

Dying to live

SERIES THEME: PEOPLE WHO NEEDED HELP

All collective worship outlines in this section focus on people who knew they needed help. The stories of how they met Jesus are from the New Testament section of the Bible..

SESSION TOPIC

The thief on the cross

AIM

To help the pupils learn that everyone needs the help of others.

SUITABLE FOR

Years 3 to 6

BIBLE BASE

Luke 23:32–34,39–43

BEFORE YOU START

Look at the **Way In** pages for tips and ideas on leading collective worship.

INTRODUCTION

Ask the pupils to imagine the following:

Claire was rushed into hospital because of a serious problem with her heart. The doctors said there was no cure. The only thing that would save her life was a heart transplant.

The problem with this was that, in order for Claire to have a new, healthy heart, another child would need to die. For her to have life, someone else needed to die.

A little while later, Mark was tragically killed in a road accident. The doctors asked his parents if they would be willing for his healthy heart to be given to Claire, so that her life could be saved. They agreed. Claire was given Mark's heart and new life as a result. Mark's death meant Claire could live.

BIBLE STORY

Tell the pupils that this reminds you of the story in the Bible about Jesus' death and the death of the two criminals who were executed with him. Read (or tell in your own words) the story from Luke 23:32–34,39–43. Talk about how life in the future was possible for the thief on the cross because of Jesus' death.

Ask the pupils to imagine the three crosses and the three people on them – Jesus on the centre one, with a criminal either side of him. They were all going to die.

- Jesus was special. He hadn't done anything wrong. Christians believe that Jesus died so that people can be friends with God again.

- Thief number two knew he wasn't perfect and admitted he'd done wrong. He knew he needed help. He had realised that Jesus was special and that he could help him. So he asked for help. Then Jesus made him a very special promise. Because Jesus was going to live, the criminal could live too.

- Thief number one thought only of himself. He didn't care about Jesus or the other criminal. He could have chosen to ask for help from Jesus, and Jesus would have promised him life too.

APPLICATION

A Christian viewpoint

Explain briefly that Jesus' death meant that thief number two could have life. Christians believe

that because of Jesus' death, everyone can have life. None of us is perfect. We all need help. Thief number two knew Jesus could help him. He will help anyone who asks him.

For everyone

The criminal on the cross needed help. We all need to recognise that we can't 'make it' on our own. Sometimes we need to ask for help.

RESPONSE

You could use this prayer:

'Dear God, help us to know that we are not perfect. We do things wrong. Help us to know that we need your help. Amen.'



Stupid question

SERIES THEME: PEOPLE WHO NEEDED HELP

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SESSION TOPIC

The man at the pool of Bethesda

AIM

To show pupils that no-one is 'invalid' (ie not valid), whatever their social status or disabilities. To help pupils understand that it's important to learn from your past.

SUITABLE FOR

Years 3 to 6

BIBLE BASE

John 5:1-9a

YOU WILL NEED

Small pieces of fabric or coloured paper (enough for one for every person in the assembly, these could be 'fringed' at each end), small elastic bands or short pieces of string (enough for one for each person in the assembly)

BEFORE YOU START

Look at the **Way In** pages for tips and ideas on leading collective worship.

INTRODUCTION

Talk to the pupils about the 'stupid' questions people sometimes ask. For example, ask the pupils to imagine they are washing the car. Someone comes along and asks, 'What are you doing?' It's a stupid question, because it's obvious what you're doing! So you give a stupid answer ('Peeling potatoes!'). The person who asked the question continues, 'No, you're not...'

BIBLE STORY

Introduce the story in the Bible of the lame man at the Pool of Bethesda, explaining that in it Jesus seem to ask some 'stupid' questions.

Read or tell the story in your own words from the Bible up to the point (verse 6) where Jesus

asks the man, 'Do you want to get well?' (The New International Version uses the word 'invalid'.)

Comment that the man maybe thought to himself, 'What a stupid question!' After all, he couldn't walk, but to be healed he had to somehow be first in the race to the pool! Now ask the pupils to think carefully whether it is a stupid question.

Point out that Jesus was not asking a general question to everyone. This was a personal question which was special to this man: 'Do you want to get well?' Comment that maybe the man didn't really want to change. After all, he had been used to being in that place for a long time.

People would give him food and drink. Maybe in a way he quite liked living like this.

Jesus' question was perhaps not so silly as it first seems. He knew that if this man was healed, his life would change. He wanted to know if this man was serious. Did he really want to change?

