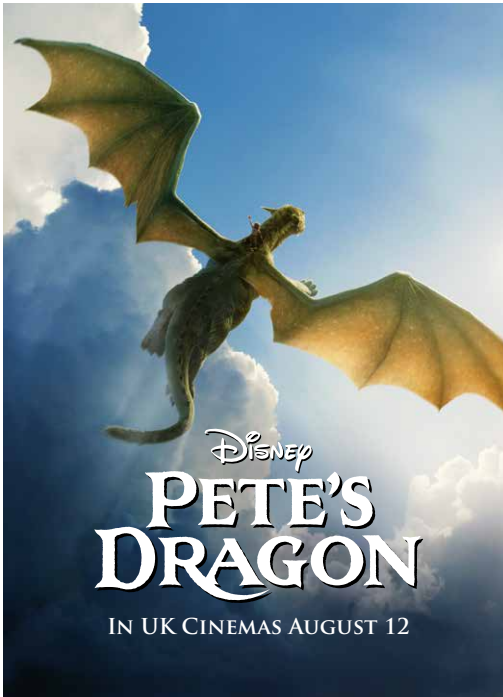


# ALL-AGE SERVICE RESOURCE



A re-imagining of Disney's cherished family film, *Pete's Dragon* is the adventure of an orphaned boy named Pete and his best friend Elliott, who just so happens to be a dragon. For years, old wood carver Mr. Meacham (Robert Redford) has delighted local children with his tales of the fierce dragon that resides deep in the woods of the Pacific Northwest. To his daughter, Grace (Bryce Dallas Howard), who works as a forest ranger, these stories are little more than tall tales... until she meets Pete (Oakes Fegley). Pete is a mysterious 10-year-old with no family and no home who claims to live in the woods with a giant green dragon named Elliott. And from Pete's descriptions, Elliott seems remarkably similar to the dragon from Mr. Meacham's stories. With the help of Natalie (Oona Laurence), an 11-year-old girl whose father Jack (Wes Bentley) owns the local lumber mill, Grace sets out to determine where Pete came from, where he belongs, and the truth about this dragon.

In the film Pete trusts the dragon, Elliott, with his life. He knows that Elliott is real, and not just an imaginary friend. He has faith that Elliott will always be there for him.

These downloadable resources for use in All-Age Church Services contain film clips, talk outlines and activities to explore the concepts of faith, reality and trust.

*'Faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.'* Hebrews 11:1.

Use any of these four sets of resources alone as a five-minute slot in your church service. Or combine them all together, with appropriate songs and prayers, for a whole all-age service.



**Copyright.** Bible quotations are from The ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®) copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

# Mystery made known



## SCENE SETTER

Introduce this slot with the film clip *Dragon Hunt*.  
Download from [EthosMedia.org/PetesDragon](https://EthosMedia.org/PetesDragon)



## TALKING POINT

In this clip from *Pete's Dragon* (in UK cinemas on 12<sup>th</sup> August) we saw how the people didn't initially know Elliott, the dragon. He was hidden from them, until he revealed himself.

As appropriate for your congregation, explore the parallels with Jesus. Elliott is uniquely different and outside of the people's experience; there had been rumours of his existence but most people didn't believe the stories; Pete (a child) knows that Elliott exists (because he lives in a relationship with him); the people react in varying ways to Elliott (some don't want to admit that he exists, others want to control him, others want to get to know him).

## DIGGING DEEPER

There is a popular literary technique, technically known as a 'Christ figure', whereby a character in a modern story reflects the characteristics of Jesus in the Bible. Examples include Sydney Carton in Dickens' *Tale of Two Cities*, Gandalf in *The Lord of the Rings*, or Harry Potter in the eponymous series by J. K. Rowling. But why do such examples also extend back into ancient mythology? Why are there elements of a Christ figure in mythological stories which were told well before the birth of Christ, such as Osiris (Egyptian), Adonis (Greek) and Attis (Asiatic)? If it can't be explained by claiming that the historical story of Jesus is just another type of myth, what explanation is there? Perhaps it is because God put his plan of salvation deep in every person's heart right from the beginning, so it naturally comes out in creative literature. As the Bible says: *'He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you.'* 1 Peter 1:20.

## BIBLICAL REFLECTION

As appropriate for your congregation, explore these Bible passages which talk about the full message of the gospel being 'hidden' until it is revealed in Jesus, so that everyone can come to faith and find a spiritual home in the family of God.

