

GOD'S BIG FAMILY

Introduce the children from your church to their brothers and sisters from around the world!



WHAT IS GOD'S BIG FAMILY?

God's Big Family includes six fun children's group sessions that are aimed at children aged 7-11. The sessions will introduce the children to their church family in Iran, Colombia, North Korea, Nigeria, and Eritrea. Each session outline includes two games, a short teaching outline with questions and a video, a craft, a prayer and a take-home resource.

WHAT WILL I NEED TO RUN THE SESSIONS?

You will need to order:

- A *Secret Smuggler* booklet for each child
- A *Prayer Passport* and map for each child, plus a map to use with the group during the sessions.

[You can order these resources here.](#)

You will also need:

- A screen, laptop or tablet for showing short videos. You will also need to download the videos if you don't have access to the internet at your children's group.
- A printer to print out some of the take-home resources.
- A few resources for the games and crafts – see individual sessions for details, but we have tried to keep these simple.

STAY IN TOUCH!

We would love to hear stories and see photos of your groups using *God's Big Family*.

Please send your photos and feedback to

contact@opendoorsuk.org.

SESSION 1 GOD'S BIG FAMILY

AIM OF THE SESSION

To introduce the idea that Christians everywhere are part of one family in God.

GAME

For a small space or a big space:
BROTHER SIMON SAYS

You will need: Nothing!

Instructions:

This is like the classic game 'Simon says', but using 'Brother Simon says'. The leader gives instructions, but the children should only carry out the instruction if the leader begins by saying 'Brother Simon says'. If the leader gives an instruction without saying 'Brother Simon says' first, and a child still does the action, they are out. (Alternatively, you could use the name of the leader giving the instructions, for example 'Brother Josh says' or 'Sister Sarah says'.)

If you don't have much space, you can have the children do small actions, such as patting their heads, clapping etc. For a bigger space, you can ask the children to do bigger actions, such as running to a wall, doing star jumps etc.

For a big space: **FAMILY FIGHT**

You will need: Nothing!

Instructions:

This is a game that everyone plays at the same time, and players change their role in the 'family' by playing games of 'rock paper scissors' against each other.

Everyone starts off as a 'baby', crawling on the floor. Each person should find someone to play 'rock paper scissors' with. The winner then becomes a 'child', walking around on their knees, and the loser remains a 'baby'.

The 'baby' should find another 'baby' to play against, the 'child' should find another 'child' to play against. The 'child' that loses becomes a 'baby' again. The 'child' that wins becomes a 'parent', walking around on their feet with their hands on their hips.

The 'parent' should find another 'parent' to play against. The 'parent' that loses goes back to being a 'child'. The 'parent' that wins becomes a 'grandparent', walking around while miming a walking stick.

The 'grandparent' should find another 'grandparent' to play against. At this point, you can

either say that the 'grandparent' that wins is the overall winner and the game is over, or you can say that the winner remains a 'grandparent' and the loser goes back to being a 'parent' and the game continues.

This may sound complicated, but it's actually not that difficult to pick up once you get going, and children usually enjoy it!

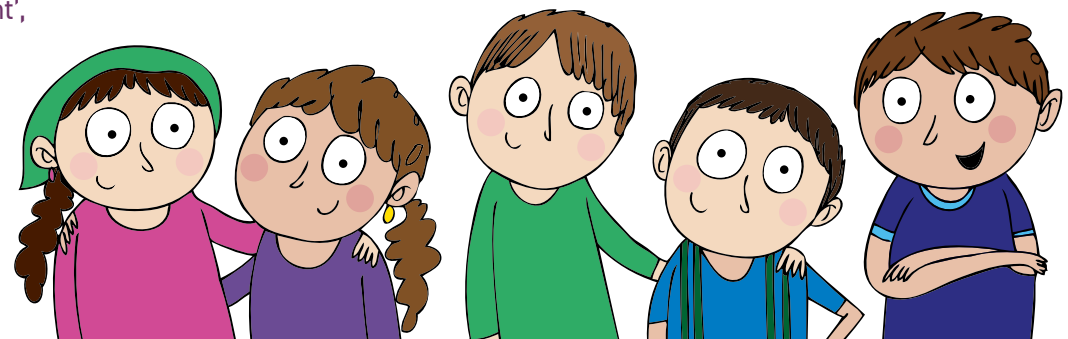
TEACHING

Share the Bible verse **1 John 3 v1a** – it would be good to have this verse up on a screen or printed out in big letters so the children can see it:



"See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!"

