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**Children’s Talk**

The Children’s Talk compliments the 2021 All-Age Back to School with God Sunday Service and can be used as an alternative to a full service. Like the All-age Service, the passage explored is John 21:1-14.

Two options are given: one suitable for meeting in person in church; the other an online talk.

**In-person Option – Storytelling through drama**

*Invite the children to come up and join you at the front (if there are not too many children and this is possible!). Say that today is a special Sunday - Back to School with God Sunday. Have a short moment of informal chat with them such as, “Put your hands up if you have a new schoolbag ready for going back to school?” or, “Who wants to tell us what primary/grade you are moving into this week?”*

**LEADER:** We have said that it is *Back to School with God Sunday*, we know that we go back to school this week, but what does it mean to go back to school *with God*? To help us think about that this morning we are going to look at a Bible story about a Boat and a Breakfast *(you could hold up a toy boat and a box of cereal as a visual at this point).*

First things first! We either need to make a bigger boat or we need to shrink you down to fit into this toy boat … (*If you have access to an inflatable boat you could bring it out at this point and use it, or you could use blankets or chairs to make a boat shape).*

Thankfully, I have brought some things to help us build a bigger boat. *(Quickly form a boat shape, encouraging the children to help if possible. When the boat is finished, invite the children to jump in and sit down.)*

I’d like you to imagine that you are some of Jesus’ disciples, particularly those who used to be fishermen before they started following Jesus. People like Peter. The last few days have been very intense. Jesus has just risen from the dead! Not only was his tomb empty, but he even appeared to you in the upper room. Exciting times! Now - you might be wondering why, if Jesus is alive again - you, his disciples, are all sitting in a fishing boat. But that is what they did. Peter and some of the others decided to go back to their boats, back to the life they were familiar with. After all, fishing was what they knew.

At dusk they set out for a night of fishing. *(Encourage the children to act out rowing the boat*.*)* Being experienced fishermen yourselves, you obviously know that night-time is a good time to fish. So, it’s time to stop rowing and throw the nets over the side of the boat! *(If you had access to children’s fishing rods at this point you could give them to a few of the children to pretend to fish, or you could use a piece of net and ask them to cast that over the side.)* Hour after hour, throughout the long, cold, dark night, Peter and his friends tried to catch fish. But each time they pulled the nets back in *(encourage the children with the nets to act this out)* they were empty. There was not one fish! Finally, the sun began to rise, and the weary, cold, sleepy fishermen were resigned to the fact their plans had not turned out the way they had hoped. *(Encourage the children to make a face which shows how they felt the disciples might be feeling. They could be sleepy, grumpy, frustrated, disappointed etc.)* Just as they rowed near to the shore *(row your boat one last time!) t*hey saw a figure on the beach. *(Encourage the children to look out towards the people in the congregation).*

***(In advance, prime an adult in the congregation to stand up and shout “Friends, haven’t you any fish? Throw your nets on the right side of the boat and then you will find some!”)***

On hearing this, the disciples did what the man said *(encourage the children to fish with their nets once again.)* One last time, they threw their nets over the right side of the boat and suddenly there were so many fish in the net, it was full! The boat that had been empty was now a boat that was full – not just of fish, but excited disciples.

Peter and his friends could never have made that happen. They needed Jesus’ help. They needed Jesus to guide them in the right direction and perform a miracle. The disciples had tried and failed: but Jesus had made it possible. Boys and girls, there are so many things in life that we can’t control ourselves. We have all experienced that in the last year, haven’t we, with lockdowns and schools closing? There are other times when things don’t work out as we hoped, and we find ourselves feeling disappointed, just as the disciples in the boat did. But like them, we can put our hope in Jesus - trusting that he will help us when we need it. The Bible tells us in Psalm 33:20 “So our hope is in the Lord. He is our help.” (ICB). We can rely on him to help us today - just as he was able to help the disciples when they obeyed him that day in the boat.

But the story doesn’t end there. The disciples finally realised who the man on the beach was! They recognised it was Jesus and they left their boat on the shore and sat for breakfast. *(Invite the children to climb out of the boat and if space allows to sit in a circle beside you on the floor.)*

Jesus had prepared a fire to warm them up *(pretend to warm your hands on the fire)* and had cooked some delicious fish and bread. Not only did he make them breakfast, he sat down with them. Jesus was there. Jesus was enjoying their company, listening to their chat, speaking to them in return. These were his friends, and he loved them. I wonder if you realise how much he loves you too, just as you are. Jesus said to the disciples: come and have breakfast. Come and enjoy my company. Come and be fed and nourished and loved.

