



SESSION 1 of 4

David

MEETING AIM

To consider how we can chat to God about whatever is on our hearts.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Psalm 25

BACKGROUND

David wrote many psalms and often connected with God through music and singing. David wrote this psalm while he was under attack from his enemies and deeply in need of God's peace. He turns to God for help and guidance, asking to know his love and forgiveness once again.

5 CIRCLE TIME

Invite the children to sit together in a circle. Encourage them to share stories from their week. Celebrate any birthdays or special events. It can be helpful to have an object or cuddly toy to pass around for the child who is talking to hold. Ask the children: "What is your favourite thing to talk about?" Thank God for being with you and ask him to help you learn more about him today.

10 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: worship music (either with someone leading, a video or recorded music) Before the session, choose an appropriate song to sing with your group. For this age group it often works to do one with simple actions and repeat it a few times. 'The singing song' by Nick and Becky Drake is a great one to link in to the theme (you can find an actions video on the 'Worship for Everyone' YouTube page).

10 BIBLE STORY

You will need: a bag for the story items; toy sheep; a paper speech bubble; a crown; a picture of a heart; a musical instrument; a Bible

Put all the items in the bag. As you mention each item, pull it out of the bag and pass it around for the children to look at:

There once was a man called David. David looked after **sheep**; he was a shepherd. He loved God. He loved to talk to God and spend time with him.

When David grew up, he became **king**. He was a good king and had a good **heart**.

David wasn't perfect, he still did things wrong, but he knew that God loved and forgave him, and helped him learn to live in a better way.

David wrote **songs**. He loved singing to God. Some of the songs he wrote can be found in the **Bible** in a book called Psalms. Today we're going to look at one of the psalms David wrote and think about why he wrote it. *Hold your Bible as you read the psalm below. This is a paraphrase, but you might prefer to write your own or find another version to read.*

This is what David said in his psalm:

I trust you God. I give everything to you. You'll look after me, won't you? You won't let anyone hurt me, will you?

Show me how you work, God. Teach me how to live my life for you. I want to be close to you, connected with you.

I'm not perfect, and I've done stuff wrong, but I know that you love me. I need you, God. Thank you that you are good and fair, and that you help me learn what is right and how to live.

Please forgive me for all the things I've done wrong.

Thank you that, when I trust you, you show me your plans and look after my family. Thank you that you talk to me.

Help me! There are lots of people who would like to hurt me.

God, please help me learn how to be safe. Look after me and keep me out of trouble.

I trust in you.

David loved God. He trusted him and loved to tell him everything that was on his heart. When he was scared or angry he would tell God. In this psalm he wanted God to look after him, keep him safe and forgive him for all the things he had done wrong.

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Use these questions to talk about the story, encouraging everyone to join in:

- Which was your favourite part of the psalm?
- What do you do when you feel scared?
- What is your favourite song to sing?
- How do you tell God what you're feeling? (Help the children explore this by giving your own examples, such as, "I sometimes shout" or "I tell God about the thing that scares me" or "I like to draw how I'm feeling".)

5 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: paper cut into heart shapes; pieces of paper with "I can chat to God about anything" written in the middle; glue; crayons or felt-tip pens

We can tell God about anything that is on our hearts and connect our hearts with his. Give each child a piece of paper and a heart. Invite them to colour the paper, decorate the writing or draw a picture of something they would like to chat to God about. Give everyone a heart and let them glue it on top like a flap so they can lift it up to see the message and their drawings.

10 PRAYER

God loves it when we chat to him, and we can chat to him about anything. We're going to chat to God now. (Often with under-5s they cannot yet chat in their heads, so invite the children to whisper into their hands.) Explain that this is a time for them and God to chat.

Invite them to tell God:

- Something that made them happy, sad or cross today
- What their favourite food is
- Something they're scared of

Move on to the next point as the majority of children finish whispering. Add in your own points and then give the children time to chat to God about anything they want to discuss. Explain that it's OK if they don't want to chat, but ask them not to distract those who do.

Finish with this prayer: "God, thank you that you always listen to us and that you love to hear what is on our hearts."

ANNIE WILLMOT

is a children's worker and mum to two boys. She loves nothing more than an honest conversation and a good cup of tea.

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SESSION 2 of 4

Elijah

MEETING AIM

To talk about how God 'speaks' in different ways.

