

Balloon Bibles

Description: a palm paddle game

Aim: learn that God wants us to take/send the Good News to people who still wait

Audience: ages three to five years, any size class with adequate help

Time: 10-20 minutes

Equipment: blue butcher paper or sheets, balloons, paper plates, elastic, timer, various items for an obstacle course (Option Three)

Scripture to Study: Matthew 28:19

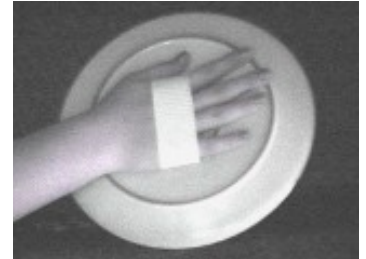
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Tiny hands and fledgling coordination make batting a balloon difficult for toddlers. But it's *so much fun!* Solution? Enlarge hands with simple palm paddles. This activity serves as good 'large muscle training' for children ages three to five years. It is also a lively introduction to Mission Time or can stand alone as a mission teaching activity. (*Vigilant adult supervision is a MUST to avoid choking on burst balloons, or to calm a child frightened by the occasional popping balloon.)



Leader's Instructions:

Pre-class Preparations:

1. Blow up balloons and draw a Bible on each one. Place enough in a large box or plastic bag so that there is one for each child, plus quite a few extras for the unavoidable accidental popping.
2. Make palm paddles by cutting two one-inch slits about five inches apart in heavy duty paper or styrofoam plates. Thread a ten-inch long strip of one-inch elastic through one slit and out the other. Tie, sew or tape the ends together to form a snug strap. (Let each child put one paddle on whichever hand s/he prefers.)
3. Choose one of the options below for a fun simulation of getting the Bible to people around the world who still wait for this precious gift! (What could be as desirable and exciting to a child as the Bible is to people who still wait for their copy? Balloons generate just a fraction of that type of real world enthusiasm.)

OPTION ONE

Take the Bible Across the Ocean

(Ages three to five years, 10-15 minutes)

1. Lay blue butcher paper or one or more blue bed sheets on the floor to represent oceans. Divide the children into two groups, one on each side of the ocean. Tell them, "A Bible is the most wonderful gift in the whole world! Here is a 'balloon Bible' for you, and you, and you, etc." Give a

- balloon to each child in the **first group only**. Encourage them to enjoy playing for 30 seconds to one minute. Bat it up in the air and catch it, balance it on the palm paddle, play catch with a child in their group! Set a kitchen timer. (About now, Group Two should start complaining loudly that it's not *fair*! You want them to express this emotion!)
2. When the timer goes off, have the children stop and hold onto their balloons while you tell them, "It's wonderful to have such a great gift, isn't it? But what about these children across the ocean? They don't have even one 'Bible,' do they? They've been waiting and waiting. Now it's time for each of you to take a 'Bible' to a child across the ocean. Come get another 'Bible' so you each have two. Carry one in your hand and balance one on your palm paddle like this as you cross the ocean." (Demonstrate giving the 'Bible' and returning home to play with yours.)
 3. If you make a third group, they will wait even longer before receiving their 'Bibles.' A fourth group waits longer still and really yearns for the gift! (Three-year-olds, however, should only be divided into two groups. It is too painful for them to wait longer. You can divide older children into more groups and get the message that it's not right to leave people waiting for a Bible!)

Discussion and Application

1. Ask Group One: It sure was fun to have a balloon Bible, wasn't it? (Likely they enjoyed it.)
2. Ask Group Two: But was it fun having to wait for your balloon Bibles? (Likely they did *not* enjoy that part of the activity.)
3. Ask all: How many of you have a real Bible...here or at home? (Most will have one with them or in their home.)
4. Are there some real people in the world who do not have a real Bible? (Yes, there are are millions and millions who still wait.)
5. Does God want everyone to have a Bible? (Yes!) Why? (The Bible tells us how to live, how to be saved and explains how God works in the world.)

Notes:

6. How can we give God's Word to those people who still wait? (Give, pray, do projects.)
7. Stop now and pray. Lead the children in asking God what He wants us to do to help get His Word to all the people of the world. (Consider other *Bright Ideas!* activities like "Prayer Cube," "Prayer Games" and "Projects to Do," or another activity page available at <http://www.wycliffe.org/Resources/Kids/FreeCurriculum/BrightIdeas.aspx/>, or the "Send the Word to Uganda," poster project under Service-learning projects at <http://www.wycliffe.org/Resources/Kids/FreeCurriculum/SenegalGivingProject.aspx/>.)

