

HELP!

IT'S THE ALL-AGE

SLOT

52
instant
talk
outlines
for church
services

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INTRODUCTION



If you have ever been asked to lead an all-age service or prepare a children's or youth talk, or are simply in need of fresh ideas for assemblies and RE lessons, then this is the book for you.

Help! It's the All-Age Slot provides all-age talks that are not only easy to prepare but will also grip the entire congregation. The ideas are designed to be quick and easy to use and are clearly presented, with relevant Bible passages suggested. Each session has been tried and tested by children's and youth workers and will help to explain the Bible in a clear and stimulating manner.

There are 52 ready-made sessions, one for every week of the year. Some sessions relate to particular seasons in the church year, but most of them can be used at any point in the calendar. The material covers not only Christmas and Easter but also other significant Christian festivals such as Pentecost, Ascension, Harvest, Bible Sunday and All Saints Day. For each of these festivals, the Appendix lists the set Bible readings from the Lectionary, allowing for easy insertion of the readings into the church service.

All of these talks are suitable for use across the age ranges and are suitable for both smaller and larger groups. Where possible, it is hoped that they will be used to involve children and young people. For large groups, there may be occasions when it would be helpful to duplicate some of the

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suggested pieces of equipment so that more people can be actively involved.

A number of the talks require the involvement of two or more people. On these occasions, pre-planning is particularly important.

Each slot is designed to take between 10 and 15 minutes, although they can be easily shortened where necessary.



Week 27



APPEARANCES CAN BE DECEPTIVE

Aim

To demonstrate that what people look like on the outside isn't always a good indication of what they are really like on the inside

Bible links

- 1 Samuel 16:1–13 (Samuel anoints David)
- John 7:24 (Stop judging by appearances)

You will need

- A blindfold
- Three packets of crisps with distinctive flavours (for example, salt and vinegar; barbecue; cheese and onion)

Before the service, open each packet carefully and swap the contents, so that each packet contains a different flavour from the one shown on the outside. The congregation must

not be able to tell that the packets have been tampered with. (Opening at the back seam usually gives the best results.)

Talk outline

To start your talk, ask if any children have a favourite flavour of crisps. Ask them to name as many flavours as they can think of. Ask for a volunteer (adult or youth) who likes eating crisps, doesn't mind being blindfolded and is good at distinguishing between different flavours.

With your crisp packets still hidden, blindfold your volunteer. Explain to those watching that they must keep very quiet. They mustn't read the variety of crisp out loud and they mustn't say if the volunteer is right or wrong until the end of the testing.

Open the first crisp packet and show the congregation the flavour. Now ask the blindfolded volunteer to take a crisp (guide their hand into the packet if necessary), chew it carefully and name the flavour. Don't tell them whether they are right or wrong. You may like to ask someone to write down the answer given.

Repeat for each of the flavours, then remove the blindfold and show the volunteer the packets. The volunteer may seem very surprised that they got it wrong. Ask them why they think they got it wrong. Ask the congregation if anyone thinks they could have done better.

Point out that, actually, the volunteer has done much better than it appears. Explain that before the service began, you swapped all the contents of the packets round. The

volunteer was correct each time and those watching were the ones who were wrong about the contents of each bag.

When the congregation saw the outside of the crisp packets, they thought they knew what flavour the crisps inside would be. In the same way, we often see what people look like on the outside and assume that we know what they are like on the inside. We may look at someone old and think they don't understand what it is like to be young; we may see someone who wears lovely clothes and assume that they are a good, kind person, or someone who looks different in some way and assume that they are unpleasant or bad.

In John 7:24, Jesus says, 'Stop judging by appearances.' His words are still very important for us today.

A story in the Bible (in 1 Samuel 16) tells us about a time when Samuel the prophet was told by God to go and choose the future king of Israel. Samuel went to the house of a man called Jesse, where he met each of seven brothers in turn. Each of them looked good. However, God had other plans. God spoke to Samuel and said, 'Don't look on the outward appearance, because man looks on the outside but God looks at the heart.' Instead, God chose the youngest boy, who, at the time, simply sat on the hillside watching his father's sheep. Samuel would not have thought of the boy David as the man whom God had chosen to be a great king. But God saw something different in David: he saw not what David was, but what David could become.

