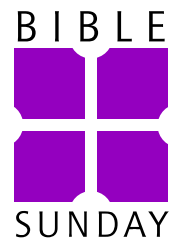


WELCOME THE WORD: SESSIONS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE



The Journey

Four 1-hour sessions for young people (11-14) to open up the readings from Advent Year B.

Overview

'The Journey' is a resource designed to be used with young people aged 11-14, to help them explore the Gospel readings for Advent Year B.

The four sessions are:

- Session 1: Ready (Mark 13.33-37)
- Session 2: Prepare (Mark 1.1-8)
- Session 3: Witness (John 1.6-8, 19-28)
- Session 4: Promise (Luke 1:26-38)

You may choose to run these four sessions in the week preceding each of the four Sundays of Advent, which will enable your group to prepare to hear the proclamation of the Gospel on the following Sunday.

Each session has a similar structure, and is designed to last for an hour. You can either run these as whole sessions, or adapt the elements to suit your own preferences and timings.

For every session, there is an equipment list to help you prepare.

Using the Bible

The focal point for each session is an exploration of the Bible passage. Before you begin the series, you should decide how you will organise this time, so that it is appropriate for your group. You should consider:-

- Who should read the text (a leader or a participant)
- What they need to prepare (don't assume that everybody can read text confidently or well)
- What text you will use (a Missal or a Bible)
- If using a Bible, which translation you will use (Good News has easier language, Jerusalem is used in the liturgy)

To help the group engage with the text, you may wish to print out copies for them to read alongside, but it helps to keep the occasion special if you use a Missal or Bible for the reader themselves.

To mark the time as sacred, you may wish to light the appropriate numbers of candles on an Advent Wreath.

Session 1: Ready

You will need:

'Getting Ready' sheets: 10 A4 sheets with big titles, describing things that you might get read for (bed, holiday, school, a party, church, exams, sports game, board game, Christmas, car journey)

Blu tack

A small prize (e.g. a mini chocolate bar) for each group member

Enough packs of equipment for groups of 3-4 in the building challenge. Each group should get 3 x sheets of newspaper, 30cm of masking tape, 6 x straws, 1 x paper cup or plate

An Advent Wreath or set of 4 candles

Matches or a lighter (to be used only under adult supervision, and kept away from the group)

A Bible or Missal (Mark 13:33-37, First Sunday of Advent Year B)

Copies of the same text (Mark 13:33-37)

Enough tea-lights or small candles for the whole group

Reflective music and music player for the prayer time

To prepare:

Stick the 'Getting Ready' sheets on the wall, in a horizontal line, in a random order, with blu tack.

Divide the 'Building Challenge' equipment into sets for the different groups

ICEBREAKER GAMES (10 minutes)

Tangle

- Invite your group to split into two teams (keep them as one if you have less than 10 participants).
- Ask them to make a circle and each extend their hands into the middle of the circle.
- They should reach out and join hands with two others (with two different people)
- They now have to untangle themselves so that they form a circle again, without breaking hands
- If you have two groups, have a competition to see who can untangle themselves quickest.

What's the Time, Mr Wolf?

- Explain that you're going to play a game that they probably played as children
- Ask for a volunteer. This person should be Mr Wolf
- Mr Wolf stands at one end of the room facing away from the rest of the group at the opposite end
- The rest of the group ask together 'What's the time, Mr Wolf?'
- Mr Wolf says a time (1-12 o'clock), and the group have to creep towards Mr Wolf the corresponding number of steps
- They repeat this as they get closer and closer
- When they feel close enough, Mr Wolf says 'Dinner Time' in response to the question, turns and chases the group back. If Mr Wolf catches anybody, they become Mr Wolf instead.

As the game finishes, explain that you will be looking later in the session at a story when people don't know the time.

ACTIVITY: GETTING READY (5 minutes)

Ask your group to look at the wall where the 'Getting Ready' sheets are stuck with blu tack.

Explain that these are all things that you can 'get ready' for.

Invite them to come forward one at a time to move one sheet from somewhere on the line to somewhere else on the line, on the basis that things at the far left hand side are those things which take longest to get ready for, and those on the far right require the least amount of time to get ready for.

As they move a sheet they should explain why they are moving it either up the scale (shorter time) or down the scale (longer time)

Ensure that everybody who wants to has had a go before agreeing that you have reached a consensus together.

DISCUSSION: GETTING READY (5 minutes)

Thank the group for their participation, and ask them for some feedback on 'getting ready':

- Why do some things take longer than others?
- What happens if you take something from the 'shorter time' end of the scale and spend a long, long time getting ready for it?
- What happens if you take something from the 'longer time' end of the scale and spend very little time getting ready for it?

Explain that the theme of today's session is about being ready, and that you'll be exploring how this connects with Advent and Christmas.

ACTIVITY: BUILDING CHALLENGE (10 minutes)

Ask the group to split into 3's or 4's.

