



EASY ENGLISH BIBLE STUDIES

*Teaching English
and teaching Jesus
through Bible
study and
discussion*



TEACHER'S GUIDE AND TEMPLATES TO PHOTOCOPY
BRUCE PRINGLE

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Easy English Bible Studies (EEBS)

(EEBS: pronounced Ee-bees)

Teaching English and Teaching Jesus through Bible Study and Discussion

Teacher's Guide

These studies are designed to help English Second Language (ESL) students learn English, and to enable them to know Jesus, believe in him, and follow him. Through personal experience I have discovered that ESL students are eager to learn about Jesus and the Christian faith. In general, they are much more receptive to the gospel than Australians. You do not need to be an English expert to lead EEBS! As long as you are prepared to learn, grow, and acknowledge your mistakes and things you don't know, students will learn and grow through you.

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Introduction to Easy English Bible Studies

Easy English Bible Studies (EEBS) were written in a very organic way over a period of about 15 years, beginning in the early 2000s. Sometimes they were written the night before, or even the morning of using! Gradually, they have been revised and added to. And then a whole lot of editing has been done prior to publishing.

At Taringa Baptist Church, where I was pastor for 22 years, we had an ongoing ESL teaching ministry where most of the students were not Christians. This was, and is, a wonderful good-deed and light-shining ministry in line with Jesus' words, "Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16) and his Great Commandment to "Love the Lord your God... and love your neighbour as you love yourself" (Mark 12:30–31).

While opportunities came from our ESL classes to talk about Jesus, I wanted something in addition to these classes that was more directly evangelistic to present to our students each session, that would enable them to come to know Jesus and follow him. The EEBS were the solution! The ESL classes followed by the EEBS have proven to be an effective and fruitful combination in helping people believe in and follow Jesus. Conversation classes show people that Christians care and work hard to help them. This establishes confidence and trust helping students to take the next step of attending EEBS. I feel that many students would never have come to EEBS and heard the good news about Jesus (and become Christians), unless they had come to ESL classes first.

We are all very busy people. The good news is that there is very little preparation needed for leading EEBS. The basic preparation needed is simply to do the study for yourself beforehand, and pray for your group. Once you have done the study once, all the preparation needed is to pray for your group! ESL students are always coming and going, so Taringa Baptist has continued to recycle these EEBS year after year. Some ongoing students have done them several times and still find them helpful. Some have come whenever they visit Australia.

EEBS are inductive Bible studies designed to help English students practice and learn English, and learn about Jesus from the New Testament Gospels—there are also a few studies from other books of the Bible. A good slogan that promotes the EEBS to students is *Learning English and Learning about Jesus*. They are a form of task-based learning which is currently the most favoured way of teaching in Australia. Students learn by completing a task—it is learning through doing. As students learn and understand a Bible story, they encounter all kinds of authentic English, and get to practice their own English as they learn and discuss the story. At the same time, they are learning about Jesus.

These particular studies are designed for intermediate and advanced learners. Chris Neale, Associate Pastor and ESL ministry leader at Taringa Baptist, is currently working on Very Easy English Bible Studies (VEEBS) which are designed for beginner ESL students.

In addition, the inductive method of Bible study is a way to gradually build up interest and knowledge of English and the meaning of a Bible story, so that the EEBS participant is able to come to a personal understanding of the Bible passage. The questions in these studies are designed to give the participants opportunities to express themselves in English, to practice their English, and to gradually lead them to understand the literal and spiritual meaning of the passage. Inductive studies are a bit like reading a novel in that all is made clear at the end of the novel. If participants answer and discuss the questions step by step, then by the end of the Bible study, the meaning of

the passage should be clear to them. With this in mind, EEBS leaders should be careful that they do not jump ahead of the questions and reveal the full meaning of the passage until the end of the study. The general and basic progression of inductive ESL Bible studies is:

- i. Introduction and warm up
- ii. Introduction to some key words that will be included in the Bible reading
- iii. Bible reading
- iv. Understand the meaning of the English words and phrases
- v. Answer questions about English and background of the story
- vi. Discover the spiritual meaning of the passage
- vii. Summarise things learnt and gently apply the spiritual meaning of the passage

Guidelines for Using Easy English Bible Studies

1. The EEBS are designed for use with the latest edition of the *Good News New Testament* (Bible Society Australia: 2000). This translation has been chosen because of its use of Australian English which is not as simple as the NIRV for example, but offers ESL learners authentic every day English. Before each class begins, it has been my practice to loan each student a copy of the *Good News New Testament* and to give a photocopy of the EEBS for the session for them to write on and follow along. If students want their own copy of the *Good News NT*, I always give them one. Using another version will cause problems as the vocabulary of the Good News Bible is what is used in these EEBS to introduce key words.
2. Promote EEBS with integrity. That is, promote that they are about learning English and learning about Jesus from the Bible. To promote them as simply about learning English is deceptive and misleading, and similar to non-ethical bait advertising often used in the commercial world. Unfortunately, I have heard of situations where this has happened.
3. EEBS are designed for small groups. That is, a group of 12, but ideally 8, although they can be used in larger groups. They are also effective with just two people, especially if one is a Christian and can speak English. Everyone in the group is encouraged to participate verbally, and they usually enjoy this. Much community is built through EEBS small groups. However, sometimes there is an individual who is too shy, or who lacks confidence to speak in the group. They still learn, although at a much slower pace. Sometimes such a person will speak in pair or triplet discussions, and sometimes do end up speaking to the whole group.
4. EEBS include lots of pair or triplet discussion. This ensures everyone gets to have plenty of time to process and practice their English. As much as possible, get students from different countries and first languages to be part of pairs and triplets. This encourages speaking in English. Hearing English spoken in different accents develops listening skills, and they learn about one another's culture. After pair or triplet work, many EEBS include sharing to the whole group. This is good repetition and practice for all.
5. Successful EEBS are about relationships. As much as you can, build relationships with the students, and help them build relationships with each other. This shows them that you care about them as individuals. In turn, this helps break down barriers which otherwise might prevent them from asking important questions, including spiritual questions. Having a good relationship with students is motivational for the students. As a matter of fact, research has concluded that after the students' own internal motivations, having a good relationship with the teacher is the second most important motivating factor for ESL students. With this in mind, it is recommended that whenever you lead EEBS, that you have morning tea or afternoon tea or a meal immediately before or after studies. This also gives students a time together to informally practice their English. Having picnics and outings with students is a good activity that students love to attend, and it also gives you personal time with students to further build relationships, and allows for spontaneous spiritual conversations. From my own experience, I have found that almost always when going on social outings with students this has led to spiritual conversations.
6. Go slowly. Do not move on to the next question until the participants understand each section. Give students plenty of time to answer questions. It takes lots of time to understand questions and think them through in a second language. In my experience, it is mostly intermediate and

advanced ESL students that come to EEBS. However, sometimes less advanced students come. For the sake of the majority, and to finish on time, I generally don't slow the whole lesson down for the beginners. They are usually able to learn something even if they can't learn and keep up with the whole class and lesson. If the whole class is slowed down for a few beginners, then the more advanced students may get bored and leave.

7. Use short sentences and simple English when speaking to EEBS students. Long sentences and big words are like fog, and only complicate things. As you gain experience and know your students, you will be able to tailor your words and sentences to suit. Perhaps one of the greatest mistakes of learner English teachers is not slowing down enough, and not using simple sentences and words.
8. Avoid using Australian expressions and slang. However, sometimes intentionally introduce Australian expressions and slang! These are like big words and difficult for ESL students to follow, and so add to the fog of language learning. However, students do love to learn some slang and Aussie expressions! So, introducing some from time to time adds to the fun for the students.
9. Students making mistakes is good! Encourage students to try, even if they make mistakes. It's like learning to drive a car—you need to make mistakes in order to learn. Personally, I am not the best at spelling. When I write a new word on the whiteboard, if I am unsure whether or not the spelling is correct, I ask the students to check their dictionaries. I usually make a joke of this, which the students always appreciate. This in turn helps them to try, even if they make mistakes.
10. Get the students to do most of the talking—aim for student talk 75% or 80% of the time. As much as possible, make the studies learner-centred and not teacher-centred. Students learn English and the Bible best by having to think and process things for themselves, not by being told by the teacher. Get the students to do the reading including the introductions, most questions, and the Bible passages. Occasionally, and in special situations, it is good for the teacher to read these, so that learners hear the correct English pronunciation. When students ask questions, first see if other students can answer them before you explain the answers. Use extra open questions and/or hints to help the students think about the questions rather than giving the answers yourself. Of course, sometimes you do have to provide the answer if you can't get the students to come up with it themselves, or if you are running out of time. Often at the end of the study it is necessary to become more teacher-centred as the teacher summarises, applies, and gently persuades about the message of the Bible passage.
11. Whiteboards are a great aid to learning English. Write any new words on the white board. Lower case printing is preferred. When students have to generate lists and ideas, write these up on white board. You and the students can refer to what is written on the board as the study continues. They will often make notes or copy from the whiteboard.
12. All kinds of visual aids can be helpful. If you have any talent at simple drawing, it is often helpful to do a simple sketch drawing of a new word rather than try and explain it. For example, it is easy to explain the meaning of propeller simply by sketching it on the bottom of a boat. Bringing actual objects or photos along to show what a word means is also very helpful.

13. Prime the pump! With warm up discussions give your own answer to the whole class before students share their own experiences. Hearing your answer helps students understand the question. Students also get to hear authentic English, and your personal stories are interesting to them, and help them to bond with you.
14. When filling in Biblical background details for a passage, simplify these as much as possible. Give only essential information, or very interesting information. Too much background detail just adds fog and makes it harder for ESL students to absorb and understand. In general, don't give alternative interpretations to Bible passages. This is too confusing for students.
15. Encourage and complement students as much as possible—especially when they come up with some advanced English words or understanding, read a passage, or say something in a clear way. Thank them for trying even if they don't get it right.
16. Make classes fun. Use as much humour as you can do naturally. Use humour that is easily understood by the students, or easily explained to them. One of my most serious ministries as a pastor was also my most fun ministry. Of course, that was EEBS.
17. Encourage students to ask questions. This gives you or fellow students the opportunity to explain things that aren't properly understood. Often, the question one student asks is useful for the whole class, and particularly for students who don't like asking questions for fear of embarrassment. Having said that, teachers need to be careful that they don't spend too much time answering questions that aren't really important and/or valuable to the whole class. One way of answering questions that aren't important for everyone is to give a brief answer in the class, and to tell the student asking the question that you will talk to them some more about their question after the class.
18. Remember the aim of the studies. This is twofold, first, to help the students learn and practice English, and second to learn about Jesus and the Bible in order that they might believe and follow him. Always keep this aim in mind. Always remember that these are two equal aims even though one has much more life changing significance. Leaders need to be just as concerned about the teaching English side as the Bible study side. Students will quickly see a lack of integrity if you don't major on both.
19. Always keep in mind always that many students know little or nothing about Jesus and the Bible when they first come along. Do not use Christian jargon. That just adds fog and another language to learn as well as English. Always be sure that students understand the meaning of basic words like "sin"—things that we do or don't do that offend God, and "disciple"—a follower of Jesus. Until you know your students, assume that your students know nothing about Jesus and the Bible. Don't try and evangelise students in one lesson! Generally, you need to take a longer-term missionary process approach to this, so that over time the students gradually build up an understanding of Jesus and the gospel. Remember everything about Jesus, his life, his example, his teaching, his death, and resurrection is gospel. This is why the Gospels are called Gospels! Of course, the centre of the gospel is Jesus' death and resurrection. The more students understand about Jesus, the cross and resurrection, the more questions they ask. Often, it is in the answering of their questions that you can be a little more persuasive and challenging.

20. Introduce Jesus the person first when it comes to the order of the studies. Usually, it is best to start each term with studies that introduce Jesus the person. This is especially important if you have new students. By Jesus the person, I mean stories about Jesus' compassion and care for people, and his supernatural power. From then, go on to Jesus' teaching on topics like love for God and neighbour, great leaders being servants, foot washing, forgiveness, and loving enemies. And from there, go on to EEBS about believing in Jesus and being a follower of Jesus.

While Luke's Gospel starts with his comments about the truthfulness of the Jesus event, I have found that this is not generally interesting for first timers to EEBS. I usually do at least 6 studies (including ones on Jesus' miracles and compassion) before doing the study from Luke 1 on the truthfulness of the Jesus' stories in the Gospels. Sometimes when lots of students are asking about Jesus miracles, I will introduce this study to them, whatever studies we are doing. Getting to know the students helps with the timing of this. Christmas and Easter are obviously very topical at Christmas and Easter times. Students always find these very interesting, especially those who know very little of the real story. Taringa Baptist often do these out of season as we have EEBS on two different days and a fairly high turnover of students with some regulars returning to home countries over Christmas and Easter.

21. Don't pray aloud during classes, unless your topic is prayer. For many students coming to a Bible study is a very strange and threatening thing. For some, it takes a lot of courage just to come along! We are trying to teach them about Jesus. Until they are ready, prayer might be too strange for them, and prevent them from hearing about Jesus.
22. Christian ESL students can be very helpful in recruiting non-Christian students to studies (but enthusiastic non-Christian students can also be very helpful in this). EEBS experienced Christian students are often very helpful in discussion and sharing appropriately. However, sometimes ESL Christians doing studies with non-Christians can present problems. Some examples are: they can try and convince the non-Christians in pushy ways, or indicate that they can't believe non-Christians don't just believe. Sometimes they can want to do all the talking and shortcut questions needed to be answered by other students for themselves. Obviously, these students need to be controlled, and great wisdom is needed for this. It is often helpful to talk to such students after the study and explain things to them.
23. Creativity is great and helps the students to get involved and have fun, but in the end, creativity is not the most important thing. Helping students believe in Jesus and helping students learn English are the most important things. Creativity should never be more important than substance, especially understanding and applying the spiritual message of the passage.
24. Generally, the whole Bible passage is best read out to the class by one student only, or if a longer passage, then two students. When students take turns to read a few verses each, this means that what happens is no student can actually follow the reading because they are overly concerned about the verses that they have to read, and having different readers disrupts the flow and fragments the passage. Also, there is a real sense of fulfillment when a student reads a complete passage or story by themselves. Some passages with lots of dialogue and many speakers are ideal for group reading. In these passages, one student can play the part of the narrator, and other students can read the words of different characters. Having said all that, sometimes it is good for the leader to read the passage, so that the students get to hear good English pronunciation

25. When teaching about Jesus and the Bible, remember five things the Bible says about telling others about Jesus:

“Be as wise as snakes and as harmless as doves” (Matthew 10:16).

“Always be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks you about the hope you have. Be ready to give the reason for it. But do it gently and with respect” (1 Peter 3:15–16).

“Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone” (Colossians 4:6).

I take it that grace is the seasoning of salt. Many English learners come from other faiths, or no faith background, so great respect, gentleness, much wisdom and grace is needed here! Remember Jesus’ words: “Treat others as you would like to be treated”. When this is done, relationships can be built and students will return to hear more of Jesus and the gospel.

26. The miraculous side of the Christian faith is a huge barrier to faith for many, especially Asian students and young people. When giving answers about this, large amounts of the above is necessary, especially showing respect for their difficulty in believing the miraculous. It is helpful to remember that while there is good evidence for the stories of Jesus and the resurrection, there is no definitive proof. Faith is faith. If there was proof, faith would not be needed. Even if people believe the miraculous side of the stories about Jesus, they still need to believe in the spiritual sense of what he taught, and to follow him. This is evident from Jesus’ statement to Thomas, “Thomas, do you have faith because you have seen me? The people who have faith in me without seeing me are the ones who are really blessed!” (John 20:29). I have found a personal answer here is highly significant to students. I usually say something like, “Yes, it is hard for many people to believe such and such about Jesus, especially as we live in such a scientific time. Let me tell you what helps me to believe...”. Of course, this is in line with 1 Peter 3:15: “Always be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks you about the hope you have”.
27. Why are there so many different Christian denominations and what is the difference between them? These are the next most commonly asked questions asked by EEBS students. This is very confusing to them. Once again wisdom, respect, and gracious answers are best, along with a lot of over-simplification. Sometimes there may be Catholic, Asian, and Muslim students in the same group with Christians who also don’t know the answers. Most importantly, I do not believe it is helpful to focus on the differences, but to major on the big things we have in common in Jesus such as: belief that Jesus is God’s son who lived among us, had great compassion for people, and helped them, often miraculously including healing the sick. That Jesus died and rose again to forgive people from the things we do that offend God, that he taught people to love God and love your neighbour, to love and do good to our enemies, and so forth. If it comes to answering questions relating to Catholics and Protestants, I talk about Catholics thinking that being accepted by God means faith plus other things, and Protestants considering the Bible to say faith only in Jesus. Remember that there are plenty of EEBS that make this clear!
28. At the conclusion of each study, after the students have discovered and understood all they can on their own, then the leader can summarise what has been learned, and even do some gentle persuasive talking about the spiritual lesson. Ask the students whether there are any questions about the spiritual meaning, and tactfully encourage them to think about and apply whatever spiritual lesson has been learned. It is important that you teach more than the simple the facts of the story. The facts of the story are mere intellectual knowledge. Without

some personal reflection and application, these alone won't lead to belief in Jesus. In the end, the spiritual aim of the studies is very much the same as John's aim in writing his gospel: "These have been written in order that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through faith in him you may have life" (John 20:31).

29. When students come to the point of believing and following Jesus, they will sometimes talk about this during the actual discussion in the small group. Of course, this is wonderful as the whole class listens in. At this stage, I am very careful not to ask any questions that might be too personal or embarrass them. I usually ask such students if they wish to talk more after the class. Sometimes, without saying anything in the group, students will ask me can they talk to me after the class, and I just about always allow time afterwards for this. Other times, I make an offer to students suggesting something like, "If you would like to have a talk about becoming a Christian, or want to know more about this, please have a chat to me after the class". When a student becomes a Christian, I always offer further personal discipling, or seek to arrange this for them. I don't offer invitations to speak to me about becoming a Christian except when that is the topic of a study, or I sense the Spirit is working in a student's life and they want to do this. Sometimes students have become Christians through EEBS and I have only found out months later! Caution! When speaking one-on-one to students after class, please do this in an open public area. This offers all kinds of protections for both teacher and student.
30. When ESL students become Christians, they already have a good understanding of Jesus the person, his example, and his teaching (often more than some who have been brought up in the church), and are already disciplined at some level. This is one of the wonderful things that I have discovered about EEBS.

