



God's Kingdom: How Do I Get In?

By Deborah Wassenberg

Activity: The Tournament 'Review'

Divide the children into 'houses'. Try to even out age and ability so the tournament is fair. Assign volunteers to each house. This activity involves the children thinking of a name for their house. (Something like the Jousting Jacks, the Slippery Squires, or the more serious, Red Knights.) Their house name will be used for scoring. Points can also be earned by good listening, correct answers to questions about the story, and anything else you like.

As a group the children must design and draw a large flag or banner on butcher's paper so their house name can be unfurled and displayed on a wall, or area, where the members of the house will sit.

A Tournament:

A bugle call was used to announce the beginning of a tournament, so one of your volunteers could use a toy one to announce the beginning of each activity or game. A nobleman was usually the sponsor of a tournament, so dress up one of your volunteers and they can act as the Master of Ceremonies. The bugle blowing character and the MC character could have a lot of fun playing off one another!

Tournament Jousts and Melees:

The King Says: The same as Simon Says. A good warm up game.

The King's Keys: You will need a bunch of keys and a blindfold. Have the children sit in a circle. These children are the subjects. Choose one child to be the King. The King sits in the middle of the circle, is blindfolded, and has the bunch of keys in front of him. Different children are selected by the leader to creep into the centre of the circle, steal the keys and return to their spot without being detected by the King. The subject stealing the keys is detected when the King points directly at him or her. This game must be played in silence. The subject is allowed 3 attempts at stealing the keys. The King must point directly at the subject; wide sweeps of the hand are not permitted. Change the King frequently— immediately if he loses the keys of the Kingdom!

King of the Bucket: You will need a strong bucket (I used a tall bucket that formally held tiling grout) a ball and a plastic bat. (A rolled up newspaper for indoors.) Choose a child to be 'King'. The King stands on an upturned bucket armed with the bat. The other children are the 'attackers' who try to hit the bucket with the ball. The King must try and fend off the ball with the bat. As soon as an attacker succeeds in hitting the bucket or the king falls off while trying to hit the ball away, the attacker takes the King's place on the bucket.

The King Demands: You will need a slipper and a list of items. Divide the children into their houses. A leader stands in the centre of the area with a slipper (and wearing a crown) and says, 'The king demands...' a specific item, such as a shoelace, pin, hairband, pen, smelly sock, tissue, watch and so on. The first team to place the appropriate items in the 'king's slipper' scores a 1000 points!

King in the Middle: Play this game the same way you would play Red Rover. Put a crown on the head of the one who is 'it' in the centre of your game area. He is the King or Queen. Set boundaries and on the word 'go', the group run from one end to the other. If the King in the middle touches anyone, they become his subjects and must help catch others as they run through. Continue until the entire group has been caught. Then choose another King or Queen and start again.

Jester's Hoop Race: You will need a hoop for each house. Each house grabs a hoop and the houses line up single file. The children hold hands and a player on one end of each team's line holds the hoop in a free hand. When the bugle blows, each house passes the hoop from one end to the other, without letting go of anyone's hands. (So players will need to wiggle the hoop over their heads and lift their legs to step through the hoop.) The first house to get the hoop to the free hand of its player on the opposite end of the chain of children wins.

Pass the Crown: You will need a crown for each team and a plastic spoon for each team member. Each house lines up in a single-file row. Each player gets a plastic spoon and holds it in one hand. The other hand cannot touch the spoon or the crown during play. When play begins, each house picks up and passes a crown down its row, using only the spoons. When the crown reaches the end of the row, the player on the end must put on the crown and run to the end of their line, and pass the crown down the line again. (Alternatively, you could use pegs to pass the crown, instead of spoons. It's tricker!)

Follow the King: (Easy game for lower primary.)
Pick a child to be the King.
The King starts walking, skipping or whatever action they choose.
All of the other players must do the same thing.
For instance, if the King scrunches down and unties and reties a shoelace, all of the subjects must do the same, the exact same way.

Knights, Horses & Cavaliers:

Divide each house into pairs. Each pair needs a bigger person and a smaller person. Each pair has to follow your instructions, and if they don't, then they are out. Your three instructions are 'knights, horses and cavaliers'. When you call out knights, one person gets down on one knee and the other person sits on it. When you call out horses, one person jumps on the back of the other (piggy back). When you call out cavaliers, one person jumps into the other person's arms. If a pair is too slow or does the wrong action, then they are out!

Storm the Castle: A box with a castle wall drawn on it, or a sheet with a castle wall drawn on it and hanging over a rope, can be used as your castle for this game. One house must stand outside while the other house are inside of the castle (on the other side of a castle wall). The children on the outside must "storm" the castle with plastic balls or balloons. The children inside must defend the castle by tossing out whatever comes in. Play for five minutes and when time is up, count how many balls are inside of the castle. Have houses switch sides and play again. At the end of another five minutes, count how many balls are inside the castle. The team that stormed the castle with the most balls wins.

