

Just Children

Extra 1: Ideas for children's activities



Notes for group leaders

In planning activities for children to learn, it is important to take into account their learning styles, concentration span and stage of development (including language level). In a group of two or three, choose one, two or three activities from the list below and think about what the learning style might be (active learning, aural learning, visual learning, kinaesthetic learning, etc.) Would the activity need adapting to suit your children's concentration span or to match more easily with their stage of development?

Now work together to plan and adapt activities to suit your group, selecting from the list below. As you plan the activity, try to ensure that it is not dependent on being able to read. Are there any Bible stories you would use with the activity you've planned, if one is not already being used?



Resources required

- Sand tray, sand, twigs, stones, dolly-type clothes pegs.
- A computer with internet connection, if you want to use *The Wrong Trainers* video.
- "Rap, rapping it" handout.



Activity 1: Letting them talk!

Try to think of four simple questions to get children talking about issues to do with being fair and fighting against poverty. You might start off with:

"Do you think it's fair that some children go on more than one holiday a year and other children have never been on holiday? Why do you think this happens?"

In pairs, or in small groups for very young children, ask the children to think about the questions then share some of their answers with the rest of the group.

- Which questions did they think were good questions?
- Which were not so helpful?
- Which other questions could be asked?

Go into the local area and ask other people to answer the questions. This could possibly be recorded on tape or video/DVD.



Activity 2: Role-play and story props

Read the story of Zacchaeus found in Luke 19:1–10. Think: how is this little story like a journey for Zacchaeus, both physically and spiritually?

Prepare a deep tray, such as a family roasting tray or a washing up bowl, by filling it with sand. Place some stones on the sand at random intervals and push some small twigs in one corner of the sand to represent trees. In the opposite corner arrange some smooth stones in a square to represent a house. Use a wooden "dolly" type clothes peg to



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represent Jesus and another “dolly” type clothes peg, that has had about 4cm sawn from the end so that it is shorter, to represent Zacchaeus.

Practice retelling the story using the props as visual aids, involving your audience in the retelling by asking questions as you go such as:

- How might Zacchaeus have felt when Jesus spoke to him in the tree?
- What might he have said to Jesus?

Work together to think of suitable questions, but remember to keep the pace of the story going. Allow children to take on the characters in the story and to manipulate them in the sand tray as they respond to the questions you ask.

You could finish the story by inviting the children to role-play the whole thing using their own ideas that were developed through the earlier telling of the story using the sand tray:

- What might we be able to learn from this story about injustice in our world today? How does Jesus show us we should act? How can we do that?



Activity 3: It’s my life, in my shoes

Look together at *The Wrong Trainers* video clips from the CBBC *Newsround* website (linked from the Multimedia section at www.justchurch.info) and also consider local situations and issues that might produce a similar story for a child. Use both of these sources to write a vignette for a boy and one for a girl, of a similar age to the children in your group.

Try out the activity detailed below. What advantages were there in asking someone to answer questions as if they were that person? How might this exercise help the children’s understanding?

Give small groups of children a vignette of the life of an imaginary child, based on the vignettes from the *Newsround* website or other appropriate material. Read through the descriptions with the group and answer any questions they may have. Ask for a volunteer to answer questions as if they were that person.

The rest of the group think of questions to ask the volunteer about their life and the volunteer needs to think what life might be like for that person and then answer the questions.

For younger children a picture may be more helpful than a written vignette.

- What might Jesus say to that person?
- How might he help?
- What can we do to be like Jesus for them?



Activity 4: Rapping It!

Listen together to the rap “Where is the love?” by Black Eyed Peas, or another rap with a relevant theme.

Ask: What are the issues that are raised by the rapper? Do any of these issues relate to the issues of poverty and injustice that you see in your local community? (Remember that for children this is likely to include individual children from their schools who they recognise as not fitting in through issues that we recognise might relate to poverty, such as children who don’t wear the “right” brand of trainers etc.)

Now read together Jesus’ mandate for social action in Luke 4:16–21. Then work together to write and perform a rap based on Jesus’ mandate and the needs in the local area.



