

Back to School with God Sunday 2016

'Home, hands and hearts'

Luke 10:38-42



Introduction

Thank you for registering your church and downloading our resources. We hope they prove really useful. We will contact you afterwards for feedback, since your input can help shape future material and we love to hear comments and stories of how it was received by both children and adults!

About Back to School with God Sunday

Back to School with God Sunday provides an opportunity for churches to pray for and support young people and the school community at the start of a new school year, with the following aims:

- Raising awareness of **prayer for schools** in general, and **local school communities** in particular
- **Supporting and encouraging Christian pupils and staff** in their daily life at school, letting them know they are valued and prayed for by the local church
- Challenging Christian pupils and staff to **live out their faith** in their school, and particularly to support any Christian witness there (such as an SU Group or similar).

We hope that your church will want to continue to pray for schools all year round. If your church hasn't already registered to pray for a local school, we invite you do so online at www.prayforschoolsscotland.org.uk.

2016 Theme

The theme of our 2016 *Back to School with God Sunday* service is 'Home, Hands and Hearts', exploring the Bible story of Jesus at the home of Mary and Martha, as recounted in **Luke 10:38-42**. The teaching is broken up into two sections, each with a suggested introductory activity.

All-age Service

The service (pages 3 to 10) includes Bible readings, activities, prayers and a sermon outline. There are accompanying PowerPoint slides and a bookmark of the memory verse for children to colour in, as well as publicity materials and suggestions for Sunday Schools. There is more than enough material for a morning service: select the options that work best for your congregation and adapt accordingly.

Accompanying Resources

The following **FREE** resources accompany the All-age Service Outline.

Publicity:

- **BSG16 Editable Poster**. An A4 poster into which you can type details of your service.
- **BSG16 Invitation Flyer Editable 2-up**. Ready-to-print invitations into which you can type details of your own service.

- **BSG16 Publicity flyer and Publicity flyer 2-up.** A flyer which explains *Back to School with God Sunday*, suitable for advertising within your denomination or passing on to others who may be interested in leading a BSG service.

Resources to use in the service:

- **BSG16 Sermon PPT.** A set of PowerPoint slides to illustrate the service. These can be edited to suit your own situation.
- **BSG16 Mary & Martha Mime.** An active way to involve children in telling the story.
- **BSG16 Mary & Martha Illustrated Story:** Simple illustrations with story text in notes, story courtesy of www.lambsongs.nz.
- **BSG16 Prayers.** Prayers involving different people in the school community; print for each person taking part.

Supporting resources:

- **BSG16 Bookmark.** A printable bookmark to hand out to your congregation. **Note:** *if desired, you can order bookmarks already printed on stiff card at a cost of 3p per bookmark. Email pray@suscotland.org.uk ahead of the service – allowing time for postage!*
- **BSG16 Children’s activities.** For use in Sunday School or crèche.
- **BSG16 Follow-up Ideas.** Different ideas on how to maintain a year-round focus on praying and serving your local school community.

Before the service

- If you aren’t the church leader, speak to the minister, leader or elders about the possibility of holding a *Back to School with God* service.
- Decide when you want to hold the service. We suggest the end of August or the beginning of September, but the service can be held on any Sunday around the start of a new school year.
- Look through the *All-age Service* and select what you want to include, for the length of service you want to hold. Approximate timings are given for each activity. You don’t need to include everything!
- We recommend that you involve children and young people in the service wherever possible. If you would like to invite children, young people and adults from the school community to take part in leading prayers, reading the Bible, or sharing a testimony, invite them in plenty of time and support them in what you are asking them to do. Some preparation prior to the service will be needed.

Back to School with God Sunday 2016



All-age Service – ‘Home, Hands and Heart’

Luke 10:38-42

We suggest that children and young people welcome the congregation by standing at the door and offering a sweet or chocolate or handing out bookmarks. It might be an idea for them to wear badges, bearing their name and the school they attend.

PPT Slide 1

Welcome

(3-5 mins)

Welcome to church today. This is our special *Back to School with God Sunday*. It is good for us to be together and to commit our children and young people to God at the start of this new school year – as well as teachers and other school staff, not to mention parents and grandparents who may be readjusting to a new routine!

(You may like to acknowledge the different schools children attend by inviting them to do one of the following:

- *Coming to the front and standing beside a banner or poster with their school name*
- *Lighting a tea light in front of the name of their school.)*

Many of you have been away on holiday this summer, but now we are back home – and it is a good place to be! If Jesus is our friend, he is with us wherever we go – even into the classroom or the playground, the college or university campus, office or factory. He is with us at home when we are alone, and with us when we are with our family and friends. Today we are thinking about Jesus with a family, in a Bible story that is very familiar, where we find Jesus visiting two sisters in their home. Their names were Mary and Martha.

PPT Slide 2

Mary and Martha welcomed Jesus into their home. I hope you felt welcomed as you came into church this morning. Let's open our hearts and welcome God into our service now, as we talk to him in prayer.

Opening prayer (own words)

(4 mins)

Hymn or song

(4 mins)

Select your own. One suggestion might be ‘Lord I lift your name on high’, which was actually written for children. See www.uk.songselect.com.

