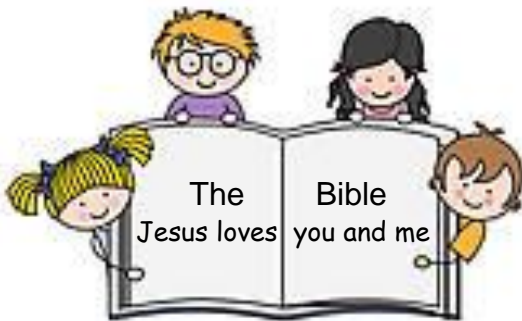


HELPING CHILDREN LEARN THE BIBLE THROUGH GAMES

by Shirley Davis



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by Shirley Davis
www.imofinc.org

"And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands that I am giving you today. Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are on the road, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up"
Deuteronomy 6:6-7 (NLT)

As is apparent to anyone working with children (especially young children) it is almost impossible to keep even a small group of children seated and quiet for more than only a few minutes! It is as though their little bodies are so full of life that they can't help but move! Obviously as a child learns to obey instruction, control his/her body and pay attention to a teacher, teaching becomes easier. But we are foolish if we expect children to not prefer an informal atmosphere where they are allowed to move more freely, provided they do not disrupt the teaching! We can avoid problems if we divide the teaching into short, varied segments, thus allowing time for children to move around briefly between segments. However we can also use various activities as a METHOD of teaching if we view them as such, rather than as merely chances to let the children be occupied, allowing us to have a break!

All children would much rather be playing a game than sitting listening to traditional teaching. So if we can use innovative ideas to transform the different teaching segments into "games" we find that the children tend to not only pay better attention, but also LEARN more of what we are teaching them about the Bible - whether that be a Bible story, about a specific Bible character, a key Bible verse, or a quiz testing their Bible knowledge (and our teaching efficacy!).

Here we want to share numerous ideas of games, activities, races and puzzles that have been used successfully in many different situations and countries around the world. Some of them can also be easily adapted to address different lessons from the Bible - and hopefully some will inspire even more fun ideas and games! Most of these ideas actually came to me as a result of seeking God's help according to James 1:5-6: *"If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the seas, blown and tossed by the wind."* (NIV).

Some activities can be introduced to break up more serious times of a lesson, such as teaching, telling a bible story or even praying. I have often used races or very active games at the beginning, to help the children use up energy and also to attract other children (if played outdoors). I have also found it very helpful to end with a longer game, especially if it is unknown how long the session will last (such as when the adult service is extended by ministry).

I truly believe that as God is the Creator AND he knows exactly what are the needs of our current situation and the needs of the children to whom we are ministering, he can create new and exciting ideas for us to use to help our children learn his Word and have fun doing it! We simply have to ask him and believe!

Shirley Davis, January 2019

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Part One: Activities for children seated in a group

Here we want to take advantage of when we have a relatively small group of children (such as less than 20), who can be seated together in rows or a circle. Some of these games can be spontaneous, whereas others may need a little preparation (though they can be played on multiple occasions to reinforce the bible knowledge).

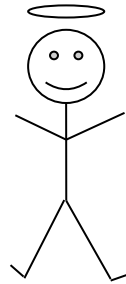
a) Quiet games & puzzle ideas

1. Noah's animals

Let the children sit in a circle, with the teacher as "Noah" in the middle. Briefly tell the story of Noah's Ark and explain that the children should imagine that they are helping Noah, checking off the animals as they enter the Ark. Each child in turn must name an animal that was on the Ark (no fish or sea animal or unicorn!). The teacher repeats each name out loud so that all can hear. If anyone repeats an animal already named, he must leave the game and join the teacher in the middle. So it continues until one person is left and wins. (Some clues may need to be given to help the very small children or they can be paired with older children).

2. Happy Christian

This is like "Hangman". A Bible name, word or phrase is chosen and a line representing each letter is written on the blackboard or a large piece of paper. The children in turn each choose a letter of the alphabet and if it appears in the word or phrase, it is written in each correct space. Every time a letter is chosen that does not appear, another part of the happy Christian is drawn on the blackboard (12 parts in total). If the drawing is completed before the word or phrase is guessed correctly the teacher wins. (This game can also be played in teams).



3. Clueless crossword

Using a blackboard or large piece of paper, see how many Bible names or books of the Bible can be fitted together in a crossword formation. Rather than preparing this in advance, let the children come up with suggestions!

4. Bible Bingo

This game is available from our ministry, complete with simple instructions. Through pictures it teaches children about bible characters known for their faith. Similar published versions may be used, and can be adapted by asking the children about each bible character as it appears in the game. In this way the children get used to hearing about different bible characters and are challenged to remember their stories while matching the pictures to play bingo.

5. Christian Fishing

This game is also available from our ministry, complete with simple instructions. There are 15 different picture cards in the shape of a fish, and two of each picture. With the children in a circle, the cards are mixed up, face down on the floor in the middle. Taking turns each child turns over two cards so that all can see, trying to find a pair. If the two aren't a pair, they are returned to be face down. If a pair is found, the game stops while the teacher briefly tells a bible story about that picture (using a cheat sheet if needed).

6. Puzzle pages

There are a number of resources available, both printed and online, to produce a bible-based puzzle page that can be used to help the children become more familiar with the Bible and learn how to find specific scripture verses. We want to encourage children to "know" the Bible and not just depend on doing a search online to find a certain bible verse. Here are some fun puzzle pages that I have developed over the years, including some special ones for Christmas and Easter:

Bible race board game

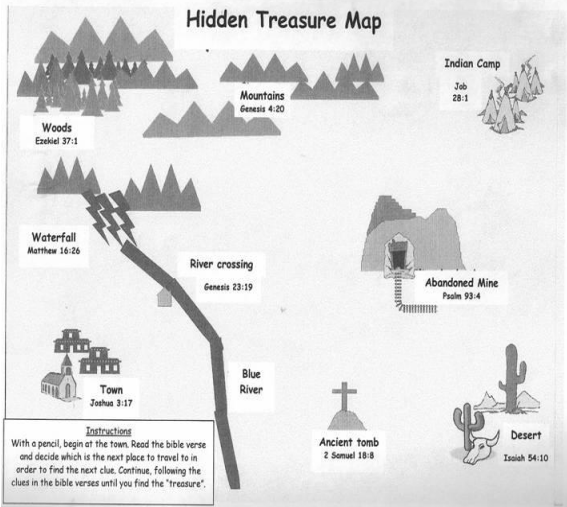
This can be played in pairs with a dice and button or marker for each player.

Bible race

Start		Miss your turn	
			
Roll the dice again		Recite a verse from the Bible	Move ahead 2 spaces
		Go back 3 spaces	 Name a person in the Bible
Miss a turn		Finish!	
Go back 2 spaces			Go back 2 spaces
			
Name a book from the Bible			
	Move ahead 2 spaces	Another throw	Recite a verse from the Bible

Hidden Treasure Map

Children can play in pairs and must look up and read each verse in the Bible in order to follow the map from the town to discover the hidden treasure.



Biblical Farmer Quiz

Many of the important characters in the Bible were actually farmers. See if you can match up each Bible character with the correct picture showing what kind of farmer he was, AND the corresponding scripture verse!

DAVID JOB JACOB ELISHA AMOS
GIDEON BOAZ SAUL PRODIGAL SON



1. donkey



2. wheat



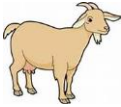
3. pigs



4. sheep



5. fig trees



6. goats



7. camels



8. barley



9. oxen

Judges 6:11 Amos 7:14 Job 1:3 Ruth 3:2 1 Samuel 9:3

Genesis 30:32 1 Samuel 16:11 Luke 15:15 1 Kings 19:19

Answers: 1. Saul - 1 Samuel 9:3; 2. Gideon - Judges 6:11; 3. Prodigal Son - Luke 15:15; 4. David - 1 Samuel 16:11; 5. Amos - Amos 7:14; 6. Jacob - Genesis 30:32; 7. Job - Job 1:3; 8. Boaz - Ruth 3:2; 9. Elisha - 1 Kings 19:19

Christmas Math Puzzle

Players can work individually or in pairs. All the answers are found in Matthew chapters 1 and 2, and Luke chapters 1 and 2. First, find the correct number for each of the following statements:

A – the number of years that Anna was a widow

B – the number of generations from Abraham to David

C – the number of days after Jesus' birth that he was circumcised

D – the number of months that Elizabeth hid herself when she was pregnant

E – the number of years that Anna had lived with her husband

F – the number of gifts given to Jesus from wise men

G – the number of pigeons offered as a sacrifice in the temple by Mary and Joseph

H – the number of months Mary stayed with Elizabeth

I – the age in years of the male children killed by Herod in Bethlehem

Secondly, answer the following four math problems, using the key below:

Problem #1 $A - B = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$

Problem #2 $C \times D = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$

Problem #3 $E + F + G = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$

Problem #4 $H + I = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$

Then SUBTRACT answer #2 from answer #1 $\underline{\hspace{2cm}}$

and then MULTIPLY the result by answer #3 $\underline{\hspace{2cm}}$

Finally ADD the answer #4 to get your final answer, which tells us when Jesus loves us.

