



All about church

MEETING AIM

To spend time with Jesus.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Mark 3:13-19

BACKGROUND

This is an important point in Jesus' ministry: the start of the Church. He spends a whole night praying (Luke 6:12) then picks twelve disciples out of his larger group of followers. He was choosing them to be with him, ready to be sent out.

STARTING OUT

5 MINS

Sit down together as a family to spend time chatting and listening to each other. Ask: "What was the best bit of your week?" Explain that you're going to explore a story about church. Ask: "What do you think church is?"

PLAY

10 MINS

Play 'Follow the leader'. Before you start, come up with a list of simple actions. Start off with you as the leader, then if the children are enjoying themselves, ask one of them to be the leader (they can use some of the actions from your list if they can't think of any – get another adult in your household to help them).

Explain that the people in the story today were called followers of Jesus because they loved to spend time with him, and learn to be more like him, to follow what he did..

BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

Before you start, make sure that you have suitable things in your house to be the props in the story. You don't need to gather anything together, you're all going to do that during the story:

For the story we're going to need to go on a hunt to find props! First, we need a Bible. Everyone looks for a Bible.

The story is in Mark 3:13-19. It says that it happens on the side of a mountain. What can we use for a mountain? Wander around your home choosing the best 'mountain'. If you have more than one child and they pick different places, you can tell the story twice...or more!

Great, we have our mountain. Now, we need characters. There's Jesus, and then it says he chose twelve disciples. So, we need to find 13 figures. Find 13 play people, soft toys or other items to act as the characters. Line them up and count together each time your children add one.

As we tell our story, we'll balance our people on the mountain!

Jesus climbed up onto the side of a mountain. He invited those he wanted with him. He chose twelve disciples. They climbed up too. Let's count them again as we help them climb. Move the characters up the 'mountain', counting as you do.

He chose them to be with him, to spend time with him and to go and tell others about him, and to share that he is more powerful than bad things and he can tell them to go away.

The twelve were:

- Simon (Jesus later renamed him Peter, which means 'rock')
- James and John (who were brothers – Jesus nicknamed them Boanerges which means 'sons of thunder'. I wonder why he chose that nickname?)
- Andrew
- Philip
- Bartholomew
- Matthew
- Thomas
- James
- Thaddaeus
- Simon
- Judas

Name each of your play people as you list the disciples. How many is that? Have we named them all?

They spent time with him, getting to know him really well. Then they would go and tell people all about him because they loved him so much they wanted others to know about him too. You could gather more toys and increase the number as you have them 'preach' to others.

That is how the Church started. It wasn't in a building, or any of the things we sometimes think church is. It was all about people who loved being with Jesus, telling other people about him.

CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Ask some questions to chat about the story together:

- What was your best bit of the story?
- How do you think the disciples felt when Jesus picked them to be with him?
- What do you think happened when they told other people about Jesus?
- How do you like to spend time with Jesus?

CREATIVE TIME

10 MINS

Explain that there are so many ways we can spend time with Jesus, and he loves to be with us. The more time we spend getting to know Jesus, the more we can share with other people about what he is like. We can chat with him and we can catch from him, hearing his voice in lots of different ways. Like the disciples who spent time with Jesus, everyone has their own way to spend time with him.

Chat about some of the different ways to do that. Perhaps you could read another Bible story, or sit quietly and chat to him, or listen to worship music, or play a game with him. Invite your children to choose how they would like to connect with him; the only rule is that it is time just for you and Jesus to be together.

After you've finished, or later in the day, ask your children: "What did you do with Jesus? How did it feel connecting with him? What was he doing when you spent time together?" Share with them how you spent time with Jesus.

PRAYER

5 MINS

Use this prayer at the end of your time, and give space for your children to pray their own prayers out loud.

Thank you, Jesus, that you want to be with us. Help us to find more ways to spend time with you this week and to remember you love to spend time with us all day long, whatever we're doing, so that we can learn more about you!

ANNIE WILLMOT

is a funeral chaplain and mum of two boys. She recently wrote *Cold Cups of Tea and Hiding in the Loo: An honest look at parenting*.



Living stones

MEETING AIM

To be reminded of God's love.

BIBLE PASSAGE

1 Peter 2:2-10

BACKGROUND

1 Peter is a letter written to a group of scattered Christians, whose faith in God might have stood out to the culture around them. In this passage he talks firstly about how we, as believers, can respond to God's word (vv1-3) and then about how we come to Jesus, who has chosen us (vv4-10). It's an encouragement to us to know we are chosen and that we are called to live differently to the world.

STARTING OUT

5 MINS

Sit down together as a family to spend time chatting and listening to each other. Share any snacks you have and ask everyone about the best part of their week. Ask your family what they think love is like.

