

# dessert

## making a bible quilt

### INTRODUCTION

If your group wants to celebrate the Bible, and create a visual record of stories from it, then you might make a Bible quilt. There are plenty of books and places to go to find out about quilt making. Someone within your group may have done this before. It is something which people of all ages and abilities can do and will take several sessions. Ask around to find the quilters in your congregation and see if you can encourage them to come along and share their skills.

The group can be of any size, but you need to have enough things like irons and sewing machines for the number of people present. There should also be enough facilitators to help things along – for example a group of seven to nine people might have three facilitators.

### AIM

The aim is to celebrate your shared understanding of the Bible and to enjoy the shared experience of creating something together.

### YOU WILL NEED

What you will need:

- fabric (can be recycled) 100% cotton is best
- bondaweb iron-on material to bond fabric together - available in sewing/craft shops
- iron and ironing board
- scissors, sewing thread and a sewing machine
- quilting, backing or wadding fabric for the quilt middle layer – from sewing/craft shops - 100% cotton is best
- paper and pens for initial designs
- Bible stories and imagination

### session one: APPROACH TO THE BIBLE

You can get the inspiration for your quilt from the Bible itself or from a children's Bible. Alternatively, you may invite the group to identify a number of Bible stories by telling one another what they remember of some well known passages. The website has more information about how to remember the Bible together. Don't worry if things take a bit longer than you thought they would. The important thing is to make sure everyone is involved. It's better to start with a straightforward project that you know you can complete reasonably quickly.

Each remembered story could form the basis for an individual panel in your quilt. The amount of time you spend on remembering the Bible is the group's choice. You may do this in the quilting sessions, or at other times, such as in worship.

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When you invite people to remember stories from the Bible you get some insight into the Bible we each have inside us. Here is the story of the feeding of the 5,000 as told by William, aged 6:

This man called Jesus and his disciples went to a land and there were lot of people. They had been walking a thousand miles. Some had come in boats. This little boy stood up out of the crowd with his basket. In his basket he had three fishes and some small bread rolls and they had to chop them up so there was enough for them to all go round. And then they all went home.

### GETTING STARTED

To start with, people will need help to make connections between the stories of the Bible and the practical activity of making a quilt. This is an opportunity to learn together and offers a space for dialogue and creativity.

Assemble the group in a comfortable setting and tell them about the idea of making a Bible quilt. Explain that the quilt will be a patchwork of fabric pictures illustrating different Bible stories. Invite people to talk about which Bible stories they want to include. Encourage them to remember their Bible story and to tell it to someone else as they remember it. You may read William's example, given here, to help them get started.

The stories gathered could be from any part of the Bible. Alternatively, you might decide at the start to make a quilt with a particular theme such as parables. Keep a note of all the stories suggested, perhaps on a flip chart, so everyone can see them.

Here is the list one church came up with:

- Christmas story
- Jesus's baptism
- Noah's Ark
- David and Goliath
- The Last Supper
- Adam and Eve
- The Good Samaritan
- The Easter Story
- Jonah and the big fish
- Daniel in the lion's den
- Joseph's multicoloured coat
- The lost sheep
- Moses in the bulrushes
- The wedding at Cana
- Mary saw an angel
- Zacchaeus
- Feeding 5000 people
- Walking on water
- Moses when older
- The tax collector

Now invite everyone to choose which Bible story they are going to work on. It is important that they make their own choice because this helps them to get more out of the process. Some people might like to work in pairs: that's fine. Encourage them to talk about their story. As they remember it they will think of details which can be part of the quilt panel they will produce.

By the end of the first session the participants should have understood the basic notion of making a Bible quilt and decided which story they wanted to make into a fabric picture.

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### session two: MAKING PLANS

Begin by spending a little time re-capping the ideas from the previous week. Any new participants can still join in at this stage and choose a story for their picture. Equally some participants may want to change their minds and choose a different story: that is also fine at this stage.

The next task is to put the ideas and designs on paper. Provide large pieces of paper (at least A3 size) for initial sketches although later you may want to provide a piece the size of the intended final picture for people to transfer their designs onto.

Sketches and designs can be in any medium: crayon, pencil, paint, collage, depending on what resources there are available for people to use. It's important, where possible, to take photographs of each stage of the process of making the Bible quilt. This will help participants to evaluate the process afterwards and to remember their part in it.

As the designs are put onto paper, encourage people to begin considering how they will translate these into a fabric version. What will they need to do this? Their list should include colours and textures of fabrics, trimmings, etc., as well as more practical things.

By the end of the second session all the participants should have completed a design on paper for their quilt picture.

### session three: COLLECTING RESOURCES

Collecting the fabrics that will be used to make the quilt could be the aim of a shared journey to a quilt show, fabric shop or jumble sale. Encourage people to collaborate on selecting fabric and other notions: most pictures will not need a large amount of every sort of fabric, so where smaller pieces are used these may be shared.

The group may need to stick to a budget, and keep accounts of what has been spent, depending on the financing of the project. Basic accounting is a common requirement for most community events and learning how to do it can begin at any age (as can the process of developing future community treasurers).

By the end of session three, a 'stash' of fabric, threads, trimmings and anything else called for by the designs should have been collected together, to be shared by the participants.

### session four onwards:

The time taken for turning the fabric into a quilt will depend on how many people take part, what experience they already have of this kind of process, and what resources (such as sewing machines) the group has to share. Some people might want to work on their picture between sessions in their own time.

There are different methods of making a fabric picture. In appliqué, the original design is transferred from paper to fabric shapes, which are then stuck or sewn on a background fabric. This is probably the easiest method to use.

Another approach is when fabric is 'stuck together' using an iron-on material called bondaweb. This makes the whole process quite straightforward and the end product is usually quite good.

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### MAKING UP THE QUILT

This could be done by the whole group or by one or more people who undertake this rather large task on behalf of the rest.

Lay out the pictures in the order preferred. Stitch them together using strips of a background fabric between each one. The quilt will need a filling, which is best purchased from a specialist shop. If you have not done this before, take your finished 'top' (all the pictures sewn together by the background strips) with you in order to buy the right amount of filling. The back of the quilt can be made from a sheet or table cloth if necessary.

Make a sandwich from the top, the filling and the back, then tack this together. Edge the quilt by using contrasting strips of fabric to neaten the borders and hem these on the reverse side. Final quilting can be done by hand or machine. More detailed instructions for making up a quilt can be found in any good quilting book, or from a local quilting group.

### AFTERWARDS

You may want to exhibit your quilt in a local or national exhibition, at a big church meeting or take it on tour if you are visiting another church or community.

A good digital photograph of the quilt could be used for a poster, the front of the church magazine, a community Christmas card or similar purpose.



This photograph shows a Bible quilt made by Shiregreen URC, Sheffield. From left to right the panels are: Angels visiting Mary, Feeding 5000, Noah's Ark; David & Goliath, Wedding at Cana, Lost Sheep; Daniel in the Lion's Den, Jesus' Baptism, The snake in the Garden of Eden.