

# DESERTS

## BOX

**All of these Bible stories can be told and worked on using the contents of the box.**

- 1. THE JOURNEY FROM EGYPT Ex. 16, 37 and 40**
- 2. SAUL SEEKS DAVID IN THE DESERT 1 Sam 24**
- 3. ELIJAH ON MT CARMEL 1 Kings 18:16**
- 4. ELIJAH IS FED BY THE RAVENS 1 Kings 17**
- 5. THE VALLEY OF DRY BONES Ezekiel 37**
- 6. THE DESERT WILL BLOOM Isaiah 35:1-7**
- 7. JESUS IS TEMPTED IN THE WILDERNESS Mt. 4**
- 8. THE GOOD SAMARITAN – Luke 10:25**
- 9. THE RICH ETHIOPIAN IS PUZZLED Acts 8:27**
- 10. PAUL'S CONVERSION ON THE ROAD Acts 9:1**

Setting up the Deserts box will probably take a little time to find all the materials you need. I've tried to include things which are:

- a) cheap to buy – perhaps from a market, a charity shop or a pound shop,
- b) things which you or others might have at home or in your loft (if you're a hoarder like me!)
- c) which are easy to make out of junk or other cheaply bought resources.

## BASIC CONTENTS OF BOX

- A Desert Bag for each story. See below
- 2m of brown/yellow fabric to look like sand
- 2 or 3 cardboard boxes to put under the sand coloured fabric so that they look like hills.
- Some sand in a drawstring bag (like the Godly play one)
- Strip of blue fabric to look like stream or pond.
- Around 10 wooden blocks to represent towns.
- Around 20 small wooden pieces/figures to represent people (Mine were from an online company called, <http://www.littlecraftybugs.co.uk/> (search for "cones" 6 little ones for £1.46)
- Post it pads, A4, A3 paper, pens and pencils

### DESERT BAG

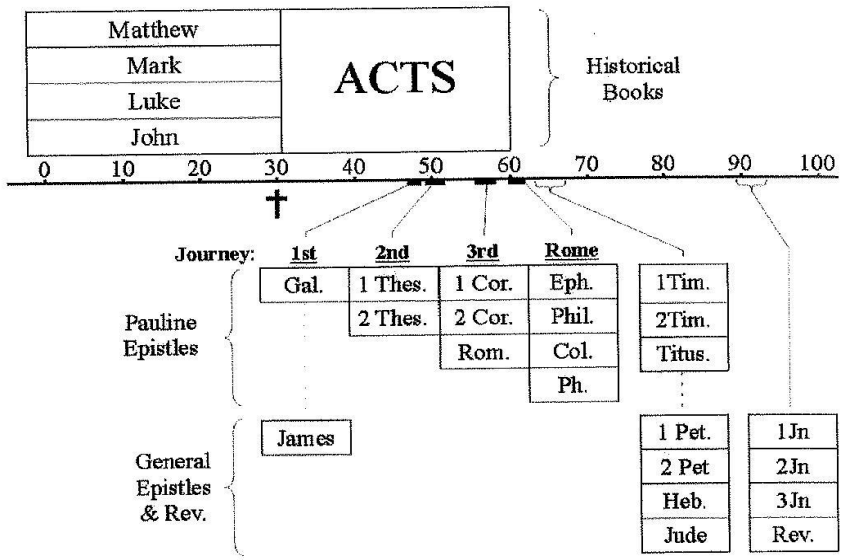
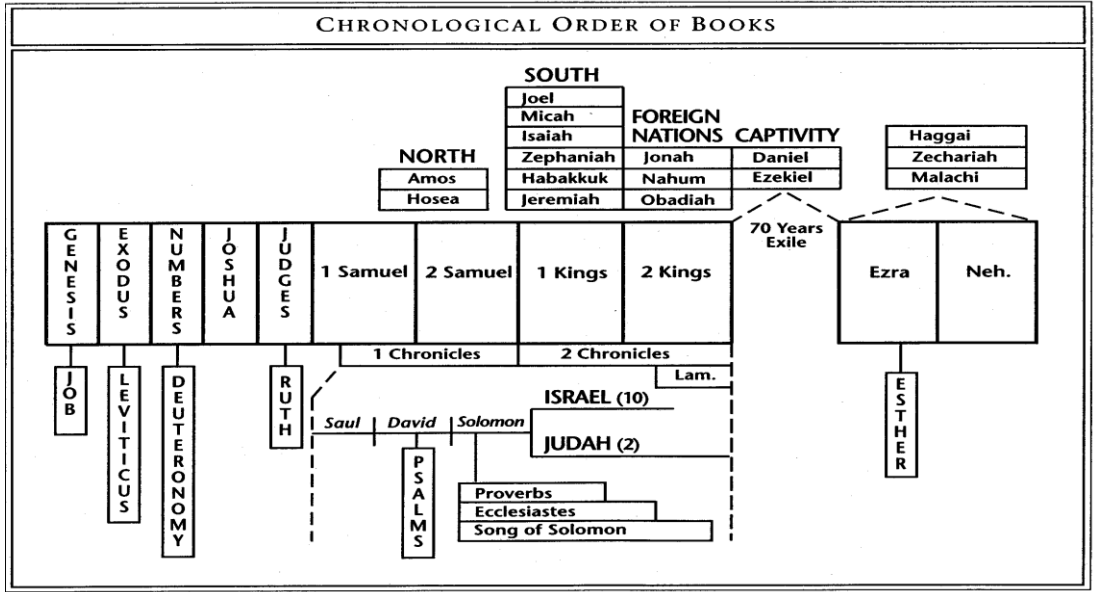
- **Use 145cm x 100cm strong upholstery fabric in desert colours. A lining in desert colours may prevent the sand leaking out through the fabric.**
- **Stitch lining fabric and upholstery fabric together. Double hem all sides to 10cms.**




