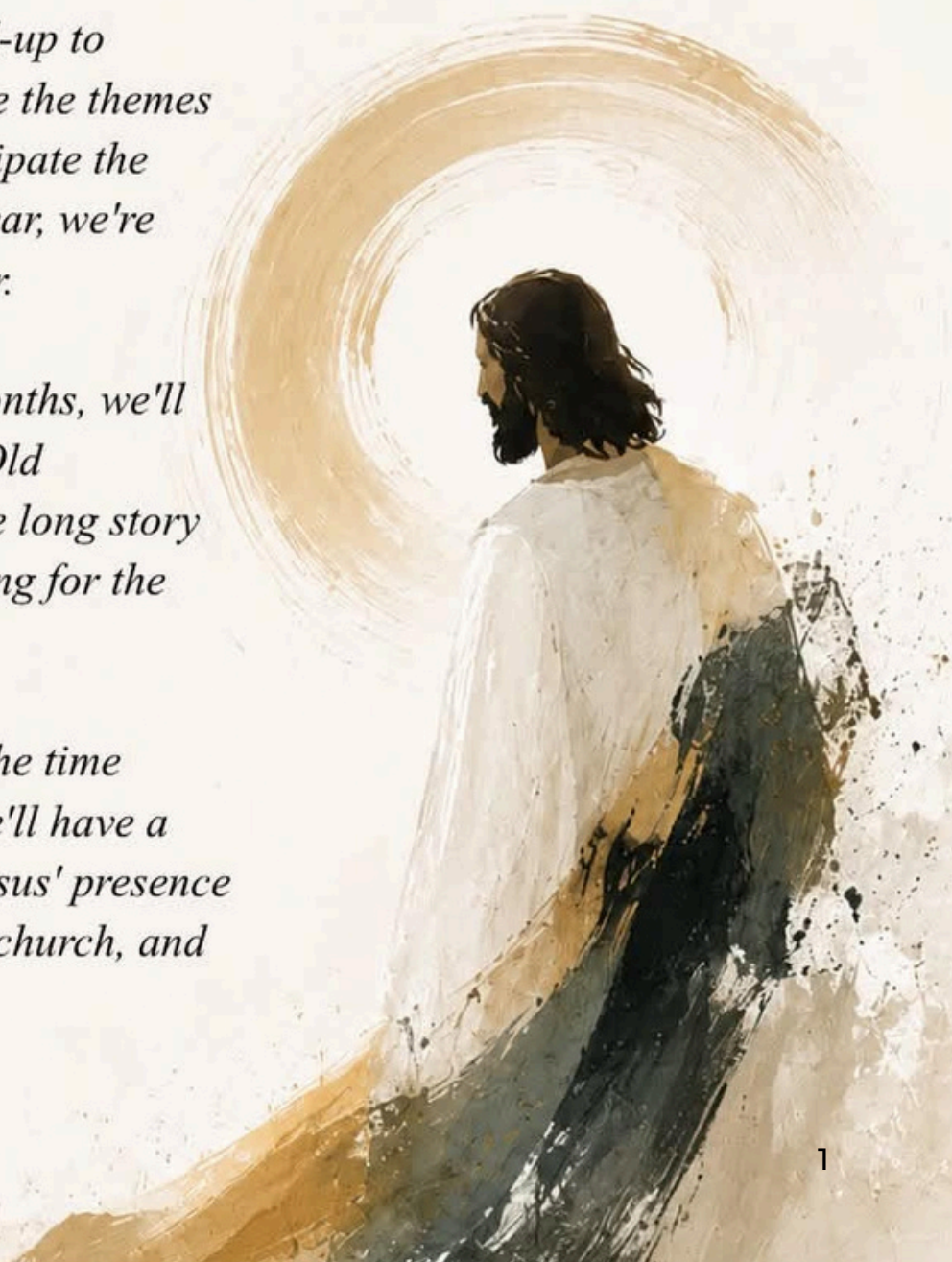


the Journey *to* Jesus

Each year, in the lead-up to Christmas, we explore the themes of Advent as we anticipate the birth of Jesus. This year, we're starting a little earlier.