FINAL ANSWER $\underline{\hspace{2cm}}$

Answers: #1 84-14 #2 8x5 #3 7+3+2 #4 3+2 Answer 365 (every day)




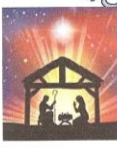


Christmas Journey Board Game

This fun board game just needs a dice, and a marker for each player. It is a great way to help children remember the details of the Christmas story.

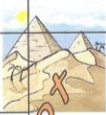


Christmas Journey Board Game
by Shirley Davis (www.imofinc.org)


START **FINISH**
Home in Nazareth

Nazareth

1 	g Return back to Nazareth	f ←	e ←
2 Move ahead one space	Judea		d - Stay 3 months in Judea - miss a turn!
3 Go to visit Elizabeth	a	b	c
4 - Prepare for Census. Miss a turn			
5 			
6 Move ahead 3 spaces			
7 Go around looking for room	a →	b	d
	← e		
8 			c
	↓		↑
9 Go around looking for room	a →	b	d
	← e		
10 	Bethlehem		
11 	Jerusalem		
12 - Stay for birth of Jesus. Miss a turn	13 - Move ahead 2 spaces	14	15 - Take Baby Jesus to Temple in Jerusalem
			16 
			17 Back to Bethlehem

Nazareth

27 Return to Nazareth	g →	f	e
26 	Egypt		
25 - Stop to rest. Miss a turn	d ↑	c	b
24 			a
23 - Flee to Egypt			←
22			
21 - Move ahead 2 spaces			
20 			




Holy Week Board Game

This is a similar board game retelling the story of Holy Week.


Holy Week Board Game by Shirley Davis (www.imofinc.org)
(played with dice and a button or colored marker for each player)


START




Bethany




Heaven






1 - Jesus celebrates the Last Supper A			
2 → Go to Garden of Gethsemane	a	b - Jesus asks his disciples to pray for him B	25 - Jesus appears to the disciples G
3 - Judas goes to tell the soldiers		c - Caught sleeping. Miss a turn ↓	26 - Thomas doubts it. Miss a turn
4 - Jesus is arrested	e ←	d - Jesus prays in agony but submits to God	27
5		29 - Jesus gives the Great Commission	28 - Jesus appears again - miracle of fish
6 - Questioned by High Priest. Miss a turn	b - Jesus is questioned again	c	29 - Jesus gives the Great Commission
7 - Peter denies Christ 3 times. Back 3 spaces	a	d - He is dressed in a robe & mocked	20 - Jesus gives up his spirit and dies
8	9 - Jesus is sent to Pilate's palace C	10 Sent to see Herod	19 - Darkness for 3 hours. Miss a turn
	11	12 - Pilate again questions Jesus but finds no fault	18 - Jesus is crucified with 2 thieves E
	13 - The crowd demands his crucifixion D	14 - Jesus is flogged. Miss a turn	17
	15 - Sent to be crucified	16 - Simon helps carry the cross. Move ahead 2	


Jerusalem



Galilee



Golgotha



FINISH
31 ↑

30 - Jesus ascends to the Father

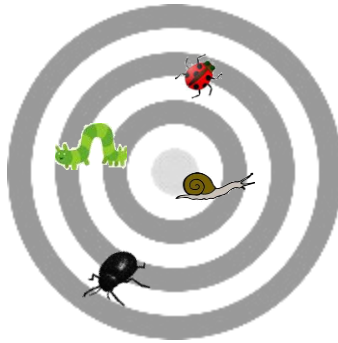
b) Seated action games

1. Biblical hot potato

The children sit in a circle and pass a beanbag around from one to another, either with music until it stops, or until the teacher signals "stop". Then whoever has the beanbag must name a bible character, a book of the Bible or quote a memory verse (depending on the age/level of the class),

2. Bug races teach bible truths

To prepare, you need to collect a variety of small harmless bugs and insects that can be sorted into the three categories below. Also prepare a large piece of cardboard marked with circles as shown in the picture. Alternatively, you can draw out the course on a flat area of sand or dirt, allowing the children to sit around the outside, so they can all view the "races".



Before each race starts, the bugs are shown to the children who can each choose one of the bugs to "support" and cheer for. The participating bugs are then placed in the center of the circles, and a whistle is blown to start the race. The children can cheer (but not touch!) the bugs as they see which bug is the first to reach the outside edge of the course and therefore becomes the winner (no prizes awarded!).

At the end of each race the teacher briefly talks about the spiritual qualities that have been illustrated by the race, using appropriate bible stories and characters such as those suggested below.

1st Race - Marathon (using slow bugs such as snails, slugs, worms....)

Teaching: patience and persistence

Bible examples:

Noah (Genesis 5-8)

The only righteous man at a time when ALL mankind was wicked. Was told by God to build the ark, which likely took about 100 years. Patiently worked and remained faithful even though must have been mocked and laughed at continually. But his obedience saved his whole family.

Abraham (Genesis 12,21)

Was 75 yrs old when called by God and promised a son and descendants. Was 100 years old when Isaac was born. Faithfully believed and trusted God, even when it seemed impossible.

Joseph (Genesis 37-45)

Was 17 yrs old when God told him in a dream he would lead his family - resulting in his brothers selling him into slavery. Was taken to Egypt where he kept his trust in God in spite of being in slavery and being unjustly accused and thrown into prison. At the age of 30 he was appointed 2nd in command only under Pharaoh, and enabled all his family to move to Egypt and live.

David (1 Sam 16-2 Sam 5)

Was a teenager when anointed to be king, but was 30 when he finally was crowned king over Judah. He had opportunities to kill King Saul, but honored Saul as king and trusted in God's timing.

2nd Race - Jog (using crawlers such as caterpillars, inch worms, pill bugs...)

Teaching: faithfulness and focus

Bible examples:

Joshua (Numbers 13; Joshua 11:23)

Was a faithful servant of Moses, and 1 of the 2 spies who gave a good report of Canaan and wanted to go on to conquer it. Was chosen to lead Israel after Moses' death, and was victorious in battle over 31 kings, claiming the land of Israel for God's people.

Daniel (Daniel 1,6)

Was taken into captivity to Babylon, and because of his pure and godly life was trained as a ruler. Received visions from God and refused to compromise his faith even when sent to the lions' den

Jesus (Luke 4; Matt 26:42)

Many times people (even Satan) tried to trap Jesus, but he always stayed focused on what God wanted him to do, and completed the work God had planned for him.

Paul (2 Cor 11:24; Phil 3:13-14)

Once he gave his life to Christ, Paul continually sought to fulfill the call God had given him. In spite of many troubles and persecutions along the way, he faithfully stayed focused on Christ.

3rd Race - Sprint (using running and jumping bugs such as grasshoppers, beetles, spiders....)

Teaching: alertness and quick obedience

Bible examples:

Mary and Joseph (Luke 1:38; Matt 1:24; 2:14)

Even as a young girl, Mary was quick to submit to God's will. Joseph also was quick to obey whenever God

spoke to him in dreams, even though he did not always understand.

Elijah (1 Kings 18:18-46)

Living through many difficult times of famine and confronting wicked King Ahab, Elijah was quick to obey God's commands and even ran a great distance faster than a chariot could.

Ruth (Ruth 3)

Though a Gentile, Ruth chose to follow God, serving and obeying her mother-in-law even if it meant hard work and little understanding - as a result she became the great grandmother of King David.

Peter (Matt 14:28; Acts 2:14)

Had a true heart for God and was always quick to respond to Jesus, such as when he walked on water. Although he denied Christ, he repented, and preached the first great sermon after being baptized with the Holy Spirit.

3. Dicey bible verses

As a fun way to recall memory verses from the Bible, the children can sit facing a blackboard. The game should be prepared by writing a memory verse on the board and dividing it into 6 or 12 parts, each covered by a piece of paper. The papers are numbered from 1-6 or 1-12. Each child in turn gets to throw a dice (or two, if there are 12 parts to the verse). The corresponding paper is removed each time a new number is revealed on the dice - thus revealing more and more of the memory verse. Children should try to guess the verse correctly before the whole verse is revealed.

4. Matching picture bible verses

A similar game to guess memory verses can be played with pictures. Cards are prepared with different pictures on one side (such as a flower; dog; tree; boat...)

and there should be three of each picture. Once the memory verse is written on the board, each word is covered with a different picture; then the remaining two cards of each picture are all shuffled and placed face down on the floor. Taking turns, each child gets to choose two cards, revealing them to everyone. If the cards are a matching pair, the corresponding card can be removed from the board, revealing part of the memory verse. If not, they are returned face down and the game continues. Again, as the verse is gradually revealed, the children should try to guess it correctly before it is completely revealed.

5. Pass the Easter egg/ Christmas present

This is a great way to review the Easter story while the children are playing the game. The idea can be adapted to suit the age and bible knowledge of the children by changing the questions/challenges. It can also be played as a way to review the Christmas story (using a multi-layered Christmas present to pass around), or in general to review any specific bible story. Just a few examples of questions/challenges are given for the Easter story to give a better idea of how to prepare the game, but it is fun to prepare at least 20-30 layers so that all the children have a fair chance to get at least one.

Preparation

1. Start with a large plastic egg or similarly shaped container filled with Easter candy. Wrap it with a layer of colored paper, maintaining the egg shape. Attach a small label numbered with the number of the final question/challenge (see below).
2. Add another layer of wrapping paper (different color) and label with next-to-last number. Continue to add layers of wrapping using different colors to distinguish each layer, and number each layer in order with decreasing numbers so that the final layer will be #1.

