

Session 31

Jesus heals a man

In today's session, Jesus continues the thread of shocking truths about himself. A sick man is brought to Jesus for healing, but Jesus does what is more important and forgives his sins. Then in order to back up his scandalous claim to have forgiven the man's sins, he gives the man physical healing too. Again, the full import of the story may be lost on the children, but allow your sense of awe and wonder to shine through to them.

To plan your session... Choose a selection of *Play and learn*, *Bible time* and *God and me* activities to make your session fun and memorable.

Play and learn activity options...

Play and learn activity

Active game

Activity time: 5–10 minutes

Aim: to experience the difference between being still and moving

You will need: live or recorded praise music

- 1 Play a game like 'Sleeping lions'. Ask the children to lie on the ground and tell them to be as still as possible. Imagine being the man who could not walk. You would just have to lie still like that all day and night. Walk around the children, checking that they are not moving. If they are, remind them that the man in the story could not move at all.
- 2 After a few minutes, on a given signal, let the children jump up and move around. The signal could be putting on a CD of praise music. How does it feel to be able to move after lying still for so long? Which do they prefer – lying still or moving about? How do they think the man must have felt when Jesus healed him? What a difference it made!

Play and learn activity

Making a puppet

Activity time: 5–10 minutes

Aim: to demonstrate the difference between being still and being able to move

You will need: the puppet template from page 231 mounted on card, a hole punch, split pins and/or treasury tags

- 1 Give each child a copy of the template from page 231 to colour, to make a jointed puppet. Help them to work out which shape is which and then cut them out. (If you do not have a long session, you could cut out the shapes beforehand.)
- 2 Make holes where shown. Link the puppet together using split pins (tape across the sharp ends) or treasury tags (which give an amusing loose-limbed effect). The puppet can now move its arms and legs.
- 3 Retell the Bible story using the puppet lying flat and then moving round, praising God. Or use the puppet to act out the 'Action rhyme'. What a contrast between lying still and being able to move!

Aim

To see that meeting Jesus can make a difference to our lives

Bible passage

Luke 5:17–26

Play and learn activity

Jesus chat show

Activity time: 5–10 minutes

Aim: to think about the difference Jesus can make to people's lives

You will need: a volunteer to speak to the children

- 1 Ask someone who you know can communicate well with this age group (it could be you!) to talk to the children about a time when God made a difference to them. It could be a physical healing or a time when they especially knew God loved them. It might be about someone's first encounter with Jesus: this was this man's first meeting with Jesus too.
- 2 Encourage your speaker to stress the difference between before the encounter and afterwards, and how God made a difference to them: this may come across clearly if you stage an interview with them.
- 3 Let the children ask questions or talk about people they know. Can Jesus make a difference to our lives too? Has he already done so?

Ready to use options...

Bible time activity

Using Bubbles

Activity time: 5 minutes

Aim: to see that meeting Jesus can make a difference to our lives

You will need: Bubbles Sheet 31 from page 230, *The Big Bible Storybook* (SPCK) or *Bonus Sheet H* from page 225

- 1 Chat together about the homes you live in. Compare these with a house in Jesus' time: there was often just one room, a flat roof and stairs outside! Today's Bible story takes place at a house like this.
- 2 Begin to tell the story 'A man who could not walk' from *The Big Bible Storybook* or *Bonus Sheet H*. When the friends lower the man down, give out the *Bubbles Sheets* and discuss the first picture. Where are the man's friends? How do the children think the man feels? What might happen next? Now look at the second scene. Were the children right? What has happened? Draw the man's arms and legs.
- 3 Read to the end of the story, stressing what Jesus says to the man. Compare the two scenes again. Now the man can walk. Who made the difference?
- 4 Suggest the children pretend to be the man, lying on the floor very still. They cannot move, so can they follow your instructions: 'Move your legs, stand up, walk around'? No – they cannot move! But in the Bible story, something happened so that the man could move. Say, 'Jesus said: "The wrong things you've done are forgiven. Get up, pick up your mat and walk."' Repeat the instructions. This time the children can move! Remind them that Jesus made a good difference to the man who could not walk. He makes a good difference for us too.

God and me activity

Praise dance

Activity time: 5 minutes

Aim: to praise God using our bodies, like the man in the Bible story

- 1 How do the children think the man felt when he realised that Jesus had forgiven him for all the things he had done wrong – and that he could move? Did he want to thank God? Say, 'I expect he wanted to praise God with his whole body! We could try that too!' Make up a dance together, using arms, legs or whole bodies to praise and thank God.
- 2 Dance to the tune of the 'Hokey cokey':
You put one arm in, one arm out,
In, out, in, out, you shake it all about.
For God has made our arms move,
So I sing and shout,
'God is good – there is no doubt!'
Oh, thank you, thank you, Jesus. (x3)
God is good – there is no doubt!
- 3 Repeat with 'other' arm, one leg, other leg, body.
- 4 If you have any breath left, say the last line of the song as a praise shout!

