

Fun, practical, interactive
Bible teaching material!

Becky May

GOD'S STORY FOR UNDER 5s

36 Bible-based sessions for
midweek and Sunday groups

- ▶ 36 key stories from the Bible
- ▶ A year's user-friendly session plans
- ▶ Wide range of easily sourced activities
- ▶ Differentiated learning styles



a FRESH approach
to exploring
God's BIG story!



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Abingdon OX14 3FE
United Kingdom
Tel: +44 (0)1865 319700
Email: enquiries@brf.org.uk
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Contents

Introduction	6
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Old Testament stories

1. God creates the world.....	10
2. Adam and Eve make a bad choice	13
3. Noah and the ark	16
4. God's promise to Abraham and Sarah	19
5. Joseph is taken to Egypt.....	22
6. Joseph serves God.....	25
7. The baby in the basket.....	28
8. Escape from Egypt	31
9. God's special rules	34
10. Joshua and the walls of Jericho	37
11. Ruth: someone who cared	41
12. Samuel: a boy who listened	44
13. David and Goliath	47
14. David and Jonathan	50
15. King David praises God	53
16. Elijah and the fire	56
17. Daniel and the lions	59
18. Jonah: God's messenger	62

New Testament stories

19. Mary and the angel.....	68
20. Jesus is born	71
21. Jesus in the temple	74
22. Jesus' baptism	77
23. Jesus chooses his disciples	80
24. The wise and foolish builders	83
25. Jesus heals a paralysed man.....	86
26. The farmer and his seeds.....	89
27. Jesus feeds 5000 people	92
28. The good Samaritan	95
29. The lost sheep	98
30. The lost coin	101
31. The prodigal son.....	104
32. Jesus notices Zacchaeus.....	107
33. Palm Sunday.....	110
34. A very sad day and a very happy day	113
35. Jesus returns to heaven.....	116
36. God sends his helper	119
Templates.....	123

Introduction

This is the first in a series of three books, which can be used to provide a creative overview of some of the key stories in both the Old Testament and the New Testament, with primary and preschool-aged children. Each book can be used independently, if you are working with children in a particular age bracket, or you can combine this book with those for 5–7s and 7–11s, to enable all your children's groups to share these Bible stories in parallel with one another.

Who is this book for?

This curriculum has been prepared for anyone who wants to share God's big story with the smallest of children. It could be used as a year-long programme to work through the Bible week by week, throughout the academic year, or the appropriate stories may be used to celebrate key festivals in the church calendar, with other sessions slotted in as best suits your teaching plan for the year.

You can use it in a midweek play group, on a Sunday morning, or in nursery and preschool groups.

What does the book cover?

The 36 sessions, which run in sequence, work together to tell God's story from creation to Pentecost, telling many of the key stories of the faith along the way. Although there is not space to include every Bible story, it is hoped that the episodes selected will give your children and their families an overview of God's story and inspire you to adopt this style of learning and exploration as you continue with further Bible stories.

Activity areas

Each session includes a range of suggested activities, which are organised under the headings listed below. To enable children to experience the full depth and breadth of learning opportunities, it is hoped that you will be able to offer all of the suggested activities, immersing your group in the story of the day. Alternatively, if time and space are limited, you will need to select activities—but do try to take them from different areas each time, to ensure variety and to expose the children to different media and activity types. One of the key values of this curriculum is that children should have freedom of choice to select the activities that they want to participate in, and so, when space is limited, it is still important to offer variety and choice in the types of activities.

Included with the activities are suggestions of things to talk about with the children as they participate, if you have enough helpers available to lead or support children in their own discovery, play and learning. Parents and carers, if present, should also be invited to explore some of the activities with their children, as well as encouraging independent exploration.

Below you will find a short explanation of each activity area, with guidance on how to set up the environment for the best possible outcome.

Sensory, tactile, malleable

These activities offer children the chance to explore using their senses (often predominantly touch), as they handle and feel objects that relate to the story. Depending on the activity, you may need a table in this area, or a large tray, such as a builder's tray, known as a tuff spot.

