



Top Tip Hopefully, the Christmas holidays have been an opportunity for you to welcome a number of new families into your church. Now have a restful holiday! In the new year start planning to re-create the warmth and excitement of Christmas by celebrating the spring-time festivals. St Valentine’s Day, Shrove Tuesday, Mothering Sunday, Palm Sunday, Passover and Easter are all opportunities to have fun together. If you’re planning to hold a Fathers’ Day event in June, consider advertising it on your Mothers’ day publicity. (Why advertise Fathers’ Day so early? - You may need to encourage your local schools to affirm the role of fathers sensitively so that children without fathers are encouraged to view the role positively.)



Time for God will be providing the volunteers to work on a brand new Grace Project starting in September 2016. There is a generous grant available for the first church to pilot a new ‘one year mission’ designed to recruit new families into the church. We’re looking for a church with the capacity to accommodate substantially more children than are currently attending. Interested? Please see the proposal going up onto our website by the new year and get in touch before the end of January 2016.

Prayer Requests We pray for our new Grace Workers Gordon and Melody and thank God for an excellent start to their excellent ministry. Both have ‘hit the ground running’ and have been welcomed into the local schools with open arms! Tanita has been exceptionally busy over the Christmas period and continues to build strong relationships with the local community. Please pray that Grace will find a suitable church to pilot our new project quickly so that it can start in September 2016.

Puppet Script Index

Instructions on page 2

| <u>Date</u> | <u>Bible Reference</u> | <u>Title</u> | <u>ROOTS compatible Theme</u> | <u>Page</u> |
|-------------|------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------|
| 3 Jan | Mt 2.1-12 | Bargain hunters | Journeying for treasure | 2,3 |
| 10 Jan | Luke 3.13-17, 21-22 | Superhero | Vocation & identity | 4,5 |
| 17 Jan | John 2.1-11 | Nice to ice | Preparing for a wedding | 6,7 |
| 24 Jan | Luke 4.14-21 | Young teacher | Teaching about Jesus | 8,9 |
| 31 Jan | Luke 4.21-30 | Reluctant speaker | Speaking with confidence | 10,11 |
| 7 Feb | Luke 9.28-36 (37-43) | Mirror, mirror | Reflecting perfection | 12,13 |
| 14 Feb | Luke 4.1-13 | I won’t do that! | Our roots shape our identity | 14,15 |
| 21 Feb | Luke 13.31-35 | I will do that! | Doing right, despite danger | 16,17 |
| 28 Feb | Luke 13.1-9 | Making amends | Being sorry an accident has happened | 18,19 |

Puppet Scripts to Introduce Themes: Lectionary Readings

For All Age Services, Children's Groups and Time Together before Junior Church

Bible readings and themes compatible with Roots

Scripts written by Kevin Hill and Rachel Coupe

CHARACTERS *(Only two puppets on stage at any time)*

Ben – Playful 10 year old boy

Lily – His 8 year old sister

Melanie – Ben's mother

Grandpa – Mel's Dad, recently moved back from Australia

Dixie the dog - Lovable rogue who can get away with being naughty; speaks English when alone

Tips: Practise a funny, **woofy voice** for Dixie the Dog. Use a puppet stand with a curtain or a table covered with a cloth. Check that it is safe. Props can be placed on a table or a tall flower stand next to the curtain.

Props and visual aids are helpful for children. If not available, be creative and help them to use their imagination.

Use safety pins to attach scripts to the back of the curtain and highlight each part. Use a large font-size.

For amplification, headset microphones stay in the right place and leave the hands free.

The puppets need to perform high enough for everyone to see - encourage people to move if necessary.

For suggestions re. buying puppets and puppet stands, please visit our website www.graceproject.org.uk

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3rd Jan 2016

Matthew 2.1-12

Travelling Hopefully

Bargain Hunters

Lily and Mel tell Dixie about their trip to the post-Christmas sales.

Theme: *Sacrificial journey to find an unexpected treasure*

Roots themes explore: *journeys; uncertainty, mystery, sacrifice and joy; being open to the unexpected*

Humour: Ridiculous enthusiasm for 'The Sales'

Not wanting to get out of bed

Ecstatic behaviour on grabbing a bargain

Running on spot, staring contest and tug of war with Dixie

Dirty mark on Lily's new dress

Props: White fabric with dirty mark

Sign saying: 'at home'

Introduction

Has anyone tried to get a bargain on Black Friday or in the post-Christmas sales? Discuss the bargains they got. Do you think it is important to head to the sales? Is it worth the stress or do you enjoy the buzz of it all?

People queuing for the sales sometimes behave so badly that they are shown on TV news. What crazy behaviour have you seen reported on TV?

Is it worth getting up early in the cold and dark to get a really good bargain? (Think of all the money saved!)

Introduce the Puppet Sketch 'Bargain Hunters'

After the Puppet Sketch

When Dixie heard about bargain hunting, he wanted to go too. Did the sketch make you envious of their trip?

Would you have got up so early?

Can you remember the special 'bargain' that Lily had wanted so much? ('Frozen' dress)

It's surprising that she didn't treasure it more and allowed Dixie to ruin it!

Let's hear about a great journey which resulted in the discovery of some real treasure that was worth so much more than a 'bargain'!

