



Introducing Lily and Grandpa! ‘Puppet Scripts’ are celebrating our first birthday! (The first of these scripts was written for the start of November 2014.) We hope that you have been enjoying them. To keep the stories fresh we have introduced two new characters. Lily is Ben’s eight year old sister and Grandpa is Mel’s father, recently returned from living in Australia. There will still be no more than two puppets on the stage at any one time, making the scripts easier to perform in churches with few puppeteers. Lily and Grandpa don’t appear until December’s scripts, so there’s plenty of time to order them from One Way UK or Resources Unlimited. (Please see our website for recommendations.)

Top Tip This is the time of year when people are buying their new diaries and calendars for 2016. Have you fixed your key dates for the new year yet? Make sure you have your handouts ready for the busy Christmas season. Some people need plenty of notice and some forget and need reminding nearer the time. It’s best to help both groups of people!

Welcome! Our new Grace Workers started on the 1st September and hit the ground running. The team worked well together to run a holiday club in Northampton using the Scripture Union material ‘Mega Makers’. Everyone had a wonderful time! Once the children left, there was time for some serious puppet training!



Prayer Requests Please give thanks for Tanita’s return to work after a serious car accident. We are thrilled to have her back with us!

Please pray for good health and additional energy over the Christmas period. It’s such a busy time for everyone and particularly for children’s workers taking advantage of the opportunities at this special time of the year when the community is most interested in visiting their local church.

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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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1st Nov 2015

Mark 12.28-34

The Greatest Commandment

Unlovable?

Ben doesn't like the commandment to 'love our enemies' if that includes the girl down the street. Mel explains he doesn't have to be 'in love' with her and Jesus helps us to be nice to those we find hard to love. Ben agrees to pray about it but doesn't want his Mum eavesdropping!

Theme: Loving someone we find annoying

Roots themes explore: loving God with all our being; loving relationships in the community; the value of ritual in Christian formation

Humour: Ben freaks out at the thought of 'loving' the horrid girl down the street
Mum teases him about her being his girlfriend and marrying her
Both children are greedy when it comes to food – they have a lot in common!
Ben doesn't want his Mum eavesdropping when he prays about this girl

Props: Heart (optional)

Introduction

Ask how people felt when they first fell in love? Can you think of a single word to describe this?

Can anyone remember a time when they were younger than that and boys and girls didn't mix as much? Did anyone go to a single sex school? Was it embarrassing to discuss romantic feelings with your parents?

Introduce the Puppet Sketch 'Unlovable!'

After the Puppet Sketch

Re-inforce that there are different definitions of the word 'love'. Romantic love is very different from the self-less love that Jesus demonstrated. How did Jesus demonstrate His self-less love for us? Do you have any suggestions of how Ben could pray for the girl down the road?

Listen carefully to today's Bible reading. Whom should we love in that unselfish way? What does Jesus say this is more important than?

The Bible Story

Ben	Mum? Please tell me it's not true.
Mel	What? What's not true?
Ben	C'mon mum. Please it can't be true?
Mel	What?
Ben	My life is ruined.
Mel	What are you talking about?
Ben	Is it true that we have to "Love our enemies"? (<i>Bring up heart prop</i>)
Mel	Yes, that is true. Why do you ask?
Ben	That means I have to love my enemies.
Mel	Err! Yes, that is what it says and that is what it means.
Ben	I'm doomed! Doomed, I tell you.
Mel	Surely it's not the end of the world?
Ben	No! You're right mum. It's much worse than that.
Mel	What could be that terrible?
Ben	This means I have to love...
Mel	WHO?
Ben	I have to love...that horrid girl from down the street.
Mel	You are overreacting.
Ben	But mum! You don't understand what it means.
Mel	OK then, tell me. What does it mean?
Ben	If I have to love her it means others will think she is my... my girlfriend!
Mel	C'mon silly. I know she's not your girlfriend. But she isn't that bad is she? She seems a nice girl to me. Why don't you ask her out?
Ben	She's horrible. She watches the boys playing football, makes nasty comments and then wants play with us. We don't let her, of course. Then she cries and runs home to her mother. We call her 'Hoover'!
Mel	Why do you call her 'Hoover'?
Ben	She hoovers up her food as fast as a vacuum cleaner, then burps. (<i>burps</i>)
Mel	That's rich coming from you. We call you "I'm Hungry", 'cos you're always saying you're hungry and just shovel food down your throat. Come to think of it, you two would make a good match.
Ben	Mum! Be serious, will you!
Mel	I'm totally serious. (<i>Pause</i>) So when are you getting married?
Ben	NEVER! We are not getting married, Mum
Mel	OK! OK! Calm Down! Loving your enemies doesn't mean being 'in love' with them. It just means demonstrating compassionate love in practical ways. Like simply being nice to them, forgiving them when they're mean, and praying for them. That's all Ben!
Ben	But it is soooooooooo hard! Can't we just ignore them?
Mel	Come on, Ben, you can do better than that! I bet you wouldn't want Jesus to 'just ignore you'? Maybe you could try praying to God for help?
Ben	Mmmm! OK I'll try praying about her. But no listening Mum! The last thing I need is my mother interrupting with suggesting matchmaking ideas to God. Goodbye!!!

