



SESSION 1 of 4

The good Samaritan

MEETING AIM

To understand that 'our neighbour' refers to anyone and everyone.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Luke 10:25-37

BACKGROUND

This parable comes in the context of a question, and it's a big one: "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" The man who asked it was trying to catch Jesus out, but he only managed to catch himself. However, it's a valid question and one that might provoke some discussion in your group. What's your own response to this?

Somewhere during this session it would be good to share the background on Samaritans and Jews. They were not such good neighbours!

5 GATHERING TIME

Ask the group how their week has gone and if anyone has been a hero for them. Has anyone given them any help or encouragement? If so, how did that help them and make them feel? (Be ready to give your own example if no one offers.) Say that today you are going to be looking at what Jesus said about helping others.

10 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: two different lists of emotions such as joy, fear and anger
Split the young people into two teams and give each team a list of emotions. Challenge them to create freeze frames of the different emotions. Give them a couple of minutes to create their tableaux and then invite them to show their freeze frames to the other team. The other team should try to guess the emotions, and the team that guesses the most correctly wins.

10 BIBLE EXPLORATION

You will need: Bibles; volunteers to perform the script below (you might want to get them to practise it before the session)
Read Luke 10:25-37 to the group, then invite your actors up to the front to present this drama. Ask people to act out the action as it is described (this doesn't need to be rehearsed beforehand):

Commentator 1: Here we are on the Jericho road.

Commentator 2: The weather is hot, hot, hot, and look at what the traveller has got!

C1: Our traveller is sporting a big bag of money.

C2: Which is spotted by a team of armed robbers.

C1: You can see them waving their arms. *They act this out.*

C2: And it looks like they intend to do him some harm.

C1: Just watch this tactical move as they surround their opponent.

C2: It's not a fair fight. The gloves are off, and I think we'd better watch this action in slow motion. *This is acted out slowly and overly dramatically.*

C1: A biff on the head.

C2: A bash on the jaw.

C1: Bish, bash, bosh!

C2: How much more of this cosh? *The person being attacked falls to the floor.*

C1: The robbers have won the fight!

C2: Now they're escaping in broad daylight. *The robbers escape with the bag.*

C1: Can anyone save the day?

C2: Now the main player is in injury time.

C1: Look down the road. Can this respectable citizen be the one?

Priest: *Walks over and takes a good look, then shakes their head and walks on.* I have a different goal in my life; one that doesn't cause me any struggle or strife. Sorry!

C2: Perhaps this new player in the game of life...

C1: Will end the suffering and endless strife. *Along comes a Levite who sees the injured person and puts his or her hands together.*

C2: It's good to say a prayer.

C1: But you've got to show that you care. *The Levite walks on.*

C2: Now here comes someone from the other side.

C1: The Samaritans are like a different team. *Enter the Samaritan, who stops to help.*

C2: But this one is on side.

C1: This Samaritan is acting like a dream. *The Samaritan helps the man up.*

C2: What a goal in life!

C1: To care for everyone!

C2: And to neglect no one.

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Discuss the story using these questions:

- Why do you think people didn't stop to help?
- What do you think the people listening to the story thought?
- Why did Jesus tell this story?

15 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: a coin; two sheets of paper; marker pens

In the story Jesus told, the Samaritan took the man to an inn and paid for him to stay there. Show the young people a coin and the fact that it has two sides. Explain that you are going to look at two sides of being a good Samaritan.

Hand out some large sheets of plain paper and pens, and ask the group to draw two circles. On one circle ask the group to think about the cost of helping someone, for example money, time and reputation. On the other ask them to think about how they might need help from someone else. Sometimes asking for help, showing vulnerability and making people aware of our needs might also cost us. Once everyone has had a chance to write some thoughts down, review what has been recorded inside the two circles.

Allow some time and space for people to reflect and think about those in society, those at their school, those in their street and those within their close circle of family and friends who need help. How can they make a practical difference?

