

Introduction

This stylised 'explanation' (based on an original activity by Dilwyn Hunt) uses storytelling and symbols to explain the key Christian ideas about creation, fall, incarnation and redemption - especially the idea of Jesus being the Saviour of the world.

Preparation

- A large round glass cookie jar or similar transparent container, with a lid (useful for transporting the mess away afterwards)
- A large glass jug of water. (You need enough water to fill the cookie jar about two-thirds full, but no more! The other ingredients will fill it to the brim, so don't overfill it at the start)
- A small model human figure. (It may need weighing down to prevent it from floating, so check beforehand in a sink)
- Small sealable containers filled with:
 - Green liquid (water and green water-based paint)
 - Chopped up fruit and vegetables
 - Small bits of wood, twigs and leaves
 - Small bits of metal (not sharp) - paper clips, foil and so on
 - Red liquid (water and red water-based paint)
 - Dry earth
 - Wallpaper paste, mixed but not allowed to become solid
- A stick for stirring
- A large tray to stage the activity in
- Spare paper towels for mopping up accidents and cleaning wet hands afterwards

Development

Explain that especially during Advent (and/or Lent), Christians try to think more about Jesus Christ and what his time on earth was really all about. Here's one way of understanding it.

Ask for a 'brave' volunteer to help with a task later on. Then place the cookie jar upright in front of the audience, in the tray.

Most Christians believe that our whole world and universe were created by a supreme being called 'God'. Plenty of Christians accept the idea of a big bang 14 billion years ago, although some don't - but, whatever the processes, they believe that God was behind it. This is their 'creation' story.

In the beginning when God made the world, it was beautiful, clean, faultless and perfect.

Illustrate this idea by pouring clean water into the cookie jar, to about two-thirds full.

Into this world, God created matter, light, the elements, forces, gravity, gases, plants, trees, flowers,



insects, fish, birds, animals... and when these things were created, then everything was perfect.

But then God decided to create his masterpiece. This creature wasn't driven mainly by instinct - it could think and reason independently. It could work out the difference between right and wrong, it could dream, it could use language, it could live in communities. And above all, it was the closest thing to God. God loved it deeply, and placed this special creature into the world.

Place the human figure into the jar. It should (if you prepared it correctly) sink to the bottom.

What do we think this special intelligent creature was? Yes, us. Human beings. At first, everything went well. But things started to go wrong. Some of these humans took to being proud, selfish, jealous and envious. The world started to change, and not for the better.

Pour in the green liquid.

Things got worse. People argued and disagreed about who had the right to food...

Pour in the chopped fruit and vegetables.

Some argued about getting access to wood, to fuel, to shelter...

Pour in the small bits of wood and leaves.

Some made weapons, to hunt, to defend themselves and to attack others...

Pour in the small bits of metal.

Some split up into groups of rival gangs and tribes who attacked each other. Many people died...

Pour in the red liquid.

And the people argued over who would have the best land, who lived where, and who owned what...

Pour in the dry earth.

Kings and emperors and tyrants gained power and raised armies. There was slavery, dishonesty, violence. It all became more fouled up...

Pour in the wallpaper paste, then stir it all up.

I wonder what God felt about this. I wonder what God would want to do with all this. The people couldn't save themselves - they were all caught up at the bottom of this mess. How could God save humanity?

Allow time for pupils to discuss this with a partner.



Christians believe that God decided to make himself human and enter the world himself, going into all the mess to experience it directly. (The word 'incarnation' is all about God becoming a human being like us.) So, what should happen here?

Ask your volunteer to step up and retrieve the human figure from the jar by hand.

Explain that Christians believe that the only way to rescue and save the human race was for God to personally feel and suffer the pain of this world - and to overcome it by entering into the world as both God and man, in the person known as Jesus Christ. (The word for that is 'salvation'.)

Discussion starters

Ask pupils to talk quietly in pairs, then feed back.

- What questions would you have for God about this story?
- How do you think God might feel about seeing the perfect world being spoiled?
- What do you think this story is saying about people today?
- How do you think God might feel about becoming a human being - something much smaller and weaker? (The word for this is 'incarnation'.)
- In what different ways do you think Jesus could 'rescue' or 'save' people? (The word for this is 'salvation' or 'redemption'.)

Prayer

Let's now be quiet. This is a very big story with lots of very deep ideas. Perhaps you have deep feelings about it, too, and more questions that you want to ask. Here's a prayer about that big story. At the end, if you agree with it for yourself, please say 'Amen'.

Creator God, you made everything good, but it got spoiled and went wrong, and although you made us good, we sometimes get spoiled and go wrong too.

Thank you that 'everything going wrong' doesn't have to be the end of our story.

*And thank you that Jesus came into our world to show us how love can rescue people. Show us how to share that love with others. **Amen***