

Jesus starts it all

MEETING AIM

To ask the question “Who is Jesus?” and to start to answer it.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Mark 1:1-15

BACKGROUND

At the start of his Gospel, Mark dives straight in at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry. In John the Baptist’s preaching, and in Jesus’ baptism, temptation and words in Galilee, we find many clues about who Jesus is and what he came to do. Throughout the service, try to bring people back to these questions: who is Jesus? And what does that mean to you?

These activities should last around 45 minutes. Use the remaining 15 minutes for sung worship and whatever liturgy your church tradition uses.

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WELCOME ACTIVITIES

OPTION 1: Introductions

As people arrive, or at the start of the service, invite everyone to move around and find someone they don’t know. Ask them to tell that person their name and something about themselves. It could be a hobby, their job or the music they like.

OPTION 2: Identity badges

You will need: large stickers; felt-tip pens
Set out tables with large stickers and plenty of felt-tip pens. As people arrive, encourage them to create badges that describe who they are. They could draw or write about their interests, family, holidays, school or work. As people work they could chat to those around them about what they’re putting on their stickers.

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BIBLE STORY

You will need: five volunteers to be Isaiah, John, Jesus, the voice of God and a narrator; suitable costumes (see verse 6 for details on what John looked like); a long piece of blue cloth; a toy dove; easy-to-read Bible translation (such as the Contemporary English Version)

Before the service, practise presenting the Bible story with your volunteers. The narrator should read out the Bible text, with the

other volunteers acting out what happens and saying their lines as appropriate:

Isaiah steps forward and delivers his lines from verses 2 and 3 in the manner of a prophet. John should make an impression with his strange appearance. Use the blue cloth to represent the River Jordan as John baptises Jesus, and hold the toy dove over Jesus’ head as the voice of God speaks. As Jesus goes to Galilee he moves through the congregation, animatedly speaking his words from verse 15.

After you have performed the story, thank your volunteers and ask the congregation to think about what it tells them about Jesus.

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SMALL GROUPS

You will need: Post-it notes; felt-tip pens; Bibles

Break into small groups – made up of one or two families, or different mixed-age groups – and give everyone some Post-it notes and pens. Invite the groups to write down all the things this Bible story tells them about Jesus, with a different thing on each note. Encourage the groups to make sure that everyone has the chance to contribute. Ask the groups to chat about this word picture of Jesus they have created with their notes. Have they discovered anything new? They can stick their notes around them, ready to use in the review section.

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REVIEW

You will need: Post-it notes from ‘Small groups’; roving microphone (if you need one)

Bring the congregation back together to review the story and find out what everyone has discovered. Go through the points below, which list key facts the Bible story tells us about Jesus. As you mention each one, ask the groups to wave their Post-it in the air if they wrote it down. Ask someone from one of the groups to explain why they noted it (choose a different group for each point to give a variety of voices).

- Jesus is the Son of God (verse 1)
- Jesus is powerful (verse 7)
- Jesus will baptise with the Holy Spirit (verse 8)
- Jesus is God’s Son, and God is pleased with him (verse 11)
- Jesus has good news about the kingdom of God (verse 15)

After reading out these five points, ask the congregation if they came up with anything else. Give space for the groups to explain what else they wrote down and why.

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RESPONSE ACTIVITIES

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: Painting

You will need: paint; paintbrushes; large sheets of paper; cover-up and clean-up equipment

Set out lots of paint and sheets of paper, and encourage people to create a piece of artwork that reflects what they have discovered about Jesus today. What is God saying to them through the story? What difference will this make in their lives?

OPTION TWO: Reflection

You will need: jugs of water; washing-up bowls; towels

Set out the jugs of water and bowls, then encourage people to pour the water into the bowls. As they do so, they can think about John and Jesus in the River Jordan. Why was John calling people to be baptised? What might it have been like to watch Jesus get baptised? What would you have thought if you had been there? Is there anything you need to say sorry for?

OPTION THREE: Discussion

You will need: volunteers to facilitate discussion; paper and pens

Gather people together in small groups, each with a facilitator, and challenge them to think about how they can tell others the good news about the kingdom of God, just as Jesus did in verses 14 and 15. Who can they tell? What will they say? When can they do it? Provide pens and paper in case they want to make notes.

