



SESSION 1 of 4

The good Samaritan

MEETING AIM

To think about who our neighbours really are (not always the people who live next door) and how we can love those around us.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Luke 10:25-37

BACKGROUND

It's easy to love family and friends, but loving people who aren't like us is much more difficult. Take this opportunity to ask the Holy Spirit to empower us to show God's love to those we would rather avoid.

5 CIRCLE TIME

Welcome the children by name and share out any refreshments you have brought. Ask the children about their week, then go on to ask them about their neighbours. How well do the children know them?

5 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: dressing-up props for different characters, for example a police officer's hat, paint-spattered overalls, a doctor's white coat

Read out the following scenarios (adding your own if you wish) and ask the children to run and dress up in the clothes of the person who would be most likely to help. The first person to get there is the winner:

- Someone at school is telling lies about you to other people.
- Your mobile phone has been stolen.
- Someone at the park falls off the monkey bars and injures their arm.
- Your best friend tells you he or she is moving away.
- Your brother falls off his scooter and cuts his hand open.

Ask a few children why they chose that particular person.

10 BIBLE STORY

You will need: pre-recorded videos of story characters; a ballot box; pens and paper
Before the session, record several people

telling their version of the events of the story using the scripts below. The 'Jewish man' will need to film twice to ensure that the story is told in the correct order!

Gather the children together and start the story like this:

A man who knew lots about the Jewish law tried to trick Jesus by asking him: "What must I do to receive eternal life?"

Jesus replied with a question: "What do you read in the law?"

The man, who of course knew the law very well, said: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul and all your strength. And love your neighbour as you love yourself."

Jesus said: "That's your answer, then."

But the man wasn't finished trying to trick him yet. So he asked Jesus: "Who is my neighbour?"

To explain his answer, Jesus told a story. We are going to be hearing from all the characters involved in the story today, and then we'll have a secret ballot to decide who you think wins the Jericho Road Best Neighbour Awards! *Play the video clips in the correct order.*

Jewish man: So, there I was on my way to Jericho when I was pounced on by some robbers. They took everything I had and beat me up. Look, you might still be able to see my black eye...I was in so much pain. Then they ran off, leaving me for dead in the middle of the road.

Jewish priest: I had very important business to attend to in Jericho with many other Jewish leaders. I don't like to admit it, but I was running late and was in a hurry. Yes, I saw the man lying on the road but I needed to get to my meeting, so I crossed over the road and hurried on my way.

Levite (a temple worker): I was taking essential documents from the temple in Jerusalem to some other Jews in Jericho. I was helping them! When I saw the man in the road I thought it was probably too late to be of any use, so I carried on. And if I'm honest, I was a bit scared too. What if the attackers came after me as well?

Samaritan: I didn't realise he was a Jew. I know Jews and Samaritans are supposed to hate each other. I was visiting friends but then I saw the man and I couldn't just walk past even if he was a Jew! He was so badly beaten, but when I checked he was still breathing. So I carefully lifted him onto my donkey. I took him to the nearest inn and paid the innkeeper to look after him.

Jewish man: I didn't know who had helped me at the time. When the innkeeper told me he was a Samaritan I was in shock! It's changed my view of Samaritans, that's for sure! I'm all recovered now. And next time I take a walk down the Jericho Road I'll take a Samaritan with me!

Give everyone a piece of paper and a pencil. Ask them to write down who was the best neighbour and put it in a ballot box. Count up the votes but don't announce the result yet.

When he'd finished telling this story, Jesus asked everyone who they thought was the best neighbour. Let's see who the Best Neighbour Award goes to. *Announce the result.*

Jesus challenged all his followers to be like the Samaritan.

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Discuss the story further using these questions:

- Was there anything in this story that surprised you?
- Having heard the story, who would you say is your neighbour?
- Is it easy to love all our neighbours?
- What can we do to show them God's love?

10 CREATIVE RESPONSE AND PRAYER

You will need: dry autumn leaves; two large pieces of paper, one with a heart shape and one with a hand shape; glue; marker pens; music and the means to play it

Play the song 'Hearts and hands' by Sean Feucht quietly in the background. Ask the children to write the names of all the people they think are their neighbours on some of the leaves. Stick these names onto the large heart shape.

