

DO  TOGETHER

seven week
study and
activity pack
for youth
groups



For use during Lent 2014: March 5th until April 19th 2014

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**URBAN
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Contents

| | |
|--|---------------------|
| Introduction | Page 1 |
| week one: generous on purpose Lent dates: Wednesday 5 March – Saturday 8 March 2014 | Page 2 - 5 |
| week two: generous with actions Lent dates: Monday 10 March – Saturday 16 March 2014 | Page 6 - 10 |
| week three: generous with possessions Lent dates: Monday 18 March – Saturday 22 March 2014 | Page 11 - 13 |
| week four: generous with words Lent dates: Monday 24 March – Saturday 29 March 2014 | Page 14 - 17 |
| week five: generous with love Lent dates: Monday 31 March – Saturday 5 April 2014 | Page 18 - 21 |
| week six: generous with your faith Lent dates: Monday 7 April – Saturday 12 April 2014 | Page 22 - 25 |
| week seven: generous with forgiveness Lent dates: Monday 14 April – Saturday 19 April 2014 | Page 26 - 27 |
| acknowledgements | Page 28 |



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introduction

what is 40acts?

40acts is a generosity challenge which invites people to do Lent a bit differently.

During the forty days of Lent, 40acts participants will be invited to take part in forty simple acts of generosity which will challenge them to 'do Lent generously' in 2014.

Lent marks a pivotal point in the history of the church, when Jesus prepared to give himself up as a sacrifice.

Traditionally we mark Lent by giving something up, but what if it could be more than that? What if Lent was a preparation for a lifetime of big-heartedness?

Small acts of generosity, performed by thousands of people across the UK and beyond, have the power to make a big change to our communities, to our churches and ultimately, to our world.

how to use this resource

40acts is a great way for individuals to practically demonstrate and grow their generosity to the people around them. 40acts Together is about being generous **with** others: multiplying that generosity and deepening relationships with other givers as well as receivers.

This guide is a seven week series that will tell the story of the Lost (Prodigal) Son. Through this series we will explore different facets of generosity and work towards a practical expression of God's generosity to one another, our neighbours and our local community.

Within this guide, each week we offer you and your youth group a range of activities, bible studies and prayers that you can combine in any way to communicate a generous theme to your young people.

40acts Together encourages your youth group to build towards a generous event over the Easter Weekend, alongside hundreds of other groups taking part this year. Download the event planner to get started, and remind your church leaders and small group leaders that there are resources available for them too at 40acts.org.uk

If you would like any more ideas about resources for your young people around generosity or any other topic then Urban Saints have a plethora of resources available here:

<http://energize.uk.net/>

week one: generous on purpose

leaders notes

In the first session of this series, we want your young people to:

1. Understand and experience the Father's love for them
2. Having experienced the Father's love we want them to plan how they can demonstrate that love to others, to be deliberately generous.

In Luke 15, Jesus tells three stories, a lost sheep, a lost coin and a lost son. The story of the lost son stands out from the other two stories on one significant point. No one went looking for him!

- A shepherd searched for his lost sheep
- A lady searched for her lost coin
- No one went looking for the lost son

In later sessions in this series we will look at who should have gone looking for the lost son. But in this session we are going to reflect on how:

- Jesus was sent from the Father's house to search for us and to bring us back home to the Father
- The Father is waiting at the door of his house, longing for his lost sons and daughters to return home
- The Father is only too willing to accept us back, regardless of the mess we have got ourselves into, clean us up and restore us into his family as sons and daughters
- The Father wants to give us a new robe, put a ring on our finger and shoes on our feet
- The Father's love just keeps on flowing – he doesn't stop there. Every time a lost son or daughter returns home, he puts on an extravagant banquet to celebrate

We are going to consider what makes the Father's banquet different from other parties the son would have attended before his money ran out.

- This was not a party to celebrate his son's performance and achievements. His son had performed dismally.

- This was not a party for the son to escape and hide from the troubles of life for a few hours, pretending all was well when it wasn't – we have all been to those kind of parties
- Nothing was hidden – everything was out on the table. Everyone at the party knew what had happened and how the father had responded with such love and overwhelming acceptance
- It is party that demonstrates what the Father really feels about us

We encourage you to give your young people a taste of the Father's love by putting on your version of the Father's banquet. Whether you choose to make this a full meal, get in a few takeaway pizzas or provide a few crisps or healthy snacks, the important thing is, your young people experience generosity as you invite them to the Father's banquet.

Once we have experienced the Father's love and generosity at His banquet we are equipped to take the love of the Father to others.

In parallel to this we will also be looking at The Lord's Prayer, a framework which teaches us how to relate to our Father

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name" is the starting place in our relationship with God. Before we speak to God about our needs and our feelings of unworthiness, he wants us to recognise who we are coming to and what the status of our relationship is. He is our loving Father and we are his precious children

End this session by getting your young people to plan how they, can demonstrate the Father's love to others during the following week.

For more information on the significance of the Father's love in 2014 go to www.thefatherslove.co.uk

getting started

ACTIVITY - OUR FATHER

Duration: 5 minutes

Equipment Required: Bibles; 2 x 9 (18) sheets of A4 paper. Write one word on each piece of paper from the first line of the Lord's Prayer including the reference, e.g. 'Our' 'Father' 'In' 'Heaven' 'Hallowed' 'Be' 'Your' 'Name' 'Matthew 6:9'

Description:

Divide the group into two teams. Each team selects 9 people who each receive one of the sheets of paper. (If there are less than 9 young people in each team, give out more than one sheet per person). Explain, no one is allowed to talk. If anyone does talk, their team will receive a 5 second penalty which will be added to their time. The winning team is the first team to stand in a line holding the words in the correct order.

Explain that over the next 7 weeks we will be looking at the story of the lost son in Luke 15 and seeing how it relates to the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6

The Point: To introduce the Lord's Prayer

GAME AND DISCUSSION - LOST & FOUND

Duration: 10 minutes

Equipment Required: None

Description:

Ask for 8 volunteers who have mobile phones. Put them in 2 teams of 4. Each team are asked to hand over 3 of their mobile phones leaving them just one mobile per team. The 2 teams are asked to leave the room while the 6 mobile phones collected in are hidden around the room. When the teams return into the room, it is a race to see which team manages to retrieve their mobile phones first.

Open discussion:

- What items do you currently have on you that are of the most value to you? (This could be a phone, purse/wallet, keys, photo etc. Place them on the floor in front of you.
- Invite the young people to talk about items they have selected and explain why these items are important to them.
- If you were to lose this item, to what lengths or personal cost would you be prepared to go to get back what you have lost?

