



# TEACHER'S GUIDE



# The Storykeepers Series

There are 13 episodes in The Storykeepers series featured on seven videos, plus two feature length films on video. The episodes are now combined in one Complete Collection, as well as an Activity Book and a Teacher's Guide. The first nine chapters cover the first nine episodes, and have the same titles as the programmes and videos. The tenth chapter, *Victory!*, is longer and covers the last four episodes.

This Resource Book has been written by Diana Lazenby, on behalf of Culham Institute, in collaboration with Brian Brown, who devised the whole series.



# TEACHER'S GUIDE

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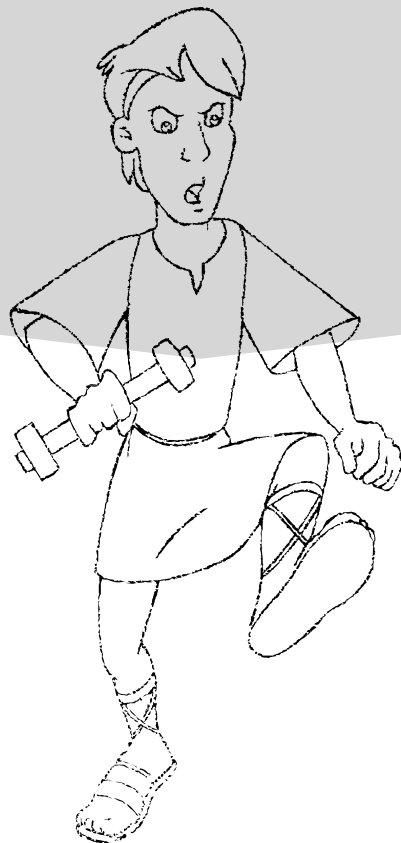
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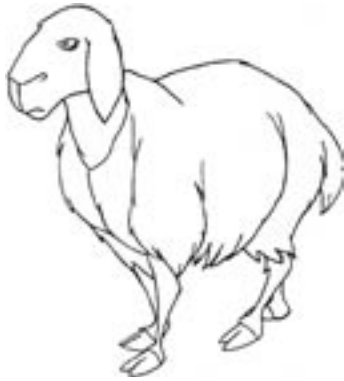


# 1

## About Storykeepers



## Introducing Storykeepers



Storykeepers is an animated presentation of events in the life of Jesus and the stories he told, linked in with the life of an early Christian family, suffering under the persecutions of Nero in Rome.

The year is AD 64, by which time the early traditions about Jesus were becoming fairly fixed and were beginning to be written down, but still were being kept alive by being told orally.

Using animation, the gospel story is presented simply but in many layers. At the same time it stays faithful to the Biblical text. By the simple device of using Ben and Helena, the bakers and storykeepers, it is possible to convey two gospel traditions simultaneously: Ben is a Jewish story-telling Christian, representing the tradition current in Rome and later to be found in Mark's Gospel, and Helena is Greek, representing the tradition later to be found in Luke.

The persecution of Christians and the death of apostles and eye-witnesses provide the setting in which the Christians realize that the stories must be written down, kept safe and handed on.

## What You Will See

Storykeepers has been designed so that in each episode the viewer will see

- something about what Jesus did, what he was like and who he was, as the early Christians understood and told it;
- something about the dramatic response of the first Christians to persecution and to the demands of following Jesus in that situation;
- some suggestion of what it might mean to follow Jesus in the contemporary world.

## Using the Teacher Resource

This book is designed to accompany the programmes/videos that form the whole of the first series of Storykeepers. It is a background document from which material can be mined, and which can help adults understand the setting and purpose of the series, rather than a course of study.

In it you will find

- a guide to each episode, with programme outlines
- background information on biblical and theme links
- short articles on topics related to the series
- information for teachers planning syllabuses

## The Themes

The series offers material exploring themes which relate to children's normal experience, and enables the teacher to pursue these at depth within different contexts. The themes overlap and recur in more than one episode. They are to be found in the "backstory" – the story about the gang in Rome – but often the theme of the backstory interacts with at least one of the biblical stories in the episodes. In certain episodes (particularly 3, 8, 9 and 10-13) these links are integral.

Three types of theme run through the series:

### • Life Themes

They have a starting point in children's own experience, e.g. of loss, growing up, moving house, or rejection or sharing. They move from that to their counterpart in Jesus' teaching or Christian belief. The material here illustrates M. Jeffreys' statement that "Religious truth is normal experience understood at full depth; what makes truth religious is not that it relates to some abnormal field of thought or feeling, but that it goes to the roots of the experience which it interprets."

### • Running Themes

Running themes follow characters and character development throughout the series. Examples include the continuing stories of Ben, the children, Tacticus and the Roman persecution of Christians. These running themes have a more explicitly Christian tone and feel, illustrating responses to situations, moral dilemmas and relationships. They also add depth to the stories, giving practical examples of Christianity in action in its original context.

Although not dealt with specifically in the notes for each episode, it is easy to track them through.

### • Biblical Themes

Three or more stories appear in each section – over 40 in all – and include some of the key teaching of Jesus and the main events of his life. The way they are told shows how information about his life, teaching and nature was passed on by the earliest Christians. Each group of Bible stories within an episode has a purpose specific to that episode, but is also part of the whole story.

### • Using the "To Explore" section

For every programme you will find a short section which helps focus on the ideas covered by that programme. As noted before, it is important not to push the underlying messages of stories too hard in the first instance, as this detracts from their impact, so we have not provided specific tasks or work programmes related to the programmes. However, you should find enough guidance about key questions to help you start a discussion or develop ideas for your own scheme of work.

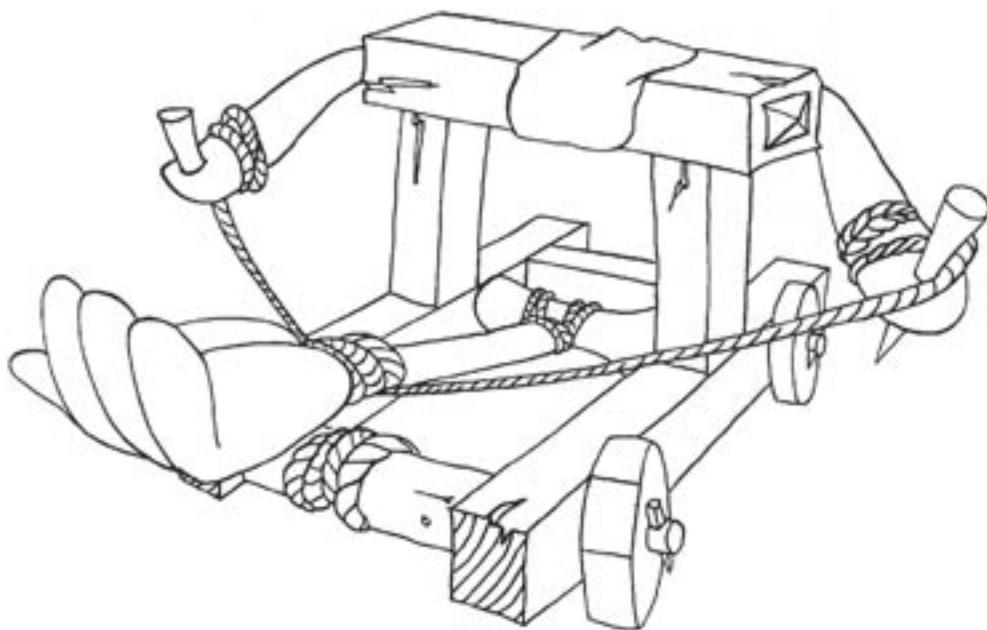


# The Gospel Stories in Storykeepers

Episode/Book	Story	Scripture reference
1 Breakout!	Feeding the five thousand	Mark 6:30-44
	Zacchaeus	Luke 19:1-10
	Jairus' daughter	Mark 5:21-43
	Jesus talks to the crowds	Luke 6:27-28, 31
2 Raging Waters	John the Baptist	Mark 1:1-12
	Stilling the storm	Mark 4:35-41
	The Gerasene swine	Mark 5:1-20
3 Catacomb Rescue	The good Samaritan	Luke 10:25-37
	The sower	Luke 8:4-10
	The unmerciful servant	Matthew 18:21-34
4 Ready, Aim, Fire!	Jesus blesses the children	Mark 9:33-37; 10:13-16
	Blind Bartimaeus	Mark 10:46-52
	The man with a paralysed hand	Mark 3:1-6
5 Sink or Swim	The Pharisee and the tax collector	Luke 18:9-14
	The house built on rock	Matthew 7:24-27
	Jesus heals the paralytic	Mark 2:1-9, 11-12
6 Starlight Escape	The Magi	Matthew 2:1-12
	The flight into Egypt	Matthew 2:13-16
	The Annunciation	Luke 1:26-35, 38
	The birth of Jesus	Luke 2:1-19
7 Roar in the Night	The lost sheep	Luke 15:3-6
	Jesus heals the dumb man	Mark 7:32-37
	The widow's mite	Mark 12:41-44
8 Captured!	The centurion's servant	Luke 7:1 - 10
	The prodigal son	Luke 15:11-32
9 Trapped!	The Transfiguration	Mark 9:2-10
	Jesus' entry into Jerusalem	Mark 11:1-10
	The wicked tenants	Mark 12:1-9
10 Tricked by a Traitor	Judas agrees to betray Jesus	Mark 14:1-2, 10-11
	The anointing at Bethany	Mark 14:3-9
	Jesus predicts his betrayal	Mark 14:17-21
	The Last Supper	Mark 14:22-25
	Peter's promise	Mark 14: 27-31
11 Tried and True	Gethsemane: Judas betrays Jesus	Mark 14:32-48
	Jesus is tried by the high priest and Peter's denial	Mark 14:53-72
	Jesus is tried and flogged	Mark 15:1-20
12 Caught at the Crossroads	The Crucifixion	Mark 15:22-41
	The two criminals	Luke 23:34-35, 39-43
	Jesus' last words	John 19:25-30
	Joseph of Arimathea and the tomb	Mark 15:42-47
	The Resurrection	Mark 16:1-8; John 20:1-10
13 The Ends of the Earth	Jesus appears to Mary	John 20:11-18
	The road to Emmaus	Luke 24:13-35
	Doubting Thomas	John 20:24-29
	Meeting in the upper room	Luke 24:36-41
	Jesus at the lakeside	John 21:1-13
	The Ascension	Acts 1:4-10

