

# Hard Questions about GOD



## **SAMPLE LESSON**

A seven-session program exploring  
some hard questions kids ask about God.



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*Hard questions about God* is one of the *kids@club* resources that forms part of the *kids@church* Bible-based curriculum designed by CEP especially for use in church-based children's ministry.

*kids@church* resources are available from:

**Australia**

CEP

PO Box A287, Sydney South, NSW 1235

Phone: (02) 8268 3344

Fax: (02) 9283 3987 or (02) 8268 3357

Email: [sales@youthworks.net](mailto:sales@youthworks.net)

Internet: [www.youthworks.net](http://www.youthworks.net)

**New Zealand**

154 King Street

PO Box 74, Palmerston North 5301

Phone: (06) 358 8180

Fax: (06) 357 0281

Email: [cep@gph.co.nz](mailto:cep@gph.co.nz)

Internet: [www.youthworks.net](http://www.youthworks.net)

Writing and editorial team:  
Robyn McKinney, Rhonda Watson, Sue Aiken

Design Team:  
Leigh Hedstrom, Andrew Hope

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# What is on the CD-ROM?

A CD-ROM has been included with your copy of this program to help add extra variety to your program. On the CD-ROM you will find 18 songs that can be incorporated into your teaching sessions, a PowerPoint presentation of the words to the songs and also PowerPoint presentations of *Becoming God's friend* and *Why is life so hard?*

The songs on the CD are:

- Track 1 – **Kingdom kids** – would make a great theme song for your program
- Track 2 – **Dear God** – great song about prayer
- Track 3 – **I want to follow Jesus** – fun song for all with a great message
- Track 4 – **John 3:16** – what could be better than teaching this fantastic verse
- Track 5 – **God's word** – why we need to read our Bible
- Track 6 – **I can talk to God** – good prayer song for younger children
- Track 7 – **Believe** – a song about faith for older children
- Track 8 – **Trust God** – fun song on trust for all ages
- Track 9 – **Psalms 118** – good song for younger children
- Track 10 – **Love God** – the impact of God's love in our lives for all ages
- Track 11 – **God is better than the footy** – fun song about putting God first
- Track 12 – **Prayer talk** – importance of prayer for all ages
- Track 13 – **I'm changed** – how and why loving Jesus changes our life
- Track 14 – **Jesus my Saviour** – focussing in on Jesus as our Saviour
- Track 15 – **Celebration** – looking forward to eternal life with Jesus
- Track 16 – **Remember the Lord** – keeping Jesus as our focal point in life
- Track 17 – **Run the race** – the need to persevere in the race of life
- Track 18 – **Your life** – understanding God's grace for older children.

Include as many of these songs in your program as you wish or pick a few and concentrate on them. The songs are designed to have the children going away singing memorable tunes with great, life-changing messages. If you don't have access to a data projector for each session then OHT master sheets are provided at the back of this book. You may even want to use these masters to make an individual songbook for each child.

A copy of the booklets *Becoming God's friend* and *Why is life so hard?* are included with this program. *Becoming God's friend* explains the gospel in a child-friendly manner while *Why is life so hard?* helps to address the question of suffering.

You can use the PowerPoint presentations on the CD-ROM to help you to explain these concepts to your group of children. You could also provide a booklet for each child to take home with them at the end of the program to help them remember the life-changing messages they have addressed during the program. Extra copies are available from CEP at \$2.50 each or \$2 each if bought in packs of 10 copies or more.





## Hi!

This program is one of the kids@club series, produced by Christian Education Publications, for Australasian kids in a kids' club setting. We're sure you will find it really helpful as you plan a program to suit the specific need of your group.

### Our aims

kids@club products are strongly committed to bringing **the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ** to primary school children and to **making the word of God relevant** to their daily lives.

### Help with Bible talks

We have given you lots of help with the Bible teaching segment. This will free you up to spend more time praying for your club members and thinking creatively about how to present your program.

### What's in the pack?

Within this pack you will find a **Bible teaching plan** for each session, **visual aids** and suggestions for music, craft and games. A **leader-training article** is included, focusing on How to handle children's questions and how to use a better understanding of this in your kids' club program.

### You may photocopy

You may photocopy any of the Visual aids or photocopiable activity pages, for use within your own club only.

We are sure you will want to **promote this material** with other clubs and encourage them to purchase this material for their own use.

### Your ideas

Finally, we would like some **feedback** on this program. Let us know how it went, what ideas it stimulated in you and so on. This will enable us to make the next edition even better!

