



Children's Christmas Resources 2017

Week Two – The Shape of Christmas

Children's Message – The Shape of Christmas

For this message you will need:

- * Two easy jigsaws – about 20 pieces, large in size and Christmas themed if possible. It would be a bonus if it was a Nativity Scene. **Make sure there is one piece missing from each jigsaw.** If it is a nativity scene take the piece out that has baby Jesus on it. Put that piece aside in your pocket for later on in the message.
- * A table

The key words in this message are '**MISSING AND EMPTINESS.**'

[SAY] 'Who loves doing jigsaws? Jigsaws are great aren't they? I am secretly hoping that I will get a puzzle for Christmas this year. It is such a great feeling when you put that last piece of the puzzle in and stand back to look at the finished picture. Well today I have brought with me a couple of puzzles and I am wondering if I could get four volunteers to help me put them together.'

(Choose four children OR two adults and two children. Place them into pairs and give each pair a puzzle. Tell them that the first team to put their puzzle together completely is the winner and that they have two minutes to complete the puzzle. Choose another volunteer to be the time keeper using their phone or watch.)

When they discover that there is a piece missing in the puzzle say -

*'Oh no, it's happened to you too. The other day when I did these puzzles the pieces were **MISSING** but I just thought it was me. I was hoping that when you did the puzzles the **MISSING** pieces might have just magically reappeared. But they haven't. Well I guess there is nothing we can do about it now. Well thank you anyway for trying, you can go back to your seats now.'* (If the puzzle is a nativity scene, emphasis that the missing piece is baby Jesus.)

*'It is always fun playing with jigsaws but can be very annoying when you get to the end and find a piece or two **MISSING**, especially when there are 1,000 pieces!'*

'I love doing puzzles at home and sometimes my family hide a couple of pieces from me so that when I get to the end of the puzzle I start to panic thinking I have lost a piece. In order to complete the puzzle fully, you need all the pieces.'

'You know these jigsaws remind me of what it is like when Jesus is missing from our lives. Just like the puzzle is not complete, our lives are not complete without Jesus in them.'

- *I wonder if sometimes you may feel an **EMPTINESS** in your heart. You feel like there is something missing. I wonder why this happens.*



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*'I would suggest that sometimes when we get distracted, we can move away from God for a time and when this happens we can feel an **EMPTINESS** in our heart. Has this ever happened to you?'
'We have to choose to stay close to God and allow God to fill our hearts. God won't push his way into our lives, He waits to be invited.*

*'Let's see what the jigsaws look like when we place the **MISSING** pieces in them. Invite two of the volunteers to come back up and put the pieces in the puzzles.'*

'Well that is much better, they look complete now.' (Especially the Nativity puzzles with Jesus back in.)

*'When Jesus is in our lives, above everything else, above all the distractions, the **EMPTINESS** that we sometimes feel in our hearts will be filled. We will be complete, just like the jigsaw is now complete.*

This Christmas when we are all so busy running around to parties, buying gifts, decorating trees, try not to get distracted from God. Don't leave Jesus out of Christmas. He is the reason why we have the season of Christmas.'

*(*A full alternative to this activity/message is to use a Nativity scene on the table with the baby Jesus missing)*



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Children's Activity

For this activity you will need:

- * Purchase a couple of simple jigsaw puzzles that the kids to put together quite quickly and easily. Try and get Christmas puzzles if you can. (Kmart/Reject/op shop)
- * Purchase one jigsaw puzzle with only 10 pieces. On the back of each piece of the puzzle write down a distraction. Try to fill up every piece with one. Some examples are:
 - Computer games
 - Sport
 - T.V.
 - Reading
 - Playing with friends
 - Bike riding
 - Craft
 - Building Lego
 - Make sure you leave a piece with the word God on it. Try and aim for this piece to be in the centre of the puzzle.
- * Bible or story book on the Prodigal Son (Luke 15)
- * Cardboard shaped in a heart for each child
- * Textas/markers
- * A jigsaw piece for each child

Let's Get Started

Jigsaw Puzzles

When the children arrive, make sure that the jigsaw puzzles are on tables, face up in pieces ready to be put together. Spend time completing them.

God's Big Idea

The Prodigal Son

Read Luke 15:11-32 from the Bible or find a story book about the Prodigal son. You could even ask a couple of kids to act the story out as you read it.

'Wow, that father was so happy to have his son back again. Could you just imagine the huge party the father threw? Can you see in the story how the son got distracted with things in life and he left the father. Do you think Jesus told this story to remind us that sometimes we may get distracted with things in life and we may find ourselves moving away from God.'

- *I wonder if God would be happy and celebrate when we returned to Him just like the Father was in the story. Yes He would be so happy that we were back.*



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What's the point?

Pull out the special puzzle with the words written on it. Keep aside the 'God' piece of the puzzle. **As you build the puzzle upside down with the words facing up**, chat with the children about the word (distractions) on each piece. You may wish to place the pieces in a bag and choose a different child each time to come up and choose a piece from the bag. What the children need to understand is that **these distractions are also good things to do**. They are fun and we should do some of these things to help us have a good and healthy balanced life. But they become a distraction when we spend ALL our time on them and spend no time with God.

Lastly chat about the last hole in the puzzle- the centre of the puzzle.

Explain that we all have a God-shaped-hole in our lives that is waiting to be filled. Pick up some of the puzzle pieces and try and fit them in the last hole. *'They don't fit do they? Only the God piece fits into that hole.'* Place the God piece in the puzzle.

"Because Jesus is God's Son and is exactly like God, only Jesus can fill the God shaped hole in our lives. We need to choose Jesus and allow Him to fill our hearts. We all have to make that choice whether we want to put Jesus first in our lives."

- *I wonder what are some things that we could do to help become good friends with God.* (Spend time brain storming). Some examples are below:
 - Read your Bible
 - Pray
 - Chat with a friend about God
 - Listen to music about God
 - Read books about God
 - Learn at Church /Kids church/Junior Soldiers

Remind the children that all these things help us come closer to God.

Remember this!

'There is a verse in the Bible that says, 'Come near to God, and God will come near to you.' James 4:8 (ICB)

'If we try and come close to God and build a friendship with him, He will respond and come close to us. Isn't that just great! How fantastic to know that God wants to have a friendship with us. BUT we need to choose this. God won't push His way into our lives. He waits to be invited. He gives us the choice.'

Give each child a piece of cardboard shaped in a heart, a texta and something to hang the card from on the Christmas tree. Encourage them to write the verse on the card and take home and hang on the tree.



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Chat with God

Give each child a jigsaw piece and texta. Encourage them to write on the back of the piece one distraction that they would like to change so that they could become closer to God. Allow the child to take the piece home with them as a reminder.

Finish by praying together asking God will help them not be so distracted and to help them to stay close to Him.

Home and Beyond

Print out the following 'Home and Beyond' cards for each child to take home and do with their family.

Home and Beyond Cards

This week choose to spend time with God. Play music about God or read a story about God.

Make a list of things in your life that may distract you from spending time with God. Plan your day so that you can fit both things in.

With your family plan to do an activity that will help you all become closer to God. Choose a story in the Bible and spend time at the dinner table talking about the story. You may choose to look at the Prodigal Son in Luke 15:11-32.



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