Over the next four months, we'll journey through the Old Testament, tracing the long story of God's people waiting for the coming of Jesus.

Our hope is that, by the time Christmas arrives, we'll have a deeper longing for Jesus' presence in our own lives, our church, and our neighbourhood.



the Journey *to* Jesus

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The **Beginning:** *A Perfect Home*



Matau/Hook

Prep: Each week you'll pull something out of a **backpack**. Get yourself a good backpack. For this week, create a simple pathway using tape, stepping stones or arrows. At the end, place a wrapped gift with a **baby Jesus doll** inside.

Gather everyone at the start. Ask, "Who likes going on a journey? What do you need to know before you begin?" (Where you're going!)

Pull a map out of backpack. (Rough sketch with present symbol at the end.)

"Maps show us where to go. For the journey we're going on, our map is the Bible. (Pull **Bible** out of Backpack.) The Bible tells the whole story of the world, all leading to a very interesting place....(point to present at the end of the trail.)

"So, today we're beginning a BIG journey through the Bible. We'll meet lots of people and discover lots of stories, but they're all leading somewhere. Let's find out where. Put the backpack on and pretending to hike, walk to the end of the trail and open the present.

"The whole journey is taking us to JESUS!"

"Ok, Let's begin at...the beginning!"



Kōrero/Story

Read "The Story and the Song" AND "The Beginning: A perfect Home" from the Jesus Storybook Bible or watch online [here](#) (0:00 - 10:37)

"What did the video say the Bible is mostly about?"

There are lots of stories, but together they tell one big story about God and his rescue.

"What was at the centre of that big story?"

Then point back toward your pathway.

"We are on a Journey to Jesus. Today we started at creation. Everything was good. God made people to know him and be with him. But we know we're not at the end of the story yet!"



Kōrero/Story CONT

Build anticipation rather than explaining the Fall yet:

“Something is going to go terribly wrong with God's beautiful world. But God isn't going to give up on his people. And as we travel through the Bible, we're going to discover God's rescue plan getting closer...and closer...and closer...until eventually...”

Let the children finish: “JESUS!”



Karakia/Prayer

“God, thank you for the beautiful world you made. Thank you that you love us your creation, your children. Thank you for the Bible and for the great story you have given us. As we begin our Journey to Jesus, help us discover more about you and your rescue plan. Amen.”



Tākaro/Play

Children travel around the room while you call different ways of moving: swim like a fish, flap like a bird, stomp like an elephant, sway like a tree, shine like a star, etc.

Occasionally, instead of a category, shout:

“Where are we heading?”

Everyone stops, points toward your Jesus/star/manger from the opening activity and calls:

“THE WHOLE STORY LEADS TO JESUS!”



Hanga/Create

This is a series long project so find somewhere big and awesome you can add to it over the following weeks.