# The Gospel of Mark

Mark 1:1-12	John the Baptist	Ep. 2
Mark 2:1-9, 11-12	The paralysed man	Ep. 5
Mark 3:1-6	The man with a paralysed hand	Ep. 4
Mark 4:35-41	Stilling the storm	Ep. 2
Mark 5:1-20	Gerasene swine	Ep. 2
Mark 5:21-43	Jairus' daughter	Ep. 1
Mark 6:30-44	Feeding the five thousand	Ep. 1
Mark 7:32-37	Healing of the dumb man	Ep. 7
Mark 9:2-10	The Transfiguration	Ep. 9
Mark 9:33-37	Jesus and the children	Ep. 4
Mark 10:13-16	Jesus blesses the children	Ep. 4
Mark 10:46-52	Blind Bartimaeus	Ep. 4
Mark 11:1-10	Jesus' entry into Jerusalem	Ep. 9
Mark 12:1-9	The wicked tenants	Ep. 9
Mark 12:41-44	The widow's mite	Ep. 7
Mark 14:3-9	The anointing at Bethany	Ep. 10
Mark 14:10-11	Judas agrees to betray Jesus	Ep. 10
Mark 14:17-21	Jesus predicts his betrayal	Ep. 10
Mark 14:22-25, 27-31	The Last Supper, Peter's promise	Ep. 10
Mark 14:32-48	Gethsemane	Ep. 11
Mark 14:55-65	Jesus is tried before the High Priest	Ep. 11
Mark 14:53-54, 66-72	Peter's denial	Ep. 11
Mark 15:1-20	Jesus is tried and flogged	Ep. 11
Mark 15:22-41	The Crucifixion	Ep. 12
Mark 15:42-47	Joseph of Arimathea	Ep. 12
Mark 16:1-8	The Resurrection	Ep. 13



# The Roman Empire, AD 64







# 2

## The Episodes



# Breakout!

## EPISODE OUTLINE

An introduction to the world in which Storykeepers is set, first-century Rome, and to the “Goodies” and “Baddies” who inhabit it.



**Act I** In the market-place at Rome, Ben, Helena, Anna, Zak and Marcus are at work selling bread – and also secretly giving their Christian customers notice of a meeting that night. They nearly run over Cyrus, a young juggler from Africa.

That night at the secret Christian meeting Cyrus knocks and asks to come in to hear the story.

- **The Feeding of the Five Thousand**

There is panic as Roman soldiers arrive, but when they raid they find nothing. The Christians have escaped. Only Cyrus is captured.

**Act II** In his throne room, Nero is anticipating the pleasures of the gladiatorial contest next day. He hears that scores of Christians have been captured in the latest raid.

At the amphitheatre, Cyrus and the Christians who have been arrested are frightened of what is in store. Anna and Helena are out on the hills, trying to find Cyrus’ parents, but they learn the parents have been lost in a fire. Ben and the family, using their bakery business as cover, go to the amphitheatre to find a frightened Cyrus. Reminding him that size is not the same as power, Helena tells another story.

- **Zacchaeus**

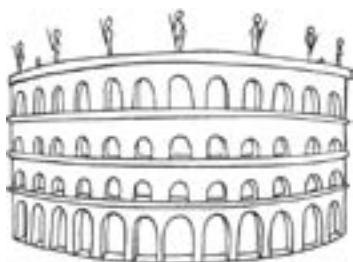
Meanwhile, the gang continue setting up their escape plan. Back at the bakery, Ben has baked a perfect key. That night, he tells the story of a good Jewish leader, Jairus, and how Jesus used his power for good by healing rather than hurting.

- **The Healing of Jairus’ Daughter**

The children sleep, while back at the amphitheatre the Christians keep their courage up by singing hymns.

**Act III** Inside the amphitheatre, the crowds roar with delight. Outside, the gang are waiting to make a getaway, whilst Ben tricks the guard into letting him in. Zak rescues the Christians at the last moment only to run the wrong way – into the arena! Cyrus’ acrobatics save the day and the escape is accomplished.

That night, Cyrus discovers that the other children have all, like him, lost parents and are now being looked after by Ben and Helena. He is invited to join the family.



# BACKGROUND

## Theme: Sharing and Fairness

Ben and Helena are portrayed as caring, friendship-offering, stability-creating early followers of Jesus, who open their home to the lost children and share food with them. As throughout the series, they illustrate Christian ideals of sharing friendship, the meal table, their time and themselves with the outcast, the stranger and those in need. In turn, the children extend the same offer of hospitality to the back-street juggler Cyrus.

### Biblical Connections

The Feeding of the Five Thousand	Mark 6:30-44 (Ben)
Zacchaeus	Luke 19:1-10 (Helena)
The Healing of Jairus' Daughter	Mark 5:21-43 (Ben)
Jesus Talks to the Crowds	Luke 6:27-28, 31

In this first episode, the scene is set to see Jesus as wonderworker, friend and healer.

The Feeding of the Five Thousand is the central event in this episode. The passing of bread and fish from hand to hand emphasizes the shared fellowship so central to Christian life. The actions of Jesus in the breaking and blessing of the bread before it is shared evoke, for later Christians, his words and actions at the Last Supper and his offering of his own life for others.

Note also in the backstory that Ben is presented as a child who had witnessed the Feeding.

All the stories show Jesus' power: to feed, to reconcile, to heal. They vary in the response to Jesus shown by those involved. In the feeding story people respond by sharing. Jairus' justice and fairness to the people help him to understand what Jesus is teaching, and to believe in him. Zacchaeus learns that his injustice has led to people hating him, and he decides to change.

## To Explore

### Key Stage 1

- Sharing. Different things we can share food, time, friendship.
- Our parents. What we like to be given, and to give. Jesus sharing and being fair.
- Why do children think there was suddenly so much food to share?

### Key Stage 2

- How we use power. Cyrus' feelings of fear and powerlessness (no parents, alone in Rome). His reactions to Ben and Helena. What do they offer him?
- What Zak risks to help Justin. Why does he do it?
- The Feeding of the Five Thousand. Jesus feeds the bodies as well as the minds of his listeners. Which is more important?
- Why is Zacchaeus suddenly happy to give his money away?

## Storykeeper Structures

There are three levels of story in Storykeepers:

**1. The "backstory".** This follows Ben the baker. Ben is a Jewish man who lives in Rome in AD 64 with his Greek wife Helena. Together they shelter four children during the persecutions by Nero.

**2. Stories of Jesus.** Stories recounting events in the life and mission of Jesus.

**3. Stories Jesus told.** Parables and images that create a sense of God's kingdom and how Christians might behave.

Each has its own style, colour tones and music. The stories relating to Jesus are told in response to certain situations in the backstory and so

illustrate how they can be applied to everyday life.

The series was developed with very careful attention to Biblical scholarship, so nearly everything has a deeper meaning not only in terms of the story but also in who is telling it. For example, Ben knows the early tradition of the Gospel of Mark, whilst Helena knows the tradition passed on to the Hellenistic church (in areas dominated by Greek culture). Notice also

how various characters in the backstory, e.g. Ephraim, have knowledge of events which either they have witnessed or have had passed on to them, and how Justin, in the end, takes on the role of Storykeeper.

# Raging Waters



**Act I** In the bakery, Ben and the gang are cooking when Zak runs past, pursued by Romans. Eventually he bursts in with the news that a storykeeper has been captured in the northern district. Who will tell the story for their meeting? Ben is already going somewhere else to tell the story of

- **John the Baptist**

The answer is to smuggle a written story to the Christians in the northern district. The children set off with a scroll hidden in a loaf via an unusual route – the aqueduct. Unfortunately, they are trapped in the filter and found by the soldiers. One greedy officer, Stouticus, finds the scroll and another, Tacticus, recognizes that the children are Christians. Zak tries to run away but is caught. Cyrus and Justin manage to get into Nero's palace from the waterways beneath, and to see what happens to Zak.

**Act II** While Nero is singing to his cringing court, Zak is brought before the emperor, who wants him to read out what is on the scroll. Zak objects and instead Tacticus reads the story.

- **Stilling the Storm**

The court are impressed, but Nero is furious, ordering the scroll to be destroyed and Zak to be thrown to the lions. But Justin and Cyrus are keeping an eye on the situation. Meanwhile, Ben, Helena, Anna and Marcus dress up as Gauls and take a cartload of cakes to Nero's palace. On the way a Roman legion goes by and Ben tells the story of another madman whom Jesus healed, who called himself Legion.

- **The Gerasene Swine**

**Act III** In his court, Nero, the madman who is emperor of Rome, is still singing and humiliating Snivilus. A sudden commotion heralds the entry of Ben, Helena, Anna and Marcus with a cart of baked goods.

Meanwhile, in his cell Zak sadly scratches a fish symbol on the floor only to cover it up quickly when Tacticus arrives. Whilst Ben tells Nero of his plan for poisoning Christians, Tacticus cautiously asks more about Jesus.

Ben's plan succeeds – Zak is brought up into the court and Ben claims he can kill him with a poison pastry. The trick works, until Zak sneezes as Ben is wheeling him away. A quick getaway succeeds only with Tacticus' help. After a chase along the aqueduct, they manage to throw the scroll down to the Christians from the northern district.

# BACKGROUND

## Theme: Communication

Earliest learning takes place through experience and through story. Story can help children to frame ideas about their own identity and the world around them. Here we see the bakery children helping to pass on the story to others who want to hear it and providing a new insight for those who have begun to be interested. In the first century many people, both young and adult, were ready to die to preserve the Jesus story and pass it on. The talk between Zak and Tacticus illustrates this brave commitment.

Early Christians were anxious to pass on their story, but this was not easy in times of persecution, when they risked being caught by the Roman authorities. Also, of course, there were many Christians who could not read or write. At first the story was kept alive by word of mouth, then gradually it was written down on scrolls and read aloud to a group. However, one of the most effective ways of communicating the gospel was, and is, showing the message through courageous living and trust, as reflected in this episode.

## Biblical Connections

John The Baptist	Mark 1:1-12 (Ben)
Stilling the Storm	Mark 4:35-41 (Tacticus Reads)
The Gerasene Swine	Mark 5:1-20 (Ben)

In this section, the story of John the Baptist proclaiming Jesus, and Jesus’ baptism which marks the beginning of his ministry, acts as an announcement of the work that the storykeepers have begun. Jesus is clearly someone special. The story of the storm at sea has at least two strands:

1. The boat was a symbol of the Church, and the passengers on board are followers of Jesus. Although at first Jesus appears not to be interested as the Christians face the

storm of persecution, he eventually responds to their cries and calms the situation, enabling them to ride out the storm safely at last.

2. This story is also about the calm faith of Jesus, and so about his power: “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”

The incident with the Gerasene swine takes this theme of real power further. Jesus communicates with the forces of nature and of evil, keeping them in their place.

## To Explore

### Key Stage 1

- Talking. Getting to know people. Jesus telling stories.
- How we know about things that happened in the past.