Explain that their challenge is to work together using the equipment you provide to build the tallest freestanding structure, and that they have 15 minutes to work on this together. The winning team will get a prize.

Give each group a set of building equipment and start the timer.

Hint: It is particularly helpful if you can reference a clock on the wall or a visible timer (e.g. on a screen) so that they're conscious of the 15 minute deadline

Wait for each group to start going, and after 5 minutes, say that they've got 10 minutes remaining.

About 2 minutes later, announce that time is actually running out, and they've got 30 seconds to finish their structure (prepare for the cries of anguish!)

At 7:30 call them to stop what they're doing and to leave their structures. Now judge them to see which is the tallest freestanding one.

To avoid bitter discontent, offer everybody a small prize for their participation!

DISCUSSION: BUILDING CHALLENGE (5 minutes)

Thank the group for their participation, and ask them for some feedback on the building challenge:-

- How did the exercise feel for them?
- What did they feel when suddenly the time limit changed? How did they respond to one another?
- Would it have made a difference if they would have known that the time might change when they should be ready?

Explain that the theme of today's session links with a passage from the Bible which describes a story Jesus told his disciples about getting ready. Invite them to clear up the mess together and then come back together where you'll be exploring the story together.

GOSPEL READING: READY (5 minutes)

Light your Advent candle or provide some other focus for the group to calm down before listening to the story.

Read the story aloud for the group once, with them listening

Now give everybody a printed copy and ask them to follow again as it is read a second time.

DISCUSSION: GOSPEL READING (10 minutes)

Thank the group for listening to the Gospel together, and ask them some questions about the passage:-

Hint: you might like to invite the group to talk in pairs and 3s on these different questions – it might be easier for them to share their answers with one another than a whole group

- What do they think the servants and the doorkeeper might have felt if the homeowner came back unexpectedly?
- What does the passage say about them being ready?
- Who might Jesus be referring to as the servants and the homeowner?
- How can we be ready?
- What practical things can we do to be 'ready' for Christ during this Advent? What might help us stay alert?

PRAYER: BE READY (5 minutes)

Invite the group to put down their sheets of paper. Put some quiet, reflective music on and dim the lights if possible.

Remind the group of your session so far:

- Exploring how we get ready for things
- Exploring what it's like if we're not ready
- Hearing from Jesus the challenge to be ready always

Say to them that you will read an opening prayer, and then invite them, as a symbol of being ready and awake in their faith this Advent, that one at a time, they can come and light a candle from the Advent candle.

Pass around the tea-lights, and then settle the group.

When they are ready, say:-

Let us pray

Dear Jesus,

Thank you that you invite each one of us to be ready to meet you in a new way this Advent. We pray that as we light these candles together you would help us to be alert and awake to you, so that we will truly be ready for Christmas.

Amen.

Once you have prayed the prayer, ensure that you or another adult leader lights your tealight first from the Advent candle, so that you can then pass the flame to the others who come forward.

After everybody who wants to has come forward, allow a pause for everybody to spend a time in quiet prayer if appropriate.

FINAL ACTIVITY: BALL THROW (5 minutes)

Thank the group for their participation in the prayer time.

Encourage the whole group to make a circle. Bring a small ball or beanbag into the circle with you.

As a closing activity, say that you'll throw the ball (gently!) from person to person. As you do so, you can say one thing that you have enjoyed or learned from today's session. Keep going until everybody has had a go.

If you have time, you can do the same exercise again, with each person saying one thing that they are hoping they might receive for Christmas!

Session 2: Prepare

You will need:

An Advent Wreath or set of 4 candles

Matches or a lighter (only use under adult supervision, and kept away from the group)

A Bible or Missal (Mark 1.1-8, Second Sunday of Advent Year B)

Copies of the same text (Mark 1.1-8)

Reflective music and music player for the prayer time

Duck, frog or masking tape

Two small tables

'Two Tables' equipment: Two sets of tableware for dinner (tablecloth, crockery, cutlery, glasses, candle, flowers etc) – one set should be clean and tidy, the other set dirty and used. You should put these in boxes or crates.

One washing up bowl with soapy water, a dishcloth and tea towel

To prepare:

Make a line on the floor of the room using the tape, long enough to accommodate your whole group standing on it.

At opposite ends of the room, prepare two tables and boxes of 'Two Tables' equipment. Cover these with a sheet, so that the group can't see underneath. One table should be completely clear, with a set of all the equipment nicely ready in the box, and simply be a question of laying the table. The other table should be covered in debris already, have a dirty tablecloth scrunched up, dirty cutlery and crockery, mismatched cups etc. You can also provide this group with a bowl of warm soapy water and a tea towel to clean the dirty cutlery and crockery.

ICEBREAKER GAMES (10 minutes)

Line up

Ask the group to stand on the line you have marked on the floor.

Now ask them to rearrange themselves in height order (tallest to shortest), without stepping off the line.