Ask the children to write what actions they can take to love these neighbours on the leaves. Stick these onto the large hand shape. Spend a few moments chatting about how you might put this into practice. Chat with parents and carers after the session so that they can help their children do this.

Stand around the leaves. At the end of the song, ask the children to say the names they wrote down out loud. Pray a prayer committing these people to God and asking him to help us love them.

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SESSION 2 of 4

The banquet

MEETING AIM

To think about reaching others with the love of Jesus.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Luke 14:15-24

BACKGROUND

We all have preconceived ideas of who would make a good Jesus follower. This parable shows us that God invites everyone, and that actually some are more grateful than others for the invitation. Use this time to allow the Holy Spirit to speak, giving you his own ideas and showing you his heart for other people. Rather than simply thinking about reaching their own friends, encourage the children to think more broadly and to listen to God's heart for others.

5 CIRCLE TIME

Welcome the children by name and share out any refreshments you have brought. Ask the children about their week, then discuss which famous person they would most like to invite round for tea at their house and why.

5 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: easy-to-make party food (check for allergies); paper plates; party decorations; music and the means to play it; equipment for simple party games; cover-up and clean-up equipment

Divide the children into four groups and explain that today they are to become party planners! Provide each group with the equipment they need to plan their section of the party.

Group one – chefs: Ensure that they have washed their hands. Provide adult supervision as they prepare simple party food, for example homemade pizza pittas, crisps in bowls and decorated biscuits.

Group two – decorators: This group will decorate the room. Show them all the decorations you have brought and help them put everything where they want it.

Group three – DJs: Help this group create a playlist for a party, either using a music streaming service or your own library of music. Encourage them to think about what music would be good for a big feast.

Group four – entertainment: This group will plan some party games. Using the equipment you have provided they should put

together some suitable games for a party.

10 BIBLE STORY

You will need: volunteers on standby in different locations with phones to act the part of the invited guests

Gather the children together and say: "So we've planned the party, but who are we going to invite?"

Ask the whole group to create a list of people they would like to invite. It could be anyone they want, for example footballers, pop stars or the Queen! Secretly text this list to your standby people.

Put your phone on speaker and choose some of the children to call the guests. The people on standby can pretend to be the famous guests and make ridiculous excuses, for example: "I'm sorry, but I can't come to your party. My tadpole has to go to the vet." Each person should have a different excuse.

Then comment that Jesus told a story called a parable, and it went just like this. Tell this story:

Jesus told all the people listening about a big feast. The party planner had told his guests that they were invited. When everything was ready the planner sent out his helpers to get the guests to come round (that's how party invites worked in Jesus' time). At the last minute, none of the people wanted to come and they all made excuses. Some of the excuses weren't good.

So the party planner told his team to go out into the town and find people who didn't normally get invited to parties: the poor, the disabled and those who were different from everyone else.

Out the helpers went and brought them all in, but there was still room for more! They went out again, but this time they went to the villages and countryside to find even more people who didn't normally get invited to parties.

The party planner told his team that none of the people who had originally been invited would be able to taste his yummy party food.

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Discuss the story further using these questions. You could eat the party food and use the playlist as background music as you chat:

- How does it feel when people don't come to a party you've planned?
- How do you think it feels to be the person who is never invited to a party?
- What kind of party do you think Jesus is talking about in this story?
- Who could we invite to the party?

- How can we invite them?
- What do you think Jesus is teaching us with this story?

10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: square pieces of paper; pens
Give each child a piece of paper and make a paper 'chatterbox' game. (If you're not sure how to make it, you'll be able to find instructions on the internet. Search for 'paper chatterbox instructions'.)

On the four outer spaces, write the words 'Come to my party'. In the middle spaces, write or draw different party activities that the children enjoy doing.

In the inner spaces, write down the names of people they would like to invite. As you work, continue chatting about the story. Do they feel like they have been invited to Jesus' party? What is their answer? You might want to set aside time to talk more about what it means to accept an invitation to this party. Have some booklets available to help: try Scripture Union's *What is Being a Christian All About?*

5 PRAYER

You will need: chatterbox games from 'Creative response'

Divide the children into pairs and play the chatterbox game in these pairs.

