



SESSION 1 of 4

Jesus starts it all

MEETING AIM

To think about how God's powerful, rescue plan had begun with Jesus.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Mark 1:1-15

BACKGROUND

There is a lot to cover in this passage. It begins with John the Baptist telling everybody to get ready for Jesus and baptising those who want to follow God. Then John baptises Jesus before he goes into the desert for 40 days, where he shows the devil how powerful he is. After this, Jesus went on to choose his disciples and began to tell people about God's word. The focus in this session is God's rescue plan – Jesus – and how powerful he is. It explores how he came to rescue every single one of us.

5 CIRCLE TIME

Invite the children to sit together in a circle. Encourage them to share stories from their week. Celebrate any birthdays or special events. It may be helpful to have an object or cuddly toy to pass around for the child who is talking to hold when they speak. Ask the children: "What do you think of when you imagine someone being rescued?" Thank God that he's with you and ask him to help you learn more about him today.

5 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: a large piece of paper; blue tissue paper; glue

Draw a river and riverbank on the paper before the session. Lay it out on the floor and encourage the children to use glue to stick on the tissue paper. Talk about how many people in the Bible, including Jesus, were baptised in rivers. Explain that people get baptised as a way of showing that they are sorry for the wrong things they have done and that they have chosen to follow God.

10 BIBLE STORY

You will need: toys to represent characters in the story (action heroes, dolls or cuddly toys will do); the river picture from 'Intro activity'; some scratchy fabric; a picture of a dove or a toy bird

Sit around your river picture. Choose a toy to represent John and tell this story:

John was born at around the same time as Jesus. When John grew up he started telling everyone to get ready for God's big rescue plan, to get ready for Jesus. He told them all about how powerful Jesus was.

People probably would have thought that John was a little unusual. He lived in the desert and wore clothes made of camel hair. *Wrap fabric around the toy.*

That must have been so itchy! And he ate locusts and wild honey. Anyone fancy a grasshopper as a snack? Not me! But God had given John the special job of telling everyone about him. *Use a selection of toys to act out John baptising people as you tell the next part of the story.*

John baptised people. This meant that when they said they were sorry for the things they had done wrong and wanted to follow God he would dip them under the water and then lift them back out again.

Jesus came to the Jordan River, where John was baptising people. He was baptised by John, even though he hadn't done anything wrong. *'Baptise' the toy that represents Jesus.*

As Jesus was coming up out of the water it was like the sky opened up! The Holy Spirit came down in the shape of a white dove and rested on Jesus. A voice from heaven said: "This is my son. I love him. I am very pleased with him." Who do you think said that? *Hover your toy bird / dove over the toy.*

God was so excited about his powerful rescue plan. He was so excited about how Jesus would rescue the people he had made. *Move 'Jesus' to a separate place in the room.*

After Jesus was baptised he went out into the desert for 40 days. He needed to get ready. He thought about all the things he and his Father would do together. His enemy, Satan, who had tempted Adam and Eve in the desert, was there. Satan didn't want Jesus to tell everyone about God. He tried to get him to stop doing what God wanted him to do. But Jesus didn't listen. He refused to believe anything Satan said. He was going to save all the people and get rid of their sin, and nothing was going to stop him! *Have your Jesus toy come back to the crowd of other toys.*

After this, Jesus went into a town in a place called Galilee to tell people about God. He was going to win God's people back. God's powerful rescue plan had begun.

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Ask the children these questions, encouraging everyone to take turns to contribute (use your object or cuddly toy if you passed one around earlier):

- What was your favourite part of the story?
- How do you think Jesus felt when he heard what his Father said about him?
- What do you think you would have thought about John if you had met him?
- How do you think Jesus felt in the desert?

10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: a washing-up bowl; hand soap; toys that can be washed; towels

Lay out bowls of bubbly water and invite the children to wash their hands and the toys. You could also use the story characters and let the children 'baptise' them.

As the children wash their hands and toys, talk about how Jesus came to tell people how much God loves them. Lots of people choose to follow him, say sorry for the things they have done wrong and get baptised. When you're baptised, it's like you're being washed clean on the inside and outside.

Thank Jesus that he came to rescue us. Thank him that he loves us and that when we say sorry for the things we've done wrong he forgives us.

5 PRAYER

You will need: the river picture from 'Intro activity'

Have the children take their shoes off and stand next to the river picture. Thank Jesus that he came for everyone and use the river to pray for each child. Say: "God, thank you for sending Jesus to rescue [child's name]." Encourage each child to jump into the river as their name is called.