Continue to tell or read the story from the Bible (verse 7). The man's reply showed he was serious about being healed. He couldn't get to the pool on his own. He needed Jesus' help. Then Jesus said something else which sounds stupid. He told the lame man, 'Pick up your mat and walk' (verse 8). Ask the pupils for their ideas about why Jesus might have said this to the man. After all, if the man had left his mat, someone else could have used it.

Point out that the mat was an important reminder to the man of his history, his past. If he had left it perhaps he would have forgotten what he had been like and how much he had changed. Emphasise the importance of remembering the past (eg the Cenotaph in London, or other locally well-known memorial). 'Memorials' help us remember important events and people. If we didn't have them or they were knocked down, we'd forget. (Remind the pupils about the words on war memorials, 'Lest we forget'.)

Ask the pupils what they think happened at the end of the story. (Answer: the man picked up his mat and walked!)

APPLICATION

A Christian viewpoint

It's important to remember what has happened in the past. The good things and the bad things all affect the present and future. Christians believe that God can use people who have learned things from what has happened in their past to help other people.

For everyone

Everyone needs help. We all need to learn from our own past and other people's experiences. None of us can look down on others as being 'invalid'.

RESPONSE

Ask for several volunteers to help you give out the pieces of fabric (or coloured paper) and elastic bands (or pieces of string), one of each for everyone.

Tell the pupils that this is to make a reminder for them to keep, a bit like the lame man's mat. Ask them to spend a few minutes in silence looking at their 'mat', thinking about one thing from their past which has had a big effect on their lives. It might be something good or something which makes them sad. Now ask them to think about one good thing which they have learnt from that event or situation.

Tell the pupils to roll up their 'mat' and fasten it with the rubber band (or piece of string), and then put it somewhere safe. Every time they look at their 'mat', it will be a reminder of their history and the things they have learnt from it.

Ask the pupils to think of ways in which their experiences in the past could help other people.

Alternatively, finish with this activity. Ask the pupils to think about what they could learn from people who, at first look, might not seem to them to have much importance (eg old people, people with physical disabilities).

Challenge the pupils to find out if there is a local community centre where they could help in some way (reading, talking to elderly people etc).

Finish with a prayer, if this is appropriate:

'Lord, help us to be ready to learn from other people, however unimportant they might at first seem to us. Help us to learn from our own past experiences and to be ready to use what we have learnt to help other people. Amen.'

Getting to know you

SERIES THEME: PEOPLE WHO NEEDED HELP

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SESSION TOPIC

Nicodemus

AIM

To help pupils learn that Christians believe they can know God because of the Holy Spirit.

To help them begin to understand what Christians believe about the Holy Spirit.

SUITABLE FOR

Years 3 to 6

BIBLE BASE

John 3:1–8

YOU WILL NEED

An electric fan, tissue paper

BEFORE YOU START

Look at the **Way In** pages for tips and ideas on leading collective worship.

INTRODUCTION

Turn on the fan. Comment that it makes the air move rather like the wind. Ask the pupils if we can see the wind. Talk about the effects of the wind (eg leaves moving on the trees.) Hold the paper in front of the fan to demonstrate.

Ask for two volunteers who are good at running. Ask the pupils which of the two volunteers they think can run on the spot for the longest. Just as they are about to start, tell one of them that he/she must hold his breath! Give a commentary on them as they are running. Stop them after a few moments if they both keep going. Thank and congratulate both participants. Ask the one who had to hold his breath what difference it made.

BIBLE STORY

Tell the pupils about the Greek word *pneuma*. Explain that it means three different things: wind, breath and spirit. Refer back to the two illustrations about wind and breath. Introduce the story of Nicodemus:

Nicodemus was a teacher – a very important teacher. He didn't only teach children, he taught adults as well. His job was to teach people about God. He was an extremely important Jewish leader. Everybody respected Nicodemus. He knew all about God's rules and what the people must do...and what they mustn't do. Good old Nicodemus!

Then Nicodemus heard about Jesus. Everyone

was talking about him. Nicodemus was curious: 'I must go and find out about this man,' he thought to himself. But he didn't want anyone to know this, because he was supposed to be the teacher. So he started hanging around where Jesus was, pretending to be just passing by, but really, listening carefully to what Jesus said...and watching what Jesus was doing – miracles! Blind people could see, deaf people could hear, people with all kinds of illnesses were being made well. 'There's something very special about this man,' thought Nicodemus. 'No-one could do these miracles without God's help. I'd like to have a chat with him.'