**We'd also like to hear from you if you have planned and run a successful program in your kids' club** and would be happy for it to be made available to the wider Australian and New Zealand community kids' clubs.

May God bless you and the children in your club as you discover together the marvellous truths of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Rhonda Watson

# Leader's notes

## Scratching where it itches

It is a well-known fact that the most effective learning takes place when teachers teach what students want to learn. Motivation is then at its highest and the knowledge to be gained is seen by the students, to be both important and relevant.

This kids' club pack is aimed at scratching where the children are itching. It is designed to answer some of the hard questions that your particular group of children is asking ... about God and Jesus, about themselves and the world, about life and death, about the Bible, about heaven and hell.

You will know from your own experience in children's ministry that primary-aged kids are thinking very deeply (and sometimes with great maturity) about a whole range of issues. They have many questions that they want answered ... some of them so hard we haven't yet found the answers ourselves!

It is important to give the kids a chance to ask these questions and explore the issues (even if we don't have all the answers). An important part of our role is to show children that what the Bible has to say is relevant to our daily lives and the difficult issues we face.

## The program works like this:

**In the first week**, through the story of Nicodemus, the children are introduced to the idea that Jesus welcomes people who want to know the truth and have lots of hard questions they want answered. The children are invited to ask questions of their own.

**During the next week**, leaders meet together. They sort the kids' questions into categories and plan which category will be answered in each week of the program. Leaders discuss the questions to be covered in the next two weeks, using ideas from this program and suggested reference books if needed. If necessary, leaders could also consult their minister or another member of the ministry team.

This meeting would also be a good time for the leaders to read through the Leadership training article on handling children's questions.

Leaders will need to meet every couple of weeks during the program so that everyone is well-prepared. It is vital that the children's questions be answered clearly, truthfully and with sensitivity.

In the subsequent weeks, the leaders and invited guests will form a lively panel to answer (or confess they can't answer!) the questions the kids have asked.

The categories we have suggested you cover in the program are: the Bible; God and Jesus; Death and suffering; Heaven and hell; Prayer, the World ... but don't reject any questions.

## Setting the theme ...

### Decorate your space

To set the theme for your program, paint on cardboard and cut out, some LARGE, EYE-CATCHING faces. You could copy popular comic strip characters or you could copy the faces on the Visual aid on page 18.

Display these characters around your hall, each one with his own large, coloured speech balloon asking a tough question (choose at least one question from each of the categories suggested in the program).

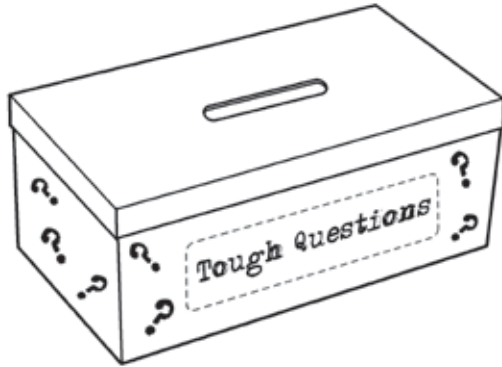


### **Wear the theme**

Leaders (and kids) could wear hats or T-shirts with question marks all over them.

### **Start the session**

Ask kids a crazy question as they come through the door!



### **Use a mailbox**

This provides a way of dealing with personal issues that may not interest the rest of the group. It allows you extra time for a tricky question. You can post your reply back in the mailbox.

### **A memory verse**

We have not referred to one specific Bible verse for this whole program, as the teaching segments will vary in theme from session to session, but you might like to pick up and run with one of the following verses that encourage us to keep on in the search for the truth.

The leader selected to teach the verse over the program needs to check out the verse in its biblical context and to be able to explain what it means to the kids. The verse should be taught in bite-sized sections, using fun teaching techniques and repeated often.

Pages 51–52 give a variety of ways to teach a memory verse. The following verses are a few suggestions you may wish to use.

#### **Jesus said:**

**Ask, and you will receive. Search, and you will find. Knock, and the door will be opened for you. Matthew 7:7 (CEV)**

**When I asked for your help, you answered my prayer and gave me courage.  
Psalm 138:2–4 (CEV)**

**Each morning let me learn more about your love because I trust you. I come to you in prayer, asking for your guidance. Psalm 143:8 (CEV)**



# Where is God?

Once a little boy said  
‘Where is God?’  
And his mother said,  
‘Eat your lunch.’  
And he grew older.  
And he asked a teacher  
‘Where is God?’  
And the teacher said,  
‘Do your homework.’  
And he grew older.  
And he asked a minister  
‘Where is God?’  
And the minister said,  
‘Go to church.’  
And he grew older.  
He ate his lunches,  
And he did his homework,  
And he went to church.  
And pretty soon,  
He didn’t ask anymore  
‘Where is God?’





