



## HEROD'S SECRET POLICEMAN

# Children's teaching session guide



# Herod's Secret Policeman

This children's teaching session has been designed to accompany *Herod's Secret Policeman* – a Christmas resource from Open Doors.

*Herod's Secret Policeman* tells the tale of how Secret Policeman Number 3 (and his toy sheep Nellie) was sent to spy on the magi and how finding Jesus changed him forever. With spies and shepherds, dictators and disguises, this funny, thought-provoking retelling of the Christmas story is a great way to gently introduce children to some of the issues faced by secret believers.

## Aim of the session

To learn about the Christmas story through the eyes of one of Herod's secret policemen, and about how Christians around the world are still watched by the secret police.

## What will I need to run the session?

### YOU WILL NEED TO ORDER:

A copy of *Herod's Secret Policeman* for each child.

You can order these resources at [opendoorsuk.org/herod](https://opendoorsuk.org/herod).

### YOU WILL ALSO NEED:

A screen, laptop or tablet for showing the animated film version of the book. You will also need to **download the videos** if you don't have access to the internet at your children's group.

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 exploring *Herod's Secret Policeman*.

Please send your photos and feedback to [contact@opendoorsuk.org](mailto:contact@opendoorsuk.org).



## GAME

For a small space: **DETECTIVE**

**You will need:** Nothing!

### Instructions:

This game works best with at least eight people. If your group is smaller, you could play the adapted version of the Secret Message game instead.

Send one child out of the room. They are the 'detective'.

The rest of the group should sit in a circle. Ask everyone to close their eyes. Tap one person on the shoulder – they will be the 'assassin', and they will be able to 'assassinate' other people in the circle by winking at them. Ask everyone to open their eyes again. Remind the group that the assassin should try not to let the detective see them winking at anyone else. Encourage the people who are 'assassinated' to die as dramatically as possible – this makes the game more fun! They should lie on the floor after they have been 'assassinated' to make it clear for the detective who is left.

Bring the detective back into the room and ask them to stand in the middle of the circle. They have three guesses to work out who the assassin is. If they manage to guess correctly, they win and can pick the next detective. If the detective guesses wrongly three times, or the assassin manages to assassinate everyone else in the group before the detective has used their three guesses, the assassin wins, and they become the next detective.

For a big space:  
**SECRET MESSAGE**

**You will need:**

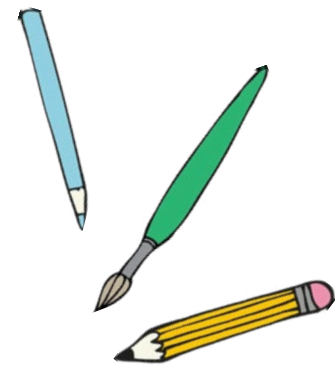
- Items to create an obstacle course. This could be things you already have in the space, such as tables, chairs, balls, etc. You will need one obstacle course per team. If you have less than 20 children in your group, two teams will be enough
- Cards or pieces of paper with the letters from the words "SHOUT WE WIN". Each letter should be on a separate card. You will need one set of letters per team.

### Instructions:

Set up an obstacle course for each team. This can be as simple or as complex as you like – they could crawl under a table, run around a chair, throw a ball into a bucket, etc.

Split the group into teams. Tell them that each of the teams are detectives who have been sent a secret message. To find out what the secret message is, each team member must complete the obstacle course in order to collect a letter to take back to their team. Once the team has all the letters, it will spell out a message. They should follow the instructions from the secret message.

Either have a leader at the end of the obstacle course to give out the letters, or have the letters in a pile at the end of the obstacle course if you trust your group not to take more than one letter at a time. Make sure the letters are in



order! Depending on the size of your teams, some team members may have to complete the obstacle course more than once in order to collect all the letters.

Hopefully once one of the teams has all the letters, the team will read the message “Shout we win” and do just that! They may need some encouragement if they seem unsure.

### **Adaptation for a smaller group or smaller space:**

You could do another version of this game where each child has to complete a task, rather than a whole obstacle course, in order to get a letter. Tasks could include hopping on one leg ten times, spelling their name backwards, singing a song, saying a phrase in a funny voice, thinking of five animals you would find on a farm, etc. If your group is small, you can all be on one team. Each child may have to complete several tasks in order for the group to get all the letters.

## **TEACHING**

**Question: In the game we were pretending to be detectives.**

**Does anyone know what real detectives do?**

You might have seen detectives on TV or in films. Usually, a detective’s job is to help to solve crimes and catch criminals.

