

01. Questions



BIBLE STORY / REFERENCE

Isaiah 55:8-9

Acts 17:27

(Luke 10:25-37 – optional)



AIMS

To help the children reflect on questions that they have about God.

To help them understand that it is good to ask questions and God wants us to seek him, but at the same time he is bigger than our understanding so we may not get answers to all our questions.

Asking questions is a good way to find out more about God. We may not discover answers to all of our questions, but God wants us to seek him and to know him. We are going to look at the Bible to try to discover answers to our questions.



PREP FOR LEADERS

Read the Bible verses for today's sessions as well as the various questions Jesus was asked which are referred to in the session.

Reflect:

- How has asking questions helped you discover more about God?
- What questions do you still have? Take some time to talk about those with God and to pray for your group.



GAMES / INTRO ACTIVITIES

Choose one or more of the following activities to introduce today's theme.

▶ Balloon Game

You will need: several balloons (at least one per child), marker pen, equipment to play music

Before the children arrive, blow up all the balloons and write a question on each one. (See below for examples of questions.)

Play some music and allow the children to dance, move around and hit the balloons to one another. When the music stops, everyone has to catch or pick up a balloon. A leader can then choose a child and

ask them to answer the question on the balloon they are holding.

Repeat this several times, allowing as many children as possible to have a turn.

Examples of questions:

What is your favourite animal?

What did you have for breakfast today?

Where would you like to go on holiday?

How many brothers or sisters do you have?

What do you like to do in your spare time?

If you could meet a famous person, who would you like to meet?

Would you prefer to eat crisps or chocolate?

What is your favourite colour?

▶ “Would You Rather...” Questions

You will need: questions printed from additional document: Would You Rather Questions

Help the group get to know one another better by answering questions.

You could cut the sheet into slips with the individual questions on and let each person in turn pick one to answer or you could simply ask the children questions from the sheet. With a larger group, you could split the children into smaller groups to do this activity.

▶ Post-It Game

You will need: post-it notes (one per child) prepared in advance with the name of a famous person or character written on each one

Stick a post-it note on each child's back, and let them move around asking each other questions to discover the identity of the person or character on their post-it note. They must ask questions which can only be answered yes or no, e.g. Am I a man? Am I on TV? etc. See who is first to discover the name they have been given.



EXPLORING THE BIBLE

▶ Introduction to Questions theme

You will need: paper and pens, or whiteboard marker and access to a whiteboard

Today's games involved asking questions, and questions are a good way of finding out more or getting to know one another.

If we stop and think about it, we probably all have questions

we would like to know the answers to. Some of them might be about little things like “What's for dinner tonight?” while others might be about much bigger things like “What will I be doing in ten years' time?”

Today we're going to start a series thinking about some of the big questions people your age have about God, Jesus, the Bible or Christianity. All the questions we'll be looking at are real questions that children in P5, P6 or P7 around Scotland have asked. They came from children in SU Groups or at SU Weekends. Maybe you'll even spot a question you asked, or one you would like to ask!

Take a minute to think: what questions do you have? Is there something you'd really like to know about God or Jesus? Something you don't understand in the Bible? Are you wondering what Christians believe about something or why they believe what they do? Whether you're already a Christian or not there is always a lot more for us to discover about God, and questions are a great way to do that.

Depending on the size of your group, you could either get the children to share their questions together and have a leader write them on a board or large sheet of paper, or you could divide the children into small groups to talk about their questions and get one person to write a list.

▶ Questions People Asked Jesus

You will need: printout of additional document: Questions people asked Jesus (cut this so that you have each individual question on a separate slip of paper)

Tell the children that you are going to show them a series of

questions. Ask them to think about where these questions could come from.

Gradually reveal the questions on the slips of paper prepared from the additional document. Depending on the size of your group, you could lay them out on a table or stick them up on the wall. Read each question out as you do so. When you have read them all, ask the children where they think the questions come from.

Questions:

- What must I do to have eternal life?
- Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?
- Which commandment is the most important?
- Who gave you the right to do these things?
- Are you the Messiah or should we look for someone else?
- Who is my neighbour?
- What does it mean to be born again? How is that possible?
- Why was this man born blind?
- What sign will signal the end of the world?
- Don't you care that we're going to drown?
- How often should I forgive someone who sins against me?
- Are you the King of the Jews?
- Why do you eat and drink with such scum?
- Are you the Son of God?

These questions all come from the Bible – in fact, they are all questions people asked Jesus. People asked him questions about all kinds of different things.

Some questions were asked by people who followed Jesus and

wanted to find out more about who he was and what it meant to follow him. Others were asked by people who doubted that Jesus was really from God.

Ask the children what they think about the questions:

Are any of them similar to questions they have?

Do any of the questions surprise them?

Jesus answered the questions in lots of different ways:

Sometimes he gave a simple answer.

Sometimes he asked a question in return to help the person think it through.

Sometimes he told a story to help them think about it.

Sometimes he took time to explain.

Sometimes he used the question to start a conversation about something that was even more important.

Sometimes he realised that they had got the wrong idea about something, so he tried to help them see the truth.

One thing he never did was to tell people that they shouldn't be asking questions, so it's ok for us to have questions too. In fact, it's a good thing because asking questions is a way we can learn more.

▶ Example of Jesus answering a question

You will need: Bible

If you have the time, you could read from Luke 10:25-37 to give an example of how Jesus answered a question. This passage tells of Jesus' conversation with one of the experts in religious law and leads into him telling the parable of the Good Samaritan.

You could point out that Jesus

responded to the man's first question by asking him a question in return, and that he responded to the man's second question by telling a story.



REFLECT & RESPOND

▶ Reflection

You will need: printout (double-sided) from additional document: Bible Verses (alternatively you could write out the two verses referenced below on either side of a piece of paper)

Some of the questions we will look at will be easier than others. Sometimes it will mean we have to think a bit. Sometimes we might not like the answers. Sometimes we might feel that we still don't understand or that we still don't know the answer to our questions.

None of us know all the answers. Even the leaders still have questions – there are still things we want to know more about or things we don't understand.

Lay out the sheet of paper or stick it on the wall so that the children can see, showing the side with Isaiah 55:8 on it:

“My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts,” says the Lord. “And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine.” (Isaiah 55:8 NLT)

God is so much bigger than we are, and because he is God and we are not, there are some things that we just can't understand.

Turn the sheet over to show Acts 17:27:

“His purpose was for the nations to seek after God and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him - though he is

not far from any one of us.” (Acts 17:27 NLT)

At the same time, God wants us to search for him and to know him. He wants us to keep asking questions and keep trying to discover more.

These are two important things to keep in mind as we look at discovering answers to our questions in the coming weeks.

▶ Song and prayer

You will need: equipment to play music or video, printouts from additional document: Ask Seek Knock and colouring pens (optional)

Play Ask, Seek, Knock by Hillsongs Kids – you can find it on YouTube here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J3vXskhl1ig>

Depending on your group you could let them sing along, or simply listen to the song and take a few minutes to reflect on their questions and think about why they want to know God more and how they feel about the idea that God wants them to know him.

You could give them copies of the Ask, Seek, Knock sheet and let them decorate the three words as they listen and reflect.

Close in prayer, asking for God's help as you explore the questions and try to get to know him more in the coming weeks.

02. How do you know if God is real?



BIBLE STORY / REFERENCE

Psalm 19:1-2

Romans 1:20

Romans 2:14-15

John 20:24-29



AIMS

To help the children think through what they believe about God and to understand some of the evidence that points to the existence of God.

Although we can't see God, there is evidence that points to his existence, for example, creation, our sense of right and wrong and people's own experience of God.



PREP FOR LEADERS

Read the Bible verses for today and reflect:

- What evidence do the verses give us that point to God being real?
- If a non-Christian friend asked you why you believe in God, what would you say?

Take some time to talk about those with God and to pray for your group. If you would like to read more on this topic, you could read Chapter 1 of *Keeping Your Kids On God's Side* by Natasha Crain.



GAMES / INTRO ACTIVITIES

Choose one or more of the following activities to introduce today's theme.

▶ **Two Facts And A Fiction**

Give everyone a moment to think about three things about themselves to share with the group. Two of the things should be true, and the third one should be made up.

Let each person in turn share their three things, putting them in a random order, and let the others vote on which one they think is made up.

If you have time you could have some discussion about why they believed certain

things but not others.

If you have a large group you could split the children into smaller groups for this activity or choose a few volunteers to share with the whole group.

▶ **Model Making**

You will need: small piece of plasticine or play dough for each child

Give each child a piece of plasticine or play dough and ask them to make something that represents something about them. It could be something they enjoy or are good at or something about their personality.

Give them a few minutes to do this, then let them show their models to the group. See if others can guess what they have made and how it relates to

(continued overleaf)

them.

▶ Follow The Leader Game

Have the children sitting in a circle and send one child out of the room. Nominate one child in the circle to be the leader. They perform an action, e.g. tapping their knees, pretending to play the piano etc. and the rest of the children must copy them. From time to time the leader must switch to a different action and everyone else must also switch to the new action as quickly as they can. Get the child who is outside to come back in and stand in the middle of the circle. See how quickly they can identify the leader.



INTRO TO QUESTION

▶ How do you know if God is real?

