



BACKPACKERS 2009

A Christian Adventure for Young People



TEACHING MATERIAL

Name:

*Scriptures quoted from the International Children's Bible,
New Century Version (Anglicised Edition)
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The Master's Plan

Introduction to this year's theme

This year we are looking at God's plan for His world.

The four days can only cover The Master's Plan very briefly. We will look at four points in God's plan – the beginning, creation; the fall; the rescue; the end, the new heavens and new earth.

We will just pick out some pivotal points but the children should see that God has a plan for his world and his people. They will learn that he never had to go for a plan B. He knew that people could not live a holy life in their own strength but humans need to come to realise that for themselves. Even before creation God knew that humans would reject him and they would need rescuing. They will see that everything started off perfect and that it will all become perfect again – in God's own time.

It is always helpful for group leaders and assistants to cover more ground than the children will, so an outline of what we can learn of God's plan from the bible follows. Should you want to read more before Backpackers an overview of the bible will help you with The Master's Plan. Some good books to read are:

- God's Big Picture by Vaughan Roberts, (published by IVP). A very readable, not too thick, bible overview
- Gospel and Kingdom by Graeme Goldsworthy, (published by Paternoster). A bible overview, a more substantial read.
- Turning Points by Vaughan Roberts, (published by Authentic Media). Another very readable, not too thick book. A 'history' book that looks at God's plan for the world.

Aim: For the children to understand that God had a plan for this world from the beginning. He knew he would send Jesus to rescue his people and give them an eternal relationship with him. Only God the Father knows when he will fully restore the world and our relationship with him.

Up Front Sessions

The first up front session of the morning will be a 'warm up' – preparation for the day; grabbing the children's attention and preparing them for the bible teaching which will follow in the groups.

The second session will be 'consolidation' – drama or activities designed to reinforce the key concepts, theme, aim and details of the teaching that they should just have received. (Deep Blues will be having their own session at this time).

The end of afternoon will be a 'wind up' – summary of the day's teaching – linking the warm up, the bible story and the consolidation together with a final emphasis on the central teaching points.

Groups should focus on the key teaching points in the morning teaching session. The resources under 'Way In' and 'Bible' can be used for this. The afternoon session should focus mainly on 'Response', i.e. application, though there may be a need to reinforce/continue the teaching of the key points. Do try to pray with your group, particularly in the short time you have together after the final up front session. There are suggestions and resource sheets for prayer each day. When the children arrive in the morning you may want them to do an activity sheet from the previous day to get them thinking about the teaching again. Another good use of this time is to see if they have remembered the memory verse. (Obviously Day 1 will be used for 'getting to know you'.)

Deep Blues in the afternoon will take teaching points a bit further, at times with another bible passage. An indication of what will be covered is given on each day. Blue Groups will have two sessions together to look at a) the teaching and b) application and response. Additional resources will be available to Blue Group leaders.



A note on layout and headings used:

- ✦ **Aim:** This statement summarises what we want the children to understand each day. It is provided to give us all a common teaching point to aim for. How far this can be met may vary according to the age, personality and background of the children in your group.
- ✦ **Today's passage:** The passage for each day is printed in full from the International Children's Bible. Please always use this version in your preparation for teaching the children so there is no confusion for them. Do note that the New Century Version (NCV) available on-line from Biblegateway.com is not the same as NCV International Children's Bible. You can get an electronic copy of these notes, and so the bible passage, from the Backpackers' web site. [Where another version is quoted in these notes the version is included in brackets at the end of the quote.]
- ✦ **Bible Notes:** Following the passages are some notes for you to use to help you 'get to grips' with the bible before you plan your times with the children.
- ✦ **Background detail:** The notes under these sections are there to give you, the Group leaders, some interesting bits of information – some will be more important to understanding the passage than others. They are intended for you mainly, to aid your understanding before you teach the children. Some may be suitable to use with your groups.
- ✦ **Tangents:** Sometimes when following a plan for a journey or for our life we end up going on the 'scenic route'. We make a turning that looks as though it is in the right direction but turns out not to be a direct route or the best next step in our plan. To understand a plan we need to notice the Sidelines and not allow them to distract from the main plan. There are points when we could become detracted, diverted from the meaning of the passage and our teaching aim. Hopefully these notes will prevent too many false leads diverting us from The Master's Plan – no picturesque routes this week!
- ✦ **How to go about it:** A suggestion of what to cover in each of your teaching sessions. This is only meant as a helpful guide for new leaders or those who feel unsure. Do, please, teach what you feel is right for your group. It would be helpful to look at the passage and help the children to understand it in the morning session, though, even if you can't cover all of it. Do please try to get the children to apply what they have learnt to their own lives.
- ✦ **Resources:** Then you will find a list of the teaching resources that are included in your Resource pack. This gives an indication of when they could be useful and which age range they are likely to suit. Don't be constrained by these suggestions! These are divided into 'Way In', 'Bible', 'Response', 'Memory Verse' and 'Prayer' to help with your planning but there's bound to be some overlap.

The Master's Plan Outline

God created a perfect world – it's there in Genesis chapter 1 with the repetition 'He saw it was good.' He made man and man had a perfect relationship with God and with his human partner, woman. The fall spoilt all that. The rebellion of Adam and Eve led to fear and the end of the close relationship with God. The trust between man and woman was also damaged.

From there it's all downhill for a while. Cain commits the first murder and evil is committed until God has to deal with it drastically with the flood. Humans still don't change; the tower of Babel demonstrates the sin of pride. In judgement God scatters the people, cutting them off from him. He causes them to speak different languages so they are cut off from one another.

Then in Genesis 12 we read about Abram (Abraham) and God's great promises to him. The progression from sin to judgement now goes onto grace. God promises Abraham a people (v2), a land (vv1,7) and a blessing (v3). He says Abram will be a blessing, that is, he will bless all the nations. Even in Genesis 3 when God pronounced judgement on Adam and Eve, he announced the gospel in telling the serpent Eve's offspring 'will crush your head'. Through the rest of the Old Testament there is a working towards fulfilment of these promises and the coming of the serpent crusher. The serpent crusher is a descendant of Eve's but it's not Cain or Abel, or Noah, or Abraham, or any of his sons, or King David or any of the Old Testament kings. It is Jesus.



The people of Israel living in the Promised Land gives a glimpse of what was to be. God's promises of a people, a place and a blessing are partially fulfilled. The people keep getting it wrong though. Throughout the Old Testament God is revealing himself, his purposes, his character to lay the foundation for understanding when Jesus comes.

Jesus' coming fulfils all the promises of the Old Testament. He is the Christ, the suffering Servant of Isaiah, he is the salvation of the world, the son of God who gives eternal life.

Jesus death made it possible for the promises to Abraham to be fulfilled. It is now possible to be God's people, in Jesus (God's place), under his blessing and rule (God's grace of salvation). The promises are not completely fulfilled though. We live in the end time, in the overlap, in the now and not yet – we live though with those promises.

The second coming of Jesus will bring complete fulfilment of those promises to Abraham. With the new heavens and the new earth God's people will be in God's place under his rule and blessing – for ever!

So much to get through but how exciting The Master's Plan is – and we want to get that over to the children.

Each day will have a main passage for use with the children but there will sometimes also be other passages and verses that can be used according to the group – age, ability, pre-knowledge, etc. This means the Group Leader has scope to go deeper or wider if they and their group are up for it.

Tangents:

- ✦ Necessarily a lot of detail of God's plan has been left out of the teaching for our four days together. Group leaders will benefit from knowing more of the plan to be able to answer questions that come from the children and keep the days connected. Try not to go too far down a byway though.
- ✦ Avoid getting bogged down in considering controversial issues such as science versus religion. Only a few children will be ready for that so make use of the Encouragers when one is, or the rest of your group will lose interest.

Open Door - Getting to know you:

Your group may consist of pairs of friends, children who know one another well and those who don't know anyone else. It is unlikely the whole group will know one another and you need to get to know them. As the children arrive on day one try to take time to speak to them individually asking their names and one or two other questions. On day one it's a good idea to use the Open Door time, and perhaps the first few minutes of the first teaching session, for ice-breaker games to help the children get to know one another and the Group leaders, assistants and any helpers. Some groups may need something like this at the start of each day.