Bible Reading 1: Luke 10:38-42

(4 mins)

Choose one of the following:

- **Luke 10:38-42**, read by a young person.
- **BSG16 Storytelling Mime**: involve children or teenagers in acting out the story.
- **BSG16 Mary & Martha Illustrations**: tell the story in your own words, using the PowerPoint illustrations to accompany your storytelling.

- **BSG Mary & Martha Illustrated Story:** tell the story using the PowerPoint illustrations and accompanying story text (in Notes below slides).

Further Options:

- Visit www.lightlive.org. Search for Luke 10:38-42. There is a ‘filter’ where you can search for ‘Bible passage’ and find various ways of telling the story.
- Use *The Big Bible Storybook* (Scripture Union, 2007) to tell the story. You might like to gather together younger children to look at the illustrations as you do so.
- Listen to the story, which is on both *Listen with the Bible CD* and *The Big Bible Storybook Audio* (Scripture Union, buy online at www.scriptureunion.org.uk/shop, or at your local Christian bookshop).
- Watch the story on Scripture Union’s *Streetwise* video, Episode 5, “The Guest Room”. Purchase a download from www.scriptureunion.org.uk/3613292.id#.VugCODZX_II.

PPT Slides 3-10

Activity 1: Whose home is this?

(5 mins)

A fun PPT quiz to introduce the theme.

1. Buckingham Palace (the Queen)
2. Kennel (a dog)
3. Igloo (Eskimo)
4. No.10 Downing Street (the Prime Minister)
5. Hive (a bee)
6. The White House (President Obama or The President of the USA)
7. The manse or minister’s house (the minster!) *Insert your own photo into the slide*
8. Our church (God’s home/our home!) *Insert your own photo into the slide*

PPT Slide 11

Teaching 1: Home

(7 mins)

Jesus had no home of his own! Jesus spent a lot of time travelling, visiting different towns and villages. In every place he went, there were those who welcomed him and gathered to listen to him. His teaching about God, his Father, was amazing – not to mention God’s awesome power that came from him to heal the sick. He was extremely popular, and people crowded round him. However, not everyone welcomed Jesus (Luke 9:52-53). At times like these Jesus had to move on, looking for a safe place to rest and stay, looking for someone who would welcome him into their home. **Mary and Martha did just that: they opened their door to Jesus, and invited him in.**

Who do you welcome into your home? Friends, family, visitors? We can’t physically open our homes to Jesus and invite him in to have something to eat. But we **can** still make Jesus welcome by his Spirit in our homes.

What might it look like to make Jesus welcome in our homes? It might mean saying sorry for cross words, being more helpful to one another, inviting strangers for a meal, reading the Bible together as a family, taking worries

to God in prayer. I hope that in all our homes, Jesus is welcome, that each of us has invited him to be our friend and that we share all of our lives with him.

PPT Slide 12

There is a lovely verse at the end of the Bible in Revelation 3:20. Jesus says, "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me." Jesus promises people that if they open the door of their lives and invite him, he will come in and be at home with them.

Home is where you and I live, but most of us have other places where we spend much of our time, such as school and work. As a new school year begins, God wants to be invited in to every part of our lives, so that wherever we are, whatever we are doing, we are not on our own because God is right beside us. It wouldn't really be fair if we were welcoming Jesus into our home, but ignoring him and keeping him out of all the other places we go to! Can you imagine doing that to one of your friends?

So what might it look like to welcome Jesus into your life at school? It might mean choosing to do the right thing, knowing that by his Spirit he is right there with you in the classroom, the canteen, the sports field, or walking home with friends. It might mean looking out for others and stopping to lend a helping hand, as he would have done. Or it might mean getting together with others in an SU Group to explore the Bible, to pray for each other and to think of what you can do to tell others in your school about Jesus.

Prayer 1

(3 mins)

*If possible, invite a teenager to lead the following prayer. A pdf version is available to print: see **BSG16 Prayers**.*

Thank You, Lord God, that you want to be in every place and in every part of our lives;
Our homes,
Our schools,
The places we go to have fun,
The friendships we make,
The activities we enjoy.
Help us to invite you in and make you at home everywhere, all the time. Amen.

Hymn or Song

(4 mins)

A suggested song that would fit with the theme is 'Better is one day with Jesus' by Keith & Kristyn Getty, available from www.uk.songselect.com, otherwise choose your own.

Activity 2: Mime Game

(4 mins)

Invite a child to volunteer. Whisper to them something they might do in a day, asking them to mime it for the congregation to guess. Suggested activities are:

- Playing football
- Reading a book
- Being on the computer
- Making a sandwich

- Praying
- Texting
- Crossing the road.

PPT Slide 13

Teaching 2: Hands and Heart

(7 mins)

Every day we do lots of things. We are all very busy. Martha's day was very, very busy. When visitors came there was a lot to do, in a country with no electric cookers, food processors and dishwashers! Everything had to be done by hand, and Martha had willing hands. She set to, busily getting everything ready for Jesus and his friends. However, we are told she was "distracted by all the preparations". In other words, she was so caught up in the busyness of getting ready that she missed out on spending time with Jesus, the most important guest!