Question: What does the word lavished mean?
The word 'lavished' means giving something really



generously. God lavishing love on us means He really, really loves us! He loves us so much that He doesn't just want to be our teacher or our friend, even though He is those things. But He also wants to be our Dad!

Question: If each one of us is a child of God, and God is our Dad, what does that mean we are to each other?

If God is our Dad, that means that we are all brothers and sisters! And not just us here in this room, but all the Christians around the world. That means we all have over two billion brothers and sisters – a really big family!

Question: Do you know any Christians who live in another country?

At this point the children might like to talk about friends or relatives they have who live abroad, or perhaps your church has mission partners in other countries that they have met. You can talk about how they are our brothers and sisters too.

Question: How should families treat each other?

If some of the children in your group come from complex family backgrounds, this could be a sensitive question. Rather than asking the children this, you may wish to move straight to talking about the answer.

In our real families, we don't always get on well with our brother and sisters. Sometimes we might have fights or be mean to each other. But we know that we should always try to be kind and look after our brothers and sisters. If one of your brothers or sisters were in trouble, you would try to help them.

Now we are going to watch a video about a man called 'Brother Andrew'. Everyone called him 'Brother Andrew' because he travelled around the world, visiting other Christians who were in trouble and helping them, so they really felt like he was their brother.

WATCH

[Watch the Secret Smuggler video.](#)

If you are unable to watch the video, you could read the Secret Smuggler booklet to the children.

Over the next few sessions, we are going to be like Brother Andrew, learning about our brothers and sisters around the world.

CRAFT

BROTHER OR SISTER NAME BADGES

You will need:

- Card – white or light-coloured, so it can be written on
- Colourful pens and/or pencils
- Safety pins
- Cellotape
- Scissors
- Optional: stickers, colourful paper such as wrapping paper, glue, other items for decorating badges

Instructions:

Give each child and leader a piece of card to make into a name badge, with 'Brother' or 'Sister' in front of their name. They can be as simple or decorative as they like.

Be aware of the literacy levels of the children in your group - it might help to have the words 'Brother' and 'Sister' up on a screen or printed out in big letters for them to copy.

Once the children are finished, tape a safety pin on the back of the pieces of card. (Of course, if the children have been using glue or paint, you will have to wait for them to dry.) If you are concerned that your group may not be safe with safety pins, you could use lanyards instead.

Have the children and leaders wear their badges during each session. Encourage the children and leaders to call each other 'Brother' and 'Sister' during the sessions.

You may wish to make a badge or put material aside for children who have missed the first session.

PRAYER

You may like to invite one of the children to read this short prayer:

Dear God, thank You that You love us so much that You have made us Your children. Thank You that we have so many brothers and sisters all over the world. Help us to know how to be good brothers and sisters to other Christians. Amen.

TAKE AWAY

Give each child a copy of the *Secret Smuggler* booklet – [you can order these here.](#)



SESSION 2 OUR CHURCH FAMILY IN IRAN

AIM OF THE SESSION

To help the children learn about their brothers and sisters in Iran, and how we can trust God even in difficult situations.

TO BEGIN

Don't forget to give out the name badges at the start of the session, and remind everyone to call each other 'Brother' and 'Sister'!

GAME

For a larger space: **BLINDFOLDED OBSTACLE COURSE**

You will need:

- Items to create an obstacle course – this could be things you already have in the space, such as tables, chairs, pieces of paper, balls etc.
- A blindfold
- Optional: a stopwatch

Instructions:

Set up a fairly simple obstacle course. Demonstrate how the obstacle course should be done – perhaps they have to go around a chair in a certain direction, stand on a piece of paper at a certain point, pick up a ball and put it on a chair at a certain point, etc.