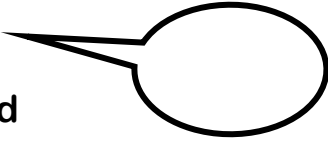

- **Leave a good mitre opening at each corner.**
- **Thread 6 m. thick upholstery cord through the side holes to create a drawstring bag. If you use really thick cord this should create some sides to the bag**
- **Loop the cord in each corner.**

**Reinforce the corner openings with hand stitching. Tie loose ends of cord together.**


- **Fill with dry Play sand. If the sand is damp leave it in the open bag in a warm place to dry out. This may take several days.**
- **Pick up the four corner loops of cord to gather the bag together**



# 1. The Escape from Egypt – Food, water, the Ark and Tabernacle Exodus 16, 37 and 40

<p><b>Main Aim and Bible Passage</b></p>	<p>When we are following God we don't ever need to worry about the things we need to live. Grumbling just shows that we really don't have faith.</p>
<p><b>Tell the story</b></p>	<p>Make rocks and hills around the desert, set a lot of different sized people, all looking at one (Moses) the people had just escaped from Egypt, through the Red sea, but now all they could think about was that their tummies were empty. Some of them said they wished they had died in Egypt rather than come into the desert to die of hunger. They were grumblers!  Moses talked to God and God said that he would give two things to the grumbly Israelites. Every morning there would be manna (use crackers to show this) and every evening there would be quails (like chickens but a bit smaller (find a little bird model or cut one out that you've printed out) Depending on your group you could go on to the other chapters</p> 
<p><b>Activity 1</b></p>	<p><b>Grumble grumble</b>  Do you ever grumble about anything? Try to think about the thing you grumble most about and write it on your speech bubble.  Now pass your grumble onto someone else, and you take one from another person. Think and talk about what you could do instead of grumbling.  When you have an idea write it on the back of the speech bubble and pass it back to the person who first wrote it. Do you think you will be able to stop grumbling so much?</p> 
<p><b>Activity 2</b></p>	<p><b>The Great Desert Bake Off</b>  Food is very hard to find in the desert but there are some things you can eat. Look at the strange pictures/objects and see if you can think up a recipe for cooking quail and manna. Remember that quail is a bit like chicken and manna was a bit like crackers. If you would like to, draw your food idea on a paper plate.</p> 

