



CALEB

MEETING AIM

To explore what it means to have confidence in God's promises, from the example of Caleb.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Numbers 13:27-33; 14:5-8,24,38

BACKGROUND

The Israelites did not have an easy time travelling from Egypt to the Promised Land. Time and time again, they doubted whether God would take them there. Against this backdrop step forward two men: Joshua and Caleb. Caleb had total confidence in the promises God had made to his people that he would lead them to this new land. This session explores how we can follow Caleb's example and how, like the relationship between the two men, we can encourage one another in that.

CIRCLE TIME

5 MINS

As you begin the session, gather the children together in a circle and ask them about their friends. Who is a good friend to them? Who is a good role model? Who do they admire in their friendship group? What does it mean to be a faithful friend?

INTRO ACTIVITY

5 MINS

You will need: pictures of famous 'pairs'

Before the session, print out a selection of pictures of well-known pairs, such as salt and pepper or shoes and socks. Hide these around the room. Challenge the group to find all the cards and pair them up as quickly as they can. (You could run this game as a race with teams or pairs competing against one another). Gather the pairs together and ask the children to take a look at one pair of pictures. Ask the children: "Can you have one of these without the other? Is one more important than the other? If you could only have one of these two, what would you go for?"

BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

You will need: dressing-up costumes (optional); words to be said by main characters below printed out

Get two volunteers to play the parts of Caleb and Joshua. Explain that the rest of the group will be the Israelites (choose some to be the spies and the rest to stand in the crowd). They should improvise as appropriate to the story. As the storyteller, take on the part of Moses:

Moses: Right everyone, here we are, now we need to take a look into the land that God has promised to us. I'm going to be choosing some of you to take a good look and see what's what. So I'll have you Joshua, and you Caleb, and you, and you...

Point out a few of the children to take on the part of the spies. If you have enough children overall, choose 12 in total, otherwise, just a few to represent them, and send them out before sitting and waiting for their return.

Group of spies: We went into the land. It is beautiful and there's food enough for us all! Milk and honey, and exotic fruits! But the people living there are very powerful; we even saw giants!

Caleb: Let's go and take the land! We can certainly conquer it!

Spies: There's no way we can take it! The land is full of giants!

Israelites: We should have died in Egypt! Let's choose a new leader to take us back there.

Caleb and Joshua: This is the land God wants to give us. Don't be afraid of the people in the land; God is on our side!

Moses: I had led the people out of Egypt but I could not show the same confidence in God as Caleb and Joshua. I would not be able to lead our people into the promised land. Caleb's loyalty to God meant that he would take the people in, together with Joshua.

Perform the short sketch again, with different children playing the different parts. If you like you could practise this and show it to others in your church.

CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Ask the children these questions, encouraging everyone to take turns to contribute:

- How do you feel about this story?
- Who can you relate most easily to?
- Why do you think the Israelites felt this way?
- Why was Caleb so confident?
- Where do you think you might be in the story?

CREATIVE RESPONSE

10 MINS

You will need: a selection of coloured cards and envelopes; print outs of encouraging Bible verses or access to a searchable Bible and printer; a selection of craft materials

Invite the children to think of someone who has been like a Caleb to them, encouraging them in their faith, or someone they can be a Caleb to, who they can encourage when they are struggling. Use the craft materials to create an encouragement card which they can send to them. Invite them to print out an appropriate verse to include in their card.

Ask the children to think about what they write in the card before taking the card away to pass to that person. Ask the group to come back next time to tell you how their card was received.

PRAYER

5 MINS

Gather the children together and invite them, if they are comfortable to do so, to stand in the centre of the group so that you can pray for them. Pray for the children, that they would be a 'Caleb', having confidence in who God is and what he has done for them, and that they would take a stand when needed.

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DEBORAH

MEETING AIM

To explore what it means to be a bold peacemaker from the example of Deborah.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Judges 4

BACKGROUND

Deborah is one of the most unsung heroes of the Bible. She demonstrates total confidence in the promises of God and a quiet certainty in the decisions she made. Despite taking her people into a battle, her actions ultimately brought peace to her people. This session explores how we too can be courageous peacemakers, making wise decisions which help to bring peace.

CIRCLE TIME

5 MINS

As you begin the session, gather the children together in a circle and ask them who helps them to make good decisions. Who do they go to for advice? Who has helped them to settle their differences with a friend or family member, perhaps?

INTRO ACTIVITY

5 MINS

Invite the children to get into pairs and play a few rounds of rock, paper, scissors, or thumb wars. You could run this as a best of three, or a knock-out contest where the winning player of each pair goes through to play against another competitor until you are down to one winner. Talk about how we sometimes use these games to make a decision where two parties disagree, or to settle an argument. Do the group know any other ways?

BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

You will need: dressing-up costumes (optional)

Invite the children to mime this story as you share it. You may like to define roles before you begin the story or just invite them to adlib.

Read directly from Judges 4, using a translation like NIRV or CEV, or use the

retelling below. Pause as you need to through the story.