### Old Testament

*'The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.'* Deuteronomy 29:29.

### New Testament

*'Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith.'* Romans 16:25-26.

## MEMORABLE MOMENT

In advance of the service, ask someone who is well known to the children in your church (e.g. a Sunday School teacher) to hide somewhere prominent in the church; this will work best if he/she is hiding in plain sight, such as camouflaged amongst a display. As a memorable climax to the slot, ask the children if they can spot him/her anywhere in the church (they could move around hunting). Ideally they won't be able to find the hidden person until he/she is dramatically revealed.

# Truth be told



## SCENE SETTER

Introduce this slot with the film clip *Just Because*.  
Download from [EthosMedia.org/PetesDragon](https://EthosMedia.org/PetesDragon)



## TALKING POINT

In this clip from *Pete's Dragon* (in UK cinemas on 12<sup>th</sup> August) we saw Mr. Meacham say 'Just because you don't see something doesn't mean it's not there.' And Grace replies 'Just because you say it's true doesn't mean it is.'

As appropriate for your congregation, explore how we know whether something is true. Do we have to see it with our own eyes? How many things can we list that are true even though we haven't seen them ourselves? Can we know something is true because others tell us? How do we decide whose word to trust?

## DIGGING DEEPER

The Christian gospel is based on the historical event of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. Like any historical event, we can't see it with our own eyes. But, like all historians, we come to conclusions about this historical event from a variety of sources, including the accounts written in the Bible. For the sceptic, just because the Bible says it is true doesn't mean it is. But these biblical records stand up well to the standard tests of historians: they were written by eye-witnesses or on the accounts of eye-witnesses; they were written soon after the events (probably before AD70), including at least one pre-existing source text (usually referred to as Q) that was written even earlier; they were transmitted accurately to the present day, with very early versions still in existence (such as the famous 'P52' papyrus, written around AD150 and now on display at the John Rylands Library, University of Manchester.)

## BIBLICAL REFLECTION

As appropriate for your congregation, explore these Bible passages which talk about God's provision of evidence for faith.

### Old Testament

*'Elijah the prophet came near and said, "O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, and that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your word. Answer me, O Lord, answer me, that this people may know that you, O Lord, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back."' 1 Kings 18:36-37.*

### New Testament

*'Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.'* John 20:30-31.

## MEMORABLE MOMENT

In advance of the service write the word 'Clap' on a large (probably A5) sticky label, peel it off ready and keep it hidden but close at hand. Ask for a volunteer to search for a piece of paper and follow the instruction written on it; and tell the congregation that they also should follow that instruction if they see the paper. When you are talking with the volunteer, surreptitiously stick the paper on his/her back. The volunteer will not be able to see the paper but it will become visible to the congregation who should start clapping, and will eventually point out where it is (you may need to encourage the volunteer to search in a place that puts his/her back to the congregation). The paper exists even though he/she cannot see it, and he/she will only find it by listening to others.

# Reasonable faith



## SCENE SETTER

Introduce this slot with the film clip *Imaginary Friend*.  
Download from [EthosMedia.org/PetesDragon](https://EthosMedia.org/PetesDragon)



## TALKING POINT

In this clip from *Pete's Dragon* (in UK cinemas on 12<sup>th</sup> August) we saw Natalie describe an imaginary friend as someone people might invent to stop them being lonely. She declared that she is not imaginary because she is real. 'So is Elliott' responds Pete.

As appropriate for your congregation, explore the difference between a reasonable faith in reality and wishful thinking that just makes people feel better. How do we know that God exists in reality, and not just in our imagination?

## DIGGING DEEPER

The standard definition of truth, recognised by philosophers and logicians for many years, is technically called the 'Correspondence Theory of Truth.' This is the basic self-evident declaration that the truth of a statement is determined by whether it accurately describes (corresponds to) the real world. In recent years, however, a variant of the new 'Pragmatic Theory of Truth' has become popular in our culture. This is the self-evidently irrational notion that any statement can be true as long as you believe it and it works for you, regardless of any correspondence with reality.

## BIBLICAL REFLECTION

As appropriate for your congregation, explore these Bible passages which talk about the importance of true God-given reality underpinning our faith, rather than our own wishful thinking.

### Old Testament

*'What profit is an idol when its maker has shaped it, a metal image, a teacher of lies? For its maker trusts in his own creation when he makes speechless idols!'* Habakkuk 2:18.