# Leadership training

## Some pointers on handling children's questions

1. Be enthusiastic about the children's questions. Be glad they asked! Commend them for using the good minds God has given them to find out about the truth. Encourage them to keep asking questions.
2. Remember that children's questions give us valuable insight into their thinking and understanding. For example:
  - The question 'Where did Elijah find the water on Mount Carmel when there was a drought?' reveals a logical mind needing authentic facts.
  - The question 'Can Jesus help with homework?' may well reveal a child who is working at making Jesus relevant in her life.
  - The question 'How could the crippled man, who was brought to Jesus by his four friends, have ever sinned?' shows that the concept of sin needs to be developed.
  - The question 'What happens if you don't do something you're supposed to?' reveals a wrestle with the consequences of sin.
3. Don't expect to be able to answer all the questions the children ask. Our ability to answer questions depend very much on the answers we have found ourselves, to the questions of life. It's okay to say 'I don't know' or 'That's a good question – I'm still working on that myself'. Children respect honesty in their leaders. Plan to work together sometimes to discover the answers.
4. Young children often want a simple, quick answer. Avoid overloading them with information. Answer only what they have asked. If the child questions you further, expand your answer.
5. Take care with the language you use. Keep in mind the age, understanding and experience of the child. Avoid Christian jargon like 'being born again', 'making Jesus Lord of your life' and so on.
6. Invite the questioner (first) then other group members to share their thoughts on the question. Build on what they contribute.
7. Listen actively to the questions children ask. Try to identify the real problem that needs an answer. Some questions are pretty straightforward, others may indicate that the questioner is grappling with a much deeper problem. Careful listening will help you to know at which level to answer.

When a child asked, 'Why does God let people break each other's hearts?' her wise teacher replied, 'I can see you're feeling very sad. Would you like to tell me what's happened?'

The child who asks, 'Has Jesus had a love affair?' may not be impertinent or smart – he may be struggling with a 'Jesus Christ Superstar' image of Jesus that doesn't match up with what his Scripture teacher has taught him. His teacher might say, 'Why do you ask?'

The child who states emphatically that prayer doesn't work has obviously had some disappointments in his prayer experience. He will be helped more by a leader who encourages him to share his experiences than by a leader who tells him he's wrong.

8. Make sure that the answers you give to 'theological' questions are biblically based. To assure a child that his unbelieving father is in heaven (for comfort's sake) is to give the child wrong information which must be unlearned later. Much better sensitively to assure the child that we can trust God to do what is right for his dad.
9. If questions come at an inconvenient time, have the freedom to make another time to answer ... and don't forget!
10. Consider the possibility of writing an answer to a child's question in letter form and delivering it personally. Kids love the personal interest this shows and can read your answer over and over again.

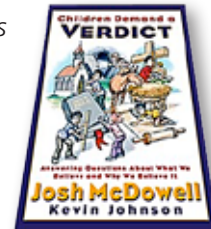
For this particular program, you may like to run a weekly personal mailbox. It creates an avenue for personal or non-group questions and provides an escape mechanism for those awkward, 'on the spot' questions. You can simply reply, 'That's a mailbox answer'.

### Further references:

You may find some of the following useful resources for this program.

Josh McDowell, *Children demand a verdict, answering questions about what we believe and why we believe it*, Tyndale House publishers, Illinois, 2003.

Out of print but still available direct from Josh through his website [www.josh.org](http://www.josh.org)



# Bible time 1

## The door is open ... come in and talk

John 3:1–15; 7:45–52; 19:38–42

### Aim

To help the children to know that Jesus welcomes everyone who has questions about him and about life. He helps us to understand the truth.

To allow the children an opportunity to write down some of the questions they would like to ask God.

### Outcomes

By the end of this session the children will:

- have heard that Jesus was willing to answer Nicodemus' questions
- realise that Jesus is also interested in their questions
- understand that Jesus doesn't mind us having questions and doubts and helps us understand the truth about God.