### Key Stage 2

- Finding out about Jesus through different kinds of story.
- Why does Zak refuse to share the story with Nero? Ways in which people spread the gospel (past and present). Signs and symbols.



## The Church as a Storykeeper

Each Christian church is a “Storykeeper”. In every church on any Sunday, passages are read from the Bible. Quite commonly there are three readings: one will be from the Old Testament, another from one of the four Gospels and a third from the

letters of St Paul or one of the other early Christians whose writings are placed with those of Paul in the Bible. To try to make sure that the same Bible passages do not come around too often, many churches use a lectionary. This is a list which sets out different Bible

passages for each Sunday over a year or more, and takes account of festivals such as Easter and Christmas. The service called the Eucharist, Mass, Holy Communion, or the Lord’s Supper, is a particularly important way in which the Church is a Storykeeper. In

that service where the words and actions of Jesus at the Last Supper are repeated, the worshippers are keeping the Christian story alive and passing it from one generation to another, as they obey the command of Jesus to “Do this in remembrance of me.”

# Catacomb Rescue

**Act I** The family are on their way to a secret meeting. Although they are stopped by Roman soldiers who are searching for a particular Christian, they make their way through. At the meeting, Ephraim, who as a young man had met Jesus in Galilee, tells a story that he heard Jesus tell.

- **The Good Samaritan**

After the story, Zak challenges a suspicious character called Felonius, who has just appeared at the meeting. Meanwhile, Ben and Helena plan Ephraim's safe onward journey to the Christians at Genoa.

At Nero's palace, Felonius the spy fails to give the emperor enough news and meets a swift end. Nihilus and Tacticus are sent to hunt for the Christian.

**Act II** Back at the bakery, Ephraim prepares to leave to continue his work of spreading the story. Helena tells a parable of how God's word spreads.

- **The Sower**

Suddenly, soldiers arrive. There is a commotion as Ephraim escapes and the soldiers come in to find nothing.

Anna, Ephraim and Justin go to hide in the catacombs, and Zak has been out gathering goods for the Christians in Genoa. The Romans are still on the hunt as Ben goes down into the catacombs to join the others.

**Act III** Anna, Justin, Ben and Ephraim are running to safety through the catacombs at night, but the Romans are close behind. Trying to keep them off, the children pull down the ceiling, but find themselves separated from Ben and Ephraim. Tacticus has fallen down a deep hole and been abandoned by Nihilus. It is the children who rescue him, though they drop Ephraim's travelling papers.

Meanwhile, outside the catacombs, the Christians are getting angry; Ephraim tells them a story about forgiveness.

- **The Unmerciful Servant**

At the end of the story, Tacticus arrives with the children. To everyone's surprise, he gives Ephraim his papers, leaving him free to go on his way.



# BACKGROUND

## Theme: Neighbours and Friends

Loving your friends is easy – but what does it mean to love your enemy? Is such a thing even possible? It is a problem that has troubled every generation and it is a major concern for children and adults alike. This episode is about being able to take risks not only for those who are nice to you, but for anyone who is in need and tells how loving friendship can produce a harvest of kindness and good relationships even in bad situations.

### Biblical Connections

The Good Samaritan	Luke 10:27-37 (Ephraim)
The Sower	Luke 8:4-10 (Helena)
The Unmerciful Servant	Matthew 18: 21-34 (Ephraim)

The episode is a development from the “Good Samaritan” theme of helping strangers and foreigners. Samaritans were regarded as unacceptable by Jews. The backstory and the stories by Jesus are carefully interwoven and brought together by Ephraim telling the story of the Unmerciful Servant. Tacticus has already been disturbed by the bravery of Zak shown in Episode 2. Now, like Paul observing Stephen’s reaction to

being stoned (Acts 7:54-8.1), the risk taking kindness of the children pushes him to think further about what makes Christians tick: “A fellow centurion left me to die, but these children saved my life because of Jesus.”

Tacticus also acknowledges the power of storytelling in this episode: “If the people who hear your stories become like these children, then all of Rome should hear about your Jesus.”

## To Explore

### Key Stage 1

- Friends – friends I can see and friends I can’t see. Can you be kind to people you don’t like or who are nasty to you? What does it feel like? Why did the Good Samaritan help the wounded man?

### Key Stage 2

- Friends, neighbours and responsibility. Who do you feel responsible for? Zak collects goods for Christians in other areas – the early Christians did this, and so do people today. What examples can you find of Christian aid organizations?
- Who is my neighbour? Is there a difference between neighbours and friends? What is it? What does Jesus say? What does the story of the Good Samaritan tell us?



## First Century Rome

The time and place in which Storykeepers is set were extremely important for the early Church. AD 64 is traditionally the year when Peter was crucified in Rome, and persecution increased the number of deaths of the eye-witnesses, who had known Jesus in person. The Roman Empire was a key factor in the rapid spread of Christianity throughout the Roman world, and Rome itself became the centre of the Church, as it still is, to some extent, today.

Roman life is the setting for the Storykeepers’ adventures: the buildings of Rome – the aqueducts, amphitheatres, catacombs; the clothes and life-style; the characters from Roman history.

# Ready, Aim, Fire!

**Act I** In a Roman street the gang are waiting, disguised, for a messenger who is also Zak's uncle, Mordecai. He arrives chased by Roman guards. After a scuffle, the gang escape. At a safe house, Zak has the opportunity of getting to know Mordecai better. After Zak has done some target practice, Mordecai tells the gang how important Jesus said that children are.

- **Jesus Blesses the Children**

While the Christians are preparing for a meeting, Nero is busy in his palace considering both a new Pantheon reflecting his own glory and Nihilus' idea of arson – to burn the Christians out. Tacitus, who has overheard, asks Darius to warn Ben.

**Act II** On a hill above Rome, preparations are in hand for the Roman attack. At the safe house, disguised again, the children watch preparations for the story meeting. Ben is reassuring the Christians that they will not have to stay silent for ever. He tells the story of the blind man who proclaimed Jesus despite opposition and even though he could not see him.



- **Blind Bartimaeus**

As the story ends, there is a knock at the door and Darius struggles in with news. Almost immediately, the Roman fire attack begins and the Christians' safe-house is hit by fire-balls. Up on the hill, however, Tacitus has an idea for putting Nihilus' catapult off-range.

Ben and his friends have succeeded in quenching the fire temporarily, but escape is still difficult as they are surrounded. Eventually they get away in Ben's disguised wagon. On the way, Helena encourages them with a story:

- **The Man with a Paralysed Hand**

Meanwhile the fire-balling continues around them and Tacitus is powerless to stop it. Suddenly the horse panics, Zak over-reacts and the cart is pulled back in the direction it has just come from.

**Act III** Nero watches the distant fire whilst below, in the town, Mordecai and Zak try to control the horse and Ben and Justin try to save them. It is a long struggle, but at last the wagon is safe. Zak feels he is partly responsible for the disaster. Eventually the Christians find a way of directing water from the aqueduct and so rescue the city from the flames.

## The Jewish Resistance Movement

Zak is a zealot-sympathizer. His father and uncle are heroes of the Resistance. The reason why Christians are

portrayed here as being impatient to hit back is because war clouds were gathering in Israel. Christians

in Rome were Jewish largely and would have sympathized with the Jews. Ben would have had a job holding the line.

# BACKGROUND

## Theme: Courage

It is not easy to be brave. This episode is full of danger for the Christians and the children rise to meet it courageously with all the conviction of their faith. They could be excused for feeling that the evil situation they find themselves in will go on and on, and that they should give in, but in fact ultimately their bravery will win through

The theme of courage triumphing in the face of adversity, key to this episode, reflects the experience of Christians throughout history. The fear of attack by the authorities was a common experience for the earliest Christians, in what we may think of as a tougher, long-past age, but similar persecutions are taking place today in some parts of the world; even different Christian groups within Europe have persecuted each other, for example in the Reformation of the 16th century.

## Biblical Connections

Jesus Blesses the Children	Mark 9:33-37; 10:13-16 (Mordecai)
Blind Bartimaeus	Mark 10:46-52 (Ben)
The Man with the Paralysed Hand	Mark 3:1-6

The message in this episode is that Ben and the Christians do not give in to hatred. Just like Jesus in the synagogue faced with the anger of the religious leaders, they do not give in by doing wrong and showing aggression. Instead they use their ingenuity to save themselves and their city.

The stories of Bartimaeus and the healing of the paralysed man also show that power with which Jesus is seen to help those who recognize and trust him, whilst his love of children shows the value of the weak, who can take courage from Jesus' support.



## To Explore

### Key Stage 1

- Things and people that frighten us. Things and people that comfort us. Brave people.

### Key Stage 2

- Facing your fears. People who have been brave and who inspire us in history and today. Why was Bartimaeus brave? Is it more frightening actually to be hurt than to be threatened? Bullying.

## Preaching and Teaching

The original Greek of the New Testament uses two words, *kerygma* and *didache*, to distinguish between preaching and teaching.

*Kerygma* comes from the Greek word meaning to proclaim or preach. It is used in the Gospels to refer to the message of Jesus about the kingdom of God. So Mark's Gospel says (1:4) that Jesus came into Galilee "preaching the gospel of God".

Elsewhere in the New Testament (in Paul's letters, for example), the same word is used in the form of "the preaching" to refer to the Christian message as a whole, e.g. in I Corinthians 1:21, though you may need to look up more than one Bible

translation of that word to spot it. For example, try comparing that verse in the Authorized Version, the Jerusalem Bible, the New Revised Standard Version, the New English Bible and the Good News Bible.

*Didache*, the second Greek word, means "to teach". It usually refers to teachings about how Christians should behave. Paul refers to this sense of "teaching" when, at the end of his second letter

to the Christians at Thessalonica, he urges them to "Stand firm and hold fast to the traditions which you were taught by me" (2 Thessalonians 2:16 RSV).

# Sink or Swim

**Act I** A Roman galley at night. Captain Hadrian and his slaves and soldiers struggle against a storm. A slave, Titus, is helping.

At the bakery, the children are putting on a juggling show for Ben and Helena. It reminds Ben of a story that Jesus told.

- **The Pharisee and the Tax Collector**

As the story finishes, there is a knock on the door. On the doorstep lies Titus, exhausted. The family care for him and hear the story of countless slaves (many of them Christians) condemned to Roman galleys. The children decide to help them. At the docks, they put on another show, distracting the crowds as Zak, Ben and Justin visit the ship and find the slaves. Justin has heard that his father was sent to be a galley slave, and he hopes to get news of him.

News of a slave revolt makes Hadrian leave port early and the gang are caught on board.

