

Children's session one

This resource has been created by Kay Morgan-Gurr, director of Children Worldwide (childrenworldwide.org.uk). Kay also does consultancy and training on working with children who have disabilities and additional needs.

To begin

Have the children come into an activity called “My favourite....”

Put large sheets of paper on the floor or on tables with different headings in the middle of the page:

- My favourite toy
- My favourite food
- My favourite drink
- My favourite book
- My favourite TV programme

Get the children to write or draw their answers on these sheets of paper - they can have more than one answer!

[Aim: get the children to understand that every child has favourite things that help them settle - for example, a favourite toy or blanket that goes everywhere with them!]

Set the scene

Explain to your group that some children are unable to live with the families they were born into but have to be looked after by another family – either temporarily (fostering) or permanently (adopted). You will know the appropriate level of detail to go into.

Try using some puppets. Do a sketch where the puppet is your ‘Foster Puppet’. (It’s ok to have the puppet ‘whisper’ and the puppeteer to relate what it ‘said’.) Get the puppet to ‘talk’ about things like:

- Their favourite things and what it was like to leave them behind or take them.
- Finding their new family ate different sorts of food, only drank water at meal times etc.
- What it was like having different rules: bed times, doing chores, homework etc.
- Having brothers or sisters who either came with them or went somewhere else.
- Having foster brothers and sisters they’ve never met before.

Don’t dwell too long on any of the areas and don’t feel you have to do all the suggestions.

[Aim: a taster to show what it can be like to suddenly have to stay with a different family in a different house, to miss their favourite things and their siblings and have to learn to get on with other children they have never met before!]

Think

Use the Puppet sketch and the opening activity information to talk about fostering and adoption. Ask: "What would it feel like to live in a different house from yours?" Different rules. Different food. Different clothes. Different people in your house... except, it's not your house."

Game

Musical Houses - this is a variation on an old favourite!

Put newspaper pages on the floor. Whilst some music is playing the children walk around.

When the music stops the children have to stand on the newspaper - as many as possible on each sheet. With each round you can either take a sheet away or make each sheet smaller by folding it in half.

[Aim: for some children in long term foster care, the amount of times they move can feel like musical homes. Or they may feel they are being squeezed into a new home and don't feel they fit!]

The story

Tell the story of the birth of Moses up until he went to Pharaoh's house (Exodus 1:8 – 2:10)

As you end the story, bring in questions about how Moses, his birth family and his adoptive family may have felt about things. *(Remember - we know the end of the story; Moses didn't)*

In the story telling, note that:

- Moses was adopted by Pharaoh's daughter, but then was 'fostered' by his birth family until he was a little older. He got to know his biological brothers and sisters in that time.
- Pharaoh's daughter had other children. When Moses went to live at the palace, he had to get used to his 'new' brothers and sisters, but would have missed his birth siblings.
- The rules, food, customs and even the language would have been very different too.

Think

- How can we help friends who are fostered?
- Some families in your church may foster or adopt children. How can we be helpful, caring friends to those children?

Pray

Paper doll chain prayer:

You can either buy these ready cut, or get the children to make them from scratch (Many useful templates can be found online.)

Get the children to:

- 1 Write their own name on one of the people, and then stop to pray about how they can help.
- 2 Draw faces on the people - some happy, some sad. Then stop to pray for children currently in foster care or being adopted, and for their new brothers and sisters. (For older children you might like to suggest writing different emotions on the bodies, such as "scared, feeling different, worried, missing home")
- 3 Tape/glue the paper doll chain into a circle, and then pray for the whole church as they help families who foster or adopt.

Let the children take these home to remind them to keep praying.

 Home for Good, 176 Copenhagen Street, London, N1 0ST



www.homeforgood.org.uk



0300 001 0995



info@homeforgood.org.uk

A company limited by guarantee Registered in England & Wales No. 9060425. Registered charity number: 1158707

Children's session two

Introduction

Throughout the Bible, God asks His people to look after widows and orphans. In Bible times, to be without a husband or parents could mean that you were outside the normal structures of protection – that means nobody to look after you, no one to help feed you, nowhere to stay in safety.

In our society children who can't live with their own parents or families are looked after in children's homes, by foster parents (often just for a short while), or adopted and given a new mum and dad. Children in need will always be looked and cared for by someone in our country. In church today the grown-ups are being asked to think about the role that Christians have in adopting or fostering children, and exploring the issue that it says in the Bible God wants us to look after orphans, so what does that mean for us as Christians when so many children need new homes to live in?

It's a tough question and for you children it's even harder because you are not in control of decisions grown-ups make. But as Christians you do have a role to play in this and we'll be exploring that in our session/group today.

Run around game

Find a home: spread newspaper sheets on the floor, play music and have the children move around. When the music stops children must 'find a home' on a sheet of paper. Start the music and remove one or more sheets.

As the game goes on more and more children will be trying to get on one sheet – encourage them to help each other!

Children not on a sheet (you define the ruling on what that looks like) are 'out'.

Wonder and Reflect: What was it like to be out?

Sitting down game

Play the Happy Families card game. Wonder and reflect: What or who makes a 'happy family'? Are families always happy places?

Quiz

Many well-known characters from books and films are orphans and/or weren't raised by their birth parents. Have a quiz to see if the children know who raised these characters. There are a wide variety of ways you could conduct this quiz – you might like to use pictures of the characters, or you could write the names of the characters and who raised them on sheets of paper and get the children to match them up.

Make sure the children identify the link that all the characters in the pictures have been adopted or fostered.

You could develop this idea and ask the children whether they know anything about what happened to the characters in the stories.