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CLOSING

Bring everyone back together and ask if anyone would like to share what they have done, thought about or discussed during the response time. Thank everyone for taking part and say an appropriate blessing to close the service.

CREATIVE WORSHIP SUGGESTIONS

Sing Graham Kendrick’s ‘Make way’, and wave flags and banners as you do so. You could even march around your meeting space.

ALEX TAYLOR

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

Charlie and the change of mind

"Great job, everyone. You've conquered the climbing wall!" said Andy, the instructor. "We'll get out on the water this afternoon. But it's important to look after your equipment, so I need some people to sort out these ropes and coil them properly."

Most of the group shifted uneasily on their feet, hoping they wouldn't be picked, but one hand shot up.

"I'll do it," said Luke. "I know how to coil them properly. I learnt all about it when I was climbing in the Grand Canyon."

There were groans from the rest of the group. This was not the first time Luke had mentioned his holiday. The Golden Gate Bridge, Hollywood Boulevard, shows in Las Vegas...the list seemed endless. And now he had added climbing in the Grand Canyon.

"Thanks, Luke. And I need someone else." Andy looked around the group, but everyone avoided his gaze. "Charlie, can you help Luke?"

Charlie looked at Andy in horror. "No way! Why do I have to do it?"

"Charlie!" The group's teacher, Mrs de Silva, shot her a warning glance.

"Why do I always get picked on? Get someone else to do it!" She made a rude gesture with her fingers and stormed off toward the residential centre.

"Sorry, Andy," said Mrs de Silva, hurrying after Charlie.

Andy was momentarily distracted, but gathered himself and carried on: "Right, people, let's get back to the centre. Lunch is in half an hour. Luke, can you sort those ropes out on your own?"

"Of course. Won't take me a minute!"

Charlie made her way back to the climbing tower. She had managed to avoid Mrs de Silva by hiding behind the racks of canoes beside the lake, but she would have to face the music at lunch. She wouldn't get away with disrespecting the instructor like that. The least she could do was help out with the ropes.

She looked around. The pile of ropes was still there, as tangled as they had been before, but there was no sign of Luke.

"Where is he?" Charlie said to herself. "I bet he's never been climbing in his life. He

probably never even went to America." She sat on a tree stump and started coiling up the ropes.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Who did what Andy asked them to do?
- What do you think about the way Luke and Charlie acted?
- What might happen next in the story? How would Mrs de Silva deal with them both?
- Have you ever been in the same position as Charlie? What happened?
- Have you ever acted like Luke? What did you do (or not do)?

This story is based on Matthew 21:28-32.

Read the passage with your group and compare it with this one. Discuss what Jesus might have been saying through his story, encouraging the young people to think about the parable in a new way.

ALEX TAYLOR

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

Starting a mentoring programme

The first mentoring programme I set up was almost entirely accidental. It was essentially the product of an unconscious emphasis I had toward building empowering and supportive relationships with young people. I didn't even call it a youth ministry; I called it a youth community. Rather than leading a group of young people and trying to get to know and support individuals within that, can we approach youth work starting with individual relationships and allowing that to create a larger group culture?

MAKING MENTORING THE START AND HEART OF YOUR MINISTRY

Here are five tips drawn from my 'youth community' experience:

Share quantity time...and it'll become quality time. As a team we aimed to meet up with all the young people regularly, both on our terms (in our locations, settings and comfort zone) and on theirs (in their settings, with their agendas in their comfort zones). This involved meeting one-to-one and also including them in everything we

did as much as possible. We ended up becoming known as a community that had fun and was always laughing together.

Commit long term. Each year when some got too old for our youth programme and moved away I gathered some of the younger ones and we went on a weekend tour of the country to visit them all at university. They knew they were loved when we travelled that far to bring them some treats and buy them lunch. Go the extra mile. Demonstrate your commitment. Mean it.

