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# Foreword

I have taught Sunday school for more years than I care to remember and, when in Christian bookshops, I scour the shelves for ideas of how to present the old, old story in new and interesting ways. The gospel doesn't change, but children do—and it's the teacher's job to run to keep up with them. I'm grateful that Renita Boyle has done some running for me, and that I'll be able to use the fruits of her efforts with the children I teach, who are aged five and under.

In *Parable Fun for Little Ones* the author takes ten of Jesus' parables and creates a whole ménage of teaching activities around them. For example, each story begins with a thoughtful welcome activity, just enough to whet the children's appetites for what is to come, yet not so demanding that a shy child will crawl into his or her shell and remain there for the rest of the session. The Story Sack® will have them on the edge of their seats as they wait to see what delights it contains, and Rhyme Time will encourage boys and girls to chant the story long after they go home. Renita Boyle's recognition that rhyme is a really valuable teaching tool when working with under-fives adds value to the lessons. It's a pity not to make use of what really works, and rhythm, rhyme and children just go together. After all, we still remember nursery rhymes learnt when we were three and four years old!

While the lessons follow a pattern and children will know roughly what is coming next, the activities themselves are so amazingly varied that there is no possibility of boredom—none whatsoever. In addition, although the activities in *Parable Fun for Little Ones* really are fun, they all earn their keep in terms of Bible teaching. Not one is a time filler or merely for entertainment.

While each parable, complete with all its activities, is intended to be used as a unit, the material could equally well be split over several sessions to good effect, and the fact that each activity is timed is a real bonus.

*Parable Fun for Little Ones* is not for the faint-hearted as each lesson requires quite a bit of preparation, but teaching the gospel to young children is not for the faint-hearted either. Those who take on this responsibility know its importance and are prepared to put some effort into it. Renita Boyle has done a great deal of work and those who add their effort to hers will, I'm sure, reap blessings.

*Irene Howat, author and storyteller*

# Introduction

Who is Silly Billy? What are Mick and Mac building? Where is Little Lamb? Why is Grandma Guddle in such a muddle? How will Farmer Friendly get her crops to grow? What did Jolly Molly find? Will Good Sammy come to the rescue? What is Tom Farmer waiting for? Will Tired Tim ever get any sleep?

The answers to these questions and many more are contained in *Parable Fun for Little Ones*, a flexible, fun-filled exploration of Jesus' parables for use with preschoolers. Whether you are a parent, grandparent, Sunday school teacher, minister, nursery school teacher or carer, you are sure to find *Parable Fun for Little Ones* a great tool for spiritual and moral development.

The book contains stories and methods for telling them, songs and finger rhymes, crafts and games, role play, snack ideas, prayer activities, Bible verses with actions and family fun activities to do at home.

Its pick-and-mix approach makes it ideal for use in church and out: in crèche, playgroups, nursery schools, Sunday schools, family services, school assemblies and children's talks, coffee mornings and charity events, or at home.

*Parable Fun for Little Ones* is both relational and playful. It encourages the fundamental relationships that children have with their primary carers at home, other carers away from home and their peers, and it does so through varied methods of themed play.

The material is in keeping with national guidelines. It will provide opportunities for spiritual and moral development as well as facilitating the fulfilment of early learning goals for ages 3–5, such as:

- ★ Communication, language and literacy
- ★ Mathematical development
- ★ Personal, social, emotional development
- ★ Knowledge and understanding of the world
- ★ Physical development and movement
- ★ Creative, expressive and aesthetic development
- ★ Spiritual and moral development

Finally, the book contains an index of themes and activities to help you freely dip in and out of this material and adapt, add or subtract to suit your needs, your children, your timeframe and the physical space.

# How to use this book

Health and safety issues are of primary concern when working with children. Before you use this material, please ensure that:

- ★ Child care workers understand child protection procedures and are cleared for work with children.
- ★ There is good communication between parents, carers and child care workers.
- ★ Data protection procedure is followed.
- ★ Children are dressed appropriately for activities and given clear guidance.
- ★ Objects used are age-appropriate and child-safe.
- ★ Food ingredients are appropriate for those with allergies, and food hygiene regulations are followed.

The material in a single session will provide about one and a half hours of activities, although this timescale can be shortened or lengthened by choosing fewer activities or taking longer with an individual activity. A time guide is given with each activity to help in the planning of your session.

Each session is focused on one of Jesus' parables, which is retold in rhyme and explored through any combination of the activities explained below. 'Chat about' questions appear at intervals throughout each session.