Finally, may you enjoy teaching ESL Students through EEBS as much as I have, and may you experience the joy of helping many of them believe in Jesus and follow him. God is with you in this cross cultural and multicultural service. He will bless you, and many through you, as you work with English learners and lead EEBS.

Bruce Pringle

1. *Christmas Series 1 ~ Announcement of Jesus' Birth to Joseph (Matthew 1:18–25)*

Introduction:

The Christmas story begins in the New Testament, with an announcement by a messenger from God, called an angel. The angel brings a message to Joseph, a carpenter, who is engaged to marry a young woman named Mary. The angel tells Joseph that Mary is expecting a supernatural baby. Joseph is not the natural father of this baby. This baby would be Jesus.

Warm up:

Divide into pairs, and talk with your partner about how people become engaged to be married in your country. Do people become formally engaged? Is there a formal period of engagement? If so, how long is it? How much are the parents involved? What happens before and leading up to the marriage?

.....

.....

Background to the story:

In Jewish culture at the time of the birth of Jesus, engagement was a legally binding contract for a woman and a man to be married. The parents would choose the marriage partners for their children. The engaged couple would not have sex together until they were married. In first century Jewish society it was a shameful thing for this contract to be broken, or for an engaged couple to have sex together before marriage. Breaking an engagement was a bit like getting a divorce in Australian culture.

1. Some important words in the story:

Christ: This is a Greek word meaning king. The Jewish word for Christ is Messiah. Hundreds of years before Jesus was born, Jewish prophets in the Old Testament (the first part of the Bible), foretold of a special supernatural king who would be sent from God to help the Jewish people, and all people. He would be a king of peace and love who would care for poor people

Holy Spirit: Another name for God

Angel: A supernatural messenger from God

Descendant: We are descendants of our ancestors, that is our parents, grandparents, great grandparents and so on

David: A famous king in the first part of the Bible (Old Testament). This king was considered very close to God, and really cared for his people, unlike many other Jewish kings

Conceived: Means to become pregnant, and it happens nine months before the actual birth

Prophet: Someone sent by God to speak God's message. They sometimes told of things which would happen in the future

Pregnant: An adjective describing a woman or animal carrying an unborn baby inside her body

Virgin: A person who has not had sex with another person

Save: Means to rescue

Sins: These are the things that people do which offend or upset God

2. Read the story in *Matthew 1:18–25*.

3. Read the story again by yourself. Were there any English words or phrases that you did not understand?

.....

4. List the characters in the story, and their relationship is to one another. Share your list with your partner, and tell them the relationship between the characters.

.....
.....
.....

5. What supernatural things happen in the story? Read verses 18b, 20, 21 and 22 and make a list.

.....
.....
.....

6. Take turns, and tell the class one supernatural thing that happened in the story. Please use sentences. We will write the answers on the whiteboard.

.....
.....
.....

7. What does the story tell us about who Jesus is and what he will do? Read verses 18a, 18b, 20b, 21, 23.

.....
.....
.....

8. Retell the story using your own English words.

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.....
.....

9. What did you think and feel as you read this story? Take turns to share with your partner about this.

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2. *Christmas Series 2* ~ Announcement of Jesus' Birth to Mary (Luke 1:26–38)

Introduction:

Mary was Jesus' mother. She was engaged to marry Joseph. At this time, she had never had sex with any man, not even Joseph. She had a very big surprise! An angel (a supernatural messenger from God) suddenly appeared to her. The angel told her that she was going to have a baby, and that this baby would be God's son, Jesus.

Warm Up:

Divide into pairs, and tell your partner about a big surprise that happened to you.

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1. Some important words in the story:

Pregnancy: The physical condition of a woman carrying a baby inside her body. Pregnant is the adjective

Angel: A supernatural messenger from God. In the Bible it was very rare for angels to appear to people. Usually when angels appeared to people it meant that God was doing something very special. No one really knows what angels look like. Artists have often pictured them like humans with wings

Ancestor: Our ancestors are our mothers, fathers, grandfathers, grandmothers and so on

David: He was the most famous king in the first part of the Bible (called the Old Testament). David had a close friendship with God and cared for his people. Jewish prophets (human messengers from God) said that one day God would send a supernatural king into the world. This king would be the Messiah or Christ. He would be a descendant of King David. The angel said to Mary that her son would be God's special king!

Descendant: We are descendants of our parents, grandfathers, grandmothers and so on

Kingdom: The people and/or area which a king controls or rules over

Virgin: A person who has never had sex

Holy: Means having the same character as God

Gracious: Means kind and loving

Jesus: This name means "God saves", and was a very common Jewish name for men

The Most High: A name for God which refers to him being the most powerful God

Reign: Kings reign or rule over their kingdoms

Holy Spirit: Another name for God

Nazareth: A small farming town in Galilee, in Israel which was hardly known and in an area not well respected

2. Read the story in *Luke 1:26–38*.

3. Were there any English words or phrases that you did not understand?

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4. Make a list of all the things that you learn about Mary from the story. After you have made your list, share it with your partner.

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5. What do you think about Mary? What kind of person was she? Tell your partner what you think.

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6. Make a list of all the things that the angel tells us about Mary's future child, Jesus. Share your list with your partner.

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7. Think about the things that the angel said about Jesus. For you, what are the two most interesting things, and why are these interesting for you? Share and discuss with you partner.

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3. *Christmas Series 3 ~ Jesus' Birth in Bethlehem: Part A (Luke 2:1–7)*

Introduction:

Jesus was born in a stable (animal house) or a cave where animals lived. This was not Mary and Joseph's preferred place to live and have a baby. It must have been very difficult for them.

Warm up:

Have you ever had to sleep or stay in a difficult place, when you would have preferred to sleep or stay in a more comfortable place? Divide into pairs and share your story with your partner.

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1. Some important words in the story:

Census: A government count of people. The Roman government were the rulers of Israel. The Jews, the people living in Israel, had to pay taxes to the Romans. The census was to make sure that everyone's name was recorded or put on a list, so that everyone paid their taxes

Emperor: A name for a king who rules over many countries

Empire: The countries and people that an emperor rules or has power over

Register: To add names to an official list of names, on this occasion the list of names was part of the census

Strips: These are long narrow pieces of cloth that were put around baby Jesus

Wrapped: Putting cloth, or paper, or rope, or anything, around something or someone. In the story, strips of cloth are wrapped around baby Jesus

Manger: An animal feeding container. This would hold animal food, such as hay for sheep, or cattle. In our story, we read that baby Jesus' bed was a manger

Inn: Similar to a hotel or motel today, although inns in Bethlehem would have been very small. Probably they were private houses where people could stay and have meals

2. Read the story in *Luke 2:1–7*.

3. Were there any words or phrases that you did not understand?

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4. Can you work out from the story why Jesus ended up being born in a stable or cave? Discuss with your partner.

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5. What three things did you find most interesting about this part of the story of Jesus' birth? Share with your partner.

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6. Jesus was born in a stable not a palace. He was born to an ordinary couple who were poor, not a rich king and queen. Can you think of any reasons why God had his son born in such humble and poor circumstances? Discuss with your partner.

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7. Take turns to tell today's story to your partner. Use your memory, and your own English words, and try not to look at the Bible (but do this if you need to).

4. Christmas Series 4 ~ Jesus' Birth in Bethlehem: Part B (Luke 2:8–20)

Introduction:

Christmas is a Good News Story. In Luke's version of the story that we will study today, God's angel said he had "good news...which will bring great joy to all the people".

Warm up:

What is the best personal good news that you have heard or experienced this year? Divide into pairs and share with your partner.

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1. Some important words in the story:

Shepherds: The name for people who cared for sheep. They would often stay out in the open fields all night with the sheep. They were usually poor and not well respected

Flocks: Groups of sheep

Angel: A supernatural messenger from God

Glory: Amazing beauty or bright shining

David's town: This was where the most famous Jewish king, called David, was born

Saviour: Someone who rescues or saves people when they are in trouble or in danger. The name, Jesus, means "God saves"

Sins: These are the things that people do which offend or upset God. As judge of the world God has to punish the bad things which people do. But God loves people, and wants to save people from this punishment and have them live in a close friendship with him. As a saviour, Jesus came to save or rescue people from their sins

Christ (or Messiah): The special king that God said he would send into the world. He would be a supernatural king who would care for people, especially the poor and the sick. His kingdom would not be about armies and geography, but where Jesus was king in people's lives. His kingdom would be a kingdom of love and peace

Lord: The name used for God in the Old Testament. Here the angel said that Jesus is the Lord or God. Jesus is a supernatural baby. He is God the Son and a human

Wrapped: Putting cloth, or paper, or rope, or anything, around something or someone. In the story, strips of cloth are wrapped around baby Jesus

Strips: long narrow pieces of cloth, or other kinds of material

Manger: An animal feeding container. This would hold animal food, such as hay for sheep or cattle. In our story, we read that baby Jesus' bed was a manger

2. Read the story in *Luke 2:8–20*.

3. Were there any words or phrases that you did not understand?

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4. Divide into pairs and take turns telling the story to your partner.

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5. What did the angels do after telling the good news about Jesus (see verse 13)?

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6. Imagine how it might have felt if you were a shepherd, and an angel appeared to you telling such good news, and then a huge crowd of angels starting singing praise to God. Remember that it was very, very rare for people to see angels. Discuss with your partner.

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7. What did the shepherds feel, say, and do, when they heard the good news (see verses 16 and 20)? Remember that the shepherds were not considered very respectable, and were poor. How do you think that they felt when God honoured them with a visit from angels who invited them to be among the first to see the new born king or Messiah? Take turns in discussing this with a partner.

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8. What did Mary feel, say, and do, when she heard the good news (see verse 19)? Discuss this with your partner.

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9. Using your own English words, give a short description of the meaning of the good news of Jesus' birth.

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The angel announced to the shepherds that Jesus' birth was "good news which would bring great joy to all the people". The good news was that Jesus, God's son, the Messiah (Christ) and Saviour, was born. God wants all people everywhere to think about the good news and find great joy. The best Christmas gift that God offers everyone is to save us, and give us his friendship. Like all gifts, this gift needs to be received to be enjoyed. People can do this by believing and worshipping Jesus as God the Son, by believing in Jesus as their own saviour, particularly believing that he died on the cross to save you from your sins (the things that you do that offend God), and to give you friendship with God now in this life and forever after in heaven. Jesus wants all people everywhere to make him king or leader of their lives and to join his kingdom of peace and love.

5. *Christmas Series 5 ~ The Wise Men (or Magi) Visit Baby Jesus (Matthew 2:1–12)*

Introduction:

The story of the wise men is a story about travelling a long distance, probably thousands of kilometres, to visit someone special. That someone special was baby Jesus.

Warm up:

Divide into pairs, and tell your partner a story about when you travelled a long distance to visit someone special.

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1. Some important words in story:

Bethlehem in Judea: The small town where Jesus was born

Herod: This man called himself the king of the Jews, but he ruled on behalf of the Romans. Historians tell us that he was a very cruel king who killed members of his family, and others who he thought might want to be king. The Bible tells us that he tried to kill Jesus by killing all the baby boys in Bethlehem. However, Jesus and his family escaped, because God told them to leave Bethlehem and go to Egypt

Men who studied the stars: These men are sometimes called wise men, or kings, or Magi. The Bible does not say how many Magi there were. However, because they gave three different types of gifts, people have thought that there were three men. In ancient culture, many people thought that wisdom was obtained by studying the stars. In modern English, this is called astrology. The wise men would have known what the Jewish prophets had said about the coming of the Messiah, God's supernatural king

His star: The star that led the Magi to Jesus. What the Magi thought was a star may have been a supernatural light in the sky which looked like a star. God sent the supernatural light or star to guide the wise men to Jesus

Chief priests and the teachers of the law: These were Jewish religious leaders

Messiah (or Christ): The special king that the Old Testament prophets said God would send into the world. He would be a supernatural king of peace who would really care for people, especially the poor and the sick. His kingdom would not be about armies and geography, but where Jesus was leader or king in people's lives. His kingdom would be a kingdom of love, peace, compassion, and fairness

What the prophet wrote: This refers to the prophet Micah, whose message from God was recorded in the Old Testament about 800 years before Jesus was born. God's human messenger, Micah, wrote that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem

Gold, frankincense, and myrrh: Were the kinds of expensive gifts usually only given by rich people to other rich people like kings. Frankincense was a perfume, myrrh was a perfume used to help preserve dead bodies for burial and stop any bad smell

2. Read the story in *Matthew 2:1–12*.

3. Were there any English words or phrases that you did not understand?

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4. Take turns telling your partner the story using your own English words.

5. What did the religious leaders think and do on hearing that the Messiah was born? What did they know about Jesus, and how did they feel about Jesus (see verses 4-6)? Discuss with your partner.

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6. What did Herod think and do on hearing about the birth of the Messiah? How did he feel about Jesus? Read verses 7 and 8, and remember what we learned about Herod earlier in our study. Discuss with your partner.

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7. What did the wise men think and do when they: saw Jesus' star, found Jesus and saw Jesus? How did they feel about Jesus (see verses 2, 8-11)? Discuss with your partner.

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8. The wise men did not know much about Jesus except that they believed that he was God's supernatural king of peace and love, so they searched for him. They were men who searched for God. Even though they searched for God in the most unlikely place, that is, by studying the stars, God rewarded their search and sent his star to help them find his son, Jesus. The religious leaders who knew much more about the coming of Messiah, including where he would be born, did not even bother to go and see Jesus. Herod wanted to kill Jesus because he felt threatened by Jesus.

What do you think is the message of the story for people today? Discuss this with your partner.

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God wants all people who don't have a friendship or personal relationship with him to find him, to worship him, to have a personal friendship with him, to go to heaven when they die, and to follow Jesus, and join the Messiah's kingdom of peace and love. This is what the first Christmas is all about, and why he sent his son Jesus into the world. He wants people to be like the wise men, not like the religious leaders who knew all about the Messiah but failed to worship him and have a relationship with him. The way to have a friendship with God is to believe in Jesus. Jesus said, "God loved the people of the world so much that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him will not die but have eternal life".

6. Jesus Teaches About Prayer (Matthew 6:7–13, Matthew 7:7–11)

Introduction:

Jesus taught many things about God. Particularly, he taught that God was like a kind father to those who trust him. On one occasion, he said that, “Unless you become like little children, you cannot enter the kingdom of God”. By that he meant that God accepts us into his special family when we trust him, like little children trust their parents. Acceptance into God’s family is not something we need to work for, because it is God’s free gift to all who have faith in God and his son, Jesus. One of the first Christian leaders, named Paul, wrote, “For it is by God’s kindness that you have been saved or accepted by God, through faith. It is not the result of your own efforts, but God’s gift”. Christians think about God as being like a good father who wants to do good things for them. Understanding and knowing God as a kind loving father is the key to understanding what Jesus taught about prayer, and about Christian prayer in general.

Warm up:

Jesus taught that prayer was like a child asking help from a good and loving father. To get us started we need to think about good fathers. Make a list of things good fathers do for their children. We will write this on the whiteboard.

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1. Some important words in the story:

Pagans: People who believe in many gods

Your kingdom: Not a geographic kingdom like that belonging to a normal human king, but one where God is king or leader in a person’s life

Evil one: This refers to Satan, also called the Devil, who is the leader of evil spirits and God’s enemy. Satan tries to get people to do bad things

2. Read the story in Matthew 6:7–13.

3. Were there any English words or phrases that you did not understand?

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4. The pagans believed in many gods. They thought that their gods did not care for people, but that if you prayed hard enough, and used many and all kinds of sounds and words, then you might get the gods’ attention, and then they might listen to your prayers. Jesus said that his followers should not pray like pagans. What reason did he give for this (verse 8)?

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5. Who is this prayer addressed to (verse 9)?

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6. The prayer that Jesus taught his disciples had two different foci. Who and what is the focus of the prayer in verses 9 and 10?

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7. Who is the focus of verses 12–14?

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8. Using your own English words, explain the three things Jesus taught that his disciples (followers) should pray to God for, for themselves (verses 12-14)?

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9. Read the story in Matthew 7:7–11.

10. Were there any English words or phrases that you did not understand?

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11. What do you think are Jesus' main points in this passage? There are at least two main points.

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12. Are there any restrictions on what people who trust in God as a loving father can ask him in prayer?

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God wants all people to have a special relationship with him, and to know him as their own loving Father in heaven. That is why Jesus came into the world, died on the cross, and came alive from being dead. The way to have this relationship with God is to believe in Jesus. Jesus said, "For God loved the world so much, that he gave his only son, that whoever believes (has faith and trust) in him will not die, but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Eternal life is about having a personal relationship with God in this life, and knowing him as Father, and going to live forever with God in heaven in the next life.

7. Jesus Teaches About Money (Matthew 6:19–24)

Introduction:

Money is important to all of us. We can't live without it! Jesus taught a lot about money because he considered it to be a very important subject. Jesus never said it was wrong to be rich. As a matter of fact, during his three years of public service he was financially supported by some rich women who were his followers. Jesus particularly taught that people should have the right attitude towards money.

Warm up:

To get us thinking about money, make a list of good things that you can do with money, and make a list of things that money can't buy.

Good things that you can do with money:

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Good things that you can't buy with money:

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Background to the story:

Jesus got his listeners to think about their own attitude toward money by getting them to think about three statements to do with a person's view of money. Jesus' first statement about money is to do with the importance of money in a person's life. He said in effect, "Don't put all your time and energy into making money and getting rich just for the sake of being rich, you could lose it all anyway. It is much better to put your time and energy into doing good things for others, and then God will reward you with spiritual riches in heaven".

1. Some important words in the story:

Riches: A plural noun meaning wealth, property, money, gold and precious stones, very good clothing, and even very large supplies of food. Jesus also used the term in the spiritual sense as well. He said in effect it is much better to be spiritually rich than materially rich

Where moth and rust destroy, and robbers break in and steal: Jesus lived in the first century in Palestine [Israel]. There were no banks in those days, so people had to store their riches in various safe places. Often money, and gold, and precious stones, were buried in secret places in the ground, and expensive cloths and large supplies of food were kept in special store houses or rooms. Clothing stored in these places could be ruined by moths (insects). Food stored could be destroyed by rust, which included bacteria. All forms of riches could be stolen by robbers

Heart: The centre of who a person is, particularly to do with a person's inmost thoughts, feelings and emotions

2. Read the story in *Matthew 6:19–21*.

3. In verse 19b, Jesus was saying that there is no real certainty or security in wealth, because it can be lost, destroyed, or stolen. This was true in the first century; do you think that this true today? Discuss with your partner.

