

Starting small – Jesus's childhood

Bible readings



The boy Jesus
at the Temple, Luke 2:41-52 bit.ly/3Su6eK8

Parable of the mustard seed, Matthew 13:31-32 bit.ly/3SrmcEM

Bible video

- Jesus in the temple – Saddleback kids bit.ly/47GkNP2
- Parable of the Mustard Seed: Parish of Moulsecomb bit.ly/3u2rtt2

Arrival activity

Baby Bunting

Depending on numbers, time and space in the room, either have three triangles of thin card for each person or have one triangle of thin card for each person but divide the triangle into three parts. Provide coloured crayons and felt tip pens for children to decorate the triangles (ask the adult helpers to have made theirs in advance). One card or part of card is to represent them as a baby – what was special about them? One card or part of card is to represent them now – what is special about them now? The third card or part of card is to represent them in the future – what are their hopes and dreams for the future? As triangles are decorated, they can be stapled onto a long piece of ribbon which can be used to hang the bunting up around the hall. Completion of this activity can earn campers the “Starting Small” badge.

Story

Jesus in the Temple

“I mean, seriously! There’s no need for this. I can’t even go and talk with my friends without one of them calling me back to them. They’re treating me like I’ve done something wrong, like it’s all my fault. They’re my parents! They should have known where I was! Did they bother to check the temple before they left Jerusalem? No. Did they bother to check that their son was in the group? No. Did they bother, at any point during the day, to check the group to see where I was? No! Yet, somehow, it’s all my fault, they were worried, they thought I’d gotten lost, blah, blah, blah.

I mean, I’m not some silly little kid! I’m 12! I’m practically a man and yet here they are, treating me like a kid. Wish I was back in the temple.

I really loved it in there. I felt really close to Him....y’know, Abba, my dad. That’s why I stayed on and didn’t leave with the others. It was so great listening to all the teachers and asking them

questions. They were so surprised that I could understand what they were teaching! I don't know why. I mean, come on, there isn't much that I don't know about Abba. I asked them questions, especially when they hadn't always quite understood what the scriptures were telling them about Him. They listened and thought on it. It's really cool that they listened to me. They didn't treat me like a kid. Not like mum and dad, my other dad. Yes, I have two dads, deal with it.

I'm so annoyed at them for treating me like I did something wrong! But, if I'm honest, I do feel really bad. If you'd seen their faces when they came to the temple, especially mum's. She'd been crying, she thought she was never going to see me again. My heart broke when I saw her and I wanted to cry and then I looked at dad. His eyes were full of fear and heartache. Then he saw me, and he smiled and then cried a little.

They were really scared. Maybe I should have told someone that I was going to stay on at the temple. I mean, I shouldn't have to, but ... didn't mean to worry them.

I really love them. Abba placed me with my mum and dad for good reason. They love me so much.

Ugh, don't you just hate it when you realise that you were possibly, only very slightly, in the wrong? I'll make it up to them. I'll be the best son they could ever wish for! And as for having to stay close by them for the trip home, well, at least I get their undivided attention! Silver linings and all that."

Parable

Tiny as tiny can be, I hold something precious in my hand.

I open my fingers and thumb ... are you ready? One – two – three – four – five.

Do you see it? Tiny as tiny can be?

Small, and brown and round and oh, so dead looking. What do you think it could be?

It's a seed, of course. A tiny tiny seed. It's a mustard seed. And hidden away in this tiny seed is a glimpse of God's wonderful kingdom. Let me share the story. Story, story, story ...

A person once had a mustard seed – just one. It wasn't enough to put on a sandwich to give it some extra seasoning. It wasn't enough to start a farm and go into business selling mustard plants. It wasn't big enough to put in a bird feeder to feed a hungry sparrow or finch. It just sat there on the table, doing nothing.

The person picked up the seed between their fingers, rolled it around thoughtfully for a moment or two, and then went outside. They found a piece of earth, pulled out the weeds and loosened the soil. Perfect – not too damp and not too dry, not too sunny and not too shaded. Deep into the soil they planted the little seed, tenderly patted the soil around it, gave it a drink of water to get it going, and then waited.

First a tiny glimpse of green among the dark dull grains of earth, and then a tiny green shoot appeared. The life that had been stored inside the seed was bursting out and growing and growing and growing. First a shoot and then a plant. First a plant and then a shrub. First a shrub and then a tree. And still it grew and grew and grew.

