

Down Town with Mark: Session 3

Title: At Simon and Andrew's house

Bible base: Mark 1:29–34

Aim: To emphasise Jesus' power over all illnesses.

This session deals with Jesus healing Simon's mother-in-law. Our time of prayer includes the opportunity to pray for those we know who are unwell. The fact that Jesus has the power to heal all illness needs to be sensitively dealt with alongside the fact that Jesus does not always heal everyone. It may be that children relate stories of those they know who are ill or who have died (including pets) and we should be ready to admit that we don't have all the answers to why some people are healed and many are not. At the same time our aim is to encourage children to keep praying for those who are unwell and remembering that ultimately Jesus is more powerful than all sickness. We should also encourage them to talk to God about any questions as this will help foster a realistic and honest relationship with God.

Introduction

Play the song 'Downtown' as the children arrive, to welcome them whilst you are doing the register or having a drink if the club runs after school.

Game

Choose one of the following games. After either game, make the point that Jesus is even more powerful than all these illnesses.

Illness relay. In advance, choose around ten (depending on the size of your group) of the illnesses listed in the 'illnesses' resource file. The list should include some that your group will be familiar with and others that will require a bit of guesswork. For the game you will need:

- an area for the children to run, relay style, to collect pieces of paper from one end of the room;
- copies of the selected words from the 'illnesses' resource file, enough for each team to have one set (the same words for each team);
- small pieces of sticky tape, enough for one per word being used.

Arrange the children into teams and get one person to be the 'ill person'. This person should stand with the others. Give the 'ill person' a number of small pieces of sticky tape (perhaps stuck around the edges of a plastic card). Place the words in one pile per team at the other end of the room.

Explain to the children that in a moment, one person from each team should run to the end and collect one illness from the pile. They then should run back to their team and stick the illness on the part of the 'ill person's' body that the illness mainly affects. As soon as one person is back, the next person can run. If they want, one or two children don't run but stay back to help place the illnesses on the right body part. Emphasise to the children that sticky tape should **not** be used on bare skin, just on clothing. If the illness affects an area where there is bare skin they either lay the card in place or have someone hold it there with their hand. The first team to have collected all the illnesses wins one point, and the first team to have correctly placed them on the ill person's body wins two points.

Illness mastermind. In advance, choose around ten of the illnesses listed in the 'illnesses' resource file. The list should include some that your group will be familiar with and others that will require a bit of guesswork. For the game you will need:

- copies of the selected words from the 'illnesses' resource file, enough for each team to have one set (the same words for each team);
- small pieces of sticky tape, enough for one per word being used.

Get the children into groups of up to five people and give each group a set of the illness names. This is a version of the old 'Mastermind' board game. Have one person from each group volunteer to be 'the body' who will have the names of the illnesses stuck on them. Give each group two minutes to stick the names of the illnesses on the parts of the body that they think they mainly affect. Words should only be stuck with sticky tape on clothing, **not** on bare skin. If the illness affects an area where there is bare skin it should be held on, not taped on.

After two minutes go round and tell them how many they have got right – but don't tell them which ones are right or wrong. Then give them a further two minutes to swap round any of their words. Go round the groups again. You can repeat this up to four times. After that, see which group has the most things right. If a group gets everything right first time, make sure the other groups don't see where they have placed things (get them to remove them) and then play for second or third place.

Body parts. In advance, think of a list of body parts that can be appropriately used in this game, eg elbows, ears, hands, shins, backs, heads, thumbs etc.

Explain to the group that you are going to play a game a bit like the one where you call out a number and people have to get into a group of that number. However, this game is slightly different as you will call out a part of the body (eg elbows) and people have to touch elbows. However, you will also call out a number (eg five elbows) at which point people have just a few seconds to get together with other people and make sure five elbows are touching each other. If you want you can allow one person to use both of their own elbows (but this won't work with ears!).

The game can be played either as an elimination game (if you don't get in a group of the right number you are out) or as a points game (if you do get in a group of the right size you earn a point).

NB Some children may not be comfortable playing this game. If so give them another role, for example to call out numbers or keep score.

Bible story

You will need:

- either one large sheet of paper or a number of sheets of paper, one for each group;
- pens, pencils or crayons – each group will need a red pen or pencil as well as other colours;
- a set of words from the 'Pictionary words' resource file.

Explain to the children that we are going to play a game of Pictionary. It is a game where you draw an object or a describing word and other people have to guess what the word is. You are not allowed to draw any letters or numbers, write the word or say the answer!

You can play this game in two ways, according to your group. You could have one person draw and the whole group guess together what the word is. Alternatively you can play the game in small

groups as a type of relay race, so one person from each team comes and collects a word, goes back to their group and draws it. When the team have correctly guessed, the next person comes up, tells you the last answer and you give them the next word.

