



CALEB

MEETING AIM

To be inspired by Caleb's life and to examine our life in the light of Caleb's life and challenges.

BIBLE PASSAGES

Numbers 13:27-33; 14:5-8,24,38;
Deuteronomy 1:35-36; Joshua 14:7-14;
Judges 3:9-10

BACKGROUND

Caleb went out on a limb for God. When ten out of the twelve spies sent into the Promised Land focused on danger and fear when they returned to the Israelite camp, Caleb and Joshua knew that the Lord could be victorious over all the dangers they would face. That fear of the unknown or of perceived dangers is still with us today. Caleb has a lot to teach us all about living for God and trusting him in difficult situations.

GATHERING TOGETHER 5 MINS

Welcome the young people and share out any refreshments you have brought. Chat together about what has happened this week. Rejoice in the young people's triumphs and sympathise with their difficulties. Use this time to build relationships and settle into the session.

INTRO ACTIVITY 10 MINS

You will need: flip-chart paper; marker pens

Sketch out on a sheet of flip-chart paper the things that the young people (and you) find hard about the Christian life. Ask what things we feel God would want us to do that we find particularly challenging: talking to our friends about God, not going with the crowd, inviting friends to youth group and so on. Feel free to instigate and put challenges on the table. Ask your young people why we find these things so hard.

BIBLE EXPLORATION 10 MINS

You will need: Bibles; flip-chart paper and marker pens

As a group, read Numbers 13:27-33, Numbers 14:5-8 and Numbers 14:24-38.

Explain that the Israelites have left Egypt after some powerful miracles, they have crossed the wilderness and are approaching the land of Canaan that God has promised them. Caleb and Joshua have gone out with others to spy the land and are bringing back a report for Moses and the people.

On a sheet of flip-chart paper, write down all the words that the group might use to describe Caleb. What does this tell you about his character?

Read Deuteronomy 1:35-36 and Joshua 14:7-14 together. Explain that Caleb had to wait nearly 40 years while God dealt with those around him who did not believe, but God never wavered on his promise to Caleb. As a much older man, Caleb was given the whole land of Hebron.

Finally, read Judges 3:9-10. Explain that years later, after Joshua and Caleb had died, the people of Israel were in need again, being oppressed by the King of Aram. They had no leader and God raised up Caleb's son, Othniel. Othniel had learned from his father and was willing and ready to serve God. He stepped up and helped to deliver the Israelites from oppression. We are told that the land then had peace for 40 years. Caleb had to wait 40 years to inherit the promised land that God had prepared for them. But later on, God granted Caleb's family 40 years of peace in that land under his son.

Look back at your word picture of Caleb. What more could the young people add to this sheet of paper?

CHATTING TOGETHER 5 MINS

Continue your exploration of the passage by discussing these questions:

- What is Caleb's response to the rebellion of the people? Would you have responded in the same way?
- If the other spies had known what was going to happen, do you think they would have agreed with Caleb in the first place? Why? Why not?
- What does the story of Caleb tell you about God?
- What does it look like to follow God wholeheartedly? How does this work out in your life (if it does)?
- What would courageous Christianity look like for you?

CREATIVE RESPONSE 10 MINS

You will need: flip-chart paper and marker pens

Encourage a leader (or young person if they are comfortable) to share a story from their own life where God answered a prayer, even when they had to wait a while, or things did not go as they expected. Also share a time where obedience was costly but worth it.

Using the flip-chart paper, ask your young people for suggestions and draw up a list of things that God does and doesn't promise us. This is a means of separating the myths and lies from the truth. Say: what we see in Caleb is that God does not promise us an easy life, a quick fix, a battle / trial-free existence or popularity with our peers. But he does promise us his presence, strength and faithfulness to his word. He gives us his gifts and we have the assurance that we will never be alone.

PRAYER 5 MINS

You will need: worship music (such as 'Pocketful of Faith' by Tim Hughes) and the means to play it.

Begin to gather prayer requests – see if everyone can think of one thing they will need God's help with in following him wholeheartedly.

