

Wrapped Up, Tied Up and Zentangled Up in Jesus



**WRAPPED UP
TIED UP
ZENTANGLED UP
IN JESUS**



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A simple artistic method to help children relax and focus in Bible Class.

Recently a group of children got me tangled up in something new.

I was teaching a small group of 9-12 year olds on Sunday mornings for Bible class. I asked the children what ideas they had for helping us learn. Their suggestions are what led us to begin “tangling” in Bible Class.

I had first been introduced to the idea quite some time ago but I had not thought of using it for my Bible class. After learning a bit more about it I realised that the children were “on to something”.

Zentangle is a method of drawing that is so simple and repetitive that it frees your mind up to relax and focus. Doodling is more freeform and flowing but Zentangle usually follows patterns.

Don't make the same mistake I did and think that [Zentangle](#) is somehow related to "Zen Buddhism". As I learned more I found out that it is actually an artistic method created by Rick Roberts and Maria Thomas. They describe the actual process of drawing "tangling". They added the word "zen" to describe the calm effect tangling produces as you do it. [You can read more about how it began here.](#)

How We Tangled in Our Class

Since we were working our way through some great Old Testament lessons from the [Tower of Babel all the way through the Life of Joseph](#) I wanted to emphasise "FAITH"

Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph had great faith.



Here's What We Did

1. Prepared a Poster:

The children could have drawn their own letters but, for this first attempt, I decided to pre-print the word FAITH on a paper using big letter outlines. I searched for a suitable font and found one similar to [Janda Manatee Bubble](#). Create your own or use [this one in A4 size](#) or [this one in letter size \(USA\)](#)

2. Drew a free-flowing grid to create drawing spaces:

The tangle designs can be done inside the letters or outside, in the white space. I decided to go with the white space outside the letters.

To help the children get started I went ahead and drew out a wavy sort of grid so they would immediately see the small areas to add designs to. By doing this free-hand I was able to create a totally unique pattern for each child.

3. Provided each child with a pen:

People take Zentangling to all sorts of levels and spend lots of money on special paper and pens. In our case I just handed each child a fine line black pen. We used fine line Sharpie pens.

4. Started tangling:

Each child selected a FAITH poster and began filling each of the "squares" with a unique design. As we all "tangled" we talked about faith. We weren't about finishing the project by the end of class. We just set them aside to be picked up and continued the next time we met.

What I learned about using Zentangle in Bible class

1. Amazingly, this method really did bring calm to the classroom.
2. Fidgeters stopped fidgeting and were able to draw and participate in conversation all at the same time.
3. The conversation while tangling flowed naturally. The children were relaxed and calm and just chatted about what faith meant in their lives and then about life in general. Even shy children contributed to the conversation since they did not feel undo attention was on them.
4. I provided some patterns that I found online but the children in my class were quite happy to come up with their own designs.

Links to Videos and Patterns:

I wasn't concerned with following strict guidelines for Zentangle so I was able to find lots of patterns and examples online. A simple online search for "zentangle" will lead you to a number of different examples. Here are a few simple ones that I found.

- [Video \(6 minutes\): Zentangle Art for beginners](#)
- [Video \(Just under 21 minutes\): 24 Doodle Patterns, Zentangle Patterns, Mandala Patterns](#)
- [Video \(5 minutes 21 seconds\): 15 Zentangle Patterns | Part 1 | Tutorial](#)
- [Video \(22 minutes 43 seconds\): 24 Zentangle patterns](#)
- [Blog Post with Patterns: 100+ Fun, Easy Patterns to Draw](#)

And just for fun I'll leave you with the song that I couldn't get out of my head while writing this post!!

Lyrics:

I'm all wrapped up, all tied up, all tangled up in Jesus.
I'm all wrapped up, all tied up, all tangled up in God.
I'm all wrapped up, all tied up, all tangled up in Jesus.
I'm all wrapped up, all tied up, all tangled up in God.

