10 MUST KNOW BIBLE STORIES

stories worth exploring

The Story of Noah's Ark

Early Level: Contexts to Explore the Story

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For young children to get the most out of the story, it is important that they are given time to explore it for themselves in different ways. So have fun setting up your Nursery or Play area and allow the children to freely explore this wonderful story and internalise it in their own way. Give them space to talk about what they enjoyed and allow them to guide you into what they would like to explore further. There will be particular aspects of the story that fascinate them and they will want to re-enact or delve into deeper. We hope that the ideas below will help you to develop the learning through their interests.

As you set up different contexts, keep in mind the links to the Noah's Ark story. Suggestions of how to link the activities to the story are found in blue. Don't worry about making the links overly complicated, just gently extend their thinking by asking questions such as "Who do Christians believe kept Noah safe....?" or "What do Christians believe about ...". Ask them what they think too! "Do you think that?" "Is it hard or easy to keep a promise?" Some suggested phrases to use in your discussions with children can be found in the blue speech bubbles in the 'Context mind-map – Noah's Ark' file.

This is such a great story and there is so much potential for learning, so don't be overwhelmed by the number of suggestions. Please don't even attempt to do all the ideas listed! Pick and choose those that are most relevant for you – maybe one from each Nursery context area (or less) and follow the children's interests as you explore further.

1. Construction – Build An Ark!

a. **Large and small construction:** Allow the children to 'build' the big boat. Talk about the story. The Bible tells us that the big boat had an upper, middle and lower deck on it. It even had rooms. Can you make a boat with different levels? How many levels does your boat have?

b. **Make an enormous boat** out of cardboard boxes and other junk. How many children (or animals) fit inside? I wonder how many were in the big boat in the story?

c. **Set up a work station:** Provide a work bench, tools and blocks for building.

2. Water Tray

a. **Colour the water** in the water tray blue and provide ice cream tubs, tin baking trays and other 'arks'. Add small model figures and animals to ride in the boats. Talk about the story of Noah's Ark.

b. **Make Rain:** Provide sieves, watering cans and colanders. Talk about rain words such as splish, drip, pitter-patter etc. Talk about how it rained for a long time in the story, so long that the whole earth was flooded.

c. **Crepe Paper Strips:** Provide a variety of colours of crepe paper strips. Allow the children to wave them back and forward in the water tray to release the colours..

d. **Floating and Sinking:**
Provide an assortment of items and allow the children to predict and test which ones float and which ones sink. God told Noah to build a boat that floated on the water and so kept him and his family safe. The big boat didn't sink.

e. **Illustrate a flood:** Put a selection of items that sink (e.g shells, stones, small metal items) into a washing up bowl or similar tray with no water in it. Add a plastic bowl as a pretend boat (or a suitable plastic boat if you have one) and add Noah and a few animals to your boat. Begin to pour water into the washing up bowl until the 'boat' is floating and everything else is covered in water. This should give the children a visual image of what a flood is. In the story, God made it rain for 40 days and nights and the whole earth was flooded.

f. **Provide toy boats to play with.**

g. **Pair Socks:** Provide lots of pairs of socks for the children to 'wash' and hang up to dry in pairs. The animals went into the big boat in pairs. How many are in a pair?

3. Sand Tray

a. **Make a building site:** Provide gravel, diggers, spades etc.
b. **Provide small animals.**

4. Technology

a. **Make a boat that floats:** You could use milk cartons or other junk such as foil, cardboard, wood, paper and polystyrene. Have a competition. Whose boat floats best? What happens if you put passengers on your boat? Are they kept safe and dry? How many passengers can you put on your boat without it sinking? Try floating your boat and then making it rain with a watering can. Does it still float? In the story, Noah followed God's instructions and made a 'good' boat. It kept Noah, his family and all the animals safe and dry.

