

The good Samaritan

MEETING AIM

To discover how each of us can be a good neighbour.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Luke 10:25-37

BACKGROUND

This is perhaps one of the best-known parables, yet it sometimes loses its potency when we view it as being about people in a faraway land. This service seeks to challenge us all to be good neighbours in our own worlds.

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WELCOME ACTIVITIES

OPTION ONE: Chatting together

As people arrive (or at the start of the service), encourage them to talk to those seated near them about their week. Has anyone been a 'good Samaritan' to them this week, perhaps performing a good deed or helping them unexpectedly? Have they had an opportunity to be a good Samaritan to someone else?

OPTION TWO: Story treasure hunt

You will need: items to hide around the church: a toy donkey, a bag of coins, bandages and a bottle of water

Before the service, hide these objects around the church building. When you get to this point in the service, ask the congregation if they can find any of these items around the building and bring them up to the front. When you have gathered them all together, ask the congregation if they can work out which story we will be telling today. What other objects might they add to this story?

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BIBLE STORY

You will need: a selection of Bible character costumes and simple props; volunteers; a Bible

Ask for volunteers of all ages to take on the key roles in the story of the good Samaritan found in Luke 10:25-37: the man, a group of robbers, a priest, a Levite, a Samaritan and an innkeeper. You will also need a narrator who will read the text aloud. Gather your volunteers and invite them to quickly select appropriate costumes or props, then direct them as to where to base themselves for the storytelling. (You can spread the volunteers out ready to perform

the story, making good use of your building to ensure that everyone can see.) Explain to the volunteers that as the narrator reads the passage they should act out the story, miming at the appropriate points. Ensure that the narrator regularly pauses to allow the actors time to engage with the story.

Ask the narrator to read Luke 10:25-37, and as they do the volunteers should mime appropriate responses to the story, making use of the props provided. You can encourage the rest of the congregation to add their own sound effects, perhaps booing or cheering at relevant moments.

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SMALL GROUPS

You will need: copies of the questions below; Bibles

Gather in small groups made up of one or two families, or of mixed-age groups. Give each group a Bible and a copy of these questions:

- If you had heard Jesus tell this story, what would you think?
- What would you like to say to the characters in this story?
- What does this story tell you about loving your neighbour?
- Who would the Samaritan character be in your neighbourhood?

Give the groups time to chat about these questions, referring to the Bible passage if they need to.

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REVIEW

You will need: a roving mic (if needed)

Get some feedback from the small groups on one or two of the questions from 'Small groups', using a microphone if needed to ensure that everyone can hear what is being said.

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RESPONSE ACTIVITIES

Set these three activities up in different parts of your meeting place. Explain what they are and encourage people to go to the one that will help them process what they have discovered most effectively.

OPTION 1: Role play

You will need: a selection of props and costumes (these can be gathered from congregation's own possessions); a Bible

Challenge the group to create a short role play or a series of freeze frames to translate the story into a modern-day setting. Encourage the group to make use of real-life situations to explore how

powerful this story is when we understand the tensions between people groups. For example, these could be Remainers and Leavers, City and United, or local villages or estates where tensions exist. Encourage the group to be sensitive about the related issues without losing any of the story's power.

OPTION 2: Collage

You will need: Bibles; a large roll or sheet of paper; newspapers and magazines; craft materials; scissors; glue sticks

Ask the group to work together to create a large collage that visually represents the parable. Rather than trying to create a storyboard of the narrative, encourage the group to pull out words, phrases and images from the newspapers and magazines that visually represent themes from the text. Leave this collage up on display for the rest of the church to see.

OPTION 3: Good neighbours

You will need: paper and pens

Ask the people in this group what they can do to show neighbourly love to others. What does it mean for us to put this teaching into practice? Encourage the group to be very practical in the ideas they have and, as they talk, to create a list of ideas they can put into action in the week ahead. Invite the group to commit to implementing one or two of these actions, perhaps sharing the list of ideas with the wider church throughout the week.

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CLOSING

Gather everyone together and thank them for their involvement in the activities today. Ask what has challenged them most, perhaps reflecting quietly for themselves or calling out loud. Encourage them to take away this challenge, ready to act on it in the week ahead. Pray for the group as a whole that we would all be the best kind of neighbours in the communities in which we live.