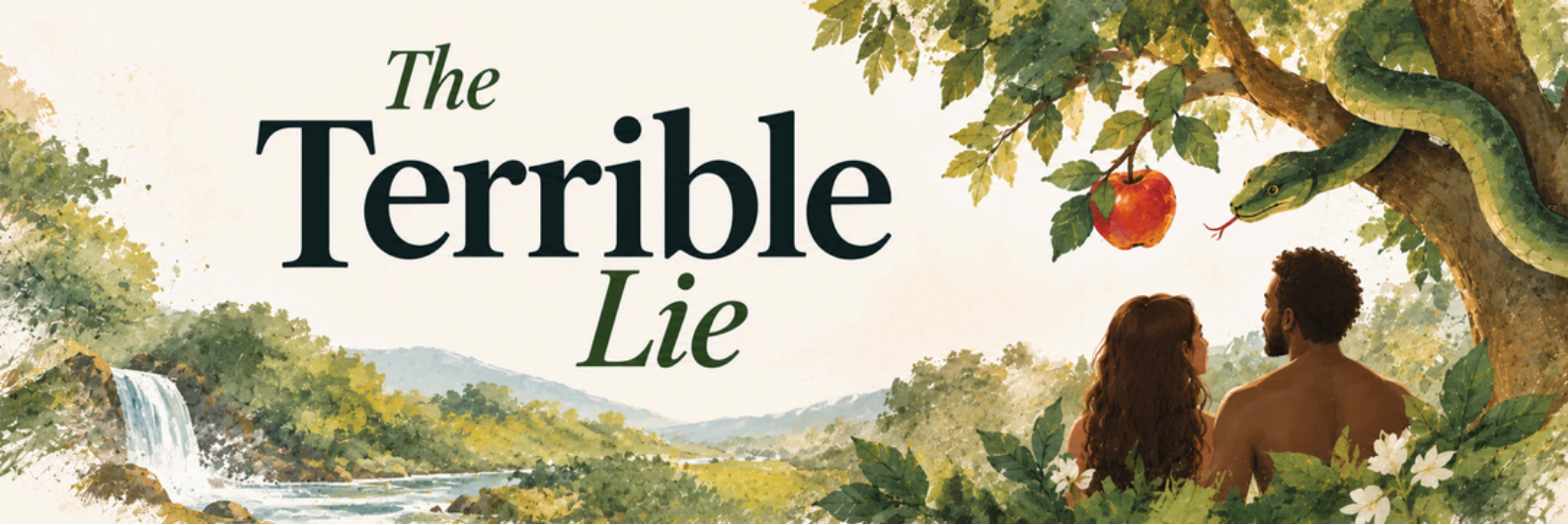
A long strip of card/paper with a winding pathway. On the left, write THE BEGINNING with a simple globe image and at the other end have a star/manger with JESUS.

During this session, tamariki trace around their feet, cut out, and draw images inside the cutout that represent today's story i.e. creation.

Bring magazines for a collage option.

Buddy them up , younger and older to make this faster and easier to manage.

The Terrible *Lie*



Matau/Hook

Bring back last week's Journey to Jesus pathway and the wrapped present/JESUS sign.

Ask: "Who remembers our big journey? Where did we start last week?" Creation! "What was God's world like?" Good / perfect. "And where is the whole Bible story taking us?" TO JESUS!

Walk or point a few steps along the path.

"But if everything was perfect, why do we need rescuing? Why does our Journey to Jesus need Jesus at all?"

Pull this week's symbol out of the backpack, a **broken heart**.

"Today something goes terribly wrong. But listen carefully: even when things go wrong, God doesn't give up on his children."



Kōrero/Story

Read "The Terrible Lie" from the Jesus Storybook Bible or watch online [here](#) (at 10:37)

Before watching/reading, give them two things to listen for:

"See if you can discover what went wrong and, even more importantly, what God promised to do about it."

For younger children, give them an action whenever they hear the word "love": make a heart with their hands.

Afterwards:

Ask: "What was the terrible lie?" Draw out the idea that the serpent wanted Adam and Eve to doubt whether God really loved them and could be trusted.

"What happened when Adam and Eve stopped trusting God?" Things that had been good became broken: their friendship with God, with each other, and with God's world.

"Was that the end of the story?"

"God could have given up on them, but he didn't. Right there at the beginning of everything going wrong, God made a promise: 'I will come to rescue you.'"

Point further down your Journey to Jesus path.

"Who do you think God's Rescuer will be?"!

"Where is the whole story going?"



Tākaro/Play

Hide & Seek: Where Are You? One or two children hide while everyone counts. When searching, everyone calls “Where are you?” (echoing God calling Adam and Eve). Keep it playful rather than making hiding seem frightening. Afterwards: “Adam and Eve hid from God, but did God stop looking for them? No. And did God stop loving them? No.” Then remind them of God’s rescue promise.