The Point: The more you care about what is lost, the more you will be prepared to search for it until you find it

bible study

THE LOST SON

Duration: 20 minutes

Equipment Required: Bibles, paper, pens

Description:

Read Luke 15 together as a group

In small groups:

In Luke 15, Jesus tells three stories; a lost sheep, a lost coin and a lost son. How does the story of the lost son stand out from the other two stories?

- *Answer: No one went looking for the lost son!*

In an open discussion:

What has our Father done to help us find our way back home?

- Jesus was sent from the Father's house to search for us and to show us the way back home
- Jesus paid the ultimate price of laying down his life so that we could be forgiven

What was the Father doing while the son was lost? (Luke 15:20)

- The Father was waiting and looking from the doorway of his house, longing for the day that his son would return

What was the Father's response when he saw his son returning home (Luke 15:20-24)

- Filled with love and compassion
- Ran to his son
- Embraced him
- Kissed him
- Gave him the finest robe
- Put a ring on his finger
- Put sandals on his feet
- Killed the fatted calf and put on an extravagant party to celebrate

How much have we fully understood, accepted and received the amazing unconditional love our Father longs to pour out on us?

The Point: The love of the Father is far more comprehensive and far reaching than we can understand. No matter what you have done or what you think of yourself, your Father's love will never give up and never leave you.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Duration: 15 minutes

Equipment Required: Write the Lord's Prayer as a framework on a flipchart or large sheet of paper

1. Our Father in heaven hallowed be your name
2. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven
3. Give us today our daily bread
4. Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us
5. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil
6. For yours is the kingdom, the power and glory for ever and ever, Amen

Description:

How much did the lost son follow the Lord's Prayer as a framework when he returned home to his Father? (Luke 15:18,19)

I will set out and go back to my father and say to him:

1. "I have sinned against heaven and against you"
 - *He starts at point '4' Forgive us our sins...*
2. "I am no longer worthy to be called you son"
 - *He goes on to say that he is no longer worthy of point '1' Our Father...*
3. "Make me like one of your hired servants"
 - *He then goes to point '3' Give us today our daily bread*

The father's response (Luke 15:22) was to stop his son speaking mid flow and take him back to the start of the Lord's Prayer, "Our Father..."

The Point: "Our Father..." is the starting place in our relationship with God.

response

PRACTICAL – GENEROUS ON PURPOSE

Duration: 10 minutes

Equipment required: Small cards and pens

Get your young people to think through how, they can demonstrate the Father's love to others in the following week. How can they choose to be generous?

Give out small cards and encourage everyone to write an idea for demonstrating generosity, and to promise to try their best to act on their idea during the week.

The Point: To demonstrate "Generous on Purpose"

RESPONSE – PRAYER – THE LORD'S PRAYER

Duration: 5 minutes

Equipment required: None

This response session follows on well from the "Digging Deeper study on "The Lord's Prayer"

Encourage your young people in turn to pray the line, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name" (or you could say "Our Father in Heaven, your name is Holy".

The Point: "Our Father..." is the starting place in our relationship with God. Before we speak to God about our needs and our feelings of unworthiness, he wants us to recognise who we are coming to and what the status of our relationship is. He is our loving Father and we are his precious children

MISSION PLANNING -

Duration: 15 minutes

Equipment Required: Laptop and projector for showing a video clip / Download Father's Love video clip from www.thefatherslove.co.uk/video

Description:

Watch the Father's Love video clip.

Use the following two steps along with the event planner to plan the event you will host at the end of this 7 week series

1. Discuss as a whole group who you would like to invite to the event. This could be:
 - Every person in your street or housing estate
 - Every person in your school class or year group
 - Alternatively each young person could invite 3 of their school friends
2. Plan what kind of event you would like to run. This could be:
 - A family fun day
 - A street party
 - A barbecue
 - A banquet in your church hall
 - A party round someone's house

The Point: To involve your young people in planning an event.

week two: generous with our actions

leaders notes

In this session we want our children and young people to:

1. Understand that they are sons and daughters, not hired servants
2. Recognise that our personal experience of having a father can influence how we relate to God as our heavenly Father
3. Experience how intimacy with the Father naturally leads to us wanting to be generous rather than needing to be

In this series we are working through the Story of the Lost (Prodigal) Son

You are sons and daughters – not hired servants.

As sons and daughters we should serve, not to get anything back, but out of love for our Father and others. Everything the Father has, (provision, approval, forgiveness) has already been freely given to them. We cannot earn our Father's blessing by becoming hired servants.

In the story of the lost son, both sons are keen to serve their Father, but for the wrong motives!

The older son served his father out of obligation and for what he would get back. (Luke 15:29,30)

The younger son's feeling of guilt made him think he was unworthy to be received back as a son. He wanted to become a hired servant out of personal need. (Luke 15:18,19)

When we understand that God is a perfect Father who loves us as his children, we serve him not for what we can get or out of feeling guilty and trying to earn our way back, but we serve him out of love.

There is a big difference between being a hired servant and being a servant hearted son or daughter.

Knowing God as Father

Your young peoples' experience of their earthly fathers may have made it difficult for them to fully embrace knowing God as their heavenly Father. You may want to use this session to help them recognise areas of personal pain they may be carrying relating to their own experience of having a father. (Be aware that some issues can be very deep and may require one to one discipleship over a period of time to fully work through). In this session we simply want to encourage your young people to begin the process by:

1. Recognising pain they are carrying which may be related to their personal experience of having a father
2. Committing to start a journey of coming to know God a Father and receiving healing

Having started the process this week, we will try to take it a little bit further in three weeks time what we look at "Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

THE LORD'S PRAYER - *Your kingdom come, your will be done*

Intimacy with the Father leads to us wanting to do the things that please him

The more we come into a close intimate relationship with God as Father, the more easily and readily we will move on from praying "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name," to "Your kingdom come, your will be done."

getting started

GAME - MOTIVES

Duration: 10 minutes

Equipment Required:

Description: To things that are important when it comes to solving a crime are:

1. Establishing the facts
2. Identifying the motive

Explain that over the next few minutes your young people are going to have an opportunity to sharpen their skills as detectives. You will read them a scenario. Their job will be to establish all the facts and identify the motive. They can ask you as many questions as they like, but you will only answer 'Yes,' 'No ' or 'Irrelevant.' (If any of the young people have heard this scenario before, ask them to remain silent so that it doesn't spoil it for everyone else.

Here is the scenario:

A man turns his TV on and sits down. He then gets up, turns the TV off, goes upstairs, turns on the light and kills himself. Why?

Here are the full facts your young people will need to establish in order to solve the scenario

- The man lives in a lighthouse
- He is responsible for turning the light on in bad weather
- He sees a News Report on the about a ship that has hit some rocks killing many people
- He realises that it is his fault, because he forgot to turn the light on

Once the scenario has been solved, make the following point

The Point: The facts enable us to see WHAT happened. The motive enables us to understand WHY it happened.

