

Understanding Scripture

Session 2

How can we enable 5-6s to make sense of the Bible?

What do we need as teachers to understand the value and significance of the Bible in RE?

What does interpretation look like for 5-6 year olds?

Can the children...

- Recall / remember / retell?
- Talk about, think about, discuss?
- Make sense of...
- Suggest meanings in...
- Consider hidden messages...
- Respond creatively to...



*God's Spirit
is like...*

Fire / Dove / Wind / Water

Because...

- **God's spirit is powerful**
- **God's spirit makes peace**
- **God's spirit is invisible, but can move you**
- **God's spirit brings life**

The Bible in 750 Words

Robin Stockitt wrote this single page to sum up the whole Bible, and won a competition with his idea. I think this little work of art is more than a summary.

At the centre of creation lies a heart beat: tick...tick...tick...tick. At times the beat quickens, during moments of high anticipation, but then it returns to its steady rhythm, without pause, without hesitation, day after day, year after year, unending. It is the pulsing life blood of love flowing from the heart of God towards all that he has made. One day this God will visit his creation in person. He himself will go and participate in the life of humanity. He will laugh and cry, encourage and admonish, educate and confuse, suffer and die, and rise again to the surprise, delight and dismay of the people with whom he lived. But this is to rush ahead to the end of the story.

At the heart of the Bible is a struggle. It is the story of a great drama in which humanity tries to keep in step with the heartbeat of love. Occasionally God and his people walk in harmony, shoulder to shoulder in sweet communion in the cool of the day. It was like this at the beginning for Adam and his wife given paradise to enjoy and guard. And there were holy moments of great intimacy too for Abram, Moses, Elijah, David, Isaiah, John and Peter. These were ordinary humans who felt the pull and tug of the heart beat of love upon their souls and responded to it. And yet the struggle to hear and to heed God's voice was often lost by those very same people who, last week, had followed God's insistent call so carefully.

At times the struggle was lost by a whole nation, God's chosen nation, Israel, despite the pleas and warnings of the prophets, God's spokespeople, who bravely stood up in his name. "These people, whom I love to bless", announced God one day, "will be a vehicle for blessing to spread to the whole world. They are blessed, not because they are more loved, but simply so that others might, through them, discern and enjoy me too". God took these people, a rag-tag collection of unknown tribes, and through an extraordinary tale of enslavement in Egypt, rescue and deliverance across a harsh and forbidding desert, shaped them into a people that belonged to him. But alas, all too often, the blessing was kept to themselves and thereby it began to decay. The

prophets came to call them out of their stupor and stubborn rebelliousness. 'Trust' called out Jeremiah in the heat of political turmoil. To no avail. 'Be merciful' declared Micah when the temptation was to be harsh and unyielding. But no-one heard.

And so it continued year after year, king after king, prophet after prophet until one day all God's chosen people were taken away to a distant land - the land of Babylon - where they remained for 70 years, in order that they might learn that mercy is better than sacrifice and love, for God and neighbour, is more important than anything else in the whole world. Those who heard the heart beat and remembered from whence it came wrote down their struggles and heartaches, as well as their joys and times of jubilant thanksgiving. Their prayers and poems were collected together in the Psalms and became a treasured library.

And so God's time drew near. It was the time for his appearing, for his coming to his own people. He called himself Emmanuel, God with us or Jesus, God the Saviour made flesh. He chose to come in disguise, as an infant in an unknown village to a simple peasant girl. He came to those who had lost their way, who had become deaf to the pulsing beat of love, who were blind to the yearning of God for them.

This Jesus, God's own Son, would enter their darkness to find them. He would even enter death for them, in order that they might know, that in God's great drama, forgiveness, reconciliation, and a new beginning were available for all. When Jesus rose again after three days, everything became new. God's people were no longer those who simply named themselves, 'Israel'. Jesus had flung the doors of the kingdom of heaven open wide for all to enter. The community that gladly walked through those doors of welcome, called themselves the 'called out ones' or the 'ekklesia' or 'the church' made up entirely of people, not at all of brick or stone.