You will need: large sheet of paper and pens, or markers and access to a white board

As you will know if you were here last time we are going to be going through a series looking at some of the questions people have about God, Jesus, the Bible and Christianity. The questions we'll be looking at are all ones that have been asked by people your age.

Today we're going to look at a very big, but very important, question which came from a child at an SU weekend away:

How do you know if God is real?

Divide the paper or the white board into two halves. Get the children to think about why people might or might not believe in God. Write reasons to believe on one side and reasons not to believe on the other.

If they don't come up with these answers for themselves, you

could mention a few of the most common reasons people give for not believing in God.

We can't see him, that's true, but we believe in a lot of things we can't see for ourselves.

Can you think of any examples?

There are places in the world we have never seen, (give an example of a country you've never been to) but we believe they are real because we hear about them from other people who have been there or we have seen pictures.

There are events in the past, such as World War One. We didn't see it for ourselves, but we believe it happened because there are historical records that tell us about it.

Belief in God is a bit different though. There's unlikely to be anyone who would seriously argue that a country is not real, or that World War One didn't happen, but people have all kinds of different beliefs about God.

Another reason people give not to believe in God is that there is lots of suffering in the world. That's a big topic so we'll look at that in a different session.

And another reason people sometimes give is that they think there is no evidence that God is real so they think maybe it's just an idea that people have made up.



EXPLORING THE BIBLE

We said last time that we were going to try to find answers to the questions by looking in the Bible. The Bible tells us a lot about God, and, although it doesn't really try to prove that God exists, it does show us some things that point to that.

There is some evidence we can look at.

▶ Creation

You will need: Bible or printouts of the verses below (from additional document: Bible verses), pictures printed from additional document: Creation pictures or equipment to display them on a computer, tablet or smartboard.

The first 12 pages of the Creation pictures document contain large images and the final three pages contain smaller versions of the same images. You can choose the size that is most suitable for your group. The images are also used in the reflection activity later.

Read out the Bible verses below. You could show the children the printouts or get them to look up the verses in a Bible.

Psalm 19:1-2:

"The heavens proclaim the glory of God. The skies display his craftsmanship. Day after day they continue to speak; night after night they make him known." (NLT)

Romans 1:20:

"For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God." (NLT)

What evidence do these verses give us to point to God being real?

They tell us that as we look at the world it can tell us something about the one who made it.

(If you used the model making introductory activity you could refer back to this.)

Show the creation pictures, either on a device or printed out.

What kind of things do you think the world around us can show us about God?

Next time we'll explore more about what evidence there might be that God made the world, but, for lots of Christians, just looking at the world around us and the way it works according to particular rules and patterns fits and makes sense with the idea of God creating it. So they see the things we can learn through science as adding to their collection of evidence that God made everything.

(If questions come up about the big bang etc. acknowledge them as important and exciting questions, but it is probably best to leave these until the next session when the topic of creation will be covered in more depth.)

If you used the Follow the Leader game earlier, you could refer back to that, pointing out that when the people in the circle changed their actions, they did it because someone started it. It made sense to the person guessing that someone was behind each change even though they may have struggled to work out who that person was.

▶ **Morality**

You will need: Bible or printout of the verses below (from additional document: Bible Verses)

Read out the verses below. You could show the children the printout or get them to look it up in a Bible.

Romans 2:14-15:

“Some people naturally obey the Law’s commands, even though they don’t have the Law. This proves that the

conscience is like a law written in the human heart.” (CEV)

When it mentions “the Law” here, it is talking about the commands God gave to his people, but it is saying that even those who don’t have God’s commands because they don’t believe in God or follow him, naturally have a sense of what God says is right and what is wrong.

How do you think this could be evidence that God is real?

Someone has to decide what is right and what is wrong. If God is real and he created the world, it makes sense that he is the one who decides, and that he made us to know what is right and wrong.

Obviously all of us do things that we know are wrong, and sometimes we might even disagree about what is right and wrong, but there are certain things we would all agree on: that murder is wrong, that stealing is wrong, that mugging an elderly person is wrong... No-one has to tell us these things are wrong, we just know. Lots of people would see that as another piece of evidence that points to God being real.

▶ **Personal Experience – Thomas’ Story**

You will need: equipment to play video (or Bible)

Those are just two examples that are often part of why Christians believe God is real. Maybe you believe that too or maybe you’re not sure. The last thing we’re going to look at today that can be part of why people believe that God is real is personal experience. Every Christian has their own story to tell of why they believe in God and the difference he has made in their lives. We are going to look at one short story from someone in the Bible, a man called

Thomas.

Thomas was one of Jesus’ followers, but after Jesus had died and people were saying he had come to life again, Thomas didn’t think it was true. Some of Jesus’ other followers had seen Jesus alive again, but Thomas hadn’t.

Play this clip from the Lumo Project version of John’s Gospel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FxmGFOYHill&list=PLcJVluh8isK1RYcLxYOL929cnN3vALi8> & (Start it at 1.13 and finish it at 2.49.)

Alternatively, you could read John 20:24-29.

What do you think we can learn from Thomas’ story about the way God responds when we have doubts?

See what answers the children come up with, and try to draw out these points:

- Jesus wasn’t angry with Thomas for doubting or questioning. He came to him and showed him he was really alive.
- Thomas believed because he saw, but Jesus said people are even more blessed if they believe without seeing.

This doesn’t mean that we should believe without evidence. Christians today don’t get to see Jesus in person like Thomas did, but often some of the strongest evidence they have for their belief is their sense that they have encountered Jesus in a spiritual way.



REFLECT & RESPOND

▶ **Reflection/ Prayer**

You will need: images printed out from additional document:



Reflection pictures (plus the images used earlier from additional document: Creation pictures), again two sizes of the images are provided so you can choose what will be most suitable for the size of your group

We can't see God but we can look at the evidence and consider what we think about God and we can ask him to help us know what is true and to help us believe.

Lay out the creation images from earlier along with the other images illustrating the other points discussed today. You could let the children choose one that stands out to them or makes them think and let them take that picture home as a reminder.

Take a moment to consider what you believe about God. Do you believe God is real? Or maybe you're not sure. If you're not sure, think about what questions you might have that you could explore.

Take a moment to think about why it matters. What difference does it make to know if God is real? (If you have time, you could get the children to share some thoughts, and possibly share what difference it makes to you.)

Take a moment to pray silently. You might want to thank God for what you know of him. You might want to ask him a question. You might want to tell him that you're not sure if he's real.

Close in prayer, asking God to help you and the children discover more of him as you go through this series together.

03. Is there proof that God made the world?



BIBLE STORY / REFERENCE

**Genesis 1:1-2:4, Psalm
33:6**

Note for leaders: This session will probably require more consideration and adaptation than many of the others to suit your group whilst still faithfully representing the key messages, so please take time to read over the different sections and decide what is appropriate. If your group is new to exploring the Bible, you may want to focus on the creation account from Genesis, but if you have a group that is more familiar with the Bible, they may be ready to explore some of the questions in the Additional Ideas section.



AIMS

To help the children understand what the Bible says about the world being made, as well as some of the scientific evidence pointing towards it being intentionally created.

To help them reflect on what these things can show us about God.

The Bible teaches that God created the world – that it did not just happen, but that there was purpose and design. There is also evidence from science that points to this conclusion.



PREP FOR LEADERS

Read the Bible verses for today, and reflect:

- As you think about the world, what evidence do you see that fits with the idea that God created it?
- What characteristics of God do you see as you consider the world he created?

Take some time to pray for your group.

If you would like to read more on this topic, you could read chapters 2 and 3 of *Talking With Your Kids About God* by Natasha Crain, or *The Case For A Creator For Kids* by Lee Strobel. (This book is also one to recommend if any of the children in your group would like to find out more on this topic.)



GAMES / INTRO ACTIVITIES

Choose one or more of the following activities to introduce today's theme:

▶ **Count To Ten**

Get all the children to stand in a circle. Their task is to count to ten as a group. Each person can only say one number at a time, and they cannot decide an order in advance or go in sequence round the circle.

If two or more people say the same number at the same time, they must start counting

from the beginning again. See if they can make it all the way to ten.

This is more difficult than it sounds.

▶ **Creation Challenge**

You will need: some art/ collage materials – whatever you have available

Supply the children with some materials and challenge them to create something using what they have been given. You could give them a theme or you could simply allow them to be creative. Give them a time limit (probably around five minutes) to complete the task and see what they have come up with.

▶ Team Challenge

Divide the children into teams of four or five (or keep them as one group if you have a small number).

Tell them that their task is to work as a team to create something based on the theme you give them – just using their bodies, for example, to create a scene from a film.

Give them a minute or so to create their scene and then see what they have come up with.

If you have more than one team, you could award a point to the one you think is best.

Then give them a different theme and repeat. Some other possible themes could be: sporting event, kitchen appliance, scene from the Bible, famous landmark.



INTRO TO QUESTION

Last time we thought about what evidence there might be that God is real and one of the pieces of evidence we thought about is the world. Christians believe that God created everything and that the world can show us something of what he is like, but today we are looking at the question: Is there proof that God made the world? This question came from a child on an SU weekend away.

Just like with the question from last time, the Bible doesn't give us proof that God made the world, but it does give us some evidence to look at which points to that.



EXPLORING THE BIBLE

Use one of the methods below. The storytelling script also appeared in One Big Story, so if

you have recently used that programme with your group, you may wish to select a different method this time.