## 2. Saul seeks David in the desert 1 Sam 24



Main Aim	To understand that David knew it was wrong to take revenge on his enemies
Tell the story	<p>Set up rocks and hills in the desert, lay a bowl or empty can on its side and cover the sides so that it looks like a cave. Use some pebbles to disguise the fact that David and his friends are hiding at the back of the cave. Explain that King Saul was not a good king, and he was very jealous of David. David was a better soldier and was popular with the people. So Saul and some of his army were hunting for David in the desert. They didn't know that David and his friends were hiding in one of the caves. Saul needed to go to the toilet! Well, there aren't any toilets in the desert, so he decided to go into a cave. It was the cave that David was hiding in!</p> 
Activity 1	<p>Before you tell the end of the story, do a Conscience Alley game. Set up the children in two lines facing each other, with a space for "David" to walk down the middle. Each person in the lines should decide whether they think he should kill King Saul, or whether he should leave him alone. They try to persuade David as he walks past. Let everyone who wants to take a turn of being David. Then, before you tell the end of the story ask each David what they have decided to do. When the ending has been told, ask the children what they think of what David did. Was he right to feel bad about it?</p>
Activity 2	<p>Using play dough, plasticine or preferably air hardening clay, make a cave shape. Use little lego people to show Saul (after the event!) and David. Make a speech bubble with David saying, "I won't harm God's king".</p> <p><b>1. KEEPER OF THE KEYS</b></p> <p>This is a well known game and is usually played with the children sitting in a circle and one blindfold in the middle. Some keys (it's harder with a bit jingly bunch of keys) are on the floor. One child is secretly selected to be the thief and they must try to steal the keys without the blindfold person noticing. This could also be played around a table with the keys in front of a blindfold child and one selected child trying to steal them. Talk about how David was able to move around the cave so silently. What things might he have found difficult in the cave? Do you think David was pleased with what he'd done? (No – he was "conscience-stricken" see 1 Sam 24:5)</p>

### 3. Elijah is fed by the ravens 1 Kings 17:1-6 (and onto 24, depending on group)


<p><b>Main Aim and Bible Passage</b></p>	<p>God created everything in the world and everything – even ravens – obey him! (God even controls everyday things like flour and oil)</p>
<p><b>Tell the story</b></p>	<p>Desert bag needs a blue ribbon which gets thinner and thinner. Also some hills each side to make a ravine. Explain that the land was in the middle of a drought, and that it was God who had brought the drought because his people were worshipping pretend gods and forgetting about God himself. Elijah was God’s prophet – he gave God’s message to his people, but he too was in danger from the drought.</p> <p>Show Elijah going to the ravine, seeing the brook and thinking that he would be able to drink, but probably wondering what he would eat. Make some little birds (see Activity 2) and show them bringing Elijah bread and meat. (Could use real bread and perhaps a small piece of ham, or just drawings)</p>
<p><b>Activity 1</b></p>	<p>Pre-prepare some bread dough and use it as you discuss the raven part of the story (make a raven shape with a current eye) or as you talk about the lady and her son who had so little food left.</p>
<p><b>Activity 2</b></p>	<p>See this you tube video to make a pecking bird. Turn it into a raven! <a href="https://youtu.be/Azh88Z7he1g">https://youtu.be/Azh88Z7he1g</a></p> <p>Ravens are usually black, but you could use any colours; after all these were God’s special ravens! Top tip – have 12x12cm paper ready cut, or 13 x 13 might be easier.</p>



## 4. Elijah and the contest on Mt Carmel 1 Kings 18:16-40

<p><b>Main Aim and Bible Passage</b></p>	<p>No matter how strong and powerful God’s enemies seem, they have no power compared to our mighty God.</p>
<p><b>Tell the story</b></p>	<p>Make a big hilltop in the desert sand (use boxes and drape a brown piece of fabric over it.) Explain that there had been no rain for three years because the people had been so disobedient. All the plants had dies and the people were hungry. Use foil trays, put some pebbles in and use lolly sticks to be the altar. You will need two of these. <i>Do the first “Role on the Wall “ here. What was Elijah thinking? What was King Ahab thinking?</i> Describe the events as in the Bible passage.</p> <p>The children can pour water onto Elijah’s altar, but be careful to keep the sand in the desert bag dry.</p> <p>Use orange paper, tissue and card to show the flames</p> 
<p><b>Activity 1</b></p>	<p>Use 2 large pieces of paper and draw a head outline on each. Use one colour pen during the story to show what Elijah and Ahab were thinking at the start. Then use a different colour to show their thoughts at the end.</p>
<p><b>Activity 2</b></p>	<p>Make a little altar using 3 whole lolly sticks and two half stick to join them. Cut some red/pink paper to stick on to show the meat and glue orange and yellow flame shapes all around the edges.</p> <p>Write “God has the Power” on an extra big flame.</p> 


