



SPIES!

MEETING AIM

To understand that with God we can do what seems to be impossible.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Numbers 13; 14:5-9,24

BACKGROUND

Caleb was one of the spies sent by Moses into the Promised Land. Only Caleb and Joshua believed that they could take the land; the others saw the dangers and declared that it was too dangerous. Caleb knew that God would be true to his word – he wouldn't have promised something he couldn't deliver. He knew that with God, the people would be able to achieve what seemed impossible.

WELCOME ACTIVITIES

5 MINS

OPTION ONE: Party pieces

Invite some volunteers to the front who can do something unusual or seemingly impossible. Prime some people beforehand to get the ball rolling. Talents might include football freestyling, skateboard tricks or circus skills. (If this is not practical, then look online for videos of people doing the seemingly impossible.) What do people think when they see feats like these?

OPTION TWO: Testimony

Find someone who has done the seemingly impossible through God's strength and power. This could be a story of survival, of healing, of employment circumstances or repaired relationships. Make sure that their story is appropriate to an all-age setting. Invite them to the front and ask them a few questions to get them going.

BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

You will need: a volunteer to play Caleb; spy costume; the *Mission Impossible* theme tune and the means to play it Give your volunteer the script below and encourage them to prepare it so that they can deliver it with confidence. Dress them like a spy and play the *Mission Impossible* theme tune as they

come to the front:

Alright? I'm Caleb – one of the people of God, the Israelites. We've been travelling from Egypt, where God freed us from slavery, to a new home. It's taken ages, but we've reached the edge this new home. Moses chose twelve people to be spies and guess what? I'm one of them!

We sneaked into this new land. God had promised we would live there, but when we travelled through our new home, we discovered people were already there. They were big! So big that some of the others said that we looked like grasshoppers in comparison.

But there were some amazing sights. We found bunches of grapes that were so big it took two of us to carry them! There were huge cities with enormous walls – they were strong and beautiful.

When we got back, the other spies started to tell Moses, Aaron and the people about this new land. They started off positively, but then went onto the difficulties. "All the men are huge!" they said. "There are lots of different people living all over this land."

The people started to panic, so I shouted out: "Let's go and take the land, I know we can do it!" But the other spies said: "Those people are too strong for us! We can't farm that land! The people are like giants!"

The people cried all night and complained to Moses, but I shouted: "If we obey God, he will give us this rich and fertile land. God is on our side, those people won't stand a chance!" But the people were scared, they didn't believe us!

Can you believe it? God promised us this land – why would he do that if he couldn't do the impossible through us and for us?

SMALL GROUPS

10 MINS

You will need: copies of the questions below; Bibles

Break into small groups – made up of one or two families, or different mixed-age groups – and give each group a copy of these questions and a Bible:

- What's your favourite part of the Bible passage?
- How were Caleb and Joshua different from the other spies?
- Has God ever promised you

something? Did he deliver? How?

- Are you in a position where you need the strength of God who can do the impossible?

Give the groups time to chat about these questions, referring to the Bible passage in they need to.

REVIEW

10 MINS

You will need: roving mic (if needed)

Get some feedback on questions two and three from 'Small groups', using a microphone to hear people's contributions if your meeting space is large.

RESPONSE ACTIVITIES

10 MINS

Set these three activities up in different parts of your meeting space. Explain what each one is and encourage people to go to the one that will help them process what they have discovered most effectively.

OPTION ONE: Discussion

Assign some volunteers to help guide a discussion about the story and what it might mean for the congregation today.

OPTION TWO: Hot-seating

You will need: Caleb from 'Bible story'

Invite Caleb to come and sit in the middle of the group. Encourage the group to ask questions of him, as if he were actually Caleb. Your volunteer should try to answer in the same way.

OPTION THREE: Reflection

You will need: grapes

Invite participants to take some grapes and think about them as a symbol of God's provision. Ask everyone to reflect on the story and talk to God about what he is saying to them.