The Bible Story

| | |
|--------------|---|
| MEL | Come on Lily! It's time to get up and go to the sales. |
| LILY | It's too early. Do we have to go so early? |
| MEL | <i>(Shocked)</i> Lily, Of course we do! If we want the bargains we need to queue at the crack of dawn or we'll be left with rubbish no one wants. |
| LILY | <i>(Rolls over under the covers to hide)</i> I don't care about getting bargains! |
| MEL | That's not what you said yesterday... |
| LILY | <i>(Muffled voice from under the bed-clothes)</i> I've changed my mind. |
| MEL | So you don't want me to get that 'Frozen' dress for you, then! |
| LILY | <i>(Jumping out of bed)</i> Yes I do! Hurry up, Mum! Let's go, let's go! <i>(Mel grunts)</i> Are you going to teach me how to look for bargains? |
| MEL | You betcha, I am going to show you everything about getting bargains. |
| LILY | Cool! <i>(Dixie barks sleepily offstage)</i> No, you can't come, Dixie. I'll tell you all about it when I get ba... <i>(Rushes off with Mel to Dixie's barking)</i> |
| <i>Later</i> | <i>(Lily enters with blue dress in hand, Dixie runs and jumps up knocking Lily out of sight, Dixie then enters back on stage with blue dress over head, looking around as though lost)</i> |
| DIXIE | <i>(Looking around searching)</i> Woof, woof, woof?! |
| LILY | Bad dog! <i>(Lily lifts dress off his head)</i> You have made such a mess of my new dress! <i>(Holds up showing marks, Dixie whimpers and droops head)</i> There is no need to jump up like that, I did promise to tell you about my trip, you just need to be patient! This dress was a fantastic bargain! I really hope Mum can get these marks out... So Dixie, let me teach you how to be a bargain hunter... a good bargain hunter starts the journey to the sales early – really early – before you've woken up. You have to make sure you get a great starting position. |
| DIXIE | <i>(Yawns, shakes head and growls, dips head as though about to run)</i> |
| LILY | It's like a race coz when those doors open you have to zoom into the store. <i>(Both run frantically, panting)</i> Get to the counter and rummage through. <i>(Both make digging actions)</i> You see, not all the bargains are on top... some of the best are buried. |
| DIXIE | <i>(Looks questioningly at Lily)</i> Woof, Woof? |
| LILY | Yes, buried like one of your bones. Now you have to have eagle eyes. <i>(Lily and Dixie stare at each other)</i> Spot something and then... grab it! Often you will be challenged by another bargain hunter. Don't back down. Stare them in the eye. They'll sense any fear and use it against you. |
| DIXIE | <i>(Barks bravely)</i> Woof, woof, woof! |
| LILY | Ooo! You scare me Dixie! <i>(Picks up dress)</i> There is a tug of war until one lets go. <i>(Dixie grabs dress and tugs)</i> Let go, Dixie! <i>(Cries comically)</i> |
| DIXIE | <i>(Excitedly)</i> Woof, woof, woof! |
| LILY | <i>(Recovers)</i> Yes it is fun! The best bit is still to come. There's victory cry. <i>(Lily shouts "YES", punching the air)</i> Then you raise your bargain item for everyone to see as you pay for it. Then you "float and gloat" as you glide past the late comers with a massive smug smile on your face. |
| MEL | <i>(Offstage)</i> A fantastic journey with wonderful gifts at the end of it. |
| DIXIE | <i>(Jumping up)</i> Woof, woof, woof, woof, woof! |
| LILY | I'll take you to the sales tomor.... <i>(Dixie whimpers)</i> Oh O.K. today! <i>(exit)</i> |

10th Jan 2016

Luke 3.15-17,21-22

Called by name

Superhero

Ben plays at being a superhero who saves the world. Grandpa tells him he can gain real power by being a child of God. They are both blown off stage by a strong wind.

Theme: Exploring one's calling and identity

Roots themes explore: Discovering calling and identity; submission, power and protection; images of fire, water and the dove

Humour: Description of super-powers
The privilege of familiarity with a superhero
Gassed to death by 'Flatulence Man'

Props: Superhero cape or costume for Ben
Sign saying: 'at home'
Sound effect: loud breaking wind

Introduction

There have been lots of movies around recently of superheroes. Does anyone have a favourite superhero? How do you recognise them? (e.g. by their clothes or their super power)

Discuss the distinctive character and actions of some of the superheroes identified. What makes them a superhero?

Introduce the Puppet Sketch 'Superhero'

After the Puppet Sketch

Grandpa didn't recognise who Ben was dressed as. Ben had to tell him he was 'Brilliant Energizer Nanobot'.

It's good to have positive role models and better still if they are real! Why is it important to have good role models?

What makes a good role model? (N.B. Flatulence Man has nothing like the strength of the Holy Spirit!!!)

How did Grandpa say that Ben could have super-human strength for real? (following Jesus, being **Bold In God**)

What kind of strengths do you think this may give us? (not being afraid, confidence, boldness, kindness)

Now listen to the revealing of the identity of the Messiah. Someone every bit as remarkable as Ben's super-heroes!

