

**A four part programme
for 3-11 year olds exploring
four Psalms**

Mustard  Seeds
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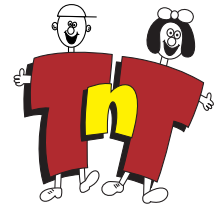
Mustards Seeds is a product of TnT Ministries.

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Since 1993 TnT Ministries has been resourcing and equipping people to teach the Bible to children and teenagers more faithfully, more creatively and more effectively.

Our comprehensive range of printed material covers the entire 18 month to 18 year age range. It is used right around the world in over 27 countries and has been translated in part or in whole into twelve different languages.

We have conducted live children's ministry training in churches and theological colleges in South Africa, Singapore, Dubai, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda, Germany, Norway, Hong Kong, Australia and throughout the United Kingdom.

Mustard Seeds is our new range of electronic material and will ultimately be a comprehensive four year syllabus for 3 to 11 year olds.

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We firmly believe that the Bible is God's word to mankind and that it contains everything we need to know in order to be reconciled with God through faith in Jesus Christ and live in a way that is pleasing to him. Therefore, we believe it is vital to teach the Bible accurately to children, being careful to teach each passage's true meaning in an age-appropriate manner, rather than selecting a 'children's message' from a Biblical passage.

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Mustard Seeds



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Psalms

Week 1 God's Way to Live

pg. 6

Psalm 1

Aim : To teach that living a righteous life by faith in Jesus is the best way to live.

Week 2 The God Who Speaks

pg. 20

Psalm 19

Aim : To teach that we should praise God as our glorious Creator, live according to his word and trust in him for forgiveness when we fall short.

Week 3 God, My Shepherd

pg. 31

Psalm 23

Aim : To teach that God's people can trust him to look after and care for them in all situations.

Week 4 The God Who Forgives

pg. 42

Psalm 51

Aim : To understand that sin affects our relationship with God, but that he always forgives those who truly repent and trust in him.

Series Aims

- To teach that ultimate satisfaction and joy in life come from living the way that God prescribes in his word.
- To understand that God has revealed himself generally in creation and specifically in the Bible.
- To teach that God is intimately involved in every aspect of our lives as Christians to guide, protect and bring fulfilment.
- To teach that even when we stray from living God's way he is willing to forgive, cleanse and fully restore us.

Series Context

The book of Psalms is essentially a collection of songs and poems written by a number of different authors. There are different types of psalms and many have a particular occasion which caused them to be written. Sometimes the writer is giving thanks to God for an act of deliverance or pleading to God for rescue. Sometimes he is lamenting his current situation, expressing confidence in God to deliver or looking back and remembering God's acts in the past.

Series Overview

This series can either be used as a block of four lessons or as four stand alone lessons whenever a 'filler' session is required in your regular teaching programme.

1. **Psalm 1** is a wisdom psalm and describes two distinct ways of living which have two very different destinies. It can be used evangelistically to invite children to live God's way in order to experience God's blessing and not be destroyed in the final judgment.
2. **Psalm 19** explores the different ways in which God has made himself known – creation and the Bible. It could be used apologetically to teach that we can only know what God is like if he chooses to reveal himself to us. He has done this through all that he has made and what he has said in the Bible. It can also be used to encourage children to treasure and read their Bibles.
3. **Psalm 23** is a well-known psalm to many adults and one worth getting the children to memorise. It can be used to teach the children that God is not distant, but that he cares deeply for those

who follow him. Those who do so can have great confidence in God's ability and willingness to provide all their needs – not only in this life, but also for eternity.

4. **Psalm 51** explores the wonder of God's grace poured out on the repentant sinner. All the other psalms clearly teach how we are to live in response to who God is and what he has done. Sadly we don't always get this right! It's therefore a great comfort to know that God also provides a way for those who trust in him to be forgiven, cleansed and restored in their relationship with him.

Memory Verse

Each lesson has its own memory verse for the children to learn. You can find these at the end of each lesson.

Using This Resource

This programme is designed to be adaptable. It can be used for a mixed 3-11s group or more age-specific groups.

Text in blue is generally applicable to younger children (3-7 years); green text is aimed at older children (7-11 years); and black text is applicable to all-age groups, at the leader's discretion.


Leaders are encouraged to engage with the study material in a devotional manner, seeking to apply God's word to their own lives before attempting to teach others.

We trust that you will be blessed as you do that. We also hope that once you have done that, your application of God's word to the children you teach will be more deliberate and relevant.


Note: All page numbers in this document are hyperlinked – simply click on the number to jump to that page.


Craft Symbols


We make use of the following symbols for the craft activities:

 Apply glue here

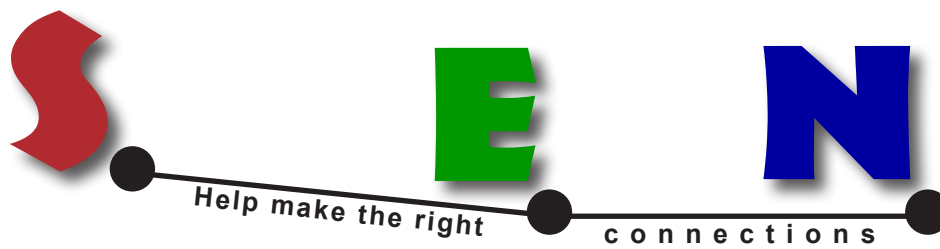
 Cut along this solid line

 Cut out this shaded area

–  – Fold outwards along this dashed line

–  – Fold inwards along this dashed line

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A child with special educational needs (SEN) may provide some challenges to your group. It is therefore essential that you are well prepared for your lessons and that you have carefully thought about how to include all the children. You may need to make some changes to your existing programme to make it accessible for everyone.

A key principle to consider is that, as with all children in your church, each child is an individual and will have different needs, strengths and weaknesses. It is important that you get to know the children you teach as well as possible and that you make an effort to build a relationship with them.

In terms of the lesson itself, you may need to consider the following:

- A child with SEN may need to have an additional adult to support them.
- Consider the environment in which you teach and try to eliminate potential distractions. Where you are seated and where the children are seated, the temperature of the room and noise levels all affect the sense of calm and orderliness of the class.
- Think about the class size and ratio of adults to children.
- It may be appropriate, at times, for a troubled or disruptive child to be accompanied by an adult and to be moved away from the group to a quiet area. Here they can engage in something related to the lesson which is calming and quiet.
- Use clear and child appropriate language.
- When giving instructions; tell them to the whole group, demonstrate, then check that the child with SEN understands what needs to happen.
- Balance the amount of open ended and closed questions you ask.
- Be careful of rhetorical questions; the child with SEN will want to answer them.
- If a child wants to ask too many questions, which may distract from the lesson, tell them that for now we are going to listen and that later you will come back to their questions. **Make sure that you do spend some individual time with the child going through their questions.** You may find that by the time you go back to them, their questions have either been answered or forgotten

or they are not that important anymore.

- Break up your lesson into different sections; short, sharp sections work best as this keeps children engaged and therefore able to manage their behaviour.
- Children with SEN like structure and routines; you may like to start the session with the same song or greeting time or keep the structure the same each week. For example; start with a song, a recap from last week, a short introduction to the new lesson, a song, the Bible story, a craft, the application and then a game for consolidation and further application.
- Use repetition (chants or songs with simple tunes to teach main Bible truths).
- Use lots of different kinds of aids to teach your lesson (movement, pictures, multimedia, props, music, textures, drama, etc.). Consider different learning styles.
- Use simple pictures (too much detail can be distracting).
- Think about how much reading and writing you are expecting the children to do; too much may cause the child with SEN to become anxious and distressed about failing.
- On worksheets, consider making them accessible by asking children to draw some of the answers, rather than write them. If there is a lot of writing or reading required, pair up the SEN child with an adult or with a more able peer. You can also write the answers on a board for them to copy down.
- Children with SEN may find it more difficult to think about application as this requires them to put themselves into a situation which is, at times, hard to do.
- For a child who is non-verbal, find out what their communication is from parents and try to use these as much as possible in your lessons and interaction (Makaton or BSL signing, eye gazes, communication switch boxes, symbols, photos, pictures, objects of reference, etc).

–Toni Edmonds-Smith
Special Needs Teacher

God's Way to Live

Psalm 1

Big Idea : There are only two ways to live – God's righteous way which brings blessing or the way of the wicked which leads to destruction.

Aim : To teach that living a righteous life by faith in Jesus is the best way to live.



Leader's Study Notes

Read Psalm 1 noting the differences between how the wicked and the righteous are described.

Use the following notes to help you think about the passage in more detail.

The book of Psalms deals with many aspects of human experience and begins with a simple and clear contrast between the way of the righteous and the way of the wicked. The wicked are not necessarily immoral people; rather they are all those who reject God's righteous rule, whether actively or passively.

Unlike some of the other psalms this one is more general – neither the author nor the particular situation which caused it to be written are mentioned. It's a very neatly structured poem which focuses on the benefits of living a life that is blessed by God rather than a wicked life.

1:1 To be blessed literally means to be happy and implies being in God's favour. This does not mean that those who are blessed will always feel happy, but rather that they can be content in all circumstances. They are different from the wicked in every way and do not fit in with those who are sinful.

1:2 Turning away from sinful people involves turning towards God. Instead of listening to the wicked, those who are blessed by God listen to his word and enjoy thinking about it at all times. Studying God's word is what leads to living God's way.

1:3-4 Two different pictures are used to compare the righteous and the wicked. A tree that has a constant supply of water bears fruit, prospers and doesn't shrivel up. Like the tree, the righteous person endures, thrives and flourishes because they are rooted in God's word. Chaff is the dried husks of seeds, the worthless scraps of a harvest. As the farmer throws his grain up in the air the chaff is blown away by the breeze and the seeds fall to the ground to be used. The wicked are like chaff: withered, pointless and useless in the end.

1:5 The wicked cannot endure the final day of judgment. They will be judged for their rejection of God and separated from his gathered people.

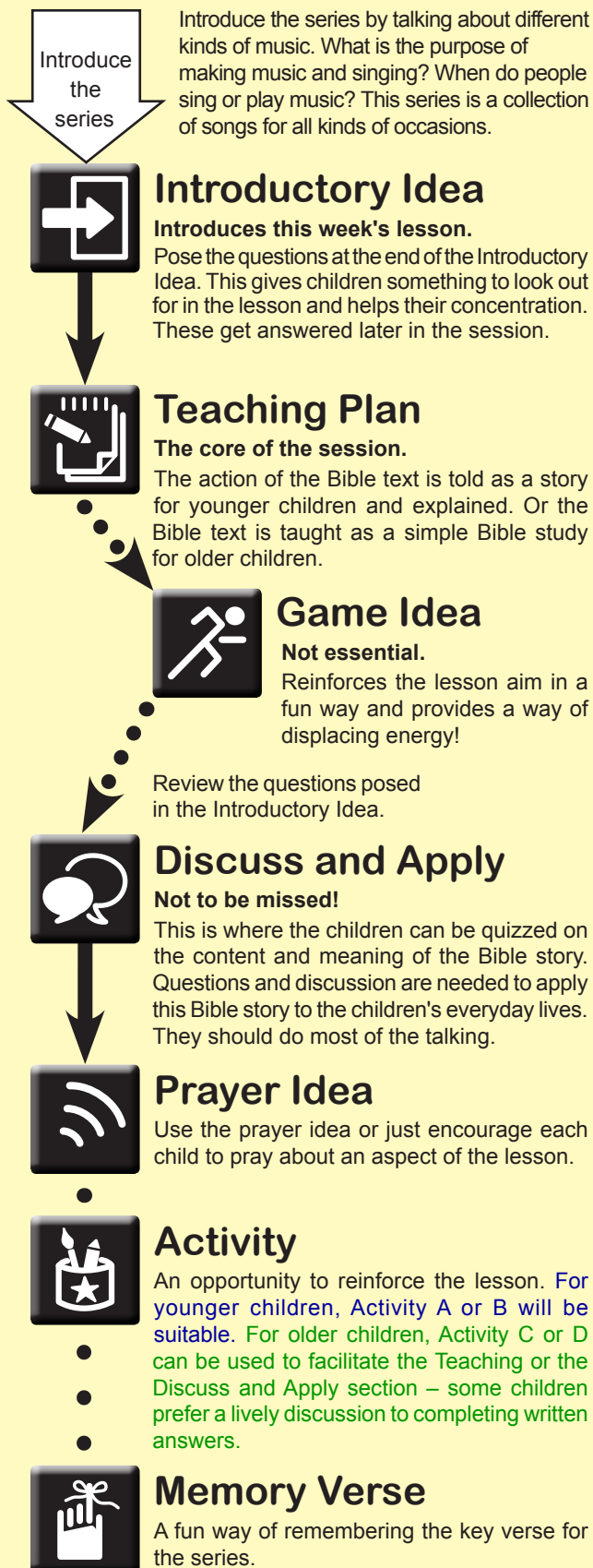
1:6 Those who are blessed are called righteous (in a right relationship with God by faith in Jesus). There is a contrast here between the life of the righteous and the life of the wicked. God cares for those who are righteous; he looks after them and guards their way. The wicked, on the other hand, will be destroyed.

There are only two ways for people to live, each of which leads to a different destination. There is no other way or destiny. The way of the righteous is rooted in and watered by God's word; it is separate from the way of the wicked and protected by God himself. The way of the wicked is feeble, pointless and will be destroyed when God judges. The challenge to the reader is clear: live God's way! This is the blessed and the best way.

Reflect

- How does your society generally divide people – by race? Class? Education? Economics? How does the psalmist divide the entire human race?
- Would you consider yourself to be 'righteous'? Why? How does this show in the way that you live your life?
- Give thanks that God has made it possible for you to be right with him through Jesus' death. Ask God to help you to be rooted in his word and fruitful in his kingdom.

Session Outline



Introductory Idea

Option 1: Would You Rather? Before the lesson draft a list of things which the children need to choose between. One of the options should be appealing and the other not e.g. eating a burger or broccoli; playing with friends or doing homework; going to the beach or to the desert. **With younger children you may need to show them a picture for each option.**

Read out the options from your list one pair at a time or hold up the pictures. The children must choose one thing each time.

Talk about why they chose some things rather than others. Did they all choose the same thing each time? Today's Bible lesson is a song about choosing the best way to live. [Use the Bridge Questions below to create a link with the lesson.]

Option 2: Which Way? Before the lesson make a number of pairs of road signs to different destinations or simply find a picture of each place. One destination in each pair should be somewhere the children would like to go to and the other somewhere they wouldn't like e.g. Disneyland or a museum; school or home; seaside or pond.

Get the children to stand in a line in front of you. Tell them that they are on a road and must choose which way they want to go. Hold up one pair of destinations at a time, one in your left hand and the other in your right hand. The children must point in the direction they want to go to get to their chosen destination (left or right).

Talk about why they chose one direction and not the other. Did they all choose the same place each time? Today's Bible lesson is a song about different ways to go that lead to different places. The different ways to go are really different ways to live, but only one of them is best. [Use the Bridge Questions below to create a link with the lesson.]

Option 3: Route Planners. Before the lesson print three copies of a road map onto paper. The scale must be large enough for the main roads/motorways to be clearly visible but small enough to cover an area that shows a few different locations. Choose a start and an end destination and mark these on each of the maps.

Choose three volunteers and give them each a map and a coloured pen. The children must draw the route that they would take from the start to the end destination without looking at any of the other children's maps. When they are finished hold up their maps for the rest of the children to see and compare the different routes they took.

Talk about why they chose their route. Did they all choose the same way? Which was the best route to the destination? Today's Bible lesson is a song about different ways to live that lead to different places in the end, but only one of them is best. [Use the Bridge Questions below to create a link with the lesson.]

Bridge Questions

The children must listen carefully to today's true Bible lesson to discover the answers to the following questions:

- How many different ways of living are described? [*Two* (1:6)]
- Where do they lead? [*The righteous to God's blessing; the wicked to destruction* (1:1, 6)]
- Which way is the best? [*The way of the righteous* (1:1-3)]



Teaching Plan

This psalm is a short song or poem that can be divided into three parts:

1. The blessed/righteous person (1:1-3)
2. The wicked person (1:4-5)
3. Two different destinations (1:6)

Keep in mind that the psalm is contrasting two lifestyles – that of the wicked and the righteous – and that the psalmist uses different titles to refer to each. **Choosing one word to refer to each group throughout will help younger children in particular to see that the contrast is between two lifestyles and not many.**

For older children you might choose to refer to them as the righteous and the wicked, but for younger children you could use 'those who trust God' and 'those who do not trust God'. You will need to explain clearly what these words/phrases mean at the start. In the Bible the wicked are not necessarily those who do terrible things, but rather anyone who rejects the rule of God in their lives. The righteous are not just those we consider 'good', but rather those who are in a right relationship with God and live under his rule by faith.

You could teach the psalm using the pictures on pages 12 and 13 to illustrate each verse. It is short enough to read out in full, **but for younger children you could simplify some of the words and phrases used.**

Place the pictures on a board or wall as you read each verse, placing the righteous person and the wicked person next to each other and the rest of the pictures below them. The righteous and wicked people have been deliberately made to look the same as the focus should not be on their outward appearance, but the condition of their hearts and their attitude towards God. There are many respectable people in society who are actually wicked in God's eyes.

- 1:1 The righteous [*boy under the crown*] do not do the same things as the wicked [*boy with crossed out crown*]. The righteous do not join in with the wicked [*place the boy being led astray under the wicked*].
- 1:2 The righteous love to read God's word [*place the boy reading Bible under the righteous*].

They think about it all the time and do what it says. They don't listen to what the wicked say, but to what God says.

1:3 A righteous person is like a tree planted by streams of water [*place the fruitful tree under the righteous*]. The tree grows fruit and does not dry up because it has a constant supply of water. It is always fruitful.

1:4 A wicked person is not like a righteous person! They are like the chaff that the wind blows away [*place the farmer winnowing chaff under the wicked*]. Chaff is the dry, useless shell of the seeds harvested by farmers. They separate the seeds from the chaff by throwing it all up in the air; the dry chaff blows away while the good seeds fall to the ground to be used.

1:5-6 The wicked will be judged by God. Their way leads to destruction in the end [*place the skull and crossbones by the wicked*]. But the righteous will be gathered together. God watches over their way and protects them [*place the heart under the righteous*].

For older children – teach the passage using the pictures as above, but then read the psalm a second time and get the children to help you move the pictures to be under the right people. You could also use some of the questions below to help them think about the passage in more detail:

- What do we learn about the righteous? What do they not do? What do they do instead? (1:1-2)
- What is the righteous person compared to? Where is the tree planted? Why is it so fruitful? (1:3)
- What is the wicked person compared to? What happens to the chaff? What does this say about the wicked? (1:4-5)
- Where does the way of the wicked lead in the end? Why is the way of the righteous protected and safe? (1:6)



Game Idea

Option 1: For younger children – Opposite Matching. Before the lesson gather some pairs of opposite pictures e.g. happy and sad face; cold and hot; sweet and sour; fruitful tree and withered tree; flowing river and a muddy puddle; north and south. Hide one half of each pair around the room where the children cannot see them.

Display all the remaining pictures on a wall or board. Go through them one by one asking the children what the picture is and what they think its opposite picture would be. Then get the children to search the room to find all the hidden pictures. When a child finds a picture they must place it underneath the corresponding displayed picture. Once all the pictures have been found and matched the children can sit down.

Check that the pictures have been correctly matched with their opposite half. Remind the children that in today's true Bible lesson there were only two opposite ways to live. Can the children remember what those two ways are?

Option 2: Destination Dash. Before the lesson write the word 'blessing' on one large sheet of green paper and the word 'destruction' on a large sheet of red paper.

Place the two sheets of paper facedown on opposite walls so that the writing is not visible. Divide the group into two and get them to stand at opposite ends of the room under their sheet of paper. Choose one or two volunteers to be the catchers and have them stand in the middle of the room.

When you say 'go' the children in each team must run to the other side of the room while the catchers try to tag them. They can only catch children travelling from the green side to the red side of the room. The children are 'safe' when they reach their destination. Any children who are caught must stand still where they are until the game is over.

