



## On your marks

A number of the psalms have their origins in real events, particularly many linked to the life of David. Why not tell the story behind one of these events and turn this into some simple drama, before you then read the psalm with the children. The stories are found in 1 and 2 Samuel. It is important to show that God is interested in all that happens to us and that every situation - even our most shameful moments - can be transformed through prayer.

## Get set

Read some of these stories linked to the following psalms:

- David in a cave hiding - Psalm 57 and Psalm 142 - see I Samuel 24
- David under house arrest - Psalm - see I Samuel 19
- David is betrayed - Psalm 52 - see I Samuel 21
- David facing up to his big sin - Psalm 51 - see 2 Samuel 11 and 12

This 'Getting Going' idea will work on the first of these.

You will need some simple props: a middle eastern headscarf (a large red and white or black and white check tea towel will work); a shepherd's staff (a long stick); a seat covered with a yellow sheet for Saul's throne; a toy sheep; and some bamboo sticks to represent weapons carried by Saul's soldiers.

This is a piece of simple drama that will work with upward of 6 children, guided by a leader who acts as narrator. Use as many ideas as possible from the children as the drama progresses.

## Go!

Psalm 57 David in the cave

1. Set the scene by introducing David - dressing up one child as a shepherd and talking about his work with the sheep.
2. Introduce King Saul, dressing another child appropriately and sitting the king on a throne; the rest all become members of Saul's court initially but later some become David's outlaw followers. Work out some simple dialogue together as King Saul gives his orders and the court flatters the King
3. Explain that King Saul is often moody (see 1 Samuel 16: 14-23) and act this out too with ad-lib reactions from the court. Only David's skilful harp playing can calm the King. Play out this scene - emphasising the sudden peacefulness that overcomes the moody Saul.
4. Explain how David's popularity grows, especially after the killing of Goliath. The whole court begins to chant for David, wanting him to be ruler, not Saul. Saul reacts accordingly, ordering

his soldiers to 'get David'. Freeze that moment.

5. Now act out a chase, where David and his followers go from hiding place to hiding place with Saul and soldiers in pursuit; each time they arrive just too late! Finally they settle in Wild Goat Rocks, hiding deep in a cave (beneath a table!?), while Saul and his men make camp at the foot of the rocks. David and his men are trapped, though Saul doesn't know he is so close.
6. This is where David prays the prayer of Psalm 57. Here is version that a child or a group could read:

*Look kindly on me, O God.*

*Keep me safe under your care.*

*Don't give up me*

*But rescue me from all my trouble.*

*My enemies are like lions all around, out to hurt me and kill me.*

*But God you are greater.*

*You are Lord of all the world.*

*They have set traps for me to try and catch me out*

*But I will trust God. I will go on singing to you, because you are great.*

*Your love is as high as the sky and your greatness is over all the world*

7. God's answer comes in a strange way! Narrate the following storyline and encourage the children to act it out with appropriate reactions.

Saul has a dodgy tummy!

Saul goes up into the cave to use it as a toilet

David and his men are deep inside the cave

David's men try and convince him this is the moment to kill Saul

David refuses to take advantage of Saul but does creep close enough to cut off part of Saul's robe

David explains to his men that he should not even have done that because Saul is still God's anointed King.

Saul goes back down the hillside

David comes to the edge of the cave and calls out to him.

He spared Saul because it wasn't right to kill him. It would be breaking God's laws; so why is Saul trying to murder him?

Saul is moved by what has happened and gives up chasing after David - for a while.

David and his men are safe. God had answered his prayer in a most unusual way.

8. Talk through with the group how everyone in the story felt about what had happened. Why did David not seize his chance to get rid of Saul? What did Saul's soldiers make of it all? What about David's men? And Saul himself? Why did God answer David's prayer in such an unexpected way?

9. Tell the group what eventually happened to Saul, as they will want to know. He did resume his hunt for David after a while but also grew increasingly tormented. He got involved with more and more evil that really messed with his head and in one battle against the country's neighbours, he was killed along with his son in the thick of the fighting. David was crowned king. David had waited on God's timing for this, refusing on more than one occasion to take the law into his own hands.