### You will need

- ☐ CD player and CDs of choice (see **Music suggestions** page 73)
- ☐ A riddle box (see **Way to go**)
- ☐ A jar of Minties or similar as prizes
- ☐ Visual aids on pages 16–17 prepared ready for **Bible time** (see **Way to go**)
- ☐ Visual aid of questions on page 18 (see **Way to go**)
- ☐ A CEV Bible marked at **John 3:1–15**
- ☐ Overhead projector (optional)

### Leader's notes

Nicodemus, Pharisee and teacher, has seen or heard of Jesus' miracles. Yet, he failed to understand or accept who Jesus is. His inquiry seemed to be genuine, as he wanted to understand Jesus' true identity. As the conversation unfolds, Nicodemus' spiritual understanding is shown to be faulty. His readings of the Scriptures have failed to help him truly see.

Jesus explains that in order to see and enter the kingdom of heaven one must be born again of the Spirit. Those born of the Spirit are children of God. Jesus further explains that God, in his great love, sent his Son to save, rather than condemn the world. The result of belief in the Son is new life with God forever.

While he failed to understand Jesus' message at this point, it is significant that Nicodemus supported Jesus at the council of the Sanhedrin (**John 7:50**) and later was to assist Joseph of Arimathea with Jesus' burial (**John 19:39**), an explicit display of his faith and devotion to Jesus.

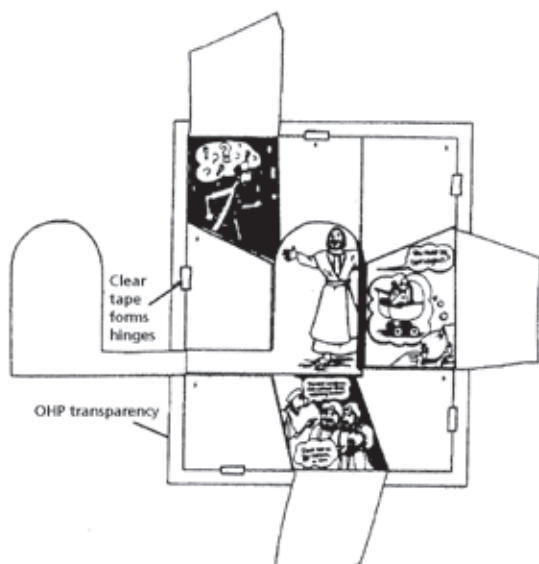
This passage contains a number of difficult yet important concepts, such as 'born again' and 'eternal life'. At this point the concepts are introduced as simply as possible. As the children get older, these concepts will be built upon in greater depth. Don't be too concerned if the children do not completely understand them straight away. Even Nicodemus had trouble! It is more important to emphasise why Jesus came and that he wants us to believe in **him**.

### Way to go

Narrative with Visual aids

The Visual aids in this lesson can either be reproduced as Overhead projector transparencies or you could photocopy and enlarge them, sticking them to a large sheet of cardboard and displaying them at the front of the group.

If presenting the visual aids as OHTs then photocopy the master on page 17 onto an OHT sheet and colour it on the reverse side. Also photocopy the master on page 16 onto paper and cut out the nine shapes and tape them over the OHT pictures so they can be folded back one at a time to reveal the pictures.



If you choose to present the Visual aids as charts, copy and enlarge the masters on pages 16 and 17 to the same size. Colour the pictures to add interest and mount them onto a sheet of cardboard for extra stability. Cut out the cover shapes (page 16) and tape them into place. You will need to secure them closed with a tiny piece of Blu-Tack to ensure they don't open out until you want them to.

You may also wish to copy and enlarge the Visual aid of questions on page 18 and mount these on a brightly coloured piece of cardboard to display on the board or wall rather than as an OHT.

You will also need to make a Riddle box. Cover a shoe/tissue box with bright wrapping paper. Make a slot in the top and a label – 'Stump the Leaders Riddle Box'. Have three riddles written out on slips of paper (preferably ones the children can guess) and put them in the box. For example:

What do you get if a herd of elephants trample Batman and Robin? Flatman and Ribbon.

What do you get if you cross an elephant and a kangaroo? Big holes all over Australia.

What do babies and old cars have in common? Rattles.



# Introduction

Welcome the children. Introduce yourself and the other leaders.