3. Prepare a bowl of candy to be placed in the center of the circle of children to reward those who answer correctly.

Playing the game

The children sit down in a circle and the large Easter egg is handed from child to child while music is being played. When the music stops (or a whistle is blown) whichever child has the egg should answer the question or perform the challenge numbered #1 as read out by the teacher. If answered or performed correctly, the child carefully removes the first layer of paper and then takes a piece of candy from the bowl in the center of the circle. The Easter egg is passed on and the game then continues.

If a child does not answer correctly or refuses to perform the challenge, the game continues without that child taking a piece of candy from the center.

The prize for the final layer is the candy inside the egg.

Suggested questions and challenges

1. Jesus and his disciples had a final meal together as part of celebrating which Jewish feast? (*Passover*)
2. What did Jesus do during the Last Supper, as an example to his disciples of being a servant? (*Washed their feet*)
3. Who left the Last Supper early? (*Judas*)
4. Sing a song about Jesus.
5. Where did Jesus go with his disciples to pray? (*Garden of Gethsemane*)
6. How did Judas identify Jesus for the soldiers? (*With a kiss*)

7. Take your piece of candy from the bowl and give it to someone else.

8. What did Peter do 3 times before the rooster crowed? (*Denied he knew Jesus*)

9. Who questioned Jesus after the chief priests? (*The Roman governor, Pontius Pilate*)

10. Hop on one foot around the outside of the circle of children.

11. Before Jesus was dressed up as a king, what did they do to him? (*He was whipped/beaten*)

12. How was Jesus put on the cross? (*With nails in his hands and feet*)

Part Two: Activities seated in teams

In this section we look at fun ways to remind the children of what we have taught them in the past, and also to test their knowledge (without them realizing it!). In any group there will likely be those who are timid; some who may have a learning disability; children new to the group; some whose parents are church leaders and know a lot of the bible...the variations go on and on, so I have found it helpful to divide the children into teams. The children in each team sit together and should be of mixed ages and abilities if possible to make it fair.

There are many advantages to working with teams - not the least being that it helps keep order! Answering questions or doing challenges in teams helps those who might be at a disadvantage if they were acting alone. They can enjoy the team spirit and also learn to work together. Compliance by an unruly child can also be encouraged by positive team pressure! Even though a child may be new or unfamiliar with the questions or bible stories, he/she will be helped by hearing repetition of them - and all will benefit from the reinforcement that comes from hearing them retold during the quiz or game.

In the ideas shared here, the actual questions or bible knowledge can obviously be adapted as needed. The methods of "keeping score" are what turns the quiz or testing into a fun game! Some may need preparation but can be used or adapted again in the future.

a) Fun quizzes

A quiz can be given toward the end of the session, using questions about the bible lesson or story that has just been read. Alternatively a quiz can be given at any point during the session as a way to reinforce general bible knowledge - for example: questions about bible characters or stories taught about recently; or to help learn the books of the Bible or memory verses. I have also used a quiz with simple general bible questions as a way to discover how much a group of children actually knows, if I am unfamiliar with them.

1. Yes/No game

As a variation to asking questions, this requires a yes/no answer from teams in response to statements read by the teacher. Each team is given a large sign saying YES and another saying NO. After hearing a statement read to everyone, the members of each team talk together and decide whether to hold up the YES or NO answer (signaling the statement is true or false). Every team responding correctly receives a point. The team with the most points at the end wins.

2. Snakes and ladders quiz game

This involves one time preparation of a game board (it can be the size of poster board, or for larger groups, it can be paper attached to a blackboard). The board is divided evenly into numbered squares from 1 in the bottom left corner, to say, 48 or 50 at the top. At intervals, colorful drawings of snakes (or slides) and ladders, are drawn to connect various numbers.

Questions are prepared and each team is asked a question in turn. Each team has a colored marker which is moved forward one square each time the team correctly answers a question. When the team marker reaches the bottom of a ladder (or the head of a snake or top of a slide), an extra question is asked. If it is answered CORRECTLY the team marker is moved UP the ladder (or on past the snake/slide). If the answer is INCORRECT, the team marker is moved on past the ladder (or DOWN the snake/slide). When time runs out the team on the highest number wins.

3. Mountain race quiz game

This is a much more exciting visual way to record points for answering quiz questions correctly than just recording points on a blackboard. A poster board picture can be prepared with a drawing of a tall mountain which has a road winding up to the summit. The road is evenly divided into, say, 20 segments, each marked with a picture such as of a tree, house or signpost. Questions are asked of each team in turn, and if answered

correctly, the team marker is advanced one segment or the team's progress can be marked by coloring in the appropriate segment. The winning team is the one that is furthest up the mountain at the end of the quiz. If quizzes are used regularly, it is helpful to prepare a list of questions about the bible story and teaching during each session for use in future weeks.

Many different variations of this quiz can be developed. Here are just a few examples:

Desert race to the oasis - an oasis with palm trees and water can be drawn (or picture from a magazine cut and pasted) onto a poster board. A wandering path (marked off into 15-20 sections) can be drawn for each team from a different part of the board to the oasis. A cutout figure is used to mark the progress of each team. Each correct answer gives two steps forward along the path, but each incorrect answer gives one step backwards.

Boat race to the island - a similar idea could be a picture of an island in the middle of the ocean. Each team is represented by a ship of a different color which follows along a path.

Country landscape - a poster board is prepared for each team with a colored background scene showing fields, hills, pond and trees. Questions can be divided into easy or difficult. Easy questions answered correctly allow for a flower sticker to be placed somewhere on the team's board. Difficult questions answered correctly allow for an animal sticker to be placed. At the end of the quiz, points are added up for each team - 1 point for each flower, 2 for each animal.

Toy car race - each team is represented by a toy car of a different color. A race track is set up in front of the children with the track marked off into sections. As questions are answered correctly, the team's car is moved section by section. (The youngest child in each team can be given the task of moving the team's car.)

4. Step forward quiz

This can be done without preparation, though it is best to use a list of prepared questions. Each team lines up one behind the other, behind the team leader at a marked line on the ground. Each team in turn is given a question, and if it is answered correctly, the leader takes one giant step forward and his team follows. At the end, the team that has advanced the furthest wins.

5. Step forward in faith quiz

This is an adaptation of the previous quiz. Questions are prepared in advance and placed in three categories - easy, medium and difficult. The teams line up as before, behind the starting line, and take turns to answer questions. BEFORE being asked a question, the team leader must choose a number from 1-3 (depending on his faith in the team's knowledge!). If the question is then answered correctly, the team moves FORWARD the corresponding number of giant steps. But if the answer is incorrect, the team must turn around and move BACK that number of giant steps! At the end of the quiz, the team that has advanced forward the greatest distance is the winner.

b) Scramble games & memory verses

1. Bible name scramble

There are various ways this can be played - such as having a team representative come forward from each team and try to be the first to unscramble a bible name written on the blackboard. The scrambled name can be that of a bible character mentioned in that day's story or lesson, or be from a lesson recently taught (to help the children remember it).

Alternatively (and to maybe reduce the pressure on the team representatives!) the name can be written with each letter on a separate piece of card or paper - a copy given to each team. The cards are shuffled before being given to each team and the game begins. The members of each team work together to unscramble the letters to reveal the correct answer.

Names can be of bible characters; biblical places; books of the Bible; or spiritual words that have been taught and discussed, such as forgiveness, patience etc.

2. Scripture scramble

This is done in a similar way, and is a good way to test memory verses taught previously. The words of a verse are written separately on large cards, mixed up and placed in front of the class. A set is prepared for each team and 1 or 2 children can be chosen to represent each team and unscramble the verse, or each team can work together as before to find the answer.

3. Scripture number board

This is a fun concept that can be adapted and used in several different ways. The memory verse (or bible name) can be written on a blackboard or poster board, and then a card or piece of paper is taped over each part to cover it up. Each card is numbered in turn 1,2,3 etc. until all are numbered. As mentioned earlier in Part One, a child from each team takes turns to choose a number - such as by picking a numbered paper out of

a bowl. The corresponding word or letter is then revealed and the teams must try to guess the whole name or memory verse. The first team to guess it correctly wins.

4. Disappearing memory verse

This is a great way to help all the children learn a memory verse by repetition, while they are playing. A bible verse is written on a blackboard or poster board. The children are seated in teams and in turn, each team reads/repeats the bible verse. After each team has done so, one of the words in the verse is either erased or covered up. Each team must then go on to read/repeat the verse accurately again. After the second round, another word is erased or covered, and so it continues with each team trying to read/repeat the verse correctly despite the words "disappearing". Finally the teams should be reciting the verse correctly with no visual clues. The team that does so the best, wins.

5. Fill in the blanks

Here, a memory verse can be written on the board with key words left blank. Teams take it in turns to guess a missing word until a team correctly guesses and recites the whole memory verse.

