

Balloon Bibles

Description: a palm paddle game

Aim: learn that God wants us to take/send the Good News to people who still wait, and look for ways to do it

Audience: 2–5 year olds, any size class with adequate help

Time: 10–20 minutes

Equipment: balloons, paper plates, elastic, various other items for optional obstacle course

Scripture to Study: Matthew 28:19

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 is good large muscle training for 2 to 5 year olds. It is also a lively introduction to Missions Time or can stand alone as a missions 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 1" slits about 5" apart in heavy duty paper or Styrofoam plates. Thread a 10" long strip of 1" 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 he/she prefers.)
3. Choose one of the approaches below for a fun simulation of getting the Bible to people around the world who still wait for this precious gift! (What is as desirable and exciting to a child as the Bible is to people who still wait for their copy? Balloons! They generate just a fraction of that type of real world enthusiasm.)

TAKE THE BIBLE ACROSS THE OCEAN

(Ages 2–5 years, 10–15 minutes)

1. Lay 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 2

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should start complaining loudly that it's not FAIR! Just what you want them to experience!)

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! (Two and three year olds, however, should only be divided into two groups. It is too painful for them to wait longer. Older children can be divided 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 1: It sure was fun to have a balloon Bible, wasn't it? (Likely they enjoyed it.)
2. Ask Group 2: 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 Bible? Or one 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 millions and millions who still wait.)
5. Does God want everyone to have a Bible, and why? (It tells us how to live, how to be saved and explains the world.)
6. How can we give God's Word to those people who still wait? (Give, pray, go.)
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

Notes:

the world. (Consider other *Bright Ideas!* in Notebook 2 like the Prayer Cube, Prayer Games and Projects to Do.)

ALTERNATIVE 1:

SEND THE BIBLE ACROSS THE OCEAN

(For ages 4–5 years, 15–20 minutes)

1. Start out the same as with number 1 in *Take the Bible*, previously outlined. Only 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, 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 send a Bible to a child across the ocean.”
2. Group 1 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 1 can be givers who do three things: blow up balloons, draw on the Bibles (with help if necessary), and hand them to the senders. *Senders* must bat the Bibles all the way across the ocean. Bibles not reaching the other side, are in no-man’s land. Useless. 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 2 to start batting Bibles to those in group 3, who have been waiting impatiently. But now, group 2 will be receiving AND sending at the same time. As they try to catch incoming balloons and send some out to group 3, mayhem and laughter will increase. It’s a big job, but really not too torturous—just like missions. THERE IS JOY IN SERVING JESUS! A good song with which to end this activity!

Discussion and Application (same as page 2)

ALTERNATIVE 2: OBSTACLES IN GETTING THE BIBLE TO THOSE WHO WAIT

(ages 3–5, 10–20 minutes)

Notes:

1. As in *Take the Bible Across the Ocean*, divide children into two groups. But this time, set up an obstacle course between Group 1 and 2. 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 2 should be complaining that it’s not FAIR! Just what you want them to realize.)
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 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.
- 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!

Notes:

- An open-ended refrigerator box can be a cave to walk through.
- 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 missionaries 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 hard for missionaries in real life, too, sometimes. They need our prayers.)
3. Did anybody fall down? What did you do then? (Get up and go on like real missionaries 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 2 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 is still waiting.)
6. (Hold up your real Bible.) How do you think people who don't have a Bible feel about waiting? (Many people are begging for a Bible. They want real Bibles as much as Group 2 wanted these balloon Bibles!)
7. What do they need to know that God tells us in the Bible? (Who God is, Jesus died for our sins and rose again, how to treat others, how to please God, what is right and wrong)

Optional Activities:

- * For additional materials that teach children how to pray, see the Prayer Cube and Prayer Games included on this CD.