**Act II** Summoned to the captain's quarters, the gang are locked in to wait. Ben tells a story:

- **The House Built on Rock**

The gang find themselves helping out as the ship prepares for battle. Ben's bakery skills are being put to good use. Justin tries to help Caleb, a sick slave, and offers to take his place at the oars. After seeing that the slaves have been well fed, Ben tells them a story.

- **Jesus Heals the Paralytic**

Justin has struck up a friendship with a slave named Andrew. While they are talking, the battle alarm sounds.

**Act III** The Roman galley goes into battle against a rebel ship and is soon rammed and boarded. During the fighting, Anna and Justin remember the slaves, but water is pouring into the ship and the slaves are fettered to their benches. As the others cross to safety on the rebel ship, Justin and Ben stay on board. With only seconds to spare, Justin dives under water to free the slaves, risking his own life.

Afterwards, safe on the rebel slave ship, Micah the captain reveals that he knows Justin's father who had once saved his life. The ship sails onward.



## BACKGROUND

### Theme: Doing, Not Just Talking

What people say and what they do does not always quite match, as children are quick to recognize. Throughout the series, Ben is portrayed as a talker, spreading the message through story. This episode emphasizes that he is also able to act when the situation requires it.

Here Ben and the children take risks not just for their friends but for people whom they have not previously met. These are slaves in need, who must be helped even though the dangers are great and the slaves could offer them no reward. By going down to the slave ship the children show that people who help us can be ordinary people who just respond when they see need.

### Biblical Connections

The Pharisee and the Tax Collector	Luke 18:9-14
The House Built on Rock	Matthew 7:24-27
Jesus Heals the Paralytic	Mark 2:1-9,11-12

These stories emphasize a theme found throughout this series, about knowing what your priorities are and acting on them. The Pharisee and those who build their houses on unsuitable foundations work on faulty assumptions. They are either proud or ignorant. The well-educated Pharisee might have been expected to know better, but he is following the letter of the law, not what its true meaning is. The tax collector, on the other hand, is a social outcast but because he

knows his own faults and limitations he is able to recognize his failings and ask for help. Those who do not understand about the importance of secure building are interested in quick returns rather than putting effort into a solid investment. Jesus is here not only talking about life in general but also revealing something about the kingdom of God and humility. The paralysed man, in his faith, is able to respond instinctively to what Jesus is offering.

## To Explore

### Key Stage 1

- Pretending. Why we pretend. Who helps us?

### Key Stage 2

- Why did the Pharisee think he was more important than the tax collector? Why do you think the Romans wanted to get rid of the Christians?
- Think of some times when what you do matches what you say and times when what you say doesn't match what you do. Why did they happen like that?



## Signs and Symbols

If you cannot read, or if you want to keep something secret, symbols are important. For the Christians, symbols were the only way to let people know they were safe. Titus, the runaway slave from the galley

who collapses at Ben's door, has drawn a fish (from the Greek "ichthus" which uses letters from a phrase meaning "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour"). The catacombs, which were later used for

Christian burials, are full of symbols including crosses, fishes, doves and other images which reminded people of important beliefs and could be very encouraging for people who were being persecuted.

# Starlight Escape

**Act I** Ben and the gang are riding through the countryside in a wagon driven by Milo. They are going to Ostia for a story meeting. Disaster nearly strikes when Roman horsemen appear. Although they get away, the wagon is damaged. A bright star reminds Ben of the story of the Magi, who followed a star, and the cruel king whom they met before their journey's end.

- **The Magi**

**Act II** While they are waiting for the damaged wagon to be repaired, Ben tells the children the sequel to the story.

- **The Flight into Egypt**

By the end, the wagon has been repaired sufficiently to set off again along part of an old river bed. Helena says that her parents were once in Bethlehem and tells the story of the events leading up to Jesus' birth.

- **The Annunciation**

The gang stops outside a tavern and Milo goes inside, but Zak is suspicious. Is Milo reliable? Even if he is, does he know what he is doing? Just as Ben and Zak are discussing the situation, four Roman soldiers emerge from the tavern and walk towards the wagon.

**Act III** Unexpectedly, the soldiers walk on. The gang are still anxious as they wait for Milo so Helena continues the story.

- **The Birth of Jesus**

As the story finishes, to the gang's horror a Roman soldier appears with Milo. In fact he is a friend, Cassius Marcellus. As he puts it, «Tacticus is not the only Christian in the Roman Guard.» Ben and the gang say goodbye to Milo and follow Cassius. As Milo drives off, he tries to remember about another family he had once driven across the desert into Egypt.



## The Stories about the Birth of Jesus

The earliest proclamation of Jesus was as Messiah and concentrated entirely on his adult life and ministry, and upon his proclamation of the kingdom of God. The Gospel of Mark, probably the earliest, reflects this, and makes no reference to the birth or early life of Jesus. By contrast

Matthew and Luke devote considerable attention at the beginning of their Gospels to accounts of the birth of Jesus. Only Luke touches, very briefly, upon his early life (Luke 2:10ff). John's Gospel, thought to be the latest of the four, alludes to the birth of Jesus in a cryptic and

profound statement in the first chapter: "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14).

We do not know the sources from which the nativity stories were drawn. Matthew's Gospel traces Jesus' genealogy right back to Abraham, Matthew interprets the nativity as the fulfilment of a prophecy of the Hebrew

# BACKGROUND

## Theme: Giving

The traditional Christmas themes of giving and caring for the family and others are worked through in this episode. The harsh realities of the circumstances of Jesus’ birth, in an occupied country rule by a ruthless puppet tyrant who would kill his own family and other innocent children alike, are contrasted with the warmth of the extended family and caring for children.

The backstory is once again one of escape and danger as an old man snatches Ben from the pursuing guards, reminding us of the real dangers faced by Jesus at his birth and the courage that overcomes them. There is also a further theme of not judging by outward appearances, illustrated by the poverty of the shepherds, the homelessness of Jesus, and Zak’s mistake in thinking that Milo was a witless old man who did not know what he was doing and who could not be trusted.

## Biblical Connections

The Magi	Matthew 2:1-12 (Ben)
The Flight into Egypt	Matthew 2:13-16 (Ben)
The Annunciation	Luke 1:26-35, 38 (Helena)
The Birth of Jesus	Luke 2:1-19 (Helena)

Jesus faced real dangers at around the time of his birth and earliest childhood, as the various birth narratives show. The stories emphasize the contrast between Jesus’ humble situation and the homage that he is paid by wise men and simple shepherds alike and the way in which his presence is seen as a threat to those with earthly power. All this underlines the gospel view that Jesus is special.

It is important to recognize that the birth narratives are presented here, and not in Episode 1 because for St Mark, as for the earliest Christians, it was the teaching of Jesus and the events of his life, death and Resurrection that were the beginning and focus of his message. They represent the churches’ mature reflection, in story form, of what they came to believe about the person of Jesus.

prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 7:14). He also sees the hasty journey of Mary, Joseph and the child into Egypt and their safe return (Matthew 2:13-15) as the fulfilment of another Old Testament prophecy (Hosea 11:1) with Jesus as the new Moses.

Luke’s Gospel, the first part of a two-part work continued in the Acts of the

Apostles, makes no direct links between prophecy and the birth of Jesus. Instead it anchors the account in events associated with a Roman population census.

Alongside the signs and wonders in the two Gospel accounts, both nativity stories show that the Jesus whose birth they celebrate is a person who knew the realities

of human life, from infancy and childhood to the setbacks and hard decisions of adult life.

## To Explore

### Key Stage 1

- When do we give people presents? Why do we give them presents?
- What happened at Christmas?

### Key Stage 2

- If Jesus was born today, what sort of setting might it be in?
- What sort of presents do we give whom? What do they represent?
- What presents did the Magi bring Jesus? what did they mean?
- Why did Herod feel threatened by Jesus? How might the Magi have reacted?



# Roar in the Night

**Act I** At the docks, animals are being unloaded, including some lions for Nero's games.

Back at the bakery, Helena and Ben put the children to bed. They try to allay the children's fears about their parents' whereabouts through a story.

• **The Lost Sheep**

Later, Marcus and the goat, Thastus, play "hide and sheep" and find two lion cubs. During the afternoon, Anna, Zak, Cyrus and Justin also play with the animals.

Meanwhile, at the amphitheatre a contrasting scene shows cruel Crassus, the animal trainer, beating animals and realizing the cubs have escaped. Marcus reassures the cubs that he will take care of them.



**Act II** Phlebus, the animal keeper, and a dog handler look for the cubs, who are in fact playing with the children.

At the amphitheatre, Ben, Justin, Cyrus and Zak go to Amicus, the circus owner, and surprise him by saying that they have the cubs and wish to have them sent back to Africa when Amicus returns there. Amicus is frightened but agrees to ask the ship's captain. Ben pays for the cubs' passage by telling a story.

• **Jesus Heals the Dumb Man**

At the bakery, the children are sad that they will have to part from their animal friends. Just as they are saying goodbye, the dog handlers arrive ... looking for the cubs.

**Act III** Phlebus has taken the cubs away when Amicus arrives with news that the Romans also have the cubs' mother. Like the Good Shepherd, Marcus wants to go and find them and asks Amicus to help.

Outside the walls of Rome, Amicus has agreed to take the risk. This in turn means that Christians may be saved from the lions, so a small action has made a big difference. Ben tells a story about this:

• **The Widow's Mite**

In the hills above the camp, the rescue of the lions seems successful, but suddenly problems arrive in the shape of Crassus. There is a chase to the dockside with a surprising ending when Mangler, the apparently mangy, tired old lion, comes into his own, recognizing his cubs and fighting off the enemy. The boat sails free taking the animals home to Africa.



# BACKGROUND

## Theme: Caring

For many children, caring for animals and caring for people go together. In this whimsical episode, Marcus' love for the lions reflects the care that a shepherd shows for his sheep and that we should show for other people. He recognizes their need, realizing that they miss their mother just as he misses his parents. The parallels between the children's care for the cubs and the care that Ben and Helena show for the children are also developed.

## Biblical Connections

The Lost Sheep	Luke 15:3-6 (Helena)
Jesus Heals the Dumb Man	Mark 7:32-37 (Ben)
The Widow's Mite	Mark 12:41-44 (Ben)

Jesus tells the story of the lost sheep to show how God cares for people. Jesus himself is described as the Shepherd. He treats people like the deaf and dumb man in a way that shows that they matter and are important. The poor widow, too, is seen as equal in

importance to the rich men throwing their gold into the Temple bowls even the little that Amicus and the children can do means a great deal because the risk is costly to them but the action is worthwhile and has far-reaching consequences.



## To Explore

### Key Stage 1

- What we care for and why.
- Who cares for us?
- What is a shepherd? Why do people call Jesus the Good Shepherd?