These are characters that five to eight-year-olds will probably know about:

Character

Cinderella
Dorothy (Wizard of Oz)
James (James and the Giant Peach)
Miss Honey (Matilda)
Harry Potter
Samuel
Tarzan
Oliver
Luke Skywalker
Mowgli
Moses
Snow White

Raised by

Step-mother
Aunt Em and Uncle Henry
Aunt Spiker and Aunt Sponge
Miss Trunchbull (her Aunt)
Aunt Petunia and Uncle Vernon
Eli the Priest
Gorillas
Workhouse, Fagin and Mr Brownlow
Beru and Owen Lars (his Aunt and Uncle)
Wolves (before being taken to the 'man village')
Pharoah's Daughter
Step-mother

These are characters that eight to 11-year-olds will probably know about:

Character

Batman & Robin
Violet, Klaus and Sunny Baudelaire

Superman / Clark Kent
Alex Rider
Lord Voldemort
Prince Caspian
Frodo Baggins
Tracey Beaker

Queen Esther
Spiderman
Mephibosheth
Po (Kung Fu Panda)

Raised by

Bruce Wayne- by Alfred the Butler, Dick Grayson- by Bruce
Count Olaf attempts to trick them into living with him in his different guises
Sam & Molly Kent found & raised him
His Uncle Ian
Children's home, then Hogwarts
His Uncle
His Uncle Bilbo
In care at the children's home 'Elm Tree House' aka 'The Dumping Ground'
Her cousin Mordecai
Aunt May & Uncle Ben
King David
Mr Ping

These are characters that eight to 11-year-olds will probably know about:

You may or may not be surprised to hear that although the concept of looking after children in need is an important theme in Bible, mentioned several times, there are only stories about four people who were fostered or adopted.

They are:

Samuel Find the story in 1 Samuel 1:21-28 & 1 Samuel 2:11
Moses Find the story in Exodus 2: 1-10
Esther Find the story in Esther 2: 5-7
Mephibosheth Find the story in 2 Samuel 9

Talk together

Invite the children to share what they think it means to be adopted or fostered. Do they know anyone who has been adopted or fostered?

Encourage sharing while respecting they may not want to so don't force anyone to speak out loud.

Story

Have a look at the story of Moses in Exodus 2:1-10 (New Century Version) or watch the beginning of *The Prince of Egypt* on DVD.

Wondering Together: Have you ever thought about this story through the lens of 'adoption' before? What do you view differently as a result?

What might it have been like for Moses, leaving his birth family at a young age to go and live with and be brought up in the Egyptian royal household?

Let's think of some of the changes;

- Birth family to Royal family (possibly not accepted by new 'brothers and sisters' but no longer belonging to his birth family)

- Different house

- Different religious practices (Jewish practices and customs)

- Different food (Jewish law)

- Different education

- Different status

- Different routine

I wonder what Moses thought about it all.

I wonder how Moses' mum felt.

I wonder how Moses' brothers and sisters felt.

I wonder how Pharaoh's daughter felt when Moses came to live with her.

I wonder if adults and children today have similar thoughts or feelings about adoption.

Is there anything constant and unchanging that might help at times of change?

Orphans around the world

Around the world there are millions of children who are orphans. They sometimes live in orphanages (but not like orphanages we think of), sometimes they live on the streets or join up in gangs.

Children become orphans for lots of reasons. Can you think of any?

- Natural disaster
- War
- Health issues like HIV/AIDS
- Poverty and economic reasons
- The child is born with some kind of disability

The experiences of children in orphanages around the world are hard for us to imagine.

There are often so many children and so few adult carers, the children do not receive the care and attention they need, so when they are ill, frightened or have nightmares there is no one to hug and reassure them.

They often wash in cold showers with lots of other children (no warm baths with bubbles or toys to play with).

They have no choices about the food they eat (they get what they get), food is sometimes scarce and children often eat quickly so no one else can steal the food from their plate.

They don't have the choice of clothing you have, perhaps only one or two sets.

Shoes are worn until they fall apart. They have to be named so no one steals them.

Personal belongings, special toys and comforts are rare or non-existent.

This may seem upsetting and sad and is why God speaks so specifically in the Bible about caring for orphans and thankfully Christians all over the world work in partnership to support, care and bring relief and hope. I wonder what part you can play in this. Find out about Christian charities supporting orphans or street children and see if you can raise money, collect toys or clothing for them at Christmas or other times.

Actions for kids

In preparing this material I did a bit of research among some friends of mine – grown ups who've adopted and children who've had their new mum and dad for a few years now.

The children all have strong memories of the adoption time and the sense of nervousness, feeling shy and worrying 'will they like me?'. It may surprise you to learn that the grown-ups felt exactly the same!

The biggest anxiety of the children was that they would make friends in their new place.

Spend some time writing or saying prayers for children waiting to be adopted, about to move to new homes or settling in.

One really practical thing you can do is to make friends with a child you know is adopted or fostered. Sometimes it happens in school that children find it difficult to make or keep friends. You could ask God to help you be a strong and stable friend (even if your other friends aren't so keen). This isn't easy, but it's one way that we can show God's love in a very real way.

Make a 'Promise Postcard' – write or draw your pledge or promise to include children, invite them to your party, (or whatever else you've thought of) on a postcard and ask God to help you honour the promise.

Are there other things you can do to make a difference at school, in church or your community?

God's love is for everyone

Remind the children that whatever happens to them on earth, God's love is forever and for always. My adopted friend 'N' said: "God will always love you even if you're not sure if mum and dad will." One of her favourite stories is 'the cross' because it reminds her that God will always love her.

You could finish up talking and praying with the children about this.