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Praise for *The Whoosh Bible*

*Wow—I wish I had had a copy of **The Whoosh Bible** when I was a school teacher. Storytelling is an integral element of the Christian faith and **The Whoosh Bible** offers a way of interacting with Bible stories that children will love. One of its most endearing features is that it can become a regular practice that will draw children into the text and help them to experience as well as understand its meaning. This is an indispensable resource for both church and school.*

TREVOR COOLING, PROFESSOR OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION, CANTERBURY CHRIST CHURCH UNIVERSITY

*Human beings of all ages are story-makers. **The Whoosh Bible** is a groundbreaking new resource written for story-making children and those who teach and learn with them in churches and schools. It can provide them with a way to walk into the stories of the Bible and live in them and thereby to find meaning for the stories of their own lives. I look forward to the day when whooshing the narratives of scripture becomes a familiar activity in school and church.*

JOHN SHORTT, SENIOR ADVISER, EUROPEAN EDUCATORS' CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION, AND PROFESSORIAL FELLOW IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION, LIVERPOOL HOPE UNIVERSITY



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GILL ROBINS

THE WHOOSH BIBLE

50 INTERACTIVE BIBLE STORIES FOR CHILDREN'S GROUPS



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Introduction

We all love stories, whether telling our own stories by talking, texting and blogging or hearing the stories of others via newspapers, magazines and other media. Stories are the way we make sense of the world, our place in it and our relationships with other people. It is no surprise, therefore, that Jesus taught about the kingdom of God by telling stories to the crowds of people who followed him everywhere he went. In its entirety, the Bible is, of course, the story of God and his relationship with us, initially through the people of Israel and latterly through his Son, Jesus Christ.

Effective storytelling involves understanding the mind of the person to whom the story is being told, rooting the narrative in listeners' experiences so that they can access its meaning. Communicating the vastness of God's story to children therefore involves starting in the mind of the child, moving to the mind of God, and then returning to the mind of the child to root God's story in their experience. Whooshing is one way of doing this.

The Whoosh was created by Professor Joseph Winston of the University of Warwick and it is now widely used to support children as they develop understanding of narrative, from ancient sagas to Shakespeare and contemporary novels. It is a form of physical storytelling in which key actions, objects and words are represented physically. It is much more than acting out the story: it means actually becoming the story.

To Whoosh, stand all the participants in a circle to create an open space. You act as the chorus master or conductor, reading the narrative and bringing people into the circle in turn to become a character or an object for the duration of that section of the Whoosh. When each section is complete, you say 'Whoosh' (as marked in the text) and everyone returns to their place in the circle, ready for the next part of the story. You can also say 'Whoosh' to bring action to an end if it is getting too noisy. In this way, everyone is involved at some point in the story and, because action is continuous around the circle, there are no starring roles. Its improvisatory nature means that children can focus on the story and its meaning.

Each Whoosh is divided into sections, with text emboldened where an action or object is suggested. A list of people, objects and sounds is provided at the beginning of each Whoosh, to give you some idea of the challenges that your storytellers will meet. Children are endlessly creative and will have no problem in becoming objects, buildings or characters in turn. You may, however, want to read through the story aloud first, giving everyone a chance to grasp its content before concentrating on the detail.

There are various ways of dealing with speech. You can read the line for the actor to repeat, you can allow children to improvise speech as suggested by the narrative, or you can use script sheets (these can be downloaded at www.barnabasinchurches.org.uk/9780857463807). To do this, print off the script for the Whoosh you are using, cut the script into strips and give the strips to the relevant participants to read when they enter the central space. Sometimes it might be suitable for everyone to be involved, including those in the outer circle.

Sound effects can be added: voices are usually the most effective medium. Props can also be used, although too many props detract from the action and slow it down.

Here's a brief overview of how it works:

- Form a circle with a large central performance space.
- Tell the group that everyone who wants to will get a chance to be part of the story.
- Start reading the story. When you reach a bold-type word, pause and gesture to a child to move into the centre of the circle, either to create a pose representing the object, or to mime the action of the character.
- Sometimes you will invite several children into the circle at the same time. Occasionally, everyone might be involved.
- When you say ‘Whoosh’, everyone returns to their original place in the circle.
- Move around the circle to invite actors for the next section of the story, so that everyone has a turn.
- Acting will become more confident with experience. Experienced whooshers can add props and improvise dialogue.