Nurture their gifts. Every job that needed doing, or responsibility I could think of, we did with the young people...until they could do it without us. This applied to admin, worship leading and preaching. I showed them and taught them what I knew, then worked alongside them as they grew in competency. I was finally able to step away as they brought their own contributions and took it further. This is one of the keys to unlocking young disciples: walk with them until they can walk alone, then fly with them until they are strong enough to soar away.

Have an objective. By this I mean an objective for the mentoring programme, not

for how you want each mentee to turn out! I would encourage you to have an objective that is easy to articulate. It makes it easier for:

- Mentees to understand what they are a part of
- Other mentors to understand what is expected of them

Communicate your passion. Be passionate about what mentoring can unlock for you, your team and all your young people. You will need to remind yourselves of these things often in order to maintain and grow as a community. What does success look like? How will you communicate this regularly with mentors and mentees? Will you mentor the mentors? Feed them regularly with ideas, resources, enthusiasm and feedback. Remember that the mentees will only be as excited and passionate about it as the mentors are, and the mentors can only be as excited and passionate about it as you are.

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New Year games

Whether you're holding a New Year party or trying to get your group to think about fresh starts, you'll need some games to get things going. Here are some suggestions to help your group think creatively or just to have a good time!

MAKING IT STICK



You will need: balloons; cups; shaving foam; cheese puff snacks (or packing pellets); cover-up and clean-up equipment

Blow up the balloons and cover them with shaving foam. Stand each one in a cup and position the group about two metres away, each person opposite a balloon. (If you have a large group, play this in teams.) Give each player a bag of cheese puff snacks (or packing pellets). At the signal to start, everyone has to throw the snacks at their balloon so that they stick to the shaving foam. The player with the best-covered balloon is the winner.

Chat about how easy or difficult it is to make New Year's resolutions stick. Ask if anyone has made any resolutions this year, and how they are getting on with them.

LYRIC MATCHING



You will need: song lyrics written out on strips of paper (see below)

Before the session, find the bestselling songs of 2018. Write out the first lines of some of these songs on two strips of paper, with the first half of the line on one strip and the second on the other. Mix all the half-lines up.

Give the group the strips of paper and challenge them to sort all the song lyrics into the correct pairs. (If you have a large group, put everyone into teams and give each team a set of song lyrics. The first team to complete all the lyrics is the winner.) Once everyone has finished, chat about people's favourite songs from the past year.

FIRST FOOTING RELAY



You will need: balloons; access to front and back doors; a safe outdoor pathway between the doors

Split the group into teams and line them up between the front and back doors of your venue. If they are quite a long way apart, the teams will need to spread out to cover the distance. Give the player closest to the front door a balloon.

On the signal to start, the first player should put the balloon between their knees and waddle to the next person on their team. They should pass the balloon to that person knee-to-knee. This player then waddles to the next player, passes the balloon along and so on. When the final player gets the balloon they have to waddle out of the back door, around the building and in through the front door, still with the balloon between their knees. The process then starts again. The first team to get back to its original order is the winner.

STARTERS



You will need: a variety of ingredients (see below); kitchen utensils; plates; cover-up and clean-up equipment

Before the session, gather together a range of ingredients that can be used to make canapés, hors d'oeuvres or small starters (depending on how posh you are!). These might be salad vegetables, cheese, bread and crackers, cooked meats or pickles. Divide these ingredients into sets of four or five. Make sure you have different ingredients in each set.

Split your group into smaller teams and give each one a set of ingredients. Challenge each team to create a canapé for a New Year party with what they have been given. Say that they are allowed to use ingredients from other groups, but only if they bargain for them. Encourage the teams to think about presentation as well as taste.

Once everyone is finished, do a taste test to see which is the best starter.

RESOLUTION CONSEQUENCES



You will need: paper and pens

Give each person a sheet of paper and a pen. Say that you're going to ask them to come up with phrases to make up a New Year's resolution. After each phrase they should fold the top of the paper over and pass it to the person on their left, as if they were playing consequences. Read out these instructions one by one:

Think of something you'd like to start doing and complete the sentence: *"This year, I'm going to..."*

Think of a famous person to do this with: *"And I'm going to do this with..."*

Think of a timescale: *"I'm going to do this by..."*

Think of some equipment: *"To do this I'll need..."*

Think of a consequence if this doesn't happen: *"If I don't do this, then..."*

Think of a benefit if it does happen: *"But if I do, then..."*

Make sure the group knows they should be appropriate in everything they write! Once everyone has finished, unfold the papers and read them out.

