

# Deep Sea Divers

**A three- to five-day holiday club  
based on Matthew's Gospel**

From Scripture Union

For 5- to 11-year-olds



# Welcome

## to Deep Sea Divers!



**Climb aboard a submarine and get ready to dive deep into the sea, through the shallows, the midnight zone and down into the trenches at the very bottom of the ocean. What animals might you meet? How long will it take? Will there be any light at all on the ocean floor?**

**Deep Sea Divers** invites children to become Divers and explore the oceans – diving deep into the sea while learning about Jesus, possibly for the first time. We dive deep into Jesus' story, going right down to the depths of Jesus' death, before rising back to the surface with the story of his resurrection!

We'll meet Jesus, the Son of God, and we'll discover that God loved his people so much that he sent his Son to forgive sins and reconcile us to God once more.

We also hope this holiday club will help and encourage children who are already part of your church community, and young people working as helpers, to explore and respond further, and to grow in faith, too. Information on adapting the content for children who are already connected to church can be found on pages 22 and 23.

Before you go any further, the most important thing to do is pray! If possible, during the build-up to **Deep Sea Divers**, pray regularly for each child and team member by name.

## Who is this for?

The focus of Scripture Union's work is on the 95% of children and young people who are not in church (we'll refer to them as 'children from the 95' or 'the 95' from here on). So, we have written this holiday club material with these children, who perhaps know very little about Jesus, as the target group.

We want to help you and your team connect with the 95 and give them an opportunity to explore who Jesus is and respond to him in appropriate ways. Of course, our prayer is that, ultimately, they will become lifelong followers of Jesus, although we don't expect this will necessarily happen during one holiday club! We recommend that a holiday club is part of an integrated, ongoing strategy for mission and engagement with the 95. We'll think more about this a little later (see pages 28 and 29).

## A different approach

We recognise that times have changed and, increasingly, families have extremely busy lives. As a result, many churches are now running events differently. We have provided material for three sessions in this book, with material for a further two sessions available online. The outline here is complete, and the additional days are just that: they add to what is already in the book, but the programme works without them. Each session stands on its own, which means, for example, that the five sessions could be spread throughout the year, but equally they could be completed during a single week. The choice is yours!



Imagine yourself going to an event that you've never been to before. You don't know many, if any people there and the building is unfamiliar; you're not quite sure what happens, yet everyone else seems to know what to do, so it can feel a bit threatening. This may well be the experience of children from the 95 coming to **Deep Sea Divers**, so bear this in mind as you plan and prepare. Make sure the team are aware that some children may feel daunted as they arrive at **Deep Sea Divers**; discuss appropriate ways in which they could help the children to feel at ease. Some of the things we have done to help include:

### Church services

Although it's important to link children into a church if practical and possible, that often takes time. A standard church service at the end of a holiday club week will be very unfamiliar to the 95, not least because it will be very different from **Deep Sea Divers**. This material does not have an outline for a church service, as such. However, you might want to organise a family activity to which children who attended **Deep Sea Divers** and church families are all invited, giving them the chance to build relationships with each other (and it could be in the church building!).

### Stories

The material focuses on stories from Matthew's Gospel that might be very familiar to churched children, but not to the 95. As we have turned things on their head, you may find it helpful to read the section on working with the 5% on pages 22 and 23.

### Singing

Children love singing, but it is inappropriate to ask the 95 to sing songs with lyrics they don't yet believe. If you know good songs that are suitable and complement the Bible exploration, and don't require the children to sing things they may not yet believe, you could sing those – these are sometimes called non-confessional songs (that is, they don't require the singer to confess a belief they don't hold). The **Deep Sea Divers** song words are available to download from [su.org.uk/deepsea](http://su.org.uk/deepsea). If possible, use accompanying videos or a live band, and also actions, so the children are engaged in the music.

### Learning styles

Children learn in different ways, so we've provided material for them to explore the story in three different ways: talking, creating and thinking. Each day there will be questions to ponder that will help the children in their exploration. This exploring is self-led, and the leaders are there to help, not to impose activities.