In the following Whooshes, the suggested objects are chosen for particular reasons because of their resonance in the story. An example is Moses’ stick, chosen because it was an important symbol of God’s power. There is even a challenge, in the story of Jesus in the desert, of creating physical representations of scorching heat and freezing cold. You or your children may want to emphasise other objects, which is fine, as long as the objects you choose are crucial to the story and it doesn’t become too cluttered with action. Some of the Bible stories, most notably ‘Joseph in Egypt’ and ‘Esther saves the day’, have been abbreviated for ease of use and to make the Whoosh more effective.

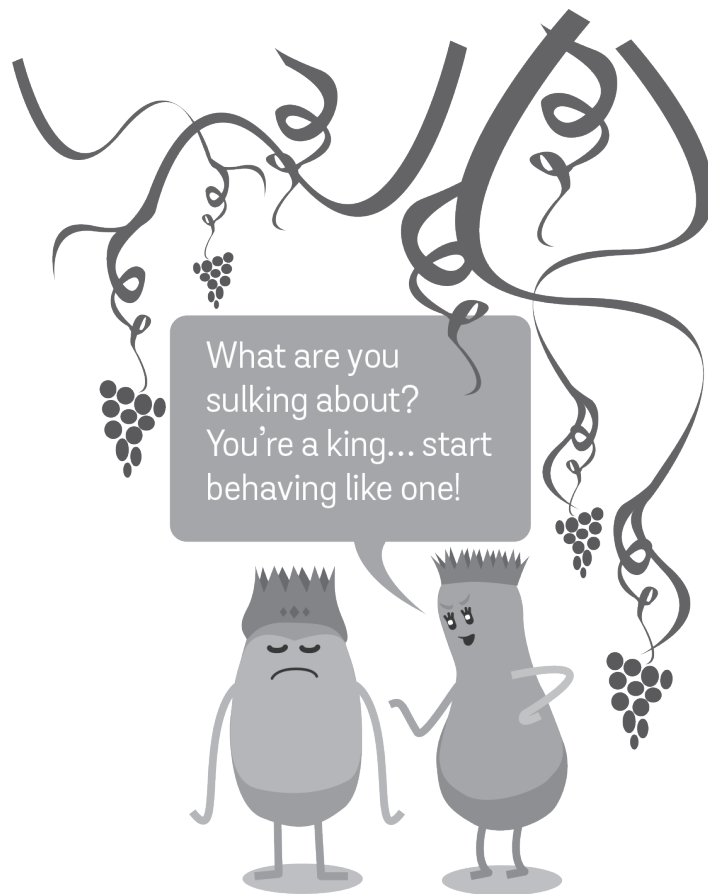
Each story concludes with discussion starters (rooting the story back in the mind of the child), a craft activity which becomes a visual reminder of the story to take home, and a prayer. These are only suggestions, though. Your children may want to say their own prayers or discuss some aspect of the story not suggested in the discussion starters. Be flexible: children’s questions are key indicators of their thoughts, so any questions they ask, even if they seem obscure to you, are relevant to their thinking about the story in a way that your questions are not.

Teachers and organisations that Whoosh find that the act of becoming the story gives children an understanding of its meaning in a way that nothing else does. Actions and words combined have a powerful effect not only on understanding but also on the detail that is remembered. Whooshes have a vital part to play in the sharing of God’s story with children. Enjoy your Whooshing!

Some benefits of the Whoosh

- Children become active participants in the story.
- Whooshing is a circle activity in which everyone gets a go, regardless of age, ability or command of language.
- Roles change often during a Whoosh so that everyone is able to join in.
- Becoming characters and objects in the story encourages children to listen carefully and interact with each other.
- Whooshing is a safe medium within which to explore new ideas and experiment with new roles.
- It helps children to engage with the story and develop empathy with the characters.
- It’s lots of fun!

Old Testament stories



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David fights a giant

1 SAMUEL 16:1—17:58

characters	objects	sounds
people of Israel	Bethlehem	shrieking
Samuel	Samuel's home	shouting
God	army camp	
Saul	sheep	
Jesse	tent	
eight sons	lions	
David	bears	
army	stream	
army commanders		
Philistine army		
Goliath		

The **people of Israel** badly wanted a king, just like the other countries around them had. When **Samuel** told **God** how the people felt, **God** said, 'I'm their king.' But eventually **they** moaned about it to **Samuel** so much that **God** agreed to let them have a king, even though he knew that it would mean trouble.

Their first king was **Saul**. **Samuel** poured special oil on his head to show that he was the king, and for a while **he** trusted God and led the people well. But then **he** started disobeying God. **God** was sorry that he had chosen Saul as king, and, for a long time, **Samuel** was very sad. Eventually, **God** told **Samuel** that he had been feeling miserable for long enough: it was time to choose a new king to take over when Saul died.

So off went **Samuel** to **Bethlehem**, looking for a man called **Jesse** who had **eight sons**.

