

# Jesus Blesses the Children

**Mark 10:13-16**



# Preparation

# Jesus Blesses the Children

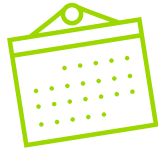
## 1. INTRODUCTION TO THIS SUNDAY

This is the first Sunday in the third series of stories from the Gospel according to Mark. The main message of Mark's Gospel is that Jesus' arrival heralds a new age: the Kingdom of God is near.

Today, we will focus on Mark 10:13-16: Jesus blesses children, and he says that you should receive the Kingdom like a child.

With the **4-8 year-olds**, we will focus on Jesus himself in this series. Today's theme is Jesus blessing children.

With the **8-12 year-olds**, we will focus on a range of different people involved in the stories. Today's topic is how children are an example of how to be part of the Kingdom of God.



## 2. CONTEXT OF THE BIBLE PASSAGE

The second main part of the gospel according to Mark starts in Mark 10: Jesus leaves Galilee and heads to Judea, en route to Jerusalem. In this second part, it slowly becomes evident that Jesus will have to suffer and die.

Today's story is similar to a story in Mark 9:33-37. In that passage, too, Jesus says children can be an example. That story is all about how being humble. Today's story is about being open to the Kingdom of God like children are. The question of how to enter the Kingdom of God is also at the heart of the other stories preceding and following today's passage. In Mark 9:42-49, Jesus uses examples to explain how you should get rid of everything that gets between you and God, even though that might be painful. And in Mark 10:17-31, he says the Kingdom of God is more important than wealth, and even more important than your family.

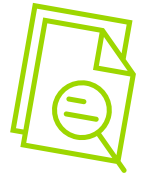


## 3. EXPLANATION OF THE BIBLE PASSAGE

Today's story starts with a group of people bringing children to Jesus so he can place hands on them. Unlike in many other stories, this time this is not about Jesus healing the children. The people want him to bless them by placing his hands on them. This was a customary act: parents blessed their children in this way (you could read the story of Jacob blessing Joseph and his sons for an example of this, in Genesis 48), and teachers also blessed people who asked for it. Mark only writes about one instance where Jesus blesses someone: the children in this story.

Children didn't have a lot of say in Jesus' days. Perhaps that is the reason the disciples stop the people: they think Jesus should be involved in more important business. This shows that Jesus' disciples still hadn't got it. Earlier, Jesus had explained that you have to distance yourself from everything that makes you great in the eyes of the people: wealth, power, status et cetera. None of those things will get you into the Kingdom of God. In order to be a part of the Kingdom of God, you have to realize you are dependent on God, like a child. And you have to humble yourself and give to those who are small in the eyes of the world (Mark 9:33-37). But Jesus' disciples have forgotten Jesus' words already ...

Jesus' response shows he looks at children differently from how the disciples and society see them. For him, they are examples of the attitude it takes to belong to him. Children cannot do much independently. They cannot earn their place in the Kingdom of Heaven. But that's the point: the Kingdom of God is a gift, not a reward for people who are important or who have done important things for God. The story ends with Jesus embracing the children and blessing them. In this way, Jesus showcases what he has just explained: it's the people who have nothing to offer but who do want to belong to him who are welcome in the Kingdom of God.



# Preparation

# Jesus Blesses the Children



## 4. FROM THE BIBLE

### 4-8 years

With the younger children, we will focus on Mark 10:16.

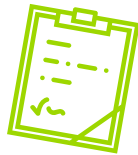
*"Jesus took the children in his arms, placed his hands on each of them, and blessed them."*

### 8-12 years

With the oldest children, we will focus on Mark 10:15.

*"I assure you that whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it."*

## 5. WHAT WILL YOU NEED?



### 4-12 years

#### During the church service

- two identical cardboard arches. When you put them on top of each other, you should not be able to tell the difference. On one arch, write the word: grown-ups. On the other arch, write the word: children.