b. **Which shape is best?** Try making different shapes using plasticine or playdough. e.g a ball shape, a sausage shape, a flat shape, a cube shape. See which ones float? Make a boat shape. Does it float? Experiment with different shapes of boat – ones with high sides or low sides, narrow boats and wide boats or tall boats. Which ones floated the best? Why do things float? The boat that Noah built floated well and kept Noah safe during the flood. God gave Noah good instructions for the boat.

c. **A heavy cargo:** Float a foil dish on water or make a boat. Use marbles as your cargo. Count the marbles into the boat. Watch the boat as the marbles go in. What happens? What happens if you put too many marbles in? Boats have to be loaded carefully, they can't carry too much or they might sink in stormy weather. Noah's boat was just the right size for Noah, his family and all the animals. It was big enough and strong enough to hold them all without sinking.

5. Art and Craft Area

a. **Paint a huge class rainbow:** You can use hand painting, collage materials or anything else you fancy! Use your creativity.
God put a rainbow in the sky as a sign of his promise to Noah. Christians believe that God always keeps his promises. How does a rainbow make you feel?

b. **Make an enormous ark:** Add to your enormous rainbow by drawing an enormous ark. Children could draw/paint their own animals and cut them out before putting them in the ark. Add Noah and his family and you have a big collage of the whole story! Talk about the story and how Noah and the animals were kept safe during the flood.

c. **Make rainbow streamers:** Tie different colours of crepe paper onto hair scrunchies to put on children's wrists or go outside and find a stick, then use an elastic band to fasten a colourful strip of crepe paper to the stick. ...or design your own!

d. **Make animal masks:** Use paper plates or cardboard. If you make two of each kind of animal, you could use them in your role-play corner.
Lots of different animals went into the big boat. How many of each animal were there?

e. **Pairs of animals:** Paint animals and before they are dry, press another sheet of paper on top to make a matching pair.
In the story, Noah chose two of every kind of animal to be kept safe in the big boat.

f. **Make junk model arks.**

g. **Water resist paintings.** Draw a rainbow with coloured wax crayons on white paper. Make each colour quite thick. Brush over the whole of the paper with watery blue paint. The paint will not stick to the wax crayons so the rainbow will shine through the paint.

h. **Make welly boot prints.** Look at the patterns. Are any the same?

i. **Make rain pictures:** Wet a sheet of paper and sprinkle powder paint over it to make a pretty pattern or alternatively, create rain from watery paint and splash it onto paper to make rain pictures.

j. **Straw Painting:** Watch rain run down the windows and re-create the effect by blowing watery paint along a piece of paper with a straw (or just hold the paper at an angle to allow the paint to run down.)

6. Playdough

a. **Playdough cutters:** Provide animal playdough cutters.
Talk about the story. What is their favourite animal? How many of each animal went into the big boat?

b. **Free Creations:** Provide matchsticks, pebbles, feathers etc. and allow children to create their own animals. Does their animal have a name? Does it have a partner? Was it kept safe in the big boat?

c. **Practise making the numbers 1 and 2 with playdough.** The animals went into the big boat in twos.

7. Role-Play

a. **A boat:** Use an old plastic sand pit or make your own boat. Provide animal costumes or masks, food, different 'rooms' for the animals etc. Talk about the story as the children act it out.

b. **A cosy den:** Allow the children to participate in making a den to keep themselves and the animals safe. Noah and his family were kept safe in the big boat.

c. **A Rainy Day:** Provide rainy day dressing-up clothes for the children.

