

**Christmas Remembered** The Grace Workers got together in January to share their Christmas news. We're very excited about the Messy Christmas celebrations that took place this year and planning to invite our guests back to enjoy our Easter festivities. Sara from Urban Saints came to talk to us about 'planning a session' and recommended their Energise material. You can request a trial period and access all the material online. I like it because it offers a variety of activities for different age groups on almost any subject. One of my churches is currently trialling the material to supplement resources already used.

**Easter is Coming!** It's the most important Christian festival of the year, the weather should be better and our families aren't quite as busy as they were at Christmas. There are so many different ways to tell the Easter story. Holy Week lends itself to interactive story-telling. I've been asked to repeat the 'Experience Easter' Exhibition that was so successful last year. In some towns, I visited schools, taking bags of props to set up in the hall. Elsewhere, school-children visited the church, which allowed more exciting displays illustrating the events in Jerusalem. My colleagues are organising 'Messy Easter' and lots more!



**Top Tip** Visit the Grace website for a simple child-friendly liturgy to remember the Last Supper. It's good to remember how Jesus celebrated his last Passover meal because it explains why we have bread and the wine and Holy Communion services. The talks and discussions need careful planning to keep the information clear. This is because there are three different time periods to think about:

- (1) Moses and the preparations for leaving Egypt
- (2) Jesus sharing His last meal with His friends and
- (3) Christians today sharing the bread and wine (be sensitive to children not yet receiving it)

**Prayer Requests** Please thank God for an excellent Grace Training Day and for the wonderful children's ministry resources that are available to us. Please pray for new volunteers to come forward to help with the various groups that we run.

Thank you for praying for the next generation!

*Tanita, Hannah, Jane and Rachel*

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## **Puppet Scripts to Introduce Themes: Lectionary Readings March/April 2015**

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

*Bible readings and themes compatible with Roots*



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

**Ben** – playful 10 year old boy

**Melanie** – Ben's mother

**Dixie the dog** - unisex, 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 the script to the back of the curtain. The larger the text-size the better.

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](http://www.graceproject.org.uk)

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**1<sup>st</sup> March 2015**

**Mark 8:31-38**

**Cross and Discipleship**

### **Dreading School**

Ben doesn't want to go to school after doing badly in a test. His teacher was cross. With a little persuasion, he bravely picks up his heavy school bag and leaves home.

*Theme: Sometimes it takes courage to do the right thing*

Humour:	Ben's reluctance to go to school Ben takes Mel literally when she says she didn't hear him say he's not going to school Silly excuses for not going to school Dixie doesn't want Ben to go to school A bad test result feels like the end of the world Mel once had a rude school report Ben's reluctance to go to school
Props:	Puppet-sized bag

### Introduction

Who has the longest journey to get to work or school? Is it worth it?

Has anyone ever not felt like going to school or work in the morning? Find out why and sympathise.

Ask the congregation to listen for the reason why Ben doesn't want to go to school and what makes his bag so heavy.

*Introduce the Puppet Sketch 'Dreading School'*

### After the Puppet Sketch

Why didn't Ben want to go to school?

Who sided with Ben? Why? Was this a helpful reason?

What made his bag so heavy?

Even after talking to his Mum, Ben still didn't want to go to school – so why did he?

Did Ben do the right thing?

Today's Bible story is about Jesus predicting the long hard journey to the cross, when people who hated him would make Him carry a heavy cross. Think why He was willing to do this unpleasant journey!

*The Bible Story*

Ben	I'm not going to school! Never again!
Mel ( <i>strictly</i> )	I didn't hear that.
Ben ( <i>louder</i> )	Then I'll say it again: I'M NOT GOING TO SCHOOL!
Mel	Why not?
Ben	Because school stinks!
Mel	What does it smell of?
Ben	Fish and chips.
Mel	Would you prefer packed lunches?
Ben	No!
Mel	Why don't you want to go to school?
Ben	My bag is too heavy.
Mel	Let me look. ( <i>finds bone</i> ) Ugh! Why is Dixie's old dogbone here?
Dixie (offstage)	Woof! Woof!
Ben	To remind me of Dixie - my only friend in the whole world!
Dixie (offstage)	( <i>sympathetically</i> ) Woof! Woof!
Ben	Dixie wants me to stay at home and play.
Mel	No way! Why don't you want to go to school?
Ben	I did badly in yesterday's test. Everyone laughed at me. It's the end of the world! ( <i>cries comically</i> )
Mel	I'm sure it's not that bad.
Ben	The teacher was cross and said I hadn't tried. She hates me!
Mel	It may feel like she hates you, but she just wants you to do better.
Ben	She'll never like me again. Never, never never! I feel poorly.
Mel	You may feel poorly, but only because you're upset. Off to school.
Ben	You don't know what it's like.
Mel	I had a bad school report once.
Ben	What did it say?
Mel	"Melanie's work is careless and untidy. You'd think she had a curvy ruler. Instead of margins, her exercise book is full of curly snakes."
Ben	Did you have a curvy ruler?
Mel	No, I just like snakes. They're more exciting than straight lines. I got into a lot of trouble for that!
Ben	What happened then?
Mel	My next teacher explained things better and my work improved.
Ben	Can I stay home until next year?
Mel	No, you need to be brave and go to school today.
Ben	Do I have to?
Mel	Yes.
Ben	My bag's too heavy.
Mel	Just go! ( <i>Ben puts the bone back into his bag &amp; slumps off grunting.</i> )