Split the children into pairs. One child from each pair should be blindfolded. The other child has to instruct the blindfolded child on how to do the

obstacle course without touching them. You will probably want the children to complete the course one pair at a time.

You could time each pair to see who is able to complete the course the fastest.

For a smaller space: **BLINDFOLDED DRAWING**

You will need:

- Paper
- Pencils
- Blindfolds – enough for half the children
- Simple line drawings

Instructions:

Split the children into pairs. One child from each pair should be blindfolded. The child who is blindfolded should have a piece of paper and a pencil.

After that child is blindfolded, give the child who can see a copy of a simple picture. You could draw these yourself - it could be a simple face, a stick figure, a simple house etc. The child who can see should instruct the blindfolded child to recreate the picture without touching the other child or the paper or pencil.

All of the pairs can do this activity at once. You may wish to set a time limit and then see how the pictures look once the time is up.

TEACHING

Question: How did you find that game? Hard or easy?

It was hard to do with the blindfolds on, but it would have been even harder without someone helping you!

This can be a bit like following Jesus. Sometimes we can't understand what's going on, especially if



we're going through something hard. We can feel like the blindfolded person. But we know that God sees everything and knows everything, and that He loves us and is always with us to help us.

Share the Bible verse **John 14:1 (ERV)** – it would be good to have this verse up on a screen or printed out in big letters so the children can see it:



“Jesus said, ‘Don’t be troubled. Trust in God, and trust in me.’”

Today we are going to talk about our brothers and sisters in Iran.

Take out the *World Watch List* map – **you can order this here**. Show the children where Iran is on the map.

It can be really hard to follow Jesus in Iran, as it is illegal for most people there to be Christians. People have to follow Jesus in secret, and sometimes church leaders are put in prison. But they keep trusting in Jesus, because they know He loves them and He is always with them.

Watch **Hami's story**.



Question: Imagine if our church leader was put in prison for telling us about Jesus. How would you feel? What would you do?

Today we are going to use our craft to help us pray for our brothers and sisters who are in prison in Iran. The Bible calls Christians who are in prison for following Jesus ‘ambassadors in chains’. We going to make paper chain prayers.

CRAFT

PAPER CHAIN PRAYERS

You will need:

- Strips of paper or thin card – white or light-coloured for writing and drawing on
- Colourful pencils and/or pens
- Cellotape and scissors or a stapler
- Optional: stickers, colourful paper such as wrapping paper, glue, other decorative items

Instructions:

Give each child some strips of paper, and invite them to write or draw their prayers. They might need some help thinking about what to draw to represent their prayers – you could suggest drawing hearts to represent love, birds to represent freedom, stick people to represent families, etc. If you keep the Bible verse from John 14:1 out on a screen or on paper, they could also write out this verse.

Once the designs are finished, use the tape or stapler to turn the strips into a chain. You might like to make one big chain as a group to keep in the room where you meet, or each child can make their own chain to take home.

PRAYER

Invite a child to pray the prayer for Iran from the *World Watch List* map, or to read a prayer they wrote as part of the paper chain. Invite another child to colour in Iran on the map.

TAKE AWAY

Give each child their own *World Watch List* map and *Prayer Passport* to take home. Show them where Iran is in the prayer passport, and how they can write or draw a prayer in there when they get home if they want to. Explain that we will be looking at other countries from the *Prayer Passport* in following sessions.



SESSION 3 OUR CHURCH FAMILY IN COLOMBIA

AIM OF THE SESSION

To help the children learn about their brothers and sisters in Colombia, and the importance of doing what God says, even when it's hard.

TO BEGIN

Don't forget to give out the name badges at the start of the session, and remind everyone to call each other 'Brother' and 'Sister'!