The Bible Story

| | |
|----------------|---|
| BEN | What do you think Grandpa? <i>(Strikes superhero pose)</i> |
| GRANDPA | Who are you? |
| BEN | Ha! I am Brilliant Energizer Nanobot, the superhero of course! Or that's... B.E.N. for short. |
| GRANDPA | A superhero eh? What are your powers then, Ben? |
| BEN | I am a super-charged Nanobot, which is a very, very small robot. I can shoot electricity out of my hands. I never run out of energy. I keep on going and going and going and... |
| GRANDPA | OK! I get the picture. So, as a superhero will you be saving the world? |
| BEN | Yes, I will. I have dedicated my life to helping to rescue humans from the evil aliens and monsters. Where ever they may be nothing is too extreme for BEN! <i>(Strikes pose again)</i> |
| GRANDPA | I am sure you will be very busy. |
| BEN | <i>(Drops his shoulders)</i> But am I powerful enough? |
| GRANDPA | It sounds like you are. |
| BEN | Hmmm... Maybe I could be 'Awesome Legend'? I would have ALL the superpowers of every superhero.... oooooo I like the sound of that! |
| GRANDPA | Every single super power? WOW! |
| BEN | You could call me A.L. or AI for short. |
| GRANDPA | You certainly would be invincible. |
| BEN | Invisible? Yes, that would be one of my powers alongside flying, super-sonic speeds, super strength... |
| GRANDPA | <i>(Interrupting)</i> Not "invisible" but <u>invincible</u> . It means you can't be defeated. |
| BEN | <i>(Sarcastically)</i> Absolutely Grandpa. No one in the universe can ever defeat me. |
| GRANDPA | I am sure there is one who would be able to defeat you? |
| BEN | Who would that be Grandpa, since I am 'Awesome Legend', the undefeated. |
| GRANDPA | It would be someone far more dangerous than you could ever imagine...It would be Flatulence Man! |
| BEN | Flatuwhat Man? |
| GRANDPA | Yes, Flatulance! He would gas you to death with all that smelly wind! |
| BEN | Ha! Ha! Ha! Yeah, maybe the stink would defeat me... |
| GRANDPA | But seriously Ben, if only for a moment. There is a way to have real power in your everyday life. |
| BEN | How Grandpa? |
| GRANDPA | If you follow Jesus then you become B.I.G. - "Bold in God". |
| BEN | Really? |
| GRANDPA | Also God gives you His power to follow Him and do what He asks of you. |
| BEN | That is so awesome, even more awesome than Awesome Legend. |
| GRANDPA | Now that is having real super powers! |
| BEN | So, I am Ben, a child of God. Cool, that sounds amazing! |
| GRANDPA | It's so cool it'll 'blow you away'. |
| BEN | Yes, Grandpa! <i>(Makes windy noise that blows both from the stage)</i> |

17th Jan 2016

John 2.1-11

Celebration and transformation

Nice to ice

Mel gets home shattered. Ben and Dixie need feeding and she has a wedding cake to start icing. Ben kindly offers to get his own tea. Dixie makes sure he's not forgotten.

Themes: We need to accept help when getting ready for special events like weddings

Roots themes explore: Reading the Bible in its cultural context; the significance of weddings; noticing signs of God at work.

Humour: Ben's initially unhelpful suggestions
Pun on 'purrfect'
Dixie's impatience for food

Props: Sign saying: 'at home'

Introduction

If there are any working parents in the congregation, ask them first what jobs have to be done when they get home from work. Is it hard to summon up the energy to do them?

Adapt to any situation when one returns home tired. It can be even harder at busy times when there are extra things to do. Has anyone helped to organise a wedding? Find out about the planning needed to make it extra special for the couple. (Emphasise the effort made by family and friends, rather than imply that expensive weddings are best!)

Is anyone good at icing cakes, like Mel? Is it quite easy or stressful? Do you think having Ben and Dixie around is helpful?

Introduce the Puppet Sketch 'Nice to ice'

After the Puppet Sketch

It was a good job it wasn't the wedding cake that Dixie made a dive for!

How did Ben wind Mel up in today's sketch? (He underestimates the time needed and importance that jobs are completed urgently.) Parents, how would you react if your children had the same attitude as Ben to some of those chores?!

Ben did improve eventually though, didn't he? In what way was Ben following Jesus in this sketch? (He helped Mel when she was tired)

This could have been the first time that Ben got his own dinner because, at first, Mel was reluctant to accept his help. Was she right to accept his offer? How can she get more help now but also teach Ben for the future too? (Teach him basic life skills like cooking and washing)

Listen to a wedding that Jesus attended. This would be the first time that Jesus used a miracle to show God's power.

The Bible Story

| | |
|------------|---|
| MEL | Phew! What a day. |
| BEN | Why? What happened? |
| MEL | It has been a crazy, busy and an absolute manic day. <i>(Mel flops as though crashed on the sofa)</i> |
| BEN | Well, you can rest now. |
| MEL | Rest? Ha! You have got to be kidding right! I really need to start icing a wedding cake for Jenny, but first I have to make your dinner. |
| BEN | YES! I am famished. What is for dinner Mum because I am like, super hungry right now! When is dinner by the way? Is it soon? |
| MEL | See, I told you I can't rest. Not with a hungry hippo like you for a son. <i>(Dixie barks offstage)</i> and Dixie, our 'Where's my dinner?' dog! |
| BEN | It's OK. You can sit down to ice the cake ... right after you have made dinner... |
| MEL | REALLY? I don't think so. I have to wash all of the school uniforms for you and Lily. Rest? No chance. |
| BEN | That won't take long. All you have to do is bung them all into the washing machine. Job done I don't know what all the fuss is about! |
| MEL | Why, thank you kindly for pointing that out to me and, by the way, I don't just bung them into the washing machine, thank you very much! There's more to it than that. |
| BEN | Like what? |
| MEL | I'll teach you one day soon. Very soon and if you keep up this attitude, it will be even earlier! |
| BEN | Nah! It's OK Mum, you really don't have to. After all you are very tired and need some rest. Jenny's wedding cake can wait. It's three days before she gets married. |
| MEL | Oh Gee! Thanks! |
| BEN | You're welcome. I've iced cakes and it only takes me ten minutes! You said my cake was really tasty! |
| MEL | It might have been tasty, but it looked a mess. This is a wedding cake, it isn't as simple as that! |
| BEN | Gee! It all gets chewed up and tastes the same whatever it looks like. |
| MEL | This is a wedding cake! It'll be in the photographs. There are several layers: Each needs a layer of marzipan and the white icing has to be really smooth. Finally the delicate decorations are piped onto the top. |
| BEN | Can't Jenny just have cupcakes? |
| MEL | No Ben! This is Jenny's very special day. I want this cake to be perfect. |
| BEN | Purrfect? Has she ordered cats for the top of her cake? <i>(thinks)</i> Maybe there are some left-overs in the fridge I could heat up for us all. Let's look. |
| MEL | Oh Ben, that's very kind of you. I feel like I ought to cook for the family. |
| BEN | Relax, Mum. Let me help you out here. I can use the microwave. |
| MEL | Yeah, that's a kind offer. Could you load the washing machine too? |
| BEN | No problem! You go and start Jenny's wedding cake. <i>(exit Mel, Ben opens fridge)</i> Mmm, that looks nice – or shall I eat... <i>(Dixie enters, crashes into Ben and pushes in front before running off)</i> Oy, Dixie, that cake was for me! <i>(Both fall out of view off the stage)</i> |

