



On your marks

Although this activity is based on the story of Joshua, it could be used as a prayer activity with children with reference to other stories in which God works in an impossible situation. The theme is one of the reality of the invisible world of the spirit.

Get set

You'll need to prepare a simple picture. Mark out a grid of squares with pen or pencil on a sheet of paper. You'll need at least as many squares (bricks) as you have children. On this paper draw a picture with a white wax candle. It might be of a Jesus figure with arms open, and the words around it saying: 'Jesus said: 'I am always with you''. This picture will be invisible to everyone (except the inevitable smart-alec who squints at the wax and spoils everyone's fun). You'll also need a box of water-based paints, water and a brush.

Go!

1. Ask the group in teams or pairs to try to think of as many things they can that are real but invisible. They could write down a list in a two-minute time limit. Discuss their answers, and point out that many things are real although we can't actually see them: air, music, smells, even invisible things like dreams are real in a very different way from the way a teapot is real: it can have a very real effect on you (you could link this to the story of Jacob's dream).
2. Today you're thinking about a time when somebody was faced with a big problem that he could see with his eyes, but the only way to solve the problem was through something invisible.
3. Tell the story of Joshua and the walls of Jericho (you could use the retelling in The Barnabas Children's Bible, story 76), asking as you get to the relevant points:
 - How do you think Joshua felt when the commander of the Lord's armies told him that?
 - How might the people in Jericho have felt when they saw the people of God walking round their city?
 - How might the people of God have felt as they walked round silently?
 - How would you have felt?
4. The only way those visible walls were going to fall down was through the invisible power of God that was somehow unleashed when Joshua and the people did what God had asked them to. For us today, we can tap into that invisible power when we pray.
5. Invite the group to think of situations or people that need something knocking down (it will depend on your age group how you phrase this): places where you'd like God to work his power. As a person prays for that situation, they can choose a colour and paint in a square brick on the picture you've prepared. With more prayers, the invisible picture in wax becomes more visible.