

## Age 9-10

### Background information

#### The Bible as armour and weapons against wrong

- When the King James Bible was published in 1611 a preface was added that described the Bible using a range of images. The images tell us how Christians think about the Bible. One of those images described the Bible as ‘. . . not only an armor, but also a whole armory of weapons.’
- When Christians talk about the Bible as an ‘armour’ and ‘weapons’ it means the relationships, values and beliefs found in the Bible help them to stand against what is wrong in the world. Please note that ‘fight’ here is used metaphorically not literally. The words do not, by themselves, resist wrong, they have to be put into practice.
- The Bible itself talks of the Word of God (which includes the written word in the Bible) as being like a sharp two edged sword that gets right to the heart of the matter.
- The Bible itself uses these military terms: ‘Let truth be like a belt and God’s justice be your body armour’ (from Ephesians 6:14-17).
- It is not just the sections of the Bible that talk in military terms that make Christians think about the Bible as armour and weapons. They see the whole of the Bible this way. For example, the quotation that follows encourages people to focus on what is right and good. This is a practical ‘weapon’ to fight despair and cynicism and balance the bad news we hear all the time.
 

‘Focus your thoughts on whatever is true, pure, right, holy, friendly, and good. Keep thinking about what is worthwhile and praise-worthy.’  
(Philippians 4:8, paraphrased)

Below are some examples of how words from the Bible, if practiced, could help Christians ‘fight’ wrong.

- An emphasis on forgiveness helps to fight bitterness
- An emphasis on justice helps to fight unfairness
- An emphasis on love helps to fight hate
- An emphasis on mercy and loving enemies helps to fight against a revenge culture
- An emphasis on God as father of all helps to fight prejudice
- An emphasis on the world as belonging to God helps to fight the destruction of the world

**The poem *The Elixir***

- George Herbert was born in Wales in 1593. He came from a well educated family who were fond of the arts. George was set for high office but he gave it all up to become a country vicar. He devoted his life to caring for the people in his parish who affectionately called him 'Holy Mr Herbert'. In his spare time George wrote poetry that reflected his faith. He is one of the leading metaphysical poets alongside John Donne and Andrew Marvell. This particular poem *The Elixir* was later set to music and became a hymn.

[www.cyberhymnal.org/mid/s/a/n/sandys2.mid](http://www.cyberhymnal.org/mid/s/a/n/sandys2.mid) plays the usual setting for this hymn.

- The title: The word 'elixir' has a number of meanings:
  - a. Something that could turn ordinary metal to gold (also known as the 'Philosopher's stone'). In Herbert's day many people were searching for this particular stone or 'elixir'.
  - b. A potion that cures people
  - c. An important principle

Although Herbert refers to the Philosopher's stone ('famous stone' in the poem), the other meanings of the word Elixir also help us to understand the poem.

- The elixir for George Herbert was an attitude of doing everything as if to God. This meant treating people well because Christians believe that Christ accepts what is done to others as being done to him. See for example Matthew 25: 34 – 40. This attitude meant dull jobs could be done with pride – it turned the ordinary into 'gold'. This, for Herbert, was the real 'philosopher's stone'.
- George Herbert would have been familiar with the King James Bible and the poem reflects a number of verses from the Bible:

'... doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men.' Ephesians 6:7 (work as if serving God)

'... Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.' Matthew 25:40 (the kindnesses you do to others you do to me)

- This elixir 'cured' people of thinking that their work did not matter. Nothing done for God is unimportant. This attitude is an important principle that changes the way Christians look at life.

### Making RE story shoeboxes/Applying stories to life

- Pupils make shoebox Bible stories in this section. They will need to see one or two these demonstrated. Go to the shoebox stories in the **RE section** for all five stories.  
They can then do the research to create their own shoebox story for younger pupils.
- Overall this resource contains five shoebox stories for pupils aged 4-9. A shoebox story has all the props needed to tell the story within the box. The box is covered with suitable paper reflecting the nature of the story and tied with a ribbon. The paper might reflect the mood of the story or it might reflect some of the content of the story.
- The fact that the story is in something that looks like a gift box reflects the Christian belief that the stories of the Bible are like a present from God and they have something to say to people today.
- In order to demonstrate a shoebox story you will need to gather your props before the session and cover the shoebox. You can deliver the script yourself or it can be done with one person moving the figures and another person reading. Pupils can join in gestures, noises, signing and speech at appropriate points.

- All items used must be child-safe.
- The shoebox story can be told on its own or can be followed or preceded by the more straightforward retelling of the Bible story (provided).
- Within each story a well-known phrase from the King James Bible is embedded in the text. This can be followed up after the story.
- Teachers will need to check shoeboxes made by pupils to make sure all is safe and also check that pupils can deliver the story and all the material is appropriate.
- Select from the material about applying the Bible according to the age and ability of your pupils.

### Applying the Bible

These notes are for the teacher to choose from when discussing applying the Bible to daily life. All application is about context, taking things from a biblical context (several thousand years ago and in the Middle East) and applying it to the modern world. Applying some parts of the Bible is fairly easy, for example 'Don't steal'. Applying a story or a poem is more difficult. There are several processes Christians go through when applying biblical material. They might ask themselves some of the following questions:

- What is this Bible story/poem about?  
What is its central message?
- Is there anything I need to know about its original context in order to understand it correctly? (See background notes on each shoebox story.)
- Can I find a modern context where it would be appropriate to apply this story?  
For example, a modern equivalent of the Good Samaritan.
- How could the central message be applied appropriately?

What can I learn from:

- The values in the story?
- The message of the story?
- The way people relate to God and others in the story?

Do these have anything to say about my values and faith and my relationship with God and others?

What does the story tell me about:

- God?
- Myself/others/relationships?
- The world?

Does the story challenge or affirm me in any of these areas?

## Resources

[www.request.org.uk/infants/bible/bible01.htm](http://www.request.org.uk/infants/bible/bible01.htm)

Information about the Bible for pupils

[www.barnabasinschools.org.uk/storybags](http://www.barnabasinschools.org.uk/storybags). *Bible Storybags* by Margaret Cooling. This has open access web resources and a book of 32 scripts

Signs can be added to stories:

[www.christiansigns.co.uk/public/search.php](http://www.christiansigns.co.uk/public/search.php)

Database of signs associated with Christian worship

[www.britishsignlanguage.com/](http://www.britishsignlanguage.com/) Moving pictures for basic signs

