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# Footsteps to the Feast

12 two-hour children's programmes  
for Christian festivals and special times of the year



Martyn Payne

# Read all about it!

## A special event to celebrate Bible Sunday

Though not strictly one of the great feasts of the Church, Bible Sunday is a special day in the year. It celebrates the gift of the word of God, which, as the traditional Collect for this day prays, Christians should ‘read, mark, learn and inwardly digest’. The Bible is the Christian’s special book. It is the story of how God has spoken to people and revealed his character of purity and love. Christians believe that it is inspired by God (see 2 Timothy 3:16) and is alive with the truth about God and our human nature. From its stories they learn how to follow God’s ways more faithfully, and through its verses Christians can hear God speaking to them today. As the apostle Paul writes, ‘The Scriptures were written to teach and encourage us by giving us hope’ (Romans 15:4).

Outside the Church, however, these inspired stories are less well known. It should come as no surprise that the Bible is kept back for the higher-value questions in TV quiz shows! Even among Christians, there is a danger that only certain favourite bits of the Bible are known, while the bigger picture of how it all fits together and the place of individual stories in the grand scheme of God’s great rescue plan for the world is not well understood. Sunday group teaching programmes often contribute to this lack of understanding, moving rather randomly from episode to episode in the Bible in an unconnected way. Paul tells us that God sent Jesus ‘when the time was right’ (Galatians 4:4). This means that the story of Jesus, so important to us as Christians, comes from within

a greater context; if we don't know that context, we may miss much of the wonder and significance of what God has done.

This programme seeks to celebrate the wholeness and interconnectedness of our sacred book. It aims to celebrate the diversity of its contents while tracing the unfolding pattern of grace that threads throughout its stories. It can be used at any time of the year, although, traditionally, Bible Sunday fell in Advent. In more recent years it has been celebrated in October.

### **Bible footsteps**

The Bible is the big story. We bring our own individual stories to it, so that through this encounter we might discover new things about God and ourselves on our journey of faith. As the writer of Psalm 119 reminds us, in his majestic poem all about God's written revelation, 'Your word is a lamp that gives light wherever I walk' (Psalm 119:105). Earlier in that same psalm, he prays, 'Open my mind and let me discover the wonders of your Law' (v. 18).

### **First steps**

As the children arrive and after they have been registered, invite everyone to join teams, which take on the names of items linked to books—for example, Chapters, Verses, Paragraphs, Contents, Index, Pages and so on. Each team area should have a simple wooden bookshelf available, ideally with five separate shelves, which will gradually be filled to make a Bible library. Have available at each team base a variety of differently coloured card, which the teams can make into new book covers to cover ordinary books that have been collected at each station. Each team will need 66 books to recover! When the books are recovered, they should be stacked on the shelves to become the books of the Bible. Here is a possible colour scheme:

## Old Testament

- ⊗ Five books of the law in green (Genesis to Deuteronomy)
- ⊗ Twelve history books in red (Joshua to Esther)
- ⊗ Six poetry and wisdom books in yellow (Job to Song of Songs, plus Lamentations)
- ⊗ Sixteen books of prophecy in purple (Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel to Malachi)

## New Testament

- ⊗ Four Gospels in white (Matthew to John)
- ⊗ One history book in red (Acts)
- ⊗ Twenty-one letters in blue (Romans to Jude)
- ⊗ One book of prophecy in purple (Revelation)

As each book is covered, arrange them on the Bible bookshelf as a visual demonstration of the variety of literature within God's special book. This activity could be continued at other times throughout the event and the teams might like to add the names of the books along the spines. You could also decorate the team bases with a variety of versions of the Bible, including some with colour illustrations—both elaborate illuminated versions from the past and modern examples.

Once all have arrived, gather everyone together to introduce the day. Begin by using the following Bible workout, using activities and actions to go alongside the different books of the Bible.

Start the session by asking each person in the group to find a space of their own around the room.

Now ask the group to follow the actions mimed by the leader. The leader should mime the opening of a big book... turning its pages... finding the right chapter (*move your pointed finger along and down imaginary columns*), marking a particular verse... reading the line (*exaggerate the head and eye movement for this*), a pause to think (*finger on chin*), a pause to pray (*hands together*), more reading...

another pause to think... another short prayer... the closing of the book... finishing with a big sigh.

Ask the group what they thought you as leader were doing. Move on to ask what their favourite book is. Tell them that, for Christians, the Bible is a special favourite book to be read thoughtfully and prayerfully, as it is one way in which they hear God speaking. The group are now going to explore this book in actions.

The group should be standing ready for the following fast-moving, physical exploration of the Bible. They should copy the leader's workout actions.