STUDY - MOTIVES

Duration: 20 minutes

Equipment Required: Bibles, paper, pens, flipchart paper, marker pen

Description: In the story of the lost son, both sons were keen to serve their Father, but for the wrong motives!

In two small groups discuss:

1. **The Older Son** – Luke 15:29-31
 - Why did the older son serve his father?
 - Was the older son justified in his complaint?
 - When the father said, "everything I have is yours..," what does this imply?
2. **The Younger Son** – Luke 15:18,19
 - Why did the younger son ask if he could become a hired servant?
 - Why did the younger son feel unworthy to be called his father's son?
 - Why might we sometimes prefer to be accepted as hired servants rather than sons and daughters

Bring the 2 groups back together and make the following points:

- The older son served his father out of obligation and for what he would get back
- If the older son loved his father he would have been pleased to see his father's joy when his younger son returned home
- Everything the father had was available to the older son – all he had to do was ask
- The younger son wanted to become a hired servant out of personal need
- His feeling of guilt made him feel unworthy of being received back as a true son
- We can fall into the trap of preferring to earn our way back rather than receiving the Father's grace and forgiveness

In this story, both sons are keen to serve their Father, but for the wrong motives! They both wanted the father's things, but they didn't want the father. The younger son tried to get the father's things through being bad, (took the inheritance money and squandered it). The older son tried to get the father's things through being good, (serving his father for what he would get back).

The Point: Young people seeing themselves as God's dearly loved sons and daughters and demonstrating the Father's love in the way we love and serve others.

bible study

KNOWING GOD AS FATHER

Duration: 15 minutes

Equipment Required: Bibles, paper, pens, flipchart paper, marker pen

Description:

Read the following passage from Jesus' baptism in Matthew (Matt 3:16-17)

Think of all the great occasions God the Father could have chosen to open the windows of heaven and say the words:

"This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy"

He could have chosen:

- When Jesus healed a blind man
- When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead
- When Jesus fed the 5,000
- When Jesus calmed the storm
- When Jesus laid down his life to be crucified on a cross

But the Father chose to say these words before Jesus had done anything! Ask what this tells us about the Father's love for Jesus

- God's love for Jesus was not based on what Jesus had done
- God's love for Jesus was based on who He was – a son

Give everyone a piece of paper and a pen. Ask them to draw a line on piece of paper with equal marks from 0 to 10.

1. With '0' being low and '10' being high, ask them to mark on their piece of paper how much they think the Father loves Jesus
2. Now ask them to put another mark on their piece of paper which indicates how much they think the Father loves them.

God the Father feels the same way about each one of us, as he does Jesus. His love for us is not based on performance or achievements; it is

based on who we are. In the same way Jesus needed to hear the words *"This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy,"* so do you.

So why do we often find it hard to receive the Father's love and acceptance? Invite your young people to feedback any thoughts they have, then make the following four points:

1. God is the only perfect Father
2. All human fathers are imperfect. Even the very best of human fathers falls far short of how amazing your heavenly Father is
3. Some of us have had negative experiences of having a father that has influenced how we see God as our Father
4. If we carry unforgiveness towards our earthly fathers for their failings, it will limit our ability to know God Father

The Point: To understand that God the Father loves us just as much as he loves his son Jesus. To understand how our experiences of having an earthly Father can affect how we know God as Father

prayer

THE LORDS PRAYER

Duration: 10 minutes

Equipment Required: Background music

Description:

Today we are going to look at the second line of the Lord's Prayer, "Your kingdom come, your will be done"

Ask what does "Your will be done" mean? See what answers your young people give.

We can pray that God will have His way, but what if we want something different? What if "our will" is different from "God's will"?

In groups of 4 or 5, compare the following two passages and discuss whether there are any similarities?

"If you love me, keep my commands" (John 14:15)

"...Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, Your kingdom come, your will be done..." (Matt 6:9,10)

Ask the groups to feedback and draw out the following point:

The more we love God the more we will want to do the things that please him.

The Point: The more we come into a relationship with God as Father, the more easily and readily we will move on from praying "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name," to "Your kingdom come, your will be done."

THE LORD'S PRAYER

This follows on well from the Bible Study on The Lord's Prayer.

Put on some background music and encourage your young people to pray and reflect on the first 2 lines of the Lord's Prayer

Stand together and pray – "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,"

- Follow this with one minute reflection on God being our Father

Kneel together and pray – "Your kingdom come, your will be done"

- Follow this with one minute reflection on areas of our lives we need to submit to God

Spend a minute thinking how we can act this week in a way which will please God.

- What one thing could each person do each day to help or serve someone else or the community?
- Encourage everyone to commit to one act of love, care or service each day this week.

The Point: To give time to think and reflect on the teaching.

response

PEBBLES

Duration: 10 minutes

Equipment Required: 2 bowls / some pebbles / background music

Description:

We recommend that you use this 'response' as a follow-on from the 'Knowing God as Father' Digging Deeper activity.

Put a bowl of pebbles in the centre of the room and an empty bowl near by.

Put on some background music and encourage your young people to reflect on whether they are carrying any pain which prevents them from seeing God as a kind and loving Father.

After about 2 minutes, invite the young people to come and take one or more pebbles to represent the pain they are carrying and sit back down.

If after a short while they feel ready to forgive and let the pain go, encourage them to put the pebble in the empty bowl and ask one of the leaders to pray with them.

If they don't feel they are ready to forgive and let the pain go, encourage them to carry the pebble with them over the next few days or weeks until they are ready.

Thank and compliment your young people for their willingness to be open and vulnerable.

Make opportunity for those who are carrying pebbles to talk to one of the leaders about what the pebble represents.

Explain that in three weeks time we will be looking at "Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us," and encourage them to pray that they will not carry the pebble beyond that day.

The Point: To create an opportunity for your young people to identify areas of personal pain they carry (which may be due to how they feel about their fathers). Also to create an opportunity for your young people to make a response to God and receive prayer

week three: generous with possessions

leaders notes

In this session we want our young people to think about how they can use what they have (money, possessions, abilities) for the benefit of others.

Giving and generosity is a heart issue. It is not limited by how much or how little we have to give. In Mark 12:41-44 Jesus drew attention to the widow who put two small coins in the offering. He pointed out to his disciples that the widow had given more than the rich people. The rich were giving only a small amount of their surplus, whilst the widow had given all that she had.

In this session we will encourage young people to explore what they have that they can give. Giving isn't limited to money and possessions. We can give our time, our love, our service, our thoughtfulness – the list is endless.

Now is a great time for young people to establish principles around their attitude to giving which will affect the rest of their lives. If we become faithful with the small amount we have now, God will trust us with larger amounts in the years to come. (Luke 19:11-26)

In Luke 6:38, Jesus said:

"Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you"

THE STORY OF THE LOST SON

Earlier in this series we looked at the 3 stories Jesus told in Luke 15 – a lost sheep, a lost coin and a lost son and pointed out that whilst a shepherd looked for the lost sheep and a lady looked for her lost coin, no one went looking for the lost son.

