



St Helen's
Bishopsgate

St Helen's Children's Ministry

Sunday school

Leader's handbook

for teaching children aged 3-11

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Welcome to the Sunday school leader's manual.



Psalm 1 speaks of the blessed man whose delight is in the law of the Lord. He meditates on it day and night, and like a tree planted by streams of water it yields fruit and does not wither.

Our prayer for the families at St Helen's is that each individual and the family collective would be those who are fed and nourished by the word of God, as they understand God's salvation plan and get to know and love the Lord Jesus Christ.



The following handbook has been produced to support leaders as they seek to disciple their young brothers and sisters.

We hope it might be of some use to you in your proclamation of the gospel to the next generation and the spread of the kingdom. Let's be those who live out Psalm 78, teaching our children 'so that they should set their hope in God'.





Our aim: 'We partner with parents to make disciples.'

Sunday school is a tool to help families and the church disciple their children.

We partner by...



Caring for children during the service so that parents can listen to the sermon undistracted. We want parents to be disciplined and grow in their love for the Lord, love for others, godliness, prayerfulness, zeal, etc. Growing in maturity is not only good for them but will make them better parents – zealous for their children to know the Lord too, prayerful for their children, more godly, loving, and caring in the home, wanting to speak Christian truth with their children and open up the Bible with them. The best thing for a child is mature parents. Mature parents will be better disciple makers of their children. So, giving parents an opportunity to grow, by caring for their children on a Sunday, is one way we partner with them.



Taking the opportunity to disciple the children ourselves. The community of believers have a collective responsibility for discipling the next generation. So of course we will take the opportunity on a Sunday to do this. Additionally, teaching children will give them truth to take away and speak with their parents, encouraging conversations at home.



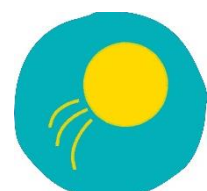
Praying for the families. Although straightforward, this is not to be underrated. We have a direct line to the creator of the universe who breathes life into people. We want to be on our knees asking him to be at work in the hearts of each of our families.



Knowing, encouraging, and advising parents. We are in a particular position to help parents. We can speak words of encouragement to them. We can ask how we can pray for them. We can advise them with how to disciple their children.



Pointing them too and providing them with good materials. There's lots of good stuff out there to help parents be Christian parents. And lots of good materials to help parents open up the Bible with their children together. We can point them to good materials. And, we have produced our own 'Bible time booklets' which help parents know what we're teaching their children at Sunday school, as well as helping them to open up the Bible with their children at home and reinforce what they've been learning.



Our **Big** principles



God speaks

We believe that God speaks powerfully by his Holy Spirit through his word, the Bible. He has told us everything we need to know to be saved and to live rightly before him. This is why we put the Bible at the centre of this material; we want the children to hear what God says and allow God's spirit to write it on their hearts. As we teach through books of the Bible, we aim to teach the point of a passage, with the purpose the author had for his readers, working with the literary form the author uses. As the children hear God speak to them we trust that eyes will be opened, hearts will burn, and souls will be nourished.



We pray

Talking to our Father in heaven is vital. Amazingly, God allows us to get involved in building his kingdom by speaking his words. But only God gives the growth. Only he helps us and the children to grasp what he says and change our hearts to follow him. Therefore, we pray to express our dependence on God and to implore him to be at work as he uses our humble efforts to grow his kingdom.



Hearts matter most

When we teach the Bible it is easy to teach it like a manual of moral wisdom or as set of behaviours to be observed. But the Bible is not a manual; it is a story, the story of God restoring relationship with his people who have rebelled against him. Our desire is to thrill their hearts with who God is and what he has done through his Son. Behaviour might then change, but only because of a love for our Lord and faith in him.



We partner with parents

There is dual responsibility for a child's discipleship: Parents, ideally fathers, are primarily responsible in bringing their children up in the training and instruction of the Lord. The church family, including any children's ministry, takes a supporting role in this. What's done by others in church is ideally there to aid what's being done at home.



We are inflexible on the inflexibles and flexible on the flexibles

The Bible prescribes the teaching of the word by believing parents and the church family to their children. It does not explicitly prescribe practically 'how' this is to happen. 'How' we go about discipling children becomes a question of pragmatics. Assuming we are inflexible on what the Bible does prescribe, there is great freedom, which we can use to be flexible on what the Bible is silent on. In the proclamation of the gospel to the next generation, our model of ministry using the following material has been fruitful for the families at St. Helen's.



We train

We aim to multiply our ministry by training and mobilising others in gospel proclamation. The result is fourfold: firstly, leaders entrusted with the gospel and trained for a lifetime of ministry, secondly, children clearly hearing and being fed, thirdly, the same children being trained for a lifetime of ministry, fourthly, the generation after them hearing and responding to the gospel.



Godliness matters

God cares about our godliness. As Bible teachers and those in positions of spiritual authority, we should follow the standards of behaviour and lifestyle outlined for us in the New Testament.

The 'what' of Sunday school

The order of a 3-5's session.



Welcome



Concept



Bible verse



Action rhyme

Bible time 1

Game



Story



Prayer

Bible time 2

Craft/colouring/discussion time



The order of a 5-11's session.



Song

All-together time



Bible talk

Group discussion



5-8's

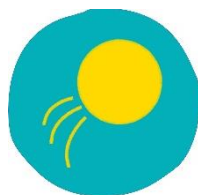


8-11's

Memory verse



Game



Group activity



VIPP



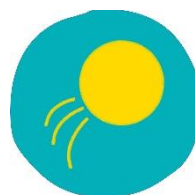
Craft



Drama

The 'how' of Sunday school

The following briefs are here to help you as a leader lead the responsibilities you might be assigned.



How to ... lead a 3 - 5 's pre-school session.



Before you start

What does a typical session look like?

A typical preschool Sunday school session is divided up into bible times and activity times.

The overall structure is this:

- 1. Bible time 1:** Welcome, concept, Bible verse, action rhyme.
- 2. Activity:** Game
- 3. Bible time 2:** Bible story, prayers
- 4. Activity:** Craft

Each bible time follows a specific structure—this helps the children because they know what is coming, and what is expected of them at each point. It is worth sticking very closely to the structure, and even the same wording each week.

What will you need for the session?

- Order of the session cards
- Sunday school rules
- A sheet with the concept written on, with an appropriate picture.
- A box—the 'Bible box'
- A Bible
- Pre-prepared craft
- Visual aids and props

Part 1 | Bible time 1

Gathering song

To gather the children, sing the gathering song.

"Let's gather together to hear from God; Let's gather together to hear from God; Come gather here with me."

Welcome and pray

Go through the order of the session.

