

EPIC

explorers



Five fun
and flexible
sessions

Exploring the life of Jesus
with children aged 4-11

Epic Explorers – Leader's Guide

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Welcome to Epic Explorers

Telling children the good news about Jesus is an exciting prospect, an act of obedience, and a big responsibility.

- It's an **exciting prospect** because the good news is so good, and children often respond to it more enthusiastically than adults!
- It's an **act of obedience** because, throughout the Bible, we see time and again commands to teach and train children, and to pass on God's mighty acts to the next generation. The Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) does not have an "adult only" rating!
- It's a **big responsibility** because, while we want to seize the brilliant opportunities we have, we don't want to over-simplify the gospel message or coerce impressionable children into a choice they haven't thought through. Rather, we ought to be careful, faithful and God-dependent, praying that God will unveil their eyes, and cause them to love him with all their heart and delight in him for ever.

Epic Explorers is ideal for a children's holiday club or vacation Bible school. The flexible sessions can also be used in a weekly evangelistic group, a short series in a regular club, or a children's *Christianity Explored* course.

The material helps you, and those in your care, journey through Mark's Gospel over five fun and interactive sessions (with an optional family session). Using the setting of Adventure Island, you will explore significant events from Jesus' life to discover **who Jesus is, why he came** and **what it means to follow him**.

Epic Explorers is full of creative ideas for reaching and teaching 4-11s, and flexible material that allows you to adapt it for your own context. We hope it will be useful for both the experienced children's worker and the first-time leader, whether you are reaching those with little or no church background, or teaching those who are already part of the church family.

May God richly bless you in all you do for the honour and glory of Christ.



Nate Morgan Locke, Tamar Pollard
and the Christianity Explored Team, November 2014

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How to use Epic Explorers

Teaching programme

Epic Explorers is based on Mark's Gospel. The children will first consider **who Jesus is** (his *identity*) as they hear how he called his disciples, performed miracles, showed his authority and revealed himself to be the Son of God (Mark 1).

They will then learn about **why Jesus came** (his *mission*) as they explore the problem of sin and the offer of forgiveness (Mark 2).

Having heard the truth about the reality of judgment, his substitutionary death, and his resurrection (Mark 15 and 16), the final session, looking at Mark 8, will help the children understand **what it means to follow Jesus** (his *call*).

Session	Main aim	Teaching passage
1. Breathtaking Bay	Children will... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know that Jesus has authority over everything. • Understand that Jesus is God's Son. 	Mark 1:1, 16-34
2. Discovery Dens	Children will... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know that we don't treat God as we should, and that our biggest problem is our sin. • Understand that only Jesus has power to forgive sin and can rescue us. 	Mark 2:1-17
3. Mysterious Mountains	Children will... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know that Jesus' death was planned. He took the punishment we deserve for our sin. • Understand that, through Jesus' death, there's now a way for us to be forgiven friends with God. 	Mark 15
4. Crown Cave	Children will... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know that Jesus really did die and rise again. • Understand that, because Jesus has beaten death, we can know life in him. 	Mark 16:1-8
5. Rocky Road	Children will... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know that Jesus is God's Son and came to rescue us. • Understand that following Jesus means putting him first, even when it's tough. 	Mark 8:27-35
Family event (at the end of the club/course)	Parents will... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be introduced to who Jesus is, understand why he came on a rescue mission, and discover what it means to follow him. • Be encouraged to attend a <i>Christianity Explored</i> course for themselves. 	Summary of all five passages

Epic Explorers works best as a five-day holiday club or vacation Bible school. However, if you are running it over four days (or weekly for four weeks), sessions 3 and 4 could be combined.

At the end of both of the session 3 talks, you will find optional paragraphs that will help you to briefly cover the core teaching on the resurrection.

In the small groups, you will need to select two or three questions from each day of the activity booklet so that the groups think about both Jesus' death and his resurrection.

THE CORE COMPONENTS

There are three core components that should be included in your teaching, regardless of the context. These are:

1. An introductory group activity
2. A Bible talk
3. Group discussion

These may vary slightly in length, depending on your setting and the age of the children. Below are some suggested timings for each component, and how they may fit within different programmes.

