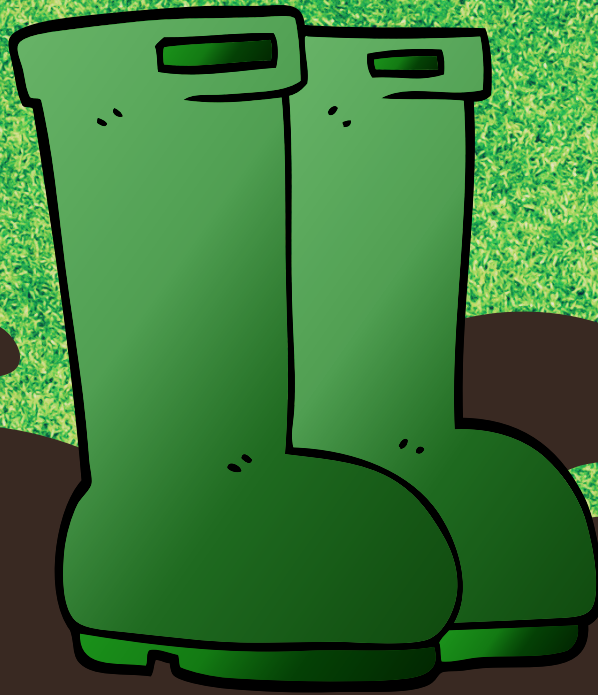


FARMING FAITH



4 SESSIONS OF
AG FOCUSSED FAITH FILLED FUN



Church of Ireland ✚
Board for Ministry with
Children & Families

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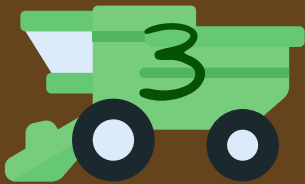
MACHINES

Explore how God made us unique and with purpose, just like the machines on a farm. Make a 3D tractor, play match the machine and more!



BEEF

Chat about how we should put our trust in God, not in the things of this world that will fade & grow weak. Play Build a Bull, make a loo-roll bull and have a go at stock judging!



TILLAGE

Think about the seasons of life, praying thy will be done and trusting God even when we don't see answers. Make an incredible edible field, or a combine memory verse harvester.



SHEEP

Explore Psalm 23, what it means to follow the good shepherd through easy green fields and very dark valleys. Make marshmallow sheepcakes or pompom sheep.



FARMING FAITH

LESSON PLAN



Machines

KEY FOCUS POINT

God made us and we each have a unique purpose.

OBJECTIVE

Children explore how every farm machine is different – some large, some small, some technical some simple, but every machine was designed with a purpose – to help the farmer with his work. In the same way we were made by God all different but all with purpose.

KEY PASSAGE

Key Passage: Psalm 139 v 13-16

Drawing out how God knows every part of us and He knows all that we can do. Even the bits of us that we might not like, the bits others might think of as different. Even though we are small, we have purpose at every stage of our lives and can do the work of telling others about God's love.

MEMORY VERSE

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. **Ephesians 8v10**

WELCOME & OPENING DISCUSSION

Welcome the Children. Ask if anyone has any news they want to share, something they have done this week that was fun or interesting. What was their favourite part of the week?

Explain this week we are looking at Farm Machinery - ask if anyone has a favourite tractor - if so, what do they like about it?

ACTIVITY

Match the Machine. The aim of the activity is to match the farm machine to the work that it does. If you have a very small group you can get the children to match the machines themselves. If the group is large you might want to split them into teams with a set of machines / work and see which team can match the machines first. Alternatively, if you have space you could stick the Machine pictures around the room, call out the work to be done and see who can find the correct machine picture first.

BIBLE CONNECTION

This is part of the lesson is scripted should you wish to use it as is, or feel free to change it to your style. Remember to keep it under 5 minutes long, keep it engaging with interactive questions and if possible some visual aids for example toy tractors, toy farm animals or picture's etc. Remember you are not preaching at the children you are sharing together with them. :)

Have you noticed how different all the machines are? Some of them are small, some of them are massive, some have huge tyres others have skinny tyres, some of them are full of buttons and technology and others just have a steering wheel and pedals.

*When you look at them, which one do you think is best?
Do they all help the farmer in some way?
Are any of them useless?*

That's right, they all have a use, they all help the farmer with the work that needs to be done. These machines didn't always exist though, did they? At some point, somebody sat down and thought about the work that needed to be done and they designed a machine that would do exactly that. They thought about every little part of the machine, how it would work, every wheel, every bolt, every tiny part of the engine.

The first machines were simple, but they got the job done. Then as time went on the machines changed, became bigger and were able to do the job faster and more efficiently.

We are going to read a few verses from the Bible now, these verses talk about how God made you:

Psalm 139 v 13-16

You made my whole being. You formed me in my mother's body.

I praise you because you made me in an amazing and wonderful way.

What you have done is wonderful. I know this very well.

You saw my bones being formed as I took shape in my mother's body.

When I was put together there, you saw my body as it was formed.

All the days planned for me were written in your book before I was one day old.

Just like the machines - when God created you He thought about every little part of you. Every single bit has a purpose and works just the way it needs to for what God wants you to do. Even the bits of us we don't like, or the bits that don't work the way we want them to. In God's eyes you are perfect just as you are.

Each one of us, no matter how big, small, young or old can work to help God in His farm - this world. We can tell others about God's love, we can look after the animals and plants, we can help others around us when they are tired, struggling or unhappy. Each of us can use the skills and strengths we have for God.

For a moment have a think about the ways you help people already - call out some of the things you do for your family, for your friends or for your community.

How wonderful! As we go through this week think about the things you are doing, how God has created you to be able to help others and how he made you perfectly for those tasks.

CRAFT ACTIVITY

3D tractor

Cut out template, colour and follow the instructions to make the tractor. If you have time also complete the trailer but this is optional.

This is not a quick craft so if you are short on time we suggest having the tractor & wheels prepped before your class.



Young Children - colour by number Tractor or Lolly stick tractor

MATERIALS

For 3D tractor:

Template tractors printed.
Cardboard.
Glue.
Toothpicks
Small Beads / blue tack

For lolly stick tractor:

Popsicle sticks
Paint / Markers
Glue

SUMMARY

Who would like to share the things that you remember most from our time together?

When you are out and about this week and you see tractors, combine harvesters or any other farm machines working, look at them closely, all the details – the bolts, the buttons, the tyres, and the work they are doing.

Remember how God created you and He thinks you are perfect. He wants you to join with Him in working for this world – helping and caring for those around you, telling them about God's love and caring for His creation. Using your skills and talents for His world.

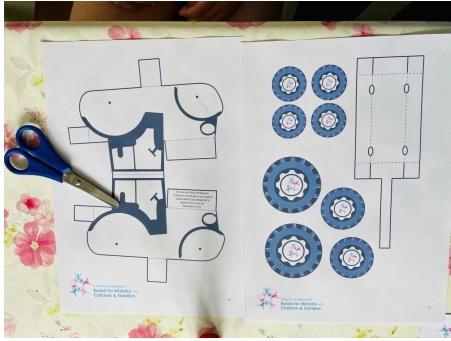
PRAYER

Father God, we thank you for our land, our crops and all those who work to produce the food we need. We thank you that you love us completely just as we are. Help us to do the work you have given us - to care for those around us and your creation, and to love others telling them how much you love them too.

Help us to remember all we have learned and talked about today as we got through the rest of this week. Amen.

3D TRACTOR

STEP BY STEP GUIDE

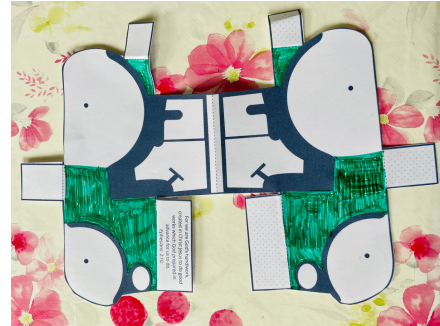


1. PRINT

Print and cut the templates - one per child

2. COLOUR TRACTOR

Children can decorate their tractors & draw themselves in the driving seat :)



3. GLUE TABS & STICK TOGETHER

Glue the tabs with dots on them and fold / stick these under the white tabs so the tractor stands.



4. PREP FOR WHEELS

Using the toothpick put a small hole where the dot is on the wheel area of the tyre. :)



6. WHEELS

Glue the tyres to card like an old cereal box and cut out.

7. PIN THE WHEELS

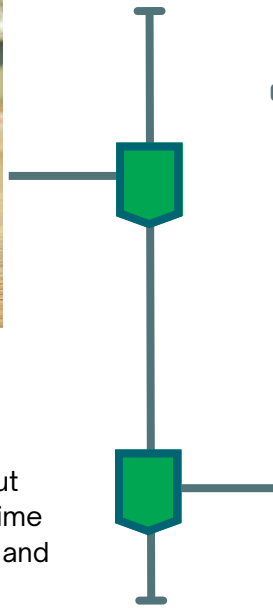
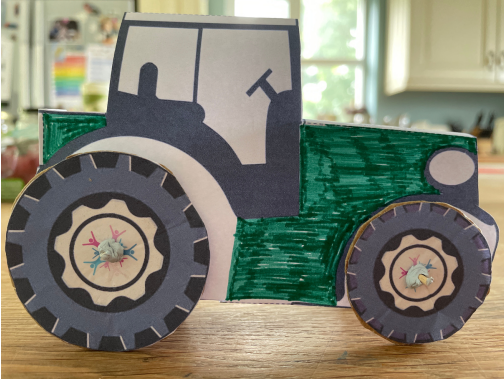
Using the toothpicks put a whole in the middle of the tyre. If Children are doing this place some bluetack under the wheel so the toothpick goes down into it and not into their fingers!