Play the game. Afterwards say something like the following.

Now you may not have realised it, but as you have played that game you have worked out today's story from the Bible. [If you played the game in groups, get each group to gather around their paper and circle each picture as it comes up. If you have played it as one group, get them to look at the pictures at the front and have someone circle relevant pictures as you go along.]

All the words we have drawn somehow link into today's story. See if you can see where they fit...

One day, Jesus [circle picture] went to the home [circle 'house'] of Simon and Andrew. But when he got there things weren't so good. The reason things weren't so good was that Simon and Andrew's mum wasn't very well – she was in bed [circle], she was really hot [circle] which I think will probably have made her go quite red [circle]. As soon as Jesus heard this, he went upstairs and took hold of her hand [circle]. Straight away, she was healed [circle the drawing for 'heel!']. She got up out of bed [circle it again if you want] and started to wait on Jesus, Simon and Andrew – just like a servant [circle] would. She made them food [circle] to eat and looked after them. Word quickly got round and before you knew it, huge crowds of people [circle] turned up. Loads of them were ill [circle] and do you know what Jesus [circle] did? [Point to the foot picture and get the children to guess.] He healed them all.

This shows that Jesus has power over all sorts of illnesses – not just all that time ago but even today.

To talk about

Ask the children why Jesus made the lady in the story better. Share an up-to-date testimony story of someone whom God has healed recently. Perhaps one of the leaders could share a personal story or share a story you have read or heard about.

Prayer activity

Choose one of the following activities.

Praying hands. In advance draw a large pair of hands, palms up in a welcoming posture, on as big a sheet of paper as possible. If you have a wooden pair of hands (representing Jesus' hands), even better. You will also need post-it notes and pens or pencils (enough for one per child).

Encourage the children to think of someone they know who is unwell at the moment. Give each child a post-it note and a pencil or pen. Encourage them either to write a name or code name or to draw a picture of the person (or pet) that they want Jesus to make well.

Read out Mark 1:31: '[Jesus] went to her, took her by the hand, and helped her up.'

Explain that often in the Bible, Jesus touched people with his hands and they were made well. Emphasise that there is nothing magical or special about the hands in our picture or object but we are going to place our prayers on them as a way of asking Jesus to place his hands on those we have mentioned and make them well.

Encourage the children to put their post-it notes on the hands if they wish. Finish off by saying a general prayer asking Jesus to touch each life that has been mentioned and thanking him for listening to our prayer.

Body prayers. You will need a long length of wallpaper, pens or pencils.

Get a child to volunteer to be drawn round by lying down on the wallpaper and have some other children draw round them using pencils.

Ask for a volunteer to draw in the brain, heart and stomach (roughly). Tell the children that we now have a prime example of the human body! Remind them that the Bible teaches that Jesus has power over everything – including illnesses or injuries in people's bodies. Explain that in a moment you are going to give everyone a chance to write a name or code word or draw a symbol or picture for someone who they know who is ill or suffering at the moment. Be ready to prompt if necessary. They should draw or write their piece on the part of the body that might be affected. Tell the children that this can include people who are sad (they may like to put this near the heart). If the illness is something that affects lots of parts of the body they could write or draw anywhere. Explain that once we have done this we are going to ask Jesus to make these people better.

Allow the children to do this if they want to. Depending on your group, you may like to invite people to say why they have put what they have.

Ask for one volunteer to say the following prayer (or one of their own):

Thank you Lord Jesus that you are really powerful and even stronger than even the worst illness or sadness. Please make all the people we have thought of today better and let them all know you are close to them. Amen.

Craft activity

To illustrate this craft, it would be good to have already made one to show the children how it looks. You will need:

- printed sheets from the 'sick lady' resource file (on card if possible), enough for one per child;
- glue sticks or sticky tape;
- felt tip pens or coloured crayons;
- a digital camera, printer and photo paper (optional).

NB If you are using the digital camera option, make sure that the photos are only used by the children concerned. You may want to check with the school if this is OK first.

This craft creates a sliding picture that shows the sick lady (or someone else from the story who was healed) in a kind of 'before and after' pose. The handle D will slide up to show a sad and ill face. When the handle is pulled down it will reveal a happy and healthy face. Explain to the children that this is how Simon's mother-in-law and the other people would have been before and after being healed by Jesus. Give each child a sheet of card or paper and follow the instructions on the sheet.

If you want to save time, cut out the card shapes first so children only have to draw and colour the face and frame. A healthy face should be drawn behind area E. An ill and unhappy face should be drawn on the top of handle D.

If you use the digital camera option make sure you have enough time to take and print all the photos. Take two photos of each child and print them out at a size that will fit in the frame. One photo should be of the child looking ill and unhappy, the other of them healthy and happy.