



Journeys in the Spirit

inward outward upward downward

Children's work edition May 2012 Issue 63



Meeting Jesus – the great picnic

Getting ready

At their heart, the Gospels are an invitation to meet Jesus. They tell the stories of those people who did, of those who met someone who showed them all that life could be, all that they could be. Whenever people met Jesus, they were changed by him, they were helped to see things in a new way, challenged to live a different kind of life.

How can we use these stories today? We can easily feel put off by a lot of the baggage that Jesus and the Gospels bring and it can be hard to let go of that; we get sidetracked by the theology and the doctrine. Jesus remains a huge source of challenge and inspiration for many Quakers and his example has had a great influence on our commitment to peace, justice and equality.

We need to begin by un-learning and un-remembering much of what we know (or think we know) about Jesus. We might ask ourselves: what would it be like to meet him for the first time? We may begin to find our answer to this by looking at the stories of people whose lives met with his - soldiers, labourers, housewives, children, women in trouble, kings and criminals. What did they bring to Jesus? What did they take away? How did he change them? Did they change him?

This issue tells the story of a boy who meets Jesus, who brings his gift and becomes part of a moment of extraordinary transformation.

Journeys in the Spirit offers resources and ideas to Quakers engaging with children and young people.

This children's work edition comes out monthly. It offers resources and ideas to Quakers engaging with 5–12 year olds in a Quaker setting.

It provides opportunities for exploring, creating and learning in an atmosphere of worship in partnership on our shared journey in the spirit.

Gather

Telling our own story.

Once everybody has arrived sit all together in a circle on the floor or around a table.

Be still and silent for a few moments; welcome everybody. Say that you are going to talk about Jesus and how the people he met were changed and sometimes challenged by meeting him. Sometimes we meet people who make everything seem better, so that even ordinary things become more exciting. They make us feel special. Ask the children to think about the people they may know who make them feel like that, who make them feel special. It might be a friend at school, a parent, a teacher. What is it about them that makes you feel special, that makes things feel different?

Meeting Jesus was like that and when people had met him, life was never quite the same again...

Underpinning references

Advices & Queries 1.04

The Religious Society of Friends is rooted in Christianity and has always found inspiration in the life and teachings of Jesus. How does Jesus speak to you today? Are you following his example of love in action?

Engage

Meeting Jesus – the great picnic

There are pictures on *Additional Resource 63.A* to illustrate the story. On *Additional Resource 63.B* there is a picture of what 5000 faces looks like. In the sidebar on this page there is a list of resources that you will need for this story.

Say that the part of the Bible called the Gospels is made up of stories about what it was like to meet Jesus. Everyone who met him was changed by him; people who were sad, angry, ill, afraid went away happy, whole, healed and hopeful. Often people who went to him feeling smug, confident and important went away feeling troubled, challenged and uneasy. He had a way of turning people's ideas (and the world) upside down. Tell the version of the story of the Feeding of the 5,000 that is set out below – it is told from the perspective of the boy who brings the food. Become familiar with the story yourself before Meeting.

Begin by spreading the large cloth or blanket on the ground and inviting the children to sit on it.

Tell the story of a boy called Joshua. He lived in a small town where nothing ever happened and no one famous ever visited. One day, he hears about a teacher, a man called Jesus, who tells brilliant stories and does amazing things. People in surrounding towns and villages can't stop talking about him and now he's coming to Joshua's town. He's going to be meeting people on the hill over-looking the sea. Joshua wants to go, but mum is busy at home and dad is busy at work. So, he grabs a basket, shoves in some bread and fish – it was going to be a long day - and follows the crowd. They walk out of town, along the coast path and up the hill. Everybody is there, sitting on the ground, under the shade of fruit trees, waiting to hear what the man has to say.