GAME

For a larger space: **LOSING LIMBS BALL GAME**

You will need:

- A ball

Instructions:

Have the children stand in a circle with a leader in the middle. The circle should be quite small to start with. The leader throws the ball to each person in turn. If the child catches the ball, they have to take a step back – this can continue until they can't go back any further.

If the child misses the ball, they have to go down on one knee, then on two knees if they miss again, and then put one hand behind their back if they miss again. If they miss a fourth time, they are out. (You might like to invite a child who has gone out to take over throwing the ball from the middle of the circle to keep them involved.) The game continues until only one child is left or you run out of time.

For a smaller space: **SHRINKING GROUND**

You will need:

- Several cereal boxes or other similar-sized pieces of card

Instructions:

Split the children into groups of three. Give each group an opened cereal box or similar-sized piece of card to stand on – everyone in the group must be on the card and not touching anything else. If they are able to do this, tear off a piece of the card and let them try again. Keep going until the piece of card is very small and they cannot all fit on it any



more. By the end, they may be on tip toes or having to carry each other!

TEACHING

Question: How did you find that game at the start? How did you find it by the end?

To start with most of you found this game quite easy. But it slowly got harder and harder. Following Jesus can be a bit like that. Sometimes it can feel easy to follow Jesus and do what He says. But sometimes it can feel hard.

Question: What things can make it hard to do what Jesus asks us to do? (For example, people teasing you for going to church.)

Share the Bible verse **Psalm 119:51 (ERV)** – it would be good to have this verse up on a screen or printed out in big letters so the children can see it:



“People full of pride are always making fun of me, but I have not stopped following your teachings.”

Even the person who wrote this psalm in the Bible had people being mean to them! But they didn't let it stop them from following God.

Question: What do you remember about Iran from our last session?

It is really hard to follow Jesus there, because most people are not allowed to have a Bible or go to church, and they can be arrested if they do. But

thousands of people there are still following Jesus. Today we're going to talk about Colombia. It can be hard for people to follow Jesus here too.

Take out the *World Watch List* map - **you can order this here**. Show the children where Colombia is on the map.

Watch Valentina's story.



Question: What things made it hard for Sister Valentina to follow Jesus?

Even though there are lots of Christians in Colombia, in the place where Sister Valentina comes from, most people follow a different religion. Her community didn't like it that Sister Valentina and her family were different from them, so they threatened to put Sister Valentina's dad in jail. They also stopped Sister Valentina from going to school, and threatened to make her join a criminal gang.

But Sister Valentina's family didn't stop following Jesus. Instead, they sent Sister Valentina to live in the Open Doors Children's Centre, so she can be safe and go to school without being threatened.

Sister Valentina said she likes to draw pictures that have a meaning. That's what we are going to do today.

CRAFT

DRAWING LIKE VALENTINA

You will need:

- Paper
- Pencils and/or pens
- Optional: paints, stickers, colourful paper such as wrapping paper, glue, scissors, other decorative items

Instructions:

Sister Valentina likes to draw pictures that have a message. Invite the children to draw something to remind them that they can ask God to help them when they are finding it hard to follow Him.

If they are finding it hard to think of ideas, they might like to draw a picture of Jesus walking beside them, to remind them that He is always with them. Or they might like to draw around one of their hands and decorate it, to remind them of God's helping hands.

PRAYER

Invite a child to pray the prayer for Colombia from the *World Watch List* map. Invite another child to colour in Colombia on the map. Remind the children that they can write their own prayers for Colombia in their *Prayer Passports* that they were given during the second session.

TAKE AWAY

Colombia colouring sheet - you can download it here.



SESSION 4 OUR CHURCH FAMILY IN NORTH KOREA

AIM OF THE SESSION:

To help the children to learn about their brothers and sisters in North Korea, and think about why the Bible is important.

TO BEGIN

Don't forget to give out the name badges at the start of the session, and remind everyone to call each other 'Brother' and 'Sister'!