Out of stock

Dixie barks at the charity collection volunteers and Mel makes a donation. Ben prefers to save his pocket money to buy Lego. However the Lego is out of stock and he contributes to the charity after all.

Theme: giving to charity, sacrificially

Roots themes explore: respect for the vulnerable; generosity; challenging greed

Humour: Dixie barking at the charity collectors, knocking their bucket over
Mel makes a donation, but Ben rushes into the shop
Predictably, Mel finds Ben in the Lego section
Ben is devastated that the shelves are empty
Dixie looks at Ben with gooey eyes until he makes a donation too

Props: Bucket
Purse
Coins (plastic or coppers)
£20 note (optional)
Signs saying: 'ASDA' or your nearest store selling Lego
'In the toy section'
'In the car'

Introduction

Has anyone in the congregation collected money for charity? What is the craziest thing anyone has done to help raise money? Have they ever done anything they were scared of for charity like a skydive? How did it feel before the activity and afterwards once it was finished?

Find out what good things the money is used for.

Applaud the work of the fundraisers.

Unfortunately, Dixie is going to bark rather loudly at the people collecting at (your nearest store selling Lego)

Introduce the Puppet Sketch 'Out of stock'

After the Puppet Sketch

How do you think Ben felt after he'd put money into the bucket?

Who can remember how much Mel and Ben gave to the charity?

Which donation could buy more for the charity?

Who had given the biggest percentage of the money they had to God?

Will it hurt Ben to do without his Lego? Supposing Mel had emptied her purse and had none left for food. Would it have hurt them both to fast for a day as a result of Mel's generosity?

What do you think it means to give sacrificially? Which do you think is more important, giving lots of money or giving sacrificially?

As you hear the Bible Reading, listen out for a poor widow who was very generous.

The Bible Story

Dixie	<i>(Loudly)</i> Woof, woof, woof!
Mel	Be quiet Dixie! Why are you barking so loudly
Dixie	<i>(Jumping up and down)</i> Woof, woof, woof!
Mel	Oh! Calm down, Dixie! It's the charity collectors collecting for Famine Relief. Leave them alone. <i>(Dixie knocks the collector's bucket over. The coins spill everywhere)</i> Now look what you've done! <i>(to collectors)</i> I'm so sorry. Let me give you some money. <i>(To self)</i> I have two twenty pound notes here. <i>(to collectors)</i> Here's £20.
Dixie	<i>(Approvingly)</i> Woof, woof!
Mel	Ben, why don't you put some of your pocket money in the bucket? Ben? Ben? Where did that boy go? I'll have to put you back in the car, Dixie, then look for him. In this large store it could take me hours to find him! <i>(Both exit)</i>

In the toy section

Ben	<i>(Enters)</i> I can't wait to get my next Lego figure. They cost £3. Every week I bring £3 from my pocket money to get a new one. Wait... where are they? I'm sure they are always here... Oh no, the shelf is empty! It's not fair, I always get one every single week. I want my Lego man! <i>(Cries humorously, tantrum)</i>
Mel	<i>(Enters from distance)</i> How embarrassing! Look at that, my ten year old son in a tantrum! Ben! Stop that at once and act your age! It's just a little Lego character!
Ben	But Mum! They've run out of Lego figures. The ones I buy every single week.
Mel	Stop being so selfish. These things happen. It's hardly life and death! Did you see the charity buckets collecting for Famine Relief? The people in the picture have nothing. You have loads of Lego. You can manage without more.
Ben	I ran past because I knew you'd suggest I put some of my pocket money in. Then I wouldn't have been able to afford my Lego character.
Mel	As they're out of stock, you might as well be generous.
Ben	<i>(In a grump)</i> NO. I want to get two next week instead
Mel	Oh Ben! I suggest you talk to God about it and see what He wants you to do.
Ben	Shan't!
Mel	If you're in a mood, then I suggest you go and wait in the car with Dixie
Ben	Yeah! I hate shopping! <i>(Both exit)</i>

In the car

Dixie	Woof, woof, woof!
Ben	I'm glad you're my friend. Mum is being cross!
Dixie	Wooooof?
Ben	There's no Lego people left and she wants me to give the money to some charity for people who have no food or something or other.
Dixie	<i>(Pants approvingly and nudges with head towards car door)</i>
Ben	Stop it, not you as well! I hate it when you agree with Mum! Stop looking at me with those gooey eyes! <i>(Dixie whimpers, pause)</i> Oh all right then. Wait here while I give away <u>all</u> my money. <i>(Exits, chuntering 'All I wanted was my Lego man' then returns a few moments later)</i> There, I've given them all my £3 pocket money, happy now?
Dixie	<i>(Happily)</i> Woof, woof, woof! <i>(Jumps up and gives Ben a slobbery kiss)</i>
Ben	I need danger money from you, Dixie. Get down quick! Mum's coming back! <i>(Both exit)</i>

Brick by brick

Ben's little sister (doesn't appear in the flesh until December) has broken the Lego castle Ben built for a competition. Mel helps him to rebuild it, but then Ben drops it!