8<sup>th</sup> March 2015

John 2:13-22

Jesus and the Temple

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## Angry Valentine

Dixie shows Mel a Valentine card from a doggie friend who's come to visit. Dixie's love for food is greater. Dixie gets very angry on discovering an empty bowl!

*Theme: We get angry when things aren't right with the things we feel passionate about.*

Humour: Dixie in love  
'Lovey dovey' feelings quickly turn to anger when food is involved  
Dixie's bad 'table manners'

Props: Dog's Bowl  
Red Valentine card – can include a simple heart cut from red card/tissue paper  
"Some time later" sign (to hold up between scenes)

### Introduction

What is your favourite food?

Have fun enjoying hearing about different 'favourites'.

What special 'food' might have been given as a gift when it was Valentine's Day?

*Introduce the Puppet Sketch 'Angry Valentine'*

### After the Puppet Sketch

Wow! Wasn't Dixie upset!!!

Dixie's love for food was evident by the anger experienced when it had been stolen.

Was Dixie right to be so angry when Bailey stole Dixie's food?

Sometimes it's right to be angry. What sort of things in the news make you feel justifiably angry?

Listen about a time when Jesus got really angry about a very special place that He cared about.

*The Bible Story*

Mel	<i>(to congregation)</i> I'll tell you a secret. I think that Dixie is in love!
Dixie	<i>(bark is stifled because of holding a valentine card)</i> Wwwwffffff
Mel	You've got a valentine card! Let me see? <i>(Takes card from Dixie)</i>
Dixie	<i>(excitedly)</i> Woof, woof!
Mel	Ahhhh! It's from your doggy friend. <i>(reads)</i> 'Love from Bailey.' Ahhh!
Dixie	<i>(romantically)</i> Wooooof!
Mel	Ah, that's so sweet that you two are in love.
Dixie	<i>(questioningly)</i> Woof, woof?
Mel	<i>(interpreting Dixie's question)</i> What time is Bailey coming? <i>(looks at clock/watch)</i> Bailey's due to visit any time now!
Dixie	<i>(yawns lethargically)</i>
Mel	It's hard waiting isn't it! Have some food while you're waiting. <i>(points to bowl, doorbell rings)</i>
Dixie	<i>(suddenly wakes up with wild barking and jumps around)</i>
Mel	<i>(laughing)</i> Calm down Dixie. <i>(Dixie rushes off knocking Mel over.)</i> Careful Dixie! <i>(gets up)</i> You are excited! Let's hope that you are so busy playing with your sweetheart, Bailey, that you leave Ben and me alone for a bit. I could just do with a bit of peace and quiet. I'm very busy at the moment. <i>(exit)</i>

Some time later

Dixie (enters)	<i>(knocks Mel over again, seems upset)</i> Woof, woof, woof!
Mel	Stop it Dixie. Why aren't you with Bailey?
Dixie	Woof, woof woof! <i>(indicates empty bowl)</i>
Mel	Have you eaten <u>all</u> your food? You greedy dog!
Dixie	<i>(Shaking head)</i> Woof, woof, woof!
Mel	Oh! I get it. Bailey ate your food. That was a dangerous thing to do!
Dixie	<i>(angrily barks and twists like a crazy dog)</i>
Mel	Watch out, Bailey! Dixie's gone crazy. He loves his food more than you! <i>(Bailey's disappointed whimpering is heard off-stage)</i>
Dixie	Woof, woof, woof!
Mel	Bailey's your friend. Don't you want to share your food with your friend?
Dixie	<i>(shakes head emphatically)</i>
Mel	<i>(shows Dixie the valentine card)</i> Look this says 'love from Bailey'.
Dixie	<i>(growls, then snaps card from Mel's hand. Shakes it violently, then drops it on the floor)</i>
Mel	Oh my goodness! Dixie! I'd better put you in the garden before you fight with Bailey. I've never seen you so angry! <i>(both exit)</i>
Dixie (offstage)	<i>(starting loudly, then fading into distance)</i> Woof, woof, woof.....

**15<sup>th</sup> March 2015**

**John 3:14-21/Mothering Sunday**

**Lifted Up/Power of Love**

## **Winning the Trophy!**

A happy, muddy Ben meets Mel after his football team won the trophy. Mel has faithfully brought him to practise every week and cheered him on cold, dark nights. The team has won thanks to a super-human new Manager who has got the team promoted to a higher division. Ben, as Captain, takes the trophy home first.