8. Outdoors

a. **Make an outdoor construction area with large blocks or cardboard boxes:** Can the children make a big boat? How many children (or animals) fit into it?

b. **Use a climbing frame or other prop to make a den:** Provide blankets, and other loose parts. Do the children feel safe inside? Noah and his family were kept safe in the big boat.

c. **Go on a Rainbow Hunt and draw what you see of each colour:** There is a 'Rainbow Hunt' sheet in our 'Additional Resources'. Remind the children that God put a rainbow in the sky to show Noah that he would keep his promise. Christians believe that God always keeps his promises. Can the children keep a promise? How do you think Noah felt when he saw the rainbow? How do you feel when you see a rainbow. Why?

d. **On a dry day, go outside dressed for a rainy day.** Wear wellies and take an umbrella or wear a rain suit. Use a watering can to make it rain on the children. How does it feel? What does it sound like? What do they like? ...or not like. In the story there was a lot of rain. So much that it flooded the whole earth.

e. **Go on rainy day walk**

f. **Can you spot a dove or a pigeon?** Noah sent out a dove to see if there was any dry land.

g. **A boat-sized play area:** If you have a large playground (you will need about the size of a football pitch) take chalk and mark off 135m long x 22.5m wide. Put cones around the area and allow the children to only play in this part. This was the size of the ark. Noah and the animals were stuck in there for a long time. Can the children play in that area only? What would it be like to be stuck there with lots and lots of other animals for such a long time – maybe as long as a year? If your children are more able, you could design some estimation and maths activities around this concept – see teacher-led ideas.

h. **Splashing in puddles:** Have fun splashing in puddles and making wet footprints and other patterns. Find different sizes of puddles. Can they jump all the water out of the puddle? What happened in the story when the big puddles joined up?

i. **Drying up the puddles.** Draw around a puddle with chalk. Leave it for a bit then go back to it. What has happened? Where has the water gone? How long does it take for the puddle to disappear completely? In the story, when the rain stopped, it still took a long time for the land to dry out and the water to go away.

j. **Blow some bubbles** and look for the rainbows shining in them.

9. Writing Table

a. **Draw some rainbows and colour them in.** Can they name all the colours? Talk about the rainbow in the story. What did it mean? Who put it there?

b. **Write the numbers 1 and 2.** The animals went into the big boat in twos.

c. **Draw pictures of the story** Talk about the story. Can they draw a picture of Noah's face when he came out of the ark? Was Noah happy? What did he say to God?

d. **Make a thank you card for someone.** Noah said thank you to God when he came out of the big boat safely.

e. **Can the children be architects** and draw their own detailed picture of the big boat.

10. Small World

Noah's Ark – there are some lovely wooden Noah's Ark sets available, but if you don't have one, why not make your own Noah's Ark. Make a boat and set out toy animals with which the children can re-enact the story.

11. Snack Area

a. Fruit: Make a rainbow with different kinds of fruit or veg.
b. Use animal or boat cutters to make biscuits.
c. Make simple fairy cakes and decorate them into different animals.
d. Lay your snack out in a boat shape with a sail.
e. Make rainbow jelly.

12. Literacy

a. Read the story of Noah's Ark from a Children's Bible.
Suggestions are:

The Beginner's Bible	ISBN 9781781283479
The Big Bible Storybook (Scripture Union)	ISBN 9780281081127
The First Lion Bible	ISBN 9780745961033
The Jesus Storybook Bible	ISBN 9780310729945

b. Puppets

- Provide (or make) animal finger puppets .
- Cut out animal shapes from cardboard, attach a lollipop stick and use them as shadow puppets using a light and a wall. The children will love it! How many different animals can you make? God kept all of them safe in the big boat.

c. Create an ark with floor cushions and provide soft toys to dramatise the story.

13. Numeracy and Mathematics

a. Count in Twos: Learn to count to ten in twos. Practise lining up in twos. Talk about two hands, two feet. The animals went into the ark in twos.

b. Practise making the numerals 1 and 2: Try it on paper, with chalk, with playdough, outside with mud or natural objects

c. Big and Small: Sort animal cards into big animals and small animals. Or adult and baby animals. Can you name the baby animal? Talk about all the animals in the big boat. There was a mum and dad of every animal in the ark so that they could start a new family.

d. Sort animals into categories e.g furry animals, animals with scales, animals with claws or maybe pets, farm animals, wild animals.

e. How many? How many animals can they fit into a toy ark? Repeat with a different sized ark. Is the number the same? How many animals do they think were on the real ark? Children love big numbers!

f. **How many in a pair?** Provide gloves or socks to match into pairs or **play animal pairs or snap.** In the story, Noah chose two of every kind of animal to be kept safe in the big boat.

g. **Sing this fun counting song** about the animals going into the ark. You can count as high as you like! It's not Biblically accurate, so remember to reinforce at the end that the Bible story tells us that two of every animal went into the boat.

