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A RESOURCE FOR BUSY YOUTH WORKERS

VOLUME 1

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A resource for busy youth workers - Volume 1

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INTRODUCTION

This book is all about raising up young people who know their God, who can understand his word and will let him impact their lives in a deep and meaningful way.

As you can see, this volume contains 48 sessions for church-based youth workers to teach young people. These meeting plans have been used and re-used, tweaked and rewritten. I've tried and tested this material over the course of 10+ years with various groups of young people as a week in week out Bible teaching series.

INSPIRE is aimed at doing just what it says on the front: inspiring youngsters. Through mystery, suspense and discovery we can help our youth to understand and apply the Bible to their lives.

A wise man once said, "Give a man a fish and you will feed him for a day, but give him a fishing rod and teach him to fish and you will feed him for life." INSPIRE will provide you with the tools to train youngsters to "catch fish" for themselves; to gain a mind-set that can understand and correctly interpret the Bible throughout their lives.

I believe this is really important for our youngsters to make it in adult life. Some young people can feel alienated from the Bible, simply because they read and don't understand. This resource gives youngsters a greater confidence in understanding the Bible.

The "science" behind each session

Each week the teaching develops through four stages of interactive discussion:

- Stage 1. Establishing what's happening
- Stage 2. Identifying the key parts of the text
- Stage 3. Applying what's there to today's situation
- Stage 4. Understanding what God is saying today

These discussion questions are aimed at developing the way young people read and interpret the Bible.

The first two volumes of this resource will take your young people chronologically through the Bible from Adam and Eve through to Ezra the prophet in the Old Testament. Volume three covers the people of God in the New Testament. Each week has a meeting plan with icebreakers, text to read, discussion points and helpful answers for the leader to know what the questions are getting at. This is a very versatile resource that provides several years' worth of teaching material. Perfect for busy youth workers!

Here is an example of how these steps aid the young people's learning:

Stage 1: Establishing what is happening in the text.

We know the story, we've heard it all before, right? Er... not necessarily. Noah's ark. The animals went in pairs two by two, didn't they? No. In Genesis Noah was required to take seven pairs of every kind of "clean" animal. From the start, the session aim is to establish what actually happened. This is the foundation the sessions are built on.

Stage 2: Identifying the key things of significance in the text

Often there are key words, statements or sentences that help to unlock pivotal questions about a text. For example, we read the statement "But God remembered Noah." Had God forgotten about Noah? A question like this then leads us on to a discussion about God's timing. This resource highlights key details of the text, enabling us to discover something fresh. Frequently, there will be clues in the Bible text that enable youngsters to discover why that particular information is there. Of course, they may need you to help point them in the right direction!

Stage 3: Applying the text to today's situations

Bible study can't simply be an academic exercise. We develop the discussion questions to then ask, "How might we respond in this situation?" and "Are there situations like these that we can find ourselves in today?" For example, if we are presented with an instruction from God that we don't understand at the time, what might we do? This leads onto themes of discipleship such as trust and obedience in our relationship with God.

Stage 4: Understanding what God is saying today

The last stage of questions focus on what God is saying to us as individuals and as a group. Is it about trusting him? How may God be reassuring us? Is it to help us more fully enjoy God's protection and provision? This last stage is all about bringing clarity where there is confusion about what to do today. Is it an action to take? Maybe it is concerning guidance or moral decision making.

How will I know the answers to the questions?

In this resource the hard work is done for you. The research has been done so that your preparation time can be focused on understanding the issues and communicating the Bible, rather than having to go through all the commentaries and dictionaries to understand what's going on. The information in brackets after each question is there for two reasons:

Firstly, to answer the question so that you can see what it's getting at. Since this is an interactive discussion resource, you may feel more comfortable re-wording some questions to your style. The answer in brackets helps you to "get" the question.

Secondly the answer is there to give you confidence in affirming people's replies and teasing out the truth of the text. It's not all about getting the right answer, but in understanding the Bible there has to be a correct teaching point coming out at the end.

What about the youngsters who don't like a discussion?

Not everyone is going to be super-chatty on every session. Therefore, there are a variety of icebreakers, stories, scenarios and other things that aim to involve the whole group and enable people to be at ease; even the shy ones like me!

It is worth having a packet of sweets (eg. a bag of Haribo) available for the first few times you lead these sessions (if not all the time!). The idea is that when someone answers a question, they get a sweet. This isn't a sweet for the "right answer," but rather for a sensible, well thought out response to the question asked. Suddenly everyone wants to say something!

How to use this resource

This resource works well if you have a small group setting, such as on a Sunday morning or during the week. The size of the group doesn't really matter. This material works best for numbers from 6 and 30 youngsters and caters for ages from 11 to 17 years old.

It is advisable that leaders take around an hour preparation time each week, to read through the Bible text and the notes to familiarise themselves with the theme and the games. The games have been chosen so that there are minimal resources needed each week. You don't want to keep having to go shopping for every session!

The Bible is essential

Since this is a Bible resource, it works best if each youngster has a Bible to use. Have someone read out the text each week with youngsters following along. It's also very handy that they have Bibles open during the teaching so that they can base their answers on evidence found in the text rather than just guessing. This will enable them to have a basis for their answers as opposed to guesswork.

Volume 1 - From Adam through to Gideon

This resource is both text based and story based. Each session takes a look at a situation that a Bible character faces and aims to drill down into the text to relate it to things that we face today. There is so much that will help us today as we discover God working in our lives through their stories, their mistakes, their failures as well as their successes.

May your young people continue to develop in their understanding of the whole counsel of God, as they go through some of the key moments of Bible history. My hope is that they will grow stronger in their faith and discover more of how God wants to lead them in the future!

SESSION 1

ADAM AND EVE - CREATED IN GOD'S IMAGE

ICEBREAKER 1 – CHINESE WHISPERS

⌚ 5 Minutes

The leader whispers in one person's ear, that person passes it on: "Fred rang to say he's late, it looks like midday flight will be at eight. He said he won't forget to bring your surprise, can you remind him of your size."