▶ Creation Account Storytelling

You will need: cards numbered 1-7 and props for each day as listed below

Involve seven children, each holding a card with a number on it from 1-7. (See additional document: Creation number cards) As their number is mentioned, get them to turn the card around so the number is visible to the group, describe what was made on that day of creation and give them a prop to hold symbolising what was made on that day. Get children to join in with response: when you say "God looked at what he had made", they respond, "and he saw that it was good."

Day 1: In the beginning the earth was dark and empty. Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. (Give child 1 a torch to shine.) **God separated the light from the darkness. He called the light "day" and the darkness "night."**

Day 2: God said, "Let there be a space to separate the waters of the earth from the waters of the heavens." That is what happened and he called the space "sky". (Give child 2 a card with a picture of the sea and sky. See additional document: Sea and sky picture.)

Day 3: God commanded the waters on the earth to flow together so that dry ground could appear. He called the dry ground "land" and the water "sea." Then he caused the earth to sprout with every kind of plant and tree. (Give child 3 flowers/plant (real or artificial).) **God looked at what he had made, and he saw that it was good.**

Day 4: God said, "Let great lights appear in the sky to separate day and night and to mark off the seasons, the days and the years." So God made 2 great lights: the sun to light the day and the moon to light the night. He also made smaller lights called stars. (Give child 4 sun, moon and stars picture. See additional document: Sun, moon and stars.) **God looked at what he had made, and he saw that it was good.**

Day 5: Then God said, "Let the waters be filled with every type of fish and sea creature and let the skies be filled with every kind of bird. Let them multiply and produce more of their own kind." (Give child 5 toy fish and bird.) **Once again God looked at what he had made, and he saw that it was good.**

Day 6: God created every kind of animal: livestock, small animals and wild animals, every kind you could think of. (Give child 6 animal toys.) **God looked at what he had made, and he saw that it was good.**

He also made human beings, both men and women and he asked them to rule over the earth and its creatures and to look after it. Again God looked at what he had made, but this time it is slightly different. The Bible says he saw that it was very good.

Day 7: God had finished creating everything so he rested from his work. (Give child 7 a pillow.)

▶ Video

You will need: equipment to play video

Show this four minute video to tell the story of Creation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=teu7BCZTgDs>

In various books in the Bible, it tells us clearly that God made

the world. The Bible is not like a science textbook full of details of the processes God used, but the writers of the Bible all agree that God made everything.

Psalm 33:6 (NLT) says, “The Lord merely spoke, and the heavens were created. He breathed the word and all the stars were born.”

It’s amazing to think that he created just by speaking!

If you used the Creation Challenge or the Team Challenge intro activities, you could point out to the group that they made something, but they needed to use the craft materials or their bodies to do that.

None of us could make something out of nothing, but the Bible tells us that’s how powerful God is.

If we believe that the Bible is true, we can see the Bible’s teaching about God as creator as evidence that he made the world. But what other kinds of evidence might fit with the idea of God creating the world?

▶ **Expanding Universe/The Big Bang**

You will need: balloon, marker pen (prepare the balloon by drawing some dots on it to represent different galaxies in the universe)

For hundreds of years many scientists believed that the earth had always been there, but in the 1920s Edwin Hubble used the world’s most powerful telescope (at that time) to look at the universe and discovered that the galaxies were moving away from earth, and the universe was getting bigger.

Show the children the balloon you have prepared. Get them to imagine that the balloon

represents the universe and the dots represent the different galaxies. Blow some air into the balloon to illustrate the universe getting bigger and the galaxies moving further apart.

Scientists realised that if the universe was getting bigger and bigger, if you turned the clock backwards, it must have been smaller and smaller (let some air out of the balloon) until you get back to a point where it began.

Science can be seen as a wonderful gift from God which allows us to explore and discover lots about His amazing universe. People who love God have been exploring His universe for thousands of years and, bit by bit we’re learning more about it.

One of those scientists was Georges Lemaitre, a priest who was one of the first people to come up with the idea we now call the Big Bang (the name we give to the beginning of the Universe). There are still lots of mysteries to explore in God’s universe and some of them are about exactly what happened in the first few milliseconds.

People like Georges Lemaitre show us that the wonders of the universe, including the beginning of it all, can support the idea of an amazing, praise-worthy God behind it all.

▶ **Attention to Detail**

You will need: picture printed from additional document: Mount Rushmore

Show the group a picture of Mount Rushmore. See if they have any idea where/what it is.

Mount Rushmore is a mountain in America, in South Dakota, and the four faces represent four presidents of the USA: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt and Abraham Lincoln.

Ask the children how they think the faces of the four presidents got on the mountain.

Does anyone think they just appeared there? Why/why not?

When we look at something like that it seems obvious that it didn’t just happen by itself, but that someone planned it and created it – someone who was very skilled and clever.

What about when we look at the world?

People have always been amazed by the world around us. Christians believe that God made us curious and creative so we could explore His amazing creation. And the more we discover, the more amazing it gets!

One of the things we’ve discovered is how incredibly detailed and finely balanced God’s universe is.

- **Did you know that life is only able to exist on earth because our planet is just the right distance from the sun? If we were closer to the sun, we’d be burned up. If we were further away, we would freeze.**
- **Also, if the earth was closer to the sun or further away, water wouldn’t be able to exist in liquid form, and we need water as a liquid for human life.**
- **Did you know that the way the earth rotates means that the sun comes up each morning and goes down each evening? If it didn’t rotate like this, one side of the earth would freeze and the other would burn.**
- **Did you know that gravity, the force that stops us from floating away into the air, is exactly the right strength for us to be able to live?**

When we look at these wonderful details, it certainly seems to fit with the idea that it has all been created by a clever, caring and hugely powerful God.

So, together with the ideas about God we get from the Bible and the way we see and know God acting in our lives and the lives of others, exploring the wonders of the universe can be evidence that supports the idea that God made it all.



REFLECT & RESPOND

Reflection

You will need: large sheet of paper or post-it notes, pens, equipment to play music/video (optional)

Give the children a moment to reflect on what they have heard today. What do they think of the idea of God creating the world? As they look at the world and as they think about some of this evidence, what words would they use to describe God?

You could get them to write these down, either on a large sheet of paper or on post-it notes, which can be stuck together on the wall so that everyone can see.

As they do this, you could play the song Indescribable: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sM5YReFSm0I>

Lead the children in prayer using some of the words they have come up with to praise God.



ADDITIONAL IDEAS

Other questions about creation

Depending on the stage your group is at, both in terms of age and understanding, it might be appropriate to look briefly at a few other questions about creation and some of the different views that Christians have about creation. These all came from children at an SU weekend, so they may be questions that the children ask, or you may feel they are ready to look at things in a bit more detail.

- How long did it take God to make the world?
- Did it really happen in just six days?
- How come there were dinosaurs that lived millions of years before humans?

The first important thing to say is that Christians have different opinions on some of these questions. There are people who believe the Bible is true and who look at what it says and look at the evidence from science, but they reach different conclusions.

The second important thing to say is: that's okay! God loves it when we explore his universe and try to find out about him. It's good to ask questions and think about the evidence. But it's okay if we don't agree with all other Christians about everything.

Although they might have some different opinions about how it happened, Christians all agree that

God created the world, so we can all worship God together. And we can explore together and learn from each other even when we have different ideas.

The third important thing to say is that we might not ever find definite answers to all our questions. The Bible tells us that God is so much bigger, more powerful and more intelligent than we are, so we will probably never understand everything about him or what he has made. But that definitely doesn't mean we should stop asking questions!

In the creation account in the Bible it talks about six days where God made things and then says he rested on the seventh day.

That sometimes leads people to ask if God really made the world in just six days. Some Christians believe that is what the Bible means and when it mentions a day it is talking about a period of 24 hours, but other Christians believe that when it talks about a day, it just means a period of time, so it could be much longer than an actual day.

Some Christians believe it is a story painting a word picture illustrating that, however it was created, it was God who made it all.

There are lots of points for and against these different views, which we don't have time to talk about in lots of detail. But here are some of the main areas of debate.

If you take the days in Genesis as being 24 hour days and use other information given in the Bible about how long people lived, it could mean that the earth is about

6000-10,000 years old.

Most scientists (lots of whom are Christians) would say the earth is much older than that because of evidence from things like rocks and fossils.

Again, people have different opinions. Some would say that just because the earth appears to be older doesn't mean it is. For example, when the Bible talks about God creating Adam and Eve, it talks about him creating man and woman. It doesn't say that he created them as babies, so they might have looked like they were 30 years old when actually they had just been created.

We don't know if that is how it happened but it's one idea people have.

Others, who think the days described in Genesis are longer than 24 hours, or that the Bible is telling a story of God's creation, think the scientists are right, that the world is much older.

Dinosaurs are never mentioned in the Bible. In fact, the word "dinosaur" didn't exist until 1842 so it definitely wouldn't have been used when the Bible was written. It's worth remembering that there are also lots of other animals that aren't mentioned in the Bible, like penguins, tigers and polar bears!

The Bible does tell us that God made everything, so that includes the dinosaurs even though they're not mentioned. Those who believe the days mentioned in Genesis are 24 hours long believe that dinosaurs lived in the world at the same time as humans and became extinct at some

point, possibly around the time of Noah's ark when God sent a flood. Those who believe the days mentioned in Genesis are longer than 24 hours believe that dinosaurs lived before humans.