Remind children of the Sunday school rules:

Sit properly; Don't shout out; Obey your teacher straight away.

To move onto the concept, sing the Bible box song.

"What are we going to learn today? Let's find out from the Bible box; Let's find out from the Bible box!"

Concept explanation

Ask a child to get the concept sheet out of the Bible box. Explain the concept for the day and help the children to understand what it means. (Take no more than two/three minutes for this.) Think about which words they will not understand, maybe how this relates to what they learnt last week. Use illustrations, examples, props, pictures, or questions. Have the children repeat the concept a few times so that they can remember it.

Bible verse

The teacher introduces the chant with a something like, "now children, where do I get all this from? How do we know that God is..? Did I just make it up out of my head? ["No!" shout the children] Did a little bird whisper it in my ear? ["No!" shout the children] "Where do I get it all from then?" ["The Bible!" shout the children]. The teacher then moves straight on to the Bible chant:

"The Bible, the Bible; How we love the Bible; It's God's word, Yay!"

Ask a child to open the Bible box. (The Bible should be hidden in the Bible box at this point.) Read the Bible verse for the day, briefly explain any long words and link it to the concept.

Action rhyme

Teach the rhyme to the children. Repeat it with them plenty of times as this will help them remember it. Consider singing it with different voices. Come up with actions for it.

Close the first Bible time with the **closing song**.

'We've gathered together to hear from God; We've gathered together to hear from God; And now it's time to play!'

Part 2 | Game time

Games are a light and fun way to re-enforce the teaching. Practice the concept together until all the children are confident saying it from memory, and then play a very basic game. Within this game think about how you can review what has been taught, eg repeating the concept, through questions, or possibly through the theme of the game.

Part 3 | Bible time 2

Gathering song

'Let's gather together to hear from God; Let's gather together to hear from God; Come gather here with me.'

Story

Tell the story. Use pictures, props, drama's, questions, actions, noises, interaction etc. (This should be no more than 5 minutes.)

Pray

Follow the ACTS order of prayer and ask the children to do the appropriate action for each prayer as you pray:

- Adoration: *"Let's point our fingers up to God and tell him how great he is. We praise you God... Amen."*
- Confession: *"Let's point to ourselves and say sorry for our sin. Sorry God... Amen."*
- Thanksgiving: *"Let's hold our hands out and thank God for what he does. Thank you, God, for... Amen."*
- Supplication: *"Let's put our hands together and ask him to do great things. Please God... Amen."*

Closingsong

"We've gathered together to hear from God, We've gathered together to hear from God, And now it's time for craft!"

Part 4 | Craft/ discussion time

Craft

Help the children with their craft/colouring.

Craft time is also the 'small group discussion time'—make sure leaders are well spread among the children and are talking to the children about the story, asking them questions about what they have heard, what can they remember, and what it means for them.

Helpful tips

1. Enforce the 'Don't shout out! Put your hand up' rule

Remind the children of this before you ask a question, or after someone has shouted out. Always ask a child who has their hand up to answer. This will really help your lessons, as over time, the children will learn not to shout out.

2. Try not to use your notes

This sounds crazy! After all, what are notes for?! But you hold the children's attention much better if you are speaking to them and using eye-contact. It can be helpful to write out exactly what you want to say, so it's in your head, and then maybe practise saying it with notes and then without.

3. Speak slowly and clearly

If they have to work hard to catch what you are saying, they will stop trying very quickly. It can be particularly hard when there is a lot of background noise, so make sure the children at the back can hear.

4. Speak as though you are in charge—you are!

If you want the children to obey what you say, you must act and speak as though you are in charge. If you want a child to do something, speak as though you mean it! Give a command, not a question, and expect to be obeyed.

How to ... lead a 5-11's All-together time.



All-together games

If you'd like a theme related game you'll need to think of one yourself.

Three general game ideas:

- **Head or tails.** Have the children stand up and choose 'heads' or 'tails' by putting their hands on their heads or bums. Flip a coin. If the children guessed wrong they must sit down. Repeat until one child is left.
- **Guess who.** Have the children stand up. In your head pick one of them. Get the children to ask you questions with a yes or no answer, eg 'Is it a boy?' If the answer is 'no' then all the boys would sit down. Through this method whittle the group down until they can guess who's in your head.
- **Rock, paper, scissors.** Have the children stand up. Everyone plays rock, paper, scissors against you. If they lose they sit down. Play until only one child is left. If this child beats you they are the ultimate champion.

Picking songs

Pick a song which is:

- Relevant
- Faithful
- Easy to sing
- Not too long
- Not too complicated

Pre-session preparation

1. Understand the sessions' teaching well.
2. Think of a question or game to get us thinking about the session theme or to help engage and settle the children.
3. Think of a song to sing.

Session time

1. Settling down.

- Whilst children are arriving, ask them whether they've had a good week or bad week. Once all arrived, settle them with an action or rhyme.

2. A warm welcome

- It's important to have a good welcome! You set the tone for the rest of the session, so you want to be upbeat, high energy, and smiley.

3. A quick prayer

- We want to pray for our time together, so the children begin by focusing on and remembering who we're really here for. As we pray, we're also teaching them dependence on God.

4. A quick question or game

- There are two purposes to a quick question or game...

Firstly, it can introduce or set up the theme of the session, or recap where we're up to so far in the book we're studying and reinforce the big points. Think about what you will say to link the question or game with what we're learning. Secondly, it can help the children blow off some steam, settle, encourage a fun vibe, and get the children to know each other a little better.

5. A song

- It is good to praise God in song, and, a song helps the word of Christ dwell in us richly. Make sure you know the song and any actions.

6. Pray before we hear God's word taught.

7. Hand over to the person giving the Bible talk.

8. After the talk, dismiss the children to their groups.

How to ... prepare a Bible story/talk



This guide is applicable to preparing both pre-school and school age Bible story/talk. It is a basic skeleton of what you might do to prepare.

What we believe about the Bible:

- The Bible is necessary to know the gospel – we cannot know the gospel without it.
- The Bible is sufficient for life and godliness – there's no need to look elsewhere.
- The Bible is perspicuous (clear) – anyone can understand.
- The Bible is authoritative – it has the last say on all matters it means to speak on.
- God speaks by his Spirit through the Bible.
- God uses the Bible to blind, or, reveal and give life.
- The Spirit's work is to illuminate what God has said and grant belief.
- We come to know God through the Bible.
- The Bible is exciting.

What we believe about public teaching of the Bible

- God uses it.
- To be done by godly and gifted individuals.
- Teaching what God teaches, how he teaches it, with his aim in teaching; this will be most edifying.