Finish by praying: "Thank you, God, that you sent your son Jesus. Thank you for your amazing, powerful plan to rescue us."

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SESSION 2 of 4

Jesus meets Levi

MEETING AIM

To explore how Jesus came for the 'sick', how he came for everyone.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Mark 2:13-17

BACKGROUND

This session continues the theme of 'Who is Jesus?'. Jesus called unlikely people to follow him. He came for all people, much to the Pharisees' disgust! This session focuses on Mark 2:17: "Jesus said to them: 'It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.'" Jesus came for all people, and he intentionally sought out the 'sick'. He went to their houses, he ate with them and he made it clear that God's love and amazing rescue plan was for them.

5 CIRCLE TIME

Invite the children to sit together in a circle. Encourage them to share stories from their week. Celebrate any birthdays or special events. It may be helpful to have an object or cuddly toy to pass around for the child who is talking to hold when they speak. Ask the children: "What makes you feel most loved?" Thank God that he is with you, and ask him to help you learn more about him today.

10 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: medical supplies eg a toy doctor's kit, bandages, plasters or empty medicine bottles

Ask the children who might use these things. Often we go to the doctor's surgery, but it used to be that a doctor would visit someone in their house when they were sick. That's similar to what Jesus did when he was on earth. He went to see people who were hurting or had problems in their lives. Explain that we'll be hearing more about that in our story today. Let the children play 'doctors' with the supplies.

10 BIBLE STORY

You will need: coins

Gather the children together and explain that you're going to pretend to be Jesus. Ask them to stand around you and pretend to be the crowd trying to hear what Jesus is saying. When you're ready, tell this story:

Wherever Jesus went, big crowds of people would often follow him. One day, he went out beside a lake and a large crowd of people came to him. He started to tell them all about God's love and his big rescue plan for them.

Jesus looked over and saw a man named Levi sitting down. Levi was a tax collector. This meant that he collected money from people. Often he asked for a lot of money; people didn't really like tax collectors. *Count the money together and get the children to pull angry faces.*

They probably thought tax collectors were people who didn't always tell the truth and cared about money more than about them. No one would have expected Jesus to talk to a tax collector. But Jesus looked at Levi and said: "Follow me." Levi got up and followed Jesus. *Pick someone to be Levi, take their hand and walk to another part of the room. Invite all the other children to follow.*

Jesus went to have dinner at Levi's house. There were many other tax collectors there, and people who would have been called 'sinners' because of the wrong things they had done in their lives. Jesus' disciples were there too, along with some of the people who had followed Jesus to hear him talk. I bet it was really crowded!

The Pharisees saw Jesus eating with all these people. *Pick some children to act as Pharisees.* Tell them to look cross and shake their heads. The Pharisees were people who taught all about religion. They thought they knew everything about God and they didn't like the idea that Jesus wanted everyone to know him. They thought that people who did bad things weren't allowed to follow God. When they saw Jesus, they asked his friends: "Why does Jesus eat with all these greedy, dishonest people who do wrong things?" They didn't think Jesus should be eating with them.

Jesus heard them and said: "It is not healthy people who need to see a doctor but people who are sick. I haven't come only to call people who do all the right things. I've come for those who do wrong and those who don't know God. I've come for everyone."

Jesus came for everyone! Everyone gets sick, and we all need a doctor. Just as doctors used to go and visit people in their homes, Jesus went to the homes of people who needed him.

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Ask the children these questions, encouraging everyone to take turns to contribute (use your object or cuddly toy if you passed one around earlier):

- What was your favourite part of the story?
- How do you think Levi must have felt when Jesus called him?
- What would it have been like to meet Jesus?
- What would you talk to Jesus about?

5 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: bubbles

Jesus came for everyone. He came for you and me. God's big rescue plan was that Jesus would come so we could be forgiven for all the things we do wrong. Encourage the children to think of something they would like to say sorry to God for.

Invite them to talk to God about that thing as you blow the bubbles. In the same way that these bubbles pop and are gone, when we say sorry to God the bad things we have done are gone. He forgives us, and we can connect with him and forget about those things.

10 PRAYER

You will need: a map of your local area; a globe or map of the world; plasters

Remind the children that Jesus didn't wait for people to come to him so he could tell them about God. He walked around and visited their houses. He went and talked to lots of people. Because Jesus came for us, we can share him with other people.

Show the group the map or globe and encourage the children to choose any country they like. They should think about the people there and ask God to help them meet Jesus. As you pray for different places, stick a plaster on them. At the end, look together at how many places you have prayed over. Thank Jesus that he came for all people.