GAME

For a bigger space: **BIBLE TAG**

You will need:

- A Bible, or a big notebook with 'Bible' written on the front in big letters

Instructions:

Play a game of tag, but with a twist. One person is 'it', but they are trying to tag the person holding the 'Bible'. This can be a real Bible, or a big notebook with 'Bible' written on the front in big letters if you're concerned about damaging a real Bible during the game!

The rest of the group can pass the Bible between them, but someone always has to be holding it – they can't just drop it on the ground, for



example, it has to be passed to someone else. If they drop the Bible, the person who dropped it is out. The person who is 'it' wins if they can tag someone while they're holding the Bible. The game can then begin again with someone else being 'it'.

For a smaller space: **BIBLE SMUGGLING**

You will need:

- A Bible
- A blindfold
- Optional: a bunch of keys, a small bell, or something else that might make a noise when moved

Instructions:

The group sits in a circle and one person sits on a chair in the middle, blindfolded. Everyone must stay completely silent.

Someone from the circle has to try to place a Bible under the chair without the person in the chair hearing them. The person in the chair has three chances to point at where they think the person with the Bible is.

The game ends when the person with the Bible is caught, or manages to get the Bible under the chair, or the person sitting in the chair uses up their three guesses.

If the group finds the game too easy to win, you could put something on the Bible that could make a noise, like a bell or a bunch of keys, to make it a bit harder.

TEACHING

Question: What are your favourite Bible stories? Why do you think it's important for us to read the Bible?

Share the Bible verse **Psalm 119:105** – it would be good to have this verse up on a screen or printed out in big letters so the children can see it:



"Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path."

This verse from Psalms tells us that the Bible can help guide us – like a light on a dark path. The Bible also tells us about how much God loves us, and all the good things He has done for us.

In some places, the Bible is not allowed – that's why we played this game where someone was trying to find the Bible. One of the places where the Bible isn't allowed is North Korea.

Take out the World Watch List map - **you can order this here**. Show the children where North Korea is on the map.

Watch 'Can you keep a secret?' video



If you lived in North Korea, perhaps you would use a secret code as a way of talking about Jesus and the Bible without getting caught. We are going to make secret cipher wheels and try writing out our own Bible verses in code.

CRAFT SECRET CIPHER

You will need:

- The secret cipher wheel sheet ([download here](#))
- Scissors
- Paper
- Pens
- Drawing pins and blue tac or plasticine, or butterfly pins



Instructions:

Cut out the wheels of the cipher wheel and pin them together. Butterfly pins are safer, but if you don't have any, you can use drawing pins stuck into a ball of blue tac or plasticine.

Have the children use the wheels to write out a short Bible verse in code. They will need to decide which symbol to line up 'A' with and write that down before they start. Then have the children swap and crack each other's codes.

PRAYER

Invite a child to pray the prayer for North Korea from the *World Watch List* map. Invite another child to colour in North Korea on the map. Remind the children that they can write their own prayers for North Korea in their *Prayer Passports* that they were given during the first session.

TAKE AWAY

North Korea colouring sheet - [you can download it here](#).



SESSION 5 OUR CHURCH FAMILY IN NIGERIA

AIM OF THE SESSION:

To help the children learn about their brothers and sisters in Nigeria, and to think about courageous faith.

TO BEGIN

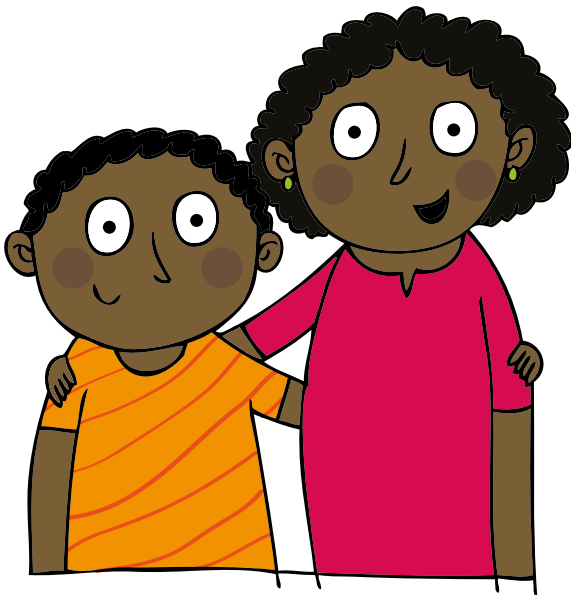
Don't forget to give out the name badges at the start of the session, and remind everyone to call each other 'Brother' and 'Sister'!