CLOSING

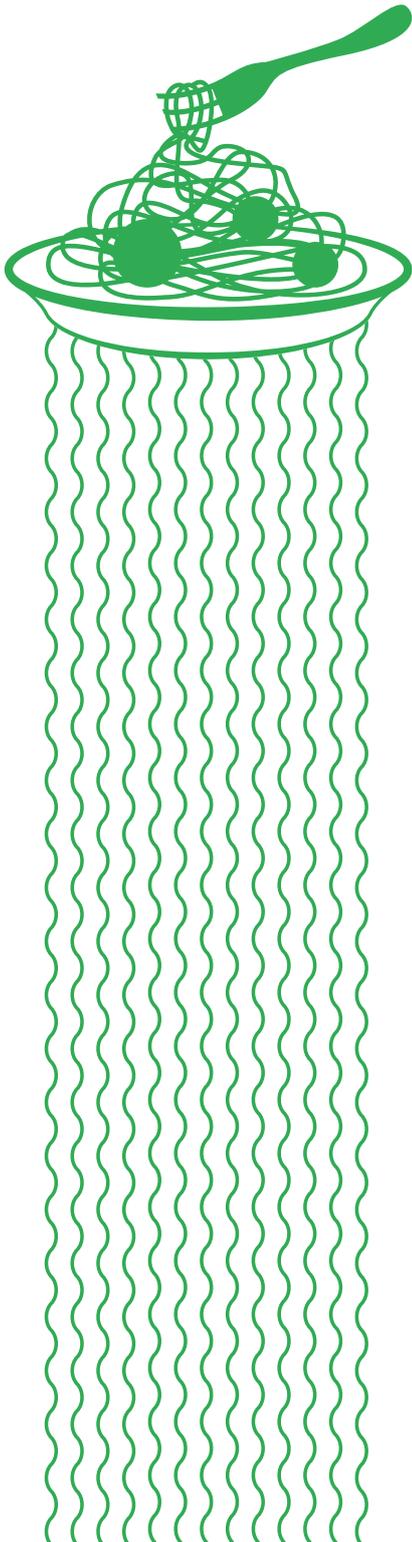
5 MINS

Bring everyone back together and ask if anyone would like to share anything from the response time. Thank everyone for taking part and say an appropriate blessing to close the service.

ALEX TAYLOR

is resources editor for *Premier Youth and Children's Work*.

This month we're experimenting with our resources! We're publishing just one out of the two resources that normally features on this page, but don't worry **Ready to use mentoring** is still available online (as are all the other resources) at youthandchildrens.work/Resources.



RAY AND THE READY-MADE RAGU

"Mate, this pasta sauce is amazing, where did you get it from?"

Ray shifted slightly in his seat. Did he want his friends knowing that he...liked cooking?

"Er, I made it."

Kofi laughed out loud. "No way, man, no way did you cook this. Are you some sort of Jamie Oliver or something?"

"You should go on *Masterchef*," shouted Dean.

"Who taught you to cook?" asked Tom. "I can't even make beans on toast."

"It's not difficult, you just follow instructions and there you go," said Ray.

"Nah, nah, nah," said Kofi. "My mum won't let anyone near the kitchen. She says that men can't cook."

"Bit sexist," said Dean. "Some of the best chefs around are men. Have you seen that Weston Bloomingtile on TV? He made this amazing giant meat pie once, and put a pub in the middle of it. It had an edible pool table and everything!"

"Yes, man, when are you going to make us a pool table we can eat?" asked Kofi.

Ray decided to come clean. "Look, my mum has this thing called a slow cooker."

"Sounds like you, Tom!" cried Dean. Tom threw a piece of garlic bread at Dean, hitting him on the ear.

"Thanks mate," said Dean, shoving the bread into his mouth.

"What's a slow cooker?" asked Tom.

Ray got up and pointed at a contraption on the kitchen counter. "Well, you chop all your ingredients up and then just put everything in this pot." Ray lifted the lid of the slow cooker. "And then you set the timer, come back after a few hours and there you go. Your food is cooked. I set this up before I left for school this morning and then when you lot came round this afternoon, it was done."

"Eh?" asked Dean. "How did it do that?"