The colouring sheets in the resource pack are also useful for this time as the children arrive one by one (some of the older children will still want to colour). On days 2 to 4 you may have things to complete from the day before but it is a good idea to always have some spare sheets, especially for the quieter children. They will often open up more when their hands are busy.

Resources are listed for each day as they follow the theme but there are also lists of ice-breakers, memory verse ideas, prayer suggestions at the end that could be used on any day. Some of these could be helpful if your group finish lunch quickly and are at a loose end.

Memory verse activity suggestions for the memory verse that match that day's aim are grouped together each day (with general ones at the end of the Teaching material). They probably come better in the afternoon as part of 'Response' you may want to use one for the previous day's memory verse when the children arrive in the morning to reinforce learning



Memory verse:

The main memory verse for the week is:

'I praise you because you made me in an amazing and wonderful way. What you have done is wonderful. I know this very well.'

Psalm 139:14

A second memory verse could also be used for older groups who manage to remember the one above, perhaps from day 2. You will find resource sheets using this verse.

'Lord our God, you show us mercy. You forgive us even though we have turned against you.'

Daniel 9:9

Teaching Material Team:

If you need further assistance in understanding these notes or the resource sheets do speak to one of the team:

| | | | |
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Day 1 - In the beginning

Passage: Genesis 1:1 - 2:3

Aim: We want the children to understand that God created all things. That everything he created is good, it is wonderful and from that to think about how wonderful God is.

Today's Passage:

¹In the beginning God created the sky and the earth. ²The earth was empty and had no form. Darkness covered the ocean, and God's Spirit was moving over the water.

³Then God said, "Let there be light!" and there was light. ⁴God saw that the light was good, so he divided the light from the darkness. ⁵God named the light "day" and the darkness "night." Evening passed, and morning came. This was the first day.

⁶Then God said, "Let there be something to divide the water in two!" ⁷So God made the air to divide the water in two. Some of the water was above the air, and some of the water was below it. ⁸God named the air "sky." Evening passed, and morning came. This was the second day.

⁹Then God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered together so the dry land will appear." And it happened. ¹⁰God named the dry land "earth" and the water that was gathered together "seas." God saw that this was good.

¹¹Then God said, "Let the earth produce plants. Some plants will make grain for seeds. Others will make fruits with seeds in them. Every seed will produce more of its own kind of plant." And it happened. ¹²The earth produced plants. Some plants had grain for seeds. The trees made fruit with seeds in it. Each seed grew its own kind of plant. God saw that all this was good. ¹³Evening passed, and morning came. This was the third day.

¹⁴Then God said, "Let there be lights in the sky to separate day from night. These lights will be used for signs, seasons, days, and years. ¹⁵They will be in the sky to give light to the earth." And it happened.

¹⁶So God made the two large lights. He made the brighter light to rule the day. He made the smaller light to rule the night. He also made the stars. ¹⁷God put all these in the sky to shine on the earth. ¹⁸They are to rule over the day and over the night. He put them there to separate the light from the darkness. God saw that all these things were good. ¹⁹Evening passed, and morning came. This was the fourth day.

²⁰Then God said, "Let the water be filled with living things, and let birds fly in the air above the earth."

²¹So God created the large sea animals. He created every living thing that moves in the sea. The sea is filled with these living things. Each

one produces more of its own kind. God also made every bird that flies. And each bird produces more of its own kind. God saw that this was good. ²²God blessed them and said, "Have many young ones so that you may grow in number. Fill the water of the seas, and let the birds grow in number on the earth." ²³Evening passed, and morning came. This was the fifth day.

²⁴Then God said, "Let the earth be filled with animals. And let each produce more of its own kind. Let there be tame animals, small crawling animals and wild animals. And let each produce more of its kind." And it happened.

²⁵So God made the wild animals, the tame animals, and all the small crawling animals to produce more of their own kind. God saw that this was good.

²⁶Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image and likeness. And let them rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky. Let them rule over the tame animals, over all the earth, and over all the small crawling animals on the earth."

²⁷So God created human beings in his image. In the image of God he created them. He created them male and female. ²⁸God blessed them and said, "Have many children and grow in number. Fill the earth and be its master. Rule over the fish in the sea and over the birds in the sky. Rule over every living thing that moves on the earth."

²⁹God said, "Look, I have given you all the plants that have grain for seeds. And I have given you all the trees whose fruits have seeds in them. They will be food for you. ³⁰I have given all the green plants to all the animals to eat. They will be food for every wild animal, every bird of the air, and every small crawling animal." And it happened. ³¹God looked at everything he had made, and it was very good. Evening passed, and morning came. This was the sixth day.

Genesis 2

¹So the sky, the earth, and all that filled them were finished. ²By the seventh day God finished the work he had been doing. So on the seventh day he rested from all his work. ³God blessed the seventh day and made it a holy day. He made it holy because on that day he rested. He rested from all the work he had done in creating the world.



Bible Notes:

'Tangents' below looks at the different ways we can read this narrative. You may want to read that first.

Look at the first four words of the passage, the first four words of the Bible, 'In the beginning God'. The Bible begins with God. He is there before anything else, a difficult concept to grasp, but it is clear everything begins with God. Before God creates anything only he exists. God is self-existent. Theologians describe this characteristic of God as his "aseity" – and all that means in simple terms is that God has life *in himself*. In other words he's not dependent on anything or anyone outside himself for his existence. This truth makes God totally unique. It makes him different from everything and anything else.

Look at how many times God is mentioned in today's passage, it's all about Him, and we've got to keep ourselves in the right place.

As we look at the creation narrative we must remember that God, this unique, independent God, is the creator and everything else is created by him. That is why God, and only God, is worthy of our worship. This truth about God is humbling for us. For if God has no need for anything then he doesn't *need* us. God didn't create the world for us, out of some need in him. That still raises the question "why create anything – why create us?" when it was not out of any need in God. A big question and the answer could be, God's creation is a spilling over of the love between Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It's a wonderful picture, to know that we exist not because of some need in God but as an expression of his love. We want the children to grasp something of that wonderful, awesome love and the amazing creator who expresses it in His creation.

God speaks and it happens. God's word is the creating force. Jesus is God's word (John chapter 1). Verse 2 mentions God's Spirit, so from the start of the Bible we have the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, working together. Verse 26 uses 'us' and 'our' '*Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image and likeness."*' The creation is an overflow of love from this Trinitarian God.

God's creation is good. Focus on that today with the children; don't go into what man has done to it. Concentrate on the new creation being good. God is very pleased with it in verse 31.

God created human beings last; on the same day as the animals. Humans have similarities to other animals but are distinctive. Verses 26 and 27 make this clear when they tell of humans being made 'in our image'. This can't mean a physical image as God doesn't have a shape – he's not really a bearded man sitting in the sky. 'Our image' suggests relationship, we're made to love God and be loved by God; to love one another and be loved by one another. Verse 27 tells of the male and female, husband and wife, relationship but we are made for all kinds of relationships. We are not made to exist in isolation.

Verses 26-27 show God has created human beings to rule over, be stewards of, the earth, the animals, birds and fish. God is the ultimate ruler but he has created human beings as his representatives. This makes it clear that children, people, are more valuable than animals, that it's our responsibility to use and develop creation – science, invention, exploration, development are part of our purpose – under God's Sovereign hand.

So from today's passage we can see that creation is very good and that human beings are the climax of the creation and have particular significance in God's purposes, in The Master's Plan. Humans originate by God's Word, made in His image. This makes us very special, we have significance, dignity and value. We're not just a product of chance. We are individually created and known by God himself. The image is marred by sin but it is



there in every human being, precious to God and that's how we should view people, all people, not just those with health and strength who are being productive in society, but the elderly, the terminally ill, the not yet born, the disabled. Every life is precious to God and therefore should be precious to us. Help the children understand that as far as they can, according to their age.

Our first passage shows us that we are created for God. We exist to be in a relationship with our creator. In Colossians Paul tells us that all things were created by Jesus and for Jesus; our purpose is to give him glory in all we do. All of our lives should be our worship to God. Whether we are at work, at school, at play we can glorify God by living well and in relationship with Him.

God's creation, His world reveals Him. Romans 1:19-20 tells of God's anger about the way people behave when all that He has made makes Him clear. This means people have no excuse for behaving badly.