Once they have done this, ask them to rearrange themselves in order of the date of their birthday throughout the year, but in silence (and not stepping off the line)

If you have time, you can ask them to complete further variations (e.g. nearest and furthest to church, oldest to youngest etc)

Whispers

With whatever configuration you end up, explain that you will whisper a word or phrase to one person at one end of the line. They should whisper it to the next person and so on until they reach the end of the line.

Can the group keep the phrase correct?!

Try this with a few phrases and a few people initiating the whisper before finishing.

ACTIVITY: TWO TABLES (10 minutes)

Split your group into two teams. Say that you have got some special guests arriving in 5 minutes, and we need to give them a meal. Each team should compete to get a table looking ready for a lovely meal for these guests using the equipment which is provided.

When the teams are ready, remove the cloths covering the two tables, and give them 4-5 minutes to get the table ready.

When the time is up, ask them to step away from their tables, and agree amongst themselves which would be the nicest for the special guests (except, sadly, the guests have now cancelled!)

DISCUSSION: TWO TABLES (5 minutes)

Bring the group together again, and thank them for the energy they put in to preparing the two tables. Ask them to reflect on their experience:-

- What made it easier / harder for each group to prepare?
- If the same food had been served at both tables, which do they think would have been a better experience? Why?
- How do we get prepared for things in life? How do we prepare for:-
 - o A trip
 - o A meal
 - o A conversation
 - o Mass

ACTIVITY: THE INTERVIEW (5 minutes)

Ask the group to divide into pairs. Ask them to decide who will be person 'A' and who will be person 'B'.

Ask them to sit on chairs facing one another. Say first of all that person 'A' will play the role of somebody coming for a job interview; person 'B' will be interviewing them. Person 'A' should play

that they are completely unprepared for any of the questions that person 'B' will ask them. Give the group 2-3 minutes to allow this to unfold.

Now ask them to keep the same parts, but that this time person 'A' will be very prepared for their interview, but person 'B' won't have prepared at all to be interviewing. Give them a further couple of minutes to play act this.

DISCUSSION: THE INTERVIEW (5 minutes)

Bring the group back together, and thank them for their participation. Ask them to reflect on the experience of the interview:-

- How did it feel to be unprepared?
- What kinds of things might the candidates have done to prepare more fully?
- How did it feel to be interviewed by somebody who was unprepared?
- What did it feel like to be prepared?

Explain that you are going to move into a time where you listen to a passage from the Bible about being prepared.

GOSPEL READING: PREPARE (5 minutes)

Light your Advent candle or provide some other focus for the group to calm down before listening to the passage.

Read the passage aloud for the group once, with them listening

Now give everybody a printed copy and ask them to follow again as it is read a second time.

DISCUSSION: GOSPEL READING (10 minutes)

Thank the group for listening to the Gospel together, and ask them some questions about the passage:-

Hint: you might like to invite the group to talk in pairs and 3s on these different questions – it might be easier for them to share their answers with one another than a whole group

- Why do you think the people needed somebody to 'Prepare a way for the Lord'?
- What different kinds of preparation do we see in this passage?
- What kinds of thing might we do to prepare for Jesus?

If appropriate, you might like to invite the group to participate in an Advent Reconciliation Service as one way of preparing for Christmas.

45-50 Prayer exercise: Writing a preparation list (2nd candle lit)

50-60 Charade relay – 10 popular TV shows

Session 3: Witness

- 0-10 Icebreaker Games
Wink murder
Pin the tail on the donkey
- 10-15 Opening activity
What do you see? – Gorillas and Basketball -
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vJG698U2Mvo> – Selective attention tests
Potentially some visual mixups
- 15-20 Discussion
What is the difference between watching and seeing?
Have there been times when you haven't seen something that everybody else has?
Have there been times when you've seen something that other people can't?
How did that make you feel?
- 20-30 Second activity
Character witness – 5 mins to prepare; a minute to defend
- 30-35 Unpack
Were they focused on themselves?
Did they put their energy into it?
What made the task easier or harder?
- 35-40 Gospel reading
- 40-45 Discussion
John as witness
Could everybody see the truth?
How did John help open people's eyes to what was among them?
- 45-50 Prayer exercise: Passing candle – witness to the light (3rd Candle)
- 50-60 Closing activity: Pass the clap

Session 4: Promise

- 0-10 Icebreaker Games
Animal pairs
Object stories
- 10-15 Opening activity
Polarisation: Keep your promises
- 15-20 Discussion
Do we trust others when they make a promise to us?
What kinds of promises do we trust?
What's the difference between a promise and an agreement?
- 20-30 Second activity
Sales pitch for a plant

30-35	Unpack How easy is it to believe the things we can't see (yet?)
35-40	Gospel reading
40-45	Discussion Spot the three promises: Promise to Mary Promise about Elizabeth Promise from OT What characteristics of Mary can we imitate?
45-50	Prayer exercise: Planting promises – with labels – (4 th Candle lit)
50-60	Closing activity Christmas gifts / Carols / Mince pies etc...

For additional resources in support of Catholic Bible Sunday please see www.Catholicbiblesunday.org