24th Jan 2016

Luke 4.14-21

Jesus' agenda

Young teacher

Grandpa joins Lily's class as she plays 'school'. It's an RE lesson and Grandpa already knows Jesus heals people, but Lily needs her dolls to learn this too.

Theme: Importance of teaching about Jesus

Roots themes explore: The power of God's word; the importance of teaching within a community; Jesus' agenda

Humour: Playing 'school' with dolls
Ben doesn't want to play
Lily praises Grandpa patronisingly for knowing the answers
Lily's joke
Lily tries to carry too many dolls and drops them

Props: Sign saying: "at home"

Introduction

Find out what games Grandparents play with their grandchildren?

What are the children's favourite games? What were Grandparents favourite games when they were young? How was this different to children today?

Today, we shall see Lily playing a role-play game in which she is the teacher. Grandpa and her dolls will be the students.

Introduce the Puppet Sketch 'Young teacher'

After the Puppet Sketch

In her RE lesson, what does Lily reveal that she knows about Jesus? (Heals blind, deaf and those who can't speak)

Grandpa does a good job affirming her knowledge of Jesus by playing along with her game and encouraging her to have a Bible story at bed-time. He's not as silly as Lily says! We recently spoke about having good role models, do you think Grandpa is a good role model for Lily? How is he helping?

Perhaps Lily will be a teacher one day. It's a very important job to pass on stories and knowledge. We have lots that we can learn from older generations!

Listen to the time when Jesus read from the Bible and started to teach the people worshipping at His local synagogue.

The Bible Reading

| | |
|---------|--|
| LILY | Grandpa, can I ask you a question? |
| GRANDPA | Sure pumpkin. |
| LILY | I'm playing 'school'. Please can you be in my class? |
| GRANDPA | I can be in your class, if you like, Pumpkin. Who else is in your class? |
| LILY | I'm going to ask Ben. <i>(Shouts)</i> Ben! |
| BEN | <i>(Shouting back from off-stage)</i> Go away, I'm busy! |
| GRANDPA | Maybe not Ben. How about your dolls? |
| LILY | They're not too busy. They always have time to play with me. |
| GRANDPA | And I'm not too busy either! Where are your dolls? |
| LILY | Here they are! <i>(Puts them out)</i> One, two, three, four... |
| GRANDPA | That will do nicely. |
| LILY | And....Five |
| GRANDPA | Even better. Let's start the lesson. |
| LILY | And I mustn't forget Trixie. <i>(Puts out sixth doll.)</i> That's six now. |
| GRANDPA | Of course not. What sort of lesson are you going to teach today? |
| LILY | It's an R.E. lesson. I've got some questions for you. |
| GRANDPA | I hope I can answer them! |
| LILY | How did Jesus help blind people? |
| GRANDPA | He opened their eyes so that they could see. |
| LILY | Very good, Grandpa. How did Jesus help deaf people? |
| GRANDPA | He opened their ears so that they could hear. |
| LILY | What else? |
| GRANDPA | What do you mean, Pumpkin? |
| LILY | Excuse me Grandpa... I'm your teacher. Please don't call me Pumpkin! |
| GRANDPA | Sorry, Pumpkin... Ah sorry, I did it again didn't I? |
| LILY | Hmmmmph... back to the lesson. Was there anything else? |
| GRANDPA | Jesus set the prisoners free. |
| LILY | No! How did He help deaf people? |
| GRANDPA | He made them hear. |
| LILY | You already said that, silly Grandpa. He made them talk. |
| GRANDPA | Yes, if they couldn't speak already. Jesus healed lots of people. |
| LILY | Can you spell Jesus? |
| GRANDPA | J-E-S-U-S |
| LILY | Very good. Now Bible. Can you spell it? |
| GRANDPA | B-I-B-L-E |
| LILY | No! Silly Grandpa. <i>(Laughs)</i> You spell it I-T. Get it? Can you spell <u>it</u> ? Tricked you! |
| GRANDPA | That's a good joke. I can spell Bible, but I'd rather read it. Come on Lily, it's time for bed. How about a bed-time story from the Bible? |
| LILY | <u>All</u> my dolls need to listen too. Hang on while I pick them up. <i>(Picks up, drops on floor)</i> Woops! Maybe they'll have to listen from down there instead! |

Reluctant speaker

Ben is nervous about speaking in public and feels sick. Mel encourages him and reminds him to ask God for help.