Bring your doubts, your fears and anxieties to God. Perhaps you, like Caleb, face giants in your land, oppression for your faith or discouragement from those around you. Pray for the same heart that God gave Caleb. Play the worship music you have brought and reflect together in prayer. Pray for boldness, courage and a heart of obedience.

This session was inspired by ideas from the *Premier Youth and Children's Work* archive, adapted by **ALEX TAYLOR**.

For the rest of this month's sessions go to youthandchildrens.work/together.



DEBORAH

MEETING AIM

To help young people think about how God's power can encourage others.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Judges 4-5

BACKGROUND

Stories from Judges can be difficult to explore, as they seem bloodthirsty, cruel and violent to our 21st Century eyes. However, they can teach us some astounding things about God, our relationship with him and our role as followers of Jesus in society. Deborah was quite unusual – a judge and prophet in a male-dominated society. However, she stands strong for God and helps Barak when he refuses to follow what God tells him to do. How can we fill the role of Deborah in our own situations? What about the young people in our groups?

GATHERING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Welcome the young people and share out any refreshments you have brought. Chat together about what has happened this week. Rejoice in the young people's triumphs and sympathise with their difficulties. Use this time to build relationships and settle into the session.

INTRO ACTIVITY

10 MINS

You will need: flip-chart paper and marker pens

Ask the following questions to the group and note down answers on the flip-chart.

- What makes a hero? Do they have to be like Superman in tights and a cape? Do they have to be superheroes or just good people?
- What motivates a hero? Is it doing good deeds to help others? Is it being a shining example to those around you?
- Who is your hero? Fact or fiction? Celebrity or world leader? Current or historical?

Keep your answers for the rest of the session, to compare with your discussion of Deborah's story.

BIBLE EXPLORATION

10 MINS

You will need: flip-chart paper; marker pens; Bibles; answers from 'Intro activity'; gummy bears; marshmallows; phones
Brainstorm everything the group know about the book of Judges (if you have already done the Caleb session, the group might remember Othniel). Write down all the suggestions on the flip-chart paper. Talk about how the book of Judges contains lots of betrayal, violence, death and assassinations. The Israelites were in need of a good person or leader to rise up and save the day. They did not have a king; God was their king. We learn in the book of Judges about various leaders (known as judges), one of whom was Deborah. Her role was to listen to and settle people's disputes in the role of an adjudicator or referee.

Ask someone to read Judges 4:4-16. Turn over your paper and ask the group to think of all the words that describe Deborah. Write those down. Compare your description of Deborah with the answers the group thought of in 'Intro activity'. Are they similar? Different?

Reread Judges 4:6-10; here we see Deborah encouraging Barak into battle and Barak asking her to go with him. Then go on to read the rest of chapter 4. This is a particularly bloodthirsty episode, but the young people may never have heard it, and might well be surprised that such episodes are in the Bible.

Ask the young people to split into groups and provide gummy bears (to represent the people) and large marshmallows (to represent the enemy chariots). In groups your young people should recreate Judges 4 using the props and narrating it. Verses 8 and 9 must be included.

After a couple of minutes, advise them they should have one more run through. Once the rehearsals are over, one person from each group should film their interpretations on their phones. To conclude, watch the premiere / premieres of the gummy bear battles while eating all the sweets.

CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Continue your exploration of the passage by discussing these questions:

- What does this story tell you about God?
- Which character in the story do you identify with? Why?
- How often have you been worried about doing something, but felt happier being supported by friends or family?
- How can you use God's power to help encourage others the way Deborah encouraged Barak?

CREATIVE RESPONSE

10 MINS

You will need: pens and paper; Bibles

Sit in a circle and hand each member of the group a sheet of A4 paper. Ask them to write their name in the bottom right corner. They should then pass this paper to the person on their left. Ask everyone to write words of encouragement, a prayer or a Bible verse for the person written in the corner. Once this is done, fold it over and pass the paper to the next person on the left. Repeat the writing and folding until the sheet is back in the hands of its rightful owner. They shouldn't unfold this in the group setting.

PRAYER

5 MINS

You will need: sheets of paper from 'Creative response'

Tell the young people to find a space in the room and to open their piece of paper privately. This is a time that they should feel encouragement from the entire group. They are in a space where they can pray about what they have read.