But whatever we decide makes the most sense to us, remember the most important things about being a Christian are loving God and loving other people, and we can do that even if we have different ideas about things like dinosaurs!

Chapters 33-36 of Keeping Your Kids On God's Side contain more information about some of the different views on creation so they may be helpful background reading if this is an area your group is keen to explore in depth.

Evolution will be discussed in Session 4, so if questions come up about that, it may be best to note them as important and exciting questions and wait and deal with them then.

04. How did God create people?



BIBLE STORY / REFERENCE

Genesis 1:27-28

Genesis 2:4-25

Psalms 139:13-14

Note for leaders: Part of this session talks about us sharing characteristics with those in our families, that certain traits are passed down to us from family members, and that we also share some of God's characteristics as we are made in his image. Keep in mind that if you have children in your group who are adopted or in care you may need to be sensitive in how you handle this section.



AIMS

To help the children understand what the Bible says about God creating people and how this relates to the theory of evolution.

To reflect on what it means to be created in God's image and how this knowledge impacts how we think of ourselves and others.

The Bible teaches that God made human beings in his image and that each of us is designed and created by God.



PREP FOR LEADERS

Read the Bible passages for today, and reflect:

- What does it mean to be made in God's image?
- What difference does it make to how we think of ourselves and others to know that we are designed and created by God?

Take some time to pray for your group.

Chapters 37-39 of *Keeping Your Kids On God's Side* by Natasha Crain contain further information on the various different views about evolution.



GAMES / INTRO ACTIVITIES

Choose one or more of the following activities to introduce today's theme.

▶ Fingerprint Doodles

You will need: ink pads or paint and palettes/paper plates to put it on, card, felt pens, wipes for cleaning up, printout(s) of additional document: Fingerprint Doodle Ideas (optional)

Give the children some card and let them create some doodles using their fingerprints and adding details with a pen. (See the additional document for ideas – you could either print this out to

give the children some inspiration or you could create your own example.)

Encourage them to be creative and come up with their own ideas too. You could make the point that each of them has unique fingerprints and that they are unique in other ways too, try to encourage discussion around what some of those ways might be.

▶ Letter Quiz

You will need: pens and pieces of paper/card cut to roughly A6 size (or mini whiteboards/ Show Me boards if you have access to them at the school)

You could allow the children either to play this game individually or in pairs depending on what you think

will work better with your group.

Give each child, or each pair, some paper and a pen.

To play the game, give them a category and a letter. They have ten seconds to write down something in that category that starts with the letter you give. Then everyone must display their answer. Give them one point if they get a correct answer, but two points if they get a unique correct answer that no-one else has got.

Keep it moving quickly, with another leader keeping score if possible, and once your time is up, see which child or pair got the highest number of points.

Some suggested categories are:

Country beginning with A

Animal beginning with L

Musical instrument beginning with B

Sport beginning with T

Place in the UK beginning with C

Food beginning with P

Colour beginning with B

Person in the Bible beginning with J

▶ Bible Verse Game

You will need: printout(s) from additional document: Psalm 139 – cut each printout into roughly 8-10 pieces

The challenge is for the children to collect the pieces that make up the Bible verse and piece it together.

If you have a small group, you could hide the pieces around the room before the children arrive and then see how quickly they can find the pieces and put them together.

If you have a larger group, you may want to divide them into

teams and set up a relay race. Each team has their own set of pieces at the opposite end of the hall from where their team is lined up and members of the team have to run in turn, picking up one piece each time. Once they have gathered all the pieces they can assemble them to reveal the Bible verse. See which team can be the first to complete this.



INTRO TO QUESTION

Last time we looked at some of what the Bible says about the world being created, and we talked about some of the reasons Christians believe it is made by God.

Today we are going to think a bit more about God making people and try to answer two big questions that children at an SU weekend away asked about that:

- **Did humans come from monkeys or from Adam and Eve?**
- **How did God create us if it's our parents who really create us?**



EXPLORING THE BIBLE

▶ Video

You will need: equipment to play video

Last time we looked at the very start of the Bible, at Genesis chapter 1, which told us that God created human beings. In Genesis chapter 2 the Bible goes into a little bit more detail about that.

This short video (four minutes) shares the account of God making Adam and Eve from Genesis 2 and what it means that humans were made in

God's image: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZZPfcWV81pE>

▶ Evolution

One idea you might have heard mentioned in connection with creation is evolution.

See if the children know what that means and give a brief explanation:

Evolution is about change and the idea that groups of living things change little by little over time. Most people, including Christians, agree that there is good evidence that living things change and adapt over time. For example, a study took place several years ago looking at finches (small birds) in the Galapagos Islands and how they adapted over time according to the conditions they were in. When there was a drought and there was no rain for a year and a half, most of the finches that survived were those with larger beaks who could eat the tough seeds which were the only things left for them to eat. Later, the scientists found that the next generation of baby finches born after the drought had beaks that were 3-4 per cent bigger than finches born before the drought. The finches had adapted to their environment in order to survive. They had changed, or evolved, but they were still finches.

Many scientists believe that evolution goes much further than the example of the finches, and believe that all animals, plants and people have developed from one living thing millions of years ago. Instead of changes just happening within one species (one type of creature) they believe that over time small changes created lots of different species. Some developed gills so they could live in the water, some

developed wings so they could fly etc.

The fossil record (remains of creatures preserved in rock) is one piece of evidence for this idea of evolution.

Some Christians believe that evolution happened like that, and that it is the way God created all the different types of creatures. One of the questions we're looking at today asked whether humans came from monkeys. That idea comes from the way some people talk about evolution. It's actually not about the idea that humans evolved from the monkeys we have today – it's more the idea that we are like very distant cousins who share the same great-great-great... grandparents.

Other Christians don't believe that there's enough evidence of one animal evolving into another. They would say that while we can see birds' beaks changing from generation to generation, we don't see evidence of one species turning into something completely different.

They believe that God made human beings not by evolution but by specially creating them. DNA is one piece of evidence that points to this. It is a code within the cells of every living thing. Some say it is like a set of instructions that couldn't have developed randomly.

Remember that it's okay for Christians to have different opinions on some of these questions, and that we can love God and love other people well even if we disagree. God loves it when we explore his universe, ask questions, think carefully and do our best to consider the evidence.

Although there are different opinions about how it happened, Christians all believe that God created the

world.

As we explore these ideas, it's important to remember that the Bible is not a science textbook. It doesn't try to explain all the detail of how everything was made. It tells us that God made it, but it focuses more on who this God is and what that says about us. However people were created, the Bible teaches that human beings are very special because we are made in God's image.



REFLECT & RESPOND

▶ Made in God's image

You will need: Bible or printout from additional document: Psalm 139 (this was also used earlier in one of the intro games)

Read Psalm 139:13-14:

You created the deepest parts of my being. You put me together inside my mother's body. How you made me is amazing and wonderful. I praise you for that. What you have done is wonderful. I know that very well. (NIRV)

Explain that this is a prayer to God written by a man called David.

What do these verses tell us about how we were made?

Obviously, it is true in one sense that we were created by our parents. We might be able to see ways we are like people in our family. People might say we look like our mum or our dad, or there might be certain skills or characteristics that are passed down in our family.

But the Bible also says we are made by God. When he made human beings, he told them to be fruitful and multiply, so part

of how God made us is that we are able to have children. You can think of your parents as an important part of how God created you!

Psalm 139 talks about God putting us together inside our mother's body, to show that he created us, knows us, and loves us.

The Bible teaches that each of us is special and unique, different to anyone else, and completely loved by God. Even more wonderful than that, the Bible tells us that God made us in his image. That means he made us to be a bit like him, to represent him by loving the rest of creation like he does, and to know him personally.

▶ Reflection

You will need: small mirror(s), equipment to play music

Pass around a mirror (if you have a larger group you may want to provide a few) and encourage each of the children to take a moment to look in the mirror.

As they do so, encourage them to think about how they feel about the idea that God created them, knows them and loves them, and also to think about what difference it makes to think of themselves, and others, as being made in God's image.

As you do this, you could play Made In Your Image by Hillsong Kids: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8AC-KtJriw4>

Lead the children in prayer to close.

05. Who made God?



BIBLE STORY / REFERENCE

Genesis 1:1

Psalms 90:2

Isaiah 40:28

Exodus 3:1-15



AIMS

To help the children understand that God was not created but that he is eternal.

To help them reflect on what that truth means for them.

God is eternal – he always existed and always will exist. He revealed himself to Moses as I Am – the one who is eternal and unchanging.



PREP FOR LEADERS

Read the Bible passages for today, and reflect:

- What do these Bible verses tell us about God?
- What difference does it make to know that God is eternal?

Take some time to pray for your group.



GAMES / INTRO ACTIVITIES

Choose one or more of the following activities to introduce today's theme.

▶ A to Z Activity

You will need: pens/ pencils, paper

This activity would work well for those who arrive early at the group as they wait for others to come.

Get them to work in groups of two or three. Give each group a pen/pencil and a sheet of paper and get one member of the group to write the letters of the alphabet from A to Z down the side of their paper.

Give them a category, for example, animals or foods, and their task is to come up with something in that

category that starts with each letter of the alphabet. You could set a time limit, depending on how much time you have available, and see which group has completed the most letters.