Study

1. Pray: Ask the Lord to help you grow personally and prepare to teach others.

2. Read the passage: Do this until you are familiar with the passage.

3. Study the passage: Ask 'what', 'why', and 'so what' questions of the passage.

What is the structure?

What are the main themes?

What is the author's main point/big idea?

How does the detail contribute towards this?

Why has the author written this passage?

What is the author trying to achieve in his reader – his aim?

Why does this matter?

How does this shape my thinking?

How might this shape my life?

3. Respond in prayer to what you've seen.

Preparing the story/talk

Either write your own story/talk or use/modify the example story/talk.

Writing your own story/talk

1. Write an aim: This should be very similar to the Biblical author's aim (God's aim). This is what you want to achieve in your hearers. Eg 'Know that Jesus is the King.' 'Be grateful that Jesus died in your place.'

2. Write a talk which seeks to achieve this aim: Structure your talk with an introduction, main body, and conclusion. Think about stating your point, explaining it, illustrating it, and applying it. Use the content and literary style of the passage – this is how God achieves his purposes in us. Think about how to engage your audience: what can they see, hear, smell, touch, taste?

Tips

- Speak with a Bible open and your notes in the Bible. This visually shows we're looking at the Bible, and means you can quickly read verses.
- Know your story/talk so you can keep eye contact with the children.
- Make it visual.
- Don't expect the children to respond to the passage how you want them to respond unless you have responded in that way.
- Speak up.
- Try to be as clear as you can in your explanation and articulation.
- Think about the language you are using.
- If you are using leaders for a drama, get them to practice it a couple of times.
- Don't recap unless necessary.



Using the example story/talk

1. Read the 'example story/talk': Think about how the talk/story is pieced together, the language it uses, how it handles and explains the passage, and the line of application it's taken. Consider why these things are so. Analysing other talks is a useful training tool.

2. Modify the example story/talk as necessary: The example talk/story is meant to be just that, an example. It can be read verbatim, adapted, used for ideas, or ignored.

Generally the more modifications the better as it'll reflect you, your excitement about what you're teaching, and be more suitable for the audience in front of you. You could:

- Make it your own by putting it in your own words or write the story out in note form.
- Adapt it to the level of the age group you're teaching.
- Change the illustrations.
- Push a particular line of application.
- Work out what you will pray for at the end of the story.

Preparing to give the story/talk

1. Gather / print visuals: Children will always need visual help or interactive elements to keep their concentration and to assist their memory afterward. This can be drawings, printed pictures, words/very short phrases, physical items etc.

2. Practice the story: Give the whole talk, thinking about how you will juggle holding a Bible, your notes, the visuals etc. If you use pictures and words think carefully about how you will arrange these when stuck up and in what order they need to be available to you.

Time yourself; do you need to be quicker / cut material out?

3. Pray: for yourself as you teach and the children as they listen.

Review: After the session ask for/invite feedback on your story/talk. Feedback is a constructive way to be trained in teaching children, both to you receiving the feedback and any others observing. Expect feedback, endure feedback, evaluate feedback, and enact upon feedback.

How to... lead an ACTS prayer group discussion for 5-8's.



What is ACTS prayer?

ACTS stands for...

Adoration

Confession

Thanksgiving

Supplication

The ACTS outline helps the children to learn to pray different kinds of prayers.

What is an ACTS prayer group discussion?

It is a group time lasting between 5-10 minutes.

The aim is to help the children recap, apply, or respond in prayer to what has been taught.

Prayer ideas

To help them pray...

- Pre-write out a prayer for them to say out loud.
- If old enough get them to write prayers down and pray them out loud
- Send round an object (eg pen), when a child has the object, it is their turn to pray, if they don't want to pray, they can pass it on to the next person. Encourage short prayers that you have already discussed.
- 'Popcorn prayers': children and leaders pray very short prayers, not in any particular order.

Pre-session preparation

1. Having read and studied the passage, and read the talk, write an ACTS prayer for yourself.

▪ Adoration

Adoration is when we praise God. People sometimes struggle with the A of ACTS prayer and are unsure how to distinguish it from thanksgiving. In this prayer we're not thanking God that he is eg powerful, we're praising God that he is powerful. Adoration focuses on God and his character; it is about who God is in himself. The easiest way to write an adoration prayer is to finish the phrase 'We praise you God, you are so _____'. What from the passage can we praise God for?

▪ Confession

Confession is when we say 'sorry' to God. Most 'application' of Bible passages is to *know* something; do we need to confess that we do not grasp these truths in our hearts and do not think how God wants us to think. For passages that identify our sin or exhort us to live godly lives, are there actions or thoughts, or inaction, we need to say sorry for?

▪ Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving is when we say 'thank you' to God. Is there anything from the passage that we can give thanks to God about; what he gives, what he does, what he says, what he hears?

▪ Supplication

Supplication is petitioning/asking God for something. Make sure requests are about the Bible story. Some ways you could phrase a supplication prayer are, 'Lord, we ask you to change us so that...', 'Lord, we ask you to work inside our hearts so that...', 'Lord, we ask you to open our eyes so that...'

2. Now write an ACTS prayer study.

- Think about whether you want the group to recap, apply, or respond in prayer to what they've heard from the Bible.
- Have a think about what you want to achieve in the children. If we don't think about what we want to achieve we might not achieve anything, or worse, achieve something unhelpful! Write an aim sentence for your study. Eg: 'Recap the story.' 'Know how much you're loved.' 'Respond to God's mercy in thanksgiving.'
- Think about activities or questions which drive towards your aim.
- Gather any materials you need.
- Pray for your time together.

Worked examples from our 1 Kings series:

2 Samuel 7

Aim: (Recap) Remember that we're learning about God's kingdom.

Material: Lots of small pictures of the UK, Israel, the new creation, Britain's, Israelites, Christians, King Charles, King Solomon, King Jesus.

Prep: Hide the pictures around the room.

1. Activity: Find the pictures and group them together.
 - a. Which kingdom/s do we live in?
 - b. Which kingdom/s are we learning about this term?
 2. What can we thank God for? (As the children mention things, hand them a pre-written prayer and ask them to lead us in prayer by reading it out.)
-

1 Kings 1-2

Aim: (Respond) Respond in prayer to God's king.

Material: Bean bags. Buckets. Small paper. Pens.

Prep: Write A, C, T, S on four pieces of paper. Stick them to four buckets. Place the buckets on the ground.

1. Activity: Form a set distance children are to throw a bean bag into one of the four buckets. Whichever bucket the beanbag lands in, the child must write a corresponding prayer, eg A=a prayer of adoration.
 2. Repeat and vary it up for difficulty, eg face the other way and throw over shoulder/through legs.
-

1 Kings 10

Aim: (Apply) Look forward to Jesus' wonderful kingdom.