Option A: Two-and-a-half-hour holiday club or vacation Bible school

An hour with everyone together including:

5 min	Introductory activity
10 min	Bible talk
5 min	Memory verse
5 min	Prayer
10 min	Quiz
	Challenges
	Songs

An hour to 75 minutes rotating round three activities (20 minutes in each):

20 min	Craft
20 min	Games
20 min	Discussion groups and refreshments

Up to 30 minutes all together at the end. Activities could include:

2nd part of the quiz
Serial drama
More songs

A game for families to join in (invite them to come 15 minutes early each day). Alternatively you could serve refreshments for them in another part of the building and have some team members chatting with them.

Option B: One-hour themed session, eg: on a Sunday

10 min	Introductory activity
10 min	Bible talk
10 min	Discussion groups
10 min	Game
10 min	Themed craft
5 min	Memory verse
5 min	Prayer time

Option C: 40-minute session, eg: 8-11s in a "course" setting

10 min	Introductory activity
10 min	Bible talk
20 min	Discussion groups with snacks

Option D: 25-minute session, eg: part of a midweek club

5 min	Introductory activity
10 min	Bible talk
10 min	Discussion groups

INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY (CORE COMPONENT)

This is a short fun activity with the intention of introducing the theme of the session, as well as providing opportunities for the children to get to know one another and build relationships with the leaders.

For each session there are several options to choose from, always including one based on the children's activity books: *Epic Scratch Pad* (4-7s) and *Epic Logbook* (8-11s).

Before the session, choose the activity that will work best in your setting, make sure you have all the necessary equipment, and think through your explanation of the game.

BIBLE TALK (CORE COMPONENT)

For each session there are two suggested talks, one for a wider age-range of 4-11 year-olds, and one for older children (8-11s).

The talks make the "big idea" clear and memorable, and have applications that are closely connected, age-appropriate and specific. They are faithful to the passage, and are visual and accessible, aiming to help the children to engage with the Bible passage.

What the leader actually says to the children is shown in **bold type**. Directions to the leaders are in normal type.

DISCUSSION GROUPS (CORE COMPONENT)

This is a chance to consider further the Bible passage and its implications with the children in your group, using the activity books: *Epic Scratch Pad* (4-7s) and *Epic Logbook* (8-11s).

These times provide the opportunity to consolidate, as well as allowing children the chance to ask questions and build relationships with the team members. It is therefore important that those running the groups are well trained and well prepared. You will find training notes on pages 35-41.

The discussion-group material is differentiated for different age groups (4-7s and 8-11s). The activities and discussion questions differ in the *Epic Scratch Pad* and *Epic Logbook*, though they both build on the same core teaching from each session.

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

Other teaching material within the book includes ideas for teaching the memory verse for the sessions (Mark 10:45) and for praying with the children.

There is a diverse range of activities in *Epic Explorers*, allowing to you to pick and mix challenges,

quizzes, games, crafts, refreshments and songs, to go alongside your core components.

Some activities are there simply to help children get to know you and let off steam. These are tied in to the exploration theme. Others are intentionally designed to consolidate the main teaching point (“big idea”) of the session.

FAMILY EVENTS

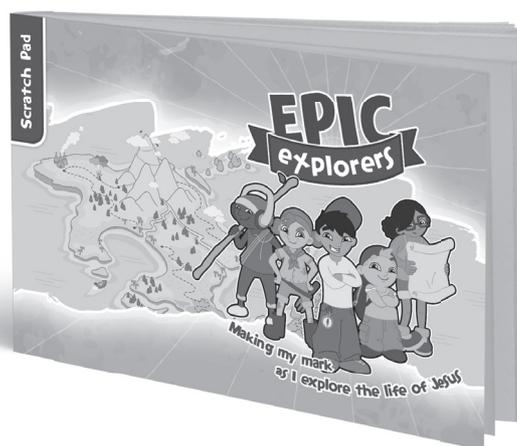
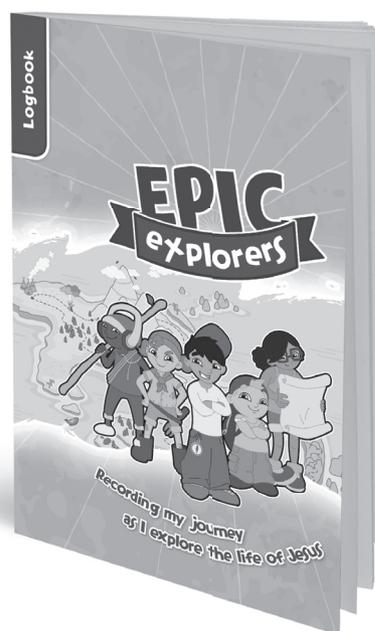
Epic Explorers is designed to help churches reach whole families, not just children, within the local community.