Consider a final prayer / thought or refer back to the initial questions that were asked at the beginning of the session. Ask: "Who could you encourage this week at school that might need your help? Who has been your Deborah when you have needed encouragement or support? How can you thank them this week?"

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HEZEKIAH

MEETING AIM

To encourage us to find rest, comfort and strength in God and to encourage us to lean on each other.

BIBLE PASSAGE

2 Kings 19:1-19

BACKGROUND

It might seem a tricky ask for young people from the 21st Century to get their heads around warfare and politics from more than 2,500 years ago, but the story of Hezekiah holds some eternal truths for your group to explore. Hezekiah is under tremendous pressure from the Assyrian king, Sennacherib. Isaiah predicts Sennacherib's downfall, but the Assyrian king continues to spread fake news about Judah's fate. There are parallels with our faith and what the world tells us is true. How easy is it to rely on God when faced with terrible situations and lies about our lives?

GATHERING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Welcome the young people and share out any refreshments you have brought. Chat together about what has happened this week. Rejoice in the young people's triumphs and sympathise with their difficulties. Use this time to build relationships and settle into the session.

INTRO ACTIVITY

10 MINS

Ask an older (and stronger) young person to lean backwards onto the back of a younger or smaller member of the group, so the older teen is resting completely on them. See how long they can stay in this position for, but keep an eye on the younger person to avoid injury! Depending on the size of the group, you could use a number of young people.

Chat about how sometimes situations can be overwhelming, weighing us down and becoming too much to handle. It is especially in times like these though that God wants us to lean on him. He loves us dearly and like a good father, he will not leave us alone when we face difficulties.

BIBLE EXPLORATION

10 MINS

You will need: Bibles; large sheets of paper; marker pens

Introduce Hezekiah to the young people. Hezekiah was king of Judah when the Assyrian empire was the region's superpower. King Sennacherib of Assyria and his predecessors had laid waste to nations, imprisoning and deporting captives from their homelands to different territories. In a futile attempt to halt the might of Assyria and appease Sennacherib, Hezekiah gave him all Judah's precious ornaments but it wasn't enough! Sennacherib still wanted more and when King Hezekiah decided to stand firm, he posed a crucial question that went to the very core of Hezekiah and of Judah: "On what are you basing this confidence of yours?" Discuss these questions in pairs:

- How do you react to challenging situations? Let the group give examples they are comfortable sharing. You should also have your own examples ready, just in case.
- What would you have done if you were Hezekiah?

Read 2 Kings 19:1-19 and make two lists. In one list, write down what God says will happen (through the prophet Isaiah). On the other write what Sennacherib says will happen. Ask the group again what they would have done if they were Hezekiah. Who would they have believed?

Leaning on God means trusting him to see us through whatever situation we find ourselves in. Solutions may or may not be instantaneous but he does promise a kind of illogical peace that thrives in the midst of chaos. 1 Corinthians 12:9 says: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Continue your exploration of the passage by discussing these questions:

- What do you think happened next? (Read 2 Kings 19:35-37 to find out.)
- How easy is it to believe what others say, rather than what God says?
- Who do we have in our lives to lean on? What about leaning on God? Is that easy to do?

CREATIVE RESPONSE

10 MINS

You will need: pens and paper; cushions; reflective music and the means to play it

Give the group 30 seconds to write the names of two or three people they can wholeheartedly rely on or call trustworthy. Once they've done this, encourage them to think about whether they would be on anyone else's list. We cannot always solve our problems ourselves and at times, God wants us to share with one another in order to make our loads a little bit lighter and to give us the experience we need to help others in the future.

Give fluffy cushions to the group to rest their heads on as if resting on God. Play your reflective music and encourage the group to intentionally let go and rest on God. After a few minutes, read this quote from Karen Sloan: "We are designed by God to be dependent. It is a twofold dependence – firstly, directly upon God, and secondly, indirectly upon God through those people God brings into our lives. Our existence is to be one of interconnection, not isolation."

