



On your marks

Taking as its starting point the story of [The Pilgrim's Progress](#) by John Bunyan, this idea explores how you might unpack the journey of the Christian faith with a group via a series of simple activity stations. This could take place perhaps over one or more sessions, or be material for a special activity morning or the outline for an all-age event. There are Bible story links and activity suggestions to keep everybody worshipping and learning with and from each other.

Get set

There are a number of children's versions of the book. One excellent retelling is [A Pilgrim's Progress](#) by Geraldine McCaughrean. Child-friendly DVDs of the story also exist.

This classic story can be broadly divided up into four sections:

- Starting off on the journey (meeting Evangelist)
- Friends for the journey (Faithful and Hopeful)
- Battles on the journey (Apollyon, Giant Despair and Vanity Fair)
- The end to the journey (The Heavenly City)

Each of these could become a focus of one activity.

You will need:

- For Station 1: a packed rucksack, a large cross, items for a journey
- For Station 2: an outline of a person, perhaps on flipchart paper, and pens to write with
- For Station 3: a number of cardboard boxes and pens
- For Station 4: a picture of a distant horizon with a city or a light far away

Go!

1. One way to capture the feeling of the journey, if you are doing this over one session, is to create four workshop stations, between which children (and adults) march to a simple rhythmic chant - see below. Call out each line to a simple clapping rhythm and then invite the group to echo it back.

We're on a special Journey

We travel night and day

Choosing good, refusing bad

Exploring life God's way.

2. The four workshops deal with four issues Christians face on their 'journey of faith':
 - deciding what is the best way to go in life - starting to follow the way of Jesus
 - choosing who are the best friends to travel with them - walking with others who are helpful
 - dealing with the temptations and challenges that come - battling with dangerous enemies
 - having an aim, such as fixing our eyes on God and his love - keeping the heavenly city in sight
3. If possible, start the session (about 10 minutes) with a summary outline of the story of **The Pilgrim's Progress**. Thereafter, the aim is to unpack what this story can mean for the children on their journey of faith.

Alternatively, you could tell/read a relevant part from the story for each workshop station, then follow with the suggested activities given below.

It would also help to introduce the word 'pilgrim' before starting. Explain that it is a special word to describe a person who is on a journey - when talking about growing in faith.

Station 1 - Pilgrim luggage

For the first part of the story, introduce a packed rucksack and a large cross. This is where Pilgrim is invited to take off his burden.

- What sort of things do the children think were in his bundle?
- What new things might Pilgrim need to pack?

Have a table in the space where you are working with a variety of items to choose from, which could be packed for a special journey.

- If the children could only take, say, three things, which would they pack?

Read together Philippians 3:7-14, where Paul describes his decision moment and writes of what he leaves behind:

But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ - the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith... Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus. (NIV)

- I wonder what sort of things Paul decided to throw away when he began to follow Jesus.
- I wonder what new things he needed for his new life journey.



Briefly discuss and then move on to the chant - see above.

Station 2 - Pilgrim friends

After an extract from the story about Pilgrim's friends, decide as a group on the qualities to look for in a best friend. Add some key words to an outline of a person on a large sheet of paper. Create a word-identikit picture of a best friend for a pilgrimage.

Print off the following seven verses from Proverbs to read together: 16:28, 17:9, 17:17; 18:24; 19:4, 19:6, 27:17.

- I wonder what sort of friend will be the best support for you as you try to follow Jesus.
- I wonder what sort of friendships are best avoided.

Briefly discuss and then move on to the chant - see above.

Station 3 - Pilgrim battles

After an extract from one of the battle or imprisonment stories, get your group to create a wall of boxes to represent all the dangers, challenges and temptations that make the journey through life hard.

Write their suggestions on the boxes.

Read together Ephesians 6:10-18, where Paul describes the sort of armour that can help us in the battle to do the right thing:

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled round your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. (NIV)

- I wonder what sort of hostile spiritual forces Paul came up against.
- I wonder if the sort of armour Paul recommends gives a clue about the dangers there are as we try to follow Jesus.

Knock down the wall of boxes before moving on again to the chant - see above.



Station 4 - Pilgrim hopes

After reading the part of the story where Pilgrim crosses the final river, show a picture of a distant city or light on a horizon.

- What would keep the group travelling and help them not to give up?

Read together Revelation 21:1 -7, with its picture of heaven:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Look! God's dwelling-place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death" or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.' He who was seated on the throne said, 'I am making everything new!' Then he said, 'Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.' He said to me: 'It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children. (NIV)

- I wonder why heaven is likened to the image of a bride and groom on their wedding day.
- I wonder what will be the best thing about heaven for you.

After discussing this, your group could create some freeze-frames (still photo shots) which portray the hope of heaven - no more pain, no more crime, no more sadness, no more wars and so on.

Finally, end with the chant - see above.