Play a second round, but this time the teams run in the opposite directions. The children who could travel safely before can now be caught and those who could be caught before can now travel safely to the opposite side. Continue the game in this way until only one child is left – the last child is the winner!

Take the two sheets of paper off the wall and ask the children which they thought was better. Which base/destination would they choose? Which destination kept them safe? Turn the sheets of paper over to reveal what is written on the other side. Remind the children that in today's true Bible lesson there were two different ways to live and two opposite destinations – one that leads to God's blessing and the other to destruction. Which of the two do the children think is the best way to live?

Option 3: For older children – Memory Meditation. Before the lesson print two copies of page 14 onto paper and cut along the bold lines. Mix up the words in each set and then use a paperclip to keep the sets separate.

Divide the group into two teams and have them line up at one side of the room. Place one set of words spread out on the floor opposite each team at the other end of the room. You will also need to give one team a Bible, opened at Psalm 1. Remind both teams that the memory verse is from Psalm 1:6. The children run in relay to collect one word at a time and return it to their team. They must race to be the first team to assemble the memory verse correctly. The team with the Bible should win easily!

Talk about why that team was able to win. What did they have to help them? Remind the children that in today's true Bible lesson there were two different ways to live – the way of the righteous and the way of the wicked, but only one way is best. The righteous love God's word and do not listen to the wicked.

Reading the Bible tells us how to live the best way.

Option 4: For older children – Obvious Choice. Before the lesson prepare two decks of cards. Remove the diamond cards and jokers from both decks. Separate one deck into a pile of black and a pile of red cards – these will be used in the second round of the game. For the first round shuffle the other deck well and then divide it into two piles, placing them facedown on a chair/table at one end of the room. Divide the group into two teams and have them stand in rows at the opposite end of the room.

The children need to run in relay and collect one card at a time. They may choose a card from either pile but they must always take the top card before returning to their team. The first team to get five red cards wins. If you have large teams or the game goes too quickly you can increase the number of red cards required for each round. For the final round remove the first deck of cards and replace it with the piles of red and black cards placed faceup. There is no need to tell the children what you have done. Run the game again. As before, the first team to get five red cards wins. Not all players will get a turn in the final round.

Ask the children why the game was easier in the final round? Why did no-one choose the black cards? If any children did choose a black card, why was that not a good idea?

Remind the children that the writer of Psalm 1 is clearly showing us the choice between death and life. When the choice is obvious, why would anyone choose death? Talk briefly about the fact that people are blinded by the lies of Satan and other people. They cannot see the truth about Jesus and therefore do not choose life.



Discuss and Apply

This psalm is about two different ways that we can choose to live: one that leads to blessing and one to destruction. There are no other alternative ways we can live.

Use the two different pictures in the psalm (fruitful tree and chaff which blows away) to summarise these two different ways of living:

- **The way of the righteous** – they are blessed by God. They submit to his rule and live in obedience to his word in which they delight (1:2). They trust God, love him and want to live to please him. They are different in every way to the wicked. This is the result of delighting in God's word all the time (1:2); they are like a tree that bears fruit because it has been planted next to a stream and has all the water it needs to grow (1:3); their way is watched over by God himself (1:6).
- **The way of the wicked** – they do not listen to God's word, but rather to each other (1:1-2); they are like dried up chaff which blows away in

the wind and in the end they are of no use (1:4). They will face God's judgment and eventually be destroyed (1:5-6).

You will need to give some examples of what these two ways might look like in the children's lives. Help the children to understand that there are only these two ways to live and two destinations. Ask them which way they want to live and why.

Explain that no matter how hard we try no-one can live a truly righteous life. No-one perfectly loves God or perfectly obeys him. Give examples of how we sometimes live in the same way that the wicked do. Talk about how Jesus was the only person who lived a perfectly righteous life. He never lived as the wicked do. He always delighted in God's word. He is the only person who is truly righteous. God sent him to die in our place so that if we trust in him we can be forgiven for our sin and not be judged along with the wicked. It is because of Jesus' righteous life and his death in our place that we can be called righteous and are blessed by God. He watches over our path and keeps us loving and serving him. Because he does this our destiny is secure – he will help us to keep trusting Jesus. Because of what Jesus has done all who trust in him will be able to stand in the judgement.

For older children – discuss as above, but then spend some time exploring how we are unable to live a perfectly righteous life. This discussion should not lead to despair because Jesus, God's perfect Son, makes us righteous. Nor should it lead to self-righteousness: we can only stand before God because of Jesus. Talk about how this motivates us to live a righteous life now and how meditating on God's word helps us to grow (cf. Psalm 119:11). You could also use some of the questions below to help the children think through the implications of the passage:

- Do you think of yourself as 'righteous' or 'wicked'? What are some ways that you live in the way of the wicked? How can you live in the way of the righteous?
- Are you able to live in the way of the righteous all the time? Which way do you tend to live?
- Who is the only person who has lived a truly righteous life and never lived in the way of the wicked/sinners? How can this encourage us?
- What is the only way in which we can be blessed by God? How should this motivate us to want to live a righteous life?
- What does it mean to 'delight in' and 'meditate on' God's word? Do you do this? Are there things you enjoy doing more than this? How can we encourage one another to love God's word more?
- Why did the tree produce fruit and not wither? Where was it planted? What does this teach us about God's word? What effect does his word have on the life of the righteous person?

- How are the wicked like chaff? What happens to the chaff? What purpose does the chaff serve in the end? What will happen to the wicked when judgment comes? Will they get through it?
- Why is the way of the righteous safe and secure? Who is watching over them? Does this mean that everything will always go our way? What does it mean to be blessed?



Prayer Idea

Before the lesson print page 15 onto paper/card and cut out the fruit. Encourage the children to write or draw what they have learnt about how we can be fruitful and blessed by God. They can then take turns to pray, asking for God's help to do this and thanking God for making a way for us to be blessed by him and saved from destruction. You could then paste these on a large outline of a tree by a river and write 'Psalm 1' above it.



Activity

For 3-7s – choose either Activity A (page 16) or Activity B (page 17).

Activity A – Print page 16 onto paper (one copy for each child).

The children colour in the pictures. Encourage them to draw lots of fruit on the tree. You could also provide them with coloured sticky dots/brightly coloured tissue paper scrunched up into tiny balls to be the fruit and brown/yellow tissue paper to be the chaff. These can be glued in the appropriate places on either side of the picture.

Remind the children that there are only two ways to live and point these out on their page. Which do they think is the best way to live? Why?

Activity B – Make an 'event pass' lanyard. Print page 17 onto card/paper (one copy for every two children). Each child will also require some tissue paper, blue cellophane and a length of ribbon/wool.

Before the lesson cut the page in half as marked then fold and glue the picture of the heart and the tree back to back. Punch a hole in the middle along the top edge.

The children colour in the pictures and glue scrunched up balls of brightly coloured tissue paper over the fruit and some blue cellophane over the river. You could also provide them with gold glitter for the crown.

Help them to thread a suitable length of ribbon/wool through the hole and tie a knot so they can wear it as a necklace. If you are concerned that this might be a choking hazard then simply provide a safety pin to turn the craft into a badge instead.

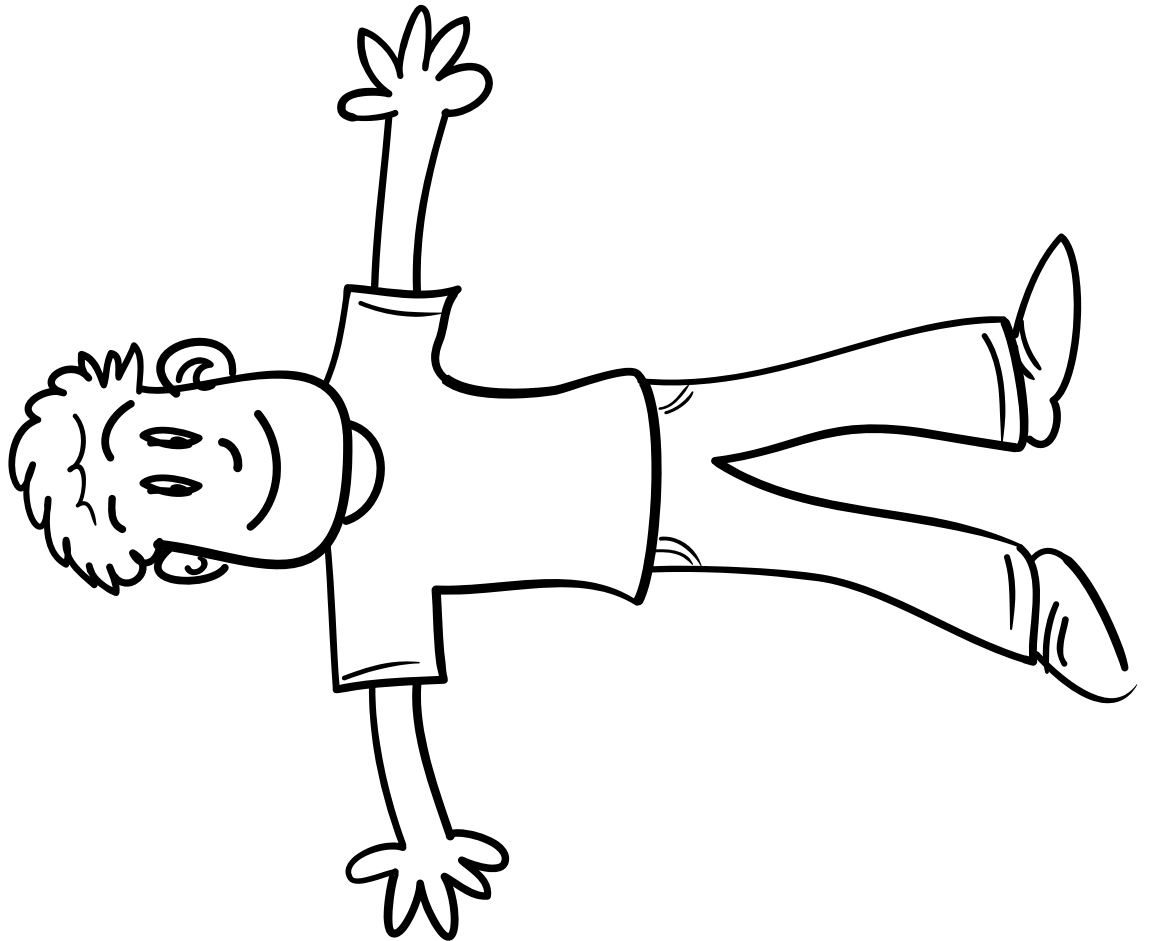
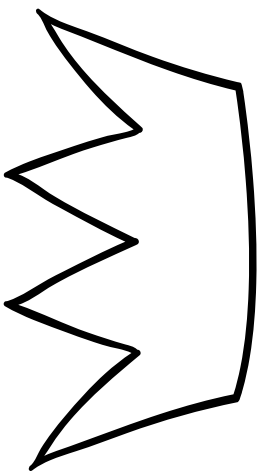
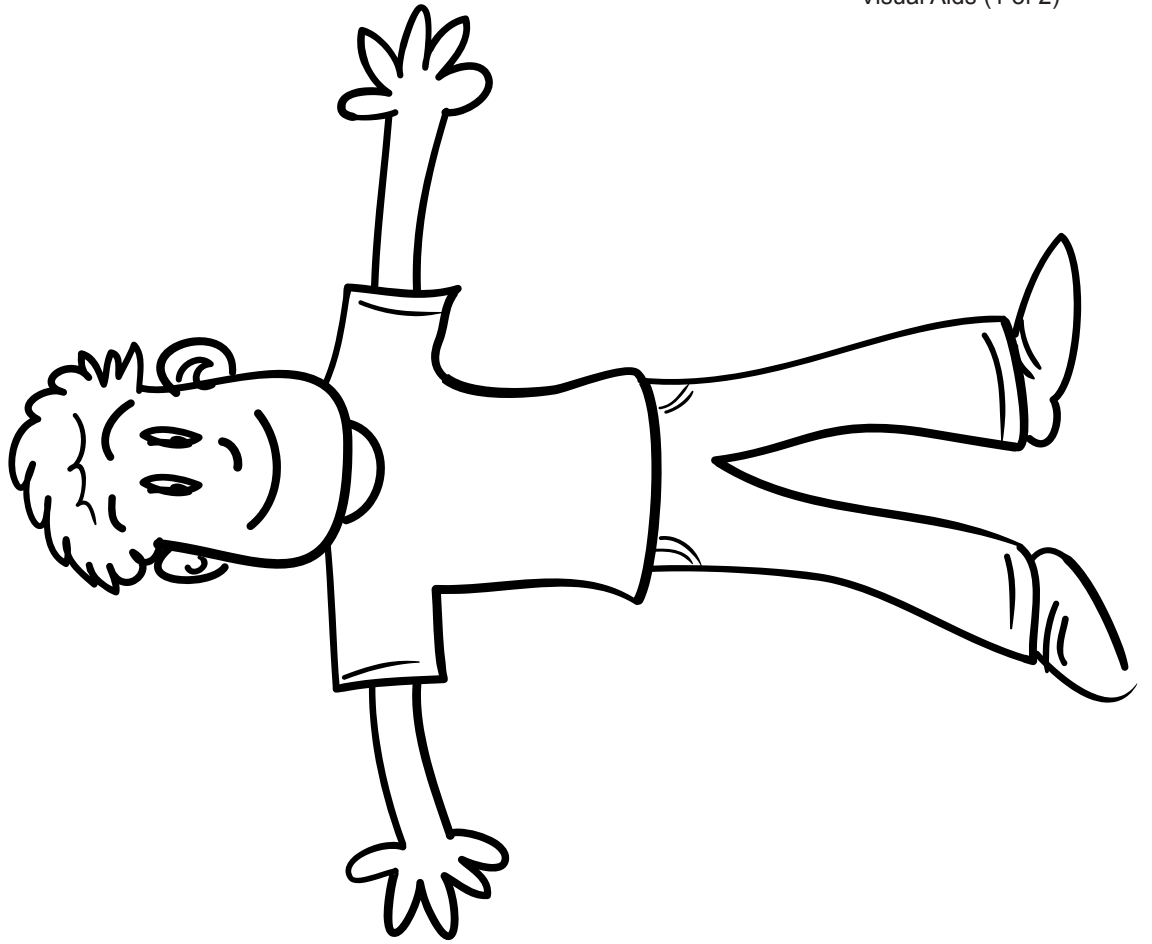
Remind the children that there are only two ways to live. The best way to live is with Jesus as our king, obeying his words in the Bible.

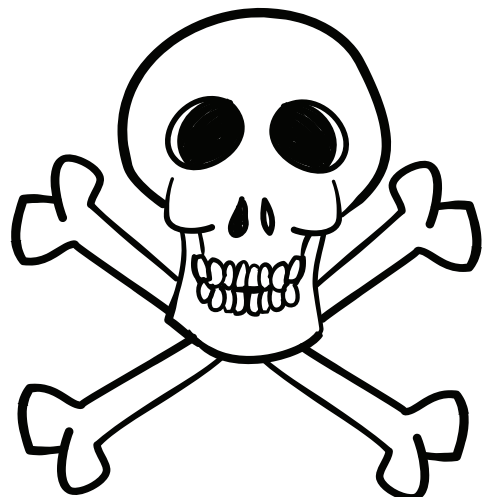
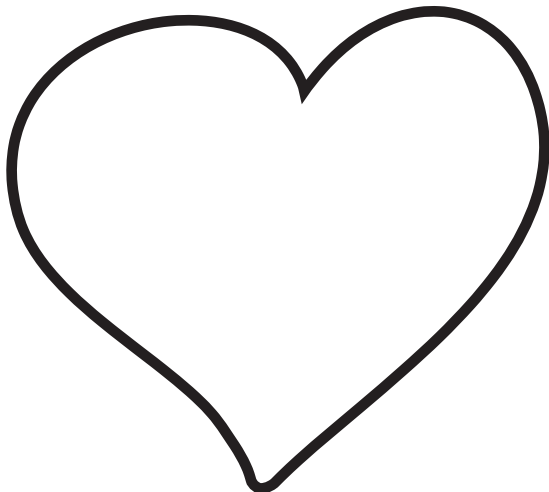
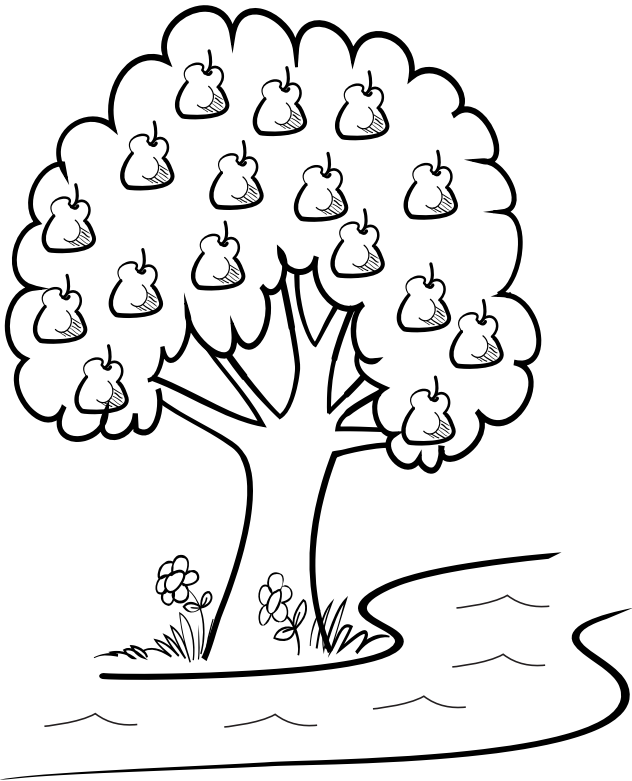
For 7-11s – print either Activity Sheet C (page 18) or Activity Sheet D (page 19) onto paper for each child. Choose whichever is appropriate for your children and use it to reinforce the lesson or as a discussion starter.