So, who should have gone?

When the estate was divided between the two sons, the older son (as in the culture) would have received a double portion. The reason for this is that he now becomes responsible for the family. He was the one who should have gone looking for his lost brother. Not only did he not go, but he became resentful when his brother returned home and as a result refused to come into the banquet.

If we truly own the Father's heart we will not stay at home not caring about our lost brothers and sisters, but we will go looking for them and use what we have to demonstrate the Father's love to them.

Over the course of this week we want to encourage our young people to find practical ways they can give to others and demonstrate the generosity of the Father.

THE LORDS PRAYER – *On earth, as it is in heaven*

When Jesus was on this earth, he described himself as the 'light of the world' (John 8:14).

Jesus, the light of the world is now in heaven. For the light to shine 'on earth as it is in heaven' we need to take up our responsibility to be the light of the world today (Matt 5:14-16).

getting started

DISCUSSION – SPEND, SPEND, SPEND

Duration: 15 minutes

Equipment Required: Flip chart paper and marker pens

Description:

In the story of the lost son, the younger son asked his father for his share of the inheritance. He then left home and went on a spectacular spending spree until it had all gone.

How would you have spent the money?

Divide the group into 4 or 5's and give each group a piece of flipchart paper and a marker pen, and this brief:

You can immediately leave school and leave home. You have been given £100,000 and 6 months to spend it. As a group you have 5 minutes to plan what you are going to do with your money.

Each group presents their plan

Once all the plans have been presented, ask the young people to vote for what they think is the best plan, using the following criteria

- The most enjoyable 6 months
- The most rewarding 6 months
- The quality of life after the money has been spent

Discuss what positive and negative outcomes you might be left with at the end of your 6 months

The Point: Helping young people to recognise the futility of living for the moment without any regard to the future

PERFECT PRESENT

Duration: 15 mins

Equipment required: A gift that you have been given that shows a lot of thought – you'd consider it to be your perfect present.

Description:

Tell your group to imagine that they have loads of money and that they've decided to spend some of it on you! Ask them what gifts they'd get for you – what do they think would be your perfect present?

Show them the gift that you've brought in.

Explain why it means so much to you. Ask your group if they've ever brought anyone a gift that they put a lot of thought into? What was it and who was it for? How did the recipient react? How did they feel as they looked for and gave the gift?

Read Acts 20:35. Discuss the following points:

- What do you think Jesus meant when he said 'it is better to give than to receive'.
- Do you believe this?
- In what ways have you found this to be true?
- This doesn't just apply to giving presents? What else might Jesus have been talking about?

The Point: To think about the many positive aspects of giving to others.

study

STORY OF THE LOST SON

Duration: 15 minutes

Equipment Required: Bibles / paper / pens

Description: In Luke 15 Jesus tells 3 stories – a lost sheep, a lost coin and a lost son. The story of the lost son stands out from the other two stories in that no one went looking for him!

- A shepherd looks for his lost sheep
- A lady looks for her lost coin
- No one went looking for the lost son

Ask the question: “Do you think someone should have gone looking for the lost son?”

If so, who, and why?

If the young people were the older son, what do they think they would have done?

Jesus is responding to the Pharisees and teachers of the law who are criticising him for welcoming sinners and eating with them. When they heard these stories, they would have immediately known who should have gone looking for the lost son! When the estate was divided between the two sons, the older son (as in the culture of the time) would have received a double portion. The reason the older son gets a double portion is because he becomes responsible for the welfare of the family. But in this story, not only did the older son not go looking, but he became resentful when his brother returned home and as a result refused to come into the banquet.

Jesus was in fact showing up the Pharisees and teachers of the law for their lack of concern and care for the tax collectors and sinners.

How can we show our love for the Father, and care for others, by using what we have for their benefit?

The Point: If we really love and want to follow God, we won't stay at home not caring, but will use what we have for the benefit of others.

BEING GENEROUS WITH WHAT YOU HAVE

Duration: 15 minutes

Equipment Required: Bibles / paper / pens / flipchart / marker pens

Description: Giving and generosity is a reflection of our hearts. It is not limited by how much or how little surplus we have available to give.

Divide into 2 groups. Give each member of one group a silver or gold chocolate coin (representing great wealth). Give each member of the other group a penny.

Ask who is rich, and who is poor. Get each group to think how much they would give away.

Tell the story from Mark 12:41-44 and get the young people to act it out. Then ask each group to think again about how much they would give away.

Draw out the following points.

The rich people

- They should be commended for giving a small amount of their surplus. (Some people would have given anything)
- They were demonstrating a low level of love for God
- They did not need put their trust in God as they were able to provide for themselves

The widow

- She had given all that she had
- She was demonstrating a high level of love for God
- She put her trust in God, that he would provide for her daily needs

Now, while you have relatively little, is a great time to establish principles around your attitude to giving which will affect the rest of your lives. If we become faithful with the small amount we have now, God will trust us with larger amounts in the years to come. (Luke 19:11-26)

The Point: Giving and generosity is a reflection of our hearts. Now is the time to start giving. If you wait until you have a surplus you will miss out on the miraculous adventure your Father wants you to experience.

week four: generous with words

leaders notes

THE STORY OF THE LOST SON

When the younger son returned home he experienced the amazing love of his father and submitted to his father's authority. His father gave him some welcome home gifts - a ring, the best robe and a new pair of shoes.

See how well this story overlays the Lords Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name

- *The son returned home*
- *There was a tremendous interaction between father and son*
- *The son's experience of the father's love and acceptance was amazing*

Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven

- *The son submitted himself to the will of his Father*
- *His days of being self centred and rebellious were over*
- *He came back under the roof of the house*

Give us this day our daily bread

- *The son received a RING - a symbol of authority*
- *Asking for daily bread is so much more than a wishful prayer*
- *The family resources were available for him to draw upon*

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us

- *The son received a ROBE - a symbol of holiness*
- *His filthy clothes were exchanged for a clean robe (Christ's robes of righteousness)*
- *He was truly forgiven and made clean*

And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil

- *The son received SHOES - a symbol of freedom*
- *Slaves were not given shoes - shoes were only for sons and daughters*
- *He had been delivered from slavery*

For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever, Amen

- *For yours is the Kingdom - SHOES*
- *For yours is the Power - RING*
- *For yours is the Glory - ROBE*

Over the next three sessions, we are going to look at the significance of receiving the ring, robe and shoes.

This time we will look at the significance of receiving the RING (Luke 15:22)

In ancient times, rings often had wax seals that represented a person in authority. The ruler or owner of an estate would often give his ring to a son or trusted official, so they could speak (or write) in his name and therefore with his full authority.