But there are some places in the world where the leaders of the country use detectives just to spy on people

they don’t like. In these places, the detectives might be called the ‘secret police’. And there were even secret policemen who were sent to spy on people when Jesus was alive.

We’re going to hear the story of one of them.

### **Watch the video or read the story of *Herod’s Secret Policeman*:**



After you have read the story or watched the video, read the story at the back of the *Herod’s Secret Policeman* booklet, which talks about Rebecca (whose name has been changed), who works with Christians from North Korea and who has to take care in case she is being watched by the police. If you have been using the World Watch List map, you might like to get it out and show the children where North Korea is.

### **Question to discuss (these can also be found in the back of the booklet):**

- What would you do if you were being followed by secret police?
- What would you do if it was against the law to follow Jesus?
- What would you do if being a Christian meant having to hide?

## PRAYER

### HIDDEN PRAYERS

#### You will need:

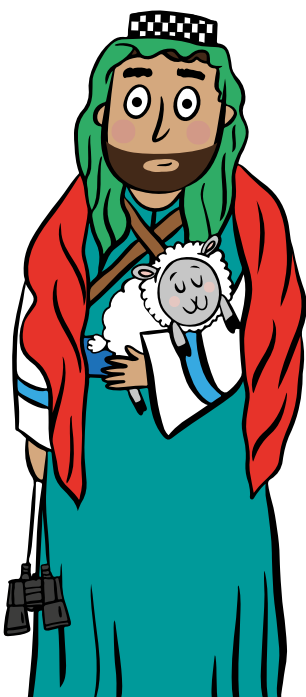
- White paper
- White wax crayons
- Felt tip pens or water colour paints (the paint must be very watery – poster paints or acrylic paints will not work).

#### Instructions:

Explain to the children that in places like North Korea, where Christians are spied on by the secret police, they often have to pray silently, in their heads, to make sure that no one can hear them praying.

Invite the children to write their own 'hidden prayers' for these secret Christians using the white crayons on white paper. It's hard to write in white crayon on white paper as you can't see where you've already been, so you may like to reassure the children that it's okay for these prayers to be quite short, such as "Thank you for Christians in [country]" or "Please keep the secret Christians safe".

Then, when they are ready, ask the children to colour over it with a felt tip pen or paint to reveal the words. Again, you may like to reassure



the children that it's okay if the prayers are hard to read, even once the letters are revealed – God knows exactly what their prayer is!

Invite the children to read their prayers aloud. If you have been using the World Watch List map, you might like to invite one of the children to pray the prayer for North Korea from the map, too.

## CRAFT

### CHANGING DISGUISES BOOKLET

#### You will need:

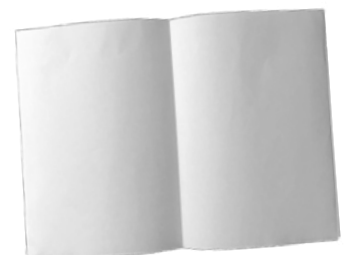
- A4 sheets of paper
- Scissors
- A stapler – ideally a large one so that you can staple the centre of the booklets
- Pens and pencils.

#### Instructions:

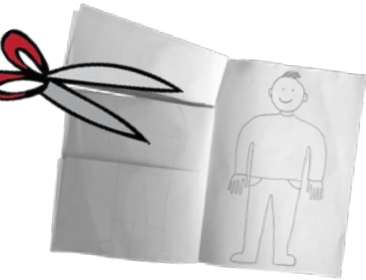
Give each child a sheet of paper. Ask them to fold it in half and then cut along the fold.

Put the two halves of the paper on top of each other, then fold them in half again to make a small four-page booklet. Staple in the centre of the booklet to hold the pages in place.

(If you don't have much time or your group are quite young, you may wish



to make the blank booklets in advance so the children can focus on the drawing.)



On the inside of the last page of the booklet, have the children draw a man or a woman. The drawing should stretch from the top

to the bottom of the page, with the head almost touching the top of the page and the feet almost touching the bottom of the page.



Once this is finished, take the front three pages that haven't been drawn on yet, and cut a slit into the sheets at the level of the neck and waist of the person in the drawing, to create three sets of flaps.

The children can then draw other outfits on the flaps so that their person can 'wear' different disguises. Just remind them to make sure the lines at the neck and the waist line up.



## TAKE AWAY

If you haven't already, give everyone a copy of the *Herod's Secret Policeman* storybook to take away with them.

You can order these at [opendoorsuk.org/herod](https://opendoorsuk.org/herod)