Theme: Accidents happen and brick buildings don't last forever

Roots themes explore: Sources of security; standing firm in challenging times; looking beyond our horizons

Humour: Sibling squabbles and Ben's 'fake apology'
Mum's not very quick building with Lego, but offers to be a Minion
She's accused of building a shopping mall, whereas Ben wants a Spy Base
Ben rejects her desire to be a superhero
After all their efforts, the Lego castle is dropped and ruined

Props: Lego bricks built into a castle shape (not yet complete)
Sign saying: 'At home'
Sign saying: 'Some time later on'

Introduction

Ask who likes Lego (or any other construction toy)? What's the biggest/most special thing they've ever built? How long did it take? Did they keep it forever or dismantle it? How does it feel when your special construction breaks or has to be dismantled? Anyone who admits to feeling upset at this will sympathise with Ben.

Introduce the Puppet Sketch 'Brick by brick'

After the Puppet Sketch

Ask how Ben felt when his castle Spy Base broke again and there wasn't time to fix it again? Who comforted him? Fortunately real buildings are a bit stronger. How long will your own church building last, do you think? What about a really special building, like Buckingham Palace, Westminster Abbey or a local historic building? Will they last forever? Unfortunately buildings like this can be bombed in times of war.

Jesus predicted such a catastrophe for the Jerusalem Temple. Listen now to His warnings

The Bible Story

Ben	MUM!
Mel	What is it Ben?
Ben	Lily has broken my Lego Castle! The one for the competition.
Mel	I am sure your sister didn't do it on purpose.
Ben	Yes, she did. She knew it was for the competition. She wanted to destroy it.
Mel	No, she didn't. Did she say sorry?
Ben	Yes, she did.
Mel	Did you forgive her?
Ben	(Folding his arms in a strop) Huh!
Mel	Go and forgive her. NOW!
Ben	<i>(Shouts unconvincingly)</i> Lily, I forgive you. <i>(to Mel)</i> Are you happy now? <i>(points to Lego)</i> I'll never get this fixed in time for the competition.
Mel	Come on! You're great with Lego. You'll have it fixed in no time at all.
Ben	Not this castle! It took ages to build.
Mel	Just do it, brick by brick.
Ben	There's no time. The competition opens this afternoon. I have to register before it opens.
Mel	How about I help you rebuild it? We have the technology. We can rebuild it.
Ben	Mum! You're so slow at building Lego and won't know where the pieces go!
Mel	Have a little faith in me and in yourself. Together we can get it done.
Ben	No, there is no time.
Mel	I can be your minion helper and you can tell me where to put the bricks. How cool is that? You get to boss me about!
Ben	OK! You need to listen to me as we rebuild my Lego Spy Base.
Mel	Yes, Sir. <i>(Mel does a salute)</i>
Ben	Let's get to work.
Mel	I've never worked on a Spy Base before. Does this mean I am a master spy now?
Ben	NO , Mum! You're not a spy and that brick doesn't go there. It goes on the other side.
Mel	Oops! Sorry! Is that better? <i>(exit as they keep talking about building then come back up again; prop sign "Sometime later on")</i>
Ben	Mum, we are not building a shopping mall. This castle is a Spy Base.
Mel	Maybe this should be a superhero base because we nailed this so fast.
Ben	Nah! It is still a super-secret Spy Base.
Mel	Aw! I want to be a Superhero! I really want to be a superhero!
Ben	Wow! We did it just in time to get it to the competition!
Mel	See, by working together we got the job done. Let's wrap it up.
Ben	No time for that. I can carry it. Move out the way, Mum. <i>(Ben picks it up, then drops it. It breaks into pieces)</i> Oh no! <i>(Ben's lips quiver)</i>
Mel	Oh Ben! Poor you! Come here and give me a hug. <i>(She comforts him)</i> There will always be more competitions in the future, you will have another chance and we can build an even better Spy Base! But maybe I should carry it to the car next time? <i>(Both exit)</i>

Tell the truth

Ben has witnesses bullying in school. Despite threats from the bullies he bravely reports it the Head Teacher. He feels scared again when there's a power cut and the lights go out in the toilets.

Theme: Telling the truth when you feel scared.

Roots themes explore: How we use our power; listening to the voice of Jesus; testifying to the truth

Humour: Mel mistakenly thinks Ben's visited the Head's office because he was bad
Metaphors e.g. Ben describes his legs as wobbling like a jelly fish
The lights went out while he was in the toilet cubicle

Props: Sign saying: 'At the school gate'

Introduction

Say that schools today have to have an anti-bullying policy. What would you expect that policy to say? (bullying defined; won't be tolerated; what will happen to punish/educate the bully; protection for those reporting it etc.) Ben feels scared of bullies in today's puppet sketch, but still does the right thing.