We will look at two examples of people in the Bible who received a ring:

1. Joseph received a ring from Pharaoh: (*Genesis 41:41-42*)
2. Mordecai received a ring from King Xerxes (*Esther 8:8, 10*)

We will see how with this ring came authority and responsibility. We will reflect on how, if we have been given authority our words will carry weight and we will need to use them with care.

THE LORD PRAYER – *Give us this day our daily bread*

We will look at what it means for us to receive a ring from our Father and reflect on how asking our Father for daily bread is far more than just a wishful prayer. We will explore the authority we have in Christ and how we can draw upon it.

We will plan how to use our words in the coming week to release the life-changing love and power of the God into people's lives and circumstances.

getting started

VIDEO CLIP – LORD OF THE RINGS

Duration: 10 minutes

Equipment Required: A copy of The Lord of the Rings – The Fellowship of the Ring and the means to play it.

Description:

Summary: The story of a ring that has to be destroyed because the power in it can destroy men. Frodo has had possession of the ring and has brought it safely to Rivendell, but the forces of evil are piling up and the chief elf decrees that the only solution is to take the ring into Mordor and throw it into the lake of fire. This scene shows the discussion of the council and Frodo's commitment to take the ring to Mordor.

Start time: 1:25:26

End time: 1:29:41

Clip Length: Just over 4 mins

After viewing this video clip, make the following points.

Frodo and his companions took on a great responsibility when they committed to take the ring to Mordor. It was the beginning of an exciting journey, full of adventure and challenge.

The Point: Introduce the theme of the evening – The Ring

DISCUSSION - MAKE A DIFFERENCE CHALLENGE

Duration: 20 mins

Equipment required: Paper and pens.

Description:

Ask the young people to work in small groups. Give each group a large piece of paper and a different heading. (If you have more than 4 groups then it doesn't matter if some groups have the same heading.)

The headings are:

- At home.
- At school.
- At church/youth group.
- In my local area.

Tell the groups that they have the authority to change things. Ask each group to write down as many different ways they can think of in which they could make a difference for the better in their chosen location.

After 10 minutes ask each group, in turn, to share their ideas and then as a large group vote for their favourite idea for each place.

Now challenge everyone to do think of those things from each sheet that they can actually do. Can they really make a difference for the better, wherever they are?

The Point: To challenge all the young people to think about what having authority means, and to encourage them to make a difference in their world.

study

BIBLE STUDY - THE RING

Duration: 20 minutes

Equipment Required: Bibles / Paper / Pens

Description:

This week we will look at the significance of son receiving the ring from his father. (Luke 15:22)

Ask the following question to facilitate an open discussion

- What was the significance of receiving a ring in Bible times?

In ancient times, rings often had wax seals that represented a person in authority. The ruler or owner of an estate would often give his ring to a son or trusted official, so they could speak (or write) in his name and therefore with his full authority.

In three groups give each group a bible passage to look up, with the following question:

1. Group 1 - Esther 8:8,10
 - What level of authority did this ring represent?
 - Written decrees sealed with the kings signet ring could never be revoked
2. Group 2 - Genesis 41:41-44
 - What level of authority did this ring represent?
 - Joseph became second in command under Pharaoh
 - Joseph was put in charge of the whole land of Egypt
3. Group 3 - Luke 15:22
 - What level of authority did this ring represent?
 - It was the family signet ring
 - The family's resources were available to him
 - He could speak in the Father's name

When the groups have all looked up their passages and answered their questions, give them the facts in brackets above.

In the story of the Lost Son, the ring shows he is part of the family again, and has his father's authority as a son. Tell them that we have received authority from our Heavenly Father, and can speak and act in His name.

BIBLE STUDY - THE LORDS PRAYER – Give us this day our daily bread

Duration: 10 minutes

Equipment Required: Bibles / Paper / Pens

Description:

God the Father has given **YOU** His ring

- With this ring comes **AUTHORITY**
- With this authority comes **RESPONSIBILITY**

When you pray, "Give us this day **our** daily bread," this is not just a wishful prayer; you are speaking with authority and claiming **our** family inheritance.

Get into groups of 4 or 5 and discuss the following questions

- What is a prayer of petition? Give an example
- What is a prayer of command? Give an example
- Read Acts 3:1-10. Did Peter pray a pray of petition or a prayer of command?

Invite feedback from the groups and then make the following points

As we grow in faith and become more accustomed to God leading us how to pray, we can begin to pray prayers of command instead of prayers of petition.

- Prayers of petition – Father, we pray for Brian and ask that you would heal his leg
- Prayer of command – In the name of Jesus I command Brian's leg to be healed

The Point: To understand how we can begin to pray with authority

response

PRAYER – THE RING

Duration: 5 minutes

Equipment: None

Description:

Just as the father of the Lost Son gave his son a ring, showing everyone that the son carried his authority, so God the Father gives us His authority to speak in His name.

Take a few minutes to let this fact sink in, so we can all understand what this means.

What things might we say, if we are to speak in God's name?

We may want people to be healed;

We may want to share our faith, so people want to know God themselves;

We may want to speak kindly to someone who is hurting;

We may choose to speak kindly to someone who has hurt others.

The Point: To encourage the young people to think about what speaking in God's name means. We want young people to notice that when we speak with God's authority there is usually a generous outcome.

PRACTICAL ACTIONS - THE LORDS PRAYER – Give us this day our daily bread

Duration: 10 minutes

Equipment Required:

Description:

Consider how a young lad gave his daily bread (5 loaves and 2 fish) to Jesus which resulted in Jesus providing a banquet for 5,000 people. If we want to see God do miracles, we need to be prepared to act by giving away what we have.

In groups of 4 or 5 discuss the following questions

- How can you use words in the coming week to release the love of God into people's lives?
 - Identify people you know who need to experience the love of the Father
 - Pray for them and ask God that he will give you an opportunity to demonstrate the Father's love to them this week
- How can you use words in the coming week to release the power of God into people's circumstances?
 - Identify people you know who need to experience the power of God in the circumstances.
 - Pray for them and ask God that he will give you an opportunity to pray with them this week and release his power into their circumstances this week

The Point: To pray for opportunities to demonstrate the Father's love and release God's power into people's circumstances this week.

week five: generous with our hearts

leaders notes

THE STORY OF THE LOST SON

When the younger son returned home he experienced the amazing love of his father and submitted to his father's authority. His father gave him some welcome home gifts - a ring, the best robe and a new pair of shoes.