Small world play

In this area, set up a model that relates to the story. Children can then manipulate figurines to act out the story, or play out a scenario that links the story to their own experiences. Because this activity usually involves small pieces, it will need to be set up in a quiet, protected area, such as at a table, off the floor.

Role play / dressing up

This area will give children the opportunity to act out for themselves something that relates to the story, retells the story, or explores an experience familiar to them, which will help them to understand the story better. This activity will work well in a larger area where children can have space to move around, perhaps with screens, with appropriate posters or pictures attached, to establish the environment better.

Creative

This is an area for arts and crafts where, through a range of media and techniques, children can make something simple to take home with them as a reminder of the session. This activity will work well at a table, where children can sit or stand around and easily access the materials that they need to use.

Construction

Using bricks and building blocks, wood and boxes, children can work (with help) to construct something, often on a large scale, that relates to the story. This activity is often used during the story time, as a prop for the retelling. You will need a large space for this activity, as it will often involve larger objects and can be quite noisy.

Books

Although most children in this age group are not yet readers, they will all exhibit a range of pre-reading skills and an interest in handling books for themselves. They might explore the illustrations and try to read independently, as well as having an adult who will read the books to them. Where possible, set up a reading rug or blanket, along with cushions, beanbags or chairs that children can sit on while they read the books. Display the books in such a way that children can access them independently.

Water

This activity will often work well with a water tray or water table, using appropriate tools or props relevant to the story. You will need to protect the surrounding area and supervise the activity to ensure that children explore the water area safely. Have cloths to hand to wipe up spillages.

Sand

This activity will require a sand tray or sand pit and a variety of sand tools to explore one aspect of the story. This is another activity area that may require more supervision.

Puzzles, toys, games

Under this heading, for each session, additional toys, games and puzzles are suggested, which can be offered to reinforce the learning that takes place in the session. These toys should be located where children can access them freely, perhaps on the floor or on a play mat, away from the more structured activities. It may be helpful to organise these activities by age or type.

Snack time

As you draw your free choice time to an end, gather the children and parents together for a small snack, offering drinks and cakes, biscuits or fruit. You could use this gathering time to celebrate birthdays and to share any notices or announcements you may have.

Story time

For each session, a script is provided so that you can tell the story in an interactive, creative way. Props or visual aids may be included, or the children may be involved in acting out parts of the story themselves.

Prayer

A short prayer is offered, which focuses on what we might learn from the story and gives children the opportunity to respond at an appropriate level. You may find it helpful to introduce the prayer by saying, 'I'm going to say a prayer. Please listen carefully and, if you want to join in, you can say "Amen" at the end.'

Songs

One or two songs and rhymes are suggested each time, relating to the theme of the session. You may wish to offer a selection of percussion instruments or ribbons and flags for the children to use, or teach them some simple actions to follow.

Take home

As you close your session, there is a suggested idea for an activity that families can participate in at home, to continue learning and growing together, or a simple object that children can take home as a physical reminder of the story and the things we can learn through it.



16

Elijah and the fire

For the team

Session theme

During this session we explore one episode from Elijah's life, when he confronted Ahab and proved that God is the true God. Through this session, we will show the children that God has power over all things.

Bible text: 1 Kings 18

Team prayer

Almighty God, we remember that you are all-powerful. Help us to share this message with the children who come to our group today.

Refer to pages 6–8 to see how the activity areas work together

Activity areas

Sensory, tactile, malleable

Copy the play dough mat template with the picture of the empty altars on page 125, and laminate the copies in preparation for the session. Provide play dough in fiery colours—red, orange and yellow—and invite the children and carers to create flames from it, to stick above Elijah's altar.

Talk about how God sent the fire on to the altar when Elijah prayed, to show the people that he was the real God.

Small world play

Provide toy fire engines and fire fighters, perhaps with a road play mat so that the children can pretend to chase through the streets to put out fires. You could also provide a dolls' house for children to practise taking a fire escape route out of a house.

Talk about how fire fighters use water to put fires out. In today's story, we will hear about a time when God sent a fire from heaven that burnt everything on the altar, even though water had already been poured all over it.