CREATIVE WORSHIP SUGGESTIONS

The songs you choose to sing could reflect what it means to be loved by God and how we can act on that love, sharing it with others in the world around us.

BECKY MAY

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Chelsea and the charity shop treasure

"Oh no, not another one!" Esther put her head in her hands as her friend disappeared into the Oxfam shop.

"Come shopping with me," Chelsea had said. "It'll be fun," Chelsea had said. "We'll try on clothes, get milkshakes and test out some make-up," Chelsea had said. Well, they'd been in town for an hour, and they had yet to try on a single dress or test one lip gloss.

Esther trailed into the shop and looked around to see if she could spot Chelsea. She eventually found her friend scabbling around in an old travelling chest. Chelsea emerged with a massive grin and pulled Esther over to a quiet spot in the shop beside the men's ties and shoes.

"You won't believe what I've found," whispered Chelsea.

"Oh, I can't guess, Chelsea. Please do tell me what you've found. I can hardly wait," replied Esther loudly. And sarcastically.

"Shhh! Not so loud!" Chelsea looked around her to see if anyone had heard, but there was only the old lady on the till, and she was busy pricing up some recently donated cardigans.

"You know how much I love big chunky jewellery, don't you?" Chelsea rattled the enormous necklace she was wearing so vigorously that the fake diamonds almost hit Esther in the face.

"Of course. We've spent the last hour browsing every charity shop in Manchesterford."

"Well, I've only gone and found something amazing. My gran showed me a photo of this necklace a few weeks ago. She said it was owned by Miss Babs, a famous local antiques dealer from the last century. It was lost when her cleaner deep-fried it by accident, thinking it was an onion bhaji. Guess what? It's in that trunk over there. It has to be genuine. There's fried batter in the chain and everything!"

Esther and Chelsea looked at the label on the travelling trunk. "Trunk and contents: £100."

"Where are you going to get £100 from?"

"Well, I'm going to see if the old lady on the till will keep it until tomorrow for me, and then I'll take my whole jewellery collection to the antiques shop down the road. I reckon that money, together with what I got for my birthday, will be enough to buy the trunk. That necklace has to be worth five times as much! And it's so much better than all the stuff I've already got!"

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What do you think of Chelsea's plan?
- Is it honest to buy the chest without telling the charity shop what is in it? Why? Why not?
- What would you do in the same situation?

This story is based on Matthew 13:44. Read the passage to the group and compare Jesus' story and words with this one. Discuss what Jesus might have been saying through his parable, encouraging the group to think about it in a new way. In October 2018 we explored the companion parable about the pearl (Matthew 13:45). If you still have it, compare the stories together.

ALEX TAYLOR

is resources editor for *Premier Youth and Children's Work*.

Asking and discovering

"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find"
Matthew 7:7.

I'm convinced I had a 'Samuel moment' when I was 5. I thought I could hear my mum calling me from upstairs, but when I repeatedly went up to respond she said that it wasn't her. No amazing epiphany from God followed, so whether it was him or my imagination we shall never truly know. However, it has encouraged me to follow, enquire and respond whenever I have felt (or heard) God calling me since then! What is your usual reaction when you feel God calling you?

When I ask my kids to fetch something, they soon return empty-handed saying they can't find it. My favourite response to this is: "Look with your eyes, not your mouth!" In your life and work, do you go around seeking answers, researching and exploring until you are satisfied? Or do you try for a bit and then give up if God doesn't immediately respond?

I know that I do both, but the more I've asked God to answer my questions as I've got older, the more I've felt his response is that he has already either given me the answer or the means and intelligence to discover it for myself. If we're honest, this can be frustrating, but it has taught me greater maturity and wisdom rather than making me over-reliant on easy answers or supernatural intervention...or leaving me tempted to give up!

Discuss this topic with your mentee, using these questions as prompts:

- Do you have any questions for God?
- Have you sought answers from him about specific things you don't understand?
- Have you found the answers with his help?
- Have you ever given up having not really found an answer?

List all their questions, big and small. See how many small ones you could knock off quickly, then set a plan together to help them find answers for the others.