8. ATTACH WHEELS

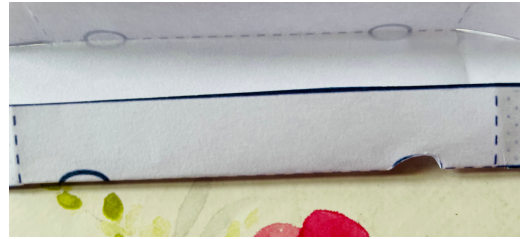
Using the toothpicks going all the way through the

3D TRACTOR



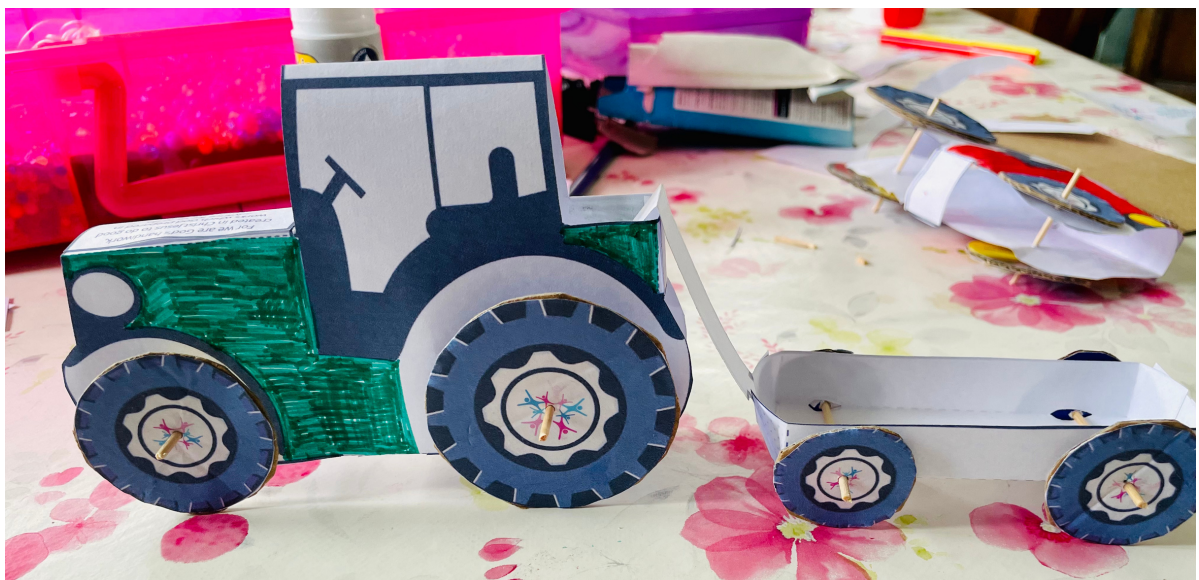
9. CUT TOOTHPICKS

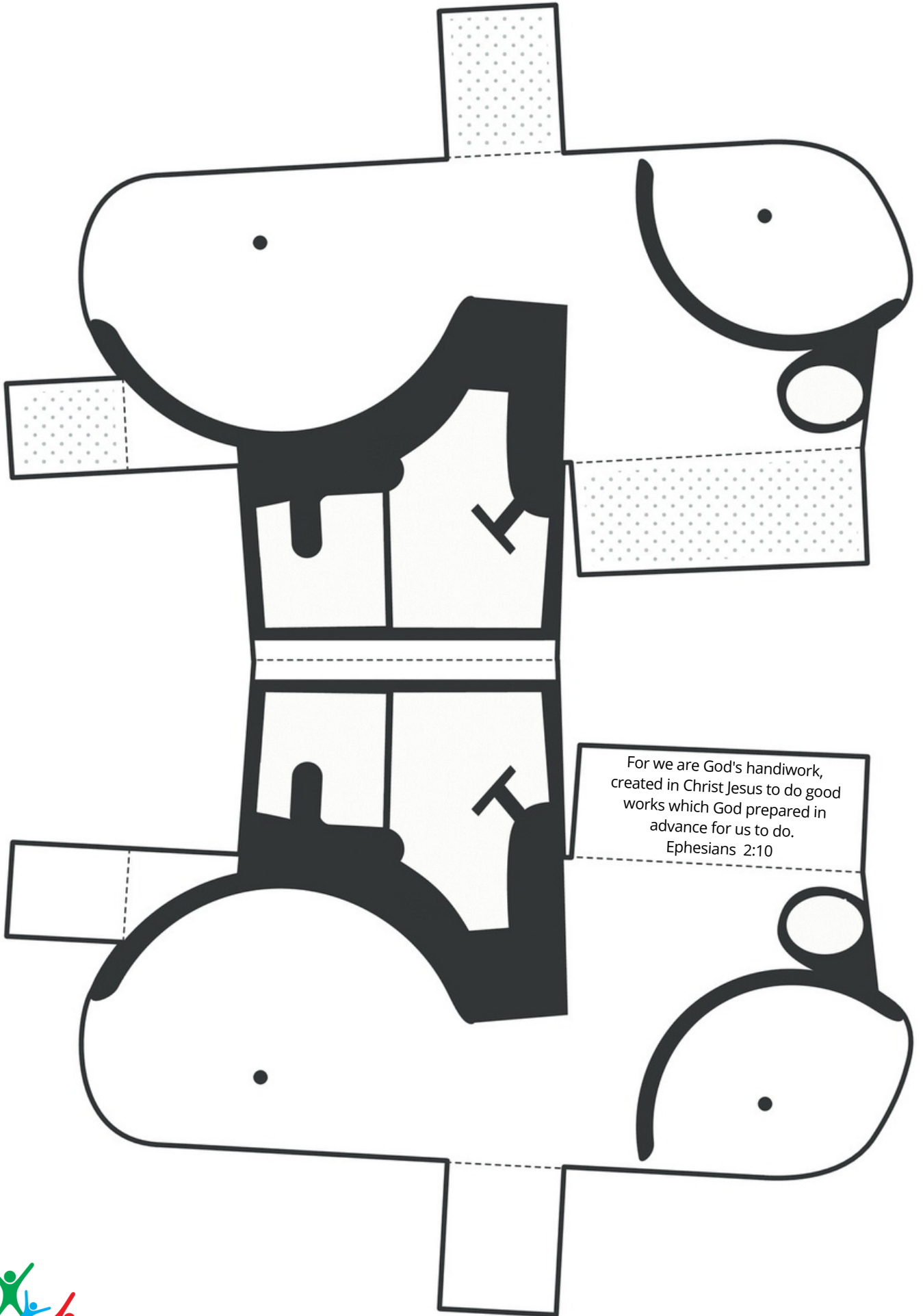
Cut the sharp ends off the toothpicks (this should be done by an adult). To ensure wheels don't fall off attach a small blob of blue tack to the end of the stick.



10. TRAILER

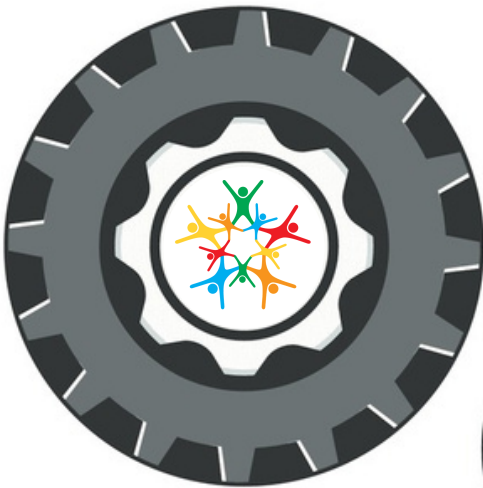
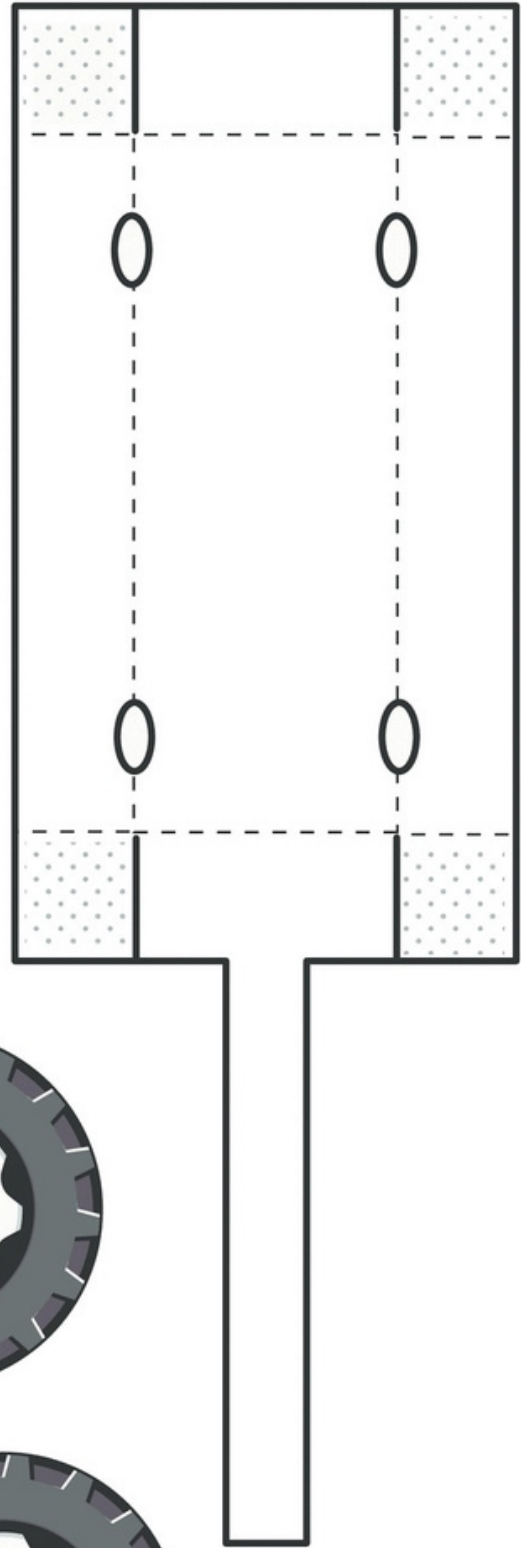
Follow the same principle for the trailer if you wish to add this. To cut the holes for the toothpicks, this time fold the paper on the dotted lines and cut the small semicircle shape





For we are God's handiwork,
created in Christ Jesus to do good
works which God prepared in
advance for us to do.
Ephesians 2:10







MACHINE MATCH

The aim of the game is to match the farm machine to the work that it does.

Prepare in advance - print and cut out the pictures and job descriptions. You may wish to use the pictures with machine names if you've a mixed group just to help younger / non farming children. If your group is older and from farming families you can use the pictures without names and give extra points to those who can name the machine after they've been matched.

If you have a very small group you could print enough copies so each child matches by themselves. Or if you've a group of more than 5 children you might want to split them into teams with a set of machines & the work and see which team can match the machines first. Alternatively, if you have space you could stick the Machine pictures around the room, call out the work to be done and see who can bring you the correct machine picture first.