## Open with prayer



## Song

**Kingdom kids**, track 1 of CEP's *Hard questions about God* CD-ROM.

OR

**Oh it's great great brill brill to have a friend like Jesus**, track 2 of Doug Horley's *Whoopah wahey!* CD.

## Stump the Leaders Riddle box.

Hold up your Stump the Leaders Riddle box. Read out the two or three riddles and award a Mintie to the kids who can answer them. Eat the Minties yourself if no one can guess the answers.

Explain how the box will work over the course of the program: Kids can put a riddle in the box at any time (together with the answer and their own name). Each session children will select three or four riddles from the box. If none of the leaders can guess the answers, the riddle owners collect the Minties.

Make the point that riddles are fun questions with fun answers ... and we feel good when people can't guess the answers. But sometimes we ask questions that people can't answer and we really wish they could!

# Bible time

Point out to the children that when Bible Your overhead projector and transparency should be set up ready to go (or you should display your Visual aid chart).

**Reveal picture 1** and begin your narrative. Note that the words to be emphasised are underlined.



You may wish to tell the children that the story you are going to tell comes from a book in the Bible and show them your Bible marked at John chapter 3.

**Nicodemus the teacher hurried along the dark street. His head was spinning with all the questions he wanted to ask.**

I suppose, being an important teacher, he should have known the answers to his own questions – but he didn't.

A few weeks back he thought he knew it all. He could have answered anyone's questions about God's Law; about how to please God; about how to be sure you'd be in God's kingdom.

But something had happened to change all that. A new teacher had arrived.

Reveal picture 2.

This stranger knew God's law better than Nicodemus did. But he understood it differently.

He spoke as though he knew God personally.

His teaching was new and exciting and powerful. It made good sense.

New Nicodemus was confused.

Whose teaching was right?

His own? Or this fellow's from Nazareth?

Reveal picture 3.

Nicodemus and his fellow teachers had lots of meetings to discuss this man's teaching. He really had been causing a stir in the community. The people were flocking to listen to him. They were turning their backs on what people had been teaching for hundreds of years. It was a serious business! God's truth was at stake!

Most of the teachers were very angry with the new man. They said that he was an enemy of God and must be stopped. Sometimes they challenged his teaching – but he always had a wise answer and he never fell for any of their trick questions.

Reveal picture 4.

But Nicodemus knew he had done some amazing things: things like turning water into wine; healing the sick; making a miraculous catch of fish. They knew that the power to do such things comes only from God. It didn't make sense!

Nicodemus was a man who wanted to know the truth, so here he was hurrying along the road hoping that the new teacher would be home: hoping that he would invite him in so that they could have a long talk; and probably hoping

that all his friends wouldn't see him heading off to talk to this new teacher!

Reveal picture 5.

He was in luck!

Jesus was home and he welcomed Nicodemus most warmly. Jesus always welcomes people who come to him with their doubts and questions. More than anything else he wants people to know the truth – about him, about God, about everything. He welcomes truth-seekers. Nicodemus was a truth seeker.

Once inside, Nicodemus said to Jesus, 'we know that you have come from God because no-one could do the miracles you are doing unless God were with him ...'

It wasn't even a question really ... but Jesus knew what Nicodemus needed to hear.

Reveal picture 6.

'This is the truth', said Jesus. 'No-one can belong to God's kingdom unless he is born again'.

'What do you mean?' asked Nicodemus. 'How can someone as old as me be born again? How can anyone be born a second time?'

Now he was even more confused.

'Let me explain', said Jesus. 'It's like this: to live in this human world, you have to have a human birth; you have to be born as a baby from your mother. That's the only way you can come into this human world.

But God's kingdom is different; to live in God's kingdom you have to have a new start. The Holy Spirit gives this new start – he gives new life as a friend of God.

Nicodemus' head was spinning. He had always thought that he would enter God's kingdom by keeping God's Law. Jesus was saying this was not so.

'This new life – how does it happen?' he asked.

Reveal picture 7.

Jesus looked at him. Perhaps a little sadly.

'You're a teacher and you don't understand these things?' he murmured.

'I am telling you the truth. No-one has ever gone into heaven but I have

**come from heaven to be your saviour. I will be lifted up on a cross to take the punishment for your sins; everyone who believes in me will have eternal life, the new life I speak of. That is how you enter God's kingdom.'**

**The Bible does not tell whether Nicodemus believed all the things Jesus told him that night. We only hear of him two more times.**

Reveal picture 8.

**The first time he is mentioned, he was standing up for Jesus when all Nicodemus' fellow teachers were condemning him.**

Reveal picture 9.