No longer locked in a tiny seed, the mustard tree grew until it was so big that it provided shelter for the birds of the air to build their nests.

This story is a parable, a picture story, of course. I wonder what it tells us about God's kingdom.

Campfire song

Sing to the tune – The Farmer's in the Dell (start the song quite low and increase the note up the scales as you sing each verse, have fun getting higher and higher).

We've got a mustard seed,
We've got a mustard seed,
Hi-ho, the derry-o,
We've got a mustard seed.

We all plant the seed,
We all plant the seed,
Hi-ho, the derry-o,
We all plant the seed.

The seed begins to grow,
The seed begins to grow,
Hi-ho, the derry-o,
The seed begins to grow.

It grows into a tree,
It grows into a tree,
Hi-ho, the derry-o,
It grows into a tree.

The birds come to the tree,
The birds come to the tree,
Hi-ho, the derry-o,
The birds come to the tree.

The tree becomes a home,
The tree becomes a home,
Hi-ho, the derry-o,
The tree becomes a home.

The tree, drops its seeds,
The tree, drops its seeds,
Hi-ho the derry-o,
The tree, drops its seeds.

The seed begins to grow,
The seed begins to grow,
Hi-ho the derry-o,
The seed begins to grow.



Start the song over again from here if you want to, adding fun actions using hands or the full body.

Wondering questions

- I wonder where you see God in today's stories and in your story.
- I wonder what one thing you liked best from today's stories.
- I wonder what you will remember about today's stories and maybe share with someone else.

What's your story?

- Can you share the story of a time you got lost?
- Can you share the story of a time you helped or taught someone much older or younger than you?
- Can you share the story of the first time you heard about Jesus or that God loved you?

Small group prayer

Growing Tree Prayers

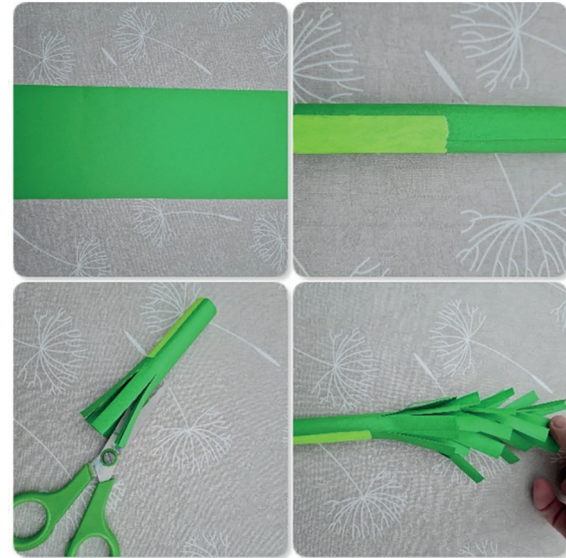
What you need:

- Green paper A4 cut in half lengthways
- Sticky tape or glue
- Scissors.

What you do:

1. Give everyone a piece of paper. Invite everyone to think about their hopes and dreams for what they would like to see grow or develop (eg freedom, confidence, happiness etc) and to write or draw them on the paper.
2. From the short edge of the paper, with the prayers on the inside, roll it up to make a tube. Stick the edge with tape from the bottom to approximates halfway up the tube, leaving the other half loose. From the open end, make slits down to the halfway point at about 1cm intervals. This will make the leaves of your growing tree. Younger children may need help with the cutting.
3. Sit in a circle. Each person needs to hold the base of their prayer tree firmly in one hand. From the cut end of the tube, slowly pull up from the centre and watch as your prayers grow into a tree. As the trees grow, you can say the prayer together:

Thank you, Lord, for helping me grow... I am growing with you. Thank you, Lord, for all good things... I am growing with you. Thank you, Lord, for being my friend... I am growing with you.
Amen.



Activity/craft

Small Things

What you need:

- Some spent match-sticks or cut up wooden skewer
- Embroidery thread
- Wool
- Small beads
- Silver foil
- Pipe cleaners
- Small pieces of pasta or rice.



What you do:

This activity is an open ended creative activity making small people, animals and objects in a variety of ways. You could use match sticks wrapped in wool or embroidery thread or create some small figures using crunched up foil or shaping pipe cleaners. You might use thread or glue to join pieces together. You could use pasta to create small things and use felt pens to draw on them. Why not create a group of miniature things to retell the story.