Memory Verse

For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked leads to destruction. Psalm 1:6 [NIV]





For

wicked

the Lord

leads to

watches

destruction

over

sleeps

the way

swims

of the

crocodiles

righteous

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but

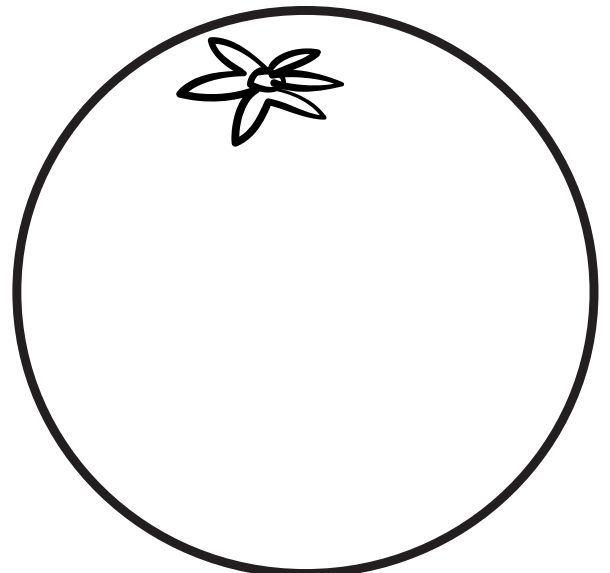
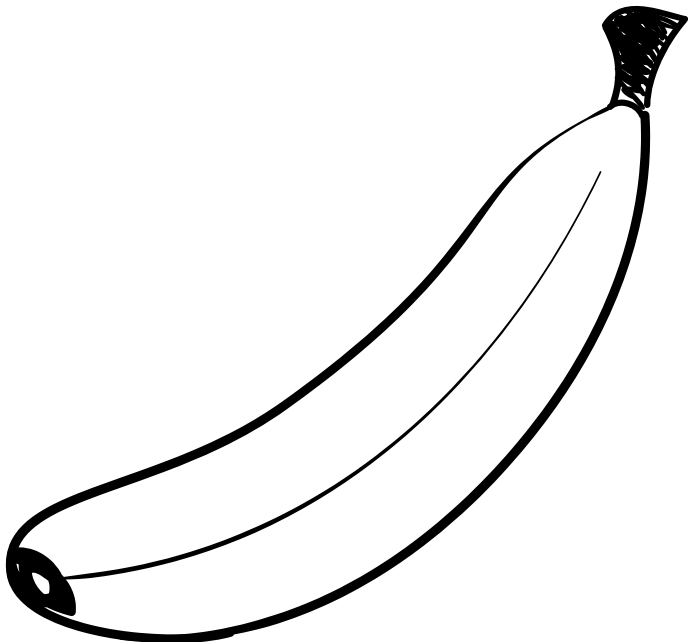
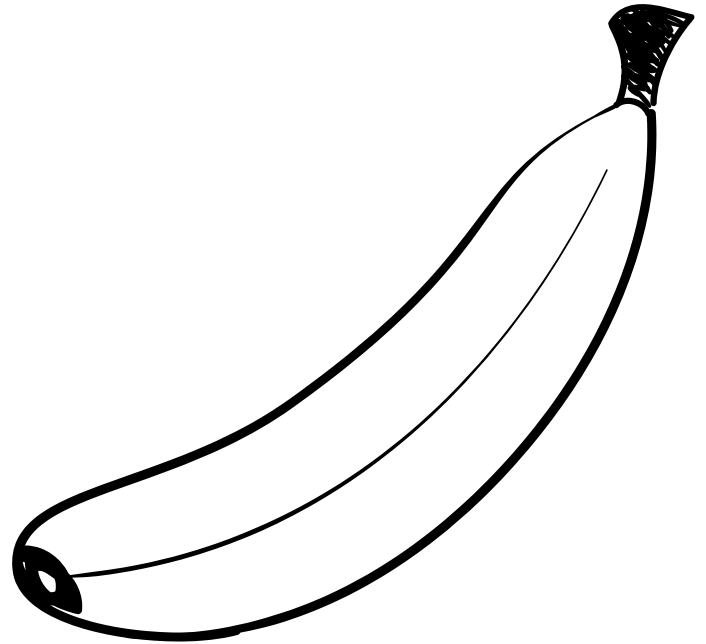
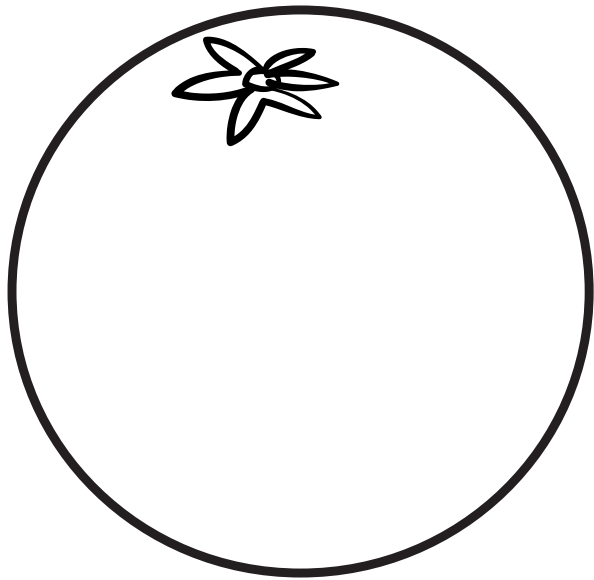
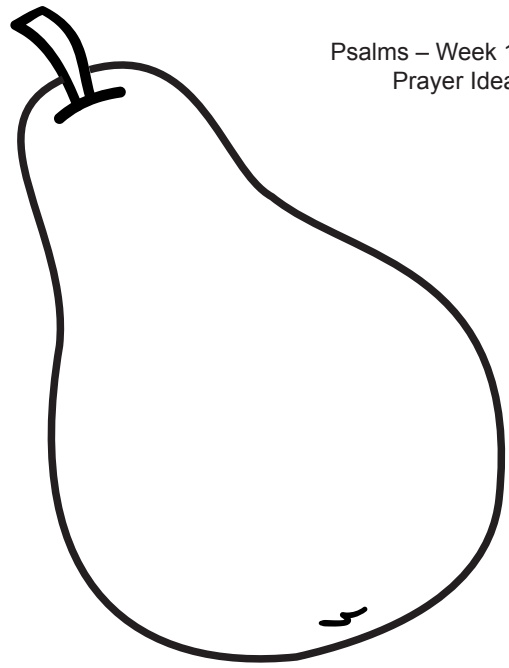
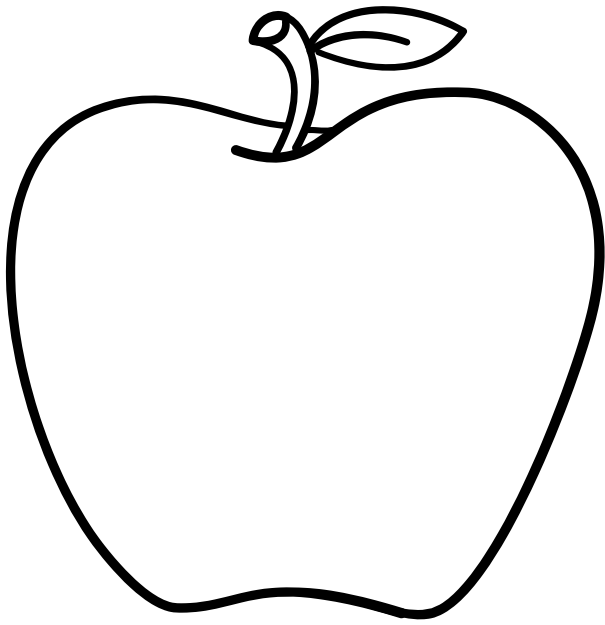
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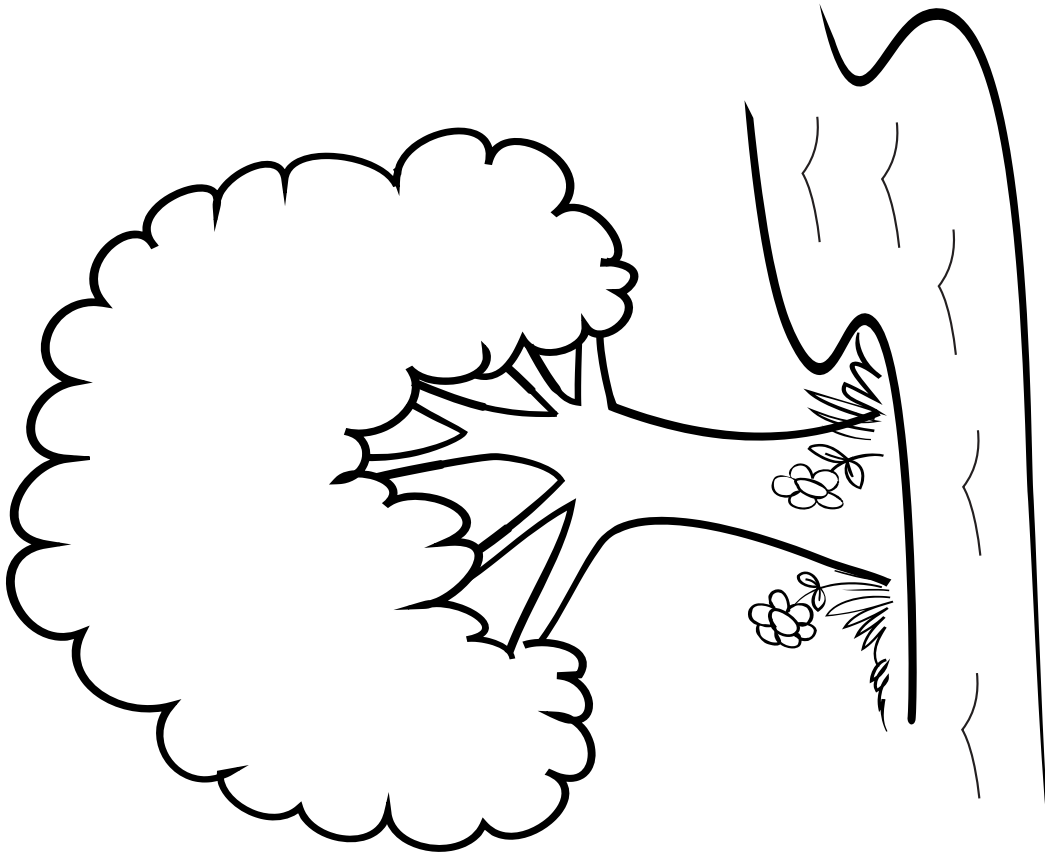
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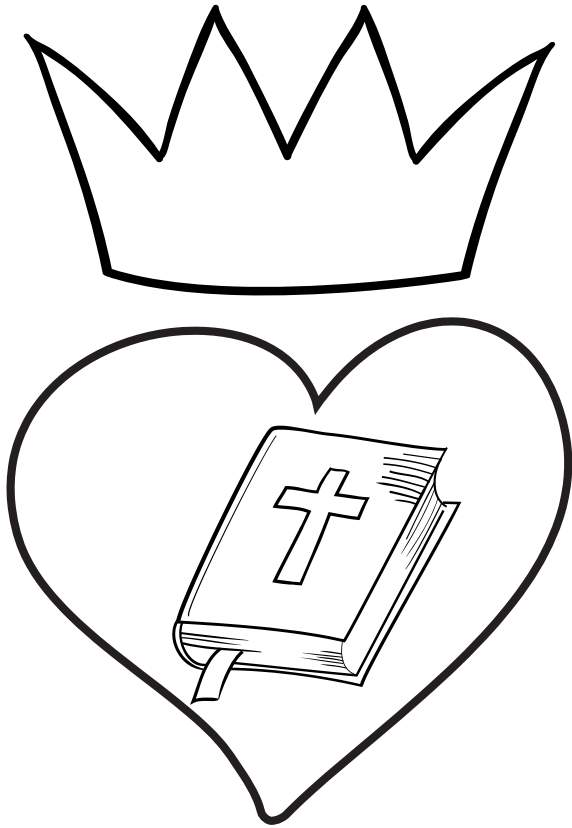
Psalms 1



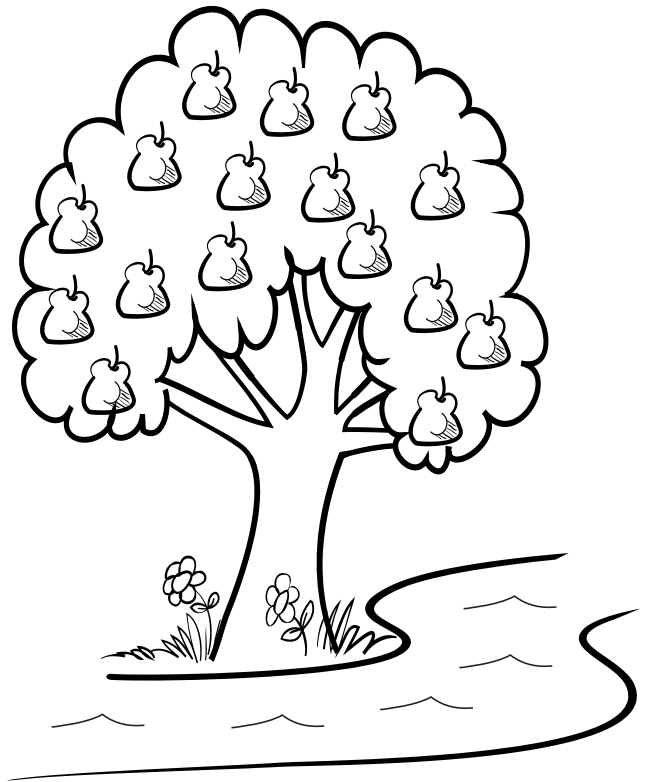
The person who reads God's word is
like a tree that bears fruit because
it is planted next to a stream.



Those who reject God are
like chaff that blows away
in the wind.

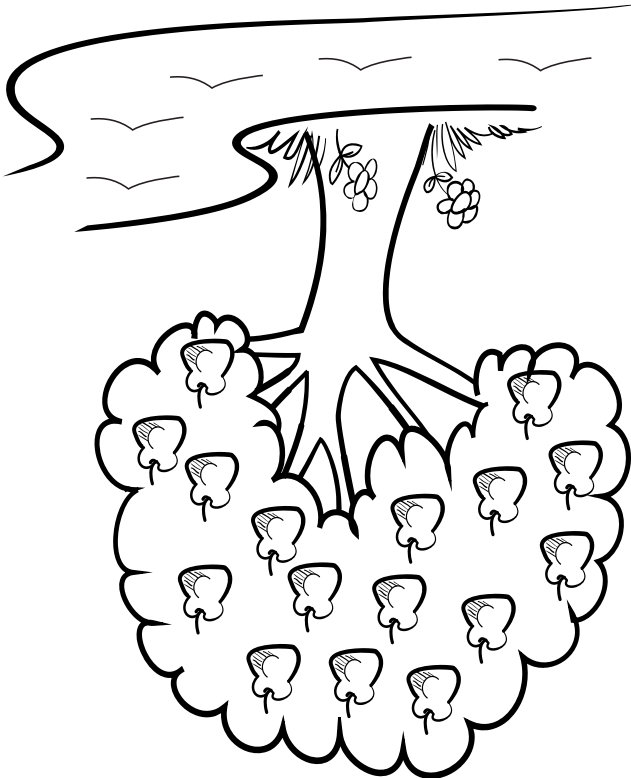


When Jesus is my king
and I love God's word...

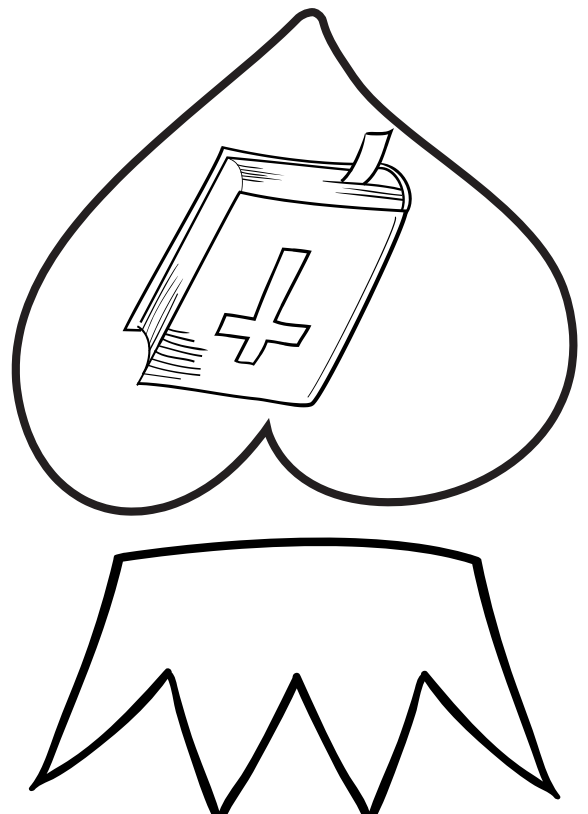


...then I will be like a
fruitful tree. Psalm 1

...then I will be like a
fruitful tree. Psalm 1

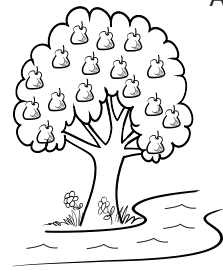


When Jesus is my king
and I love God's word...



God's Way to Live

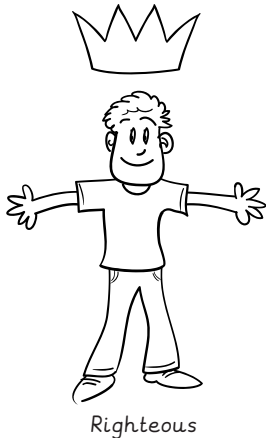
The true story can be found in Psalm 1



Discover

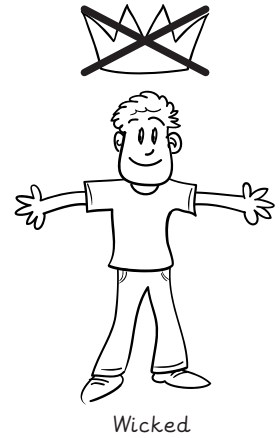
What does this psalm say about the righteous and the wicked? (1:1-6)

Draw lines to match the correct person to their description.



Righteous

Blessed
Always meditates on God's word
Like chaff that blows away
Like a tree that bears fruit
Delights in God's word



Wicked

Think? Spot

What does it mean to be like a fruitful tree?
What does it mean to be like chaff?

What will happen to the wicked? (1:5-6) Tick two correct answers.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> They will turn into chaff | <input type="checkbox"/> They won't stand when God judges |
| <input type="checkbox"/> They will be destroyed | <input type="checkbox"/> They will turn to God |

What will happen to the righteous? (1:6) Cross out the wrong words.

The **Lord** / **wicked** will **watch over** / **judge** everything they do.



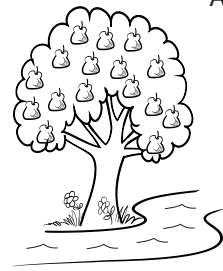
DISCUSS?

How are the righteous like fruitful trees? How are the wicked like chaff? Are you more like the righteous or the wicked? In what ways?

Are you able to live in the way of the righteous all the time? Who is the only person to have ever done that? What does it mean to delight in and meditate on God's word? Do you do this? Are there things you enjoy doing more? What could you do to change this?

God's Way to Live

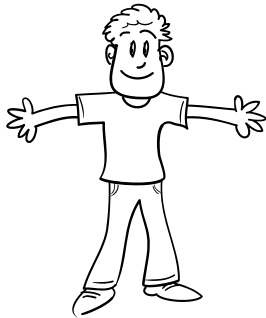
The true story can be found in Psalm 1



Discover

What does this psalm say about the righteous and the wicked? (1:1-6)

Draw lines to match the correct person to their description.



Righteous

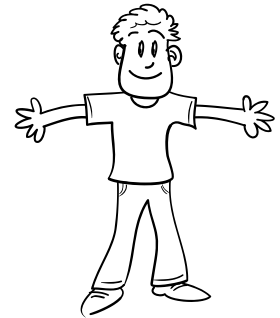
Blessed

Always meditates on God's word

Like chaff that blows away

Like a tree that bears fruit

Delights in God's word



Wicked

Think Spot

What does it mean to be like a fruitful tree?

What does it mean to be like chaff?

What two things will happen to the wicked?

1. _____ (1:5)

2. _____ (1:6)

What will happen to the righteous? (1:6)



DISCUSS

How are the righteous like fruitful trees? How are the wicked like chaff? Are you more like the righteous or the wicked? In what ways?

Are you able to live in the way of the righteous all the time? Who is the only person to have ever done that?

What does it mean to delight in and meditate on God's word? Do you do this? Are there things you enjoy doing more? What could you do to change this?

How does God watch over the way of the righteous? Does this mean everything will always go their way?



The God Who Speaks

Psalm 19

Big Idea : Creation reveals God's existence and glory to all people, but we can only know how he wants us to live through his precious word.

Aim : To teach that we should praise God as our glorious Creator, live according to his word and trust in him for forgiveness when we fall short.



Leader's Study Notes

Read Psalm 19 noting the different ways in which God has revealed himself to mankind.

Use the following notes to help you think about the passage in more detail.

This psalm was written by King David. It explores two ways in which God has made himself known: in creation and through his word. In the first half of this psalm, the Lord is referred to as 'God', a more general term, as this is all we can know of him through his creation. In the second half he is named as the covenant Lord, who can be known only through his revealed word.

- 19:1-2 David points to the sky as one example of what the whole of creation tells us – it is made by God and he is spectacular. As part of God's creative work, the sky is evidence of his existence and his greatness. This message is ongoing, every day and every night.
- 19:3-4a This truth is not restricted to a particular language – everyone everywhere can see the sky (cf. Romans 1:19-20).
- 19:4b-6 The sun is the greatest thing which humans can observe from earth with the naked eye. Like a bridegroom it does not grow weak or weary; as the sun shines we see its strength and majesty and feel its warmth.
- 19:7-9 God's revealed word is referred to here in six different ways and includes all of Scripture. David only had what God had revealed up to that point in history; today we have God's complete written revelation in the Bible. It is perfect, reliable and good. It gives us wisdom, joy, understanding, refreshment and life (cf. 2 Timothy 3:15-17).
- 19:10 God's word is more valuable than any precious metal and sweeter even than honey. It is worth more than the treasures of this world and is more desirable than anything else.