ALEX TAYLOR

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

Jesus feeds a crowd

BACKGROUND

This is one of the best-known and best-loved of Jesus' miracle stories. Here are some ideas to help you take a creative approach to some of the themes.

POPCORN MAKING



You will need: popcorn kernels; a popcorn maker and access to an electricity supply (or oil, a pan and a stove top); toppings eg sugar, salt, golden syrup; small dishes for serving

Popcorn is great for thinking about how a little goes a long way in this story, because a tiny handful of kernels can fill a whole bowl when cooked!

Show the children a small serving of popcorn kernels. Your popcorn maker or recipe should give some guidance as to how big each serving should be. Comment that this amount is unlikely to feed the whole group as it seems very small. Put the kernels into the machine and watch as the popcorn cooks and expands, and the bowl fills. Alternatively, cook the popcorn in a pan on the stove. Relate this amazing expansion of the popcorn to the miracle in which Jesus is able to feed so many with so little. Here we use the power of the machine, but Jesus used God's miraculous power. Share out the popcorn and let the children choose their topping. A drizzle of golden syrup always goes down well!

MIRACULOUS PAPER



You will need: A5-sized pieces of paper (two sheets each); scissors
The way Jesus is able to feed the crowd is a real miracle. This craft appears to be quite miraculous too as it makes something very small stretch a long way.

Give each child a piece of paper and ask them to cut a big enough hole to step through with their whole body. They are highly unlikely to be able to do this! Now demonstrate to them how cutting such a hole is possible (find instructions at youthandchildrens.work/links) and let them have a go. Make sure that you try this out beforehand so you know you will be able to fit through the hole you cut! What seems impossible becomes possible when you know who to ask. Likewise, what seems impossible is possible with God.

CELEBRATION BREAD



You will need: sliced white bread; food colouring; water; clean paintbrushes (brand new ones are best for this); a toaster or grill; little pots or dishes

The miracle of feeding more than 5,000 people with so little celebrates just how amazing God is. This craft uses bread and bright colours to help express that celebration.

Mix food colouring with a little bit of water and have pots of at least three different colours that the children can use as 'paint'. Give everyone a piece of bread and encourage them to paint designs on it with the food colouring. The children might want to paint a picture of something that happens in the story or a design that represents God, or a celebration of the miracle. Make sure that children wipe the excess liquid off their brushes after dipping so the bread doesn't get too soggy at this point! When the designs are finished, lightly toast the bread and eat it as part of a 'celebration' snack.

THANK YOU PLATES



You will need: paper plates; glue; scissors; food magazines and food packaging, eg cereal boxes and crisp packets

Before performing the miracle, Jesus thanks God. This craft helps children to focus on foods they are thankful for.

Talk to the children about the story, and about what it must have felt like to be fed by Jesus in such an amazing way. Discuss their favourite foods and ask why they would thank God for them. Cut out pictures of their favourite foods and stick them onto paper plates. Use this time to chat to them about the story and what it means to them.

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Skyscraper

CLIP: 01:10:00 – 01:14:25

RATING: 12A

SYNOPSIS

Former FBI hostage rescue team leader and war veteran Will Sawyer now assesses security for skyscrapers. On assignment in Hong Kong at the world's largest and most futuristic skyscraper, he suddenly finds the building ablaze and discovers he has been framed for it. A wanted man on the run, Will must find those responsible, clear his name and rescue his family, who are trapped inside the building.

Skyscraper does a fairly decent job of humanising someone as impressive as the Rock by giving him a prosthetic leg and a history of failure. What is perhaps even more impressive (and rare in Hollywood) is

that the Rock's disability isn't played on as a weakness; in fact, his prosthetic leg helps him out in several narrow scrapes along the way.