Material: Large sheet of paper/whiteboard. Colouring pens/pencils/markers.

Prep: Write out the big prayer.

1. Activity: together, draw what Solomon's kingdom was like.
 2. What are you looking forward to about Jesus' kingdom?
 3. Say the big prayer together. 'Dear God, we thank you that your kingdom will be wonderful. Amen'
-

- Ask children to finish a sentence eg "Father you are so amazing because..."
- 'Balloon prayers': get children to write short prayers on a balloon; once they have said them, they get to pop them with a balloon.
- Building block prayers: build a tower of blocks (Duplo etc.), for each block the children must think of an adoration/ thanksgiving prayer, try and see how high you can build.
- Bin the prayers: children write out a confession prayer on a piece of paper that they scrunch up and throw away after praying their prayer, signifying that God has forgiven that sin.
- Dice prayer: Different sides of a dice correspond to different types of prayer (ACTS)

Helpful tips

- Focus your time. It's better to do one thing well.
- Leave them wanting more – keep it short and sweet. Ask yourself, 'Are they enjoying our time thinking about the Bible or enduring it?' And don't be afraid to cut things short!
- To help engage all the children, think of inclusive activities, and, direct questions to particular individuals.
- Print your study for yourself and your co-leader.
- Wear a watch.



How to ... lead a Digging Deeper group discussion for 8-11's.



What is a Digging Deeper group discussion?

It is a group time lasting 10-15 minutes.

The aim is to get the children looking at the Bible for themselves, to think about application and respond in prayer.

What we believe about the Bible:

- The Bible is necessary to know the gospel – we cannot know the gospel without it.
- The Bible is sufficient for life and godliness – there's no need to look elsewhere.
- The Bible is perspicuous (clear) – anyone can understand.
- The Bible is authoritative – it has the last say on all matters it means to speak on.
- God speaks through the Bible by his Spirit.
- God uses the Bible to blind, or, reveal and give life.
- The Spirit's work is to illuminate what God has said and grant belief.
- We come to know God through the Bible.
- The Bible is exciting.

Pre-session preparation

1. Having read and studied the passage, and read the talk, think about how these truths apply to yourself.

- What is God wanting us to know?
- What are the necessary and impossible implications of this?
- How does what God says encourage, challenge, shape, affect, our thinking?
- Where in our thinking/lives do we see ourselves believing or not believing this?

2. Now think about how these truths apply to the children in your group.

- Put yourself in their shoes: What might be their current thinking in this area?
- How might what God says affirm, affect, challenge, shape their thinking?
- In what particular areas might this bite?

3. Now write a Digging Deeper study.

- Have a think about what you want to achieve in the children. If we don't think about what we want to achieve we might not achieve anything, or worse, achieve something unhelpful! Ensure what you want to achieve runs with the grain of the Bible author – ask yourself, 'Is my intent for the children the same as the authors intent?' Now write an aim sentence for your study. Eg: 'Feel convicted of your sin.', 'Know how much you're loved.'
- The Bible author uses what he's written to achieve his aim. Think about which bits of the text you could get the children to look at to achieve the authors/your aim in them. This might be all of it or some of it.
- Think about one or two activities or questions which gets them looking at the text.
- Think about one or two activities or questions which gets them to think about what they've seen.
- Think about a question or activity which helps them to respond in prayer.
- Gather any materials you need.
- Pray for your time together.

Worked examples from our 1 Kings series:

2 Samuel 7

Aim: Look forward to the 1 Kings series.

Material: Print out the passage (2 Samuel 7:8-16), one for each child. Highlighters and pens.

1. Activity: On the print out:
 - a. Underline what God has done.
 - b. Highlight what God promises about the King of the promised kingdom.
 - c. Colour over what God promises about the people and land of the promised kingdom.
 - d. Circle your favourite promise.
2. Share your favourite promise with the group. Why is that your favourite?
3. Lead the group in a prayer of thanksgiving.

1 Kings 1-2

Aim: Know it matters that God has enthroned his king, Jesus.

Material: A whiteboard, whiteboard marker, and eraser. One per child.

1. Activity: Give each child a personal whiteboard, pen and eraser. Get them to write 'True' on one side and 'False' on the other. Ask them lots of quickfire questions about the story. They must show you 'True' or 'False'.
2. Get the children to discuss the following scenario with the person next to them:

Your friend thinks it doesn't matter that God has enthroned his king, Jesus. How can you show them they're wrong?
3. Write a prayer of praise on your whiteboard.

1 Kings 5-9

Aim: Be clear where to find forgiveness.

Material: Bibles.

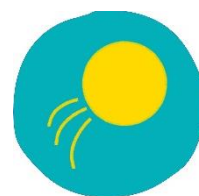
1. Find 1 Kings 8:27-30 in your Bible. Go around the group reading one verse each. I've found at least 7 things that this passage tells me about the temple. Try to guess what they are.
2. Turn to Acts 2:38 to see how we can find forgiveness. Now write a prayer for each of our ACTS prayers.

During the study...

- Encourage the children find the Bible passage. This will help them orient themselves around the Bible. Though of course some will need help.
- To help engage all the children, think of inclusive activities, and, direct questions to particular individuals.
- Encourage an environment where we work together.
- A group discussion is precisely that. Don't turn it into another talk – if you're talking more than them then somethings gone wrong.
- Thinking questions are hard and require time to process. Be patient as they think. Don't be afraid to wait for others to think of an answer before hearing from the one of the children.
- Answers should be driven by the text.
- For older children it's worth thinking through how to develop their ability to handle the Bible rightly and engage in a group discussion.
- Leave them wanting more. Watch that it doesn't become too intense, or so academic that only a few can participate. Ask yourself, 'Are they enjoying our time thinking about the Bible or enduring it?' And don't be afraid to cut things short!
- Print your study for yourself and your co-leader.
- Wear a watch and keep a track of the time.



How to ... lead a Game activity.



What is a Game activity?

It is a group game lasting 15-20 minutes.

The aim is to have fun re-caping what the children have seen in the Bible.

During the activity

- Do set up the game before the session. If during your time the children have to wait for you to set up the game it'll only end in disaster and reduce the time actually playing the game.
- Don't spend more time explaining the game than playing the game. Have a think about how you will quickly and clearly give instructions.
- Children can become frustrated if:
 - Rules are not applied fairly.
 - The game is too hard/easy for them.
 - They spend a long time waiting for their turn.
 - The game is not enjoyable.
- If using method 1, think about when and how you can explicitly remind them of the teaching point.
- If using method 2, think about when to incorporate review questions. Perhaps at the start of every round. Or, pausing the game at certain points. Or, asking a child a review question to 'let them back in'.

Pre-session preparation

Method 1:

Design a game which re-enforces the teaching point.