Theme: Speaking with confidence

Roots themes explore: The power of God's word; the importance of teaching within a community; Jesus' agenda

Humour: This is the first time Ben has been shy
The body language of feeling sick/being nervous
The sickness goes, but a very loud sneeze comes over Ben instead

Props: Sign saying: 'at the school gate'

Introduction

Ask for a volunteer to come and introduce the puppet sketch today.

Rehearse the words they will need to say, discussing how to project your voice.

Congratulate your volunteer, pointing out that not everyone has the confidence to speak publicly. I

The volunteer introduces the Puppet Sketch 'Reluctant speaker' ...and receives a round of applause.

After the Puppet Sketch

Ask whether it was rational for a 'talker' like Ben to be so nervous about speaking in assembly. (No right answer: but the emotions are quite natural)

Notice that Ben was afraid that, if he forgot his words, everyone would laugh at him. Was that likely to happen?

Some audiences are very critical. Discuss feedback given by the X Factor/Britain's got Talent/Strictly Come Dancing.

Can anyone think of any other situations where it takes a lot of confidence to face a hostile audience? (e.g. Ministers attending a Union conference; International summits, places where there may not always be a friendly crowd)

Has anyone here felt really nervous before a speech? How did you cope? What did you find helped?

Ben clearly found that knowing God was right by his side the whole time. Who do you think is bigger, God or our fears?

Jesus faced a hostile audience when he spoke at the synagogue in Nazareth, his home town.

The Bible Story

| | |
|-----|---|
| MEL | This is it, Ben! Today is your big day. Are you ready and feeling OK? You are looking a bit pale! |
| BEN | <i>(Mumbling)</i> No, not really. I still feel very queasy. Can I have sick day? <i>(wobbles)</i> |
| MEL | Nope. You know that's not happening. |
| BEN | Awww Mum. I'm really feeling sick. I think I'm going to throw up or faint. |
| MEL | Ben, we have been through all of this for the last couple of weeks. You will nail this speech for the whole school assembly. |
| BEN | What if I forget the words and everyone laughs at me? |
| MEL | Ben, nobody will laugh at you. Do you want to know why? |
| BEN | Yes, of course! |
| MEL | You're Ben who remembers all those gross facts like why snot is green. |
| BEN | Snot is green because ... |
| MEL | <i>(Interrupting before he goes too far!)</i> Another thing is that you, Ben, can talk for England. All you have to do is just keep talking. You'll be fine. |
| BEN | Good point there, Mum. But what if I get all shy and... |
| MEL | HA! You shy! You have never been shy in your entire life. There isn't a shy bone in your body. |
| BEN | Err OK then! What if I get all nervous, turn to jelly <i>(Ben wobbles like a jelly)</i> and blabber on and on and on and on and on? <i>(Ben keeps wobbling comically)</i> |
| MEL | Everyone, including professional actors, have stage fright. First of all just remember to breathe. Take a deep breathe right now... You have learnt your opening lines and your ending. Organize your thinking around those points. |
| BEN | OK! I can do that. What if I get so nervous that I need to... to.... errr pee? |
| MEL | Then, you had better make sure you go before you get on stage. |
| BEN | It's scary up there on the stage, alone. |
| MEL | Yes, it can be scary but pray to God to help take away those fears. |
| BEN | Definitely need to do that. |
| MEL | Remember that you are not alone. Jesus is always with you. |
| BEN | Always? |
| MEL | Always. He is closer than the air we breathe. |
| BEN | Really, that close? |
| MEL | That close. |
| BEN | That is comforting to know... |
| MEL | Don't forget God will give you His power to speak in this assembly. |
| BEN | Mum, that is awesome. God is so cool. |
| MEL | Yes He is. |
| BEN | I don't think I feel sick any more. |
| MEL | That's good. |
| BEN | But I can feel a big sneeze coming on. A aaa aaaaa aaaAAA TISHOO! |
| MEL | Bless you! |
| BEN | Thanks, Mum! <i>(Both exit)</i> |

Mirror, mirror on the wall

Lily is acting the role of the Wicked Queen in Snow White and scares Dixie away. She wants to look evil, then beautiful. Grandpa provides a torch and they joke about beaming blinding light around the bedroom. Grandpa reminds Lily that a beautiful person is kind and thoughtful.

Theme: Reflecting perfection

Roots themes explore: Mountain top experiences; risking an encounter with God; reflecting God's glory

Humour: Lily's costume and acting
Dixie's barking poetry
Dixie is scared by her and runs off
The thoughts of coats of armour made of mirrors
Lily's vanity

Props: Costume (Queen's head-dress)
Mirror
Torch
Sign saying: 'in the play room'

Introduction

Show a mirror and find out how many mirrors people have in their homes. Why so many?

How many different uses of mirrors can you think of, collectively?

In today's sketch, Lily is using a mirror for vanity as she acts out a scene from Snow White, but Grandpa helps her to see that she herself is beautiful to God.

What do you think vanity is? Is it a good or a bad thing?

Introduce the Puppet Sketch "Mirror, mirror on the wall"

After the Puppet Sketch

When the Wicked Queen looked in the mirror, she saw the face of someone else – Snow White.

How do people think of beauty? What first comes to mind when you hear that word? Far too often beauty is thought of as something external, and how we appear on the outside. Lily saw herself as a beautiful princess, loved by Grandpa and by God.