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4. In verse 20, Jesus was saying that it is better to store up spiritual riches in heaven, by putting your time and energy into doing good things, than trying to get rich. What do you think of this statement? Is it true?

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5. Jesus finished these statements with a saying that has become famous, “Your heart will always be where your riches are”. Think about material riches contrasted with spiritual riches. What do you think that he meant by this? Do you think what he said in this statement is true?

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6. In Jesus’ second statement about riches he used a first century saying, “The eyes are like the lamp of the body”. When he talked about eyes, he was referring to a person’s focus in life, and a person’s eyes being like a lamp shining light (good or bad) into a person’s life. When a person’s focus is good, then good light comes into a person’s life, and if a person’s focus is on the wrong things, then a person will be in darkness. Light is good and darkness is bad. Jesus was saying that if you focus on the wrong things in life, particularly trying to get materially rich instead of doing good things for other people, then that is darkness and bad. Read Jesus’ original words in *Matthew 6:22–23*.

7. Discuss Jesus’ statement in verse 23, “If the light in you is darkness, how terribly dark it will be!” Or putting this in a modern way, “If your major focus in life is all about making money, and getting rich just for the sake of being rich, then this a very dark or bad thing”.

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8. In Jesus’ third and final statement about riches he talked about God and money being like rival masters (owners and bosses) and rival gods. He said that, “A person cannot be a slave of two masters”. This was impossible as a slave was only ever owned by one person. He said that if this were possible, then the person’s loyalty would be to one or the other master. He used a figure of speech called a hyperbole to say this. Hyperbole is about exaggerating something to make a point. Finally, Jesus said that you have to choose which God and master you will serve, either the god of money (riches), or the real God in heaven. Read Jesus’ words in *Matthew 6:24*.

9. What do you think about Jesus’ statements that money or riches can become like a master (an owner or boss) of our lives and like a god in our lives?

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10. If the group is big enough, break into pairs, and take turns giving a summary to your partner of what Jesus taught about money from today’s study.

8. Jesus Teaches About Worry (Matthew 6:25–34)

Introduction:

Our story today is about Jesus teaching his followers not to worry, but rather to trust God. When Jesus talked about worry, he particularly meant excessive worry. In modern English, some people use the word “worry” when they mean “concern”, although a dictionary definition says that “worry” is about “having a troubled state of mind, or anxiety”.

Warm up:

Divide into pairs, and discuss with your partner: What things or issues do people excessively worry about the most in your culture? If you are brave enough, are there any things that you sometimes worry about in an excessive way?

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1. Some important words in the story:

Your Father: Jesus’ followers thought of God as a loving and caring father

King Solomon: He was a famous, rich and powerful king of Israel who wore beautiful clothes

Kingdom of God: This has to do with making Jesus the king of your life, and practicing his teaching about loving and serving others, forgiving others, having compassion for the poor and people in need, and so on

2. Read the story in *Matthew 6:25–34*.

3. Were there any English words or phrases that you did not understand?

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4. When Jesus told his followers not to worry, he gave a number of negative and positive reasons why his followers should not worry. Use your own English words, and make a list of the negative reasons that Jesus gave, telling why excessive worry is not good, and a list of the positive reasons why his followers do not need to excessively worry.

Negative reasons

A. verse 27.....

B. verse 34.....

Positive reasons

A. verse 26.....

B. verses 28–30.....

C. verse 32b.....

5. Share your findings with your partner, and then share with the class.

6. Jesus gave his followers a very active way to help overcome excessive worry. This is to do with his followers having the right focus in their minds, and in the things they did. What is this focus that Jesus said his followers should have (verse 33)?

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7. What is Jesus' special promise to his followers who focus on doing what Jesus taught (verse 33b)?

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8. In another part of the New Testament, Paul, one of the first Christian leaders, wrote to Christians at the town of Philippi who were going through hard times. Read *Philippians 4:6–9*.

⁶ Don't worry about anything, but in all your prayers ask God for what you need, always asking him with a thankful heart. ⁷ And God's peace, which is far beyond human understanding, will keep your hearts and minds safe in union with Christ Jesus. ⁸ In conclusion, my friends, fill your minds with those things that are good and that deserve praise: things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and honourable. ⁹ Put into practice what you learned and received from me, both from my words and from my actions. And the God who gives us peace will be with you.

9. Were there any English words or phrases that you did not understand?

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10. What three things does Paul recommend to help deal with worry? Talk about these with your partner.

Verse 6.....

Verse 8.....

Verse 9.....

11. What two things does Paul promise for people who do these things (verses 7 and 9)?

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12. Discuss with your partner, and then share with the class your thoughts about Jesus' teaching on worry.

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9. Jesus' Compassion on the Crowd (Matthew 9:35–36; 10:1, 5–8)

Introduction:

Our Bible story today is about Jesus' compassion or pity for people, and his supernatural power, which he always used to help people. Compassion or pity are similar and both mean feeling strong emotions for people who are in trouble or in pain, and feeling at least some of the pain that people in trouble feel. Whenever Jesus felt compassion or pity for people, he always did something to help them.

Warm up:

If you were given \$100,000 and told that you had to give it all away, but not to any of your family members, who would you give the money to and why? Divide into pairs, and share your answer with your partner.

1. Some important words in the story:

Synagogue: A building where the Jews went for worship, similar to a church building

The kingdom, or kingdom of heaven: Jesus said that he was the supernatural king whom God's prophets said God would send into the world. This king would start a kingdom where people would make Jesus, God's son, the king or ruler of their lives, and would practice his teaching to love, care for and help others

Like sheep without a shepherd: Shepherds loved, cared for, and looked after their sheep. In the Bible, a common metaphor for people was that they were "sheep" who needed a "shepherd", that is, a caring leader to look after them. The leaders of Israel, both Jews and Romans, neither loved nor cared for their people, and did nothing to help them, so the people were like sheep without a shepherd

Disciples: Followers of Jesus. Jesus had many disciples, both men and women. However, he had twelve disciples who spent all their time with him, and followed him everywhere for about three years

Authority: Means power

Evil spirits or demons: Supernatural beings that caused all kinds of trouble for some people, and opposed all the good things that Jesus did and taught

Dreaded: Means feared or were afraid

2. Read the story in *Matthew 9:35–36; 10:1, 5–8*.

3. Were there any English words or phrases that you did not understand?

4. What caused Jesus to have pity or compassion for the crowds? (Read chapter 9 verses 35 and 36, and chapter 10 verses 7 and 8). Divide into pairs and discuss with your partner.

5. In what ways might people today be similar to the people that Jesus had compassion for?
Discuss with your partner.

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6. What are some common needs of people in the world today that should cause caring people to have compassion for them? Write a list.

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7. What did Jesus' compassion for the crowds cause him to do (see chapter 10 verses 1, 5, 7, and 8)?

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Summary:

Jesus never had any money to help others, but he had supernatural power which he always used to help and to heal people. In today's story, we saw that he gave his first twelve disciples supernatural power to cure sick people and help people in need. Jesus is also the leader of Christians, his twenty-first century followers [disciples]. Like his followers in the first century, their aim is to follow Jesus' example and practice his teaching.

8. With your partner make a list of lessons can we learn from Jesus' example in today's story.

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10. What Jesus Taught About Forgiveness (Matthew 18:21–35)

Introduction:

Our story today is about Jesus' teaching on forgiveness, and a story or parable he told about forgiveness.

Warm up:

Divide into pairs and discuss with your partner:

a) Has any person ever forgiven you for something that you did which hurt or insulted them? How did it feel when they did so?

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b) Have you ever forgiven another person for something they did that hurt or insulted you? How did that feel, and how did it affect your relationship with the other person?

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Background to the story:

Our Bible story today has two parts. The first part is about Peter, one of Jesus' followers who asked Jesus how often he should forgive someone. The second part is a story or parable that Jesus told to answer Peter's question. (Parables were everyday stories that Jesus made up, and told which had a special meaning or lesson).

1. Some important words in the story:

Peter: A disciple or follower of Jesus

Sinning against me: Means doing bad things that are hurtful to me

Seventy times seven: A saying that means always

Kingdom of heaven: This is not a material or physical kingdom, but how life would be if Jesus was the leader or king in everyone's heart

Accounts: A record of money owing or owed

2. Read the story in *Matthew 18:21–22*.

3. Were there any English words or phrases that you did not understand?

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4. Now read *Matthew 18:23–35*.

5. Were there any English words or phrases that you did not understand?

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6. Take turns to retell the parable that Jesus told, using your own English words. (Don't try and explain the meaning, just tell the story).

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7. There are two main characters in the parable: 1) the king, and 2) the man who was forgiven a very large debt (millions of dollars in today's money). The king is like God, and the man forgiven a large debt could be anyone who God has forgiven for doing something bad or offensive toward him.

8. With your partner answer the following question. What does the story tell us about God?

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9. Share your answers with the class.

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10. What does the story tell us about how God wants us to act? Discuss with your partner.

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11. Share your answers with the class.

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All people have done bad things that offend God (that is, they have sinned). God loves all people, and he sent Jesus to die on the cross to forgive the bad things they have done. We accept God's forgiveness when we believe that Jesus is the Son of God who died on the cross and came alive again. Jesus taught that God wants people he has forgiven to then forgive other people who offend them.

How do you think the world would be different if people did what Jesus taught?

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11. Jesus the Teacher and Preacher (Mark 1:21–28; Mark 1:35–39)

Introduction:

Our stories today tell us about Jesus' teaching and preaching. Preaching is persuasive speaking, usually done in public. Each Sunday in church services, pastors usually preach for about 15 to 30 minutes; for this reason, pastors are often called preachers. Jesus was famous as a teacher and preacher, and even today many people who are not followers of Jesus have great respect for his teaching.

Warm up:

Teachers are important in helping us to learn all kinds of things. Divide into pairs and share with your partner a story about your favourite teacher.

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Make a list of all the qualities and the kind of character traits that you would like to find in an ideal teacher. We will write these on the white board.

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Today's story is also about evil spirits or demons. In your country, do people believe in spirits or evil spirits? If so, tell the class a story about spirits or evil spirits.

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1. Some important words in the stories:

Disciples: Followers of Jesus

Sabbath: Saturday, the holy day for Jews

Synagogue: A Jewish religious building, like a Christian church building

Teachers of the law: Jewish religious leaders and teachers who taught from the Old Testament, which is the first part of the Christian Bible

Evil spirits or demons: Supernatural beings who are bad or evil

Authority: Jesus' teaching was very special because he sounded like he had special knowledge and truth and this was very powerful

Companions: Friends

2. Read the story in *Mark 1:21–28*.

3. Were there any English words or phrases that you did not understand?

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4. The people were amazed at Jesus' teaching. Read verse 22 and explain to your partner in your own English why they were amazed at Jesus' teaching.

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5. Why was the evil spirit concerned about Jesus? Who did the evil spirit think that Jesus was? See verses 23–26. Share your answers with your partner.

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6. Our story takes place at the beginning of Jesus' public service, and so the people were just getting to know Jesus. Read verses 27 and 28. If you were in the crowd that day, and heard Jesus' teaching, and saw him drive out the evil spirit, and this was all you knew about Jesus, how might you have felt? Use the first person to explain your feelings to your partner, for example: "I might have felt (interested)".

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7. Read the story in *Mark 1:35-39*.

8. Were there any English words or phrases that you did not understand?

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9. Why did Jesus say he had come (verse 38)?

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10. Take turns to retell the story to your partner using your own English.

11. Share with your partner any of Jesus' teachings that you know or remember.

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12. Jesus Heals a Paralysed Man (Mark 2:1–12)

Introduction: When Jesus was about 30 years old, he began his public service. During this time, he sometimes stayed in the town of Capernaum and this became known as his home town. Jesus did supernatural acts to heal many sick people. Therefore, he was very popular, and when he came back to his home town many people wanted to see him, be healed by him, and hear his teaching and preaching.

Warm up:

Tell your partner about your home town. What are the best things about your home town?

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1. Some important words in the story:

Capernaum: A town on the edge of Lake Galilee that was Jesus' home town during his public service

Preaching: To preach means to give a talk about God, or how to live, and is usually given by a religious leader to a group of people

Paralysed: A person who is paralysed has no feeling in his or her body, and cannot walk or move because of damage to his/her nerves

Faith: To have faith means to believe in, trust in, or depend on someone or something

Your sins are forgiven: Sins are wrong things we do or say that offend God. If our sins are forgiven God is no longer angry at us and will no longer punish us for them

Teachers of the law: Jewish religious leaders, similar to Christian ministers or pastors today

Dare: To dare to do or say something means you have the courage to do/say it, even though it is difficult or wrong, and you are willing to accept the consequences

Blasphemy: To curse or say bad things about God. In this story, the religious leaders accused Jesus of blasphemy because Jesus said he had the same power as God

Authority: Power to make things happen or to control other people

Amazed: To be very surprised by something

Praised: To say thank you to God and give respect to God for what he has done

2. Read the story in *Mark 2:1–12*.

3. Were there any English words or phrases that you did not understand?

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4. What do we learn about the four men who carried the paralysed man to Jesus? How did they show that they had a lot of faith?

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5. What do we learn about the teachers of the Law? Why do you think they accused Jesus of blasphemy?

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6. Imagine that you are the paralysed man. How would you have felt when your friends carried you to Jesus and then let you down through a hole in the roof? Think, and then share your ideas with your partner. Start your sentence with “*I would have felt...*”

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How would you have felt when Jesus said: ‘Get up, pick up your mat and go home’?

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7. Jesus said that he had “authority on earth to forgive sins” (verse 10). Can you remember any other stories where Jesus had authority? Talk to your partner about what you remember.

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8. All the people were amazed and praised God and said, “We have never seen anything like this” (verse 12). What new things do you think the people saw and learned that day? Talk with your partner.

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9. What do you learn about Jesus from this story? Share your ideas with your partner, and then the whole group.

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10. Take turns to retell the story to your partner using your own English.

13. Jesus Teaches and Provides Food for a Large Crowd (Mark 6:30–44)

Introduction: Jesus was a great teacher who also did supernatural acts to heal many sick people. He was very popular with the people. Wherever he went, large crowds of people followed him and his disciples (followers).

Warm up:

Divide into pairs. Share with your partner a personal experience or story about a time when you were in a large crowd. Why were you in the crowd? What did it feel like at the time? How did you feel after you left the crowd?

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1. Some important words in the story:

Apostles: The name given to the twelve closest followers or disciples of Jesus. These men spent every day of their lives for three years with Jesus. During this time, they saw him do miracles, they saw how he cared for people, and they listened to his teaching

Lonely place: Isolated place, or a place where there are only a few people, or a place away from crowds

Like sheep without a shepherd: This was a first century saying. Shepherds love and care for their sheep. God's ideal for people was that they have good leaders who love and care for their people, just as shepherds care for their sheep. First century Jewish religious leaders and Roman authorities did not love and care for their people. So, the people in the crowd were like sheep without a shepherd

2. The story has three sets of voices; these are the narrator or story teller; Jesus; and the disciples. We will have one person read the words of the story teller, one person read the words of Jesus, and the rest of the group can read the words of the disciples. Read the story in *Mark 6:30–44* using the script below.

3. Were there any English words or phrases that you did not understand?
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4. Together with your partner, make a list of everything that you learn from the story about **the crowds** of people who came to Jesus. Then, share what you have learned with the whole group.
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5. Together with you partner, make a list of everything that you learn from the story about **Jesus** from. See verses 31, 34, 39, 41–44. Then, share what you have learned with the whole group.
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6. Take turns to share with the class what you think about the whole story.

Script: Jesus feeds a crowd of five thousand

Narrator: ³⁰ The apostles returned and met with Jesus, and told him all they had done and taught. ³¹ There were so many people coming and going that Jesus and his disciples didn't even have time to eat. So, he said to them,

Jesus: Let us go off by ourselves to some place where we will be alone and you can rest a while.

Narrator: ³² So they started out in a boat by themselves to a lonely place. ³³ Many people, however, saw them leave and knew at once who they were; so, they went from all the towns and ran ahead by land and arrived at the place ahead of Jesus and his disciples. ³⁴ When Jesus got out of the boat, he saw this large crowd, and his heart was filled with pity for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So, he began to teach them many things. ³⁵ When it was getting late, his disciples came to him and said,

Disciples: It is already very late, and this is a lonely place. ³⁶ Send the people away, and let them go to the nearby farms and villages in order to buy themselves something to eat.

Jesus: ³⁷ You yourselves give them something to eat.

Disciples: Do you want us to go and spend two hundred silver coins on bread in order to feed them?

Jesus: ³⁸ How much bread do you have? Go and see.

Narrator: When they found out, they told him,

Disciples: Five loaves and also two fish.

Narrator: ³⁹ Jesus then told his disciples to make all the people divide into groups and sit down on the green grass. ⁴⁰ So the people sat down in rows, in groups of a hundred and groups of fifty. ⁴¹ Then Jesus took the five loaves and the two fish, looked up to heaven, and gave thanks to God. He broke the loaves and gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. ⁴² Everyone ate and had enough. ⁴³ Then the disciples took up twelve baskets full of what was left of the bread and the fish. ⁴⁴ The number of men who were fed was five thousand.

14. Jesus Walks on Water (Mark 6:45–52)

Introduction:

Today's story happened as Jesus' disciples (followers) were going through a difficult and frightening experience. They were crossing a large freshwater lake in Israel, in a small fishing boat, in the middle of a bad storm. They thought that their boat might sink.

Warm up:

Have you ever been in a boat or ship and had a scary (frightening) experience? Divide into pairs and share your experience with your partner. If you haven't had a scary experience in a boat, then share a scary experience that you have had in a plane, bus, train or any kind of transport.

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Background to the story:

Before this story happened, Jesus had done all kinds of supernatural good actions (or good deeds) to help all kinds of people, including his disciples. He did these out of kindness or compassion for people, to show them that God loved them, and as evidence that he was God's son. By the time of today's story, Jesus' disciples (followers) still weren't sure just who he was. They knew he was special. They knew that he was sent from God, and was an important religious leader, but still they did not know he was God's son and had the same power as God.

Do you remember any stories about Jesus doing supernatural good things for people? Share with the group one of these stories of Jesus' supernatural power. Just give a short version of the story.

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1. Some important words in the story:

Disciples: followers of Jesus.