For Mary, it wasn't so much about her *hands* that day, it was her *heart*. For her, the better thing was to sit and listen to Jesus, enjoying his company. Fed up by Mary's attitude, Martha stormed up to Jesus and asked him a question, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do all the work?!"

Now, if you don't know the end of the story, I wonder what you think Jesus might have done or said next? Some 10-year-olds in a school SU Group were asked that question, and they came up with all sorts of interesting ideas. "Jesus would have joined Martha in helping cook the dinner", said one. Another thought that it wasn't at all unfair, because Martha's time to listen to Jesus would come when *Mary* was doing the washing up!

Jesus' answer took Martha by surprise. Jesus didn't turn to Mary and tell her to help her sister; instead he had something to say to *Martha*. He recognized that she was upset, so spoke to her kindly, "Martha, Martha". But he taught her something too, that "only one thing is needed" and that Mary had "chosen what is better". How surprised Martha must have been!

Mary was listening and learning. In Jesus' time, sitting at someone's feet meant quite simply to be their student. When the apostle Paul "sat at the feet of Gamaliel" (Acts 22:3), he was listening and learning, focusing on the teaching. Jesus wanted Martha to discover what Mary had discovered – that listening to Jesus, focusing on him, learning from him, spending time with him were very important.

It is good to use our **hands** for Jesus: making our beds, helping around the house, tidying up at home. At school we can use our hands to look out for others, do our best, act responsibly. But we can do all these things and miss out on the 'one thing' needed, which is to put Jesus at the **heart** of our lives. Busy Martha almost missed out on something really special – individual time with her best friend, Jesus. Do we? When friends come to visit, we get ready for them coming, but we also stop and listen to them. In the same way, we need to take time to be alone with our friend Jesus.

Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem, where he would give his life on the cross to rescue all who trust in him. Mary and Martha were both friends of Jesus, showing their love for him in different ways. Being active and hard-working like Martha is essential. However we too need to choose 'what is better'. Hands and heart are **both** important, but **first the heart and then the hands**.

Personal story

(5 mins)

Ask a young person or teacher to share their personal story of friendship with Jesus. You may wish to interview them using the guidelines below:

Jesus liked being with his friends and they liked being with him. Can you tell us why you like spending time with your friend Jesus? Can you tell us how you do this at school as well as at home?

Prayer 2

(4 mins)

Choose one of the following options. A pdf version is available to print: see **BSG16 Prayers**.

Option 1: reflective prayer

You may like to invite a young person to read the Bible passage.

Let's take time to reflect on what God has been saying to us today through his Word.

We are going to listen to the story again, think about it then talk to God about it. As (name) reads Luke 10:38-42 again, listen carefully. What words or phrases stand out to you? What might God be saying?

PAUSE

We are now going to pray and offer God our hands and our hearts. If you would like to offer your hands to God you can. If you want to make this prayer your own, say it with me:

PPT Slide 14

Lord God,
We are sorry that we squeeze you out of our busy lives.
We are sorry that at times our hands are busy doing things for you,
but our hearts are distracted and far from you.
Take your place at the very centre of our lives.
We offer our hands and our hearts to you this day
To serve you and to live for you
Use us we pray,
Amen.

Option 2: action prayer

Before the service ask four children to take part in the following prayer. They will need to learn signs for the following four different actions (see www.babysignlanguage.com), and it would help greatly if they could learn the words of the prayer off by heart.

PPT Slide 15

Walking:



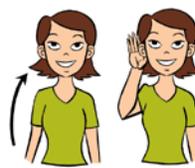
Sign two feet walking along the ground.

Talking:



Tap two fingers against the mouth.

Listening:



Bring one hand up towards the ear.

Helping:



Make a thumbs-up sign with one hand, rest on the other hand and move upwards.

how busy we are. These are:

- Remembering Jesus is with us when we are going places (*walking sign*)
- Telling him about our day and how we are feeling (*talking sign*)
- Reading the Bible and listening to people who teach us how to live God's way (*listening sign*)
- Doing things for other people, just like Jesus did. (*helping sign*)

Let's practice these four signs together. (*All together, sign walking, talking, listening, helping*)

You are now invited to sign with the children as they pray.

Child 1: Father God, when we are **walking** to different places this week, especially school, help us remember that you are with us.

Child 2: When we have a sad day, help us to **talk** to you, telling you how we are feeling. Thank you that we can talk to you about anything, for you understand us and love us, no matter what.

Child 3: Help us at school to **listen** to those who teach us, and not be distracted. Help us especially to be like Mary, making time for you by reading the Bible and listening to those who teach us how to live God's way.

Child 4: Thank you for our hands. **Help us** to use them to do helpful things at school and at home, showing others that we love you.

All: Amen.

Closing Hymn or Song

(4 mins)

Finish with a rousing item of praise of your own choosing. Thank everyone for attending the service, and assure the children and school staff of the church's ongoing prayers throughout the school year.

Benediction or closing prayer

(1 min)