Background detail:

- ✦ Most of the passage is about our world but the opening reminds us that it is more than that. He created everything there is. If life is discovered on Mars or elsewhere we will know that God put them there. It's this world that is the focus of The Master's Plan but verse 1 also reminds us that there is a whole heavenly realm that we cannot see but was created by God. The heavens are not merely the skies, but a spiritual realm, where angelic beings are even now active in serving God.
- ✦ The first three days create the space, the context, the environment, and then the second three fill them up:

| | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| Day 1 – Light / darkness; | Day 4 – Sun, moon, stars |
| Day 2 – Water – sky above and water below; | Day 5 – birds, and fish |
| Day 3 – Land, vegetation; | Day 6 – animals, human beings |

Tangents:

- ✦ **Creation or evolution?** Religion v science. This is such a big debate we don't want to get too bogged down in it in the limited time we have at Backpackers. Some thoughts from big minds are set out in the next few bullets but let's remember that many of the children are not yet at the stage where they are asking these questions so don't feel you need to raise them unless they do. The Bible reveals truths about God, sometimes these are expressed as plain facts, sometimes in picture language, sometimes in story, sometimes in other ways. The main thing is the Bible, including this passage, reveals the truth about God. Let's point the children to those truths and help them realise that God is wonderful and he created a wonderful world.
- ✦ Bible believing Christians disagree about whether the days of creation are literal and therefore the earth is just several thousand years old or if the world evolves with God superintending the evolution and therefore the earth is several billion years old.
- ✦ Some think this passage should be read as literal history. This does generate serious conflict with scientific analysis, not only in the age of the earth, but also in the order in which things are created, with vegetation coming before the sun, and so on. Of course, no one who believes in a creator God would doubt that He could create in six days, and in whatever order He chooses, nor would most doubt that scientific theories can get it wrong. Many Christians, though, struggle with the conflict and question whether the general revelation in the natural world as interpreted by most, and the Biblical revelation would seem to contradict one another so acutely. More importantly, should Genesis 1 be read as a literal account of what happened – is it a scientific text book?
- ✦ Others suggest it should be read as Ancient Poetry – it's all symbolic, it's just a song or a poem rejoicing in the wonderful creation, suggestive of a creator God. This means there need be no conflict with science. Genesis 1 can be left in the background for those creative, arty types who like a bit of dusty old poetry.



- ✦ Literary scholars suggest that it is what is called "Heightened prose". That is it reads as though it is giving an account – there is something solid and real to understand here about creation, but the writing is structured and stylised which would suggest that it is not to be read just like a science text book. This argument is supported by the repeated phrases: 'And God said...'; 'God saw that it was good...'; '...There was morning and there was evening...' and also by the structure of Days 1,2,3 which are mirrored by 4,5,6.

Treating the passage as 'heightened prose' means there are real truths to be discerned and understood from this passage about God and His intention in creation. It is not intended to be a scientific record of the process of how God created. This is the approach taken in the notes above.

How to go about it:

Morning Session

It's a long passage today but we really need to look at the whole of creation. You may not want to read the whole passage but do please use the Bible so children can see that it comes from there and hasn't been written just for Backpackers.

It will probably take all of the morning session to look into what the passage says. For older children this could be done by asking questions such as 'What was created on Day 3?' They could also spot the repeating phrases. (See Resource Sheet BS1.) For younger children use the colouring sheet (See Resource Sheet 1a) or pictures of what is created on each day, they could stick them onto a large sheet of paper that's divided into 6. (The 1 G Resource sheets provide some templates that could be coloured by the children). The Resource sheets suggest other activities as well.

Afternoon Session

Spend time considering how wonderful God is and how amazing are the things he has created. There is a quiz/fact sheet on the human body included in the resources (1I). You could also talk about tiny babies with their very small fingers, etc. and how they will grow into adults without any re-building. Springtime could be another good focus.

Give the children a chance to reflect on all God has made, including them. Do try to get across how amazing and awesome God is.



Resources for Day 1:

See end of Teaching Material for 'Getting to know you' suggestions.

Way in:

| | Sheet: | Groups: |
|---|--------|---------|
| Decorate folders with stickers, felt pens, etc and copy of memory verse | | All |
| Colouring Sheet | 1A | Y,R,G |
| Site Tour – important as it is a new venue for all. For ideas see 'Getting to know you' suggestions 1 to 3 at the end of the teaching notes. | | All |
| Activity sheet – Count The Stars (answer=29) 2 per A4 sheet | 1B | All |
| Activity Sheet – Word Search | 1C | R,G,B |
| A-Z of animals. In pairs try to list an animal starting with each letter of the alphabet. 1 point for every correct answer, 2 points if no-one else has it. Could be an on-going activity throughout the day or week. | | G,B |
| Awesome. How many small words can you make from the word 'awesome'? | | R,G,B |
| Fruit basket. Sit the children in a circle, quite well spread out. You need 1 person in the middle and even numbers in the circle (possibly use leader). Allocate fruit names round the circle. Use each name twice. The person in the middle calls out the name of a fruit and the 2 people with that name have to try and swap places by running across the circle while the person in the middle tries to get into one of the spaces. (You could use names of animals or plants). | | All |
| If I were an animal I'd be... Children to say what kind of animal matches their personality e.g. dogs are friendly, loyal; cats do what they like; sheep like to follow others; ants are hard workers; elephant stomp around making lots of noise. | | R,G,B |

Bible:

| | Sheet: | Groups: |
|--|--------|---------|
| Read the story from the Bible (International Children's Bible but for yellow groups you could use the Lion First Bible) | | All |
| Story with Actions. See Resource Sheet for details, | 1D | R,G |
| Tell the story using Pass the Parcel with visual aids in each layer e.g. sunglasses, swimming armbands, seeds, fruit, animals, play people | | Y |
| Creation diagram. Use a large sheet of black paper, possibly divided into 7 sections for each day, add the stages of creation as the story unfolds | | Y, R |
| Activity Sheet – Which Day? (words) | 1E | R,G,B |
| Activity Sheet – Which Day? (pictures) | 1F | Y,R |
| Play 'All the Fish in the Sea' but using creation instead of fish | | All |
| Play Simon says but using God instead of Simon | | Y,R |
| Ladders. Children get into pairs and sit opposite partner with feet touching to make a ladder effect. Name each pair "God", "light", "day", "sky", "earth". Read the bible passage (up to v19). When they hear their name read, they run up the centre of the ladder, round the outside and back up to their place. When the phrase "God saw that this was good" is said, everyone runs. (The version of the bible that we are using varies this phrase; sometimes it says God saw that these things were good. The children should run on any variation) | | G,B |
| A-Z of Animals and/or Plants. Draw a grid on a large piece of thick paper or piece of material and write a letter of the alphabet in each space. Have some pictures of animals/plants cut out from magazines ready for the children to stick on. Ask the children to bring more pictures from home to add to the collage each day. | | Y,R |
| Creation Pictionary Game. Divide the children into two teams. You will need to make a set of cards with creation things written on them (e.g. star, moon, tree, flower, apple, banana, lion, elephant). Some things are easier to draw than others so you will have to pick things that are appropriate for your age group. You will also need two sets of letters that | | All |



| | Sheet: | Groups: |
|--|--------|---------|
| make up the word "creation". One child from each team takes a card and then draws the picture for their team to guess. The first team to correctly guess collects a letter. The first team to complete the word "creation" wins. | | |
| Bible Study Leaflet | BS1 | G, B |

Response:

| | Sheet: | Groups: |
|---|--------------------------|---------|
| Creation Mobile | 1G(i),1G(ii), 1G(iii) | Y,R,G |
| Play Dough – let the children be creative. Recipe on Resource Sheet. | 1H | Y,R |
| Creation Scene – Crayola Explosion paper would make a wonderful scene (Wilkos sell it) | | Y,R,G |
| Activity Sheet - The Amazing Human Body, could be used as a quiz even though most answers would be guesses. | 1I | R,G,B |
| The Wow Factor. Set up a spoof TV programme with a leader or extrovert child as presenter. Contestants take it in turns to describe something that would make you say "Wow!" e.g. rainbow, thunderstorm, rollercoaster ride. They must really sell their experience. The person who gets the loudest Wow is the winner. | | G,B |
| Beauty. Provide a selection of pictures that show God in majesty (photos of amazing places, a rainbow, animals, plants etc). Ask the children to describe what they see, then to say how they feel when they look at them. Remind them of the wonder of God's <i>design</i> - these aren't accidents. They, like us, are part of a plan and wonderfully put together displaying the Creator's imagination and power. | | R,G,B |