Part Three: Active games - individual participation

Active games are a great way for the children to use up some of their energy, and even if some choose not to participate, they can still enjoy watching the others! I find that some of these games are great at the beginning of a session as children are still arriving and are excited. An active game can also be helpful in the middle of a long session to let the children let off steam and be better able to sit and pay attention after. Also of course such games are fun at the end of a session as children are waiting to leave. I always try to adapt the game so that at least it can be used to introduce a bible topic mentioned in the session, or to remind the children of some Christian qualities they are learning about.

a) General games

1. Four Gospels

This can be played indoors or outdoors. Choose 4 “bases” or corners, naming them “Matthew, Mark, Luke and John”. One child is chosen as “it” and sits in the middle with eyes blindfolded. He/she (or the teacher) counts out loud from 1-10 while the other children run quietly to one of the bases (not all to the same base). On the count of 10, anyone not at a base must leave the game temporarily (or can go to sit quietly with the child in the center). The child in the center calls out one of the names of the four gospels and all the children at that base must leave the game (or join those in the center). The game continues in this way until only one child is left, who then becomes “it” for the start of a new game.

2. Who am I?

This is a fun game for children who can read. A nametag is pinned to the back of each child, with the name of a Bible character written on it. The children then must ask others simple questions requiring only yes/no answers in order to find out what their bible name is. e.g. Am I a man?....Did I live in Jesus' time?.....

3. Autograph game

This is a longer game that can be played in two parts - the 1st has statements pertaining to the children as individuals; the 2nd is a way to test bible knowledge - especially for older children or even adults more familiar with the bible. You could also play the 2nd part with the class as a whole, giving hints to the answers. Several answers to each point have been given, using more commonly known stories, although other answers may also be correct.

1st Part

Each person receives a sheet of paper with the following statements, and he/she has to talk to others, trying to find someone who can say that a particular statement applies to them, and therefore can sign alongside it. The winner is the first person to get a signature alongside each and every statement. (This is a great ice-breaker, although it may be necessary to change the statements according to the children's ages and experiences.)

1. I like liver and onions. _____
2. I attend church every Sunday. _____
3. I have 4 brothers and sisters. _____
4. I live in a two-story house. _____
5. I have traveled outside the USA. _____
6. I am 11 years old. _____
7. I play football. _____
8. I know words in a foreign language. _____
9. I've been in an ocean. _____
10. I have eaten Chinese food. _____

2nd Part

This part can be played individually or in teams with a Bible and concordance. In each space write the name of a person in the Bible who could have signed alongside the statement saying it was true about him/her.

1. I like honey. _____
2. I enter Beautiful Gate to pray in the temple. _____

3. I have 11 brothers. _____
4. For one year I lived in a house on the water. _____
5. I have visited Egypt. _____
6. I am 900 years old. _____
7. I have dreams sent by God. _____
8. I speak in other tongues. _____
9. I've been in the Mediterranean Sea. _____
10. I've eaten stew. _____

Answers (If others are given, include the bible verse)

1. Samson (Judges 14:8,9); Jonathan (1Samuel 14:27); John the Baptist (Matthew 3:4)
2. Peter or John (Acts 3:1-3)
3. Joseph or any of his brothers (Exodus 1:1-5)
4. Noah, Shem, Ham or Japheth (Genesis 9:18)
5. Abraham (Genesis 12:10); Joseph, his brothers or Jacob (Exodus 1:1-5); Jesus, Joseph or Mary (Matthew 3:13,14)
6. Adam (Genesis 5:5); Methuselah or others (Genesis 5); Noah (Genesis 9:29)
7. Joseph (Genesis 37:5); Pharaoh (Genesis 41:1); Daniel (Daniel 7:1); Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4:5)
8. Peter, John or the disciples (Acts 2:4); Paul (1 Corinthians 14:18); Cornelius (Acts 10:46)
9. Paul (Acts 27:43,44); Jonah (Jonah 1:15)
10. Esau (Genesis 25:29,34); the sons of the prophets (2 Kings 4:38)

4. Beanbag toss

A memory verse or biblical phrase can be written on a blackboard and each word covered with a numbered card (or a word or name can have each letter covered). The cards are numbered in order from 1 up to 12. If played outdoors, squares can be drawn in chalk on the ground and numbered 1-12 (in a 3 x 4 rectangular format). If played indoors, masking tape can be used on the floor or a piece of fabric prepared with the lines and numbers painted on it. Each child in turn stands in front of the numbered rectangle and throws a beanbag. If it lands exactly inside a square, the child can remove the

corresponding number to reveal part of the verse or name. If the beanbag lands touching a line, it doesn't count and the child goes to the end of the line to await another turn. The game continues rapidly as each child takes turn to throw, and more letters or words are revealed, until someone guesses the correct answer.

5. Bible word hunt

A short phrase from the Bible story, or phrase such as "JESUS IS LORD", can be written with each word written individually on small pieces of colored paper: the word JESUS on one color; IS on another color; and LORD on another. Enough sets of the colored papers can be made so that there are sufficient for the total number of children (or children can hunt in pairs). They are then hidden around the play area before the children enter. After explaining the challenge (for each child to find one of each color paper) the children go off to hunt. Once a child finds all the papers (in this case a total of 3), he/she must then put them together in the correct order to make the phrase.

This basic idea can be adapted in several different ways according to the age and ability of the children. For example the name of a place, bible character, or book of the Bible, can be written on pieces of paper with each letter on a different colored paper.

Alternatively, the letters for each child can all be written on the SAME color paper, in which case, each child hunts a certain number of pieces of paper of a specific color.

6. Follow the leader

In this simple game for preschool children, the children line up behind the leader, who moves and acts in the manner of a specific animal. The children must follow along doing the same. The leader can briefly tell a bible story about each animal as they are all mimicking it. For example: big fish - Jonah; dove - Noah's ark; donkey - Jesus entering Jerusalem; snake - Garden of Eden; camel - wise men; frog - Egyptian plagues.

b) Games for holidays & special events

1. Christmas bible search game

The concept of this game can be used to create other exciting bible searches with different themes. The key is to make sure you use bibles of exactly the same version. This one was prepared using the New International Version, and actually just uses the New Testament rather than the whole Bible, so that the game can be played by groups who only have access to New Testaments.

Preparation - I chose a phrase with 12 letters with the theme of the upcoming holiday season. Then I searched through scriptures in all the books of the New Testament to find verses that began with each of the letters in turn, and wrote down the scripture references. (It is best to use as many different books of the Bible as possible). Each bible reference can be written onto a separate piece of paper and placed in a bowl. If no blackboard is available, write each reference onto a large piece of paper or card so that it can easily be seen by everyone in the group playing the game.

To play the game - Ensure each participant has a Bible or New Testament of the chosen version, and paper and pencil. Everyone is seated facing the blackboard or front of the room. Throw a beanbag into the group. Whoever catches it must return it to the teacher, and then take a scripture reference card from the bowl. If using a blackboard, that individual then writes the reference clearly on the blackboard before returning to his/her place. If not using a blackboard, the larger card is pinned or placed in full view so that all can read it. This is all then repeated as the beanbag is thrown again, to a different part of the group.

Throughout the game, each individual must look up the scripture references and write down the **FIRST LETTER** of the **FIRST WORD** of each corresponding verse. Once all 12 references have been found, the letters must be rearranged to form the correct phrase.

Whoever first brings the correct phrase written on their paper to the teacher is the winner.

For this Christmas version, here are the Bible references in random order (as found in the NIV):

1 Corinthians 12:11	Ephesians 4:3
James 4:10	Acts 18:9
Philippians 1:10	Mark 14:41
1 Peter 5:5	Colossians 3:1
Galatians 3:13	Romans 14:10
John 11:25	1 John 2:17

Answer: Christmas joy

2. Christmas dinner quiz

Start with a simple Christmas table decoration, such as a candle with decorated foliage wreath around the base. Cut apart the twenty questions below and tape or glue each one onto a larger piece of Christmas paper (such as wrapping paper or colored tissue).

Roll up each paper with a question to make a long thin colored tube. Then insert each tube into the foliage so that they protrude from the decoration in every direction. Alternatively the clue tubes can be placed among the branches of a Christmas tree.

Each person takes a tube and must try to answer the bible question about the Christmas Story. Note - the simpler questions (1-10) can be wrapped in a specific color so that children choose them, leaving the harder questions for the adults.

1. What was the name of Mary's husband?
2. Where did Mary and Joseph live?
3. In which town was Jesus born?
4. To whom did the angels appear and tell about the birth of Baby Jesus?
5. Who was jealous and wanted to kill Baby Jesus?
6. What was the 3rd gift brought to Jesus - frankincense, myrrh and...?
7. What led the wise men to the Baby Jesus?

8. Whom did Mary visit for 6 months before Jesus was born?
9. What was used as a bed for the Baby Jesus?
10. Who is Jesus' father?
11. Which angel appeared to Mary?
12. How did God warn Joseph to flee Bethlehem?
13. What did Mary and Joseph sacrifice in the temple?
14. What was the name of Elizabeth's husband?
15. Who told King Herod that Jesus was in Bethlehem?
16. Up to what age were the baby boys in Bethlehem killed?
17. How old was Jesus when he was officially given the name of Jesus?
18. Which old man prophesied over Baby Jesus in the temple?
19. Why did Joseph and Mary have to travel to Bethlehem?
20. Who was emperor of Rome when Jesus was born?