## Ready, steady, go

Ready, steady, go gives you the following preparation material:

- ★ The 'aim', 'truth' and 'themes' of each session.
- ★ The biblical basis from which the rhyme time parable is derived (based on the Contemporary English Version of the Bible).

Ensure that all helpers understand the aim, truth and themes of the session as well as the structure chosen. Where appropriate, discuss personal learning goals for each child—for example, to help Sally feel more confident or Joe to listen better. If used in a church or club setting, pray for one another, the children and their families.

## In a circle

Circle times are particularly effective in developing community, self-esteem, confidence, social skills and cooperation. During the circle time, ensure that:

- ★ The floor space is big enough, and free from obstacles and too many distractions.
- ★ A cushion or chair is provided for each person.
- ★ The storyteller is on a level with the children and can be seen and heard by everyone.
- ★ Helpers are evenly distributed to help where needed.
- ★ Children are given clear guidance on how to minimize safety risks, so that toes and fingers are not stood on.
- ★ The story sack® is nearby and only those objects currently in use remain in the circle.
- ★ Young or reluctant children, and those with special needs and their helpers, are welcomed in ways appropriate to the child.
- ★ Everyone is included, everyone belongs and everyone is valued.

## Pat-a-pet

Choose an appropriate stuffed animal, beanie doll or puppet to be the pat-a-pet for each session. Ideas for use are included for each session. The pat-a-pet can:

- ★ Give hugs and help with welcomes and waves.
- ★ Demonstrate a request made of the children, such as 'go around the circle to the left' or 'jump over the rope'.
- ★ Be the official turn-taker during circle time. For example, only the person holding the pet may speak, and everyone else must listen. The pat-a-pet may be passed on to someone wishing to speak or as an encouragement to a child who might be reluctant to speak.
- ★ Give encouragement or prizes to those who behave well, achieve a task, improve on a skill or show kindness or helpfulness.

## Welcomes and waves

Remembering a child's name is a positive affirmation of self-worth. Ideas for name games, welcomes and waves and name tags are included for each session.

## Story sack®

This is a large pillowcase or bag containing the props for telling the rhyme time parable. Script and prop ideas are given for each session.

## Rhyme time

Each session is focused on one of Jesus' parables. The rhyme time parable is based on a well-known nursery rhyme and told with the help of the story sack®. Although the rhyme time parable is not taken directly from the Bible, it is important to help children make the connection to the Bible. This is usefully done by making accessible a child-friendly Bible and encouraging the children to understand the Bible as God's storybook. Relate the rhyme time parable to the Bible by saying, 'This is a story something like one Jesus told. We can find the stories Jesus told in the Bible, God's storybook.'

## Up and about with tickle trunk

Up and about activities will allow imaginative and energetic exploration of each parable and attendant themes.

The tickle trunk is a large trunk, plastic container or cardboard box filled with clean and safe dressing-up clothes and props based on the session's parable and theme. The tickle trunk may be used in free play or to help children dramatize the parable in their own way. Children may even participate in decorating the tickle trunk. Specific ideas for the contents of the tickle trunk are given for each session. In general, be on the look out for:

- ★ Oversized clothes, such as old suits, bright flowery shirts, bridesmaids' dresses, nightgowns and pyjamas (buttons and zippers may be replaced with Velcro® for easier handling).
- ★ Clothing accessories, such as boots, shoes, hats, scarves, gloves, necklaces, bangles, hats, wigs, slippers and handbags.
- ★ Costumes, such as fairies, superheroes and animals.
- ★ Uniforms, such as doctor, nurse, fire fighter, police officer, astronaut, racing car driver.

- ★ Towels, textured and themed fabrics, headbands with antennae, and umbrellas.
- ★ Props such as toy gardening tools, building tools and seaside equipment.

## 'We can' can

Choose a container with a wide enough mouth for a child's hand to get in, such as a crisps tube. The 'We can' can contains slips of paper with on-the-spot activities that require no special materials, preparation or clean-up. Each activity is related to the parable. A child will choose the activity from the 'We can' can and the helper will read it out and lead it—for example, 'We can sing Old MacDonald', or 'We can grow like a tree'. The 'We can' can is particularly useful during down-times, in-between times or as a distraction from chaos. Ideas for the 'We can' can are included for each session.

## Food fun

Food fun gives you a snack idea or recipe related to the session's parable. Children may be involved in preparation or simply enjoy the snack.

## Prayer pocket

The prayer pocket is a large manila envelope decorated according to the theme, which contains ideas to help children express themselves in prayer. A variety of prayers and methods for prayer are explored.