   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7EWpBIii4XQ (this one goes up to 6)
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R_I-ZDv9IMA (this one goes up to 10)

h. **Make a pictograph** of the children's favourite animals or colour. Talk about the story and the colours in the rainbow.

i. **Keep a weather diary** and then make a pictograph of the results. How many days did it rain? In the story it rained for 40 days.

j. **Thread rainbow beads** on to cord to make necklaces, key rings or animals

14. Music Area

a. **Make a rain stick** for your music area. Use a tall container filled with lentils and sealed securely at each end. In the story, God made it rain for 40 days and nights.

b. **Learn this rhyme about the story and repeat it regularly:**

   'Bang, bang, bang!' went the hammer on the wood.
   Noah built the boat, because God said he should.
   'Roar, gobble, squeak!' went the animals together.
   'We'll be safe in the boat, no matter what the weather!'
   'Splish, splash, splosh!' went the waves against the boat.
   But the boat didn't sink, because God kept it afloat.
   'Crash, creak, groan,' went the boat against the ground.
   They landed on a mountain: God had kept them safe and sound.

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c. **Provide chiffon scarves of all different colours of the rainbow:** Allow the children to have fun throwing them into the air. How long do they take to come back down? Can they keep all the coloured scarves in the air at the same time to make a rainbow? Where does a rainbow come into the story? How does a rainbow make you feel? How do you think Noah and his family felt when they saw the rainbow in the sky? Remind the children that God put a rainbow in the sky to show Noah that he would keep his promise. Christians believe that God always keeps his promises.

d. **Learn the rainbow song:**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mXtpjBzPMeY This is a nice one, but there are many versions available on youtube. Talk about the rainbow in the story. Why did God put it in the sky?

e. **Sing this fun song about the story:** Why not make up your own actions?
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4r78BLBszQ0

f. **Say this simple rhyme together**
(or sing it to this tune: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eu5bBDRpzPM)

All Noah's animals went into the Ark ***(make walking action with palms of hands)***
The ark was very big, and the ark was very dark ***(stretch out hands for big and cover arms in for dark)***
Two by two is how they had to park *(count 2 with fingers)*
And the rain came tumbling down *(move arms down, wiggling fingers as you do so)*
The rain came down and the floods came up *(wiggle fingers down and push arms up)*
The rain came down and the floods came up
The rain came down and the floods came up
And the animals all stayed DRY *(shout out dry and clap hands at the same time)*

Talk about the story. How did the animals stay dry?

g. Sing this fun counting song about the animals going into the ark. You can count as high as you like! It's not Biblically accurate, so remember to reinforce at the end that the Bible story tells us that two of every animal went into the boat.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7EWpBIii4XQ (this one goes up to 6)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R_I-ZDv9IMA (this one goes up to 10)

h. **Percussion Sounds:** Can you use percussion instruments to make the sounds of animals, thunder, rain and calm. Try retelling the story with your instruments.

i. **Circle Game:** (a story reminder)
Try this simple circle game. The children stand in a circle. Two children hold hands and skip around the outside of the circle. Everyone else claps and sings this rhyme: (to the tune of 'The ants go marching two by two')

The children are marching two by two, hurray, hurray
The children are marching two by two, hurray, hurray
The children are marching two by two, Kiera and George, (or whatever the children's names are) and the animals too
And we'll march and sing, as **we** go into the ark.

The children skip around the outside of the circle back to their space and then through their space and into the 'ark' which is the centre of the circle. They return to their space and choose two new children.