GAME

For a bigger space: **WHO AM I? GUESSING GAME**

You will need:

- Post-it notes
- Pens or pencils



Instructions:

Split the children into pairs. Have each child write the name of a famous person on their post-it note without showing the other person, and then stick their post-it notes on each other's foreheads.

Have the children go around the room asking each other questions to help them work out who they are. They should only ask questions that can be answered 'yes' or 'no'. They can only ask each person one question, then they must ask someone else. The winner is the person who works out who they are first. You can keep playing until everyone knows who they are.

For a smaller space: **EMPIRES GUESSING GAME**

You will need:

- Pieces of paper
- Pens or pencils
- Optional: flip chart

Give each child a piece of paper and ask them to write down the name of a famous person without showing anyone else. Collect all the papers and read out all of the names from the papers. (You may also want to write them all out on a flip chart or piece of paper so no one is forgotten.)

Pick a child to go first. They must guess who one person is. For example, Sarah asks Josh, "Are you Peppa Pig?"

If Sarah guessed correctly, Josh becomes part of her 'empire' and he can help Sarah make another guess. If Sarah guessed incorrectly, Josh would make the next guess.

If someone correctly guesses the identity of the leader of an 'empire', the whole empire then transfers to the guesser.

This continues until everyone is part of one 'empire'.

This game works best with at least eight people. If your group is smaller, you may prefer to play 'Who am I?' as above, but with the children sitting rather than moving around the room, and taking it in turns to try and work out who they are.

TEACHING

In that game we were asking each other, "Who are you? / Who am I?"

Sometimes we pretend to be someone else for fun, as part of a game or if we are in a play.

But sometimes we might pretend to be someone else for other reasons.

Question: Why else might someone pretend to be someone they aren't?

Peter, one of Jesus's followers, once pretended to be someone he wasn't. He was asked if he knew

Jesus after Jesus was arrested. He lied about who he was and pretended that he wasn't one of Jesus's followers.



(You could read a more detailed version of this story from a children's Bible, or the passage from **Matthew 26:69-74**, **Mark 14:66-72**, **Luke 22:54-62** or **John 18:15-27**.)

Question: Why do you think Peter lied about knowing Jesus?

God can also help us to be brave and tell the truth about who we are, even when it might make things difficult for us. Later on in the Bible, Peter is always telling people about Jesus, even though he was arrested for it.

Today we are going to talk about Nigeria, where there are lots of brave Christians.

Take out the World Watch List map - **you can order this here**. Show the children where Nigeria is on the map.

In some parts of Nigeria, there are groups of terrorists. Terrorists try to make people do what they want using violence – they might burn down your house, attack you or kidnap you. Some terrorists in Nigeria don't want there to be any Christians, so they attack Christians.

We are going to watch a video about one of our sisters from Nigeria called Leah Sharibu. She was kidnapped by terrorists because she was a Christian. She could have lied and pretended that

she wasn't a Christian, but she didn't – she told the truth.

Watch Leah Sharibu video



Sister Leah's family don't know where she is now. But God does, and we can pray and ask God to help Sister Leah and to help her to be free. We are going to make some paper chain people now to help us remember to pray for Sister Leah.

CRAFT

PAPER CHAIN PEOPLE

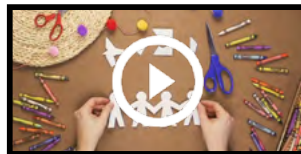
You will need:

- Sheets of paper
- Scissors
- Colourful pencils and/or pens

Instructions:

Have each child make a chain of paper people. If you aren't sure how to do this, watch this video for instructions:

How to Make a Folding Paper Doll Chain - YouTube



Invite the children to decorate each person in the chain. One person in the chain can be Leah. One person in the chain could be the child themselves, holding Leah's hand to pray for her. The others could represent other Christians they know who need prayer.