### 4-8 years

#### Who Is This?

- a (digital) baby or toddler photo of each child
- alternatively, baby pictures of famous people or images of baby animals

#### Close to Jesus

For each child:

- the handout
- a pin-prick pen and a pair of scissors

And also:

- coloring pencils and felt-tip pens
- glue

#### Finding Your Way to Jesus

For each child:

- the handout

And also:

- coloring pencils

### 8-12 years

#### What Do You Think?

- statements. You can find example statements later on.

#### Bible passage

- a bible

#### Colored Milk

- a baking dish
- whole milk
- food coloring in a few different colors
- washing-up liquid
- a cotton bud

#### Find the Word

For each child:

- the handout
- a pen

# Building blocks of the Sunday Jesus Blesses the Children

## During the Church Service



### 6. CHILDREN'S MOMENT IN THE SERVICE

#### Big, Bigger, Biggest

In Jesus' days, children didn't have a lot of say. You had a lot to learn, and people didn't think you were important until you'd grown up.

#### What do you need?

- two identical cardboard arches. When you put them on top of each other, you should not be able to tell the difference.
- On one arch, write the word: grown-ups.
- On the other arch, write the word: children.

#### Let's start!

- Show the children the arch with the word "grown-ups" on it. One child should read out the word.
- Tell the children that you've brought another arch. Put down the arch with "grown-ups" and take up the arch that says "children". Have another child read out what this arch says.
- Explain that today's Bible Story is about grown-ups and children. As you say this, hold the arch with "grown-ups" in front of you with one hand, and use the other hand to hold the bow with "children" underneath it. So: grown-ups over children.
- Ask the children which arch is larger. The arch with "grown-ups" looks larger now.
- Explain how grown-ups often feel big and important.
- Now place the arch with "children" on top of the arch with "grown-ups". The children now discover that both arches are the same size.
- Explain that Jesus thinks children are also important. In today's story, children are an example for grown-ups.



## During the Children's Service



### 7. TO START OFF

#### 4-8 years

#### Who Is This?

Jesus thinks babies and children are important. He invites them to come to him.

#### What do you need?

- a (digital) baby or toddler photo of each child
- alternatively, baby pictures of famous people or images of baby animals

#### Let's start!

- The children give you a baby picture of themselves when they come in. They can also provide a digital picture, so you can show it on a laptop or tablet.
- All pictures are placed on the table.
- Can the children guess who the baby or toddler on the picture is?



#### Tips

- If you have a lot of time, ask the children whether they know any nice stories about when they were a baby.
- Are there many children you don't know or who come only occasionally? Use baby pictures of famous people instead.
- Instead of baby pictures, you could also use pictures of young animals, like a chick, a whelp, a donkey foal et cetera.

# Building blocks of the Sunday

# Jesus Blesses the Children

**8-12 years**

## What Do You Think?

The children come up with examples with the statements, so that it becomes clear what might differentiate children and grown-ups, and why a child serves as an example in the Kingdom of God.

*What do you need?*

- statements to discuss

*Examples of statements:*

- Children move because they enjoy it, grown-ups do so because they have to.
- Children are more honest than grown-ups.
- Children like new things, grown-ups are scared of new things.
- Children are less likely to expect trouble than grown-ups.

*Let's start!*

- Divide the group into two
- One half of the group is the inner circle. The other children stand opposite someone from the inner circle, facing each other. These children form the outer circle.
- The children listen to a statement, think about it and exchange opinions with each other.
- After half a minute or a minute, the inner circle moves one place to the left (clockwise). Now everybody can talk to a new child about the new statement.



*Tip*

If you don't have enough children to make an inner circle and an outer circle, discuss the statements with each other in one circle.

## 8. PRAYER AT THE START OF THE CHILDREN'S SERVICE



Good God,  
You welcome everybody.  
It doesn't matter how old we are,  
what we can do or what we know.  
You think we are all equally important.  
Everyone is important to you,  
including people who we don't usually notice,  
who don't appear to be important.  
Children are an example in the Kingdom of God.  
You want children to join in.  
You enjoy it if children come to you.  
Thank you for blessing us.  
Amen.