The lake of Galilee: Was a large freshwater lake where several of Jesus' followers worked as fisherman, before they gave up fishing, and followed Jesus. The lake often experienced sudden and dangerous storms

Straining: Making an unusually great, even painful, physical or mental effort to do something

Oars: Long poles with flat ends used to make a boat move forward. One end of the oar is put in the water and the other end is pushed or pulled by a person in the boat

Rowing: The action of using oars to move a boat is called rowing. Boats moved by oars are called rowing boats

Ghost: The spirit of a dead person. Not all cultures and people believe in ghosts

The feeding of the five thousand: This refers to the supernatural good action or deed that Jesus had just done before today's story took place. Jesus fed a hungry crowd of over 5000 people with five loaves of bread and two fish

2. Read the story in *Mark 6:45–52*.

3. Were there any English words or phrases that you did not understand?

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4. Picture the story in your mind, and think about the story as if you were one of Jesus' disciples who was in the boat that day. Using your imagination, as well as the facts given to us in the Bible, take turns in explaining to your partner:
 - a. What happened, and how would you have felt if you were rowing and straining against the storm and wind for many hours, and it looked like your boat might sink?
 - b. How would you have you felt when you first saw Jesus walking on the water, but didn't recognise him?
 - c. What happened, and how you would have felt when Jesus got into the boat with you and the other disciples, and then the huge storm stopped?

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5. Share some of what you discussed with you partner with the class. List the words that you used to describe the feelings of the disciples.

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6. This story is part of Jesus continuing to show who he was to his disciples, in order to help them understand him more. There are a number of spiritual lessons that we can learn from the story. If you were a disciple in the boat that day, what spiritual lessons might you have learned about Jesus?

There are two major lessons. Talk about this with your partner.

Lesson 1:

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Lesson 2:

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7. Optional (depending on time): Take turns in to tell the story to your partner, and explain its meaning.

In our story Jesus did two main things to help his disciples believe that he was God's son or God the Son. Firstly, he walked on water, and then he caused the storm to stop as he got into the boat with them. Secondly, he showed that he cared for his disciples by coming to be with them in the storm, and then by causing the storm to stop. Jesus is always looking for more disciples to believe in him and to follow him. As God the Son, Jesus loves and cares for all people, especially his disciples. He wants all people to believe in him, and so enjoy a friendship with him, to become his disciples, and to live forever with him in the next life. This is called "eternal life". Even today, Jesus sometime gives people special evidence, such as answering important prayers, to show us his power, and to show that he cares for us, and help people believe in him. Jesus said, "For God loved the (people of) the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, and whoever believes in him should not die but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

15. Jesus and Little Children (Mark 10:13–16)

Introduction: Our Bible story today is about Jesus and little children. In the story we see that Jesus, a very busy leader and popular person, took time out of his busy schedule to demonstrate his love and care for little children.

Warm up:

Think about various leaders in your culture: political leaders, business leaders, academic leaders, and military leaders. What is their attitude towards young children? Do they care for them? Are children important to them? Divide into pairs, and discuss these questions with your partner, and then share your answers with the class.

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Background to the story:

In Palestine (Israel) at the time of Jesus' public service, important leaders regarded little children as being of little or no significance compared to adults. Most leaders would not give time to children (or women for that matter) because they thought that they had far more important things to do than talk to and spend time with children. This background is important in understanding today's story.

1. Some important words in the story:

Babies: This is not the best translation of the original word. Babies and little children are a better translation

Place hands on: Physically put one's hand on someone to identify with them, to pray for, and to bless them

Bless: Means praying that God would do good things for people

Disciples: followers of Jesus

Scolded: To scold someone is to strongly correct that person, and tell that person that they are wrong. Parents often scold their children when they do something wrong or behave badly

Kingdom of God: This is about people having a friendship with God, and making him king or leader in their hearts, and about going to heaven

2. Read the story in *Mark 10:13–16*.

3. Were there any English words or phrases that you did not understand?

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4. What was the disciples' attitude to people bringing their children to Jesus (verse 13)? Divide into pairs and discuss with your partner.

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5. What was Jesus' attitude to his disciples when they refused to allow the little children to be brought to him (verse 14)? Discuss with your partner.

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6. Do you think that Jesus' anger with his disciples was good or bad? Discuss with your partner.

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7. Jesus was God's son. What does the story tell us about Jesus' attitude, and therefore, God's attitude toward little children? What lessons can we learn from Jesus' example in his interactions with little children? Discuss with your partner and then share with the class.

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8. Jesus used the little children as an example of the attitude people need to have if they want to have a relationship or friendship with God, and to go to heaven. Jesus said, "The kingdom of God belongs to such as these (the little children)", and he also said that unless people "receive the kingdom of God like a child (they) will never enter it". Think about the relationship and attitude of a little child to his or her parents.

What do you think that Jesus meant when he said this? Discuss with your partner and then the class.

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9. Take turns in telling the story and explaining its meaning to your partner. Remember that there are two major points.

16. Jesus' Teaching About Being a Great Leader (Mark 10:35–45)

Introduction:

Jesus is the greatest and most influential leader that the world has known. He has millions of followers in the world today, and has had millions more followers over the past 2000 years. Christians see Jesus as their leader. They are his followers. Our Bible study today is about Jesus' twelve closest disciples (or followers), and what Jesus taught them about being a good leader and a great follower.

Warm up:

Who are some political, academic, community, and business leaders in your country?
What do people think about them and the job they do?
Are they respected and trusted, or are people suspicious of them?
Find a partner from a different country to you, and discuss these questions with them.

In (name of your country) people think politicians/business leaders _____ (tell lies/are honest/are corrupt/only want votes)

Some people become leaders for the wrong reasons or motives. What are some wrong reasons or motives for people wanting to be leaders? Discuss with your partner.

Someone might become a leader to _____ (get money/power/be popular/be famous)

Tell your partner about one good leader, or one bad leader, from the history of your country.

(Leader's name) was a good/bad leader because he/she _____

1. Some important words in the story:

James and John: Two of Jesus' closest disciples or followers

Sit on your throne in your glorious kingdom: The disciples believed that Jesus was about to start a powerful kingdom where he would be king. A throne is the king's chair, and is a symbol of power and leadership. The followers of Jesus wanted to sit on the right and left of Jesus. They wanted to have the most powerful leadership positions after Jesus

The cup I must drink and be baptised in the way I must be baptised: These are figures of speech. They mean that Jesus would suffer and die on the cross. Most of Jesus' twelve disciples ended up suffering like him, and being killed because they were Christian leaders

Heathen: People who don't believe in the God of the Bible

Son of Man: This is a name Jesus used to talk about himself

Redeem: Means to pay a price to set people free. Jesus was talking about his death. Jesus gave his life (he died) to pay the price to set people free from God's punishment on them for doing things that offended God

2. Read the story in *Mark 10:35–45*.

3. Were there any English words or phrases in the story that you did not understand?

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4. Explain to your partner using your own English what James and John wanted Jesus to do for them (see verse 37).
5. Why do you think James and John wanted to have the most powerful positions in Jesus' kingdom? Share your answers with your partner.

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6. How did the other disciples react or respond when they heard that James and John wanted the two most important leadership positions (see verse 41)? Why do you think they reacted this way? Discuss with your partner.

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7. In verse 42, Jesus said that the heathen rulers (kings and other leaders) had "power" over others and "complete authority". He said that this was not how it should be for Christian leaders. What do you think he meant by this?

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8. In verses 43–45, Jesus taught his followers about how to be a great leader, and he used himself as an example of what great leaders should do. Finish this sentence using your own English:

According to Jesus great leaders should _____.

9. Jesus said that he came to serve other people (verse 45). Can you think of some ways that Jesus served people? As a group, make a list of these on the whiteboard.

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10. What was the most important way Jesus served people (see the last part of verse 45)?

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11. Imagine that you had the chance to interview Jesus about the qualities and types of behaviour of a great leader. What questions would you ask him? What do you think he would say?

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12. Role play an interview between you and Jesus.

For Christians, Jesus is the perfect example of good leadership. He always cared for and served others in all kinds of ways. He was even willing to die for people. He never used his power, position or influence to achieve selfish things; rather he always used this to help others. He wants his followers, especially Christian leaders, to be like him.

17. Jesus Heals a Blind Man (Mark 10:46–52)

Introduction:

In our story today, Jesus uses his supernatural power to heal a blind man. Supernatural power can't be explained by scientific laws.

Warm up:

Blindfold your partner and give him/her some instructions. For example:

Walk forward 3 steps.

Turn to the left and walk 4 steps.

Turn in a circle.

Walk forward 5 steps.

Turn to the right and walk forward 3 steps.

Swap roles. Take off the blindfold and discuss with your partner:

How did you feel when you couldn't see? How did you feel when you were the one giving instructions?

Background to the story:

The Bible tells us that Jesus had supernatural power. Jesus only used this supernatural power to help other people. Often, Jesus used this power to heal people who were sick or disabled. In a world without modern medicine, this made Jesus a very popular person. Everywhere that Jesus went sick people followed him, hoping to be healed.

1. Today's story is from *Mark 10:46–52*. We need four people to read: a storyteller or narrator, Bartimaeus, the crowd, and Jesus.

Narrator: They came to Jericho, and as Jesus was leaving with his disciples and a large crowd, a blind beggar named Bartimaeus son of Timaeus was sitting by the road. ⁴⁷ When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout,

Bartimaeus: Jesus! Son of David! Have mercy on me!

Narrator: ⁴⁸ Many of the people scolded him and told him to be quiet. But he shouted even more loudly,

Bartimaeus: Son of David, have mercy on me!

Narrator: ⁴⁹ Jesus stopped and said,

Jesus: Call him.

Narrator: So, they called the blind man.

Crowd: Cheer up! Get up, he is calling you.

Narrator: ⁵⁰ So he threw off his cloak, jumped up, and came to Jesus.

Jesus: ⁵¹ What do you want me to do for you?

Bartimaeus: Teacher, I want to see again.

Jesus: ⁵² Go, your faith has made you well.

Narrator: At once he was able to see and followed Jesus on the road.

2. Let's read and act out the story, and particularly think about the meaning of the verbs and commands underlined in the story.

3. Were there any other English words that you did not understand?

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4. Divide into pairs or small groups, and talk about these questions:

What do you learn about the crowd?

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What do you learn about Bartimaeus?

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What do you learn about Jesus?

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5. In verse 52, Jesus said to Bartimaeus, "Go, your faith has made you well". What do you think Jesus meant?

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How did Bartimaeus show that he had faith in Jesus?

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6. Take turns to retell the story and its meaning to your partner.

In this story, Jesus did two main things to help Bartimaeus have faith, or believe, that Jesus was God's son. First, Jesus showed that he cared about Bartimaeus and wanted to help him. Second, he used his supernatural power to make him see again. God is looking for more disciples to ask Jesus for help, to believe in Jesus, and to follow him. Even today, Jesus sometimes gives people special evidence, such as answering an important prayer, to show that he cares and has power to help them.

18. Part 1: The Great Commandment, the Most Important Values (Mark 12:28–31)

Introduction:

When Jesus lived on earth, in Israel, 2000 years ago, the religious leaders often asked Jesus tricky questions about the Old Testament (the first part of the Bible written before Jesus was born). Our reading from Mark's Gospel is a story where Jesus was asked a tricky question about the Old Testament. The Jewish people of Jesus' time wanted to live their lives by the commands or values of the Old Testament. The question that Jesus was asked was, "What is the most important command?" or put another way, "What is the most important value in the whole Old Testament?"

Different cultures have similar and different ideas about what the most important ideas or values in life are. In your home country, what values or ideas are considered the most important? Some important values or ideas for many Australians are: caring for your family, enjoying a good relaxed life-style with plenty of leisure time, looking after your mates (friends), treating people fairly, equality of men and women, being successful, having and getting more and more money and possessions, freedom, and democracy.

Warm up:

Divide into pairs, and share with your partner what you consider the most important values of your home country to be. These values may not be values that you agree with, but simply the values of your country.

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Background to the story:

The Jewish people at the time of Jesus lived their lives according to the laws and teachings of the Old Testament (that is the first part of the Bible.) They turned the Old Testament into a list of 613 rules, which they tried to follow in their lives. They considered that these rules were the most important values. The sad thing about keeping this long list of rules is that often what the Old Testament and the rules were meant to be about, that is loving God and caring for people, didn't happen. Keeping the rules became more important than loving God and caring for people! It was in this context that Jesus was asked what the most important command or value to live by was.

1. Some important words in the story:

Teacher of the law: A Jewish religious leader who specialised in teaching the Old Testament

Sadducees: Another group of Jewish religious leaders

Commandment: A command or instruction from God. In the Old Testament, God told his people, that they must keep many different rules and laws. These were called commandments

The Lord our God is the only Lord: The one true and most powerful God, who created the whole world

Heart, soul, mind, strength: When these words are used together, they refer to your entire person, or the central being of a person, that is your emotions, your intellect, and your body

Love: In the Bible, love is not so much about feeling warm positive emotions, or liking other people, but rather on doing what is in the best interests of other people. This includes helping, caring, and being kind and compassionate to other people, whether you like them or not

Your neighbour: Means more than just your next-door neighbour. It means all people that you meet, whether they are strangers, friends, or even enemies. It also includes people that you don't personally meet

2. Read the story in *Mark 12:28–31*.

3. Were there any English words or phrases that you did not understand?

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4. Jesus said that the most important command or value from the Old Testament was, not one, but two commands, "Love the Lord your God" and "Love your neighbour as yourself". Why do you think that Jesus answered the question with two commands, or put another way, two values, and not just one? Discuss with your partner.

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5. What do you think might be some things about God, his character, and the things that he has done for people, that are reasons for people to love God? Discuss, and make a list with your partner.

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6. Share with the class, and write your answers on the white board.

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7. Other than caring for and helping other people, can you think of some examples of things that people do, or might do, to show that they love God? Discuss, and make a list with your partner.

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8. Share with the class, and write your answers on the white board.

The highest value to live by for Christians, and a value that God wants all people to have, is to love him. The Bible helps us to know God better, and to learn about what he has done for us, and his wonderful character of love and kindness. This is most easily seen in the stories and teaching of Jesus, God's son. Getting to know God better through the stories of Jesus, the things he taught, and understanding why he died on a cross, helps people to love him more and have a friendship with him.

Jesus' most important teaching on the two most important values or commandments is together called the "Great Commandment". Next week, we will think about the second part of the Great Commandment, "Love your neighbour as yourself".

19. Part 2: The Great Commandment, the Most Important Values (Mark 12:28–31)

Introduction:

In Part 1 of this study, we thought about Jesus' first command or value, "Love God". In this study, we will be thinking about the second most important command or value that Jesus gave, "Love your neighbour as yourself".

Background to the story:

God gave the Jewish people commands and values to show them how to live. These commands and values were written down in the Old Testament. The Old Testament is the first part of the Bible that was written before Jesus was born. Unfortunately, many of the people did not keep the spirit of, or true reason, for these commands and values. Rather, they turned the Old Testament into a long list of 613 rules, which they tried to keep. The sad thing about keeping this long list of rules is that often what the Old Testament and the rules were meant to be about, that is loving God and caring for people, didn't happen. It was in this context that Jesus was asked what was the most important command or value in the Old Testament to live by. Jesus answered, not by giving one command, but two commands. He said, "Love God" and "Love your neighbour as yourself". The reason he gave two commands was because these commands could not be separated. If a person says that they love God, then one of the most important ways that they show their love for him is by loving and caring for all people.

Warm up:

Divide into pairs and discuss these questions with your partner:

What does the word "love" mean in your country of origin?

In your culture, do people only love and care for people who they really like, or other people as well? Who are the groups of people or kinds of people in your country who hardly anyone loves?

What kind of people do you find it hardest to love and care about?

1. Some important words in the story.

Teacher of the law: A Jewish religious leader who specialised in teaching the Old Testament

Sadducees: Another group of Jewish religious leaders

Commandment: A command or instruction from God. In the Old Testament, God told his people, called Israel, that they must keep and practice many different rules and laws. These were called commandments

The Lord our God is the only Lord: The one true and most powerful God, who created the whole world

Heart, soul, mind, strength: When these words are used together, they refer to your entire person, or the central being of a person, that is your emotions, your intellect, and your body

Love: In the Bible, love is not so much about feeling warm positive emotions, or liking other people, but rather on doing what is in the best interests of other people. This includes helping, caring, and being kind and compassionate to other people, whether you like them or not

Your neighbour: Means more than just your next-door neighbour. It means all people that you meet, whether they are strangers, friends, or even enemies. It also includes people that you don't personally meet

2. Read the story in *Mark 12:28–31*.

3. Were there any English words or phrases that you did not understand?

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4. Divide into pairs, and take turns to explain what you think that “Love your neighbour as [you love] yourself” means. Remember that your neighbour, as Jesus used the word, was every person you might meet including strangers, not just your next-door neighbour.

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5. Jesus explained “Love your neighbour as yourself” in a different way on another occasion. He said, “Treat others how you would like to be treated” (Matthew 7:12). Think about some difficult situations that you have been in, and how you would have liked to be treated in those situations.

Think about some good situations you have been in, and how you would have liked to be treated. Share with your partner what you think that Jesus meant by these words.

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6. Make a list of as many different ways or examples as you can to “Love your neighbour as yourself”. Think of different kinds of people in different situations, and different ways, that you could love and care for such people.

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7. Take turns, going around the group, to give one example of different ways to love people.

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Christians are people who believe that Jesus is God’s son. They become his followers and live by his values and commands, which he summarised as “Love God... and love your neighbour as yourself”. Christianity is a relational faith in that it is about living in a love relationship with God, and all people. It is much less about keeping religious rules. In this relationship, Christians show their love and appreciation for God by worshipping him in their hearts, and in church, and showing their love for him by loving, helping, and caring for all people. Christians call these two most important commands or values to live by, “The Great Commandment”. When people live their lives in relationship with God, aiming to keep the Great Commandment as their most important value to live by, then they enjoy the full meaning of life as God intended. Jesus came to help all people have a friendship with God, and have the full meaning of life. He said, “I have come in order that you might have life—life in all its fullness” (John 10:10).

20. The Truthfulness of the New Testament Stories About Jesus (Luke 1:1–4)

Introduction:

The stories we have about Jesus are amazing stories. Jesus did all kinds of supernatural things. His human mother, Mary, became pregnant supernaturally by God's Spirit. Jesus' father was God. Jesus turned water into wine. He supernaturally healed many sick people. He walked on water and caused wild storms to stop. He supernaturally fed a huge crowd of many thousands of people with just a few fish and loaves of bread, and there were twelve baskets of food left over! He always cared for others, and was never selfish. He had compassion for all people, especially the sick and the poor. He claimed to be God's son. He was killed by being nailed to a cross, and on the third day came alive from the dead. For some people, these stories are so amazing and hard to believe that they think that the stories are not true. A good question to ask about this is, what evidence is there that the stories about Jesus are true?

