



# Extra tips

## The Garden, The Curtain And The Cross Family Times

Welcome to *The Garden, the Curtain and the Cross* family devotional! We hope that you enjoy learning together from the Bible passages that the book is based on. In conjunction with the accompanying calendar, you could use these studies as you prepare for Easter. Or they can be a stand-alone Bible overview for children who have enjoyed their first taste of God's big salvation story in *The Garden, the Curtain and the Cross* storybook.

Each Bible time should last around ten minutes (the earlier sessions are deliberately shorter), and they follow the same format each day. Over the course of the fortnight, the questions and prayer times ask progressively more of the children so they can enjoy starting to apply and pray from the Bible for themselves.

Every day the pages include the Bible text, taken from the International Children's Bible. For children who can read, we recommend giving them their own hard copy of the ICB passage, which they can use to follow along as you read aloud. For the optional "Let's Think a Bit More" sections, you'll need to look up the passage. A useful online resource is [biblegateway.com](http://biblegateway.com).

If time is pressing, the booklet is designed to be read as it's written, so you can pick it up and go! However, here are some useful extra tips to get the most out of your time:

### **This is new to my kids. What can I do to help them?**

- Choose a time of day when you're not rushed and you know your kids aren't likely to be very tired or hungry!
- If an activity asks the children to do an action as the passage is read, practise the action together first and then slow down your reading to give them time to recognise and respond to the cues.
- As well as slowing your speed, use tone, volume and facial expressions as you read aloud to emphasise where answers to questions are to be found.
- Whatever the age of your children, you will probably need to give them a lot longer than you think they need to consider the questions. Don't worry about leaving some time of quiet for them to think; don't jump in too fast with the answer or a rephrased version of the question (although be prepared to do the latter if necessary).
- Praise their attempts to join in and understand the passage. If their answers aren't what you were expecting, you could add to them by saying, "Something I noticed was..." or use the text after the questions in the booklet to clarify the answers.

### **How can I use this in combination with the book?**

- If you plan to use the devotional in the fortnight leading to Easter, why not read the book together regularly in the Lent period before that to familiarise your children with the story?
- Once you have done a devotional, later in the day or the next day, sit down with your child(ren) and with the storybook, and look together at the pages that day's passage was focused on. Looking at the pictures together, ask your child(ren) to explain what is happening on those pages.
- Look out for little extras in the pictures that lend themselves to useful discussions. For instance, what animal is Jesus sharing a glance with on one of the pages? Can your child explain why the illustrator put that in? Why do you think Catalina chose to add the pictures she did to the page showing the cross? What detail has she included in the picture of the resurrected Jesus?

### **How can I include older children?**

- Have additional open questions that you could ask them, such as "What most struck or excited you about God in this passage?"

- They could do the “Let’s Think a Bit More” sections either on their own or at another time with you.
- If they’re used to doing so, ask them to pray aloud themselves in response to the passage before you use the printed prayer at the end.
- As time goes on, if appropriate, you might ask them to lead some of the sessions from the booklet.

**And if I’ve got extra time to prepare?**

- Consider gathering props or setting up a space you can move around in to enact the story. Could you recreate a “Garden of Eden”, complete with pot plants, fruit and

toy animals? If you can head out and enjoy reading the passage for Study 1 surrounded by real trees, even better! On Palm Sunday, gather coats and branches (and a strong volunteer to be the colt) and enjoy acting out Christ’s entry into Jerusalem. Do you have an old sheet you could tear to add the appropriate drama to Study 13? Or simply prime someone to turn off the lights as you read Mark 15 v 33?

- Some stories lend themselves to being acted out with puppets or toys. A tricky passage such as Leviticus 16 might benefit from a few toy figures and animals, and a cube box with a warrior angel drawn on the front, as visual aids to accompany the passage.

Whether this is a new adventure for you all or a new resource for a regular family activity, we pray that you will enjoy growing together in love for the Lord Jesus and delight in his word.

**Carl and Lizzie Laferton**

