

### 2 Honoured by God

In quietness, think of something kind you have done recently. Have you been friendly to someone? Have you helped, or shared, or smiled? Have you looked after someone, or have you been cheerful? Have you done something kind when you didn't really want to? God is always so glad when we are like that. Thank you God for the times when we do things that make you happy. **Amen.**

### 3 Take my life

Dear God, I want to be like Jesus – who did what you wanted, even when it was hard and scary. He gave his life, just as you asked him to. And now millions of people have come to know you – because of what he did. That's lots of fruit from one life. Please help me to follow you when it's hard, as Jesus did. Please will you use my life to bear lots of fruit too? **Amen.**

## MUSIC AND OTHER RESOURCES



Domine Deus (BBP, JU)

Father, I place into your hands (JP)

Jesus, thank you for the cross (KS)

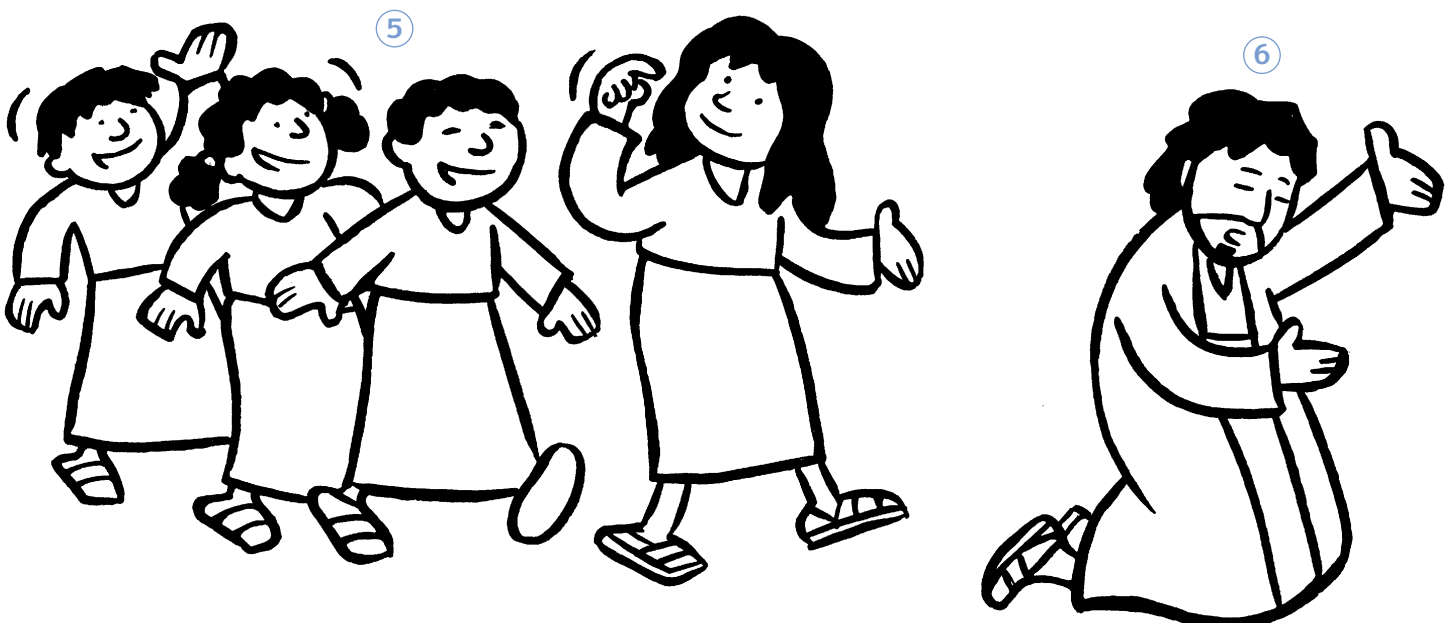
Jesus Christ (KS, TS)

Thank you, Jesus (JP, KS, TS)

Two long pieces of wood (BBP)

When I think about the cross (KS)

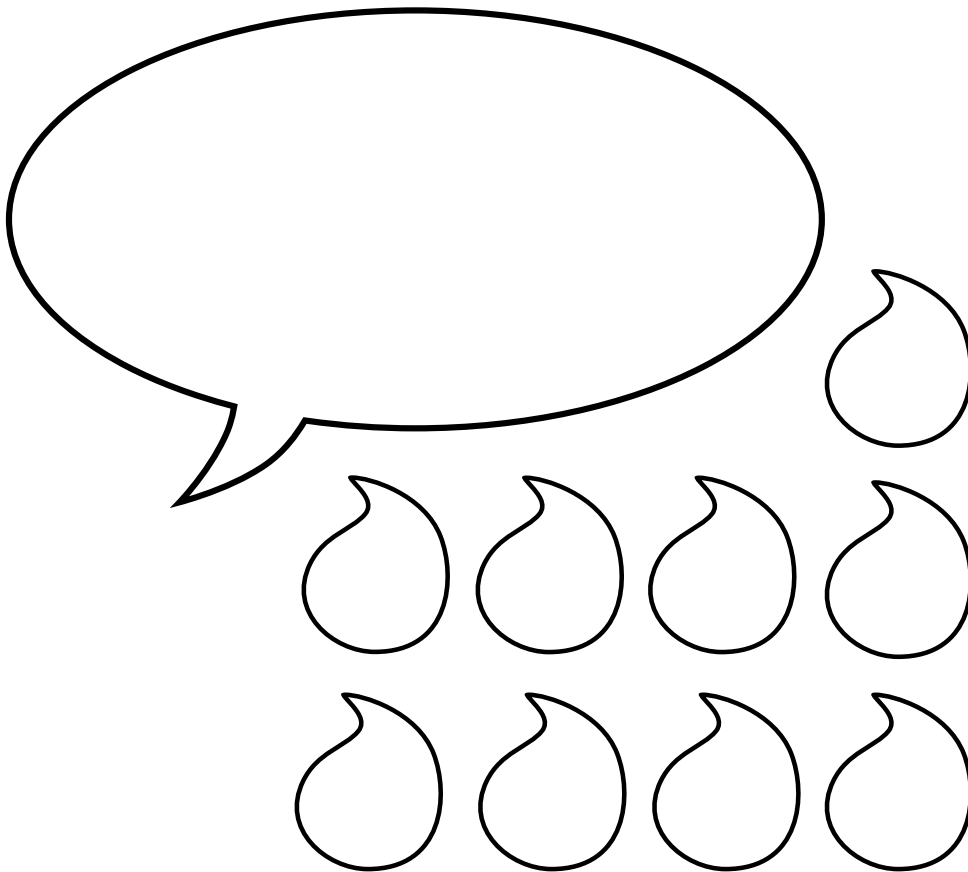
*Pilgrim's Progress* - John Bunyan's classic retold by Geraldine McCaughrean, Hodder Children's Books, 1999, ISBN 0340727543.





Activity sheet for extra time, or to take home. Photocopy and/or enlarge whole page or just this section.

'Father, glorify your name.' John 12.28 (NRSV)



The speech bubble shows Jesus' prayer.  
The teardrops remind us that it was hard for Jesus to die.

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**Make a mobile**

- 1 Cut out the speech bubble and teardrops.
- 2 Colour them on both sides.
- 3 Write the words of Jesus in the speech bubble.
- 4 Make the mobile as shown. Stick the teardrops to the wool or thread with tape.