▶ When Did It Start Quiz

You will need: printout(s) of pictures and years (from additional document: When Did It Start Quiz)

Before the session starts, cut each picture and each year out separately from the document. If you have a large group, you may want to prepare multiple sets and have the children doing this activity in small groups.

Their task is to match up each thing shown in the pictures with the year it began.

The correct answers are:

Television – 1927

YouTube – 2005

Passenger flights – 1914

NHS – 1948

Disney World – 1965

Scripture Union – 1867

▶ **Werewolf Game**

Leaders' Note: This game can take a while to explain when you are playing it for the first time; it is much quicker once a group is familiar with it. You may like to spread this session over two weeks if you want to include this game and your time is limited.

You will need: slips of paper prepared in advance: two with the letter W, one with the letter D, several with the letter V (you will need enough slips in total so that each member of the group can have one)- fold the slips so that the letters cannot be seen.

Get the children to sit in a circle. Pass out the slips of paper, allowing each child to take one. Make sure the two slips with the letter W and the one with the letter D are included in those that are passed round.

Get the children to open their slips and look at them, but without letting anyone else see. If they have the letter W, they are a werewolf for this round of the game, if they have the letter D, they are the doctor, if they have the letter V, they are a villager. (If you think it would be more appropriate for your group, you could simply talk about wolves instead of werewolves.)

Set the scene for the game. It all takes place in a village where there are some dangerous werewolves on the loose, but no one knows who they are. Each night they will attempt to attack an innocent villager and the task of the villagers is to figure out who the werewolves are.

Tell the children that night has fallen in the village, so everyone goes to sleep. (Get them all to

close their eyes.)

While the rest of the village continues sleeping, the two werewolves wake up. (Tell the two people who are werewolves to open their eyes.) Together they must decide who they want to attack. They can choose anyone in the circle, but make sure they do this by silently pointing instead of by speaking.

Once they have attacked, the werewolves go back to sleep. (Get them to close their eyes.)

The doctor wakes up. (Get the doctor to open his/ her eyes. They must choose someone they want to save, again they can do this by silently pointing.) Then the doctor goes back to sleep.

In the morning, everyone wakes up. (Get them all to open their eyes.) They discover that in the middle of the night ... was attacked by the werewolves. (Include the name of the child chosen by the werewolves.)

If the child was saved by the doctor, tell everyone that he/ she survived the attack. If not, tell everyone that unfortunately he/she died.

(Players who die are out of the game. They can keep their eyes open to watch what is going on, but they must not say anything or contribute to the votes or discussions.)

All of the players now have to discuss who they think is a werewolf. Allow them to give suggestions and have a brief discussion (but don't let it drag on for too long). Of course the children who are the werewolves can try to accuse others to throw them off the scent. Once two or three suspects have been identified, let the children vote on who they think is most likely to be a werewolf. The person with the most votes is now dead.

You can then reveal whether they have indeed killed one of the werewolves, or whether it was an innocent villager, or the doctor, who is dead.

Tell the children that night has fallen in the village once more, and repeat the whole process of having the werewolves wake up and choose a victim, the doctor waking up and choosing someone to save, and then everyone waking up and trying to discover the werewolves' identities. As the game progresses, there may only be one werewolf, or the doctor may have been eliminated.

The game ends when either the villagers successfully kill both werewolves or the werewolves kill everyone else in the village.

If you have time to play again, collect in all the slips of paper, mix them up and distribute them again.



INTRO TO QUESTION

Over the last two weeks, we've looked at questions about the world being created and at some of the evidence that God created the world and us.

Today we're going to look at one of the most common questions about God, also one of the biggest and one of the hardest to understand. We got this question from a P6 at an SU Group in Inverness, but it's a question that most people wonder about at some point.

The question is: Who made God?

Just like with all the questions, we are going to look at what the Bible says.

▶ Video

You will need: equipment to play video

Show this three minute video, which contains a brief answer to the question, referring to the Bible: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lp6tzHgoMBA>

▶ Bible Verses

You will need: Bible, or printout of verses (from additional document: Bible verses)

As an alternative to showing the video above, or as a recap if you have time, you could show the children the verses below, either in a Bible or printed out from the additional document.

When we looked at what the Bible had to say about creation, it started by saying: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." (Genesis 1:1 NLT)

Read Psalm 90:2:

"Before the mountains were born, before you gave birth to the earth and the world, from beginning to end, you are God."

Read Isaiah 40:28:

"Have you never heard? Have you never understood? The Lord is the everlasting God, the creator of all the earth."

▶ Brief discussion

What do the Bible verses (in the video or from the activity above) tell us about God?

He was there in the beginning, before anything was created, and he is everlasting. He doesn't have a beginning or an end.

If you used the Werewolf Game earlier, you could refer back to

that. Everyone playing the game was part of an imaginary world that was created for the game, but the leader was outside of that. They could see everything that was going on and they knew things that the people playing the game didn't. They saw it all from a different perspective.

Because God is outside of time and space, he sees things very differently from how we see them.

For example, 2 Peter 3:8 says "A day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day."

▶ Moses and the burning bush

You will need: printouts of images or equipment to display them on PowerPoint or on a laptop.

The suggested images come from Free Bible Images at this link: <http://freebibleimages.org/illustrations/moses-burning-bush/> The slide numbers appear against the appropriate paragraphs in the script below. Some images have been omitted for brevity.

We are going to hear about a time when God spoke to one of his people and revealed himself as the eternal God.

Moses was one of God's people, the Israelites, who we read about in the Old Testament of the Bible. At that time, the Israelites were slaves in Egypt, but Moses was living in a place called Midian. One day, God spoke to Moses, telling him who he was and giving him a special task to do.

1. Moses was a shepherd, and as he was out in the wilderness with his sheep, he noticed something strange.

2. There was a bush that was on fire. That wasn't so strange in itself, but no matter how much it burned, the bush

wasn't burning up!

3. He went closer to take a look, and as he did, he heard a voice coming from the bush: "Moses! Moses!"

"Here I am," he replied.

4. "Do not come any closer," the voice said. "Take off your sandals because you are standing on holy ground. I am God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. I have seen the way the Egyptians are treating my people, and I am going to rescue them. I am sending you to Egypt to go to Pharaoh and to lead the Israelites to freedom."

7. Moses protested: "But who am I to do that?" but God reassured him: "I will be with you."

8. "But what should I tell the people?" Moses asked. "If I go and say that God has sent me to them, they will ask, "Who is this God?" What should I say?"

9. God said, "I am who I am. Tell them that I Am has sent you. This is my eternal name to remember for all generations."

21. Moses was scared, and he took some persuading, but finally he obeyed God and he got ready to return to Egypt, knowing that God was with him and would help him.



REFLECT & RESPOND

▶ Reflection

What was it that God said when Moses asked what he should tell the people about who God is?

He said, "I am who I am." It sounds like a bit of a strange thing to say. What do you think it could mean?

Basically, God was saying that he is the same forever. He was there before time began and he will be there for ever and ever, and he is always the same - he will never change. He will always be exactly who he is.

Why do you think it was important for Moses to know this about God as he set off to free the Israelites from slavery?

It must have given him courage to go knowing that God was with him – the God who has always been there and always will be there – and to know that God never changes so he could put his trust in him.

What difference does it make for you to know that about God?

▶ **Response/ Prayer**

You will need: large sheet of paper, pens, post-it notes (optional), equipment to play music

Before the group arrives, write the words “I Am” in the middle of the piece of paper. (If you have plenty of time during the session, an alternative would be to let the children write and decorate the words before moving on to the next part of the activity.)

Give the children a few minutes to reflect on what they have discovered about God so far as they have gone through this series, or through other Christian activities, time reading the Bible etc.

Let them write on the large sheet, around the words “I Am,” some words that describe God or what they would like to say to God. (If you have a larger group, you might want to give them post-it notes to do this on and then let them stick those on the large sheet.)

Play some music as they do this (for example, “How Great Is Our

God” by Chris Tomlin: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wDgmJFw6F64>)

Close in prayer, using some of the words the children have written.

06. Did God cause the bad things in the world?

 **BIBLE
STORY /
REFERENCE**

Genesis 2:15-17

Genesis 3:1-24

 **AIMS**

To help the children understand what the Bible says about sin and its consequences.

To reflect on the brokenness of the world and on God's plan to restore it through Jesus.

Sin and death entered the world when people disobeyed God. The consequences of that disobedience were severe and affect everyone, but God has a plan to bring restoration through Jesus.

**PREP FOR
LEADERS**

Read the Bible verses for today and reflect:

- What were the immediate consequences of sin for Adam and Eve?
- What are the consequences for us?
- Where do we see glimpses of hope that point to God's plan to restore? Take some time to talk about those with God and to pray for your group.

**GAMES /
INTRO
ACTIVITIES**

Choose one or more of the following activities to introduce today's theme.

▶ Domino Challenge

You will need: dominoes (one set for every group of three or four children)

If you have a large group, divide the children into groups of three or four. Their challenge is to lay the dominoes out on the floor or on a table, standing them on their ends, so that when the first domino is pushed over, the knock-on effect causes the rest to fall over in turn.

They can simply lay the dominoes out in a line or they can try to create a pattern with them.