- ⊗ Run on the spot with 33 quick double steps (1-2,1-2,1-2 and so on, to demonstrate that the Bible has 66 books.
- ⊗ Sweep your right arm out from your side, all the way to above your head. Sweep your left arm out from your side to above your head, to demonstrate that the Bible has two halves; the Old and New Testament.
- ⊗ Use one arm and then the other to imitate the clock hand ticking its way around the clock face that is your body. Count in hundreds up to 1000 on one half of the clock face and another 1000 on the other half, to demonstrate that the Bible records about 2000 years of history.
- ⊗ Stand like a comic policeman with hands behind back and do five knee bends. There are five books of the law (use words, too, such as 'hello, hello, hello, hello, hello', and, the second time you do it, 'Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses'). These books are in the Old Testament (sweep right hand out from your side as described above).
- ⊗ Next we get down on one knee, as if before a king or honoured leader. There are twelve books of history about kings, judges and special leaders. Bow down on one knee twelve times. These books are also in the Old Testament (sweep right hand out from side).
- ⊗ There are also love stories, praise songs, wise sayings and sad poems in the Bible. For each of these words have a simple

action, such as touching the heart, lifting hands high, stroking your chin, rubbing tearful eyes. Repeat this a few times. There are six books like this in the Old Testament (sweep right hand out from side).

- ☉ Teach three actions: pointing forward with the words ‘watch out’; one hand to one ear with the words ‘listen up’; a hand shading your eyes as if looking into the distance with the words ‘look forward’. There are 16 prophets who wrote books in the Bible telling God’s people to watch out... listen up... look forward. Repeat this with words and actions 16 times! These books are also in the Old Testament (sweep right hand out from side).
- ☉ Stand to attention and then, on the spot, jump four quarter-turns to face left, back, right and front again, demonstrating that there are four books of stories about Jesus. As you jump round on the spot, recite ‘Matthew, Mark, Luke and John’. Repeat this a few times. These books are in the New Testament (sweep left hand out from your side as described above).
- ☉ Now freeze in a dramatic pose to pause the action for a moment. There is one history book, called Acts, in the New Testament part of the Bible (after a while, unfreeze and sweep left hand out from side).
- ☉ Get ready for 21 star jumps, to look like a great capital ‘X’. There are 21 letters written about God’s love. Do 21 star jumps. These books are also in the New Testament (sweep left hand out from side).
- ☉ Finally, all lie down as if asleep and then stand up in slow motion and look as if you have seen something incredible! There is one final book... at the end... a special vision... a dream picture... full of mysteries... called Revelation. This book is about the end of this world and the beginning of heaven. It is in the New Testament (sweep left hand out from side).
- ☉ And that’s the Bible—God’s special book. All together, take a deep breath and then say ‘Wow!’

What a book. If you have any energy left at the end, you could try doing all this again!

This book is special: it is the big story of God's love for his world. It begins with God making the world and ends with him making all things new. It starts in a glorious garden and ends in a magnificent city. It is all about people like you and me who put their trust in God. It is about journeys, battles, family disputes, joy and sadness. It is about Jesus—his birth, life, death and rising again. It is about how more and more people join God's family through Jesus. All life and eternal life is here! Today we shall be exploring this amazing book and how Christians come close to God through reading its stories.

### **Footsteps chant**

Teach the following rhyme to a simple clapping rhythm, with the children and adults echoing each line after the leader. Use this chant, varying the pitch and the volume, to accompany movement from one activity to another throughout the programme.

*We're on a special journey  
Of stories from the Book.  
To know God's love and what he's like,  
It's here we're going to look.*

### **First footing**

This is an activity based on the game of Dingbats, in which famous words or phrases are disguised in a word puzzle. It gives a flavour of the range of stories, events and characters that are contained in God's special book.

You will need to explain the way these Biblebat word puzzles work, by showing a few examples, such as R/E/A/D/I/N/G = reading between the lines, and P A I N S = growing pains. The



following Biblebat puzzles should be enlarged and copied on to A4 or A3 paper, so that they can be pinned up around a room. Children could work in groups or together with adults and, if they have a Bible each, the contents page or index would be a useful place for them to find clues.

Here are some suggestions for three lists of Biblebats. The first is for Bible books, the second Bible characters and the third Bible events. The answers are listed at the end.

### Bible books

- a) X
- b) 7, 33, 15, 8, 41, 2...
- c) George and Edward
- d) Male makes tea
- e) mouth <sup>eyes</sup> nose
- f)  $2 + 2 = 4$ ; 5; U
- g) Jeffreys and Dread
- h) Teacher, builder, policeman...
- i) scenes + scenes + scenes
- j) knee <sup>am</sup>

### Bible characters

- a) m, n, o, p, q, s, t, u
- b)  $\pi$  unpunctual
- c) GGGG us
- d) the day before
- e) (O<sub>2</sub> N) off
- f)  $\sqcup$
- g) Auction item
- h) Jo's F
- i) He saw
- j) + am

## Bible events or places

- a) water  
world
- b) Biro T ££
- c) ~~The~~ Jordan
- d) O  
L I  
V E S
- e) lionsdanielden
- f) EgBA527ypt
- g) A\* YYY males
- h) SPAAUULL
- i) ~~Wo~~rd
- j) Ro<sub>man</sub> of

## Answers

Books: a) Mark; b) Numbers; c) 2 Kings; d) Hebrews; e) Isaiah; f) Matthew; g) Judges; h) Job; i) Acts; j) Nehemiah (knee, am higher)

Characters: a) Noah (no 'r'); b) Pilate; c) Jesus; d) Eve; e) Aaron; f) Eli (E lie); g) Lot; h) Joseph; i) Esau; j) Adam

Events or places: a) the flood (world under water); b) Pentecost; c) crossing of the Jordan; d) Mount of Olives; e) Daniel in the lions' den; f) flight into Egypt; g) three wise men follow a star; h) Saul's conversion; i) the end of the world; j) the lowering of the man through the roof (to be healed by Jesus).

