



SESSION 3 of 4

The vineyard

MEETING AIM

To help children explore the idea that God, in his love and mercy, sent his son but that Jesus was rejected by many.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 21:33-46.

BACKGROUND

This is not an easy story for children to understand. God is the judge, and those who don't accept his son will face his judgement. Yet this is all born out of God's love for us and his desire for us to be in relationship with him. Be prepared to answer some difficult questions and allow the children to express their thoughts and concerns. You don't need to have all the answers; rather, explore these questions together.

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CIRCLE TIME

As you begin the session, invite the children to sit together in a circle and share out any refreshments you have brought. Ask the group about their week. Celebrate their triumphs and sit with them in their disappointments. Ask the children to mime one thing that has happened to them this week. The others in the group must guess what it is!

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INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: pens and paper (optional)

Explain that you're going to read out some scenarios. Challenge the group to think about how they should be resolved:

- You see an older child bullying one of your friends.
- Your brother or sister is hogging the tablet.
- There are people living on the streets in your town because they don't have any homes.
- Someone in your class has taken all the credit for work you did.
- Someone has taken your bike and won't return it.

Now revisit each of these scenarios and challenge the group to think of the most unlikely way these problems could be resolved. If you have a dramatic group they could act out some of these unlikely ways. Otherwise, they can discuss them or write down their ideas.

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BIBLE STORY

You will need: Lego (or other construction toy); Lego mini figures (or similar); Bibles; devices for filming (eg mobile phones or cameras); equipment for the 'set' (eg cardboard boxes, paper and pens); popcorn; projector and screen to display the films (or a laptop if a smaller group)

Divide the children into 'production teams'. Read the Bible story together, then give each team the equipment and Bibles so they can revisit it. Explain that each group is going to create a short film of the story, using the Lego and mini-figures.

Each production team needs to have a director, voiceover actors, animation builders and a cameraman. As a team they should plan and create a storyboard for the film. Encourage them to work collaboratively and ensure that no one is left out. They will need to build the set and make sure they have everything they need.

The teams must then rehearse and 'shoot' the film. Make sure leaders are available to help the children with anything they need, though it's important that the children lead this activity. Being able to explore the story with few boundaries and play around with it means they will be open to hearing God speak and will start to come up with their own ideas about who he is and what he is doing here.

Once they have completed this, sit everyone down with popcorn and screen the different retellings of the story. How were the films different? Ask the children why they told the story in the way they did. What were they trying to tell the audience?

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CHATTING TOGETHER

Ask the children these questions, encouraging everyone to contribute (if you have lots of children, split into smaller groups to give everyone a chance to speak):

- How does this story make you feel?
- Are there any parts you don't understand?
- How can we help each other understand them?
- Who do all the characters represent?
- Why did the owner send his son to the vineyard?
- Why do you think Jesus told this story?
- What does this story tell us about God?

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CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: paper with speech bubbles printed on both sides; pens

Invite the children to look at the characters from the story, choosing one or two, and then imagining being them. Ask them to write what they might have said if they were those characters on one side of the speech bubble.

Once everyone has finished, compare the children's thoughts and ideas. What are the differences? What are the similarities? If the children would like to, ask them to explain what they have written. If there are differences of opinion you don't need to resolve them. Comment that God speaks to us differently, and we will hear him speak in different ways depending on where we are in our relationship with him.

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PRAYER

You will need: speech bubbles from 'Creative response'; pens

Ask the group to turn the speech bubble over. The children can write what they want to say to God there. If you have confident children, encourage them to pray this out loud. If not, the children can hold up their speech bubbles to symbolise their prayer.

You might have one or two children who want to chat more about this story, so make sure you provide time for them to do so.

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