Hanga/Create

Use a template of a broken heart, again in pairs get kids to draw pictures of things they know are broken in our world, and mistakes that people make. Glue the heart on your big path towards Jesus.



Karakia/Prayer

“God, thank you that you made the world good. We’re sorry that people chose not to trust you and that sin brought brokenness into your world. Thank you that you didn’t give up on your children. We give all these broken things to you (pointing to their pictures) Thank you for your promise to rescue us, and thank you for Jesus. Help us trust your love. Amen.”

God *Makes a Way*



Matau/Hook

Prep: Put a **compass** in the **backpack**. Have your Journey to Jesus pathway/map visible.

Put on the backpack. “Who remembers what this is for? We’re on a...” JOURNEY TO JESUS! Pull out the **Bible**. “And what’s our map?” The Bible!

Point back along the journey. “We started with Creation, God made a perfect home. Then last week...” Point to the broken heart. “People stopped trusting God. Sin came into the world, and everything went wrong.” “But did God give up on his rescue plan?” NO! Pull out the compass.

“Who knows what this is? A compass helps you find the way when you don’t know where to go.” Pretend to check it, then look worried.

“Today, God’s people are going to get stuck. REALLY stuck. There’s an army behind them, a huge sea in front of them, and absolutely no way out.”

“They won’t know the way. They won’t be able to rescue themselves. So what are they going to do?”

Put the compass back in the backpack and hold up the Bible.

“Today we’re going to discover something really important about the God we’re following on this journey...”

“When there is no way, God can make a way.”

“Backpack on! Let’s keep going on our Journey to Jesus.”



Kōrero/Story

Read “God to the Rescue/God Makes a Way” from the Jesus Storybook Bible or watch online [here](#) (at 26:25)

Spot the rescues: “Every time you notice God helping, protecting, leading or rescuing his people, put your hands up like this 🙌. See how many different ways God helps them!”

Afterwards: “Wow! God’s people were in some pretty impossible situations. Retell the story to a buddy next to you, don’t forget to take turns!”

Who was really doing the rescuing? Moses, the people, or God?”



Kōrero/Story

“But did you hear the clue about our bigger Journey to Jesus? The story said an even greater rescuer was coming. People couldn’t find their own way back to God, so God was going to make a way for them too.”

Point toward Jesus at the end of your journey.

“And where is our journey is heading?”(TO JESUS!)



Tākaro/Play

Red Sea Rush: Two leaders hold a blue sheet/rope across the room. Kids run toward it. Kids: “GOD MAKES A WAY!”

The leaders dramatically lift or part the “sea” and everyone rushes through!

Reset and repeat with different ways of travelling: hopping, skipping, giant steps, tiptoeing, marching, slow motion, sideways.



Hanga/Create

Use a template of a compass, again in pairs get kids to draw pictures of things that they (or others) get stuck with . Glue the compasses on your big path towards Jesus. Then pray about these things together to finish.



Karakia/Prayer

“E te Atua, our God,

Thank you that you hear us when we call to you. Thank you that you were with Moses and your people, and when they couldn't see a way forward, you made a way.

Thank you that your rescue plan kept going, all the way to Jesus. Help us to trust you when we don't know what to do or where the road will lead.

These are the things we get stuck with sometimes help us find a way through them (Leave silence for kids to chime in)

Thank you for your love and for always being with us.

Āmine.

Becoming God's Family



Matau/Hook

Family photo in the backpack (you could sneakily ask parents to slip you family photos beforehand so the kids get to see themselves coming out of the backpack. Also a card with the number 10 on it.

Put the backpack on. "Who remembers where we're going?" (TO JESUS!)

Pull out the compass from last week. "Last week, God's people were trapped. There was a sea in front of them and Pharaoh behind them. There was..."

NO WAY! "And what did God do?" GOD MADE A WAY!

"God rescued his people and led them out of Egypt. But their journey wasn't finished. God wasn't only taking them out of somewhere. He was taking them towards something. He wanted these people to become..." Pull out the family photos. "...his special family, God's people!"