*Theme: The winning team lift the trophy – thanks to the loving support of parents and a new manager*

- Humour: Ben is mad keen on football  
Mel is bored by football, but takes him to practise every week, even when it's cold and dark  
Mel can't say fandabadozy  
An over-sized trophy  
The trophy is too heavy for Ben to carry  
Ben wants everyone to see the trophy
- Props: Football  
Large Trophy (or cardboard cut out)  
Trophy cut-outs on which to write the people whose efforts contributed to the team's success (i.e. Mum, manager, team members, grounds-man etc.)

### **Introduction**

(N.B. Today is Mothering Sunday...)

Find out which football teams the congregation support. Who are the best Managers?

Think about the Mum's providing transport and cheering for their children on cold, dark practice nights.

Think about the coaches who give up their time to train the team.

Express gratitude for everyone who supports youngsters in many different ways.

### *Introduce the Puppet Sketch 'Winning the Trophy'*

### **After the Puppet Sketch**

Ask for a list of the people whose efforts contributed to the winning of the trophy.

Write their names on the trophy cut-outs and ask for volunteers to hold them up.

(Mum/Dad for transport/washing the clothes, manager, team members, grounds-men, fundraisers etc.)

What did the new football manager do to make the team even better than it was before?

Would the team have won the trophy if the players hadn't welcomed his advice and really taken it to heart?

Today we shall hear about someone who was grateful to Jesus for giving up his time to explain how life can be even better when you experience the power of the Holy Spirit.

### *The Bible Story*

Ben (entering)	We are the champions! We are the champions!
Mel	Congratulations on winning the trophy!
Ben	<i>(shows trophy)</i> Isn't it big!
Mel	It's enormous! Your team is amazing. You beat every other team!
Ben	We couldn't have done it without our new manager.
Mel	...Or?...
Ben	Our new shiny kits!
Mel	...Or?...
Ben	Um??? ...the oranges at half time?
Mel	...Or without me bringing you in the car to practise every week.
Ben	You don't mind do you, Mum?
Mel	<i>(sarcastically)</i> No. It's a pleasure cleaning out the mud every week!
Ben	Thanks, Mum. <i>(looks at Mum shivering)</i> Why are you shivering?
Mel	It's cold standing out here in the dark waiting for you to finish!
Ben	Please don't stop coming to cheer us on. It helps us win.
Mel	<i>(laughs)</i> My pleasure!
Ben	Oh no! There's mud on the trophy!
Mel	Who minds a bit of mud when it'll wash off???
Ben	Thanks Mum! <i>(Gives her a muddy hug)</i>
Mel	Now I'm all muddy too <i>(laughs)</i>
Ben	We go up to the top league next season!
Mel	That's fantastic. You were good before. Now you're just brilliant!
Ben	We are the champions! We are the champions!
Mel	What's the secret of your success?
Ben	The new manager. He's fan... fan... fandabadozy!
Mel	And what makes him fandab err...rrr <i>(she can't say it)</i> ...fantastic?
Ben	He makes me feel special as the captain. I take the trophy home first.
Mel	Does he train you hard?
Ben	Yes, but we don't mind because he makes it fun and encourages us.
Mel	You liked your old manager, I seem to remember.
Ben	Yeah, he was good, but this one's even better! He's out of this world! He made us champions!
Mel	You'll always be my champion. I really don't mind the cold, dark muddy cheering you on every week.
Ben	Thanks, Mum!
Mel	It's time to go home now. You need to carry that trophy carefully.
Ben	Of course I will!!! <i>(tries to lift it)</i> It's heavy, can you carry it, Mum?
Mel	My pleasure. <i>(takes the trophy)</i> Where will you put it?
Ben	On my bedroom window-sill. High up for the neighbours to see.
Mel	I'm going to hold it up high so everyone can see it. <i>(exit with trophy high)</i>

22<sup>nd</sup> March 2015

John 12:20-33

Drawn In

## Can you hear?

Ben needs a hearing test, so Mel takes him to the Doctors. He can hear the thunder, Mel's jokes and the offer of a sandwich, but not requests to go to bed or tidy his bedroom! Ben emerges with his ears syringed and a quiet bean shaker which he can now hear. He returns the bean-shaker onto the reception desk and the beans fall out.

*Theme: Listen carefully to hear today's message: A seed must die to be fruitful and so must Jesus.*

Humour: Jokes  
Ben can hear the things he wants to hear and not the rest!  
Ben initially over-estimates how many plants could grow from a jar of seeds  
Pun: 'Ear, ear'

Props: Sandwich  
Orange  
Jar containing pulses  
"A short time later" sign (to hold up between scenes)

### Introduction

Ask: 'What's the loudest noise you've ever heard?'

This question's harder: 'What's the quietest noise you've ever heard?'

Find out what sounds nobody wants to hear. (e.g. alarm clock, bell that ends break-time, smoke detector etc.)

Which sounds do we like? (e.g. Ice cream van, a new-born baby's cry, the voice of someone you love etc.)