## An ongoing strategy

We're so pleased you've chosen to share the good news of Jesus with the children and young people in your community! **Deep Sea Divers** is designed to be part of an ongoing strategy. It's great to organise a successful and exciting event, but what will happen next for the children you reach out to? Make sure you begin your planning by answering these questions:

- How committed can you be to maintaining contact long term with the children who attend?
- Can you arrange follow-up activities for the children that will include their families?
- What can you do between activities or events to maintain contact and build relationships?

For more information and guidance on constructing a longer-term strategy, go to pages 28 and 29.



# Dive Prep



## The aims of Deep Sea Divers

You will, of course, have your own aims for doing a holiday club using **Deep Sea Divers**. It might be to carry on building relationships with your local primary school.

You might want to provide a place to which children already in your church can invite their friends who have no experience of Jesus. It could be that you have had some new families who have recently joined a church, and you see **Deep Sea Divers** as the starting point for a more regular family ministry.

**Deep Sea Divers** itself has been created with the aims below in mind:

- to introduce children to Jesus, particularly those children who come from outside the church's current reach
- to explore stories of Jesus' life and present the gospel in a simple and engaging way
- to use the theme of the oceans and life beneath the seas as a way into these stories
- to show that you can discover Jesus and have fun at the same time!

Some of these aims might well align with what you intend for the holiday club programme, which is great! But even if you have additional aims for your club, ensure that you agree these with your whole team (and other church leaders) during the planning stages. There's a downloadable resource at [su.org.uk/deepsea](http://su.org.uk/deepsea) to help you do that. There's also a form to use after the end of the club to help you assess how well you met your chosen aims.

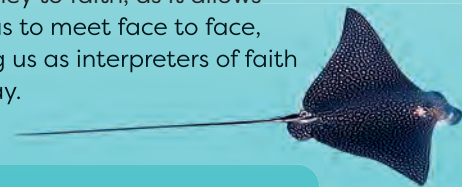
## The ethos of Deep Sea Divers

**Deep Sea Divers** is a programme that can be used during school holidays. It can also be used as a Saturday club, on successive weekends or one day a month. It is designed to be suitable for children who have never had any experience of church or Christianity, and have yet to catch sight of Jesus. Therefore, it assumes no previous knowledge and is accessible for all.

The Bible passages come from the Gospel of Matthew. They introduce children to Jesus through the stories of his birth and baptism, times when Jesus healed, taught and did amazing miracles, and when he was put to death but rose again.

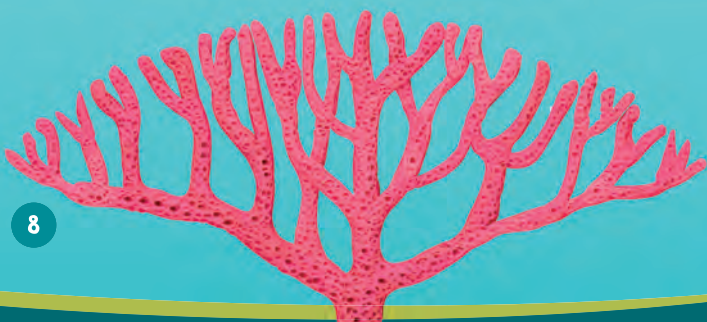
Throughout, there are several opportunities for children to ask themselves who they think Jesus is. Responses to this question will be varied, and individual children may well change their answer as they hear, discover and explore more about Jesus.

This freedom of response is built into the structure of **Deep Sea Divers**. The aim is not to tell children the 'answers' – who Jesus is, what the stories mean etc – rather to allow children to discover this for themselves. This journey of discovery is a far more powerful and effective journey to faith, as it allows the child and Jesus to meet face to face, rather than having us as interpreters of faith standing in the way.



## Water-sports option

If you would like to include a sports theme (maybe you intend to link the club to an international sporting event, such as the Olympic Games) within **Deep Sea Divers**, each Dive has a water sport linked to the programme.



## The Deep Sea Divers Plan

The three main passages seek to give children the chance to explore who Jesus is from different angles. The two extra days add in a parable and a miracle to give two extra dimensions of who Jesus is and supplement the three main days.