### Key Stage 2

- Things that guide life and behaviour. Why did the widow give what she had?
- What did the dumb man feel when he had been cured?
- Consider feelings of being lost and found and emotions involved in caring.
- How far can you learn by example (Marcus tells Anna not to shout at the animals: «Ben and Helena don't shout at us»)?

## Storytelling

Storytelling, the oldest form of communication, is still the most powerful. All human life is experienced as a story, and through stories we can learn deeper truths that we may not be able to express directly. In Storykeepers, the storytellers

are able to draw parallels between the experience of the first Christians and that of Jesus, his disciples and those who heard him. Any religious story should be related to the whole Story, and the stories about Jesus and the story of

Jesus recounted in this series are set against the whole life experience of the community which originally heard them. In the same way, they have messages that can be interpreted again by every community, including our own, told in new contexts using new media.

# Captured!

**Act I** The granary is set up for a story meeting and Cyrus, Justin and Anna are skylarking around, but they know they have a serious task in hand and Nero's soldiers are at hand. Despite the danger, Ben reminds them that not all Roman soldiers are bad – they can't be blamed for Nero's orders. Helena tells them a story about a Roman soldier who was prepared to take his orders from a different source.

- **The Centurion's Servant**

Suddenly, the soldiers raid the granary and in the ensuing chase Cyrus is caught and taken away to be sold into slavery, watched by Anna and Marcus.

**Act II** At the palace of Flavian, a wealthy merchant and one of the worst slaveowners, Cyrus is being dragged to his fate. Inside a corridor, though, he sees the Christian fish sign on the wall. With new hope he outwits the guard, using his acrobatic skills, only to be caught again. Flavian has seen him, though, and now wants Cyrus as a new performer at his banquet.

Meanwhile, the gang at the bakery have worked out Cyrus' whereabouts. Whilst Cyrus prepares to perform, they travel in Ben's wagon to rescue him. Justin is dubious about all the trouble Cyrus has caused: "Maybe if he hadn't been such a show-off we wouldn't be here now." Ben says that even brothers can have trouble getting on, a truth that Helena illustrates with a story.

- **The Prodigal Son (part 1)**

By now, Cyrus' situation has changed and he is living a life of luxury. Torn between his new life and old, he is not sure he wants to escape. When the gang arrive, they are soon forced to leave without him.



**Act III** Whilst Cyrus performs at Flavian's banquet, there are signs that a secret slave revolt is being planned and soon violence erupts. Cyrus flees only to be spurned later by the slaves outside. He eventually catches up with Flavian, only to be accused of conspiracy. No-one will accept him.

News of the revolt has reached the bakery. Despite Justin's cynicism, everyone wants to find Cyrus. Helena tells the rest of the story she started earlier.

- **The Prodigal Son (part 2)**

That night, the children are in bed but Cyrus is still outside, alone, sad and feeling excluded. After he has wandered aimlessly around Rome, he is eventually found by Justin, who invites him home at last.

## BACKGROUND

### Theme: Acceptance

The story of Cyrus' restlessness and his attempt to escape in a search for fame and fortune is one frequently seen by twentieth-century children on television and in the pages of magazines. It is easy to understand both the excitement that draws Cyrus to leave the home offered by Ben and Helena and the hurt experienced by the rest of the children whom Cyrus appears to have rejected albeit temporarily.

### Biblical Connections

The Centurion's Servant	Luke 7:1-10 (Helena)
The Prodigal Son	Luke 15:11-32 (Helena)

When Cyrus returns, Justin, remembering the message in the story of the Prodigal Son and what Ben has been saying, resists the temptation to say, "I told you so." However, the message that even those who have apparently turned away from us are to be welcomed back is a difficult one. Even for Cyrus, it is not easy to believe that he is loved simply as he is, warts and all, by the accepting Ben, Helena and the children.

The message of the Centurion's Servant is also one which gives an unexpected answer to the question of what it is to be accepted: the trust shown by a Roman to Jesus, who is not his leader in worldly terms, pays dividends and, as Jesus points out, "I haven't found any of my own people who trust me like this centurion."

## To Explore

### Key Stage 1

- What we like doing and why.
- Sticking with your friends.
- What other people feel about what we do.
- What we feel about what other people do.
- Forgiving.

### Key Stage 2

- Relations between brothers and sisters.
- What change means. Cyrus's feelings and how they affected those around him.
- What makes people happy?
- In the story of the Prodigal Son, was the father fair?
- Why was it hard for Justin to take Cyrus back?
- Examples of trust. Why might people have trusted Jesus?

## Truth and Fiction in Storykeepers

"The crucial question about any story is not 'Is it true?' but 'does it contain truth?'" (Dr Jack Priestley).

Some of the characters in Storykeepers really existed Nero and his wife Poppaea, for example. Some of the others are made up with names that hint at their characters. Nihilus and Snivilus are examples. The main Storykeepers have names that reflect different

strands of the early Christian tradition: Ben and Ephraim are some of those from the Jewish tradition; Helena is Greek, representing Gentile converts; Tacitus represents the Romans who carried on Christian stories and tradition.

Throughout the series,

real events, such as the persecutions in Rome, are combined with fictional accounts, such as the various escapes of the Storykeepers from Nihilus and his gang. However, the underlying truths are the most important: the story was conveyed to Christians in a particular place, to be spread in a variety of ways to many places by new believers from both the Jewish and Gentile communities. Those who

spread it met with problems in their mission but the story was considered so important that people were prepared to risk their lives for it. And the story is still being told today

# Trapped!

**Act I** Preparations are in progress for Nero's birthday. Ben and the gang have been chosen to cook for the party. Miriam, a servant to Nero's wife and a Christian, is anxious. Tacticus arrives, having set up a safe place for the Christians to meet. He is a Roman soldier who is also sympathetic to the Christians, and this has put him in a difficult situation. Ben tells how even Jesus had to keep his real identity quiet at first.

- **The Transfiguration**

At Caesar's palace, Nero is chivying the workers who are building an altar to him. Anna and Miriam, supervised by the ghastly empress Poppaea Sabina, bring food. Tacticus is expected to kneel and join in the emperor-worship but, when challenged by Nero, refuses. Tacticus has until next day to decide whether he is a Christian or not.

**Act II** News of Tacticus' predicament reaches the gang, who wonder why he didn't just keep quiet about being a Christian. Ben tells a story to show that there is a time when people have to reveal what and who they are, whatever the danger.

- **Jesus' Entry into Jerusalem**

Zak has developed a plan for rescue, via the aqueduct.

Dawn breaks next day to find Tacticus in a cell, being tempted by Nero with offers of worldly power. What will he do? Meanwhile, the rescue plans continue under cover of bakery activities, but not in time to stop Tacticus being dragged away across the courtyard.

**Act III** In Caesar's palace, Tacticus is in chains but Nero's birthday party is in full swing. Ben and the gang appear in the Empress's clothes, disguised as guests. As a gift, Tacticus offers to tell a story.

- **The Wicked Tenants**

Nero, impressed, wants to know who told this story. Tacticus reveals all to Nero's fury.

Sudden confusion bursts out as the gang creates a diversion. Fighting and scrambling allow them to escape, leaving the Romans furious. Tacticus fights Nihilus but resists the temptation to kill him. Now Tacticus has made his decision and become part of the gang.



## BACKGROUND

### Theme: Making Choices

whatever age we are, and whatever our situation in life, sometimes we have to make choices and sometimes they are very important ones. Tacitus, whose story has been a running theme in the background of this series, appears again. This time he has to face the decision that countless others have faced throughout history: whose side is he on? What does he really believe? Tacitus has the stark choice between, on the one hand, his career as a soldier with loyalty to the Emperor and ties of family and friends and, on the other, loyalty to his new friends, the Christians whom he respects. Tacitus chooses, and accepts the consequences.

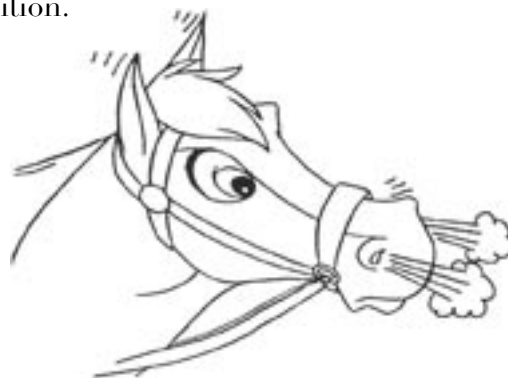
### Biblical Connections

The Transfiguration	Mark 9:2-10 (Ben)
Jesus' Entry into Jerusalem	Mark 11:1-10 (Ben)
The Wicked Tenants	Mark 12:1-9 (Tacitus)

On the Mount of Transfiguration, it is revealed who Jesus is and what the consequences of his going to Jerusalem would be. Here Tacitus has to recognize and face the consequences of his inner beliefs, and also to reveal what they are in public. At any point, Jesus might have been able to change events, by not going to Jerusalem, for example.

The parable of the wicked tenants probably appeals to Nero because it seems to be about revenge, but it is actually about how people who are unjust cannot expect to profit from their bad actions.

Notice that in this story, Tacitus is handing on a story that had in turn been handed on to him – continuing the oral tradition.



## To Explore

### Key Stage 1

- Good things and bad things. Finding out who people are. How do we choose between things?

### Key Stage 2

- How do we make choices? What sorts of information do we need when we make choices? Think of an important choice you have had to make. How did you make it? Who else was affected? What do you think Tacitus felt like when he was making his choice? What helped him make up his mind?
- What do you think Jesus' disciples thought when he decided to go to Jerusalem?

## The Gospel of Mark

Mark's Gospel, the shortest of the four, is generally accepted to be the earliest. It gives no details about the birth and early life of Jesus and concentrates on the essential themes of the Christian message, including

the sayings of Jesus about the kingdom of God, the costs of loyalty for those who would be his followers, and the fate Jesus willingly suffered in fidelity to his mission.

Storykeepers on the whole follows the structure

of Mark's Gospel. Episodes 1-9 focus on the preaching and proclamation of Jesus as Messiah. Jesus is seen as healer, teacher, wonder-worker and Messiah. In Episodes 10-13, the focus is on the stories recounting the last week of Jesus' life. The stories circulated in no

particular form. Ben tells his stories on the hoof, as the situation demands. That is why Storykeepers does not follow Mark's order exactly.

## Victory!

# Tricked by a Traitor!



**Act I** A narrator brings us up to date, telling how Tacticus has been sentenced to death then rescued by the gang, prompting Nero to seek revenge. Ben and the others must smuggle the fugitives out of Rome, but not until they have rescued Miriam's parents and hidden them in their wagon. Guards discover them and only the gang's quick-wittedness allows them to evade arrest.