PLAY

10 MINS

You will need: a cup or bottle of milk; a doll

If your children drink milk then you could do this while drinking some together, or perhaps chatting over a bowl of cereal. Or you could do it with a doll which you pretend to feed. (If you have milk allergies or intolerances you may want to just pretend with a doll.)

In the Bible it talks about we should be like babies (1 Peter 2:2-3)! Ask your family what babies are like. What do they drink? Why?

Explain that in the Bible, it talks about God's word, the Bible, being a bit like food, and it says that we should want to read it, like a baby wants milk and we want meals! We do this so that we can learn more about God and how good he is, and grow up close to him.

BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

You will need: building blocks or stones

Tell the family that this part of the Bible was a letter written to Christians who were living in different places, with other people who maybe didn't love God and wouldn't have understood the way they lived. It was written to encourage them to keep loving God and following him. And, it can encourage us to do the same. Remind the children that you have already learned how we can be like babies, growing up and learning more about God. Then explore what Peter's letter says next:

As we come to God, we are like living stones. Hmm. Living stones? Have you ever seen a living stone? What do you know about stones? They're hard. They can be used to build things. Shall we have a look for some things which are built from stones or bricks? *Have a look online together and talk about how things are built, and how they have strong foundations of stone.* When stones are put together they are really strong.

Use building blocks or stones to build as you explain the passage. In the Bible it says that we are like stones building a strong house, and Jesus is the cornerstone. The cornerstone is a really important stone. When you start building something you need the cornerstone, it's the strong foundation and all the other stones are built on top. It makes the whole building strong.

When the Bible talks about us being like living stones it says that God loves us, no matter what, and that is like the first strong stone and we remember that and get to build on top of it. We start with God's love. And then we grow stronger when we spend time with him, and when we share him with others.

CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Ask some questions to chat about the story together:

- What was your best bit of the story?
- How do you think the people felt when they heard the letter being read to them?
- In what ways do you like to spend time with God?
- How could we help ourselves to remember how much God loves us?

CREATIVE TIME

10 MINS

You will need: somewhere to go to gather smooth stones (or some pre-gathered ones); pens or paints

Together, find some smooth stones that you can use to remind us how much God loves us, and you can use to share God's love with others. Invite your children to find at least two smooth stones. Decorate one each for yourself with a picture to remind you of God's love. Chat together about where you might put your stone to remind you. Then decorate a second for someone else. This may be for someone specific, or perhaps you could go for a walk and leave your stone for someone to discover. Whatever you choose, pray together that the person who finds the stone would know how much God loves them.

PRAYER

5 MINS

Use this prayer at the end of your time, and give space for your children to pray their own prayers out loud.

Thank you, God, that you love us. Each time we look at our stones, please remind us of how much you love us and how you love to spend time with us.

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is a funeral chaplain and mum of two boys. She recently wrote *Cold Cups of Tea and Hiding in the Loo: An honest look at parenting.*



Passing it on

MEETING AIM

To think about people who have shared their faith with us and practise sharing ours.

BIBLE PASSAGE

John 1:29-42; Matthew 28:19-20

BACKGROUND

John the Baptist's ministry was to point people towards Jesus, to share his faith so others could know, and follow, Jesus too. In this passage we see him sharing his faith with those who had been following him, and then them going on to do the same.

STARTING OUT

5 MINS

Sit down together as a family to spend time chatting and listening to each other. Ask: "What was the best bit of your week?" Explain that today you're going to hear about someone who was Jesus' friend. Ask what makes a good friend.

PLAY

10 MINS

You will need: a picture (or pictures) of an arrow; a game with an arrow if you have one

Draw an arrow, or invite your children to, and ask what an arrow does. Find some arrows to look at your house or go for walk and see if there are any signs. Or, if you have a board game with an arrow (like Twister) you could play that.

Talk about how what an arrow does. It points to something, it shows us the way, it shows us what we need to be looking at or what's important.

BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

You will need: an arrow each to point at your Jesus character throughout the story; play figures or soft toys

As you tell the story, encourage the children to choose a play figure or soft toy to represent each new character:

John the Baptist was Jesus' cousin and his friend. He spent his life pointing people to Jesus and telling other people about him.

In John (1:29-42) in the Bible we can find stories of John the Baptist telling people about Jesus. One time, John saw Jesus coming down the road and he said: "Look who it is! Jesus, who came so we can be friends with God! This is who I've been talking about! The person who was coming to share even more about God than I have!" *Point an arrow from John to Jesus.*

John said: "I saw him get baptised and I saw that he is God's Son. God told me how much amazing stuff he was going to do!" *Point the arrow again.*

Wow! John had so much amazing stuff to share about Jesus. He loved him, and he loved God. He pointed people towards Jesus. Let's hear about some people who followed Jesus because John pointed to him.