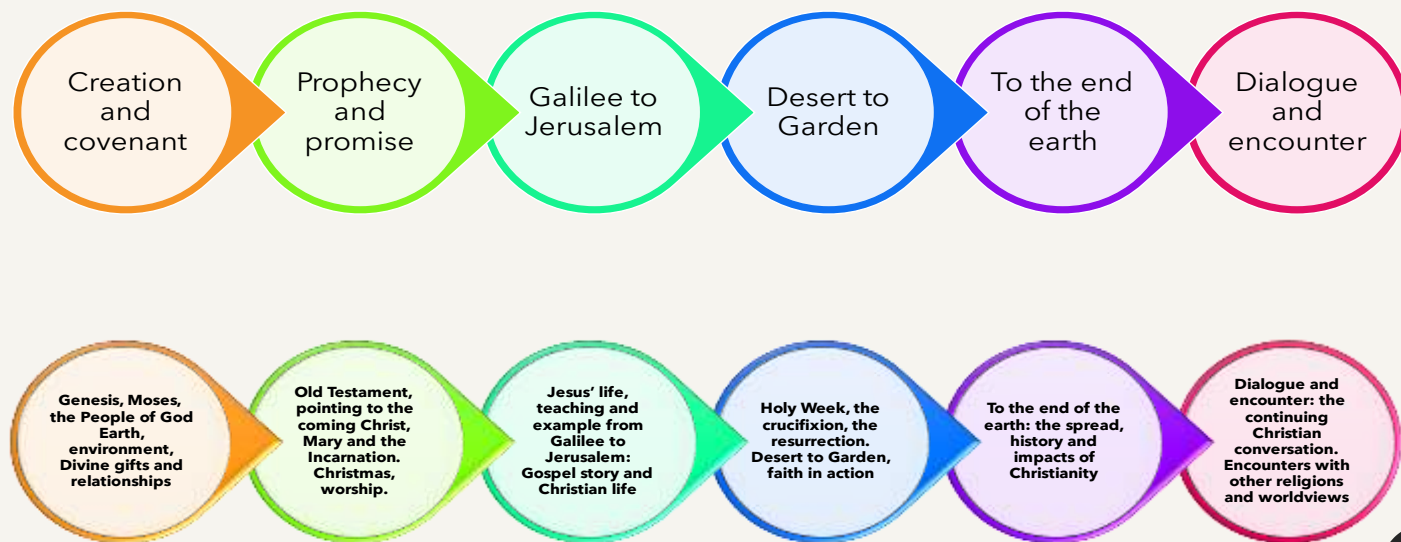
The remainder of the Bible concerns the struggle of this new community to understand itself, its relationship to Jesus, the carpenter from Nazareth who had come to reveal God to them and to tell them all about the heartbeat of love that never stops. It is an unfinished story...

Tick... tick... tick... tick



Emma Yarlett - Large frieze – with interpretive booklet £52 from RE Today

Six branches of understanding in the growing RE learning of every pupil



Age related expectations	Question stems to lead pupils towards the outcomes
- Recognise religious stories - Retell, in any form, a narrative that corresponds to the scripture source used. (retell does not mean 'learn by rote' – pupils can tell the story in their own words)	- Can you use the..... to tell the story of.....? Could use pictures, role play to tell the story of.... - What can you remember about what happens next in..... ? - Who are the characters in the parable of.....? What do they do....? Are they important in the story and why? - What happens in the story? - Can you tell me the story about? - Who can remember what the character does now?
- Recognise key people in the local, national and universal church. - Describe different roles of some people in the local, national and universal church.	- Who does / says / teaches / follows / leads / is kind / is good / is bad etc? - What does... do? - What do they do in church? - Who's job is it to.....? - What else do (they) do in the Church? - What do believe about...?
- Recognise that people act in a particular way because of their beliefs. - Describe some of the actions and choices of believers that arise because of their belief.	- What do... do at.....? - Christians believe..., so how should they act? - Which one of these objects...? What can you tell me about this object?
- Recognise key figures in the history of the People of God. - Describe the life and work of some key figures in the history of the People of God.	- Who is this? - Can you name any people who have (worked/ shared/ taught/ lived as..)? - Who was.....? - What did.....do when they were (living in/ working as/ helping with)?
- Recognise religious signs and symbols used in worship, including the celebration of the Sacraments. - Describe some religious symbols and the steps involved in religious actions and worship, including the celebration of the Sacraments.	- Where we might we find....? - Who could use these.....? - What happens in the sacrament of baptism? - What does..... Say / do?