This machine turns the soil
ready for winter



This machine gathers the crop
into a round shape



This machine turns the cut silage (grass) to help it dry



This machine helps the sheep feel cooler in the summer



This machine puts the crop seed into the ground



This machine gathers the silage (grass)



This machine stops weeds growing in the crops



This machine gets the milk from the cows



This machine cuts the trees down



This machine cuts and gathers the corn / wheat / barley



Round Baler



Combine Harvester



Crop Sprayer



Dairy Parlour



Sheep Shearer



Plough

Chain saw



Seed Drill



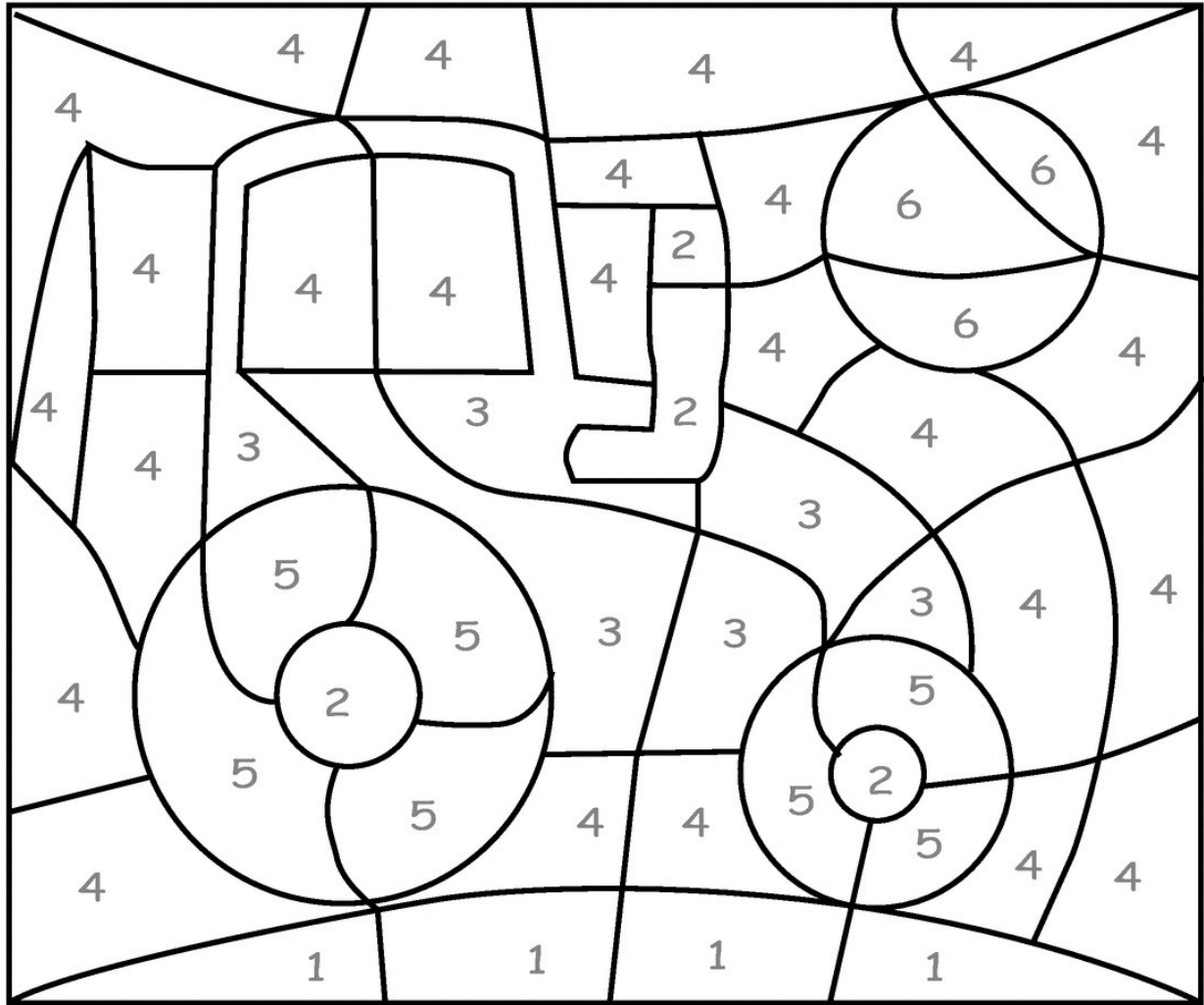
Tedder / Rake









Forage Harvester



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- 1  green
- 2  grey
- 3  red
- 4  blue
- 5  black
- 6  yellow

Alternative craft ideas



FARMING FAITH

LESSON PLAN



Beef

KEY FOCUS POINT

We can trust God in all things - more than anything else the world might offer.

OBJECTIVE

Children explore how this world tells us to trust in jobs, in money, in relationships, in fame and fitness. Whilst these things in themselves are not wrong, they will at some point disappoint us or let us down. The Bible tells us instead to put our trust in God who is always faithful, strong and is always there - for eternity.

KEY PASSAGE

Key Passage: Psalm 20 v 7-8

Some trust in their war chariots and others in their horses, but we trust in the power of the Lord our God. Such people will stumble and fall, but we will rise and stand firm.

MEMORY VERSE

Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in the LORD with all your heart; and lean not to your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.

WELCOME & OPENING DISCUSSION

Welcome the Children. Ask if anyone has any news they want to share, something they have done this week that was fun or interesting. What was their favourite part of the week?

Explain this week we are looking at Beef farming. Ask if anyone has ever stood close to a big bull – how big was it, how did it make you feel?

ACTIVITY

If you have space, play "stampede" (also known as foxes and rabbits) one person stands in the middle they are the farmer, the rest stand at the end of the space – they are the bulls. When you call Stampede all the bulls run to the other side of the space and the farmer has to tag as many as they can. Once tagged those bulls become farmers – keep playing until only one bull is left.

BIBLE CONNECTION

This is part of the lesson is scripted should you wish to use it as is, or feel free to change it to your style. Remember to keep it under 5 minutes long, keep it engaging with interactive questions and if possible some visual aids for example toy tractors, toy farm animals or picture's etc. Remember you are not preaching at the children you are sharing together with them. :)

If you have ever stood close to a bull – even a young one – you will know they are very strong, powerful and big animals. You would not want to get too close and you'd certainly want to keep your toes out of the way when they walk!

Did you know Bulls are mentioned in the Bible, a lot! They were, and still are very important animals. Before tractors were invented it was bulls who pulled the ploughs – in many countries they still do. The Bible talks about bulls in different ways, sometimes they are symbols of wealth, other times of stubbornness (Hosea 4:16), some people even made statues of bulls and worshipped them as they thought bulls were so strong and mighty.

Imagine if you had a bull with you when you went to school, would anyone mess with you? What you like having something so big and strong beside you – where would you go and what would you do? It would be quite cool having something so big and powerful beside you don't you think?!

Whilst in real life people don't walk around with a bull for protection, lots of us do put our trust in many other things thinking they will protect us. What things do you think people put their trust in? It might be how strong they are, how clever they are, how good they are at sports, how pretty/handsome they are if they have all the latest fashion or technology. Adults might trust in money, a good job, another person, cars, houses, or even our own fitness, intelligence and strength.

These things are all good in themselves but if they are all we trust in and build our lives on then we will find ourselves let down. Money gets spent, jobs can be lost, people can let you down and cars brake - and so do our bodies! Even something as strong and mighty as a bull doesn't last forever.

When we read the Bible we get to hear stories of many people who have trusted God - can you think of anyone? Noah, David when he fought Goliath, Moses leading people through the sea. We can also read the things Jesus himself said about trust. He said that the only one we should trust our life to is God.

That can be hard to do sometimes - we look at those with the latest phones, fancy cars, big houses and the latest fashion, or those who are super clever and get all the questions right in school, or super sporty and always score the goals or win the races. We might think their lives must be so easy and think "if only I was like them..."

Trusting in God isn't always easy. But when we read our Bibles we can see every time that someone has put their trust in God He has never let them down. They might not have received what they WANTED but God knew what was NEEDED. He sees the beginning and the end, He knows all things and He knows us COMPLETELY, so we can trust that God will give us exactly what we need.

Our memory verse today helps us to remember that trusting God is important. That when we trust Him and ask Him to guide us each day, that He will lead us the right way - it might not mean big houses and fancy cars, but He will give us exactly what we need (which might be different to what we want!) for each day.

CRAFT ACTIVITY

Build a Bull:

Print one bull for every child. Ideally print on card for durability. Children can cut out their pieces of Bull and then play as a group or small groups of 4 if you have a large crowd. You could have a knock out championship - split children into pairs and each time you have the winners play each other until you have one champion bull. If you are short on time you might wish to pre-cut the pieces for each child.

Loo Roll Bull:

Print a bull for each child onto card. Children colour their bull and cut it out - smallies will need help. Snip both ends of the toilet roll and fan out like a flower. Stick the ends of the loo roll to the inside of the bull - front and end



MATERIALS

For Loo Roll Bull:

Bulls printed on card
Loo Rolls
Glue

For Build a Bull game:

Bulls pieces printed on card
Dice

SUMMARY

Who would like to share the things that you remember most from our time together?

When you are out and about this week see if you can spot any bulls. See how big and strong they are. Remember what we have talked about this week and how we should trust God with all the bits of our life. That when we trust Him and ask Him to guide us, He will give us all we need for each day.

PRAYER

Father God, we thank you for your great love for us. Help each day to trust you more, to ask you to guide us and to look for the ways you have provided us with all we need, and to give thanks.

Help us to remember all we have learned and talked about today as we got through the rest of this week. Amen.

OPTIONAL EXTRA

If you have children from farming families or just children who are passionate about cattle you might like to try the Stock Judging task. Very simply print the page with pictures of the prize winning cattle and invite the children to judge which in their opinion should receive 1st, 2nd and 3rd prize. If you had time they can cut out the rosettes and stick them on their chosen bulls.

There's no right or wrong answer - this is all a matter of opinion, they are all prize winning Bulls.

Build a Bull!

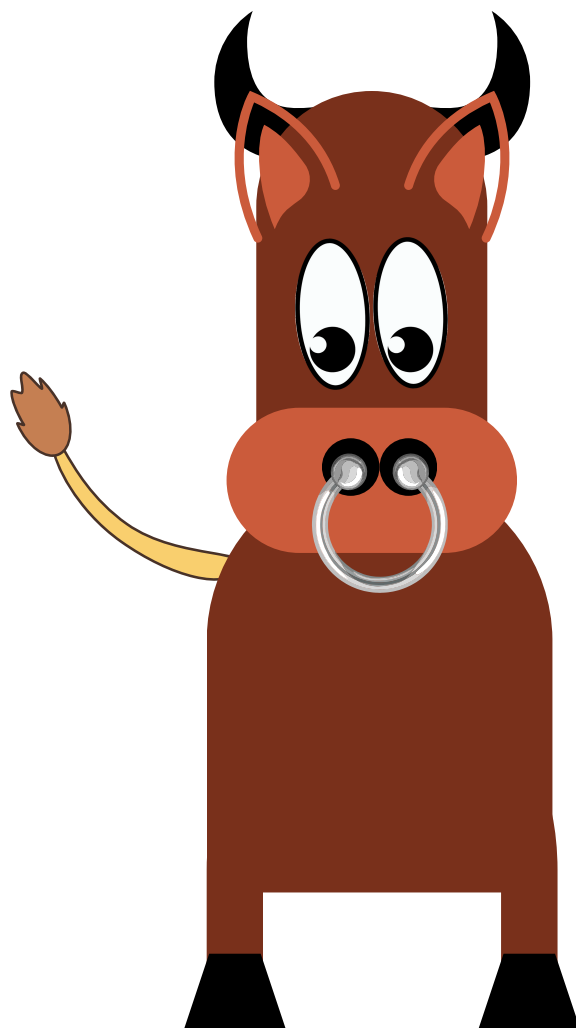
You will need a dice to play this game.