The clip this session focuses on sees the Rock needing to climb up the outside of the skyscraper to reach a control panel. But with only rope and duct tape to hand he is hopelessly at risk. With a crowd gathered below to watch, he must battle against gravity and his own fears to achieve his objective and get back inside the building. Yes, it's completely preposterous, but there is enough tension to keep everyone interested. You could even stop the clip at the tensest moments to ask the group what they think might happen next.

DISCUSS

After showing the clip as a stimulus, break into small discussion groups (you may wish to have a designated discussion leader for each group) and pose the following questions:

- What is the most exciting stunt you've ever seen in a film or in real life? How did it make you feel when you watched it?
- What emotions do you think were being felt during the clip? Do you think added danger makes someone feel more or less emotion?

- What is the biggest risk you have taken in life? (It doesn't have to be a physical stunt!)
- How do you think Will's wife felt during the clip? Is it difficult to watch others taking risks in life?
- After discussing the first set of questions, read 2 Kings 7:3-11. (The whole chapter would be better if time allows. You may also want to give the context first.) Return to your groups to discuss the next set of questions:

How would you describe the characters with leprosy in this story?

- Is there a moral we can learn here?
- Where examples of risk-taking do we see in the story?
- Should Christians take more risks in life, or should we make sure we are safe and secure?

If you have the time, why not watch the whole film so you can view the clip in context?

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A million dreams

ARTIST: P!nk

SUITABLE FOR: 10s to 13s

INTRODUCTION

This song from *The Greatest Showman: Reimagined* takes us into a world where we can imagine that anything is possible, without limitation. This session explores what it means to be a dreamer of dreams, and what we can do with that.

As you begin the session, invite the young people to share some of their best or perhaps funniest dreams. Talk about the young people's experiences as a light-hearted introduction to this session and explain that today we will be looking at different types of dreams: those we have for ourselves and those that God gives us.

LISTEN AND DISCUSS

Play the track and provide copies of the lyrics for the group to follow, perhaps even having a sing-along if they already know the song. Ask:

- Can you relate to what the singer talks about in this song?
- What does it mean to be a dreamer, like the singer?

Check whether the young people have seen *The Greatest Showman*, then talk about the character of Barnum and how he was a real dreamer. This song describes the way he dreamt of a better future for himself and his family that was not constrained by reality. This approach to life left him wide open to criticism, yet he had the confidence to act on his dreams and make the changes he wanted to achieve.

Talk about what it means to be a daydreamer and how this is often used as an insult to those who seem to be caught up in their imaginations. Explain to the group that, despite the perceived insult, being a dreamer can be very positive and healthy. When we imagine a different future, we can, like Barnum, take positive steps to change the world around us.

Distribute Bibles and ask the group to look at Acts 2:16-18, briefly summarising the context before and after these key verses. In the speech Peter gives he is talking about the way God shows his people glimpses of the world as it could be. Just as P!nk sings: "I think of what the world could be, a vision of the one I see."

Spread out a huge sheet of paper and distribute pens. Explain that you are going to play the song again and, as you do so the young people should take some time to draw or write key words that describe the world they long to see, just as they believe God would want it to be.

As you draw the session to a close, gather the young people around the shared artwork. Talk about some of the dreams that have been shared here before challenging the young people to think about what they could do to begin realising some of these dreams. Pray together for the young people as dreamers of dreams that they would be equipped by the Holy Spirit to turn these dreams into reality.

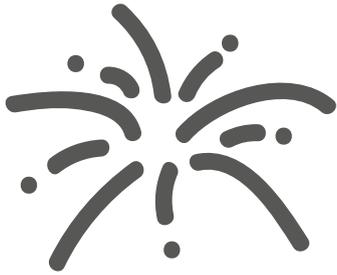
BECKY MAY

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NEW YEAR'S PRAYERS

CELEBRATE THE OLD!

What things from 2018 can you say "thank you" to God for? Write and doodle among the fireworks:



WELCOME THE NEW!

New Year's Resolutions 2019
Prayers

My hopes and prayers for the new year:

*"You crown the year
with your goodness,
and your paths drip
with abundance."*

Psalm 65:11, NKJV.

SARA AND SAM HARGREAVES

lead engageworship.org, resourcing and training for
creative and world-changing worship.