



On your marks

Many children's leaders have found the style of storytelling that has been developed within Godly Play to be a very helpful and effective way of opening up the Bible with children. In the *Barnabas* Ministry Team we have been experimenting with some additional stories from scripture presented in this style, which we have used at *Barnabas* events and on Quiet Days. We are making them available so you can try them out with your children's group and we would be interested in any feedback on how they were received. Remember to tell the story slowly, focusing on the objects and on the story itself, *not* on the children who are listening. When you have finished telling the story, leave a short space and then use the wondering questions written out for you at the end of the piece.

Get set

Peter's up and down journey of faith has endeared itself to many Christians, who read his story in the Gospels and Acts. He seems to have been like so many of us - making mistakes, rash promises and bold gestures, but alongside these, tiny but genuine steps of real growth in understanding as a disciple of Jesus. Jesus recognized from the very start that he was someone who could be 'a rock' and of course Jesus never gave up on him, despite many a stumble and even that awful moment of denial. No wonder his story is such an encouragement to us as we, too, try and follow Jesus as his 21st-century disciples.

The following presentation tries to bring together the big picture of that whole story, with space for children and adults to allow it to speak to them about what it might be saying to each of us today.

For this presentation you will need the following items, choosing or making 3-D objects that are both simple and attractive:

Two model fishing boats

Two pieces of simple netting

Some wooden fish

Two small rocks

A small bed (from a dolls set) and a wooden figure

A wooden figure to represent Jesus

Two identical keys

A small table, goblet (chalice) and large plate (paten) - wooden if possible - and also perhaps from a doll's house

A piece of towelling

A toy cockerel

A representation of the hill with three crosses; the tomb sealed and then opened

A fire (perhaps red and yellow small beads on a shallow clay dish)

A tea light in a holder (I used a fish-shaped one, which seemed appropriate)

A piece of red felt underlay about 18cm wide and 150 cm long



Go!

Unroll part of the red felt, from your right to your left, just enough to lay down the first object. Repeat this for each section of the story, so that eventually the whole story is laid out in front of the group, so that the story 'reads' from left to right for the audience.

Simon was a fisherman.

Lay down the first model fishing boat.

He lived in a place called Capernaum on the shores of Lake Galilee.

Simon was good at fishing and he knew how to lead a team of others to get the best catches from the lake.

Lay down a piece of fishing net and then gradually fill it with small model fish.

Simon's brother was Andrew. He had gone south to hear John the Baptist. John had told everyone to get ready for Jesus. When Andrew did find Jesus, he was so excited that he brought his brother Simon to meet him, too.

Jesus looked at Simon and said, 'Follow me. I want you to fish for people to be part of God's kingdom. From now I will call you Peter, because I want you to be a rock for me.' Peter means 'rock' in their language.

Lay down one of the small rocks.

Simon Peter began to follow Jesus. Jesus did such wonderful things and said such amazing things that Peter never left Jesus' side. He became one of his special friends. Peter was there when Jesus brought a young girl back to life. Jesus was always showing God's love to everyone who came to him.

Lay down the small bed with a figure on it and then lift the figure up and stand her by the bed, as you say these last sentences.

Once Peter and the other friends of Jesus were out on the lake in a boat. Jesus wasn't there. He had gone into the hills to pray.

Lay down the second fishing boat.

Suddenly Jesus appeared like a ghost walking on the water.

Place the figure representing Jesus near to the boat.

Peter cried out, 'Is it you, Jesus? If it is, call me over to you.'

Jesus did call Peter, who walked on the water towards him. But then he got frightened and looked



down and began to sink. Jesus reached out and caught him and brought him safely to the boat. 'Don't be afraid,' said Jesus. 'Trust me.'

Peter and the other disciples followed Jesus everywhere, telling everyone about God's kingdom. Once they were up on a mountain in the north and Jesus asked, 'Who do you think I am?' Peter spoke up with the words, 'You are God's special one - the Messiah sent to save us'. Jesus was pleased with his answer.

Place down the second small rock and then the two keys crossed over each like an 'X'.

He said, 'You will be the rock, on which I build the church. And I will give you the keys to the kingdom, so that you can open its doors to anyone who wants to come in.'

Finally Jesus went to Jerusalem for the last time. It was the Passover festival and some of the leaders wanted to get rid of Jesus. On the Thursday of that week the disciples had a special meal in an upstairs room.

Place down the small table, chalice and paten. Next place the piece of towelling down.

Before they ate, Jesus began to wash everyone's feet. Peter did not want this to happen to him. Jesus shouldn't be their servant. But Jesus said, 'I am showing you the way you must care for each other. In God's kingdom you must be a servant to each other and love one another.'

Later that night Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane. Peter wanted to fight, but Jesus told him to put his sword away. Peter followed to the place where the soldiers took Jesus. He was very frightened. Then in the courtyard near where Jesus was on trial, some of the people recognized that Peter was a follower of Jesus. Three times they challenged him and three times he said he did not even know Jesus.

Put down the cockerel.

A cock crowed... once, then twice. Jesus had warned Peter that this would happen. Peter had let down his best friend.

Put down the three crosses on the hillside.

Jesus was taken away and killed on a cross. Peter felt so sad. It seemed like everything he had hoped for had come to an end.

Pause.

But on the Sunday morning some of the women surprised him by saying that the tomb was empty. Peter ran and found it was true.

Put down the object representing the open tomb.



Later Jesus appeared to all his friends. Once he even appeared to Peter on his own to prove that he was alive again in a new Easter sort of way. Jesus told them to go back to Lake Galilee for a while and wait for him.

While they waited, Peter suggested they went fishing again on the lake. They didn't catch anything all night. Then in the early morning they saw someone on the shore by a fire.

Lay down the small campfire with two fish on it.

'Throw your nets on the other side,' the man said. They did and there was a huge catch of fish. The man was Jesus. Peter jumped into the water and rushed to be near him.

Lay down some more fish on a second piece of netting.

After having breakfast together, Jesus asked Peter if he was still his friend. He asked him three times. 'Of course I am your friend,' said Peter. The past was mended. He was forgiven for those things he had said and now he became the new leader of the church just as Jesus had promised.

Put down the tea light in its holder and then light this.

Peter took the story of Jesus off around the world and opened the door to God's kingdom for many people.

Allow a pause after you have finished the story and then ask:

I wonder which part of this story you like the most?

I wonder which part of this story you think is the most important?

I wonder where you are in this story - or which part is especially about you?

I wonder if there is any part of this story you could leave out and still have all the story you need?