INTRODUCTION

⌚ 1 Minute

Over the next year we are going to be studying the lives of some of the most important characters in history. There's so much insight that we can gain for help in living our own lives, by learning what the people of God did in the Bible. It's important to remember that these people were ordinary people just like us. They did some amazing things, but also made mistakes just like we do.

By keeping this in mind we can really understand how God related to people in the past and how he will relate to us today.

DISCUSSION

⌚ 10 Minutes

Jenna Franklin has told her mother that she would like bigger breasts for her 16th birthday present. Her mother, who is a cosmetic surgery consultant, has herself had breast implants and has agreed to pay the bill of around £3,000.00.

However, the surgeon who would have performed the operation has announced that he considers cosmetic surgery inappropriate because Jenna is still developing physically. He also thought that a 15-year-old lacked the psychological maturity in making such an important decision. He has announced that he will not operate until Jenna is 18.

Newspapers have reported that Jenna anticipates having lip-suction and dental work in her 20s and a face lift at 40. Around 25,000 teenagers receive cosmetic surgery each year in the United States. It seems that a similar trend is developing among young people in the UK to opt for the knife and implants to achieve the "perfect look and shape."

01. Do you think Jenna is old enough to decide for herself if she wants cosmetic surgery?
02. Jenna says she wants the surgery "to be successful, I need to have them." What do you think about that?
03. Describe the pressures to be a certain shape that affect young men and women...

04. **Glossy magazines, adverts and films all tend to emphasise physical attractiveness. What else can make a person attractive?**

TEACHING 1

🕒 10 Minutes

READ Genesis 1:1-27 & Genesis 2:4-7

01. **Does anyone have any comments on what we've just read? Have you noticed anything that you hadn't seen before? Any initial thoughts?**
02. **How does Genesis say the plants appeared?** (It's easy to think that God just made them appear, but here we see that he has established laws of nature and v6 tells us that he uses water to spring up from the earth to make the vegetation grow).
03. **Where does the Bible say Adam came from?** (The dust. In the same way God uses what he has already established to form Adam ie. the dust).
04. **What image does God use to create Adam?** (v27 His own. No other living creature is said to have been made this way).
05. **Tell me what do you think the words "image" and "likeness" communicate about Adam and Eve?** (They were made having certain things in common with God. But being made like God is not just about our physical appearance).
06. **How does this make you feel about yourself knowing that you've been made in God's image?** (God has made you in the form of his own beauty, there are some truly lovely things about you).
07. **In what way are we different from the other creatures on the Earth?** (Get them to try and think how Adam and Eve were made)
08. **Verse 26 hints as to why we are different to the animals... The clue is where God says "Let us make man in our own image."**
09. **Why "Us"?** (God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. 3 parts in 1 God).

As humans we have: **a mind** where we think, we feel pain, we love and stuff, **a body** that is physical that we can see and interact with others **and a spirit** inside us and will go to the next life when we die. In this way we are like God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

God made mankind different from the animals in that we have a spirit. Animals don't know right from wrong. A lion will kill you and eat you without a second thought. They can feel pain, hunger, they can be loyal and intelligent, they can also be trained by us, but they have no in-built conscience.

There is no spirit inside them. They cannot go to heaven or hell. They simply have a body and a mind, and when they die, they return to the earth. In this way we are special and distinct from the animal world.

10. **What attributes do you think mankind has that are like God?** (Love, compassion, faithfulness, goodness, authority over the other creatures of the earth, power to rule, the ability to choose, etc.)
11. **Do you think a person can be beautiful simply by having these good attributes, without having a stunning outward appearance?**
12. **Who would you rather be friends with:**
 - A. **Someone who is outwardly beautiful but not necessarily inwardly beautiful, or**
 - B. **Someone who has a beautiful character, but not necessarily outwardly good looking?**
13. **Same question again, but this time who would you rather go out with??**

If we are honest, we often give those who are physically good looking more attention than those who are good on the inside. It takes a deeper person to see people for who they are on the inside, ie. their character. This is what makes a good friend and a good relationship.

14. **Here we have the first human being, made perfect by God. Why do you think God made humans as special?** (Read Deuteronomy 7:6 He made us to have a relationship with him. It is because we have a Spirit inside of us that we can have a relationship with God).

TEACHING 2

🕒 8 Minutes

READ Genesis 2:8-15

We're going to look at these verses more next week, but does this tell you anything about God's relationship with Adam?

1. **Try and put yourself in God's shoes... Have you ever had an Action Man or a Barbie doll or a small pet like fish or guinea pig? In what way are verses 8–15 similar to this?** (God made a special place for Adam to stay, that Adam could take care of and enjoy. It was a special place of immense beauty in which Adam could make his home).
2. **How else does God interact with Adam in these verses?** (He helps Adam in his search for a companion).
3. **What does this say about God caring for our needs?** (Don't worry if you don't have a girlfriend/boyfriend and you want one. God will take care of that and find you what

you need *when* you need it! This might not be right away! Sometimes we think things happen instantly, but we see with Adam it took some time. There were lots of living creatures on the Earth!).

So, take heart, he understands where you're at and hears your prayers.

ROUND UP

🕒 1 Minute

Here is a fantastic picture of Adam interacting with God. Adam and Eve, made in God's image, made different from all the other living creatures, made with a spirit for a relationship with God. God shows himself here as one who interacts with us, and who thinks of our needs and provides for us in order that we may be satisfied in life.

Of course, we all want to look nice, but whether we are stunningly good looking on the outside is not as important as developing good character on the inside. It's far better to build relationships with people who genuinely love and respect you for who you are on the inside.

PRAYER TIME

🕒 5 Minutes

SESSION 2

ADAM AND EVE – TEMPTATION PRESENTS ITSELF

ICEBREAKER 1 – DO NOT TOUCH

🕒 2 minutes

Leave an item that people will want to pick up somewhere in middle of the room (if you can source a remote doorbell button that would be ideal). Place a sign on it saying “do not touch.” Say that you've just forgotten something and need to get it and leave the room... Come back a minute or so later and see if anyone has touched it.