Role play / dressing up

Create a fire station scene where children can dress up as fire fighters. Let them use a play phone to practise taking an emergency call, 'writing' the messages that they take.

Talk about how fire fighters are there to keep us safe in an emergency, although we should never do anything dangerous that could cause a problem. Talk about what we should do if we ever see a fire and how we should act to stay safe.

Construction

Work with the children and carers to build a model of the altar, like the one Elijah built in the story. You will need twelve large stones, but make sure that they are not too heavy for the children to carry themselves. Alternatively, you could stuff twelve large brown paper bags or black plastic sacks for children to use as stones.

Talk about how, at the time of Elijah, people had to build altars to offer sacrifices or gifts to God. We do not have to do that now, because Jesus came to make things right between us and God.

Books

Provide a selection of books about fires, fire engines and fire fighters, along with children's Bibles and story books about Elijah, which could include other episodes from his life.

Share the books with the children who ask to have them read to them, and talk about the things that are of interest to the children.

Water

Provide water squirters and pistols so that children can pretend to be fire fighters, putting out a fire with the water.

Talk about how we use water to put fires out—but even though everything had been covered in water, God is so powerful that his fire still burnt everything on the altar.

Sand

Help the children to dig long trenches in the sand with spades and scoops. Provide a jug of water that the children can use to pour water into the trench.

Talk about the way that Elijah dug a trench around the altar to fill with water.

Puzzles, toys, games

Gather a selection of games and jigsaw puzzles with fire engines or fire fighters as their theme.