## 5. The Valley of Dry Bones Ezekiel 37

<b>Main Aim and Bible Passage</b>	Even if people refuse to obey God, he can make new people just out of dry bones!	
<b>Tell the story</b>	Scatter uncooked macaroni across the desert. Tell the story from Ezekiel 37 and ask the children to provide the sound effects - they could use any percussion instruments you have, plus hitting large blunt nails together, rattling keys and also using their voices. Blow when the passage talks about breath.	
<b>Activity 1</b>	<b>Not just bones!</b> God put the bones together, but that was just the start! How many other things can you think of which are inside your body? Make a list together. Show everyone or tell everyone what you could do if you were just bones! <b>Why do you think God told Ezekiel this story about bones?</b> (Maybe he wanted Ezekiel to tell his people that without God they were nothing – they couldn't really live for God. They needed God to give them proper life, make them properly alive.)	
<b>Activity 2</b>	On black paper using PVA or other glue, gather up the macaroni and stick it together to make a skeleton – which animal will you choose? Use a sticker and write, “Hear the word of the Lord”	





## 6. Water in the Desert




Isaiah 35:1, 2, 5-7

<b>Main Aim and Bible Passage</b>	The desert is dead when there is no water, but when streams start flowing everything blooms and show how amazing God is. We are a bit like this! We need God to make us fully alive and beautiful.
<b>Tell the story</b>	You need a hill set up in your deserts. If possible go outside at the start of the lesson and look for dead leaves, flowers etc. (even in the summer there will be some!) “Plant” the dead things in the desert. Talk about the lack of colour, what would it be like to walk through this desert? How would you feel? What might help this dead desert?  Now use your blue fabric to make a waterfall. What difference would this water make? Now use real or artificial flowers to make the desert bloom.
<b>Activity 1</b>	Use a small water pistol gently, unless you fear this could cause mayhem! Ask the children to crouch down so that they can't see. Give some challenge eg run around the room and touch two walls, but only when they feel tiny drops of water on themselves. Talk about God's gift of life to us, or you could relate this to the Holy Spirit.. Do they know anyone who had to wait for the Holy Spirit? Can they remember what happened when they did receive the Holy Spirit?
<b>Activity 2</b>	Using beige, coloured paper folded in half, stick the dead leaves etc in one half and the paint or stick materials to make the other half into a blooming desert. 



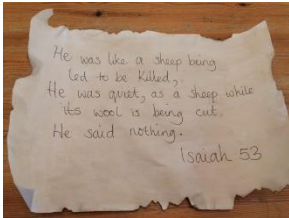
## 7. Jesus is tempted in the wilderness Matthew 4

<p><b>Main Aim and Bible Passage</b></p>	<p>That when we want to do something that really we know is wrong, this is called temptation. It's not wrong to be tempted, Jesus was tempted, but he didn't give way.</p>
<p><b>Tell the story</b></p>	<p>You will need: 2 boxes under fabric, preferably one higher than the other. On the smaller one put some blocks on the top to represent the temple. You will also need two or three pebbles which look a little like bread!</p>  <p>Explain how Jesus went out into the wilderness and didn't eat for a long time (they might know about giving something up for Lent, and how this is connected with Jesus' temptation) Talk about how it feels to be really really hungry. Now show Jesus with the stones and perhaps ask someone to read the verse that Jesus quoted, "Man (people?) shall not live by bread alone" Continue with the top of the temple and the high mountain. Each time allowing the children to listen to and think about the verses Jesus used.</p>
<p><b>Activity 1</b></p>	<p>Story in a muddle – hide pieces of the story and when one is found put it in the correct place. Then tell the story with different children telling different sections. To end there are a number of weapons. Which weapon did Jesus choose to use? Why do you think he did this?</p>
<p><b>Activity 2</b></p>	<p>Decorate a matchbox and on a piece of paper, write a verse which reminds you that you should always trust God. (Could use one from the story) Put some blank pieces of paper in too so that you can add more verses when you read or hear them.</p> 