5 PRAYER

You will need: circles from 'Creative response'; a marker pen

Ask the group to place the two circles next to each other and draw a third circle that joins them two together. Explain that God can help us in everything we go through and can help us to help others deal with what they are going through.

Allow some time and space to ask God to be that connecting circle in the different areas of your young people's lives.

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SESSION 2 of 4

The banquet

MEETING AIM

To understand that God's love is for all, and it is up to everyone to respond to that invitation.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Luke 14:15-24

BACKGROUND

Jesus was a Jew. The Jews were looking for and waiting for the Messiah, their Saviour, to come. What shocked and rocked the Jewish audience listening to Jesus' stories is that Jesus showed that God's love was for all people. What was true then is still true. For God so loved the world that he sent his son. It's not exclusive but inclusive. Everyone is welcome and everyone is invited, but not everyone will choose to respond in a positive way.

5 GATHERING TIME

Welcome the group to the session and share out any refreshments you have brought. Catch up with how the young people are and how their week has gone. Ask the group if there is any party or big event coming up that they have been invited to and are excited about.

10 INTRO ACTIVITY

Play a word association game. Ask for two volunteers and pick a subject for the two contestants to speak on. They each have to say a word in turn to do with that topic. The contestants can't hesitate, repeat a word or deviate from the subject. If they do, someone else takes their place.

The topics can be anything, but make sure the last subject you pick is parties.

15 BIBLE EXPLORATION

You will need: actors to perform the script below

If you have time before the session, ask your volunteers to rehearse this dramatic reading. If time allows you could do the rehearsals as part of the session, exploring emotions and motivations as you rehearse:

N1: When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus:

N2: Blessed is the one who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God.

N1: Jesus replied:

Jesus: A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited.

Owner: Come, for everything is now ready.

Jesus: But they all began to make their excuses. The first said:

Person 1: I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.

Jesus: Another said:

Person 2: I have just bought five pairs of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.

Jesus: Still another said:

Person 3: I just got married, so I can't come.

Jesus: The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servants to:

Owner: Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town, and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.

Servant: Yes, sir!

Jesus: Then the servant said:

Servant: What you ordered has been done, but there is still room.

Jesus: Then the master told his servants:

Owner: Go out into the roads and country lanes, and compel them to come in so that my house will be full. I tell you, not one of those invited will get a taste of my banquet.

After the dramatic reading, split the group into two. Give one group 'the press conference' and the other 'the red carpet'. Give each the relevant brief.

The press conference: Review the parable, then set up and act out a press conference. The people who are being interviewed by the press are the characters in the story who choose not to come to the banquet. Give the young people time to think up a few questions and the characters time to decide what they might say.

The red carpet: Ask the young people to create a red carpet moment for the characters in the story who said yes to coming to the party. Give them a few minutes to think through and discuss how the people might be feeling and what they might be thinking. The other people in this scene are the press, stopping them on the red carpet and asking them how they feel.

Let the two groups practise their scenes, then show them to each other. Depending on the size of the group you might decide to do just one of these all together.

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Discuss the story using these questions:

- Why do you think people didn't want to come to the banquet?
- How do you think the people who were invited from the streets felt?
- Which characters do you identify with most?
- Why do you think Jesus told this parable? What is this parable really about?

5 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: a large sheet of paper with the letters RSVP written on; marker pens
Show the group the sheet of paper and explain what the letters mean: an invitation has been given and a reply is requested.

Ask the young people to consider what their response would have been if they had been invited to that banquet. What things in their lives are stopping them accepting Jesus' invitation to get to know him? Encourage them to write these things down on the paper. If they want to keep things a secret they could draw a picture or a symbol.

5 PRAYER

You will need: a pack of RSVP cards; pens
Hand out an RSVP card to each person. Play some quiet worship music and ask your young people to write personal prayers based on what they have already been thinking and sharing as a group.