Challenge the congregation to look in the mirror and see a child of God, reflecting the love of God to others.

How does that make you feel? (Hopefully encouraged and more confident!)

Listen to a remarkable story from the Bible when the glory of God brightly shone out from Jesus.

The Bible Story

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|---------|---|
| LILY | Mirror, mirror on the wall, who is the fairest one of all? |
| DIXIE | <i>(Woofs in time to)</i> 'Famed is your beauty, Majesty. Behold, a lovely maid I see. Alas she is more fair than you.' |
| LILY | <i>(Angrily)</i> Alas for her! Reveal her name. |
| DIXIE | <i>(Woofs in time to)</i> Lips red as the rose... |
| LILY | Lips red as the rose? |
| DIXIE | <i>(Woofs in time to)</i> Hair black as ebony... |
| LILY | Hair black as ebony? |
| DIXIE | <i>(Woofs in time to)</i> Skin white as snow.. |
| LILY | Skin white as snow? <i>(Screeches)</i> I see Snow White! <i>(Exit Dixie, scared)</i> Hmm! I wonder where Dixie ran off to? Let me think, how can I make it seem scarier? I know, I need a torch and the light will shine out of my body just like it does in the movies. <i>(Enter Grandpa)</i> |
| GRANDPA | Did I hear you say you need a torch? Here's a red one, Pumpkin. |
| LILY | Thanks, Grandpa Now I can shoot beams of light out of my hands and out of my eyes. That red glow could make me look really evil. |
| GRANDPA | That could be fun! You wouldn't need a night light in your bedroom that's for sure! You could just point and light up the room. |
| LILY | Yes! That would be so much fun! Would we be able to see if we are shooting beams of light out of our eyes or would we be blinded by the light too? |
| GRANDPA | I guess that we would be able to see it. I've never really thought about it to be honest. |
| LILY | <i>(Holds up mirror)</i> What about light shining off a mirror? |
| GRANDPA | Instead of wearing a suit of armour, we would wear a suit of mirrors . |
| LILY | And we wouldn't need to take a bath, just polish the mirrors. |
| GRANDPA | Could be awkward wearing the armour and going to bed! Might rip the bed sheets! |
| LILY | He! He! Grandpa, the Wicked Queen needs to look beautiful. She looks in her magic mirror, but sees the reflection of Snow White. |
| GRANDPA | And Snow White is very beautiful, huh? |
| LILY | Yeah and the wicked Queen wants to be more beautiful. |
| GRANDPA | We could start by swapping the red torch for a white one. |
| LILY | I could borrow Mum's make-up. |
| GRANDPA | Now you're going to get me into trouble. I can't encourage you to do that. The Queen will never really be beautiful unless she becomes a beautiful person. Kind and thoughtful to everyone. |
| LILY | That's not going to happen. You know the story, Grandpa! |
| GRANDPA | I'm not talking about the Wicked Queen. I mean you. When I look at you, I see a girl who's kind, thoughtful and helpful. |
| LILY | Am I beautiful, Grandpa? |
| GRANDPA | To me and to God, my precious princess. Just look in the mirror! |
| LILY | I see myself, Lily. A girl who wants to be a princess. Yes, I suppose I am beautiful when you describe it like that! Thanks Grandpa! |

14th Feb 2016

Luke 4.1-13

Revealing identity

I won't do *that*!

Lily has received a Valentine card, but isn't sure who sent it. She and Mel speculate and discuss what people are willing to do for those they love.

Theme: Our roots shape our identity

Roots themes explore: Remembering how our roots shape our identity; wilderness experience; enrichment through giving

Humour: Speculating who sent the unsigned card
Mel has Lily married off to a boy in her class already

Props: Valentine card
Signs saying: 'at home'

Introduction

Today is Valentine's Day. Did anyone get a card? Was it signed? How did it make you feel? Have fun hearing about who might have sent the cards, as appropriate for the group. Can anyone remember getting their first card? How old were they? Lily has just received her first card at the tender age of eight. Who could it be from, I wonder?

Introduce the Puppet Sketch 'I won't do that!'

After the Puppet Sketch

Ask who the card was from. (Mel) Remembering Valentine's Day with family and friends is a tradition more common in America than it is in the UK, but it makes an important point. Hopefully, those you love can be trusted not to ask you to do anything bad. Can anyone remember the two things Lily wouldn't do for her friends? (jump off cliff/steal car) Her loving family have taught her that it's wrong to do those things. Do you think Lily will remember what she said about 'doing anything' for her Mel or will she quickly forget when the chores start?

Today's Bible story reveals more about *who Jesus is* by the moral judgements He makes when faced with temptation.