## Busy box

The busy box is a large box containing craft materials. Ideas for the contents of the busy box and directions for a craft related to the parable are included for each session. It will be useful to:

- ★ Protect table and floor surfaces with messy mats, drip sheets or newspaper.
- ★ Provide a clearly identified place for projects to dry.
- ★ Ensure that there are enough helpers to supervise and that all helpers understand the project instructions.
- ★ Help children write their names on projects for easy identification.
- ★ Find a way to show the children's work in an eye-catching, eye-level display.

## **Go game**

The go game is an energetic group game or activity related to the session's parable.

## **Music makers**

Music makers provides an idea for a musical activity based on the theme of the parable or ways to incorporate music in the session's other activities.

## **Memory time**

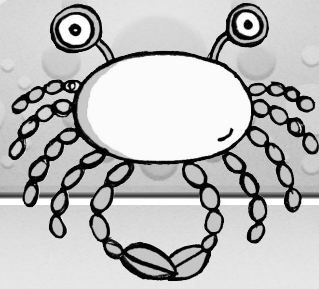
Memory time provides an opportunity to learn a Bible memory verse with simple actions. For each session, you will need to write out the memory verse on a card to display to the children.

## **Home and Away sheets**

A Home and Away sheet is provided for each session. This will enable a good flow of information, foster supportive relationships with primary carers and encourage greater participation. The sheet contains:

- ★ Think together (including the biblical basis of the day's parable).
- ★ Link together (including an activity linked to the session).
- ★ Play together (including a fun activity for all the family).
- ★ Pray together (including a simple one-line prayer to say together).

A further sheet with the rhyme time poem is also available for the children to take home if desired.



# Jolly Molly May

## Ready, steady, go

- ★ **Aim:** To affirm the joy of knowing Jesus
- ★ **Truth:** Being friends with Jesus is the best treasure ever
- ★ **Themes:** Treasure, sea life, happiness and family


### Biblical basis: A hidden treasure

Jesus said: The kingdom of heaven is like what happens when someone finds treasure hidden in a field and buries it again. A person like that is happy and goes and sells everything in order to buy that field.

MATTHEW 13:44

## In a circle

### Name tag crabs


 Time guide: 5 minutes

**You will need:** A crab name tag for each child (see page 64 for photocopyable template), coloured pens, pencils or crayons, a hole punch, sticky tape, scissors and a length of ribbon

Help the children to cut out and colour their tags and write their names on the front. Place sticky tape toward the top, where you will punch a hole. Loop ribbon through the hole and tie the ends.

## Pat-a-pet

### Click-clack Crab

 Time guide: 5 minutes

**You will need:** A crab soft toy or puppet, sand bucket, blue confetti or shredded paper

Hide Click-clack Crab in a sand bucket full of blue confetti or shredded paper. Repeat the following rhyme to introduce Click-clack Crab as a visitor for the day. Talk about crabs and their habitat.

*Here is a bucket*

*Deep and wide.*

*I wonder what is hidden inside (peep inside).*


*It's Click-clack Crab without a doubt*

*Hey, click clack, clack click, come out!*

Remove Click-clack Crab from the bucket and scatter the confetti on the children.

## Welcomes and waves

### X marks the spot

 Time guide: 5 minutes

**You will need:** Click-clack Crab and a helper to lead

Ask the children to stand up and turn to the right. When you say someone's name, everyone is to repeat the name and take one step around the circle for every beat in it. For example, 'Sam-u-el' would be three steps, 'Sa-rah' two steps, 'Matt' one step, and so on. When you shout 'X marks the spot!' everyone is to sit down where they are as quickly as they can. Continue play until everyone's name has been called. Make sure to include Click-clack Crab in the fun.

### Chat about

Chat about what the children like about their names. Does anyone's name have a special meaning or story? Does God know each of us by name?

## Story sack®

### Jolly Molly May



**Time guide: 5 minutes**

**You will need:** Some yellow silk scarves in different shades (sand) and some blue silk scarves (sea), three rag dolls or beanie dolls dressed in summer clothes (Maggie, Milly and Molly May), a seashell, a toy crab and a treasure chest bundled unseen in a yellow silk scarf

**You will wear:** Sunhat and beach wear

Dress up as if you are going to the beach. Hold the sack in your lap until everyone in the circle is seated and settled. Instruct the children that they are not to move from where they are sitting unless told to do so. Quietly set up the scene.

Remove the blue silk scarves one at a time and ruffle them out on the floor like ocean waves. Remove the yellow silk scarves one at a time and create a beach and sand dunes. Hide the treasure chest unseen in a yellow silk scarf and place it among the dunes. Tell the following story, following the directions in roman (upright) type.