There are three suggested activities that you could run to help engage with non-Christian parents, build relationships and connect them into an adult *Christianity Explored* course.

There are ideas for:

- A family treasure hunt (including a wet-weather option)
- A family fun night
- A family service

Choose at least one to run at the end of *Epic Explorers*. Two summary talks, as well as programme outlines, have been provided on page 135.



Unpacking the programme options

The material is flexible and can be adapted to fit into a reduced or extended amount of time. A five-day holiday club or vacation Bible school is ideal and will allow plenty of time to explore each day's theme. You can give extra time and resources to preparing a special event for local children and their families to enjoy.

A weekly club means you will have less time together, a smaller team and less of an explorer's theme (eg: decorating the venue would be difficult). However it may allow some leaders to be involved who can't do daytimes, and it will help build on-going relationships both with children and their families as you see them over a period of time.

On the following pages there are some details of suggested formats (also available as downloads from www.ceministries.org/epic).

As you consider which format to opt for, make sure you work out how much you can realistically fit in within your time slot. Ensure that enough time is given to teach the Bible passage clearly and unpack it further in discussion groups.

Option A: Two-and-a-half-hour holiday club or vacation Bible school – page 14

Option B: One-hour themed session, eg: on a Sunday – page 17

Option C: 40-minute session, eg: 8-11s in a "course" setting – page 18

Option D: 25-minute session, eg: as part of a midweek club – page 19

Leader's Guide

Introduction

Epic Explorers is designed so that you will have all you need to run a holiday club or vacation Bible school, a short series in a weekly club, or a children's *Christianity Explored* course.

- You will find **outlines for the five sessions**, with a wide range of activities to support the teaching theme for each one.
- There are also **two talk outlines for each session**, one for a group of 4-11s all together (eg: in a holiday club or vacation Bible school), and one for a group of 8-11s only (eg: in a weekly club or course).

 *Note: We do not recommend using Epic Explorers just with 4-7s as the material has not been designed to use in this way.*

There is a strong exploration theme throughout as the children discover the different places on Adventure Island. There is a **selection of Exploration crafts, games and quiz ideas** starting on page 47. These can be used in any of the five sessions.

You will also find **specific activity ideas for each session**, along with **help in using the two children's booklets**: the *Epic Logbook* (8-11s) and *Epic Scratch Pad* (4-7s).

We have designed this material to be as flexible as possible so that you can plan *Epic Explorers* to suit your particular group or situation. You will find some suggested programme outlines on pages 13-19 in Section 1 of this Leader's Guide.

However, you know your group best, so you may want to make some changes to these outlines if they would suit your group better.

Page	Section	Contents
47	Exploration crafts, games and quiz ideas	<i>A range of activities that pick up the theme of exploring Adventure Island. These can be used in any of the five sessions.</i>
55	Session 1: Breathtaking Bay	• <i>Jesus is God's Son (Mark 1:1, 16-34)</i>
69	Session 2: Discovery Dens	• <i>Jesus forgives sins (Mark 2:1-17)</i>
85	Session 3: Mysterious Mountains	• <i>Jesus died in our place (Mark 15)</i>
101	Session 4: Crown Cave	• <i>Jesus is alive and offers new life (Mark 16:1-8)</i>
117	Session 5: Rocky Road	• <i>Following Jesus (Mark 8:27-35)</i>
135	Family events (at the end of a club/course)	<i>Outlines for a Family service to close a holiday club or vacation Bible school; or a Family treasure hunt or fun night that can be held in an evening or weekend at the end of a course. Includes talk outlines to sum up the teaching from all five passages.</i>

Exploration crafts, games and quiz ideas

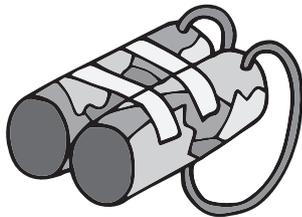
EXPLORATION CRAFTS



Binoculars

You will need:

- Cardboard cylinders (eg: the insides of kitchen-paper rolls)
- Thin, black sticky tape
- Ribbon or cord
- Black, dark green, light green, medium green, brown and yellow paint
- Paint brushes
- Water
- Hole punch
- Double-sided sticky tape



1. Stick the two cylinders together using double-sided tape. You may want to make a smaller cylinder out of card (card stock) to go between the two tubes.
2. Stick black tape around the bottom and top of the cylinders.
3. Hole punch each side of the binoculars, close to one end.
4. Paint the binoculars in a camouflage style.
5. Thread the cord/ribbon through one hole, tie a knot on the inside to hold in place, and thread through the other hole. Knot this end on the inside as well.



