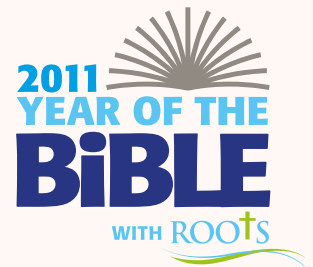


Bible heroes and villains

Flexible ideas to open up Bible characters



Introduction

The Bible is full of stories of ordinary people who became heroes by trusting and following God. The small boy who killed a mighty giant and went on to rule a nation, the young woman who saved a nation by risking her own neck, the young man who defeated a whole army with just a few men. The young leader who followed in his master's footsteps, the woman who was willing to go to extraordinary lengths in obedience, the zealous Pharisee whose life was turned around when he encountered Jesus.

Yet, the Bible also has stories of people who failed to trust and follow God, from those who were eaten by jealousy to those who betrayed and deceived, or lied and led others astray. In these pages we offer suggestions using a wide range of crafts, activities, games and songs to explore six characters. Included are some of the consequences and human characteristics that caused their rejection of God, giving us opportunity to learn lessons from their life stories. We will look at The Serpent, King Herod, Jezebel, Delilah, Cain and Judas to challenge our ideas and encourage us all to be a disciple, to be a hero. These might be used as a follow on from the heroes covered in issue 53, or combined with them to create a comprehensive holiday club.

Upside down hero

Villains are heroes turned upside down. Just as a classic hero has a lethal flaw, so a villain will have an incurable virtue! God made each of us in his image and, out of a response of love for us, gave us free will. So we have the choice to become a hero or villain, to pursue our virtues or our flaws.

In this issue we are going to take a look at **The Serpent**, the Slippery Slave (Genesis 3.1-15), **Cain** the Jealous Brother (Genesis 4.1-16), **Jezebel** the Painted Lady (1 Kings 16.29-33; 21.25), **Delilah** the Disloyal Deceiver (Judges 16.3-22), **Herod** the Liar (Matthew 3) and **Judas** the Betrayer (Luke 22.1-6, Matthew 26.20-25; 47.1-50).

These six villains of the Bible come from a variety of settings: young and old, male and female, from different times and cultures, however all are linked by their villainous acts, not that they were born this way, simply that they chose this path and walked away from God.

The *Lion Storyteller Bible* has some great retellings of some of the stories. It might be worth your while getting hold of a copy from your local library.

Prepare the space

- Display pictures of characters from TV and films that the children will recognise, such as Scar (from *The Lion King*), Jafar (from *Aladdin*), Cruella De Ville (from *101 Dalmatians*), Captain

Hook (from *Peter Pan*) and Scrooge (from *The Muppet Christmas Carol*).

- You could also add pictures of the six characters that the sessions focus on. Pictures can be sourced from an internet search engine.
- Provide a large piece of paper and pens so that the children can write down characteristics of these people/characters that make them into villains, for example, Jealousy, Selfishness, Envy, Anger, No remorse, Greed... You can add to these over the sessions.
- Allow some time at the end of the session for children to change these words of villainous behaviour to those traits of heroes, or to change pictures from those of the villains to those of themselves or the heroes studied previously.
- Each session has a film clip suggestion that can be shown with little explanation or used to prompt discussion in a whole or small groups.

Gathering activity

Begin each session with this simple activity.

You will need: slips of card, each naming a superhero.

- Beforehand, prepare the cards with names of superheroes, ensuring you have enough cards for the numbers who may attend. The superheroes listed might be: Spiderman, Superman, Marvelgirl, Batman, Buzz Lightyear.
- Give each person a slip with their hero name and ask them to remember who they are.
- Explain that when they hear their hero name they should stand up, adopt a superhero pose and shout out their hero name. They might be asked to sing a superhero theme tune.
- Call out each of the hero names randomly.

Prayer

Start or end each session with a time of worship, sing a couple of songs and pray together. Some suggestions for songs are below, along with a prayer. The end of the session could be an opportunity for the children to talk about what they have learnt from the story, and what you can all learn from the example of the person whose story you have read.

For the times when we have been less than heroic,

Lord, we are sorry.

For the times we have not used our hero talents,

Lord, we are sorry.

Give us the courage to be generous, and celebrate the gifts of others. Encourage us to have a go at being heroes.

Amen.

Songs

Jesus is my Superhero (recorded on *Hillsong live worship for kids – Jesus is my superhero*); Our God is a great big God; Superhero (recorded on *The Kids Colossal Jumbo Songbook*, Spring Harvest).

The serpent — the slippery slave

Gather

Prepare the space

Show a picture of a tug of war team pulling a rope. Pictures can be sourced through an internet search and projected on a wall or screen.

Introduce the theme

Eve was persuaded away from the truth she knew, away from the path she should be taking.

Have you ever been persuaded by someone else to do something you knew you shouldn't? What happened?