BIBLE PASSAGE

1 Kings 19

BACKGROUND

Elijah has gone from seeing God burn the sacrifice when he is up against the prophets of Baal to suddenly fearing for his life. Jezebel has threatened him and he has run away. Elijah has lost confidence and concludes that life isn't worth living any more, but God provides for him and leads him to Mount Horeb.

The focus in this session is on 'catching' from God and expecting him to 'speak' in different ways. (For more in-depth info on catching, check out Session 4 of the Parenting for Faith course at parentingforfaith.org.)

5 CIRCLE TIME

Invite the children to sit together in a circle. Encourage them to share stories from their week. Celebrate any birthdays or special events. It can be helpful to have an object or cuddly toy to pass around for the child who is talking to hold. Ask the children to whisper their answer to the question: "What is your favourite weather?" Thank God that he is with you, and ask him to help you learn more about him today.

5 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: music and the means to play it
Play some music. When you stop it, the children have to freeze. You could add the rule that the last person to freeze is out, or simply enjoy playing the game together. Play for as long as you have time and the children remain interested.

10 BIBLE STORY

You will need: a candle and matches (or a battery-operated candle); a fan; scrunched-up paper for rocks

Gather the children together and tell this story:

Elijah loved showing people how powerful God was. He was a prophet, which meant that he told people what God was saying. He had just seen God send fire to burn up a

sacrifice to show people who didn't believe in him how powerful he was.

But now he was afraid. Queen Jezebel had sent a letter to Elijah saying that she wanted to kill him. Elijah was really scared and really tired. He ran away! He wanted to give up.

Elijah felt alone. He sat under a tree and said: "I give up. I've had enough." Then he lay down to sleep. *Everyone lies down.*

An angel woke him and gave him food and drink. *Everyone wakes up and yawns.* Once he had eaten he lay down again. The angel woke him up and said: "Get up and eat, you have a long journey ahead of you." After he had eaten he travelled for 40 days and 40 nights to a cave on Mount Horeb. *Get up and walk around together.*

He lay down and slept for the night. *Everyone lies down.*

God spoke to Elijah and said: "What are you doing here?"

Elijah replied: "I have told so many people about you. They haven't listened or worshipped you. They just fight. I'm the only one left. I'm all alone, and now they're trying to hurt me."

God told Elijah to stand outside on the mountain and wait for him.

A powerful wind came and broke up the rocks. *Turn on your fan and scatter your paper rocks.*

Then an earthquake came. *Get all the children to stamp their feet and wobble.*

Then a fire came. *Light the candle.*

After that, there was a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it he pulled his cloak up over his face and stood outside.

God asked Elijah again how he had come to the mountain, and Elijah replied the same way as before: "I have told so many people about you. They haven't listened or worshipped you. They just fight. I'm the only one left. I'm all alone, and now they're trying to hurt me."

God reminded Elijah that he wasn't alone. And to prove it, he gave Elijah an assistant called Elisha to tell the people about him.

We can 'catch' things from God in lots of different ways. We don't just hear his voice. We can also catch him on our skin, or he can pop pictures into our heads. He can speak to us through the Bible, we can know deep down that he is saying something to us or he can speak to us through other people. (Share your own examples of when you have caught something from God.)

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Use these questions to talk about the story, encouraging everyone to join in:

- What was your favourite part of the story?
- What do you do when you feel scared?
- How do you like to talk to God?
- How do you 'catch' things from God?

10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: paper; pens; colouring sheets

Explain that you're going to spend some time being quiet, as Elijah did in the cave. If you have children who like the dark you could dim the lights. Encourage the children to find a spot on their own and ask God to meet with them. Say that God might pop words or pictures into their heads, they might feel him on their bodies or he might meet with them in a different way.

Invite the children to wait on God. Have some paper and pens ready for them to draw whatever they felt they caught from God if they want to. You may find that some children finish very quickly, while some will want to spend longer doing this. Allow them to take as long as they want. You could light your candle and put your fan on to remind them that God speaks in lots of different ways.

Have pens and paper or colouring sheets ready for children who finish quickly. Colouring can provide space for children to process what they have caught from God.

5 PRAYER

Stand together and say this prayer:

"God, thank you for speaking to Elijah. Thank you that you speak to us in so many different ways. Help us listen to you with our ears and hearts and bodies. Just as Elijah heard a whisper, let's whisper our prayers to God."

Invite the children to chat to God by whispering into their hands. Let's tell God one thing that has made us happy today. Invite the children to chat to God more, and add some other suggestions for things they could tell him.