Answers to simpler questions: 1 - Joseph (Matthew 1:18); 2 - Nazareth (Luke 2:4); 3 - Bethlehem (Matthew 2:1); 4 - shepherds (Luke 2:15); 5 - King Herod (Matthew 2:13); 6 - gold (Matthew 2:11); 7 - star (Matthew 2:9); 8 - Elizabeth (Luke 1:39-40); 9 - a manger (Matthew 2:16); 10 - God (Luke 1:35); Answers to harder questions: 11 - Gabriel (Luke 1:26-27); 12 - in a dream (Matthew 2:13); 13 - two doves (Luke 2:24); 14 - Zechariah (Luke 1:5); 15 - chief priests (Matthew 2:4-5); 16 - two years old (Matthew 2:16); 17 - eight days old (Luke 2:21); 18 - Simeon (Luke 2:34); 19 - Roman census (Luke 2:1-4); 20 - Caesar Augustus (Luke 2:1)

3. Christmas marathon bible game

This is a fun game that is perfect for either a small family group of children or a large group such as at a camp or special meeting, and can be played outside in a large area giving the children plenty of opportunity to burn off energy! The questions and clues can be focused on a particular theme and the example is given of a Christmas marathon.

1 - Children are divided into pairs (one older child with a younger child to be responsible for) and given a piece of paper and pencil to write down the answers

2 - Around the area are 5-6 "stations" each with a card with several multiple choice questions written clearly on it. (Someone dressed as a suitable bible character could be at each station if a large number of children are playing)

3 - At the start, a clue is read out to all the children, directing them to the first station. Then at each station once they have written down their answers to the questions, they are given a clue directing them to the next station. (Clues can simply be like "the next station is near the gate" or "find the next station near a big tree")

4 - Once all the stations have been visited and the answers written down, the children must go to the Finish point and hand in their paper.

5 - After all the answers have been checked and points awarded, go through all the questions explaining the correct answers to all the children (to remind them of the real Christmas story) and then the winners can be announced. (Points can be given for each correct answer as well as to the first teams arriving at the finish)

Here is an example of the questions for a Christmas marathon:

1st station (with Angel)

1) Who did the angel Gabriel first visit to tell of a special son being born?

- a) Mary
- b) Joseph
- c) Zechariah

- 2) Who was the mother of John the Baptist?
 - a) Mary
 - b) Elizabeth
 - c) Martha

- 3) Where was Mary when the angel Gabriel visited her?
 - a) Bethlehem
 - b) Jerusalem
 - c) Nazareth

- 4) How long did Mary stay when she visited her cousin?
 - a) three months
 - b) six months
 - c) nine months

2nd station (with Innkeeper)

- 1) Joseph wanted to divorce Mary because she was pregnant but changed his mind - why?
 - a) Mary begged him to marry her
 - b) an angel visited him in a dream and told him to marry her
 - c) God spoke to him from Heaven with thunder

- 2) Why did Joseph and Mary travel to Bethlehem?
 - a) because of a census
 - b) to visit relatives
 - c) for their honeymoon

- 3) Where was Baby Jesus born?
 - a) in a field near the shepherds
 - b) in the inn
 - c) in a shelter where the animals went to eat

3rd station (with Shepherd)

- 1) How did the shepherds learn of Baby Jesus' birth?
 - a) they saw a star over the place where he was
 - b) an angel appeared and told them
 - c) some wise men stopped to tell them

- 2) How did the shepherds react on seeing the angel?
 - a) they were happy
 - b) they were scared
 - c) they didn't believe it

- 3) What was the special clue the angel gave them to be able to find Baby Jesus?
 - a) he was wrapped in swaddling clothes
 - b) there was a star over the place
 - c) he was lying in a feeding trough

- 4) What did the shepherds do after leaving Baby Jesus?
 - a) they went and told everyone they knew
 - b) they went straight back to their sheep and said nothing
 - c) they went and told King Herod

4th station (with wise man or king)

- 1) Who was king over Judea at the time of Jesus' birth?
 - a) King Augustus
 - b) King Herod
 - c) King Caesar

- 2) Where did the wise men go first when they got to Judea?
 - a) Bethlehem
 - b) Nazareth
 - c) Jerusalem

- 3) Who said that Jesus was in Bethlehem?
 - a) the wise men
 - b) the chief priests and teachers of the law
 - c) the angels

- 4) How did the wise men know exactly where Jesus was?
 - a) the star stopped over the place
 - b) the shepherds showed them
 - c) an angel appeared to them

5) What did the wise men do first when they saw Baby Jesus?

- a) they gave him gifts
- b) they asked to hold him
- c) they bowed down and worshipped him

5th station (with Egyptian)

1) Why did Joseph take Mary and Baby Jesus and run away from Bethlehem in the night?

- a) they couldn't pay the rent any more
- b) they heard soldiers coming
- c) Joseph dreamed that an angel told him to do it

2) What might have happened if they had not gone away?

- a) Baby Jesus would have been taken to grow up in Herod's palace
- b) Jesus would have been killed
- c) Herod would have been able to worship Jesus

3) Why did they go to live in Egypt?

- a) because Joseph had friends there
- b) because the angel led them to Egypt
- c) because the angel told them to go there

4) How long did they stay in Egypt?

- a) until King Herod died
- b) until the Romans left Judea
- c) until Jesus was 12 years old

Answers:

- 1st station - 1:c); 2:b); 3:c); 4:a) 2nd station - 1:b); 2:a); 3:c)
3rd station - 1:b); 2:b); 3:c); 4:a) 4th station - 1:b); 2:c); 3:b); 4:a); 5:c)
5th station - 1:c); 2:b); 3:c); 4:a)

4. Easter marathon bible game

This is prepared as previously described in the Christmas marathon, with 5 stations.

Here is an example of the questions for an Easter Marathon:

1st station (with person in Jewish robe)

- 1) When Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, the crowd cheered him and waved what?
 - a) flags
 - b) palm branches
 - c) flowers

- 2) Jesus and his disciples had a special meal to celebrate which Jewish feast?
 - a) Holy Communion
 - b) Pentecost
 - c) Passover

- 3) During the meal Jesus did something strange - he went up to each of the disciples and did what?
 - a) washed their feet
 - b) washed their hands
 - c) combed their hair

- 4) Which parts of the Last Supper meal did Jesus use to help us to remember him?
 - a) lamb's meat and wine
 - b) bread and water
 - c) bread and wine

2nd station (with disciple)

- 1) Where was the Garden of Gethsemane?
 - a) by the Sea of Galilee
 - b) on the Mount of Olives
 - c) by the Dead Sea

- 2) While Jesus prayed there, what did the disciples do?
- a) they kept watch
 - b) they built a fire to keep warm
 - c) they slept
- 3) What did Jesus pray in the Garden of Gethsemane?
- a) the Lord's prayer
 - b) that he would not have to go through with the plan unless it was truly God's will
 - c) that God would send angels to save him
- 4) Who betrayed Jesus and led soldiers to arrest him?
- a) Judas
 - b) Judah
 - c) Peter

3rd station (with Jewish priest or King Herod)

- 1) Jesus was taken before the High Priest, Pilate and King Herod, but who finally agreed to crucify him as the crowd demanded?
- a) Pilate
 - b) Caesar
 - c) King Herod
- 2) Who was recognized as a disciple of Jesus but denied it three times?
- a) Judas
 - b) Peter
 - c) John
- 3) What happened to Jesus before he was taken to be crucified?
- a) he was given his last supper
 - b) he was beaten and tortured with fire
 - c) he was beaten and made to wear a robe and crown of thorns
- 4) How did Jesus get to the hill outside the city where he was crucified?

- a) he had to walk, carrying the wood for the cross
- b) he was led on a donkey
- c) he was dressed as a king and taken in a cart while the people stoned him

4th station (with Roman soldier)

- 1) How was Jesus crucified?
 - a) they tied him to a cross with rope
 - b) they put nails in his hands and feet
 - c) he had to stand on a ledge and hold on or fall off

- 2) Who was crucified with Jesus?
 - a) Peter and John
 - b) Judas
 - c) two thieves

- 3) How long was Jesus on the Cross?
 - a) 3 days and 3 nights
 - b) about 6 hours
 - c) 3 hours

- 4) What was written on the sign over Jesus?
 - a) This is Jesus the King of the Jews
 - b) Jesus the Messiah
 - c) he called himself King of the Jews

- 5) How did Jesus die?
 - a) a soldier pierced him in the chest with a spear
 - b) he starved to death
 - c) he gave up his spirit

5th station (with angel)

- 1) Who took Jesus' body off the Cross?
 - a) Joseph of Arimathea, a friend of Jesus
 - b) Mary and the disciples
 - c) the Roman soldiers

- 2) Where was Jesus' body placed?
- a) in the room of the Last Supper
 - b) in a grave alongside two thieves
 - c) in a new tomb in a nearby garden
- 3) How was the tomb protected?
- a) by two of the disciples
 - b) with a sealed stone and a guard
 - c) by an angel
- 4) What was found on the day after the Sabbath?
- a) the tomb was completely empty
 - b) the tomb had been blown open by an explosion
 - c) Jesus' body was gone leaving just the grave clothes
- 5) Where did Jesus go?
- a) he went straight to heaven
 - b) he went and preached in the temple to show everyone he was alive
 - c) he appeared and spoke to his disciples in several places around the land
- 6) How did Jesus get to Heaven?
- a) in a chariot of fire
 - b) he went up into the clouds from the Mount of Olives as his disciples watched
 - c) God took him as he was walking along with his disciples