## Footbridge

Here are some simple book-related games to use with the group.

1. Play this adaptation of the 'fruit salad' game. Ask the children to stand in a circle. Go round the circle giving the word 'chapter',

‘verse’ or ‘book’ to each member of the group. Then ask for a volunteer to stand in the middle. The volunteer is now without a place in the circle. When the leader calls out one of the three words, the children who have been given this word must quickly walk across the circle to stand on the opposite side. As this is happening, the volunteer in the middle should try to take up one of the empty spaces. The child who ends up without a space becomes the one in the middle. If the leader says ‘Bible’, all the children must move.

The basic format of this game works with any group of four related words, so you might like to invent some examples of your own, linked to the Bible.

2. Organize some relay races between teams, including the balancing of a book on the head of the runner each time.

3. Play a game of charades between teams in which one or two or more have to act out certain Bible stories. Can the other team guess which story it is? From the suggested list below, choose stories that you feel your groups will know well.

Noah’s ark (Genesis 6:1—9:17); Joseph’s special coat (Genesis 37:1–4); Crossing the Red Sea (Exodus 14:21–22); Moses receives the Ten Commandments (Exodus 19:16–25); Joshua and the walls of Jericho (Joshua 6:6–20); a Samson story (for example, from Judges 16:20); David and Goliath (1 Samuel 17:41–50); Jonah and the big fish (Jonah 1:13–17); Daniel and the lions’ den (Daniel 6:1–23); Jesus’ birth (Luke 2:1–7); Jesus walks on water (Mark 6:45–52); Jesus and Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1–10); Paul being shipwrecked (Acts 27:39–44).

4. This game is, again, open to endless variations for introducing key words, ideas and themes. Have the children stand in a circle, but all facing outwards. On a given signal, the children jump and turn so that the circle is facing inward. To activate this, the leader calls out a word and, on the count of three, everyone jumps and

turns to mime their version of that word. Each child will then be 'frozen' in a particular mime, which they believe best illustrates it.

To connect the game with an understanding of the Bible, use words that describe different landscapes from the Bible, such as desert, mountaintop, seascape, busy city and so on. What sort of statues will the children create? You could try the different occupations of the authors of the various Bible books, such as soldier, priest, king, doctor, fisherman, scholar and so on—or different moods and activities from the Bible, such as romance, fear, sadness, celebration, fighting and travel. It is best to keep the signal to one simple word. You might like to try inventing some more key words of your own for the children to mime. You could introduce Bible characters if your group are familiar with them, or perhaps some Bible animals. The field is wide open!

### **Best foot forward**

For this presentation you need to study the Bible labyrinth template on page 229. This labyrinth is designed so that key Old and New Testament events are brought together at various points to help connect up the whole Bible story. You will need a large floor space to set this up, using masking tape and arranging the numbered areas in such a way that groups of six or seven children from one team can sit comfortably in a circle at each of the stations of the labyrinth. Ideally, the labyrinth needs to be set up in a separate space, in advance of the event.

When the children walk from one station to the next, they should do so in single file and use the footsteps chant (see page 199) as they move along. You also need one leader to bring up the rear of each group, as he or she will be responsible for rearranging anything that has been built or made at the station by the group that has just left, ready for the next group to arrive.

There are 13 stations in all. This is how they pair up:

- 1 and 13: Creation and new creation (with the theme of making).
- 2 and 12: Noah's ark and Holy Communion (with the theme of remembering).
- 3 and 11: The call of Abraham and the great commission (with the theme of calling).
- 4 and 10: The exodus and the Easter story (with the theme of rescuing).
- 5 and 9: The Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes (with the theme of receiving).
- 6 and 8: Entering the promised land and baptism (with the theme of entering).
- 7 alone: The incarnation—God becoming a human (with the theme of arriving).

At each station, there will be an activity and a brief retelling of the relevant Bible story. Each team should go round as a group, staggering the journeys through the Bible labyrinth so that there are at least two stations free between groups. Groups who are waiting to go could spend time completing their Bible library in their team base.

Here are the stories and activities at each station:

## 1: Creation

You will need a black circle of felt or cloth for the centre of this station, and six pieces of fabric coloured white, blue, green, yellow, grey and red, which form a hexagon shape when put together. You will build the hexagon as you tell the story. Finally, you will need a box full of items linked to creation, such as pictures of water, models of plants and trees, models of the sun, stars and moon, model fish, birds and animals, and some model human beings.