Start with the three main Dives and add in one or both of the supplementary Dives, between Dives 2 and 3, if you have the time to do more sessions.

### DIVE 1

#### Jesus is baptised

*Matthew 1:18-24; 3:13-17*

Jesus is born; he is baptised.

The children are introduced to Jesus by Matthew. We encounter the miraculous story of his birth and discover what a baptism is and what happens when Jesus is baptised. God the Father announces that Jesus is his Son and the Holy Spirit settles on Jesus.

### DIVE 2

#### Jesus heals a man who can't walk

*Matthew 9:1-8*

Jesus forgives and heals a man who cannot walk.

The children discover that Jesus can heal – he has power over the physical. More importantly, they discover that he has the power to forgive sins, to mend the broken friendship between God and his people. And some people – including the religious leaders – don't like this. Because this means that Jesus is God.

### DIVE 3

#### Jesus dies and comes alive again

*Matthew 26:27; 28:1-10*

Jesus is put to death on a cross but, three days later, he comes alive again.

Through what happens when Jesus dies and comes alive again, Jesus mends the friendship between God and his people, bringing his people back to him. What do the children think of this? What are they going to do about it?



### Additional DIVE A

#### Jesus tells a story about a pearl

*Matthew 13:45,46*

Jesus tells a story about what the kingdom of God is like.

The children encounter a parable of Jesus – a story that has deeper meaning – and are invited to reflect on what it might mean. What is the kingdom of God like?

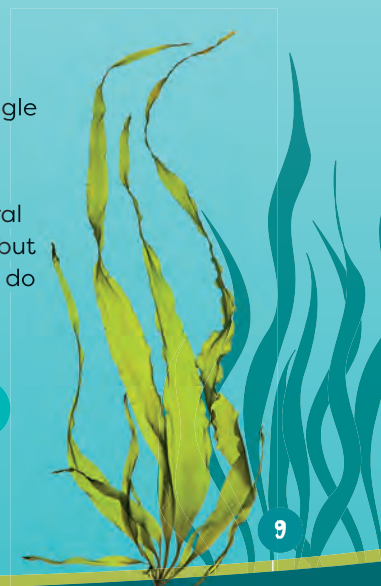
### Additional DIVE B

#### Jesus walks on water

*Matthew 14:22-33*

Jesus walks out to his friends, as they struggle on the waters of Lake Galilee.

Once again, the children meet Jesus, who has power over the physical, over the natural world. His friends, the disciples, are scared but then they realise how special Jesus is. Who do the children think Jesus is?



# Dive 1

# Jesus is baptised



## You will need for Dive 1

Items from the 'Diving equipment list'  
on page 14 plus:

### Check in

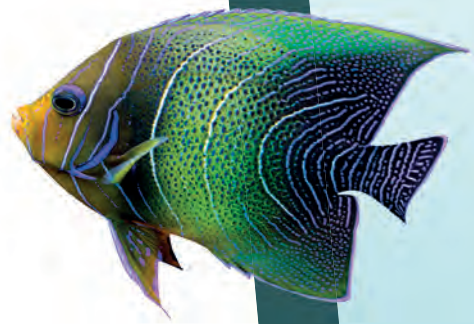
- Music and the means to play it

### Dive schools

- Dive/scuba equipment (eg snorkels, face masks)
- Camera/smartphone
- Means of printing photos

### Zoologist's report

- Pictures of sunlight zone creatures (optional)
- Videos of people surfing (optional)



**Dive aim**

To introduce children to Jesus

**Water sport**

Surfing

**Bible passages**

Matthew 1:18–24; 3:13–17

Jesus is born. Then, when he is about 30 years old, he is baptised by John. As he re-emerges from the River Jordan, the Spirit settles on him like a dove and his Father speaks a blessing over him.

## Before the children arrive



### Divemaster's briefing

20 minutes

As a team

Gather the team together and break into smaller groups. Ask each group to read Matthew 1:18–24 and to decide together what they think is the most important part of this passage. They can only have one! Once every group is ready, ask them to share what they chose as important in the passage, and why.

