



## MARY AND MARTHA MEET JESUS

### MEETING AIM

To examine how we can keep our focus on Jesus.

### BIBLE PASSAGE

Luke 10:38-42

### BACKGROUND

These sessions are designed for you to do online in a group video call (on something like Facetime or Zoom). Make sure you have parental permission to do this, as well as following your church's safeguarding procedure.

On the face of it, Martha is doing the right thing. Hospitality was a key feature of the culture of the day and had been for thousands of years. She was making sure that her guests had everything they needed. However, Jesus praises the way Mary acts – simply sitting and listening rather than providing for the guests. Her focus was on the right thing and Martha, this time, had got it wrong. This session will help young people think about where their focus is in different parts of their lives.

### JOINING THE SESSION 5 MINS

As people join you online, ask them to share what they have been doing during the past seven days. Ask them if they have ever missed the point of something – a joke or a game or a TV programme. What happened?

### INTRO ACTIVITY 10 MINS

**You will need:** pictures of famous people, objects, animals, landmarks etc

Before the session, use a picture app to blur the photos you have collected, so that it's difficult to tell what they are. Share your screen and show the photos in turn. Get the young people to either shout out what they think each one is, or write their answers down.

When concluding this game, explain to your young people that you are going to look at a story from the Bible that is all about focus. The story is about two sisters who had very different attitudes towards Jesus when he came to visit them at their house; they focused on

two very different things and Jesus was very clear regarding who was focusing on the right thing.

### BIBLE EXPLORATION 10 MINS

**You will need:** paper and pens

Make sure everyone has a piece of paper and pen. Ask them to split the page into four. Explain that as you slowly read the passage from Luke 10:38-42, they are going to create a comic strip or storyboard telling the story.

When they have finished their drawings ask the group for some suggestions of words that they would use to describe Mary and Martha. If anyone wants to share and explain what they have drawn, encourage them to hold their comic strips up to the camera.

Ask what they think it means when Jesus says to Martha: "You are worried and upset by many things, but few things are needed – or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better." Chat through what ideas the young people have.

### CHATTING TOGETHER 5 MINS

Ask the group these questions, making sure everyone has the chance to contribute:

- What was wrong with what Martha was doing?
- When might doing a good thing not necessarily be the right thing?
- When do we get our focus wrong in our lives? (It might be worth having an example ready from your own life to get the ball rolling.)
- What changes might we need to make in our lives? How can we have the same focus as Mary?

### CREATIVE RESPONSE 10 MINS

Sitting at the feet of Jesus was relatively straightforward for Mary as she was sitting in the same room as him, but how do we go about this today? Use these questions to start a discussion about some applications of this story. For each question, either chat together, or put the young people into break-out rooms for each question, before reporting back their thoughts after a couple of minutes. Encourage them to go beyond just a yes or no answer.

- How many times should you pray each day?
- Should you read your Bible more than once a day?
- Is it good to spend time with other Christians?
- Does Jesus speak to us as we take time to serve others?

Be careful with the last one, as interestingly this is what Martha was doing! It is important your young people understand that Jesus will speak as we serve others, after all serving others was what he came to do. What is important is that we spend time with him first so that we can be guided towards the best way to serve. Feel free to add some of your own, just remember to adjust your timings as you really want to allow enough time for the 'explain' part of the activity.

### PRAYER 5 MINS

**You will need:** the song 'Fix my eyes' by For King and Country; pens and paper  
Play the song and encourage the young people to write a prayer asking God to help them fix their eyes on him.

Say that the Bible says in Hebrews 10 that we are to consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another. In our world today there are endless methods of communicating with each other.

Encourage the group to think of the one method that they and their closest friends use the most and create a group chat and have a think as to how they could use this platform to encourage each other throughout the week to keep your eyes fixed on Jesus.



## THE CANAANITE WOMAN MEETS JESUS

### MEETING AIM

To discover the meaning behind what Jesus says and does when he meets the woman from Tyre.

### BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 15:21-28

### BACKGROUND

As people join you online, ask them to share what they have been doing during the past seven days. Ask the group if they can remember a time when someone was rude to them. How did they react? Or perhaps there was a time when they were inadvertently rude to someone else – what happened?

### JOINING THE SESSION 5 MINS

As people join you online, ask them to share what they have been doing during the past seven days. Ask the group if they can remember a time when someone was rude to them. How did they react? Or perhaps there was a time when they were inadvertently rude to someone else – what happened?

### INTRO ACTIVITY 10 MINS

**You will need:** marshmallows or other soft sweets

Ask the young people to go and find someone else in their household to help them with this game. If no one else is available, or if a young person doesn't want to take part, then that's OK.

The young people should give their partner the sweets and stand about a metre away. The partner should throw the marshmallow and the young people to catch it in their mouth. If they manage to catch it, each partner takes a step back. The winners are the pair stood furthest away from each other when they run out of marshmallows. At the end of the game there will probably be some sticky marshmallows on the floor. Ask:

- Who would be willing to eat up those marshmallows? (Don't actually let them – that's a health hazard!)
- How desperate would you have to be to eat the marshmallows?

### BIBLE EXPLORATION 10 MINS

**You will need:** paper and pens

Read Matthew 15:21-28 together and then ask:

- With only this interaction to go on, what would you think about Jesus?
- How do you explain Jesus' behaviour here?

Comment that, on first reading of this passage, Jesus seems to be really mean, unnecessarily making this woman suffer before he heals her daughter, seemingly purely because she's not Jewish. That seems kind of harsh and maybe a little racist...right? Ask the group to divide a sheet of paper into three columns and write these headings: 'The story is recorded wrongly', 'Jesus isn't who we thought he was', 'We're reading the passage wrong'. Invite the young people to pick what they think is the most likely scenario and to write down why they think this is the case.

Ask the young people to share what they have written, if they would like to. Gather some opinions on what Jesus might be doing.

Say that it's always OK to ask difficult questions of the Bible and God. Spurgeon said that scripture is like a lion, it doesn't need us to protect it: it's quite capable of coping with our hardest attack. Often, when we wrestle with scripture long enough and hard enough, while talking to God about it, we will be able to find ourselves satisfied.

Here are some of the things that other Christians have discovered about this passage as they have wrestled with it. Read these out and ask the young people what they think:

- Jesus is testing the Canaanite woman in order to bestow on her honour and recognition for her faith. The story ends with Jesus celebrating the woman's 'great faith' – one of the highest honours he gives anyone.
- Jesus isn't just teaching the woman, in fact he's teaching the disciples about their prejudices. They believed that Jesus should only be serving Jewish people. By playing out their negative prejudices to their fullest extent in front of them here, he forces them to see how awful it

would be if they were right.

- After this passage, Jesus drives his point home by healing many Gentiles and by performing a miracle for them. While one chapter earlier he miraculously fed 5,000 Jews, he now miraculously feeds 4,000 Gentiles. He makes it clear that his mission and grace will include the whole world.

### CHATTING TOGETHER 5 MINS

Ask the group these questions, giving everyone the chance to contribute:

- Are places where Jesus has a bigger vision than the church does today? What might that look like?
- Are there people that we would hesitate to help or welcome today, who Jesus might treat differently?

### CREATIVE RESPONSE 10 MINS

**You will need:** any art resources that the young people have available

Make sure the young people have access to some art resources – a sheet of paper and some felt-tip pens would be enough. Encourage them to come up with a piece of artwork that reflects what they have learnt or are thinking about from today's story. Has this story changed their view of Jesus? Why? If any young people don't want to draw, they can write a poem or story.

### PRAYER 5 MINS

Invite the young people to join you in this prayer. You could share your screen to read the words together:

"God, we thank you that you are bigger and more complex than we give you credit for. Thank you that you see the full extent of our potential and that sometimes you make us uncomfortable to help us grow. This week, please make us uncomfortable in our assumptions and prejudices about people and the Bible, so that we might grow to look more like Jesus. Amen."