Introduce the Puppet Sketch 'Tell the truth'

After the Puppet Sketch

Ask whether Ben did the right thing to report the bullying?

It's not always easy to tell the truth in certain circumstances. Can anyone else think of a time where they had to be really brave? Did it work out for Ben in the end? What can we do to help us be brave in really difficult situations?

Jesus was arrested and tried by powerful men. He knew they wouldn't want to hear the truth. Today's Bible story finds Jesus in a very frightening situation.

The Bible Reading

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Mel	You seem very quiet, Ben. What's happened?
Ben	I had to go to the Head's office.
Mel	Oh dear! What did you do? You must have done something really ba....
Ben	<i>(Cutting in)</i> ...good. Don't jump to conclusions, Mum! I did something really brave.
Mel	<i>(Surprised)</i> Oh? <i>(nervously)</i> I'm pleased to hear that – I think!
Ben	Mum! I haven't told you what happened yet...
Mel	Sorry Ben, please tell me what happened. Start at the beginning. Exactly what did happen, how were you brave?
Ben	A boy was being bullied by two older students. Then they saw me and warned me not to say anything.
Mel	Oh Ben that sounds awful. Did you do what the bullies wanted?
Ben	No, I didn't. I ran to the school office... well more like wobbled like a jelly fish trying to cross the dance floor to be honest.
Mel	Good for you. What did you say?
Ben	I told them that a kid was being bullied.
Mel	What happened next?
Ben	When the boys were brought into the office they lied. The kid was too scared to talk and the other boys said I was bullying the boy as well. But I didn't Mum!
Mel	I know Ben. You wouldn't do that.
Ben	It was hard to talk when the bullies were glaring at me, but I told the truth.
Mel	Good for you.
Ben	They had threatened me if I told anyone, but I needed to tell the teachers.
Mel	<i>(Putting her arm around Ben)</i> Yes. That was the right thing for you to do.
Ben	I was so nervous and my insides felt like they were inside a washing machine.
Mel	Well done for being brave!
Ben	The boys were staring at me. I felt like I was going to be the lion's next meal.
Mel	But you weren't were you?
Ben	No! The Head looked at the boys and told them that they had to stop bullying other people. They're going to be punished.
Mel	Great! The bullying has to stop.
Ben	I felt much better as I left the Head's office. I felt proud of myself.
Mel	What did you do then?
Ben	I needed the toilet.
Mel	As you do.
Ben	I was just doing what you do when all of a sudden the lights went off and it was pitch black
Mel	Oh my goodness. What a shock!
Ben	I felt scared again! It was just a power cut, but I thought it was those boys being nasty again. I hid in there for ages, scared to come out.
Mel	How long were you stuck in there?
Ben	I'm not sure but it felt like an eternity! Actually it feels like an eternity since I had anything to eat... Can we go home now? I'm starving!

Is he here yet?

Mel and Ben are waiting for Grandpa for ages. It's boring and Ben wants to go home! Grandpa finally arrives.

Themes: The need for patience waiting for someone special to arrive

Roots themes explore: Fear; finding strength in challenging times; seeing and being signs of hope

Humour: Ben gets bored very easily
Play on the children's car-cry 'Are we there yet?'
Ben vents his frustration by waving Grandpa's toy around wildly
Everyone else in the arrivals lounge has gone

Props: Any Australian gift e.g. kangaroo/Koala toy, boomerang, flag etc.
Sign saying: 'Arrivals'

Introduction

Has anyone had to go to the airport to meet a relative they haven't seen for a long time?

Find out who they were meeting and how long it was since they had last met.

Discover the emotions involved at the start of a family reunion.

Introduce the Puppet Sketch 'Is he here yet?'

After the Puppet Sketch

Speculate how Grandpa would have felt if Mel and Ben hadn't had the patience to keep waiting and gone away. Suggest that Grandpa probably wasn't into modern technology, but what might other people do if they'd been delayed. Express appreciation for texts and mobile phones. Have we ever had to be patient for anything? Can anyone give an example? How did it feel while you were waiting? What did you do to help? Did you forget about the boredom of waiting when it finally happened?

Now listen to the signs that tell us to wait patiently for Jesus' return.