The Bible Story

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|------|---|
| LILY | Here's your post, Mum. I opened mine already. |
| MEL | You got post today? What is it? |
| LILY | This is my first Valentines Card! (<i>Shows to Mel</i>) |
| MEL | Ooooooo! Who is it from? |
| LILY | I am not sure. |
| MEL | Why not? Didn't they sign the card? |
| LILY | No, they didn't. |
| MEL | Can we work it out? |
| LILY | Of course we can. There are two boys who I think it could be. |
| MEL | Two boys, eh? You know you are only allowed to marry one of them. |
| LILY | Mum! I'm NOT getting married. |
| MEL | That's a pity. I had a lodger all lined up to take your room, I was going to paint it a beautiful plum colour... |
| LILY | (<i>Interrupting</i>) Hang on MUM! I'm only eight! |
| MEL | (<i>Cheekily</i>) Oh go on then, I suppose it is a little early to be thinking about that! Anyway back to these two boys. Tell me more. |
| LILY | There are two boys I'm friendly with: Cameron and A-Jay. |
| MEL | Come on Lily, details! I want details. |
| LILY | Well... Cameron is tall. A-Jay is smart. They're both really nice. |
| MEL | What makes them nice? |
| LILY | We help each other. Cameron sticks up for me at playtime and A-Jay helps me with my maths. |
| MEL | And what do you do for them? |
| LILY | Well, lots of things. Anything really. |
| MEL | Anything? Are you sure? Would you jump off a cliff if they asked you? |
| LILY | No, of course not. I'm scared of heights. |
| MEL | Would you steal a car? |
| LILY | No, of course not. I can't drive. |
| MEL | Is that the only reason? |
| LILY | Errr... Mum, you know I won't do that . You taught me not to steal. |
| MEL | That's my girl. I'm so proud of you! I'll tell you a secret. |
| LILY | Ooooooh a secret? Do you know who sent the card? (<i>Thinks</i>) Wait... was it you? |
| MEL | Yes, you know that I love you very much, don't you? |
| LILY | Yes I do. |
| MEL | Someone else loves you very much and did more than stick up for you or help you with maths. He died on the cross - for you. |
| LILY | Yeah, Jesus is my best friend and I'd do anything for Him too! (<i>Hugs Mel</i>) And you're my best friend too, Mum. |
| MEL | Two best friends! |
| LILY | I'd do anything for you, Mum. |
| MEL | Oh good, that's handy! Can you go and tidy your bedroom? |
| LILY | Well, nearly anything. (<i>Thinks</i>) Oh, OK go on then. But only if you help me too! <i>Both exit</i> |

21st Feb 2016

Luke 13.31-35

Darkness and destiny

I will do that!

Grandpa tells Lily about her great grandfather who voluntarily left a safe job to be a bomb disposal expert. He was a brave hero who saved hundreds of lives.

Theme: Doing right despite danger

Roots themes explore: Symbolism and rituals of covenants and promises; discernment of vocation; pursuing the future through the darkness

Humour: Is it Grandfather or the photo that is faded?
Comical wobbling by puppets
'Tap, tap' song
The thought of queue jumping
Lily bored by queues
The thought of an 84 year old still working in bomb disposal
A comfortable place is a good choice for a death bed
Grandpa plays at threatening to tickle Lily for her rudeness

Props: Photograph
Walking stick for Grandpa
Sign saying: 'at home'

Introduction

Ask a child to demonstrate climbing up a small step ladder. Take safety precautions such as holding their hand. Discuss health and safety rules at work. Hear some suggestions and think about why they are sensible. Has anyone seen or heard of some silly health and safety rules that have taken it far too seriously? (e.g. wearing goggles to play conkers)

In the sketch, notice the tall chimney climbed by a young risk-taker and listen out for an even more dangerous activity.

Introduce the Puppet Sketch 'I will do that!'

After the Puppet Sketch

Ask the role great grandfather performed in the war. Make sure all the children have understood what the work involves. Do the congregation think that it was worth-while asking a soldier to carry out such a dangerous task? Take a moment to think how we might feel about doing a job as risky as that. It makes you feel a lot safer in your current job!

Draw out the difference between needless risks and brave ones that help others. Sometimes it is important to take risks and often when the time comes we won't have long to decide what to do which makes the decision even harder but we have to trust in God that he will help us in those choices and guide us in the right way!

Things are 'hotting up' for Jesus in the Bible reading. Listen carefully for the danger He faces and how He feels about it.

The Bible Story

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|---------|--|
| LILY | Tell me about the man in this old photo, Grandpa. |
| GRANDPA | That was my father and your great grandfather. |
| LILY | He looks very...ermm.... faded! |
| GRANDPA | No silly, it's not him that is faded! That's because the photograph is so old, not him! I really should get it restored soon. You see, he once stood on the top of that tall, smoky chimney and nearly fell off! |
| LILY | Like this? (<i>Wobbles</i>) Why did he need that walking stick? |
| GRANDPA | That was for tapping new buildings. (<i>Taps stick and sings to tune of Old MacDonald</i>) 'With a tap, tap here; a tap, tap there. Here a tap, there a tap, everywhere a tap, tap.' He worked for council planning. He tapped the walls and floor and listened to see if they were built correctly. |
| LILY | So that's why he's dressed so smart in such a dirty place. |
| GRANDPA | Exactly! In fact it was not long after this picture was taken he left that job. |
| LILY | Was he scared of falling off the chimneys? |
| GRANDPA | No, he could have stayed safe in that job right through the war. But he felt called by God to save hundreds of lives as a bomb disposal expert. It was very dangerous. Bombs can go off before you can take them apart. My mother was furious he volunteered to risk his life. |
| LILY | Wasn't she proud of him for saving lives? |
| GRANDPA | I am sure she was, but she was very scared for him and she obviously didn't want to be a widow, or me to lose my father. However, there were some perks though. |
| LILY | Like what? |
| GRANDPA | When Father was on leave we would go to the cinema. One day we were in a long queue. It was pouring with rain. The people in front said 'If you're in bomb disposal, you won't live much longer. You'd better go in front of us and enjoy life while you can.' It was fun queue jumping! |
| LILY | I don't like queuing either. It's sooooo booooooring! |
| GRANDPA | Seriously though, we were really worried about him. |
| LILY | Did he die? |
| GRANDPA | Yes, Pumpkin, but not until he was an old man of 84. |
| LILY | Did the bomb go off that time? |
| GRANDPA | He was 84 and retired! Snug in a hospital bed holding mother's hand. |
| LILY | So it wasn't a huge explosion? (<i>Disappointed</i>) That's not as exciting it is! |
| GRANDPA | I can think of worse ways to 'kick the bucket' or 'pop your clogs'! |
| LILY | I wanted my great Grandpa to be a hero with lots of medals. |
| GRANDPA | He did get medals for his brave work. Heroes don't always die. |
| LILY | But he could have done. He must have had jelly legs, wobbling lots. |
| GRANDPA | You mean like me. I have wobbly legs too. Look! (<i>Demonstrates</i>) |
| LILY | Oh that's different. That's just because you're ...err ... very old! |
| GRANDPA | (<i>Sarcastically</i>) Thanks, Lily. Good job I have this walking stick - to tickle you with. (<i>Lily runs off screaming, chased by Grandpa</i>) |