Prize Giving:

A special guest (a noble lady) could come and hand out the prizes to the winning house. Historically, a prize could be anything from a dead fish to a golden ring. But any lolly will do!

Banquet:

Just add a flag to a cupcake and suddenly it is medieval fare. Gold coins are available at Kmart. A chocolate cake can be turned into a castle. You'll find lots of food ideas on the internet.

Bouncy Castle:

If your budget will allow this is the time to have a castle!

Memory Verse: Cannon Ball Throw

John 3:3 Jesus answered, 'I tell you the truth, unless you are born again, you cannot be in God's kingdom.'

You will need a plastic bowling ball and enough empty soft drink cans for each word of the Memory Verse. Decorate the cans as knight helmets to sit on top of a castle wall. Roll up a word of the Memory Verse and poke it in the hole of the soft drink can. Choose children to throw the cannon ball at the cans. If they knock one from the castle wall, they pick up the can and remove the word from inside and hold onto it until every can has been knocked down. The children holding a word then come out the front, and the rest of the children put the Memory Verse into the correct order. Repeat the verse over and over, removing a word or two at a time, until the children can say it without any of the words.

Lesson: How Do I Get Into God's Kingdom?

Bible Reference: John 3:1-21; John 7:51; John 19:

Suggested Visuals for PowerPoint or Flashcards:

Visual 1: A flag saying 'God's Kingdom'

Visual 2: Pharisees

Visual 3: Nicodemus travelling at night

Visual 4: Nicodemus and Jesus talking

Visual 5: Picture of a new born baby and a picture of an old man

Visual 6: Pictures of tree leaves rustling, windmill turning, flag flying, fan cooling

Visual 7: Nicodemus and the Sanhedrin

Visual 8: Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea at the tomb of Jesus

Story: Nicodemus and Jesus

Visual 1:

God has a kingdom! It's called the Kingdom of God, or sometimes, the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus talked about God's kingdom a lot. But it's not a kingdom you can go and visit. There are

no castle tours because God's Kingdom is wherever God is in charge. Wherever He rules and reigns...that's where the Kingdom of God is!

So how do you get into God's kingdom? A man in the Bible asked the same question and his name was Nicodemus.

Visual 2:

Nicodemus was a Pharisee. Pharisees were a religious group who made a great point of showing everyone how good they were. They believed the only way to get into God's kingdom was by earning their way in by carefully and devotedly following their religion. They worked very hard at it so they'd please God with what they had done. They were full of pride! Of course, we know you cannot do anything to earn your salvation. That's why Jesus had to speak harshly to them many times, and that is why they plotted to kill him.

Visual 3:

So Nicodemus went to see Jesus in the night.

Visual 4:

'Teacher, we know you are a teacher sent from God, because no one can do the miracles you do unless God is with him.'

Jesus answered, 'I tell you the truth, unless you are born again, you cannot be in God's kingdom.'

Visual 5:

Nicodemus said, 'But if a person is already old and grey, how can he be born again? He cannot enter his mother's womb again. So how can a person be born a second time?'

But Jesus answered, 'I tell you the truth, unless you are born from water and the Spirit, you cannot enter God's kingdom. Human life comes from human parents, but spiritual life comes from the Spirit. Don't be surprised when I tell you, 'You must all be born again.' The wind blows where it wants to and you hear the sound of it, but you don't know where the wind comes from or where it is going. It is the same with every person who is born from the Spirit.'

Visual 6:

Who has heard the wind blow? How did it sound? Who has seen the wind? You can't! You don't know where it comes from or where it is going but you can see what the wind does. Think about....leaves rustling on a tree, a windmill turning, a flag flying or a fan cooling. When someone is born again...when they ask Jesus to be their Lord and Saviour, you can't see what is

happening. But you will see the change in a person who is born again. You will see what the Spirit does!

Visual 7:

The Bible tells us Nicodemus tried to help Jesus when the Pharisees and Priests wanted Jesus arrested. He thought Jesus shouldn't be condemned without a chance to speak up for himself. But the other Pharisees wouldn't listen.

Visual 8:

Later, after Jesus had been crucified, Nicodemus brought lots of expensive spices for Jesus' body and helped wrap him up and put Him in the tomb.

Ministry to the Children:

Of course, we've all been born...we're sitting here, aren't we? Your Mum and Dad have really embarrassing photos of you as a baby. But have you been born again? I'm not talking about your physical body this time. I'm talking about your spirit. Your spirit needs to be brought to life, and the only way for that to happen is for you to ask Jesus to come and live inside you by the power of the Holy Spirit. Then you will be born of the Spirit. You will belong to God's Kingdom!

Craft:

Kingdoms and castles provide lots of opportunity for great crafts. Crowns, flags, swords, goblets, helmets, shields, scrolls, bunting...make sure you add the Memory Verse wherever possible.