In the beginning God made the heaven and the earth. He began by saying, ‘Let there be light’ and there was light. (*Put down the white hexagon piece*) It was good. Next he made the water (*Put down the blue hexagon piece*), and that too was good. Then God made the land (*Put down the green piece, building up the hexagon*), and he saw that that was good. Next came the sun, moon and stars to give light for the day and the night. (*Put down the yellow piece*) This was good. Then he filled the waters with fish of all kinds, and the air with birds (*Put down the grey piece*), and he said that that was good. Finally, he made the creatures (*Put down the red piece, completing the hexagon*), and he also made people—you and me—and put us in charge of his world, to look after it.

Now invite the group to talk about which part of creation they like best. Then, from your box of objects, invite the children in turn to select items to place on the different colours of the hexagon. Finish by putting a candle on to the white piece, lighting it and saying, ‘When God saw everything that he had made, he said it was very good. When he had finished creating the world, God rested.’

## 2: Noah’s ark

You will need a circle of brown felt or cloth for the centre of this station of the labyrinth, a boat to represent the ark, some small golden stones to build an altar and several strips of fabric in the colours of the rainbow.

God made everything good, but soon the world began to go bad. People chose not to care for God's world or even for each other. God was sad and decided to start all over again by sending a flood. Only Noah's family truly believed in God, so they were kept safe in a boat called an ark. *(Lift up the ark as you say the next part)* On board were representatives of all the animals that God had made, so that God could fill his cleaned-up world with life again after the flood.

When the flood was over *(Lower the ark back on to the cloth)* Noah and his family and the animals came out. They remembered to thank God for all that he had done. *(Put down one golden stone to represent the altar. Now invite the children to add more stones to build the altar of thanks further. Ask them what sort of things they might thank God for. As they mention items, they add their stones.)*

Then God gave them a sign that he would never stop loving his world and its people in future. He gave them a rainbow.

Invite each child to take a piece of the fabric and together build a rainbow around the edge of the brown cloth, where the ark and altar are.

### 3: The call of Abraham

You will need a circle of sandy-coloured cloth or felt for the centre of this station of the labyrinth, and a set of fluorescent stars (at least two or three for every child).

God never stopped loving his people. He wanted to help them to trust him, whatever happened. Once, he spoke to a man called Abraham and told him and his wife Sarah to set out on a dangerous journey across the desert to a new place to live called Canaan. Abraham could not see God, but he believed that God was always close. God kept them safe on their long journey. *(As you say this, trace a twisty journey with your finger across the sandy-coloured base cloth.)* He then gave them a very special safe place to live. He also promised them that he would give them a son and that from this son would come a family and a great nation. In that nation one day a very special person would be born, who would bring God's love to the whole world. God's family would be world-big and contain as many people as there are stars in the sky or grains of sand in the desert. God kept his promise.

Invite the children to place their stars on to the sandy base cloth as you tell the last part of the story. As they put the stars down, invite them to name as many countries in the world as they can think of. God's family would be in every country one day.

#### 4: The exodus

You will need a circle of green cloth or felt for this station of the labyrinth, as well as five pieces of wood of equal length, which together create a doorframe—two pieces for each side and one for the lintel—and three red circles which can fit on each side of the door and the lintel. (NB: a similar set of five pieces will be used at station 10 to create a cross). Finally, you will need some matzo bread in a basket.



God's people didn't find it easy to trust God. They often made mistakes and often deliberately chose to go their own way, ending up in trouble. Many, many years after Abraham, they were in Egypt as slaves. Their situation seemed hopeless but God did not forget them. He sent Moses to bring them to freedom. The Pharaoh in Egypt only let them go when a terrible thing happened: all the eldest boy children of the Egyptians, including the Pharaoh's own son, died. God's people, however, were kept safe because they had put lamb's blood around the doors of their houses. (*Create the door with the pieces of wood and add the red circles*) The angel of death had passed over them and they were saved. Moses led them across the Reed Sea to freedom.

They had been in such a rush to leave that there had been no time to bake proper bread for the journey. It had no yeast or leaven in it, so it was flat. They called it unleavened bread. Whenever they ate this bread, they remembered how God had rescued them from being slaves and brought them into freedom.

Share some matzo bread with the children. Can they taste the story?

## 5: The Ten Commandments

You will need a circle of grey cloth for this station of the labyrinth, a basket of small stones and some chalk (at least one stone and one piece of chalk for every child).

God guided Moses, and he led God's people through the desert to a new home. God gave them miracle food to eat and water to drink. But, even then, some of them began to doubt God's love. It was so easy to forget the best way to live, so God called Moses up a mountain and gave him the Ten Commandments. These ten rules would help people to know how to come close to God. They told the people how to love God and love other people. *(Use your fingers and thumbs as a quick way of going through the Ten Commandments briefly. For example, God is number one, his image is secret, his name is special, and his day is holy. Honour your parents, and don't break your marriage (link up the small fingers of both hands for these two commandments). Don't steal, don't murder, don't lie, don't want what others have.)*

I wonder what rules you would suggest for living the very best life you can? What key qualities are most important to God? Love? Kindness? Friendship? Discuss this briefly with the children. Then they can pick a stone on which to write the key quality that they think would please God most and help us to live well. Place the stones down in the shape of a heart on the grey cloth.