19:11-14 The word of the Lord warns us of our sin and points to our need for forgiveness – not only for obvious outward sins, but also for those in our minds and hearts. It also shows us how we should live in relationship to God, by obedience to his word.

We are only ever pleasing in God's sight when we acknowledge him as our glorious Creator (19:1-6); delight in his revealed word (19:7-11); and take refuge in him as our redeemer (rescuer). His word is the means by which we come to understand this. It also shows us where we fall short, why we need to be redeemed and who that redeemer is.

Reflect

- Think about the reactions people have when studying nature. What response do you have towards God when you admire his creation?
- What would it look like to value God's word more than precious gold? Why do you sometimes fail to value it as you should?
- Thank God for making himself known to you not only as the magnificent Creator, but as a redeeming saviour. Pray that the whole of your life would be shaped by this personal relationship.

Session Outline



Introductory Idea

Introduces this week's lesson.
Pose the questions at the end of the Introductory Idea. This gives children something to look out for in the lesson and helps their concentration. These get answered later in the session.



Teaching Plan

The core of the session.
The action of the Bible text is told as a story for younger children and explained. Or the Bible text is taught as a simple Bible study for older children.



Game Idea

Not essential.
Reinforces the lesson aim in a fun way and provides a way of displacing energy!

Review the questions posed in the Introductory Idea.



Discuss and Apply

Not to be missed!
This is where the children can be quizzed on the content and meaning of the Bible story. Questions and discussion are needed to apply this Bible story to the children's everyday lives. They should do most of the talking.



Prayer Idea

Use the prayer idea or just encourage each child to pray about an aspect of the lesson.



Activity

An opportunity to reinforce the lesson. For younger children, Activity A or B will be suitable. For older children, Activity C or D can be used to facilitate the Teaching or the Discuss and Apply section – some children prefer a lively discussion to completing written answers.



Memory Verse

A fun way of remembering the key verse for the series.



Introductory Idea

Option 1: Revealing. Ask the children to turn to the person next to them and tell them three things about themselves e.g. where they live, favourite food, date of birth. Choose two or three pairs to stand up and ask them the three questions again. They must tell everyone the answers that their partner gave about themselves.

Talk about how the children knew the answers about the other child. Could they have known the answers if their partner hadn't told them? Today's Bible lesson is a song about how God has made himself known and how we can know him as our rescuer and king. [Use the Bridge Questions below to create a link with the lesson.]

Option 2: Handwriting. Before the lesson write a sentence on a piece of paper e.g. "this is my handwriting". Choose three children to write the same sentence on separate pieces of paper without the other children seeing it. Show the group the sentences and see if they can work out who wrote which sentence.

Did the children know who had written which sentence? Could they recognise whose handwriting was whose? Today's Bible lesson is a song about the work of God's hands and how we can know it is his work. [Use the Bridge Questions below to create a link with the lesson.]

Bridge Questions

The children must listen carefully to today's true Bible lesson to discover the answers to the following questions:

- Who is being made known? [*God* (19:1)]
- What makes him known? [*Creation and God's word* (19:1-4, 11)]
- What can we know about him? [*He is the glorious Creator and our redeemer* (19:1, 4)]



Teaching Plan

In this psalm David explains the two ways in which God reveals himself and calls those who have witnessed this revelation to respond in praise, obedience and trust. The response must be shown by our attitude, words, actions and dependence on him as our redeemer. Only then can we be pleasing and acceptable to God.

This passage can be divided into three sections:

1. God revealed through creation (vs 1-6)
2. The Lord revealed through his word (vs 7-10)
3. Our response to the Lord God (vs 11-14)

You could teach the psalm using the pictures on page 25 or items where possible to illustrate each section. Try to simplify the verses into a few

sentences by placing the relevant picture on a board/wall as you go.

- 19:1-4a [*Cloud with "I am made by a great God!" written inside.*] Everytime we look up at the sky it tells us that it is made by a great Creator. Every day and every night, this is what the sky says to everyone on earth in a language we can all understand.
- 19:4b-6 [*Sun.*] The biggest thing you can see in the sky is the sun. It is strong and warm. It never stops shining. As it rises on one side of the earth, it sets on the other side. Everyone on earth can see the sun.
- 19:7-9 [*Bible.*] God's word tells us even more clearly how God wants us to live. His word is true, perfect, holy, reliable. It gives people joy and helps us to live wisely. It's for all people everywhere and for all time.
- 19:10 [*Pile of gold coins, honey/sweets/cake.*] God's word is worth much more than gold or other expensive things. It is better than anything we could enjoy in this life – better than sweets or honey or cake.
- 19:11-14 [*Cross.*] God's word tells us about our sin and shows us how we can be forgiven.

Finish by explaining that God is pleased when we think about him in this way, delight in him and live accordingly. We should praise God for creating everything; ask him to help us read and live according to his word; and trust in him for forgiveness when we fall short.

For older children – teach the psalm using the pictures/items as above, but read the psalm directly from the Bible. You could then go through it a second time, summarising what each section says. Use some of the questions below to help the children think about the passage in more detail:

- What does the sky tell us about God? (19:1)
- How often does it give us this message? (19:2)
- Who is able to see this message by looking at the sky? (19:3-4a)
- What is so impressive about the sun? How is it like a bridegroom? How does it reveal God's glory? (19:4b-6)
- What is God's word like? What effect does God's word have on people? (19:7-9)
- How valuable is God's word? Why does David think God's word is sweet? (19:10)
- How does God's word help us to think rightly about ourselves – our thoughts and actions? What does God need to help us do and become? (19:11-13)
- How can we please God? Whose help do we need? (19:14)



Game Idea

Option 1: For younger children – Wordless Message.

Draft a list of actions that have specific meanings e.g. shrugging shoulders (I don't know); waving (hello/goodbye); beckoning with a hand (come over here); scratching head and looking puzzled (I don't understand). As the leader does the actions the children must try to guess the meaning.

Was it hard to understand what the leader was trying to say? What would have made it easier? Remind the children that today's Bible lesson began with a message that had no words. Creation shows us that God is big, but his word tells us even more clearly about him.

Option 2: Message Relay. Before the lesson write the same message on several pieces of paper. Divide the group into two or three teams and have them line up in their teams at one side of the room. Choose one child in each team to be the leader and have them stand at the other side of the room opposite each team. Give one piece of paper with the secret message to each team leader.

The first child in each line runs to the team leader, reads the secret message and then runs back to their team. They can then whisper the message to the next child in their team. That child runs to the leader to confirm the message and back to their team, whispering the message to the next child. The game continues in this way until all the children have run. The last child to run should tell the leader the message. If it is correct, they win.

Remind the children that in today's Bible lesson there was a message that had no words and a message that had lots of words. Creation shows some things about God (he has made everything and he is great), but his word tells us even more clearly about him and how we can live in relationship with him.

Option 3: For older children – Name that Thing!

Before the lesson draft a list of items that you will describe first by their colour and then by their function/characteristic. You will need to choose a category to make this simpler for the children e.g. fruit, food, animals. Have some colour swatches to hold up and a single sentence to describe each item's function/characteristic e.g. an orange – orange colour swatch and the phrase "makes tasty juice"; banana – yellow colour swatch and the phrase "long and bent"; lime – green colour swatch and the phrase "sour citrus"; strawberry – red colour swatch and the phrase "goes well with cream".

Divide the group into two teams and have them sit in their teams on the floor. The teams take it in turns to guess the item that you are describing. Show the first team the colour swatch and allow them time to discuss and guess. If they are correct they earn five points; if they are wrong, read out the description/characteristic and give the other team a chance to

guess. If the other team is correct they earn two points. Continue in this way, alternating between which team gets to guess first. The team with the most points at the end wins.

Talk about whether it was easier to guess correctly from the colour swatch or the description. Why was it easier when they had a description as well? Remind the children that in today's Bible lesson there was message that had no words and a message that had lots of words. Creation shows some things about God (he has made everything and he is great), but his word tells us even more clearly about him and how we can live in relationship with him.



Discuss and Apply

The universal Creator God of 19:1-6 is the same covenant Lord of 19:7-14. He is a personal God who reveals himself through his word so that we can respond accordingly with faith and obedience.

Think of some examples in nature that show how great and magnificent God is. You could show the children pictures of the seven natural wonders of the world (Northern Lights, Harbour of Rio de Janeiro, Grand Canyon, Great Barrier Reef, Mount Everest, Paricutin Volcano, Victoria Falls) and tell the children one amazing fact about each place. Have any of the children seen or been to these places? Two of the greatest natural wonders that everyone on earth can see are the sky and the sun. Talk about how the sun and sky tell us that God is the Creator and that he is great. Even if some people try to ignore this truth, everyone anywhere in the world can know these things about God by looking around them. When we understand that God is the great and powerful Creator of everything we should respond, like creation, with praise.

Help the children to understand that it's reasonable to expect those living in God's world to live in a way that pleases God. Can the children share some of the rules that they have at home or at school? Why do we have rules? Which are good rules and which are bad rules? All the rules and laws that God has given us are good – not a single one of them is bad. This psalm teaches us that God made the world and that he has told us the best way to live in his world. We can know how God wants us to live through his word, the Bible. Point out how this psalm says that God's word is a joy and delight.

Explain that when you read through God's word you quickly realise that it's impossible to keep all his rules. Even David knew that he couldn't live perfectly as God requires. When he read God's good and perfect word he realised that he had done wrong – not only in his actions, but also in his thoughts, feelings and words. David knew that he needed a redeemer (rescuer) who could pay for all the times that he did not live in obedience to God's word.

God's word is wonderful! It tells us what God is like. It tells us what we are like. It tells us where we are getting things wrong and it tells us how to be friends with God by trusting in Jesus. Help the children to understand that we can rejoice when God's word shows us where we are going wrong because it reminds us that we need God's forgiveness and help to change.

For older children – discuss as above, but then spend some time talking about the implications of these truths and why we so often struggle to love God's word as we should. You could use some of the questions below to help the children think about the meaning of this psalm in more detail:

- How can we know what God is like? Where do you try to find out about God and how he wants us to live?
- How is God referred to in this psalm? Why do you think God's name changes? What does this tell us about where we can best find out about God?
- What are the different ways that God's word helps us? How does it guide us? How does God's word warn us?
- Why does David say God's word is a delight, worth more than gold and better than honey? Is this the way you think about the Bible? Why/why not? How might your attitude towards the Bible need to change?
- What do your friends and family think about God's word? How could you help them to think about it in the same way that David does?
- Why is David not able to fully obey God's word? Is the problem with the law or with David? Who or what can provide a solution for David? Who provides the solution for us? How does he redeem us? How does he help us to obey God's word?



Prayer Idea

Get each child to draw one thing in creation that shows them God is great and then one thing they have learnt about God's word. Take turns to pray, thanking God for these things.



Activity

For 3-7s – choose either Activity A (pages 26 and 27) or Activity B (page 28).

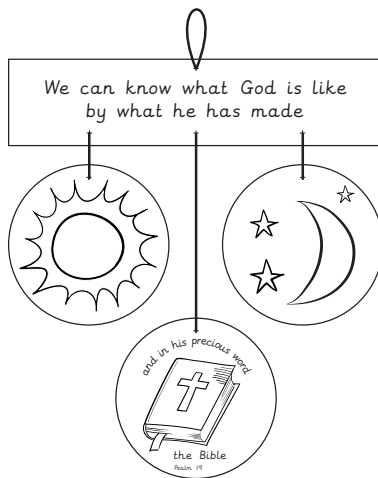
Activity A – Make a revelation mobile. Print page 26 (one copy for every three children) and page 27 (one copy for every two children) onto card.

Before the lesson cut along the solid lines and fold as marked on page 26. Glue the folded cards to produce strong header strips from which to hang the

other components. Cut out the circles on page 27 and hole punch the Xs as marked. Each child will also require one long and three short lengths of wool.

The children decorate all the components of the mobile. Encourage them to draw other things that God has made on the back of the sun and moon. They must draw their most precious possession on the back of the Bible picture – the Bible is more precious than anything they own.

Help them to assemble the mobile by using lengths of wool to hang the sun and moon circles either side of the header stripe as marked. Use a longer length of wool to hang the Bible in the middle and slightly below the sun and moon. Make a loop out of wool and tie it through to top hole in the middle of the header strip as shown in the diagram below.



Remind the children that we can know that God is powerful and glorious from the things that he has made. But we know more of what God is like and how he wants us to live by reading the Bible. That's why the Bible is so precious, more precious than gold or anything we own.

Activity B – Make a Bible bookmark. Print page 28 onto card (one copy for every four children).

Before the lesson cut along the bold lines to produce four bookmarks from each page.

The children decorate their bookmarks. If you have access to a laminator then you could laminate them for the children to cover and protect them.

Explain to the children what we use bookmarks for and encourage them to use theirs in their own Bible at home.

Remind the children that we can know what God is like from the world that he has made and we can know how he wants us to live by reading his word, the Bible.

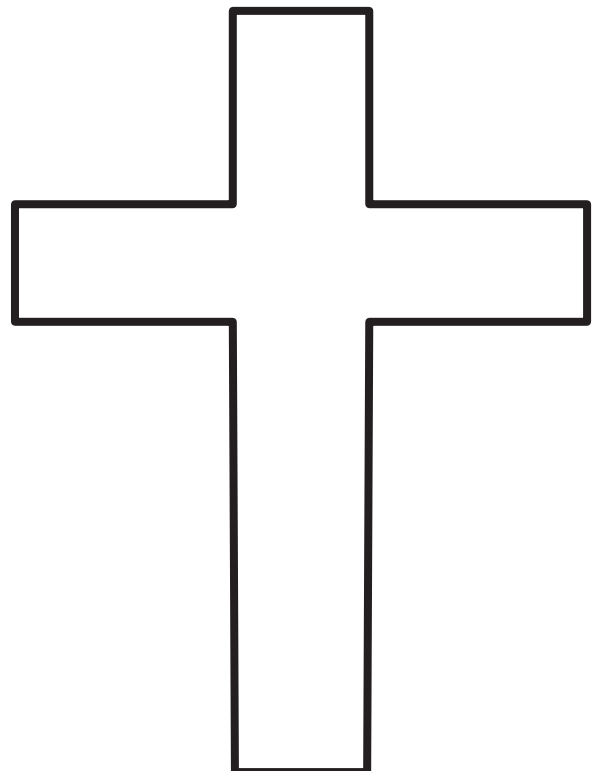
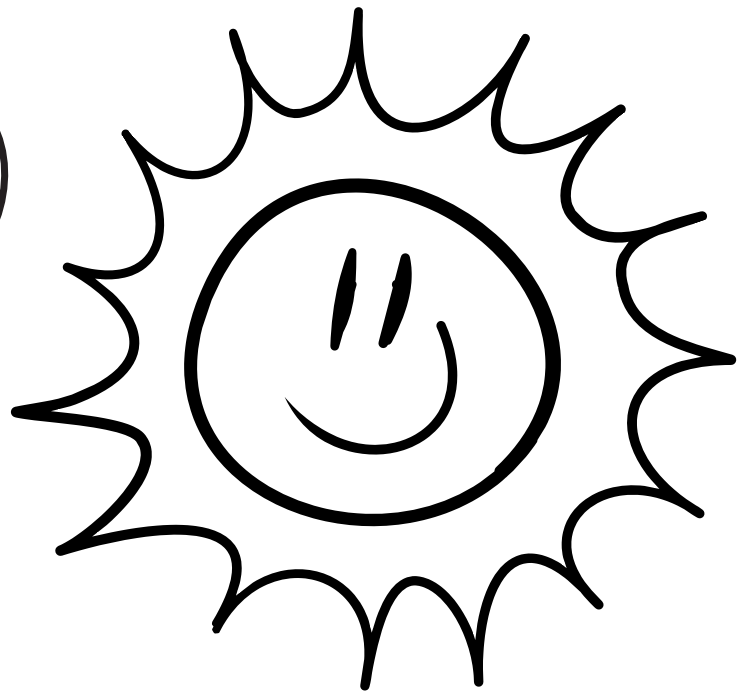
For 7-11s – print either Activity Sheet C (page 29) or Activity Sheet D (page 30) onto paper for each child. Choose whichever is appropriate for your children and use it to reinforce the lesson or as a discussion starter.



Memory Verse

*The heavens declare the glory of God;
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.*

Psalm 19:1 [NIV]





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We can know what God is like
by what he has made

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We can know what God is like
by what he has made