"Er, you know what, I actually don't know. I just put all the right stuff in and it kind of does its thing when you're not around." Ray peered at the slow cooker in confusion.

"Well, however it does it, this is amazing," said Dean, shovelling a giant forkful of pasta into his mouth.

"Dean, you're disgusting," said Tom. "You've got pasta sauce down your T-shirt."

"Yeah, your dress sense is so 'pasta' it's sell-by date!" said Kofi, looking at Tom and Ray. "Am I right boys?"

"Lame," said Tom. "I'm embarrassed for you."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Are you a keen cook like Ray?
- Do you understand the science behind cooking and baking?
- Are there any mysteries in your life? Things that just happen without you understanding how? What are they?
- How do you approach something that you don't understand?

This story is based on Mark 4:26-29. Read this passage to the group and compare Jesus' story and words to this one. Discuss what Jesus might have been saying through his parable, encouraging the group to think about it in a new way.

ALEX TAYLOR

is resources editor for *Premier Youth and Children's Work*.

ARE YOU ACTIVE LISTENING?

How often do you argue? What effect does that have on you? Do your disagreements tend to escalate or de-escalate? Do you still have bitterness or unforgiveness from previous arguments? Could your listening skills help with any of this? How well do you listen to people in everyday life?

Spend a good amount of time on these questions then brainstorm with your mentee the main outcomes of poor listening (eg misunderstanding, errors, hurt feelings, damaged relationships) and then flip it to identify what good, active listening can achieve for you too.

POOR LISTENING

Misunderstanding	Frustration	Escalation
Lost in own thoughts Takes conversation on tangents Forgets details Getting distracted Fiddling with phone Responding to own preconceptions / expectations not what is actually said	Body language (eg folded arms, scowling, sighing) Having to repeat what you said Interrupting Speaking over someone Speaking faster	Judgemental Non-verbal cues Words such as "Whatever", "So hypocritical" "Yeah, right", "Typical" or "You always do this" Raised voices Accusations Bringing up historical grievances

ACTIVE LISTENING

Listen	Echo	De-escalate
Keeping eye contact Facing body towards speaker Concentrating fully on what's being said Calm, neutral expression Even, calm breathing Smiling when appropriate Considering comfort (eg embarrassment, feeling overheard, uncomfortable, intimidated)	Waiting until they finish speaking Repeating and clarifying what was said Using questions to aid understanding Reflecting on and responding only to what has been said Recognising and affirming the aspects that you liked or can agree with (even ignoring parts you disagree with)	Being positive Suggesting what could be a good outcome Being mindful of the bigger picture Considering other influences on mood (eg hunger, tiredness, stress) but not commenting on these

What does bad listening do in the following situations (try to identify a real example for each)?:

- Discussing politics or other emotive subjects...
- Arguing with your parents...
- When your teacher is giving you instructions...
- When your friend is opening up to you about a personal issue...

Chat about:

- Is there a spiritual element to this?
- How do the principles of active listening relate to 'listening' to the voice of God?
- How does all this relate to Mark 12:31: "Love your neighbour as yourself?" (For example, active listening can be a powerful way to show love and care for others.)
- How can you work on your active listening skills (as a spiritual act of worship) in the coming week?

JOEL TOOMBS

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QUIET GAMES



You might be blessed with lots of sound insulation in your childrens or youth venues, or you might meet away from other groups. On the other hand you might meet in a room right next to the adult service, with thin walls and a vicar who disapproves of the service being disturbed. Here are some games you can play when you need to keep the noise down.

NOT SPOONS

You will need: pack of playing cards

This game is similar to Spoons or Slam, but is quieter and less violent! Before playing, sort the cards out into sets of four of a kind. You'll need one set per player. Shuffle the cards and deal out four cards per player. The players should choose one of their cards to pass to the player on their left, then pick up the card being passed to them on their right. The aim of the game is to collect four cards of the same number (or rank, for picture cards). Once a player has collected four of a kind, they should make a silent signal, such as sticking out their tongue or putting their thumb on their forehead. Other players who notice someone making this signal should do the same. The last player to make the signal loses.