Finish with a closing prayer about how God includes and invites us to follow and know him because he loves us:

Father God, thank you that you invite everyone into your kingdom. Thank you that you sent your Son to die for us all because you love us and want us to respond to your amazing grace. Amen.

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SESSION 3 of 4

The sower

MEETING AIM

To show that we need to put into practice God's word if we are to be fruitful.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 13:1-9

BACKGROUND

A parable is a story with many layers of meaning. Jesus used a lot of parables in his teaching, but he rarely explained them. However, Jesus does give an explanation for the parable of the sower. Before the session, reflect on verses 18 to 23 and listen to what God is saying, both to you and to the young people.

5 GATHERING TIME

Welcome the group to the session and share out any refreshments you have brought. Catch up with how the young people are and how their week has gone. Ask the group what they have been listening to this week. What has been good? Is there anything they have struggled to pay attention to?

5 INTRO ACTIVITY

Play a couple of rounds of Chinese whispers. Try using sentences such as: "There are bears playing with red balloons in the shopping area outside Tesco!" or "How many matches make a match for a perfect match of a box of a million matches?"

After the game, ask them how easy it was to get every word right. What made it hard and what made it easy?

10 BIBLE EXPLORATION

You will need: actors to perform the script below

If you have time before the session, ask your volunteers to rehearse this dramatic reading. If time allows you could do the rehearsals as part of the session, exploring emotions and motivations as you rehearse:

- N1:** Jesus told a story about a farmer.
N2: A farmer who sowed seeds in his field.
N1: Some fell along the path.
N2: A rocky path.
N1: And the birds of the air swooped on in.
N2: And gobbled the lot.
Birds: KERCHING! GET IN!

- N2:** Some fell on rocky places.
N1: Where the soil was shallow.
N2: The seed sprang up quickly.
N1: And died quickly.
N2: Because it had no root!
N1: Quickly...on to the next seed.
N2: The seed that fell among the thorns.
N1: Which quickly grew up.
N2: And quickly choked the seed.
N1: Quicker than quick.
N2: Some seed fell onto good soil.
N1: That quickly grew.
N2: And stayed as good as new.
N1: When the rain fell...
N2: And the sun shone...
N1: The harvest was full.
N2: The harvest was done.

Split into four groups and give each group one of the areas where the seed landed. Ask them to quickly recap why the seed did or didn't thrive. Then ask each group to discuss how that relates to the way people hear and respond to God's word.

Ask for feedback from the four groups. If people aren't quite sure at this stage, there is no need to worry because the people who first heard Jesus say this were a bit confused as well.

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Discuss the story using these questions:

- Which type of ground do you identify with the most?
- What does this parable tell you about God?
- What does this parable tell you about you?
- What is this parable really about?

10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: four large sheets of paper; Post-it notes; pens

Spread the large sheets of paper out around the room and write at the top of each one the different ground the seed fell on. Set out piles of Post-it notes so the group can write and stick on the different big sheets. (You might want to give people the option of keeping the Post-its private). Give the group time to write and stick the Post-it notes onto the sheets.

The idea is to encourage people to see how they engage with God's word and how they put it into practice. You may want to help them consider how and if they want to get help in overcoming areas of struggle and weakness.

5 PRAYER

You will need: sheets of paper and Post-it notes from 'Creative prayer'; packet of seeds (large ones such as sunflower or pumpkin seeds)

Before you say this prayer, allow the group a moment of quiet to respond to the Post-it notes they have written and the things in their lives they want to get rid of. (It's important to note that some big issues may come out in this session.)

Give each person a seed to hold. Ask them to close their eyes and listen to the prayer:

Father God, thank you that you give us your living word. Please help us not to ignore, neglect or reject it. Please help us to listen carefully and respond wisely, to not let worries get in the way or any other distraction to stop us putting into action what you say.

Thank you that your word living in us will grow the best harvest; the best kind of life we can ever wish to see. Amen.