Ben is having a spot of trouble with his hearing today. Will he hear his Mum explain why Jesus is like a seed that needs to grow? How many of the congregation will hear the answer to this riddle?

### *Introduce the Puppet Sketch 'Can You Hear?'*

*It starts with the sound of thunder – ask the congregation to do the sound effect.*

### After the Puppet Sketch

Put your hand up if you heard the answer to the riddle 'Why is Jesus like a seed that needs to grow?'

Congratulate the congregation for listening well.

Just in case the crowd weren't listening as well as you have just done, God sent a thundery voice to confirm Jesus' words. Listen carefully to hear what was spoken from Heaven...

## *The Bible Story*

Ben (entering)	I hate thunder and lightning! It's so loud and scary!
Mel	Come inside quick. Here's a joke to cheer you up. 'What does a cloud wear under his raincoat?
Ben	I don't know. What does a cloud wear under his raincoat?
Mel	Thunderwear! <i>(both laugh)</i>
Ben	I could hear the thunder very loudly. Why do I need a hearing test?
Mel	Because you don't hear everything you should be hearing.
Ben	Oh yes I do! Try me. I don't want a hearing test.
Mel	Would you like a strawberry jam sandwich?
Ben	Yes please! See! I did hear you.
Mel	It's funny how you hear the things you want to hear. You never seem to hear 'time for bed'.
Ben	Of course not. Who wants to go to bed?
Mel	You never hear 'tidy your bedroom, please'.
Ben	Why does a bedroom need tidying, anyway?
Mel	<i>(sighs)</i> You'll understand when you grow up. Do you want a grape?
Ben	Are they seedless? I don't like the pips.
Mel	Pips grow into new vine plants. We couldn't do without them.
Ben	We planted some beans in school. All kinds of seed have to die and break apart to let the new little plant grow out of them.
Mel	Jesus said that he would have to die like a seed. His death on the cross would bring new life. He tried to explain this before he died.
Ben	That's a strange idea. Jesus dying like a seed. But what plant grew?
Tannoy (offstage)	Will Ben please go and see Dr Philip.
Mel	Time to go. <i>(both exit)</i>

A short time later

Mel	Can you hear better, now the Doctor has syringed your ears?
Ben	Yes, everything sounded sort of muffled before. Now it's normal.
Mel	Before we go home we have to test your hearing with this shaker. It's got beans inside. Turn round. Say 'beans' when you hear them.
Ben	<i>(turns back to Mel who shakes the jar)</i> Beans. <i>(shakes again)</i> Beans.
Mel	You seem fine now. How many plants would these beans grow into?
Ben	Billions! Err Millions! ...Well, maybe just twenty.
Mel	We have to return this jar to the receptionist now.
Ben	I'll do it. <i>(Jar drops onto the table)</i> Oh no! The beans have fallen out!
Mel	Don't worry. They've landed on the table and can be swept up.
Ben	It looks like they've been scattered for planting. <i>(rubs ear)</i>
Mel	What's that in your ear? <i>(looks)</i> How did that bean get in there?!!!
Ben	It must be a jumping bean.
Mel	Ear, ear to that! Time to go home. <i>(exit)</i>

## What's that Tree?

Ben takes Dixie to the park to help him with his science homework. He has to collect a small branch showing new signs of life. Is there any other life nearby that likes to be near a tree? (A safe place for birds to build a nest, a home for insects under the bark, food for caterpillars, shade on a hot day and conkers for boys in the Autumn.) Ben is horrified when Dixie 'waters' the tree – but Mel explains the tree doesn't mind - it's good fertiliser! The branch could be useful for the Palm Sunday play in church.

*Theme: How we interpret things, depends upon our perspective.*

Humour: Ben is horrified when Dixie 'waters' the tree  
He wants to be a passive tree in the Palm Sunday play

Props: Plant or cardboard cut-out to represent tree  
Small branch with buds or small leaves  
"In the park" and "Back at home" signs (to hold up before each scene)

### Introduction

Show the plant or cardboard cut-out representing a tree. Say how good it is to see them back in leaf.  
Talk about the things that are good about trees (absorb CO<sub>2</sub>, give shelter, provide food, look nice, etc.)  
Ben's science homework is to collect a branch with new leaves and find out what a tree means to different animals.  
Can you guess what Dixie the dog likes doing to trees? (wink, wink)

*Introduce the Puppet Sketch 'What's that Tree?'*

### After the Puppet Sketch

Ask why Ben likes horse chestnut trees so much. (conkers)  
Review the different characteristics of the tree valued by different animals.  
Isn't it strange how we see things in a different way, according to who we are, what we know and where we stand.  
Mel talked about the different emotions of the people in the Palm Sunday story.

Listen carefully to the different people named in today's Bible story and think about what they would have been thinking.