Many of the answers we seek from God can be found through people we trust, so your challenge this month is to help your mentee access the right people to get the answers. Some ideas for useful contacts might be:

- People with expertise or specific passions within your church or community
- Friends of friends: call in some favours for your mentee
- Those you don't know but could find a way to reach (for example celebrities or well-known Christians) via social media or the relevant websites
- Your church leader
- Your local MP
- Local charities and other volunteering organisations
- Local business owners
- People with experience of what your mentee wants help with / information on (for example homeless people if they want to get involved in helping)

Encourage your mentee to be persistent and not to give up until they have found their answers!

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Getting to know you

"Getting to know you, getting to know all about you..." Nope, this issue's games aren't based on Rodgers and Hammerstein's musical *The King and I*. It's the start of a new academic year, so here are some games to help the children and young people in your groups get to know each other better.



CLAP CLAP

This game is appropriate for younger children. Stand in a circle and get a simple clapping rhythm going. Once the children get the hang of it, introduce these phrases:

"My name is [insert name]. *Clap, clap*. And I like [insert interest]. *Clap, clap*."

Then the next person in the circle has a go. Once you've gone all the way round the circle, clap and cheer, thanking everyone for taking part. Challenge the children to remember everyone's name and what their interests and hobbies are.



WEAVING A WEB

You will need: a ball of wool

This game is suitable for younger children. Sit the children in a circle. Keeping hold of the end of the wool, throw the ball to someone else in the circle. As you do so, say your name and the name of the child you're throwing the wool to. That child then holds on to the string of wool while throwing the ball to someone else, saying their name and then naming the next child. This continues until everyone is holding onto part of the wool and you have created a web of wool between you. You could even work in reverse to roll the wool back up again.



GIANT GUESS WHO

You will need: names of all the group members written on separate cards; Post-it notes in two colours

Ask for two volunteers and get them to choose a card with someone's name on. Give each volunteer one colour of Post-it note. Arrange the other group members around the room and give them both colours of Post-it note to hold in the air, one in each hand.

Each volunteer has to guess which person the other volunteer has on their card before that other volunteer guesses theirs. They ask questions such as: "Does this person have blond hair?" or "Is this person wearing a dress?" Depending on the answer, they should go around the room, taking away the Post-it notes of their colour from the people who don't match the answer to their question. So if the person on the card has blond hair, remove the Post-it notes from all the people in the group without blond hair. The first person to guess correctly is the winner! Play as many times as the children want to.

WHICH ONE'S ME?

You will need: sheets of paper; felt-tip pens; Blu Tack or sticky tape; Post-it notes

This game is for older children or young people. Give out sheets of paper and felt-tip pens, then ask everyone to design a poster about themselves without putting their name on the paper. They should try to do this without anyone seeing; encourage everyone to spread out so they can't be overlooked as they draw. Give the group enough time to do this and then gather the posters in.

Stick the posters up around the room, then challenge everyone to guess which poster belongs to which group member. They should write names on Post-its and stick them to the posters. Once everyone has decided, go around the posters to see how many people have guessed correctly.

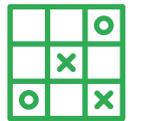


FIND SOMEONE WHO

You will need: bingo card featuring facts about everyone in the group; pens

An absolute classic, this game is ideal for older children or young people. Before the session, ask members of the group to share a fact about themselves. Put all of them onto a bingo card and make enough copies for everyone in the group to have one.

Give out the cards, then encourage the group to find the right person for each fact and ask them to sign their card. The first person to match all the right facts to the right people is the winner.



TWO TRUTHS AND A LIE

Another classic game. Ask everyone in the group to think of two facts about themselves and one false fact. Examples could include: "I've climbed to the top of Snowdon", "My grandmother was in *Coronation Street*" or "I can burp the alphabet".

Sitting in a circle, each person shares their three 'facts' and everyone else in the group has to decide which is the lie.



FACT, FACT, FACT

This version of 'Duck, duck, goose' is suitable for children and young people of all ages. Sit in a circle on the floor. Share a fact that you know is true for at least two people in the group, such as: "You go to Manchesterford Primary School." The people for whom that fact is true have to get up and run around the circle, then back to their place. The person who gets there first earns a point. Keep going until you run out of time or facts. The person with the most points is the winner.