Snack time

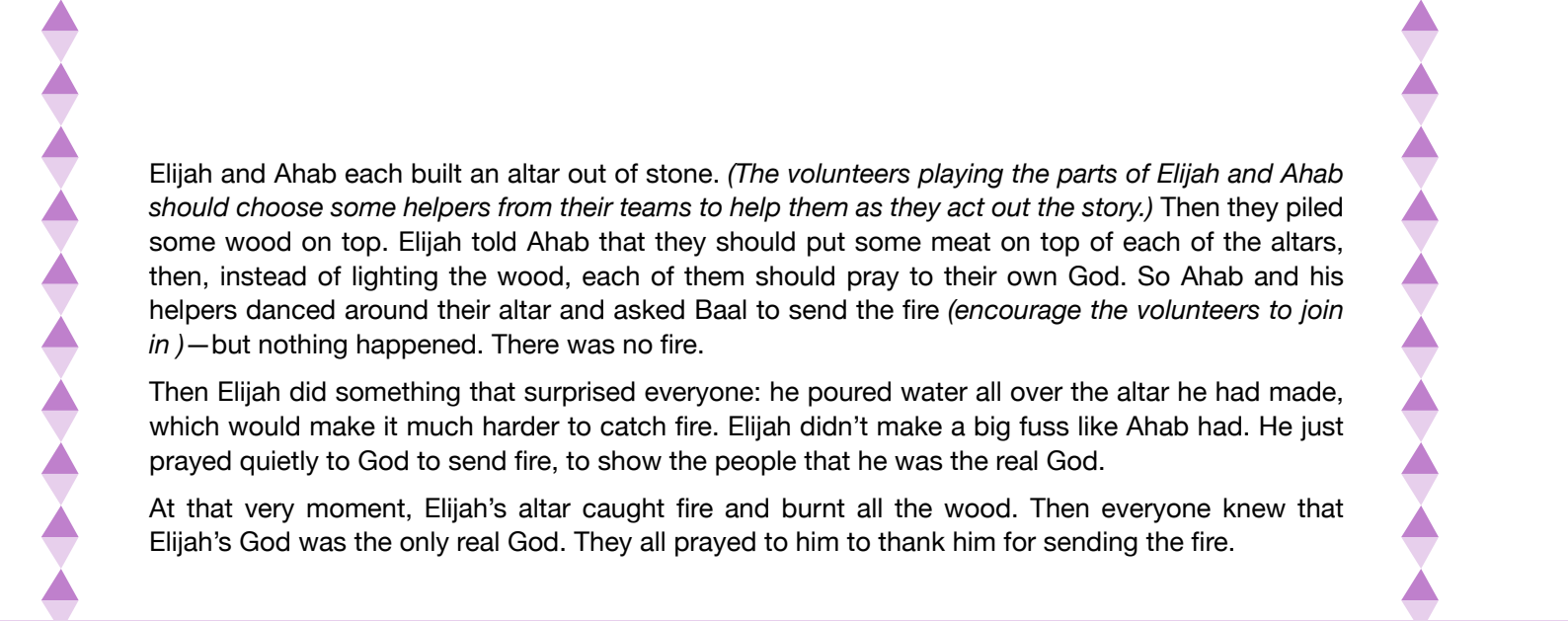
Story time

As you prepare to tell the story today, divide the children and carers into two teams, with a clear division between them. You will need a leader for each group, one to play the part of Elijah and the other to be King Ahab. You will also need a number of large stones or stuffed plastic bags, some sticks, a small paddling pool where you can build Elijah's altar, and a watering can filled with water. You could use appropriately coloured ribbons to represent the fire, or just leave it to the imagination. Settle everyone down and begin the story.



In today's story, we meet a very bad king—King Ahab (*encourage everyone to boo as Ahab poses in front of them*). King Ahab didn't believe in God and he didn't look after God's people very well. He had a made-up God, called Baal, but Baal wasn't real and didn't do anything.

There had been no rain for a very long time and Elijah, a good man who followed God, tried to warn King Ahab that he needed to trust God to look after the people. But Ahab would not listen, so Elijah told him that they needed to have a contest to see which God was real—Baal or Elijah's God.



Elijah and Ahab each built an altar out of stone. *(The volunteers playing the parts of Elijah and Ahab should choose some helpers from their teams to help them as they act out the story.)* Then they piled some wood on top. Elijah told Ahab that they should put some meat on top of each of the altars, then, instead of lighting the wood, each of them should pray to their own God. So Ahab and his helpers danced around their altar and asked Baal to send the fire *(encourage the volunteers to join in)*—but nothing happened. There was no fire.

Then Elijah did something that surprised everyone: he poured water all over the altar he had made, which would make it much harder to catch fire. Elijah didn't make a big fuss like Ahab had. He just prayed quietly to God to send fire, to show the people that he was the real God.

At that very moment, Elijah's altar caught fire and burnt all the wood. Then everyone knew that Elijah's God was the only real God. They all prayed to him to thank him for sending the fire.

Prayer

Thank you, God, that you are the real God and you always listen to our prayers. Amen

Songs

Songs today could include:

- Nothing's too big (Doug Horley)
- Have we made our God too small? (Doug Horley)

Take home

Encourage your families to spend some time in prayer together this week, thinking of words to say to tell God how great we think he is.



28

The good Samaritan

For the team

Session theme

This session explores another of Jesus' parables, with a lesson about how we should show love and care to everyone we meet, enabling the children to explore a key value that is relevant to all ages.

Bible text: Luke 10:25–37

Team prayer

Lord Jesus, today's story carries a real challenge to care for all people. Help us to model this care in our actions as well as in our teaching.

Refer to pages 6–8 to see how the activity areas work together

Activity areas

Sensory, tactile, malleable

Provide a selection of different coins, paper and wax crayons for the children to use to create rubbings of the coins. Encourage them to feel the coins first, by carefully rubbing their fingers over them.

Talk about the good Samaritan, who paid some of his own money to make sure that the man who had been hurt was looked after until he was well again.

Small world play

Provide a roadmap floor mat and a selection of toy vehicles for children to use to re-enact going on a long journey. As well as cars and buses, you could also provide some horses or donkeys to represent the way that the man in the story would have travelled.

Talk about children's own experiences of going on a long journey. Where did they go, how did they travel and who did they travel with? Explain that the man in the story today was badly hurt while he was on his journey.

Role play / dressing up

Set up a hospital or doctor's surgery where children can take turns to play a patient, doctor or nurse. You could include blankets on the floor to represent beds, toy medical cases, dressing-up outfits and an assortment of bandages for children to use to tend 'wounds'.

Talk about children's own experiences of being looked after when they have hurt themselves, perhaps at the hospital or by their parents. How good does it feel when someone takes care of us and makes things better?