Have a moment of silence to finish.

This session was inspired by ideas from the Premier Youth and Children's Work archive, adapted by **ALEX TAYLOR**.



## ZACCHAEUS MEETS JESUS

### MEETING AIM

To explore the strength of our hunger and desire for God.

### BIBLE PASSAGE

Luke 19:1-10

### BACKGROUND

These sessions are designed for you to do online in a group video call (on something like Facetime or Zoom). Make sure you have parental permission to do this, as well as following your church's safeguarding procedure.

In the opinion of the people of Jericho, Zacchaeus wasn't deserving of Jesus' attention or forgiveness. He was viewed as a cheat and a traitor, he was despised. However, his desire to check out what Jesus was saying, and his desire to change after meeting Jesus show that no one is outside God's grace. For young people who have grown up in church, this story may be overfamiliar, so help your group engage with the story in a new way.

### JOINING THE SESSION 5 MINS

As people join you online, ask them to share what they have been doing during the past seven days. Ask if anyone has made a big effort to see or do something this week. What was it like? Were the results worth the effort? Have an appropriate example ready from your own life to get the ball rolling if necessary.

### INTRO ACTIVITY 10 MINS

**You will need:** cushions or coats; small prizes of different value and desirability

Before the session, gather some small prizes – make some good and some not so good. You could have a chocolate bar, an onion, a small nail, a book, some felt-tip pens or an old newspaper.

Ask for two volunteers to stand with their arms straight out in front, palms down, balancing a heavy cushion or stack of coats on their arms. The winner is the last one to be holding their arms out. (You could have any physical challenge here, such as press-ups or doing a plank.) Award one of your

prizes and discuss whether the prize was worth all the effort. Play again with different volunteers.

### BIBLE EXPLORATION 10 MINS

**You will need:** pens and paper

Read the Bible passage and ask the group why this story is in the Bible. Why does God want us to know about this story? Who is it about: Zacchaeus, Jesus, the onlookers or us? (There's no wrong answer.) The passage challenges our judging attitude of others, our self-worth and assumptions of Jesus.

Get the young people to draw a stick figure on a piece of paper. Ask them what we know about Zacchaeus from this passage. They should write their answers around the figure on their paper. Encourage some members of the group to share what they have written.

Zacchaeus seemed very aware that Jesus had something he needed and he would go to great lengths to find out what. He seems to be a man of high power but no influence (outside of tax-collecting). Not only was he not highly regarded, he also didn't consider himself above climbing trees in order to see this famous Jesus! What kind of figure was he? Can the group think of a contemporary equivalent?

### CHATTING TOGETHER 5 MINS

Ask the group these questions, giving everyone the chance to contribute:

- What's the most important part of this story?
- Can you identify with any of the characters in this story? Why?
- What is Jesus doing in this story?
- What difference might this story make to your life today?

### CREATIVE RESPONSE 10 MINS

**You will need:** any art resources that the young people have available

Make sure the young people have access to some art resources – a sheet of paper and some felt-tip pens would be enough. Encourage them to come up with a piece of artwork that reflects what they have learnt or are thinking about from today's story. Has this story changed their view of Jesus? Why? If any young people don't want to draw, they can write a poem or story.

What the young people create here isn't the most important thing, rather it's the process that's key. A time of creativity will help your group think more deeply about what God is saying to them, as well as provide an opportunity to chat, so make sure everyone stays on Zoom during this activity.

### PRAYER 5 MINS

**You will need:** a tree

Ask the young people to go outside and find a tree that they can look at. They should stay in their own garden or look through their window if they don't have a garden. If they can't see a tree anywhere, encourage them to search for pictures on the internet. Encourage them to think about what they would do to meet Jesus and perhaps what they need to change. Ask them to come back after two or three minutes.

If anyone wants to share what they think God might be saying to them, provide space for that now. Then say a short prayer to finish the session.