When a name is revealed, pray for that person and pray that the child would have the courage to invite them to meet Jesus. Keep playing the game in pairs until all the people in each chatterbox have been prayed for.

The children can take the chatterbox games home to continue praying for their chosen people.

At the end of the session, play one of the games chosen by the entertainment group.

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The sower

MEETING AIM

To encourage the children to think about how they are growing as followers of Jesus, and how they can reach others and help them grow.

BIBLE PASSAGE
Matthew 13:1-9

BACKGROUND

We often think about this parable when looking at ways of reaching others with the message of Jesus. However, we also need to ensure that we are growing healthily as followers of Jesus. A sign of healthy growth is that we automatically 'self-seed' and make disciples as we live out our everyday lives in the way Jesus asks us to.

5 CIRCLE TIME

Welcome the children by name and share out any refreshments you have brought. Ask the children about their week, then ask them to mime what they ate for breakfast. The rest of the group must guess!

10 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: inflated balloons; several soft footballs; tape or chairs to be a 'garden fence'

Divide the room into two 'gardens' using the chairs or tape. Split the children into two groups and show the groups which side of the room their garden is on. Their garden is special and they have some important flowers growing, but the snails and footballs from next door keep invading it. Their job is to keep the snails and footballs out!

Empty the balloons and balls into the middle of the room. When you shout "Go!" or blow a whistle they must throw the balloons and balls over the garden fence. Give them a time limit and then blow the whistle again. Count how many balloons and balls are left. The garden with the fewest snails and footballs is the winning team.

10 BIBLE STORY

You will need: one clipboard per group; wheat seed; a bag of flour; four pots with plenty of seed in; bird sound effects; grey or brown cloth to represent a path; rocks; two torches or lamps; two seed bed trays or similar; compost; a watering can; weeds; question sheets (see below)

Before the session, make up some question sheets asking:

- Where has the seed been planted?
- Does the seed have (tick as appropriate):
 - Sunlight?
 - Water?
 - Good soil?
 - Oxygen?
 - Space to grow?
- Are there any dangers to growth here? If yes, what are they?
- What do you think will happen to the seeds?

Gather the children together and show them a wheat seed. Discuss what it will grow into. Then show the group the bag of flour and discuss all the things we can make from flour.

Say: "It all starts with a seed. What does a seed need to grow? Jesus told a story about seeds. In his story, the seeds fell in different places. In each area there was a different result."

Explain that the children are going to be garden investigators, visiting the different places Jesus talked about. In groups, they should to think about what the outcomes might be for the seeds and write their thoughts down. Give each child a question sheet.

Garden one: If you can access an outside area, use a real path or make a 'path' out of material. Play some bird sounds. Ask the children to throw some seeds from the pot onto the path. Read out Matthew 13:4 and give the children time to fill in their sheets.

Garden two: Pile up some large stones and rocks. Use a torch or lamp to shine on the area to imitate the sun. Ask the children to throw the seeds onto the rocks. Read out verses 5 and 6, then answer the questions again.

Garden three: Fill a seed bed tray or similar with compost and plant some weeds in the soil. Ask the children to throw the seeds into the soil. Read out verse 7 and answer the questions again.

Garden four: Fill a seed bed tray or similar with compost. Place a filled watering can beside it. Shine a torch or lamp onto the area to imitate the sun. Ask the children to throw seeds into the tray. Read out verse 8 and answer the questions again.

Finally, review the sheets together.

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Discuss the story further using these questions:

- What do the seeds represent?
- What do you think the different areas where the seeds landed mean?
- What kind of soil / area are you?
- What makes good soil?
- What could the seeds grow into?
- What is Jesus teaching us through this story?

10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: one small plant pot per child; compost; daffodil bulbs; a watering can; two stickers per child

On one sticker, answer the question: "How can we be good soil?" On the second, answer the question: "Where can we throw our seeds?"