You could adapt this game for animals going in two by two. Each pair of children could choose to be a particular animal going into the ark and could go around the circle pretending to be that animal.

j. **Remember traditional rhymes and songs** such as 'Rain, rain, go way', 'Dr Foster' or 'I hear Thunder'.

15. Outdoor or Gym Hall games

a. Parachute Games:

- Sit the children around a parachute: Pretend that the parachute is a boat. Sit two children in the boat. They can be Noah and his wife. Everyone else can make the parachute ripple and wave like the water around the boat. How do the children who are 'in' the boat feel? Noah may have felt a little scared, but the Bible tells us that God kept him safe.
- Raise the parachute into a balloon shape: Choose some children to crawl underneath it while the others gently ripple and wave like the sea. Is it cosy underneath the parachute? Do they like it? Noah and his family were protected from the wind and rain inside the big boat. God kept them safe.
- Choose an animal and two children to be that animal. Raise the parachute into a balloon shape and shout out the animal. The pair of animals should swap places underneath the parachute. Add an appropriate action (e.g. kangaroo jump, elephants make a trunk with arm. Chant this rhyme in between each animal:

  Noah built a boat, built a big, big, boat
  I wonder will it float, will it float, float, float.

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b. Pair games:

- Rainbow tag: Children are in pairs, holding their partners hand. The chaser chases around and when he tags a pair (either partner) that pair stops running, join both hands and make an arch (or rainbow) above their heads. They are freed when another pair runs under their rainbow.
- Throw and catch balls or beanbags in pairs, roll hoops in pairs, etc.
- Make shapes with your bodies together in pairs

c. Animal Games:

- Can you be an elephant, a giraffe, a kangaroo? Can you move from one side to the other as an elephant, a mouse etc.
- Play 'What's the Time Mr Wolf' or 'Piggy in the Middle'

16. Science

a. **Floating and Sinking:** see above under water tray.

b. **Make paper boats:** See if they float. Set up an experiment by making them with sugar paper, newspaper, a paper towel and shiny paper. Which ones floats for the longest? The paper soaks up the water. God told Noah to build a boat that floated on the water and so kept him and his family safe. The big boat didn't sink.

c. **Which one is waterproof?** Cut several pieces of different types of fabric (e.g satin, nylon, cotton, velvet, plastic coated fabric) and secure them to the top of identical plastic containers or jam jars using an elastic band. Using a pipette, add the same number of water drops to each fabric. See how much water drips through the fabric into the jar. Which fabric was best at keeping the water out (the most waterproof?). Which would you choose to make a jacket to keep you dry in the rain? The bible tells us that Noah coated the inside and outside of the big boat with tar to make it waterproof.
Extend this activity by seeing if you can make the non-waterproof fabrics waterproof. What could you use? Sticky tape? Wax crayons? Soap? Vaseline? Or why not make a waterproof roof for a duplo house. Test it with a watering can.

d. **Drying up Puddles –** see above in 'outdoors'. Why not set up an experiment. Measure your puddles and see how long different sizes take to dry. Does wind help? Does sun help? The Bible tells us that Noah and the animals stayed inside the big boat until the water had dried up and the land was dry again.

e. **Keep a Weather Diary:** Can you manage to keep it for 40 days? How many days did it rain in the story? Do you ever know when it is going to rain? How?

f. **Make a simple rain gauge:** Use a cut-down lemonade bottle marked on the side with a gauge and a funnel in the top to collect rain. Check the rainfall each day.

g. **Make a Rainbow:** Put some water in a straight-sided glass. Cut a slit (about a cm wide) out of a piece of cardboard and tape it on to the side of the glass. Place the glass on a sunny window on top of a piece of white paper. As the sun (the light) shines through the water, it splits into a rainbow of colours. If you have a prism in your science cupboard you can make a rainbow with this and a light source too. Talk about the lovely rainbow that God put in the sky. How does the sun shining through the water make you feel. What did the rainbow mean?