▶ Snake Tig

For this game, you will need a bit of space for the children to run about.

Divide the children into groups of about five and get each group to join hands to form a snake. Designate one end of each snake to be the head and the other the tail.

The object of the game is for the head of one snake to tig the tail of another snake. Give them a point every time they manage to do this. Snakes must stay joined at all times.

After a minute or so, get the child who is the head of each

(continued overleaf)

snake to move to be the tail so that different children get turns in different positions.

If you have a small group, you could just have one person as the head of the snake, trying to tig the others. When they tig someone that person joins onto the snake and they continue trying to catch the others. Once everyone is joined on to the snake, you can start again with a different person as the head.

▶ Hey, Harry

You will need: lipstick and baby wipes, or small coloured stickers

Have the children sitting in a circle. One is designated to start. They turn to the person on their left and say, "Hey, Harry!" That person responds, "What, Harry?" and the first child says, "Tell Harry," indicating the person two places to their left.

The second child then turns to the person on their left and repeats the conversation. It passes round the circle in this manner.

If someone makes a mistake at any point by saying the wrong words or speaking at the wrong time, they receive a spot of lipstick or a sticker on their face, and instead of being referred to as Harry they are now referred to as "One Spot." If they make a mistake again, they become "Two Spot" and so on.

This game highlights the challenges of keeping to the rules.



INTRO TO QUESTION

We've thought already, when looking at big questions, about the answers to some questions about creation: we looked at some of the evidence that God

made the world and at what the Bible says about him creating people.

We read in the Bible that God made the world and people, and he said that what he had made was very good, but as we look around us today, I'm sure all of us can think of some things that are very good and other things that are very bad.

What kind of bad things do you see in the world, or in people, today?

(Let the children give some examples.)

Today's big question is about that. We've actually got two big questions that link together. These questions came from children at an SU weekend away.

- **Was it God who made all the bad things in the world?**
- **Is God responsible for climate change and natural disasters?**



EXPLORING THE BIBLE

First, let's look at the Bible to discover what it says about the start of bad things in the world.

There are two different suggestions to choose from here – either reading the Bible passage with accompanying images or showing a short video.

▶ Bible passage with images

You will need: Bible, equipment to show images from <http://freebibleimages.org/illustrations/adam-eve-fall/> (either printed out or in a PowerPoint presentation), printouts from additional document: Bible passage (optional)

Read Genesis 2:15-17 and

then Genesis chapter 3 while showing the images. The list below outlines which verses match with each slide.

There is an additional document (Bible passage) with the verses spread over 12 pages corresponding to the slides. If you choose to print out the images, you could print the relevant verses on the back of each image so that you can read them while holding up the image to show the children.

1. Genesis 2:15-17
2. Genesis 3:1
3. Genesis 3:2-3
4. Genesis 3:4-5
5. Genesis 3:6
6. Genesis 3:7
7. Genesis 3:8-11
8. Genesis 3:12-13
9. Genesis 3:14-15
10. Genesis 3:16
11. Genesis 3:17-19
12. Genesis 3:20-24

▶ Video

You will need: equipment to show video

Show this short video from Crossroads Kids Club, which sums up the events of Genesis 3: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kg2lkCxjMg8&t=>

▶ Sin and its Consequences

You will need: printout of additional document: Sin or equipment to display it on PowerPoint, equipment to play video (optional)

When Adam and Eve disobeyed God, it was the start of all the bad things in the world. They should have obeyed God, who made the world, and when they didn't there were serious consequences.

What were some of the bad things that happened, or things that changed for them, as a result of their disobedience?

Let the children give some answers and draw out the following points:

- They felt afraid and ashamed for the first time
- It damaged their relationship with God and made them want to hide from him
- It damaged their relationship with one another. They wanted to hide from each other, and Adam tried to blame Eve
- Life would be different from now on, they would have to work hard to grow food to eat, they were sent out from the garden, they would know pain and, ultimately, death

The Bible talks about what Adam and Eve did as “sin.” One of the ways to describe sin uses a phrase beginning with each of the letters.

(Show the definition of sin, either on a card or on PowerPoint.)

It’s like Adam and Eve were saying:

“Shove off, God!

I’m in charge!

No to your rules!”

The consequences of sin didn’t just mean things changed for Adam and Eve. There was a massive knock-on effect.

You could refer back to the domino challenge if the children did it earlier or you could show this short video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U5eweVGzLmk> (Just use a 30 second clip if you are pushed for time.)

Once the first domino was pushed over, there was no way

to stop the whole lot from falling down. Obviously, the person recording the video meant to do it, but imagine what it would be like if they had spent hours (or probably even days) setting up the dominoes and then, just as they got close to the end, they accidentally knocked one over!

It might seem like Adam and Eve’s sin was small – it was only a piece of fruit – but it means that every person who is born into the world also sins. No matter how hard we try to be really good, we all do things that are wrong.

If we look at what’s wrong with the world today, we can see that a lot of it is because of people’s sin. People choose to lie, or steal or hurt other people, and that causes suffering.

When we think about things like climate change and natural disasters, we can see that some of these things are caused by people’s actions too, because we haven’t always cared for the world as we should, but there are also lots of things that are wrong in the world where there’s not an obvious cause. People get ill, accidents happen that injure people, there are disasters that happen and we can’t see a reason.

The truth is we don’t know why certain things happen. We can’t understand why one person gets ill and another person doesn’t, why one person is injured in accident and another person is not, why some countries are hit by a natural disaster and others are not, but the Bible tells us that sin and death came into the world when people sinned, so it all comes back to that. It’s like the world is broken. It’s not how God originally created it.

Over the next two weeks, we’ll think a bit more about that.

(The next two sessions cover related questions which might arise:

- Did God know sin was going to happen?
- Why did he give Adam and Eve the choice?
- Why doesn’t God stop the bad things in the world?

If these questions come up, you can tell the children there will be more time to explore them over the next couple of weeks.)



REFLECT & RESPOND

▶ Reflection and Prayer

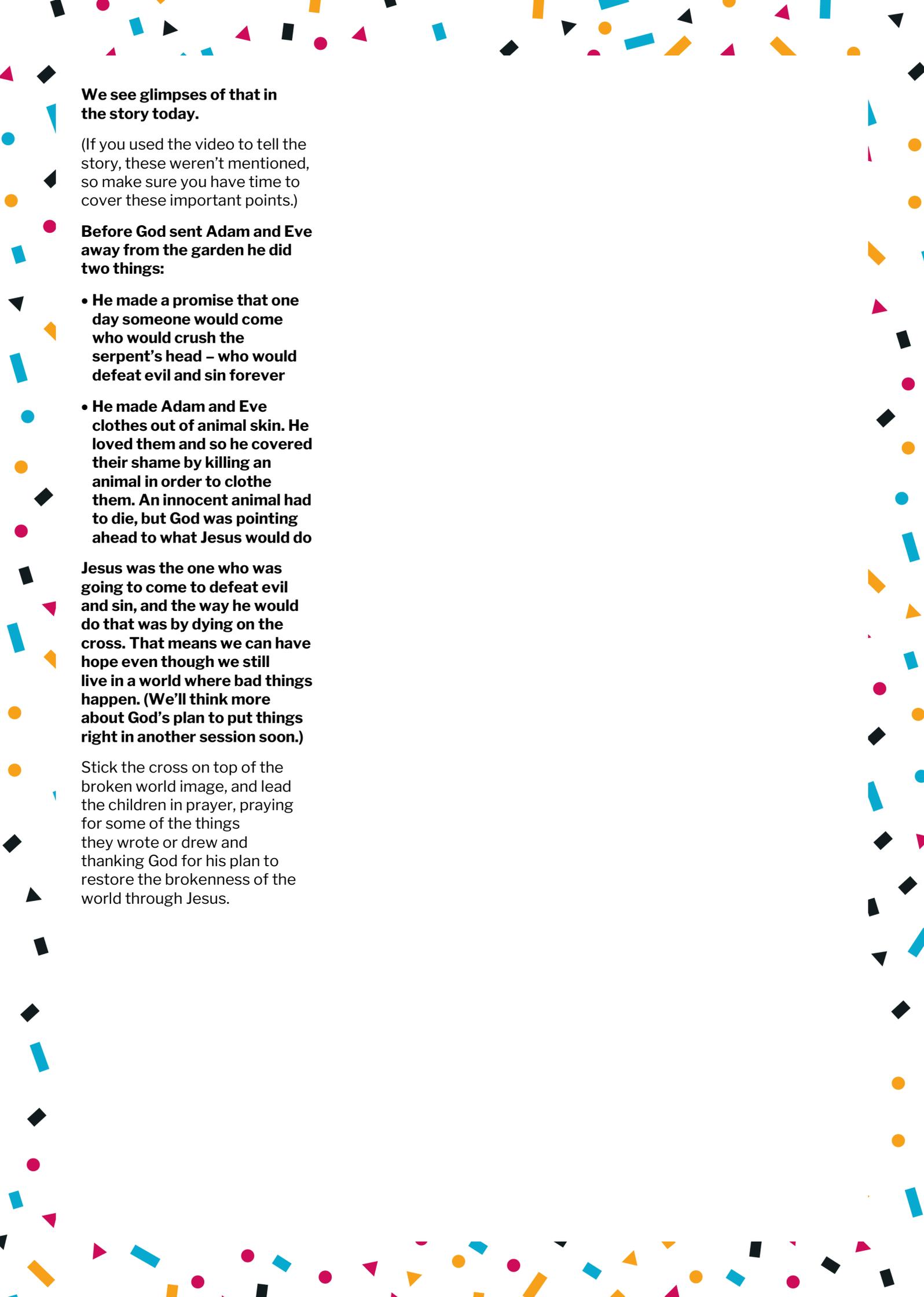
You will need: printouts from additional document: Broken World (two different sizes are provided) – cut out the cross before the session, pens or pencils, Blu-tack

Alternatively, instead of printing out the documents, you could draw something similar on a flipchart or whiteboard.