28th Feb 2016

Luke 13.1-9

When the time comes

Making amends

Dixie has accidentally uprooted a tomato plant and is really sorry. Mel nurses it back to health in a grow-bag. Dixie is so excited to see its recovery that he licks the one, small tomato and knocks everything over, again.

Theme: Being sorry for an accident and trying to make amends

Roots themes explore: God's bigger picture; living well in a crisis; repentance and preparedness for whatever might happen

Humour: The plant is too dirty to touch
Dixie meant well with his digging and is suffering dis-proportionate bereavement
Dixie tries to tell the story of what happened with funny actions
Mel accuses Ben falsely
Imagining the plant as a 'Jack in a Box' – it jumps again at the finale
After all the fuss made over the plant, Dixie's excitement uproots the plant a second time

Props: Green plant (could be a simple picture/clip art printed out)
Small tomato

Signs saying: "in the Garden"
"on the Driveway"

Introduction

Find out whether anyone has green fingers. Ask them which plants they have nursed back to health and how they did it. Express excitement that plants can appear dead, yet spring back to life at this time of year.

Introduce the Puppet Sketch 'Making amends'

After the Puppet Sketch

Ask how Dixie showed that he was sorry for uprooting the tomato plant. (Whimpering facial expressions and body language) He really did want to try and put things right.

Mel seems like a good, cool-headed person to have around in a crisis. What did she do sort out the problem? Say that there are times when you need a problem-solver around to sort things out.

When we are sorry for a mistake, we get another 'chance' like the fig tree in today's Bible reading.

The Bible Story

| | |
|--------------|--|
| DIXIE | <i>(Appears with large plant in mouth, tries to give to Ben)</i> |
| BEN | No thank you, Dixie. I don't want your muddy plant. |
| DIXIE | <i>(Whimpers)</i> |
| BEN | Oooh that's disgusting! It's even got poop on it. Take it away! |
| DIXIE | <i>(Whimpers again; places plant at Ben's feet; starts digging; looks up)</i> |
| BEN | So, you're trying to tell me that you tried to fertilise this plant by burying some poop, when it just 'popped' out of the ground? |
| DIXIE | Woof! <i>(Dixie nods; re-enacts watching the plant 'pop up' repeatedly)</i> |
| BEN | I think that this tomato plant has had it. It's doomed! There will never be any more tomatoes on this young sapling. It has ceased to be. |
| DIXIE | <i>(Groans and lies down; Ben picks up plant gingerly)</i> |
| BEN | I will pick up this tomato plant gingerly. |
| DIXIE | <i>(One short bark)</i> |
| BEN | OK, I know, it's not a ginger plant. I'll pick up this ginger plant 'tomatoly'. |
| DIXIE | <i>(Barks and looks pleadingly at Ben who shakes his head)</i> |
| BEN | I can't mend it. It goes in the brown bin. Don't feel sad. It's had a good life and will live on as recycled plant food for other tomato plants. |

On the Driveway

| | |
|------------|---|
| MEL | <i>(Angrily)</i> Ben, what have you done with that tomato plant? |
| BEN | Nothing, Mum! |
| MEL | So, you are totally innocent of killing this poor plant? |
| BEN | Yes Mum. I told you. I didn't do anything. |
| MEL | So please tell me why exactly are you holding it? <i>(Sees poop)</i> Oooh it's a bit dirty! |
| BEN | Blame Dixie. Dixie is the murderer. |
| MEL | OK! Tell me what exactly happened. |
| BEN | Dixie was 'fertilising' it by burying poop nearby, but his digging uprooted it completely. Like a 'Jack in the Box'. That's what Dixie told me... |
| MEL | Dixie told you that? |
| BEN | With his eyes, Mum. With his eyes... |
| MEL | <i>(Sarcastically)</i> Oh I see, seems so obvious now. |
| BEN | Dixie was really sorry and wanted me to save it. I can't, can I? |
| MEL | Not easily, but we could try. I've got a spare compost bag. We'll tie it in so that it stays upright and give it plenty of water. You never know we might be able to revive it... |
| BEN | Thanks Mum! Can I help? |
| MEL | You can – but Dixie isn't allowed anywhere near it! |

Several weeks later

| | |
|--------------|---|
| BEN | Look, Dixie! The tomato plant has made a complete recovery! |
| DIXIE | <i>(Happy barking; jumps up and licks Ben)</i> |
| BEN | <i>(Pointing)</i> There's even a small tomato growing! |
| DIXIE | <i>(Jumps at plant; licks tomato. It falls off and rolls away as plant falls)</i> |
| BEN | Oh well! We tried! Maybe next year we can work on improving your 'green paws'! |