### *The Bible Story*

Ben	Here we are Dixie. Look at this beautiful tree! It's a horse chestnut.
Dixie	Woof! Woof!
Ben	Science homework is to collect a small branch showing signs of life.
Dixie	Woof! Woof!
Ben	Then I have to see what other life likes to live near the tree.
Dixie	<i>(jumping)</i> Woof, woof, woof, woof, woof!
Ben	Yes, <u>you</u> like being near this tree. Why do you like being here?
Dixie	<i>('waters the tree', then barks proudly)</i> Woof! Woof! Woof!
Ben	<i>(horrified)</i> You're not supposed to wee on it!
Dixie	<i>(looks sad)</i> Woooooof! <i>(cheers up)</i> Woof, woof, woof! <i>(picks up stick)</i>
Ben	<i>(laughs)</i> You like me to throw sticks for you. I need this for school. <i>(thinks)</i> Oh all right, there's plenty more. Here! <i>(throws stick)</i>
Dixie	Woof! <i>(disappears)</i>
Ben	<i>(looks up)</i> I can see birds nesting in the tree for safety, caterpillars eating the new, soft leaves and insects living under the bark. But I like the conkers best in Autumn!
Dixie (returns)	Woof! Woof! Woof!
Ben	We have to take this branch home now. I've done my homework.

Back at home

Mel	Did you find your branch, teeming with new life?
Ben	Yes, here it is Mum!
Mel	Who likes to be near a tree?
Ben	Birds nest in trees for safety. Caterpillars need it for food, animals like shade in summer, I love conkers and Dixie thinks it's a toilet!
Mel	<i>(laughs)</i> Don't worry. The tree enjoys the good fertiliser.
Ben	That's disgusting!
Mel	Well, it all depends on your perspective. Dixie wasn't just going to the toilet. It's the way dogs mark out their territory.
Ben	Do you like my branch? Look how the buds are growing into leaves.
Mel	I need some branches like that for the Palm Sunday play in church. I need actors to show different emotions as Jesus rode past all those people waving branches from the tree.
Ben	Can I be in your play? Pleeeeease?
Mel	There are some exciting parts. You could cheer the king, be a puzzled soldier, a scared disciple or sad Jesus knowing the crowd will soon be wanting him to die. Do you want to be happy or sad?
Ben	I think I'd like to watch it all and not take part. I'll be errr ...a tree!
Mel	O.K.!

## So Egg-citing!

Ben wakes up early on Easter Day and can't wait to eat his egg. In his excitement, he drops the egg and it breaks. Dixie rushes in and upsets Ben by eating the chocolate. All is well when Mum finds the middle section intact and reads the Easter story.

*Theme:* The Resurrection was an unexpected, disturbing and disorientating experience for Jesus' friends. There was amazement as well as joy.

Humour:           Waking up far too early  
Dixie slobbering all over the chocolate  
Excessive crying about the egg that broke  
Egg-citement and other 'eg' words

Props:            Chocolate egg in foil (but not in a box)  
Small pack of wrapped chocolates (supposedly from middle of the egg)

If you use a 'Real Easter Egg', it will contain an Easter storybook. This could be used as a prop and brought into the sketch.

### Introduction

Ask 'Who likes chocolate?'

How would they feel if you were expecting to eat an Easter egg this morning, only to find that the dog had eaten it? Exaggerate the feelings of frustration.

Point out that such a tragedy would be particularly bad for a child. It might feel like 'the end of the world!'

### *Introduce the Puppet Sketch 'So Egg-citing'*

### After the Puppet Sketch

It wasn't the end of the world, was it?

Easter isn't really about chocolate. Ask what really makes Easter special.

Sometimes, losing something trivial like chocolate (and yes, it is trivial, as catastrophes go!) gave Mel the opportunity to explore the real excitement of Easter.

If Ben was so upset that his dog was eating his chocolate (which isn't supposed to happen because dogs have their own doggie chocolate), how much more would the friends of Jesus have been upset that Jesus died and disturbed that a corpse could come back to life. Jesus wasn't supposed to die, they thought. Corpses don't come back to life! As well as being Good News, the Resurrection must have been disruptively disorientating to their understanding. It would have taken them right out of their comfort zone!

Think about the roller-coaster of emotions that must have been going through the minds of the people in today's Bible story!