Memory Verse:

| | Sheet: | Groups: |
|---|--------|---------|
| Memory verse code breaker (Psalm 139:14) | M1 | R,G,B |
| Person shaped bookmark | M2 | All |
| Colour the verse | M3 | Y,R |
| Colouring sheet | M4 | Y,R |

Prayer:

| | Sheet: | Groups: |
|---|-----------------|---------|
| STOP Prayer Sheet. Each child is given a sheet with the STOP Acrostic (Sorry, Thanks, Others, Please). Each day they fill in one section with a short prayer or picture. Their ideas can then be used to form a group prayer for the end of the day. Day 1: <u>S</u> orry Prayers | P1 | All |
| Prayer Banner. – Use a large sheet of card cut into the shape of the world and divided into four [see sheet P2(i)]. Stick prayers into a different section each day. Today write prayers that give thanks for God's creation (Wow! prayers) written on a fish shape piece of paper [Sheet P2(ii)]. | P2(i) P2(ii) | All |
| Wonderful. Think of as many words as possible which mean wonderful (fantastic, amazing, awesome, wondrous, magnificent etc) Leader starts the prayer with "Thank you God for your wonderful world" Each person repeats but uses a different word for wonderful. | | G,B |



Day 2 - Oh dear!

Passage - Genesis 3:1-7

Aim: We want the children to understand that, though they are wonderfully made because God made them, they do go wrong, and our sin ruins a relationship with God, but this can be restored. So that each of them can have an amazing relationship with God.

Today's Passage

¹Now the snake was the most clever of all the wild animals the Lord God had made. One day the snake spoke to the woman. He said, "Did God really say that you must not eat fruit from any tree in the garden?"

²The woman answered the snake, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden. ³But God told us, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden. You must not even touch it, or you will die.'"

⁴But the snake said to the woman, "You will not die. ⁵God knows that if you eat the fruit

from that tree, you will learn about good and evil. Then you will be like God!"

⁶The woman saw that the tree was beautiful. She saw that its fruit was good to eat, and that it would make her wise. So she took some of its fruit and ate it. She also gave some of the fruit to her husband, and he ate it.

⁷Then, it was as if the man's and the woman's eyes were opened. They realized they were naked. So they sewed fig leaves together and made something to cover themselves.

Bible Notes:

Today's passage is usually known as 'the fall'. It is the account of sin entering the world. Many misunderstand the nature of sin. Some immediately think of crimes - like theft or murder, and think they haven't sinned as they haven't done that sort of thing. Sometimes the word sin is used to describe something trivial, for example, the 'naughty but nice' phrase that's used to sell chocolate or cream cakes. The 'sins' you can allow yourself each day when you're dieting. There's a lot of misunderstanding about sin, but this passage takes us to the very heart of what sin really is, it takes us back to the beginning of sin. It shows that sin is rebellion against God. One way of looking at the fall is to see it as our attempt to take God's place, to try and be like God and ignore his rules. That's still attractive to many today. People live as though they are in charge of their lives. The children should be able to grasp this concept.

Day 1 and chapter 1 concentrate on creation being good. Chapter 2 goes on to tell more of the delightful garden that God created. Adam lives there, with his perfectly matched helper and all the animals that he has named. Adam and Eve had a wonderful relationship with God in this beautiful garden too. You can just imagine them strolling together in the cool of the evening without a worry or care. All good, all perfect - no hint of a problem, no sin, no rebellion, total innocence - the final verse of chapter 2 says '*The man and the wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.*' They were innocent. It was all delightful. But today's passage shows how that was all damaged.

The serpent sidles up to the woman and puts temptation in her way. In verse 1 The serpent says: "*Did God really say, 'You must not eat fruit from any tree in the garden'?*" He is sowing doubt about God's word in Eve's mind. Chapter 2:16-17 are what God did say:

¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, "*You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.*" Genesis 2:16-17 (NIV)

God didn't say 'you must not eat from any tree' but rather 'you can eat from every tree except one'! The serpent, Satan, was twisting God's words around so that they looked harsher. So that he could make the woman start to doubt God - not just what God said but God himself.



Eve does acknowledge that God *did* say they could eat fruit from the other trees - but she adds to God's word. She makes an attempt to correct the serpent (verses 2-3). But God didn't say anything about *touching* the tree. The serpent's subtle sowing of doubt is having effect. Eve has now distorted God's command by adding to God's word.

Then the serpent denies God's word in verse 4. The serpent is contradicting what God said - 'don't believe *that* he's saying what it *sounds* like he's saying.' And he goes straight on to denigrate God's character. 'God doesn't really mean you'll *die*; it's just that he knows if you eat that fruit you'll be just like him.'

God has created all things good and has provided all that Adam and Eve need including a good relationship with one another so they can carry out God's purposes. Satan whispers 'ah but, really he's keeping you in your place, there's more you could have.'; 'are you *sure* about his motives?'; 'Are you sure he's sovereign?' He's not only tempting them to disobey God but suggesting that God will do nothing about that disobedience. He's saying there will be no judgement.

This doubt about God's words and his motive stirs up discontent and desire in Eve. The fruit appealed to all the human senses. It was good, pleasing to the eye, it would make them wise and - it would make them like God. Already Eve is discontented now there is *something to desire*. Something more than God provided. God has provided all Adam and Eve need - a beautiful setting to live in, good food to eat, animals and the land to care for, a relationship with one another and with God himself. Yet Eve wants more - echoes of our materialistic society today.

So her discontent and desire lead to disobedience as described in James 1:13-15. Eve took some of the fruit and ate it. She also gave it to her husband and he ate it. Then, just as the serpent had said, their eyes were opened and they knew good and evil. (see first bullet under 'Background Detail') Their innocence had gone. It made them ashamed of their nakedness. BUT - they were **not** like God as the rest of chapter 3 shows.

Sin is rebellion against God. Eve did what God had said they should not do because the serpent encouraged her to, to think it would make her like God. Adam eats the fruit because Eve gave it to him. The natural order of things had been overturned. God created an orderly world. (Genesis 1:28) God ordained that humans should rule over the animals. Yet in these verses today, an animal has told the woman what to do and she's done it. A reversal of God's planned order. He said Adam and Eve were to rule over every living creature that moves on the ground. They were not supposed be told what to do, what God said by a creature. Adam and Eve believed the created not the creator. Their actions are a rebellion against God - they are no longer looking to him to provide everything and to order their lives. They have sinned.

God created a good world. His creatures are good. Yet the serpent questions God's word and insinuates that God has lied. Satan is putting temptation in Eve's way. Eve had to balance what she knew of God *against* this and the sight of this desirable fruit that would give her the knowledge God has. She exaggerates what God has said 'don't do' and gives in to temptation.

There's a lot we can learn, and teach the children from this passage. Help them to think about what is important to them, do they always want something more than they have? Do they take responsibility for their own actions or blame someone else, like Eve and Adam? Do they easily follow what others suggest they do even when they know it's not right? There are more application questions on the bible study sheet.



The rest of chapter 3 tells of the outcome from Eve and Adam's actions. What we can realise straight away though is that those good relationships between God and man; and man and woman are spoilt. There will be no more walking with God in the shade of the garden in total innocence because now they have realised, verse 7, they are naked. They are ashamed of their nakedness and make a feeble attempt to cover up their shame. Their innocence has gone.

Background Detail:

- ✦ 'Knowing good and evil' is not just about *being aware* of what is good and what is evil but being able to *decide* what is good and what is evil. To take God's role in deciding.
- ✦ Rebellion against God can be seen today. It can be seen in the idolatrous attitude to money and wealth that's caused people to act recklessly. Those high flying bankers who, already wealthy, appear to have taken bribes. People put their trust in things or people rather than God; possibly in money. The money for the mortgage, the holidays we deserve, the car that says 'we've made it'. None of these things are bad in themselves. They're all good things and God wants us to enjoy good things. But how much of their trust and focus in life do they invest along with the money? Or perhaps it's work, the status that gives, the authority. Or even family!