We can’t sort out all the bad things in the world by ourselves, but we can pray to God and ask him to help.

Give the children a couple of minutes to think about what situations they would like to bring to God and let them write or draw these things on the image of the broken world. (If you have a large group, you could use multiple copies of the image and let the children do this in small groups.)

The good news is that God cares about the things that are wrong in the world, and he didn’t just give up on Adam and Eve when they sinned. He had a plan to put things right.



We see glimpses of that in the story today.

(If you used the video to tell the story, these weren't mentioned, so make sure you have time to cover these important points.)

Before God sent Adam and Eve away from the garden he did two things:

- **He made a promise that one day someone would come who would crush the serpent's head – who would defeat evil and sin forever**
- **He made Adam and Eve clothes out of animal skin. He loved them and so he covered their shame by killing an animal in order to clothe them. An innocent animal had to die, but God was pointing ahead to what Jesus would do**

Jesus was the one who was going to come to defeat evil and sin, and the way he would do that was by dying on the cross. That means we can have hope even though we still live in a world where bad things happen. (We'll think more about God's plan to put things right in another session soon.)

Stick the cross on top of the broken world image, and lead the children in prayer, praying for some of the things they wrote or drew and thanking God for his plan to restore the brokenness of the world through Jesus.

07. Why did God give Adam and Eve the choice to sin?



BIBLE STORY / REFERENCE

Psalm 139:1-4

Deuteronomy 30:15-20

1 Peter 1:19-20



AIMS

To help the children reflect on why God gives people choice rather than forcing them to obey.

To help them understand that God knows in advance what we will do and he had already planned a solution to sin.

To allow them to reflect on their response to God.

God gives us choice because he wants us to choose to love and follow him rather than forcing us to obey. He knew in advance that people would sin and he had already planned for a solution.



PREP FOR LEADERS

Read the Bible verses for today and reflect:

- How do you hold together the ideas that God knows in advance what we will do, but that he also gives us choices?
- What difference does it make to know that he planned Jesus' sacrifice before the creation of the world?

Take some time to pray for your group.



GAMES / INTRO ACTIVITIES

Choose one or more of the following activities to introduce today's theme.

▶ Robot Tig

You will need: small spray bottle filled with water

For this game, you will need a large space for the children to run about.

Choose one child to be the catcher and give the water spray (which represents an oil can) to a different child. Let all the children run about pretending to be robots while the catcher tries to tig them –

encourage them to do their best robot moves!

When a child is caught, they become a rusty robot and they have to freeze where they are. The child with the water spray (who cannot be caught) has to come and oil them by spraying at them a couple of times so they can move. The person who has just been unfrozen then takes over the water spray and it is their job to free the next person while the child who has just freed them continues as a normal participant in the game.

Continue playing like this. The catcher's aim is to freeze everyone except the child with the water spray, and everyone else's aim is to work together to prevent this.

(continued overleaf)

After a few minutes, you can allow everyone to be unfrozen and start the game again with a new catcher.

▶ Design a Robot

You will need: felt pens, paper

Divide the children into groups of three or four and give them a few minutes to design a robot. Get them to draw it on their piece of paper. Encourage them to give it a name and to think about what it will be able to do and the features it will have.

Once they have done this, let each group show their robot to the larger group. If you have time, each group could give a short explanation of their robot and what it can do, or if you are pushed for time, you could gather all the pictures together on a table or stick them up on the wall and give everyone a minute to look at them.

This activity could be done just for fun or a leader could choose a winning group.

▶ Friendship Game

You will need: pens, paper

Choose two volunteers who are good friends with each other. (You could choose two or three pairs to play at once.) Give each participant a pen and some paper. Tell them that you are going to read out a series of questions that involve making a choice.

Tell one of the pair that they have to write down what they would choose in that situation while the other member of the pair has to write down the answer they think their friend will give.

Here are some possible questions:

- Would you choose chocolate or crisps?
- What is your favourite colour?

- Would you rather go swimming or play football?
- If you found a £10 note lying in the playground, would you keep it or hand it in?
- Where in the world would you most like to visit?
- Do you prefer going shopping or going to the beach?
- Would you rather have a cat or a dog?
- If you saw someone dropping litter in the playground, would you tell them to pick it up, pick it up for them, or do nothing?

After each question, get the children to display their answers and give them a point for each question where their answers match within their pair. If you have more than one pair competing you can see which pair of friends know each other the best.



INTRO TO QUESTION

Last time we thought about why there are bad things in the world. God had made a world that was very good, but Adam and Eve sinned. They disobeyed God, and the knock-on effect was that their relationship with God and with one another was broken, and the world was broken. Now, instead of being very good, there are lots of things in the world that are very bad.

Today we're going to think about two big questions that follow on from what we talked about last week. Both of these questions come from children at an SU weekend away.

- Did God know sin was going to happen?
- Why did God give us free choice?

They are both brilliant questions, and they're quite complicated to think about, but we're going to do our best to find out what the Bible says!



EXPLORING THE BIBLE

▶ What does the Bible say?

You will need: Bible or verses printed out (from additional document: Bible verses)

First of all, did God know sin was going to happen?

The short answer to that question is yes.

Look up the Bible verses below, or show them to the children on the printouts:

*Lord, you have seen what is in my heart.
You know all about me.*

*You know when I sit down and when I get up.
You know what I'm thinking even though you are far away.*

*You know when I go out to work and when I come back home.
You know exactly how I live.
Lord, even before I speak a word, you know all about it.*

(Psalm 139:1-4 NIRV)

If you played the friendship game earlier, you could point out that when someone was making a choice, often their friend knew what they would choose because they knew them so well.

The Bible tells us that God knows us even better than our best friend because he made us. He knows what we are going to do or say, even before it happens.

You could refer back to Session 5 – it talked about how we are limited by time and space but God is not, so his view of things is different from ours.

That leads on to the second question (and possibly several other questions!) If God knew that Adam and Eve were going to disobey him, why did he give them the choice? Wouldn't it have been easier if he had made them choose not to eat the fruit? And why does God let people choose to do things that hurt others today?

See what ideas the children come up with in answer to these questions. If they are struggling to think, you could ask them to imagine what it would be like if people didn't have a choice about how they behaved.

If God had made people so that we couldn't choose to do things that are wrong, then we wouldn't be able to choose to do right either. We wouldn't be able to choose to do anything. We'd just be like robots, doing what we were programmed to do.

That might mean there was no evil, but things like love and friendship wouldn't exist either, because they are things that have to be chosen. They can't be forced.

If you used the Design a Robot intro activity you can get the children to think about what it would be like if they actually made the robot. It might be able to do things for them, but could it really be their friend?

The Bible teaches that God created people for friendship with him, and that he wants us to choose to love him and obey him, but it's not something he forces us to do, because then it wouldn't really be love.

All through the Bible, he gives people a choice.

A couple of weeks ago (in Session 5) we heard about Moses. God's people, the Israelites, were slaves in Egypt, and God decided to

rescue them and called Moses to lead them to freedom. The story of how God rescued his people is amazing! He saved them even though Pharaoh, the King of Egypt, was determined to keep them as his slaves. He opened up the sea and made a path through the middle for them to escape. He provided all the food and water they needed on the long journey to the land he had promised them, and he led them all the way there. They were free!

But part of that freedom meant making a choice.

When the people were at the edge of the land and about to go in, Moses spoke to them and told them about the choice they had.

Read Deuteronomy 30:15-20:

'Today I'm giving you a choice. You can have life and success. Or you can have death and harm. I'm commanding you today to love the Lord your God. I'm commanding you to live exactly as he wants you to live. You must obey his commands, rules and laws. Then you will live. There will be many of you. The Lord your God will bless you in the land you are entering to take as your own.

Don't let your hearts turn away from the Lord. Instead, obey him. Don't let yourselves be drawn away to other gods. And don't bow down to them and worship them. If you do, I announce to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You are about to go across the Jordan River and take over the land. But you won't live there very long.

I'm calling for the heavens and the earth to be witnesses against you this very day. I'm offering you the choice of life or death. You can choose either blessings or curses. But I want you to choose life. Then you and

your children will live. And you will love the Lord your God. You will obey him. You will remain true to him. The Lord is your very life. He will give you many years in the land. He promised to give that land to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.' (NIRV)

What was the choice the people had?

What were the consequences of their choice?

They had to choose whether they were going to love God and obey his commands or whether they were going to do their own thing.

If they followed God, that would lead to a good life in the land, but if they didn't, it would lead to trouble. He wanted them to choose to follow him, but they had the choice and, unfortunately, as we follow the story of the Israelites we see them make lots of bad choices and we see that it led to trouble.