Bear in mind the following...

- Time and space restrictions
- Ability limitations
- Inclusiveness
- Props/equipment needed
- Health and safety risks
- What exactly you might be illustrating—it is very easy to accidentally illustrate a different point, or even the opposite, to the one intended.
- How you will explicitly and clearly link the game to the teaching

Now gather any props and equipment you may need.

Method 2:

Use a pre-existing game and incorporate review questions into it.

Bear in mind the following...

- Time and space restrictions
- Ability limitations
- Inclusiveness
- Props/equipment needed
- Health and safety risks

Now write review questions for each of the following categories. Ensure you have enough for your time.

- Remember. eg 'Tell me one thing that makes up a kingdom.'
- Understand. eg 'Why is God's kingdom so good?'
- Apply. eg 'What are you looking forward to about God's kingdom?'

Now gather any props and equipment you may need.

How to ... lead a Memory Verse activity.



What is a memory verse activity?

It is a group activity lasting 15-20 minutes.

The aim is to have fun learning and understanding the memory verse. The children can take the memory verse away to remind them what they've been taught as it reflects this in a succinct way.

Ideas for learning a memory verse:

- Say the verse all-together.
- Repeat.
- Repeat.
- Repeat.
- Say in different voices/speeds/volume.
- Put actions to it.
- Remove/cover up words from it.
- Create a rhyme or song for it.
- Play 'Memory verse ping pong'. Two children throwing a ball between them and each time they catch it they say the next word of the verse.
- Print each word of the verse and hide/scatter around the room. Then ask the children to put it back together.
- Print out the verse and cut it up into puzzle pieces. First one to put it together wins.
- Have a relay race. Teams race to stick up post-it notes of the verse in the correct order.

Pre-session preparation

- Learn the memory verse in advance. It is much easier to teach others when you already know it.
- Make sure you understand what the memory verse means.
- Work out how you will teach the children to learn it, and what game/activity you might use to help.
- Think up some concrete examples of what the memory verse means or how it applies—it will be useful to share these with the children as you discuss.

Now gather any props and equipment you may need.

Session time

1. Finding the verse

For older groups: get the children to find and highlight the verse in their Bible.

For younger groups: have the verse already written up in large for all the children to see.

2. Understanding the verse

Read through the verse slowly.

Spend some time asking questions about the verse. Help the children to help each other—if one child knows an answer ask them to explain it to the rest. Think about what it says, what it means, and what it means for them.

Explain any words they might not understand.

Give a concrete example for how you have used and applied the memory verse.

3. Learning the verse

Say the verse together three or four times.

Through activities and games help the group to commit the verse to memory. Any activity or game which incorporates learning the verse will do.

How to ... lead a Craft activity.



What is a craft activity?

It is a group activity lasting 15-20 minutes.

The aim is to have fun re-enforcing the teaching through creating a craft. Taking home a craft also provides a platform for children to talk about the teaching with their parents.

Pre-session preparation

Create a craft. Think about:

- How it'll re-enforce the teaching.
- Resource limitations.
- Time constraints.
- Child ability.

Create an example to show the children.

Now gather any bits and equipment you may need.

Session time

Explain to the children clearly what the craft is and what they must do. Show them an example. It is likely the children will need individual instructions repeated one at a time as they complete each part.

Whilst the children are busy with their hands, engage individual children in conversation about the story using the craft. Good questions to ask are about the story's content, the story's meaning, and the story's application. These questions can be spread between encouraging comments about what the children are making.

Ensure the children safely use equipment.

How to ... lead a Drama activity.



What is a drama activity?

It is a group activity lasting 15-20 minutes.

The aim is to have fun recalling the story and re-enforcing the teaching point.

Tips and tricks:

- Use a big whiteboard or sheet of paper when discussing scenes and characters.
- Make sure your costume box is fully stocked.
- Assign parts appropriately to individuals, bearing in mind their personalities and temperaments.
- Print/write lines clearly.
- Consider doing freeze frames.
- If not too crazy, be positive about creative ideas.

Pre-session preparation

For younger ones:

1. Decide which part of the story you will dramatise – you don't necessarily need to do the whole story.
2. Split your play into scenes; these can broadly be the beginning, middle and end of the story.
3. Write a short narration for each scene, and find short phrases for children to say, or actions which the children can act. Print/write these out ready for use.
4. Children love props and costumes. Gather items ready for use.

For older ones:

Depending on their ability, older children can organise much of the above themselves during the activity. However, they will likely still benefit from guidance and direction so have a think about what will and won't work beforehand.

Session time

For younger ones:

1. Ask them:
 - a. What scenes will we act out?
 - b. Who are the characters?
 - c. What point are we trying to get across? What's the title of our play?
 - d. What props might we need?
2. Assign parts. If you don't have many characters in the Bible story you can get some of the children to be scenery!
3. Get them to dress up.
4. Rehearse the play a couple of times.
5. Perform the play to the leaders or another group.

For older ones:

Depending on their ability, older children can organise much of the above themselves during the activity. However, they will likely still benefit from guidance and direction.

How to ... lead a VIPP activity.



What is a VIPP activity?

It is a group activity lasting 15-20 minutes.

VIPP stands for Very Important Prayer Person. The aim is to have fun learning about the work Christians do locally and around the world, and to pray for them. These individuals might be missionaries, ministers, or members of the church – including you!

How to find out about your VIPP:

- Talk to them
- Email them.
- Read the prayer diary/updates.

Guess who questions:

- What group do you serve in? (Minister, missionary, or member.)
- Where do you live?
- What's your favourite food?
- What's your favourite animal?
- What do you like to do for fun?
- How do you serve Jesus?
- What job do you do during the week?
- What do you look like? (Hair, eyes, man or woman – look at the photo)
- What can we pray for you?

Pre-session preparation

1. Pick a VIPP. Perhaps pick one for the whole year.
2. Find out about them: Have a picture of them. Find out some facts about them. Find out about their work and how they are living for Jesus and making him known. Find out what they would like prayer for.
3. Think about how you will help the group get to know them and pray of them by using one of the options below.
4. Now gather any props and equipment you may need.

Session time

During the activity your group could complete one of the below options. Whichever option you choose, don't forget to pray for the VIPP with the children.

Option 1: Write a letter

1. Tell the children about the VIPP. This could be done through an activity. Examples include: Cutting up a photo of the VIPP to piece together. Getting the children to find on a map where the VIPP lives. Have a prop which might tell the children something about the VIPP.
2. As a group write a letter to the VIPP. Each child could write a letter or a line in a letter. Help them to think of what to write. Should we explain who we are? Is there anything we can be encouraging them with from what we've been learning? Could we draw the Bible story? Tell them what we are praying for them.
3. Get all the children to sign the letter. Put it in an envelope. Pray for the VIPP. Send the letter to the VIPP.