Finish by praying: "Jesus, thank you that you came to forgive us for the things we have done wrong. Thank you that we can share your love with other people."

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SESSION 3 of 4

Jesus calms the water

MEETING AIM

To explore how Jesus brought peace and showed God's power wherever he went.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Mark 4:35-41

BACKGROUND

This session continues the theme of 'Who is Jesus?'. Though children may have heard this story before, the idea of a storm can feel quite far removed from our lives. This session gives children opportunity to identify the things that feel storm-like for them and ask Jesus to bring peace and calm.

As the storm was happening and Jesus was sleeping, the disciples' focus was on the storm and how big and scary it was. Jesus was so full of peace that he had fallen asleep amid the storm. When Jesus woke up he knew that God had the power to calm the storm so he told it to stop. Jesus knew who he was and understood the power he had, so he knew what he could do.

5 CIRCLE TIME

Invite the children to sit together in a circle. Encourage them to share stories from the week. Celebrate any birthdays or special events. It may be helpful to have an object or cuddly toy to pass around for the child who is talking to hold when they speak. Ask the children: "What is your favourite kind of weather?" Thank God that he's with you and ask him to help you learn more about him today.

10 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: a container and some water; little boats (you could use yoghurt pots or small containers)

Let the children have a go at floating the boats on the water. Talk about how Jesus often went out on a boat as lots of his friends were fishermen. In today's story he went out onto the water in a boat and there was stormy weather. Have the children step back and create stormy weather and waves in the water using your hands. Ask the children how they think it must have felt to be in a boat in a storm.

10 BIBLE STORY

You will need: a Bible; an inflatable boat (or rug or upturned table); a cushion

Blow up your inflatable boat and sit it in the middle of the room. (Alternatively, spread out your rug or turn a table upside down.) Gather the children around it and tell this story:

Jesus and his disciples had spent the day talking to lots of people. When the evening came, they decided to go somewhere quieter in a boat. Jesus and his disciples got into a boat because they wanted to cross the sea. *Jump into the boat and encourage the children to come and sit with you. If you're using an upturned table, make sure the children don't bang into the table legs.*

Jesus was really tired, so he got himself a cushion and lay down for a nap. *Get your cushion, yawn and lie down sleepily (or have another leader do this while you narrate).* A very big storm came and the waves began to rock back and forth. *Encourage the children to make wave noises and rock back and forth.*

Splash! The waves were coming up over the boat! *Encourage the children to sway more.*

Jesus' friends were scared. They woke him up and said: "Don't you care that there's a huge storm?" *Have Jesus wake up.*

Jesus got up and said to the wind and the waves: "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. *If the children are still making wave noises and rocking back and forth, encourage them to stop now!*

Jesus said to his friends: "Why are you so scared? Do you still not trust me?" They were really afraid, but also amazed at how powerful Jesus was. They asked each other: "Who is he? Even the wind and the waves do what he says!"

If the children would like to, you could retell the story with the children taking it in turn to be Jesus falling asleep, then getting up and stopping the storm.

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Ask the children these questions, encouraging everyone to take turns to contribute (use your object or cuddly toy if you passed one around earlier):

- What is your favourite part of the story?
- How did Jesus' friends feel when the storm started?
- How do you think they felt when they saw him make the wind and waves stop?
- What makes your heart feel like it's in a storm sometimes?

10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: stones; paint (if you wanted a non-messy option you could do this activity with paper plates and felt-tip pens or crayons)

Give each child a stone. Invite them to paint the storm on one side and the calm water on the other.

Have your own example ready. Hold up the stormy side and say that the disciples felt afraid of the storm. Turn over the stone to the calm side. But Jesus stood up and told the waves and the wind to stop. Remind the children that the storm listened to Jesus and did what he said. The water and the wind were calm.

Invite the children to think about something that makes them feel afraid, or like their heart is in a storm, as they paint the stormy side of their stones. Remind them as they paint the other side that Jesus is more powerful than the storm and that he makes it calm. He brings us peace.

5 PRAYER

You will need: a cup for each child; water; paper straws

Ask the children if they think Jesus is powerful. He is more powerful than any scary thing! Talk about how, when it feels like our hearts are in a storm, we can ask Jesus to make them calm.

Give each child a cup of water and a straw. Ask them to blow bubbles in their cup until you tell them to stop. Then watch the bubbles disappear. Jesus told the waves to stop and they stopped. Can they see how the water in their cups has become still?