John was with two of his friends. He saw Jesus again and he said: "Look! It's the one who I've been talking about!" *Point the arrow again.*

His two friends heard him and they followed Jesus. Jesus saw them following and turned around and said: "What do you want?" They asked him where he was staying and he said: "Come with me and you'll see." So they followed him and spent the day with him.

Andrew was the name of one of the people. The first thing he did was to find his brother Simon and tell him: "We found Jesus!" And he brought his brother to Jesus. *Point the arrow from Andrew to Jesus.*

In the Bible (Matthew 28:19-20) it says that God will be with us always, and Jesus says to do the same as John, to tell people about him and to point to him. *Encourage everyone to point to Jesus with their hands.*

CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Ask some questions to chat about the story together. Here are some to get you started:

- What was your favourite part of the story?
- If you were one of the friends in the story, how would you describe Jesus to your friends and family?
- How can we share our faith with other people?
- Talk about a time when you told someone about God.

CREATIVE TIME

10 MINS

You will need: paper; pens; scissors

Make paper chains of people. Write the names or draw a picture of people who have shared their faith with you. Then write your name, or draw a picture of yourself, on the next one. And then, have a think about who you might want to share Jesus with. Use the remaining paper people to add those names.

Hold your paper chains and thank God for everyone who has shared God with you, and for all the people you'd like to tell about him.

Spend some time chatting as a family about people who have had an impact on your faith. Share some stories with your children about those who have helped you to love God or learn more about him in your life. Practise chatting to each other about your faith, share in what ways you love to spend time connecting with God, or what you've seen God doing.

PRAYER

5 MINS

Use this prayer at the end of your time, and give space for your children to pray their own prayers out loud.

Thank God that sharing our faith with other people can be as simple as saying: "I've seen God doing this", like we're pointing towards him and showing others what he's like. Pray that God will help you to point towards him this week.

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Community

MEETING AIM

To think about what we can share with others.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Acts 2:42-47

BACKGROUND

Following the day of Pentecost, this passage shares how believers – the early Church – met together as a community, and how every day more people came to believe and joined them.

STARTING OUT

5 MINS

Sit down together as a family to spend time chatting and listening to each other. Ask: "What was the best bit of your week?"

Explain that you're going to hear today about when people first started meeting together as church and sharing things with each other. Ask: "What things can we share?"

PLAY

10 MINS

You will need: a snack you can share such as a bag of sweets or crackers

Tip your chosen snack out into a bowl. Ask your children to share the snack out between your family. As you sit and eat your snack, chat together about what it feels like to share, and ask: "Why do we share?"

If you have time, you could play a game that involves sharing and taking turns, if you have one.

BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

You will need: Bible; large sheet of paper; marker pen; props for retelling the story (optional)

Read the passage from a Bible together and ask your children if they can spot the different things the believers did together.

There are lots of parts which they could pick out. Write down all the family's suggestions. Chat together about everything you've written down.

Ask the family who they think it means when it says "everyone" and "all the believers"? Adults? Just the people leading the church? No! What is so exciting is that it is everyone! Adults, babies, children, teenagers, old people...everyone! We are all part of God's family, and all part of the Church.

Read the story again and come up with some actions, or act it out with props. Remind the children that when it says everyone, it means everyone! We are all invited to be part of God's Church together.

Read the passage one more time and either gather props such as play food to share and money so you can pretend to sell items, or make actions for various parts, eg hugging each other for phrases like "meet together".

It talks a lot in this story about being "together". The people didn't have a church building like we do, they met in people's homes and outside. They looked after each other and they shared everything they had.

CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Ask some questions to chat about the story together. Here are some to get you started:

- What was your favourite part of the story?
- How did the people help each other?
- What do you think other people thought when they saw how they all shared everything together?
- Does this sound like our church today?
- Why do you think God wants us to be together with other people who believe in him?
- How can we share what we have with others?

CREATIVE RESPONSE

10 MINS

You will need: art and craft materials

Talk about how God loves everyone and how much he loves it when we share him with others so they can know him too. He loves it when we share what we have to help others. Explain that while you can't all be together as God's family, you can still find ways to share what you have and help each other.

Ask God to show you a way you can share and show his love to someone in your community this week. Spend some time waiting to see if he pops anything in your heads. Invite your children to lead the discussion and come up with something you can do together. For example, making a card for someone or choosing some toys to give away. Spend some time responding together and then go share with someone!

PRAYER

5 MINS

Use this prayer at the end of your time, and give space for your children to pray their own prayers out loud.

God, thank you that you love us and we get to be together with other people as part of your family. Show us this week how we can help others and share all the things you have given us.

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