Miriam's parents, now hidden at the bakery, are to leave in a boat the next week. A sudden knock at the door turns out to be only the miller, Antonius, with his servants, Tracus and Bracus. He finds the Christians and tries to change Ben's mind, but eventually gives up and leaves. Zak thinks the miller reminds him of Judas:

- **Judas Agrees to Betray Jesus**

The silence following this story is broken by Darius, who brings a warning about Roman guards looking for Tacticus and Miriam. They flee to the catacombs but outside Antonius has been caught by Capella the Roman soldier and set up to catch Ben on pain of his life.

**Act II** The Christians have reached the catacombs. Helena, Justin, Marcus and Cyrus, who stayed behind at the bakery, are gathering provisions for them including Marcus' toys for comfort. Helena tells a story.

- **The Anointing at Bethany**

Back underground, Ben prepares a meal and Tacticus wonders how Jesus felt when, as a wanted man, he had his last meal with friends. Ben tells the story.

- **Jesus Predicts his Betrayal**

Above ground, Zak is just loading the supplies when suddenly the Romans arrive to ransack the bakery. Antonius has betrayed Ben. If the Romans do not find Ben, they will burn the bakery.

**Act III** Zak brings the dreadful news to the catacombs. Ben decides he must give himself up but Zak is determined to catch the betrayer. In the bakery, the soldiers are interrogating the children, and trying to bribe Justin.

Zak has reached Antonius and is about to attack him when Tracus and Bracus stop him. But Zak's words have left their mark. As Zak leaves, Tracus follows him into the catacombs and sees the rest of the gang digging an escape tunnel.

The children at the bakery have refused Nihilus' bribes. Furious, he locks them up with Helena, who tells another story of betrayal.

- **Peter's Promise**

While Ben and his friends tunnel to the rescue, Antonius hears about them from Tracus and the Romans prepare to torch the bakery. To Ben's astonishment, Antonius appears to help the tunnellers; his conscience has got the better of him. Helena and the children in the bakery are saved but what will they do now?

# BACKGROUND

## Theme: Betrayal and Loyalty

Everyone knows about fair-weather friends who let you down. Children in particular are often aware of their own vulnerability and, knowing what it is to be betrayed, greatly value loyalty and the kind of blind friendship which lasts in all situations.

Of course, Christian friendship is not blind in quite the same way, but nevertheless it shows a way of understanding and forgiving the betrayer, however difficult this may be. Ben is betrayed, albeit understandably, by one of his Christian friends in the same way that Jesus was by Judas. However, like Jesus, Ben still invites his disloyal friend to share fellowship in a meal.

### Biblical Connections

Judas Agrees to Betray Jesus	Mark 14:1-2, 10-11 (Ben)
The Anointing at Bethany	Mark 14:3-9 (Helena)
Jesus Predicts his Betrayal	Mark 14:17-21 (Ben)
The Last supper	Mark 14:22-25
Peter's Promise	Mark 14:27-31 Helena)

In the remaining four episodes, Ben goes through the same kind of experiences that Jesus went through after he arrived in Jerusalem for the last week of his life (Holy Week). The episodes are heavily influenced by the biblical stories.

Here the emphasis is on Jesus' recognition and acceptance of his

betrayal, and how he will forgive the betrayer. Although being betrayed makes him appear weak and vulnerable, Jesus' behaviour means that he has kept his integrity. He is loyal to his mission. When a woman anoints him with valuable ointment, the action foreshadows his death but also symbolizes great respect.



## To Explore

### Key Stage 1

- Who do you trust? People we trust and why. People we don't trust.

### Key Stage 2

- Examples of betrayal and loyalty in stories and real life. Why didn't Jesus give up on his mission? What do you think he felt about Judas and about Peter? How do you think Judas and Peter felt about what they did? How important do you think loyalty is? Is there difference between not being loyal and actively betraying someone?

## The Gospels in the Early Christian Context

The four Gospels are not biographies of Jesus. They were not written to tell his life story. What they really do is preserve, in written form, traditions about the life and teaching of Jesus which the apostles and late followers of Jesus passed on by word of

mouth to Christians and would-be Christians of the newly founded churches in cities of the Roman Empire. These oral traditions concentrated on the actions and teachings of Jesus which reveal him as the Son of God, his claims on the loyalty and

fidelity of those joining the Christian community, and the trials and tribulation they might meet. It was not until the latter part of the first century that those traditions, with their individual variations in style and content, were preserved in written form.

## Victory!

## Tried and True

**Act I** The gang have moved further into the catacombs to escape Nero's wrath. A large group of Christians is getting ready to flee in Saleem's boat. They dream of a better land.

Ben looks for Justin, who is nearly 13 years old, and so ready for new responsibilities. Ben wants him to be a Storykeeper.

Meanwhile, in the ruins of the bakery, Capella spots a map of the catacombs.

Justin is too nervous to succeed in his first attempt at storytelling. Ben continues it for him.

- **The Garden of Gethsemane: Judas Betrays Jesus**

Just as the story finishes, the Romans burst in. Christians flee down the tunnels. Many escape but Ben, Marcus and Justin are trapped and caught by Nihilus.

**Act II** A lavish party is in progress at the villa of Petronius, a Roman Senator who is also a secret Christian. Helena, disguised as a servant, has come to tell him about Ben and ask his help for the fugitives.

Ben is being held in chains with Justin, Marcus and two other Christians. They refuse to betray anyone. Ben tries to calm their fears with a story.

- **Jesus Tried by the High Priest, and Peter's Denial**

At the dockside, Helena tries to find a ship to escape in, whilst Cyrus and Zak fend off threats to Anna.

Ben has just finished the story, adding how brave Peter was in the end, when Nihilus arrives to take him away.



**Act III** Without Ben, there is uncertainty amongst the others. Is it worth being brave? Justin remembers a story he heard about Jesus' bravery that matches their own situation.

- **Jesus Tried by Pilate and Flogged**

Justin has told his first story in public and wins a hug from Marcus.

Zak, disguised as a taskmaster, has organized a rescue team, who are actually the Christians dressed as slaves – and Helena is the bearded man. With a letter from Senator Petronius they are allowed into Nero's court.

Ben has been chained and is now being hauled before Nero, accused of rebellion. Petronius pretends to laugh at the idea of Ben being dangerous and has nearly convinced Nero, when Ben is asked directly if he is a Christian. His "yes" is a death sentence.

Just as the boat carrying the Christians is leaving port, Petronius arrives to break the news to Helena. Deeply saddened, she and the children stay and prepare to return to the city. Suddenly, a man appears. He is Zemo, a magician from Cyrus' parents' circus. Cyrus' parents will be in Rome next day. This unexpected news adds a little hope to the desperate situation.

# BACKGROUND

## Theme: Telling the Truth and Facing the Consequences

Sometimes it is difficult to tell the truth even about something simple. Now Ben is faced with the same choice as Tacticus had to make. Just as Jesus warned his disciples of the consequences but still went on, so Ben when challenged has to admit that he is a Christian and therefore guilty of treason. It is especially hard to tell the truth when it will land you in danger and Ben needs all his bravery when he finds himself facing a trial that parallels that of Jesus.

### Biblical Connections

The Garden of Gethsemane: Judas Betrays Jesus	Mark 14:32-48 (Ben)
Jesus is Tried by the High Priest and Peter's Denial	Mark 14:53-54, 66-72 (Ben)
Jesus is Tried by Pilate and Flogged	Mark 15:1-20 (Justin)

Judas has already agreed to do something that is dishonest: he will betray Jesus for money, and perhaps because of jealousy. Judas' weakness is mirrored when Peter denies that he knows Jesus, but Peter has not gone out actively to cause trouble, he is simply being weak. Pilate and the High Priest are both bad at facing

what the truth might really be they rely on what other people say and want to avoid trouble at all costs. By contrast, the Gospels show Jesus as being prepared to face up to the consequences of being who he was, and being so sure of himself and God's will that he was able to forgive those who were weaker.

## To Explore

### Key Stage 1

- Who tells you the truth? People we believe.
- What happens when we do something wrong? Forgiving people.

### Key Stage 2

- How difficult is it to tell the truth? Why bother?
- Are there ever any situations in which it is better not to tell the truth?
- Why do you think Peter didn't tell the truth? What do you think he felt like afterwards?
- What do you think about Pilate? Was he being just when he tried Jesus? Who wanted Jesus dead and why?



## Victory!

# Caught at the Crossroads

**Act I** Helena and the gang have bid farewell to Tacticus, Miriam and the other Christians. Although they long to go to safety with them in Shemhadar, they must first rescue Ben, Justin and Marcus.

Two passengers, Sabban and Risa (actually Cyrus' parents) approach Rome by boat. They are coming to meet friends, but Risa is sad, remembering their lost son. As they dock, Zemo hails them and there is a joyous reunion with Cyrus.

At Petronius' villa, Sabban pledges to help the gang free Ben. Meanwhile, Ben and the other prisoners are suffering at the hands of Nihilus. Capella the gaoler, as it turns out, witnessed the crucifixion of Jesus.

He tells the story.

- **The Crucifixion**

Unlike Capella, Ben does not agree that Jesus' death was an end. Instead he sees it as a beginning.

**Act II** In the streets of Rome, street performers are entertaining the crowd. Ben, in his cell, tells Capella the rest of the story about Jesus' death.

- **Joseph of Arimathea and the Tomb**

Inside the stockade, Nihilus fears that the acrobats are part of a rescue bid. In fact, Ben is being freed by an elephant behind Nihilus' back. The escape is nearly accomplished. When the others are out, Ben stops to help Capella, who has been trapped in the wreckage. Nihilus arrives; Ben's compassion has cost him his freedom.

**Act III** Capella can hardly believe that Ben has made such a great sacrifice in order to tell the rest of the story, but Ben is determined to carry on.

- **The Resurrection**

While Capella is thinking about what he heard, Nihilus announces a change of plan: to avoid rescue, Ben is not to be thrown to the lions—he is to be crucified.

Helena has gone to the Circus Maximus, only to find it more heavily guarded than ever. The kids have followed Ben and now see him about to be crucified. Nero is watching and encourages Capella to do the deed. But the story has had its effect: Capella turns on Nero instead. Nihilus dashes to kill Capella. Although the gang snatch Capella away, he is mortally wounded.

The act ends with Nihilus exiled by Nero, Capella honoured by burial in Petronius' family vault, and Cyrus introducing his parents to Ben and Helena as they continue towards Shemhadar.



# BACKGROUND

## Theme: First Things First

There are many situations in which we have divided loyalties. Having to take a decision which might affect our well-being or even our life is one that we hope never to have to make, but even small decisions may feel very hard and it can be difficult to tell where our priorities should lie.