Three things that matter most at Holy Week and Easter

**Can you say why you chose this one?
We can help you to write it down.**

My first choice

My second choice

My third choice

We All Need Encouragement

These learning ideas and lesson plans have been developed by Lat Blaylock of RE Today based on Fischy Music songs. They use key Christian concepts from the Catholic Curriculum Directory (2022). Catholic schools, among others, will find a good fit with their RE curriculum. The material is also suitable for use in all other school types. This project has been generously supported by Westhill Trust and St Christopher's Trust.

About the song

In this song our human need for the encouragement of others and the positives of team work are highlighted. It's a wellbeing song in that it invites singers to recognise the power of togetherness and mutual support. Children's experience of singing this song can fit well in school assembly, reinforcing a school's community values in which we all support each other.

Connections to the RE/RME curriculum

Pupils using these activities in RE will be enabled to:

Know more about a Biblical story of Barnabas and Paul.

Understand more about the ways a community can be encouraging to all its members.

Explore and express for themselves the experiences of giving thanks and being thanked, being encouraged and giving encouragement.

Connections to the Christian community and to Christian scripture

The Bible story of St Paul and St Barnabas is used in this work to provide a spiritual reference point for the thinking about wellbeing. Take care if you choose to talk about depression in this context: a sensitive set of issues, but they should not be ignored in schools. Many pupils know about depression from 'close to home'. Consider ways in which spiritual life – prayer for example – can be used to respond to sadness.

Singing the song together

Stephen (Fischbacher, Fischy Music) says: "This is a very positive call and response song that is easy to sing and provides the opportunity to sing lots of encouraging words to each other to build each other up".

Start off with the opening section, "C'mon, c'mon" with the claps. Go through this a few times, this is a good way of getting into the positive vibe of the song and warming up their voices as well.

Say the "well done, that's great" words asking the children to respond back to the words of encouragement.

Now sing it with the responses.

In the pre chorus part, "Sweet music, pure music", you could try actions where children use their hands like a conductor conducting a choir then finishing off by pointing to their ears. Alternatively, like lots of Fischy songs, ask children to come up with actions or signs that work for them and help them to connect with the meaning and emotion of the song.

Learning methods

These activities emphasise **creative thinking and reasoning**. There are possibilities for spiritual and moral growth in thinking about the narrative and Biblical teaching of St Paul.

Connections to big ideas in Christianity

In the beginning: Christians teach that God made humanity in the divine image and gave us the dignity of human nature to share.

To the ends of the Earth: The story of Barnabas and Paul is a good example of the ways in which Christians believe the Holy Spirit can bring healing to a person's past, and put into action the idea that God is a 'God of second chances'.

Life to the full: living well surely includes the idea that we need each other for the building up of the community and we all need to play our part as encouragers.

Activities and learning suggestions

Starting off: what is encouraging?

After listening to the song challenge the pupils in groups of three to make some lists. Can they list:

Ten encouraging words or phrases (there are lots in the song)?

5 encouraging ways to behave?

5 emotions that we feel when others are encouraging?

3 characters from the movies or TV who encourage others?

Share the lists around the class so that each trio can add more to their lists. This, of course, is quite an encouraging thing to do.

Linger longer, dig in deeper

Christian concepts: the Holy Spirit, in Christian belief, is the presence of God, invisible, but at work in all life and in anyone's life. The Spirit of God can be called the encourager, the heart warmer, the comforter, the challenger.

Bible story: St Barnabas rescues Saint Paul from depression. Tell this story to the class – a simple version can be found on page 4 below. The page sets some follow on activities. You could ask pupils to write a drama script for the conversation between Paul and Barnabas at Tarsus.

Biographical detail for Paul's life comes from the book of Acts and from Galatians 1:11-2:2. It is to some extent a speculation that Paul was depressed in the decade when his history 'goes quiet'. In the decade following his extraordinary contribution to the growth of Christianity went off like a firework display.