The Bible Story

Ben	<i>(Clutching an Australian toy)</i> MUM! Is he here yet?
Mel	No, honey not yet.
Ben	MUM! <i>(mournful)</i> We have been waiting ages. When is Grandpa coming?
Mel	Soon! Very Soon!
Ben	You said that about a million, gazillion years ago and he still hasn't arrived.
Mel	Well it takes time to get through customs.
Ben	What do you mean?
Mel	Well, once you get off the plane you have to go through customs and then go to pick up your luggage. It all takes time.
Ben	Why? Why isn't he here yet? I'm sooooooooooooo bored.
Mel	Aren't you excited about seeing Grandpa since he has been living in Australia for many years.
Ben	Of course I am! It is just this horrible boring waiting time. Can we go home?
Mel	<i>(Horried)</i> Of course we can't abandon him! Grandpa is expecting us to meet him. Play with the <i>(toy)</i> Grandpa sent you for your birthday. <i>(Ben plays with it somewhat roughly.</i>
Ben	Yeah! Look more people coming out of the doors?
Mel	Keep a watchful eye out for Grandpa.
Ben	Will do! Is he here yet?
Mel	No, still not arrived.
Ben	Oh! This is taking forever!
Mel	Not long now, Love.
Ben	Is he here yet? IS HE HERE YET? IS HE HERE YET?
Mel	NO! And repeating those words will only annoy me and make the wait longer.
Ben	Hummm!
Mel	He's coming, we just have to keep waiting a little longer.
Ben	Oh Man! Christmas comes quicker than Grandpa.
Mel	There does seem to be a delay. I wonder what happened? It's hard waiting so long but it will be worthwhile when you see Grandpa, won't it?
Ben	<i>(Quickly changes from moody face to excited as though he has been distracted!)</i> For sure! I am really looking forward to seeing Grandpa.
Mel	It will be so different to be able to talk to him face to face rather than just on the telephone.
Ben	Will he play games with me and take me out to the park?
Mel	He certainly will do all of that and so much more!
Ben	Is he here yet? I can't see him... wait...YES, THERE HE IS! GRANDPA!
Mel	How did you recognise him when you've never seen him?
Ben	Coz, there's no one else left waiting here!
Mel	I suppose that's true. Why don't you run to him and give him a hug?
Ben	OK Mum. <i>(runs off)</i> Grandpa! Grandpa! Grandpa!

The icy path

Ben and Lily are clearing the path of snow so Grandpa won't slip when he gets back from the doctors. Will he follow the doctor's advice and use a walking stick?

Theme: Following advice to prepare for a slippery journey

Roots themes explore: Making our voices heard; visionary ideals

Humour: Sibling rivalry e.g. Lily dumps snow over Ben
Lily gets tired quickly
Building a snowman
'Do you want to build a snowman' can be sung, as in the film 'Frozen'
Slippery 'dancing' on the snow

Props: Spoons (puppet spades)
Humorous picture of snowman
Torn pieces of white paper representing snow
Signs saying: 'Outside the house'

Introduction

Find out who likes the snow and who doesn't. What do they like/dislike about it?

Discuss who's job it is to clear the pathways around your church. Now watch Ben and his little sister Lily doing that task.

Introduce the Puppet Sketch 'The Icy Path'

After the Puppet Sketch

Two people gave instructions in the sketch. Who were they and what did they ask to be done?

(Mum asked Ben and Lily to clear the path for Grandpa. The Doctor told Grandpa to use his stick.)

What might happen if that advice isn't followed? Why should Grandpa listen to the Doctor? Why should we listen to what the Bible has to say to us? Can we trust and believe what the Bible says?

As you listen to the Bible reading, find out what advice we hear from John.

The Bible Story

Ben	<i>(There are spades on puppet hands for shovelling the snow)</i> Lily? Mum asked both of us to shovel the snow off the path. So do some work!
Lily	Look it's snowing! <i>(Pretends to shovel snow but deliberately puts it all over Ben and giggles)</i>
Ben	Hey! If you want a snowball fight you will seriously lose. Now get shovelling the snow away. Grandpa will be back soon.
Lily	It's nice having Grandpa coming to live with us in time for Christmas. I love his stories.
Ben	Lily! Stop day dreaming and help me clear the snow. If there is snow and ice Grandpa may slip, fall and hurt himself and you don't want that do you?
Lily	No of course not, but why can't Mum do this? I'm tired. <i>(leans over stage, exhausted)</i>
Ben	Tired? Why? You haven't done anything yet! Mum's indoors cooking. So smarty pants that leaves me and you.
Lily	I hope mum is cooking turkey.
Ben	Don't be silly! It's not Christmas yet. This isn't fair. If you don't start to do some work...I'm telling Mum.
Lily	Tell her! Then I will tell her that you put snow down my back.
Ben	Don't give me ideas!
Lily	You are so mean!
Ben	No I'm not. <i>(Shoves Lily who slips on ice)</i>
Lily	Are so!
Ben	Do you want to build a snowman?
Lily	Yes, let's.
Ben	OK! You get that snow that you have cleared for the head and I will get the snow I cleared to make the body.
Lily	Is this enough?
Ben	Yes it looks like it! Now roll it up carefully. <i>(Puppets pretend to roll the snow)</i>
Lily	Done! <i>(Hold up pic of snowman)</i>
Ben	C'mon I'll race you to clear the rest of the snow from the path and the drive. <i>(Ben frantically starts to shovel the snow.)</i>
Lily	Hey! That is not fair you are bigger and stronger than me.
Ben	What? I can't hear you.
Lily	Can't we just leave it?
Ben	No! We need to prepare the way for Grandpa, so he won't slip on it.
Lily	He won't slip if he uses his walking stick like the doctor told him to.
Ben	Even with his walking stick, he might fall. It's very slippery.
Lily	Yeah, it's good for dancing on. <i>(Does slippery movements, shrieking happily)</i>
Ben	Yeah! That looks funny! Watch this! <i>(shows off his dancing but then falls over comically)</i>
Lily	<i>(Giggling)</i> That was funny!
Ben	Only because I wasn't hurt! Now stop giggling and get back to work.
Lily	OK Billy Elliot! <i>(Both start shovelling gradually moving off the stage)</i>

Walkies in the snow

Despite the snow outside, Dixie still wants to go out for a walk. Lily offers her spare coat so that Dixie doesn't get cold. Mel doesn't want to take Dixie out, but Lily talks her into it.