**The second time he is mentioned, he was gently lifting Jesus' body down from the cross, wrapping it, with spices, in linen cloth and laying it carefully in a garden tomb.**

**What do you think?**

**Do you think Nicodemus believed in Jesus?** (Accept responses.)

## Conclusion

**Fold all the cover shapes back over the pictures leaving only picture 5 exposed.**

**Have you ever felt like Nicodemus – with all sorts of hard questions you want to ask Jesus? Jesus is really pleased when we ask questions – it shows that we are thinking about things and that we want to know the truth. And he's the right person to help us because the Bible says he is the truth – he knows the truth and he speaks the truth!**

Explain to the kids that in this program you're going to give them the opportunity to ask lots of their hard questions about God, about the world, about life and death, etc. And the leaders are going to try to give them some answers from the Bible.

Display the questions poster from page 18. Give the children some time to read them.

**Here are some really good questions kids have asked. You might be wondering about some of these – or you might have some different ones you'd like answered. Let's make a list ...**

Break into small groups, each with a leader, and spend a few minutes jotting down all the questions the kids would like answered. (Put the kid's names with their questions in case they don't get answered in the program and need a personal reply later.)

If the leader needs to get the ball rolling, he/she could suggest a category and maybe a question or two that kids might ask.

The categories we have suggested you cover in the program are: the Bible; God and Jesus; Death and suffering; Heaven and hell; Prayer, the World ... but don't reject any questions.

We suggest you move from this activity into a boisterous game.

## Game

See **Game suggestions** page 55.

- Musical laps
- Poison mat



## Song

Sing one or more of the following:

**I want to follow Jesus**, track 3 of CEP's *Hard questions about God* CD-ROM.

**God so loved the world**, track 6 of Tony Jones & Mountain feet's, *Best news!* CD.

**Jesus rocks the world**, track 1 of Colin Buchanan's *Jesus rocks the world* CD.

## Closing prayer

Lord Jesus, thank you that you love us and want to listen to our questions. Help us to learn more about you each day. Amen.

## Craft

### Hairy Harry

See **Craft suggestions** page 61.



## For next session

Read the next page to find out what to do with all the questions!



# Where do we go from here?

Now that you have the children's questions in hand and some idea of the direction your teaching program will take over the next sessions, it's time for your team of leaders to meet together to plan in detail.

Here are some steps you will need to take:

1. Firstly, sort the kid's questions into categories so that each session you will be more or less following a theme. Some questions will fit into more than one category, so you'll have to make a decision. Others will 'hang loose' so you might decide to have a 'general' category (if there are enough questions); or to spread them over the other categories. Some questions may be personal – or of small interest to the wider group. Set these aside and give a personal, written reply to them (see Leadership training article, page 9).

Generally, the questions kids ask God tend to fall into six categories:

- The Bible – its origins, authenticity
- God and Jesus – their character and work
- Death and suffering
- Heaven and hell
- Prayer – how to pray, unanswered prayer
- The world – its creation, functioning and problems.

These are the categories we have suggested in this program. But for this program to be effective it must be relevant to your particular group of children ... so you may end up with some different categories and travel down a different teaching path.

Some categories may be light on. If this is the case, add some extra questions from the program or your other resources, which you think would be of interest to your group. But it's quite okay to answer only 3 – 5 questions each session.