Going wider: Sentences of encouragement for a patchwork or mosaic

Ask pupils to work in threes to consider the sentences of encouragement which Saint Paul wrote in the book of Philippians – see page 5 below.

These are sentences from Christian scripture that might be applied to anyone who is in need of encouragement. Some offer the encouragement of faith in God, but others are about humans being humane, and encouraging each other.

Enable pupils to share their work by choosing a sentence they would like to pass on to someone they care for – they could make a card. And another sentence they feel has a good meaning for themselves today – they could make a card for themselves with the sentence and some images on it.

A concluding strategy: Make a triptych work of art yourself

This uses the outline on page 5 below, and uses the kind of framework for a piece of art that is called a triptych.

Can pupils make a triptych?

Use a piece of A4 card, and fold it so that it stands up by itself, and the two sides are like 'doors.'

Include the sentence you chose from Saint Paul written round the framework.

Do a picture of Saint Barnabas the encourager in the centre.

Do a picture that shows you encouraging someone else on the left hand side.

Give pupils the time they need to do this piece of work in ways they can take pride in, and arrange a display.

The story of Saint Barnabas rescuing Saint Paul from depression

Ask the class: What does it mean if someone is depressed?

After Jesus died, his followers were just a few thousand. They were persecuted and picked on! One of their main enemies was Saul from Tarsus. He even organised the killing of people, just because they were followers of Jesus. One day he went to a new town, Damascus, to capture and imprison Christians. On the way, a bright light flashed on him and it threw him from his horse. He heard Jesus speak to him: 'Saul, why are you picking on me?' His life changed around completely and from being anti-Jesus, he became a Christian. He changed his name to Paul. But do you think maybe he felt guilty about his past? He met up with some of the other Christians, but for years he kind of hid away. He went back to Tarsus. He was a tentmaker. He kept himself to himself. Was he ashamed of what he had done before? Was he depressed? Maybe.

Another Christian called Barnabas, from Cyprus, had not forgotten Paul. He went to Tarsus, Paul's home town, and searched until he found him there. 'Paul', he said 'God has a purpose for your life. You may be depressed, but can we travel together, be companions, look for the work of the Holy Spirit?' Barnabas brought Paul back close to the centre of the new Christian community. They went and joined a new church in Antioch. Barnabas encouraged Paul to find his true purpose in life. Not long after they were sent by the church to begin new churches, in Cyprus. Then they travelled and worked together to start new churches all over their part of the world.

Paul went on to start 22 churches and write 13 Bible books as well as starting the first version of 'Christian Aid' in the world. He is much more famous than Barnabas, but without his friend's encouragement, he would never have done any of that.

Can you guess what the name 'Barnabas' means? It means 'Child of encouragement.'

How did Barnabas live up to his name?

Who do you know who is maybe not well known, but is good at encouraging others?



Stained glass window from St Barnabas School in Leicester, showing the school's values, connected to the idea of encouragement. How can we all encourage each other at the moment?

Can you remember how many books of the Bible Paul wrote after Barnabas had encouraged him to be his best self? One of them was a letter to the Philippians. Choose your favourite sentence that Paul wrote from these 8 examples. Did he learn for himself from Barnabas's encouraging ways? What sentence do you think is encouraging?

"Always be glad because of the Lord!"

"Always be gentle with others."

"Don't worry about anything, but pray about everything."

"With thankful hearts offer up your prayers and requests to God."