Tangents:

- ✦ Is this passage myth or fact? Is it just giving an insight into deep human truths? A lot has been written on this. Clearly this passage is not written from an eye witness account, as are the gospels. The story of the creation of the world and this first couple is likely to have been handed down orally. However, there would have been no-one, at the time it was written down, who was an actual *witness* of the events. Does whether this passage is literal fact or not really matter? God has provided scripture, the Bible, to teach us. The Bible teaches truth and Scripture interprets scripture. There are several references in the bible to these as actual events, one is in Romans 5:12 'Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man,' And later verse 14 refers to Adam breaking a command. Paul uses the events described in today's passage to teach about sin entering the world and God's grace, the gift of forgiveness and eternal life that came through one man, Jesus.
- ✦ It's not all Eve's fault (vv6-7) Adam was there, no excuses about not knowing where the fruit came from, he was with Eve. He ate the fruit too – and then **both** of their eyes were opened. I don't think we can blame Eve alone.

How to go about it:

Morning Session

A shorter passage today so easier to read in full and then use the morning session to understand. Use the bible study leaflet (Resource BS2) or your own questions or activity to help the children to understand it.

Discuss who sets rules and what would happen if you were to play a game and you all used different rules. With younger children play a game with the Assistant Group Leader or a Young Leader disobeying the rules. That person could then explain that they didn't want to play it the way the leader said. This can then lead into talking about how we all try to make our own rules and decide what is right and what is wrong but that is really God's job.

Afternoon Session

Talk about how today's world is spoilt. Many of the children will be very aware of environmental issues. Bring in things like litter and people hurting one another by the things they say as well as fighting. Help them to see that people cause these problems.



Ask them if they've ever tried to be perfectly good for a whole day. Did they succeed? Or have they ever decided not to be rude or say something nasty to someone and failed?

Help the children to see that they are wonderful because they are made in God's image and are His special creation but they are not wonderful because they are unable to be perfect and live exactly as God would have them live. Yet they can have an amazing relationship with God. Sadly people rebelled/rebel against God and spoil that relationship and their relationships with one another. Just as Adam and Eve did.

Resources for Day 2:

Way in:

| | Sheet: | Groups: |
|---|--------|---------|
| Colouring Sheet | 2A | Y,R,G |
| Activity Sheet – Spot the Difference (2 per A4 sheet) | 2B | All |
| Activity Sheet – Maze (2 per A4 sheet) | 2C | R,G,B |
| Make a Snake (ready for story time) | 2D | All |
| Activity Sheet – Find the Apples | 2E | Y,R,G |
| Change the rules. See notes above. | | G,B |

Bible:

| | Sheet: | Groups: |
|---|--------|---------|
| Read the story from the Bible (International Children's Bible but for yellow groups you could use the Lion First Bible) | | All |
| Act out the story with Barbie and Ken and snake (see above) or use the children. Buy snake sweets to munch afterwards. (Please check for allergies.) | | Y,R |
| Use puppets to tell the story and then let the children have a turn. | 2F | Y,R |
| Story with fruit. Have a bowl of fruit (or pieces of fruit) on the table. Talk about how tasty/juicy the fruit looks. Children take on the roles of – narrator, snake & woman and read the story from the Bible. When you get to v.6 give each child a piece of fruit from the bowl. (Please check for allergies.) | | All |
| Activity Sheet – Missing Words | 2G | R,G,B |
| Game. All in a circle with one child in the middle with paper apples. Someone steals an apple and runs round the circle and back to their place. The child in the middle tries to catch them first. | | All |
| Blindfold Fruit Game. (Please check for allergies.) The children are blindfolded in turn and given a piece of fruit to identify by touch, smell or taste. | | All |
| Feely bag with fruit. | | All |
| Bible Study Leaflet | BS2 | G, B |



Response:

| | Sheet: | Groups: |
|---|--------|---------|
| Make a garden, retelling the story and inviting a response | | Y,R |
| Miming – right and wrong. (See notes above) e.g. dropping litter, wanting more, answering back, cheating. | | Y,R |
| Collage. Using magazine pictures, make a collage of creation. Add newspaper articles to show the way things have been spoilt. Use as a focus for prayer - thank you for the wonderful things you have made, sorry for not looking after them. | | G,B |
| Don't push it. Have some bubble pots. Blow some for the children to catch and pop. See who can blow the biggest bubble. Remind them that if they blow it too big, it will burst. As they blow, remind them of the consequences of pushing the limit too far. Relate to Adam and Eve. You could follow this with bubble prayers: the children think about mistakes or wrong choices they have made and blow a bubble for each one to say sorry. | | All |
| Decisions, decisions. Call out pairs of items that the children must choose between e.g. Coke/Pepsi, Chelsea/Man United, Girls Aloud/Sugarbabes, Eastenders/Coronation Street. Move to opposite sides of playing area as indicated. Finish with Eat the Apple or Not? | | R.G.B |
| Relationships. Ask each child to draw, privately, something that represents how they feel about their relationship with God at the moment. They could draw: an apple (are they attached to the tree, have they fallen off?); a thermometer, showing how hot they are; a football pitch with a mark to show where they are (on the pitch, on the bench, way back in the stands); a picture of themselves with God - are they a baby or more mature, close or distant, arguing or listening? If they want to share, allow them to. | | G,B |

Memory Verse:

| | Sheet: | Groups: |
|--|--------|---------|
| Snake Spiral (Daniel 9:9). Children colour the snake. Younger children will need help cutting out. Make a hole in the head and thread with wool so that snake can be hung up. | M5 | All |
| Any of previous sheets or ideas at back of teaching material | | |

Prayer:

| | Sheet: | Groups: |
|--|-----------------|---------|
| STOP Prayer Sheet. Day 2: Thank-you Prayers | P1 | All |
| Prayer Banner. Sorry Prayers written on an apple shaped piece of paper | P2(i) P2(ii) | All |
| What If? Think of some scenarios e.g. What if you don't revise for a test, you watch TV when you've been told not to, you tell a lie to a friend. How do others react? Explain that we all make wrong choices and ask what we should do when we know we're wrong. How do they think God reacts? Lead into "sorry" prayers. The great thing is that we can still have a relationship with God. | | G,B |
| Feet prayers. Each child draws round own feet. Write on shapes things which make us go away from God. | | G,B |
| Snakes and Ladders. Play the game. If someone lands on a ladder, they should say thank you for something positive about a relationship (what their parents/friends do which makes them feel good). If they land on a snake they say sorry for something they have done which has spoiled a relationship (or for situations like bullying). | | G.B |



Day 3 – Rescue!

Passage – 1Corinthians 15:1-11

Aim: For children to realise God always had a rescue plan and that Jesus' birth, death and resurrection means that we can have a special relationship with God again.

Today's passage:

¹Now, brothers and sisters, I want you to remember the Good News I brought to you. You received this Good News and continue strong in it. ²And you are saved by this Good News. But you must continue believing what I told you. If you do not, then you believed for nothing.

³I passed on to you what I received. And this was the most important: that Christ died for our sins, as the Scriptures say; ⁴that he was buried and was raised to life on the third day as the Scriptures say; ⁵and that he showed himself to Peter and then to the twelve apostles. ⁶After that, Jesus showed himself to more than 500 of the believers at the same time. Most of them are still living today. But some have

died. ⁷Then Jesus showed himself to James and later to all the apostles. ⁸Last of all he showed himself to me—as to a person not born at the normal time. ⁹All the other apostles are greater than I am. This is because I persecuted the church of God. And this is why I am not even good enough to be called an apostle. ¹⁰But God's grace has made me what I am. And his grace to me was not wasted. I worked harder than all the other apostles. (But I was not really the one working. It was God's grace that was with me.) ¹¹So then it is not important if I preached to you or the other apostles preached to you. We all preach the same thing, and this is what you believed.

Bible Notes:

Day 1 saw everything was created by God and it was good. Day 2 saw that man messed up by rebelling against God. We now jump over the history of God's people so often getting it wrong and God judging, yet graciously rescuing them. Now, on Day 3, we come to God's rescue plan. Not a sudden whim on God's part because, as far back as Genesis chapter 3, God told the serpent, Satan, that he will ultimately be crushed by the woman's offspring. Already God was promising His rescue. We bypass all those who might have been the rescuer as mentioned in the notes at the beginning of this material. We bypass God's great promises of a people, a land and a blessing to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-4), the prophecies in Isaiah and elsewhere and come straight to the rescue and **the** rescuer, Jesus, as 1 John 3:8 says, "The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work" (NIV).