Deborah was a judge and a prophet who would hear from God and tell the people what he had to say. She would sit under a palm tree. People would come to her with their problems and arguments for her to settle.

One day, she called for a man called Barak and told him she had a message from God. God wanted Barak to take 10,000 men – warriors who would fight on God’s side – to fight their enemy, Sisera. God promised to give them victory.

Barak said to Deborah: “I will go, but only if you come with me!”

Deborah agreed but said: “Because of this, you will not receive the praise for winning this battle. Instead, God’s victory over Sisera will be at the hands of a woman!” This was unusual; in those days, women didn’t fight in battles.

So Barak took his armies, and Deborah, to meet Sisera and his armies. Just as God promised, the battle went Israel’s way. Sisera could see he was in danger so he ran away, and as he ran he met a woman called Jael. She offered him a place in her tent. Sisera believed Jael’s family were on his side and that he would be safe here.

Jael gave Sisera a blanket to rest under and he asked for a drink of water as he was thirsty, but Jael gave him a drink of milk instead. Sisera told Jael to keep watch and not to let anyone know he was there, before he settled down for a sleep.

As soon as he was asleep, Jael took a tent peg and drove it into his head, killing him! When Barak came, she showed him their dead enemy! And so, just as Deborah had said, the Israelites defeated their enemy and victory was in the hands of a woman. There was then peace in the area for 40 years.

CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Ask the children these questions, encouraging everyone to take turns to contribute:

- How do you feel about this story?
- What surprises you the most?
- What does this story tell us about God?
- How does this story challenge us?

CREATIVE RESPONSE AND PRAYER

10 MINS

You will need: paper doilies; scissors; felt-tip pens; instructions for making a dove (can be found at youthandchildrens.work/links); map of world or local area, or recent newspapers

Work with the children to make some doily doves, following the instructions on the link above. As you make the doves, talk about the way a dove is often used as a symbol for peace. What other symbols can they think of? Why do you think these symbols are used?

When you have made a few doves, explain that we will be using them to help us to pray together. This can be done in a couple of different ways. Firstly, you could use maps of the world or local area and spread these in front of the group, or you could use newspapers and spread the pages out (make sure all the pages you use are appropriate). Invite the children to place a dove on an area on the map, or a story in the newspaper, where they want God to bring peace. You could invite them to write a prayer or prayer request on their dove, or simply place the dove as an act of prayer.

Gather the children together and pray over the various places where they have placed their doves. You may decide to talk about these things before you pray, or simply pray over them. Pray too for the children that they would be peacemakers, in these places, like Deborah.

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HEZEKIAH

MEETING AIM

To explore what it means to take everything to God from the example of Hezekiah.

BIBLE PASSAGE

2 Kings 19:1,14-19

BACKGROUND

Hezekiah was one of the good guys. Through generations of kings and leaders over the people of Israel, we see the kings who served God first, and those who sought their own desires. King Hezekiah strengthened the walls of the city, and strengthened the people's worship of God, removing all those things which had become a distraction for the people and seeking God first.

CIRCLE TIME

5 MINS

As you begin the session, gather the children together in a circle and ask them what makes a good leader. What makes a good leader in helping us to follow Jesus? At church, perhaps? What helps us to connect to God, first and foremost?

INTRO ACTIVITY

5 MINS

You will need: newspapers (identical copies, one for each team, local newspapers work well); list of prepared questions

Before the session, create a list of questions relevant to the newspaper you're using, such as who is staring at the Grove theatre according to page 18? On which page can you find the result of the Wanderers football match? How many tokens do you need to save for a free ice cream?

Split the group into equal-sized teams and put a leader with each group. Give each group a copy of the newspaper and explain that you are going to have a scavenger hunt through the newspapers to find a story and bring it to you at the centre of the room first. You could award a small prize to the team who win the most rounds.

BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

You will need: roll of lining paper; marker pens

Gather around the roll of paper and invite them to draw or write down what comes to mind as you tell the story today. Encourage the children to make themselves comfortable and to listen carefully to the story. Read 2 Kings 19:1,14-19 or use the following retelling:

God's people were under threat; enemy armies were trying to take the city. One day, the king of Assyria sent a threatening letter to the people. When the king, Hezekiah, heard the news, he tore off his clothes and wore sackcloth instead, which was a symbol of humility, and went to God's temple.

He took the letter he had received into the temple and spread it out before God, then he prayed: "God you alone are God of the whole world. You created the heavens and the earth, and you sit on the throne of heaven. Hear these words, I pray. Hear these words and answer our prayer.

"The Assyrians have attacked many nations, and they have won many battles. You alone are God. Rescue us, and all people will know that you alone, are God."

Go to verses 35-37 to tell the end of the episode. Then ask the children if anyone would like to share what they have doodled or written down. What are the things that jumped out to the children?

CHATTING TOGETHER

10 MINS

Ask the children these questions, encouraging everyone to take turns to contribute:

- How do you feel about this story?
- What do we learn about Hezekiah?
- What does the story tell us about God?
- How do you think the story ends?
- How could or should we be like Hezekiah?