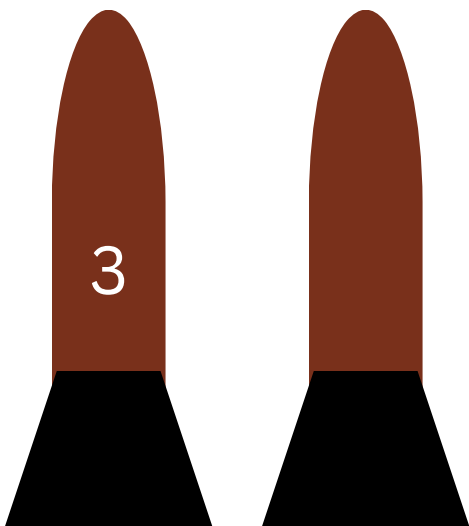
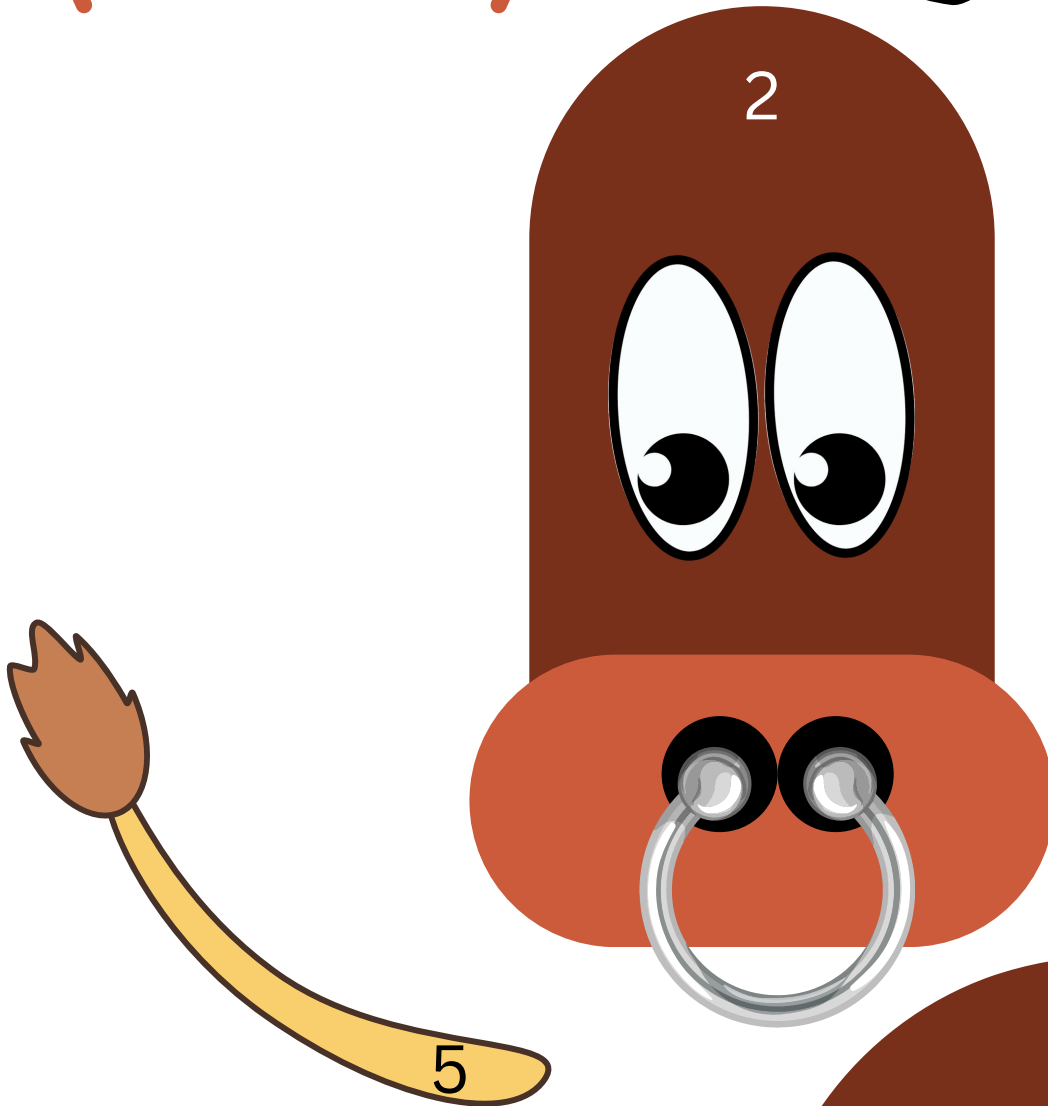
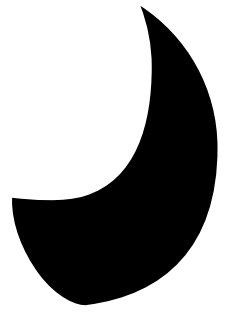
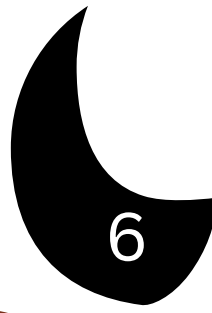
Cut out the parts of your bull.

Each part of the bull has a number that links to a number on the dice.

Take turns to throw the dice - you must throw a number 1 first to get started with your body (if you are short on time you can skip this rule).

Then see who can roll the numbers they need to build their bull first!





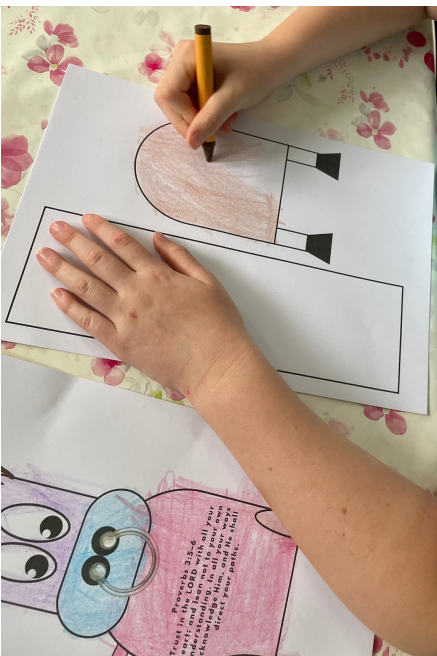
1

Proverbs 3:5-6
Trust in the LORD with all your heart; and lean not to your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.

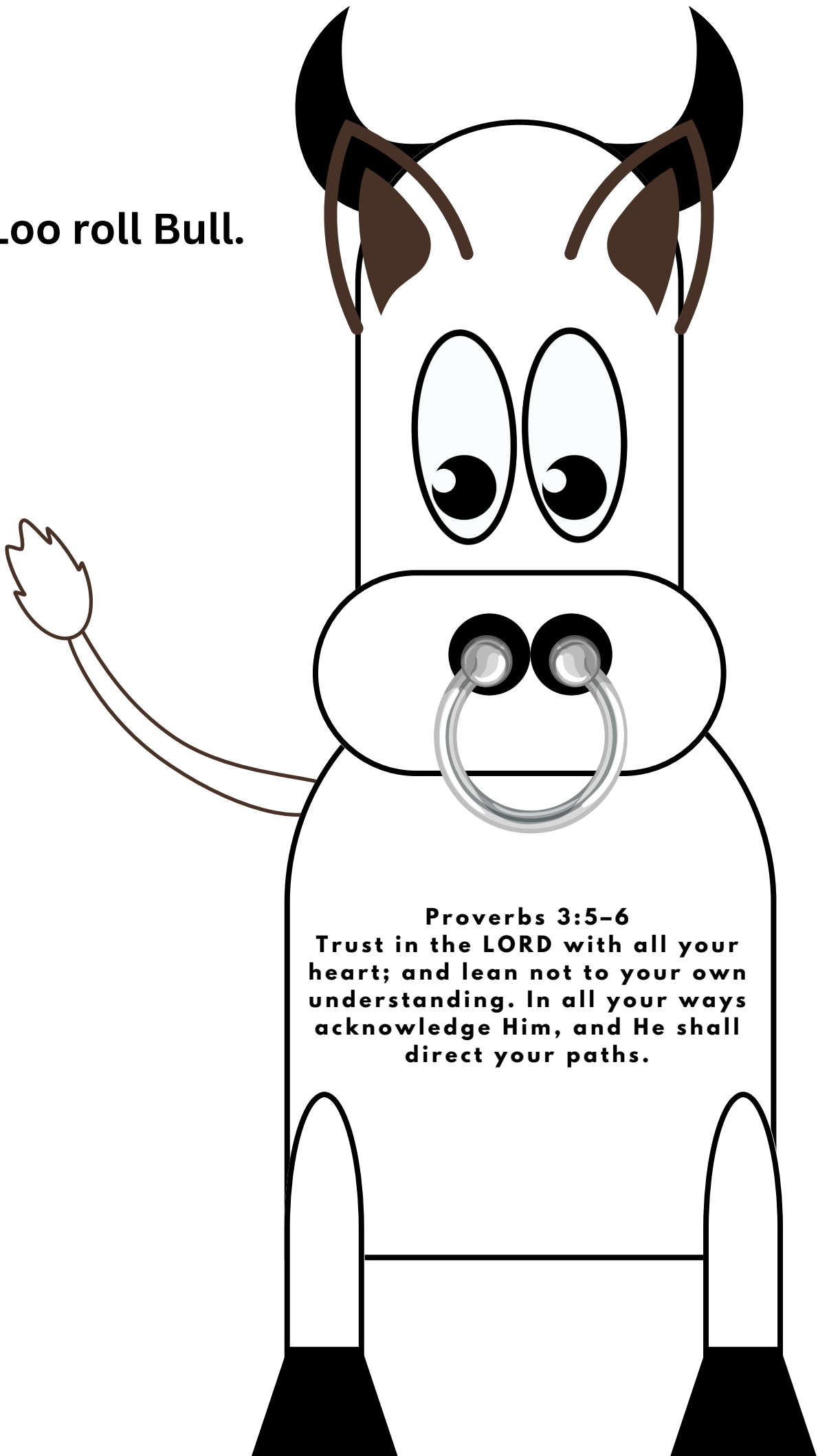
Loo roll Bull.

You will need a loo roll or tube of some sort.

- Print bull onto the card.
- Colour all sides and cut out the bull.
- Colour the loo roll (optional)
- Cut the ends of the loo roll & bend to fan out then stick each end to the inside of the Bull's body.