ICEBREAKER 2 – TRUE AND FALSE?

🕒 10 Minutes

Ask everyone to think for a couple of minutes and come up with two statements about themselves, one true and one false. They can be as wacky as you like, but if they've got unusual things to say about themselves which are true it could become very interesting. When everyone has had time to think, begin with one of the leaders, to give the youngsters a good idea of the sort of thing they can say. The leader has to give two statements about themselves and then the group has to decide which statement is true, and which is the false statement. Move around the group, allowing each person to make their two statements and everyone to select the true statement.

Have fun doing this, but at the end try make a point about lies. Sometimes they are more convincing than the truth; but they are always wrong. Satan is the father of all lies and Jesus is the way the TRUTH and the life.

INTRODUCTION

🕒 1 Minute

Last week we began looking at Adam and Eve. We learned about how God made them in his own image and although that doesn't mean physical likeness, it does mean likeness in character.

As humans we have: **a mind** where we think, we feel pain, we love. We have **a body** that is physical that we can see and interact with others. We also have **a spirit** inside us that will go to the next life when we die. In this way we are like God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

So, Adam and Eve were made in God's image. They were made different from all the other living creatures and made with a spirit for a relationship with God.

TEACHING 1

🕒 8 Minutes

READ Genesis 2:18-25

01. **Why did God decide that Adam needed a helper?** (v18 He acknowledged that it wasn't good for Adam to be alone. God knows that we need others to be in relationship with. We get lonely).
02. **How did God go about getting Adam a helper to begin with?** (vs 19-20 He brought all the living creatures to Adam for him to name them)
03. **Why do you think Adam didn't find a helper among all the creatures of creation?** (There was no-one who he could communicate with, no-one with the same mind, body and spirit, so no-one he could be in equal relationship with).
04. **What did God do about it?** (vs 21, 22. God caused Adam to fall asleep and then created a woman out of Adam's rib. Original cloning?! "The woman was *made of a rib out of the side of Adam*; not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved." *Matthew Henry*).
05. **How did Adam respond to God's new creation?** (v23. He recognised their likeness and felt her to be a suitable helper; he also saw the lifelong commitment it would be.

TEACHING 2

🕒 15 Minutes

READ Genesis 2:15-17 and 3:1-7

01. **What did God actually tell Adam he could and couldn't do? What would happen if he was disobedient?** (He could eat the fruit from any tree in the garden, except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If he ate from that tree he would die.)
02. **Do you think that was fair of God?** Discuss.
03. **What do we learn about the snake? Who was it?** (The snake was clever and cunning. It was Satan).
04. **How did he begin his conversation with Eve?** (v1 by questioning what God had actually said and casting doubt on it).
05. **Was Eve sure about what God had told them?** (She knew that she could eat from all the trees except the one in the middle of the garden because they would die if they ate from that one).
06. **What did the snake say in reply and why was this a temptation to Eve to eat the fruit?** (He contradicted God and said they would not die, that they would know about good and evil and be like God. This appealed to her pride that she would be like God).
07. **How did Eve deal with Satan's temptation?** (She gave in).

08. **What would have happened if she had resisted the temptation Satan put before her?** (She and Adam could have continued living in the garden in comfort and at peace with themselves and God).
09. **Think about when Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness. How did He resist temptation? What did He do?** (Matthew 4:1-11. He answered with the word of God and stood firm with faith in God).
10. **What can we learn from Adam and Eve's experience and how it compares with Jesus and how He dealt with temptation?** (Discuss).

ROUND UP ⌚ 1 Minute

Satan will always try to turn us away from God, he will do all he can to shake our faith. He is the master of lies and will delight in making us believe that God has lied to us. Remember Jesus said "I am the Way, **the Truth** and the Life." Also remember that we have a choice. Satan cannot make us give in to temptation any more than God would make us be obedient to him. We have free choice and that choice brings responsibility. We choose to listen to God or to listen to Satan's lies and we have to take responsibility for that choice. What can we do?

We can ask God to help us stand firm against temptation. Remember that line in the Lord's prayer, "Lead us not into temptation." God can give us the strength to say 'No' to Satan, but only if we want to.

PRAYER TIME ⌚ 5 Minutes

Spend a few minutes chatting about things to pray for. Encourage the group to share if they have any particular difficulties or temptations they are facing and then have a prayer time together.

SESSION 3

ADAM AND EVE - WHAT GUILT DOES TO YOU

ICEBREAKER – PASS THE KEY

🕒 8 Minutes

Players sit in a circle, facing inwards; one person stands in the middle, holding a key behind their back.

The game begins when a player from the circle stands up, takes the key from one in the middle and sits back in the circle. The key is then passed behind their back undetected to another player, who must in turn secretly pass it on. The person in the middle must try to keep track of where the key is.

At some point the leader will say "STOP" and then everyone must hold both their hands in front of them, clenching their fists so the key cannot be seen. The person in the middle has three guesses at which hand contains the key. If they guess correctly, they swap places with the person with the key and the game runs again. Any players can do fake moves to make it harder for the guesser to keep track of the key.

After a couple of rounds add a further element to the game. This time, when the leader says "STOP" the guesser can ask up to three questions before making his/her three choices. For example, they might ask "Do you have the key?" "Where is the key?" "Did you have the key at some point?"

Then ask... did being able to ask questions and see reactions make it easier? Why/Why not? Did anyone make guessing easier by looking guilty?

DISCUSSION

🕒 10 Minutes

Picture the scene. It's Saturday, around 3pm. You have rumbles in your stomach and you could really do with something to eat. It seems like ages until dinner time and you feel like you can't last out. So, you go foraging around in the kitchen, where you come across your brother's stash of fun-size Twixes. He's not around to ask and there are loads in there. You're sure he won't even notice if one measly little bar is gone.

No-one's around and you know the Twix is just what you need. If no-one notices you, it's probably not even like a crime at all?! (You think!). You slip the Twix into your pocket and disappear upstairs.

You are now in your bedroom with the said Twix bar.

01. **What is going through your head right now?** (What are the options you are considering? Is there much debate in your head as to what to do next, after all it is just a Twix? Or is it more than that?).

You look at the Twix, and think of the biscuity, caramel chocolate mix and you unwrap it. The shiny layers of chocolate look so tasty, so you decide to devour it on your own in your bedroom.

02. **How do you feel at this point?** (Satisfied? Happy? Guilty?)
03. **Now the Twix is gone. If you had a time machine, would you go back and make another decision?** (Discuss).
04. **Why is it that we are sometimes told *not* to do things? After all, aren't rules just boring?** (Discuss).

Now, it's nearly dinner time and you are watching the TV downstairs. Your brother comes home from playing sports. He needs to replenish his body sugar levels. He goes into the kitchen for his stash of Twixes. Something's wrong. It's not as he left it. Fortunately, he knows how many are left as he has one for every day left in the month. It's the 3rd today, so he should have 28 left!

05. **What would you do at this moment in time??** (eg. Find a place to hide, or find your parents fearing for your personal safety?).
06. **What feelings are you experiencing at this moment??** (Anxiety, fear etc).

Your brother is now looking for you. He confronts you and tells you that he's counted them, and there's a Twix missing! He tells you in no uncertain terms that he believes you did it.

07. **How do you respond?** (Discuss).

INTRODUCTION ⌚ 1 Minute

Last time we saw how Adam and Eve were faced with a choice, a temptation. We learned that, because they chose to listen to Satan and disobey God, they were responsible for what followed. This week we're going to see what happened as a *result* of the choices Adam and Eve made.

TEACHING ⌚ 20 Minutes

READ Genesis 3:1-20

Here, Eve is standing at the tree and Satan is telling her to eat some fruit.

01. **Did Satan *make* her eat the fruit?** (No. She was faced with the choice. The only power the snake had was to try and persuade her to eat the fruit. The snake could not force her to eat it).

With just the power of persuasion, just with words, the snake managed to make Eve do something wrong. This would affect the future of her life. He used the tree and its fruit to lure her.

02. **It says in verse 6 that the tree was beautiful. Would the outcome have been the same if the tree was unattractive and the fruit ugly?** (Often we will find that at the time, the wrong things that we are tempted to do can appear very attractive).

ACTIVITY – STRAIGHT FACE ⌚ 5 Minutes

Find five volunteers who think they can keep a straight face no matter what. Get those in the group to ask the volunteers questions. The only reply the volunteers can answer is with the word "sausages." The one who keeps a straight face for the longest time wins a prize.

01. **What was the winner's secret to success?**
02. **Now, take the example of the Twix bar. When it looked so enjoyable and you really wanted to eat it, how could you overcome such strong feelings?** (Think about the outcome, think about something else, pray and ask God to help you find something else!).
03. **Did the fruit fulfil all that the snake said that it would?** (No. Satan lied when he said they would be like God. He also told a half-truth that they would know good and evil. There were some very negative effects as a result of their disobeying God).

There's always the *before* and *after* with temptation. Before, things look very attractive and promise to make you feel happy, excited or be something you will enjoy. You can end up thinking of nothing else. But after, when you realise it was wrong and that you have made a mistake, you will probably wish you could turn back time. You've been tricked by a half-truth. Yes, the chocolate would be tasty, but you don't enjoy it as much as one you would have paid for. So you feel guilty.

TEACHING CONTINUED ⌚ 10 Minutes to go

06. **Describe the negative feelings Adam and Eve must have had?** (v10 They felt guilty inside and shameful of what they had done. They were afraid of God).
07. **What does guilt do to us?** (It makes us feel full of regret for what we've done. It's a horrible feeling we get inside, because our conscience reminds us that we've done a bad thing. It can stop us from sleeping and make us want to do things to help us forget about it. We just want to blot it out from our minds. It can mess us up on the inside and lead us to do further destructive things).
08. **If guilt makes us feel so bad, is guilt wrong?** (Guilt is good as it is our gauge as to what is right and wrong. If we lose this, we will lose control of our lives).

09. **Who and what were Adam and Eve afraid of?** (They were afraid that God would find out and be angry and He was. It made them want to run away and they were worried because of what might happen to them as a result of what they had done).
10. **What were they afraid would happen?** (They'd messed up big time. This was the start of the world and they didn't realise it at the time, but their actions had poisoned the human race. Our actions affect others, and when we do wrong others are affected).
11. **Adam and Eve knew there would be consequences, so they legged it. Do you ever run away from God when you've done something you know he isn't pleased with?** (Discuss).
12. **How can we get rid of this guilty feeling? What can you do after you've messed up?** (Confess it to God, and ask to be forgiven. Jesus will forgive you! 1 John 1:8-9).

Being forgiven is God's solution to the problem of guilt that we feel inside when we do wrong things. Guilt makes us feel all wrong on the inside. God is good, holy and pure and will judge all sin. But in his great love He has provided a way to take away all guilt and sin. Thousands of years later Jesus would come to Earth and through believing in him all guilt and every sin is taken care of.

13. **Take a look at verses 16-19. Do you think this is a harsh punishment for simply eating an apple?** (These are very serious punishments, but we can always trust God to be fair).
14. **If God is always fair, this must mean that what they did was very serious. If it was more than just eating an apple, what was it that was so bad?**

Firstly, they disobeyed God. They decided to believe the snake instead of God and went against what God had asked them to do.

Secondly, this was something more than an apple, because they were changed after eating it. Something irreversible had happened to them. They knew things they didn't before ie. that they were naked. God had made everything in the world good, but now it was no longer all good any more.

As a result of the change that happened in Adam and Eve, things now had to change around them.

ROUND UP ⌚ 1 Minute

We see in verses 13-20, that as a result of what Adam and Eve had done, things were now going pear-shaped. The consequences of their actions were now being realised and the passing pleasure of eating a forbidden apple has turned into a nightmare. Often things that are wrong are wrong for a reason. God wanted to protect Adam and Eve from the bad things

of the world, and provide a pleasant and restful environment for them to live in. Unfortunately, by disobeying God they destroyed many of the good things God wanted them to enjoy.