Answers:

1st station - 1:b); 2:c); 3:a); 4:c)

2nd station - 1:b); 2:c); 3:b); 4:a)

3rd station - 1:a); 2:b); 3:c); 4:a)

4th station - 1:b); 2:c); 3:b); 4:a); 5:c)

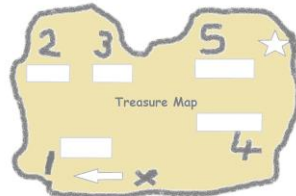
5th station - 1:a); 2:c); 3:b); 4:c); 5:c); 6:b)

5. Bible treasure hunt

This can be part of an evangelistic outreach or special event for children, and needs preparation. However it can be adapted to be either elaborate or simple, and is an exciting way for children to learn what is truly "treasure" in relation to God and the Bible, along with the Bible verses that teach us about it. A course with 5 stations can be laid out inside Sunday School rooms, or outdoors in a field - two suggestions are given as examples:

a) Indoors

A series of tunnels or caves can be constructed as the course, using chairs placed facing outward and plastic sheeting or cardboard attached to them and the walls of the room to form tunnels through which the children crawl. Each tunnel leads to a station which is decorated according to its treasure theme; it has an attendant who greets the children as they emerge from the tunnel, and explains the treasure theme and its bible verse. Each child writes each treasure in the correct order on his/her map, and at the end receives a prize for completing the map correctly.



b) Outdoors

Each child is given a map with the key points of interest marked (such as buildings, trees, road, etc). The 5 stations can be marked on the map with stars, and clues given to lead the children to each station in the correct order. (If a large number of children participate, it would be best to allow them to follow the course in groups of only 5 or 6 at the time.)



Attendants at the beginning and at each station read the next clue after explaining about the treasure. Try to make the course as large as possible with the decorated stations hidden behind a building or among some bushes, to make it more exciting. Each child writes each treasure in the correct position on his/her map, and at the end receives a prize for completing the map correctly.

Below is a suggested list of the 5 different treasure stations. Each should be decorated accordingly and have a large poster with the scripture written clearly - with blanks for the key word to be guessed by each child and then written down on his/her map.

Station 1 - Treasure (suggest decorate with an old treasure chest filled with rusted and tarnished treasures, cobwebs etc)

Matthew 6:19-20 (New Living Translation)

“Don’t store up _____ here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. Store your _____ in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal.”

Station 2 - Pearls (suggest decorate with a fake giant oyster shell, huge fake pearl such as a white ball, and strings of pearls)

Matthew 13:45-46 (New Living Translation)

“Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant on the lookout for choice _____. When he discovered a _____ of great value, he sold everything he owned and bought it!”

Station 3 - Gold (suggest decorate with fake gold bars and other treasures of gold)

Psalms 19:9-10a (Easy to Read Version)

"Learning respect for the Lord is good. It will last forever. The Lord's judgments are right. They are completely fair. His teachings are worth more than pure _____."

Station 4 - Silver (suggest decorate with fake silver bars and treasures wrapped in foil)

Proverbs 3:13-14 (New Living Translation)

"Joyful is the person who finds wisdom, the one who gains understanding. For wisdom is more profitable than _____, and her wages are better than gold."

Station 5 - Jewels (suggest decorate with strings of shiny, multicolored glass beads, crowns etc)

Revelation 21:2,19 (New International Readers Version)

"I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem. It was coming down out of heaven from God. It was prepared like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband..... The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of _____. The first foundation was made out of jasper. The second was made out of sapphire. The third was made out of chalcedony. The fourth was made out of emerald."

Part Four: Active games in teams

As mentioned in Part Two, dividing the group of children into several teams can be beneficial in many ways. It is fairer if each team consists of both boys and girls, and of children of varying ages. In this way, even children who are shy, or possibly physically challenged, can participate. Even if unable to actually compete, they can cheer on their team members from the sidelines - especially if each team is given the opportunity to initially choose a team color and even a team name.

I've found it particularly helpful to use team races to start a VBS or other outreach event held in a public park, or outside of a church on the mission field. The noisy fun and laughter quickly attract the attention of other children, who can then be invited to participate in the whole event. The churched children can be encouraged to befriend the newcomers on their team as a way of learning how to share God's love. Also, older children can be encouraged to work with and help the younger ones.

As much fun as games are, I believe it is always important to use the game as a type of object lesson or illustration - taking the time to link it to a Bible story or teaching point about the Christian way of life. Once the children have settled down and are tired, they are more apt to pay attention to a short teaching - which is also more easily understood after the recent illustration.

a) Races & challenges

1. 3-legged race

Each team lines up with the members in pairs, with a leg of one partner tied to a leg of the other in the pair. In turn each pair must run to the end of the course and then return, before the next pair can leave. All must sit down at the end in order to win. *The teaching afterwards discusses the importance of working together, joining up with those going in the same direction we are, joining up with Jesus etc....*

2. Blindfold race

Each team is divided into two, with one half at the beginning of the course and the other at the far end. Those at the beginning are blindfolded and in turn must run toward the end of the course, guided by shouts from their team members. On arrival at the far end, each blindfolded member is led back to the start by a "sighted" team member, and then another blindfolded one can set off. Again, everyone in the team must sit down when they have finished. *Afterwards the teaching discusses how it is to be blind or lost - wandering, dangers of falling, led astray by others etc, and then the advantages of being led by someone who can see and help us (Jesus).*

3. Tug of war

Two teams line up facing each other, and they hold on to different ends of a long rope with a colored marker tied in the middle. A center line is marked on the ground, with another line marked on either side about 6 feet (2 meters) away. At the shout of "go" the two teams start pulling the rope to try to move the marker (originally set at the center mark) across the line on their side. *Afterwards the teaching discusses how we all struggle at times with temptation or between doing things "our way" rather than God's way; also how others may help or hinder us.*

4. Scripture balloon race

A Bible name or spiritual word of 5-8 letters is written one letter at a time on scraps of paper of a specific color for each team. Balloons are also chosen to match that color for each team and a slip of paper is put into each balloon as it is inflated. The teams are lined up one member behind the other, at one end of the course, and each team's balloons at the opposite end.

At the word "go", the 1st member of each team must run down the course and grab one of their balloons. He/she then runs back and hands it to the 2nd team member, who in turn runs with it down the course

and grabs a second balloon. Carrying both, he/she then returns and hands both balloons over to the 3rd team member. This continues until the final team member returns to the start, carrying ALL the balloons. If any balloons are dropped along the way, they must be retrieved by the team member before returning to his/her team.

When all the balloons have been retrieved, the team can begin popping them - being careful to find the scrap of paper inside each one. They must then rearrange the letters to determine the correct name or word to win.

5. Christmas Balloon Race

This is a more challenging version that requires each group looking up scripture references hidden inside the balloons, therefore helping improve knowledge of the books of the Bible and familiarity with the Bible. The following verses are written separately on scraps of paper, and then inserted into balloons, which are then inflated, using a different color balloon for each block of verses. Each of the four teams of participants is assigned a color, an identical bible (in this case the **NIV**), paper and pencil.

The teams line up behind the starting line each with their 9 balloons opposite them at the end of the room. The 1st team member of each team must run and get one balloon, then return and hand it to the 2nd member, who runs and gets a second balloon. He then hands BOTH balloons to the 3rd and so on, until the 9th member returns with all 9 balloons. Then the team must burst their balloons and encounter the 9 scraps of paper. With the aid of the Bible, they must look up each verse and write down the **FIRST LETTER OF THE FIRST WORD** of each verse, and then rearrange the resulting 9 letters to form a word from the Christmas story. (The answers are given at the end).

1) Nehemiah 4:21; Psalm 78:70; Ezekiel 10:14; Acts 10:21; Numbers 23:8; Hebrews 12:7; 2 Corinthians 6:4; Mark 13:2; Genesis 44:30

2) Genesis 42:38; Numbers 18:14; Ezekiel 44:5; Acts 15:9; Mark 12:13; Nehemiah 5:18; Psalm 78:13; 1 Corinthians 4:15; Hebrews 13:4

3) Numbers 16:1; Acts 14:8; Nehemiah 7:4; Psalm 87:3; Genesis 32:13; 1 Corinthians 7:20; Hebrews 13:7; Ezekiel 42:10; Mark 12:37

4) Genesis 45:3; Numbers 24:18; Acts 11:11; 1 Corinthians 14:10; Nehemiah 5:4; Ezekiel 47:3; Mark 14:6; Hebrews 13:21; Psalm 89:24

Answers: 1) Shepherds 2) Bethlehem 3) King Herod 4) Jerusalem

6. Bible word hunts

This concept can be used with any words or names pertaining to a specific theme and can be adapted in many ways. In the previous game the clues (scripture references) were placed inside balloons and developed into a fun race, however they could easily be simply hidden around the room or outside play area, using different colored paper for each team. The children run around hunting the given number of slips of their colored paper and then return to where they can look up the bible verses and write down the first letter of each. After unscrambling the letters they must determine the correct word, write it down and be the first to hand it to the teacher to win.