### *The Bible Story*

Ben	<i>(yawns comically)</i> What time it is? <i>(looks at clock)</i> Four o'clock in the morning! I should go back to sleep. <i>(lies, tosses, sits up)</i> It must be 'getting up time' now! <i>(checks clock)</i> Only <u>five</u> past four. <i>(groans, lies down again, sheets fly everywhere, sits up)</i> I can't get back to sleep. It's Easter Day. I'm too excited. <i>(thinks)</i> Egg-cited – do you get it? Easter Eggs are making me egg-cited! I love my egg-spensive egg!
Dixie (enters)	Woof! Woof! Woof!
Ben	Can't you sleep either, Dixie? Did you smell chocolate?
Dixie	<i>(jumping)</i> Woof! Woof!
Ben	<i>(picks up egg)</i> Only a teeny piece. You have your own dog chocolate.
Dixie	<i>(jumps on Ben)</i> Woof... <i>(lots of barking and comical egg wobbling)</i>
Ben	Careful, Dixie! <i>(drops egg)</i> Now I've dropped it.
Dixie	<i>(lots of slobbering noises)</i> Woof! Woof! <i>(greedy eating noises)</i>
Ben	Bad dog! That egg was for me to eat! <i>(cries comically)</i>
Dixie	<i>(whimpers and turns to leave)</i> I'm in big trouble now! <i>(exit)</i>
Ben	There's nothing egg-citing about Easter with no eggs. This needs egg-cessive tears. Boo hoo... <i>(continues ridiculously loud crying)</i>
Mel (offstage)	What's the matter, Ben?
Ben	My egg! My egg! My eggs-ploding egg!
Mel (rushing in)	Exploding egg????
Ben	It eggs-ploded into tiny pieces – <b>BANG!</b> - and worse... <i>(cries again)</i>
Mel	Go on
Ben	Dixie ate it. <i>(cries again)</i>
Mel	What a mess! Dog slobber all over the carpet. Ughhh!
Ben	I wanted to eat it. It was <u>mine!</u>
Mel	You were expecting to eat your egg, but you were disappointed!
Ben	My Easter Day is ruined!
Mel	Is chocolate the only thing that makes Easter special?
Ben	Yes!
Mel	Wrong! Easter is about the Resurrection. Jesus coming back to life.
Ben	Humph! <i>(Mel finds the packet of small chocolates intact)</i>
Mel	Dixie missed these! A treat from the middle of tragedy! Eat them and remember Jesus' friends were disappointed and heartbroken when he died. They didn't expect that to happen! They certainly didn't expect him to see him alive again. How do you think they felt?
Ben	Shocked! People don't usually come back to life, do they?
Mel	They were amazed how God turned their disappointment into an amazing discovery – Death defeated! Now forget being disappointed about your chocolate and remember what a special day it is today.
Ben	Exactly – or should I say <u>eggs-actly!</u>

12<sup>th</sup> April 2015

John 20:19-31

My Lord and My God

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## Lost and Found

Ben and Mel feel desperately sad when Dixie goes missing. They look everywhere!

*Theme: The joy of being reunited prompts hugs and a new commitment to each other.*

Humour: Dixie often hides in the airing cupboard  
The first thing Dixie can think of on returning home is food  
Ben is so pleased to see Dixie he makes all sorts of unrealistic promises

Props: Dog bowl  
Telephone  
"Next morning" sign (to hold up between scenes)

## Introduction

Does anyone enjoy playing hide and seek? Where are the best places for hiding?  
It's no fun when people really go missing and can't be found. Everyone feels desperately worried.

### *Introduce the Puppet Sketch: Lost and Found*

## After the Puppet Sketch

Dixie was naughty for wandering off, despite having been trained not to. How did Mel and Ben feel?  
Which emotion was stronger when Dixie returned? Cross for Dixie's disobedience or relief and joy that Dixie was safe? Why did Ben want to hug Dixie?  
Do you think that the incident brought their relationship closer?

In today's Bible reading, seeing Jesus alive would make the disciples renew their commitment to following Him faithfully as their much-loved leader.

### *The Bible Story*

Mel	Ben, have you seen Dixie?
Ben	No. <i>(laughs)</i> Try our nice warm airing cupboard.
Mel	Good idea! That's a good <u>hot</u> tip! <i>(exit)</i>
Ben	I haven't seen Dixie for ages. Dixie never misses dinner time!
Mel (enters)	No, Dixie's not in the airing cupboard. Where can that dog be?
Ben	Look, the front door's open. Dixie could be anywhere!
Mel	<i>(shouting)</i> Dixie! Dixie!
Ben	Dixie! Dixie!
Mel	Stay here while I go and look outside. <i>(exit)</i> Dixie! Dixie! Dixie!
Ben	I'll put some food by the door for Dixie. <i>(does so)</i> See if that works?
Mel (offstage)	Dixie! Dixie! Dixie!
Ben	Try the park, Mum.
Mel	Can you phone the neighbours and ask if they've seen Dixie?
Ben	OK Mum. <i>(picks up phone)</i> Have you seen Dixie anywhere? <i>(pause)</i> Please tell us if you do. Thank you. Goodbye. <i>(sighs)</i>
Mel (enters)	Dixie is nowhere to be seen and it's bed-time. Off you go.
Ben	Do I have to? I'm so worried!
Mel	I'll come and tuck you in. We can pray for Dixie together.
Ben	Goodnight Mum <i>(exit)</i>
Mel	I'll be up in a minute. <i>(exit)</i>