"But how should God's people live? How would they learn to trust God and show the world what he is like?"

Pull out the 10 card. "Hmmmm. I wonder what this has to do with it?" Put it back in the backpack.

"Backpack on. Our Journey to Jesus continues!"



Kōrero/Story

Read "Ten Ways to be Perfect/The Warrior Leader" from the Jesus Storybook Bible or watch online [here](#) (at 55:52)

Pause at 1:03 (end of ten ways to be perfect) and ask, who is God going to send that can follow all the rules perfectly?

At the end...

How was God teaching his people to be His family?

(Showing them that if they did what He said, He would look after them.

Giving them rules to help them look after and love each other.

Leading them to a new place they could live and grow together

Providing them with all the things they needed, just like a good parent does.)



Tākaro/Play

Family Journey Obstacle Course: Hold hands and make it through a simple course without letting go: around cones, over a rope, under a pool noodle, around a chair, across stepping stones. If they disconnect, they simply reconnect and continue. Add challenges: “Now help the youngest/smallest person go first,” “Everyone through this tiny gap,” etc. Finish: “God wasn't just leading lots of separate people, he was forming them into his family.”



Hanga/Create

Create foldy holdy hands people.

Bonus points if you can make it look like hearts between each person.

Kids to decorate themselves as one of the people.

Fold enough people that early finishers can colour in other family members from your church.



Karakia/Prayer

E te Atua, our God,

Thank you for rescuing your people and making them your special family. Thank you that you showed them how to live and taught them that they could trust you.

We know that, like them, we don't always get things right. Thank you that your rescue plan kept going and that you sent Jesus. Help us to trust you. Help us to love you, follow you, and show others what you are like.

Āmine.

The Teeny Weenie **True King**



Matau/Hook

Prep: Put a **crown** in the backpack.

Put on the backpack. “Journey time! Who remembers where this whole journey is taking us?” TO JESUS!

Quickly retrace your journey using the journey poster.

“Last week we discovered God was making the people into his...FAMILY!

“Now God’s family are living in their new land. But they decide there is something they REALLY want.”

Pull out the crown. “A KING!” Put the crown on a child or leader.

“What do you think makes someone look like a great king?”

“Surely God would choose the biggest, strongest, most impressive person to be king... right?”

“Today we’re going to discover that God sees something we can’t see just by looking at someone.”

Point to your chest.

“God looks at the heart”



Kōrero/Story

Read “The teeny weeny true king” from the Jesus Storybook Bible or watch online [here](#) (at 00:00)

“Every time you hear the word KING, quietly put an imaginary crown on your head. See if you can keep up!”

Which King is God going to send from Bethlehem later in the Bible?

Why did the people want a king?

Why did Samuel say no at first?

How might God have felt when his family wanted a king?

Why do you think He said yes?



Tākaro/Play

Toss the Crown on the Teddy.

Use a plastic crown toy and in teams kids try to toss the crown onto the head of the toy.

To finish ask, “How did God decide who would be king?”



Hanga/Create

Give each child a paper crown.

They can make the outside as ridiculously royal as they like, gems, gold, stickers, drawings. Print large paper hearts with the words “God looks at the heart.” 1 Samuel 16:7 on them.

Kids can glue crowns onto the hearts and attach to the journey map.



Karakia/Prayer

E te Atua, our God,

Thank You that you don't just look at what people are like on the outside, You see our hearts.

Thank You for David, and thank You that your plan didn't stop with him. You promised an even greater King, and You sent Jesus.

Āwhinatia mātou ki te aroha ki a koe, help us to love you.

Help us to have hearts that listen to you, trust you and love others.

Thank you for Jesus, our King.

Āmine.

Operation: No More Tears.



Matau/Hook

Prep: Put a **love letter** in the **backpack**. (perfume scented, heart stickers etc.)