## 6: Entering the promised land

You will need a blue circle of felt or cloth for this station of the labyrinth, some small pieces of stone that have been dirtied in sand, a bowl of water and some cloths.

After a journey of 40 years, the people were finally ready to come to God's promised land. This was the place where

they would be safe. In order to get into this land, they had one more thing to do: they needed to cross the River Jordan. It seemed impossible, but Joshua, who had taken over as leader from Moses by now, trusted God to show them how. The priests went out into the water first, carrying the great golden chest that contained the Ten Commandments (this too was called an ark), and they stood in the middle of the river. As soon as they were there, the River Jordan began to dry up so that all the people could cross safely. After many years of walking through the desert, they could walk into God's special home for them. Their feet were dusty from their desert journey but, as they crossed the wet riverbed, they were cleaned, ready for a new beginning.

Ask each child to take one of the dirty, dusty pebbles and wash it in the water. Once it is clean and dry and shiny again, oversee arranging the pebbles on the blue cloth to spell the word S-A-F-E. God's promised land was the place where his people could be safe.

## **7: Incarnation—God becomes a baby**

You will need a circle of white cloth or felt for the centre of the station (which is also the centre of the whole labyrinth), a box ready with a crib set inside and a large candle and matches.

God kept on looking after his people in the new land, but there were so many temptations to forget him and go their own way. There were great leaders and kings, such as David and Solomon, but even they didn't always choose God's

way. They built special places to worship God—even a golden temple in Jerusalem—but they began to forget that God was everywhere, not just in a building. God sent special people to remind them of his love and warn them of the dangers of turning away from his love. These people were called prophets—but not everyone listened to their messages. Finally, God decided that the only way to really show his love was to come and live with his people. God decided to wrap himself up very small, and he quietly entered his own world as a tiny baby.

Build the crib scene together. Have the children tell you what happened as each of the pieces is put in place.

God had planned this all along as the way he was going to show his people what he was really like and how he could keep them safe for ever. God became a human being and his name was Jesus. In this way, he was fully human and fully God.

Light the large candle as a picture of Jesus coming as the light for the world. This candle now stands at the heart of the Bible labyrinth.

## 8: Baptism

You will need another blue circle of cloth or felt for this station of the labyrinth, to match station 6. You will also need some small tealight candles in holders (one for each child), a jug of water in a bowl and a towel.

Jesus shone bright with God's light. When he was about 30 years old he went to the River Jordan, where his cousin John was baptizing people. He asked John to baptize him. John was surprised. He knew how special Jesus was. He said it should have been Jesus baptizing him! However, Jesus insisted, and so he went down into the water and came out again. People nearby said they heard God's voice; others saw a dove coming close to Jesus. Jesus was showing everyone the way of starting a new life with God.

Invite each child (one at a time) to hold their hands over the bowl, as you pour some water over them. Once they have dried their hands, they should (with the help of an adult) light a small tealight candle, using the light from the candle at station 7, which is nearby.

The washing of baptism was a picture of how people enter into the safe place of trusting God for ever. The light reminded everyone of what it means to belong to Jesus.

## 9: The Beatitudes

You will need another grey circle of felt or cloth for this station, matching the one at station 5. You will also need some heart-shaped post-it notes and some pens and pencils.

Jesus began teaching people about God and his ways. Crowds gathered to listen. Once, he was speaking to a great crowd of men, women and children on a mountainside in Galilee. He told them about what things are like when God

is king. He described the sort of lives God's people should lead. He said that people would be happy if they knew that they needed God, happy if they were sad about being far from him, and happy if they always put others first. They would be happy if they longed for what was good and right, and happy if they were kind and said 'no' to all that was bad. They would be happy if they were people who made peace. Everyone else might think they were crazy and laugh at them, but this was the only way to be happy and make God happy too.

Wonder about what the group thinks will make God really happy. Discuss this briefly with the children and then, on the heart-shaped post-it notes, invite them to write or draw the things or words that make God happy. Arrange the notes neatly on the cloth.

## 10: The Easter story

You will need another circle of green felt or cloth for this station, to match the one at station 4. You will also need five pieces of wood in exact imitation of the ones used to make the door in station 4, including the red marks, and some craft sticks (two per child) which can be tied or glued together to make a simple cross. The children will write the word JESUS along the crosspiece and RESCUER down the vertical piece, dissecting at the middle 'S' of Jesus.

Jesus said and did amazing things. Everyone knew that he was special and that he was showing them what God was like. However, very few really knew who he was. He called

himself by many names. Once, he said he was the light; on other occasions he called himself the good shepherd and the way, and once he described himself as the door. (*Make a door from the pieces of wood, just like at station 4*) But Jesus knew that the only way to rescue people from the bad that keeps spoiling our lives was to go to Jerusalem and die on a cross. (*Change the door shape to become a cross, placing the red marks now where the hands and feet would be*) Now, everyone who comes to God through this cross can be safe and rescued from all that is bad. The cross gave people the power to choose to do what is right.