## Rhyme time

### Jolly Molly May



**Time guide: 10 minutes**

*Maggie and Milly and jolly Molly May*  
(Remove Maggie, Milly and Molly May one at a time and place them on the beach)  
*Went to the beach to play one day.*

*Maggie found a shell that sang like the sea*  
(Remove the shell and place it next to Maggie's ear),  
*Went to show her mum, happy as could be.*  
(Put Maggie and her shell out of sight behind your back)

*Milly found a crab scuttling all around*  
(Remove the crab from the sack and place it next to Milly),  
*Went to tell her dad what she had found.*  
(Milly runs out of sight behind your back in one direction and the crab in the other)

*I wonder, do you wonder, jolly Molly May,*  
(Pick up Jolly Molly May as if speaking to her)  
*What did you find on the beach that day?*

*Molly found a chest hidden in the sand*  
(Molly May finds the hidden treasure and gets excited),  
*Discovered it, uncovered it, then buried it again.*  
(Molly May buries the chest again without opening it)

*Molly's got a secret smile upon her face,*  
*Molly's got a treasure and knows its hiding place.*  
(Molly runs out of sight behind your back)

*I wonder, do you wonder what our treasure is?*  
*Jesus is our treasure and we are his!*

### Chat about

Chat about what the children liked best about this story. Use some of the following wondering questions:

- ★ I wonder what you would like to find on the beach?
- ★ I wonder how Molly felt when she found the treasure?
- ★ I wonder what Molly's treasure was?
- ★ I wonder why Molly kept the treasure a secret?
- ★ I wonder what we treasure most?
- ★ I wonder what Jesus treasures most?
- ★ I wonder how knowing Jesus is the best treasure ever?

When you are finished, quietly remove the scene, talking about each item as you return it to the sack.

## Up and about with tickle trunk



**Time guide:** 10 minutes

**You will need:** Floppy hats, sunglasses, flip-flops, beach towels, beach toys, seashells and animals, treasure chest, buckets and spades, sandbox

Either encourage the children to play freely with the parable in their own way or choose a cast of children to act out the rhyme time parable.

## 'We can' can

### We can sing 'What shall we do...?'

*(Tune: What shall we do with a drunken sailor?)*



**Time guide:** 5 minutes

**You will need:** A slip of paper that says: 'We can sing "What shall we do when we go to the seaside?"' and the following words.

*What shall we do when we go to the seaside (x 3)  
Early in the morning?*

*Make a castle out of sand...*

(x 3, pretending to make a sandcastle)

*Put on our very best swimsuits...*

(x 3, pretending to dress)

*Run and jump in the waves...*

(x 3, pretending to splash)

*Swim up and down in the sea...*

(x 3, pretending to swim)

*Look for shells on the seashore...*

(x 3, pretending to look)

*Go for a walk along the beach...*

(x 3, pretending to walk)

*Have an ice cream in a cone...*

(x 3, pretending to lick)

*Watch for boats out in the sea...*

(x 3, pretending to spy)

*Find some treasure in the sand...*

(x 3, pretending to dig)

Choose a child to remove the instructions from the 'We can' can. Read the instructions aloud. Do the chant and rhyme together.

## Chat about

Chat about a time when the children went to the seaside. What do they like to do most when they go to the seaside?

## Food fun

### A day at the beach



**Time guide:** 10 minutes

**You will need:** Beach towels, umbrella, container of sand, seashells, tape of beach sounds, cold fruit juice, ice cream and cones

Spread the towels out on the floor. Open an umbrella and lay it on its side nearby, turn on the beach sounds, place seashells in the area, eat up and clean up.

## Chat about

Chat about the kind of things we see, feel, smell, hear, taste when we are at the seaside. What lives in the sea?

## Prayer pocket

### Seaside prayers



**Time guide:** 5 minutes

**You will need:** A prayer pocket decorated like a seaside bucket, a set of seaside prayer shapes for each child, such as a starfish, fish, seahorse, crab, seashell and treasure chest (see photocopiable sheet on page 69)

Put one set of seaside shapes into the prayer pocket before the session. Recite the rhyme below, asking a child to remove a shape from the prayer pocket. Help the children to thank Jesus for one characteristic that we treasure about him (kind, loving, giving, forgiving, always there and so on). Repeat this exercise until all the shapes are gone and several children have had a chance to pray.

*Here is a bucket*

*Deep and wide.*

*I wonder what is bidden inside? (peep inside)*

*It's a [name seaside shape], without a doubt.*

*Hey, [seaside shape], come on out!*

Finish with the prayer below.