*Tip*

Sit down in a circle for this prayer. You could light a candle.

# Building blocks of the Sunday

## Jesus Blesses the Children



### 9. BIBLE STORY

#### 4-8 years

Mark 10:13-16

Tell the story to the children. While you talk or after reading the story, look at the picture together. Ask the children to look carefully and say what they see. You could also use the older children's Fact File for more information.



#### Let the Children Come!

Jesus is in the area! The people in town tell each other about it.

"We are going to Jesus", a mother says, and she puts her little one in a baby sling.

"We are also going to Jesus!" a father says, and he lifts his little son onto his shoulders.

"We are going, too!" the neighbors are saying, and they call their children.

Lots of fathers and mothers take their children and start travelling. In little boats they cross the river Jordan. Jesus is on the other side of the river. But he is busy. He is talking to a group of important people.

"Could I pass, please?" a father says. "I would like Jesus to bless my daughter."

"We'd also like to pass", says a mother with a baby on her arm.

A few children try to squeeze through the crowd of grown-ups.

But one of Jesus' disciples stops them. "Hold it right there", he says. "You can't do that. Jesus is much too busy with important things. He doesn't have time for little children. You shouldn't disturb him during his work. Go home, will you? Children aren't very important, are they?"

Jesus sees what happens. He stops his conversation.

"What?" he says to his disciples, with anger in his voice.

"What are you saying? You shouldn't stop those children.

Let them come to me. However did you get the idea I didn't think they were important? Children are very important! The Kingdom of God is for people like them.

I will tell you something. You should all learn from the children. They are better at understanding the Kingdom of God than all of you put together.

Welcome, fathers and mothers! Please bring your children to me. I would like to meet them."

They all come. The little children. The mothers and fathers with their little ones. Jesus lifts a baby. He wraps his arms around a few older children. He puts his hand on their heads.

"God will always look after you", Jesus tells the children.

"You don't have to be afraid."

#### 8-12 years

Mark 10:13-16

#### Jesus Blesses Little Children

Some people brought children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples scolded the people.

When Jesus noticed this, he was angry and said to his disciples, "Let the children come to me, and do not stop them, because the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I assure you that whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it." Then he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on each of them, and blessed them.

# Building blocks of the Sunday

## Jesus Blesses the Children

### 10. FACT FILE



#### Children

In biblical times, people thought it was very important to have children. Children could help with farming and household chores from a very young age. And later, they could take care of their parents. But at the same time, children didn't really seem to matter much, and they were not generally allowed to make their own decisions. In today's story, you will see that: the disciples do not think children are important enough to come to Jesus.

#### The Kingdom of God

Jesus often tells people about the Kingdom of God. The Greek words used there can also mean "the Kingdom of Heaven". In that Kingdom, God is King: everything will be the way he has meant it to be. God will ensure this new world will arrive, but we can also see a little of it now. For example if we are good to each other, live in peace with each other and pay attention to people who aren't important in most people's eyes.



#### Tip

Would you like to know more about what "blessing" means? Check out Sunday 40, "Jacob and Esau".

### 11. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



Below, there are two kinds of questions you can discuss: "knowledge questions" and "thinking questions". You can look up the answers to the knowledge questions, for example in the story. But the thinking questions can keep your group thinking. There are no wrong answers in those!

#### 4-8 years

- The fathers and mothers bring their children to Jesus. Do you know why?
- Jesus thinks children are very important. What do you think about that?
- Do you feel important in church or the children's service?
- What does Jesus do when the children come to him?

#### 8-12 years

- The Kingdom of God is meant for children, especially. Why do you think that's how it is?
- Children are an example to grown-ups, Jesus says. Why? What can you do better than grown-ups can?
- What can you do where you are to make the world look like the Kingdom of God a little more?

# Building blocks of the Sunday

## Jesus Blesses the Children

### 12. DOING

4-8 years

#### Close to Jesus

The disciples want to stop the children. Jesus wants the children to come to him, so he can wrap his arms around them and bless them. This craft projects shows the children that Jesus wants to be with them.