Comment that this is only part of the Christmas story that we revisit every year. Back in the smaller groups, ask everyone to consider why they think Matthew chose these details to include in his story of Jesus. What does this story tell them about Jesus? Ask them the same questions about Matthew 3:13–17.

These passages come from the start of Matthew's Gospel, as he tries to bring the story of Jesus to a Jewish audience, who would have been familiar with the prophecies that Matthew says Jesus fulfils and would have been waiting for God to send the Messiah. However, the children coming to **Deep Sea Divers** have probably never heard of Jesus before. They have no background knowledge, so challenge all the volunteers to consider how they will introduce Jesus to children who have never caught sight of him.

Give the group members 5 minutes to think

about this on their own, and then to share with the rest of their group. All together, ask for one or two suggestions. Remind everyone that the children in their groups will know little or nothing of Jesus or the Christian faith. Encourage them to remember to talk about Jesus in simple, easy to follow ways that don't include any Christian jargon.

Run through the programme for the session and check that everyone knows what they are doing.

Pray for one another and for the activities, and that the children who jump in the water at **Deep Sea Divers** will catch sight of Jesus for the first time.



# The Dive Programme



**Check in**  
10 minutes  
All together

When it's time to open the doors, have some music playing quietly in the background and make sure the team members are in position, ready to give the children a warm welcome to **Deep Sea Divers**.

For the music, use upbeat Christian songs or theme your soundtrack with these watery hits (*make sure you have the appropriate licence...*):

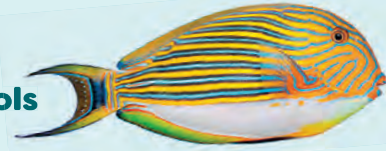
- 'Beyond the Sea' – Bobby Darin
- 'Under the Sea' – *The Little Mermaid*
- 'Octopus' Garden' – The Beatles
- 'Yellow Submarine' – The Beatles
- 'Orinoco Flow' – Enya
- 'Wipe Out' – The Surfaris
- 'Surfin' USA' – The Beach Boys
- 'Sailing' – Rod Stewart

As each child arrives, make sure your registration team is ready to greet them. If you were able to obtain registration and consent forms in advance, you will simply need to check off each child as they arrive and double-check the arrangements for collection. If the children attending **Deep Sea Divers** have not been pre-registered, you will need to ensure you have the space for parents and carers to complete the relevant paperwork and a team member to attend to them. No child should attend the club without written permission.

Once each child is registered, give them their name badge and have a team member take them to their Dive School. When registration is completed, remember that each Dive Instructor will need a list of the children in their school (along with any food allergy information), in case of emergency.



**Dive Schools**  
10 minutes  
Small groups



As this is the first time the Divers in each school will have met each other, make sure that all Dive Instructors and Dive Assistants make a special effort to welcome each Diver by name and make them feel at home. They can show the children the school drybag – a place where they can store coats, jumpers or anything else they have brought that they want to keep safe.

As the Divers arrive at their School, encourage them to put on some dive equipment (such as snorkels and face masks) and take their pictures (provided that parents or carers have given photo permission). Print these out and use them to decorate your Dive School. Make sure you include all Dive Instructors and Dive Assistants too! Be sure to clean or sanitise equipment after each child has posed for their photo.

Once everyone has arrived, tell the children the name of your Dive School and encourage them to come up with a shout or chant together that bigs up your School! It doesn't have to be complicated or long – something short and simple that the children can shout. A call and response structure might work well.



**Taking the plunge**  
45 minutes  
All together

## Dive in

The Divemasters welcome all the children to **Deep Sea Divers** and tell them briefly what is going to happen today. They say that everything is explained on the Dive Profile, so that anyone who needs to know what is coming next can see clearly what they can expect. They introduce the kraken and say that the Divers can put any questions, comments, suggestions or jokes into the kraken's mouth. The Divemasters explain that they'll read some of these out later in the Dive.

The Divemasters tell the children that today they're going to meet a very special person, someone who did some very special things.