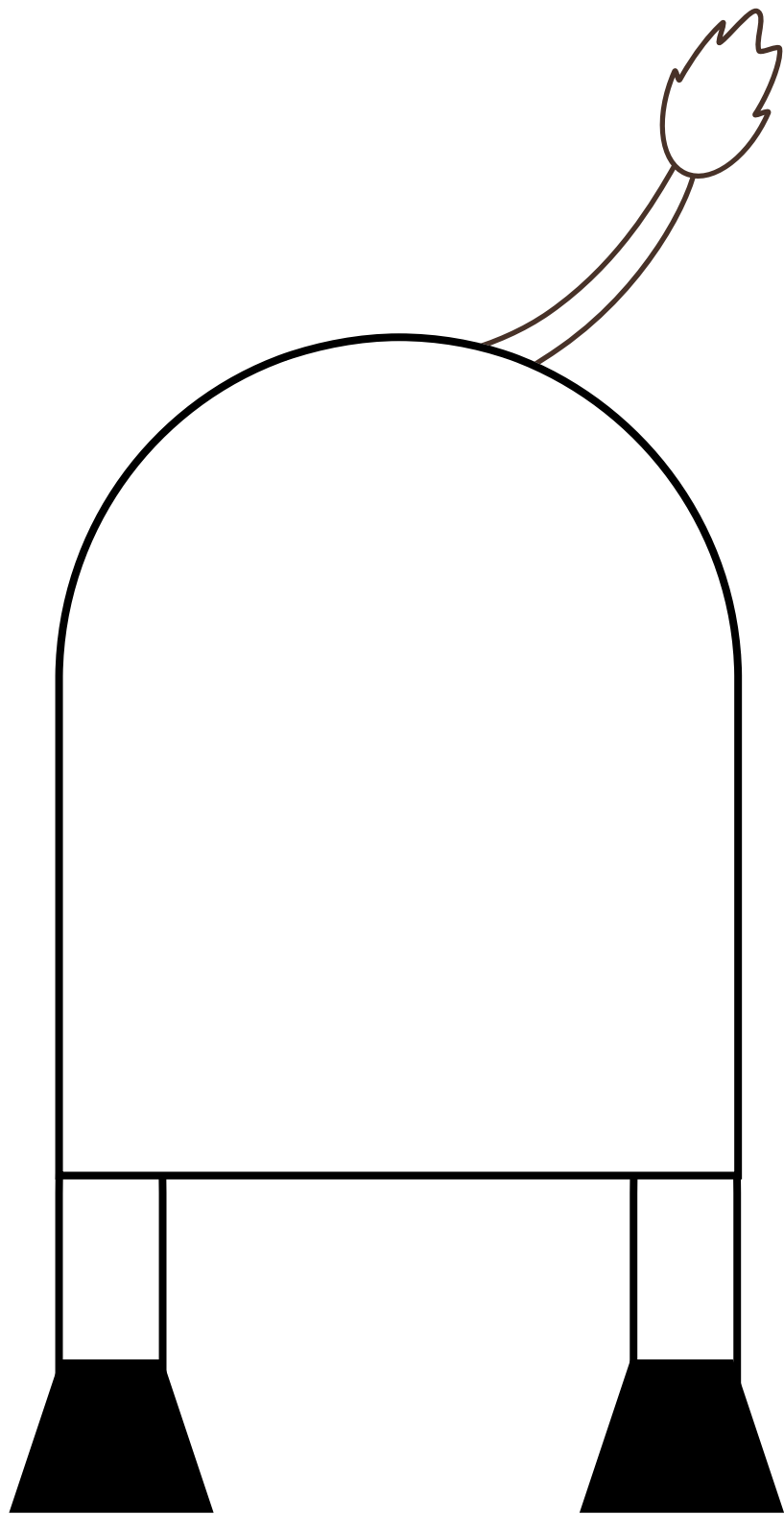


Loo roll Bull.



Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in the LORD with all your heart; and lean not to your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.





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Beef Stock Judging

Take a look at the pictures below, all prize winning cattle.

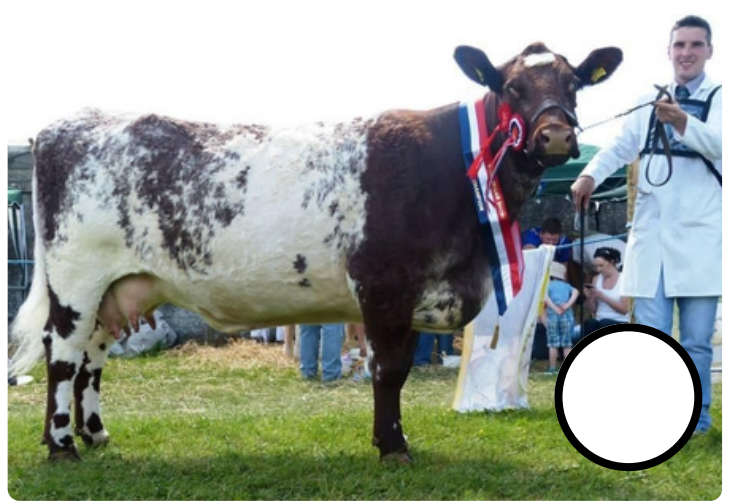
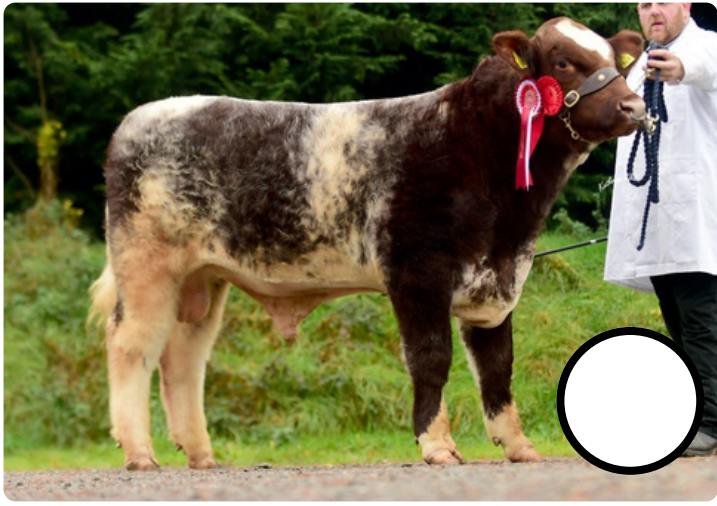
Imagine you are the judge at your county show.

Now choose your 1st, 2nd and 3rd place cattle - cut out the rosette and stick them on your chows bulls.

Tell the rest of the group who you have chosen and why.

Is there an overall winner in your group?





FARMING FAITH

LESSON PLAN



Tillage

KEY FOCUS POINT

Faith - being sure of God in all seasons

OBJECTIVE

Children explore what we mean when we pray "thy will be done." How we can trust God will take care of us even if His way looks different than we would like. We tie this to Ecclesiastes 3 and that there is a season for everything, linking with the tillage farmer who sows seed and trusts they are growing even when there's only bare soil to look at, then they have to be ready for whatever the weather brings & how it impacts the harvest.

KEY PASSAGE

Key Passage: Ecclesiastes 3: 1-8

There is a right time for everything. Everything on earth has its special season. There is a time to be born and a time to die. There is a time to plant and a time to pull up plants. There is a time to kill and a time to heal. There is a time to destroy and a time to build. There is a time to cry and a time to laugh. There is a time to be sad and a time to dance. There is a time to throw away stones and a time to gather them. There is a time to hug and a time not to hug. There is a time to look for something and a time to stop looking for it. There is a time to keep things and a time to throw things away. There is a time to tear apart and a time to sew together. There is a time to be silent and a time to speak. There is a time to love and a time to hate. There is a time for war and a time for peace.

MEMORY VERSE

Hebrews 11:1

To have faith is to be sure of the things we hope for, to be certain of the things we cannot see.

WELCOME & OPENING DISCUSSION

Welcome the Children. Ask if anyone has any news they want to share, something they have done this week that was fun or interesting. What was their favourite part of the week?

Explain this week we are looking at Tillage farming - can anyone explain what these type of farmers do? Yes, tillage farmers grow crops - all sorts of crops: barley, maize, oats, potatoes, wheat and many other crops. Today we will chat about what Tillage farming can teach us about God.

ACTIVITY

Bale Wrapping. One of the jobs on a tillage farm is cutting and baling the silage. Many of the silage bales are then wrapped in plastic. As a fun take on this process split the children into teams of 2 or 3 and give them each a pack of toilet rolls. One child is chosen as the bale, the others are the wrapping machine. They have 3 minutes to wrap their bale as fully as they can in the toilet paper. Winning team is the one whose bale is the most covered.

BIBLE CONNECTION

This is part of the lesson is scripted should you wish to use it as is, or feel free to change it to your style. Remember to keep it under 5 minutes long, keep it engaging with interactive questions and if possible some visual aids for example toy tractors, toy farm animals or picture's etc. Remember you are not preaching at the children you are sharing together with them. :)

How patient would you say you are...really?! Would the adults in your life agree - when it's not quite dinner time and you're hungry, when it's your birthday and you know your present is hidden somewhere in the house, when you have to take turns on the X-Box and your brother still has 30 minutes left?! What are some other things you find it hard to wait for?

It can be very hard waiting for things sometimes, especially if you can't see any sign of the thing you're waiting for. Tillage Farmers have to be very patient when working with their crops. They start with an empty field, just mud, mud and more mud! They plough it and then have to wait for the right time to plant the seeds - looking at the weather, the temperature and soil quality before they can move. Once the seeds are planted then the real patience is required because for what feels like a long time nothing happens. There's no signs of growth and nothing to get excited about.

During this time the farmer has to trust that the seeds are growing under the ground, that change is slowly happening. Gradually green shoots begin to appear and slowly they get taller and taller. But there's more waiting for the farmer, they have to wait not only for the crops to grow, but they then have to wait for the right weather before they can harvest. Too much rain and the crops will be too wet to gather, but too little rain and the crops won't grow strong and healthy. Waiting each week to see what the weather will be takes patience too.

In our Bible reading from the book called Ecclesiastes it talks about this very process, saying "there is a time to plant and a time to harvest" and it talks about all the other different times in life too. Some of the times mentioned in this reading can be hard to go through, times of sadness, times of war, times of death, times of crying.

When these tough times come we might get angry that life is so hard, it might even be hard to imagine ever laughing, dancing or feeling happy again – a bit like when it's icy cold in the winter it's hard to imagine wanting to put your swimming togs on and jump in the sea. But as we are reminded in this reading, these hard times will pass too, there will be a new season, just as the farmer has to wait for the winter to pass before he begins to see green shoots in the spring.

In Church we often pray the special prayer that Jesus taught us – can you remember it? "Our father..." It's a prayer we say quite a lot, but I want you to think about one line of that prayer right now – the line that says "your will be done..." What do you think that means? What are we saying to God when we pray that?

What we are saying really is "...God you know me and my life best, you know the beginning and the end of time, you know all the people in my life better than anyone, so I trust you with whatever happens, help me not to get in the way of what you want to happen in my life..."

I don't know about you, but for me it isn't always easy to say that. I would much rather be in control because then I would make sure nothing bad or sad ever happens to me!

That's the thing though, when WE try to control our lives we tend to put ourselves first, we do only the things that will make us happy and don't think so much about others. But God sees everything, He understands everyone, He made us, this world and time itself. Whilst it was never His original plan for us to go through pain, illness or death, we know that we can trust him even in all of those difficult things. We know that if we keep chatting with Him, listening to Him and obeying His word – what He says to us through the Bible, He will guide us through those difficult times into new things. He will teach us and help us to grow from the challenges we face.

Praying "your will be done" means we have to trust God with every part of our life, not just when we're in Church. To really trust someone you need to know them, and to get to know them you need to spend time with them. So we need to spend time with God – chatting with Him, listening to Him and learning more about Him.

Just like the tillage farmer, we might not see change happen immediately when we pray, but we have to trust God's timing, trust that change will come – in His time.

(Given the things talked about in this session you might want to take a short time to pray together before moving on – ask the children if there is anything they want to pray about)

CRAFT ACTIVITIES

Incredible Edible Arable Fields:

Follow the instructions to create an edible tillage farm made from chocolate crumbs, coconut & shredded wheat. Print the memory verse and add on a paper straw in the field.