See how well this story overlays the Lords Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name

- *The son returned home*
- *There was a tremendous interaction between father and son*
- *The son's experience of the father's love and acceptance was amazing*

Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven

- *The son submitted himself to the will of his Father*
- *His days of being self centred and rebellious were over*
- *He came back under the roof of the house*

Give us this day our daily bread

- *The son received a RING - a symbol of authority*
- *Asking for daily bread is so much more than a wishful prayer*
- *The family resources were available for him to draw upon*

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us

- *The son received a ROBE - a symbol of holiness*
- *His filthy clothes were exchanged for a clean robe (Christ's robes of righteousness)*
- *He was truly forgiven and made clean*

And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil

- *The son received SHOES - a symbol of freedom*
- *Slaves were not given shoes - shoes were only for sons and daughters*
- *He had been delivered from slavery*

For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever, Amen

- *For yours is the Kingdom - SHOES*
- *For yours is the Power - RING*
- *For yours is the Glory - ROBE*

This week will look at the significance of receiving the ROBE (Luke 15:22)

THE LORDS PRAYER – *Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us*

In this session we want our young people to understand that they are loved by the Father and have been given a clean robe as a sign of the forgiveness which comes as a result of the Father's love.

We will end the session by creating an opportunity for your young people to practically forgive those who have sinned against them and plan ways that they can demonstrate the Father love to those they find difficult in the coming week.

getting started

ACTIVITY – FASHION PARADE

Duration: 20 minutes

Equipment Required:

Felt pens

Paper

Crepe Paper

Material

Description:

Introduce the session by explaining when the lost son returned home, his father gave him 'the best robe. (Luke 15:22). Today we are going to look at the significance of the ROBE.

In small groups, invite the young people to make a robe, suitable to be given to the son when he returned home.

Remind them of Joseph and his "coat of many colours", for inspiration.

Get one volunteer from each group to wear the robe. to take part in a 'fashion parade.'

Set up a 'cat walk' and get the remaining young people to sit round it. The fashion parade starts with the first volunteer walking to the end of the cat walk, turning around and walking out again, followed by volunteer No. 2 etc.

If you want to make it a competition, all the young people can vote for the best robe.

Explain that this week the teaching is all about the Robe and its significance.

The Point: To introduce the theme of The Robe

ACTIVITY - PUSH OVER

Duration: 10 mins

Equipment required: Something to mark out the two lines e.g. chalk, rope and masking tape.

Description:

Get your young people into pairs and give them the following challenges to compete against each other:

When you say 'go' the partners must see which of them can say the alphabet backwards the quickest

Create two lines on the ground (with chalk, a rope, or masking tape) down the centre of your hall – approximately four feet apart. Have the young people stand in the gap between the two lines, back to back. On the shout of 'go' they must try to push the other partner over the line that their partner is facing

After this activity is completed make the point that society emphasises people who are 'winners'. The people who are the 'greatest' are usually seen as this kind of people. They have status, talent and usually celebrity notoriety.

The Point: In this session we will be seeing how the Bible turns this idea on its head. The greatest people aren't the ones who do stuff for themselves. Instead, the greatest people are the ones who show compassion, who care for, and serve, others.

study

DIGGING DEEPER – BIBLE STUDY - NEW ROBES

Duration: 10 minutes

Equipment Required: Bibles

Description:

Joseph is often acknowledged as a picture of Jesus in the Old Testament. They were both highly esteemed by their fathers, envied by their brothers, sold for silver, falsely accused, sentenced to death but drawn out of the pit, and exalted to the right hand of the King.

Joseph's brothers stripped him of his robe and dipped it in goat's blood before taking it back to their father to convince him that his son was dead. But he wasn't dead! Instead, he was raised to the second highest position in the kingdom. Maybe this is same robe, the robe of the Father's love, that John saw Jesus wearing in Revelation 19:13

Ask the question – Why is Jesus depicted as wearing a 'robe dipped in blood?'

- This must represent His own blood, which He shed on the cross. He paid our debt when he died on the cross in order that we can be forgiven.

Make the points:

- Our robes were never going to be good enough.
- But the good news is that because of the price Jesus paid when he died in our place, our 'filthy rags' can be exchanged for Jesus' best robes.

Make the points:

- Although Jesus has paid the price and our Father has given us the robe, we need to put it on by receiving God's forgiveness and extending forgiveness to others.

The Point: Our robes are never going to be good enough. Jesus has exchanged his best robes for our inadequate clothing. The question is, are we going to put them on.

DRAMA - THE LORDS PRAYER – Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us

Duration: 10 minutes

Equipment Required: Bibles / Paper / Pens

Description:

Peter asked, "How many times should I forgive someone who sins against me?"

In answer, Jesus told the story in Matt 18:21-35.

In small groups, give them the story to read and then get them to act it out to the whole group.

- What is the main lesson we can learn from this story?
 - Our Father has forgiven us
 - We should also forgive others

What line in the Lords Prayer speaks to this issue?

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us (Matt 6:12)

The Point: Our Father has forgiven us and given us his best robes. We should also forgive others

BIBLE STUDY/DISCUSSION – COMPASSION

Duration: 10 minutes

Equipment required: Pens and paper

Description: Luke 15:11-32. When the lost son returned home and said to his Father, "I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called you son," his father was filled with **compassion** and exchanged his son's dirty clothing for the 'best robe.'

Ask your young people:

- "What does Compassion mean?"
- "What does it mean to Show compassion?"
- Think of examples of compassion.

It can best be describes as "love in action". Compassion is not just love, not just sympathy, not just feeling for people who have problems. Compassion is when those feelings lead to action. If someone is going through a hard time, sympathy might lead you to feel sorry for them, but compassion leads you to help them, in a practical way.

The Point: To help the young people to understand what compassion means.

response

PRAYER - ACTION

Duration: 5 minutes

Equipment Required: pens and 1 small card for each person

Description:

If you have not just completed the discussion on Compassion, tell the young people the following:

Compassion can best be describes as “love in action”. Compassion is not just love, not just sympathy, not just feeling for people who have problems. Compassion is when those feelings lead to action. If someone is going through a hard time, sympathy might lead you to feel sorry for them, but compassion leads you to help them, in a practical way.

Encourage the group to think about people less fortunate than themselves. How can they show compassion? What can they do to demonstrate God’s love to someone who really needs it right now?

Suggest that they all take their card, and write on it something practical they can do to demonstrate God’s love, to sow compassion.

See if they are willing to commit to doing this every day for the next week, and to come back next week with stories of what they did and how it was received.

The Point: To encourage the young people to demonstrate compassion, God’s love in action, generosity.

week six: generous with our faith

leaders notes

THE STORY OF THE LOST SON

When the younger son returned home he experienced the amazing love of his father and submitted to his father's authority. His father gave him some welcome gifts - a ring, the best robe and a new pair of shoes.

See how well this story overlays the Lords Prayer.