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Yes, This Counts at Home

PRAYER CARDS:

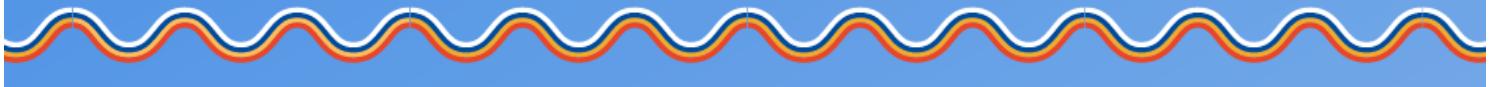
Reminding us to pray for our brothers and sisters



The troubling story of Joseph and his brothers leads to good discussion about getting along with siblings.

Genesis 35:23-26; 37:1-36

another teaching idea from www.missionbibleclass.org



The best lessons are not what goes on in my Bible class. The best lessons are what the children take with them when they leave.

Years ago I was teaching children about the [Fruit of the Spirit](#). One young child was in total agreement with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness and faithfulness. These were great concepts and he loved learning about them and exploring how they apply in church and in school and with his friends. But I'll never forget his reaction when I mentioned that the Fruit of the Spirit should also be displayed to our brothers and sisters in our family.

This young man, moments before, had been enthusiastic when talking about these concepts in various other settings. Now, he looked at me in shock and horror and said, "What! This counts at HOME too?"

This child realised a truth that is for all of us. It is God's intention that we apply what we learn to ALL parts of our lives.

[Prayer Cards](#) are one way to help children understand this important truth.

I was able to use these recently when teaching about [Joseph's brothers selling him into slavery](#). As we explored the tense relationship between Joseph and his brothers I asked the children in my class to consider relationships with their own siblings. Even if we do not always get along we should want the best for them. One way to do this is to pray for them.

I supplied paper, scissors and pens. As we talked about our siblings we wrote their names on cards. In class we prayed for each one. Then, the children took the cards home so they could remember to pray for their siblings.

Yes, prayer counts at home, too.

[Full instructions for prayer cards](#)



Am I Willing to Sacrifice?

Some stories in the Bible lend themselves to crafts and colouring sheets. This is not one of them.

There is no way to lightly depict a father being asked to kill and sacrifice his precious son. The story of [Abraham Preparing to Sacrifice His Son](#) is a test of faith like no other.

Of course, even as Abraham was about to carry through with what God had told him to do, an angel intervened and stopped him. Yes, Abraham had reasoned that God would not ask this unless he planned to bring his son, Isaac, back from the dead after the sacrifice ([Hebrews 11:17-19](#)). But even so, there was a father and a son and a knife.

As difficult it is to comprehend the events of [Genesis 22:1-18](#) they are only a foreshadowing of another time, later in history, when another father allows his son to be sacrificed on a cross.

I wanted the children in my Bible class to contemplate sacrifice. I wanted them to think about what it would mean to love and trust God so much that we would be willing to give up something we hold precious. Abraham passed the test and showed he was willing to go to any extreme God asked of him. Would we pass that test?

The following activity meant a lot to my group of kids so I thought you might like to try it too. Like Abraham, they will be taken to the very edge in contemplating sacrifice but then they will not actually be sacrificing.

I would suggest you speak calmly and not too fast so that you create an environment of contemplation among the children.

Supplies you will need:

- Enough paper so that each child will have a few small sheets of paper
- Pens or pencils
- Some flat stones
- Something upon which to place the stones (I used a round metal pizza pan)
- An empty box of matches

Instructions:

After telling [the story of Abraham and Isaac](#) further discuss how God was more important to Abraham than anything or anyone. Abraham proved that he was willing to sacrifice even the most important thing in his life, his son. Is God that precious to us? What would we be willing to sacrifice if we were tested?

1. Have the children write or draw what is important or precious to them on small pieces of paper. One item on each piece of paper. As they write you can already begin asking them whether the thing written on their paper is as important as God.

Keep in mind that this is not about good or bad. They will be writing down some very good things and people. This is about whether or not God is more important than even the MOST precious things.

