

September 2024 – If you love a good story

Please note Bible stories and themes may occasionally differ from this overview.

If you love a good story, then this September is for you. David and Goliath, Jesus teaching in parables, Jesus healing Jairus's daughter and Jesus healing at the Bethesda pool cover our four weeks this month. There is victory for underdogs in all these stories, but we need to think carefully before applying them to our own lives. They raise questions too, especially about when people are not healed, victorious or successful. Get stuck in, ask your questions and experience what Jesus did, if you love a good story.

Session 1 Sept 7/8

Session Aim: To learn the story of David and Goliath

Bible Ref: 1 Samuel 17:4-16,32,38-40,48-51

Today's fruit

Faithfulness. David had faith to trust that God would look after him when he faced Goliath.

David and Goliath

God directed a man called Samuel to travel to Bethlehem and find a shepherd boy called David, whom God wanted to be the next king after Saul.

King Saul often fought against the Philistines because they were constantly invading Israelite territory. One day the Philistines were led by a man twice the size of the others, known as Goliath from a place called Gath.

Saul's army were afraid to fight against him, but David stepped forward. David was brave and trusted in God. As a shepherd, he had killed lions and bears when looking after his flock of sheep, so he had a sense that God would look after him too.

Saul offered his armour to David, but it was too big. Instead, David faced Goliath with his usual simple weapons – a slingshot and five smooth stones. One stone struck Goliath in the head, and he fell to the ground. Using the giant's own sword, David then cut off his head and the Philistines fled away seeing that the Israelites and David had won.

Think about

Today's story has two very different important parts. On one hand, it is about the victory of a brave child who trusted that God would keep him safe; but on the other it is a reminder that people lived in situations of war where people would easily be killed. Many years before Jesus, we see gruesome stories like this in the Bible as people fought over whose god was the most powerful. How might Jesus have responded to Goliath?

Are there 'Goliaths' in your life or people and moments that bring fear? How do you face them? Does knowing that God is with you help at all?

Why did David turn down wearing Saul's armour? Do you notice the 'weapons' you already have or what is already in your hand when you face challenges? Perhaps we are already equipped to take on the 'giants' we meet?

Session 2 Sept 14/15

Session Aim: To know why Jesus told parables
Bible Ref: Matthew 13:1-10,13,18-23

Today's fruit

Patience is needed when working out the meaning behind Jesus' parables.

Jesus speaks in parables

Jesus told a story about a farmer who scattered seed in his field. Some of the seed fell on a footpath (which was then eaten by birds and did not have a chance to grow). Other seeds fell on rocky ground (but the plants could not put down roots so these crops died); and some seed fell within weeds (which choked the crops). However, some seed found good soil, and this grew into tall, plentiful crops.

The seed could be the 'Word of God'. Some people hear it but don't take it in and forget it. Some people only take it in until they are faced with problems, while others get distracted by selfish habits.

But the final type is good soil, those people who take it into their hearts so that God's ways can grow in them, and their lives can bear fruit.

Think about

If you like stories with hidden meanings, then parables are for you. Can you think of any that you know from school?

Working something out (rather than being told the answer) can show our commitment to learning. Jesus said, 'This is why I use stories to teach the people: they see, but they don't really see. They hear, but they don't really understand' (Matthew 13:13 *ICB*). What have you really understood today?

If you described yourself, which type of ground for the seeds are you? Identify the 'weeds', those parts of life that squeeze out God's best for us.

What might a fruit-bearing life look like as a follower of Jesus? What would make your faith grow between now and next week?

Session 3 Sept 21/22

Session Aim: To explore a moment when Jesus raised the dead
Bible Ref: Mark 5:21-24,35-43

Today's fruit

Joy was received by Jairus's parents and all who experienced Jesus' act.

Jesus heals Jairus's daughter

Jairus, a leader at the local synagogue, had a daughter who was very ill. He begged Jesus to save her, but they were too late. As they walked towards his house, one of his servants approached and told Jairus that she had died.

There was a group of people outside weeping. Jesus told them that Jairus's daughter was only in a deep sleep.

Along with Jairus, his wife, Peter, James and John, Jesus entered the daughter's room and took her hand. He told her to stand up. Amazingly, she got up and walked. Jesus told her parents not to mention this event to anyone and to give her some food to eat.

Think about

There are always people we know who are ill or suffering in some way. Today might be a moment to invite Jesus into the situation for the first time.

How do you feel about Jesus knowing this 12-year-old was not dead, but asleep? What does he mean – or does he have special knowledge?

It may surprise you that Jesus told her parents to keep this quiet! An impossible question, when Jesus brought so much joy into their lives perhaps, but why do you think Jesus said this?

Jesus tells her parents to feed her. He always works with people. What practical actions can you take for somebody who is suffering today?.

Session 4 Sept 28/29

Session Aim: To learn how Jesus annoyed the religious leaders

Bible Ref: John 5:1-18

Today's fruit

Once again, Jesus brings joy into someone's life by healing them. This led to them talking about him to others.

The miracle at the pool

Jesus attended a religious festival in Jerusalem and visited a holy pool at a place called Bethesda. The pool was always surrounded by many sick and injured people who hoped that going into the waters would cure them.

Jesus saw a man who had been crippled for 38 years but was unable to get himself towards the edge of the pool and into the water. Realising that he had waited for so long for a miracle, Jesus told him to stand up, pick his mat and walk.

The man stood up and was healed, rushing to the Temple to give thanks to God. The religious leaders asked him what had happened, and he told them that Jesus had cured him. The leaders were furious because Jesus had worked a miracle on the Sabbath, a holy day of rest.

They wanted to get rid of him, but Jesus insisted that God, his Father, never stops working for good, so he would not too!

Think about

What makes a place holy? Do you have a space where you sense God's presence more than any other?

In what way do we marginalise those with disabilities? How can we become more aware of others and enable them to access all that we enjoy?

The healed man went to the Temple to thank God. When good things happen to you, where do you take your gratitude or how do you react? Do you feel 'joy' about anything today?

Reflect upon keeping a Sabbath day. Taking rest is a very good idea, so why were the religious leaders so angry with Jesus?

Jesus referred to God as his Father. This word is not helpful to everyone, but what was he trying to say by using it? When might we call God 'Father'?