



A2 ACTIVITIES TO REVEAL HIDDEN ISSUES

How did Jesus respond to children?



Why use this activity?

To help us understand how Jesus responded to children in the Bible.



A brief description

A group listens to a Bible story and then acts it out. A discussion follows to explore how people felt during the role play and therefore how we should view and treat children.



You will need

A large room or space for the role play to take place



Time taken

60 minutes



What to do

Start by explaining to the group that together you are going to act out a story from the Bible. Say that you will read the story first for everyone to hear it. You will then give everyone a role, and then you will read the story again, with the group acting it out as you read it.

Read the following verses from the Bible:

Luke 18:15-17

People were also bringing babies to Jesus for him to place his hands on them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. But Jesus called the children to him and said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."

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A2 HOW DID JESUS RESPOND TO CHILDREN?

- Ask one person to play the role of Jesus. Divide the rest of the participants into three groups. Each group will play one role: the parents, the disciples and the children.
- Ask the person playing Jesus to sit on a chair. Ask the people playing the disciples to surround Jesus. Jesus is resting, talking quietly with his disciples. Ask the parents and the children to stand around Jesus and his disciples.
- Tell the group that you will read the story again, and ask them to act out their roles as you read it. Say that you will pause after each sentence, giving time for the group to use words and actions to act out the story. For example, when the Bible says that the disciples rebuked the children, what will this have looked like? It will probably have meant the disciples speaking harshly to the children and sending them away. Encourage the group to imagine themselves in that role and to be as creative as possible in the way they speak and act during the role play.
- Read the Bible text again, sentence by sentence, leaving time in between each sentence for the group to act out their roles.
- Once the role play has come to an end, ask the group sit in a circle for a time of discussion. Explain that you will ask people how they felt in the roles they were playing.
- First, ask those playing the disciples: in the role you are playing, how did you feel when the children were driven away?
- Now ask those playing the parents the same question: in the role you are playing, how did you feel when the children were driven away?
- Next ask the person who acted Jesus the same question.
- Finally, ask those who were playing the children how they felt.
When those who were playing the children answer, try to emphasise the feelings of rejection and hurt the children will have felt.
- To the whole group, ask the following discussion questions:
 - What has struck you in this story? How are you feeling having listened to, and acted out, the story?
 - Do you recognise the negative attitudes towards the children?
 - What have we learnt about Jesus' attitude towards the children?
As the facilitator, try to stress and emphasise replies which acknowledge that Jesus respected the children; he listened to them, he loved them, he prioritised them, etc.
 - How did the disciples view the children?
Explain that the same attitudes still exist today.
 - What are our attitudes, and how do we behave, towards children today?
Encourage the participants to answer frankly and to mention negative behaviours and attitudes.

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A2 HOW DID JESUS RESPOND TO CHILDREN?

- What needs to change so that our attitudes towards children (and the attitudes in our communities) becomes more like the attitude of Jesus?
- As the discussion comes to an end, read Luke 9:48 aloud to the group: *'[Jesus] said to them, "Whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. For it is the one who is least among you all who is the greatest."*
- Finish the activity by praying for us all to have the same attitude and heart towards children that Jesus had.



Notes

This activity is adapted from *The Heart of the Matter*, a 5-day training resource developed by the Stop Child Witchcraft Accusations Coalition – <https://stop-cwa.org>



Finding out more

- Stop Child Witch Accusations (2017) Roots, realities and responses: lessons learnt in tackling witchcraft accusations against children – <https://stop-cwa.org/resources/31>
- Stop Child Witch Accusations (2017) A Call to Action: Responding to beliefs that harm children – <https://stop-cwa.org/resources/10>

Related tools:

- A1 – Revealing the harm caused by witchcraft allegations against children [A1: Children & youth-3]
- A2 – Understanding accusations of child witchcraft [A2: Children & youth-6]
- B – Christ's victory over evil and fear (Bible study) [B: Children & youth-4]
- B – How Jesus responded to people with evil spirits (Bible study) [B: Children & youth-5]

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