



On your marks

So, you are sitting down to prepare for your children's group or all-age worship and you're faced with your Bible story for the week. You work with a mixed group of children (or children and adults in a service), each with his or her own personality, background, learning style and attention span! Some are eager to learn but easily distracted; others are reluctant to be there and may even be openly indifferent to the story, but you want to help them encounter the Bible story for themselves and enter into its meanings. Most of all, you want to give them all space, time and the tools to hear God speaking to them personally from the story. So where do you start?

The following idea offers ten creative ways to open up any Bible story with your group. So, over to you and the Holy Spirit!

Get set

Some of these ideas require props and this is indicated in each section.

One useful thing to do, which will help you to get your own heart and mind around what God is saying in the story, is to read it carefully in one or two different translations, retellings or paraphrases to start your preparation.

Go!

1 The briefcase

Decide on who the main character of the story is and then collect together a set of items that he or she would carry around in a briefcase or other appropriate carrier. Let your imagination run free. Pass the case around your group and have each take out one item to prompt curiosity, questions and discussion about the story.

Here is an example: a travel bag with: a map, a telescope, a guide to astronomy, a bag of animal feed, sunglasses, wrapping paper, and so on = the story of the visit the wise men.

Matthew 2:1-12

Another example: a rucksack with: a loaf of bread, some cheese, a note from mum, clean socks, a sheet of music, a slingshot, a picture of a sheep, and so on = David visiting his brothers on the battle front.

1 Samuel 17:12-30

2 The phone



Focus on the main event in the story and then work out an imaginary conversation with someone who was there, who has phoned you up to tell you about all it. Pick up your mobile and let the group hear only half the conversation, which will contain your responses to and questions about what went on. At the end put down the phone and say: 'Well, you'll never guess what happened - or can you?'

For example:

Hi, good to hear from you... All right and what about you? ... What happened? ... How many of them? Ten! ... Where were they from? You don't say! ... Of course I've heard of Jesus... He did what? ... What, all of them? ... Amazing! ... No wonder... How many? ... Just one!? ... Never! ... Who'd have thought it... Jesus said what? ... Bet he'll never forget that ... You're going to see him? ... Maybe... I'll give you a ring if I can make it...

Luke 17:11-19

3 Sounds

As you read the story, make a list of the sounds that you would have heard if you had been eavesdropping from behind a wall or hedge. Invite your group to make these sounds in order, or perhaps you can hand out some instruments and other objects that will make the appropriate sounds.

For example: an explosion, a match being struck, water pouring, rain falling, the banging together of rocks, leaves blowing, birds singing, fish splashing, animals roaring, footsteps, laughter, dozing

Genesis 1:1—2:3

4 Colours

As you read your story, think of it as a series of meaningful colours that reflect the moods, emotions and drama of the event. Assemble a collection of differently coloured fabrics and felts, or you could simply ask individuals from your group to create pure colour pictures to contribute to the telling of the story.

For example: grey, red, brown, many colours, light blue, darker blue, very dark blue blood, black, pale yellow, black, white, green and rainbow = Noah and the flood

Genesis 6—9

5 Movements

As you read the Bible story, think of all the movements that it contains. Make a list of these and the activities that go with them to build up a 'verbal version' of the story.

For example: walking, walking carefully, walking downhill, walking nervously, stopping, staggering



and stumbling, falling, lying still. A second person walking confidently, hesitating and then running; yet another person walking confidently, hesitating and then running on; finally, a fourth person walking, pulling something along, pausing, thinking, stooping, carrying, knocking at a door, carrying upstairs, sitting, waiting, paying a bill, walking away.

Luke 10:25-37

6 Faces

Most Bible stories can be presented as a series of feelings or moods, which the participants experience in the course of the action. Isolate the key emotions in the story and then use them as a framework through which to tell the story.

For example: excitement, curiosity, annoyance, anger, exhaustion, looking around, being shocked, confused, happy, amazed, questioning, joyful and surprised.

Luke 19:1-10

7 Bracelets

Assemble a collection of differently shaped and coloured beads, which can be threaded on to a string to make a bracelet. As you tell the Bible story give the group time to choose an item to thread on to their bracelets, which for them symbolises that part of the story. Each bracelet story will turn out differently in your group and this can open up further discussion together as to why each person chose that piece for each part of the story.

Try this for the feeding of the 5,000 with symbols for the people, the food and the baskets and so on.

John 6

8 Sculptures

Break the story into sections and ask an individual or a group of individuals to become a sculpture of one particular part of the Bible story, a section at a time. Movement can be added to bring the Bible story to life. String these together as a long tableau that expresses the story you are telling.

There are more details of this technique in our idea: [Worship sculpture](#).

And an example of this applied to Psalm 23 go to: [Sculpturing the shepherd psalm](#).

9 Shapes

As you read the Bible story, focus on the objects that are in it. Using Plasticene, Playdoh, or Fimo™, invite the group to create some visual aids for the story, adding them to the display one at a time and in order as you tell it.



Try this with Joseph's story which has lots of objects to work with from his dreams and his adventures in Egypt (Genesis 37 and 39-45).

10 Costumes

Assemble a collection of scarves, hats, shawls, coloured sheets, oversize clothes, and so on. This doesn't take too long - raid the back of the wardrobe! - and this resource can be used again and again. Focus on the characters in the story and as you retell it and invite your group in ones or twos to dress up as the different people involved.

Here's an example:

Two women, one in dull clothing because she is sad and one in bright clothing because she's happy

An old man

A very young boy in working clothes and temple-best

Two priests in messy clothing because they've been stirring the pot and choosing the best bits for themselves

Night attire

New coats, some too small and some too big

1 Samuel 1-3