ANNIE WILLMOT

is a children's worker and mum to two boys. She loves nothing more than an honest conversation and a good cup of tea.

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SESSION 3 of 4

Esther

MEETING AIM

To think about how God was with Esther and gave her courage when she was afraid.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Esther 4, 5 and 9

BACKGROUND

There is a lot to cover in this story. Esther became queen after King Xerxes had got rid of his previous queen, Vashti. Esther was a Jew living in Persia, and she chose to keep her heritage secret. God used Mordecai to encourage Esther and give her the boldness to step out and risk her life for the people. It's worth reading through the whole book to get an overview of the story.

5 CIRCLE TIME

Invite the children to sit together in a circle. Encourage them to share stories from their week. Celebrate any birthdays or special events. It can be helpful to have an object or cuddly toy to pass around for the child who is talking to hold. Ask the children: "What's the bravest thing you have ever done or seen someone else do?" Thank God that he is with you, and ask him to help you learn more about him today.

10 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: elastic; beads, cotton reels or something that small items can be threaded onto the elastic with

Explain that in your story today you are going to hear about a queen who did something brave. She would have worn royal robes and expensive jewellery. Show the children how to make jewellery by threading beads onto their elastic. (Alternatively, you could make crowns alongside the same discussion.)

10 BIBLE STORY

You will need: play food; a crown; a people paper chain

Sit the children in a circle and tell this story:

King Xerxes was the King of Persia. He had a queen, but she refused to do what he said, so he got rid of her! After that he wanted a new queen. *Hold up the crown whenever you talk about Esther being queen.*

His officials gathered all the young women in the kingdom so he could pick one. He chose Esther.

Esther lived with her Uncle Mordecai and she was Jewish. The Persians didn't like the Jewish people at all, so when Esther became Queen of Persia she didn't tell anyone she was Jewish.

One day, the king's servant Haman made a plan to get rid of all the Jewish people and got the king to agree with his plan!

Mordecai heard about this plan and was heartbroken. He ripped his clothes, and cried and cried. But God heard him, and he helped Mordecai come up with a plan. The law could not be changed, but perhaps Esther could help save her people...

Mordecai asked Esther to tell the king she was a Jew. He begged her. He said to Esther: "Maybe this is why God has made you queen. Maybe you are here for this very purpose."

Esther was very scared. Even though she was the queen she wasn't allowed to go and speak to the king. She had to wait to be invited. He was the kind of king who got rid of a queen because she wouldn't do what he said. You can imagine why she was nervous!

However, she knew it was the only way to save her people. She put on her royal robes and went to the king hoping that he would let her speak.

The king was pleased when he saw her, and let her speak to him. He said: "What do you want? I will give you anything."

Esther told him she wanted to have a meal with the king and his servant Haman. She was trying to find a way to tell the king about Haman's horrible plan.

Twice they had a banquet. *Lay out the play food for a banquet and invite the children to sit down as if they had also been there. Pretend to eat the food together.*

Esther didn't say anything during the first meal, but during the second banquet she told them she was Jewish. She said that Haman's plan would mean that she and all her people would die. The king was furious! He had his officials take Haman away.

Esther risked her life to save her people. The king allowed the Jewish people to defend themselves, and even the king's officials helped them! *Show the children your paper chain people and pull it out as you talk about Esther's people.*

Esther was scared, but God used her to help save her people. God made her bold and gave her courage. Esther knew she could ask God to help her when she felt afraid and alone.

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Use these questions to talk about the story, encouraging everyone to join in:

- What was your favourite part of the story?
- What do you do when you feel scared? Or if someone is asking you to do something that feels really big?
- How do you think Esther felt when God saved her people?
- How can you encourage others when they feel scared?

10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: paper; a person template; felt-tip pens or crayons; glue; things to decorate paper people with (for example sequins or stickers)

Before the session, cut out people paper chains that are as long as you can make them!

Explain that Esther was scared but that God gave her courage. God was with Esther and he saved Esther's people. Give each child a people paper chain and invite them to decorate Esther and all the Jewish people.

5 PRAYER

You will need: the jewellery or crowns from 'Intro activity'

Invite the children to wear their jewellery.

Explain that God made Esther the queen, and that she was able to help her people even though it was scary. Sometimes we will be afraid, but God is with us and helps us.

Invite the children to name a place where they might feel afraid, and then to ask God to be with them and give them courage. Finish by saying: "Thank you, God, that you are with us."