This person is Jesus, who is the Son of God. The Divemasters should make sure they speak about Jesus in a positive, exciting way, so that





children can see their enthusiasm. Many children will never have heard of Jesus before, so first impressions matter!

The Divemasters invite a couple of the Dive Schools to perform their shouts or chants.

Now is the time for them to mention essentials, such as toilets, fire exits and what to do in an emergency (keeping it very calm and relatively low-key, so children don't get worried).

### Zoologist's report

The Dive School Zoologist comes on stage and tells the children about the zone of the ocean that they're going to dive into today. They explain that it's the sunlight zone, the area of the water which is closest to the surface, and show some pictures or videos of creatures the children might meet on their dive, for example, hermit crabs, angelfish, stingrays and basking sharks.

If possible, they give some interesting facts about sunlight zone creatures. For example:

- **Turtles** can weigh up to 900 kg. Once they hatch on a beach and crawl into the ocean, male turtles will never go on to land again. Females will only go on to a beach to lay their eggs.
- **Hermit crabs** will live in shells left by other creatures, and exchange shells with each other. (You could show this BBC clip from *Life Story*: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=rLUAoTjdmZ8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rLUAoTjdmZ8).)
- The sting of a **Portuguese man-of-war** can kill a human. The Portuguese man-of-war is not one single animal, but something called a siphonophore – made up of thousands of genetically identical smaller organisms.



### Water-sports option

If you're including a sports theme, the Zoologist should arrive on stage pretending to surf! Show videos of people surfing and show how surfers 'ride' the wave as it breaks on to the shore. They can introduce the sports challenge: every time the Divers hear a certain tune (for example, 'Surfin' USA' by The Beach Boys), they (and the leaders!) have to pretend to surf! The tech team should play the song at appropriate moments during the whole Dive (though they should be careful not to interrupt any Bible activities).

### Flotsam and Jetsam

Invited by the Divemasters, Flotsam and Jetsam come to the front. They bring with them what they have found washed up on the beach today, which will help the children discover what today's story is: an angel from the top of a Christmas tree and a white feather. Flotsam and Jetsam introduce themselves and tell some jokes. They show their finds to the children and ask what these might signify. After a few suggestions they leave the two items somewhere in the stage to be 'found' by Mary (if you are using the monologue storytelling option below). If Flotsam and Jetsam are also leading 'Frog kicks', they should go straight into the workout.

### Frog kicks

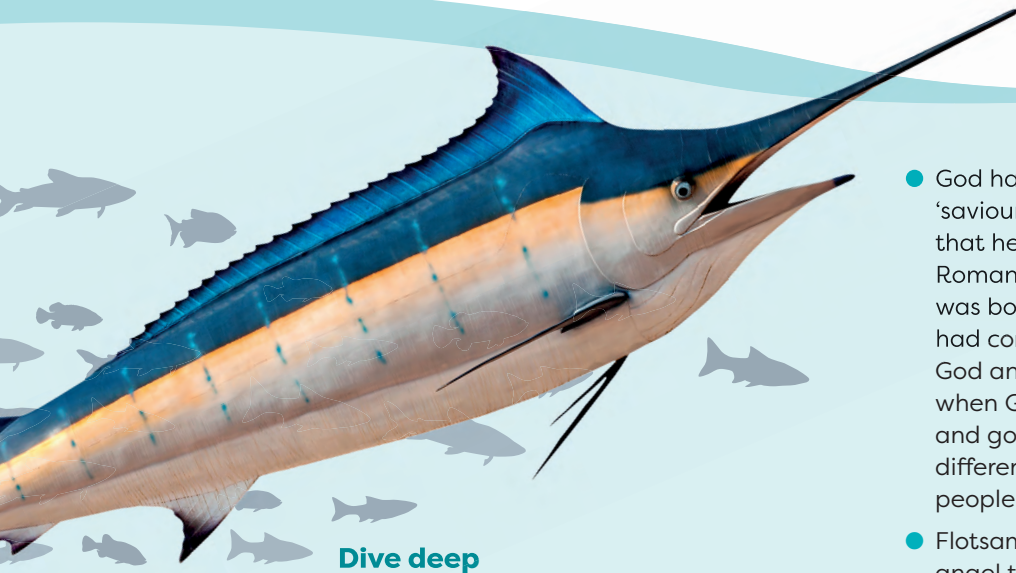
Introduce the diving workout. A frog kick is a way of a diver moving through the water without disturbing the wildlife too much. Show all the Divers what a frog kick looks like, by lying down on your front and kicking your legs like a frog. (You might want to watch a few videos online before the Dive so that you're familiar with what it looks like.) If you don't have a stage, then lie down on a bench or some stools, so the children can see what to do. When the children try it out, make sure they all have enough space and don't kick each other.