PRAYER

5 MINS

You will need: Post-it notes; pens; basket

Close by creating a prayer wall. Ask each young person to write a prayer point on a Post-it note. Put them all in a basket and ask each person (depending on group size) to randomly pick a prayer sheet and spend a few minutes praying about it. After they've prayed, stick their prayer sheet on a board or wall. They could also take a picture of the wall as a reminder that someone is praying for them and vice versa.

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LYDIA

MEETING AIM

To get to know Lydia, and to explore how we might have a risky, kingdom-expanding faith like hers.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Acts 16:11-15,40

BACKGROUND

Lydia seems to be the first person in mainland Europe to become a Christian. She is already a follower of God, but she responds to Paul's teaching and her life changes. She is a bit of a mystery – why does she run a business and own a large home on her own, when it was unusual for women to do so without a man? However, she takes a risk in welcoming foreign men into her house and takes a risk in following Jesus. How can we take risks for God? Not stupid risks or ones that are needlessly dangerous, but ones that will further our faith?

GATHERING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Welcome the young people and share out any refreshments you have brought. Chat together about what has happened this week. Rejoice in the young people's triumphs and sympathise with their difficulties. Use this time to build relationships and settle into the session.

INTRO ACTIVITY

10 MINS

You will need: clip from *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* (the link is available from [youthandchildrens.work/links](#)); items to create an obstacle course (see below); cover-up and clean-up equipment

Play the *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* clip. After the clip, explain to your group that faith is often a risk and will sometimes require us to take a leap of faith.

Set out an obstacle course that involves leaping over some undesirable stuff like a big pool of water or a bucket of baked beans. Let the young people (and leaders!) take turns 'leaping' over – have some towels at the ready!

BIBLE EXPLORATION

10 MINS

Ask someone to read the story of Lydia in Acts 16:11-15,40. Then present the group with Lydia's biography: Lydia was a seller of purple cloth, kind of like the Marc Jacobs or Michael Kors of her day! She owned a house big enough for her household, and for guests like Paul and Silas to stay. A church ended up meeting in her house. She was a Gentile (non-Jew) who worshiped God and became a Jew. When she heard the gospel, Lydia became the first Christian convert in her town. She became one of the leaders of the church in Philippi – the church that the book of Philippians is written to.

Split the young people into small groups with a leader and a Bible each to examine the story. Encourage each group to create a drama to act out the story. They could just do Lydia's story or read the whole of Acts 16, noting how Lydia takes Paul and Silas into her house again, once they are out of prison.

Lydia is a great example of risky faith – she would have been a known figure in her town, but she doesn't hide her faith. Her household came to faith and publicly affirmed it through baptism. She shows outrageous hospitality, despite the next verses showing Paul and Silas getting into trouble with the authorities!

CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Continue your exploration of the passage by discussing these questions:

- What strikes you about this story?
- What does this story tell you about God?
- Are you like Lydia? Or not? Why?
- What kind of 'risks' do you take in your life with regards to your faith?
- How can we help each other in taking these risks for God?

CREATIVE RESPONSE

10 MINS

You will need: large sheets of paper; marker pens

Explain that Lydia's faith was marked by five things: believing, baptism, evangelism, hospitality and leadership. It's

now time to explore them. Put a sheet of paper in a different part of the room and write one of those five things on the top. Put a leader prepped alongside each sheet. Get your group to split up, move round every area and discuss how important they think each area is to the Christian faith. Why might each have been a mark of Lydia's faith?

Lydia's faith was given by God; he opened her heart. We do everything with and through God: it's not us on our own. Because we're not on our own, God wants to use us, cultivating a risky and active faith in each of us.

PRAYER

5 MINS

You will need: Post-it notes; pens; lining paper

Ask the young people to sit on their own around the room, where they won't be distracted. Give each of them a Post-it note and pen, and ask them to prayerfully write on it one 'risk' they want to take for God. You might want to put some worship music on in the background. Have the lining roll spread in the middle of the room. When they are ready, get each person to come and stick their Post-it down on the paper. Once everyone has had a turn, gather the group around the lining roll to be encouraged by each other's decisions (you may want to say a group prayer).

End by getting everyone into small groups to pray for each other that God would help them to take their 'risks'. End by encouraging them to retrieve their Post-it note from the lining roll, take it home and put it somewhere they'll see it, for example on a bedroom mirror.

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