The game is prepared as follows:

1) Decide on the word answer (such as TITUS)

2) Write down each letter separately and then look through the Bible to find a verse that BEGINS with a word whose FIRST LETTER is the required letter. In this

case we're using the NIV and so could choose the following examples:

T - Isaiah 53:12

I - Psalm 139:14

T - Exodus 24:12

U - Proverbs 30:21

S - Ruth 2:17

3) Then each bible reference is written onto a slip of paper to be hidden. If the activity is to be done by different teams, you could choose a different word answer for each team as long as they have the same number of letters. Also when researching Bible verses, try to use the same books of the Bible (such as Psalms, the Gospels etc) for each team's clues to make it fair. Alternatively you could use more obscure books of the Bible for older teams.

7. Nativity Story race

This is a really fun way to remind everyone of the Christmas story. A course is set up (indoors or outside) with stations along it as follows: 1st - Nazareth; 2nd - a stable in Bethlehem; 3rd - a house; finish line - Egypt. Each team has children as Joseph, Mary, and a donkey on all fours, stationed in Nazareth. Each team's Baby Jesus waits in the stable; and three wrapped boxes as gifts await each team in the "house".

At the word "go", Mary must sit on the donkey and be led around the course by Joseph. When they arrive in Bethlehem, Mary gets off the donkey and picks up Baby Jesus, and Joseph leads the donkey. They all move on to the house where 3 wrapped gifts must be picked up and carried on to the finish in Egypt, according to the story. The first team to arrive in Egypt with all members and gifts, wins. This is quite hilarious but is a good way to review the story of Jesus' birth!

b) Special games and events

1. Bible Olympics

This can be set up as a special event for a church or Christian club; or the different sections used separately as an ongoing weekly series for individuals or teams; or of course any part can be used independently as a fun quiz! First sign up each contestant and give them a number, then seat them in front of the “audience” or rest of the group. Contestants can enter whichever races they prefer. (See Part B for suggested list of questions for each contest level: children or adult)

Note – although this is a fun way to test individual’s bible knowledge, it is also a good way to help those watching to learn more biblical facts!

1) 100 meter dash

Each contestant is given an answer sheet and pencil, and should write their number at the top. The number of each question is written already on the left-hand side and each contestant must write his/her answer alongside as soon as the question has been asked. The question master reads the list of questions aloud clearly and quickly until the time-keeper says the time is up (such as 2 minutes). Immediately the answer sheets are collected and checked by the judges as the questions and correct answers are read aloud to everyone. Gold, silver and bronze “medals” are awarded to the top three contestants with most correct answers.

2) Marathon

Contestants are blindfolded and line up side by side along a starting line, and then each is given two large cards, one saying TRUE (in their right hand) and the other FALSE (in their left hand). As each statement about a Bible character or event is read aloud, each contestant must lift up the card with the answer that they think is correct. Contestants who

answer incorrectly must remain where they are, but those who answer correctly may take one giant step forward for each correct answer. After a total of 20 Bible statements have been read gold, silver and bronze “medals” are awarded to the three contestants who have advanced the furthest.

3) Javelin throw (to pinpoint Bible characters)

Contestants are seated in front and each is given paper, pencil and a Bible (all the same version). Each “question” consists of a Bible reference which they must look up in the Bible and read, in order to find the name of the Bible character mentioned in the text. Bible references are called out every 20 seconds for adults and every 40 seconds for children. After reading out all 10 references the papers are collected up and judged as the correct answers are read aloud. Gold, silver and bronze “medals” are awarded to the top three contestants with most correct answers. This is a great way for everyone to become more familiar with using their bible!

4) Hurdles (bible quotes)

Prepare a “course” with a starting line and a finish line and with hurdles (chairs) at intervals. Beside each chair is a judge and on each chair is a large poster with a scripture verse written out but with a key word missing. The contestants must wait in a separate area (out of earshot) until it is their turn. Each contestant is timed and when he/she arrives at each chair he/she must provide the correct missing word for the scripture verse. They cannot move on until they give the correct word. Gold, silver and bronze “medals” are awarded to the top three contestants with best time for the completed course.

5) Obstacle race (obstacles overcome by miracles in the Bible)

This can be played with a similar “course” but on each chair is a large picture portraying a biblical miracle (or key words to identify it). Again the contestants must wait in a separate area (out of earshot) until it is their turn. Each contestant is timed and when he/she arrives at each chair he/she must explain to the judge how God overcame the “obstacle” in that Bible story with a miracle. Gold, silver and bronze “medals” are awarded to the top three contestants with best time for the completed course.

6) 3-legged race (the “couples” are husbands and wives in the Bible)

Each contestant is given an answer sheet and pencil, and should write their number at the top. The number of each question is written already on the left-hand side and each contestant must write his/her answer alongside as soon as the question has been asked. Each “question” involves a pair of Bible characters and the “answer” is the name of his wife or her husband. The answer sheets are collected and checked by the judges as the correct names are read aloud. Gold, silver and bronze “medals” are awarded to the top three contestants with most correct answers.

Bible Olympics Part B (Suggested list of questions and answers for two different age levels – obviously questions should be adjusted according to the amount of bible knowledge of the contestants)

1a) 100 meter dash – children

1. Who killed the giant, Goliath? (David)
2. Where did Adam and Eve first live? (Garden of Eden)
3. Who built the Ark? (Noah)
4. In which town was Jesus born? (Bethlehem)
5. Who was swallowed by a big fish? (Jonah)
6. Who betrayed Jesus? (Judas Iscariot)
7. Who was Esau's twin brother? (Jacob)
8. Who received 10 commandments from God? (Moses)
9. In which city was Jesus crucified? (Jerusalem)
10. Who had a coat of many colors? (Joseph)
11. Which sea did God open for the Israelites? (Red Sea)
12. How many disciples did Jesus choose? (twelve)
13. In which river was Baby Moses placed? (River Nile)
14. Who did Jesus raise after 4 days in a tomb? (Lazarus)
15. What kind of den was Daniel thrown into? (lions' den)
16. Who baptized Jesus? (John the Baptist)
17. Which is the first Gospel in the Bible? (Matthew)
18. Who was the strongest man in the Bible? (Samson)
19. After how long did Jesus rise from the dead (3 days)
20. How many days did it rain on the Ark? (forty)

1b) 100 meter dash - adults

1. Who was the first murderer in the Bible? (Cain)
2. Which is the longest book of the Bible? (Psalms)
3. How many people were on the Ark with Noah? (7)
4. Who was Isaac's mother? (Sarah)
5. In which river did John baptize people? (River Jordan)
6. Who was the first king of Israel? (Saul)
7. Who wrote down the first 5 books of the Bible?(Moses)
8. Where did Paul live in his final years? (Rome)
9. Who succeeded the Prophet Elijah? (Elisha)
10. Who hid the Israelite spies in Jericho? (Rahab)

11. Which 2 cities were destroyed by fire?
(Sodom/Gomorrah)
12. Who was the wisest king in the Old Testament?
(Solomon)
13. Who wrote most of the Epistles (letters) in the NT?
(Paul)
14. On which mountain did God speak to Moses?
(Mt. Sinai)
15. Where were the Jews taken to live in captivity?
(Babylon)
16. Along with Joshua, which spy gave a good report?
(Caleb)
17. In which town was King David born? (Bethlehem)
18. Which disciple denied Jesus three times? (Peter)
19. How many men won the battle with Gideon? (300)
20. In which garden did Jesus pray before his arrest?
(Gethsemane)

2a) Marathon – children

1. God created the earth in 7 days. (False – 6 days)
2. The first woman was called Eve. (True)
3. Noah was in the Ark for just 40 days and 40 nights.
(False – over a year - *Genesis 8:13-16*)
4. Abraham was 90 years old when Isaac was born.
(False – 100 - *Genesis 21:5*)
5. Jacob lied to his father. (True)
6. Joseph was sold as a slave by his own brothers.
(True)
7. God drowned Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea.
(True)
8. The Israelites wandered in the desert for 50 years.
(False – 40)
9. There were 12 tribes of Israelites. (True)
10. The Israelites shouted and the walls of Jerusalem fell down (False - Jericho)
11. The first king of Israel was King David.(False – Saul)
12. The wisest king in the Old Testament was Solomon.
(True)
13. Queen Esther was very ugly. (False – beautiful)
14. Wise men brought gold, silver and frankincense to Jesus. (False – not silver, myrrh)

15. John the Baptist was related to Jesus. (True – mothers were cousins)
16. Jesus had no brothers or sisters. (False – at least 6 - *Matthew 13:55,56*)
17. Jesus grew up in Nazareth. (True)
18. Jesus baptized John the Baptist in the River Jordan. (False – John baptized Jesus)
19. Jesus was tempted by the Devil in the wilderness. (True)
20. The first great missionary in the Bible was Paul. (True)

2b) Marathon – adults

1. Adam and Eve's first grandchild was called Enos. (True)
2. Noah's three sons were Seth, Ham and Japheth. (False, Shem not Seth)
3. Sarah was 90 years old when Isaac was born. (True)
4. Rachel was the mother of Jacob and Esau. (False – Rebekah)
5. Jacob had to work 14 years to marry Rachel. (True)
6. Joseph was Jacob's youngest son. (False – Benjamin)
7. Moses' father-in-law was called Jethu. (False – Jethro)
8. The enemy against Gideon numbered about 135,000. (True – *Judges 8:10*)
9. Ruth was King David's grandmother. (False – great grandmother)
10. Twice David had the opportunity to kill Saul but didn't. (True)
11. Solomon had 700 wives. (True)
12. Elisha was bald. (True – *2 Kings 2:23*)
13. The 3 alive in the furnace were Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah (True – *Daniel 1:7*)
14. Esther replaced the previous queen, Queen Vishnu. (False – Vashti – Vishnu is a Hindu god!)
15. John the Baptist's father was struck dumb. (True)
16. One of the first disciples called by Jesus was Andrew. (True)
17. Jesus preached a lot by the Dead Sea. (False – Sea of Galilee)
18. Peter's prayers raised Dorcas from the dead. (True)