When he speaks, it's like nothing Joshua has ever heard before. Jesus tells stories that are funny and exciting and dangerous, he promises that the poor and the weak and the gentle are the ones who are closest to God - he talks about a new kingdom, a new way of life, about heaven on earth. Time flies and before anyone realizes it, it's time to eat. Jesus takes a break and suddenly people start to get restless...and hungry. When people are hungry, they get cross. What do you mean there's no food? Didn't *you* bring any? Why me? They should've brought some; it's no good dragging folks all the way out here, miles from the nearest shop, and not laying on some refreshments.

Joshua thinks about his bread and his fish. It's all he's got; it was all the food in the house. He's hungry too, but he can't just eat it all himself without sharing it...can he? Before he even realises what he's done, Joshua is making his way towards Jesus. Jesus is surrounded by his friends – big blokes with their backs to him – but something drives Joshua forward. He pushes and prods a bit. At first the men are cross and tell him to go away, but one, a smiling, sunny-faced man like a fisherman with big hands and a weathered face, puts a hand on his shoulder. Joshua offers him the basket of food; not nearly enough but all he has. The man smiles and says something to Jesus. Jesus turns and looks at Joshua; he looks *into* him; he looks at the food. In the basket and in the boy, Jesus sees something – a possibility, a potential – that no one else does.

Straight away he tells everyone to sit down; the sea of people sinks and settles onto the grass and, suddenly, they are quiet. No more shoving and arguing. Jesus tells them what this boy has done, he gives thanks for the food, breaks some up and starts sharing it; he gives some to the woman and children near him, to the men to his right and they start sharing with those around them. Like a wave breaking over the crowd people begin breaking, sharing, giving thanks, noticing and talking to the people around them. All around Jesus, joy and generosity is breaking out. The little that was brought – the food, the thought, the generosity, Joshua himself – has become something new, unexpected...a feast...

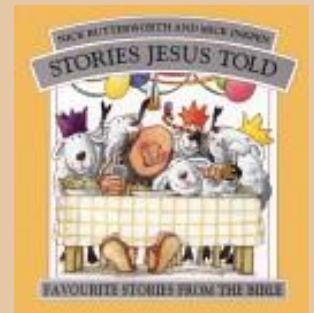
Ask children what they thought about the story – did they like it? What do they think the child felt like or thought as he offered his food? What do they think people in the crowd felt about him and what he did?

References & other resources

Resources for the story: *An illustrated Bible; large cloth or blanket; a picnic basket; large pictures of a hill, fish, bread, a picnic, a big crowd.*

The feeding of the 5000 in the Bible: *Matthew 14:13-21, Mark 6:31-44, Luke 9:10-17.*

Mick Inkpen and Nick Butterworth's excellent collection of Bible stories:



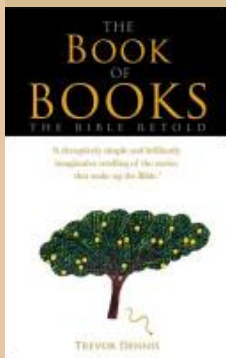
ISBN
9781859855881

Order books from the Quaker Bookshop: 0207 663 1030 or at www.quaker.org.uk/shop

Additional Resources mentioned on this page can be found at: www.quaker.org.uk/resources-children

References & other resources

Fish shape biscuit cutters can be bought online or in high street cooking shops. Have a look on Ebay for example.



Trevor Dennis,
'The Book of Books'

ISBN
9780745969121

www.feeding5k.org/

This is an organisation that has been raising and working on the issue of waste food.

A possible project for children or Meeting

Respond

Food for thought

The best kind of activities to help this story come alive are, of course, food related! Here are some ideas to do with children - artwork around food, feasts and picnics – use art and craft materials to make a collage or even models of food; try cutting pictures of favourite foods out of magazines - or they can make something that they can *actually* eat!

Lovely fishy biscuits

Ingredients:

Two fish shape biscuit cutters; 150g digestive biscuits; a handful of chopped sultanas (optional); 100g melted butter; one tablespoon golden syrup; 200g melted chocolate; a few colourful sweets.