Play and learn activity

Action rhyme

Activity time: 5 minutes

Aim: to learn what a difference meeting Jesus made to the man's life

- 1 Demonstrate the following rhyme and finger actions. Repeat, inviting the children to join in as much as they can.

One poor man was very ill,
Lying on his mat so still. (*One finger flat on palm.*)

Four kind friends took the mat,
(*Four fingers upright by palm.*)
To the house where Jesus sat.
(*Move hands.*)

Four kind friends climbed to the roof, (*Move hands up.*)

'We will see Jesus and that's the truth!'

They made a hole and lowered the mat, (*Pretend to dig, then lower hand with finger on.*)

Down to the place where Jesus sat.

Jesus looked at the man and said, (*One finger upright and one horizontal.*)

'I will heal you – get off your bed!

All your sins are forgiven too,
So get up and walk! See what you can do!'

The man got up, no longer flat!
(*Lift horizontal finger.*)

How amazing to be off his mat!

His legs could walk! It felt so odd!
So home he danced, still praising God! (*Jiggle finger up and down.*)

Options for children aged 3 to 5 years...

Bible time activity

Bible story with small-world models

Activity time: 5–10 minutes

Aim: to see that meeting Jesus can make a difference to our lives

You will need: play-people, a rectangle of fabric to be the bed-mat, a model house (cardboard box or play bricks), a picture of a first-century house (see page 232 or an illustrated Bible)

- 1 Show the children what a house would have looked like in Jesus' time. Make a model house together, with a flat roof and steps at the side from interlocking bricks or a cardboard box. Put one play-person on the bed-mat, keeping four play-people aside. Place all the others inside and outside the house, one of whom will be Jesus.
- 2 Use the models to act out the story.

This man could not move his legs so he could not walk. He just had to lie on his bed. He felt sorry for himself. (Can you imagine how that would feel? He couldn't run or play or jump or climb stairs...)

He had four good friends. They helped him. But it was not the same as doing things for himself.

One day, the man's friends told him that someone was visiting their village. Who do you think it was? It was a special man. A man who could heal people. Who do you think that was? Jesus!

Could the man walk to see Jesus? No. What do you think his friends did? They picked up the man – on his bed! They carried him carefully. They

went to the house where Jesus was. (Let the children help you move the four friends and the man on the mat.)

There were so many people at the house that they could not get in. What do you think his friends did? They climbed up the stone steps at the side of the house. They put the man down on the flat roof of the house. They made a big hole. And then, very carefully, they lowered the man down, right in front of Jesus. (Let the children help you put the mat through the roof.)

'Hello,' said Jesus. 'What good friends you have to bring you here to me! All the things you have done wrong are forgiven!'

The man felt happy. What an amazing person Jesus was! Then Jesus said, 'Get up! Walk home!'

Could the man move? He trusted Jesus. He moved one leg. He moved both legs! He could walk and dance and jump and run.

And he did! All the way home! (Move the play-person around.)

'Wow!' shouted the man. 'Look at me! Look what Jesus has done! He's changed my life for ever!'

- 3 Let the children use the models to act out the story for themselves. Ask them to show you how meeting Jesus made the man's life very different.

God and me activity

Praying

Activity time: 5–10 minutes

Aim: to bring people to Jesus so he can make a difference to them

You will need: a focal point for worship such as a wooden cross or a picture of Jesus

- 1 Remind the children that the friends in the story took the man to Jesus. Jesus made him better. We can do the same with our friends. When we tell Jesus about them, it is like 'taking' them to Jesus.
- 2 Let the children draw someone they want to 'take' to Jesus. It can be anyone they think needs Jesus' love: friends, family, people who are ill or those in the news.
- 3 Gather the children together, around a wooden cross, near an altar or a picture of Jesus. Invite them, one at a time, to place their pictures around this worship area. As they do so, pray, 'Jesus, here is *Lucy*. Please bless her. Please make a difference to her life.' Or, 'Jesus, we bring *Jamie* to you. Please make him better.' Encourage the children to repeat these prayers and add their own.

More on this theme

- If you want to do a short series with your group, other sessions that work well with this one are:
- Session 30** Jesus at Nazareth, Isaiah 61:1,2; Luke 4:16–21
- Session 32** A woman with a gift, Luke 7:36–50
- Session 33** Martha and Mary, Luke 10:38–42

Options for children aged under 3 years...

Bible time activity

Bible story

Activity time: 10 minutes

Aim: to see that meeting Jesus can make a difference to our lives

You will need: a teddy, a small blanket

- 1 Lay the teddy (or a puppet you have already made) on the blanket and sit the children round the edges of the blanket. Explain that you are all going to pretend that the teddy is the man in your Bible story.

- 2 Tell the story:

There was once a man who could not walk. He just lay still all day long. He could not move unless someone helped him. That's like Teddy. He cannot move unless one of you helps him.

