

# All Saints (or All Hallows) Celebration

**Bible base:** Mark 10:46–52

**Aim:** To present an alternative focus to the Hallowe'en events that dominate this time of year.

## Note to leaders

Our focus this week will be on the celebration that preceded Hallowe'en – All Hallows Eve, a time when Christians celebrated all those who had followed Jesus' ways through the ages. We want to make this club session as 'light' as possible, as a contrast to much of the darkness of Hallowe'en. Therefore, if you have enough access to the room and time, it would be great if you could decorate the room in a party style – eg with brightly coloured balloons or paper chains. You could even buy some party hats to wear and give each children a party bag as they leave (remember to check with the school beforehand if you want to put sweets in and be careful about any children with allergies).

## Introduction

Ask the children what is usually celebrated at this time of year on 31 October. Explain that there is another festival, which has been largely forgotten, that led to the naming of Hallowe'en. That festival took place on 1 November. Either tell the children the name 'All Hallows Day' or get them to guess it by playing a game of hangman.

Explain that 'All Hallows' meant 'all those who are holy', or in plain English all those who are followers of Jesus. Another name for the day is All Saints' Day. Explain that in today's club we are going to celebrate All Saints' Day – we are going to celebrate what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

## Game: the forgotten piece

Play the game (sometimes called Kim's Game) where you have a large number of objects on a tray and give the children a few seconds to look at the objects. Remove the tray and give the children 20 seconds to write down as many of the objects as they can remember. Check back to see how many they have got right. The game can be played individually, in pairs or in teams of about four children.

If your group is too large to see objects on a tray, you could use either an acetate with pictures of objects or a large sheet of paper with drawings on (if you are not confident at drawing, try cutting pictures out of a catalogue).

To add a second round to your game you can bring in the tray (or whatever you have used) after removing one of the objects. The children then have to guess which object has been removed.

Make the connection that the celebrations of All Saints' Day are often forgotten amongst all the things that happen around Hallowe'en.

## Alternative game: balloon volleyball

Blow up brightly coloured balloons and on each one place a sticker on which is written something that you gain as a follower of Jesus. Explain to the children that each balloon says something that reminds us how good it is to be a follower of Jesus. Some possibilities are:

- Jesus is my friend

- I can talk to God and know he hears me
- God has promised me a place in heaven
- Jesus has forgiven me for all the bad things I have done
- I am a part of God's family.

**If you are in a classroom with furniture that cannot be moved**, get the children to sit in two teams around tables. Explain that they are not allowed to move from their chairs and their bottoms must remain on the chairs at all times. Mark out an area of the classroom around each team which is within arm's reach of where the children are sitting. Explain that if the other side hits the balloon and it touches the floor or furniture within the team's marked-out playing area then the other side scores a point. If someone from the other side hits the balloon and it lands outside the marked-out area then that is a point to the defending side. The team with most points wins.

**If you are in an area that doesn't have furniture** (or where a space can be cleared for the children to move around), mark off an area of floor for each team. Divide the children into two teams and get each team to stand in their area. Explain that the aim of the game is to hit the balloon so that it lands in the other side's area. If it lands outside of that area then the other team get a point.

However you define playing areas, begin by using one balloon. Every few minutes, stop the game, read out the sticker on the next balloon and use that either instead or as well.

### **Alternative game: 'follow my leader' and variants**

You can play either the original game of 'follow my leader' (where the children have to follow what one person does) or some alternatives:

**Guess the leader:** The children sit in a circle. One child goes out of the room and another child is secretly chosen to be the 'leader' and to start off the actions (drum beats work well, or certain claps). No one is allowed to say who the leader is. The group should start to follow the leader and then the other child returns to the room. The child has three guesses to decide who the leader is. Once the person has had three guesses or has got it right, another child should be chosen to be the leader and you can play again.

**Simon says:** play this traditional game and see how many children you can catch out.

Make the connection that the game is about following a leader. On All Saints' Eve we celebrate following Jesus – the best leader ever.

### **Bible story**

Choose three children out to help act out this story. Explain that the rest of the group will be needed to add sound effects to this story from the Bible. Choose one person to be Jesus (they should sit in the middle of the group), one to be Bartimaeus and one person to be a bird (!).

This story requires the group to do the 'sound effects' for the story. Before you begin, it may be worth you practicing a signal that will prompt the children to be quiet after doing their sound effect. This way you will keep control of the group and keep the story on track.

Explain to the group that in TV programmes, when the producers want it to sound as if there are people chatting in the background, they get the actors to say 'mutter, mutter' quietly to each other, and when you get to the part in the story where there is a crowd, the children should do this.

You will need a blindfold for this drama and a coat for Bartimaeus. Read the script as given below in italics, and encourage the children to act and add sound effects as given in square brackets; not all the actions needed are given but they should be obvious.