In today's passage Paul summarises the gospel message, the Good News, in verses 3 and 4. Jesus is a real human being, descended from Adam but unlike Adam does not sin even when tempted. He is therefore the one person who lived who did not rebel against God and does not deserve to be banished from God's presence. Yet Jesus willingly died for our sins; He took on the cross the punishment we deserve for rebelling against God. Paul, in Romans 5:19 puts it: *'For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.'*(NIV) This means the wonderful relationship with God is available, restored, for us to enjoy. We want the children to understand this; that God always had a rescue plan and that Jesus' birth, death and resurrection means that we can have a special relationship with God if we make Jesus King of our lives.

Paul gives the evidence for the resurrection in verses 5-8. The resurrection is important as it shows that Jesus has defeated death. It means His followers will also be raised from death and enjoy eternal life in that special relationship with God. The death and resurrection of Christ are of prime importance to the Christian faith. It is the gospel and Paul starts by



pointing out that followers of Jesus must hold firmly to that. This firm faith will see them through difficulties or suffering they encounter in life still trusting in God.

Paul stresses all the evidence from eye-witnesses that Jesus did indeed rise from the dead. Verse 8 '*a person not born at the normal time*' means that Paul was not, as the other Apostles were, an eye-witness. He didn't see Jesus after his resurrection and before his ascension but Jesus did appear to him at the time of his, Paul's, conversion.

On the cross Jesus defeated God's enemies making it possible for God to introduce a new age with everything restored to perfection as the prophets of the Messiah said would happen. The resurrection shows that victory has taken place. The victory over death and all who trust in Jesus can be confident there is life after death. The new age is not here yet but the resurrection starts the process that will bring it in. We are living in the end times, sometimes described as the 'now and not yet'. Tomorrow's passage looks at the time when it will be 'now'.

At the end of the passage Paul describes how unworthy he feels of God's grace (**God's Riches At Christ's Expense**), a common feeling amongst Christians! Paul is very aware that it is God's grace working through him that enables him to do all that he can do. A good thing to remember when preparing for Backpackers; put in the work of preparation but trust in God to use that to speak to the children in your care for the week.

Background Detail:

- ✦ Paul is speaking to a church that has a few people of Jewish background but majority of them would have been Gentiles. The Jews believed in a bodily resurrection whereas the Greeks, a major influence in Corinth, thought the soul was immortal.
- ✦ The final verse refers to the division in the church (see chapter 1 of 1 Corinthians). Members were stating they followed different teachers, Paul, Apollos, Peter or Christ. Paul's reminding them it is the message that's important not the messenger.

Tangents:

- ✦ Don't get too bogged down by the last few verses. Paul refers to himself being unworthy of God's grace, His forgiveness through Jesus. Don't focus on Paul and what he did here but keep general. If you use this part of the passage (possibly only with older children) use it to teach that God will forgive anyone whatever they have done, providing they turn to Him and make Jesus the centre of their life.

How to go about it:

Morning Session

If you have a younger group or a group with many non-church children you may want to look at Jesus birth in Luke 2:1-7. His death in Mark 15:21-40 and resurrection in John 20:1-18, explaining what these mean along the lines of today's passage before, or instead of, looking directly at this passage.

With older children you might want to briefly explain how Christ's coming is foretold throughout the Old Testament (see notes at start of teaching material)

On the cross a wonderful swap took place. Examples of swapping could help the children understand. (See Resource sheet 30.)

Afternoon Session

This is the day to try to challenge the children about their own belief. Do they already follow Jesus? If not, do they understand why he died on the cross? Will they make him their King?



How you apply the passage will depend on the faith and understanding of the children in your group. You may need to concentrate on what Jesus has done for them on the cross and on the promise of eternal life. For others it will be more about following Jesus and what God's grace means then. How His grace and power can help when the going's tough. Talk about prayer and bible reading being part of that special relationship with God through Jesus.

Resources for Day 3:

Way in:

| | Sheet: | Groups: |
|--|--------|---------|
| Colouring sheet – three parts | 3A | R,G |
| Colouring sheet – birth | 3B | Y |
| Colouring sheet – death | 3C | Y |
| Colouring sheet – resurrection | 3D | Y |
| Play dough – children roll or squeeze the play dough to make the name Jesus. | 1H, 3E | Y,R |
| Activity sheet – Rescue! | 3F | Y,R |
| Activity sheet – Code Breaker | 3G | R,G,B |
| Activity sheet – Word search | 3H | R,G,B |
| Snatch Game. Divide children into groups of 3 and 1 pair. Sit in groups on chairs. The pair go to any group of 3 and snatch a player and return to their seats. The new pair wait until the new 3 sit down then they repeat the process. If music is available, stop at random intervals (otherwise call Stop). The last 3 who sit down are out and must sit with their arms crossed. They may not be snatched. The game continues until the last 3 is out. | | G,B |
| Superhero. Invent a superhero. Draw it, name it, give it a superhero attribute and think of a scenario where your hero rescues someone. Be sure to discuss that no super hero can do what Jesus did for us. | | G,B |

Bible:

| | Sheet: | Groups: |
|---|--------------------------|---------|
| Read the story from the Bible (International Children's Bible but for yellow groups you could use the Lion First Bible – story of Gabriel appearing to Mary and unfolding God's plan.) | | All |
| Act out the stories: Divide children into three groups. Get each group to act out one of the following stories- Birth, Death, Resurrection | | All |
| Advent Calendar. Tell the story of the life of Jesus, each child revealing a picture. | 3I(i),3I(ii), 3I(iii) | Y,R,G |
| Activity sheet – Crossword | 3J | R,G,B |
| Good News. Divide group into two and line them up in 2 lines. One person, 'A', from each team stands facing the others some distance apart in a "safe" area. 'A' runs to the first person in their team, grabs them, says "You are saved by the Good News". Together they run back to the safe area, then 'A' repeats the action until all the team are saved. | | G,B |
| Drama. Act out any rescue scene e.g. falling off a slide in the park, car broken down, lifeguard or coastguard, lost in London. | | Y,R,G |
| Chinese Whispers. Pass a few messages round the circle. End with the message, "God's grace has made me what I am." | | R,G,B |
| Bible Study Leaflet | B53 | G, B |



Response:

| | Sheet: | Groups: |
|---|--|---------|
| Cross Illustration. Follow instructions on Resource Sheet to make a cross and the word LIFE. | 3K | R,G,B |
| Activity sheet – circle the correct answers | 3L | R,G,B |
| Rescue vests. Make life jackets from bin liners | 3M(i), 3M(ii) or 3M(iii) or 3M (iv) | All |
| Rescue Bracelets. Buy reflective safety snap bands (try e-bay) and write on with permanent markers. | | All |
| Helicopters. Jesus saves helicopters. (5 per resource sheet). May be best copied onto thin card. Cut out each of the helicopters. Cut down the line between the 'feathers' and bend each half in opposite directions. Attach a paper clip to pointed end. Launch! | 3N | All |
| Swapping. Use swapping activity described on Resource Sheet. | 3O | G,B |
| Cross Stuck in the Mud. The rescuers stand in front of the stuck person with their arms outstretched. The unstuck person is free to carry on playing but the rescuer must now take their place and wait to be rescued themselves. See if they can make the connection to the day's teaching for themselves. | | All |
| Rescue game. If you have 2 rubber rings or quoits use these, otherwise make quoits by tying rope into circles or cutting the middles out of paper plates. Divide your group into 2 teams and line them up in 2 lines. One person from each team stands facing the others at some distance and throws the ring. Imagine they are lifebelts. When a person catches the ring, they join the thrower until all the group is rescued. | | G,B |

Memory Verse:

| | Sheet: | Groups: |
|--|--------|---------|
| Any of previous sheets or ideas at back of teaching material | | |

Prayer:

| | Sheet: | Groups: |
|--|-----------------|---------|
| STOP Prayer Sheet. Day 3: Prayers for Others | P1 | All |
| Prayer Banner. Thank-you prayers written on a star shaped piece of paper. | P2(i) P2(ii) | All |
| Mobile 'Phone Prayers. As we could use mobile 'phones to call for physical rescue use the mobile 'phone template to write 'thank-you for rescuing us' prayers in text language. Older children could include a bible verse showing how God's rescue plan came about. (2 per A4 sheets but different design) | P3 | G,B |



Day 4 – God’s Place again!