You could adapt this to fit the game 'Fruit salad'. Sit the group in a circle of chairs, with a chair for each person, minus one. The person without a chair stands in the middle and calls out a fact that relates to some of the people in the group. The people to whom that fact applies have to run to a different chair, while the person in the middle has to try to sit in one of the vacated chairs.



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The good Samaritan

The good Samaritan is a well-told tale, but often a disservice is done by categorising it as a story that is merely about being loving and helping others. These crafts will help us pick up on themes of surprise, wonder, compassion and the messiness of loving our neighbour.

PLASTER BISCUITS

You will need: long, thin biscuits such as lotus biscuits or rich tea fingers; red jam; white fondant icing

This craft helps children explore the themes of injury and compassion in the story. It also looks a bit gory, which only adds to the appeal! Cut the fondant icing into squares the same width as the biscuits. Put a small blob of jam in the middle of the biscuit and stick the fondant on top of it. Now smear a little bit of jam on top of the white fondant. This will now look like a plaster that has been taken off.

As you eat the biscuits, talk about the injured man in the story. Discuss the compassion he was shown by a stranger and how that might have felt.



PLAYDOUGH MARK-MAKING

You will need: playdough; mark-making implements such as forks, pipe cleaners, lolly sticks, Lego bricks and buttons

Flatten or roll out the playdough, then ask the children to use the mark makers to draw a picture of something from the story that really stuck out for them. Use the creating time to talk about the story and to notice the different marks each item makes. Allow time for the children to share their creations and talk about what has affected them from the story. Why did they choose certain mark makers to create their picture?



MESSY NEIGHBOUR CLOUD DOUGH

You will need: eight cups of plain flour, a cup of oil, marbles or coins

This story has some mess in it. Some of the characters avoid the injured man because they don't want to touch the mess and make themselves unclean. The fact that someone who people would usually avoid turns out to be the helper adds to the lack of neatness. This craft is a bit messy and emphasises the fact that sometimes Jesus wants us to love people we might not deliberately seek out.

Mix the oil and flour until they are well combined. The flour will feel soft and will clump really easily, but it will also separate easily. Put the flour in a large container and hide marbles or coins in it. Get the children to search for them, expecting to get a bit messy as they pull them out! Use this as a starting point to discuss the fact that the people Jesus wants us to love are not necessarily the ones we see or relate to at first glance.



POP-UP SURPRISES

You will need: A5 paper; A5 card; scissors; glue; a selection of coloured paper

The pop-up contents of the card will come as a surprise, just as a Samaritan helping a Jew is surprising. The people Jesus wants us to love as our neighbours can also surprise us. The internet has lots of tutorials on how to make simple pop-up cards. Search 'flower card' on iheartcraftythings.com and you'll find one with photos and a video.

When the children have completed the basic pop-up step they can decide what they would like to create for their pop-up pictures. Just make sure that whatever they make doesn't protrude when the card is closed! As you make the cards, talk about the surprise of the pop-up and the surprise that the injured man's helper turned out to be someone who was an outcast in Jesus' culture. How does that part of the story relate to anything the children have heard about or experienced?



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Spider-Man: Homecoming

CLIP: 00:21:43-00:24:22

RATING: 12A

SYNOPSIS

Thrilled by his experience with the Avengers, Peter returns home to New York, where he lives with his Aunt May. Under the watchful eye of his new mentor, Tony Stark, Peter tries to fall back into his normal daily routine, distracted by thoughts of proving himself to be more than just your friendly neighbourhood Spider-Man. However, when the Vulture emerges as a new villain, everything that Peter holds most dear is under threat.

There have been a few Spider-Men over the years, and many people felt suspicious when yet another iteration was announced. But when it became apparent that this version of Spider-Man would be appearing in the Marvel Universe along with Iron Man and the rest of the Avengers a whole new world of possibilities, villains and friends opened up. With a renewed focus on a young Peter Parker (played by the excellent Tom Holland) living his life at high school and trying to balance his superhero duties with the many issues facing a teenage boy, this version helps open up the potential to talk about life and faith. And with the sequel, *Spider-Man: Far From Home*, out in cinemas last month, this is a good opportunity to use the community-focused hero to generate some discussion and debate.

