



JESUS MEETS MARY AND MARTHA

MEETING AIM

To discover the joy of spending time in Jesus' presence.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Luke 10:38-42

BACKGROUND

On the face of it, Martha is doing the right thing in this story. She has opened her home, and this means a lot of work in terms of hospitality, caring for her visitors and making sure they have everything they need. However, in this fulfilling of custom, she misses out on the most important thing, spending time with Jesus. Jesus states in verse 42 that this is the only thing that's needed. While Mary and Martha could only spend time with Jesus when he visited, we don't have that restriction, but we often don't prioritise spending time with him, and children aren't often encouraged to do so. Let this session challenge you and your family (or your children's group) to prioritise time with Jesus.

STARTING OUT

5 MINS

Start your time together with some simple refreshments and chat about what your children have found exciting during the week. Ask them: "What was the best thing about when someone last came to visit? (This could be someone in your bubble or when visitors came to the garden – however the social-distancing guidelines work in your area.)"

PLAY

10 MINS

Play a simple memory game about preparing for someone special to come and visit. The first person to play says: "The Queen is coming to visit! We've got to get ready. I..." followed by something they are going to do to prepare. This could be something like wash the windows, bake a cake, put out fresh towels or buy some flowers. The next person says the beginning phrase, followed by the first person's suggestion. They then add an idea of their own. This carries on around the circle,

with each player trying to remember all of the previous actions before adding their own. The game continues until someone forgets!

BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

You will need: child-friendly Bible; pictures of Mary and Martha; felt-tip pens

Before your session, print out the pictures of Mary and Martha. Either print them onto A4 paper, or create a Top Trumps style card with different categories.

Give everyone a copy of the pictures or Top Trumps card and ask them to listen as you read Luke 10:38-42. As they listen, they should write or draw around the pictures what they think Mary and Martha are like. Are they happy? Lazy? Busy? Right? If you're using a Top Trumps card, then encourage everyone to fill in the categories you have included on the card. If they are struggling to think of something, they can colour in the picture as they listen.

Give a few moments after reading the passage for people to complete their word pictures / cards. In this time, chat informally about the story, what they think of Mary and Martha and who they think they are most like.

When everyone has finished, share what the children have done and what ideas they had. What picture have you built up of Mary and Martha?

CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

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

- What part of this story do you like best?
- Which character are you most like? Why?
- If Jesus came to your house, what would you do?
- What do you think Jesus would like you to do if he came to your house?

CREATIVE TIME

10 MINS

You will need: simple recipe; baking ingredients and equipment; access to an oven; icing and decorations (optional)
Before your session, find a simple recipe for cakes or biscuits. You could try this biscuit recipe or this cupcake recipe. Gather all the ingredients and, having washed everyone's hands, enjoy making the cakes together.

As you bake, chat about the story and about why Jesus said Mary had done the right thing. Think together about the times when you 'do' things and the times you spend with Jesus – reading the Bible, praying together, singing songs or just being quiet and listening to him.

If you have time, decorate the cakes. Spend a few moments as you eat them chatting about when you can, as a family, spend more time with Jesus. Plan a time during the week where you can sing praise songs and chat with Jesus.

PRAYER

5 MINS

You will need: cakes from 'Creative time' (optional)

Encourage your family to think about a place in your house where they can sit and be quiet. Let everyone know that in a minute, you're going to go and sit in that place (with your cakes if you haven't already eaten them!). When they're sitting in their quiet place, each member of your family should spend some time praying to Jesus and listening to him. Invite your family to suggest some of the things they might talk with Jesus about, before sending them all off to their quiet places. (Make sure everyone has chosen a different place, and be prepared to mediate over any disputes!)

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JESUS MEETS THE CANAANITE WOMAN

MEETING AIM

To discover that Jesus' love and grace is for everyone.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 15:21-28

BACKGROUND

In this encounter, Jesus seems...well... rude. A Canaanite woman (ie not Jewish) came to ask for Jesus' help and he appears to insult her before agreeing to help. However, just as with his encounter with Mary and Martha in Session 1 (and our other sessions in September), he is challenging traditional opinions about what is right and who deserves his help. Jesus reveals that the faith of Gentiles is as valid and powerful as that of Jewish people. He has come to save everyone, even those who were traditionally seen as beyond God's grace.

STARTING OUT

5 MINS

Start your time together with some simple refreshments and chat about what your children have found exciting during the week. Introduce the idea that sometimes we need to help and chat to those people who are on the fringes. Who in the children's lives are the people on the fringes? Perhaps this is someone at school who is often alone.

PLAY

10 MINS

You will need: Happy Families game or playing cards

Play a game of Happy Families together. If you don't have a specific Happy Families set, then play a similar game with ordinary playing cards, collecting number sets, rather than family groups. As you play, chat about how you are a family together, but also how you are part of God's family. Maybe you could share your own story about how you became a member of God's family.