The losing player can be out, with people dropping out after successive rounds until you have a winner. Losing players can be out just for one round, or you could keep a tally of each player's losses.

SLEEPING LIONS

You couldn't have a page of quiet games without this classic. Encourage the children to lie down on the floor and be as quiet and still as they can. If a player moves or makes a sound, they are out. After a few seconds, you can go around trying to catch the players out, doing things to make them move, laugh or speak (without touching them, of course!). The last player staying still and silent is the winner.

AGONY AUNT OR UNCLE

You will need: pens and paper

Give each player a pen and paper. Everyone should write down a problem or dilemma a person might have: "I sneezed on the train and got snot over the back of the person in front of me." "I ate all my sister's Christmas chocolate and she blamed our dad." "I got my toe stuck in an escalator and now it's turned black."

They should fold the top of the paper over, so that the problem can't be seen, and pass the paper to the person on their left. This person should write a solution to the problem, without knowing what the problem is. Once everyone has finished, unfold them and read them out. Give points for the funniest or most appropriate advice. WARNING: You may end up laughing a lot, and so make too much noise, even though the game itself is quiet...

ANAGRAMS

You will need: pre-made anagrams – printed out, on PowerPoint or written out on a large sheet of paper; pens; paper

Before the session, create some anagrams. These can be of words that link into your session, celebrity names or the names of people in your group. (If you find this difficult, there are several anagram generators online.) Print them out, put them on a PowerPoint slide or write them out on a large sheet of paper.

Challenge the group to solve the puzzles and reveal the right items or names. The one with the most right (or who finishes the quickest) is the winner.

WHO'S THAT BABY?

You will need: baby pictures of group members or volunteers; pens; paper; Blu Tack

Before the session, collect together baby photos of your group members and leaders. Number them and stick them up around the room. Give each player a piece of paper and a pen and challenge them to guess who all the baby pictures are.

If it would be difficult to get photos of people in your group, search for 'baby photos of celebrities' on the internet and use those instead. To make it easier, you could give the players a list of the celebrities featured.

The player who guesses the most correctly is the winner.

KIM'S GAME

You will need: a range of objects; a tray; a tea towel; stopwatch or smartphone; paper and pens

Not the most exciting of games, but it is quiet and you can add in some variations. For the basic game, put a variety of small items (such as a stapler, toy car or grape) onto a tray and show it to the players. Give them 30 seconds to memorise the objects and then cover the tray with the tea towel. Give the players paper and pens and challenge them to make a list of all the objects they can remember. The winner is the player who can name the most objects. An alternative to this version is to remove one of the objects after the initial 30-second memory time. The players have to guess which object is missing.

Different variations on this include using jars with strong-scented items or liquids, such as vinegar, lavender or soap. Players smell the jars and then have to write down all the smells they can remember. You could use touch by placing objects in bags that the players have to feel, then remember.

ALEX TAYLOR

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DEBORAH

The story of Deborah in Judges is definitely one of an unsung hero. Not only is she a well-respected leader and prophet, completely in her own right, but she has such wisdom and strength of character that even the leader of a mighty army won't go into battle without her back-up. This is a story where women, often missing from famous Bible stories, show how strong and important they are to God.



SOUND MATCHBOXES

You will need: matchboxes (enough to have at least five pairs); patterned papers; scissors; glue; rice; pasta; beads; buttons; 1p coins; other small items that will rattle inside a matchbox; sticky tape

Deborah is a prophet who listens to God and tells Barak God's message. This craft creates a game to encourage children to think about listening.

Use glue and patterned paper to cover and decorate the matchboxes. Make all of the matchboxes different so that the game will be harder. Take two boxes and fill them with rice. Leave enough space for the rice to rattle around inside when they are closed. Next, fill two boxes with beads and go on to fill pairs of boxes with the different small items. When all of the boxes have been filled, tape the ends up very securely so that nothing will leak out.

Now the boxes are ready, spread them out and take turns to shake them and find the sounds that match. Use this game as a way to open a conversation about listening to God and how we might hear his voice differently.