Gathering game

Dividing the group into two teams, ask a volunteer to stand in the middle holding on tightly to a long ribbon tied round their waist. Have a 'gentle' tug of war match between the two teams, then ask the child in the middle what it felt like being tugged backwards and forwards. Explain that this is like the battle that goes on in us when we are being tempted. With a larger gathering you would be better to ask for three volunteers for each team. Consider all the health and safety implications.

Open the Word

Read Genesis 3.1-15. The Serpent was used by Satan to deceive Eve. You might use a children's Bible or *The Message* version.

Ask the children to think about why the serpent is a villain.

How did it show a rejection of God?

Respond

Get stuffed

Make snakes.

You will need: paper and pens; old, clean socks and other craft materials including googly eyes!

- Encourage the children to make snakes out of the socks and stuff them with paper.

- You could ask the children to write on the paper some of the things that they need help from God to resist.

Snakes and ladders

A game of highs and lows.

You will need: copies of the board [WEB](#); coloured pens; pipe cleaners; strips of coloured paper; glue sticks; dice.

- Beforehand ensure you have enough boards. You can make your own using the template [WEB](#).

- Divide the children into groups and ask them to design a snakes and ladders board. They can use the pipe cleaners as snakes and the paper strips as ladders. Older children might add forfeits linked to the Bible reading, for example, tempted by an apple: miss a go.

- They might swap boards with others in the group.

Cain

— the jealous brother

Gather

Prepare the space

As the children enter the room give each either none, one, two or three sweets.

Observe whether they share their 'spare' sweets? How do the children without sweets react?

Introduce the theme

Ask the children how they felt if they didn't receive a sweet when they entered the room? Whoever received more than one sweet, had they considered sharing?

Have there been occasions when they have felt jealous of others?

Gathering activity

A relay race.

You will need: two large suitcases or bags; books; shoes; water bottles and any other heavy items.

- Divide the group into two teams and provide both teams with a large suitcase.

- At the other end of the space provide heavy items such as books, shoes, bottles of water.

- Each child runs with the suitcase to the other end of the space and adds an item to the suitcase. Repeat the relay until all have had a go.

- After the race explain that Jealousy and Anger are like the heavy suitcase: as we add them to our lives, they weigh us down.

Open the Word

Read Genesis 4.1-16. You might use a children's Bible or *The Message* version.

Ask the children to think about why Cain is a villain.

How did he reject God?

Respond

Colour of jealousy

Art activity to consider the characteristics of jealousy.

You will need: art supplies: coloured pens and pencils, fabrics and materials of different texture and colour.

- Ask the children to present 'jealousy' using the art materials provided.

- They might prefer to draw a scene showing someone acting jealousy, or consider what colours might show jealousy.

Overflowing

Visual presentation of the impact of jealousy.

You will need: vinegar and baking soda; a glass and a bowl on a tray with other items that will possibly get wet.

- Set out the glass and bowl on the tray with the other items surrounding it.

- Explain that our anger hurts not only us but others too. As you are saying this, fill the glass with baking soda and begin adding vinegar. Foam will form and then spill out, covering the items you have laid around the glass.

Gather

Prepare the space

Display pictures of babies, on the floor of the space you meet in, along with the words HERO, VILLAIN and CHOICE.

Introduce the theme

Jezebel was influenced by others to turn from God to worship other idols, to turn from being a hero, a follower of the one, true, God, to become a villain!

What things do you turn from God to focus on?

Who influences you?

Gathering activity

As the children enter, have available lots of playdough formed into different shapes. Give them freedom to create and mould as they will. In your introduction explain that we are like the playdough, easily moulded and shaped, therefore we have to be careful who we spend time with.

Open the Word

Read 1 Kings 16.29-33 and 21.25. You might use a children's Bible or *The Message* version.

Ask the children to think about why Jezebel is a villain.

How did she reject God?

Respond

Make-up

Creating make-up designs.

You will need: face paints or make-up, or paper plates and colouring pens.

- Explain that Jezebel was known for having a lot of make-up. Make-up can be used to communicate a message to others: beauty, fun, anger, culture.
- Show the children pictures of different examples – stage make-up, war paint.
- Invite the group to create their own make-up designs, either on paper plates using colouring pens or actual make-up or face paints. Ask them to create a design of make-up that illustrates their personality, or a message they want to give to the world.

Oil and water

Experiment with mixing.

You will need: two glasses of water; food colouring; vegetable oil; a clear jug; the film *Shrek* and the means to play it.

- Add food colouring and oil to one of the glasses of water.
- Explain to the children that we are called to be good and follow God, even when others try to influence us.

- Pour the clear water into the jug.

- Explain that there are situations and people we are best not mixing with.

- Pour the coloured, oiled, water into the jug.

- Explain to the children that we should be like the oil; we need to separate ourselves from those who want us to sin, just as oil separates from water.

Delilah

– the disloyal deceiver

Gather

Prepare the space

Arrange a selection of pictures of people with radical hairstyles and wigs.

Introduction of theme

Samson trusted Delilah but that wasn't a smart decision. Ask the children

Who do you trust?