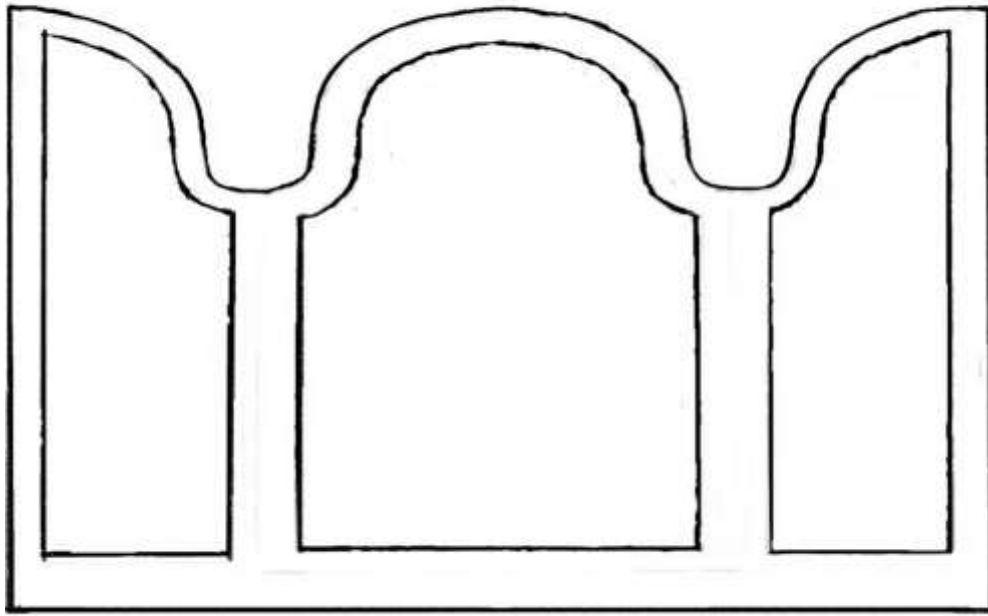
"Because you belong to Christ Jesus, God will bless you with peace."

"Friends, keep your minds on whatever is true, pure, right, holy, friendly..."

"Don't stop thinking about what is truly worthwhile."

"God, who gives peace, will be with you."

This kind of framework for a piece of art is called a triptych:



Can you make a triptych? Use a piece of A4 card, and fold it so that it stands up by itself, and the two sides are like 'doors.'

Include the sentence you chose from Saint Paul written round the framework.

Do a picture of Saint Barnabas the encourager in the centre

Do a picture that shows you encouraging someone else on the left-hand side.

Do a picture that shows someone who has encouraged you in the right-hand panel.

It will stand up by itself – together with others from the class this makes a great display.

Examples of pupils' work

8-year-old Sam's triptych responds to the story of Barnabas from the New Testament.



Lyrics

C'mon, c'mon, c'mon
c'mon, c'mon, c'mon

Well done, that's great, good job, come on!
Just right, join in, keep going, cool song!

Sweet music, pure music
Sweet music to my ears

Cos we all... need encouragement, I do believe
We all... need encouragement, like the air we breathe (x 2)

C'mon, c'mon, c'mon, c'mon...

You're great, you're smart, you're cool, you're kind
You're right, you're sound, you're in, you're fine!

Sweet music, pure music
Sweet music to my ears

Cos we all... need encouragement, I do believe
We all... need encouragement, like the air we breathe (x 2)

C'mon, c'mon, c'mon, c'mon...

Well done, that's great, good job, come on!
Just right, join in, keep going, cool song!

Sweet music, pure music
Sweet music to my ears

Cos we all... need encouragement, I do believe
We all... need encouragement, like the air we breathe (x 2)

C'mon, c'mon, c'mon, c'mon...

Read the sayings of Jesus out loud, but really quietly, all together, several times

Jesus Said:

“I am the real vine, and my Father is the gardener.”

“I am the vine, and you are the branches. Those who stick with me, I will stick with them. They will be very fruitful. But you can’t be fruitful without me.”

“A branch can’t be fruitful by itself; it can do so only if it is growing on the vine. In the same way you cannot have a fruitful life unless you stick with me.”



The Fruit of the Spirit

LOVE

Seeks the highest good of others.

JOY

Gladness that is not based on circumstances.

PEACE

Contentment, unity between people.

PATIENCE

Slow to speak and slow to anger.

KINDNESS

Merciful, sweet, and tender.

GOODNESS

Generous and open hearted.