One day Jesus came to the town where the man lived. The man needed his friends to help him go to see Jesus. Would you like to help Teddy? (*Encourage the children to pick up an edge of the blanket and walk carefully around, without dropping the teddy.*)

Jesus was in a house. But it was full of other people too. The man's friends had to climb up the stairs at the side of the house. (*Be very careful carrying the teddy up pretend stairs!*)

They made a hole in the roof. And then they lowered the man down through the hole into the room below. (*Help the children work out how to do this: they will need to put the blanket down first, and then pick it up again after 'making the hole'.*)

Jesus looked at the man and said, 'I forgive you for all the wrong things you have done. Now get up and walk!' The man found he could move!

- 3 Shout together: 'Thank you, God, you changed this man! He couldn't walk but now he can!'
- 4 Continue with the 'Praise' activity.

God and me activity

Praise

Activity time: 5 minutes

Aim: to enjoy what happened in the Bible story

You will need: the teddy from 'Bible story'

- 1 This activity will work well straight after 'Bible story'.
- 2 Ask the children how to make Teddy look as if he is now able to move. Try these suggestions out. Stress that the teddy is only moving because you are holding him. But the man in the story did not need anyone to help him move! What a difference Jesus made!
- 3 Ask the children to suggest different ways that the man would now be able to move, such as walking, jumping, tiptoeing and striding. What a change from having to lie still all day!
- 4 You could all try out these actions, moving around in a circle. As you try each method, pray, for example, 'Thank you, God, that we can tiptoe.'

Play and learn activity

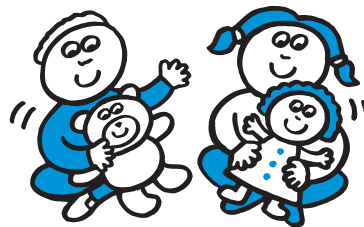
Free play

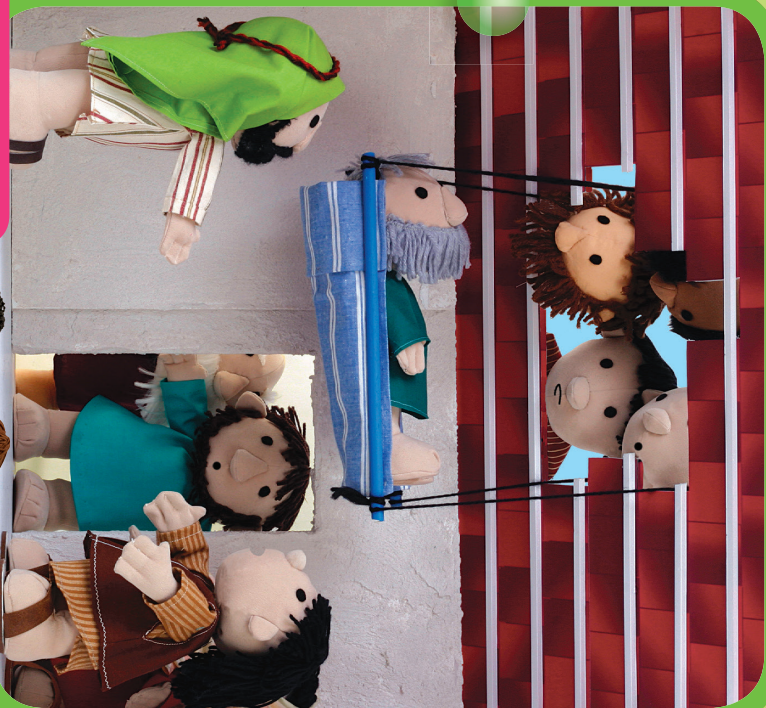
Activity time: no time limit

Aim: to try 'different' things we can do with our bodies

You will need: a variety of large and small, active and static toys and games (construction sets, small-world play, play dough, trikes, tunnels, play house)

- 1 Allow the children to play freely with any toys you have available. Try to offer a selection so the children can choose freely. Play alongside the children, and as you play ask questions such as, 'How did you put those bricks together?' Help them to identify which parts of their bodies they use to do everyday things.
- 2 After a while, gather the children together. Ask them if they enjoyed playing. Ask them which parts of their bodies they were using to play.
- 3 Try playing with the toys with different parts of your bodies! Can you pick up bricks with your toes? Can you wiggle through a tunnel without using your arms? Keep this light-hearted, but comment on how difficult it is to do these things. When the man in the Bible story met Jesus, he was able to do things he had never done before. How could that have happened?





The man could not move his arms or legs, then he met Jesus.

What happened next? Draw the arms and legs on the man!



Photocopiable resource



Bubbles 31

A man met Jesus

Today's aim is to see that meeting Jesus can make a difference to our lives.

Luke 5:17-26

Play this game at home together.

Try to sit very still as though you cannot move your arms or legs. Then jump up, moving your whole body. Enjoy the difference.

This is a fascinating story about Jesus for young children (and adults!) full of drama, contrast and action to capture and keep their attention.

A man is lowered down through a hole in the roof and comes face to face with Jesus. Like the man, we will be discovering God's nature of love and forgiveness and starting to wonder what difference Jesus can make to our lives.

The Bible story is on **Bonus Sheet H**.

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