#### What do you need?

For each child:

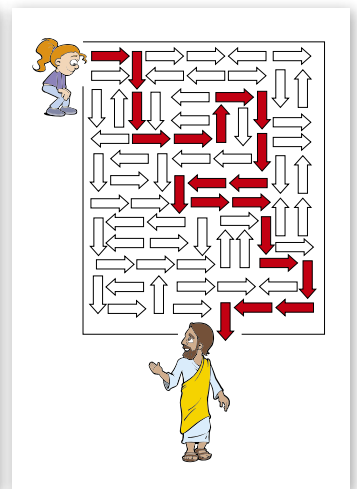
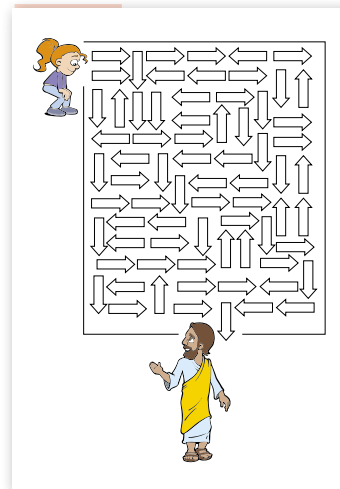
- the handout
- a pin-prick pen and a pair of scissors

And also:

- coloring pencils and felt-tip pens
- glue

#### Let's start!

- Each child gets the handout.
- The children can color in all grown-ups. They also color the child on the strip of paper.
- Have the children prick open the two vertical lines with a pin-prick pen.
- Have the children cut out the strip of paper. Then they pull the strip through the two openings on the large picture.
- What happens if they carefully pull the back of the strip?



4-8 years

#### Finding Your Way to Jesus

Fathers and mothers want to bring their children to Jesus, so Jesus can bless them. But the disciples want to stop them. They don't think children are important. Help the children find their way to Jesus, anyway.

#### What do you need?

For each child:

- the handout

And also:

- coloring pencils

#### Let's start!

- Give each child a copy of the handout.
- Have the children color the arrows that point to Jesus.



#### Tip

Have them look at the arrows carefully before starting to color.



# Building blocks of the Sunday

## Jesus Blesses the Children

8-12 years

### Colored Milk

Jesus tells his disciples, "Let the children come to me, and do not stop them, because the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these." In this experiment, the milk represents the Kingdom of God and the food coloring are the children. They provide the Kingdom of God with color!



#### What do you need?

- a baking dish
- whole milk
- food coloring in a few different colors
- washing-up liquid
- a cotton bud

#### Let's start!

- Fill the bottom of the baking dish with the milk. Put one drop of each coloring into the milk in the middle of the dish.
- Put a little bit of washing-up liquid on the end of a cotton bud.
- Dip the cotton bud into the middle of the coloring for ten to fifteen seconds. What happens?
- Put another drop of washing-up liquid on a cotton bud and lower the cotton bud into the milk at different places. Now what happens?

#### Explanation:

- The secret of the moving colors is the drop of washing-up liquid. Milk consists of water and fat. This water with fat-mixture responds if you add washing-up liquid to it. The milk starts to move. You can see this really well because of the coloring. A range of colored shapes are formed in the milk.



### Tips

- Instead of food coloring, you could also use ink.
- If you have some time left ...
  - Take a sheet of paper that fits into the bowl and carefully place it on the milk mixture.
  - Carefully lift the paper, and place it on a newspaper so it can dry.
  - A print of the milk can be seen on the paper. A colorful milk painting is ready!

8-12 years

### Find the Word

The children make the puzzle, and with the remaining words, they discover a word that is important in today's Bible passage.