2. After they have written for a little while then bring out the stones and stack them together to form an altar. My class was sitting at a table so I placed the stones on the metal pizza pan in the centre of the table. The children immediately recognised it was an altar.
3. Now ask the children to think carefully about what they have written on their papers and whether or not they would be willing to give them up (sacrifice them) if God asked them to. If they are willing to give it up then have them scrunch up the piece of paper and place it on the altar. Don't rush this. Allow them to really consider. More than one child in my class was not ready to "sacrifice" what they had written but, after some thought, bravely decided to do so. When they place something on the altar be sure and tell them you understand how difficult it is and are proud they have made that decision. After all, sacrifice is difficult for children just like it is difficult for us adults!
4. Once the papers are all on the "altar" then bring out the matchbox. When you seem to be ready to burn all of these sacrifices then open the matchbox to show that it is empty.

At this point continue the conversation to relate the activity back to Abraham. Here is what I said, "Of course we are not going to burn all of these things. God wants us to enjoy all of these blessings in our lives. After all, many of these people and things are very good for us and he does not want us to give them up.

But God DOES want us to understand that HE is more important than even the best things in our lives. Isaac was the best thing in Abraham's life but Abraham's willingness to sacrifice him showed that God was even more important than his beloved son.

In today's bible lesson we learn that God tested Abraham to see if he was willing to give up Isaac if it was for God. Abraham passed the test.

And guess what? Today we have had a kind of test. YOU were willing to give up your precious things if it was for God. You showed that God is more important than all of these things. You passed the test. I am so proud of you."

At the conclusion of the activity I prayed out loud for each child individually.



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I Think I'll Just Hum...



Sometimes I prepare what I think is a great class and yet my students struggle to think past the surface level of the Bible story. But sometimes, often when I least expect it, the kids run ahead of the teacher and want to go deeper.

Instead of just appreciating the facts or even the drama of the story they may ask questions about the characters or wonder why the characters did what they did. They might want to discuss motivations and causes. They may even ponder over what God was up to or discuss how he interacted with the characters.

Sometimes the Biblical truths become personal. They dig deep into a child's heart and convict them to act upon these truths.

And then sometimes, like this past Sunday, a child takes one more step and actually makes a plan. It is at times like these that a teacher knows she has truly passed on the message.

Earlier in the week a young woman and I had prepared a lesson together on the [Tower of Babel](#) using the [Lesson Template](#). This time I stood back and she did the teaching.

- First she had the letters of the words "proud" and "humble" written on cards. She mixed the letters up and showed how to unscramble them to form the words.
- Then she drew the face of a girl on a balloon and spoke as if she was the girl on the balloon. She began "bragging" about everything from her good looks to her amazing skills at sports. Every time she bragged she would blow some more hot air into the balloon. The bragging continued until the balloon finally popped.
- Using a simple flip chart she then told the story of how people began building a tower thinking only of how they would make a great name for themselves. God was not pleased and mixed up their language so it must have sounded like they were just

babbling to one another. Not being able to communicate led to the people going their separate ways.