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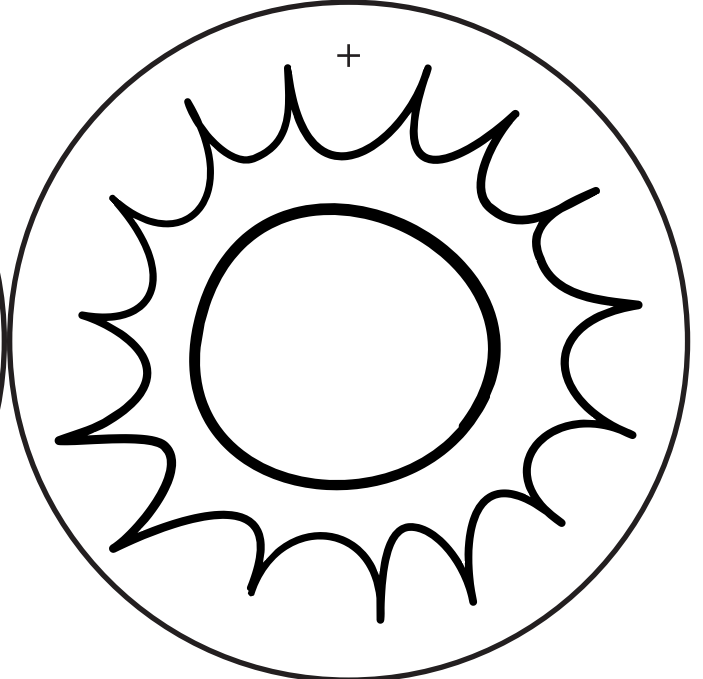
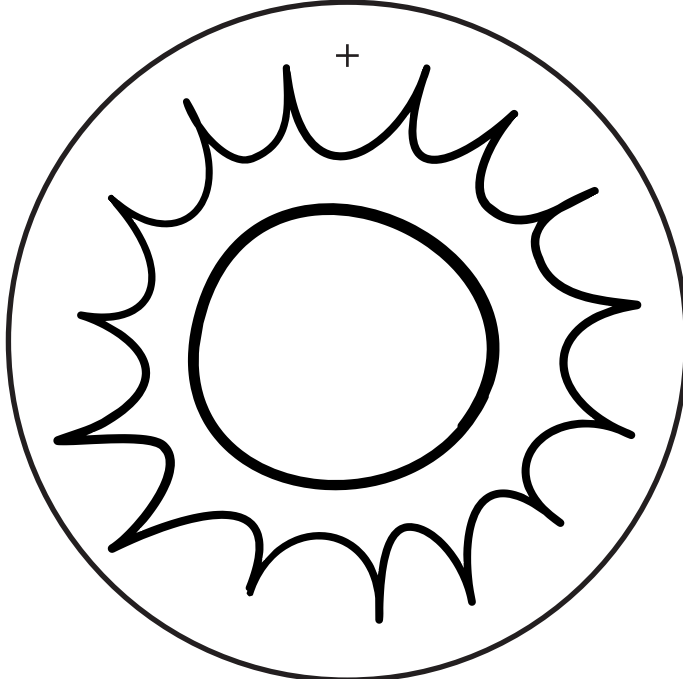
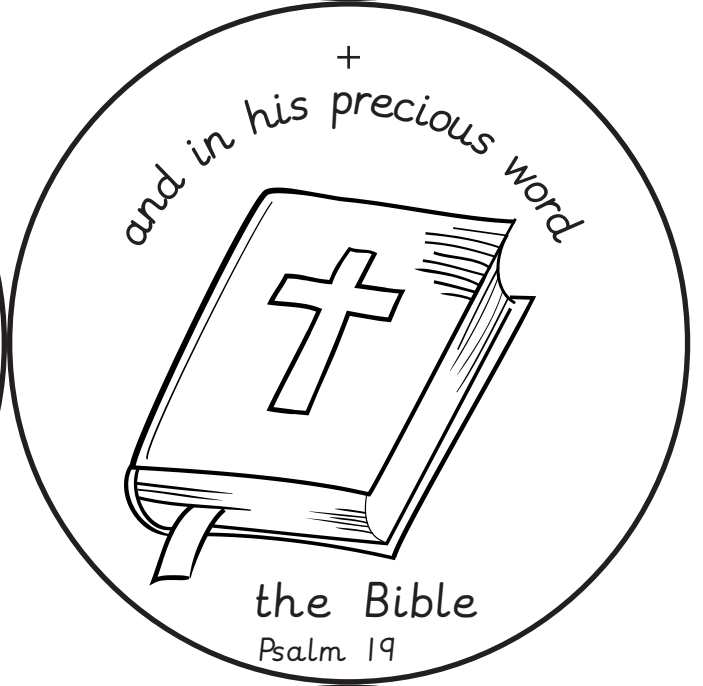
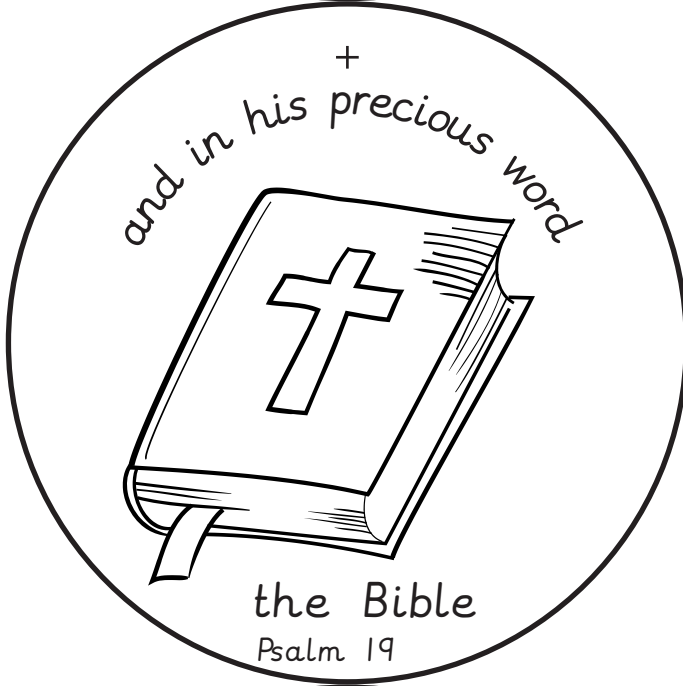
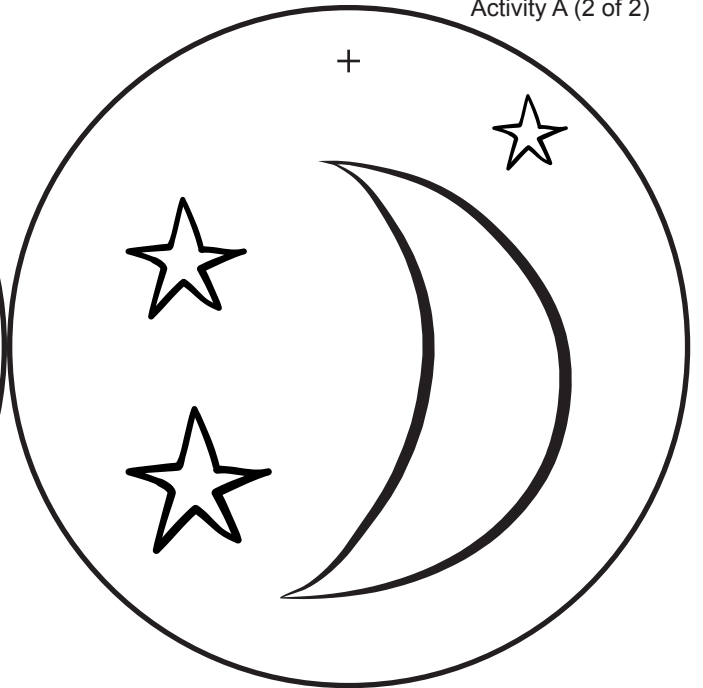
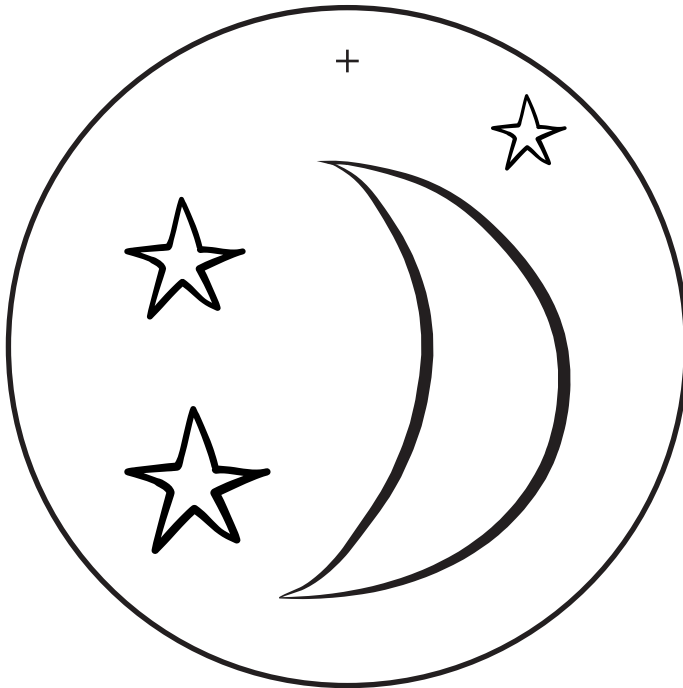
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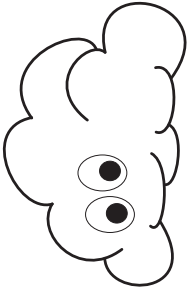
We can know what God is like
by what he has made

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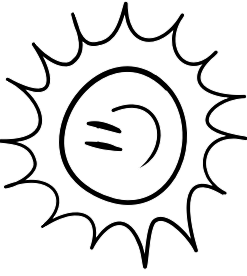




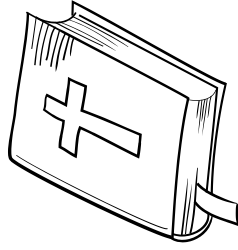
The heavens declare



the glory of God.



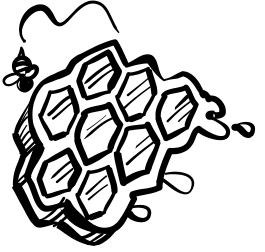
God's word is



better than gold

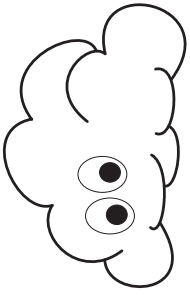


and sweeter than
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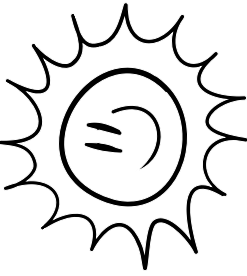


Psalms 19

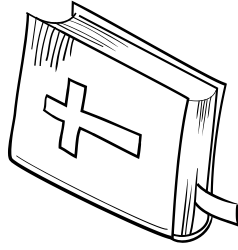
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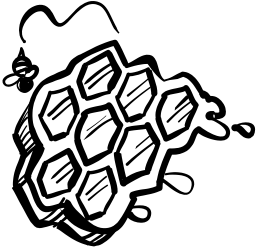
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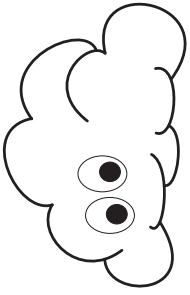


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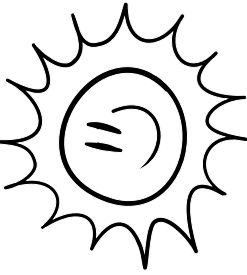


Psalms 19

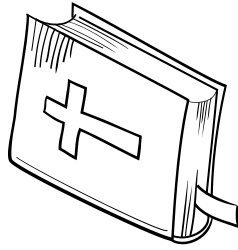
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the glory of God.



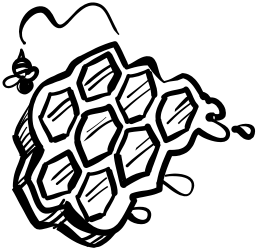
God's word is



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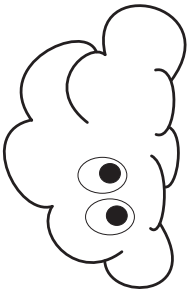


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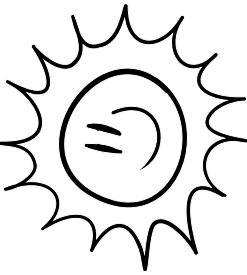


Psalms 19

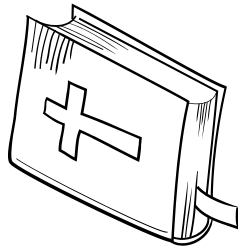
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the glory of God.



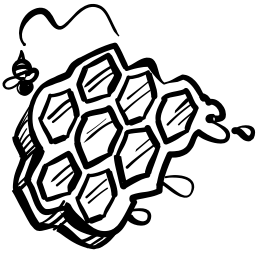
God's word is



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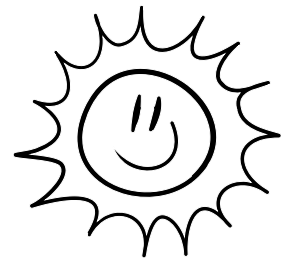
and sweeter than
honey.



Psalms 19

The God Who Speaks

The true story can be found in Psalm 19



Discover

What does creation reveal about God? (19:1-6) Circle two correct answers.

- His glory
- He loves the sun
- He speaks a lot
- He has made everything

Who can know these things? (19:3-4) Cross out the wrong answers.

- No-one
- Only clever people
- Everyone

How does the psalmist describe God's word, the Bible?

P _ _ _ _ _ (19:7)

T _ _ _ _ _ (19:7)

P _ _ _ (19:9)

P _ _ _ _ _ (19:10)

What does the Bible tell us? (19:11-14) Tick the three best answers.

- How God wants us to live
- How we have sinned
- How we should read the Bible
- How we can be forgiven



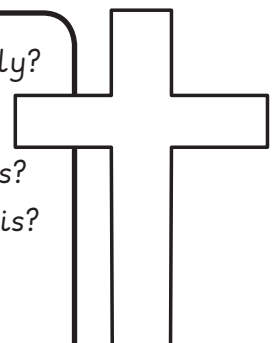
Think Spot

What does the Bible tell us that creation can't? Is it enough to just know God exists?



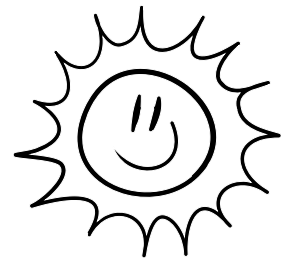
DISCUSS

- How can we know about God? How can we know him personally?
- Why does the psalmist think so highly of God's word?
- Do you think about the Bible the same way the psalmist does?
- Does this show in your life? What could you do to change this?
- Why can't we fully obey God's word? What is the solution?
- Who provides this solution? How has he done this?



The God Who Speaks

The true story can be found in Psalm 19



Discover

What does creation reveal about God? (19:1-6) Circle two correct answers.

His glory He loves the sun He speaks a lot He has made everything

Who can know these things? (19:3-4) _____

How does the psalmist describe God's word, the Bible?

P _____ (19:7) T _____ (19:7)

P _____ (19:9) P _____ (19:10)

What does the Bible tell us? (19:11-14) Tick the three best answers.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> How God wants us to live | <input type="checkbox"/> How we have sinned |
| <input type="checkbox"/> How we should read the Bible | <input type="checkbox"/> How we can be forgiven |



Think Spot

What does the Bible tell us that creation can't? Is it enough to just know God exists?



DISCUSS

How can we know about God? How can we know him personally?

Why does the psalmist think so highly of God's word?

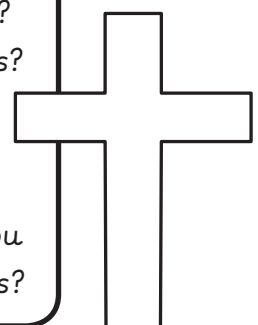
Do you think about the Bible the same way the psalmist does?

Does this show in your life? What could you do to change this?

Why can't we fully obey God's word? What is the solution?

Who provides this solution? How has he done this?

What do your friends think about the Bible? How could you help them to treat the Bible the same way the psalmist does?



God, My Shepherd

Psalm 23

Big Idea : God leads his people like a shepherd and welcomes them like a friend; he provides for, protects and blesses them.

Aim : To teach that God's people can trust him to look after and care for them in all situations.



Leader's Study Notes

Read Psalm 23 noting how God is described and what he does for his people.

Use the following notes to help you think about the passage in more detail.

This psalm was written by David, a shepherd boy who was made king over Israel. He was chosen by God to shepherd God's people. Yet here David writes that he himself is led like a sheep by an even greater shepherd and feasts at his table.

23:1 David understood that with God as his shepherd he would lack nothing. God provides rest and sustenance for all those who follow him.

23:2-4 God not only provides all that is physically necessary to sustain his people, but also spiritually as he refreshes and guides them in the right way to live. Sometimes this righteous path may lead through trials and danger, but even there they need not fear because their shepherd is always with them – he leads and he comforts them.

23:5 The metaphor changes here with David no longer a sheep, but a guest at a lavish feast. God is the host who provides food and drink in abundance. He generously welcomes David using oil to anoint him publicly so that even his enemies see that he is the Lord's honoured guest.

23:6 To live in the house of the Lord is to be with him forever. There is no better place to be, surrounded each day by God's love and goodness.

God's faithfulness, mercy and love towards his people makes it possible for them to live in his presence and be on the right path. It's not simply that they have followed him, but that God has carefully led them. The images of God as a shepherd and a host here in the Old Testament are clearly true of Jesus in the New Testament. Jesus is the good shepherd who gave his life for his sheep (John 10:11); those who trust in Jesus will also be welcomed at his wedding feast in heaven (Matthew 22:1-10).

Reflect

- Think back over your life, both the good and the difficult times. Where can you see God's care, provision and protection for you? Why can we be calm and confident in the face of dark situations?
- What makes it possible for David to live in the presence of God? Who has made this possible for us?
- Thank God for his provision for you throughout your life. Ask God to help you to trust in his provision and guidance in all situations.

Session Outline



Introductory Idea

Introduces this week's lesson.

Pose the questions at the end of the Introductory Idea. This gives children something to look out for in the lesson and helps their concentration. These get answered later in the session.



Teaching Plan

The core of the session.

The action of the Bible text is told as a story for younger children and explained. Or the Bible text is taught as a simple Bible study for older children.



Game Idea

Not essential.

Reinforces the lesson aim in a fun way and provides a way of displacing energy!

Review the questions posed in the Introductory Idea.



Discuss and Apply

Not to be missed!

This is where the children can be quizzed on the content and meaning of the Bible story. Questions and discussion are needed to apply this Bible story to the children's everyday lives. They should do most of the talking.



Prayer Idea

Use the prayer idea or just encourage each child to pray about an aspect of the lesson.



Activity

An opportunity to reinforce the lesson. For younger children, Activity A or B will be suitable. For older children, Activity C or D can be used to facilitate the Teaching or the Discuss and Apply section – some children prefer a lively discussion to completing written answers.



Memory Verse

A fun way of remembering the key verse for the series.



Introductory Idea

Option 1: Fear Factor. Before the lesson draft a list of things that the children might be afraid of e.g. spiders, snakes, the dark. Talk about what the children do when they have to face one of those fears. What makes them feel better? Who does this for them? Do they find a parent or another adult? We often feel safest when we know that someone is in control and is able to protect us.

Today's Bible lesson is a song about a shepherd who is always with his sheep to keep them safe and protect them. [Use the Bridge Questions below to create a link with the lesson.]

Option 2: Job Description. Before the lesson write a list of some different jobs and draft a short job description for each of them e.g. fireman – drives around in a truck and puts out fires; teacher – writes on a board and tells people about the world; farmer – looks after lots of animals and grows food; doctor – tells people what is wrong with them and makes them feel better. You will need to include a job description for a shepherd as well e.g. cares for, leads and protects sheep from danger.

Read out the descriptions one at a time and ask the children to guess what job you are talking about. How many of these jobs involved helping or looking after people or animals? Today's Bible lesson is a song about a shepherd and how he looks after his sheep. [Use the Bridge Questions below to create a link with the lesson.]

Bridge Questions

The children must listen carefully to today's true Bible lesson to discover the answers to the following questions:

- Who is described as a shepherd? [God (23:1)]
- How does he protect his sheep? [He guides them and stays with them (23:3-4)]



Teaching Plan

In this psalm David uses two different images to describe God and his relationship with his people:

1. God, the shepherd (23:1-4)
2. God, the friend (23:5-6)

The last verse summarises what we can learn from the psalm – it is only by God's kindness, love and mercy towards us that we can live in his presence.

You could teach the psalm using the pictures on pages 36 and 37. The passage is short enough to be read directly from the Bible, but you could simplify some of the concepts for younger children e.g. oil as a sign of welcome.

Start by placing the picture of the shepherd on one side of a board/wall and the friend on the other.

Place the other pictures under or around either the shepherd or the host as you read (see below).

Shepherd: 23:1-4

- Sheep resting (23:2)
- Stream (23:2)
- Heart (23:3)
- Path (23:3)
- Eyes in the dark (23:4)
- Shepherd with staff and sheep (23:4)

Host (23:5-6)

- Table of food (23:5)
- Enemies staring in shock (23:5)
- Jug of oil (23:5)
- Cup overflowing (23:5)
- Happy face (23:6)

Finish by summarising what God does for his people – leading, guiding, protecting, comforting and caring for them. Remind them that this is what he does for everyone who follows him and trusts in Jesus.

For older children – teach the passage using the pictures as above, reading directly from the Bible. You could then read the whole psalm a second time and get the children to help you place the pictures under the shepherd and the friend at the relevant points. You could also use some of the questions below to help them think about the passage in more detail:

- What does the shepherd provide for his sheep? (23:1-2)
- Where does the shepherd take his sheep? (23:2-4)
- Where do the sheep sometimes walk? (23:4)
- Why do the sheep not need to be afraid? (23:4)
- How does the friend welcome and honour his guests? What does the friend provide? (23:5)
- Who sees how the friend treats his guests? (23:5)
- Why is it so good to live in the house of the Lord? How long will this be for? (23:6)



Game Idea

Option 1: For younger children – Follow the Shepherd. Play a version of the game 'Follow the Leader'. You will need a staff/walking stick to show that you are the shepherd. The children stand in a line behind the shepherd and follow wherever he leads.

After a while pass the staff to one of the children and get them to be the shepherd instead. Continue the game in this way, making sure different children are given a turn to be the shepherd.

Towards the end of the game you could set out a table

with cookies on it and another with a drink. Encourage the shepherd to lead them past the tables and then sit them down to discuss the meaning of the psalm while they eat and drink. Remind the children that in today's Bible lesson the shepherd led, guided, protected, comforted and cared for his sheep.

Option 2: Shepherd Run. Set out an obstacle course using the imagery from Psalm 23. You could have a green towel/sheet to represent the pasture/field; a blue towel/sheet to represent water; a line of masking tape to be the path; and a table with a cup in a bowl and jug of water for the overflowing cup. You will also need a staff/stick for the shepherd.

Divide the group into two teams and have them line up next to each other in their teams at the start of the obstacle course. One team are the shepherds and the other team are the sheep. The first shepherd must hold the staff/stick as they guide the sheep next to them through the course. At the pasture the 'sheep' pretends to sleep on the towel, snoring three times; at the water they kneel down and pretend to lap the water; they must walk carefully down the path marked out on the floor; and at the table they must pour the water into the cup over the bowl until the cup overflows. You will need to refill the jug with the water from the cup between each sheep's journey.

