



## On your marks

Often children's groups need a simple activity to occupy them as everyone gathers and one that may also help focus them for the session to come. In schools many teachers use what are sometimes called *Smart Tasks* for this. These are simple challenges relating to different skills and intelligences, which help children prepare for the lessons. These tasks exercise the imagination and can help improve creativity and the co-ordination between the left and right hand side of the brain. Why not print off some of the following suggestions for some biblical smart tasks and keep them up your sleeve for when you need something to kick-start a children's session?

## Get set

Some of the following will need pen, paper and colours. A few also require other simple props. Check carefully first that you have everything you need.

## Go!

Choose ideas from the following sections:

### ***Musical Starters***

1. Play a music-only track of a well-known modern worship song and ask the children to draw whatever patterns or colour combinations that come to mind as they listen.
2. Football chants are well known and are a way of uniting a team of supporters. In pairs why not compose a team chant for your own Sunday or midweek group? What sort of chant might the disciples have composed? What about other biblical teams such as David and outlaws in the wilderness?; Moses and the people of God in the desert?; Paul and his fellow missionaries on their travels?; Noah and his seafaring family? Perhaps the children can borrow the tune of a well-known football chant or maybe put their words to a popular chorus?
3. Play a nature CD, which has the sounds of rain or the sea on it. As the children listen invite them to draw whatever landscape picture that comes to mind and link this to the story of creation.

### ***Imagination Starters***

1. God created the world in six days and then on the 7th day it says he rested. Ask the children to come up with ideas of what God did on this rest day? Surely he would have been too excited and pleased with what he had made to sleep!
2. Jesus travelled about telling everyone of the Kingdom of God. It seems he didn't ever stay in one place for long. Ask the children to come up with ideas of what he kept in his tunic pockets on his travels and also what essential items he took with him in his first century suitcase. What would have been really important to him on his journeys?
3. Many great events in the Bible hinge on one single decision made by a key character in the



story. But what if that person had chosen to act differently?  
Ask the children to imagine what would have happened if...

Moses had refused to go back to Egypt when he met God at the burning bush  
Noah had decided not to finish the ark, leaving it half built  
Abraham had not left Ur to travel to Canaan  
David had not volunteered to fight Goliath  
Peter had stayed with his fishing nets

### ***Designing Starters***

1. Ask the children to make up their own designs for a special container in which the Ten Commandments and other very precious items from God could be kept.
2. What sort of welcome home party would you organise to celebrate the return of a long-lost brother or sister. Link this to the prodigal son parable
3. Design your own special stained-glass window to go in your local Church. What images and which Bible story or stories might you use?

### ***Mathematical Starters***

1. Using the number 3 as many times as possible and in varying positions, draw a picture that focuses on some part of God's creation. For example two threes together could make the upper part of a tree or, on their side, a cloud in the sky.
2. Turn the numbers 1 to 10 into different animals, which are going into the Ark
3. The figure 7 seems to be a rather special number in the Bible. How many different sums can you think of, using 'minus, plus, divided by and times', to which the answer is seven? Link this to the seven days of creation, the seven churches, the seven deacons and the spirits of God.

### ***Kinaesthetic Starters***

1. Using a set of four long matchsticks, from which you have removed the phosphorus heads, can you make each of the numbers between 1 and 10. Link this to the Ten Commandments. How many letters of the Alphabet can you make? Can you link each one to a Bible character beginning with that letter?
2. Using a pack of 10 plain white postcards, how tall a 'Tower of Babel' can you build?
3. As a group can you arrange the furniture and any other moveable items in your meeting area in such a way that you can successfully move from one end of the room to the other without ever your feet touching the floor? Link this to crossing the reed sea or walking on water!

### ***Observational Starters***

1. Draw a square within which you create a grid, four by four. How many individual squares of varying sizes are there within this one large square? Link this to the idea of there being many sides to the character of the one God.
2. How many things that are triangular in shape can you see in your meeting area? Link this to



the Trinity.

3. Play Kim's game, including among the items some that are linked with the story from the Bible that you will be looking at in the session. Either give them a minute to look at the items and then, as they close their eyes, remove one of those items and see if they notice what is missing; or ask them to list all the items that they can remember on the tray.

### ***Explanation Starters***

1. List the various ingredients that go to make up a world/the ark/the Temple and explain in your own words how they are all put together.
2. Describe the process of getting on and off a camel.
3. Explain to someone who has never been to your church before what happens in a service of worship.

### ***Questions Starters***

1. If heaven were a colour, what colour would it be?
2. If God were a favourite piece of furniture, what piece of furniture would he be?
3. What present would you give to the wise men?
4. What do angels most enjoy doing?
5. What makes God laugh?