#### What do you need?

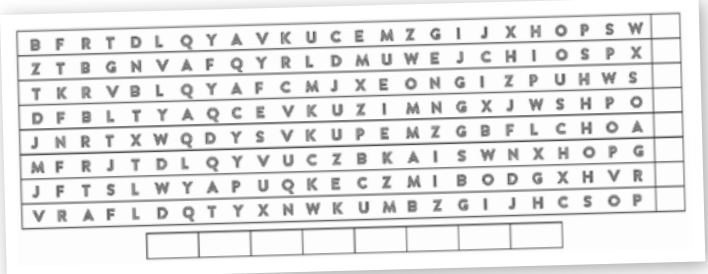
- For each child:
- the handout
  - a pen

#### Let's start!

- On the handout, there are eight lines with 25 letters.
- On each line, one letter of the alphabet is missing.
- Have the children write the missing letter in the square behind it.
- By placing the remaining letters into the right order, they discover a word that is important in today's story.

#### Solution:

Children



# Building blocks of the Sunday

# Jesus Blesses the Children

## 13. BLESSING

In the Bible, there is a blessing for all people. It is a wish that we often hear at the end of a church service. And we say this blessing to each other:



**'May the Lord bless you and take care of you; May the Lord be kind and gracious to you; May the Lord look on you with favor and give you peace.'**

## Numbers 6:24-26



### *Tips*

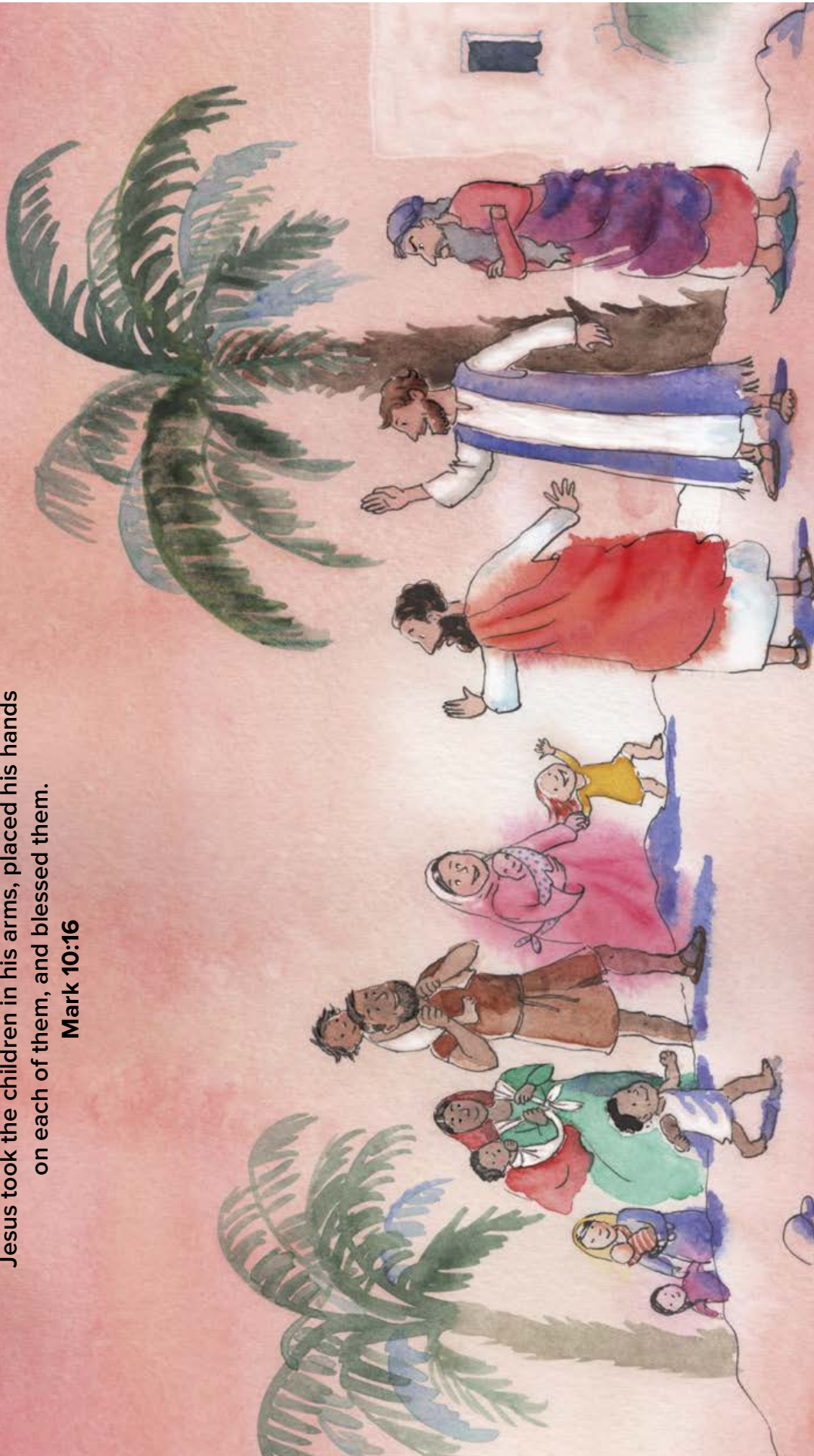
- Stand in a circle and hold hands.
- Let three children say one sentence each, or say the entire blessing together.