Once children have got the hang of the frog kick, add in a few other watery-themed exercises to create a diving workout. If you're including a sports theme, then you can do some moves that imitate surfing. (Make sure you risk assess all your movements before the Dive starts.)

### Dive playlist

Introduce the band, the Bends, and start to learn the **Deep Sea Divers** song together. As this is the first time that many children will have come into contact with Jesus, don't sing any worship or praise songs today. Children will have no concept of who Jesus is and what it means to sing to God. However, as you meet Jesus and hear more about him during the holiday club, you can include some non-confessional songs – those that don't require children to sing words that they don't (yet) believe.





## Dive deep

For each Dive at **Deep Sea Divers**, there are three options for telling the Bible story. You can use the same approach each time, mix and match how you tell the story, or combine two or all three options. Choose which will be the most helpful for your team (in terms of the skills you have available), the children and the style of your club.

It's worth noting that the Divers will know little or nothing of Jesus or the events of these stories. Even though the Dive's Bible passages cover Christmas, it's only a part of the Christmas story – the children may be expecting things that never come, such as shepherds, wise men or even stables and innkeepers! Reinforcing the narrative by using more than one method will help children find their way into the story more easily.

- The Divemaster introduces today's character – Jesus' mother, Mary, and invites her to tell her story using the script on page 39. The actor playing Mary should ideally learn the monologue and practise it before the Dive.
- The Divemaster tells the story from Matthew 1:18–24 and 3:13–17, using their own words and storytelling style.
- The Divemaster introduces today's film storytelling episode, available to download from the **Deep Sea Divers** multimedia downloads area.

## The anchor line

The anchor line guides divers towards their destination – the shipwreck or the coral reef for example. In this section, the Divemaster should reiterate the main points of the story, guiding children as they meet Jesus, perhaps for the first time:

- Even though Jesus had an earthly father, Joseph, Jesus was God's Son.

- God had promised his people a special 'saviour'. Some people thought this meant that he would save the people from the Romans, who were in charge when Jesus was born. But really, this meant that he had come to mend the friendship between God and his people, which was broken when God's people decided to ignore him and go their own way. Jesus was a very different kind of saviour from the one some people were expecting.
- Flotsam and Jetsam's angel refers to the angel that told Joseph what was going to happen. Their feather symbolises the dove that rested on Jesus when he was baptised – the dove was the Spirit of God.

## Back to school

The Divemaster should then send the Divers off to their schools to explore the story further and have fun together! Play the **Deep Sea Divers** theme song as everyone goes.



## Dive Schools

45 minutes  
Small groups

For options on how to structure this time, refer back to pages 11 and 12.

## Scuba snacks

Dive Instructors and Assistants should make sure all the Divers have made it safely back to their schools. Hand out the refreshments and chat about what the children have seen and heard so far. (For ideas of themed snacks, see page 11.)

## Depth gauge

Give each child a copy of **Dive Tables** (younger children) or **Dive Logbook** (older children).

## Dive Tables

On page 5, solve the maze to discover the two objects that Flotsam and Jetsam found during 'Taking the plunge'. Read Matthew 1:18–24 and wonder together about how Joseph might have felt. On page 7, fill in the words that the angel said to Joseph. Ask the Divers what they think this tells them about Jesus.

Read the story of Jesus' baptism on page 8 and ask the Divers to draw themselves in the picture (on the far right on page 9). If they had been there, what would they have thought? They can write or draw that in the bubble.