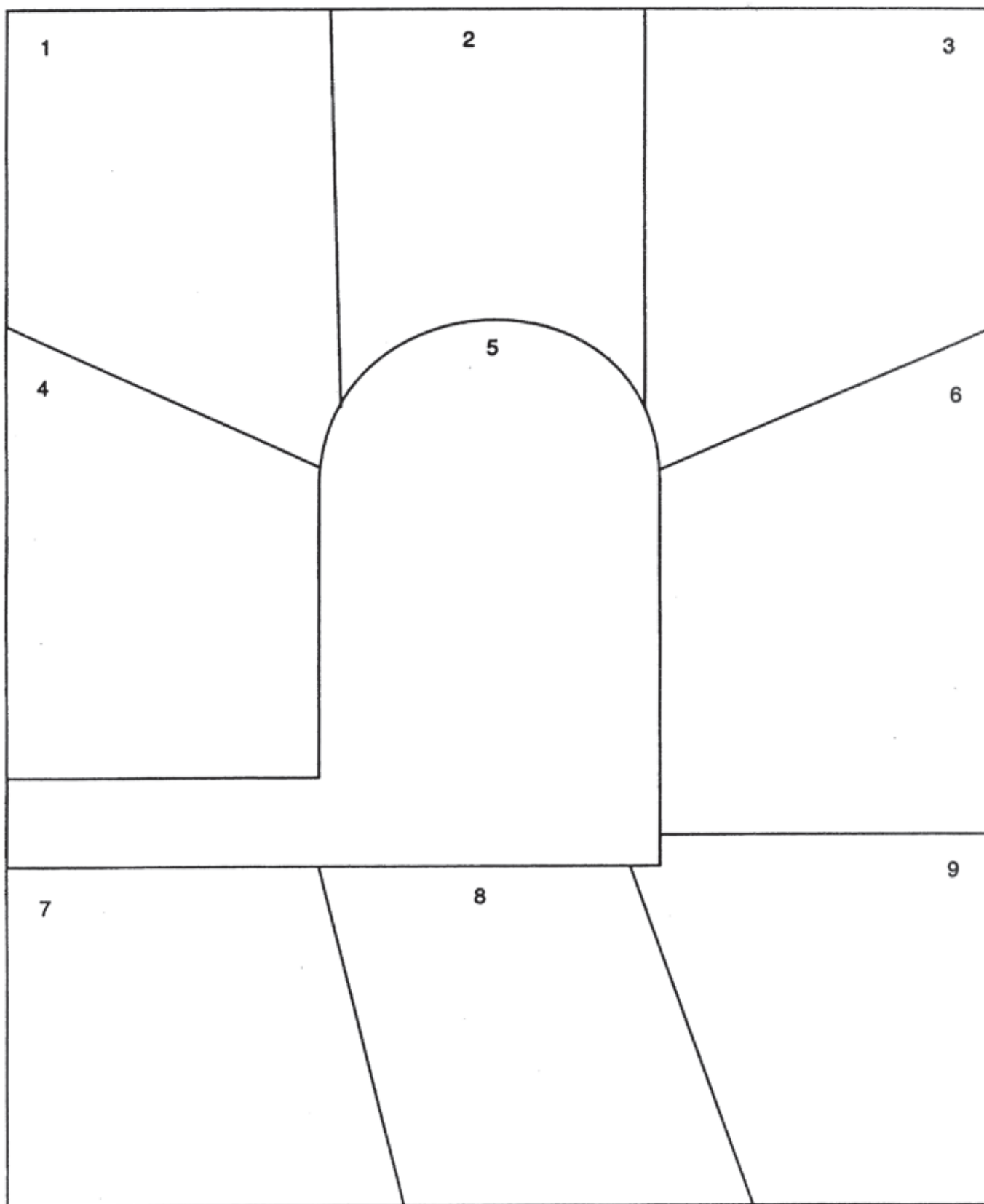
2. Secondly, **plan the order of your teaching**, covering only one category each session. You could follow the order suggested in this program or do your own thing.
3. **Discuss together how you intend to answer the questions.** Will it be a panel of leaders each session? Will you have a 'Stump the Minister' session? Could you invite Scripture teachers one session, or church members who relate well to kids? Perhaps the youth worker could bring a group of committed young people? Could the kids perhaps find their own answers sometimes? Some of these ideas are suggested in the program. You'll need to plan early and book up any guests!
4. **Read together the Leadership training article on handling children's questions.** Make sure that any guests invited to answer questions also have a copy of the article. It's important that all questions are valued and answered succinctly and sensitively.
5. **Pray that God will help you** to answer the children's questions truthfully, helpfully and sensitively.
6. **Discuss the questions in your first two categories and plan your answers**, using your Bibles, the program notes and any other resources you have collected. If you feel your team lacks theological expertise, involve your minister or another qualified person in this step. It's very important to get it right. It's equally important to say 'I don't know' if that is the answer at the end of the day. It would probably be helpful, if using the panel format, to decide who will answer which question.

**Steps 5 and 6 will need to be repeated with later categories.**  
**This could also be a valuable evaluation time.**

**Teaching tip:** A good teaching principle to remember when answering kids' questions is this – the **more** we say, the **less** they will remember; the **less** we say; the **more** they will remember.