NEWSPAPER TOWERS

You will need: newspaper; scissors; sticky tape; mug; rulers or tape measures

Barak will not go into battle without Deborah by his side because he recognises her strength as a person and a leader. This craft is about building something with the strength to support something fragile.

Split the children into small groups and challenge them to use newspaper to build a construction that will hold a mug safely at least 20cm off the floor. They will have to work together as a team and you might want to introduce a time limit to make things more urgent! When all of the constructions have been built, test them out by putting the mug on them. Talk about how you made the constructions strong and who in your life is strong for you.



EGG BOX FACES

You will need: egg boxes (one per child would work best); scissors; sticky tape (optional)

This craft is very open-ended and will help children to explore the characters and emotions of the story.

Think about the characters in the story and what they may have been feeling at certain points in the action. Cut up the egg boxes to make faces to represent chosen characters. Cut the lid into a face shape and use the rest of the box to create the features. When finished, see if anyone can guess who the faces represent. If you wish, use sticky tape to stick the bits of egg box down. Otherwise, the egg box features can be removable and interchangeable. Egg boxes can make surprisingly expressive faces!

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YESTERDAY (12)

CLIP: 00:08:05 – 00:16:14

SYNOPSIS

In Lowestoft, Jack Malik is a frustrated musician whose musical career is going nowhere despite the faith that his friend and manager Ellie Appleton has in him. However, on the night Jack decides to give up, the whole world is momentarily hit with a massive blackout and Jack is hit by a bus. Upon regaining consciousness, Jack learns to his astonishment that he is now the only one who knows the music of The Beatles. Realising this improbable opportunity, Jack begins playing the music of the greatest of rock bands, claiming it as his own. It pays off quickly and Jack becomes a worldwide musical sensation. However, Jack finds himself drifting away from Ellie, only realising his love for her when she has become intimidated by his success, which depends on blatant, but undiscoverable, plagiarism. Now, Jack must make a decision about his music to satisfy his conscience as he decides what he truly needs.

Starring an excellent British cast and even including an acting performance from Ed Sheeran (playing himself, which is more difficult than it sounds), *Yesterday* is a film about desire, temptation, failed dreams, love, music, and everything else in between.

The clip begins with Jack making his way home after another unsuccessful performance. After declaring to his manager that he is giving up his musical career Jack is hit by a bus during a global blackout. Upon waking Jack is nursed back to health by his friend Ellie. After leaving the hospital and having an interesting conversation about whether his accident was a message from God or not, Jack plays the song 'Yesterday' for his friends. Jack is taken aback when he discovers that no one knows who the Beatles are. If you want to follow the plot along and see the point where Jack decides to claim The Beatles songs as his own, watch the film until 00:20:54.

DISCUSS

After showing the clip as a stimulus, break into small discussion groups (you may wish to have a designated discussion leader in each group) and discuss the following questions – if you wish to depress yourself, start by asking how many of your young people have heard a Beatles song before:

- How would you feel if you were Jack in this situation?
- What would you like to wake up to discover has disappeared from our world?
- Have you ever been tempted to claim credit for something that isn't yours?
- Why is music so important to so many people?

Read Genesis 25:19-34 and Genesis 27 together. If pressed for time you could summarise the story of Jacob and Esau. Once this has been completed, return to your smaller groups and discuss the following questions:

- Was Jacob wrong to claim something that wasn't his?
- Do you think that Rebekah was wrong to have a favourite?
- What do you think will happen next to Jacob – does he need to be reconciled with Esau?
- Does God reward those who don't deserve it?

Yesterday is now available to purchase and stream on Amazon Prime Video.

TOM WADE

is head of humanities at Haileybury and Imperial Service College.



SOME THINGS NEVER CHANGE

ARTIST: Cast of *FROZEN II*

SUITABLE FOR: Under-10s

INTRODUCTION

This is one of the tracks from the *Frozen* sequel. It may not be the earworm that 'Let it go' was, but it is a feel-good catchy number nonetheless. This track has a sense of foreboding about it, as the characters are about to discover that everything in their lives will change around them. For the children in our care, change is an ever-present reality as they grow and develop and life changes around them. This session provides a space where children can explore how to best handle some of those changes, and how God is the constant presence in our lives who will never change.