While the **boat** *(hold up toy boat)* reminds us to hope in Jesus because he is our help, the **breakfast** (*hold* *up* *cereal packet)* reminds us that Jesus wants to spend time with us. He gives us that same invitation he gave to the disciples: to come to him. To enjoy his presence and to know we are loved by Him. As you go back to school, our prayer is that you will know that same loving presence of Jesus going with you.

**Online option – Activity and Video Clip**

**LEADER:** Welcome to our *Back to School with God Sunday*. This week our boys and girls, young people and a number of our adults will be returning to Nursery, School, or perhaps even College or University, and so we want to mark this important day and have a think about what it means not just to go back to school, but to go back to school **with God**. On the screen I am about to show you some things which are related to going to school. If you know the answer you can unmute yourself and shout out what you think it is.

**Download BSG21 All-Age Service PPT Slides. Use PPT Slides 15-21.** *Click advance slide each time to make the answer appear.*

1. Lunch box
2. Schoolbag or backpack
3. Shoe
4. Jotters or notebooks
5. Pencil pot
6. School Tie

Well done for recognising all these items! These items are very familiar, because they are part of everyday school life.

Life at school can feel very familiar, can’t it? School is the place you go most days, you generally know what to expect, and what will happen. It’s familiar, because it’s what you know. This morning we’re going to think about some of Jesus’ friends, who, after Jesus had risen from the dead and met them in the upper room, decided to go back to what they were familiar with, back to what they knew, and so they set off fishing. Let’s watch a short video that tells us the Bible story found in John chapter 21.

**VIDEO:** *Choose one of the following:*

* Saddleback Kids *Jesus Forgives Peter*: from Youtube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ppb9bKX1r7k>. Start time: 3.54, End time: 4.56 - just after “Jesus said come and have some breakfast.”
* Download **BSG21 John 21 Bible Story Video –** <https://vimeo.com/551995601/c391a876eb> the Bible story told beside the sea.

**LEADER:** What an amazing story, boys and girls! Isn’t it fantastic that Jesus performed a miracle for his friends? (*Perhaps you could hold up a toy boat or a picture of a boat as a visual when you are saying this part. Another option is to Screen Share PPT slides of the story as you talk – slide numbers given relate to* ***BSG21 All-Age Service PPT Slides****.)*

Neither Peter nor any of the other men in the boat could have made that amazing catch of fish happen. **PPT Slide 9** They needed Jesus’ help. They needed Jesus to guide them in the right direction and perform a miracle. **PPT Slide 10** They The disciples had tried and failed: but Jesus had made it possible. Boys and girls, there are so many things in life that we can’t control ourselves: we have all experienced that in the last year haven’t we, with lockdowns and schools closing. There are also other times when things don’t work out as we hoped and find ourselves feeling disappointed, just as the disciples in the boat did. But like them, we can put our hope in Jesus – trusting that he will help us when we need it. The Bible tells us in Psalm 33:20, “So our hope is in the Lord. He is our help.” (ICB). We can rely on him to help us today - just as he was able to help the disciples when they obeyed him that day in the boat.

And the story doesn’t end there. Jesus helps them when they trust him in the boat, but he also spends time with them when they meet him for breakfast. *(You could put down the boat visual at this point and hold up a box of cereal to represent breakfast or show* **PPT Slide 14***).* Jesus had prepared a fire to warm them up *(pretend to warm your hands on the fire)* and had cooked some delicious fish and bread. Not only did He make them breakfast, he sat down with them. Jesus was there. Jesus was enjoying their company, listening to their chat, speaking to them in return. These were his friends, and he loved them. I wonder if you realise how much he loves you too, just as you are. Jesus said to the disciples: come and have breakfast. Come and enjoy my company. Come and be fed and nourished and loved.

While the boat *(hold up toy boat)* reminds us to hope in Jesus because he is our help, the breakfast *(hold* *up* *cereal)* reminds us that Jesus wants to spend time with us. He gives us that same invitation: to come to him. To enjoy his presence and to know we are loved by Him. As you go back to school, our prayer is that you will know that same loving presence of Jesus going with you.