Combine

Follow the instructions to create a card combine harvester with the memory verse on the top of the cab.



MATERIALS

For edible field:

- Chocolate - melted
- Biscuits crumbled or rice crispies
- Desiccated coconut or lime jelly (already set)
- Shredded wheat - mini ones are best.
- Paper straws
- Green food colouring

For Combine:

- Printed templates
- Toilet rolls inner
- Paper straws
- Stick glue

SUMMARY

Who would like to share the things that you remember most from our time together?

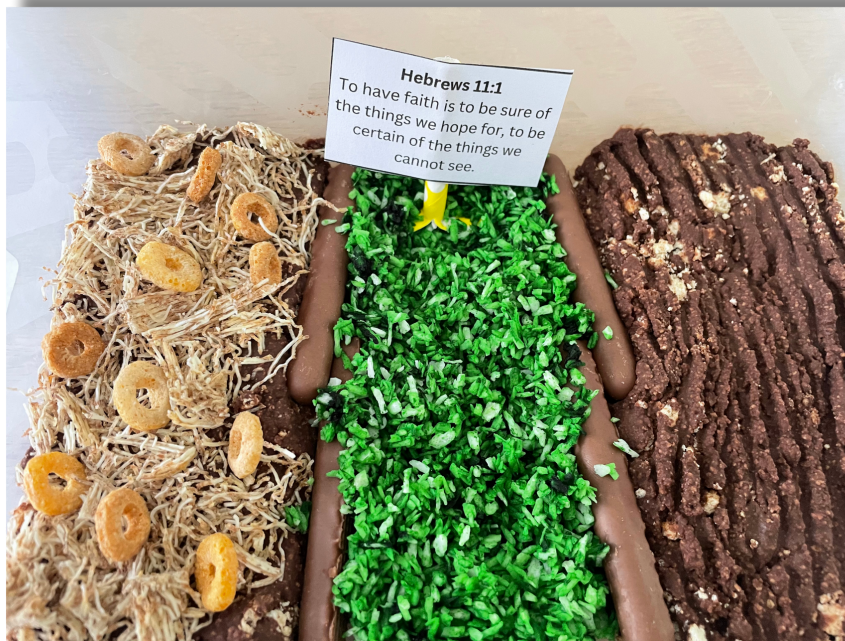
When you are out and about this week take time to look at the fields. Notice what stage they are at and pray for the farmers who are helping to grow our food. Remember the things we have talked about and that there is a time for everything, praying "your will be done" and trusting God in the good times and the sad times.

PRAYER

Father God, we thank you for your great love for us. Help each day to trust you more, to ask you to guide us and to look for the ways you have provided us with all we need, and to give thanks.

Help us to remember all we have learned and talked about today as we got through the rest of this week. Amen.

Incredible Edible Aarable Farm!



A fun, slightly messy but hopefully yummy way to create a field showing the seasons of growth on a tillage farm - from the ploughed field to the green first shoots of growth to the harvested field and bales.

We used blitzed biscuits & melted chocolate but if you're making this in a club you might find the rice crispy and chocolate mix easier to use. Likewise, not all children like coconut so we used lime jelly as an alternative.

For this tasty activity you will need:

- Paper plates / take-away containers
- Shredded wheat / mini shredded wheat
- Desicated cocunut & green colouring or lime jelly (already set)
- Chocolate fingers
- Digestive biscuits or rice crispies
- Milk chocolate - for cooking
- Cheerios (not needed if you are using mini-shreddies for bales)
- Paper straws

EDIBLE FARM

STEP BY STEP GUIDE



1. BLITZ BISCUITS

Place biscuits into food processor and blitz (ignore if using rice crispies)



2. MELT CHOCOLATE

Break chocolate into squares and place in a heat/microwave



3. MIX IN CHOCOLATE

Pour melted chocolate into the biscuit or rice crispy mix & ensure it's evenly covered.



4. SPREAD ONTO PLATE / TRAY

Divide the mix to each child and they then spread across their plate/tray and make lines with a fork for the ploughed field. Then place the chocolate fingers as fences dividing the field into 3 sections.



6. CRUMBLE THE SHREDDED WHEAT

The children can crunch up the shredded wheat with their hands & place on the end section. Use mini shredded wheats or cheerios for bales.

7. COLOUR COCONUT / LIME JELLY

If using desiccated coconut - mix with green food colouring and add into the mid section of the field. Alternatively chop up the lime jelly and add into this section.



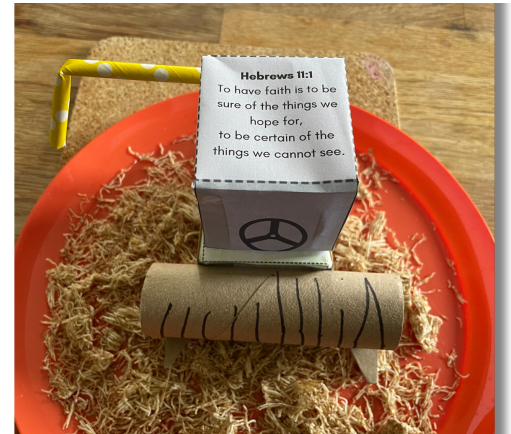
8. ADD MEMORY VERSE

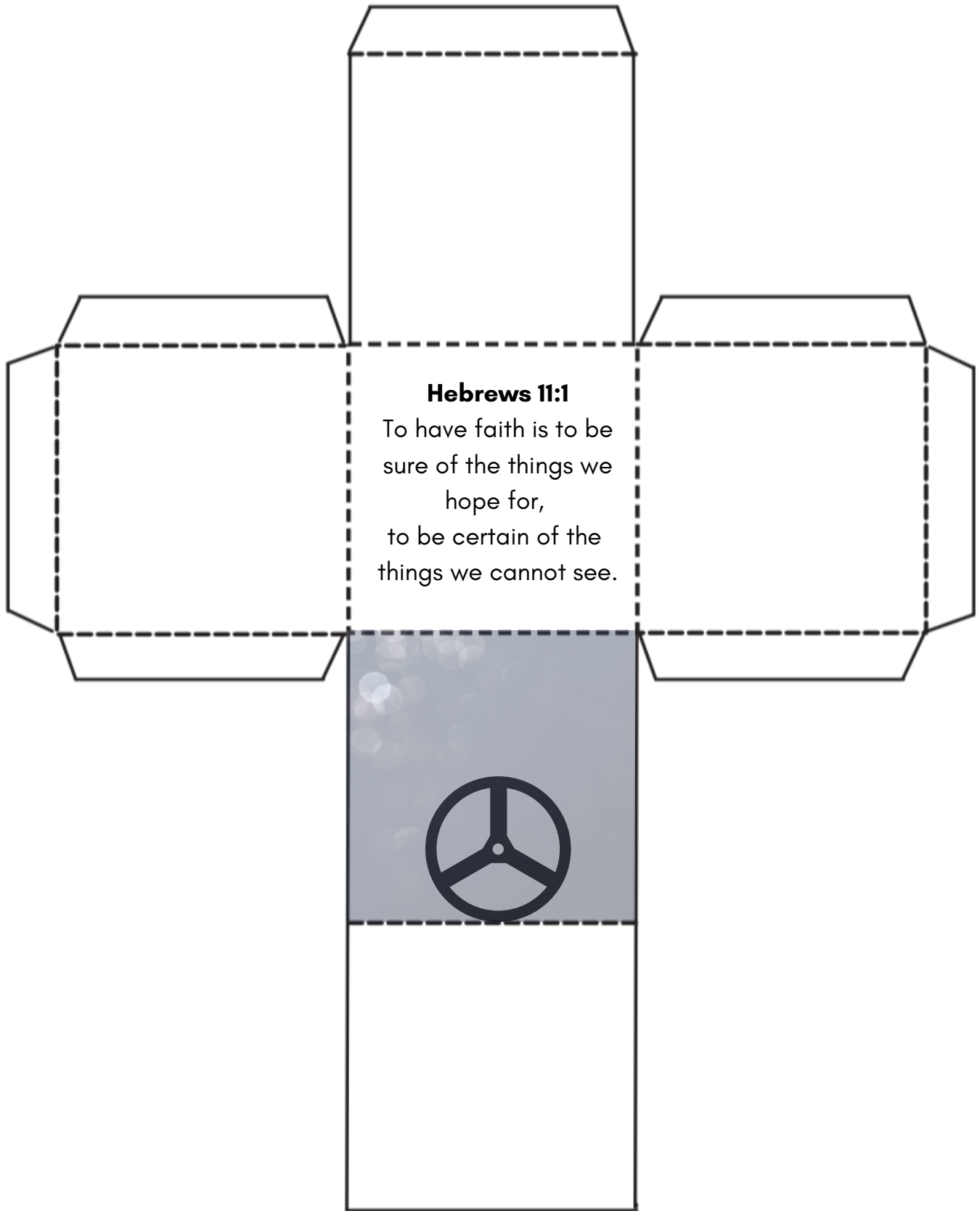
Give each child a cut out memory verse, cut a paper straw into 3 sections - snip the bottom about 1 cm and flatten out for legs. Use stick glue to attach memory verse to the straw post and set into the chocolate field to stand.



Card Combine

- Print & cut out the templates - on card if possible for durability
- Colour the combine top and bottom
- Fold along the dotted lines and stick to make cuboid and cube.
- Stick the cab onto the base close to the front.
- Cut a loo roll lengthways
- Roll it back on itself and glue so it leaves a lip sticking out at the front
- cut the two crop dividers (like pointy teeth at either end)
- Draw lines for the gards on the front.
- Take a paper straw, bend it at the end for the funnel & selotape it to the back of the cab.
- (optional) Cover paper plate in glue and crumble wehatabix / shredded wheat for the field - place combine on top