Once the first shepherd has led their sheep through the course they go back to their team and pass the staff to the next child to lead the second sheep through. The game continues in this way until all the sheep have been guided to the other side.

Remind the children that in today's Bible lesson the shepherd led, guided, protected, comforted and cared for his sheep. Can the children remember where he led them and what he did for them?

Option 3: Sheep Run. Before the lesson mark a start and finish line at opposite ends of the room using masking tape. You will also need to mark out large squares or triangles to be 'no go' areas spaced randomly between the start and finish lines like bunkers on a golf course.

Provide each child with a cotton wool ball to be their sheep and a straw for their staff. They all begin behind the start line and have to use their staff to get their sheep to the finish line, avoiding the 'no go' areas. They may either push their sheep with the staff or blow through it to move their sheep along. If a sheep lands in a 'no go' area that child must pick up their sheep and return to the start. The first shepherd to cross the finish line with their sheep is the winner.

Remind the children that in today's Bible lesson the shepherd led, guided, protected, comforted and cared for his sheep. Can the children remember where he led them and what he did for them?



Discuss and Apply

This psalm describes the relationship between God, the shepherd, and his people. The focus is on God's character and what he does for the sheep more than what the sheep are like. Our confidence in all situations is never based on our performance or ability, but on who God is, what he has done for his people and how he continues to lead them. Your discussion should encourage the children to trust God in any situation because of the knowledge that he is with them and always acts in their best interest – even in the valley of the shadow of death!

You will need to make it clear that this psalm is a picture of God and his people. We are like the sheep; God is like a shepherd to us. Get the children to repeat from the passage what a shepherd is like and what he does for his sheep. At each point show the children how God does each of those things for those who follow him. Think of a few practical examples from your own life that you can share with the children of how and when God has done that for you and some examples that will be relevant to the age group you are teaching.

Move on to explain how the psalm also describes God as being like a friend who invites guests into his home. Can the children suggest what they do when a friend comes to visit them? How do they greet their guest? Do they take their coat and hang it up? Do they offer them a drink? Do they ask if they would like more food? Remind the children that the guest in this psalm felt very special because the host poured oil on their head to welcome them and gave them more than enough to eat and drink. God does the same for us. Jesus said that he is the good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep (John 10:11). When we trust in Jesus we can enjoy friendship with God now and one day we will be with him in heaven forever.

For older children – divide the group into two smaller groups and give each of them a sheet of A4 paper. One group must focus on the shepherd (23:1-4) and the other on the friend (23:5-6). Each group lists all the ways in which God is like the shepherd/friend. Can they suggest practical ways in which they might experience each aspect of God's character/action in their daily lives? Encourage the children to make the application for themselves by asking them to think about how God does these things for us.

You could also use some of the following questions to aid discussion:

- Who is God a shepherd to? Who does he treat as an honoured guest? Do you know God as your shepherd and friend? How is this possible if you don't?
- What are some of the things that God has provided for you? How does he care for you? Does God provide everything we want or everything that we need?

- What does it mean to be guided and led by God? How does God guide you? Does this mean he will never lead you through difficult times?
- What does it mean that God is with us? Why is there no need to fear anything if he is with us? Do you find it easy to trust God in difficult situations?
- How does God discipline and comfort us?
- How does knowing that God is like a shepherd encourage you? How does it challenge you to trust him?
- How has God treated you like an honoured guest? How do we deserve to be treated? Has God treated you better than you deserve? How and when did he do this?
- What in your life shows that God is your shepherd? How will this affect your view of the present and the future; what you do with your time; and how you deal with difficult situations? What can you be certain about in all situations?



Prayer Idea

Place the pictures from the lesson on the floor and ask the children to think about one aspect of God's character/action that most excites them from today's lesson. What would they like to say to God in response to this truth? Is there something they can thank God for? Is there something they can ask God for? Encourage them to each pray a short prayer in response to what they have learned.



Activity

For 3-7s – choose either Activity A (page 38) or Activity B (page 39).

Activity A – Make a sheep mask. Print page 38 onto card for each child. Each child will also require a length of shearing elastic/wool and about ten cotton wool balls.

Before the lesson cut out the mask and use a blade to cut the holes for the eyes and the X's for the elastic.

The children decorate their sheep by gluing the cotton wool balls on the sheep's head to give it a woolly top!

Help the children to fit the mask by securing it using elastic tied through the X's.

Remind the children that God is like a shepherd in the way that he cares for his people and we are like his sheep. Can they remember how God cares for those who follow him?

Activity B – Make a fridge magnet. Print page 39 onto card (one copy for every three children). Each child will also require a few cotton wool balls and a length of magnetic tape. If you do not have magnetic tape then Blu-tack will be sufficient.

Before the lesson cut out the ovals.

The children decorate their sheep by colouring it in and gluing the cotton wool balls onto the sheep's body.

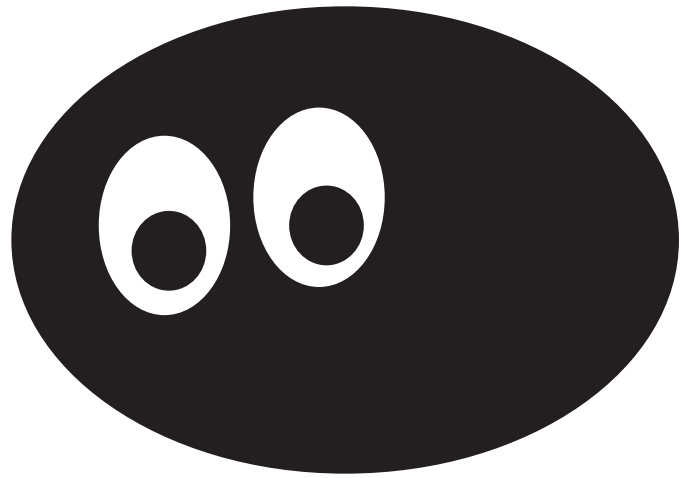
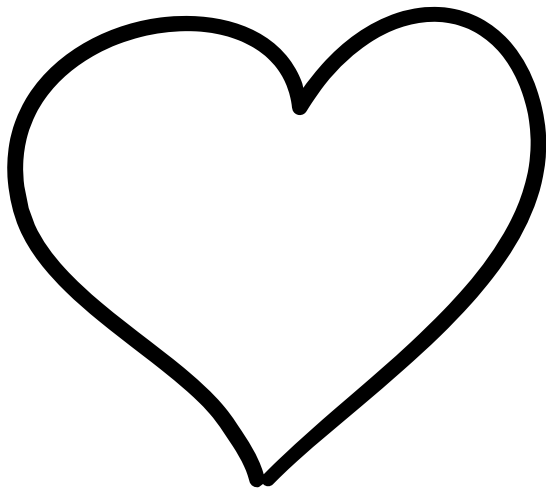
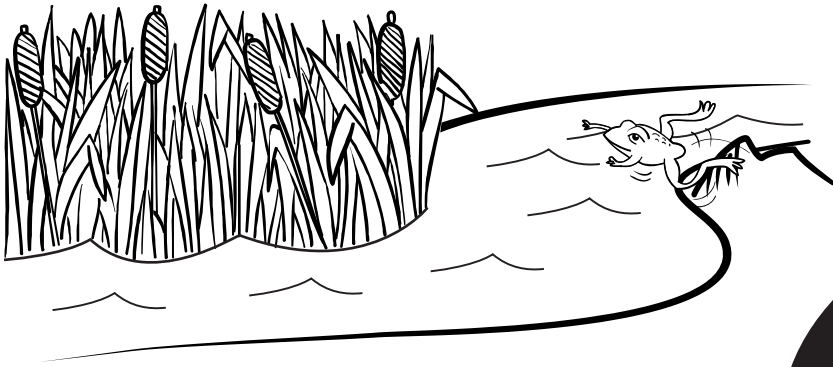
Remind the children that God is like a shepherd in the way that he cares for his people and we are like his sheep. Can they remember how God cares for those who follow him? Ask them to stick the sheep on their fridge at home so that every time they open the fridge to get something to eat or drink they will be reminded that God is a our loving shepherd who provides all that we need.

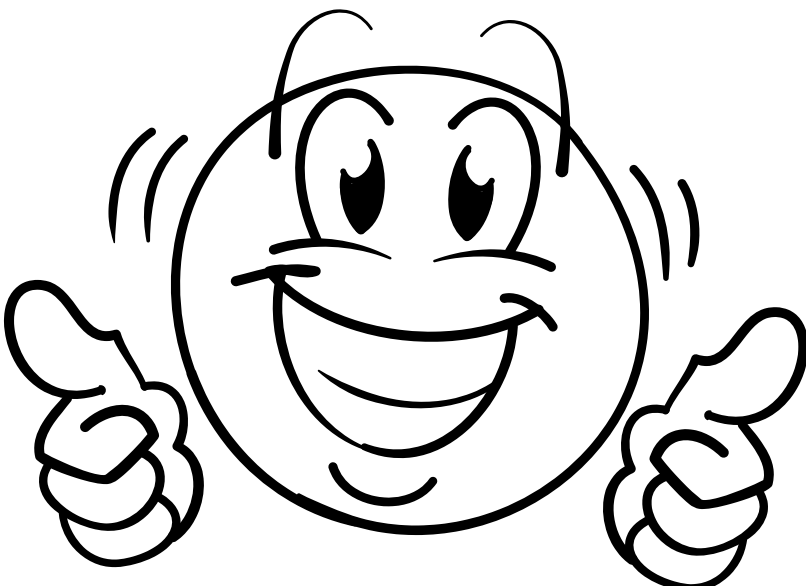
For 7-11s – print either Activity Sheet C (page 40) or Activity Sheet D (page 41) onto paper for each child. Choose whichever is appropriate for your children and use it to reinforce the lesson or as a discussion starter.

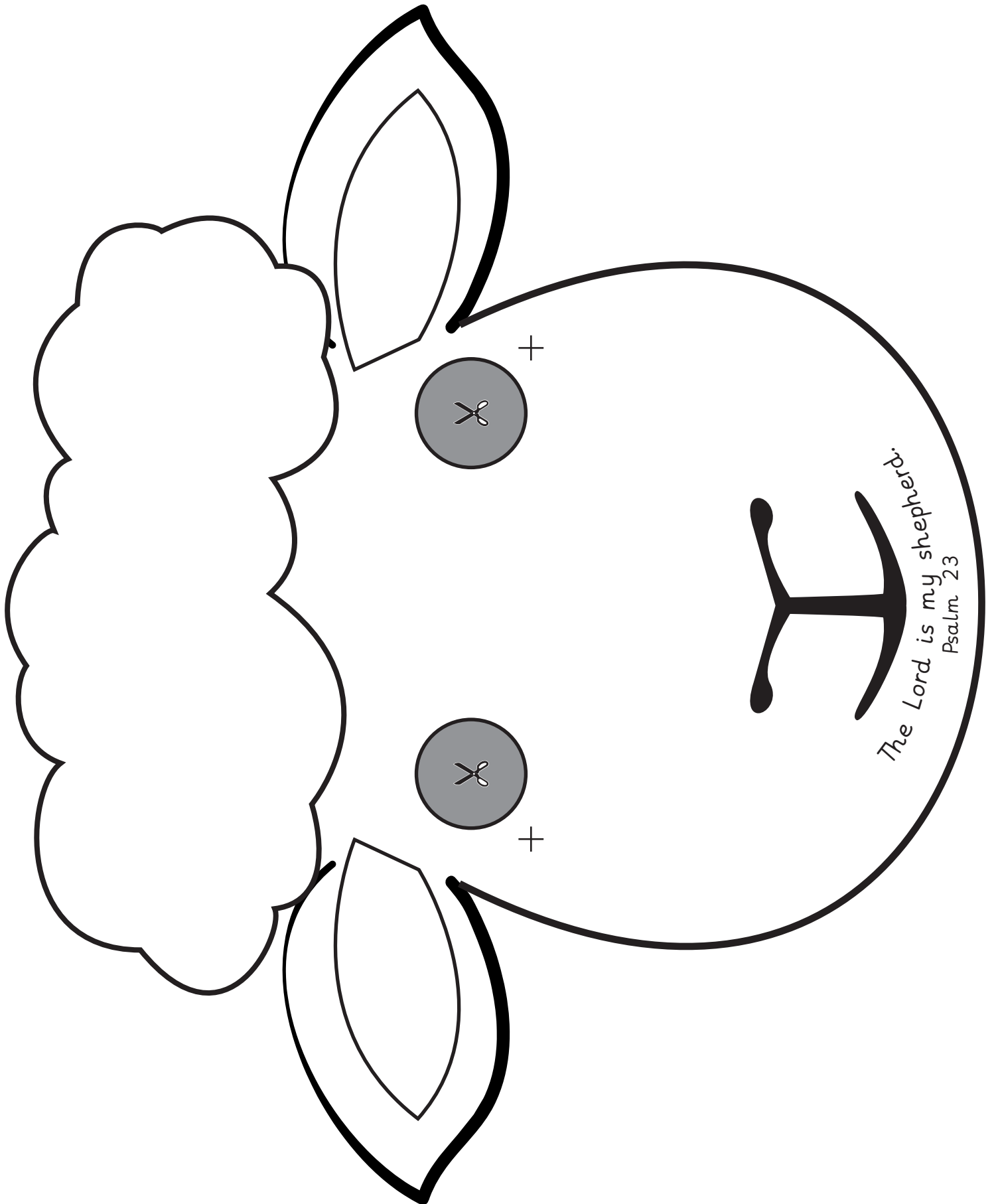


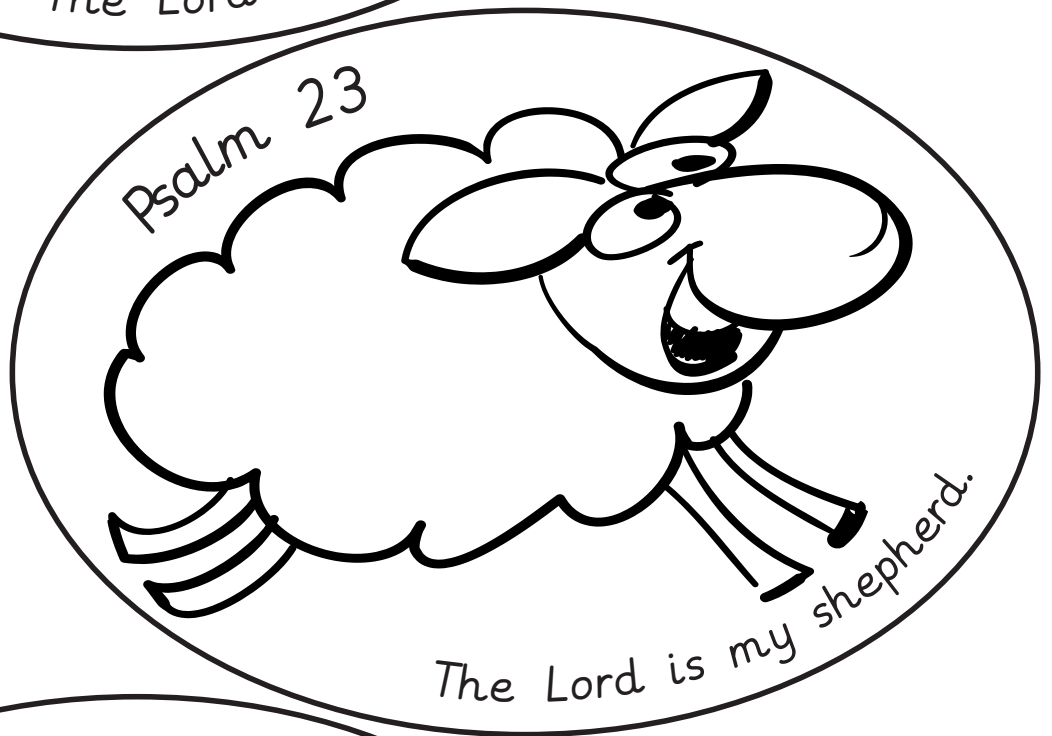
Memory Verse

The Lord is my Shepherd, I lack nothing.
Psalm 23:1 [NIV]









God, My Shepherd

The true story can be found in Psalm 23

Discover



What does the shepherd do for his sheep? Circle the correct words.

23:1-2 He **keeps** / **provides** all that they need.

23:2-3 He **leads** / **carries** and refreshes them.

23:3 He **guards** / **guides** them on the **dangerous** / **right** path.

23:4 He is with them and comforts them so they don't need to **follow** / **fear** .

How does God welcome and honour his guests? (23:5-6)

Draw some pictures in the space below.



Think Spot

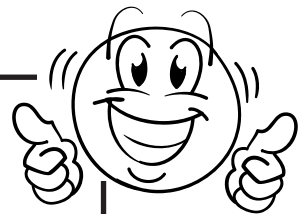
Why is it so good to live in God's house forever? Who will be there?

DISCUSS

Who is God a shepherd to? Do you know him as your shepherd and friend? How is this possible if you don't?

In what ways is God like a shepherd to you? What has he provided for you? How does he lead and guide you?

What does it mean that God is with us? Why do we not need to fear? How does knowing this encourage you to trust him?



God, My Shepherd

The true story can be found in Psalm 23

Discover



What does the shepherd do for his sheep? Circle the correct words.

23:1-2 He **keeps** / **provides** all that they need.

23:2-3 He **leads** / **carries** and refreshes them.

23:3 He **guards** / **guides** them on the **dangerous** / **right** path.

23:4 He is with them and comforts them so they don't need to **follow** / **fear** .

How does God welcome and honour his guests? (23:5-6)

Write some of the things in the space below.



Think Spot

Why is it so good to live in God's house forever? Who will be there?

Discuss

Who is God a shepherd to? Do you know him as your shepherd and friend? How is this possible if you don't?

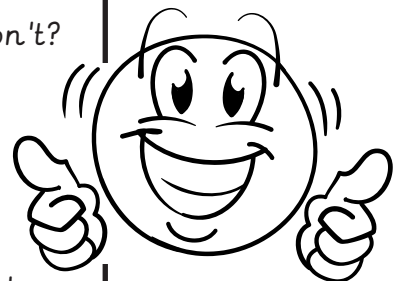
In what ways is God like a shepherd to you?

What has he provided for you? Does he give us everything we need or everything that we want?

What does it mean to be led and guided by God?

How does he lead and guide you? Does this mean he will never lead you through difficult times?

What does it mean that God is with us? Why do we not need to fear? How does knowing this encourage you to trust him? When do you find it hardest to trust him?



The God Who Forgives

Psalm 51

Big Idea : After David was confronted about his sin he confessed what he had done and asked God to forgive him, cleanse and change his heart.

Aim : To understand that sin affects our relationship with God, but that he always forgives those who truly repent and trust in him.



Leader's Study Notes

Read 2 Samuel 11:1-12:25 to understand the background of this Psalm. Then read Psalm 51 noting what David sees as the cause of his sin and what he asks God to do.

Use the following notes to help you think about the passage in more detail.

51:1-2 David's plea for mercy is based on the fact that he knows God's love for him is unfailing. Because of his established relationship with God that he could ask God to forgive him and blot out the stain of his sin. Transgressions refers to the breaking of God's laws.

51:3-4 Nathan had exposed David's sin and he acknowledged that ultimately all sin, even harm done to others, is against God. In his relationship with Bathsheba David had directly or indirectly broken at least seven of the ten commandments. He had failed to worship God as God by fully obeying him (commandment 1); he had made an idol of his sexual desire for Bathsheba (commandment 2); he was responsible for the death of Bathsheba's husband, Uriah (commandment 6); he committed adultery (commandment 7); he stole another man's wife (commandment 8); he was deceitful in trying to hide his sin and Bathsheba's pregnancy (commandment 9); and he had coveted his neighbour's wife (commandment 10).

51:5-6 David knew that the source of his sinful behaviour was his sinful nature – he had had a bias towards sin since conception. It's not the act of conception itself which imparts sin, but it is the nature of every child conceived. Before any new life has thought, felt, spoken or done anything against the law of God, their heart is naturally turned away from him (Romans 3:10-12). But even in that early stage of life the demand of God's law is for truth and righteousness

– we are all, from the youngest possible age, accountable to God.