Invite the children to make their own cross from the craft sticks, writing on the words 'Jesus' and 'Rescuer' as described above.

## 11: The great commission

You will need a circle of sandy-coloured cloth for this station, just like the one at station 3, along with a candle in a holder and a bowl containing some sand.

After three days, Jesus was seen alive again in a new Easter way. He could now always be there for his people, to lead them into what was good and true. Although he returned to heaven, through the gift of the Holy Spirit he was still with them in a new invisible way. He wanted everyone to be filled with light as he was filled with light, and to take God's love out into the world so that more and more people would become part of God's new beginning. God's

promise to Abraham was coming true. God's family was growing and growing and was becoming as many as the stars in the sky and the grains of sand in the desert.

Invite each member of the group to take a handful of sand and allow it to fall through their fingers as a picture of the huge family of God around the world today.

God wants his followers to pass on his light to others.

Pass a lighted candle around the circle carefully and slowly as a picture of what it means to pass on the light of Jesus in order to grow this family.

## 12: Holy Communion

You will need another circle of brown cloth or felt for this station, just as at station 2, as well as some cups with water and a simple biscuit for each child.

Jesus wanted everyone to remember him so that they would not forget how to come close to God wherever they were. He had given them a way to do this—not a rainbow this time, but a simple meal of bread and wine to share together. There had been bread to eat and wine to drink as part of the meal he had eaten with his friends the night before he died.

Distribute the drink and a biscuit to each member of the group, but ask them all to wait for each other so that everyone eats and drinks at the same time.



Every time Christians eat and drink in this way, they remember Jesus. They remember how he died and then came back to life to be with everyone everywhere for ever.

### 13: New creation

You need a circle of white cloth or felt for this final station of the labyrinth that contrasts with the black one at station 1. You will also need a second hexagonal set of six pieces, but this time they should all be white. You will build the hexagon with the pieces as you tell the last part of the story. Finally, you need some white paper and pencils.

The story ends with a new beginning. The first creation will be over and, because of Jesus, all that is bad and spoils God's world will be washed away. Everyone will be able to choose to be safe in Jesus. The Bible promises that God will make a new heaven and a new earth, full of light (complete the white hexagon). This is the light of God and of Jesus his Son. All that was broken will be mended and all that was painful will be healed. This is how the Bible ends, but really it is just the first page of a new book that will go on for ever. I wonder what heaven will be like?

Hand out a piece of white paper to each child and show them how to fold it to make a small concertina book. Give them some space to think as they look at this brand new book as an example of the new beginning the Bible promises.

Now, I wonder what pictures of heaven you would like to

put down here? I wonder what the next, as yet unwritten, books of the Bible will look like?

Give the children the opportunity to do some drawings, or maybe to take their paper away to work on later. Finish with the footsteps chant together (see page 199).

## **Footrest**

Take a break in the programme at this point for a drink and a biscuit at the team bases. This will also give time for leaders to prepare for the coming workshops.

## **Footprints**

The children and adults can now experience up to three different activities on a Bible theme, depending on the time available. Workshops are based around drama (Footlights), music (Footnotes) and craft (Fancy footwork).

## **Footlights**

1. As a warm up for this workshop, challenge the group to make a book-making machine. To do this, each person in the team chooses to become part of an imaginary machine that turns a tree into a book, adding in as many appropriate noises and actions as possible.

You will need several parts and actions for this machine, for example, cutting down a tree, sawing up the wood, pulping the wood, rolling out the pulp, cutting up the paper, printing the paper, putting together the pages, binding the book, packing up the books, delivering the books, selling the books, and finally reading a book.

Do this in an ordered way. As each new person adds to the machine, they should make their noise and/or activity on their own before all the preceding noises and actions strike up simultaneously.

2. Below are some outlines for possible mime presentations for various Bible stories. Choose some that are suitable for the age range of the group. Perhaps the leader could arrange, over the course of about three workshops, to build up a set that could be presented to everyone later as 'the Bible in mime'.

You will need some chairs (one for every member of the group in the last scene).

### The Old Testament

The first mime represents the story of creation and then the story of the first sin. Two people lie on the ground while a third person (the creator) first hovers over them and then steps back. The two people stand up and join hands with the creator, one on either side so that the creator stands in the middle. After a pause, one of the two created beings looks away from the creator, lets go and moves away. Soon after, the second created being also lets go and moves away. The three should now stand with the creator on one side and the two created beings on the other. The creator then takes a chair and stands on it, high and separate from the other two. The creator remains on this chair for the rest of the Old Testament mimes.

The second mime represents God choosing Abraham and Sarah. The creator (standing on the chair) mimes calling out to people. Two people walk by and respond by listening (hand to ears) and then by walking around the chair as they 'travel' together, sometimes pausing to kneel.

The third mime represents God choosing Moses. The creator on the chair beckons with his or her hands. One actor comes close, but is afraid. The actor takes off his or her shoes, listens

and then walks away, but returns to walk around the chair.