Before the session, ask your leaders to provide a baby photo of themselves. Gather these together on display. As you begin the session, ask the children to try to identify who is in each of the photographs. If you wish, you could set this up as a competition and award a small prize to the player who correctly identifies the most people.

Explain to the group that during this session, we will be thinking about how in our lives we experience many changes; none of us look much like we did when we were babies! You could have a brief discussion at this stage about some of the changes the children have experienced recently, as you set the scene for this session.

LISTEN AND DISCUSS

You could check who has seen the film as you introduce the song. Play the track, distributing copies of the lyrics if needed, and inviting the children to listen or sing along. Invite the children to discuss the following questions:

- Why do you think the characters sing these lyrics?
- Can you relate to how they feel? Why?
- What things stay the same for these characters? How about for you?
- How well prepared do you think they are for things changing in their lives?
- How well do you think you cope with change?
- What things help you to cope with change?

Allow plenty of time to discuss some of these questions, particularly focusing on how the children cope with change and what helps them to do so. Spend some time sharing your own experiences of coping with change and what helps you, keeping the advice practical and helpful to the children in the group.

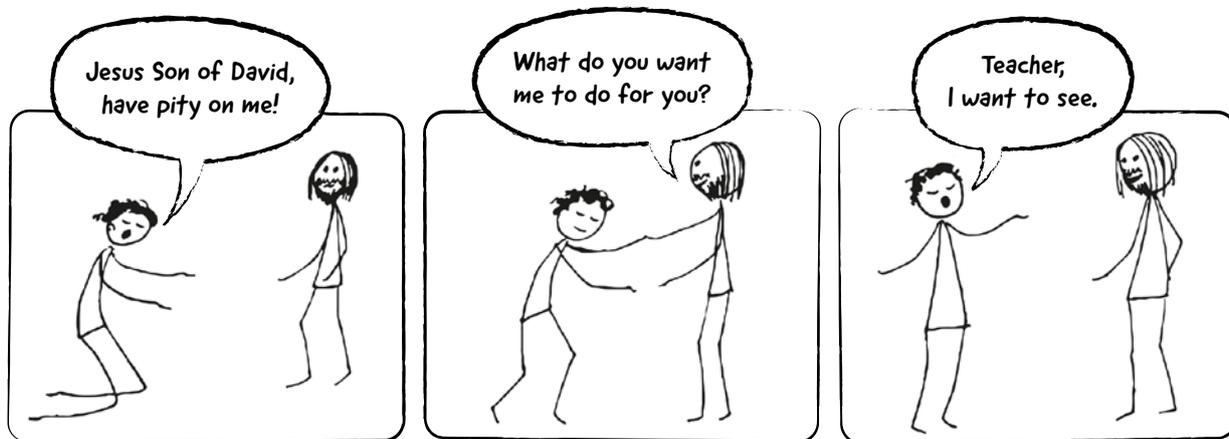
Provide a Bible and ask someone to read Hebrews 13:8 and help to unpack how Jesus remains unchanging. In the song, Olaf and Anna sang about how they were holding on to each other in the midst of change, being constant and firm in their friendship to one another. What does it mean for us to hold on to Jesus as a firm foundation, in the midst of change which may surround us? As you draw to a close, pray for the children in your group, and particularly for any changes they may be experiencing at this time.

BECKY MAY

is a freelance writer and experienced children's and youth leader. She can be found at theresourcescupboard.co.uk.

PRAY LIKE BARTIMAEUS

In Mark 10:46-52 we read of Jesus healing blind Bartimaeus (you can read it in your Bible for the full story):



AND JESUS HEALED HIM!

We can pray like Bartimaeus did, and trust that Jesus doesn't assume what we need, but asks us to tell him:

Draw yourself in place of Bartimaeus in each frame below.

What would you call out to Jesus?
Write that here.

How would you answer Jesus' question? You can use all the speech bubbles below.