Theme: Sharing with others; getting an adult do what can't be done by a young child

Roots themes explore: What we mean by 'enough is enough'; judgement and repentance; living ethically

Humour: Dixie wants to go out in the cold
Lily thinks Dixie will 'die' without a daily walk
Dixie looks funny in Lily's old coat
Mum is very reluctant to go out with Dixie

Props: Lily's coat (can just be a piece of cloth or clothing)
Signs saying: 'By the front door'

Introduction

Show the congregation your warm winter coat and any other garments suitable for cold weather (or hiking)

Find out whether anyone has invested in warm clothing for their pets.

How bad does the weather have to be before pet dogs have to do without their 'walkies'?

In the puppet sketch, Dixie the dog still wants to go 'walkies' despite the snow outside.

Introduce the Puppet Sketch 'Walkies in the Snow'

After the Puppet Sketch

Lily had an old coat she didn't need any more. Who admits to owning more than one coat?

What makes us have a larger wardrobe than we really need? (e.g. the fun of shopping, keeping up with the Jones', not wanting to lose clothes we've been fond of, hoping clothes will fit again after losing weight etc.)

In modern times, how can we appropriately share with people in the third world?

Notice that Lily did what she could for Dixie by offering her coat, but recognised that she's too young to take Dixie out in the snow and asked her Mum to do this. Why do you think Lily can't take Dixie out by herself? It's important to share tasks around so we can accomplish goals the best we can! As you listen to the Bible reading, notice how John refers to the coming of someone greater.

The Bible Story

Dixie	Woof, woof, what's all that white stuff outside. I want to investigate! Woowoof!
Lily	<i>(Enters)</i> What's the matter, Dixie?
Dixie	<i>(Jumping excitedly)</i> Woof, woowoof!
Lily	Ah! You want to go walkies!
Dixie	<i>(Dixie nods head, panting)</i>
Lily	It's freezing cold out there.
Dixie	<i>(Dixie shivers noisily)</i>
Lily	You can't go outside without a coat, you'll die!
Dixie	<i>(Dixie coughs and rolls over, playing dead)</i>
Lily	Poor Dixie!
Dixie	<i>(Whimpers comically)</i>
Lily	You can have my old coat, Dixie. Wait there while I get it. <i>(exits)</i>
Dixie	<i>(Sniggering)</i> I'll be the best dressed dog in (your town) .
Lily	<i>(Returning)</i> Here you are, Dixie. Let me put this over you. <i>(Coat covers Dixie incl. head)</i>
Dixie	<i>(Tossing head)</i> Grrrrrr <i>(Coat falls off altogether)</i>
Lily	Oh dear. Put it back on, Dixie. <i>(Lily puts it over Dixie's eyes again)</i>
Dixie	<i>(Tossing head)</i> Grrrrrr
Lily	Not over your head, you silly dog. Let me move it up and tie it on. That's better!
Dixie	<i>(After the adjustments)</i> Yap, yap, yap <i>(scratches at the door)</i>
Lily	I'm not allowed to take you out by myself. I'll have to call Mum. <i>(shouts)</i> Mum!
Mel	<i>(Shouting from offstage)</i> Yes Lily. I'm busy.
Lily	Dixie wants to go walkies!
Mel	It's too cold out in the snow.
Lily	I've given Dixie my old coat.
Mel	What about me? It's too cold for me !
Lily	Please, Mum! Dixie really, really, really wants to go!
Mel	And I really, really, really don't want to go!
Dixie	<i>(Whimpers loudly)</i>
Lily	Dixie says, 'Pleeeeeease'.
Mel	Oh, all right then. Give me five minutes and I'll come.
Lily	Good news, Dixie. Mum will take you out after all! I suppose it is best if she comes with us. Yippee <i>(Both jump up and down noisily. The coat falls off again)</i> Put my coat back on, Dixie. We don't want you, or Mum, dying of cold. <i>(Puts coat back on and they both continue to jump about noisily as they move offstage)</i> Yippee, walkies time!

Memories

Mel is pleased that her Dad has returned from Australia and come to live with the family. They enjoy remembering funny events from her childhood.

Theme: The importance of family and spending special time together with a close relative

Roots themes explore: Human and divine stories; being generations together; God working through the lowly

Humour: Various situations remembered from the past

Props: Sign saying: 'At home'

Introduction

Does anyone in the congregation have some humorous memories from their own or their children's childhood that they would like to share? Enjoy listening to these. Are they funnier now looking back at them? Who are the people they are most likely to share these memories with and in what situations?