OPTION TWO

Send the Bible Across the Ocean

(For ages four to five years, 15-20 minutes)

1. Start out the same as with Group One in *TAKE the Bible*, previously outlined. Here, Group One gets to play with their 'Bibles' for one minute. When the timer dings, tell them, "It's wonderful to have such a great gift. But what about these children across the ocean? They don't have even one 'Bible.' They've been waiting and waiting. Now it's time for each of you to send a 'Bible' to a child across the ocean.
2. Group One must stay on their side of the ocean and bat the 'Bibles' across to those who wait on the other side. If you like, some in Group One can be 'givers' who hand balloons to the 'senders.' Senders must bat the Bibles all the way across the ocean. 'Bibles' not reaching the other side, remain useless in no-man's land. Everyone must stay out of the water and only retrieve the waterlogged 'Bibles' afterwards.
3. If you have three groups, it's time for Group Two to start batting 'Bibles' to those in Group Three, who have been waiting impatiently. But now, Group Two receives and sends at the same time. As they try to catch incoming balloons and send out to Group Three, mayhem and laughter will increase. It's a big job, but really not torturous--just like missions. "There is Joy in Serving Jesus!" or "If You're Happy and You Know It..." are both good songs with which to end this activity!

Discussion and Application (same as page two)

OPTION THREE

***Obstacles to Getting the Bible
to Those Who Wait***

(ages three to five years, 10-20 minutes)

1. As in *TAKE the Bible Across the Ocean*, divide children into two groups. But this time, set up an obstacle course between Group One and Two. Tell them, “A Bible is the most wonderful gift in the whole world! Here is a ‘balloon Bible’ for you, and you, and you, etc.” Give a balloon to each child in the ***first group only***. Show them how to play with it: bat it up in the air and catch it, balance it on the palm paddle, play catch with a child in their group! Set a kitchen timer for one minute or more, depending on how long you want the activity to last and let the fun begin! (About now Group Two should be complaining that it’s not *fair!* You want them to realize this discrepancy.)
2. When the timer goes off, have the children stop and hold onto their balloons while you tell them, “It’s wonderful to have such a great gift, isn’t it? But what about these children across the ocean? They don’t have even one ‘Bible,’ do they? They’ve been waiting and waiting. Now it’s time for each of you to take a ‘Bible’ to a child across the ocean. Come get another ‘Bible’ so you each have two. Carry one in your hand and balance one on your palm paddle like this. Watch out for things that could get in your way, like wild animals, rivers, mountains, or “sickness.” (Demonstrate maneuvering through the obstacle course, giving the ‘Bible’ and returning home to play with your own.)

Obstacle Course Preparation Suggestions:

- Fold a blue bed sheet lengthwise or lay down a strip of blue butcher paper to form a narrow ‘river’ which can be stepped over by several children moving forward shoulder to shoulder.
- Line up stuffed toys to represent wild animals.

Notes:

Notes:

- Hang crepe paper strips over a suspended rope so they pretend to go through hanging vines in a forest. Use anything you have, plus imagination!
- A large, open-ended box makes a good walk-through cave.
- Cut out large ‘germs’ from colored construction paper to lay on the floor. Just a circle with a yucky face, as used by poison control centers, communicates well. Encourage children to step over or walk around them.

Discussion and Application

1. What are some of the hard things translation teams face when they take the Bible to those who wait? What do you think those things in the game were supposed to be? (rivers, wild animals, caves, forests, disease, etc.)
2. Was it hard to get through all that stuff out there on the floor? (Yes, and it’s sometimes hard for translation teams in real life too. They need our prayers.)
3. Did anybody fall down? What did you do then? (Get up and go on like real translation teams do! If you have a class or church missionary, relate this to their lives.)
4. Were the people on the other side glad you worked so hard to bring them their ‘Bibles’? (Likely, they were thrilled!)
5. Ask Group Two if it was fair that they had to wait so long. (No, and it’s not fair for us *not* to take a Bible to everybody who still waits for one in their own language.)
6. (Hold up your real Bible.) How do you think you would feel if you were one of the people waiting to have a Bible? (Many people are begging for a Bible. They want real Bibles as much as Group Two wanted these balloon Bibles!)
7. What do people who are waiting for a Bible need to know that God tells us in the Bible? (Who God is, Jesus loves them and died for their sins and rose again, how to treat others, how to please God, what is right and wrong, etc.)
8. What can you do to help get the Bible to people who still don’t have one? (Consider choosing a project or two from the Service-Learning Projects at <http://www.wycliffe.org/Resources/Kids/FreeCurriculum/SenegalGivingProject.aspx/>.)

9. Ask God how He wants you to help get the Bible to people who wait for their first copy.

Other Resources

1. For an additional craft that teaches children how to pray for missionaries see the elementary age “Prayer Cube” lesson from *Bright Ideas!* at <http://www.wycliffe.org/Resources/Kids/FreeCurriculum/BrightIdeas.aspx/> or on the *Great Commission Toolbox CD*. Children who are four and five years old can handle this craft with assistance from adult helpers.
2. For other prayer activities see the elementary age “Prayer Games” lesson from *Bright Ideas!* at <http://www.wycliffe.org/Resources/Kids/FreeCurriculum/BrightIdeas.aspx/> or on the *Great Commission Toolbox CD* available at <http://www.wycliffe.org/Resources/Shop/InteractiveCDs.aspx/>. These activities let children pray in fun ways. They’ll actually be a part of the missionary team while playing!

Notes: