

11-14 appendix



Day 1

Jesus' childhood

Bible readings

- Luke 2:41-52 The boy Jesus at the Temple: bit.ly/3Su6eK8
- Matthew 13: 31-32 Parable of the mustard seed: bit.ly/4b9v7SB

We don't really know much about Jesus' childhood, do we? We have the Christmas birth stories and then we skip a load of years until we come to the story of Jesus in the temple.

What happened between Jesus and his family returning from Egypt and today's story when we are told he is 12 years old? We know from the Bible passage that Jesus' family went to the temple in Jerusalem every year – did Jesus go with them every year? Or was this the first time he went with them? In the Jewish faith, a boy doesn't 'come of age' until he's had his Bar Mitzvah – when he's 13 (girls celebrate their Bat Mitzvah when they are 12). There is no record of Jesus having a Bar Mitzvah (it only really started in the fifth century) but some believe that this Bible passage suggests that he did, because going to Jerusalem for the Passover was a requirement for Jewish men.

What are the important things that happened to you growing up between when you were born and when you went to secondary school?

Activity

Using a pen and paper, draw a timeline of your life from birth to now. Mark on your timeline the events that you think were significant (eg birthdays, starting school, getting a pet, moving house.)

Discuss

Are there similarities between your timeline and those of the others in your group? Which life events might Jesus have included in his timeline?

Question

I wonder why the people that compiled the Bible didn't include anything else about Jesus growing up?

Day 2

Jesus' baptism

Bible reading

- Matthew 3: 13-17 The baptism of Jesus: bit.ly/3SrmBXO
- Matthew 5: 15-16 Parable of the lamp on a stand: bit.ly/3Ubm1OZ

Jesus was baptised by his cousin, John, in the River Jordan when he was about 30 years old. Nowadays, although some churches practice 'adult baptism' we are more likely to be baptised when we are children or babies. We don't have the knowledge or understanding of what is happening in baptism – which is why we have Godparents to make promises on our behalf.

Discussion

What do you think baptism means? Why do we do it? Are you baptised? How old were you when you were baptised? Does not being baptised mean that God doesn't love you as much?

We understand baptism as being welcomed into God's family. Jesus is the Son of God – did he really need to be baptised?

Activity

Using your phones or a laptop, look on the internet to explore the different baptism beliefs of Christian denominations (eg Roman Catholic, Baptist and United Reformed Church). Which do you agree with? Do any make you feel uncomfortable?

Day 3

Jesus' ministry

Bible reading

- Matthew 22: 36-40 The Greatest Commandment: bit.ly/3u0CQSm
- Luke 10: 25-37 Parable of the Good Samaritan: bit.ly/48LDhyU

Do you know people who, when you ask them a question, give you more of an answer than you need? The Pharisee asked Jesus "What is the most important commandment?" and Jesus told him what the TWO most important commandments are! Is that too much information? Or is Jesus making an important point?

Sometimes, too much information is as difficult to deal with as too little.

Activity

Play a game of 20 Questions (sometimes called 'Animal, Vegetable or Mineral') in which the group have to guess the 'identity' of a player by asking questions – but the player can only answer 'yes' or 'no'.

Discussion

Which is more frustrating – too much information or too little? Why do you think that?

Jesus used the Parable of the Good Samaritan to make the point about who are 'good neighbours'. If Jesus was telling that parable today, what group of people might the Good Samaritan have come from?

Activity

Using headlines/articles from newspapers, create a collage of individuals, or groups of people, that might be the modern day 'Good Samaritan'. Share it with your church or group and invite them to pray for the people in your collage, remembering that God loves them every bit as much as God loves us.

Day 4

The way back – Jesus' death and resurrection

Bible reading

- Matthew 27: 32-54 and 28: 1-10 Jesus death and resurrection: bit.ly/3St5QLG; bit.ly/3Udv6a6
- Luke 15: 11-32 Prodigal son: bit.ly/3Hs8dZ9

Believing that Jesus rose from the dead (came back to life) is a central belief to all Christian denominations. In the Apostle's Creed (as used in the Church Of England), it is summed up as:

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

('Creed' comes from the Latin word 'Credo' which means 'I Believe').

Activity

Using your phone or laptop, look up examples of the Apostle's Creed to see the full text and compare it with the Nicene Creed (as used in the Roman Catholic Church). What are the similarities and differences? Can you find any other examples of 'creeds' used in churches?

Go out and be – Jesus commission and ascension

Bible reading

- Matthew 28: 16-20 The Great Commission: bit.ly/3u2sDoo
- Luke 24: 50-53 Ascension of Jesus: bit.ly/3OdV7Cr
- Luke 14: 15-24 Parable of the Great Banquet: bit.ly/491r20S

Have you ever been invited to a party or an event to which you didn't want to go? What excuses did you make up? Which do the group think is the most inventive excuse?

The Parable of the Great Banquet would seem to suggest that people gave some great excuses for not being able to go to a banquet organised by an important person in, presumably, a posh venue (maybe that is why it is described as 'great') so the Master told his servants to go and invite people who would not normally get to go to such an event.

Discussion

What sort of people do you think were originally invited? Why might they not have wanted to go? How do you think the people who were invited by the servants felt when they were allowed in? The Master was clearly very angry that his initial guests turned his invitation down – do you think they deserved the punishment that they received (never to eat with the Master again)?

Activity

If you were to organise a 'great banquet' what would be on the menu and whom would you invite? What would you do if people didn't turn up?

Some people suggest that this was Jesus saying that, if the Jews didn't want to hear his message of God's Kingdom, then he would share it with anyone who wanted to listen – no matter who they were. This might not have been the first time he thought this – look at Matthew 15: 21-28, what do you think that tells you about who Jesus was coming to save?

We looked at the baptism of Jesus in our first session. In one of today's passages, Jesus tells his followers to "go and make followers of all people in the world. Baptize them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit."

Do you think this means that anyone can baptise other people?