CREATIVE RESPONSE

10 MINS

You will need: banners, streamers or a display board; selection of craft and collage materials; scissors; glue

Explain that in this story we get a glimpse of how Hezekiah viewed God and revered him. Invite the children to work together to create a banner or streamers they can use in worship, or a fixed display board collage which celebrates who God is and what he has done.

Encourage the children to use this creation as an act of worship in itself (whether or not they are able to articulate that). They could use Hezekiah's words, the things they see of God in his creation or what they have seen in their own lives. They could use some of the things they noted down on the lining paper in 'Bible story' as they listened to the story.

Display the completed artwork, as a reminder to the children of just how amazing God is. Help them to see that holding onto this truth helps us to understand how God can deal with the things we may find overwhelming, as he did for Hezekiah.

PRAYER

10 MINS

You will need: newspapers, both local and national; background music and the means to play it (optional)

Remind the children that Hezekiah spread out the story that was worrying him before God in the temple. Explain that you're going to use this same idea in your prayers today. Invite the children to take some time to look through the newspapers and pull out the stories they want to bring to God in prayer, spreading these out on the floor in the centre of your space. If you find it helpful, you could play some background music to encourage an atmosphere of prayer and reflection.

When they have had enough time to look at the stories, gather the children together and pray over the stories presented. Depending upon your group, you may wish to lead this time, or invite them to pray aloud.

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LYDIA

MEETING AIM

To explore what it means to demonstrate hospitality from the example of Lydia.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Acts 16

BACKGROUND

Lydia could be described as little more than a bit player in the missionary travels of Paul, yet she is one of the few characters Paul meets who is referred to by name and we see a glimpse of her story. In this session, we explore what she teaches us about hospitality and how we can follow her example. The session focuses on Lydia and ignores what happens when Paul and Silas are in prison. You could look at this episode on another occasion.

CIRCLE TIME

5 MINS

As you begin the session, gather the children together in a circle and ask them what they enjoy doing with their friends? What do you like to do when a friend comes around to play? Or when a family member comes to visit? How do you make them feel welcome?

INTRO ACTIVITY

10 MINS

You will need: large piece of paper or board; pens; paints

Explain that you are going to work together to create a welcome sign, poster or banner. This could be something as simple as filling in the letters 'WELCOME' written out on poster paper or you could create a more permanent sign or banner for your group or even your church building. As you work together, talk about what it means to be welcomed.

BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

You will need: Lego mini figures; Lego bricks; Lego base board

Gather the children together and explain that as you tell the story, they can play it out with the Lego figures and bricks. If you wish, you could work with the

children to create a simple stop-motion animation of the story, using the Lego, or create scenes which you can photograph and storyboard. Alternatively, invite the children to play out the story. You could read the text from Acts 16, using a translation such as the NIRV or CEV, or use the following retelling, after briefly recapping Paul's story so far:

One night Paul had a dream with a message from God, calling him to travel to Macedonia to share the news of Jesus there. When they got there, they went to the river and met a group of women. One of the women was Lydia, who already worshiped God. She was a merchant in the city – a seller of purple cloth. As they talked to Lydia, she discovered more about Jesus and was baptised there, together with her family.

She invited Paul and Silas to stay in her home, inviting them to be her guests while they were in the area. She was very keen for them to stay and wouldn't take no for an answer!

While Paul and Silas were in the area, sharing the good news about Jesus, they got into trouble with the authorities when they came to the rescue of a slave girl who was being misused by her masters. They even ended up in prison! God worked another miracle, but that's another story for another day!

After they were released from prison, Paul and Silas made their way back to Lydia's home, where they stayed until they left the town.

When you have finished the story, compare the different models the children have made. Use these as a starter for discussion about the events of the story and what God is doing; use some of the 'Chatting together' questions in your discussion.

CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Ask the children these questions, encouraging everyone to take turns to contribute:

- What do you like about this story?
- What questions does it raise for you?
- What would you like to ask Lydia?
- What does this story tell us about being a follower of God?
- How does this story challenge us?

CREATIVE RESPONSE

15 MINS

You will need: materials dependent upon your choice of activity (see below)

Plan and create an event which they can invite other people to. This could be an afternoon tea for members of your church congregation or a movie night for their friends. Use the time in the session to plan when this will take place and what you will need to do and create some invitations which the children can take away with them to give out after the session.

Alternatively, create something which the children can give out to show hospitality out of the session. Bake, ice and decorate some cakes to give out after the group has finished, or create miniature hampers to give to older members of your congregation – boxes or baskets filled with teabags, coffee and biscuits. Find a way to give these out after your session is over.

PRAYER

5 MINS

Stand in a circle facing outwards and invite the children to hold hands or link arms, if they are comfortable to do so. Pray together for the children, that they would be a Lydia in the world, with their eyes opened to those around them and how they can show the same hospitality she showed to Paul and Silas. If your children are happy to do so, invite them to pray aloud for one another. Alternatively, you could lead this prayer time. Encourage them to live this out in the week ahead and to bring back stories of how God answers this prayer in the weeks that follow.

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