Invite the children to do it again and to think, or say out loud, something that makes them feel afraid. Stop them blowing bubbles. Say that Jesus brings calm. Jesus is more powerful than those scary things. (If your children are too young to blow bubbles, you could use a bigger container and blow the bubbles yourself for them to watch.)

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SESSION 4 of 4

Jesus feeds a crowd

MEETING AIM

To learn that we can ask Jesus for what we need because he cares for us.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Mark 6:30-44

BACKGROUND

This session continues the theme of 'Who is Jesus?'. The feeding of the 5,000 is often told to children, usually with the focus on the little boy bringing all he has. The boy isn't in the story in Mark's version, so this session focuses on the fact that Jesus provides what we need, cares deeply about us and can do incredible things.

5 CIRCLE TIME

Invite the children to sit together in a circle. Encourage them to share stories from the week. Celebrate any birthdays or special events. It can be helpful to have an object or cuddly toy to pass around for the child who is talking to hold when they speak. Ask the children: "What is your favourite food?" Thank God that he's with you and ask him to help you learn more about him today.

10 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: playdough

Share the playdough out and enjoy making food items out of the dough. Make sure you remind the children not to eat it! While you're making the food, ask the children about what would be in their favourite packed lunch. Have they ever been on a picnic? Talk to them about the kinds of things they might do on a picnic. What types of food do they like to eat?

10 BIBLE STORY

You will need: a picnic blanket; a lunch box; fish and bread rolls (paper or real)

Lay out the picnic rug and invite the children to sit down with you. Then tell this story:

Jesus and his disciples were busy. They had been talking to lots of people and telling them about God. They decided to go somewhere quiet to eat and have a rest. But lots of people saw them and followed because they really wanted to hear Jesus talk. Jesus began teaching them all kinds of things.

There was a big crowd of people and they didn't want to go home. They loved sitting listening to Jesus, and it got very late.

Let's imagine we were all in that crowd of people. Can you imagine if you'd been listening to Jesus until it got really late and hadn't anything to eat? I think my tummy would be rumbling. Did anyone bring a packed lunch for us to eat while we listen to Jesus? Oh, no one has a packed lunch?

The disciples were worried that no one had any food. Jesus told them to give the people some food, but they didn't have any. They went out into the crowd to see what they could find. *Get out the lunchbox with the fish and bread rolls.*

I wonder what's inside this lunchbox. *Pass the lunchbox around and encourage the children to look inside.*

All the disciples could find was five loaves and two fish. Surely this wasn't going to be enough food for everyone! Well, Jesus told the disciples to get everyone to sit down and he thanked God for the food. *Share the bread around and invite the children to eat some if you are using real bread (making sure you're aware of any allergies).*

When Jesus asked the disciples to start handing out the food an amazing thing happened. There was enough food for everyone. In fact, Jesus friends' went around collecting the leftovers afterwards and there were twelve baskets full of food left!

Recap the story as many times as the children would like to. You might need to mime eating the food if you tell the story so many times that you run out! Comment that the people were really hungry and their stomachs were rumbling. Jesus cares about everything. He cared about telling them who God was, but he also cared that they were all hungry. Jesus performed a miracle. From just a small lunch there was enough food for everybody!

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Ask the children these questions, encouraging everyone to take turns to contribute (use your object or cuddly toy if you passed one around earlier):

- How do you think you would have felt if you had seen this miracle happen?
- Why do you think Jesus gave food to all those people?
- What things do we need?
- What should we do when we see someone else in need or in trouble?

10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: people shapes cut out of card (you can buy these ready-made in craft shops or online); felt-tip pens or crayons; collage materials; child-safe scissors; glue sticks

Give each child a card person. Tell them that Jesus cares about each of us; he cares about what we need. Encourage the children to decorate their person as a self-portrait. Talk about how Jesus cares about our families, our friends, the food we eat and how we feel. He cares about everything. We can chat to Jesus about anything. He cares about it all.

If you have an appropriate story about how God has cared for you, share it with the children now.

5 PRAYER

You will need: paper (or people shapes cut out of card); felt-tip pens or crayons

Remind the children that Jesus cares about every single person. Sometimes we see people who are hungry or need looking after, or even just someone who we can smile at and talk to. Jesus asked his friends to help feed the hungry people. He asks us to follow him and look after people in need just as he did.

Encourage the children to chat to God and to ask him to help them think of someone they could help this week. It might be that God just pops someone's name into their head, or maybe they can picture someone. Give out the paper and invite the children to draw a picture of that person to help them remember who they are praying for.

Finally, say this prayer: "Jesus, thank you that you ask us to help others, just as you asked the disciples. Help us to spot people who need you this week and to make them feel cared for."

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