WHOOSH

Jesse's eldest son, **Eliab**, was a tall, strong soldier in Saul's army. **He** already looked like a king as **he** walked into the room.

'This must be the one,' **Samuel** thought. But **God** said, 'No,' because although **Eliab** looked good on the outside, **his** heart didn't belong to God. And so it went on, **son** after **son**, until **Samuel** had met **seven** of them. Each time, **Samuel** thought this son must be the one God wanted to be the next king. Each time, **God** said, 'No.'

'Is that it?' **he** asked **Jesse** after he had met **seven** of his sons.

'No. There's one more, the youngest. But he's just a shepherd,' answered **Jesse**.

Samuel asked for **David** to be brought to him, and, as **David** appeared, **God** said to **Samuel**, 'This

is the one.' So, although David was still very young, **Samuel** poured oil on his head to show that he was going to be the next king. Then **Samuel** left **Bethlehem** and went **home**.

WHOOSH

As well as being a shepherd, **David** was a good musician. Sometimes King **Saul** would get really miserable, and **David's** harp playing would cheer him up. In fact, it cheered him up so much that **he** sent a message to **Jesse** saying that **David** would be staying with him.

So there was **David, going** backwards and forwards between Saul's **army camp** and his father's **sheep**. Sometimes **he** played his harp for the **king** in his **tent**, and sometimes he cared for the **sheep** in his father's fields. With wild animals around, being a shepherd could be dangerous and **David** sometimes had to use a slingshot to kill the **lions** and **bears** that tried to attack the **sheep**. He was a good shot, though. No wild animals harmed *his* sheep.

WHOOSH

David's three oldest **brothers** were already soldiers in King Saul's **army**. One day, **Jesse** told **David** to leave the **sheep** and **take** some food to his **brothers** and to the **army commanders**. He told **David** that he was to come back and tell him how his brothers were getting on. But when **David** got to the **camp, he** found all the **soldiers** already lined up for battle with the **Philistines**. Suddenly, **they** all started looking really scared.

'What's happening?' **David** asked one of the **soldiers**. The **soldier** pointed to the hugest **giant** that David had ever seen. **He** was almost as tall as two ordinary people. Every morning and evening for 40 days, **Goliath** the giant had appeared, **waving** his spear and **roaring** at the Israelites, daring them to send a man to fight him. **Everyone** was terrified of him—everyone except **David**.

David rushed back to Saul's **tent**.

'I'll fight him,' **David** said. 'God will help me.'

Saul wasn't sure at first, but **David** got impatient and **insisted** that if he could kill lions and bears, **he** could certainly kill a giant. So **Saul** agreed. **He** gave **David** his armour and his weapons, but they were far too big and heavy for David. After **wobbling** around in it a bit, **he** gave it all back. **Leaving** the **tent, he** picked up five small, smooth stones from a **stream** and walked to the front line of the **soldiers**.

WHOOSH

'What?' roared **Goliath** when he spotted **David**. 'A little boy!' **he** laughed.

'You come at me with a sword,' said **David** calmly. 'But I come at you in the name of God.' **He** took one of the stones, **put** it in his slingshot, **swung** it round and round, and then **let go**. The stone hit **Goliath** right on the forehead.

The **Philistines** were so frightened when they saw their **hero** fall down dead that **they** ran away, **shrieking** in terror. The Israelite **army** pursued them, **shouting** at the tops of their voices.

And so the **Philistines** were driven out of their land.

WHOOSH

Follow up

Discussion

- Jesse's oldest son was a strong, brave soldier. Why didn't God choose him as the next king?
- Why did God choose David?
- What sort of people does God want us to be?
- How can we become those sort of people?

Activity

- Give each pair of children an apple. Talk about what it looks like, what colour skin it has, and so on. How do we know whether the apple is as nice inside as outside? Might there be something bad inside the apple? Or something good?
- Cut each apple in half horizontally. Inside every apple when it's cut this way is a star, which has never been seen before because it can't be seen from the outside. Eat the apple halves.

Prayer

Thank you, Father, that it's what is on the inside of me that matters to you, not what I look like or how other people see me. Help me to grow a heart that loves you. Amen

The lost sheep

MATTHEW 18:12–14; LUKE 15:1–10; JOHN 10:11–15

characters	objects	sounds
people Jesus Pharisees teachers of the law children shepherd friends and neighbours woman	sheep wild animals rocks brambles bushes home	murmur

All sorts of **people** were crowding around **Jesus**, wanting to listen to him speak. As usual, the **Pharisees** and the **teachers of the law** were there, keeping an eye on him and waiting for an opportunity to catch him out with a tricky question or two.