This clip sees Peter return home after a semi-successful mission to stop a bunch of criminals stealing some money. A somewhat dejected Peter sneaks into his bedroom, taking extensive care to be as silent as possible so as not to arouse any suspicion from his aunt. After managing to close his bedroom door, Peter turns around to discover his best friend Ned sitting on his bed. Having managed to keep his superhero identity secret from all of those around him, Peter's secret life is finally discovered.

DISCUSS

After showing the clip as a stimulus, break into small discussion groups (you may wish to have a designated discussion leader for each group) and consider the following questions:

- How would you feel if you were in Ned's position in this clip?
- How do you think Peter would feel about keeping his secret?
- What do you think will happen now that Ned knows?
- Is it possible for Peter to have a genuine relationship with his aunt if he is keeping such a big part of his life from her?

There are many passages in the Bible that explore keeping secrets, but for this session we will focus on Proverbs. After discussing the first set of questions, hand each group a copy of Proverbs 11:12-13. Ask your groups to read the verses and discuss the following questions:

- Should secrets always be kept?
- What sort of person would you tell a secret to?
- Is it possible to keep a secret from God?
- Is keeping a secret the same as lying? Would that make it a sin?

Spider-Man: Homecoming is available to stream on Netflix. *Spider-Man: Far From Home* is in cinemas now.

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You've got a friend in me

ARTIST: Randy Newman

SUITABLE FOR: Under-10s

INTRODUCTION

With the return of the world's most famous toy amigos comes the return of the hit song! This session explores what it means to be a good friend and takes some advice from the Bible about how we can be good friends.

Begin the session with a *Toy Story*-themed game. You could print off pictures of all the characters to hide around the room ready for the children to find, set out some 'Mr Potato Head' toys to play with or set up a photo booth where children can take photos while wearing appropriate costumes or accessories. As you begin, talk about the films and the story so far. Who are the big *Toy Story* fans in your group? Does anyone have a Buzz Lightyear? What do they think will happen in the new film?

LISTEN AND DISCUSS

Play the track, distributing copies of the lyrics if needed, and invite the children to join in with a singalong. When you have sung the song together, discuss the following questions:

- How does this song make you feel?
- What does it make you think about?
- What does it mean to have a friend who is always there for you?
- How can we be a friend like the one described in this song?

Ask the children to think about their own close friends and talk about what they mean to them, whether that friend is part of the group or not. Spend some time celebrating good friends and discussing what they mean to us, sharing encouraging stories with one another.

Tell the group that the Bible has a lot to say about friendships. If appropriate, perhaps retell the story of David and Jonathan, Ruth and Naomi or Jesus, Lazarus, Mary and Martha. Explain how, right back in Genesis, God explained that human beings were not designed to be alone, but rather to live in community and relationships with others when he formed Eve and Adam.

The Bible also has a lot to say about how we can be good friends to others, and why we need good friends around us, particularly in the book of Proverbs. Distribute Bibles and ask the group to take a look at this book to see what advice they can find about friendship. They could begin with some of the following:

- Proverbs 13:20
- Proverbs 17:17
- Proverbs 22:24-25
- Proverbs 27:17

As you look at these words of advice, talk about what they mean to you and to the children in the group. How can we put these words of advice into practice, and why should we?

As you draw the session to a close, invite the children to pray for their friends, thanking God for the friendships they have and asking him to help them be the kinds of friends these proverbs describe, and to provide friends for them who do the same.

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NEW SCHOOL YEAR

Pray using your hand. Draw your hand in the space below and follow the ideas to pray:

LONG FINGER

What do you long for? Doodle your hopes and dreams to God for this year.

RING FINGER

People sometimes wear rings to show their love for someone. Who in your school needs love - a lonely classmate or sad teacher? Write their names or draw them above.

POINTING FINGER

Point in the direction of your school and pray for it and all its staff and students. Write or draw your prayers around this finger.

LITTLE FINGER

The smallest of them all! What makes you feel small and weak ahead of this year? Doodle or write prayers around your little finger.

THUMB

Thumbs up for good things in the past! What are you thankful to God for from this summer or last year? Write or doodle around your thumb.

Amen!