Warm up:

Can you think of a story from your family's or your country's history that is a true story, but is so amazing that it is hard to believe?

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A number of ancient historians, who weren't Christians, wrote about Jesus in their writings. They tell us things, like that Jesus was a special person, who was a famous teacher, and who had many followers. He did supernatural things and good actions for others, and was worshipped as a god. However, these ancient historians don't give us very many specific details about Jesus and his service. Most of the detailed stories we have about Jesus come from the New Testament (the second part of the Christian Bible), especially the books called the Gospels. Gospel means good news. These good news stories about Jesus are called Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. They are the first four books in the New Testament.

1. Our next question is, did the writers of the Gospels write truthfully about Jesus or were they just making the stories up?

If the gospels were written hundreds of years after Jesus lived on earth by people who did not spend time with Jesus, or who did not have access to people who knew him and had seen and heard Jesus, then it would be highly unlikely that the stories about Jesus would be true. This was not how it was. The Gospel writers all wrote their Gospels before 100AD, while there were many eyewitnesses to Jesus' life still living. The writers of the Gospels were either members of the twelve disciples (followers) who were closest to Jesus and followed him everywhere, or close associates of these disciples. This is a good indication that the Gospel stories about Jesus are true.

2. The Gospel writers claimed that they were telling us the truth about Jesus. Luke tells us this in the introduction to his Gospel. Read *Luke 1:1–4*.
3. Were there any English words and phrases that you did not understand?

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4. Divide into pairs, and discuss with you partner the reason/s that Luke wrote his Gospel or good news story about Jesus (see verses 3 and 4). Use your own English words.

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5. With your partner, make a list of all the words that Luke used to show that his story about Jesus was accurate or truthful.

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6. Discuss with your partner what resources you think Luke might have used to write his Gospel (see verses 1 and 2)?

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7. Does Luke's telling of Jesus' story sound like a truthful approach to you? If you don't think it is totally truthful, what are your concerns? If you do think it sounds truthful, use your own English words to explain why you think that it does sound truthful.

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21. Jesus Is Rejected by the People of His Home Town (Luke 4:16–30)

Introduction:

Jesus was born in the town of Bethlehem, but his family was from Nazareth, where his step father, Joseph, was a carpenter. Jesus grew up in Nazareth, and worked as a carpenter there until he began his public service, or ministry, when he was about 30 years old. When Jesus began his public service, he read to the people in his synagogue (Jewish worship building) from the Old Testament book of Isaiah. The part he read was a passage about God's Messiah, a special supernatural good king. In this passage, God said he would send this king to his people. Jesus read the passage, and then said that he was this king. The people in his town would not accept that Jesus was the Messiah.

Warm up:

Tell the class about the town that you grew up in, and what your parents did for work.

1. Some important words in the story:

Sabbath: Saturday was the Jewish day of worship, like Sunday is for Christians

Scriptures: Another name for the Bible, the Christian Holy Book

Scroll: An ancient book which did not have separate pages, but was written on a roll of paper

Spirit of the Lord: Lord means God, so Spirit of the Lord means God's Spirit, or the Holy Spirit

Liberty: Means freedom

Oppressed: Describes people who are treated unfairly, and without compassion

Marvelled: Means amazed

Eloquent: This is a powerful, persuasive, and fluent way of speaking or writing

Prophet: Someone sent by God to speak a message from God to people

Elijah and Elisha: They were prophets who lived about 900 years before Jesus was born

Widow: A woman whose husband has died

2. Read the story in *Luke 4:16–30*.

3. Are there any English words or phrases that you did not understand?

4. Jesus read from the scroll, sat down, and then told the people that his mission was the same as the mission of the Messiah, the supernatural king that God said he would send into the world.

Read verses 18 and 19, and describe Jesus' mission to your partner using your own English words.

When Jesus visited Capernaum, a town not far from Nazareth, he did many miracles and healed many sick people. The people at Nazareth heard about these miracles, and were impressed with Jesus, but they didn't believe that he was the Messiah, God's son. They thought he couldn't be the Messiah because he was Joseph's son. Jesus knew that the people wanted him to do miracles like he had done in Capernaum, to prove that he was the Messiah. However, Jesus said, "Prophets are never welcomed in their home town". In other words, Jesus said that the people had rejected him as the Messiah, God's son. Jesus said that what happened to him was like what happened to the prophets Elijah and Elisha. They didn't do many miracles for Jewish people because they didn't believe. Instead, Elijah and Elisha did miracles for non-Jewish people who did believe. Jesus was good news for many people who believed in him and for those who were healed and helped by him.

5. How might Jesus be good news to people today?

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6. The people in the synagogue who heard Jesus read from the Old Testament and speak, reacted strongly to what Jesus said. Turn to your partner, and using your own English words, describe how the people reacted to Jesus.

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7. What did you learn about Jesus from our story today? There are a number of things.

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22. Jesus Calls Simon to Become One of His Followers (Luke 5:1–11)

Introduction:

When Jesus was about 30 years old, he chose and asked (called) twelve men to be his special disciples or followers. He wanted these men to make him their leader and teacher and to be with him every day. Jesus also had many other disciples, including women, but these twelve men were his closest disciples. Today's story is about Jesus calling three professional fishermen, Simon (also called Peter), James, and John to become his disciples. These men fished with nets from small sailing boats in a large lake in Israel.

Warm up:

Have you ever been fishing? If you have, tell the class a story about your fishing experiences.

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What methods do fishermen in your home country use to catch fish?

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What skills and character are required to be a good fisherman or fisherwoman?

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1. Some important words in the story:

Lake of Gennesaret: Also called the Sea of Galilee. This is a large lake in the country of Israel which was famous for its good fishing

Master: A respectful name for a religious teacher and leader

Signalled: To communicate with a sign without using any words. Examples of making signals are waving your hands, or using a flag, or using a flashing light, or by using smoke

Partners: People who share an activity or business together. In this story, Simon, James and John were fishing partners

Sinful: Being guilty of doing things that are wrong and offend God

2. Read the story in *Luke 5: 1–11*.

3. Were there any English words or phrases that you did not understand?

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4. Read verses 4 and 5 again. Simon had been fishing all night but had not caught any fish. Now Jesus told him to go fishing again. Discuss with your partner how you think Simon might have felt.

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5. Read verse 6. Imagine that you are Simon. How would you have felt when you caught such a large number of fishes? Use words that describe your feelings. Remember that the men made money from their fishing.

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6. After catching so many fish, why do you think that Simon said to Jesus: "Go away from me, Lord! I am a sinful man!"

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7. When Simon saw Jesus had power like God, it changed his life and he became a follower of Jesus. Have you ever had a similar experience to Simon where you saw God's power and it changed your life? If so, share your experience.

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Jesus then said to Simon, "From now on you will be catching people." By this he meant that as a follower of Jesus one important thing that Simon would do, would be to "catch" other people to also become followers of Jesus. This is why Christians tell people about Jesus. We want them to know that God loves them and wants to give them eternal life. So, Christians are fishermen or fisherwomen of people!

8. Turn to the person sitting next to you and tell them today's story using your own English. Take turns to do this.

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23. Jesus' Teaching About Loving Enemies (Luke 6:27–36)

Introduction:

Jesus taught his followers to love God, and to love their neighbours as themselves. When he taught them to love your neighbour, he meant all people that you come into contact with (and even those you never meet), including your enemies. When Jesus used the word “enemies”, he meant all the kinds of people who hate you, cause you trouble, hurt you, make your life difficult, insult you, or people you just don’t like, or people who don’t like you.

Warm up:

Do you know any such people? Share a story with the class about one of these people, and how you feel about them.

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In your home country, what are some common ways people treat or act toward their enemies?

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1. Some important words in the story:

Bless: Means to pray and wish for good things from God for someone

Curse: Means to pray and wish for bad things from God for someone

Sinners: Used here to mean bad people

Merciful: Is similar to compassionate, but also includes doing good things for people who don’t deserve good things

2. Read the story in *Luke 6:27–36*.

3. Were there any English words or phrases that you did not understand?

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When Jesus used the word “love”, he meant doing good things, like helping and caring for enemies. It was not so much about having warm feelings for your enemies, but about being compassionate and kind to them, and treating them how you would like to be treated, that is, doing what is in the best interests of your enemy. Jesus said, “Do for others just what you want them to do for you” (verse 31). Of course, he wanted his followers to apply this to all people: to friends, to enemies, and everyone in between.

4. Jesus suggested some ways to love our enemies. List some of those ways. Remember that Jesus sometimes used exaggeration or hyperbole to emphasise his points.

a. Verse 28

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b. Verse 29

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c. Verse 30

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d. Verse 31

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e. Verse 36b

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5. What reasons does Jesus give to love our enemies?

a. Verses 32–35a

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b. Verse 35b

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c. Verse 36

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6. Divide into pairs, and share with your partner what you think of Jesus' ideas about loving one's enemies.

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7. What difference would it make if people started loving their enemies in the way that Jesus taught? Share with your partner.

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Loving our enemies is not easy! It is an ideal that is hard to reach. Only Jesus reached this ideal perfectly. While he was dying on the cross, Jesus prayed for his enemies who were in the process of killing him, even though he had done nothing wrong. Jesus was an innocent man. He prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing". God gives special supernatural help to people who try and love their enemies. Many Christians have found that with God's help they have been able to pray for and do good things for their enemies.

24. Jesus and the Roman Army Officer (Luke 7:1–10)

Introduction:

Our story today is about a powerful Roman army commander, and Jesus' supernatural power to heal sickness.

Warm up:

Make a list on the whiteboard of things that might make a person powerful.

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Background to the story:

The Bible writers and other ancient historians tell us that Jesus was a man who had supernatural power. The interesting thing about Jesus' use of this supernatural power is that he only ever used it to help other people. Mostly, Jesus used his power to cure sickness or disabilities. In a world without modern medicine, this made Jesus a very popular person. Everywhere that Jesus went sick people followed him hoping to be healed. Healthy people brought sick family members or friends to Jesus, hoping that he would heal them.

1. Some important words in the story:

Servant: Someone who is paid to work for and help another person. Slaves were servants who were owned by another person, and had to work for them, often without pay

Roman officer: A Roman army commander who was in charge of many soldiers. The Roman army had defeated the Jewish army, so the Romans controlled the Jews. Because of this, the Romans were considered enemies of the Jews. Jesus was Jewish. The Roman army officer in today's story was different, he was a friend of the Jews

Was very dear: This means he was a special friend

Elders: leaders

Synagogue: A Jewish religious building similar to a Christian church

Earnestly: Very seriously, or very strongly, and intensely emotional

Worthy: Deserving of, or having the right to some special attention or action

Under authority: Someone who is under the command of a superior officer

2. Read the story in *Luke 7:1–10*.

3. Were there any English words or phrases that you did not understand?

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5. Divide into pairs and retell the story to your partner using your own English.

6. With your partner, make a list of everything that you can learn about the Roman officer from the story.

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7. What spiritual lessons can we learn from the Roman officer?

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8. With your partner, make a list of everything that the story tells us about Jesus, and the kind of person he was.

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9. We all have some power. What power do you have?

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10. What lessons about the use of power can we learn from Jesus' example in the story?

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25. Jesus Brings a Dead Man Back to Life (Luke 7:11–17)

Introduction:

This story is about Jesus using his supernatural power to cause a dead person to come alive again. The writers of the Bible tell us about three separate occasions when Jesus did this.

Warm up:

In your culture, what happens at a funeral? What happens to the bodies of people once they have died? Talk about this with your partner.

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1. Some important words in the story:

Nain: The name of a town in Israel

Disciples: Followers of Jesus who called Jesus master [leader], and teacher, and lived their lives according to Jesus' teachings. Today, Christians often call themselves disciples

Procession: A small or large crowd of people moving forward in a line, often following behind a leader

Prophet: A person with a special job and message from God

2. Read the story in *Luke 7:11–17*.

3. Were there any English words or phrases in the story that you did not understand?

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4. What do you learn about the woman in the story? Make a list with your partner.

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5. What things do you learn about Jesus from the story? Particularly read verses 13, 16 and 17.

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6. How did the people respond when they saw what Jesus did?

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7. Divide into pairs and take turns to retell today's story using your own English.

8. What do you think about this story?
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26. Jesus Loves All People, Even the Worst Kind of People (Luke 7:36–50)

Introduction:

Today's Bible story is about a Jewish religious leader called a Pharisee, who invited Jesus to his home for dinner. While he was having dinner with Jesus, a woman who was considered a very bad person (she might have been a prostitute) and who was not invited to the meal, came to Jesus and started doing certain actions that showed that she really loved Jesus.

Warm up:

Make a list of people (and their occupations) who are considered the worst kind of people, or bad people, in your home country or country of origin. Find a partner and share your list with them.

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How would you feel if you were having dinner with an important friend, and one of these bad people came uninvited to your house and started talking to your friend? Share with your partner.

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1. Some important words in the story:

Alabaster: A semi-precious stone

Sinful: Used in this story to describe a person who lived a bad life

Perfume: A scent often worn by women in the 21st century, but also used at the time of Jesus to put on dead bodies to prepare them for burial

Prophet: Someone sent by God to deliver God's message to people. Sometimes they told what would happen in the future

Moneylender: A person who lends money, like a banker

Sins: All the things that people do that offend God

Faith: Means belief in, or trust

Saved: Means that God forgives a person, and will not punish them for all the bad things that they have done which have offended him. Instead, he gives that person his friendship and they go to heaven

2. Read the story in *Luke 7:36–50*.

3. Were there any words or phrases that you did not understand?

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4. To see how well you understood the story, and to practice your English, take turns in telling a short version of the story to your partner.

5. Think about the meaning of the story. Read verse 39. What adjectives could you use to describe Simon's attitude towards:

a) the woman who came uninvited to his house:

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b) Jesus:

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6. In reply to Simon's criticism, Jesus told a story called a parable. Read verses 41–43. Share with your partner what you think the meaning of this story is. Jesus explains this in verses 43–47.

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7. Jesus forgave this bad sinner. What does this tell us about Jesus and God?

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8. Jesus forgave the woman's sins and became her friend; this is why she loved him. Other people sitting at the dinner table were amazed that Jesus forgave sins (verse 49). Jewish people knew that only God could forgive sins, yet Jesus did the same. What does this tell us about Jesus?

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Jesus is God's son or God the Son. He wants to forgive all people from their sins (even the worst kinds of sins), so that we can be friends with God. There are no sins that God won't forgive, providing that we are sorry for them, want to stop doing them, and we ask God's son Jesus for his forgiveness. When we do this, God forgives us. When God forgives people's sins, this causes us to love Jesus, and make it possible to become God's friends, like the woman in the story.

27. The Woman Who Touched Jesus' Cloak (Luke 8:40, 42b–48)

Introduction:

At the time when Jesus lived, there was no modern medicine, and no health insurance, or social security system. People who were very sick could also become very poor. People also believed if they touched blood from a woman, that they would become unclean or polluted. Jesus was willing to touch a sick, poor woman, because he cared about her.

Warm up:

Talk with a partner about one or more of these questions:

Talk about the health system in your country. Where do people who are sick go for help and treatment?

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If you feel comfortable, talk about a time when either you, or a family member, were very sick.

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Have you ever been in a large crowd where people were pushing against you? Tell your partner about your experience.

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1. Today's story is from *Luke 8:40, 42b–48*. We will read the story in parts, so we need a narrator, Jesus, and Peter:

Narrator: ⁴⁰ When Jesus returned to the other side of the lake, the people welcomed him, because they had all been waiting for him. ⁴² As Jesus went along, the people were crowding him from every side. ⁴³ Among them was a woman who had suffered from severe bleeding for twelve years; she had spent all she had on doctors, but no one had been able to cure her. ⁴⁴ She came up in the crowd behind Jesus and touched the edge of his cloak, and her bleeding stopped at once. ⁴⁵ Jesus asked,

Jesus: "Who touched me?"

Narrator: Everyone denied it, and Peter said,

Peter: "Master, the people are all around you and crowding in on you."

Narrator: ⁴⁶ But Jesus said,

Jesus: "Someone touched me, for I knew it when power went out of me."

Narrator: ⁴⁷ The woman saw that she had been found out, so she came trembling and threw herself at Jesus' feet. There in front of everybody, she told him why she had touched him and how she had been healed at once. ⁴⁸ Jesus said to her,

Jesus: "My daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace."

2. Were there any English words or phrases that you did not understand?

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3. In verse 42, it says, “as Jesus went along, the people were crowding him from every side”. What do you think it was like for Jesus in that crowd? What do you think it was like for members of the crowd?

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4. What do you think life was like for this woman before she met Jesus?

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5. Imagine that you were the woman coming up to Jesus in the crowd and think about how she might have felt:

a) before she touched Jesus.

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b) after she touched Jesus.

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6. In verse 48, Jesus said, “My daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace”. What do you think he meant by this?

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7. What do you learn about Jesus from this story?

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8. Take turns to retell the story to your partner using your own English.

Jesus helped this woman when no one else could. Even today, Jesus helps people with all kinds of needs, especially spiritual, but also emotional and physical. He is looking for people who will reach out to him, and believe he has the power and compassion to help them.

28. Jesus Brings Jairus' Daughter Back to Life (Luke 8:40–42a, 49–56)

Introduction:

Today's story is about a man whose daughter was very sick, and then died. He was afraid that Jesus wouldn't be able to help her.

Warm up:

What things are you afraid of?

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What can you say to someone who is afraid? What is a helpful thing to say? What may not be helpful?

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Background to the story:

In the middle of today's story, Jesus stopped to help a woman who had been bleeding for twelve years. If you were here last time, take turns to tell the story of Jesus and this woman to your partner. (You could use pictures to help you remember).

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1. Read the story in *Luke 8:40–42a, 49–56*.

2. Were there any English words or phrases that you did not understand?

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3. How would you describe Jairus in the different parts of the story? Talk about his actions and how you think he was feeling.

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4. What did Jesus say to Jairus in verse 50? Explain this to your partner using your own English words.

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5. How did the people at the house respond to Jesus (see verses 52–53)? Why?

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6. Why do you think Jesus told the girl's parents to give her something to eat?

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7. How did the girl's parents respond when they saw what Jesus did? Explain this to your partner using your own English words.

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8. How would you describe Jesus in the different parts of the story? Talk about his actions and how you think he was feeling.

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9. What do you like about this story?

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10. Take turns to retell the story to your partner.