### New Testament

*'Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!"'* John 20:26-28.

## MEMORABLE MOMENT

In advance of the service find someone who will be willing to take part (and is particularly articulate or dramatic) and ask them to tell you their favourite cold drink; fill a travel mug (where the contents cannot be seen) with that drink, and a second one with water. Ask members of the congregation to name their favourite cold drink and say why they like it so much. Pick your chosen 'volunteer' and tell everyone how fortunate this person is because you happen to have that drink in a cup. Invite them forward and ask them to imagine they are drinking it now, and to describe how wonderful it is. Then give them the mug of water to drink (pre-arrange with them that they will look very disappointed – or even spit it out). Point out how we need reality, not just imagination; we need truth, not just wishful thinking. Then, to finish on a positive note, give them the mug with the real drink, and point out how good it is when our faith corresponds with reality.

# Faith for life



## SCENE SETTER

Introduce this slot with the film clip *Leap of Faith*.  
Download from [EthosMedia.org/PetesDragon](https://EthosMedia.org/PetesDragon)



## TALKING POINT

In this clip from *Pete's Dragon* (in UK cinemas on 12<sup>th</sup> August) we saw how much Pete and Elliott enjoy being together, and how Pete trusts Elliott so much that he jumps, knowing that Elliott will catch him. If appropriate you could give an illustration of your own children trusting you (but perhaps also a necessary warning about jumping off cliff-edges!)

## DIGGING DEEPER

The popular term 'leap of faith' is originally attributed to the philosopher Soren Kierkegaard but has since been developed by others who adopt a Christian existentialist position. The notion is that remaining with a non-committed belief is not really faith at all; rather, we move into faith when we step out and choose to actively place our trust in God. This doesn't necessarily mean a leap into the dark, or placing trust in a belief based upon insufficient evidence. It means a confident assurance as we rely upon God whom we know to be trustworthy.

## BIBLICAL REFLECTION

As appropriate for your congregation, explore these Bible passages which describe examples of people stepping out in faith, trusting God.

### Old Testament

*'The Philistine said to David, "Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and to the beasts of the field." Then David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand.'* 1 Samuel 17:44-46.

### New Testament

*'Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me." Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased.'* Matthew 14:29-32.

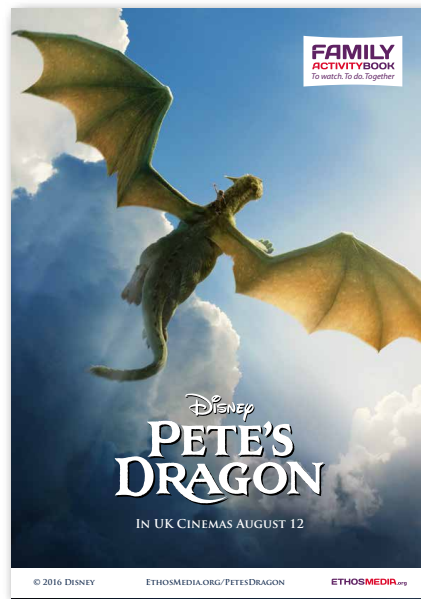
## MEMORABLE MOMENT

As appropriate for your congregation use one of the many standard, proven, trust-building exercises as a visual demonstration. For example, if you have two particularly fit, and equally matched, youth leaders you might ask them to demonstrate the 'human spring' which is dramatic for an audience to watch. (We recommend that they practice it beforehand so they know their limits). The two people stand face to face, a few inches apart, with their arms in the air, slightly bent, palms facing forwards. Keeping their backs straight they both lean forward until their palms touch, supporting one another's weight. They then push against one another's hands to spring themselves back upright. They repeat the leaning forward and springing back, but each time having moved a few inches further apart. This relies upon each of them trusting the other (but they must stop when they reach their safe limit).



‘It was magic. It changes the way I see the world... The trees, the sunshine, you.’  
Mr. Meacham (Robert Redford)

## GET THE FREE FAMILY ACTIVITY BOOK FROM [ETHOSMEDIA.ORG/PETESDRAGON](http://ETHOSMEDIA.ORG/PETESDRAGON)



**ETHOS  
MEDIA.org**

**cpo**

**HOPE**  
in our villages, towns & cities

**home  
for good**

  
**URBAN  
SAINTS**