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name

- *The son returned home*
- *There was a tremendous interaction between father and son*
- *The son's experience of the father's love and acceptance was amazing*

Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven

- *The son submitted himself to the will of his Father*
- *His days of being self centred and rebellious were over*
- *He came back under the roof of the house*

Give us this day our daily bread

- *The son received a RING - a symbol of authority*
- *Asking for daily bread is so much more than a wishful prayer*
- *The family resources were available for him to draw upon*

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us

- *The son received a ROBE - a symbol of holiness*
- *His filthy clothes were exchanged for a clean robe (Christ's robes of righteousness)*
- *He was truly forgiven and made clean*

And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil

- *The son received SHOES - a symbol of freedom*
- *Slaves were not given shoes - shoes were only for sons and daughters*
- *He had been delivered from slavery*

For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever, Amen

- *For yours is the Kingdom - SHOES*
- *For yours is the Power - RING*
- *For yours is the Glory - ROBE*

This week will look at the significance of receiving the SHOES (Luke 15:22)

In the culture of the time, slaves and hired servants were not given shoes. Only sons and daughters received shoes. When the father gave his son a pair of shoes, he was saying, "You are not coming back as a hired servant or a slave. I am receiving you back into the household as my son."

Our Father welcomes us as his sons and daughters. We are no longer slaves. We no longer live under slavery - we are free. What ever addictions, insecurities, hereditary illnesses or curses you may have lived under in the past, they are completely broken and have no power over your future.

THE LORDS PRAYER - *Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil*

So when we pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil," we are putting our new shoes on and claiming the freedom that Jesus died for in order that we might walk in his shoes. How fantastic is that!

In Ephesians 6, these shoes are referred to as the "readiness that comes from the gospel of peace." Having experienced the peace that comes from responding to the good news of the Gospel, we are encouraged to put our shoes on and take the gospel of peace to where people are.

The main aims of this session are to

1. Help our young people walk in a greater level of freedom from temptation and addictions.
2. Equip our young people to communicate the gospel of peace wherever they go, using their words and actions.

getting started

ACTIVITY - FOOTPRINTS

Duration: 10 minutes

Equipment Required: Roll of lining paper / Paint / Bowl of water / Soap / Towel

Description:

Divide the young people into two teams. If you have another room available, send one of the teams into a different room. Alternatively, set up some kind of screen so that the two teams can't see each other.

Give each team a strip of paper about 6 to 10 feet in length. Instruct each team to select 3 people to step into the paint and then walk their footprints over their piece of paper. Once this has been done and the young people have washed the paint off their feet and put their shoes and socks back on, bring the two teams together.

Each team have to guess whose footprints are on the opposing team's piece of paper.

Make the following point: We all leave a mark wherever we go. Sometimes it's visible and sometimes it's hidden.

Consider what kind of mark (both positive and negative) you have left behind at school, home or anywhere else you have been over the last week.

The Point: To introduce the theme – Shoes. We all leave a mark wherever we go.

study

ALL THINGS UNDER YOUR FEET

Duration: 20 minutes

Equipment Required: Bibles / Paper Pens

Description:

When the lost son returned home, his father gave him a new pair of SHOES (Luke 15:22)

What do the shoes signify? Allow young people to discuss and then make the following point:

In the culture of the time, slaves were not given shoes. Only sons and daughters received shoes. The father giving his son new shoes was a statement that he was not coming back as a slave; he was being received back into the household as a son.

Your heavenly Father has given you a new pair of shoes. This means you are no longer a slave – you don't have to live under slavery. No addiction, habit, insecurity or sickness has any rights or power over you. You can walk free.

- God's original plan for humanity was that we would have all things under our feet. This means God did not intend for us to be controlled. He wants us to be able to exercise self-control.
- What sort of things can control us?
- Self-control is part of the fruit of the Holy Spirit. We can get control back by accepting that Jesus gives us the power to put everything under our feet.

Activity

- Encourage them to write on a piece of paper any addictions, habits, or insecurities that trouble them. Stress that they do not have to tell anyone what they have written. They should put them under their feet by putting them inside their shoes.

Pray for your young people, out loud, that God will empower them this week, and that none of the things written on their papers will have any power or control.

The Point: When we put on Jesus shoes, all things can be put under our feet. We do not have to live under slavery. We can walk in freedom as sons and daughters of our heavenly Father.

study

BIBLE STUDY – SHOES OF THE GOSPEL

Duration: 15 minutes

Equipment Required: Bibles / Paper Pens

Description:

When the Lost Son returned home, his father gave him a pair of shoes. What did that signify?

Ask if anyone knows what shoes meant, in those times. Explain that, in the culture of the time, slaves and hired servants were not given shoes. Only sons and daughters received shoes. When the father gave his son a pair of shoes, he was say, "You are not coming back as a hired servant or a slave. I am receiving you back into the household as my son."

Slaves and hired servants are given tasks to fulfil, and have no choice but to do them. Sons and daughters of the household have much more freedom to choose. It is an honour and a privilege to be a son or a daughter of God, and we are in this position because God loves us. So we don't act out of fear, or lack of choice. We do things because we choose to.

Being a child of God is "Good News" (that's what "Gospel" means) so we want to share our good news with others.

Read Ephesians 6:10-17.

- The 'shoes of the gospel of peace,' are listed as part of the armour of God.
- Consider what that means, if your trainers, your boots, your flip-flops, are the shoes of the gospel of peace.
- What difference will that make to where you walk and what you say?

Now that you are wearing the shoes of the Gospel, how can you share that "Good News" with other people?

The Point: To introduce the idea of sharing our faith

DISCUSSION - THEIR STORY, YOUR STORY, GOD'S STORY

Duration: 20 minutes

Equipment Required: Paper / Pens

Description:

We are going to look at a simple framework for communicating the Gospel

1. THEIR STORY – Start by listening to what they have to say
2. YOUR STORY – Look for opportunities to tell them about your experiences of God
3. GOD'S STORY – Be prepared to explain the good news of the gospel

THEIR STORY

Open discussion and flipchart.

Why is it important to listen to other people's story before we tell them our story or God's story?

- It is less threatening.
- It values people and makes people feel you are genuinely interested in them.
- You have to recognise where they are at.

YOUR STORY

Give out paper and pens and give your young people 2 minutes to write down the key moments in their personal experience of knowing God. This could include:

- Experiences where you felt close to God
- Answers to prayer
- How you became a Christian
- Events you have been to that have been significant in bringing you closer to God

Divide the young people into groups of 3's. In turn each person will have one minute to tell THEIR STORY to the other two people in their group.

GOD'S STORY

This is the gospel message; that God loved humanity and sent his son, Jesus, to show us his nature. Jesus was killed by mankind and after three days he rose from the dead and was made King.