Once the paper chain people have been decorated, help the children to write short prayers on the back. The prayer on the back of Leah could be as simple as, 'Dear God, please help Sister Leah to be free. Amen.'

PRAYER

You may like to invite one of the children to pray the prayer they have written for Leah. Invite another child to pray the prayer for Nigeria from the *World Watch List* map. Invite another child to colour in Nigeria on the map. Remind the children that they can write their own prayers for Nigeria in their *Prayer Passports* that they were given during the first session.

TAKE AWAY

Nigeria colouring sheet - [you can download it here](#).



SESSION 6 OUR CHURCH FAMILY IN ERITREA

AIM OF THE SESSION:

To help the children to learn about their brothers and sisters in Eritrea, and to understand that they can make a difference to others with their prayers and actions.

TO BEGIN

Don't forget to give out the name badges at the start of the session, and remind everyone to call each other 'Brother' and 'Sister'!

GAME

For a bigger space: **STUCK IN THE MUD**

You will need:

- Nothing!

Instructions:

This game is like tag, but when someone is tagged, they have to stand still with their arms stretched out either side of them. They can be released from being 'stuck' if someone runs underneath each of their arms.

For a smaller space: **LENDING A HAND**

You will need:

- Items for completing tasks – this could include hats, scarves, cutlery, slices of bread on plates, cups of water etc.

Instructions:

Put the children into pairs. One child puts their hands behind their back, the other child stands

behind them and puts their arms under the first child's armpits to become their arms.

Give each pair a series of tasks they need to complete, using only the hands of the child standing behind the other child. Tasks could include putting a hat and scarf on the child in front, having the child in front eat a piece of bread using a knife and fork, have the child in front drink a cup of water etc. The quickest pair wins.

To really make the point about helping, you could have a leader try to do these tasks with their hands behind their back, without anyone helping them.

TEACHING

That game was better when we helped each other. The same is true in life. Life is better when we all help each other. And Jesus asks us to help others too.

Share the Bible verse **Matthew 22:39 (ERV)** – it would be good to have this verse up on a screen or printed out in big letters so the children can see it:



“Love your neighbour the same as you love yourself.”

Question: Can you think of a time when someone helped you? How did you feel?

Today we are going to learn about our brothers and sisters in Eritrea.

Take out the World Watch List map - [you can](#)

[download it here](#). Show the children where Eritrea is on the map.

In Eritrea, many Christians are arrested and put in prison. We are going to watch a video about one of them, called Paul.

Watch 'Paul in Prison' video.



At the end of that video, Paul talked about how much it helped him to know his brothers and sisters around the world were praying for him and helping him in other ways. Today we are going to think about how we can help our brothers and sisters like Paul, who are going through a hard time because they follow Jesus.

CRAFT

WRITE TO A PERSECUTED CHRISTIAN

You will need:

- Paper
- Pens and/or pencils
- Information from the Open Doors website about who needs a letter of encouragement
- Optional: stickers, colourful paper such as wrapping paper, glue, scissors, other decorative items

Instructions:

It is a huge encouragement to persecuted Christians to hear from their brothers and sisters around the world. It shows them that they aren't forgotten and lets them know that people are praying for them.

Go to the Open Doors website to find out who needs a letter of encouragement. Share their stories with the children, and invite the children to write a letter or draw a picture to send to them. Collect them when they are finished and send them to Open Doors.

PRAYER

Invite a child to pray the prayer for Eritrea from the *World Watch List* map. Invite another child to colour in Eritrea on the map. Remind the children that they can write their own prayers for Nigeria in their *Prayer Passports* that they were given during the second session.

TAKE AWAY

Eritrea colouring sheet - [you can download it here.](#)