FAITHFULNESS

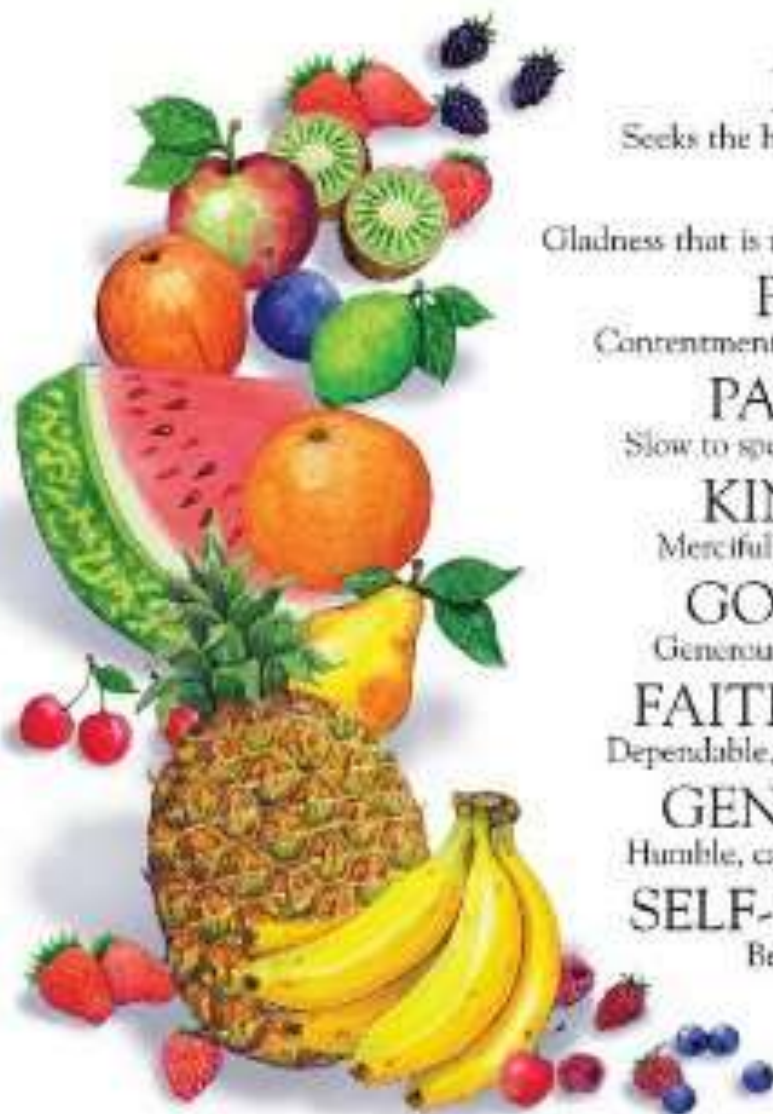
Dependable, loyal, and full of trust.

GENTLENESS

Humble, calm, non-threatening.

SELF-CONTROL

Behaving well.





Imagine your own life in 1 year, 5 years, ten years, thirty years. Can you imagine something you would like to do for God and for good?

Draw an image of this, or write it down on the back of the leaf.

Say a quiet prayer to God to ask for help in doing what you imagined.

Add your leaf to the vine.

Think of the life of a Christian we can all admire.

When and how did this person show love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness or self control?

Can you see and say how the Holy Spirit was growing in their life?

What can we do for God? A little list.

Someone in our class today might, in life...

- ❖ Pray every day
 - ❖ Give away £1000
 - ❖ Choose a job that helps people
 - ❖ Serve God in a poorer country
 - ❖ Speak up about Jesus
 - ❖ Raise money for charity
 - ❖ Live a life of love
 - ❖ Become famous for their kindness
 - ❖ ...
 - ❖ ...
- ❖ Plan and lead a Bible study
 - ❖ Give a Bible to a friend
 - ❖ Make friends with someone new
 - ❖ Bring a friend to church
 - ❖ Help a homeless person
 - ❖ Have a vocation and become a priest or religious person!
 - ❖ ...
 - ❖ ...
 - ❖ ...



By Fiona, 10.

Cut some grapes out of green and purple paper to stick onto your vine.

Take two or three of each colour and draw onto them. You can add a word or two if you want to.

**Green grapes are for 'thank you's'
What would you like to thank God for today?**

Purple grapes are for the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Choose a word and draw a picture to show this in action. Some are easier than others.

Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Humility, Self-control.