Expedition bottles

You will need:

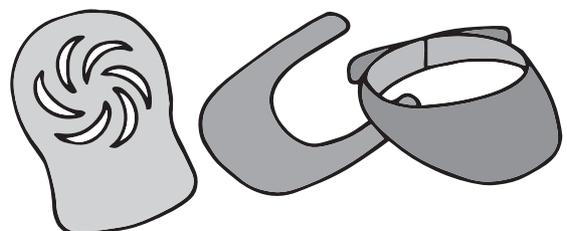
- Plastic water bottles
 - Permanent marker pens
 - Glass pens or OHT pens
1. Give each child a water bottle.
 2. Ask them to write their name on it somewhere using a glass pen or permanent marker.
 3. Use the pens to create their own design. Don't touch the design until it is dry!



Expedition hats

You will need:

- Sun visors or spiral hats (available from Baker Ross in the UK and Oriental Trading in the US)
 - Felt-tip pens
 - Funky-foam letters
 - Stickers
 - Glitter glue
1. Hand out the visors/hats.
 2. Ask the children to colour and personalize them by decorating, eg: following the swirls, spelling their name.





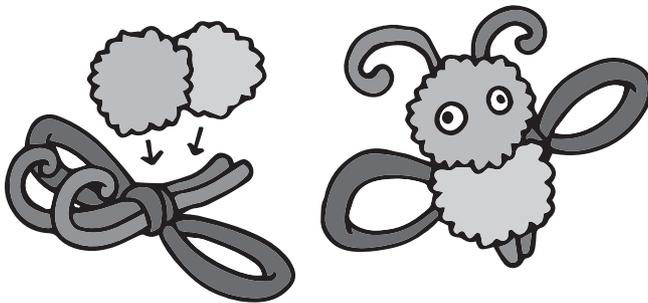
Explorer pom-pom bugs

You need:

- Pom-poms of varying sizes
- Googly eyes
- Pipe cleaners
- PVA (white) glue
- Glue spreaders
- Scissors

Dragonflies

1. Cut a pipe cleaner in half, and place the pieces side by side. This will give the base for the dragonfly's body.
2. Curl the top of the two pipe cleaners to make them look like antennae.
3. Take two more pipe cleaners and make them loop into wing shapes. Twist them together; then twist them onto the middle of the dragonfly's body.
4. Glue five or six small pom-poms onto the two pipe cleaners that form the body.
5. Stick googly eyes onto the top pom-pom.



Creepy crawlies

1. Cut one pipe cleaner into 6 or 8 (depending on how many legs you want the creature to have!).
2. Glue a small pom-pom to a larger one.
3. Stick two googly eyes on the smaller pom-pom.
4. Bend the bottom of the pipe cleaners to create feet. Bend the top of the pipe cleaner also if you want the creepy crawly to have knees.
5. Glue your legs onto the pom-pom.



Flags

You will need:

- Felt-tip pens
 - Art straws or small garden canes
 - Sticky tape
 - Scissors
 - Card (card stock) A5/half US letter
1. Ask the children to design a flag for their newly-discovered land.
 2. Colour using felt-tip pens.
 3. When finished, tape the flag to the top of the art straw or garden cane.



Maps

Note: This craft will need to be done over two days.

You will need:

- Paper
- Tea bags in warm (not hot) water
- Felt-tip pens
- Ribbon

Day 1

1. Rip the edges from the paper so it has jagged sides.
2. Crumple the paper up into a ball.
3. Flatten out the paper.
4. Take a tea bag, soak it in warm water, and then wipe it all over the paper. Soak the tea bag in water again if it dries out.
5. Leave the paper to dry (and maybe do another short craft, eg: the expedition bottle, as the map could then go inside it).

Day 2

1. Draw an island outline and put a big "x" somewhere on it.
2. Add a picture of a compass in the corner.
3. Draw the places we're travelling to in the week (Breathtaking Bay, Discovery Dens, Mysterious Mountains, Crown Cave and Rocky Road). Join them using a dotted-line trail that twists and turns.