Have you ever broken someone's trust? Why?

Gathering activity

Ask the children to look at the pictures of people with crazy hair and decide which ones are wigs and which ones are not!

Open the Word

Read Judges 16.3-22; Delilah – the woman the hero Samson falls in love with, whom he ultimately trusts to his peril.

Ask the children to think about why

Delilah is a villain. *How did she reject God?*

Respond

Hair-growing Samson!

Make grass hair pots.

You will need: tights or a stocking, one 'leg' per child; grass seed, sawdust; elastic

bands; yogurt pots; googly eyes; paper; paint and pens to decorate the pots.

- Hand each child one length from a pair of tights, or a single stocking, and ask them to fill the end with grass seed, topping up with sawdust until they have a ball shape. Help them to fasten the end tightly with an elastic band.

- They should then decorate the yogurt pot as the body and stand the stocking ball in the pot with the grass seed at the top. Get them to add some eyes and any other decorative bits they wish.

- Invite all the children to take their own pot home and keep it topped up with water. After a few weeks their grass head should grow hair – the question is when will each child cut it!

Trust me?

A simple trust game.

- Set up a simple narrow route. Scatter some objects along the route that have to be avoided.

- Pair the children up and blindfold one child of each pair. The other child in each pair then leads the blindfolded friend around the route, minding out for the objects along the way.

- Ask the children afterwards how it felt to trust one another. *Who can they trust?*

Film

Show the children a clip from the film *Aladdin* (Chapter 07, 00:25-00:33). This excerpt shows the villainous character Jafar disguised as an old man tricking Aladdin to go into the cave, to retrieve the genie's magic lamp. Aladdin trusted the old man, in much the same way as Samson trusted Delilah.

King Herod — the liar

Gather

Prepare the space

Display the words TRUE and FALSE on opposite ends of the meeting space.

Introduce the theme

Explain to the group that trusting what people say is so important. The Bible in many places talks of blessing those whose words are pure (1 Peter 3.10), and it also suggests that God is disgusted by those who lie (Proverbs 12.22).

Who do you trust fully in what they say? Are there people whose words you cannot trust?

Gathering activity

Invite the children to take turns at telling two facts about themselves. One fact should be true, one should be a lie.

The rest of the group have to guess which is the fact and which is the lie.

Open the Word

Read Matthew 3. Herod is one of the most fascinating and villainous figures of the biblical world. Each year we are reminded of the character flaws of this evil king, when he is played by children in the annual Christmas nativity play.

Ask the children to think about why Herod is a villain. *How did he reject God?*

Respond

Does this face lie?

A discussion and drawing activity.

You will need: flip chart size paper and marker pens.

- Draw two large faces on flip chart paper, one with a smiling face and one with a frowning face. From the mouths of both of the faces draw a speech bubble.

- Ask the children to shout out ideas about the effects of telling the truth and telling lies. Discuss these ideas as you write them into the relevant speech bubbles.

True or false?

Tell the children that you are going to give them statements that could be false or true, they must decide and then make their way to the end of the space that you have identified as 'true' and 'false'.

Some examples of statements to give are on the [WEB](#).

Judas – the betrayer

Gather

Prepare the space

Project the word Betray. Give the children the opportunity as they enter the room to say the words they think of when they hear the word 'Betray'. You can use this activity to illustrate that we all have different ways of seeing things. Judas understood things differently, but took it too far!

Introduce the theme

- Judas had a great love of money and violence. He was the trusted disciple with money for the whole group, but it was ultimately money that led to Judas betraying Jesus. Judas most probably came from a group called the Zealots. They had an understanding of the Old Testaments prophecies, seeing the Messiah coming and overthrowing the Romans and establishing his kingdom through physical force.

Does money always have to be bad?

When can money do good?

Gathering activity

Beforehand, ask the children to bring a donation of copper coins for a chosen charity with them to the session.

Invite them to lay their coins down side by side and see how far they can get across the space you are meeting in.

Open the Word

Read Luke 22.1-6, Matthew 26.20-25 and Matthew 47.1-50. Judas was good at maths! Ask the group what they discover about Judas.

Ask the children to think about why Judas is a villain. *How did he reject God?*

Respond

I'll do it my way

A musical activity.

- Ask the group to sing a song they all know.
- Invite them to work in groups to devise new actions for the song.
- Invite everyone to sing as a group with everyone doing the actions that mean something to them!
- Explain that we all translate things differently: thankfully it doesn't always have the same drastic effect as it did when Judas interpreted the Scriptures differently to how Jesus did.

Be impressed

A brass-rubbing activity.

You will need: a range of coins; some A4 sheets of paper; wax crayons.

- Ask the children to create a picture from rubbing the crayons over a piece of paper on top of some of the coins.
- Explain that just as the Pharisees' villainous behaviour rubbed off on Judas, bad behavioural traits can rub off on us.
- Discuss how we protect ourselves and how this is difficult when something we want is offered to try to sway us.