## 8. The Good Samaritan – danger on the road Luke 10:25- 37

<p><b>Main Aim and Bible Passage</b></p>	<p>To understand that Jesus wants his followers to care for and look after everyone, especially those who don't always see our friends.</p>
<p><b>Tell the story</b></p>	<p>Put some hills on both side of a winding path. Use blocks to show Jerusalem at one end of the road and Jericho at the other. Let the children hide some "baddies" on each side of the path and talk about what might happen. Then one of your leaders can be the man who asks Jesus a question about living for ever. The leader can be quite arrogant, insisting that they already do everything right. Now tell the story using little people on the road. Stop for each passerby</p> 
<p><b>Activity 1</b></p>	<p>A label saying "the priest" Pass the label around and anyone who thinks they have some ideas about WHY he didn't stop can say as they get the sign. You might have to start the ball rolling – I got to this body on the ground – he was bleeding and I can't stand blood, so I kept going. Etc Do the same with the Levite and the Samaritan. Talk about why the Samaritan helped when the others didn't. Do things like this ever happen to us?</p>
<p><b>Activity 2</b></p>	<p>Make a red "First Aid" envelope. Explain that we might see someone who is hurt in some way, and if we do, it would be good to go and help them – making sure we've checked with an adult first. We should help all people who are hurt not just our friends. Sometime people are hurt because they are sad and upset, so our first aid kit also has some tissues in case they are crying, and als a chocolate coin in case that would help too!</p>  

## 9. The Rich Ethiopian is puzzled Acts 8:27

<b>Main Aim and Bible Passage</b>	<p>To understand that God's words in the Old Testament tell us about Jesus. Sometimes we will need people to help us understand.</p>
<b>Tell the story</b>	<p>A good way to start this story is to make a "chariot" out of chairs and perhaps some lengths of fabric for the sides. The one person can sit in the chariot and read aloud (see bible passage) They should then ask themselves questions, e.g. "Well, I don't know! Who is this bible reading about? Is it about Jesus, or about the prophet who wrote it? If only I had someone to ask! Etc"</p> <p>Then transfer your action to a road in the desert. Make sure you have a handy pool ready and waiting. Show the Ethiopian's baptism and Philip disappearing.</p> 
<b>Activity 1</b>	<p><b>Hot Seat.</b> A leader and/or a child takes a seat and wears a drape etc to show that they are acting as the Ethiopian, The others ask questions and the Ethiopian answers (this activity always sounds very hard for the children, but experience shows that they enjoy it and come up with some very interesting ideas.)</p>
<b>Activity 2</b>	<p>Use tea stained paper – burn the edges if you're feeling brave and write or draw on your "scroll". Have a tied ribbon to finish the scroll.</p>  

## 10. Paul's conversion on the Damascus Road

### Acts 9:1-9 (go on a little further if your group wish)

<b>Main Aim and Bible Passage</b>	To understand that God can and does change people completely when they are going the wrong way.	
<b>Tell the story</b>	Give the children a card person and a pen. Prepare the Damascus Road in the desert with a city at each end. You will need a torch. Tell the first part of the story where Paul/Saul is breathing out murderous threats. The children can draw on him to show how angry he was. Show what happened on the road, and what happened to Saul/Paul. Stop for Activity 1	
<b>Activity 1</b>	In a space in the room ask everyone to be one of the people on the road to Damascus, Imagine you're walking along, chatting, when the light flashes and Saul falls to the ground. Freeze at the point – an adult go around and lightly touch each person on the should, if they wish they can tell what they saw, and maybe what they think has happened.	
<b>Activity 2</b>	Make pipecleaner glasses which at first you can see through but then you can't.	