We can learn at least two things from this story. First, even when things seem to be going very wrong in our lives, God wants us to be patient and continue to trust him. He cares about us, and has complete power and authority to change events in the world, and in our lives. We can ask him to help us. Second, Jesus is even stronger than death, and our personal death will not be the end. There will be life after death. Then we will face God.

29. The Story or Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37)

Introduction:

Jesus was a great teacher who told stories that we call parables. These were stories from everyday life that Jesus made up to help people think about their relationship with God, and to encourage them to help other people. Our parable today is called the Parable of the Good Samaritan, and is one of Jesus' most famous parables. It is about a Samaritan, a person from Samaria, which was a country next to Israel. These people were hated by the Jews (people from Israel) who thought that all Samaritans were bad or evil. In their minds, there was no such person as a good Samaritan. However, in this story the Samaritan turns out to be the good guy and the hero. The story also includes two Jewish religious leaders: a priest and a Levite. Jesus' Jewish audience would have expected the priest and Levite to be the heroes in the story. However, these people turn out to be the bad people.

Warm up:

Can you think of a story, it could be from your own life, when someone you thought was a bad person turned out to be a good person, or someone you thought was a good person turned out to be a bad person? Divide into pairs, and share your story with your partner.

1. Some important words in the story:

Trap: A plan to trick someone (also a device used to catch animals, birds, or fish)

Teacher of the law: A Jewish religious leader who specialised in teaching the Old Testament

Eternal life: Means having a relationship with God as a friend in this life, and going to be with God in heaven after death

Scriptures: The Bible, or in this story, the first part of the Bible, that is the Old Testament

Justify: Means to make something seem acceptable, or right, or to make an excuse for something

The road from Jerusalem to Jericho: This was a well-known, busy road, but dangerous for travellers because of many robberies that happened on the way

Stripped: Means to take off clothes or some other covering

Priest and Levite: These were two different kinds of religious leaders, similar to ministers, or pastors in Australia

Samaritan: A person from Samaria, which was a country next to Israel. These people were hated by the Jews who thought that all Samaritans were evil

Pity: A feeling of sadness because of another person's trouble, or being emotionally moved because of another person's suffering

Wounds: An injury caused by some external force (can also be used of emotional injury)

Bandaged: To bandage means using some material (a bandage) to cover a wound or support an injury

2. Read the story in *Luke 10:25–37*.

3. Were there any English words or phrases that you did not understand?

4. Tell a short version of the story to your partner using your own English words.

5. Why do you think that the teacher of the law asked Jesus how he could find eternal life (see verse 25)?

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6. Why do you think that the teacher of the law asked Jesus who his neighbour was (see verse 29)?

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7. Imagine that you are a Jew living in Jesus' time. How might you have felt when you heard that the religious leaders did nothing to help the injured man, but instead walked past him on the other side of the road to avoid him? Share your ideas with your partner.

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8. In Jesus' story, the people you would have expected to help the injured man were the religious leaders. Can you think of any reasons or excuses as to why the religious leaders might have walked past the man in need, and not helped him? Share your ideas with your partner.

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9. Jesus' story strongly implies that the religious leaders just didn't care for the injured man. Why do good people today sometimes walk past and not help people in need? What excuses might they give for sometimes not helping people they meet who are in need?

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10. Jesus' story would have been a shocking story to his readers, because they heard that the good guys (the priest and the Levite) were bad, and the bad guy (the Samaritan) was good! What very good and important attitude toward the injured man did the good Samaritan have that the bad religious leaders didn't have (see verses 33 and 37)?

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11. Having compassion and caring for people in need usually costs us something. This might include money and time. What did it cost the Samaritan to help the man in need (see verses 34 and 35)?

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12. What is the answer to the teacher of the law's question, "Who is my neighbour?" (see verse 36).

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13. Jesus' story had one main message. What is the big lesson of the story?

30. The Story or Parable of the Rich Fool (Luke 12:13–21)

Introduction:

Jesus often taught about money and how we need to think wisely about it. He never said that it was wrong to be rich, but he warned about having the wrong attitude toward money and material things. Today's reading is one of Jesus' stories, called parables, about money, and about a very selfish rich man. It helps us to think about our attitude toward money.

Warm up:

Divide into pairs, and discuss the following questions with your partner:

- a) What are some of the advantages of being rich?

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- b) What are some of the disadvantages of being rich?

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Share some of your answers with the class. We will write them on the whiteboard

1. Some important words in the story:

Greed: This is the desire to have more and more of something, more than you really need. This could be wanting more money, more power, more food, or more of just about anything

Bore: This verb is the past tense of "to bear". It has various meanings, but in our story, it means to produce or grow food on a farm

Crops: Plants grown for food, usually on farms

Barns: Storage buildings on farms

Grains: Plant seeds that can be used for food. For example, wheat, rice and corn are all grains

Pile up: Putting a number of things one on top of another to make a pile. For example, to pile up dirt, or to pile up dirty clothes, or to pile up paper work

2. Read the story in *Luke 12:13–21*.

3. Were there any English words or phrases that you did not understand?

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4. Divide into pairs, and explain to your partner using your own English words what you think Jesus' words in verse 15 mean.

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5. What are some of the things in life that are much more important than money, possessions, and getting more and more of these? Make a list with your partner.

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6. Share your list with the class.

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7. Who and what was the focus of the rich man's life? With your partner, list the actions and attitudes of the rich man in Jesus' parable, and then think of adjectives that describe him. Discuss with your partner what you think about this man and his actions? Keep in mind verse 20.

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8. The rich man was materially rich, and very self-centred and selfish. However, he was spiritually poor, because he was greedy and only cared about himself. He did not care about other people. He didn't care about the poor, or about God. So, God punished him (verse 20). In verse 21, Jesus said that people who were like the rich man and were greedy for money, and didn't care about other people, would be punished. What is more important than being materially rich is to be spiritually rich, that is, "rich in God's sight". What do you think it might mean to be "rich in God's sight" (see verse 21)?

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9. If there is any time remaining, take turns in sharing with your partner what you think the meaning of the parable is.

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31. Jesus' Stories or Parables of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin (Luke 15:1–7; 15:8–10)

Introduction:

Jesus was friends with, and spent much of his time with, people who weren't very religious, and who did many bad things that upset the religious people of his time. The religious leaders could not understand why Jesus did this. Often, they were angry with Jesus and complained about him. They complained that Jesus even ate with people who weren't religious. In their culture, religious people would only eat with other religious people, just like themselves. Jesus answered these complaints from the religious leaders by telling them two stories or parables about people searching for valuable things that were lost.

Warm up:

Have you ever lost something or someone valuable to you, and then searched to try and find that valuable thing or person? Divide into pairs, and share your story with your partner.

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1. Some important words in the story:

Tax collectors: These people were Jews who collected very unfair and large taxes from their own people on behalf of the Roman government who ruled the Jews. They were also dishonest, and charged their own people even more than the Roman government asked them to. Naturally, most Jews thought that tax collectors were very bad people, and did not respect them

Outcasts: All kinds of people who did not keep the Jewish religious laws. These people were not religious, and were considered second class people by the religious people

Pharisees and teachers of the law: Jewish religious leaders

Grumbling: Complaining

Sinner: All people do things that offend God at times. Sometimes we do things that we know are wrong, and sometimes we don't do things that we know we should do. All these things are sins, so all people are sinners

Repent: This is about changing your mind, especially realising that you have done something wrong that offended God, that you are sorry for this, and don't want to do it again

Parable: A story that Jesus made up and told to teach a lesson or to explain something

Sheep: These were valuable animals who were cared for, and loved by, their keepers who were called shepherds. Shepherds knew all their sheep by name, and they would know if any of their sheep became lost

Pasture: Land or a field with grass where animals, like sheep or cows, eat and live

2. Read the parable of the lost sheep in *Luke 15:1–7*.

3. Were there any English words or phrases that you did not understand?

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4. In this parable, Jesus is like the man (a shepherd) who went searching for his lost sheep. The tax collectors and outcasts are like the lost sheep. They don't have a relationship with God.

What does the parable of the lost sheep tell us about why Jesus was a friend who welcomed tax collectors and outcasts, and ate with them? Share with your partner.

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5. What does the parable tell us about how God and Jesus feel when one lost sheep or sinner is found, that is, they repent, and come to have a friendship or personal relationship with God (verses 5–7)?

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6. Read the parable of the lost coin in *Luke 15:8–10*.

7. Both parables or stories have similar features and details. With your partner, make a list of things that are similar in both parables.

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8. The parable of the lost coin has a similar meaning to the parable of the lost sheep. Can you explain the meaning of the parable of the lost coin to your partner?

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These parables tell us why Jesus came into the world. He came into the world so that lost people might be found. That is, those who don't have a relationship or friendship with God, might come to have a friendship with God. Jesus showed people what God is like through his teaching and example. When people believe that Jesus is God's son, who died and came alive for them, and when they want to live their lives according to Jesus' teaching and example, then they have a true friendship or relationship with God.

32. The Story or Parable of the Lost Son (Luke 15:11–24)

Introduction:

Jesus told many stories called parables to help people understand God, and our relationship with him. These parables were everyday stories that Jesus made up about everyday situations, but they have special points to make. The Parable of the Lost Son is one of these stories. It is a story of a son who deeply offended his father.

Warm up:

To get our study started, do you know any sad stories of how sons or daughters may have badly upset or offended their parents? Divide into pairs and share your story with your partner.

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1. Some important words in the story:

Reckless: Acting without thought about how dangerous what you are doing might be, or about what might happen as a result of this action

Famine: A bad food shortage

Bean pod: The long narrow outer covering or case holding seeds of a plant, in this case, bean seeds

Pigs: For Jewish people, these animals were considered unclean, and they did not touch, or go near, or eat their meat. The son and his father in the story were Jews

Sinned: Means to have done something offensive to God or to another person

Pity: Means feeling strong emotions for someone who has suffered a bad experience. Similar words are compassion, kindness, sympathy and mercy

Robe: This is a piece of loose clothing worn over other clothes. Sometimes this can be ceremonial outer clothing, as worn by a king

Calf: This is a young cow

Feast: A large special meal often held to celebrate a special occasion, as in today's story

2. Read the story in *Luke 15:11–24*.

3. Were there any English words or phrases that you did not understand?

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4. Who are the main characters in the story?

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5. With your partner, make a list of the things that the youngest son did that offended and upset his father (see verses 12, 13 and 15).

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6. How do you think the father in the story might have felt when his son took half of the family inheritance and left home? Discuss with your partner.

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7. What caused the son to return home (see verses 14–17).

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8. Using your own English words, explain to your partner what the son said to his father when he returned home (see verse 21).

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9. In different cultures, fathers react differently to children who offend them very badly. In your culture, how would you have expected a father to react if his son had offended his father as badly as the son in the parable, and then wanted to return home?

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10. In first century Jewish culture, sons who badly offended their fathers were usually thrown out of the family permanently, and never forgiven, no matter what. The first hearers of Jesus' parable would have been surprised at how the father in Jesus' story responded to his lost son coming home. How did the father respond when his son returned home? List the father's actions and emotions when he saw his son return home (see verses 20–24).

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11. In the story, the father is like God, and the son is like many people. From the parable, what can we learn about God and his relationship to people who have offended him, and who are not in a relationship with him?

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12. In what way might people be like the lost son?

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God wants to include all people in his family. He wants to forgive us from all the things that we have done that have offended him (that is our sins), and he wants us to enjoy a friendship with him, similar to a relationship between a loving and forgiving father and a loving child. We can have this relationship by believing in Jesus, by telling God that we are sorry for offending him, and that we want to live our lives in relationship with him and to please him. When we do that, we have a friendship or relationship with God, and God and all heaven celebrates, just like in the parable.

33. Jesus Heals Ten Men (Luke 17:11–19)

Warm up:

Can you think of a time when you did something very special for someone else but were disappointed because they did not thank you for what you did for them? If you can't think of such a story, describe how you might feel if you did a good deed for someone, which cost you a lot of time, money, and energy, but the person was not thankful for your efforts.

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Introduction:

In first century Israel, there was an infectious or very contagious skin disease called leprosy (called a skin disease in our story). There was no medical treatment for this disease, and naturally no one wanted to come near people with the disease. Usually, these people were not able to work, were forced to live in groups separate from the rest of society, and had to beg for food to eat. They were also forced to call out, "Unclean, unclean!" whenever anyone came near them. This was to prevent the spread of the disease. If someone was healed from this disease, they had to have an examination by the priest. The priest acted like a doctor, and if he said a person was healed, then the person could re-join society and live a normal life again. Our story today is about Jesus healing some people with leprosy.

1. Some important words in the story:

Border: The invisible line between two countries or areas

Dreaded: An adjective meaning terrible and feared

Pity: A similar word is compassion, and it means you feel sorry for someone because they are in trouble

Examine: To look at something carefully

Foreigner: A person who comes from another country

2. Read the story in *Luke 17:11–19*.

3. Were there any English words or phrases that you did not understand?

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4. Divide into pairs and take turns to retell the story.

5. Imagine that you were one of the men that Jesus miraculously healed from the skin disease. Describe to your partner how you might feel. Start your sentence with "*I would have felt...*"

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6. Jesus healed ten men, but only one came back and thanked Jesus for healing him. What do you think about the attitude of the men who were healed, but didn't say thank you to Jesus? Share with your partner. Start your sentence with "*I think he was...*"

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7. The man who said thank you to Jesus was a Samaritan, a person hated by most Jews, and who had a different religion to the Jews. Jesus, God's son, was a Jew, and yet he did a good deed for the Samaritan and healed him. What does this tell us about Jesus (and God)?

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The Bible often tells people to be thankful to God for the good things he does for us. God does good things for people because he loves and cares for all people.

In the Old Testament, in Psalm 145: 8–9, we read:

⁸ The LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

⁹ The LORD is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made.

While God does good things for all people because he loves and cares about them, he also wants people to say thank you for the good things he does. A number of Psalms in the Old Testament tell people to give thanks to God, for example:

Psalm 105:1

O give thanks to the LORD; call upon his name; make known his deeds among the peoples!

Psalm 106:1

Praise the LORD! O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!

The New Testament also tells people to give thanks to God for what he has done, for example:

Ephesians 5:20

...giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

8. Think back over the last year or so. What are ten good things that happened to you that you are most thankful for?

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|---------|----------|
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| 3 | 4 |
| 5 | 6 |
| 7 | 8 |
| 9 | 10 |

If you feel comfortable, share some of these things with your partner, and then the whole class.

9. Are there some people that you haven't thanked, or wish to thank again, for things they have done for you? What are some ways to thank people? If you would like to, take a thank you card, and write a thank you note to someone.

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10. When you go home, you might like to say, "Thank you," to God for the good things that have happened to you over the last year.

34. Jesus and the Tax Collector, Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1–10)

Introduction:

Tax collectors are not popular people in any society or culture. Nobody likes tax collectors! In Israel, at the time of Jesus, tax collectors were not only unpopular, but usually very bad people, and were hated by everyone. They collected taxes from their own people for the Roman rulers (government), whom the Jews hated. Therefore, the people considered tax collectors to be traitors. Tax collectors usually cheated people by collecting more taxes than they needed to, and kept the extra money for themselves. No person in Israel would want to spend time with, or eat a meal with a tax collector, because you only spent time with and had meals with friends. Jesus was different. He wanted to go to Zacchaeus' house to spend time with him, to have a meal with a tax collector, and be a tax collector's friend!

Warm up:

Divide into pairs with someone from a different country to you. Share with your partner who the people in your home country are that no one wants to spend time with, or would not share a meal with?

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Would it be hard for you to have a meal with these kinds of people? Why would it be so hard to have a meal with them? Share your answers with your partner.

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1. Read the story in *Luke 19:1–10*.
2. Were there any English words or phrases that you did not understand?

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3. Talk with a partner, and using your own English words, give a description of Zacchaeus before he met Jesus. Include everything you can learn about him from the story, and from what you have learned about first century tax collectors. See verses 2, 3, 4 and 7.

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4. Share your findings with the class. Write these on the whiteboard.

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5. In verse 7, we read that the crowd was not happy about Jesus wanting to go and spend time as Zacchaeus' guest at his home and to eat with him. What do you think of the idea of Jesus spending time with bad people, and wanting to be their friends? What does this tell us about Jesus? Share with your partner.

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6. Jewish stories like our story today do not give us all the details of what happened. We often have to use our imaginations to understand all the details of the story. We don't know what Jesus said to Zacchaeus when they spent time together. However, verse 8 tells us that after he met Jesus, Zacchaeus was a changed man who believed in Jesus. From verse 8, describe the new Zacchaeus after he met Jesus. Talk with your partner.

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7. Share your findings about the new Zacchaeus with the class. Write them on the whiteboard.

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8. Because Zacchaeus worked for the Romans, the Jews considered him to be a traitor, and not a real Jew. In verse 9, Jesus said that because the new Zacchaeus wanted to be fair to people and care for the poor, God would not judge him for the bad things he had done. Jesus said that "salvation" had come to him, and he was now a "descendent of Abraham". This meant that Zacchaeus was no longer a traitor but, like Abraham, was a true Jew and a man of faith in God. Today, meeting Jesus still changes people's lives if we allow him to. If you have got to know Jesus better, has he changed your life in any way?

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9. What lessons can we learn from Jesus' example in this story? Share with your partner, and then with the class.

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35. The Last Meal of Jesus with His Disciples, and the Lord's Supper (Luke 22:14–20)

Introduction:

The Lord's Supper, or Communion, is the special part of Christian worship specifically given to Christians by Jesus himself. Other parts of Christian worship come from the Bible, but weren't given to Christians directly by Jesus. Jesus gave the Lord's Supper to his disciples, and commanded them to celebrate it. All this makes Communion the central, and most important part of Christian worship.

Warm up:

List and describe some of the various ways people of different religions worship. What rituals and activities do they have? Discuss with a partner, and then share with the whole class.

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Background to the story:

The first Lord's Supper was actually the Last Supper, or meal, Jesus had with his disciples before his death and resurrection. The background to the Last Supper is the Jewish "Passover". The Passover was one of the most important worship events on the Jewish religious calendar. More than 1000 years before Jesus was born, God rescued the Jewish people's ancestors from slavery in Egypt. Each year, they remembered and celebrated this by sacrificing lambs and other animals at their temple, and eating them as part of a special meal. During the meal, they remembered and retold the story of how God rescued them, and they gave thanks to God.