Play as many times as your children are interested and you have time for.

BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

You will need: child-friendly Bible; picture of the Canaanite woman; felt-tip pens

Before your session, print out the picture of the Canaanite woman. Either print it onto A4 paper, or create a Top Trumps style card with different categories.

Give everyone a copy of the picture or Top Trumps card and ask them to listen as you read Matthew 15:21-28.

Explain that the Canaanite woman wasn't Jewish – she wasn't someone who was considered as one of God's people. Jewish people thought that she wasn't allowed to have God's help. In fact, they sometimes referred to non-Jewish people (called Gentiles) as dogs.

As they listen, they should write or draw around the pictures what they think the Canaanite woman is like. Is she happy? Desperate? Bored? If you're using a Top Trumps card, then encourage everyone to fill in the categories you have included on the card. If they are struggling to think of something, they can colour in the picture as they listen.

Give a few moments after reading the passage for people to complete their word pictures / cards. In this time, chat informally about the story, what they think of the woman and how Jesus talks to her.

When everyone has finished, share what the children have done and what ideas they had. What picture have you built up of the Canaanite woman?

CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

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

- What part of this story do you like best?
- Which character are you most like? Why?
- What does this story tell you about Jesus?
- What does this story tell you about other people?

CREATIVE TIME

10 MINS

You will need: A4 card; felt-tip pens; art and collage materials; scissors; glue sticks

Chat together about who in your family, school, church or community might feel on the 'outside'. If you chatted about this in 'Starting out', then refer back to your conversation. Why do these people sometimes feel on the fringes of things? Do some people think that they can't be part of God's family?

Give everyone a piece of card and ask them to fold it in half to create a greetings card. Encourage them to think about who they might want to create a card for. Spend some time decorating the cards and thinking about what to write inside.

As you work, continue your discussion from 'Chatting together'. It might be that some family members feel like they don't deserve Jesus' love – be sensitive if this is the case and try to explore why they think this.

PRAYER

5 MINS

You will need: cards from 'Creative time' (optional)

Invite everyone to hold their cards from 'Creative time' and to think about the person they're going to send their card to. Encourage your children to talk with God about that person and ask him to meet with them, so that they can be part of God's family.

After a minute's quiet, say a prayer thanking God that no one is outside his love and thanking God for sending Jesus. Then plan together how you are going to deliver your cards.

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JESUS MEETS ZACCHAEUS

MEETING AIM

To discover how Jesus can change lives.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Luke 19:1-10

BACKGROUND

Zacchaeus is a well-known story – even older children are likely to be familiar with it. Sometimes familiarity means that we can think we know all the answers. Zacchaeus' life is completely transformed by his meeting with Jesus, and Jericho itself must have been a different place after Zacchaeus changed his ways. Such a life-changing, life-giving transformation can get lost in that familiarity, so try to help children hear the story as if for the first time.

STARTING OUT

5 MINS

Start your time together with some simple refreshments and chat about what your children have found exciting during the week. Ask them if there's anyone they know who has changed, in whatever way. This could be something as simple as changing hairstyle or something as serious as changing family.

PLAY

10 MINS

You will need: board games

Before the session, search out any board games you have where one thing changes into another (such as Reversi / Othello), where players 'change' over the game (such as The Game of Life) or where you turn components into something more complex (such as Mouse Trap).

Play your chosen game together, commenting on how things transform from one thing to another.

BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

You will need: child-friendly Bible; picture of Zacchaeus; felt-tip pens

Before your session, print out the picture of Zacchaeus. Either print it onto A4 paper, or create a Top Trumps style card with different categories.

Give everyone a copy of the picture or Top Trumps card and ask them to listen as you read Luke 19:1-10. Explain that people who collaborated with the Romans – such as collecting taxes for them as Zacchaeus did – were hated by Jewish people. The fact that Zacchaeus was dishonest as well as a collaborator made him doubly hated.

As they listen, they should write or draw around the pictures what they think Zacchaeus is like. Is he happy? Desperate? Bored? If you're using a Top Trumps card, then encourage everyone to fill in the categories you have included on the card. If they are struggling to think of something, they can colour in the picture as they listen.

Give a few moments after reading the passage for people to complete their word pictures / cards. In this time, chat informally about the story, what they think of Zacchaeus and how Jesus treats him.

When everyone has finished, share what the children have done and what ideas they had. What picture have you built up of Zacchaeus? How was he changed before and after his encounter with Jesus?

CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

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

- What part of this story do you like best?
- Which character are you most like? Why?
- What does this story tell you about Jesus?
- What does this story tell you about other people?
- What does Zacchaeus' transformation tell you?