The trouble was that Jesus wasn't very popular with lots of the other teachers. After all, Jesus hadn't been to university and he was only a carpenter's son. What gave him the right to teach people about God? The other teachers also didn't like him because crowds of people followed Jesus everywhere he went. They all wanted to hear what Jesus was teaching, and that meant they weren't listening to them any more.

'I can't go and see Jesus during the day,' thought Nicodemus. 'I'll go and see him at night when no one else is around.' So, one night, Nicodemus went secretly to see Jesus. He knew that Jesus had something that he hadn't got and he wanted to know what it was.

Jesus told Nicodemus that anyone who really wants to know God needs to have the Spirit of God in him.

Explain that Christians often call God's Spirit 'the Holy Spirit' and believe that they can know God because his Spirit is with them. Ask the pupils if they can remember what the Greek word *pneuma* means. (Answer: wind, breath, spirit).

Talk about how God's Spirit is like wind and breath. Ask the pupils why the running competition was so difficult for one of them? (Answer: Because he didn't have any breath in him!)

APPLICATION

A Christian viewpoint

Christians believe that in order to live a life which pleases God, people need to have God's breath or Spirit inside them. Without his help it's too hard, like trying to run without breathing.

For everyone

Anyone can ask God to help them to do what's right.

RESPONSE

Turn on the fan and allow the breeze to blow over the pupils. Ask them to think about the wind. Even though we can't see it, we can feel it. Talk about how, in some ways, God being with us is like that.

Think about breath that enables us to live and walk and run. Think about God being like the wind or like breath.

Allow a few moments of silence, and tell the pupils that they may want to use the time to ask God to help them to live a life that pleases him.



Money money!

SERIES THEME: PEOPLE WHO NEEDED HELP

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SESSION TOPIC

The rich man

AIM

To encourage pupils to question the idea that having lots of money is what is most important in life.

SUITABLE FOR

Years 3 to 6

BIBLE BASE

Mark 10:17–23

YOU WILL NEED

Pictures of a large house, an expensive car, a yacht, a private jet (see www.cofebirmingham.com/info-for-parishes/interfaith/presence-engagement/ministry-in-schools); two large money bags filled with 'money'

BEFORE YOU START

Look at the **Way In** pages for tips and ideas on leading collective worship.

INTRODUCTION

Talk about the National Lottery. Pretend that you recently won millions of pounds (make sure the pupils know that you are pretending). Talk about the expensive possessions you have bought with some of the money (show the pictures of the house, car etc). Ask the pupils what they would buy if they were you? Talk about the difference it would make to their lives. Would it make their lives perfect? Would it make a difference to the way they treated other people?

BIBLE STORY

Make the point that many people who are rich are still not happy. It has always been that way, even 2,000 years ago in Jesus' time. Jesus was a

wise man and many people came to ask him questions about the best way to live their lives.

Tell the story of the rich young man who once met Jesus:

There was once a young man who was very rich. He had everything he needed – a big house, a fast car ... oh, cars weren't invented then ... Well, he probably had a very fast camel... and lots of money. *Shake the money bags*. But there was still something missing. He knew that money wasn't everything and he believed that loving and obeying God were very important too. He wanted to be sure that when he died he would be able to go to heaven and be with God for ever.

‘What must I do to get the life that never ends?’ he asked Jesus.

‘The way you live your life is very important,’ Jesus said. ‘You mustn’t murder anyone, you mustn’t steal, you mustn’t tell lies about anyone, you mustn’t cheat, you must respect your parents...’

‘I’ve obeyed those rules since I was a boy,’ said the young man. ‘Is there anything else?’

Jesus looked straight at the young man. He really cared about him and wanted what was best for him. ‘There is one more thing you need to do, he said. ‘Go and sell everything you have, and give the money to the poor. Then come and follow me.’

Pause to consider what that would mean to a rich young man. Talk about the things you have imagined buying with your lottery money. How would you feel about selling them all and giving all the money away? How would the pupils feel if it was them in that position? Ask the pupils what they think the rich young man did.

Then continue:

The rich young man was very sad to hear Jesus say this because he was very rich. He looked at Jesus and he looked at his money and thought about his big house and his fast camels and all the other things he had...and he turned and walked away from Jesus. Jesus was very sad too.

