



May 2020

Down by the river

Theme for today: sharing the story of Jesus

How do people get to hear about Jesus? Sometimes the story of Jesus is shared in surprising ways! There is a great diversity of people who are searching for answers in life.

The bible passage is Acts 8:26-39

An angel of the Lord spoke to Philip. The angel said, “Get ready and go south on the road that leads down to Gaza from Jerusalem—the road that goes through the desert.”

²⁷ So Philip got ready and went. On the road he saw a man from Ethiopia. He was a eunuch and an important official in the service of Candace, the queen of the Ethiopians. He was responsible for taking care of all her money. This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship. ²⁸ Now he was on his way home. He was sitting in his chariot reading from the book of Isaiah the prophet.

²⁹ The Spirit said to Philip, “Go to that chariot and stay near it.” ³⁰ So he went toward the chariot, and he heard the man reading from Isaiah the prophet. Philip asked him, “Do you understand what you are reading?”

³¹ The man answered, “How can I understand? I need someone to explain it to me.” Then he invited Philip to climb in and sit with him. ³² The part of the Scriptures that he was reading was this:

“He was like a sheep being led to the butcher.

He was like a lamb that makes no sound as its wool is being cut off.

He said nothing.

³³ He was shamed, and all his rights were taken away.

His life on earth has ended.

So there will be no story about his descendants.”

³⁴ The official said to Philip, “Please, tell me, who is the prophet talking about? Is he talking about himself or about someone else?” ³⁵ Philip began to speak. He started with this same Scripture and told the man the Good News about Jesus.

³⁶ While they were traveling down the road, they came to some water. The official said, “Look, here is water! What is stopping me from being baptized?” ³⁷ ³⁸ Then the official ordered the chariot to stop. Both Philip and the official went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. ³⁹ When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord took Philip away; the official never saw him again. The official continued on his way home. He was very happy.

Activities to do at home

1. Guess the number of coffee beans in a jar

Here’s a picture of coffee beans in a jar. Can you guess the number of coffee beans contained?



Please send in your guess somehow – e-mail, telephone or on our Facebook page.

Our story today is about a man from Ethiopia, where coffee came from. This man wanted to find out about God. You could make up your own jar of coffee beans and have a family competition to guess how many there are.

Talk about how it's impossible to know exactly how many beans are in the jar without counting them. But God knows – and he knows us all individually too. God even sent Philip to one particular person who wanted to hear about Jesus.

2 Cup chariot

You will need: paper cups; scissors; lolly sticks; cut-out wheels; split pins; coloured pens

Cut out the back of the cup as shown in the photo. Make two slots to put the pop sticks in as the shaft, and use split pins to fix wheels to either side. Using coloured pens, you can colour and decorate your chariot.



Talk about how people used to travel in Bible times.

3 Make a scroll

You will need: large lolly sticks; paper; coloured pens

Make a scroll out paper and large lolly sticks. Glue the sticks on to the top and bottom of the paper.



Write on to the scroll the words of Isaiah 53:7-8 which the Ethiopian official was reading:

“He was like a sheep being led to the butcher.

He was like a lamb that makes no sound as its wool is being cut off.

He said nothing.

³³ He was shamed, and all his rights were taken away.

His life on earth has ended.

So there will be no story about his descendants”.

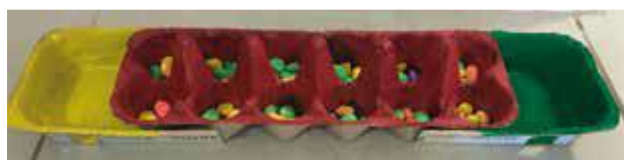
Or you could write what today’s story was about: Sharing God’s good news.

Talk about how people many years ago would read the Bible. Have you thought about how the Bible came to us? This verse helps us to remember the importance of Jesus’ death in the message about what he brings to us today.

4 Tegre board game

You will need: cardboard egg carton; yellow, red and green paint; paint brushes; scissors; glue or sticky tape; small seeds

To make the game board, you need to paint the cardboard egg carton in the colours of the Ethiopian flag. Cut off the top of the carton and then cut the top in half. Fasten each half with glue or tape to the bottom of the egg carton so that you have a section on either side of the game board to collect the seeds from your opponent. This is an Ethiopian game.