Passage - Revelation 21:1-7

Aim: We want the children to understand that, for those who turn to Jesus as their Lord and King, there is a perfect, wonderful eternity spent in a perfect relationship with God.

Today’s Passage

¹Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The first heaven and the first earth had disappeared. Now there was no sea. ²And I saw the holy city coming down out of heaven from God. This holy city is the new Jerusalem. It was prepared like a bride dressed for her husband. ³I heard a loud voice from the throne. The voice said, "Now God's home is with men, He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them and will be their God. ⁴He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death, sadness, crying, or pain. All the old ways are gone."

⁵The One who was sitting on the throne said, "Look! I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this, because these words are true and can be trusted."

⁶The One on the throne said to me, "It is finished! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give free water from the spring of the water of life to anyone who is thirsty. ⁷Anyone who wins the victory will receive this. And I will be his God, and he will be my son."

Bible Notes:

Now we jump to the end of the story. The end point of The Master’s Plan. Revelation is a description of a vision the Apostle John had. Again there is much picture language here and we can have no idea how close this, and our understanding of it, is to what the new heaven and new earth will actually be like. Just like Genesis, though, we can seek out the truths from the passage. The New Jerusalem can only be described in language we humans can understand.

The start of Revelation describes God clearing out all the old rubbish to make way for the new creation he has promised. Today’s passage starts to describe this new creation. It comes down from heaven (verse 2) from God. The picture is not of people going up to heaven but rather God’s new creation coming down to earth. The New Jerusalem is made by God, just as the Garden of Eden was. It will be a physical place, an earth restored to the perfection God first created.

At the beginning there was a garden and two people, at the end there will be a city – much more space so many more people! There will be no sea. Sea separates people, here all will be together, people from all races and countries. God’s people will be there in God’s place under his rule and blessing. There will be no separation caused by the sea, different languages or different cultures.

A city is hard to think of as a perfect, idyllic place when we think of the rush, bustle, dirt and crime associated with so many cities today. We often think of quiet, isolated, beautiful countryside, gardens, beaches or mountains as our perfect place. God wants us to live in a perfect community, though, with perfect relationships between people restored. No separation, no isolation, no loneliness or anger. Everyone will be united in Christ. So a city is a better image but not a city as we know it. This one will be beautiful, perfect and a happy place.

Verse 3 tells us that God will live with His people again in this New Jerusalem. Just as He walked in the cool of the evening with Adam and Eve in Eden, he will be there amongst His people. In the Old Testament God lived with His people in the Temple but he was inaccessible, only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies and then only once a year. Christian believers know God’s presence through His Holy Spirit dwelling in them. Our knowledge is still only partial though but in the city described here we will be able to know



Him more. God will be living with His people. This is an exciting point to get across to the children.

This will be a new place, verse 5, where there are no tears, suffering, pain or death (verse 4). Is this the kind of place the children wanted the world to be?

There is a river the 'spring of the water of life' (verse 6) as there was a river in Eden and, further on in chapter 22, the tree of life is on each side of the river, producing fruit all year long. The throne of God and of the Lamb is right at the centre and the river flows from it bringing life to everyone (Revelation 22:1-2).

God's people will be living in God's place under His rule and blessing.

Background Detail:

- ✦ Revelation is written in a style known as apocalyptic. This style uses symbolism to explain its message. Apocalypse means revelation or unveiling.
- ✦ The sea was a place of chaos to the Jewish people, a place where the forces of evil dwelt.
- ✦ 'Heaven' in the bible can refer to either the sky, 'heavens' sometimes, or the whole universe.
- ✦ Later in chapter 21 the city is described in detail. The city is described as a perfect cube, just as the Holy of Holies in the temple where God's presence was. The Holy of Holies was small though, for just one man. The city is a cube of 12,000 stadia, 1,500 miles, the same size as the known world in John's day. So there will be no special place to go and meet with God in this new city, the whole place is a temple which is why Revelation 21:22 says '*I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.*' (NIV)

Tangents:

- ✦ There could be questions about who will go to heaven. Whether Grandma is there. Do animals go to heaven? etc. Be honest with the children. Explain that it is those who follow Jesus who are promised a place there but that it is all God's decision and we just don't know many of the answers.
- ✦ Revelation 7 and 14 mention the believers who will be saved as 144,000 in number. Numbers used in the Bible are often symbolic, e.g. 7 is the number for perfection, completion, fulfilment. This number, 144,000, is symbolic, it stands for the total number of God's people, none will be missing. It is 12, the number of election (12 tribes of Israel) squared multiplied by 1,000, a large amount. It is not to be taken as a literal head count.
- ✦ 'him', 'he' 'son' of course does not exclude the women! The passage makes it very clear that all God's people will be in the New Jerusalem – and of course the son was always the heir at the time this was written, so it is a great privilege to be called God's son whether we are male or female.

How to go about it:

Morning Session

This is a short enough passage to read all of it from the Bible, although the content may be quite difficult for them to understand. Help the children talk again about what is wrong with our world and remind them of what it was like in Eden. Let them think and talk about what they would like our world to be like. Adam and Eve lived in the garden and were happy and close to God. This passage tells of when God's home will be with His people again and how there'll be no sadness.

Older children could look at the start of Revelation 22 and spot how the garden and the city are the same but different.



Help the children to understand that heaven will be a fantastic place of great happiness and feasting because God will be living there and all His people will obey His rule and not rebel.

Afternoon Session

Remind the children that it will be those who follow Jesus that will live in this beautiful city. Try to find out which of them really believe. Think about whether any should talk to an Encourager. Resource Sheet P3 has a prayer of commitment, have several copies ready for children who accept the Good News. Having a printed prayer means they can take it away with them.

This passage is a good opportunity to talk about how we need other people to help us if we want to follow Jesus. The church should be trying to reflect that multi-national, happy community we have thought about through today's passage. Make sure they are aware of the groups in churches on Sundays and the mid-week ones that are open to all children of any church or none. They will be given details to take home.

Resources for Day 4:

Way in:

| | Sheet: | Groups: |
|---|--------|---------|
| Colouring Sheet. Party in Heaven | 4A | Y,R,G |
| Make invitations for God's Banquet | 4B | Y,R |
| Comparison tray. Old and new. | | |
| Spot the Difference. The Throne (2 per A4 sheet) | 4C | All |
| The rough sea. You will need a long skipping rope. The leaders kneel down, holding the ends of the rope. Instead of turning it, they wiggle it up and down like big waves. The group tries to jump across the rope, but the leaders flick it higher as they jump and try to stop them from getting over. (Links to the sea being a place of chaos to Jewish people). | | G,B |
| Lay Table Beetle. If you are going with the party theme, this is a good team game. You will need two of everything. A piece of A4 paper, decorated or not, would do for the placemat, use plastic cutlery and tumbler. Divide your group into 2 teams. Have a designated running area; children at one end, equipment in the middle, chair (to represent the table) at the other end. Children take it in turns to roll dice. They can't start until a 6 is rolled. The child runs to the middle, picks up the corresponding item, takes it to the "table" and lays it in the correct place. If they roll a number for which the item has already been placed, they can check the table and move any piece they think is in the wrong place. First team to have a complete place laid is the winner. 6 = placemat 5 = plate 4 = knife 3 = fork 2 = spoon 1 = tumbler | | R,G,B |