Invite 2 or 3 volunteers to have a go as telling God's story in 3 minutes using the 4 Points. Tell them to try and do this in their own words with out using any Christian jargon

The Point: To equip young people to communicate the gospel

response

PRAYER - THE LORD'S PRAYER – *Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil*

Duration: 10 minutes

Equipment Required: Background Music / Shredder

Description:

Put on some background music and encourage your young people to get into same gender groups of 2's or 3's. If they feel they want to, they can talk to their group about the areas they have written on paper and put inside their shoes. If they don't feel comfortable in doing this they can speak more generally about what they would like prayer for.

Encourage the young people to pray in their groups, then when they are ready, take the paper out of their shoes and put it through the shredder

The Point: An opportunity for young people to receive prayer into the areas they sometimes struggle with

week seven: generous with forgiveness

leaders notes

In this, the final session of our series, we want your young people to understand that there is a party in heaven every time someone who is lost repents, comes home and is reunited with their heavenly Father.

In the three stories we looked at in Luke 15 – lost sheep, lost coin and lost son, each one ends with a party to celebrate that that which was lost has now been found.

Jesus goes on to explain, that these parties are just a picture of what happens in heaven every time someone who is lost, repents, comes home and is reunited with their Father.

After the story of the lost sheep, Jesus says in Luke 15:7

"I tell you that in the same way there is rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent."

After the story of the lost coin, Jesus says in Luke 15:10

"In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

THE STORY OF LOST SON

The story of the lost son has a slightly different ending. As in the previous two stories there is a party put on to celebrate the return of the lost son. But in this story, the older son refuses to come to the banquet and his father has to come out to him to plead with him to come in.

John, in chapter 2 of his Gospel, records that Jesus started his public ministry by attending two parties:

The first party was a wedding in Cana. On this occasion Jesus took the party to a whole new level by turning water into wine! The stone water jars, which were recognised as instruments of purification, became full of Jesus' new wine

The second party was the celebration of the Passover in Jerusalem. On this occasion, instead

of turning water into wine, Jesus turned the tables over and through people out of the temple. The temple, which was supposed to be an instrument of purification, had become corrupted by the religious leaders trying to make money out of people coming to worship God.

The celebration of the Passover should have been an amazing celebration of how God delivered the nation of Israel out of slavery and brought them to his promised land, or maybe in our context, the Father's banqueting house.

THE LORDS PRAYER – *For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever*

We are going to use the last line of the Lord's Prayer to reflect again on the gifts the father gave his son as you look at the last line of the Lords Prayer

For yours is...

- *the kingdom... The SHOES – gospel of peace and freedom*
- *the power... The RING – authority*
- *and the glory... The ROBE – holiness for ever and ever, Amen*

Over the last seven weeks, we have sought to create an opportunity for our young people to...

1. ...have a fresh experience of the Father's love for them, in order that they can...
2. ...take the love of the Father to those who are lost and then...
3. ...invite them to the Father's banquet

If ever there was an action that demonstrated what it means to be 'generous with forgiveness,' it was the banquet put on by the father when his lost son returned home.

So let's end this time by joining with the angels in heaven by putting on a fantastic party 'on earth as it is in heaven,' for lost sons and daughters returning home to be reunited with their heavenly Father.

We encourage you to use this session to finalise plans for the event your young people will be putting on for their friends or the community. Encourage them to be as creative and generous as they can and to think of ideas that will take the experience beyond their guests' expectations.

study

DISCUSSION - A PARTY IN HEAVEN

Duration: 15 minutes

Equipment Required:

Description:

Luke 15 has 3 stories of something lost - lost sheep, lost coin and lost son. Each one ends with people hosting a party to celebrate that which was lost has now been found.

After the story of the lost sheep Jesus says:

"I tell you that in the same way there is rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent." (Luke 15:7)

After the story of the lost coin Jesus says:

"In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." (Luke 15:10)

The story of the lost son has a slightly different ending. As in the previous two stories there is a party put on to celebrate the return of the lost son. But in this story, the older son refuses to come to the banquet and his father has to come out to him to plead with him to come in. The father says:

"We had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found." (Luke 15:32)

Divide your young people in to groups of 4 or 5 and get them to discuss the following questions?

- What was being celebrated at these 3 parties?
- What do these 3 parties tell us about God?

Invite the groups to feedback and then make the following point:

If ever there was an action that demonstrated what it means to be 'generous with forgiveness,' it was the banquet put on by the father when his lost son returned home.

The Point: To be reminded of the teaching over the past 7 weeks and to think about a party-loving God.

DRAMA – THE LOST

Duration: 15 minutes

Equipment required: None

Description:

Divide your group into smaller groups of 5 or 6. Either let them choose, or allocate them one of the 3 stories from Luke 15, The Lost Sheep; The Lost Coin: The Lost Son.

Invite them to use their own words to act out the story, but they must use the word "forgive" at least once. They can bring it up to date if they wish. They should ensure that they finish the drama with a party to celebrate finding that which was lost.

The Point: Reinforce the last 7 weeks teaching.

REFLECTION – FORGIVE US AS WE FORGIVE

Duration: 5 minutes

Equipment required: None

Description:

Just as the father of the lost son forgave his son and threw a party for him, God has forgiven us and held a party in heaven when we chose to accept his forgiveness.

Invite your young people to think about two things:

- Have they accepted God's forgiveness for themselves? If not, this would be a good time for them to do so, to thank Jesus for His death on the cross which has led to God's forgiveness, and to commit to following Him.
- Is there anyone they need to forgive? Are they holding a grudge about anything? Are they cross with anyone? Perhaps they need to say "I forgive you" to someone, or perhaps they just need to put down the unforgiveness they are carrying.

Then invite your young people to commit to being "quick to forgive" in the future. When anyone offends them or says or does anything unkind, they should try to remember that God has forgiven them, so they should forgive others.

The Point: To help the young people to forgive as they have been forgiven.

acknowledgements

Urban Saints

Since 1906 Urban Saints (formerly known as Crusaders) has been reaching out to children and young people with the good news of Jesus Christ. We are passionate about working with children and young people who have no church connection, helping them to realise their full God-given potential as they journey from childhood to adulthood.

Young people (aged 3 to 18+) connect with the movement in a variety of ways, including weekly youth groups, special events, holidays, community projects and training programmes. These activities are led by thousands of volunteers who are comprehensively trained and supported in order to help them work effectively and achieve the highest possible standards of youth work practice.

Whilst much of our work is in the UK and Ireland, increasingly we are helping indigenous churches within countries in the developing world to set up and run outreach work among un-churched children and young people.

About Stewardship

We help people give. Since 1906 Stewardship has provided advice, guidance, inspiration and practical tools to make it easy for people to give easily and tax effectively. Stewardship giving accounts are currently used by over 25,000 people in the UK with more than £53 million distributed to charitable causes from Stewardship accounts every year. Over 19,000 registered churches, secular and Christian charities and full-time Christian workers are currently supported with Stewardship.

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