*Thank you, Jesus, for treasuring us. Help us to treasure you. Amen*

### Home and away link

Send a sheet of seaside shapes home with each child. 'Home and away' provides a further linked activity.

## Busy box

### Treasure boxes



**Time guide:** 10 minutes

**You will need:** Plain cardboard gift boxes, paint, brushes, pencils, glitter glue, shells, jewels and other decorative materials

Help the children to paint and decorate their boxes. Leave the boxes to dry ready for the children to take home.

### Chat about

Chat about what the children would put in a treasure box. What would they like to find in a treasure box?

## Go game

### Beachcomber



**Time guide:** 5 minutes

**You will need:** Beanbags (treasure) and a large playing area

Divide the group into two. One half are beachcombers, the other half are waves. Send the beachcombers to one end of the playing space and the waves to the other. Scatter the beanbags (treasure) in a line in the middle. When the leader says 'Go', the beachcombers rush out, pick up a piece of treasure and try to bring it home before the waves tag them. Reverse teams and play again.

### Chat about

Chat about what the children would like to find on a beach. How do they feel when they find rubbish on the beach?

## Music makers

### Crabs in the bucket



**Time guide:** 5 minutes

**You will need:** Seaside themed music

When the music is playing, the children scuttle around sideways in a crab position (bending over frontward or backward with hands and feet on the ground). When the music stops, they stand up, clasp their hands in a circle like a bucket in front of them and remain as still as possible. Anyone who moves has to sit down for the remainder of the game. Play until one child is left standing.

### Chat about

Ask the children, if they could be any sea creature, what would they be and why?

## Memory time



**Time guide:** 5 minutes

**You will need:** The Bible verse 'Your heart will always be where your treasure is' (Matthew 6:21)

Teach the children the following actions. Explain that remembering what is said in the Bible can really help us, and that they are going to try to remember something Jesus said, using both words and actions.

**Your:** Sweep outwards from left to right with your right hand, palm open and facing upward.

**Heart:** Use your right and left index fingers to draw a heart shape over your own heart.

**Will be where:** Hold your right hand out, palm up.

**Your:** Sweep outwards from left to right with your right hand, palm open and facing upward.

**Treasure:** Hold your hands in loose fists, thumbs lying flat on top. Bring fists together side-by-side, touching heels of hands, knuckles and thumbs.

**Is:** Hold your right hand out, palm up.

Practise the actions to the verse yourself in advance of the session.

**Chat about**

Chat about how often we think about the things we treasure. How can we make Jesus our best treasure ever?

**Home and away**

The image shows three worksheet pages from a resource pack. The first page is titled 'The parable about a hidden treasure' and contains text and a small illustration of a man digging. The second page is titled 'Jolly Molly May' and contains a rhyme. The third page is titled 'Seaside prayer shapes' and contains several simple line drawings of objects like a shell, a fish, a seahorse, a star, and a shell.

Give each child a copy of Home and Away Sheet 1 (see page 74), the Jolly Molly May rhyme time poem (see page 84) and a copy of the seaside shapes (see page 69).

# The parable about a hidden treasure

Thank you for sharing your child(ren) with us today. Here are some of the things we thought about together and some things you might like to try at home.

## Think together

Today's story and activities were based around Jesus' parable about a hidden treasure.

**Jesus said: The kingdom of heaven is like what happens when someone finds treasure hidden in a field and buries it again. A person like that is happy and goes and sells everything in order to buy that field.**

MATTHEW 13:44

## Link together: Seaside bangle

**You will need:** The sheet(s) of sea shapes your child(ren) brought home today, scissors, colouring crayons, hole punch, uncooked pasta tubes, shells, a length of ribbon or string

Help your child(ren) cut out and colour the shapes and punch a hole for threading. Thread the pasta tubes, beads, shells and paper shapes on the ribbon or string and tie to make a seaside bangle.

## Play together: Hunt the treasure

**You will need:** A box full of treasure (a mixture of costume jewellery, coins, chocolate coins, small toys and so on), a really long piece of string

Without the child(ren) seeing, tie one end of the string around the treasure box and hide it out of sight (under a pile of cushions, clothes or toys or outside under a bush). Trail the string around the room or outside (over and under furniture or plants, out the door, up the stairs and so on). When the child(ren) arrive(s) give them the loose end of the string and help them to follow it to the treasure, delighting in the items on the way. Explore and enjoy the contents of the treasure box together.



## Pray together

*Thank you for treasuring me.*

*Help me to treasure you. Amen*