Often our actions have repercussions for other people's lives too. Eve's actions affected Adam's life and in turn their actions affected their children's lives and all of humanity. When we risk getting involved in bad things, we also put at risk our future happiness. God wants you to be happy, and he sent Jesus to set us free from the guilt and fear that attacks us as a result of what we do wrong.

PRAYER TIME

🕒 5 Minutes

Maybe there is something they feel guilty about and wish they hadn't been tempted. Maybe they made a mistake. Encourage them that there is forgiveness through Jesus and pray.

SESSION 4

CAIN AND ABEL – JEALOUSY BETWEEN BROTHERS

ICEBREAKER – STRING TOSS GAME

🕒 10 Minutes

Get a ball of string or yarn. Have each person answer a question (from the list of questions at the end of this study) when they have the string in their possession. They then hold on to the string and throw the ball to another person so they can answer the question. You eventually create a web of some sort. In the end, describe how we all played a part in creating the web, and that if one person was gone it would look different. When we all take part that is what makes the group what it is, unique and special.

INTRODUCTION

🕒 1 Minute

Last week we looked at the consequences of Adam and Eve giving in to temptation. They lost everything. They lost their comfortable lifestyle, their innocence and their peace of mind. This was replaced with pain, hard work, eviction from the only home they had ever known and the knowledge that they had disappointed God. Their actions did not only affect them; the consequences would go on and on throughout the generations. We are still paying the price!

When we risk getting involved in bad things, we also put at risk our happiness. God wants us to be happy, and He sent Jesus to set us free from the guilt and fear that attacks us as a result of what we do wrong. Today we see the birth of the first babies in the Bible and then things go a stage further down the slippery slope.

TEACHING

🕒 25 Minutes

READ Genesis 4:1-26

01. **What did the boys do when they grew up?** (v2 Abel became a shepherd and Cain became a farmer).
02. **What was significant about the offerings Cain and Abel brought to God?** (vs 3-4 Cain brought some food, but Abel brought the best of his flock).
03. **How did God respond to the gifts?** (vs 4-5 God accepted Abel's gift, but not Cain's).
04. **Why did God respond like that? And how do you think God felt?** (God gives us so much. Our response is to give him the first fruits; not the worst fruits. All things come from God. What we give back to God is what he has already given us! God must have felt sad and disappointed with Cain's response).

05. **How do we respond to God's generosity to us? Do we give back to him generously, or do we only give God what's left?** (It's the attitude of heart when giving back to God, as well as the quality of what we give).
06. **Cain felt rejected. How did he respond to God's words?** (He didn't want to hear them, instead he left the way open for Satan).
07. **Why did Cain kill Abel? Was there any justification for his actions?** (Jealousy and Abel was making Cain look bad).
08. **What reasons can we have for being jealous of a brother or sister?** (Maybe if we feel they get better treatment from us or when they are treated special because of something they have done well).
09. **What is the right response in these circumstances?** (It isn't right to punish or blame them for doing well).

SCENARIO

🕒 8 Minutes

Imagine your younger brother has just passed some important exams. It's a big thing in your family, as he is the first person to ever have passed these exams (your parents didn't and neither did you). So as a reward your mum and dad buy your younger brother an expensive present and you all go out to celebrate at Pizza Express.

1. **How does that make you feel?** (Hopefully really happy, but probably a little overlooked and left out?).
2. **What do you think the right way of dealing with those feelings is?** (It is right to reward exceptional achievements, and we would always want the best things for our younger brothers and sisters since we love them. Rather than feeling down on yourself, instead enjoy the food and how everyone wants to celebrate. If you get on with enjoying it, you will be demonstrating great love to your family and a good example for your younger brother to follow).

So just because someone else in the family gets a lot of attention it doesn't mean that you are being rejected.

TEACHING CONTINUED

🕒 8 Minutes to go

01. **What emotion fuels Cain's jealousy?** (It's his anger, combined with his jealousy that leads him to commit his violent actions).
02. **What did Cain do to compound his actions?** (He wasn't honest with God).
03. **Do we try to cover up or make excuses when we feel guilty and caught out? Are we any different from Cain?** (Discuss).

04. **What was the result? Did Cain get away with murdering his brother?** (No, he had to accept his punishment, which was that he would wander around the land and never settle. He would have no home and he would never grow good crops).
05. **Was that it? Had God abandoned Cain completely?** (No, when Cain pleaded, it was because he was afraid. God promised him protection, but he still had to see through the consequences of his actions).
06. **What happened to Cain in the long term?** (He moved to the land of Nod, married and had children, but through the generations they did not worship God and moved further and further from him, marrying more than one wife, killing, etc. The consequences continued through the generations).
07. **What was going on with Adam and Eve?** (They had another son, called Seth).
08. **Did Adam and Eve turn away from God because they had lost both sons? Abel being killed and Cain wandering the land and going away?** (No, they acknowledged that their child was a gift from God).
09. **What happened about the time of Adam's grandson Enosh?** (People started praying to God).
10. **What can we learn from what we've looked at today?**
(Discuss)

ROUND UP ⌚ 1 Minute

Today we've looked at the beginning of family life. Family life is not easy, but Cain's reaction was perhaps a bit excessive!! He was jealous of Abel because God approved of Abel's offering.

Unfortunately, he let this make him angry. His anger, mixed with his jealousy led him to commit the world's first murder. Adam and Eve lost both of their sons; one to death and one to darkness and disillusionment.

As a result of Adam and Eve's original disobedience, mankind is left to struggle with the problems of jealousy, misunderstanding and suspicion. The root problem of disharmony in today's homes is the same as that which afflicted the first human family, a refusal to let God be God.

PRAYER TIME ⌚ 5 Minutes

Spend a few minutes chatting about things to pray for. Encourage the youngsters to share if they have any issues they are facing either at home or at school and then have a prayer time together.