51:7-9 Hyssop was used to apply the lambs' blood to the doorframes in the original Passover (Exodus 12:22) and by priests in the Old Testament to cleanse those who were ceremonially unclean (Leviticus 14:6; Numbers 19:16-19). David recognised that he was unclean and that only God could make him clean again. This cleansing would result in a restored relationship where joy and fellowship replaced guilt and shame. David was crushed by the guilt of his sin and must have felt the effect on his relationship with God.

51:10-12 David knew that he could not change his sinful heart, the root cause of his sin. Only God could change him and cause him to walk in obedience. He had seen the result of God removing his Spirit from Saul (1 Samuel 16:14) and he feared that this might also happen to him. He longed to experience the joy of knowing God's rescue and forgiveness again. Guilt and shame had hindered his relationship with God.

51:13-15 If David were to call other sinners to repentance then he too needed to repent and ensure that he was right with God. He specifically asked for forgiveness from God for the blood he had shed; he was responsible not only for Uriah's death, but also the many other men killed when his army retreated to ensure Uriah's death. God's forgiveness even extended to a murderer and David praised him for such mercy!

51:16-19 The sacrifices which Israel brought were offered as an outward sign of genuine repentance – without this, the sacrifice itself achieved nothing. Because David was king of Israel his failure as king was public and had consequences for the people as well. He did not wish his personal failures

to affect the people of God as a whole so he prayed that God would prosper the nation and delight in the offerings that they brought.

David had a profound understanding of the sinfulness of his own heart and actions, but an equally rich understanding of God's mercy and unfailing love. It's precisely because of who God is and what he is like that David was able to cast himself upon God's mercy and appeal to his unending love.

The depth of both our sin and of God's love is most clearly seen at the cross where God gave his only Son to die in the place of his enemies who have broken his laws and rejected his rule. Those who have trusted in Christ are sealed by his Spirit and need never fear being cast from his presence. Yet the experience of guilt over our sin ought to cause us, like David, to repent and ask for mercy so that we may know the joy of an unhindered relationship with our heavenly Father.

Reflect

- Think about some of the things that you have thought, felt, said and done in the past week which you know have been wrong. How does knowing that you are guilty affect the way you feel about your relationship with God?
- Have you ever experienced the crushing guilt of a particular sin? Have you confessed it to God? Have you asked him to change your heart?
- Give thanks to God that Jesus' sacrifice covers all our guilt and shame. Ask God to grant you a sensitive conscience and a willingness to repent. Pray that he would change your heart.

Session Outline



Introductory Idea

Introduces this week's lesson.

Pose the questions at the end of the Introductory Idea. This gives children something to look out for in the lesson and helps their concentration. These get answered later in the session.



Teaching Plan

The core of the session.

The action of the Bible text is told as a story for younger children and explained. Or the Bible text is taught as a simple Bible study for older children.



Game Idea

Not essential.

Reinforces the lesson aim in a fun way and provides a way of displacing energy!

Review the questions posed in the Introductory Idea.



Discuss and Apply

Not to be missed!

This is where the children can be quizzed on the content and meaning of the Bible story. Questions and discussion are needed to apply this Bible story to the children's everyday lives. They should do most of the talking.



Prayer Idea

Use the prayer idea or just encourage each child to pray about an aspect of the lesson.



Activity

An opportunity to reinforce the lesson. **For younger children, Activity A or B will be suitable. For older children, Activity C or D can be used to facilitate the Teaching or the Discuss and Apply section – some children prefer a lively discussion to completing written answers.**



Memory Verse

A fun way of remembering the key verse for the series.



Introductory Idea

Option 1: Big Sin, Little Sin. Before the lesson draw up a list of various accidental or deliberate things that people do to each other. These could include: bumping into someone by mistake; deliberately pushing someone; pushing to the front of a queue; stealing sweets; hurting a friend; breaking someone's toys, etc. Write each action on a separate strip of paper so that they can be moved around individually. **For younger children you'll need to provide them with pictures to represent each of these.**

Place all the strips of paper (or pictures) onto a board or wall and ask the children to put the actions in order according to how easy they think it would be to forgive someone who had done those things **(you will need to guide younger children through this process by comparing two at a time).**

Talk about why they thought some things would be easier or harder to forgive. Today's Bible lesson is a song about someone who had done something worse than any of these things, but they still asked God to forgive them. [Use the Bridge Questions below to create a link with the lesson.]

Option 2: Saying Sorry. Encourage the children to think about a time when they needed to say sorry to someone and ask for forgiveness. You will need to have an example of your own ready to start the discussion. Who did you have to ask to forgive you? What had you done? How did that person respond? You could then choose two or three of the children to share about their experience.

Today's Bible lesson is a song about someone who had done something worse than any of these things, but they still asked God to forgive them. [Use the Bridge Questions below to create a link with the lesson.]

Bridge Questions

The children must listen carefully to today's true Bible lesson to discover the answers to the following questions:

- Who asked God to forgive him? [*David* (introduction to psalm 51)]
- What else did he ask God to do? [*Cleanse him, change his heart and save him* (51:2, 7, 10, 14)]
- Why could he ask God to do these things? [*Because of God's unfailing love and great compassion* (51:1)]



Teaching Plan

Since the background to this psalm is David's sin with Bathsheba it will be worth very briefly telling that story. Don't go into too much detail as the focus of this lesson is the psalm itself and that story is covered in the series on David. Start

by reminding the children of the ten commandments which God gave to Moses at Sinai. **Very young children may not have been taught these before so you might need to use pictures to represent each commandment.** Very simply the laws are:

1. There is only one God whom we should worship.
2. Do not make idols for yourself to bow down to.
3. Be careful to only speak about God in the right way.
4. Do not work all the time, but have a day of rest.
5. Honour your parents.
6. Do not kill people.
7. Keep marriage between one man and one woman.
8. Do not steal.
9. Do not lie.
10. Do not want what others have.

Briefly describe David's sin with Bathsheba. The big issue is that he wanted another man's wife and when he knew that he would be caught out he tried to cover his sin up by having her husband killed in battle. As you do this point to all the commandments that David broke. This needs to be done with minimal detail and very concisely.

Tell the children that the prophet Nathan told David that God was very angry about what he had done and so David had to say sorry to God. David felt very sad about what he had done. Help the children to understand why they feel bad/sad when they have done wrong.

Today's lesson is about the song or prayer that David wrote to show how sorry he was for what he had done.

Summarise the content of the psalm by using the pictures provided on pages 48 to 50 to represent each section. Placing the pictures on a board in sequence will help the children to understand the flow:

- 51:1-2 [*Man pleading.*] He asked God to have mercy on him. Mercy is when you don't get what you deserve. Can you think of an illustration with which your children will identify to help them understand the concept of mercy?
- 51:3-4 [*Owning up.*] He admitted that he had done wrong. It is often very hard for children to admit that they have done wrong – especially when they know that there will be consequences or punishment for doing so. Talk about why owning up to wrongdoing is so hard.
- 51:5-6 [*Dirty heart.*] He knew that he had done wrong because his heart was not right. Spend some time exploring why we do the things we do. Help the children to

understand that our thoughts, feelings, words and actions are all controlled by our hearts. In our hearts we would much rather do whatever pleases us than what pleases God. Every time we treat God like this in our hearts it causes us to think, feel, say or do wrong things.

- 51:7-12 [*Clean heart.*] He asked God to take away his sin and change his heart. Explain that only God can change our hearts. Rules don't change our hearts – sometimes they even make things worse because we don't like rules and we always want to disobey them. We cannot change our own hearts.
- 51:13-15 [*Speech bubble with crown.*] He promised to tell others about God's kindness. David knew how wonderful it is to not feel guilty about the wrong things we have thought, felt, said and done. He wanted to share this with others.
- 51:16-19 [*Heart with a tick through it.*] He knew that God would always forgive someone who asked him to do so. Help the children to understand that those who trust in Jesus are adopted into God's family. When they do wrong things they don't get kicked out of the family, but they do need to say sorry. When they do that they can know that God will forgive them because of what Jesus has done by dying in their place on the cross.

For older children – use the above teaching plan, but have the children break into groups and summarise the psalm themselves. Divide the class into six smaller groups and give each of them one section of the psalm (or if you have a smaller class break into three groups and give each one two sections). Help them to think about their verses using some of the following questions:

- 51:1-2 What did David ask God to do for him? Why could he ask God to do this? What does mercy mean? Can you think of an example of what mercy looks like?
- 51:3-4 What had David done wrong? Who had he sinned against? What did David admit to doing? Who did he say he had sinned against here? How can these both be true?
- 51:5-6 When did David become a sinner? How does this help you to understand why David sinned with Bathsheba? Does this mean that it wasn't David's fault? What does God want from his people instead?
- 51:7-12 What did David ask God to do for him? Why could he not rejoice before this? How do you think David felt before and after God forgave him?

51:13-15 What did David want to do once he had been forgiven? Why? What are some of the things he wanted to tell others about?

51:16-19 What kind of sacrifices does God love? How could David be certain that God would forgive him? What did David still need to do?

Finish by comparing the way David could be forgiven with the way that we can be forgiven. Can we be as certain as David was that God will have mercy on us? Where do we see the biggest demonstration of God's hatred for sin and his love for us? Because of this, how can we know that God will not leave us?



Game Idea

Option 1: For younger children – Clean Run. Before the lesson print page 49 onto paper or card and cut out the hearts. Glue the hearts back to back around a garden cane or small stick.

The children line up at one end of the room while you stand at the other end holding the heart stick. When the heart showing is 'clean' the children can move forwards; when the heart showing is 'unclean' the children must stand still and any child that you see moving gets sent back to the start. The first child to get to the other side wins.

You could play several rounds of this game and give some of the children a chance to hold the heart stick. Remind the children that in today's Bible lesson David had sinned against God. His heart was unclean and he couldn't change it. He needed God to forgive him, cleanse him and change his heart.

Option 2: "Help, I'm Stuck!" Play a version of the game 'stuck in the mud'. Choose one child to be the catcher who must chase the other children around the room and try to tag everyone. Leaders cannot be caught. Once a child has been tagged they must stand with their feet apart and arms out and shout, "Help, I'm stuck!" A leader may then run to that child and tag their hand to free them. When the catcher starts to get tired you could choose a second child to help them or simply change the catcher.

Remind the children that in today's true story from the Bible David had sinned against God by taking Uriah's wife, Bathsheba, and having Uriah killed. David was sorry for what he had done, but he couldn't change his own heart. He needed God to forgive him and to help him to change.

Option 3: Wipe Out. Before the lesson write a number of different good and bad things that people do on separate pieces of paper. You will also need to include a score under each action e.g.

- Was kind to someone +1 point
- Shared a toy +2 points
- Was rude to parents -100 points
- Stole a sweet -200 points

The bad things need to far outweigh the good ones to show the seriousness of sin and that we can never cancel it out by doing good. You will need enough of these for each child to receive at least two balls each – it's not a problem to have duplicates. Scrunch up the pieces of paper to make balls and place all of them in a bucket.

Divide the class into two or more teams and have them line up in their teams at one side of the room. Place the bucket with the scrunched up paper balls on the other side of the room:

The first child in each team runs to collect one paper ball and takes it back to their team before the next child can run. The children continue in a relay, collecting one paper ball at a time until all the balls have been collected. The teams can then open up the balls, read each one and add up their scores. Neither team should win this round because they will both have negative points.

Remind the children that in today's true story from the Bible David had sinned against God by taking Uriah's wife, Bathsheba, and having Uriah killed. David was sorry for what he had done, but he couldn't change his own heart and he couldn't do anything to make up for what he had done. He needed God to forgive him and to help him to change. If you used Intro Idea Option 1 you could refer to those sins as well and talk about the fact that we all need to be forgiven no matter how big or small our sin may seem to us.

Place the paper balls back in the bucket and play a second round, but this time add one more paper ball with a cross drawn on it and +1,000,000,000,000 points underneath. The team that gets the cross will obviously win.

Talk about how, like David, there is nothing that we can do to make up for our sin. We need to say sorry when we sin against God and ask him to change us, but because Jesus died on the cross for our sin we can be certain that we will be forgiven.



Discuss and Apply

For younger children – ask them to think about something that they have thought, felt, said or done in the past week that they know to be wrong. You might need to suggest some things as younger children will not easily admit wrongdoing. You might also share at an appropriate level something from your own life. It will be an encouragement for the children to know that sin is something with which we all struggle.

How does it make them feel when they do wrong? Share how you feel when you sin. Do they understand how it makes God feel? Is God right to be angry about our sin? Remind the children that David also felt very bad about his sin, but that feeling bad was not enough. He needed to confess (admit) his sin to God and ask God to forgive him. David could admit his

sin because he knew that God loved him very much.

God loves us very much too. He loves us so much that he sent Jesus to take the punishment that our sin deserves by dying on the cross. When we ask God to forgive us he can do it because Jesus has already paid for all our sin. But it's right that we still pray and ask God to forgive us because of what Jesus has done. If you used Intro Idea Option 1, you could refer to the list of sins and show that God can forgive all of these and more because of what Jesus has done. Encourage the children to think about the worst thing that they have ever done. Remind them that Jesus died for even the worst sins we can imagine and that God will forgive everyone who admits their sin and trusts in Jesus' death in their place.

For older children – discuss as above and then spend some time exploring the concept of real and false guilt. Real guilt is what we experience when we have been convicted of our sin, but once we confess our sin we ought to know God's forgiveness and have the burden of guilt lifted. Any remaining feelings of guilt are false.

When we first come to trust in Jesus we become part of God's family and nothing can change that, but when we sin it still makes God sad. The right thing to do is always to say sorry when we have hurt someone – especially someone we love. If we are serious about our relationship with God then we will be quick to say that we are sorry not only for the wrong things we have done, but also for those things which we should have done yet failed to do. If we have trusted in Jesus then we should be careful not to allow false guilt to weigh us down. We cannot fight sin on our own. David asked God to change his heart; we need to do the same. Every time we confess our sin we need to ask God to help us not to commit that sin again.

You could also spend some time discussing the difference between true repentance and simply feeling sorry for or embarrassment at being found out. What does true repentance look like? How will this show in our lives? How should it affect our attitude towards committing the same sin?



Prayer Idea

Get the children to spend a moment in silent reflection thinking about their sin. You might need to prompt them to think about various areas of life where we often get it wrong. Encourage them to say sorry to God and assure them that those who trust in Jesus' death are forgiven by God and that he removes their guilt.

You could then lead them in the following prayer of confession:

Heavenly Father,

We know that you are the Creator of all things and that you rule this world and us.

We are sorry for the times that we have not treated you as God or worshipped you as our king. We are sorry for the unkind things that we have thought, felt, said or done this past week. We are sorry for the things that we should have done, but have failed to do.

Thank you that Jesus died in our place to take the punishment for all our sins. Please forgive us and help us to live in obedience to you from now on.

Amen.

The children can say 'amen' if they agree with what you have said.



Activity

For 3-7s – choose either Activity A (page 51) or Activity B (page 52 and 53).

Activity A – Make a confetti heart. Print page 51 onto paper for each child. You will also require some confetti, glue and a tray or box lid.

Help the children to cover the area surrounding the heart with glue being careful not to get any glue inside the heart. Place the page on the bottom of the tray/lid and let the children sprinkle confetti all over the page until it's entirely covered. The confetti represents all the bad things that we think, feel, say and do.

Remind the children that God can cleanse our hearts when we ask him to forgive us because Jesus died in our place. Take the page out of the box and shake off the excess confetti. The heart should be totally clear of confetti. Repeat the process for each child. The complete picture will look like the one below.



Activity B – Make a cleansed heart print. You will need some paint and sponges for this craft. Print page 52 onto paper (one copy for every child). Print page 53 onto paper to use as a template to cut out one paper heart for each child. The easiest way to do this is to stack several pages together at a time and place the template page on top. Staple the pages all together in about six places around the page and cut all the hearts out at the same time.

Place one length of sticky tape over the phrase 'a pure heart' on page 52 and rub it firmly. Place another piece of sticky tape which you have doubled over onto itself with the sticky side outwards and on top of the first piece of sticky tape – this will

act as double-sided tape to keep the heart shape temporarily in place. The first piece of sticky tape will ensure that the page is not damaged when the second piece and the heart are removed.

The children place the heart shape over the words and then sponge the entire page, including the heart shape, lightly with paint. You could provide them with paper plates with a small amount of paint spread across them so that this isn't too messy and to ensure they don't use too much paint.

The paint represents all the bad things that we think, feel, say and do. Remind the children that God can cleanse our hearts when we ask him to forgive us because Jesus died in our place. When the paint is dry the children can lift the heart shape to reveal a clean heart beneath and throw the dirty heart shape away.

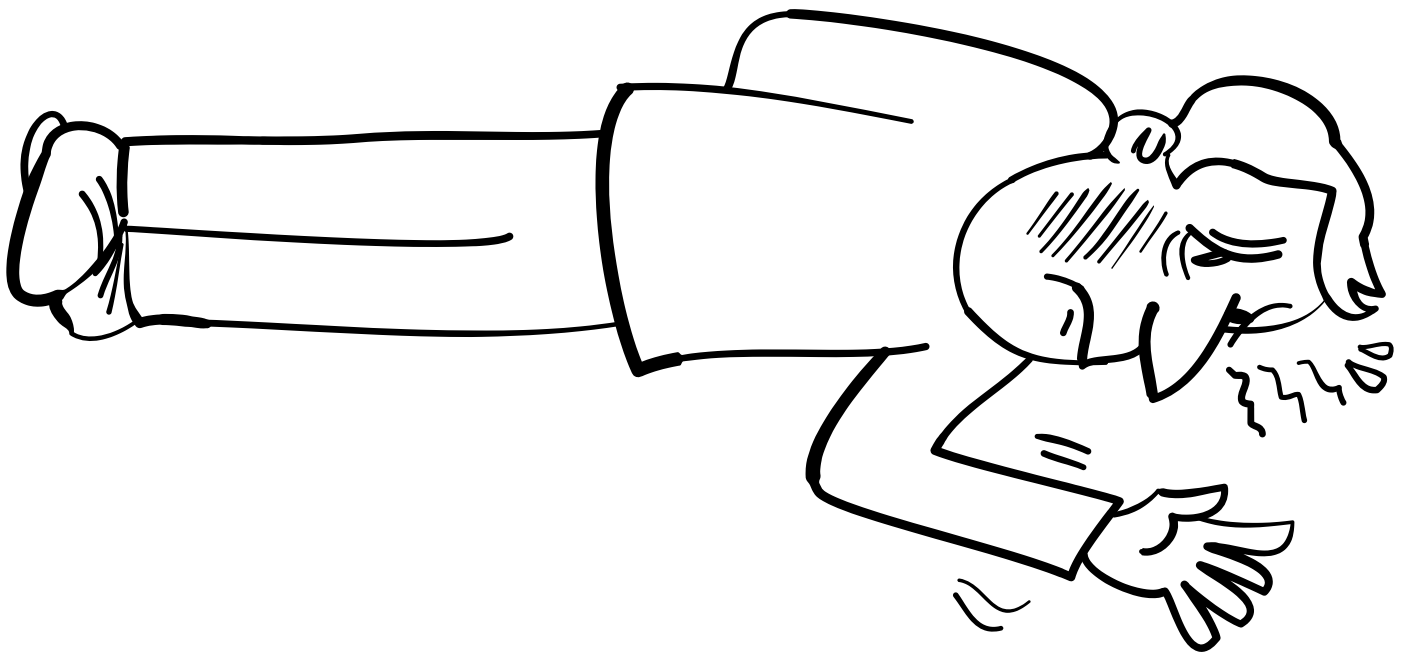
For 7-11s – print either Activity Sheet C (page 54) or Activity Sheet D (page 55) onto paper for each child. Choose whichever is appropriate for your children and use it to reinforce the lesson or as a discussion starter.