The children should fill each plant pot with compost, plant a daffodil bulb and stick their responses onto the pot. As they work, continue chatting about the story. When do they feel like good soil? When do they feel like weeds are choking them or the sun is burning them? (You may need to help children who are struggling with the metaphors with this.)

Encourage the children to take their pots home, put them outside, watch them grow and remind themselves to be good soil. (Explain that they will have to wait until the spring for the bulb to grow.)

5 PRAYER

You will need: wooden lollipop sticks

Give the children a handful of sticks. Ask them to write their names on one and to write and the names of anyone else they might think of as 'seeds' on the others.

Take the sticks and place them in the gardens they feel best match the person whose name is on the stick. Pray together for these people.

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SESSION 4 of 4

The lost son

MEETING AIM

To identify with the characters and recognise their identity as loved children of a good heavenly Father.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Luke 15:11-32

BACKGROUND

As this is a very well-known story we can easily dismiss it. However, use this session to dig deeper into the issue of identity. While we were still a long way off, our Father ran to us, threw his arms around us and welcomed us. Allow this truth to be revealed in your heart again as you prepare for the session.

5 CIRCLE TIME

Welcome the children by name and share out any refreshments you have brought. Ask the children about their week, then go on to describe the best party you've ever been to. Whose party was it? Why was it so good?

5 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: ten sweets or small pieces of fruit (such as grape halves) per child
 Make statements, such as "Never have I ever been in a police car." If this statement is true for the children they should eat a sweet / piece of fruit. The first person to eat everything is the winner.

10 BIBLE STORY

You will need: dice (one per team); ingredients for 'pigswill' (same amount per team); bowls; wooden spoons; sections of the story as below (adapted from the International Children's Bible), printed and numbered; cover-up and clean-up equipment
 Before the session, gather together the ingredients for pigswill. Each team will need: one tin of baked beans, a jug of water and a vegetable stock cube, carrot peelings, potato peelings, squashy tomatoes and brown bananas.

Divide the children into smaller groups. Each team rolls the dice and collects one item from the ingredients along with the relevant numbered section of the story.

Make the pigswill and put the story together. When they have collated the story they can check Luke 15 to see if they got it right.

Section one: Jesus told this story: There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father: "Father, give me my share of your money." So he divided his money between them. Not long after that, the younger son packed up all he had, set off for a distant country and lost all his money there in wild living.

Section two: After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine across the whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a farmer, who sent him into his fields to feed the pigs. The younger son longed to fill his stomach with the food the pigs were eating but no one gave him anything.

Section three: When he came to his senses, he said: "So many of my father's 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 servants.'" So he left the farm and headed back to his father's house. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him. He ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

Section four: The son said to him: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son." But the father said to his servants: "Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the best food. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found." So they began to celebrate.

Section five: Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house he heard music and dancing. He called one of the servants over and asked what was going on. "Your brother has come," the servant replied, "and your father has put on a party because he has him back safe and sound."

Section six: The older brother was angry and refused to go in, so his father went out and pleaded with him. But he answered his father: "Look! All these years I've been slaving away for you and have never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours, who has lost all your money, comes home you have the best party for him!" "My son," the father said, "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 is alive again; he was lost and is found."

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Discuss the story further using these questions:

- Why did Jesus tell this story?
- Which character do you relate to most and why?
- What would it feel like to be the father?
- What would it feel like to be the older brother?
- What would it feel like to be the younger brother?
- What does this story tell us about God?

10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: pens; banana skins; pigswill from 'Bible story'; Hula Hoops in transparent plastic bags with the following labels: Accepted, Loved, Welcomed, Celebrated, Precious, Chosen, Safe and Home

Ask the children to think about what is happening in their lives that they don't want to happen any more. Like the younger brother in the story, God has something better for them. Maybe they have felt lonely, have been arguing with a sibling or have joined friends in behaviour that doesn't please God. They can write these thoughts on the banana skins and mix them into the pigswill.

Then they should look at labels on the bags of Hula Hoops and take the rings from the bags. God the Father swaps the rubbish in our lives for the very best things. They can choose as many words as are relevant and put them on their fingers.

5 PRAYER

Invite the children to share about their swap with a partner. Encourage them to pray for one another that they would know the reality of the Father's love and acceptance.

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