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SESSION 4 of 4

The lost son

MEETING AIM

To see how much God loves and forgives.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Luke 15:11-32

BACKGROUND

The only way the son would have his inheritance was if the dad was dead. When the son asked for the money he was controversially wishing that his father was deceased. The father running to the son and embracing him would also have been an alien sight. Jesus was making a strong point and giving a clear message of how much God loves us.

5 GATHERING TIME

Welcome the group to the session and share out any refreshments you have brought. Catch up with how the young people are and how their week has gone. Ask the group if they have messed up in any way. They can answer in their heads if they wish.

5 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: a comedy confession of your own (optional)

Explain that you are going to 'confess' to your group something you have done to see if they are willing to forgive you. Alternatively, you could use this confession:

One lunchtime at sixth-form college, a bored teenager bought a Cornish pasty and a can of Coke for his lunch. For no good reason and without knowing why, the sixth former stuffed the Cornish pasty into the can of Coke until it was completely submerged inside. On walking back to the social area, a fellow sixth-former asked if she could have a sip of Coke as she was very thirsty. The guy mentioned the Cornish pasty to his friend but the girl didn't believe him. She took a very, very long drink before spitting it all back out.

Ask the group if they would forgive the sixth-form lad who stuffed an innocent Cornish pasty inside a can of coke and then gave it to his friend to drink.

10 BIBLE EXPLORATION

You will need: actors to perform the script below

If you have time before the session, ask your volunteers to rehearse this dramatic reading. If time allows, you could do the rehearsals as part of the session, exploring emotions and motivations as you rehearse:

N1: Jesus said:

N2: There was a man who had two sons.

N1: The younger son said to his father:

Younger son: Father, give me my share of the estate.

N2: So he divided his property between them.

N1: Not long after that the younger son got together all he had.

N2: And set off for a distant country, where he squandered his wealth on wild living.

N1: After he had spent everything there was a severe famine in that country.

N2: And he began to be in need, so he went and hired himself out to a pig farmer.

N1: He longed to fill his stomach with the pods the pigs were eating.

N2: But no one gave him anything.

N1: When he came to his senses, he said:

Younger son: So many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will go back to my father and say to him: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants."

N2: So he got up and went to his father.

N1: But while he was still a long way off...

N2: His father saw him and was filled with compassion for him.

N1: He ran to his son.

N2: And threw his arms around him.

N1: And kissed him.

N2: The son said to him:

Younger son: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.

N1: But the father said to his servants:

Father: Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate, for this son of mine was lost and now is found.

N2: So they began to celebrate.

N1: Meanwhile, the older son was in the field.

N2: When he came near the house he heard music and dancing.

N1: So he called one of the servants.

N2: And asked him what was going on.

Servant: Your brother has come home.

N1: The servant replied.

Servant: And your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.

N2: The older brother became angry.

N1: And refused to go in.

N2: So his father went out and pleaded with him.

N1: But he answered his father:

Older brother: Look! All these years I've been slaving away for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never even gave me a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours, who has squandered your property with prostitutes, comes home you kill the fattened calf for him.

Father: My son!

N2: The father said.

Father: You are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and he is alive again; he was lost and is found.

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Discuss the story using these questions:

- How do you think the younger son felt when his dad forgave him?
- Why did the older brother find it hard to forgive?
- What is this parable really about?

15 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: a large sheet of paper; a marker pen; a spoken word piece from youthandchildrens.work/resources

Draw a road on a large piece of paper and explain that this parable is a universal story. It is our story. Ask the group:

- Are you still at home, slaving away for God, not understanding how much he loves us and trying to earn his favour?
- Are you someone far away from God?
- Are you on your way home?
- Read out the spoken word poem, which is a modernised version of someone lost turning to find Jesus, who is always there for us.

10 PRAYER

Give your young people the space to pray and thank God for his generous love and grace.

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