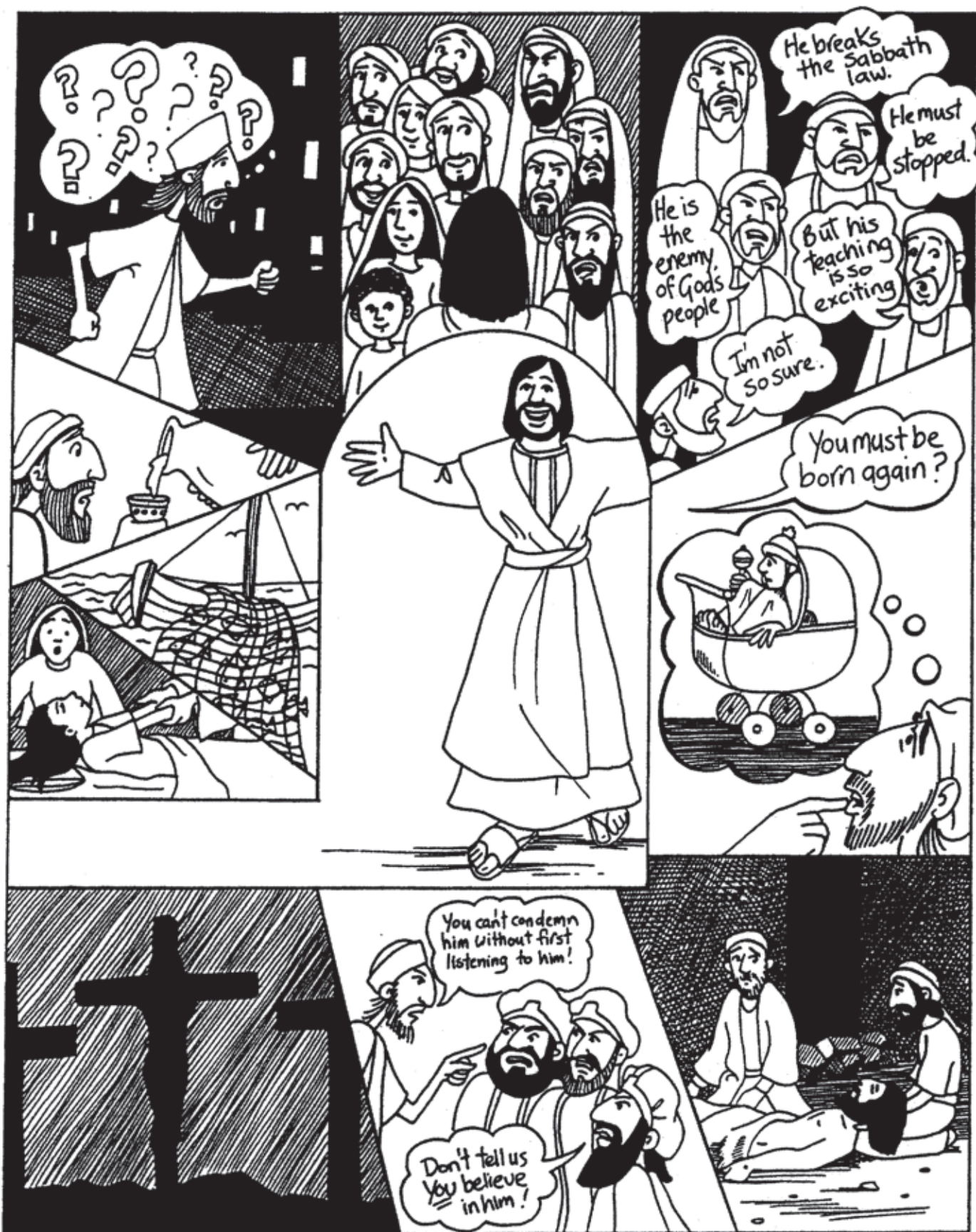






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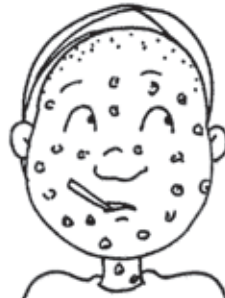
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Why did God invent  
funnelweb spiders?



How come  
good people  
get sick  
more than  
bad people?

How come you can't  
hear God when you  
pray?



How do we  
know the  
Bible isn't  
made up?



Why do schools send naughty  
children to Scripture?



Why doesn't  
Jesus stay  
on earth  
where we  
need him?



Were you  
scared when  
God talked to  
you?



Have you  
met God?



Can Jesus  
help you  
with your  
homework?



Would you  
be scared  
if the  
world  
blew up?



Has Jesus had a love affair?

Does  
death  
hurt?



Does sin  
rub off  
onto other  
people?