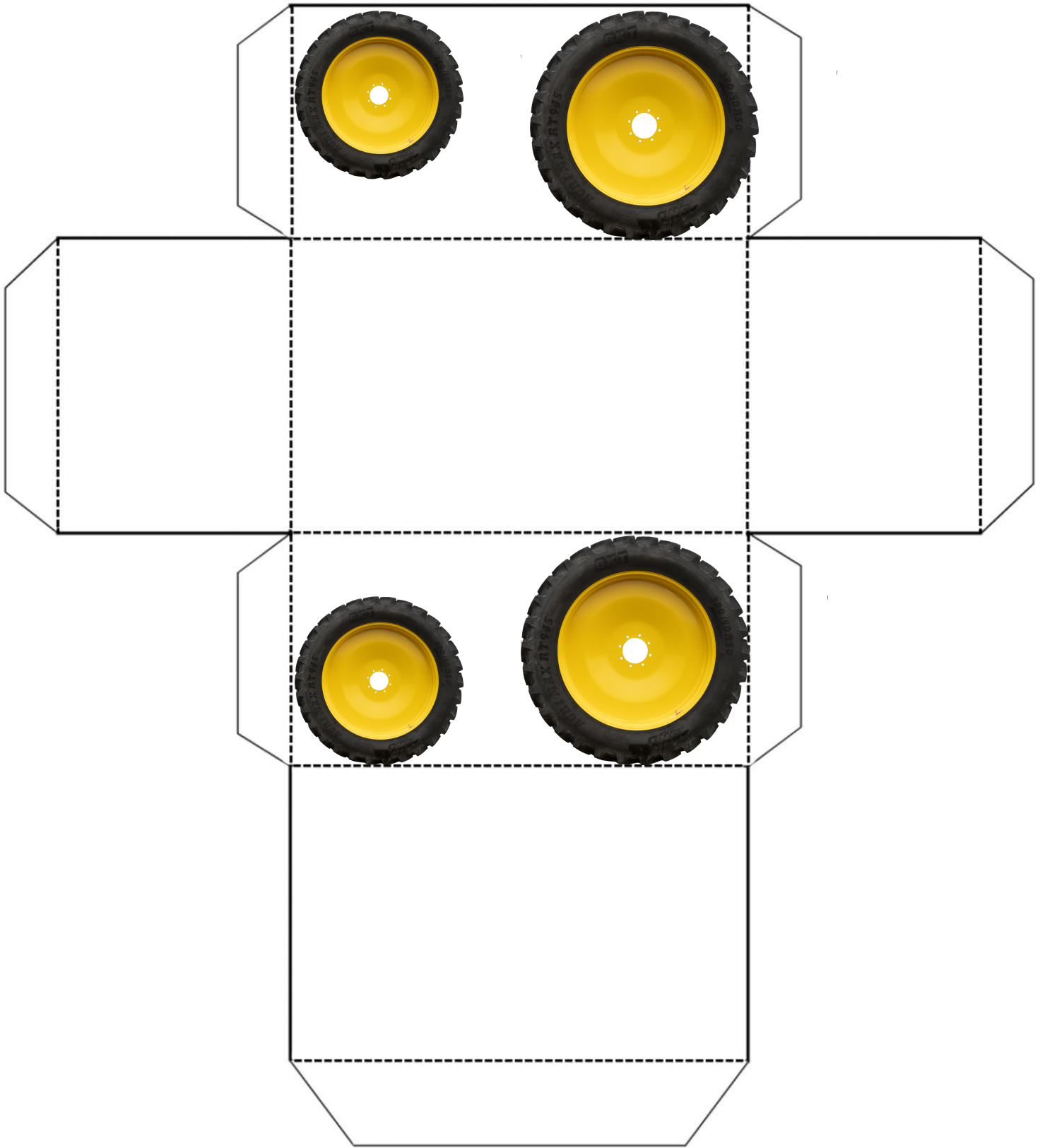




Hebrews 11:1

To have faith is to be
sure of the things we
hope for,
to be certain of the
things we cannot see.



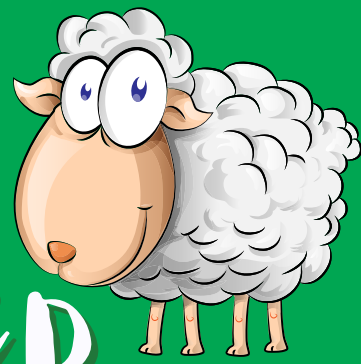


FARMING FAITH

LESSON PLAN



Church of Ireland ✝
Board for Ministry with
Children & Families



Sheep

KEY FOCUS POINT

Learning to follow Jesus the good Shepherd - he leads us through life.

OBJECTIVE

Children explore together Psalm 23. We will look at sheep farming in Bible time compared to sheep farming today in Ireland and see if the lessons are still relevant. We will chat about how no matter where we are, how old we are or how clever we are, we all need God to guide us and to help us - but we have to follow.

KEY PASSAGE

Key Passage: Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd. I have everything I need. He gives me rest in green pastures.
He leads me to calm water. He gives me new strength. For the good of his name,
he leads me on paths that are right. Even if I walk through a very dark valley, I will not be afraid
because you are with me. Your rod and your shepherd's staff comfort me.

MEMORY VERSE

Psalm 23

"The Lord is my shepherd...even if I walk through a very dark valley, I will not be afraid because you are with me"

WELCOME & OPENING DISCUSSION

Welcome the Children. Ask if anyone has any news they want to share, something they have done this week that was fun or interesting. What was their favourite part of the week?

Explain this week we are looking at Sheep farming. Can anyone guess how many sheep there are in Ireland? (4million) Which country in the world has the most sheep? (China 175 million!). That's a lot of sheep - imagine having to look after all of them! Today we will look at what Jesus said about sheep.

ACTIVITY

Follow me - split your group into pairs and have one member of the pairs blindfolded, they are the sheep, those unblindfolded are the shepherds. Have the pairs go for a walk together - the one who is blindfolded listening to the directions of the shepherd. Swap over and walk again. If you have time and space you could have all the shepherds lined up on one side of the room and the sheep at the other and the shepherds call their sheep by name - the blindfolded sheep have to make their way across the room and find their shepherd.

At the end, ask the group what it was like being a sheep? Which did they prefer - being sheep or shepherd?

BIBLE CONNECTION

This part of the lesson is scripted should you wish to use it as is, or feel free to change it to your style. Remember to keep it under 5 minutes long, keep it engaging with interactive questions and if possible some visual aids for example toy tractors, toy farm animals or pictures etc. Remember you are not preaching to the children you are sharing together with them. :)

In the Bible, sheep get mentioned a lot - right through the old testament and the new. In years gone by, particularly in the countries we read about in the Bible, sheep were kept by many families. They were smaller herds and the shepherds who looked after them would spend most of their time with the sheep, guiding them to where the food was, protecting them from wolves and bears.

Today, in Ireland the sheep herds tend to be a lot larger and we are blessed with many lush green fields so the shepherd doesn't have to lead them every day to find new grazing spots. We also don't have wolves or bears here to protect the sheep from - although uncontrolled dogs can cause many problems. So sheep farmers here don't have to spend all their time with the sheep, but it's still a very busy job. Sheep are still sheep and they need a lot of care - they are not the most intelligent of God's creations (if you wanted you could show here the clip of the sheep being rescued only to jump straight back into the same ditch:

<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/Mz2WfBFdOAU>)

Our Bible reading for today uses sheep to help us understand how God cares for us. Let's read it together and as we listen see how many places you notice the Shepherd leads his sheep to:

Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd. I have everything I need. He gives me rest in **green pastures**.

He leads me to **calm water**. He gives me new strength. For the good of his name, he leads me on **paths that are right**. Even if I walk **through a very dark valley**, I will not be afraid because you are with me. Your rod and your shepherd's staff comfort me.

(ask the children to tell you the names of the places they remember - you might want to read it twice)

Some of the places the shepherd leads his sheep to sound lovely - green pastures, calm waters, paths that are right. But there's one place that doesn't sound so nice - what was it?

The very dark valley. What might it feel like to walk through a very dark valley?

Why do you think the writer of this Psalm mentioned a dark valley?

Trusting in God doesn't mean that our life will be easy, there can be times for all of us that are hard, sad or even bad. Whilst God leads us on paths that are right, those paths go around all the problems of life, but they do lead us THROUGH the difficult times. When it feels like we are walking through a very dark valley, God is with us always.

In the verses we read it also talks about the rod and staff being a comfort - does anyone know what those are and what they are used for?

Well, still today, many Shepherds carry a crook or hook - a funny-looking long stick with a bent-over part at the top. The rod and staff are pretty much the same thing - in the past, Shepherds carried a rod which was a short thick stick that was heavy enough to kill a wolf if it was thrown the right way. Shepherds would practice throwing the rod so that when something came to harm the sheep he was ready to protect them. The staff is what we know as a crook or hook, this is used by the shepherd to guide the sheep on the right paths and also to rescue sheep if they get stuck or lost. So in the same way, we can trust God even in the hard times because He will guide us and protect us. How does He guide us? Through the words of the Bible, through other people, and through our feelings - sometimes you just know what the right thing is to do even if it might not be the easiest thing. When you know someone is with you in the dark - someone who loves you and is protecting you - it is a great comfort and helps us to keep walking through.

CRAFT ACTIVITY

Pom Pom Sheep:

There are almost as many sheep crafts as actual sheep in the world! This is one of our favourites. We have a step-by-step guide to making a pompom if you've never done it before and a range of sheep faces: ready-to-stick or blank ones so that children can draw their faces/stick on googly eyes. Depending on the size of the pompoms you make you can choose the relevant size sheet to print. Print & stick the sheep to the memory verse base.



Marshmallow Sheep:

Use ready made plain cupcakes - or if you're a super baker make your own before your lesson :) The children can then help make the icing - either butter icing or glaze icing (icing sugar & water). They then stick on the mini-marshmallows & make the faces from chocolate buttons or large marshmallows. **Be aware of the choking hazard.**



MATERIALS

For PomPom Sheep:

Thick white or black wool
Scissors
Glue - ideally glue gun.
Card faces printed
Memory verse printed

For Marshmallow Sheep:

Cupcakes ready cooked
Icing Sugar / butter icing
Mini Marshmallows
Chocolate Buttons or large marshmallows
Edible eyes / fondant icing (Black & White)

SUMMARY

Who would like to share the things that you remember most from our time together?

When you are out and about this week see if you can spot any sheep in the fields - notice the marks on their wool. Each sheep is marked to show that they belong to a certain farmer. What things about your life show others that you belong to God - that He is your shepherd? Can people tell from the way you treat others, from your language, from your joy?

PRAYER

Father God, we thank you for your great love for us. Help each day to trust you more, to ask you to guide us and to look for the ways you have provided us with all we need, and to give thanks.

Help us to remember all we have learned and talked about today as we got through the rest of this week. Amen.

OPTIONAL OR ALTERNATIVE GAME

One man and his balloon sheep.

If you can get white balloons - blow them up and draw sheep faces on them. Roll up used newspapers to make a long tube and bend at the top to become shepherd crooks - secure with Selotape.

Create a pen with chairs big enough for 4 or 5 balloons and challenge the children to see who can herd the sheep with the crook into the pen the fastest or with the best technique.

Pom Pom Sheep

There are almost as many sheep crafts as actual sheep in the world! This is one of our favourites. Below you will find step by step guide to making a pompom if you've never done it before and a range of sheep faces - there are ready-to-stick ones and blank ones so that children can draw their faces / stick on googly eyes. Depending on the size of the pompoms you make you can choose the relevant size sheet to print. The same is true of the memory verse base.



Cut a small section of wool - about 8 inches - and place between your middle fingers



Tidy up the pompom by snipping the wool so it's all the same length.



Wrap the wool around your fingers - all 4 fingers for the children, 3 fingers for adults depending on how big you want the pompom.



Children can either choose a ready printed face or draw their own. Stick onto the wool with either a hot glue gun or stick glue.



Bring the small section of wool up from either side of your hand and loosely tie. Then carefully pull the wool off your fingers and tie the small section of wool tight into a knot then to the back of the wool & tie another knot.