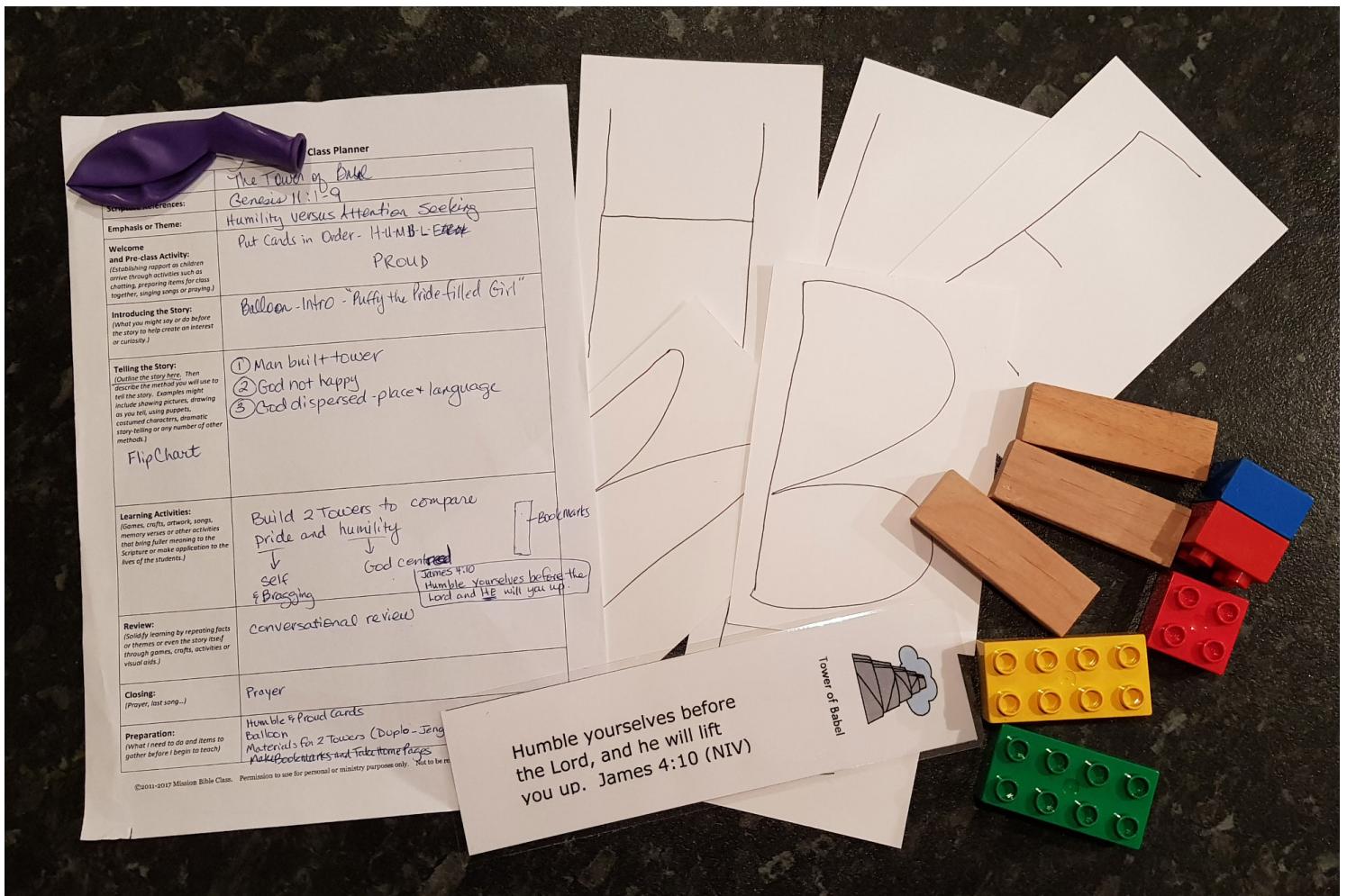
- After this, two towers were built in class...
 - One was built out of large Lego blocks. As each block was stacked the young teacher talked about how great God was.
 - The other tower was built from wooden Jenga blocks. As we had planned, I built this tower making a point to blatantly brag about my own abilities at each level. As expected, my tower crashed and the first one held.
- As we gathered back together we looked once more at the word "humble" and talked about what it meant.

One boy had taken in the facts and had been convicted that he should be humble. But now, he was ready to put it into ACTION. At his own instigation he devised a way to go deeper!

And here is a seven year old boy's simple plan of action...

"Every time I start being too proud I think I'm going to just hum." In answer to the perplexed expressions on our faces he went on to explain, "I'm going to hum because that will help me stop being proud and remember to be HUM-ble."

Yes, that little boy really understood the message. He has a plan of action and now, so do I. Next time I start thinking that teachers have all the answers...I'm going to start humming.





Good Conversations

One of my favourite parts of teaching is conversation. There are times in a normal classroom setting for children to quietly listen while I share a story, read from the Bible or give instruction. But, as far as I am concerned, I have not done my job as a teacher if I have not interspersed that lecture style with plenty of opportunities for good conversation between the students and myself. I don't want to always be the one talking. I also want to listen. I don't accomplish this every time but it is my goal to engage with each child that I teach.

This is one of the reasons I love simple activities like the ones below.

In these activities the teacher and students draw simple pictures and participate together in discovering the important words and ideas in a Bible story.

[Click here for more detailed instructions](#) or watch the video below:

The Bible stories used in the examples in the instructional video above are [Jacob, Esau and the Birthright](#) and [Deborah, the Judge](#) and [Samuel Becomes a Helper in the Tabernacle](#).