*Once there was a man called Bartimaeus. [Bartimaeus waves to the group.] Now Bartimaeus was very sad. There were two reasons why he was very sad. Firstly Bartimaeus was blind [put a blindfold on Bartimaeus] – which meant he couldn't see a thing. Secondly, because he was blind, Bartimaeus couldn't get a job so he had no money at all. So every day, Bartimaeus used to stand by a gate, put his coat on the floor [Bartimaeus puts his coat on the floor] and beg for money. [Bartimaeus begs.]*

*Whenever Bartimaeus heard footsteps approaching [the rest of the group makes the sound of footsteps on the floor], he would jump to his feet and beg for money.*

*But most of the people would shout, 'No, go away, we're not helping you!' [The children shout this together.] So Bartimaeus would sit back down and wait for the next person.*

*Bartimaeus must have wished he could see – he could hear the birds singing [the children make bird sounds and the child acting a bird flies around] but he couldn't see them, he would hear and feel the rain pouring [the children make rain sounds by tapping one finger on their palms] but he never saw a raindrop in his life, he could hear people laughing [the children laugh] but he never once saw a smile. [The children smile silently.] Bartimaeus must have hated being blind.*

*One day, Bartimaeus was sat in his usual place, begging money from passers by [Bartimaeus begs for money] when a huge crowd appeared. [The children 'mutter' fairly quietly.] So Bartimaeus started to call out louder for people to give him money. [Bartimaeus begs a bit louder.] Suddenly, Bartimaeus realised that this wasn't just any old crowd, this was a crowd following a man called Jesus. [Jesus stands up.] Bartimaeus had heard about Jesus – he was someone who had done lots of amazing things – including healing people. Bartimaeus started to shout 'Jesus, please help me!' [Bartimaeus shouts this] but the crowd just made more noise. [The children mutter louder.] So Bartimaeus shouted louder, 'Jesus, please help me!' But the crowd made even more noise. So Bartimaeus shouted as loud as he could, 'Jesus, please help me!' Jesus told the crowd to be quiet and walked over to Bartimaeus. Jesus asked Bartimaeus, 'What do you want me to do for you?'*

*Bartimaeus fell on his knees and begged Jesus, 'Please, let me see.'*

*Jesus put his hands on Bartimaeus' eyes. When he took his hands away he asked Bartimaeus what he could see. At first Bartimaeus wasn't sure – everything was a bit blurry. Then he jumped to his feet and shouted, 'I can see! I can see!'*

*Suddenly, Bartimaeus could see as well as hear. He could see the birds flying [the children make bird noises and the bird actor flies in front of Bartimaeus], he could hear and see the rain [the children make rain sounds and Bartimaeus 'catches' a drop and looks at it in his hand], he could even see people laugh and smile. [The children laugh and smile.]*

*Bartimaeus was so happy and there was only one thing he knew he wanted to do. He left everything – even his coat that he collected his money in – and followed Jesus. [Bartimaeus does this.] Jesus had*

*healed Bartimaeus and done something amazing for him. So from that day on, Bartimaeus became a follower of Jesus.*

### **Follow-up questions**

- How do you think Bartimaeus must have felt when suddenly he could see?
- Why do you think he decided to follow Jesus?
- How do you think meeting Jesus would have changed Bartimaeus' life?
- Do you think Bartimaeus would always be grateful for what Jesus had done for him?
- Do you think being with Jesus was a good thing or a bad thing for Bartimaeus? Why?

Make the point that Bartimaeus was just one person who decided to become a follower of Jesus. He was just one of many people who over two thousand years have decided, for various reasons, to become followers of Jesus. Today, we are celebrating being followers of Jesus.

### **Craft activity**

You will need: felt tips or colouring pencils, a set of footprints from the session resource sheet (use two sets if you have more than 12 children in the group), a large sheet of wallpaper to stick all the footprints on, glue sticks; plus optionally magazines or catalogues, scissors, small pieces of paper to draw on.

Explain that All Saints' Eve is a good chance for us to say thank you to Jesus for all the good things he gives us. This activity is the chance to think about and do just that.

- 1) Depending on the time available, either cut out the feet templates or get the children to do this. They can also colour in the letters if you have time.
- 2) Stick the footprints onto the page so as to make a track of footprints saying 'All Saints' Day.' Leave space around the footprints for pictures.
- 3) Explain that around each letter we are going to draw a picture of something, or write something, to thank Jesus for that starts with that letter. If you are using catalogues and magazines, the children can cut things out and stick them around the letter. If you have so many children that it would be too crowded for them all to be around the footprints at once, given them smaller pieces of paper to draw or stick their pictures to and then stick these on the bigger picture. Make sure that there is something written around each letter.
- 4) After you have finished, gather everyone around your wallpaper banner and look at what you have made. Explain that people follow Jesus for lots of reasons. One reason is because they are thankful to Jesus for all the good things he has given us – including all the things on the banner.

### **Prayer activity: banner prayers**

If you have done the craft activity, gather the children around the banner and explain that we are going to have a time to thank Jesus for some of the things on the banner. You can go through the footsteps in order and encourage children to say 'Thank you God for ...' and then choose one of the pictures for that letter. If you run out of letters you can always start again!

### **Alternative prayer activity: balloon thank-you prayers**

This activity only works well with a fairly sensible group. The children sit in a circle with a balloon. The person who is holding the balloon says, 'I thank God for ...' and then says something they would like to thank God for. They then throw the balloon to someone else in the group who also says a thank-you prayer. If the person with the balloon isn't comfortable praying out loud or doesn't want to today, they can close their eyes and pray silently or just pass the balloon on to someone else. Make sure everyone has a go. The aim of this prayer activity is to keep things going pretty fast and to keep going until you have run out of time or things you can think of to thank God for.