‘Look at him,’ one of the **Pharisees** grumbled. ‘He welcomes sinners and tax collectors. Apparently, he even eats with them,’ **he** carried on, looking around at his **friends** in a very superior manner. **They** all smiled at each other: **they** weren’t like this man Jesus that everybody followed around. Nobody could accuse them of spending time with people who didn’t keep the law to the very letter. **They** were careful who they were seen with. It was the outside of you that mattered, after all. You needed to be seen doing the right thing.

WHOOSH

Jesus called one of the **children** from the **crowd** to come and stand with him.

‘Unless you change and become like a little child,’ **he** told the crowd, smiling at the **child**, ‘you will never enter God’s kingdom.’

‘Hmph!’ said one of the **Pharisees**. ‘Behave like a child? What will he say next?’

‘Well, suppose...’ **Jesus** started to say. The **crowd** sensed a story coming, and as **they** settled down to listen, a hush fell over them. The **Pharisees** stood at a safe distance, still looking superior.

‘Suppose you were a shepherd,’ **Jesus** finished the sentence. Yes, **they** could imagine that. **They** knew plenty of shepherds.

‘Suppose you were a **shepherd** with a hundred **sheep**. **You** care for them. When **wild animals** attack, you don’t run away like a paid helper would. **You** defend your **sheep**. You would even die for them. **You** watch over them and keep them safe, because sometimes they can do silly things.

‘Then, one day, when **you** count your **sheep**, **you** only count 99. **You** count again, just in case you missed one... 97, 98, 99. No, there’s definitely one missing. What do you do?’ **Jesus** asked. ‘Do **you**

sit and wait until the sheep reappears on its own? No, of course you don't. **You** leave the 99 **sheep** that are safe and well, while **you** go and look for the lost one.'

Everyone nodded their agreement. Shepherds often had to leave their sheep with each other to go and hunt for one that had got lost.

WHOOSH

'**You** look everywhere,' **Jesus** said. 'And **you** keep looking until you find it. **You** hunt behind **rocks**. You search in the **brambles** and the **bushes**. And when **you** finally find it, **you** put the **sheep** up on your shoulders and go back to the rest of your flock. When **you** get **home**, you call on all your **friends** and **neighbours** and say, "Come and celebrate with me. I've found my lost sheep."'

Everyone looked at each other and smiled in agreement. That was exactly what they would do.

'Or suppose...' **Jesus** continued, to the delight of the crowd, who sensed another story coming. 'Suppose a **woman** has ten silver coins and she loses one.'

A sympathetic **murmur** went around the crowd. All the married **women** knew exactly how they had felt when they were brides and wore their silver coins. **They** would have been devastated to lose one.

Jesus carried on, 'Wouldn't **she** light a lamp straight away and sweep every single corner of her house? Wouldn't **she** search every nook and cranny until she found it? And when **she** found it, **she** would call her neighbours and invite them to celebrate with her, because what was lost had been found.'

WHOOSH

Everyone looked intently at **Jesus** as he finished what he was saying. **They** all knew someone who had lost something they valued, even if they hadn't lost anything themselves.

'I'm telling you,' **Jesus** concluded, 'my Father in heaven celebrates in just the same way when someone who has sinned says they are truly sorry.'

What did it mean? **people** pondered as they sat there. Were they among the sinners? And why was Jesus telling them this story? Only the **Pharisees** looked pleased with themselves. **They** knew they were like the 99 sheep who didn't need to be found. They had nothing to be sorry for.

It wasn't long before **people** understood what Jesus meant. 'I am the good shepherd,' **he** told them when he was talking to them on another day. **He** told them that he was like the shepherd who would never run away when wild animals attacked.

'I know my sheep and they know my voice,' **he** said. 'I am the good shepherd, and I will give up my life for my sheep. I am like the gate of the sheepfold. People who come in through me will be saved.'

On that occasion, **lots of people** walked away, saying, 'He must be mad,' but **some** of the crowd understood what he meant. **They** knew they were like the lost sheep that needed to be found.

WHOOSH

Follow up

Discussion

- Has anyone been lost? What did the adults do?
- Has anyone ever lost something? What did they do?
- Why did Jesus tell this story?
- Why is God so happy when someone chooses to follow him?

Activity

- Draw a shepherd in one corner of a piece of A4 paper. Draw a sheep in the opposite corner. Create a maze by drawing wavy, tangled lines around the page. Only one line should touch both the shepherd and the sheep. Add some rocks, brambles and bushes in the spaces between the lines.
- Challenge friends to find your lost sheep.

Prayer

Father, thank you that you love me so much that you sent Jesus so that I could have eternal life. Thank you that you will never stop loving me. Amen