19. Saul was watching when Philip was stoned to death.
(False – Stephen was stoned to death)
20. Because of a shipwreck Paul got to preach in Cyprus. (False – Malta)

3a) Javelin throw – children

1. Matthew 3:1 (John the Baptist)
2. Genesis 45:4 (Joseph)
3. 1 Samuel 17:45 (David)
4. Acts 17:2 (Paul)
5. Judges 16:28 (Samson)
6. Deuteronomy 5:1 (Moses)
7. Exodus 15:21 (Miriam)
8. John 11:11 (Lazarus)
9. 1 Kings 9:10 (Solomon)
10. Hebrews 11:7 (Noah)

3b) Javelin throw - adults

1. Numbers 27:19 (Eleazar)
2. 2 Kings 12:19 (Joash)
3. 2 Corinthians 3:13 (Moses)
4. Job 25:1 (Bildad)
5. Judges 3:16 (Ehud)
6. Philemon 10 (Onesimus)
7. Haggai 1:15 (Darius)
8. Ezra 5:16 (Sheshbazzar)
9. Ephesians 6:21 (Tychicus)
10. 1 John 3:12 (Cain)

4a) Hurdles – children

1. For God so loved the world that He gave His only beloved _____ that whoever believes in Him will not die but have everlasting life. (SON - *John 3:16*)
2. The Lord is my _____ I shall not lack..
(SHEPHERD – *Psalms 23:1*)

3. _____ each other as I have loved you. (LOVE – *John 15:12*)
4. Nothing is impossible for _____. (GOD – *Luke 1:37*)
5. Go into all the world and _____ the Gospel. (PREACH – *Mark 16:15*)
6. Do to _____ what you would have them do to you. (OTHERS – *Matthew 7:12*)

4b) Hurdles – adults (as above but then also these following)

1. Do not _____ or you too will be judged. (JUDGE – *Matthew 7:1*)
2. If any of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a _____ at her. (STONE – *John 8:7*)
3. If we _____ our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us.....(CONFESS – *1 John 1:9*)
4. So God created man in his own _____. (IMAGE – *Genesis 1:27*)
5. My God will meet all your needs according to his glorious _____ in Christ Jesus. (RICHES – *Philippians 4:19*)
6. For He will order his _____ to protect you wherever you go. (ANGELS – *Psalms 91:11*)

5a) Obstacle race – children

1. Moses, Egyptians, Red Sea – (Moses lifted up his rod and God miraculously opened up a path for the Israelites to go through the sea on dry ground)
2. Joshua, Israelites, Jericho – (Joshua and the Israelites walked around the walls in silence then blew horns and cried out, and miraculously the walls fell down and they took the city)
3. Giant, David, stones – (David trusted God, threw the stones and killed Goliath miraculously)
4. Daniel, lions, den – (God sent an angel to shut the mouths of the lions, saving Daniel's life)
5. Crowd, Jesus, preaching – (God multiplied 5 loaves and 2 fish miraculously to feed over 5,000 people)
6. Paul and Silas, prison, chains – (They praised God and He sent an earthquake to miraculously set them free)

5b) Obstacle race – adults (as above but then also these following)

1. Gideon, 300 men, 135,000 enemies – (Gideon obeyed God and used torches in pots, got miraculous victory)
2. Naaman, leprosy, Elisha – (Naaman obeyed prophet's word, dipped 7 times in river and was healed)
3. Elijah, famine, widow – (Widow believed prophet's word, made bread for Elijah, and God multiplied the flour and oil to last through the famine)
4. No money, Jesus, taxes – (Jesus prayed, God miraculously provided fish with coin in mouth)
5. Tomb, Lazarus, dead – (Jesus prayed and called Lazarus to come out, and God raised him from the dead)
6. Lame beggar, Peter and John – (Peter and John had no money to give but shared faith in Jesus, and the beggar was healed)

6a) 3-legged race – children (complete the couples)

1. Adam and _____ (Eve)
2. Abraham and _____ (Sarah)
3. Isaac and _____ (Rebekah)
4. David and _____ (Bathsheba, Michal or Abigail)
5. Samson and _____ (Delilah)
6. Joseph and _____ (Mary)

6b) 3-legged race – adults (as above but then also these following)

7. _____ and Rachel / Leah (Jacob)
8. Moses and _____ (Zipporah)
9. Boaz and _____ (Ruth)
10. _____ and Elizabeth (Zechariah)
11. _____ and Sapphira (Ananias)
12. Aquila and _____ (Priscilla)

2. Ideas for Bible-based carnival games

Here are a number of tried and proven ideas for a special event which is really great for outreach. The various games need preparation but can also be adapted to make changes. Events such as fall festivals, Halloween alternatives and even VBS can be great times to plan such games as a way to draw outsiders into the church and also remind children of different Bible stories.

Suggestions:

#1 - You can either give candy/prize at each game or you can give "points" on a scorecard worn around the child's neck. Then at the end of the day, they can go to a special prize booth and cash in their points for special prizes.

#2 – Prepare a short paragraph telling the Bible story for each game, which can be read at the beginning of each session by those who are running the game.

#3 - To encourage kids to visit ALL the games (and so hear all the stories and not just keep winning prizes at a simpler game!) give each child a name-tag worn around the neck (this can be combined with the scorecard) and each game is given a number, which has a hole punched next to it when the child plays the game. Each child cannot return to a game until he/she has played them all.

#4 – It is a good idea to sound a bell every 10 minutes or so, at which point everyone moves on to a new game. In this way you avoid congested lines waiting at any one game. (This works well if you have more than 100 kids, and especially if many are visitors.)

Examples of games:

1) Jonah and the whale – Using black trash bags you can make a large container to look like the mouth of a whale in the sea. Kids throw beanbags with cutout picture of Jonah on front into the "mouth". (Or maybe you could use old "Ken" dolls!)

2) Goliath sling shot - Using small pieces of soft dough (NOT stones!) kids use a sling shot to shoot "Goliath" in the head. (Use 4x8 sheet of board painted like Goliath)

3) John the Baptist's head - Paint the picture of a large plate onto a 4x8 sheet of board, then cut out a hole "on" the plate so that someone can put their face through. Contestants throw water-filled sponges to hit the head.

4) Field with hidden treasure (Mt 13:44) - Fence off a section of land (about 20 x 20 feet or more if possible) and let each kid write his name on a marker stick and then stick it in the ground where he thinks the treasure is buried. Before the start, someone "chooses" a spot and records how many feet it is from the corners and seals the envelope until the end when it is opened and whichever marker is closest gets the prize.

5) Jail - Roman soldier goes around putting people in jail for being Christians. Periodically an angel comes to the prison to let them all out!

6) Fishing for a golden coin – Using an inflatable pool with water and small bamboo fishing poles with a magnet on the end, kids can try to catch fish. Each fish can be a cut-out with a paper clip on the top, but one can have a small "coin" picture glued or drawn on it underneath – if caught it denotes a special prize or more points.

7) Lost sheep – If you have a large area of field, you can make up small cut-outs of sheep that are then hidden around the area. The kids are each given a paper with a map-type layout of the area, showing "landmarks" like trees and bushes, fence, driveway etc. They are given a certain time limit to search for the hidden sheep and mark on the map where each sheep is located (thus not disturbing it to be found again by others). If all sheep are found the kid receives a prize.

8) Plague of frogs – Make cut-outs of sitting frogs from poster board, and attach to the front of empty soda bottles. Practice beforehand to see how much sand or dirt is needed in each bottle so when a beanbag is thrown, it is not too easy but not too hard to knock it over. Prize if all are knocked over with certain number of beanbags, or points according to number knocked over.

9) Rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 7:15) – Using a stop watch, each child is given 52 seconds to build up a wall as high as they can next to a yardstick stuck in the ground. The results are recorded and the one who has built the highest at the end of the day wins. You can use bricks, blocks of wood or children's building blocks - as long as they are all about the same size.

10) Ruth gleaning in the field – Each kid is given a sandwich bag and 60 seconds to run down a course and pick up as many kernels of corn as they can (which are scattered on the ground). Points or prizes awarded for # of kernels in bag.

Special events during the day

1) "Water to wine" race - Competing teams must carry ladles filled with water down the course to fill up a gallon jar which has a package of red Koolaid in the bottom. All members of the team that fills up their jar first get prizes.

2) "Armor of God" race – Individuals (or team representatives) compete by racing around a course putting on items that represent the armor of God (in Ephesians 6 - belt, vest, shoes, shield, helmet and sword) – winner must be wearing all items at the finish.

3) Missionary race - Individuals (or team representatives) compete by racing around a course, stopping to put on an article of clothing typical of each "country" visited. They must be wearing all the clothing at the finish line. e.g. scarf (Russia), sari (India), Chinese hat, cowboy boots (USA), grass skirt (Africa)...