Introduce the Puppet Sketch 'Memories'

After the Puppet Sketch

Did you notice which event was the most memorable of all? (Holding a baby for the first time.) Discuss the feelings associated with the birth of a baby.

The arrival of a new family member is one of the times when family members get together to exchange and share their 'stories'. Now hear about the meeting of two cousins, both of them pregnant.

The Bible Story

Grandpa	It is so good to be living with you and back from Australia.
Mel	Glad to have you back. I have missed having you around, Dad.
Grandpa	I do like being around for you and the chats that we can have together.
Mel	Remembering the funny things that happened when I was just a kid.
Grandpa	Do you remember getting your skirt stuck on the railings at the park? You'd tried to jump over the fence and ended up swinging from the spikes?
Mel	Oh yes! I do! It felt like I was swinging for ages.
Grandpa	It took quite a while to lift you up high enough to set you free.
Mel	Everyone was watching me. It was so embarrassing!
Grandpa	You were always one for getting into crazy situations.
Mel	Me? What about that time when you took us to hillwalking?
Grandpa	What about it?
Mel	We had to cross the river on the slippery stepping stones. You reassuringly said "Everything would be OK". Wasn't quite true at the time was it?
Grandpa	It was in the end!
Mel	Yeah! After getting stuck in the middle and sinking in the mud.
Grandpa	I got you out by giving you a piggy back.
Mel	Then you fell over, getting both of us soaking wet!
Grandpa	Remember the times when you first started school and didn't want to go?
Mel	What was it I used to say when I had stomach ache?
Grandpa	I have a bouncy tummy.
Mel	Oh yeah! A bouncy tummy. <i>(Both Laugh)</i>
Grandpa	Remember when you went on Christmas theme park white knuckle ride.
Mel	Oh yes! That was so funny! It was so cold and so bumpy!
Grandpa	Was it the boy in front of you or the one behind you that was sick?
Mel	It was the boy in front of me who threw up on to the kid in front of him.
Grandpa	Poor kid didn't even notice the boy had thrown up on him.
Mel	No! Not till near the end of the ride when he turned to his mum and told her "I think the ice is melting. I can feel it running down my back". Yuck! Disgusting, but funny!
Grandpa	My, how you have grown up into my pride and joy? You have kids of your own now. I'm sure you have plenty of stories already!
Mel	Yes, kids tend to grow up.
Grandpa	Yep, they do and it seems so fast.
Mel	I'll tell you what though, Dad. Having children is the best thing I ever did.
Grandpa	I know what you mean. Holding that tiny little bundle for the first time, nothing can compare can it?
Mel	So precious! So delicate but at the same time so strong.
Grandpa	You're doing a great job bringing them up. They are perfect!
Mel	Thanks Dad. <i>(Screeches heard from off-stage)</i> Ah, only nearly perfect, I think! <i>(both exit)</i>

Bright light

Lily opens a Christmas present. It's a book called 'The Lighthousekeeper's Lunch'. She and Mel discuss what it must have been like living on a lighthouse over Christmas.

Theme: The birth of Jesus brought light into the world
Roots themes explore: The spiritual significance of the home; light in the darkness

Humour: The fun you can have in a lighthouse

Props: Sign saying: 'Lily's bedroom'

Introduction

Find out what Christmas presents have been opened this morning. Enjoy hearing about the pleasure/joy/fun experienced by the recipients.

Lily is just opening her first Christmas present. Let's find out what it is!

Introduce the Puppet Sketch 'Bright Light'

After the Puppet Sketch

Mel and Lily thought it must have been fun to live in a lighthouse. Ask what fun things could the lighthouse keeper do at Christmas? It was good that Mel reminded Lily that the most important thing about the lighthouse is to shine a light for sailors to see. It's the same for us too, we have been given the fantastic bright light of sharing the Good news of the Gospel with others and we have the responsibility at Christmas to make sure all our friends know that the baby Jesus in the stable can guide them through the rough times in life too!

Whilst having an exciting Christmas, let's remember that the most important part of the season is to remember the birth of Jesus, the light of the world. What do we mean by saying that Jesus is the Light of the World?