APPLICATION

A Christian viewpoint

Jesus taught his followers that God must be most important in their lives. For many people, money and the things they own are more important to them than God. Jesus taught that we have a choice— you can’t serve God and money.

This story of the rich young man makes Christians think hard about how much money they keep for themselves. It doesn’t mean that all Christians give everything they have away, but it reminds them that money mustn’t become the most important thing in their lives.

For everyone

Sometimes when we see the National Lottery on television and we hear about all the things rich people have, it makes us think that having lots of money is what life is all about. Jesus taught that the way we treat other people is more important.

RESPONSE

Ask the pupils to think about what is really important in their lives. Is what they own more important than the way they treat other people?

Ask them to think about other people in school. How could they go out of their way to be generous to those around them today? (Make it clear you don’t mean just by giving things away!)



Look again!

SERIES THEME: PEOPLE WHO NEEDED HELP

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SESSION TOPIC

Legion

AIM

To help pupils understand that first impressions don't always give a true picture. We need to look again and make sure we're 'seeing' properly.

SUITABLE FOR

Years 3 to 6

BIBLE BASE

Mark 5:1–20

YOU WILL NEED

Optical illusions (printed out or on PowerPoint – see www.cofebirmingham.com/info-for-parishes/interfaith/presence-engagement/ministry-in-schools) or a large tapestry picture where the back can be viewed as well as the front

BEFORE YOU START

Look at the **Way In** pages for tips and ideas on leading collective worship.

INTRODUCTION

Display the optical illusions and ask the pupils to guess what each picture shows. (Alternatively, show the pupils the back of the tapestry and ask them to guess what the picture is.)

BIBLE STORY

Introduce the story by explaining that often we look at things, but don't really understand what we are looking at. In the following story, the pupils will hear about someone who Jesus helped because he was looking properly, but other people weren't seeing things clearly.

Tell this story, emphasizing the parts in bold: Once there was a man who was filled by evil spirits. He would walk round shouting, screaming and hurting himself. The people of his home

town made him live on his own outside their town in the hills. **They looked at the man and saw someone who was frightening.**

One day Jesus came to the town. On his way there he met the man out in the hills. The man was shouting and hitting himself. **Jesus looked at the man and saw someone who needed help.**

Jesus made the evil spirits come out of the man. They went into some pigs which ran into the sea. The man was better. He stopped shouting and screaming. He didn't hurt himself any more.

The people from the town came running to see what had happened. They were really cross. **They looked at the man and thought, 'Our pigs were more important than him.'** They at Jesus

and saw someone they thought was frightening and would cause trouble.

‘Get out of our town,’ they shouted at Jesus.

The man who had been healed wanted to go with Jesus and help him. **He looked at Jesus and saw the only person who was able to help him.** Jesus told the man to stay in his town and tell people what had happened.

Jesus looked at the man and saw someone useful, someone much more important than the pigs.

Show the optical illusions again and explain what each one is. (Alternatively, show the front of the tapestry at this point.) Now you can look at it properly and see what the picture is.

APPLICATION

A Christian viewpoint

Jesus, as portrayed in the Bible, looks at things differently, or we could say, as they really are. When he looks at people, he sees everyone as people who need help. People need help to act the right way; to be forgiven for doing things wrong; to see things clearly, as God sees them. Jesus wants to help people, the Bible says, because he looks at people and loves each one.

For everyone

In the story, Jesus was the one who saw things properly. He saw that the man wasn't frightening, but that he needed help. The people

in the town didn't stop and think about what they were seeing. They just looked quickly and decided they knew how things were. But they got it wrong.

Ask the pupils about how they make their minds up about people and situations, using some of these questions to help them think about this:

- Do you bother to look properly? Or, are you like the people from Legion's home town and make up your mind about someone or something before you've really thought?
- Do you decide what people are like by what they look like?
- Do you decide something will be boring before you've tried it? Or, that something tastes horrible before you've eaten it?

Jesus challenged people by looking properly at things and seeing things as they really were. His way of looking at things challenges us to do the same. Are we always ready to look again?

RESPONSE

You could finish with this prayer:

‘Dear Lord Jesus, thank you that when you were here on earth you saw things as they really were. You saw the man, Legion, as needing your help, not as someone to be sent away. Thank you that when you look at us you see us as people you love, needing your help. Help us to be people you see things properly, just like you do. Amen.’