## MARY MAGDALENE MEETS JESUS

### MEETING AIM

To discover more ways that Jesus went against the social norm to give extraordinary roles to the most unexpected people.

### BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 28:1-10

### BACKGROUND

These sessions are designed for you to do online in a group video call (on something like Facetime or Zoom). Make sure you have parental permission to do this, as well as following your church's safeguarding procedure.

The two Marys – Mary Magdalene and the mysteriously named 'other Mary' – would have been considered unreliable witnesses to the resurrection, merely because of the fact that they were women. So why are they chosen to be the first to hear the news that Jesus is alive? All through Jesus' ministry, unlikely people are chosen; today, we can be chosen to do great things, even though we might not be the 'normal' choice.

### JOINING THE SESSION 5 MINS

As people join you online, ask them to share what they have been doing during the past seven days.

### INTRO ACTIVITY 10 MINS

**You will need:** pens and paper

Read out the roles listed below and ask the young people to pick people (famous or otherwise) that they would choose for fill the jobs. Once all the roles have been filled get them to share results and vote on the best suggestions. The player with the most votes wins. Here are the roles:

- You are creating the world's best boy band: which four people would you choose?
- You have a limitless budget for a new football team: which three players would you choose first?

- You can choose the next President of the United States: who would you choose?
- You are casting a new *Star Wars* film: which actors would you choose?

Close this activity by highlighting that when choosing people for roles, we are usually drawn to the best or most famous. What about Jesus – does he choose people the same way?

### BIBLE EXPLORATION 10 MINS

Read Matthew 28:1-10 and invite the group to think about how they might act this story out over a video call. Some could be the women, others could be the angels, still others could be the disciples. Give the group some time to work out how they are going to perform their re-enactment. They can use anything in their houses as props or costumes. Anyone who doesn't want to act can make suggestions or direct the action.

### CHATTING TOGETHER 5 MINS

Ask the group these questions, making sure everyone has the chance to contribute:

- Is there anything unusual in the story?
- What do you find inspiring in this passage?
- What does it tell you about how Jesus chooses people?
- Mary Magdalene was the first evangelist – how does she inspire you?
- Why do you think Mary was chosen for this role? (Maybe check out John 19:25.)
- Mary obeyed Jesus and went to tell the disciples – how did she feel?
- Mary stepped up to a role that society would never have given her or trusted her to do – what example is she setting for us today?
- How could we be more like Mary?

### CREATIVE RESPONSE 10 MINS

**You will need:** pens and paper

Invite the group to write themselves a letter (of no more than five sentences) to the 90-year-old version of themselves. They could write something like:

Dear [own name], I hope that you have lived with the courage of Mary; that when the world has given you limitations, you have walked, with Jesus, straight through them. I hope that you have found hope in the loneliest times and found joy in telling others about Jesus. Love from [own name].

Invite the group to share their letter (if they want to) and then take a photo with it and post it to social media.

We can be each other's biggest cheerleaders as we say 'no' to limitations and 'yes' to the role God has for us in his story. Whether we feel sure of the part we have been given to play or not, we have great opportunities to be like Jesus and live in a way that honours everyone and includes people that society might think are inferior.

### PRAYER 5 MINS

**You will need:** paper; pens

Give the group two prayer options for people to spend time doing. They can do them both, or just pick one.

**Prayer activity one:** Invite people to write on a sheet of paper anything that they think stops them being courageous for Jesus. For example: people's opinions of me, finding time to spend with Jesus, doubts in faith. Once they have written on their paper, ask them to screw it up and throw it away (or recycle it), and write 'Courage' in the palm of their hand. This is a symbolic act of putting down our fears and taking up Jesus' courage.

**Prayer activity two:** Who are the people that we have thought of as inferior? It might be people in school who behave differently to us or wear different clothes. It might be people we come across in daily life: the girl in netball who can't throw, the man behind the checkout at our supermarket or the homeless woman finding shelter in a doorway. Grab a piece of paper and write about that person as God would write about them. Keep the piece of paper so that you don't forget that God honours everyone.

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