Next morning

Mel	<i>(shouting)</i> Ben, breakfast is going cold!
Ben (offstage)	Has Dixie come home?
Mel	Not yet. I'll try calling again. Dixie! Dixie! Dixie!
Dixie (offstage)	Woof! Woof! <i>(enters and eats the food noisily and hungrily)</i>
Mel	Oh Dixie, <i>(strokes Dixie)</i> we were so worried about you! <i>(shouts)</i> Ben! Dixie's back! <i>(exit)</i>
Ben (offstage)	I'm coming! I'm coming! <i>(rushes on to stage)</i> Oh Dixie. We missed you so much. We were so worried! Anything could have happened to you. You could have got run over or stolen or died of the cold. We hunted everywhere and asked the neighbours to help. We prayed you'd come home and you did!
Dixie	<i>(Stops eating and jumps at Ben, knocking him over)</i> Woof! Woof!
Ben	Bad dog for running off, but I forgive you. Let me give you a big hug. <i>(does so)</i> Dixie, I love you so much I will never leave you again. Never ...not even to go to school. I'll give you a new bone every day. I'll tickle your tummy all the time. I'll never let you out of my sight!
Dixie	<i>(Rolling over to have tummy tickled)</i> Woof! Woof!
Ben	You and I will be together forever! <i>(Dixie gives a delighted howl)</i>

## Ben the Chef

Mel has made a fish pie for an outreach supper. Ben thinks that he would like to make some chocolate crispies. The left-over chocolate and Rice Crispies disappear – into Dixie’s tummy!

Theme: Thinking about how the church can be a witness for Jesus through a supper-party.

Humour: The idea of giving invitations to people you don’t know  
Trifle doesn’t appeal to a ten year old boy  
Ben prefers cooking something with chocolate  
Dixie steals the leftover chocolate and Rice Crispies – where have they gone?

Props: Dish for fish pie  
Mixing bowl  
Wooden spoon  
Bar of chocolate  
Box of Rice Crispies  
Box of baking cases

### Introduction

Talk about the times when your church members get together and share food.

Draw out the principle that mealtimes are a very important way to mix with people and share good conversation.

Explain how your church/other churches deliberately invite visitors to their meals as a form of outreach.

They can be a wonderful opportunity to explain the Gospel message (e.g. Alpha Courses)

### *Introduce the Puppet Sketch: Ben the Chef*

### After the Puppet Sketch

Discuss how Jesus gave specific instructions to spread the Good News.

After the Resurrection, Jesus’ friends had to get to know Him in a whole new way, understanding why He had died and returned to them. Up until then, the prophecies hadn’t made sense to them, but now at last they were able to understand when Jesus explained God’s plan.

Today’s Bible reading is one of those times when Jesus is talking to His friends over a meal. It’s Peter’s favourite of course – fish!

### *The Bible Story*

Mel	This fish pie is baked to perfection! Perfect for the church supper.
Ben	That looks nice Mum. Who's going to be there?
Mel	Barry next door and lots of other people we don't know are invited.
Ben	Urrr? How can we invite people we don't know?
Mel	<i>(laughs)</i> Everyone at church could invite friends who don't normally go to church. People like Barry. We want to welcome them to our friendly church and tell them the good news of Jesus.
Ben	What is the Good News?
Mel	Jesus has conquered death. God loves all of us, whatever we're like.
Ben	That's a nice message to share. Can I do some cooking too?
Mel	We need some more healthy foods like vegetables.
Ben	No. I want to make something special that our guests really like.
Mel	What about a trifle?
Ben	Oh no!!! I was thinking more about something with chocolate.
Mel	Chocolate?
Ben	Yes chocolate. I like chocolate and so does Barry and lots of people!
Mel	All right. How about Chocolate Crispies <i>(Ben nods head vigorously)</i> Let's put this chocolate into a bowl over hot water. <i>(does so and puts down the remaining chocolate bar)</i> You have to stir it while it melts.
Ben	<i>(Mel exits)</i> This takes a long time to melt! <i>(in a singing voice)</i> Stir, stir, stir, stir... <i>(While Ben is stirring, Dixie enters, takes remaining chocolate in mouth, runs off with it)</i> Mum! The chocolate has melted.
Mel (enters)	<i>(looks around)</i> What did you do with the left over chocolate? Oh well, never mind! Now let's add the Rice Crispies. <i>(does so, puts down the remaining Rice Crispies)</i> Stir in the Rice Crispies until they're covered in chocolate. <i>(exit Mel)</i>
Ben	Mum's been a bit mean with the chocolate. Oh well! <i>(in a singing voice)</i> Stir, stir, stir, stir... <i>(While Ben is stirring, once again he doesn't see Dixie enter, take the Rice Crispy box in mouth, run off with it)</i> Mum! The Rice Crispies are all covered in chocolate.
Mel (enters)	<i>(looks around)</i> What did you do with the left over Rice Crispies? Oh well, never mind! Now you need to spoon the mixture into individual portions. You need two spoonfuls in each baking case. I'm very impressed that you are tidying up after yourself. First you put away the remaining chocolate and then the box of Rice Crispies. <i>(exit Mel)</i>
Ben	Mmm? What did Mum mean? I didn't put anything away? <i>(Dixie enters, takes baking cases in mouth, Ben turns round just in time to see Dixie run off with them)</i> Dixie! I need those! Come here, Dixie! <i>(Ben &amp; Dixie do tug of war with baking case box, both fall over.)</i> Mum! I think we need more baking cases! These have been Dixied...
Mel (offstage)	Dixied? Is that dog causing trouble again. <i>(sighing)</i> I'm coming.....