Ask everyone to look round at the people in church or, perhaps, to stand and say 'hello' to those close by. All of us are different. We have different coloured eyes and hair. Some of us are old and some of us young. Some of us like the way

we look and some of us wish we looked different. When God looks at us, he sees what we are like on the inside. He sees if we love him and he sees how we care about other people. God knows that these things are far more important than our outward appearance.

Challenge

Ask the children and youth to think about someone at school that they find it hard to like. (Don't ask them to name the person.) Challenge them to try to look for something good in that person this week. You might even challenge them to mention the 'good thing' if other children are being nasty or talking unkindly about that particular person.

Challenge the wider congregation to do the same with someone that they find it difficult to like.



Week 46



SPEAKING FLOWERS

Aim

To aid the understanding of Remembrance Day by looking at the significance of flowers when showing love

Bible links

- Matthew 6:28–30 (God clothes the flowers)
- Matthew 6:25, 34 (Do not worry)
- John 15:13 (Jesus gives his life)
- John 8:36 (Jesus gives freedom)

You will need

- A red rose
- A large daisy from a florist shop, or a paper daisy (yellow circle with white removable petals).
- Display board for the paper daisy (optional)
- Mistletoe, or a picture of mistletoe
- A red poppy (real, if possible, or an artificial Remembrance Day poppy)

- Someone to read John McCrae's poem 'In Flanders Fields' (optional)

Talk outline

Explain that recently you have been thinking about flowers. You may want to tell a story about why you recently bought some.

Ask the children if they have ever bought flowers for someone or if they know anyone who has. Ask why they might buy someone flowers. Explain that most flowers are bought to say 'thank you', to show someone you care, to say 'I love you' or simply because they look nice. When someone buys flowers, they will usually choose the flowers that either they or the recipient likes best. However, certain flowers traditionally have a specific meaning.

Show the congregation the red rose and ask if anyone knows when this flower is traditionally bought. Explain that the majority of red roses are bought around 14 February, which is Valentine's Day. It means 'I love you'.

Show the congregation the daisy. Ask if anyone can guess what the daisy traditionally stands for. Explain that it is meant to show 'loyalty in love'—the idea that someone will love the other person for ever. Ask if anyone knows a game that children play using a daisy. Sometimes people pretend that pulling the petals off a daisy can tell you whether someone loves you or not. They pull off one petal and say, 'Loves me'; they pull off the next petal and say, 'Loves me not.' This continues until all the petals have

been removed. The phrase that is spoken as the last petal is removed is supposed to show whether the person they are thinking about loves them or not. Demonstrate using your real or paper daisy. Point out that this is just a silly bit of fun.

Show the congregation the mistletoe and ask if anyone knows what it is and what it is traditionally used for. Explain that, at Christmas, mistletoe is traditionally hung above a doorway. Whoever stands under the mistletoe is supposed to receive a kiss.

Show the congregation the poppy and ask if anyone knows anything special about it. Say that it is traditionally used on and around Remembrance Day. There are a few different reasons given for using the poppy in this way, but you are going to tell them one of these reasons. Explain that in World War I, an area of land that spanned Belgium and north-west France was called Flanders, and it was the scene of some of the worst fighting. The area was devastated and ended up as a mudbath, with all natural wildlife destroyed. However, almost as soon as the fighting ceased, poppies began to sprout from the ground, between the rough wooden crosses that had been placed on the soldiers' graves. Poppy seeds, which can lie dormant in the soil for over 80 years, had begun to grow as the soil was disturbed.

In 1915, a Canadian doctor called John McCrae saw the fields covered in poppies and wrote a famous poem called 'In Flanders Fields'. (A prearranged volunteer could read the poem at this point.)

Over time, the poppy has become the symbol of remembrance. We buy poppies to show that we will not forget the many men and women who have laid down their lives for us

in the past (and continue to do so) so that we can enjoy the freedom we have today. The money we spend on poppies goes to help the people involved in the armed forces and their families. Point out that many of these people paid the ultimate price for freedom: they gave up their lives.

You may want to tie this in with the life and death of Jesus. Read the words of Jesus in John 15:13: 'Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.' Jesus was pointing towards the fact that he would eventually give his own life so that we could be forgiven.

Read John 8:36: 'So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.' Explain that Jesus' death and resurrection brought us freedom.

Challenge

Encourage the congregation to think about the people who have given their lives to bring peace, and to think also about Jesus, who gave his life to bring us peace with God. Challenge them to think what they could do to encourage peace in the world. Do they need to bring peace in a relationship? How can they encourage peace in the home, at school or in the workplace?