Option 2: Play a guess who game

1. Play a game/quiz involving the guess who questions. This will help the children relate and connect with the VIPP. It will also inform the children what the VIPP does to serve Jesus and how they can pray for them.
2. Pray for the VIPP.

Option 3: Meet the VIPP

Children are introduced to a VIPP in person who visits Sunday School. The VIPP can be interviewed by the children. Several creative ways to interview the VIPP are:

- a. Ask the VIPP questions: The children ask the VIPP questions. You can give the children some of the eight questions to ask, or, help the children to think of their own questions. Always have some questions prepared in case the children are too shy/cannot think of questions!
- b. Tell an Interesting Story: For a VIPP who is a missionary or involved in an outreach ministry, ask them to be ready with a short story showing what they do and what their life is like. (A story that the children can understand.) Ask them to bring props or pictures.

After interviewing the VIPP help the children to think up (or ask the VIPP) specific things they could pray for them and write these down on a white board or large sheet of paper. Then pray for the VIPP.

Guess who games...

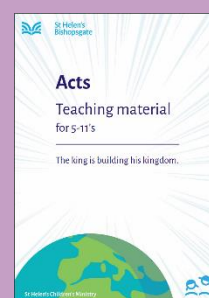
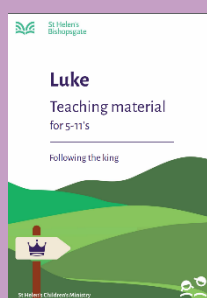
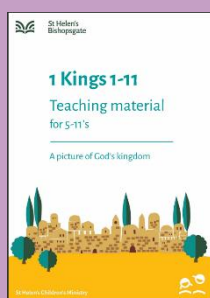
- Ask questions about the VIPP giving three options for the answer. Stick up an 'A', 'B', and 'C'. Have the children run to 'A', 'B', or 'C' to indicate their answer.
- Play detectives. Through a series of clues the children find out about the VIPP.
- Ask a question and show a zoomed in picture of the answer.



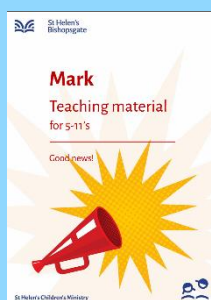
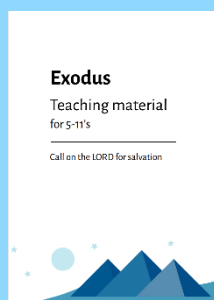
The 'curriculum' of Sunday school

The following is our three-year curriculum. Each year will cover an important Old Testament book, a gospel (between Christmas and Easter), as well as a selection of other books.

Year 1



Year 2



Year 3

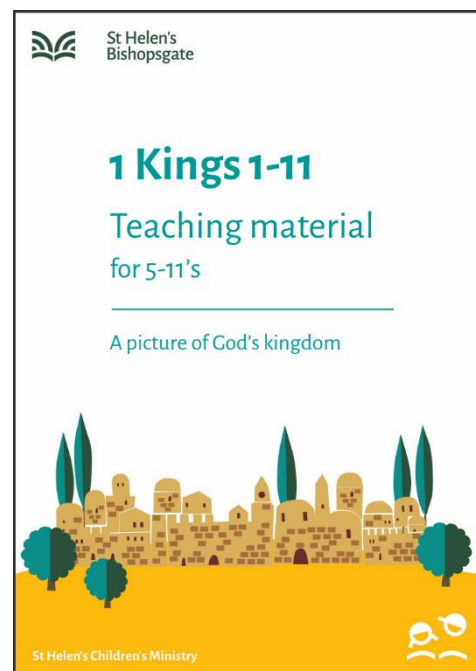
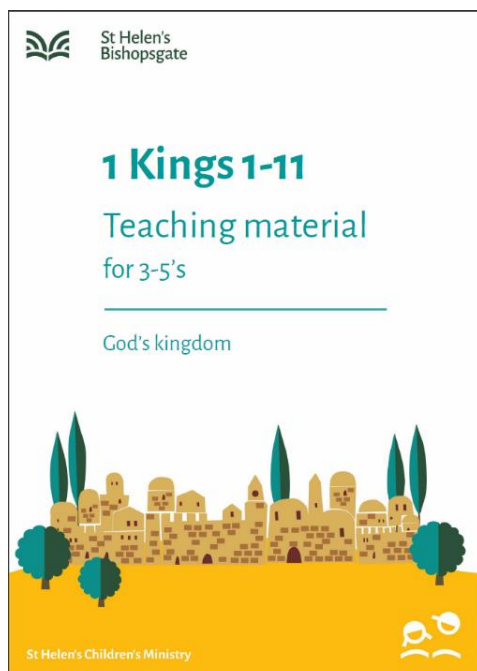
The 'material' of Sunday school



The unfolding story of the Bible is revealed progressively through 66 books. These books were written by human authors who were inspired by the Holy Spirit. They were written with an agenda to a real audience. **Through these books, by His Spirit, God works.** He gives new life and disciples His people.

At Sunday school our desire is to teach through books of the Bible and allow our teaching to be directed by the Biblical author. We want to make the *main point* of our teaching the main point the author is teaching. We want the *aim* of our teaching to be the aim the author had. When we think about *how* we teach, we want to use the literary style, techniques, and content the Biblical author uses. In short, **we want to teach the Biblical author's point, for the Biblical author's purpose, using the Biblical author's practice.** The more clearly this is done, the more clearly the children will have heard the living God speak to them. As we strive to do this, we pray the fruit would be thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold.

The team at St Helen's has worked hard studying some key books of the Bible. As we have done so we have endeavoured to write our material following the principles above.



3-5's material

The 3-5's material is presented as a skeleton of the session with the example Bible story.

Some parts of the session are provided, and some will need to be prepared. I.e. the Concept, Bible verse, and Action Rhyme are provided. But the concept explanation, Bible verse explanation, game and ACTS prayer will need to be prepared by the leader. Use the space in the material to do this.

Lesson 1 | 1 Kings 1-4

The wise king

★ Concept | **God's kingdom is ruled by God's wise king.**

Bible time 1

🎵 **Gathering song**
*Let's gather together to hear from God.
 Let's gather together to hear from God,
 Come gather here with me.*

Welcome

Order of the session: Bible time, game, Bible time, craft.

Sunday School rules: Who can tell me one of our rules which helps us to listen to the bible and to each other?

Pray: Let's ask for God's help as we hear him speak in the Bible.