Ben has the opportunity of escaping, but if he does it would compromise his gaoler. Rather than taking the selfish way out, Ben decides that he must remain where he is. The first thing for him is his loyalty to Jesus and his work as a Storykeeper: he will finish telling the story of Jesus rather than save his own life. The reasons for Ben's choice may not, at first sight, seem very obvious, but in Ben's case he proves to have made the right decision.

## Biblical Connections

The Crucifixion	Mark 15:22-41 (Capella)
The Two Criminals	Luke 23:34-35, 39-43
Jesus' Last Words	John 19:25-30
Joseph of Arimathea and the Tomb	Mark 15:42-47 (Ben)
The Resurrection	Mark 16:1-8; John 20:1-10

At the climax of these last four episodes, once again Ben's experience closely parallels that of Jesus, and the children look on helpless, just as the women did at the crucifixion and burial. Capella, the soldier who witnessed the crucifixion himself, now hears the rest of the story, the

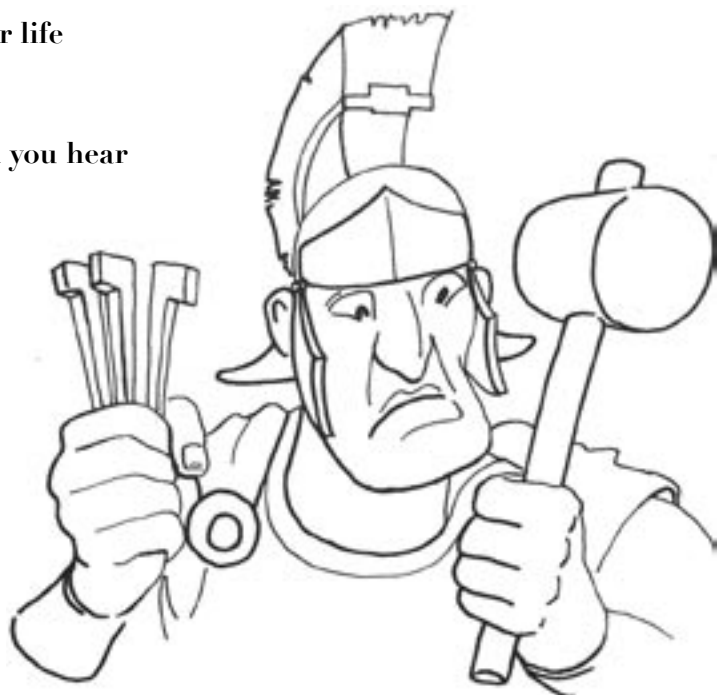
parts that he did not see for himself. Without this part of the story, Jesus' death might just be seen as an unjust punishment. The belief that is inspired in his followers after the Resurrection turns it into something more powerful and lasting that affects the whole way they live.

Capella:

**“How can you sacrifice your life to tell me a story?”**

Ben:

**“Maybe you'll understand when you hear how it ends ...”**



## To Explore

### Key Stage 1

- Losing people people we can't see any more. What makes us sad. Remembering people.

### Key Stage 2

- How can we know what happened in the past? How do we know about people who have died?
- What do we feel when people or animals suffer? What might the disciples have felt like when they heard about the crucifixion?
- Why didn't Ben get free when he could? What might Ben have felt about being crucified rather than thrown to the lions?

## Victory!

# To the Ends of the Earth

**Act I** Ben and the gang have narrowly escaped Nero's death sentence and fled Rome on Saleem's ship sailing to Arabia. On board ship, Cyrus has been reunited with his parents and Tacticus and Miriam have been married, but there are still mixed feelings as Justin, Marcus and Anna remember that they have no parents. Helena tells them a bedtime story about how Jesus' disciples felt forgotten.



- **The Road to Emmaus**

As the ship sails on unaware of danger, Nihilus and his henchmen are in pursuit. Ben, realizing that things could be difficult, suggests the Christians go separate ways. Saleem's boat disappears, leaving Ben, Justin, Marcus, Zak, Helena and Tacticus on land to start their journey. Milo's unexpected reappearance with his wagon (see Episode 6) means that at least they have transport. Days later, in a desert ravine, they are attacked by three Arabs and Nihilus.

**Act II** The wagon has been burned. Ben and Tacticus have been taken prisoner and the rest of the gang are trapped to die in the ravine. After some near misses and co-incidences, they escape and try to follow the tracks of Nihilus' camel caravan. When Justin and Zak lose heart, Helena encourages them with a story.

- **Doubting Thomas**

Although the story cheers them up, soon there is bad news. Milo, examining the caravan tracks, sees that Ben's strength is failing fast.

**Act III** Tacticus tries to help Ben, who can no longer walk. Milo's horse, which had escaped from the caravan earlier, is watching. A clever plot means that Zak is able to catch one of Nihilus' henchmen and return to the caravan in disguise and make contact with Ben. To Nihilus' disbelief, the rest of the gang appear at a distance.



Events culminate in a battle and a showdown between Nihilus and Tacticus. Even at the last minute, Tacticus wants to spare Nihilus' life, but Nihilus stubbornly refuses and plunges to his death.

Exhausted, the gang continue through the desert. Is the oasis they see real, or just a mirage? Justin and Marcus think they can see their parents and to everyone's astonishment it is indeed Joshua and Lydia. The gang have arrived, at last, at Shemhadar.

At the oasis, everyone is reunited. Ben celebrates with a story.

- **The Meeting in the Upper Room, and the Ascension**

The stories have been told and are ready to be passed on «until one day there are as many Storykeepers as there are stars in the sky».

## BACKGROUND

### Theme: Hope and New Life

The series winds up on a note of hope. The stories that take place after the Resurrection are linked with the reunion of the boys with their parents and the new life for Anna with Tacticus and Miriam. This hope is, however, linked to courage in the face of continuing persecution. Nero and his henchmen have not gone away. There are still people who prefer to hate and be cruel. Although Nihilus is killed, and the goodies escape, the evil he represents still continues.

In the end, though, the message is that the light does shine in the darkness. Ben's story is a celebration of the faith and qualities that triumph over evil and death, just as cold dark winter is overcome by the vibrant life force of a new spring.

### Biblical Connections

Jesus Appears to Mary	John 20:11-18
The Road to Emmaus	Luke 24:13-35 (Helena)
Doubting Thomas	John 20:24-29 (Helena)
The Meeting in the Upper Room	Luke 24:36-41
Jesus at the Lakeside	John 21:1-13
The Ascension	Acts 1:4-10 cf. also Mark 16:9-20

The stories of Jesus after his Resurrection show a number of different ways in which his disciples understood him to be with them. On the road to Emmaus, they are unhappy that they have been left, and draw some comfort from the unknown traveller who joins them and talks through why these events have happened. It is only later that they recognize that it is Jesus.

Thomas, more than the other disciples, needs physical proof that Jesus is alive, and this he is given. The Ascension, where Jesus is "taken from them up into heaven", provides a link between the comfort that the disciples have from Jesus' physical presence and the continuing, but unseen, comfort they will continue to feel as they travel through the world and life itself.

## To Explore

### Key Stage 1

- Losing a person or thing and finding them again.
- New life brings new hope.
- Hopes (and fears) for new babies, new animals, new situations. The changing seasons and spring.

### Key Stage 2

- Looking to the future.
- Hope after despair: Having confidence when things are uncertain.
- What do you think about the struggle between Tacticus and Nihilus? Why did Nihilus refuse help?
- What do you think the stories Ben and Helena told meant to the children at the time and when they thought about them later?
- Do you think any of the children went on to be Storykeepers? Why?

## Early Christian Worship

At first, Christians met informally. They believed that Jesus would come back to earth in person very soon so there was no need to set up elaborate ways of worshipping. They met in houses, as we see the Storykeepers doing. There are descriptions in the New Testament that give some idea of what early Christians thought was important: joyful celebration of their faith, giving help to the poor and spreading the gospel. These quotations from the Bible and Roman sources are from the first and second centuries AD:

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. (Acts 2:42)

With gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs to God. (Colossians 3:16, early 1st century AD)

And each shared in the bread and they feasted ... to the sound of David's psalms and hymns. (Acts of Paul, Apocryphal book, c. AD 190)

They were accustomed to meet on a fixed day before dawn and sing alternately amongst themselves a hymn to Christ as God. (Pliny's letter to Trajan, c. AD 112)

See also the account of the institution of the Holy Communion in I Corinthians 11:23-26 (probably written before AD 64).



# 3

## Teacher Information



# Storykeepers and Syllabuses

## Religious Education

Every school should have its own syllabus, based on local or diocesan requirements. This means that it is difficult for any one resource to tie in exactly with more than one syllabus. However, there are some model syllabus and attainment target guidelines published by the Schools Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA) in 1993 which have been taken into account when writing these notes.

The notes are designed to give basic information that will help fit the Storykeepers material into a school's own syllabus.

## The SCAA models

**Model 1** Structured round the knowledge and understanding of what it means to be a member of a faith community

**Model 2** Structured around the knowledge and understanding of the teachings of religion and how these relate to shared human experience

## Attainment Targets

**AT 1** **Learning about religions.** This includes the ability to

- identify, name, describe and give accounts, in order to build a coherent picture of each religion;
- explain the meanings of religious language, stories and symbolism;
- explain similarities and differences between, and within, religions.

**AT 2** **Learning from religions.** This includes the ability to

- give an informed and considered response to religious and moral issues;
- reflect from what might be learnt from religions in the light of one's own beliefs and experiences;
- identify and respond to questions of meaning within religions.



## Cross-curricular Work

Storytelling, drama, other writing, history and geography are all subjects which have curriculum links with Storykeepers, and the way in which Storykeepers in itself shows that one subject can lend itself to several treatments.

Each class, each teacher and each school will have a different mixture of subject strengths, so it is worth considering these when planning work in a term where Storykeepers is being used. Group discussions may come up with exciting new ideas. The themes for each episode will also give some clues.

## Teacher Planning

If you are using Storykeepers as part of a syllabus in a primary school, these points are worth bearing in mind:

- discussing the material and themes with other teachers saves time and gives more insights;
- being aware of the Storykeeper themes well in advance means you can pick up useful illustrations and cross-curricular links for use later.

# Storykeepers and Collective Worship



Storykeepers is all about passing on the Jesus story and showing its effect on people who came and come into contact with it. This means that the programmes are highly suitable for showing in collective worship as they stand either for a specifically Christian element or to illustrate a theme. However, you might like to consider some ideas for extension.