QUESTIONS FOR ICEBREAKER

01. What was the first thing God created? (The heavens).
02. Can you name three of the 12 disciples? (Peter, James, John, Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James (son of Alphaeus), Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot).
03. How many sons did Jacob have? (12).
04. Who was Moses' brother? (Aaron).
05. Who heard God call his name in the night? (Samuel).
06. What amazing thing did Jesus do at a wedding? (Turned water into wine).
07. Who was blinded by a bright light on the road to Damascus? (Saul).
08. How many commandments did God give to Moses? (Ten).
09. What number is the longest Psalm? (119).
10. Which is the only book in the Bible not to mention God? (Esther).
11. Who had a talking donkey? (Not Shrek! Balaam).
12. Who washed his hands when passing judgement on Jesus? (Pontius Pilate).
13. Who laughed when they heard they were going to have a baby? (Sarah).
14. Can you name the strongest man in the Bible? (Samson).
15. How many friends were put in the fiery furnace by King Nebuchadnezzar? (3. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego).
16. How many people did Jesus feed with five loaves and two fish? (5,000+).
17. Who walked on the water towards Jesus? (Peter).
18. Where was Jonah supposed to be going when he was swallowed by a big fish? (Nineveh).
19. Apart from the animals, who went on the Ark with Noah? (His wife, 3 sons, Ham, Shem and Japheth & wives).
20. Who found Jesus' tomb empty on Easter day? (Mary Magdalene and the other Mary).

21. Which disciple denied Jesus? (Simon Peter).
22. How many years did the people of Israel wander in the wilderness? (40).
23. How old was Jesus when his parents took him to Jerusalem and he got lost? (12).
24. Who was Jacob's twin brother? (Esau).
25. Who had a coat of many colours? (Joseph).
26. Who was Jesus' cousin? (John the Baptist).

SESSION 5

NOAH – A MAN UNDER PRESSURE

ICEBREAKER 1 – TONGUE-TWISTER RACES

🕒 3 Minutes

Say five times “Irish wristwatch” or “Big bib on Bob the bouncing baby.” See who can say it the fastest five times.

ICEBREAKER 2 – THE YES NO GAME

🕒 8 Minutes

Select contestants and ask them a barrage of questions. When they say “yes” or “no” they are out.

INTRODUCTION

🕒 1 Minute

Last week we saw that in giving to God, it's important to give him first place. To God, the reasons and motivations we have for giving a gift is even more important than the actual gift itself. A gift given to God that is meaningful to us is what God is looking for, rather than giving him something because we feel we have to.

TEACHING

🕒 30 Minutes

Read Genesis 5:28 – 6:22

01. **Little quiz question for you... How many generations was Noah from Adam? (See chapter 5).** (Noah was the 10th generation from Adam).

Last week, we had a question which turned out to be a bit of a mystery. After Cain killed Abel, he was sent away. He was worried that people out there might find him and kill him. We wondered where these people came from. The assumption is that God created other people after Adam and Eve.

02. **Look at verse 2-4 of chapter 6. Does this shed any more light on this issue?** (Sons of God sounds like other men on the earth).
03. **It says “Sons of God” what do you think this means? Isn't there just one Son of God?** (Sons of God probably refer to just that, human men made by God and put on the Earth, not Divine like Jesus. Jesus is different as he is God, and is his only Son).

What was different about these Sons of God is quite interesting. They seem to have been warriors of some kind, physically big. Their children were also big (called the Nephilim). See Numbers 13:3-33.

04. **How do you think God hoped these “Sons of God” would live their lives?** (As good men).
05. **And how does the Bible describe the people who lived at the time of Noah?** (Wicked and evil).
06. **Over 10 generations the world had been corrupted. How does God view all that’s going on?** (He regrets even creating man).
07. **If God is omniscient (all knowing), why did he bother creating man in the first place?** (God has given us free will to choose to love him or not. Even though he knew mankind would do evil, rather than force us to be good and to love and obey him, he gave us the opportunity anyway. God being holy must exercise his judgement on those who are living evil lives; but there is one man who is good).
08. **What do you think upset God most, the people’s sin or the fact that they were ignoring him?** (He had created mankind to be in relationship with himself. If they had chosen him, their lifestyles would have been different. We can see this because of Noah's life).
09. **Why do you think God is pleased with Noah?** (Because his character was different from those around him).

The pressure to be like those around us is always very real. When someone is different it is noticeable. The people around at the time Noah was alive, seem to have been violent, probably murderers, taking many wives, drunkenness and all sorts. These were people out of control, and a dangerous time to live in. In those days there was no TV, or posh houses to sit in, the people would have spent much of their time outside, living off the land and interacting with each other. Many people were becoming corrupted as a result.

10. **However, Noah “found favour with God,” do you think God has favourites? Are there any other people in the Bible that might be described as favourites of God?** (At times it seems that God chooses certain people to use for his plan. Therefore, he promises things to them and does amazing things in their lives).
11. **What does it mean to be righteous? And blameless? Verse 9** (A person who is morally good. Being “righteous” has nothing to do with judging other people, but rather making sure our own lives are good. A person who believes what is good and does it. Blameless in that he didn’t get involved with the bad stuff that was going on around him).

ICEBREAKER 2 – PLASTICINE MODELS

🕒 5 Minutes

Give everyone a piece of modelling clay with these instructions:

'Please make a small model. Everyone should make every effort to make an identical model to everyone else. You may not talk or write notes to each other. You have three minutes.'

Do not say anything else. Observe how the young people go about choosing a leader and then copying them.

01. **How did you find that task? Difficult/Easy?** (Discuss).
02. **Why was it difficult to try and create exactly the same thing as everyone else?** (Discuss).

Sometimes it's right to do what everyone else is doing. However, there are other times when you have to break the mould and be who you are. Not to copy those around you by trying to fit into the shape people try to put you in. It's more important to do what is right. It takes wisdom and courage to decide against something others want you to do which is harmful to you or others and go your own way.

03. **Noah was righteous. How difficult is it to be "righteous" at School?** (Discuss).