Players sit facing each other in front of the egg carton (two rows of six holes). Start with four seeds in each hole. You each have six pits that are ‘yours’ and the hole to your right is where you’ll put the captured seeds (the hole to your partners right is theirs). The goal is to get as many seeds in your pit as possible. Each player starts by choosing a hole on his or her side and picking up all the seeds in that hole. Then moving in a counter-clockwise direction, they deposit them one by one in the following holes (as if taking a lap around the holes). This player continues to pick up seeds and place them in holes until the last seed goes into an empty hole. When the last seed of the turn is placed in an empty hole there are three possibilities:

1. If the hole is on your opponent’s side, the turn is over

2. If the empty hole is on your side, and the opposite side empty, the turn is over
 3. If the empty hole is on your side but the opposite cup has some seeds in it, you get to capture the seeds and place them to your pit (to the right).
- The whole game ends when one row is empty.

Talk about how important it is to understand other people’s cultures and traditions before talking to them about any topic, including the good news of Jesus.

5. Spice it up

You will need: various Ethiopian spices in separate containers (e.g. cumin, ginger, turmeric, coriander, cardamom, paprika, cinnamon, clove)

Have the spices set up on a table (without labels). Describe each and smell the different ones. Can someone identify what they are?



Talk about how all of these different spices are grown in Ethiopia, but they’re all so different! We are all different, but God loves us as we are.

6. Contagion

Get a piece of paper and something that will help you make thumbprints, like an inkpad, a sponge with paint on or just a plate of mud. Draw a cross in the middle of the paper to stand for Jesus, then add a thumbprint to stand for one person who’s met Jesus next to the cross. This person might tell two more people about Jesus, so add two more thumb prints next to the first one. And each of these people might tell two more people about Jesus – add two more next to each thumbprint, and so on. See how quickly the paper fills up. Does it

remind you of anything? Maybe one of Jesus' parables about the kingdom of heaven or maybe the diagrams of how viruses can spread from one person to another?



You could start a race between a number of people to see who can fill their page with thumbprints first.

Talk about how good news spreads rapidly, but doesn't rely on one person to tell everyone else.

7 Chariot races

You will need: large, medium and small boxes (sufficient for one box for every two or three people); glue sticks; masking tape; rope; coloured pens; crayons; PVA glue; paper plates; crepe paper or coloured paper

Use the box to design and build a chariot. It needs to have wheels and a place to sit or stand, as well as a rope to pull the chariot. Decorate with various craft items. When the building is completed, organise chariot races. If you are at home alone, please take a picture of your chariot and we can think about the best-designed chariot, the best-looking chariot, the fastest chariot, the most imaginative chariot, etc.



Talk about how you are working together to be creative. What would it have been like in Bible times to ride in a chariot?

8 Spreading the good news

The first Christians loved being together and telling others about Jesus. They called this 'koinonia' (co-ee-non-ya) or 'fellowship', something like friendship but depending more on being linked together by Jesus than on whether they liked each other. They knew it was something they had to work hard at, just like Philip did in his meeting with the Ethiopian official. Jesus wanted a church where everyone was welcome.

Make a list of everyone you miss at the moment or who might be feeling lonely and who might want to share some fellowship and hear about Jesus.

Throw a ball of wool around the people in your household – as you throw the rest of the ball, hold on to the strand of wool, and keep on holding on to it as the ball keeps being thrown, so that each person is connected in turn in a messy web. You can carry on as long as you have the energy... Each time the ball is thrown at you, say someone's name from your list of people you'd like to pray for and everyone else reply 'Amen'.

If you're on your own, you might like to French knit, knit or crochet, naming a person to pray for with each stitch or row, 'knitting them together' in prayer.

Talk about how prayer for those who you want to speak to about Jesus is an important part of spreading the good news.

Thy Kingdom Come

Reflect on:

- What you like best about the story.
- Whether you have ever felt 'nudged' by the Holy Spirit to talk about Jesus.
- If you could choose one person to talk to about Jesus, who would that person be?

Thy Kingdom Come is a time when we think about sharing the message of Jesus with others. It's also a time of prayer across all churches worldwide.

It runs from 21st – 31st May and there are lots of possible ways of taking part which are all included on the Thy Kingdom Come website at <https://www.thykingdomcome.global/resources/digital-family-prayer-adventure-map>. This year there's an app developed that you can follow during the period of Thy Kingdom Come with games and reflections for each day. Follow this exciting journey of prayer via our social media platforms. Why not share your story and journey of prayer with others across the world by using our hashtag #thykingdomcome.

Prayer

Use the fingers of one hand to represent the ways in which God speaks through his Holy Spirit:

1. Through words or pictures in our heads;
2. the advice of friends;
3. the way circumstances turn out;
4. a bible story;
5. a sense of inner peace about what to do.

Remember the name of the person you would love to talk to about Jesus. Pray: Jesus, help us always to be ready to explain our faith to other people, as you nudge us to. Amen