The Bible Story

Lily	Hi Mum! I've found Santa's pillowcase. I think this is a book?
Mel	<i>(Entering)</i> You're probably right. What's it called?
Lily	Let's see. <i>(opens parcel)</i> 'The Lighthouse Keeper's Lunch'.
Mel	That's one of my favourites. Santa chose well!
Lily	Mum? Why do we have lighthouses?
Mel	To warn ships that they are near to the shore and not to crash on the rocks.
Lily	Don't the ships have computers and sat navs to do that?
Mel	Yes, they do now, but a really bright extra warning light can help too.
Lily	With that bright light, how do people inside sleep. It's not a little night light!
Mel	No, it's much brighter. The bedrooms need to have thick, blackout curtains.
Lily	Why are lighthouses so tall?
Mel	So that ships can see the light from far off.
Lily	I wouldn't want to climb all those stairs.
Mel	How would you get to the top then?
Lily	I would put a lift in or use one of those chairs that go up the stairs.
Mel	A chair lift?
Lily	Yes, I'd zoom up and down on it. Wheeee! <i>(Lily mimes being on the chair lift)</i>
Mel	I suppose that would save your legs from all that exercise of climbing the stairs?
Lily	They could have a fireman's pole or a slide to come down. How cool!
Mel	Like a Helter Skelter?
Lily	A what?
Mel	Those big slides at the fairgrounds.
Lily	Oh! OK! Who looks after the lighthouse in the Christmas holidays?
Mel	They're all run by computer now. Once they were all manned by a lonely people living all by themselves.
Lily	Would Santa find them there to bring their Christmas presents?
Mel	He would if they put up Christmas decorations, like a 'Santa stop here' sign.
Lily	They'd have to order a proper Christmas lunch with turkey, Christmas pudding and lunch. It would all have to come across on that washing line!
Mel	And after eating a big Christmas lunch there'd be important work to do. They mustn't let themselves fall asleep and forget why they were there.
Lily	Would they really have to work at Christmas?
Mel	Of course! Checking that the bright light kept shining all the time. That would be more important than opening their Christmas presents.
Lily	I'd rather be at home for Christmas, not missing out on all the Christmas fun.
Mel	All the fun things that can make us forget what Christmas is really about.
Lily	I know all about that. Christmas is Jesus' birthday!
Mel	Yes, that's it! Never forget Lily that Christmas is the birth of Jesus bringing light to the world.
Lily	Not just a little night light, but a massive, great, bright, lighthouse light!
Mel	Talking of light, let's open your curtains and have you out of bed, I'm Ben will be around somewhere, waiting for someone to play with!
Lily	<i>(Groaning)</i> Yes Mum!

Where is she?

Mel and Lily go to the sales. Mel loses Lily and panics. She'd gone to look at the kittens in the pet shop. Where else would she be?

Theme: Mum needs to know the answer to the question 'Where is Lily?'

Roots themes explore: Holy families; growing up; questioning and reflecting

Humour: Relaxing retail therapy turns into a nightmare with Mum freaking out

Props: Sign saying: 'The High Street'

Introduction

Who plans to go to the post Christmas sales?

What do they plan to get?

Is it a relaxing or a stressful experience? Why do you think some people love the sales and some people hate them?

Introduce the Puppet Sketch 'Memories'

After the Puppet Sketch

Has anyone had that experience of losing their child? What was going through your mind when you realised they were missing?

Where were they? Could they laugh about it afterwards or was it just too horrible?

We can all sympathise with Mary and Joseph as the 'freak out' looking for their lost son in today's Bible story.

The Bible Story

Lily	Mum, I'm ready for our traditional 'girls go shopping' to the sales trip! I've got my new handbag and my Christmas money.
Mel	I'm ready too, sweetheart.
Lily	Can we get a mince pie after shopping?
Mel	Yes of course we can. We will go to that nice café as a treat.
Lily	Look there' the pet shop!
Mel	<i>(Distracted)</i> Yes looks lovely Lily... <i>(Lily exits – Mum doesn't notice)</i>
Mel	Ben wants some more Lego and superhero stuff! Hmm! Will get those later on.
Mel	Ooh! Look at that. Grandpa will love that.
Mel	Hey Lily? Do you think Grandpa will like this sweater? <i>(Mel looks all around)</i>
Mel	Lily? Where are you?
Mel	LILY? Stop playing games now and come out.
Mel	Lily, Where are you? <i>(Moves around and looks around)</i>
Mel	Come on Lily. This is not funny.
Mel	Lily? <i>(panicking)</i>
Customer	<i>(Voice from behind the stage)</i> Are you alright?
Mel	Do I look alright? I have lost my daughter and you ask if I am alright? Of course I'm NOT alright.
Customer	<i>(voice from behind the stage)</i> Not to worry love. It happens to the best of us.
Mel	Have you ever lost you kids in the store?
Customer	<i>(voice from behind the stage)</i> Well! No I haven't actually.
Mel	Then this doesn't happen to the best of us does it?
Mel	<i>(Exaggeratedly mournful)</i> I'm a terrible mother. My kids are going to need so much therapy!
Customer	<i>(Voice from behind the stage)</i> However, I was going to say that I saw a little girl in the pet shop.
Mel	Oh! Really! Thank you so much. <i>(Mel moves to the other side)</i>
Mel	<i>(Relieved)</i> Lily! There you are. I worried so much I was having kittens.
Lily	<i>(Now reappeared)</i> That's great I've always wanted some pet kittens.
Mel	Why did you run off? I have been searching everywhere for you.
Lily	Why were you searching? Of course I would be here! Where else would I be?
Mel	I was worried sick. Come here and give me a big hug. <i>(They hug)</i>
Lily	This is my favourite shop. This is where I would be!
Mel	Yes I guess so!
Lily	Shall we go and get that mince pie now?
Mel	Absolutely, I think I might need two!