The fourth mime represents the escape from Egypt. The creator on the chair points firmly into the distance, away from where the other children are standing. The children are all close together, fiercely guarded by one other person. The person who was beckoned to in the last scene (Moses) approaches, and points in the same direction as the creator. The creator then counts slowly to ten on his or her hands. When ten is reached, the person guarding the other children steps aside so that they can follow Moses in the direction in which the creator is pointing.

The fifth mime represents Moses receiving the Ten Commandments and the years that the people of Israel spent wandering in the desert. The creator on the chair is writing, in big letters. The other children walk away from the chair and back again four times, pausing each time they are close to the chair to listen to the person who is writing.

The sixth mime represents God choosing David to be king of Israel. The creator on the chair enacts pouring out oil from a flask (anointing) and then holds his or her hands out in blessing. The children look at each other uncertainly, and then one of them stands up above the others while the others crouch down.

The seventh mime represents God's people worshipping at the temple built by Solomon. The creator on the chair listens intently with his or her hand to an ear. The other children circle the chair, lift their hands in worship and then bow to the ground.

The eighth mime represents God's prophets calling the people back to God. The creator on the chair pushes forward with open hands, as if sending people. All the others are crouching. From time to time, some stand and point toward the chair; then others stand and point in a different direction.

## The New Testament

The first mime represents the story of Christmas. The person who was standing on the chair now steps down and very deliberately

crouches down among the others, who are sitting on the floor. Most look away; just three turn and look.

The second mime represents Jesus choosing his disciples. The person who stepped down from the chair (the Christ figure) now stands up and, one by one, the others stand up and follow him. Together they walk in a circle around the chair, following the Christ figure.

The third mime represents Jesus' teaching. The Christ figure now stands in the middle while the others sit, looking up and listening.

The fourth mime represents Jesus' last meal with his friends. The Christ figure stands centrally with head bowed, while the others, sitting around, reach out towards him or her. The Christ figure mimes breaking bread and pouring wine to share.

The fifth mime represents the story of Good Friday. The Christ figure stands with arms held out as if on a cross. The others move far away, except for one who stays and stands close.

The sixth mime represents the resurrection. All are sitting with heads bowed. Suddenly the person among them who is the Christ figure stands up, and the others react with amazement.

The seventh mime represents the great commission and the ascension. The Christ figure now goes back to the chair to stand on it, and points slowly in every compass direction. The others gather round in a circle and follow the pointing with their eyes. Those around the chair then begin to spread out wider and wider, moving into every corner of the room and pointing to the Christ figure from where they are.

The eighth mime represents the new heavens and the new earth. Each of the people around the room now picks up a chair and moves to draw close to the Christ figure on the central chair. Now they, too, stand on chairs around Jesus. All lift their hands in praise. Then they all reach out and join hands, including Jesus, in God's new beginning.

This mime of the story of the Bible has been kept as simple as possible. It may be that some sort of one-line narration is thought

appropriate to go alongside each scene, but it can be very powerful if people are left to work out the story for themselves. Not all details of facial expressions and movements have been recorded here, but any group that practises this mime will begin to add some of their own and thereby make the mime more effective.

If your group are readers, print off the different instructions for the different mimes and give groups the opportunity to rehearse particular sections.

### Footnotes

Have a selection of instruments available with which to experiment. Decide which kind of sounds best express the various types of books found in the Bible. For example, there might be warning drums for the prophets, stringed instruments for the love poetry, cymbals for the history books, brass instruments for the books of the law, keyboard sounds for the letters and recorders for the Gospels. Can the group create a sound version of the Bible in this way?

There are a number of Bible-linked songs that you could also teach and sing together, such as:

I am so glad that my Father in heaven (with the line ‘wonderful things in the Bible I see’) (*Junior Praise* 88)

The best book to read is the Bible (*Junior Praise* 234)

Every day with Jesus (Ishmael, Glorie music), beginning ‘I realize the Bible is the book I need to read’

God’s way (Nick Harding), beginning ‘Take the Bible, live it out’

When we walk with the Lord (perhaps just verse 1 and chorus) (*Mission Praise* 760)

I will sing the wondrous story (*Junior Praise* 127)

Make the book live to me, O Lord (*Junior Praise* 163)

The wise man built his house on the rock (*Junior Praise* 252)

Don’t build your house on the sandy land (*Junior Praise* 39)

## Fancy footwork

You will need one large matchbox for each child, PVA glue, scissors, ruler, pencil, gold paper, crayons or felts.

The following idea is for making a small pocket-sized Bible-like book, which is also a secret treasure box.

Remove the outer sleeve from the matchbox and cut it open along one of the edges. Turn it over so that the plain side is uppermost and wrap it around the inner drawer of the matchbox. Stick the outer sleeve on to the drawer on the back and one side, leaving the front section free to open up. (You will need to work on the creases appropriately to enable the sleeve to hinge easily.) The outer sleeve should overlap by a small amount the inner drawer of the box, in the way that a hardback cover is bigger than the inside pages of a book.

Next, take some gold paper along which you have drawn a number of lines very close together in pencil. Cut the paper into pieces that will stick neatly on to the exposed side of the inner drawer, to give the effect of gold pages.

