

Thinking Big Questions

Bible Bonanza 2024: Who is God?

Leader & Volunteer Guide



Introduction - Leader (10-15 minutes)

Welcome students, give out name tags, general conversation... good to see you!

A. Arrival activity: STUDENTS SIT IN CIRCLE AROUND BIG **TREASURE BOX** (DON'T OPEN YET)

I wonder what you can remember about last term. (*Who is Jesus, and Who is God*) I wonder where we might go to find out more about them... Leave this question hanging, and look down at the treasure box...

Hmm... Can you imagine if a box like this came to your home (read some labels)... and you shoved it on a shelf and never opened it! That's what many people do with a Bible! They think they already know what's in there and they don't look inside! The Bible is a great place to find out more answers about Jesus and God!

So today, we are going to look inside this amazing book and think of it like a treasure box. There's so much in the Bible, and Christians treat each part like a treasure. Inside this box are some of those parts. REMOVE LID...

Place timeline cards and corresponding item in a circle in front of students.

(NB: If the group is too large for a circle some students could hold the items out the front.) **These things happened over thousands of years, it's only going to take us a minute or two to recap it all**

TIMELINE CARD	LEADER SAYS	ITEM PLACED
God made the world	God made the world	world ball
Adam and Eve	people chose THEIR way	people/NO God
God promises	God made promises	rainbow
Moses and Joshua	God chose people...	Joseph, Joshua, Ruth
Judges and Kings	kings...	David
people sent away	leaders...	Daniel, Esther
people return	God helps His people	smiley ball
Jesus	God sent Jesus	cross
first churches	people believe God	people/TICK God
forever	God is forever	forever hearts

The Bible is NOT... a rule book, fairy tale, full of super-heroes	matching cards
The Bible IS... a history book; a rescue, love, true story	matching cards
My story... I wonder, where would we put – ourselves	Me heart

Segway to stations: (Cut out the turning over if you have less time)

Let's turn the timeline cards over (closest students can turn a card) and we have:

"The Bible is one BIG story of how God loves his children and comes to rescue them".

Each part is a treasure and even a clue about God's one BIG story. Today we'll be exploring Daniel and Esther to help us answer our big question:

What is the Bible? When we come back together, we can share what we have found out.

Stations - Volunteers (20-25 minutes) assist as needed/allow time for whole group end
Volunteers use station guide and materials as provided. Each stations covers one of the 2 stories – Daniel, Esther. Allow students to handle the resources, be part of the activities and contribute their ideas. (NB: David and Joshua also prepared but not used due to 2024 political climate)

Conclusion – Leader (10-15 minutes)

SHARING: Let's see what Bible treasure each group heard about.

name card for each: Daniel – Esther (each group shares key points)

Was there a part you treasured?

Christians believe that God is a God that can rescue, and we treasure this! Through God's big story we see God rescuing, over and over. Each time, God rescues SOME people (like in these stories + many others), but then we get to the part that rescues EVERYONE - JESUS! (**JESUS/RESCUE card** from timeline cards). This is the BIGGEST rescue and the BIGGEST treasure!

'I wonder' card with flaps

JESUS' rescue can re-connect **EACH OF US** with God, forever!

One of the most famous Bible verses says:

'God loved the people of this world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who has faith in him will have eternal life and never really die. God did not send his Son into the world to condemn (judge) its people. He sent him to save them!' John 3:16-17

Put down the Treasure Token (Golden heart with wooden cross)

SUMMARY: God's story sure is a big story to think about, isn't it.

So, how did we answer the big question today: **What is the Bible?**

(share any group responses from 'What is the Bible?' cards)

Thank you everyone! You have helped each other understand, even more, how... **'The Bible is one big story of how God loves his children and comes to rescue them forever.'**

What is the Bible?

Thinking Big Questions Bible Bonanza 2024: What is the Bible?



DANIEL and the Lion's Den (Daniel 6)

Key verses: *"Don't be afraid, for I am with you"* Isaiah 41: 10 *"Daniel heard about the law but when he went home, he went upstairs and prayed in front of the window that faced Jerusalem. In the same way that he had always done, he knelt down in prayer three times a day, giving thanks to his God."* Daniel 6:10

WELCOME students: **Remind them of the question 'What is the Bible?'**

Use Bible timeline photo to find DANIEL. **You may also use the Bible** to show where the Daniel story is (pg 1129 CEV).



SEEK: I wonder....

1. Has anyone ever seen a real lion? Briefly share. There's a lion in our story today. Let's watch this

Kid's Spot to think about our story <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SI-frzKdD0g>

OR What could happen if you met a real lion?

2. Settle students for story and invite their involvement along the way.

1 numbers indicate story picture card that can be placed, along with suggested props (in brackets)

NB: Questions in blue are suggestions – NO NEED TO DO THEM ALL!!