## COLOFON

Text: Nederlands Bijbelgenootschap  
Bible passages: Good News Bible  
Retelling Bible story: NBG/Corien Oranje  
Translation: NBG/Erica Kramer  
Illustration: NBG/ Liza-Beth Valkema  
Puzzle 4-8 years: NBG/Bart den Heeten  
Craft project 4-8 years: NBG/Paul Oole  
Design: Frivista  
DTP: Villa Grafica

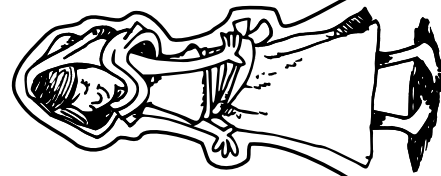
Jesus took the children in his arms, placed his hands  
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**Mark 10:16**



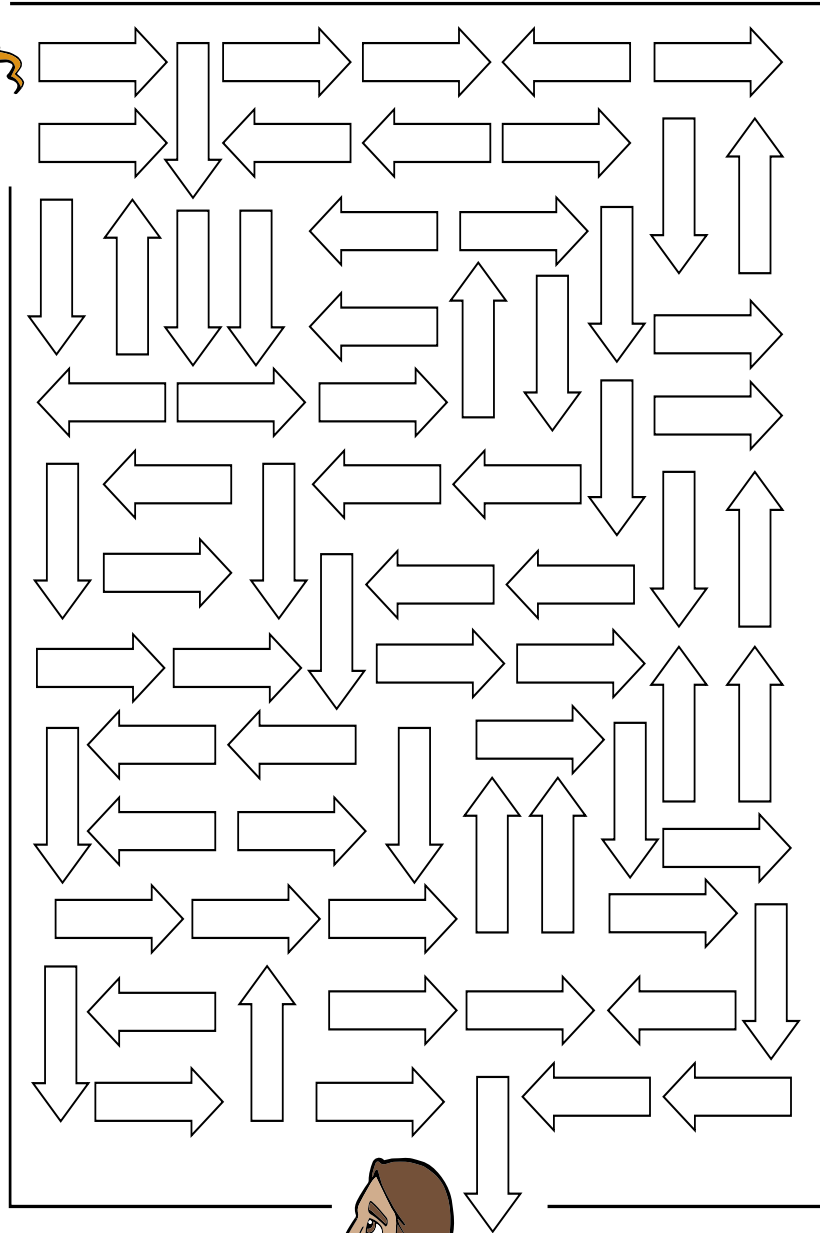
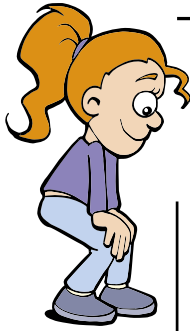
Handout (4-8 years)