Creative

For this activity, you will need a small craft box. Invite each child to paint their box green before sticking a white foam or card cross on to the lid. Give them a few plasters and an antibacterial wipe, to create their own small first aid kit.

Talk about the way that the good Samaritan took care of the man who had been injured. We can keep our first aid kits at home to be used when someone in our family gets hurt, too.

Books

Gather a selection of children's stories that talk about helping others, as well as children's Bibles and story books that retell the story of the good Samaritan. Other book themes could include journeys or hospitals.

Share the books with the children, reading the stories and talking about the things they discover in the books that they choose to look at.

Water

Add a small amount of washing-up liquid or hand soap to the water tray and provide some dolls' clothes for the children to 'wash' in the water tray. You could set up a washing line so that children can peg the washing out to dry.

Talk about the man in the story who was badly hurt and was left in a terrible mess. The good Samaritan treated him very kindly, taking him to a place where he could be cleaned up and looked after, so that he could get better.

Sand

Work with the children to dig into the sand and create a scene appropriate for the telling of today's story, with roadways, hills and valleys. You could provide some pebbles to represent rocks for the robbers to hide behind, and perhaps some figurines that could be used by the children to retell the story.

Talk about the route that the man was walking along: it was very dangerous, with robbers hiding, ready to jump out and attack him.

Puzzles, toys, games

In the selection of toys and games offered today, you could include things that focus on people who help us, such as doctors, nurses, police, fire fighters and so on.

Snack time

Story time

For this retelling, you will need a number of people figurines to represent the man on his journey, the robbers, the priest, the Levite, the good Samaritan and the innkeeper. Lay out a strip of brown fabric or paper to represent the road and invite the children and their carers to sit on the floor with you.



This is a story that Jesus told, to teach people how they should care for others. It's the story of a man who went on a journey.

Spread the roadway out in front of the children and hold up the man, walking him steadily along the road as you continue.

Suddenly, some robbers jumped out (*use these figures to push the man to the ground*). They stole the man's money and hurt him badly. The poor man was left lying next to the road.

After a while, a priest came along (*move this figure along the road*). You would expect a man who followed God to take care of the injured man, but he didn't—he just walked past.

Then another man who worked in the temple also came along (*move the next figure along the road, past the man*). He saw the injured man lying beside the road but, instead of helping him, he walked past too.

Then another man walked along the road (*use the Samaritan figure to follow the road*). This man was from a different town, and the people from the two towns were not good friends. Everyone would have expected this man to walk straight by, but he didn't. The man from Samaria stopped to help. He put bandages on the injured man's bumps and bruises and carefully helped him to get to a nearby hotel (*move both figures along the road to the innkeeper*). When they got there, the Samaritan gave the innkeeper some money and asked him to help the man to get better again.

Jesus told this story to remind us that when we see somebody who needs our help, we should be ready to help them straight away and not walk past. Perhaps that means sharing our toys with someone we don't normally play with, or helping our parents with some jobs at home. We can all be good and kind, just like the Samaritan man in the story.

Prayer

Dear God, please help us to be good and kind, like the man in the story, and to look after people when they need our care. Amen

Songs

Songs today could include:

- Don't hide your light (Leanne Mitchell)

Take home

Encourage your families to take home the first aid kits that they have created, to keep in a safe place. The next time somebody needs a plaster, take out the box and use it as a reminder of today's story.



LET'S SHARE GOD'S BIG STORY!

Use as a year-long weekly programme or dip in and out to highlight individual stories at key times of year and supplement other activities. Varied storytelling methods enable children to engage with God's big story in different ways, with a range of activities to illustrate and explore the story, catering for different learning preferences and play styles and using materials that most children's groups will already have to hand.

Each session includes a theme summary for the team and a team prayer, a wide range of activities including sensory, tactile, malleable, small world play, construction, water, sand, role play, dressing up, snack time, story time, a closing prayer, suggested songs and a take-home idea.

Also in this series:



Becky May has led various children's and youth programmes over the past 20 years, including Sunday morning discipleship groups for children aged 0-12 and midweek outreach groups for both primary-age children and teenagers.



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