- Take one of the themes explored in the series (e.g. courage, loyalty, freedom). Choose a biblical story from Storykeepers that relates to it, then ask the children to re-enact it in a modern setting build up a collection of other stories/poems/drama that also illustrate it. Children can write their own or find these from elsewhere.
- Look at a particular event in Jesus' life, then ask older children to tell the story from the angle of someone else who saw it, as Tacticus, Capella and Ben do.
- Tell the stories of other people, religious and secular, throughout history and today, from Christianity or a different faith, who have faced trials because of their faith.

# Using Video

Each programme

- is complete in itself but is best seen as part of the series;
- carries its own stories and context, as well as continuing the backstory;
- can be watched straight through (but not more than one episode per session).

Each programme also

- contains elements relating to one or more of the other programmes;
- can be «resource-raided» for illustrating, developing or reinforcing other work.

This checklist should help you make best use of the programmes when you are showing them on video:

## **BE PREPARED!**

- **It is important to watch the programmes and read the notes beforehand.**
- **Make sure the aims and objectives of the viewing session are clear.**
- **Make sure the viewing area is comfortable and that everyone can see clearly.**



# Storykeepers and the Liturgical Year

For those who follow the Christian calendar, here is a list of some of the main feasts, together with a story or episode that might be appropriately used in preparing for them, or understanding them. The number under “episode” indicates which TV programme/video/book the story appears in, and the letter indicates its place in the programme, e.g. 3b = 3rd programme, 2nd story.

Season/Celebration	Story	Reference	Episode
Advent	Stilling the storm	Mark 4:35-41	2b
	The lost sheep	Luke 15:3-6	7a
	The good Samaritan	Luke 10:25-37	3a
Christmas	The birth of Jesus	Luke 2:1 - 19	6d
Holy Innocents	The flight into Egypt	Matthew 2:13-16	6b
Epiphany	The Magi	Matthew 2:1 - 12	6a
Ash Wednesday/Lent	Zacchaeus	Luke 19:1-10	1b
	Jairus' daughter	Mark 5:21-43	1c
	The prodigal son	Luke 15:11-32	8b
March 25	The Annunciation	Luke 1:26-35, 38	6c
Palm Sunday	The entry into Jerusalem	Mark 11:1 - 10	9b
	Judas agrees to betray Jesus	Mark 14:1-2, 10-11	10a
	The anointing at Bethany	Mark 14:3-9	10b
	Jesus predicts his betrayal	Mark 14:17 - 21	10c
	Peter's promise	Mark 14:22-25, 27-31	10d
Maundy Thursday	The Last Supper	Mark 14:22-25	11a
	Gethsemane; Judas betrays Jesus	Mark 14:32-48	11b
	The trial and Peter's denial	Mark 14:53-54, 66-72	11c
	Jesus is tried and flogged	Mark 15:1-20	11d
Good Friday	The Crucifixion	Mark 15:22-41	12a
Holy Saturday	Joseph of Arimathea and the burial of Jesus	Mark 15:42-47	12b
Easter Sunday	The Resurrection	Mark 16:1-8	13a
	The road to Emmaus	Luke 24:13-31	13b
St Thomas	Doubting Thomas	John 20:24-29	13c
Ascension Thursday	The Ascension	Acts 1:4-10	13e
Feast of St John's birth	The birth of John the Baptist	Mark 1:1 - 13	2a
Feast of St Peter and St Paul	The house built on a rock	Matthew 7:24-27	5b
Feast of the Transfiguration	The Transfiguration	Mark 9:2-10	9a

There are a number of Gospel episodes and stories not contained in the above list which do not neatly attach to a feast or celebration. The complete list of stories and the reference to episodes is found on page 10.

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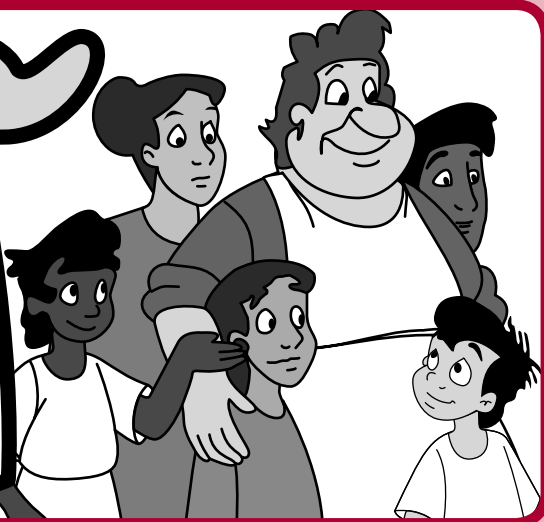
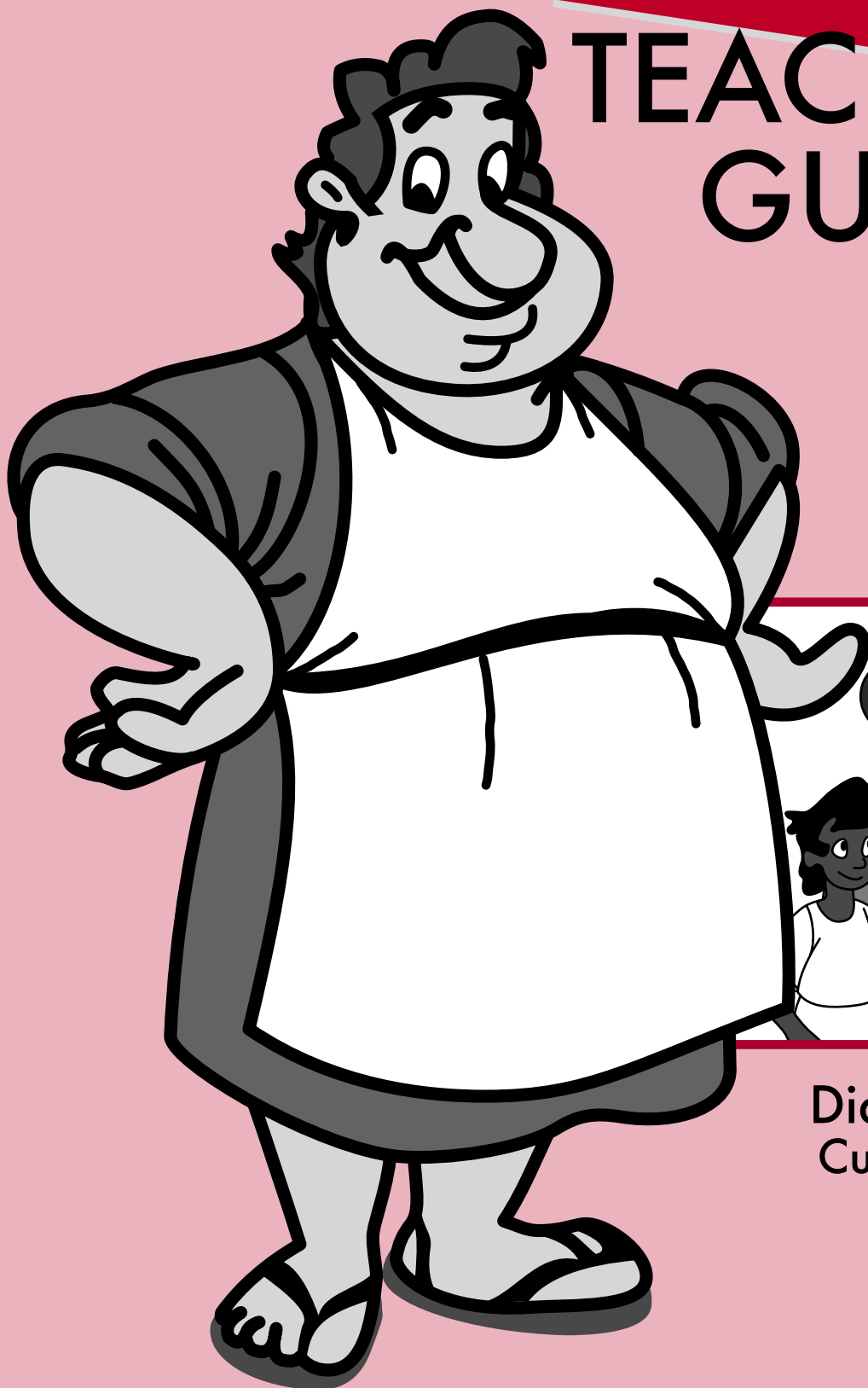
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The Storykeepers can be used for Schools Collective Worship in conjunction with [www.culham.info](http://www.culham.info) website. See also page 45.



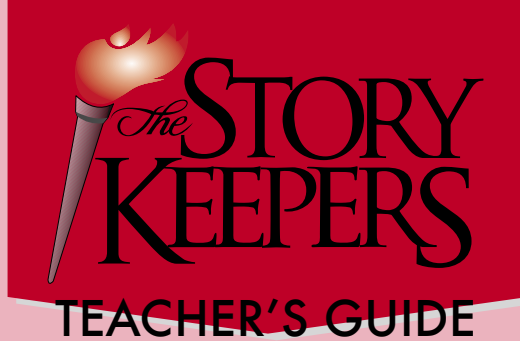
# *The* STORY KEEPERS

## TEACHER'S GUIDE



Diana Lazenby  
Culham Institute

Supports the  
Videos, TV and  
Books



**TEACHER'S GUIDE**

**T**HIS BOOK is designed to accompany the two series of children's books and the programmes and videos that form the whole of the Storykeepers series. It is a background document, rather than a course of study, from which material can be mined, and which can help adults understand the setting and purpose of the series.

It contains:

- a guide to each episode, with programme outlines
- background information on biblical and thematic links
- short articles on topics related to the series
- information for teachers planning syllabuses
- discussion material for children at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 (ages 5-11)
- detailed information about which biblical story is told in which episode
- a guide to the use of Mark's gospel in the series
- links with the liturgical year

**"The Bible stories are allowed to speak for themselves with no moralizing at the beginning or end of the stories. It's likely that this is one set of cartoons that will be around for a long time to come."**

NEW CHRISTIAN HERALD

**"Storykeepers provides the churches with an important resource for telling the New Testament's stories to young people. I warmly commend the series and hope it will be used widely in both schools and in Sunday schools in bringing the story of Jesus to life for a new generation."**

**DR GEORGE CAREY,**  
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**"This animated series on the stories of the Gospel should fill a great need. Our Council receives countless requests for such programmes."**

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**"A brilliant idea,"**

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**"I was beguiled by them."**

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**"... fast-moving, descriptive, colourful, exciting and enthralling ... the stories of Jesus are woven in naturally, fitting the context of what is happening in the story, The teaching is solid and appropriate for children ... One of my young readers echoed my response to this new series: 'It was exciting! I'd like to read more please.'"**

**PHILLIPA BRUNT,** CROSSCURRENT

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