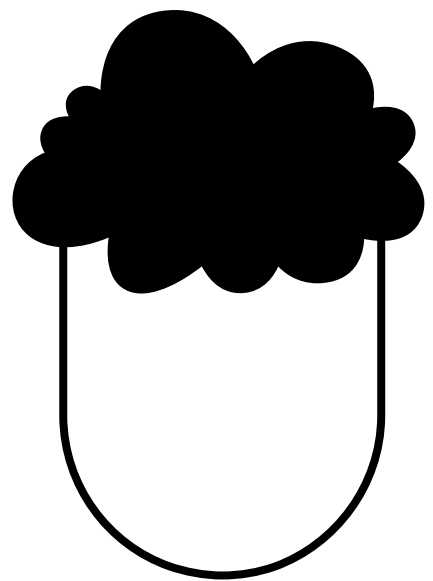
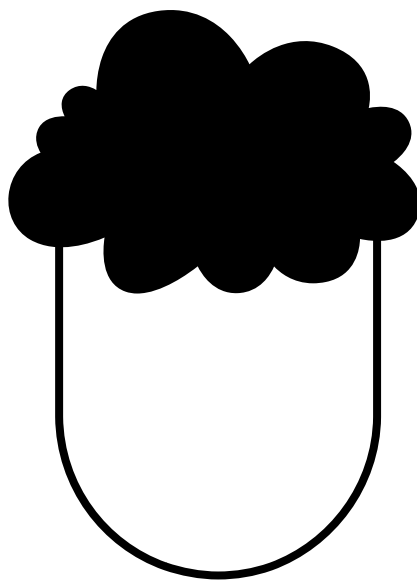
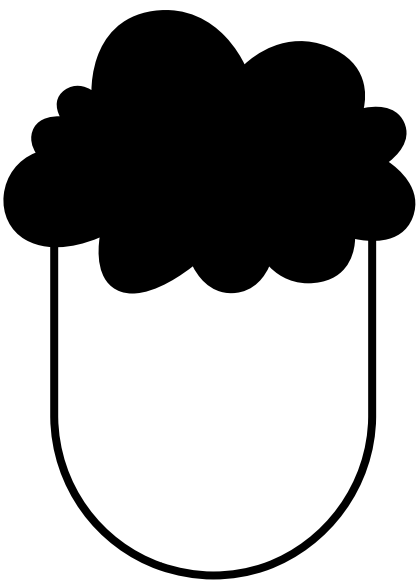
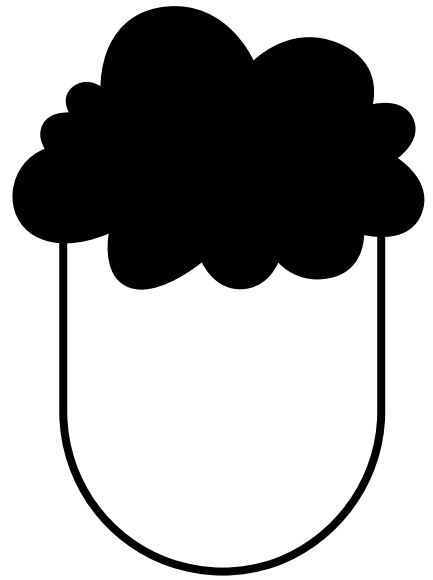
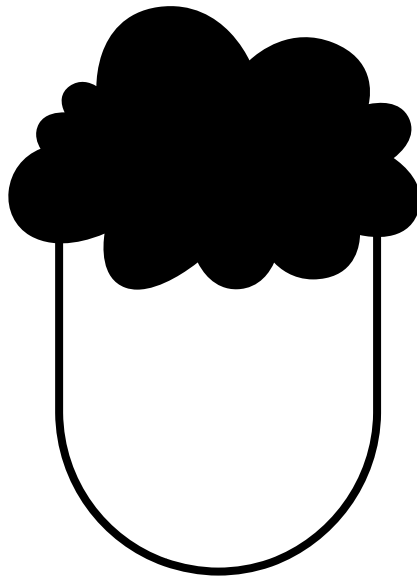
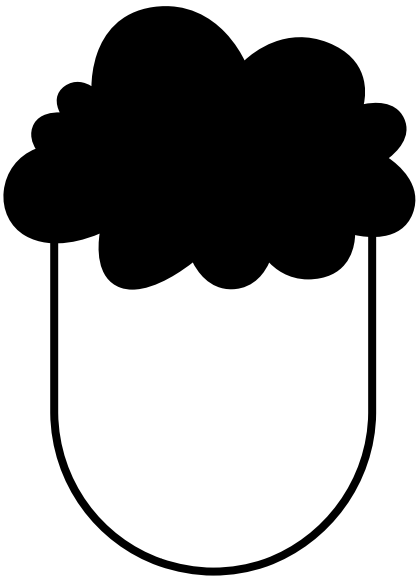
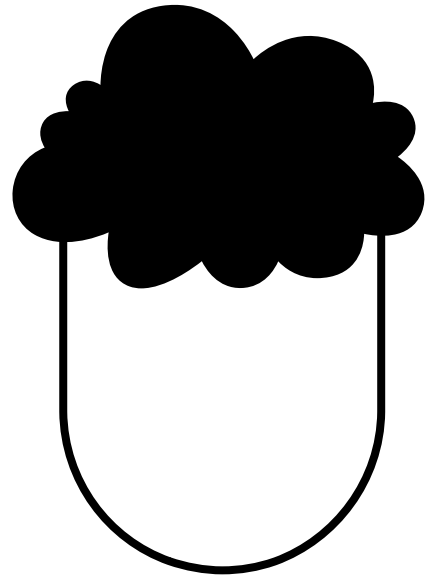
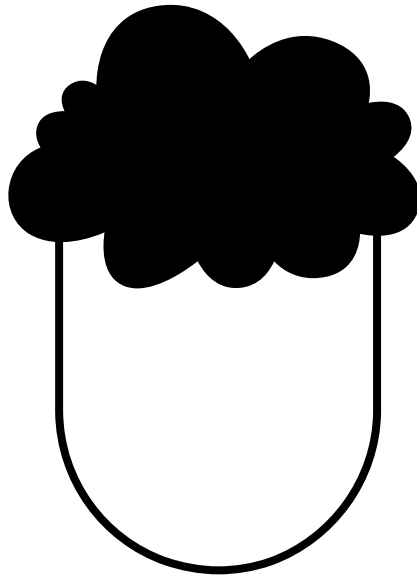
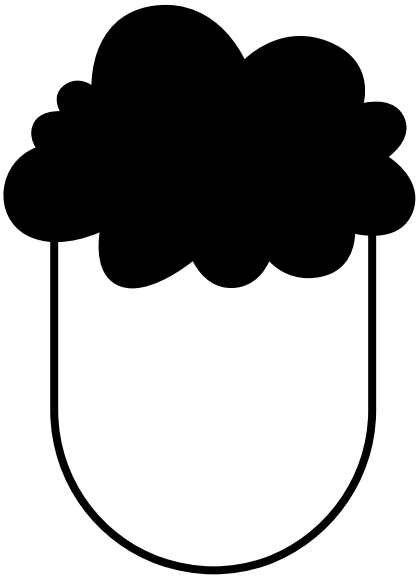


The sheep can now sit on the printed grass patch with memory verse. Alternatively you might like to use paper plates and have the children colour the grass and write the memory verse themselves.

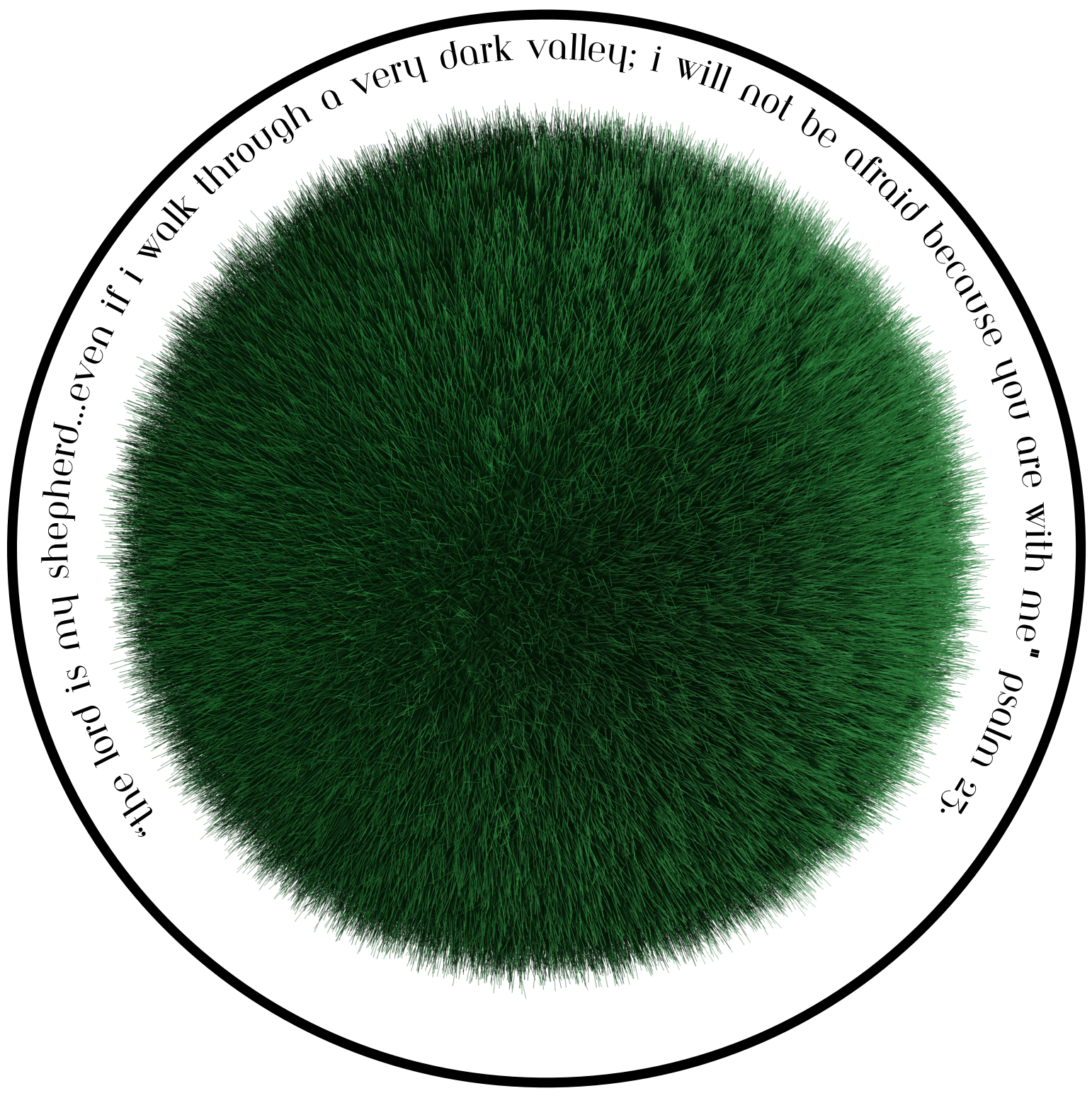


Once it is tied tightly now snip all the loops. You may need to help children with this if the wool is thick or they can't use sharp scissors.









the lord is my shepherd...even if i walk through a very dark valley; i will not be afraid because you are with me" psalm 23.