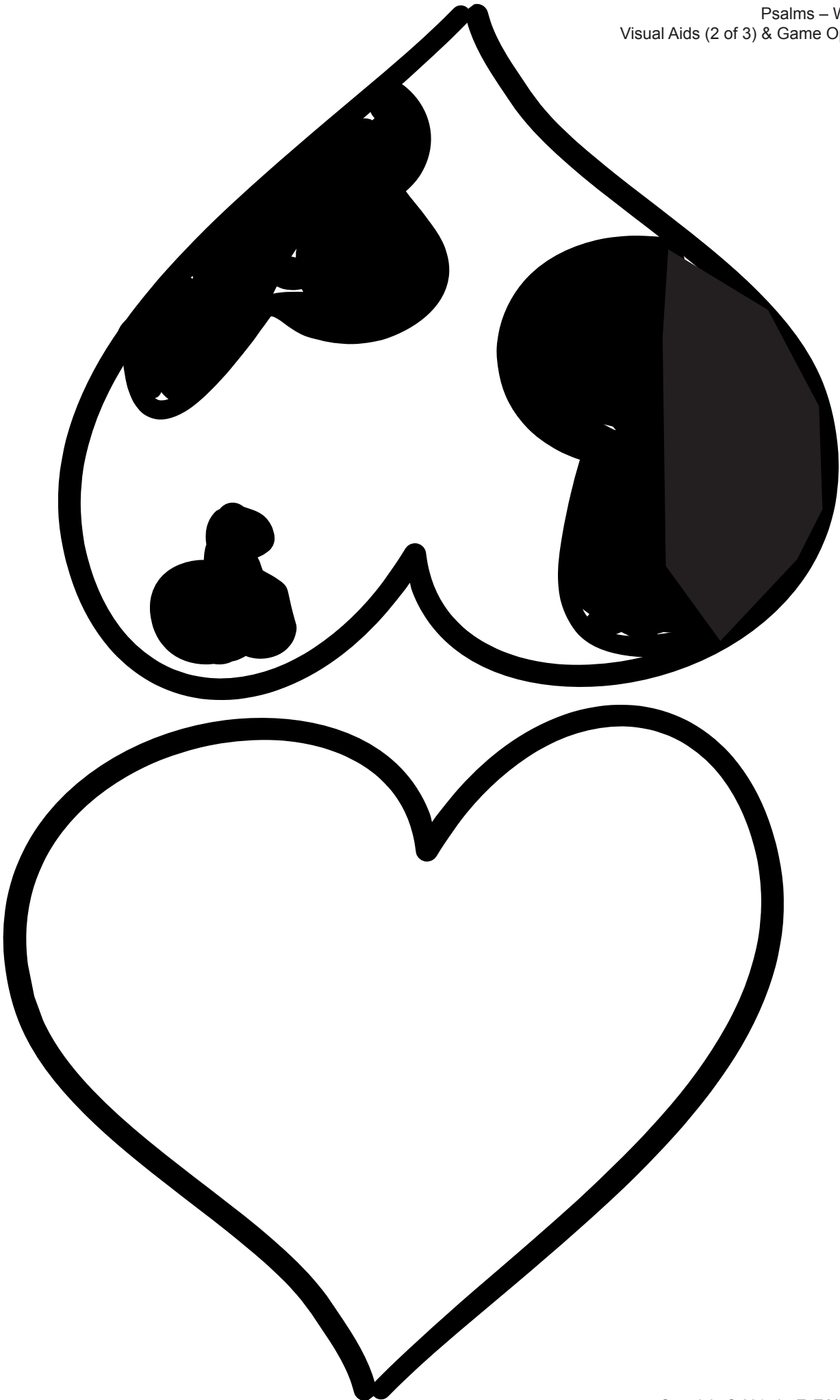


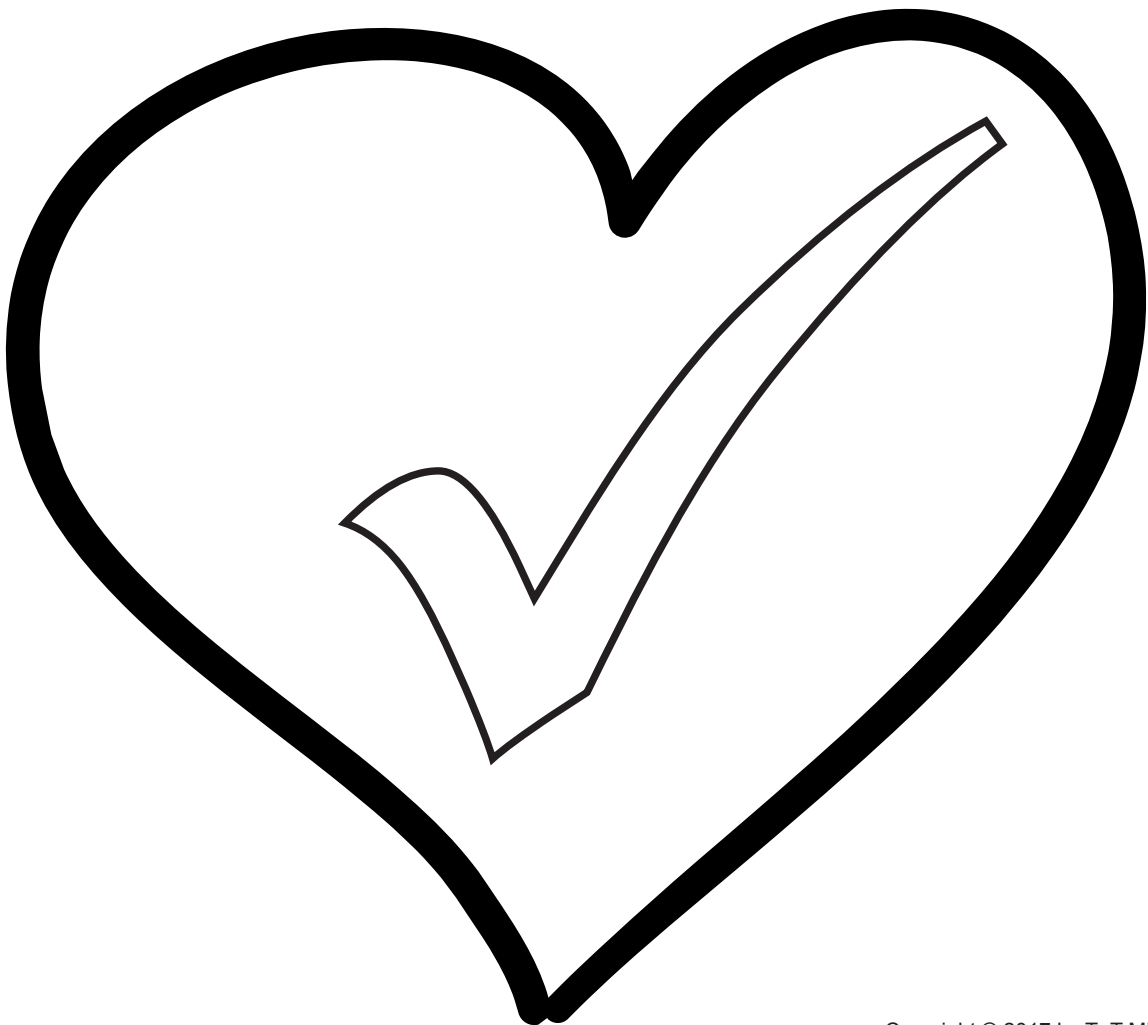
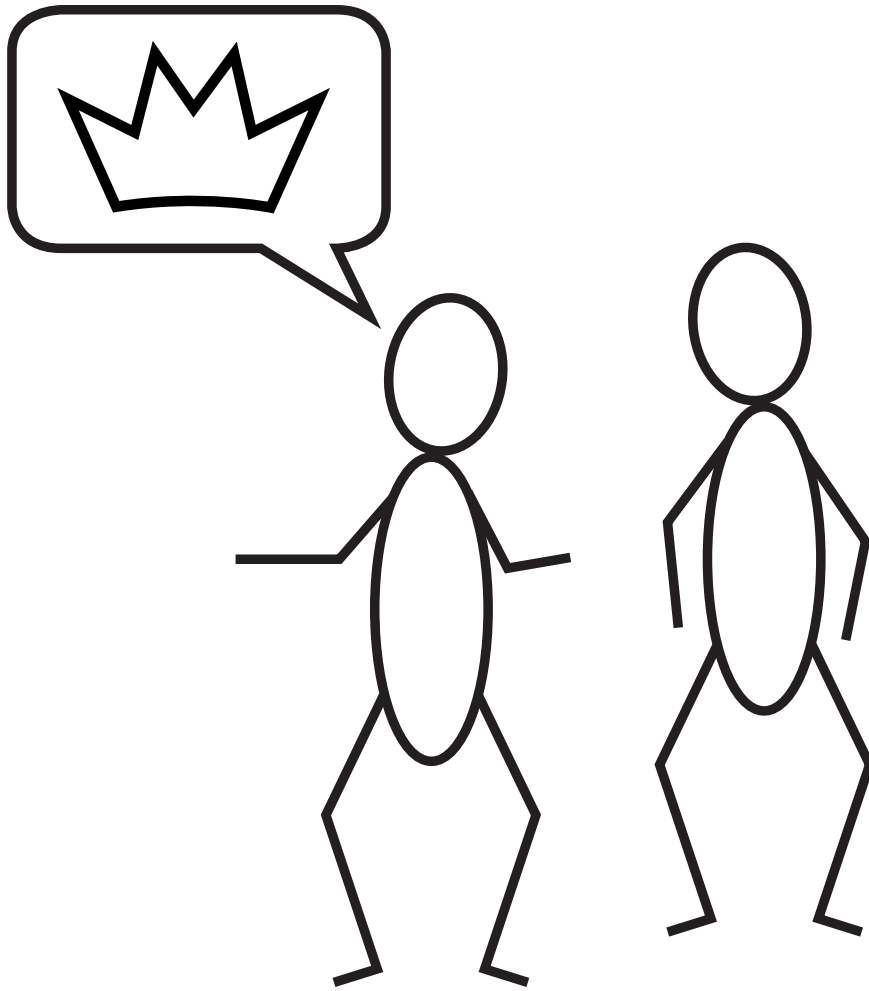
Memory Verse

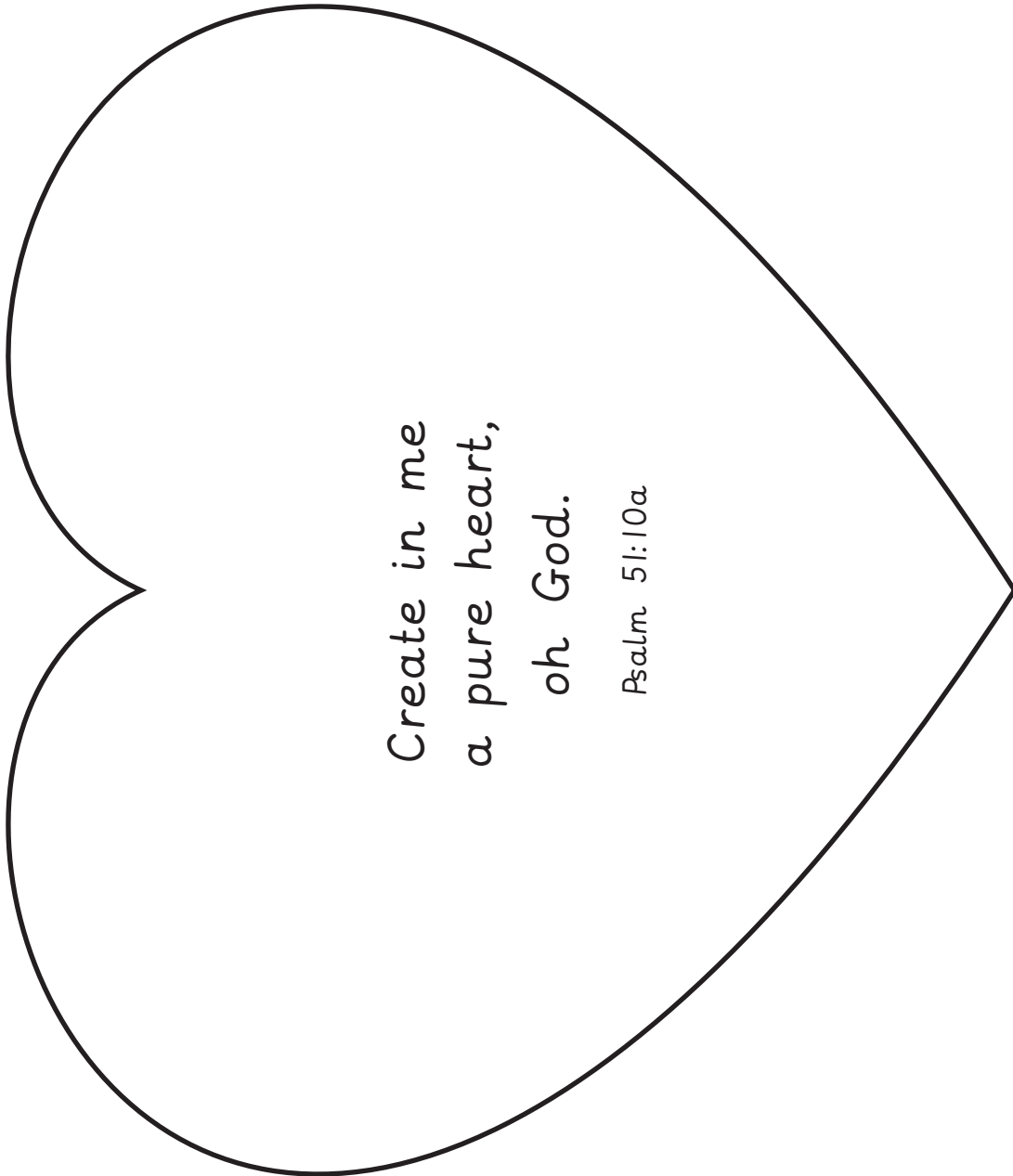
Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.

Psalm 51:1 [NIV]







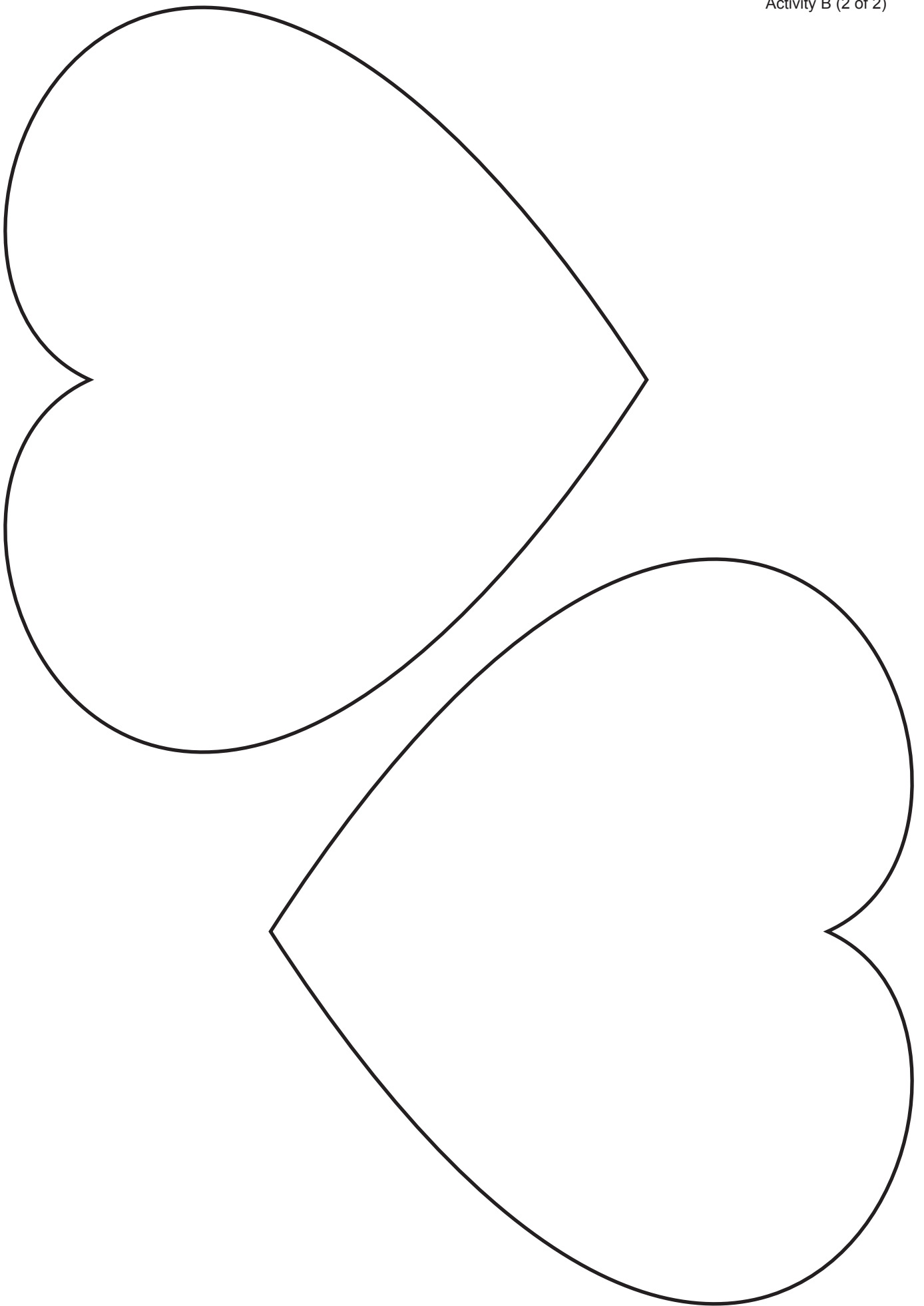


Create in me
a pure heart,
oh God.
Psalm 51:10a



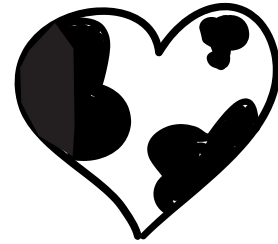
Create in me
a pure heart,
oh God.

Psalm 51:10a



The God Who Forgives

The true story can be found in Psalm 51



Discover

Who had David sinned against? (51:3-4) _____



Think Spot

What sin had David committed? Look up 2 Samuel 12:9. Why does David say he has sinned only against God?

When had David become a sinner? (51:5) Tick the correct answer.

- When he killed a man When he was a child Before he was born

What did he ask God to do?

51:1 Have m _ _ _ _ on him.

51:2, 7 C _ _ _ _ _ him of his sin.

51:10 Give him a p _ _ _ h _ _ _ _ .

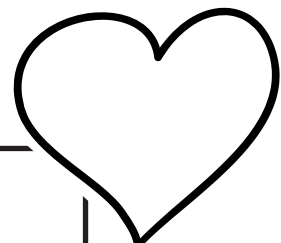


Why could he ask God to do forgive him? (51:1) Cross out the wrong answers.

- He was really sorry He had done lots of good things He was born a sinner
God doesn't really care God's love doesn't fail

Discuss

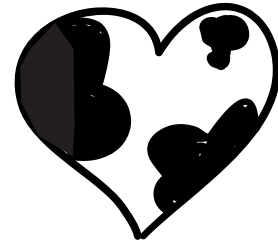
Who is our sin ultimately against?
How should we respond when we sin?
What does mercy mean? How has God shown mercy to us?
Why has he done this? How can we be forgiven?
If we have trusted in Jesus' death for us do we still need to say sorry when we sin? Why/why not?



The God Who Forgives

The true story can be found in Psalm 51

Discover



Who had David sinned against? (51:3-4) _____



Think Spot

What sin had David committed? Look up 2 Samuel 12:9. Why does David say he has sinned only against God?

When had David become a sinner? (51:5) _____

What did he ask God to do?

51:1 Have m _____ on him.

51:2, 7 C _____ him of his sin.

51:10 Give him a p _____ h _____ .



Why could he ask God to do forgive him? (51:1) Cross out the wrong answers.

He was really sorry He had done lots of good things He was born a sinner
God doesn't really care God's love doesn't fail

What does God desire when we sin? (51:16-17) _____

DISCUSS?

Who is our sin ultimately against? How should we respond when we sin? Why is feeling bad about our sin not enough?

What does mercy mean? How has God shown mercy to us? Why has he done this? How can we be forgiven?

If we have trusted in Jesus' death for us do we still need to say sorry when we sin? Why/why not?

Is it right to still feel guilty after we have been forgiven?

Why/why not? How should being forgiven change the way we live?