PART 1: Life was not looking good for God's people. They had been captured, taken far from home, and were like slaves to the king of Babylon **1** (place people figures on map- move from Jerusalem to Babylon, choose a student to be king – others ess-up the king). But God had not left his people. God was with them and looking after them. Daniel (Choose a Daniel and give them the Lanyard to wear) loved God and obeyed God. **2** God made Daniel clever and able to understand lots of difficult things (lightbulb). King Darius noticed Daniel and liked how clever he was. He made Daniel his most important helper (VIP badge). The other helpers, called Governors **2** B, didn't like this. They wanted to get rid of Daniel. They tried to find things wrong with Daniel, things they could tell the king... but there weren't any. They only noticed this: 3 times (place 3) every day Daniel went to his room and prayed. I wonder what they might plan for Daniel...

OPTIONAL ACTIONS: learn & make actions for king, pray/prayed and lion every time they are heard in the story.

PART 2: The Governors smiled to themselves. "Let's get the king to make a law, that no one is allowed to pray to anyone except the king. Daniel won't obey this law and he will be punished!" They were pleased with themselves for being so clever and hurried off to tell the king. The king liked the idea. He didn't know they were tricking him so he made the new law (student king reads scroll 1 ★) "Everyone must pray only to me! If you don't, the lions will have you for their dinner!" Daniel heard this. He knew it was wrong to pray to anyone except God, so Daniel went to his room, closed the door and prayed to God like he always did. **3** Was this a good decision?

PART 3: That's just what the mean Governors knew Daniel would do. They immediately told the **king**. The **king** was sad. He had been tricked! He didn't want to hurt Daniel, but he couldn't change his law. He had to let the soldiers throw Daniel to the **lions** 4 (the students become the den & sit around your Danie- turn into lions -roar like lions. Give the king the speech card, read speech bubble 1.) **"May your God, who you love so much rescue you!"** the **king** said.


Could the king have done something else?

The **king** (king could act this out) went back to the palace but didn't sleep. He tossed and turned all night until morning, leapt out of bed, and ran straight to the **lion's** den. (King reads speech bubble 2) **"Daniel?"** he cried. **"Has your God rescued you?"**

"YES!" Daniel shouted. **"God sent an angel (angel) to close the lions' mouths!"** The **king** brought Daniel out of the den. He didn't even have a scratch! The **king** made a new law:

"Pray to the God of Daniel... the living God... the God who rescues people!" 5

(king reads scroll 2)

 **QUESTION:** I discover... Ask questions from the **A4 'I wonder' card** and encourage sharing.

Read 'In the Bible' comment (extra JESUS info will be covered in conclusion) then think about the big question again: **What is the Bible?**

Write any student responses onto the question card – bring back for sharing with whole group.

 **EXPLORE:** I respond (what has this got to do with me?)

Through the Bible, we hear about hope and promises from God. In this story we heard:

May God rescue you! "Pray to the living God... who rescues." Daniel 6:26-27

These CARDS can help us to think about that too.

DANIEL CARDS

Spread the 'DANIEL CARDS' out, story side up.

Place a matching 'QUESTION CARD' near each 'DANIEL CARD'.

Take turns to briefly share a response to a question.

Place a candle on the 'VERSE CARD' to symbolise 'God with us'.

(each verse card also has a Daniel response on the back, if needed)

Explain and read (together) the prayer example of asking God to be with us.

DANIEL - BONUS ACTIVITY IF TIME




Lion/Governor/Daniel (based on 'scissors/paper/rock')

1. Teach students the 3 actions: Daniel (praying hands) - Governor (angry fist) - Lion (lion's claws)

2. On the count of 1-2-3 students choose one of the 3 actions:

Governor beats Daniel (because the Governors got King Darius to throw Daniel to the lions)

Daniel beats Lion (because Daniel trusted God and the Lion's mouths were closed)

 I wonder...  				
Was there an amazing or favourite part for you?	What this story tells us about God?	What this story shows us about life?	How God helps people here?	What this story makes us think about?
In the Bible...				
...we see God rescuing SOME people...				
then we get to the part that rescues EVERYONE – JESUS!				
JESUS' rescue can re-connect EACH OF US with God, forever!				

What is the Bible?

Thinking Big Questions Bible Bonanza 2024: What is the Bible?

ESTHER helps save God's people (Esther 1-10)

Key verses: *"Maybe it was for a time like this that you were made queen!"* Esther 4:14b

"I will go to the king, even if it is against the law. If I must die for doing it, I will die." Esther 4:16b

WELCOME students: **Remind them of the question 'What is the Bible?'**

Use **Bible timeline photo** to find **ESTHER**. You may also use **the Bible** to show where the Esther story is (pg 642 CEV).



SEEK: I wonder....

1. Let's watch this (Queen Esther) **trailer** for some clues to our story <https://youtu.be/RW7xBZzCSGM>

What did you notice? What might happen next?

OR Has anyone ever met a king or queen? Briefly share. There's a queen in our story today.