Arrive wearing the backpack. “Okay travellers, where is our journey taking us?”
(TO JESUS!) Quickly point back along your pathway.

“We’ve seen God create his world, promise to rescue it, make a way for his people, make them his family, and last time we heard about how the people wanted to have a king, even although God wanted to be their king.

God gave them what they wanted. Human kings, who of course, were never going to be perfect. How do you think it went for God’s family, the Israelites?

Not great!

Today’s Bible story, is from a couple of hundred years after last week. The people had forgotten about God, the kings were nasty and God wanted to remind them that he still loved them, He was still coming to rescue them.

How would he tell them? Reach into backpack and pull out the love letter.

He sent the people love letters. There wasn’t much writing or reading in those days, so to deliver His love letters God used people as His messengers. The Bible calls those people prophets, people who would tell God’s family what God was saying. Let’s learn about one of those prophets and the love letter from God, that he read to God’s family.



Kōrero/Story

Read “Operation: No more tears” from the Jesus Storybook Bible or watch online [here](#) (at 18:36)

Who was Isaiah talking about?

Why do you think God needed to use Isaiah to tell God’s family these things?

What would you have done if your children were making bad choices and hurting each other?

What might God say to His family today? (See Hanga, you might want to take notes here)



Tākaro/Play

Whisper Circle:

Have tamariki take turns whispering a kind phrase in the ear of the person next to them. This phrase gets repeated and passed down to the end of the line. See if they can get to the end of the line with the correct phrase!



Hanga/Create

Message in a bottle.

Tamariki to write a love letter to God's family today. What do they think God might say? Roll this up like a scroll. Stain with tea bags etc. Attach to your journey map.



Karakia/Prayer

E te Atua, our God,

Thank You that you didn't forget Your people. Thank You for giving Isaiah Your promise that a Rescuer was coming.

Thank You that when the world was dark, You promised light. When Your people were lost, You promised a Shepherd. And when they needed rescuing, You promised Jesus, Emmanuel, God with us.

Help us to look for You, listen to You, and wait with hope.

Āmine.



Get Ready!



Matau/Hook

Prep: Put a **party popper** in the **backpack**. Arrive wearing the backpack.

“Okay travellers, where is our journey taking us?” (TO JESUS!) Point back along your pathway.

“We’ve seen God create His world, promise to rescue it, make a way for His people, make them His family, give them a king, and write them love letters. Do you think God’s family listened to His love letters? Nope! They had carried on being mean to each other and ignoring God. And then people were mean back to them. They came and took God’s family out of their land and took them to another country to be slaves. To work hard for no money. They couldn’t even leave when they wanted to! They were stuck! Again! Would God rescue them this time?

Let’s see what’s in our backpack?

A party popper! What might this mean?

Do you think God rescued them?



Kōrero/Story

Read “Get Ready” from the Jesus Storybook Bible or watch online [here](#) (at 31:36)

Did God rescue His family?

Yes! He did! Tell the person next to you what happened next (in other words, get them to retell the video)

God told Ezra and Nehemiah to do what we are doing! They read God’s family the Journey to Jesus, the story of the Bible! And what happened when God’s family remembered about everything God had done (point to your journey poster)?

(They realised they needed to change and were sad but then they remembered God’s promises to love and rescue them and they were happy! And had a party!)



Tākaro/Play

Dance Party! Celebrate God's story and His never stopping, never giving up love with a dance party!



Hanga/Create

Blow up balloons and write celebration messages on them. "God is our Rescuer!" "Jesus is coming soon!"
Use them in your dance party and then attach some to your poster.



Karakia/Prayer

E te Atua,
Thank you for our Journey to Jesus. Thank you that through every part of the story, you kept loving your people. When they wandered away, you didn't give up. When they needed rescuing, you rescued them. And when you made a promise, you kept it. Thank you that after all that waiting, Jesus was coming.
As we get ready for Christmas, help us remember that Christmas is really about celebrating that Jesus, our Rescuer, has come.
Amine!