REFLECT & RESPOND

▶ Reflection and Prayer

You will need: paper and pen or pencil for each child

Give each child a sheet of paper and a pen or pencil. Get them to divide their paper into quarters. Lead them through the reflection below and get them to write or draw something in response to each of the four questions. Let them know that nobody will be asking for their responses, this is something for them to think about by themselves.

Take a moment to think about the choices you make.

What is one choice you have made today? (It could be a very simple choice like what to have for a snack or it could be a

bigger choice.) Draw or write something on your paper.

When have you been pleased about a choice you've made? It could be choosing a particular person to be your friend, it could be taking on a challenge or trying something new, it could be choosing to do something to help someone else.

When have you not been happy about a choice you've made? Maybe you said something unkind to someone or chose to do something you knew was wrong.

What is something you don't have a choice about?

We talked last time about the knock-on effect of sin. Since Adam and Eve chose to disobey God, every person who is born into the world also sins. And although we do have choices between right and wrong in individual situations, none of us can ever be perfect. We can't choose never to sin no matter how hard we try.

The good news is that because God knew in advance that people would sin, he also had a plan to do something about it.

Read these verses from 1 Peter 1:19-20

'Instead, you were bought with the priceless blood of Christ. He is a perfect lamb. He doesn't have any flaws at all. He was chosen before God created the world. But he came into the world for your sake in these last days.'

These verses are talking about Jesus. He is the only person who has never done anything wrong, and he came into the world to deal with the problem of sin. This was something God had planned since before the world was created! We'll think more next time about how Jesus dealt with the problem of sin.

Give the children a moment to reflect on the idea that God knew people would sin but that he had a plan to do something about it.

They could use the back of their piece of paper to write or draw what they want to say to God.

Lead them in prayer to close.

08. Why doesn't God stop the bad things in the world?



BIBLE STORY / REFERENCE

1 Peter 5:7

Isaiah 53:3-5

John 16:33

Romans 8:28

Revelation 21:3-4



AIMS

To help the children discover some of the things the Bible says about suffering and to understand that God is more powerful than the bad things in the world and has a plan to put things right.

To help them reflect on how the truths in the Bible can encourage them when they face hard times.

God has a plan to deal with the bad things in the world. For now, we live in a broken world and we all experience suffering, but there is hope in the midst of that, and God's people have the promise of a future free from pain and suffering because of Jesus.



PREP FOR LEADERS

Read the Bible verses for today and reflect:

- What hope do these verses offer us in times of suffering?
- When have you known God's comfort or seen him at work in difficult times?

Take some time to pray for your group.



GAMES / INTRO ACTIVITIES

Choose one or more of the following activities to introduce today's theme.

▶ Musical Statues

You will need: equipment to play music

Play some music and get the children to dance or move around the room. Whenever the music stops, they have to freeze. After a couple of practice runs, get anyone a leader spots moving to sit out, and continue playing until you have a winner.

▶ Hospital Tig

In this version of tig, all the children are trying to tig one another. When someone is tug, they have to hold the part of the body they were touched on as they continue playing. When they are tug a second time, they have to hold the part of the body they were touched on that time with their other hand. If they are tug a third time, they must go to the "hospital" - a designated area at the edge of the room - and do ten star jumps. They are then healed, and they can re-join the game with both hands free.

▶ Jigsaw Game

You will need: jigsaw pieces (cut from additional

(continued overleaf)

document: Jigsaw A3 or Jigsaw A4), Bible verses (cut from additional document: Bible verses)

The jigsaw pieces and the Bible verses will be used for the Exploring the Bible section later on. Before the children arrive, hide the jigsaw pieces and the Bible verses around the room. Get the children to hunt for them. See how quickly they can find all the pieces, put the jigsaw together and arrange the Bible verses around the jigsaw, matching them to the correct piece.

If you have a large group, you could print multiple sets on different colours of paper or mark each set with a different colour. You could divide the children into teams and ask each team to find the pieces of a particular colour. Then you could see which team is able to complete the task first.



INTRO TO QUESTION

Over the last two weeks we have looked at some questions about the bad things in the world, which all began with people's choice to disobey God. Last time we thought about how God knew in advance that they would disobey, and we thought about how God allows people to have a choice because he wants us to choose to love him and follow him.

Today we're going to look at one more question on this topic, which came from another child at an SU weekend away.

Why does God not stop all the bad things in the world?

It's a great question, and it ties in with what we thought about

last time. God created people with the ability to make choices, and often we make bad choices that hurt other people, but if God stopped those things, it would be taking away our freedom to choose.

But even if that makes sense, we can still ask why. Especially if we are suffering, or we see someone close to us suffering, it's normal to wonder why that's happening and to wonder why God sometimes doesn't stop it even if we pray to him and ask him.

The good news is that God does have a plan to do something about the wrong things in the world, so that is what we are going to think about today.



EXPLORING THE BIBLE

▶ What does the Bible say about suffering?

You will need: either: printout of jigsaw (from additional document: Jigsaw A3 or Jigsaw A4—choose the size that will work better for your group and cut the jigsaw into individual pieces in advance) and Blu-Tack (optional) or: equipment to show PowerPoint (from additional document: Jigsaw PowerPoint)

The subject of suffering is a big one and we may not find the answers to all your questions about it. We don't understand why God allows certain things to continue, and we don't understand why certain people suffer in ways that others don't, but it is something that affects us all, and it is something that the Bible has a lot to say about.

Talk through each of the points below, displaying the

appropriate jigsaw piece for each section (either on PowerPoint, by sticking the pieces up on a wall or laying them out on a table) until the whole jigsaw is built up. You could ask a child to volunteer to read out each Bible verse from the PowerPoint, by giving them a slip of paper with the verse on (from additional document: Bible verses) or, if you have time, asking them to look it up in the Bible.

• God cares about our suffering

"Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you." (1 Peter 5:7 NLT)

The first piece of the jigsaw tells us that God cares about us and that he sees and notices when we are suffering. It makes God sad when he sees people hurting, so we can talk to him and tell him how we feel.

• In Jesus, God came into the world as a person, so he understands

"People looked down on him. They didn't accept him. He knew all about pain and suffering. He was like someone people turn their faces away from." (Isaiah 53:3 NIRV)

If you have a group that is familiar with the life of Jesus, you could ask them to list examples of times when Jesus experienced suffering.

Jesus lived as a human so he experienced suffering for himself. There were people who said unkind things about him, people who didn't believe him. He was let down by his closest friends and even betrayed by one of them. And when he died on the cross, he experienced extreme pain and suffering. This is important because when we pray to God about our suffering, we are speaking to someone who

understands.

- **Jesus died to deal with all the wrong in the world**

“It was our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows that weighed him down. He was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins.” (Isaiah 53:4-5 NLT)

Jesus’ death on the cross wasn’t a mistake. It was part of God’s plan to deal with sin. The Bible tells us that, on the cross, Jesus took the punishment for all the sin of the world. This means that those who put their trust in Jesus can have everlasting life with God, free from sin and suffering. We’ll think more about that in a few minutes.

- **Just now we live in a broken world, but God is more powerful**

“Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33 NLT)

Jesus won the victory over sin and death on the cross, but for now we still live in a broken world where bad things happen. After Jesus died on the cross, he rose to life again, showing that his power is greater than sin and death, so, even though we live in a broken world, we can have hope.

- **God can work for good, even through suffering**

“And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.” (Romans 8:28 NLT)

Although lots of bad things happen in life that are not what God wants, he can still work good through them. For example, often the times when we are struggling are the

times we turn to God for help and we get to know him better.

You could refer to the story of Joseph from the Bible if the children will be familiar with this or share an example of your own.

- **One day, God’s people will be free from pain and suffering forever**

“God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever.” (Revelation 21:3-4 NLT)

This is an amazing promise! The Bible tells us that one day God’s people will live with him forever, and there will be no more pain or suffering. Those things will be gone forever.

(Place the piece with the question mark in the middle of the jigsaw, or click onto the next slide to reveal it on the PowerPoint.)

We’ve looked at some of the things the Bible has to say about suffering, but there’s still a lot we don’t understand. The things we do know can help us though because they show us that God cares, that he is more powerful than the bad things in the world, and that his plan is for his people to live free from pain and suffering because he sent Jesus to deal with sin.



REFLECT & RESPOND

▶ Reflection and Prayer

You will need: copies of the Bible verses (from additional document: Bible verses) – cut these into slips with the individual verses, equipment to play music, paper and pens

(optional)

Because God cares about the suffering in the world, he likes it when we talk to him about it and ask him to help.

Give the children a moment to think of a situation they would like to pray about. It could be something they are struggling with, it could be a friend or family member who is suffering, or it could be a situation in the world.

If you have time, you could give them the option to share it if they would like to, but don’t put them under any pressure.

Ask them to look at the Bible verses and to choose one that encourages them in their situation. Let them take the slip home as a reminder.

(If you have more time, you could give the children paper and pens and let them design a poster with the Bible verse they have chosen. You could play the song “Hope” from Allstars Kids Club as they do this: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r_t5xitQjlc)

Lead them in prayer, asking God to help in the situations they were thinking about (whether they have shared or not) and thanking God for his plan to deal with sin and put an end to suffering.

Mention as you finish that God sometimes provides help with suffering through people, and encourage them to speak to an adult they trust if there is something they are particularly struggling with.