Concept

🎵 **Bible Box song**
*'What are we going to learn today? What are we going to learn today?
 Let's find out from the Bible box. Let's find out from the Bible box.'*

Concept: God's kingdom is ruled by God's wise king.

Concept explanation

Bible verse

🎵 **The Bible song**
*But how do we know that ...? Did I hear it on the ...? Did I read it in a ...? Did I see it on a ...? No? Where do I get it all from then?
 'The Bible, the Bible, how we love the Bible. It's God's word. Yay!'*

Use the 'How to lead a pre-school session' section in the leader's handbook to help you prepare.

Visuals and props:

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-
-
-

Ask a child to get the Bible from the Bible box.

Read Bible verse: 1 Kings 4:29

Bible verse explanation

Action rhyme

Let's sing a song with some actions to help us remember what we're learning today.

(To the tune of 'The wheels on the bus')

*God's kingdom is ruled by God's king,
 By God's king,
 By God's king,
 God's kingdom is ruled by God's king, God's king is very wise.*

🎵 **Closing song**
*'We've gathered together to hear from God.
 We've gathered together to hear from God.
 And now it's time for a game.'*

Game

The example Bible story has several functions.

Firstly, it is a short talk. This talk could be given verbatim, adapted, used for ideas, or ignored by the individual assigned to give the talk. For less experienced leaders they may wish to read verbatim the example talk, adding in props and visuals. For more experienced leaders they may wish to chop, change, and adapt the example talk as they see fit. For very experienced leaders they may wish to ignore the example talk and write their own, only looking at the example to see another voice on the passage.

Secondly, it is a commentary on the passage. For those not giving the talk the example helps them to understand the passage, how it can be taught, and areas of application. It will also indicate what the speaker might say so that everyone is aligned on the teaching.

Here is an example of an example Bible story...

Bible time 2

🎵 Gathering song

*Let's gather together to hear from God,
Let's gather together to hear from God,
Come gather here with me!*

Story

The wise king

We're going to learn about God's kingdom. To have a kingdom you need three things. [Have visuals for the following] 1) A king to rule over the kingdom, to be in charge, to tell people what to do. 2) A place for the king to rule over, including towns and cities and villages and rivers and fields. 3) A people to live in the kingdom.

A long time ago, before Jesus came to earth, God's people had a king called Solomon. Solomon was king, he was in charge, he told people what to do. Solomon was king over a big place called Israel, Israel had lots of towns and cities and villages, and rivers and fields too. Lots of people lived in Solomon's kingdom, they were God's people, they were called the Israelites.

Today we are going to learn more about King Solomon. Every time I say King Solomon, I want you to pretend to put a crown on your head [practice it once or twice].

The first thing we are going to learn about King Solomon [action] is that God made Solomon king. Solomon was made king by God. Solomon didn't choose to be king, Solomon didn't pay lots of money to be king. Solomon didn't fight lots of people to be king. Solomon didn't pass a big test to become king. There were other people who wanted to be king, these other people tried to make themselves king, but God stopped them. God wanted Solomon to be king, so God made Solomon king. He was just Solomon, but God made him King Solomon [action] over his people the Israelites, in the land of Israel.

The second thing we are going to learn about King Solomon [action] is that God made King Solomon [action] very wise. After God had made Solomon king, God said to Solomon that he would give him whatever he asked. He could ask for anything; he could have asked for lots of fast cars or lots of big houses or lots of lovely food, but he didn't. Instead, King Solomon asked God to make him wise. Solomon wanted to be wise so that he would be a good king, that he would be good at being in charge and tell people the right things to do. God thought that wisdom was a very good thing to ask for, so God made Solomon very wise.

Solomon was the wisest king that God's people in the Old Testament ever had. Solomon was the best at being in charge, he was really good at telling people what to do and telling people what was right and wrong. Solomon was the wisest and best king in the Old Testament because God had made him king and made him wise.

But King Solomon [action] is not the wisest and best king who has ever lived. There is one king who came a long time after Solomon. This king was even greater than Solomon, this king was even wiser and even better at being king than wise King

Solomon. This king's name is Jesus. King Jesus is a bit like King Solomon [action]. God made Solomon king and God made Jesus king too. Solomon was a really wise king and Jesus is even wiser. Solomon was good at being king, but Jesus is even better at being king. Jesus is God's king; he rules over God's kingdom.

Jesus is still king today, he is still a very wise king, very good at ruling, it's great that Jesus is king.

Prayer

Let's now pray to God. Can you get your praying fingers out.

🧡 **Adoration.** Let's point our fingers up to God and tell him how great he is.
Wow God/ We praise you God... _____

🧡 **Confession.** Let's point our fingers at ourselves and say sorry for our sin.
Sorry God... _____

🙏 **Thanksgiving.** Let's hold our hands out and thank God for what he does.
Thank you, God... _____

🧡 **Supplication.** Let's put our hands together and ask him to do great things.
Please God... _____

🎵 Closing song

*We've gathered together to hear from God,
We've gathered together to hear from God,
And now it's time for craft!*

Craft

Craft ideas...

Week 1: Colour in people, fields, and buildings, to make up a kingdom story board.
Week 2: Make a crown.

5-11's material

The 5-11's material is presented as example talks. An example talk has several functions.

Firstly, it is a talk. This talk could be given verbatim, adapted, used for ideas, or ignored by the individual assigned to give the talk. For less experienced leaders they may wish to read verbatim the example talk, adding in props and visuals. For more experienced leaders they may wish to chop, change, and adapt the example talk as they see fit. For very experienced leaders they may wish to ignore the example talk and write their own, only looking at the example to see another voice on the passage.

Secondly, it is a commentary on the passage. For those not giving the talk the example helps them to understand the passage, how it can be taught, and areas of application. It will also indicate what the speaker might say so that everyone can align their group time with this.

Here is an example of our example talks...

Talk 1 | 2 Samuel 7:1-17

The promise

Big Idea | God promised David a kingdom.

Introduction

Over the next six sessions we're thinking about God's kingdom. There are three things that make up a kingdom. Can you guess what they are? A king, a people, and a place. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland covers England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland – that's the place. It has King Charles III as king. And he rules over the British people. But we're not looking at the United Kingdom, we're going to be looking at another kingdom, Israel. [Hang up a large picture frame which has a map of Israel, a picture of King Solomon, and a picture of some Israelites. This visual can be used throughout the series and either referred to or added to as we look at the kingdom under Solomon.] The place was the land of Israel. The king was King Solomon. And the people were the Israelites – God's people. We are going to hear about this kingdom from the Bible, in the Old Testament, from a book called 1 Kings. [Show where 1 Kings is in bible.]