Jesus was a Jew and at his last meal with his disciples, and just before he was crucified (killed by being nailed to a wooden cross), Jesus celebrated the Jewish Passover with them. At the same time, he gave his followers a new way to worship, which Christians call the Lord's Supper or Communion. For Christians, this was to replace the celebration of the Passover. Instead of a lamb being killed for the people's sins, Jesus himself would be a new, once only, sacrifice that would replace the sacrifice of the lambs and other sacrifices that were made in the Old Testament. For this reason, Jesus is sometimes called the "Lamb of God" in the Bible.

1. Some important words in the story

Suffer: This is talking about Jesus' painful death on a cross

Covenant: An agreement or contract made between people, similar to a promise

Son of man: A name Jesus used to talk about himself

My blood which is poured out for you: Means Jesus' death on the cross

Kingdom of God: This can mean that God is king in someone's heart, and that person does the things God wants them to do. But, in this story it means that Jesus is coming again to the earth where he will be king in a physical sense. When this happens, all people will recognise and worship Jesus as the king of all kings

In memory: Means to remember

Sealed: Means to make official, or to finalise

2. Read the story in *Luke 22:14–20*.

3. Were there any English words or phrases that you did not understand?

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4. In verse 19, Jesus told his disciples, “Do this in memory of me”. He especially wanted his disciples to remember his death, by celebrating the Lord’s Supper. Discuss with your partner why you think Jesus especially wanted his disciples to remember his death?
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5. At the Last Supper, and the Lord’s Supper or Communion, the bread and the wine remained bread and wine and are symbols of Jesus and his actions. Read verse 19. What do you think the symbols of bread and wine mean?
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6. Jesus’ death and resurrection are the most important things Christians give thanks to God for. At the Passover, the Jews remembered and gave thanks to God for rescuing them from slavery. For Christians, the Lord’s Supper replaced the Passover. At the Lord’s Supper, Christians remember, celebrate, and give thanks to God for several things:

- Remember Jesus, especially his death.
- Remember and celebrate God’s great love for them in sending his son Jesus, to die for us.
- Remember and give thanks that Jesus’ sacrifice made it possible for God to forgive our sins, and to give us friendship with God in this life, and later to live with him forever in heaven.
- Remember and celebrate that all Christians are part of God’s special family because of what Jesus did on the cross, and their belief in him.
- Remember and celebrate that Jesus is alive and with us today, and that one day, Jesus will return to earth.
- Remember that, like Jesus, Christians are to live sacrificial lives caring for all people, forgiving people, and helping others.
- Feel happy and celebrate because Jesus is alive and loves us so much.
- Give praise and thanks to God for his love, for all he has done especially giving us eternal life, that is, a relationship with God now in this life, and forever in the next life with God in heaven.

7. Take turns in explaining briefly to your partner, using your own English words, what happened at the Last Supper, and what the meaning of the Lord’s Supper or Communion is. Don’t worry if you don’t give every detail, just a summary of the important things is enough.
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36. Jesus Forgives (John 8:1–11)

Introduction:

Jesus taught his followers to always forgive others. He himself practiced this. Our story today is about Jesus forgiving a woman who had had sex with a man who was not her husband. In first century Israel, this was a crime that was punishable by being put to death.

Warm up:

In your country of origin, is it illegal for people to have sex with anyone other than their husband or wife? If so, what punishment is given to people who do this? Divide into pairs and discuss these questions with your partner.

1. Some important words in the story:

The temple: Jews in the first century used two kinds of building for their worship, and the most common one was the synagogue. These were found in most Jewish cities. There was also the temple which was located in the capital city of Jerusalem

Adultery: Means to have sex with someone who is not your husband or wife

Teachers of the law and Pharisees: These were Jewish religious leaders, similar to Christian ministers or pastors today

Trap: A device used to catch animals, but in our story used to try to catch or trick Jesus. The religious leaders wanted to show that Jesus was a bad teacher, not wise, and not from God

Sin: To do something that offends God or to do something bad

Stoned to death: A way of putting criminals to death by throwing stones at them until they died

Condemn: Means to judge or decide that someone needs to be punished, or to say strongly that someone or something is very bad

2. Today's story is from *John 8:1–11*. We will read the story in parts, so we need a narrator (storyteller), the religious leaders (teachers of the law), Jesus, and the woman.

Narrator: ¹Then everyone went home, but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. ²Early the next morning he went back to the Temple. All the people gathered around him, and he sat down and began to teach them. ³The teachers of the Law and the Pharisees brought in a woman who had been caught committing adultery, and they made her stand before them all.

Teachers of the law: ⁴"Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. ⁵In our Law Moses commanded that such a woman must be stoned to death. Now, what do you say?"

Narrator: ⁶They said this to trap Jesus, so that they could accuse him. But he bent over and wrote on the ground with his finger. ⁷As they stood there asking him questions, he straightened up and said to them,

Jesus: "Whichever one of you has committed no sin may throw the first stone at her."

Narrator: ⁸Then he bent over again and wrote on the ground. ⁹When they heard this, they all left, one by one, the older ones first. Jesus was left alone, with the woman still standing there. ¹⁰He straightened up and said to her,

Jesus: "Where are they? Is there no one left to condemn you?"

Woman: ¹¹"No one, sir,"

Jesus: "Well, then, I do not condemn you either. Go, but do not sin again."

3. In what way do you think that the religious leaders were trying to trap Jesus (verses 3 and 4)?
Talk about this question with your partner.

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4. In verse 7, Jesus told the religious leaders that the one who had never done anything sinful or wrong should be the one to throw the first stone at the woman. Then he bent over and wrote something on the ground that only the leaders could see. Remember that Jesus was God's son, and he knew what people were thinking. Imagine what Jesus might have written on the ground. Share what you think with your partner and then the class.

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5. Why do you think that none of the religious leaders were prepared to throw the first stone to punish the woman?

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6. The whole story tells us a lot about Jesus. What do we learn about Jesus from the story, especially thinking about verse 11? Share with your partner.

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7. What do you think about this story? Take a few minutes to discuss with your partner, and then share with the whole group.

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This story reminds us that God, who is like his son Jesus, wants to forgive people for all the things that they do that offend him, that is, our sins. However, he also wants us to stop doing the things that upset him. To have a real friendship with God, we need to be sorry for the sins we have done, accept God's forgiveness, and want to stop offending God by sinning or offending him.

37. Who is Jesus? (John 8:51–59; John 20:24–31)

Introduction:

Today, our Bible stories are about how Jesus describes who he was and is. Jesus lived about two thousand years ago in Israel. Sometimes he told people who he was. On one occasion, Jesus told the

Jewish religious leaders that he was God’s son or put another way, God the Son.

Warm up:

Who are you? How would you describe yourself? What kinds of things are you interested in?

Where did you grow up, in a big city, or small town, or in the countryside? What about your relationships to others (married/single, parents, children), and your occupation or training? Divide into pairs, and explain to your partner who you are.

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The things Jesus did, and the stories he told, help us to understand something about who Jesus is. Tell your partner one of the stories that you know from Jesus’ life, and what the story tells you about Jesus.

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1. Some important words in the story:

Jews: People who come from Israel and worship the God of the Bible

Demon: An evil spirit. Evil spirits caused people to say or to do bad or evil things

Abraham: This man lived about 1,900 years before Jesus. He was considered the father of the Jewish nation

Prophets: Men and woman who were sent by God to speak a message from him to people. Much of the Old Testament, the first part of the Bible, contains the words of prophets

Liar: Someone who does not tell the truth. A very strong word

I Am: This was a famous name that God called himself in the Old Testament. It was the name he used to introduce himself to Moses, one of God’s most famous leaders in the Old Testament

Picked up stones to throw at him: This was a common way of killing criminals in first century Israel

The temple: The most important Jewish religious building and place of worship

2. Read the story in *John 8:51–59*.

3. Were there any English words or phrases that you did not understand?

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4. What did Jesus mean when he said, “Before Abraham was born, I Am” (verse 58)? Discuss with your partner.

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5. Why did the Jews pick up stones to throw at Jesus (verse 59)? Discuss with your partner.

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6. Take turns to tell and explain the story to your partner, using your own English words.

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Our next Bible story happened just after Jesus was killed and came alive again (or rose from the dead). It is about Jesus' appearance to one of his followers, Thomas, who had trouble believing that Jesus had come alive again after being dead. Thomas was the first of Jesus' followers to understand and believe that Jesus was really God the Son.

7. Some important words in the story:

Disciples: Followers of Jesus

Lord: Means leader or master, and is also used as a name for God

Scars: Marks left on a person's skin after they have been cut or injured. Jesus had scars from the nails that were put into his hands and a spear that was put into his side when he was killed

My Lord and my God: These were words of worship. No Jew would ever accept these words used of themselves, except Jesus, who considered himself to be God the Son

8. Read the story in *John 20:24–29*.

9. Were there any English words or phrases that you did not understand?

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10. When Thomas saw that Jesus was alive, he bowed down and worshipped Jesus, and said "My Lord and my God" (verse 28). What was Jesus' response to this? What does this tell us about who Jesus thought that he was?

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11. Use your own English words to tell and explain the story to your partner.

From Jesus' powerful miracles and teaching, the way Jesus cared and helped all people, and what Jesus said about himself, the writer of John believed that Jesus was God, God the Son. He wanted all people to know about Jesus, and come to believe in him, so that they might have "life".

12. Read *John 20:30–31*. "Life" means having a personal relationship with God. Christianity is essentially about having a personal relationship with God; that is, knowing and enjoying him as a friend, making him leader of your life and living your life to please your friend God.

38. Jesus Brings His Dead Friend Lazarus Back to Life (John 11:1–48)

Warm up:

In your culture or home country, what happens at funerals and to the bodies of the dead? Divide into pairs, and share your answer with your partner.

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Background to the story:

In ancient Jewish culture, when a person died, their body was wrapped in cloth together with special perfumes and spices, and buried in a tomb. Tombs are caves or special small rooms where dead people are placed.

1. Some important words in the story:

Glory: This means honour

Judea: The region in which the town of Bethany was situated

Disciples: Followers of Jesus

Lord: This means leader or master, and was also the name of God

Resurrection: This noun is the raising of someone who was dead back to life. The ancient Jewish people believed that one day God would raise good people back to life at a time when God came and lived on earth. This time was called the “last day”

Life: When Jesus used the word life, he meant “eternal life”. Eternal life is having a friendship with God in this life, and going to live with God in heaven in the next life

2. Read the story in *John 11:1–16*.

3. Were there any English words or phrases that you did not understand?
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4. In pairs, and using your own English words, give the reasons why Jesus did not go immediately to Bethany and heal his sick friend (verses 4 and 15).
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5. What concerns did Jesus’ disciples have about Jesus going to Judea (verses 8 and 16)? Discuss with your partner.
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6. With your partner, take turns to retell the story (up until verse 16). You don’t have to give all the details, just what you think are the important points.

7. Read some more of the story in *John 11:17–27*.

8. Were there any English words or phrases that you did not understand?

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9. What do you think Jesus was saying in verse 25? Discuss with your partner.

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10. What did Martha believe about Jesus (verse 20 and 27)?

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11. Read more of the story in *John 11:28–37*.

12. Were there any English words or phrases that you did not understand?

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13. What do you think about Jesus crying in public (verses 33–35)? Do men do this in your culture? Share with your partner.

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14. Read more of the story in *John 11:38–45*.

15. Were there any English words or phrases that you did not understand?

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16. With your partner answer the question: Why do you think that Jesus did not go and immediately heal Lazarus, but waited until he was dead and then raised him to life (verse 40–42)?

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Share with the class what you think about the whole story.

39. Jesus' Teaching About Doing Humble Service for Others (John 13:1, 3–9, 12–17)

Introduction:

Jesus was a great teacher who always helped people by serving them in all kinds of ways. Our story today is about Jesus serving and teaching his followers (disciples). Jesus performed a humble act of service for his disciples that nobody else wanted to do. He washed their feet.

Warm up:

Divide into pairs. If possible, find a partner from a different country to you. Discuss questions a, b, and c.

a) In your country, are there any kinds of work a leader would never do?

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b) In your home country, are there some kinds of work that men would never do because they think that it is women's work, or they are too proud to do? Are there some kinds of work that women would not do, or are too proud to do?

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c) What kind of work do you dislike doing the most, and why?

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Background to the story:

In this story, Jesus washed his disciples' feet. After doing this, he said to his disciples (who would be future leaders of the Church), "Wash one another's feet". This story is especially important because it includes some of the last words of Jesus to his disciples (followers) before his death and coming alive after death (resurrection). To understand the story, we need to understand what foot washing was in the first century. In Israel at that time, everyone wore sandals, and walking on rough and dusty roads was the most common way to travel. When a person arrived at their host's house, they usually had dirty and sweaty feet. To freshen up and clean up, a slave or servant would wash the feet of the traveller. This was considered a bad and dirty job, and no one wanted to do this work. Only the lowest slave in the house would do this, and only because he or she had to. Washing someone's feet was considered a very humble job. The owner of the house, or the host of a meal, would never do this himself as this was not the kind of job that a successful person would do.

1. Some important words in the story:

Passover festival: An important Jewish religious celebration

Outer garment: An item of clothing that was worn over other clothing

Basin: A large bowl for water

Lord: A name given to Jesus that means master or leader

2. Read the story in *John 13:1, 3–9, 12–17*.

3. Were there any English words or phrases that you did not understand?

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4. Verse 14 says, “You then should wash one another’s feet”. This explains the meaning of the story. Describe using your own English words what foot washing stands for.

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5. With your partner, make a list of other kinds of humble service (similar to foot washing) that Jesus’ followers, including Christian leaders, should do for one another and other people as an expression of their love and care for people?

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6. Using your own English words, explain what this story means.

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7. Take turns to retell the story, and explain its meaning to your partner.

40. The Church, God's Family (Acts 2:41–47)

Introduction: In English, the word “church” can mean a Christian building where God is worshipped. The same word can also mean a group of Christian people, whose relationship to one another is similar to the relationships within a good loving family.

Warm up:

Take a few minutes to make a list of all the benefits of being part of a human family.

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Take turns to tell the group one benefit of being in a good, loving family. Write these on the whiteboard.

Most of these benefits are similar to being in God's family, the Church. The Church is God's special family. When a person believes in Jesus, and trusts in God, they come into a special relationship with God. He becomes like a father to them, and they become his sons and daughters. At the same time, they also come into a special relationship with others who also believe in Jesus and know God as their heavenly father. Christians are like brothers and sisters who are part of the same spiritual family. “Brothers and sisters” was a common way Christians referred to each other in the Bible. Every family has its rules. Jesus gave a special rule to God's family. He said to his followers, “Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another” (John 13:34). When Jesus used the word love, it meant: to be compassionate toward, to help and care for, to do good things for, and serve the needs of others.

Can you remember some of the ways that Jesus loved and helped his disciples and other people?

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1. Some important words in the story

Were baptised: Christians get baptised as a sign that they have believed in Jesus, and that they are Christians and are part of God's family. When someone is baptised, they are usually put under water or have lots of water thrown over them. Some Christians sprinkle with water.

Apostles: The twelve apostles were the first Christian leaders. They were the twelve disciples who spent three years with Jesus when he lived on earth

Fellowship: Another word for fellowship is community. It is to do with a group of people sharing something in common. The Christians shared a common belief in Jesus and his teachings. They shared being part of God's special family the Church

Awe: Means a sense of amazement, wonder and respect, mixed with a feeling of personal smallness and powerlessness

Good will: Feeling positive and friendly toward other people or another person

The temple: the large and very special Jewish worship building that was in Jerusalem at that time

Humble: This is to do with showing respect to other people, not being selfish or proud and not thinking that you are better than other people

2. Read the story in *Acts 2:41–47*.

3. Are there any English words or phrases that you don't understand?

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4. List some things that this first Christian Church family did together and for each other. There are at least 6 things.

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

6)

5. You can see that God's family, the Church, is meant to be like a very caring family, whose members love and care for one another. In verse 41, we read about how people became members of God's family, the Church. From reading this verse, what is necessary to become part of God's special family?

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6. Find a partner and discuss with them what you thought about today's story.

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41. God the Shepherd: Psalm 23

Introduction:

Psalm 23 is a poem about God, and people who trust in him. In the poem, God is like a person who cares for sheep, that is a shepherd, and people who have faith in God are like the sheep.

Warm up:

Did you study or learn any poems at school?

What livestock (animals on farms) is raised or grown in your country?

What do you know about sheep? What are they like? Describe the characteristics of sheep.

In your home country, who looks after sheep, and how are they cared for?

Background to the poem:

During the time of the Bible, shepherds cared for sheep. Shepherds knew their sheep's names, and cared for their sheep individually. Shepherds protected their sheep from wild animals, and made sure that they had the best grass to eat and plenty of water to drink. Shepherds had two important tools that they used to help them care for their sheep. The first tool was a "rod", which was a heavy piece of wood that was used as a weapon to protect sheep from wild animals. The second tool was a "staff", which was a longer stick sometimes with a bend at one end. This was used to help support a sheep, or even to rescue a sheep caught in bushes or fallen down a crack in rocks.

In the Bible, God is often compared to a shepherd. This psalm was written by King David, the most famous Jewish or Israeli king, who lived about 1000 years before Jesus. David wrote lots of poems (psalms). David was a shepherd before he became a king.

1. Read *Psalm 23*. Remember that the Psalms are poems, so each word is not meant to be taken literally. Many words in poetry are figures of speech or idioms.

The LORD is my shepherd;

I have everything I need.

² He lets me rest in fields of green grass
and leads me to quiet pools of fresh water.

³ He gives me new strength.

He guides me in the right paths,
as he has promised.

⁴ Even if I go through the deepest darkness,
I will not be afraid, LORD,
for you are with me.

Your shepherd's rod and staff protect me.

⁵ You prepare a banquet for me,
where all my enemies can see me;
you welcome me as an honoured guest
and fill my cup to the brim.

⁶ I know that your goodness and love will be with me all my life;
and your house will be my home as long as I live.

2. Without trying to understand the meaning of the poem, were there any English words or phrases that you did not understand?

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3. In your English own words, what does God the good shepherd do for his sheep?

Verses 1–3

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Verse 4

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Verses 5–6

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.....

In the New Testament Jesus said, “I am the good shepherd, who is willing to die for the sheep” (John 10:11). Jesus the shepherd showed how much he loved us by dying on the cross, so that everyone who believes in him might have their sins forgiven, and know God as their own shepherd.