SCENARIO ⌚ 5 minutes

01. **How does the way other people are behaving around us change the way we behave?**

Say you have been looking forward to going bowling with your school mates for ages. You all meet up, but once inside one of your mates produces some alcopop drink. She shares it round and everyone has a swig. It gets round to you. What do you do? They say "Oh go on, it's only a sip" and "you can't get drunk on a sip" and "what's wrong with you? Is it because you're religious?" But you know as a 14-year-old you are under age and it is illegal.

02. **Have you been in or can think of any situations where it's easy to compromise and just do what everyone else is doing, even though it's wrong?** (Discuss).

TEACHING CONTINUED ⌚ 10 Minutes to go

12. **Verse 11 tells us that the earth was corrupt. How do you think corruption starts?** (Often it will start with something small, where you have to make a choice on some moral judgement. Say for example, you are working in a shop. You do a friend a good deal on an item of clothing. As a result, they buy you a box of chocs. Then the next time they come in they ask you for a good deal on something and offer you some money. Maybe they even threaten to tell your boss about the previous deal? What do you do? If you give in it's easier the next time etc).
13. **With this in mind what's the best way to avoid our lives becoming corrupted by friends and people around us who don't believe what we believe?** (Discuss).

14. **When the Bible says Noah “walked with God,” it’s using picture language. What idea is it trying to communicate about Noah?** (That he had a close relationship with God. He was devoted to God and wanted to communicate with God. As a result, God blessed him and communicated back with Noah, telling him what’s going to happen next).
15. **How can we walk with God?** (By taking time to talk with God and be interested in what he has to say. When we involve him in our lives and tell him about our day and ask for his help).
16. **Do you think it’s possible to have a close relationship with God where he talks to us?** (Discuss. Maybe someone has an example from their life where they felt God was speaking to them).
17. **Noah chose to live differently from those around him. How does this benefit him?** (God entrusts him with a special task. To build an Ark).
18. **Do you expect this made him popular?** (Hmm... we’ll see next week. But doing the right thing won’t always make you popular!)

ROUND UP

🕒 1 Minute

Today, we've seen that when everyone is living their lives, doing what whatever they want (be it right or wrong), those who choose to do what is right will instantly stand out. Pressure can be put upon such people to change to be just like everyone else. However, it is possible to live “righteous” if we learn what it is to “walk with God” and live our lives in relationship with him. This is a life that pleases God and he’s sure to look after us through the tough times and involve us in his future plan.

PRAYER TIME

🕒 5 Minutes

Spend a few minutes chatting about things to pray for. Encourage the youngsters about the power of prayer and how God can really change things when we involve him with our lives. Ask if anyone can remember anything recent that they have asked God for help with and whether they have begun to see an answer yet.

SESSION 6

NOAH – FAITH IN GOD’S WORDS

ICEBREAKER - COUNT TO 20

⌚ 5 Minutes

The aim of this game is to count to 20, but without interruptions. Without indicating who, one person will start by saying “one.” Then anyone else in the room can say “two” and so on up to twenty. However, if two or more people say the same number at the same time, you have to start again at one.

FILM CLIP

⌚ 3 Minutes

Show a clip from Evan Almighty “There’s going to be a flood.”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g_U9jZQ54LM

INTRODUCTION

⌚ 5 Minutes

Last week we saw how Noah stood out. Four words describe Noah best: “He walked with God.” We can all have that sort of relationship with God; it’s our choice! To have that kind of relationship, we have to be willing to make sacrifices, to spend time with God. Going for a walk takes time. A good walk is not done in five minutes, nor is our walk with God something we can cut short because something better comes along. We need to invest our time with God and so develop our relationship with him and “walk with him.” When we do that, he will walk with us.

TEACHING

⌚ 25 Minutes

READ Genesis 7:1-16

- 01. Why did God say that Noah and his family could go into the ark?** (v1 Because Noah was the best person alive at that time. Note that God doesn’t say that he was faultless, just that Noah was the best around).
- 02. What special instructions did God give to Noah about the occupants of the ark?** (vs 2-3 He should take seven mating pairs of each type of ‘clean’ animal and bird and one mating pair of every other type of creature).
- 03. Why did they have to be male and female?** (So that after the flood they could establish new herds/flocks, by mating.)
- 04. Do you know or can you guess which animals were “clean” and which were “unclean”?** (Split the group into two and have one group open at Deuteronomy 14:4-

20 and the other at Leviticus 11:1-31. Start a list of clean and unclean animals. See below.)

Clean: Cud chewing animals with split hooves, cattle, sheep, goat, deer and gazelle, freshwater fish with fins and scales can be eaten, birds such as chickens, turkeys and pheasants, crickets, grasshoppers and locusts.

Unclean: camels, rabbits, and pigs, as well as creeping things like moles, mice and lizards as well as four-footed animals with paws; cats, dogs, bears, lions, tigers; sea creatures without fins and scales, catfish, lobsters, crabs, shrimp, mussels, clams, oysters, squid, octopi, any birds that eat decaying flesh like vultures, birds of prey, plus ostriches, storks, herons and bats.

05. Why does God say that some creatures were fit to consume, but not others? (We know that God gave laws "that it might be well" with those who seek to obey him. We've already said that some of those on the "no" list are creatures that eat decaying flesh as well as other animals that might eat decaying flesh. Animals like bears, pigs and vultures do that, whilst hunting animals like wolves often go for the weakest in the herd, sometimes weak because they are diseased).

Sea creatures and bottom dwellers such as lobsters and crabs scavenge for dead animals on the sea floor. Shellfish such as oysters, clams and mussels similarly consume decaying organic matter that sinks to the sea floor, including sewage.

Many of these creatures have this in common: God labelled them as unclean since they would often eat flesh that would sicken or kill human beings. When we eat such animals, we are eating things from the part of the food chain that includes things harmful to people. Maybe God made these "clean up" creatures for the very purpose of consuming the nastiness that comes through death and disease.