A rap is a relatively easy music format to produce even without a strong musical bias in the group. Younger children may well enjoy creating their own instruments out of recyclable materials to accompany their rapping.

Producing a rap!

Writing and performing a rap is a great way of inspiring and supporting the creativity of children and adults. Words are powerful, and words of truth, learnt when young, stay with the learner for the rest of their life.

Setting words to a rhythm promotes the learning of those words.

The words that will be used are a paraphrase of Luke 4:18–19:

God's Spirit is on me,
Yes, he's chosen me
To tell good news to the poor.
To forgive wicked deeds
To heal all the sick,
To set strugglers free,
To say, "Now see God act."

There are several ways that a rap based on these words could be used in all-age worship. It is always important that the words are understood by the people who will be saying them. Here are some suggestions of ways that a justice rap might be developed:

Option 1: Children leading!

This works best if the children leave the worship activity for a time to work on the rap and then come back to share their ideas with the whole group, leading them also to participate in the rap!

If the children have time they could start by making instruments to accompany the rhythm pattern of the rap. This could include shakers made from decorated plastic bottles and claves made from pairs of decorated wooden spoons. Children love making instruments! (Wooden spoons can be decorated using felt-tip pens, and plastic drinking bottles using either permanent OHP markers or pens for drawing on glass.)

Read the verse to the children and talk together about what it means. Remember to explain who the verse is about and also how as the body of Christ we must be involved in this mandate if the world is to be able to see God act.

Now practise walking around the room to steady rhythmic beat or clapping the beat as you say the words:

God's Spirit is on me Yeah, he's chosen me
• . . . • . . . •

The emphasis should be on the heavier spot each time.

Now work with the children in small groups with their instruments. Each group will say the phrase twice, using the steady beat they have practised. Encourage them to keep time using the instruments. Add other phrases from the paraphrase and encourage the children to make up their own lines in the spirit of the verses.

Have a line from one group, then a line from another group. Play around with it and see how the children's creative ideas fit together best. Take it back to the larger group so that the adults have a chance to learn from the children.



Option 2: Everyone working together!

Introduce both verses to the group and talk about their meaning. Ask the group to talk to the person next to them about one local issue of poverty and injustice that they think Jesus would want to be involved with. Teach the congregation to say the paraphrased verse to a steady rhythmic beat as detailed above. Split the group into sections and ask each section of the congregation to keep time with a different sound or action, e.g. clapping, stamping, finger snapping, waving two hands from side to side. Ask the clappers to say the verse, then the wavers respond, etc.

Now add to the verse from the ideas the group fed back of things Jesus would want to be involved with. For example:

**God's Spirit is on me,
Yeah, he's chosen me
To tell good news to the poor
To the poor and the weak**

To those with no homes,
To people in debt,
To those with no heat,
To those living alone,

**God's Spirit is on me,
Yeah, he's chosen me
To tell good news to the poor
To the poor and the weak**

Everyone raps the parts in bold print and each group does one of the lines that tells of areas where Jesus wants to act, e.g. stampers – To those with no homes.

Option 3: As a call and response

This is the quickest and easiest way of including a rap as part of worship, and groups that are not so used to being asked to work creatively may be more comfortable with this approach.

For this the group will need to be divided into two parts. The verse should still be explained, but the rap is pre-written and the group uses it in much the same way as they might use a responsive reading. Actions, instruments and sounds can of course still be included and the rhythm pattern still needs to be followed!

Here is a suggested rap based on the verse. It has been divided into two parts by the use of bold and light print;

**God's Spirit is on me,
Yeah, he's chosen me
To tell good news to the poor
To the poor and the weak**

To forgive wicked deeds
To give freedom from sin

To heal all the sick
Yeah, the sick and the blind

To set free those in chains
Chains of debt, chains of fear

To bring freedom to choose
To bring freedom to live



Then Jesus, yeah, can show he's the boss

Then Jesus, right, can show how God acts!

As adults you might want to undertake this task, it's fun! You might choose to use the time to prepare examples of the resources needed, such as your own instrument as a model for the children or preparing a structure for the rap. You may find it helpful to think about people and issues that the children might suggest to go in their rap.