2. Settle students for story and invite their involvement along the way.

1 numbers indicate story picture card that can be placed, along with suggested props (in brackets) **NB:** Questions in blue are suggestions – **NO NEED TO DO THEM ALL!**

**** THIS STORY IS PRINTED IN SECTIONS ON THE BACK OF THE STORY CARDS IN THE RESOURCE KIT.**

THESE CAN BE HELD UP & READ FROM - EASIER TO FOLLOW AS YOU TELL THE STORY & ADD PROPS **

PART 1: God's people had been taken away to another country by another king **1** (choose a student to be king - wear lanyard, cloak, read first 'king' sentence). **"I am the great, powerful and rich king of Persia! I can do whatever I want."**

It was sort of like God's people were kidnapped! But God was still with them in this new place (**God card**). One of God's people was an orphan **2** named **Esther** (choose a student to be Esther - wear lanyard). When she was young her mom and dad died so her older cousin **Mordecai** (choose student to be Mordecai, scarf – wear lanyard) became like her dad **3** and took care of her.

When Esther grew up, the king was looking for a new queen. He saw Esther was beautiful and kind, so he chose her **4** (**tiara**) Esther really didn't have a choice. She was taken to be queen. So Mordecai told Esther to keep a secret (**Mordecai reads first sentence**). **"Don't tell anyone that you are one of God's people."**

How do you think Esther felt about becoming queen? Would it be hard for her to live away from her people?

Maybe Esther liked being super rich and living in a palace. She even had lots of helpers to work for her!


PART 2: Five years later Queen Esther heard terrible news about her people! Everyone was meant to bow down to the king's worker **Haman**, (choose student to be Haman – wear lanyard, robe) but Mordecai wouldn't – he only bowed down to God (all students could bow; not Mordecai). Haman started hating Mordecai and all God's people.






(**Haman reads sentence**) **"I hate Mordecai! I hate all of Mordecai's people! I'll tell the king they are bad!!"** Haman even had the king write a new law to have Mordecai killed and the rest of God's people killed too! How terrible! **5**
If you were Mordecai, would you bow to Haman? What do you think Esther should do?

The king was Queen Esther's husband, but even Esther couldn't go and see him when she wanted. Esther knew the law - if someone went to the king without being asked, they could die! The king hadn't asked to see Esther for 30 days! Queen Esther sent a message to Mordecai to ask about the problem. Mordecai sent back this reply (**Mordecai reads second sentence**), **"You need to go and talk to the king. You need to ask for help. Maybe this is the reason that you became queen."** **6** Esther wrote back to Mordecai (**Esther reads first sentence**),

"I have decided. I will go see the king. And if I die, then I die." **What do you think about Esther's decision?**

PART 3: Esther was faithful. First, she and all God's people in the city fasted (stop eating and pray to God) for 3 days **7 Esther was wise.** She made a plan then dressed in her queen robes (**Esther student is dressed by other students - each give an item to wear**). **Esther was courageous** (**take characteristic cards from lanyard pouch & clip to lanyard**). She went to see the king without being asked! **8 What will the king do?** Yay!!! The king welcomed her! Esther waited before asking for help. First, she prepared a special dinner, a banquet. Then she faced up to the challenge and told the king the truth (**Esther reads second sentence**), **"I, your queen am one of God's people. This man, Haman, wants us all killed!"** She cried and knelt before the king to ask him to save their lives. **9 What would the king do?** The king saved Esther! He got rid of Haman! Esther's faith, wisdom and courage meant God's people were saved! **10** The king wrote new laws to help save them! Wow! What a huge change! The king even gave cousin Mordecai a job at the palace! Together Mordecai and Esther worked for the good of God's people! (**God card**)

 **QUESTION: I discover...** Ask questions from the A4 'I wonder' card. Read 'In the Bible' comment (extra JESUS info will be covered in conclusion)... could add:
In the time/book of Esther, God's people needed saving and God use Esther because she was brave enough to go before the king – but now we have a king that is brave enough to save everyone – Jesus!

I wonder...				
 Was there an amazing or favourite part for you?	 What this story tells us about God?	 What this story shows us about life?	 How God helps people here?	 What this story makes us think about?
In the Bible... ...we see God rescuing SOME people... then we get to the part that rescues EVERYONE – JESUS! JESUS' rescue can re-connect EACH OF US with God, forever!				

Think about the big question again: **What is the Bible?** Write any student responses onto the question card – bring back for sharing with whole group.

 **EXPLORE: I respond (what has this got to do with me?)** 

Through the Bible, we hear about hope and promises from God. In this story we hear about Esther trusting in God: **"Trust God from the bottom of your heart; don't try to figure out everything on your own."** **Proverbs 3:5**

These CARDS can help us to think about that too.

ESTHER CARDS

Briefly summarise 'Esther' using 'CHARACTER CARDS' as you spread them coloured side up. Turn the cards over and invite students to make the sentence together (A4 landscape/images connect). Spread the ★ **CHALLENGE CARDS**' coloured side up. Take turns to briefly share any ideas for any challenge. Turn CHALLENGE CARDS over and invite students to make the sentence together - discuss. Place candles around the Proverbs 'BIBLE VERSE CARD' to symbolise 'trusting in God'. Explain and read (together) the prayer example of asking God to be with us.