06. With this in mind, why do you think God told Noah to take seven pairs of 'clean' animals and birds and only one pair of the other creatures? (It was likely that Noah needed the 'clean' animals for food for him and his family. Therefore, there needed to be more than one pair. Those animals could breed more quickly and thus be used for food as well as to sacrifice to God).

07. What if Noah found some road-kill one day and was very hungry. Do you think it would have been that bad if he'd eaten it? (We have to trust God's words are there for a reason. This is one of the ways we exercise faith. Obedience is really important in our relationship with God).

08. God was very specific with Noah about when the rain would be coming and for how long it would last. Why do you think he was so specific? (Discuss. It could be that it was such a big and frightening thing that God knew that he needed to be really specific with Noah about when and for how long, so that Noah would have a better understanding and be able to trust God more).

09. **Is God ever that specific with us about things?** (It depends on what God is doing. Sometimes he is very specific. Other times we just have to trust God without any indication of how long something is going to take).
10. **How did Noah respond to God's instructions?** (He obeyed God totally, showing complete trust in him).
11. **Do you think Noah had much trouble rounding up the animals to get them into the ark?** (Note that in verse 9 it says "they came to Noah". Isn't that amazing?? They just came. How powerful is God, to be able to do that?!! Not only did they just come, but exactly the right number and sex of each kind! Stunning, isn't it??).
12. **Just think about it for a minute. Try to picture the scene. What do you think it would have done for Noah's faith?** (It says twice in these few verses that Noah was 600 years old when all this happened. Notwithstanding that he had to build a boat when he lived a long way from the sea. Now God said he had to load in all these animals too. He must have wondered about how to find every species and mating couple of animal and then how to get them to the ark. But to see them come to him proved God's provision for what he has asked Noah to do. Here was the proof at last!).
13. **What do we see in verses 10 and 11?** (The rain came just when God said it would. This is the first mention in the Bible of rain. Would Noah have even known what God meant by rain? See Genesis 2:5-6. Still, he was obedient and built an enormous ship, miles away from water. God showed his faithfulness to Noah in doing what he said he would do).
14. **In this short passage we see it repeated that Noah was 600 years old when this happened and also that the rain came seven days after they entered the ark. Why are these details put in twice?** (When things are repeated in the Bible, it means that they are important. These show us that God's word can be trusted. He said seven days and sure enough it was seven days. Noah was so old that it would have been impossible to do all this without God's hand. It shows the power of God in this situation).
15. **So much of this story is repeated within the passage, which emphasises there are some big things to learn from it. What do you think those lessons are for us today?** (Discuss. Hopefully the group will talk about obedience to God and God keeping his promises; God's faithfulness and our need to trust God, etc.)
16. **Who closed the door? And what does that tell us?** (God closed the door. He was in control. He made sure it was properly shut, thus he was protecting Noah, his family and all the animals).

READ Hebrews 11:1, 6-7

01. **What is faith?** (Try to get the group to put the definition in verse 1 into their own words, to make sure they really understand what faith is).

02. **This chapter of Hebrews is often called the “Roll call of faith” because it lists great men and women of faith in the Bible. Why is Noah included?** (He trusted God and obeyed him when he was asked to do something which seemed totally outrageous and impossible. How much faith must that have taken?!)
03. **How can reading about Noah and his relationship with God make a difference to us today?** (Discuss)

ROUND UP

🕒 3 Minutes

This short passage of only 16 verses can teach us so much about God and what he requires of us his people. God is still that same now as he was then, and he still wants the same things from us as he wanted from Noah then. Noah is a wonderful example for us of a man full of faith, who was obedient to God and as a result we see God's blessing in his life.

In Noah's case, these blessings were **protection** for Noah and his family from the flood, and **provision** in the here and now, as well as in the future. At the time, the animals came to Noah in the right numbers and types. God also provided for their future needs so that there were enough animals to breed and provide meat for the future. God also provided **relationship**, in which Noah and God could communicate together. God wants to pour his blessings into our lives, but he can only do that if we have a relationship with him. For that to work, we need to be able put our trust in him. What this means is that we are obedient to what he requires us to do in faith without knowing what the outcome will be.

PRAYER TIME

🕒 5 Minutes

Spend a few minutes chatting about things to pray for. Encourage them to get into the habit of talking to God about everything that happens in their lives so that they can be open and honest with God, because God loves each one of us and cares passionately about us.

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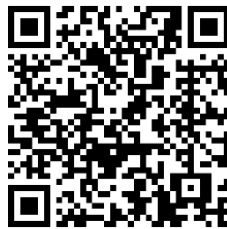
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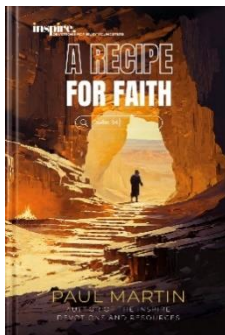
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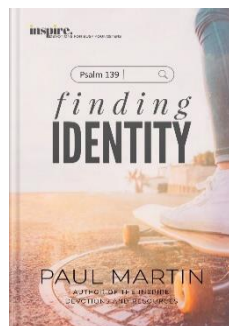


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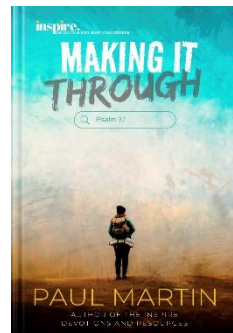
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Paul Martin is a Bible teacher with over 21 years of experience in full-time youth ministry. He has worked as a Youth Pastor in Baptist, Anglican and Pentecostal Churches.

"The idea to start writing, began during a conversation that I had with a friend, about how to communicate the full counsel of God (as found in the Bible) to today's young people."

It took five years before he began the project to go chronologically through the Bible, looking at the lives of God's people. It took a further ten years to develop his three volume resource *Inspire. A resource for busy youth workers*.

Paul studied for his BA in Applied Theology at Moorlands College in Christchurch and has a Masters in "The Bible and Ministry in the Contemporary World" from Belfast Bible College.

Paul enjoys watching and playing football, gaming, as well as being arty and creative. He lives in Northern Ireland with his wife and two teenage sons.