Activity 5: Special guests!

Read together the story of "The Great Banquet" found in Luke 14:15–24. If that story were happening today, where you live, who might be the extra guests who were invited to the Banquet? Look in local newspapers for inspiration. Try to think about who the children would suggest as well as other situations you might want to introduce to them. Make a list of likely guests. (Children's suggestions are likely to include individual children from their schools who they recognise as not fitting in through issues that we recognise might relate to poverty, such as children who don't wear the "right" brand of trainers etc.)

When you do this with the children you will need to share the story of "The Great Banquet" with them before asking them for their suggestions for the guest list.

Then join together lengths of plain wallpaper to create a huge canvas. Work together with the children to paint a mural of the Banquet today with all the people Jesus would invite today from your local area.



Activity 6: How poor is poor?

Work together to produce a list of 10–12 statements for the children to consider which situations would mean someone was being treated unfairly. For example:

- Was made to do his homework, even though his friends had gone to play in the park.
- When the biscuits were shared out she had four and everyone else was given two.

Signs should be put up on opposite walls of the meeting area saying FAIR and UNFAIR. A statement is read and then the children have to decide which sign to run to. They need to be able to justify their decision. Invite the children to add their own ideas to the list as they play the game.



Activity 7: Dress me!

Split the group of children into two smaller groups. The children in one group have a budget of £50 each and the other group has a budget of £150 each.

Gather together catalogues and pictures of children's clothing for children of a similar age to those you are working with. Let the children "choose a wardrobe" from the catalogues for three different occasions, e.g. going to a party. What questions might you ask the children about the experience to draw out issues of poverty and injustice?

Give each child six sheets of a broadsheet newspaper. The children who had a budget of £150 can also have access to sticky tape and scissors; the children who had the lower budget can only use their newspaper. Each child has to design and make a costume for themselves for a fashion show to be held at the end of the session.

- What questions might you ask each group of children?
- How will you help children to apply this activity to issues of poverty and injustice in the UK?



Activity 8: A suggestions box

Give the children a voice by working with them to make a suggestions box. The children and adults can post ideas in the box for raising awareness of:

- local issues of injustice and poverty;
- national issues of injustice and poverty;
- suggestions for action;
- prayer requests and suggestions.

Ask the children how the box will be used and how the items inside will be brought to the attention of the church.



Activity 9: Where shall I sleep?

Plan a “sleepover” with a difference! Why not raise awareness of children who sleep on the streets by having a sleepover in your church hall or a similar venue? Think about the sort of things that street sleepers might have to make themselves comfortable, e.g. cardboard boxes, newspaper, possibly a blanket or maybe a sleeping bag.

In the morning think about:

- What were the difficulties or challenges?
- What did you have that real street sleepers don't have easy access to? (Toilet, fresh water, company, etc.)
- Could you be sponsored to raise money for a homelessness charity such as Shelter?



Activity 10: Creative prayer

Encourage children to pray creatively for a just world, using some or all of the following ideas:

Option 1: Paper planes

Children make paper aeroplanes and inside draw pictures or write ideas of people and situations where they could act on behalf of Jesus. Everyone throws their aeroplane together, whilst saying what is represented inside and everyone shouts AaaaaaaMEN!

Option 2: Paper chains

On paper chains children draw pictures or write the names of people or situations where people are tied down, e.g. by illness, poverty, loneliness. The children join the chains together. An adult uses the children's ideas to create a responsive prayer, e.g. For people who have nowhere to live after each phrase the children respond with “Jesus, you give freedom,” after the last idea everyone pulls on the chains to break them, saying, “Jesus, you give freedom”

Option 3: Get well soon

The children make a get well card for a particular local situation. The card is written as a prayer to God.

Option 4: Graffiti wall

Put some wallpaper on the wall so that the children can use it as a graffiti wall for their prayers about justice.



Option 5: Bursting balloons

Give each child an inflated balloon and a permanent marker pen. On the balloon ask them to draw or write something that is unfair or not shared fairly. Say together, "Jesus help us to look for injustice and where we find it to stamp it out!" Everyone then stamps on their balloon until it bursts.