# Jesus Blesses the Children



Handout (4-8 years)

# Jesus Blesses the Children





# Handout (8-12 years)

## Jesus Blesses the Children

I assure you that whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it.

Mark 10:15

### COLORED MILK

Jesus tells his disciples, "Let the children come to me, and do not stop them, because the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these." In this experiment, the milk represents the Kingdom of God and the food coloring are the children. You provide the Kingdom of God with color!



#### What do you need?

- a baking dish
- whole milk
- coloring in a few different colors
- washing-up liquid
- a cotton bud

#### Let's start!

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### CHILDREN

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### THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Jesus often tells people about the Kingdom of God. The Greek words used there can also mean "the Kingdom of Heaven". In that Kingdom, God is King: everything will be the way he has meant it to be. God will ensure this new world will arrive, but we can also see a little of it now. For example if we are good to each other, live in peace with each other and pay attention to people who aren't important in most people's eyes.



### FIND THE WORD

Make this puzzle, and with the remaining letters, discover a word that is important in today's Bible passage.

- There are eight lines with 25 letters. On each line, one letter of the alphabet is missing.
- Write the missing letter in the square behind it.
- Place the remaining letters into the right order.



B	F	R	T	D	L	Q	Y	A	V	K	U	C	E	M	Z	G	I	J	X	H	O	P	S	W	
Z	T	B	G	N	V	A	F	Q	Y	R	L	D	M	U	W	E	J	K	H	I	O	S	P	X	
T	K	R	V	B	L	Q	Y	A	F	C	M	J	X	E	O	N	G	I	Z	P	U	H	W	S	
D	F	B	L	T	Y	A	Q	C	E	V	K	U	Z	I	M	N	G	X	J	W	S	H	P	O	
J	N	R	T	X	W	Q	D	Y	S	V	K	U	P	E	M	Z	G	B	F	L	C	H	O	A	
M	F	R	J	T	D	L	Q	Y	V	U	C	Z	B	K	A	I	S	W	N	X	H	O	P	G	
J	F	T	S	L	W	Y	A	P	U	Q	K	E	C	Z	M	I	B	O	D	G	X	N	V	R	
V	R	A	F	E	D	Q	T	Y	X	N	W	K	U	M	B	Z	G	I	J	H	C	S	O	P	

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