CREATIVE TIME

10 MINS

You will need: a volunteer whose life has been changed by Jesus

Before your time together, arrange for someone from church or another Christian friend to join you, either in person or via video calling. Find someone who has a story about how meeting Jesus changed their life. Check with them they are happy to and confident in telling their story to children.

Welcome the visitor to your family and invite them to change their story of a life changed by Jesus. Ask your children to think about any questions they might like to ask your guest about their story.

Thank your guest for joining you and pray for them before they go.

PRAYER

5 MINS

You will need: space to be quiet and alone

Encourage your family to find a place in your home or garden where they can be quiet and undisturbed by others. You could simply sit in different rooms, or find 'hidden' places, such as in a wardrobe, behind the sofa or under a table.

Ask everyone to spend three or four minutes in silence, chatting with God and listening to him. Invite them to reflect on Zacchaeus' story and how his life was transformed. How might God transform their lives?

If anyone wants to talk more about following Jesus, then make sure you provide space for them to do so, either immediately after your session, or in the next few days.

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JESUS MEETS MARY MAGDALENE

MEETING AIM

To see how God uses everyone, no matter who they are.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 28:1-10

BACKGROUND

Mary Magdalene was an unlikely first witness to the resurrection and yet, in Matthew's account, it is she and the other Mary (poor other Mary, what a descriptor to be lumbered with) who are the first to learn that Jesus has risen from the dead. Yet, it is the female followers who are most loyal to Jesus at the end – they are there at his crucifixion and death, when many of the male disciples had melted away. Their testimony wouldn't have held up in court (a woman's word wasn't viewed as trustworthy), but it was to them that the news is first announced. Children in our families and groups often don't have much of a voice, but they too can bring great revelation. How much more can we listen to them? And how can we empower them to speak out?

STARTING OUT

5 MINS

Start your time together with some simple refreshments and chat about what your children have found exciting during the week. Ask them if they have thought of the answer to a tricky problem that no one else has been able to solve.

PLAY

10 MINS

You will need: clues for a treasure hunt; small prizes

Before your session, work out a treasure hunt that goes around your home and garden (if you have one and if the weather is good). It doesn't have to be complex, but it should foster the idea of looking for something valuable. Have some small prizes, or even your refreshments from 'Starting out' as the treasure!

Alternatively, play this over the week, with a new clue to work out each day. You could even do a car treasure hunt, going further afield to follow clues.

BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

You will need: child-friendly Bible; picture of Mary Magdalene; felt-tip pens
Before your session, print out the picture of Mary Magdalene. Either print it onto A4 paper, or create a Top Trumps style card with different categories.

Give everyone a copy of the picture or Top Trumps card and ask them to listen as you read Matthew 28:1-10. Explain that at this time, women didn't have as many rights as men. It wasn't fair, but that's how it was. If a woman tried to deliver some news, it wasn't thought of as true until a man had said the same thing. So what did that mean for women to be the first to hear that Jesus was alive?

As they listen to the Bible passage, they should write or draw around the pictures what they think Mary Magdalene is like. Is she happy? Desperate? Bored? If you're using a Top Trumps card, then encourage everyone to fill in the categories you have included on the card. If they are struggling to think of something, they can colour in the picture as they listen. If you'd like a more Mary focused passage, John's account of the resurrection would be worth reading too (John 20:1-18).

Give a few moments after reading the passage for people to complete their word pictures / cards. In this time, chat informally about the story, what they think of Mary Magdalene.

When everyone has finished, share what the children have done and what ideas they had. What picture have you built up of Mary Magdalene?

CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

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

- What part of this story do you like best?
- What does this story tell you about Jesus?
- What does this story tell you about other people?
- If you were Mary Magdalene (or the other Mary) what would you have done?
- How did God use Mary Magdalene?

CREATIVE TIME

10 MINS

You will need: large sheet of paper; marker pens

Spread out the large sheet of paper in front of everyone and ask them how God might use them this week. Do they have opportunities to help others? Are there any chances to tell people about Jesus? Can they show the love of Jesus to others? Ask the family to come up with ideas and to write them down on the paper. The ideas can be as outlandish as they like, write everything down.

Go through the ideas and decide what you can do this week. You might end up buying flowers and giving them to someone, or baking a cake and delivering it to a neighbour. Perhaps you could re-enact today's story, film it and share it on social media, so that others can know the story of Jesus!

PRAYER

5 MINS

You will need: paper from 'Creative time'

Stand around the paper full of ideas and ask God to be with you as you tell others that Jesus is alive, just like Mary Magdalene did. Leave space for all the family members to pray out loud if they would like to. Round up by saying thank you to God that he is always with you, even during any part of your plan which might be nerve-wracking.

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