(Remember that very small hands or children/adults with fine motor skill difficulties may need extra support with this activity but without the leader taking control of the creativity – ensure that the children are given instructions if they need help).

STEM activity

Things in a matchbox

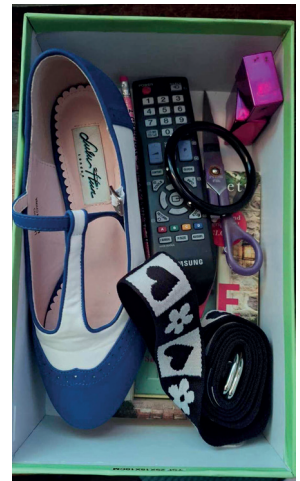
What you need:

- Small matchbox or small box
- Small items (seeds, buttons, coins, marbles, rubbers, beads, small Lego pieces, small marshmallows, stones, flower heads, leaves)
- Small sticky white labels
- Felt tips.



What you do:

1. First decorate the small white sticky label and stick it to the top of the matchbox. You could write the words... 'starting small but growing with God'. Search the area you are in for things which fit into the matchbox. If you have access to an outside space, this can be an ideal opportunity for this, otherwise use the items provided. How much can you fit in your matchbox?
2. Talk together about how things might start small but can grow ... such as ideas, a seed, a person or pet, a thought, a prayer.
3. You may want to extend the activity find a bigger box to put all the individual matchboxes in – or a series of boxes getting bigger – to show that small starts can have a bigger impact when they are put together, too.



Recipe

Popcorn

What you need:

- Popcorn kernels
- Three tablespoons oil (if you are using the pan method)
- A heavy based saucepan and lid and an oven top OR a popcorn machine OR a microwave oven, a pyrex glass bowl and a ceramic plate to act as a lid
- Toppings: sugar, butter and salt, melted chocolate
- A big bowl to serve.



What you do:

Pan method: This will need to be done by an adult!

1. Put the oil in a large heavy-based pan over a medium heat. Add a small number of popcorn kernels, cover with a lid and leave to pop (this can take up to five minutes). This will show you that the oil is now hot enough.

2. Remove the pan from the heat and uncover. Add all the remaining corn, cover with the lid and shake the pan to mix the corn with the hot oil. Set aside for one minute to rest and come to an even temperature.
3. Return the pan to the heat. Shake every now and again as the rest of the kernels pop – you may need to crack the lid slightly to let a little steam out. When the popping has really slowed down, remove from the heat.

Microwave method:

Add the popcorn kernels to a medium to large glass bowl (make sure it's tempered glass) and place a ceramic dinner plate on top of the bowl to act as a lid. Microwave for three to five minutes, then stop when you hear a few seconds between pops.

Popcorn machine method:

Place the popcorn into the machine and let the popping begin. Remember that it does get hot so this needs to be carefully supervised.

You can add lots of different flavours to your popcorn, sweet or savoury. Toss with any flavourings while still hot, then allow to cool slightly before serving.

Games

Balloon Tree

Start with a bag of balloons and a roll of tape for each team.

On "GO", teams will have a pre-set amount of time to build a balloon tree using the balloons and tape they have. They need to blow up the balloons (you may choose to supply a manual balloon pump) and then tape them together as best they can. They are not allowed to tape the tree to the floor or anything else, and once the time is up the tree must stand for ten seconds without falling over. You could even provide each group with an origami bird or an Easter chick to sit in the tree and this must stay balanced in the tree without falling for ten seconds. The winning team is the team with the tallest tree.



Find Jesus

Use a model (eg from a nativity set) or cardboard cut out with a picture of Jesus on it and, when the group are busy doing something else, hide Jesus somewhere in the room. The challenge is to be the first person to 'find' Jesus. An alternative is to hide lots of images from the life of Jesus around the room and put a party blower with each one. As each child finds a picture, they stand on the spot and just keep blowing their party blower until everyone has found one. Be aware that some children (and adults) may struggle with the noise and need the option to sit this game out in a quieter space.

Large group prayer

Movement Prayer

Everyone makes themselves as small as possible, using the smallest voice they have to pray, and say together: God, I'm only small but help me grow in your love. Then repeat this line four to six times, each time making themselves a little bigger and a little louder until they are almost shouting and are as wide as possible.

Then, to finish, jump up and shout Amen.