ANNIE WILLMOT

is a children's worker and mum to two boys. She loves nothing more than an honest conversation and a good cup of tea.

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SESSION 4 of 4

Jeremiah

MEETING AIM

To consider how God is always with us, and is always at work.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Jeremiah 38:1-13

BACKGROUND

Jeremiah's prophecies had been met with rejection among his people over and over again. He had been imprisoned and banished, and now his life was being threatened. God had warned the Israelites through Jeremiah that they should leave their city or they would be killed by the Babylonians. Yet again, the people didn't want to listen.

But even when Jeremiah might have been feeling alone, God was with him and was still looking out for him.

5 CIRCLE TIME

Invite the children to sit together in a circle. Encourage them to share stories from their week. Celebrate any birthdays or special events. It can be helpful to have an object or cuddly toy to pass around for the child who is talking to hold. Ask the children: "When do you like to chat to God?" Thank God that he is with you and ask him to help you learn more about him today.

10 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: 2 tablespoons of cocoa powder; 2 cups of flour; 2 cups of water; objects or toys to put in the 'mud'
Before the session, mix the ingredients together to make mud. You could find another mud 'recipe' if you prefer or even use real mud!

Explain that in today's story you're going to hear about someone who ended up in squelchy mud. Even when he felt like he was alone in the mud, God was always with him. Encourage the children to play with the mud and join in with their play.

10 BIBLE STORY

You will need: a tall pot or cardboard tube; play figures to be Jeremiah, the king's officials, the king and Ebed-Melech; string; two magnets

Before the session, attach one magnet to a piece of string and one to your Jeremiah figure.

Gather the children together and tell this story:

Jeremiah was a prophet. *Hold up your Jeremiah figure.* He went around telling people what God was saying. *'Walk' Jeremiah this way and that.* Because the people didn't always like what they heard, lots didn't listen to him. He had even been put in prison.

God told Jeremiah to tell the Israelites that anyone who stayed in the city would be destroyed. He said they would lose in battle to the Babylonians and that the city would be captured. He said that they could leave and then they would be safe, but the people didn't like what they heard! *Invite the children to pretend to be the people who were not listening or liking what Jeremiah was saying.*

The king's officials went to the king and said: "We should get rid of this man. He is not helping our people. We don't want to listen to him!" Act out the story with your figures.

The king said: "OK. Do whatever you want to do with him."

So they went and found Jeremiah, and they threw him into a broken and empty well. There was no water, only mud. Jeremiah sank down into the squelchy mud. *Throw your Jeremiah figure into your 'well'. (You could even put some of your play mud from 'Intro activity' in the bottom.)*

They left him there.

But Jeremiah wasn't alone. God was with him.

A servant from the palace called Ebed-Melech heard about Jeremiah and went to the king, saying: "Please help Jeremiah. These men have been very unfair. Jeremiah is alone and there is no food for him." *Act out the story with your Ebed-Melech and king figures.*

This king told Ebed-Melech to hurry up and get Jeremiah out! He took 30 men and lots of rags with him and they used them to pull Jeremiah out and rescue him. *Use the magnet and string to 'rescue' Jeremiah. Invite each child to take a turn rescuing Jeremiah.*

Jeremiah was never alone. God was always with him. God is always at work.

We can always talk to God because he is always there. When Jeremiah was sinking in that squelchy mud, God was with him and he had a plan.

God is always doing stuff, even when we can't see what he's doing.

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Use these questions to talk about the story, encouraging everyone to join in:

- What was your favourite part of the story?
- How do you think Jeremiah felt at the bottom of the well?
- How do you think God felt when the king's officials put Jeremiah in the well?
- When do you feel most alone? (Remind the children that however lonely they feel, God is there with them.)

10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: sticker sheets with 'God is always with me' written or printed on them; felt-tip pens or crayons

Share with the children that God is always with us, just as he was with Jeremiah in the well. Even when we don't know what is happening or we feel scared or alone, God is with us and he has a plan.

Give each child a sticker and invite them to decorate it. They can either wear it or take it away to stick somewhere at home. Then when they are on your own they can look at their sticker and remember that God is with them. They can chat to him and he will listen.

5 PRAYER

Invite all the children to share about somewhere they will go this week, then pray they will know that God is with them. You could do this in a 'popcorn' prayer style, with each child 'popping up' to name their place as you pray together:

"Thank you, God, that I can always talk to you. Thank you that you are always with me and that you always have a plan. Please be with me when I go to..."

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