The outer sleeve can then be coloured and decorated. In bright letters, put a title on the front of the book (and possibly also along the spine), such as 'My Pocket Bible', 'God's Special Book' or 'The Big Story'.

Inside this 'book', there is room for some small objects, which could symbolize some particular Bible stories from the day. Perhaps you could include a small wooden cross or a thin white birthday candle for Jesus, a stone to represent the Ten Commandments and a star for the promise given to Abraham. The children might like to put something of their own here as a reminder of the part of the event that they liked the best.

## Foothold

Use the footsteps chant (see page 199) to bring everyone back to the team bases for a final time of prayer and reflection. The teams should sit in a circle with their leaders, who have placed a Bible at the centre. Open the Bible up at Psalm 119, which is all about God's words.

The Bible writers describe God's words in several ways. As the central leader speaks each line of the following section, each team leader should place the appropriate objects in a circle around the open Bible.

**Leader:** The Bible is like a light. It shines to show us the best path to take in life.

*Place a candle or a lantern around the Bible.*

**Leader:** The Bible is like a treasure chest. It is full of riches from God for us.

*Place a small golden box around the Bible.*

**Leader:** The Bible is like food. We need to read it regularly to stay spiritually alive.

*Place a bread roll around the Bible.*

**Leader:** The Bible is like honey. It is sweet and good for us, bringing health.

*Place a small jar of honey around the Bible.*

**Leader:** The Bible is like a sword. It can help us to fight all that is bad.

*Place a small model sword around the Bible.*



**Leader:** The Bible is like a conversation with God. It can help us to hear what he is saying.

*Place a mobile phone around the Bible.*

**Leader:** God's special book for us shows us how to live life as God planned. The big story of the Bible helps us find our way through the story of our lives. *(Pause)*

I wonder which description of the Bible you like the best?

*Allow some time for their response or else some quiet wondering. Pause.*

**Leader:** Help us, Father, to get to know your Bible better. As we read it, help us to hear you speaking to us. Thank you for the Bible. Amen

## **Footsteps to the feast**

As a finale, gather all the children in a great circle. The big story of the Bible has been passed on from generation to generation. Now it is our turn to pass it on.

Hand out some Bibles to one or two children at various points in the circle. The idea now is to pass the Bible on (clockwise) to the next person in as many different ways as possible. Demonstrate some possible ways, such as passing it on mysteriously, presenting it as a prize, opening it up and pointing to a verse, pretending to sing from it, acting out part of a story, passing it over the shoulder or under the arm and so on. Give everyone a chance to think of a fun method and then, on the count of three, start the Bibles being

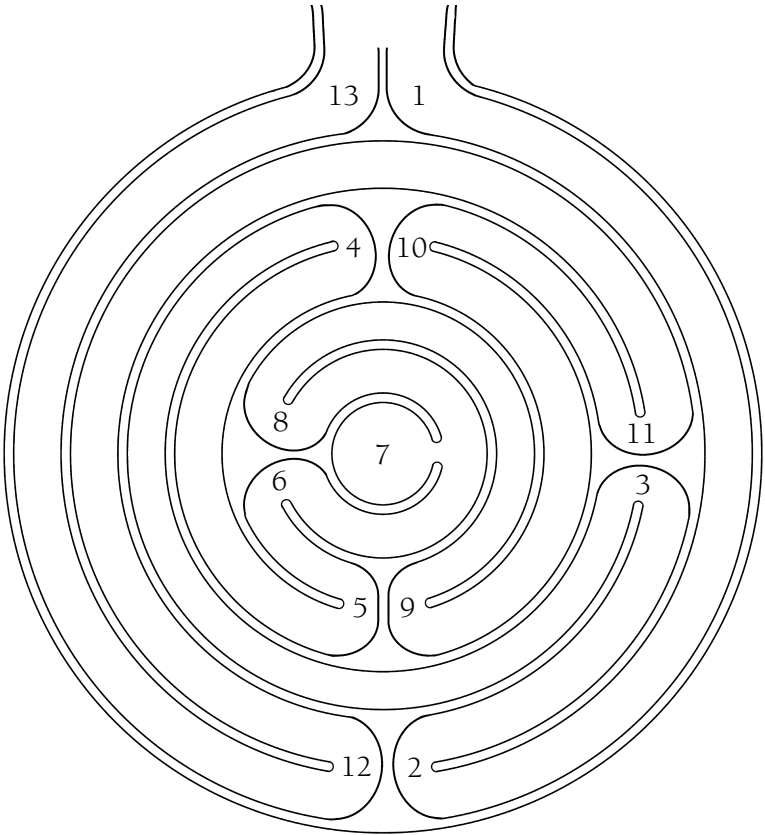
passed around the circle as fast as possible until they have all returned back to where they started.

Finish with the footsteps chant for the day (see page 199).

## **Stepping out**

End the event with a Bible feast together, inviting parents and carers to join you for food and drink. Perhaps you might have a cake in the shape of a big book, or small biscuits or cakes decorated with iced verses or Bible-related words.

## Bible labyrinth



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