How to do it:

Place the biscuits into a big bowl and break them up into fairly fine crumbs. Mix in the sultanas. Mix the melted butter and golden syrup and the melted chocolate into the biscuit mix. Pour the mixture into a tray lined with cling film and press down firmly with the back of a spoon. Chill in the fridge until set (do this partway through the session, so that they are cooled by the end). Use the fish template to cut out the biscuits.

At the same time as doing this have out a selection of good quality drawing and colouring materials and A4 white card for children to use to write or draw thoughts and ideas about the story. Also have illustrated Bibles available to look at.

Children share out the biscuits with the rest of the Meeting and talk about the story. There may then be conversations about the story and the biscuits.

Bring and share lunch or picnic

The previous week(s) you will need to ask people to bring food to share; something tasty, simple and filling, bread, fruit, etc. It can be something like pizza or cheesy breadsticks, just good picnic food. The children can lay the food up onto plates and take it into the end of Meeting and share it. This could be after the session in which they have heard the story.

A little bit of help goes a long way – 'change for change boxes'.

It can be hard, in a world that seems full of problems, to think that a little bit of help is any use at all. This is an activity for the whole Meeting to take part in that can be initiated by the children. *Resources: sheet of sticky labels, coloured and writing pencils, fine felt tip pens, small empty boxes, jars or pots.*

Say to the children that, following the story, you want to ask everyone in Meeting to collect lots of little bits of money to then give to help other people. The labels are to be given to each person in Meeting – children have them too. Labels are to be taken home by other people in Meeting and stuck onto a small, empty cardboard box, a tin, a jar or a pot – it doesn't matter which.

Have a selection of small boxes so that children can write or decorate their labels, stick them onto a box and decorate their box.

For one month, people have to put small coins – 1p, 2p, 5p, 10p and 20p – into their 'change for change' boxes. Tell people the date that their boxes have to come back to Meeting. On the chosen day, after Meeting for Worship, the containers can be emptied in a heap on a cloth or blanket. The children then work together to make a long line of coins around the Meeting room or wherever is best. Once the line or circle is finished then the money can be added up. Prior to doing this have a conversation in Children's Meeting about who the children would like to help by using the money. Think of possible local or other charities.

Reflect

Transforming gifts

The heart of the story is about generosity and transformation. Encourage the children to think about their own gifts.

What opportunities do you have to use your gifts? What are your gifts? A gift is more than just things we're good at like sport or art or music.

Think about gifts like kindness, gentleness, generosity, courage; how can you share these gifts with others? How can you help to change their lives? The people around you...people around the world...

When have others shared their gifts with you?

Think about what they do that makes you feel better?

The Gospels are full of stories about meeting Jesus; can you think of other stories of meetings with remarkable men and women? People who changed the lives of those around them?



Review

Some questions to consider in relation to this session include:

How did the children respond to Jesus in the story?

Were they familiar with him?

If they were, did they feel able to think of him and come close to him as a person?

How did you feel coming close to this version of Jesus?

Was it possible to get past some of the clutter and preconceptions and meet him afresh on the hillside?

This issue was written by Alistair Fuller and edited by Chris Nickolay and Howard Nurden. Chris Nickolay wrote the Topical activity.

Issue 64 explores the story of Moses. This will be available on June 1st 2012.

Issue 65 offers ways to explore the story of Jesus and the children. This will be available on July 2nd 2012.

Issue 66 is the first in a new series. The theme for Series 8 is 'Our Senses'. The first of these, Issue 66, has all sorts of ways to explore 'Touch'. Available August 1st 2012

Materials available online are:

Current issue Additional Resources Sheets

An easy to use plan for a Children's Meeting

A simple plan for an all age Meeting for Worship

A topical activity – this time about helping bees.

Also a 'How to use *Journeys in the Spirit*' guide; a link to special issues; an archive of previous issues; a discussion forum and a link to the *Journeys in the Spirit* Youth edition.

All these are available at:

www.quaker.org.uk/journeyschildren

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Children's work

Additional resource 63.A

Engage

Meeting Jesus – the great picnic





Journeys in the Spirit



Children's work

Additional resource 63.B

Engage

The great picnic – 5000 faces