But first, let me show you when the kingdom of Israel was in history. [Build a timeline of Biblical history around the picture frame of Israel, where the picture frame is at its centre. Use visuals of Creation, Abraham, Moses and Egypt, conquering the promised land, King David – who killed Goliath, the collapse of the kingdom, Jesus, us, God's forever kingdom.]

Point 1.

Waiting for God's promised king.

The book of 1 Kings starts with King David when he was very, very old. Who can tell me something they know about King David? [Take answers] David was a king who loved and feared God. And God was with him. King David used to be a shepherd. He would take care of his sheep by bringing them to green pastures and by protecting them from ravenous wolves. God had chosen him to be a shepherd of his people. He became king in Israel. He protected his people from the Philistines. This included defeating Goliath. And he made the kingdom a safe place to live. He conquered Jerusalem and went to live there. He built a great palace out of stone and cedar. He built up the city around him. And he brought the ark of the covenant there, with singing and dancing, with shouts and the sound of trumpets. [Read 2 Samuel 5:12]

One night, God made a very special promise to David. Listen carefully to what God promised. [Read 2 Samuel 7:10-13] What did God promise? [Take answers]

- A place for his people.
- Rest from their enemies.
- One of Davids sons would be king.
- His kingdom will be established.
- The throne of this kingdom would last forever.

What amazing promises! We're going to see that God kept these promises. One of Davids sons would be king, his kingdom would be established, the kingdom would be a really wonderful and safe kingdom, and there would forever be a king on the throne.

Use the 'How to prepare a Bible talk' section in the leader's handbook to help you.

Visuals and props

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-
-

Point 2.

God's kingdom will be ruled by King Jesus.

When King David had died, his son Solomon became king over Israel. He ruled over a really wonderful and safe kingdom. But you may have noticed from our timeline that his rule didn't last and the kingdom was almost completely destroyed. But, 950 years after Solomon, there came another king, King Davids Great (x26) Grandson, Jesus. Jesus was going to be the king over the really wonderful and safe forever kingdom. When Jesus died, rose, and ascended into heaven, God crowned him as king. Jesus is the king God promised David. Jesus has been king for the last 2000 years. And he will continue to be king for the next 2000 years, and 2000 years after that, and 2000 years after that, for ever and ever. Can someone remind me what else we need for a kingdom? [Take answers]

People: When Jesus ascended into heaven his disciples took Jesus to be their king. They became the people of God's kingdom. And they went on to tell others of King Jesus, who then also became people of the kingdom. And they told others, and guess what? They too became people of the kingdom. And they told others, who told others, who told others, who told your parents and Sunday school leaders, who tell you. If we have heard about King Jesus, and take him to be our king, then we also become people of the kingdom. God's kingdom fills with people every day, like a tap filling up a bath.

Place: God's kingdom doesn't have a place on this earth. His kingdom is the kingdom of heaven. God's people go to be with Jesus when they die. Then in the future, God will create the new heavens and earth where they will live. There will be nothing broken or bad in it. It will be a wonderful place. It will be a safe place. This will be the place of the kingdom.

Conclusion

This term we're thinking about God's promised kingdom. And we're going to look at David's first son Solomon and his kingdom, because this will give us a picture of King Jesus and his kingdom. Looking at the kingdom under Solomon will give us an idea of what Jesus' forever kingdom is like. So that as we look at the picture, we can get excited, and understand more, about the real thing.

Let's thank God for promising an amazing kingdom.

Pray

Additionally there is space for working. Use this to help you prepare for your group discussion and activity.

Notes/ thoughts/ workings/ personal response:

Discussion: Digging deeper / ACTS

Aim - Recap/ apply/ pray: _____

1

2

3

Materials:

Use the 'How to lead a Digging deeper discussion' or 'How to lead ACTS prayer' section in the leader's handbook to help you prepare.

A. God, I praise you _____

C. God, I am sorry _____

T. God, I thank you _____

S. God, I ask you _____

Activity: _____

Use the 'How to prepare a e.g. memory verse/ game/ VIPP activity' section in the leader's handbook.

Materials



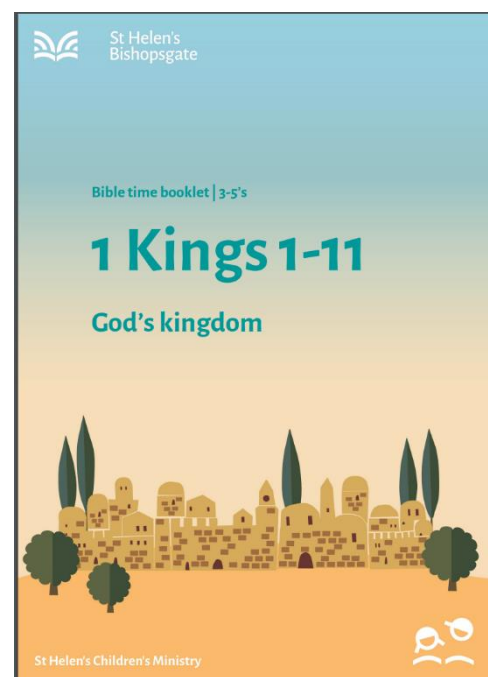
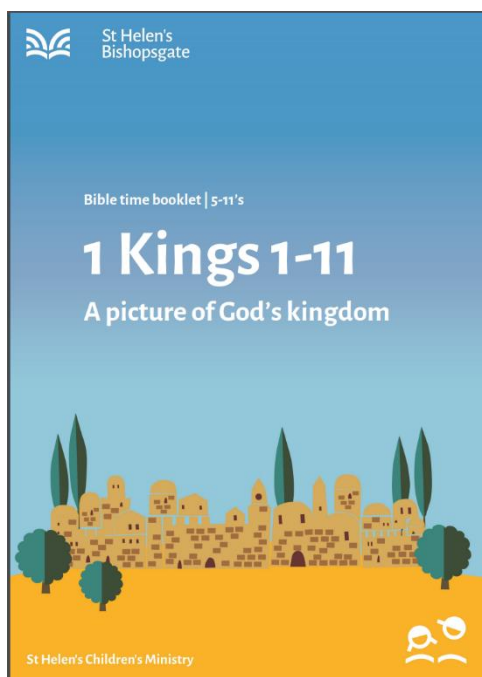
The 'Bible time booklets' of Sunday school



One of the ways we partner with parents is to give families a Bible time booklet. Bible time booklets help:

- Parents to know what we've been teaching in Sunday school.
- Parents and children to talk about what they've been learning in Sunday school together.
- Parents to get into the Bible and pray with their children.
- Parents to help their children to further think through how they are responding to what they are hearing in God's word.
- Children to reinforce what they've been learning in Sunday school.

For each Bible book we teach we give the parents/children a Bible time booklet.





St Helen's
Bishopsgate