Bible:

| | Sheet: | Groups: |
|--|--------|---------|
| Read the story from the Bible (International Children's Bible but for yellow groups you could use the Lion First Bible, 'A New World') | | All |
| Children read the story. Cut up the story sheet so that each child has a few lines. Give these randomly (unless you know you have reluctant readers) to the children and allow them a few minutes to practice their lines. Then ask the children to get themselves in the right order to read the story - for the younger children this will mean sorting themselves alphabetically. For older children the alphabetical markers can be cut off - they will then need to use their Bibles to find the correct order. Once the order is correct the children can read the story. | 4D | R,G,B |



| | Sheet: | Groups: |
|--|--------|---------|
| Make a city. This could be done with card board boxes or Duplo/Lego. Add a river, trees, throne etc. Talk about what the Bible says the New Creation will be like. | | All |
| Golden city place mat. Onto yellow card glue gold and silver squares and rectangles and build up a city. Decorate with glitter and sparkles and place into plastic document wallet ready for party later! | | All |
| Decorate biscuits or small cakes and have a party! (Remember allergies!) | | All |
| Contrasts. Divide your group into 2 teams. Get one group to act out a scenario which shows life in a modern city (give suggestions e.g. crime, homelessness, materialism, stress) and the other group to show what life will be like in the New Jerusalem (God living among the people, no death, no crying). Blue Groups can go further if they have read on to Chapter 22 (people come to have hurts healed, people of all nations living together in harmony). | | G,B |
| Bible Study Leaflet | B54 | G, B |

Response:

| | Sheet: | Groups: |
|--|------------------|---------|
| Make a crown. The resource sheet gives a template. Cut in half using the zigzag lines and join together. If possible use card (gold?) to create crown. The children can decorate using the 'I love Jesus' words if wished. | 4E(i), 4E(ii) | Y,R,G |
| Room 101. (A TV programme in which celebrities try to persuade show host to consign things they hate (broccoli, accountants etc) to Room 101). Discuss what you would not have in your new city. Each person chooses one thing and tries to persuade group to relegate it to Room 101. Discourage group from naming people. Instead focus on things which would not please God. Group votes on which will be discarded. | | B |
| City Planning. Ask the group to imagine they are going on a weekend trip to a major city. What things can a city offer for fun and recreation that a small town like Chesham can't? Make a list of ideas on large sheets of paper. Then invite them to design a poster to advertise the weekend to their friends. Afterwards decide which is the most effective and why. Explain that at one time cities just grew as the population increased but modern cities are planned and designed with features for people to come together and enjoy themselves. In the same way, God has planned his city for us all to live together and enjoy life. What will we do to advertise this to our friends? | | G,B |
| Board game. Whistle-stop journey through the week's teaching. Photocopy onto A3 paper. You will need a dice and counters (pennies will do). Alternatively (if it's not windy!) you can number A4 sheets of paper and set them out on the ground to form a winding road. Children are counters. They roll the dice and move themselves accordingly. Leader reads out corresponding instruction from resource sheet. | 4F | G,B |
| Cross Box. See instructions on Resources Sheet | 4G | All |
| Have a party to anticipate! The New Jerusalem will be a happy place. | | All |

Memory Verse:

| | Sheet: | Groups: |
|--|--------|---------|
| Memory Verse Code Breaker. Daniel 9:9 | M6 | R,G,B |
| Quiz. (with questions on all the stories we have looked at this week) Divide the children into 2 or 3 groups (for each group you will need the memory verse cut into pieces). Ask the groups in turn to answer a question. If they get the answer right they get a piece of their memory verse. The winners are the first group to complete their memory verse. | M7 | R,G,B |
| Any of previous sheets or ideas at back of teaching material | | |



Prayer:

| | Sheet: | Groups: |
|---|-----------------|---------|
| STOP Prayer Sheet. Day 4: Please Prayers | P1 | All |
| Prayer Banner. Please Prayers written on a cup-cake shaped piece of paper. | P2(i) P2(ii) | All |
| Prayer of Commitment. For children who decide they want to start following Jesus as their King. | P3 | All |
| <p>Pray for people who are building God's communities on earth (Backpackers, church groups, ministers). Remind the children that there will be details of churches and young people's groups on today's take home sheet. You could also mention to the Year 6s that their new schools will have Christian Union groups.</p> <p>To make this prayer physical, you could use Lego so that each time someone prays a piece is added to build a wall. Or draw a building on an A4 sheet of paper with bricks showing and children colour in a brick each time they pray.</p> | | G,B |



Some suggestions:

Getting to know you:

1. To fit the theme of investigation use a plan to enable a site tour to take place.
2. Animal Game – children each choose an animal and then follow their leader around the site pretending to be that animal. (i.e. moving as that animal would and maybe making that animal's noise.)
3. Lay a trail of breadcrumbs for the children to follow to key points on the site.
4. Stand in circle. Leader in middle. Throw ball round circle. As person catches ball they say own name. After a few times, change so that leader calls name as she throws ball and that person has to catch it.
5. One step forward. All stand in a line. Leader calls out stuff like: Who had cornflakes for breakfast? Those who did, take a step forward. Include questions about being at Backpackers before/belonging to a church
6. Get into a line without talking:
 - o in alphabetical order of names
 - o in birthday order
7. In pairs with someone you don't already know. In 2 minutes, find out as much as you can about them. Later introduce them to everyone else.
8. Body dice - (variation on Twister) 2 teams. 2 large dice - one regular, one with body parts on. Both dice rolled and number and body part called out (e.g. 1 - elbow). Then roll again (e.g. 4 - foot). Number 1 has to connect elbow with number 4's foot.
9. Spider's web - In circle, everyone crosses arms and grabs someone's hand across circle. Aim is to untangle into complete circle with joined hands without letting go.
10. Sharks - like musical chairs only with sheets of newspaper. Ends up with everyone on a small piece of paper.

Energetic Games

1. Grab

In 2 teams. Number 1-5 from opposite ends . Place ball at x

1 2 3 4 5

x

5 4 3 2 1

Call out numbers. Both players try to grab the ball and get back to seat without being tagged by the other one

2. **Disciples** (aka fishes) - name children round circle (Simon, Andrew, James, John) Call Simon, all Simons have to stand up, run round circle and back to own place.

Quiet Games

1. **Backpackers ABC** - think of words about Backpackers beginning with each letter of the alphabet
2. **Storyboards** - can be used as fillers any time



Memory Verse Activities

1. **Pairs game.** For this you will need some small (business card size) pieces of paper or card. Write each word of the memory verse on a separate card (use lower case letters). Make two sets. Place the cards face down on the table or blanket. Each child takes it in turn to turn over 2 cards. If the cards match, they keep the pair. At the end put one set into the correct order to reinforce the memory verse.
2. **Bookmark.** Make a bookmark with the words of memory verse on. Try to use a shape which is relevant to the bible story.
3. **Spinners.** Cut a circle each about 10cm in diameter out of thick card. Decorate the circle on both sides with a bright and colourful design and write the words of the memory verse on one side. Make 2 small holes in the centre of the circle, approx 2 cm apart. Thread about 60cm of thin string or embroidery thread through the holes and tie the ends together to make a loop. Hold the end loops of the thread around your index fingers and twirl the spinner so that the thread becomes twisted. Then pull the thread taut and watch the spinner unwind at speed.
4. **Balloons.** For older groups. Write each word of the memory verse on a slip of paper, roll each one up and put each in a balloon before blowing up the balloon. Children have to burst the balloons, retrieve the bits of paper and lay out the words in order.
5. **Washing line.** Write each word on an A5 piece of paper. Tie a length of string between 2 chairs and have enough clothes pegs ready to attach words to the line. You now have 3 choices of activity:
 - a. Give each child a couple of words and ask them to peg them up in the right place.
 - b. You peg all the words in the wrong order and they have to rearrange.
 - c. You peg every other word and ask the children to fill in the gaps.
 - i. Once the verse has been pegged out correctly, get them to repeat several times, taking away some of the words each time so that they end up reciting from memory.
6. **Quiz.** Divide into 2 teams. Ask questions about the day's bible story. The prize for a correct answer is a word (or sequence of words) from the memory verse. The ultimate winner is the team with the whole memory verse.
7. **Relay.** Divide into 2 teams. Put the words at one end of your area and the children at the other. They take it in turns to run up and collect the words, one at a time. The rest of the group puts the words in order. First team to finish with words in correct order wins.

Prayer:

1. **Star Prayer.** Everyone lies down on their stomachs with their bodies forming a star shape – heads into the middle. This way you can pray quietly and everyone can hear.
2. Use an acrostic for the sequence of prayer. e.g. **STOP** Sorry, Thanks, **O**thers, **P**lease or **ACTS** Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication or **PRAY** Praise, **R**epent, **A**sk for someone else, Your own needs. This year the ACTS method would fit the theme well if translated into 'child speak' as Wow, Sorry, Thank-you, Please.