26<sup>th</sup> April 2015

John 10:11-18

The Good Shepherd

## Dixie the Wolf

Ben is playing a game with Dixie. Ben is armed with a wooden spoon and a saucepan lid for a sword and shield. He pretends that Dixie is a wolf threatening his imaginary, cotton wool sheep. Mel sticks up for poor Dixie and Ben decides it's his responsibility to care for Dixie, rather than his imaginary sheep.

*Theme: God protects us and, like a shepherd, stakes his life to do so.*

Humour: Ben looks funny with his 'sword and shield'  
Dixie can't even eat lunch in peace  
Ben suddenly changes from protecting cotton wool from Dixie to being protective of Dixie  
Ben 'dies' comically in his game, then comes back to life

Props: Dog bowl  
Cotton wool balls  
Wooden spoon  
Saucepan lid

### Introduction

In the old days, boys liked to play 'Cowboys and Indians' What sort of games do they like to play now?  
Who are their super-heroes?  
Shepherds may have seemed unlikely super-heroes in Jesus' day, but Ben has made them his role-model.

*Introduce the Puppet Sketch: Dixie the Wolf*

### After the Puppet Sketch

Did you notice how Ben, the shepherd, pretended to die in his game protecting Dixie?  
That's OK in an imaginary game, but it's not a good idea for children to risk their lives to save a pet.  
Today, soldiers really do risk their lives for the sake of others.  
Jesus draws a parallel between the shepherd's attitude in Bible times and His own willingness to sacrifice His life for us.

Listen to Jesus predicting His death and resurrection, using shepherds to help us to understand why He would do so.

*The Bible Story*

Ben	Look at all my sheep. <i>(points to cotton wool balls)</i> They need protecting against the wicked wolf. Dixie you can be the wicked wolf.
Dixie	Woof! Woof!
Ben	If I'm going to protect my sheep, I shall need some weapons. This wooden spoon can be my sword and this saucepan lid can be my shield. <i>(picks up both)</i>
Dixie	<i>(a little more nervously)</i> Woof! Woof!
Ben	My sheep are scared by the wolf. They're bleating loudly. Baa, baa, baa, baa.....
Dixie	<i>(aggressively towards the sheep)</i> Woof, woof, woof, woof!
Ben	Get away from my sheep, Dixie. Go away!
Dixie	<i>(Dixie retreats, eats from bowl)</i> Munch, munch, munch.
Ben	What's that you're eating? Lamb? <i>(pokes Dixie away, exit Dixie)</i>
Dixie (offstage)	Whimper, whimper, whimper.
Ben	You're safe now, sheep. The wolf has gone. Let's count you. 1,2,3,4,5....
Mel (offstage)	Ben? Why is Dixie upset?
Ben	Dixie was eating my sheep. I was protecting them.
Mel (offstage)	You haven't got any sheep!
Ben	Yes I have. I've got 1,2,3,4,5....
Mel (enters)	How many times have I told you, Ben? It's your responsibility to look after Dixie. Your dog is alive and has feelings. The cotton wool balls don't. Don't hurt a real dog for some silly pretend sheep!
Ben	<i>(to the cotton wool balls)</i> Don't worry. She doesn't mean it!
Mel	Yes I do. I will be very cross if you don't start being kind to Dixie!
Ben	<i>(Sighing)</i> OK Mum! <i>(exit Mum)</i> Sorry sheep! Game over. <i>(kicks them away comically)</i> Come back, Dixie. You can have your lunch now.
Dixie (enters)	<i>(Enthusiastically)</i> Woof! Woof! <i>(starts eating again)</i>
Ben	I'll protect you from the monsters outside don't worry. <i>(starts fighting the imaginary monsters comically)</i> Take that <i>(thrust with spoon)</i> and that. <i>(thrust)</i> I'll protect Dixie with my life <i>(falls to ground)</i> I'm dying, I'm dying <i>(exhales noisily)</i> I'm dead. <i>(Goes quiet)</i> No, I'm not dead. You monsters can't get rid of me that easily. I'll live to fight another day. Monsters be gone! Hooray!!!! <i>(waves spoon)</i>
Dixie	<i>(puzzled)</i> Woooooof?
Ben	The monsters came to get you, but I fought them off. You're safe as long as I'm here to protect you, Dixie.
Dixie	Woof! Woof! Woof! <i>(rolls over to have tummy tickled)</i>
Ben	Now the monsters have gone, I don't need these. <i>(puts down spoon and saucepan lid)</i> Let's play 'tickle, tickle your tummy, tummy'.
Dixie	Woof! Woof!