42. Easter Series 1 ~ Jesus Rides into Jerusalem on a Donkey (Luke 19:28–40)

Introduction:

Our story today is about Jesus coming into Jerusalem just before the first Easter. On this occasion, for the first time, Jesus publicly allowed the people to say that he was a king, and to praise and honour him as king. The Old Testament (the first half of the Bible) said that one day God would send his special king, the Messiah, into the world. Now, hundreds of years later, as Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, he was symbolically saying that he was this king. When he rode into town on the donkey many people remembered a part of the Old Testament that said, “Shout for joy, you people of Jerusalem! Look your king is coming to you ...riding on a donkey” (Zechariah 9:9). Remembering this, the people shouted and welcomed Jesus their king with great joy.

Warm up:

Have you ever been part of crowd who welcomed a prime minister, or a president, or a queen or king, or famous person to your city? Divide into pairs and describe your experience to your partner.

1. Some important words in the story:

Master: Leader, or boss

Praise: To say words that show admiration or approval of someone

Cloaks: Outer clothes, a bit like coats

Glory: This is honour and admiration given to God in praise

Disciples: Followers of Jesus

Pharisees: Jewish religious leaders who did not like Jesus because they felt threatened by him and were jealous of him. Most of them opposed Jesus and the things that he taught and did

2. Read the story in *Luke 19:28–40*.

3. Were there any English words or phrases that you did not understand?

4. Divide into pairs, and take turns telling the story to your partner using your own English words.

5. Read verses 30 and 36. Discuss these questions with your partner:

Who was the first person to ride on this donkey?

What might this tell you about Jesus?

6. Verse 37 says the people thanked and praised God for all the great things they had seen. What other great things do you know about or remember that Jesus did or said? Share with your partner.

7. As a group, pretend that you are the crowd in the story, and together shout the words the people shouted in verse 38.

8. Who wanted to stop the shouting (see verse 39)?

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9. List reasons why the Jewish religious leaders might have wanted to stop people welcoming Jesus as king. Discuss these with your partner.

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10. At the time of Jesus, most kings who rode into Jerusalem would have ridden on powerful war horses. There would have been bands playing, many flags, a whole lot of officials dressed up in their best clothes, and hundreds of their soldiers would have followed them. With your partner, make a list of what was different about Jesus' entry into the city as king.

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11. Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. What does this tell us about the kind of king he is?

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Jesus taught his followers, "Happy are those who work for peace. God will call them his children" (Matthew 5:9). He also said, "Love your enemies and do good to those who hate you" (Luke 6:27). He taught his followers to love, serve, help, and forgive all people. He wants his followers and all people to be like him; people of peace, love, forgiveness, and service.

In the end, Jesus' ride into Jerusalem was one of the final things that caused the Jewish religious leaders to kill Jesus by having him crucified. Jesus knew this would happen. Looking at this another way, Jesus' ride into Jerusalem brought about his own death! Jesus described his mission on earth as a mission of service and helping others. It was a mission that would end up with him dying to pay the price for all the things that people might have done that offended God.

Jesus was a servant king who really cared for his people. Jesus did not come to be served. Instead, he came to serve others. He came to give his life as the price for setting many people free (Mark 10:45). In dying and paying the price for the things we do that offend God (that is our sins) Jesus, the peaceful servant king, made it possible for all who believe in him to enjoy eternal life and become part of Jesus' kingdom of peace. Eternal life is to enjoy friendship with God in this life, and forever in heaven in the next life. Jesus said, "God loved the people of this world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who has faith in him will have eternal life and never really die" (John 3:16).

43. *Easter Series 2 ~ The Crucifixion of Jesus [Part A] (John 19:1–16)*

Introduction:

Today we will study a passage from the New Testament that tells us about Jesus trial before a judge. The judge was the Roman governor, Pilate. A trial is a legal examination in a court of law to decide whether a person committed a crime or not. At a trial, the judge will usually say whether the person accused of a crime is guilty or not guilty. A person who has committed a crime is called guilty, and a person who has not committed a crime is called not guilty.

Jesus was not guilty of any crime. Even though Jesus never committed any crime, his trial led to his death by crucifixion. Crucifixion was a very painful and cruel form of punishment used by the Romans. They crucified people by nailing them to a wooden cross, and leaving them to die. This punishment was only given to the worst criminals, especially those who were part of rebellions. With many famous people there is a celebration of their birth and the things they did during their lifetimes. However, with Jesus, the New Testament writers spent as much time writing about his death, his coming back to life, and the events leading up to this, as they did about the rest of his amazing life. Christians consider Jesus' death and his coming back to life very central and important to his story. For Christians, the cross is their most important Christian symbol because it reminds them of what is most important, Jesus' death and coming back to life.

Warm up:

Have you ever been to a trial in court, or watched a movie that included a trial? From your experience or imagination, describe how it might feel if you were a person on trial for a serious crime that you did not commit. Find a partner and share with them.

Background to the story:

At the time of Jesus, the Jewish people did not govern their own country, but were ruled by the Romans. Pilate was the Roman governor who ruled Jerusalem. The Romans charged very unfair taxes and the Jews were not free in their own country. Because of this, the Jews hated the Romans. The Jews did have their own leaders, chief priests, but these were accountable to Pilate and Roman laws. Jesus never did anything wrong to deserve being punished. He always only ever loved, cared for, served and helped all people. He was an innocent man.

1. Some important words in the story:

Thorny: An adjective from the noun, thorn. A thorn is a sharp spike that grows on a plant. Rose plants have thorns and therefore they are thorny plants

Robe: A piece of outer clothing, like a coat, which was used to keep warm. Often special robes were worn by kings

Slapped: To hit someone with an open hand

Condemn: In a law court, to state that someone has done wrong, and to announce a punishment

Crucify: This is a verb from the noun, crucifixion

Emperor: A king who rules many nations and lands

2. Read the first part of the story in *John 19:1–16*.

3. Were there any English words or phrases that you did not understand?

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4. With your partner, make a list of the people who caused Jesus to be nailed to the cross (see verses 4, 6, 7, 12, and 16).

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5. Who did Jesus consider most responsible (see verse 11b)?

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6. Why do you think that the religious leaders and the crowds (who were Jewish) wanted to crucify Jesus? Read verse 7, and think of any other reasons not given in this verse.

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7. Why did Pilate give the order to crucify Jesus (see verses 12 and 15)?

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8. Take turns to tell the story to your partner using your own English words.

9. Discuss with your partner what kind of man you think Pilate was?

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10. Share with your partner your own feelings and personal responses to the story so far? Was there any part of the story that was especially interesting to you?

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11. Share your feelings and thoughts about the story with the class.

44. *Easter Series 3 ~ The Crucifixion of Jesus [Part B] (John 19:16b–27)*

Introduction:

Last week we studied Part A of the story of Jesus' crucifixion. Today we continue to read the story of Jesus' trial before the Roman governor, Pilate.

Warm up:

Jesus was killed by crucifixion. This was a terrible form of punishment given to the worst criminals. In your home country what are the worst forms of punishment given to criminals? Divide into pairs and discuss with your partner.

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1. Some important words in the story:

Pilate: The name of the Roman governor in charge of Jerusalem at that time

Crucified: This is the past tense of the verb, crucify. It means to kill by attaching a person with nails to a wooden cross

Robe: A piece of outer clothing, like a coat, which was used to keep warm. Often special robes were worn by kings

Woven: An adjective describing something, often clothing, made by weaving many strands or threads of material together

Cloth: Material that clothes are made from

Seams: In this story, seams is plural for joins in a piece of cloth

Tear: To tear something means to rip it apart forcefully

Dice: These are small cubes with numbers on each side used to gamble or play games with

Scripture: This is another name for the Bible. Here it means the Old Testament, the first part of the Bible

2. Read the second part of the story in *John 19:16b–27*.

3. Were there any English words or phrases that you did not understand?

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4. Divide into pairs, and with you partner, discuss and answer the following questions:

- a. Who were the disciples who stayed or remained with Jesus at the cross (see verses 25 and 26)?
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- b. What do you notice about this list of disciples?
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- c. What do you think about the fact that all Jesus' other disciples didn't stay with Jesus as he died?

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- d. What do you think about the disciples who stayed with Jesus?

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- 5. What do verses 25-27 tell us about Jesus?

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- 6. What did you find most interesting in this part of the story?

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- 7. Take turns to tell the whole story, including Part A, to your partner.

45. *Easter Series 4* ~ The Crucifixion of Jesus [Part C] (John 19:28–37)

Refresher:

Divide into pairs and take turns to tell the story about Jesus' crucifixion from our previous Bible studies.

1. Some important words in the story:

Scriptures: This is another name for the Bible. Here it means the Old Testament, the first part of the Bible

Sponge: A material that soaks up liquid and is often used for cleaning. Many people use sponges in the kitchen or the bathroom

Stalk of hyssop: Hyssop is the name of a plant. A stalk is the stem of a plant that supports flowers or seeds at the end of the stalk

Sabbath: This is Saturday, the Jewish holy day. It is similar to the Christians' Sunday

Plunged: This is the past tense of the verb, plunge. It means to push something quickly or firmly into something else. Jesus had a spear plunged into his side

Pierced: A similar verb to plunged. It means to push through something with a sharp object. Jesus' head was pierced with a crown of thorns, his hands and feet were pierced with nails, and his side was pierced with a spear

2. Read the story in *John 19:28–37*.

3. Were there any English words or phrases that you did not understand?

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4. Just before Jesus died, he let out a cry of celebration and triumph, "It is finished!" (verse 30). What does this cry tell us about Jesus and how he understood his death?

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5. What was the ultimate and final cause of Jesus' death (see verse 30b)?

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6. Talk with your partner about which details or parts of the trial and crucifixion story you found most moving, or interesting, or significant?

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7. Take turns to retell as much as you can remember of Jesus' crucifixion story to your partner.

46. *Easter Series 5 ~ The Meaning of Jesus' Death* (John 15:13; Mark 10:45; John 3:16)

Introduction:

Jesus' death was partly to show how much he loved people.

Warm up:

Has any person, maybe a special friend or family member, ever done something costly or very special for you, to show you just how much they love you? Divide into pairs and share your experiences with your partner.

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Background to the story:

Jesus' death was not just a sad story about a great man who was innocent, suffering a terrible death by crucifixion. It was not just a story to do with the jealousy and hatred of the religious leaders. It was not just a story about a Roman governor, Pilate, who was a coward, and who ordered an innocent man to be killed just to keep the crowds happy. All this is true, but there is another part to the story. Jesus saw his death as the most important part of his mission from God, and something that was written about hundreds of years before in the Old Testament. Jesus told his disciples that he would die a long time before it happened. When Jesus was dying on the cross, he said, "It is finished". This was a statement of success. By this he meant that, now he had been crucified, his mission was finished.

1. Jesus himself explained the meaning of his death in a number of different ways, on a number of different occasions. One occasion was the night before he was crucified. Read *John 15:13*.

2. Discuss with your partner. What do you think Jesus meant by these words?

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3. Before his death Jesus told his disciples that he would suffer and die. He explained the reason in *Mark 10:45*. Two import words or phrases in this passage are:

Son of Man: This was a name Jesus used to refer to himself

Redeem: Means to pay a price to set someone or something free. In the first century, slaves could save up money and pay a price so that they would go free. Or a friend could pay a price so that they could go free. In modern English, it means to release or rescue, or to set free, or to buy something back. It is often used when some kind of security is given for a loan. A person redeems their security by paying back the loan plus some interest.

4. Read *Mark 10:45*.

5. Use your own English words to answer these questions, and explain what Jesus was saying:

a. What is a servant?

.....

b. What does it mean to serve another person?

.....

c. Why did Jesus come to earth?

.....

6. Very early in his public service, on another different occasion, Jesus explained the meaning of his whole mission on earth, including his death, in *John 3:16*. Some important words in this verse are:

The world: This refers to all the people of the world, from every culture and country

Only Son: Jesus was God's only son. He is God the Son. The supernatural things he did, including to come alive again after he died, are signs or evidence that he is God's son

Not die: Means not to miss out on eternal life, and not be punished by God for doing things that offend him

Eternal life: Means knowing God as your friend, and going to be with your friend God in heaven when you die

7. Read *John 3:16*.

8. Why did Jesus come to earth and die? Explain using your own English words.

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Eternal life is God's free gift to all people who believe in Jesus. The basic things that a person needs to believe about Jesus in order to become a Christian and receive eternal life are:

- a. Believe that Jesus is God the Son, who came to earth as a human. This is who Jesus said he was.
- b. Believe Jesus' teachings enough to want to turn from your own way of living to become a follower of Jesus, and learn and practice what he taught. Of course, you don't have to know everything that Jesus taught in order to become a Christian. Jesus summarised his teaching in what we call the Great Commandment, "Love God and love your neighbour (that is all people) as yourself".
- c. Believe or trust that Jesus died on the cross because he loves you, and in dying on the cross he paid the price for the things that you have done which offend or upset God, that is your sins.
- d. Believe that Jesus rose from the dead and is alive today.

9. Take turns to explain the meaning of Jesus' death to your partner. Use these verses to help you:

John 15:13

Mark 10:45

John 3:16

47. *Easter Series 6 ~ The Resurrection of Jesus [Part A] (John 19:38–42; 20:1–10)*

Introduction:

The resurrection is a very important part of the Christian faith. If Jesus had not come alive from being dead, then Christianity would never have started and become a worldwide religion. One of the first Christian leaders, Paul, said, “If Jesus had not come alive from being dead, then our Christian faith is useless” (1 Corinthians 15:14). Jesus made promises to his followers that he was God’s Son, and that by believing in him they could have friendship with God and go to heaven.

If Jesus had remained dead, then all his claims about being God’s Son, and giving us friendship with God, would not be something that we could take seriously. However, Jesus did come alive from being dead! This is evidence that Jesus is who he said he was, and that he can give people friendship with God and that they can go to heaven. Other evidence that Jesus is God’s Son includes his miracles, his good life lived helping and serving the needs of others, and his amazing teaching.

After Jesus came alive from the dead, he appeared to his disciples (followers) on at least ten different occasions over a period of forty days. Sometimes he appeared to one or two of them together, sometimes to small groups, and on one occasion to about 500 at once! Four books of the Bible, called the Gospels, tell the story of Jesus, and each gives us a slightly different part of the story of Jesus’ resurrection. We’ll read two of these stories today. These two stories happened just before Jesus’ disciples began seeing that he was alive after he had been killed. One is to do with Jesus’ burial, and the other to do with Jesus’ tomb being empty.

Warm Up:

Different cultures and countries have different practices as to how they handle the dead. In first century Israel, at the time of Jesus, dead bodies were wrapped in cloth, had perfume and spices placed on them, and then were placed in tombs. Tombs were special caves or rooms. Share with your partner how dead bodies are taken care of in your home country.

The Burial of Jesus: (John 19:38–42)

1. Some important words in the story:

Authorities: Leaders or government

Pilate: The name of the Roman governor who ordered Jesus to be crucified

Custom: A tradition

Burial: Placing a dead person’s body in a grave in the ground, or a tomb, or sometimes the sea

Linen: A type of cloth

Wrappings: Long thin pieces of cloth put around dead bodies to prepare them for burial

Tomb: This was a cave or special room where a dead body was placed

Sabbath: This is Saturday, the weekly Jewish day of worship and rest

Spices: These are similar to perfumes. At the time of Jesus, fragrant spices were put on dead bodies as part of their preparation for burial

2. Read the story in *John 19:38–42*.

3. Were there any English words or phrases that you did not understand?

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4. Divide into pairs and take turns to tell the story of Jesus' burial using your own English words.

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The Empty Tomb: (John 20:1–10)

5. Some important words and phrases in the story:

The disciple whom Jesus loved: This disciple was John. He wrote a book in the Bible called John

Scripture: This is another name for the Bible. Here it means the Old Testament, the first part of the Bible

6. Read the story in *John 20:1–10*.

7. Were there any English words or phrases that you did not understand?

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8. How do you think that Jesus' disciples might have felt on that first Easter Sunday morning before they realised that Jesus was alive? Share with your partner. Remember that Jesus was their leader, God's messiah who was going to start a kingdom of love and caring, someone who did miracles to help others, and a very special friend. The disciples had spent about 3 years following Jesus as he travelled around Israel preaching and doing miracles.

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9. Take turns to tell this part of the story to your partner using your own English words.

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48. *Easter Series 7 ~ The Resurrection Appearances (John 20:11–20, 24–31)*

Introduction:

The resurrection is a very important part of the Christian faith. If Jesus had not come alive from being dead, then Christianity would never have started and become a worldwide religion. One of the first Christian leaders, Paul, said, “If Jesus had not come alive from being dead then our (Christian) faith is useless”. Jesus made promises to his followers that he was God’s Son, and that by believing in him, they could have friendship with God and go to heaven. If Jesus had remained dead, then all his claims about being God’s Son and giving us friendship with God would not be something that we could take seriously.

After Jesus came alive from the dead he appeared to his disciples (followers) on at least ten different occasions over a period of forty days. Sometimes he appeared to one or two of them together, sometimes to small groups, and on one occasion to about 500 at once!

Warm up:

When Jesus’ followers began seeing that he was alive after being dead, they were very surprised. It would have seemed too good to be true! Have you ever had a good big surprise that seemed too good to be true? Divide into pairs and share with your partner.

1. Some important words in the story:

Mary: Mary Magdalene was one of Jesus’ disciples or followers who stayed at the cross

Tomb: A room or cave in which the bodies of dead people were placed for burial

Angels: Supernatural messengers sent by God

Lord: A name that Jesus’ disciples called Jesus. It means leader or master and can also mean God

2. Read the story in *John 20:11–18*.

3. Were there any English words or phrases that you did not understand?

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Jesus gave Mary Magdalene a special honour by appearing to her first. In John’s story about Jesus, Mary was the first person to see Jesus after he had risen from the dead. Jesus gave her the job of telling the rest of the disciples, including the men, that he had risen from the dead. In giving Mary the job of being the first witness to his resurrection, Jesus also made a statement about women. (A witness is someone who tells the truth about what they saw or heard themselves.) In Jewish society at this time, women were not considered to be reliable witnesses. A man’s witness was always considered more reliable than a woman’s. Jesus was saying that women were equal to men.

4. Read the story in *John 20:19–20*.

5. Were there any English words or phrases that you did not understand?

6. How do you think Mary and the other disciples (followers) might have felt on that first Sunday after Jesus' death? Think about how they felt at the beginning of the day when they thought that Jesus was dead. How might they have felt when they discovered that Jesus' tomb was empty, and Jesus had come alive from being dead?

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Even after Jesus had appeared to some of his disciples, those who hadn't seen him did not at first believe that he was alive. It seemed too good to be true! Thomas, one of the twelve disciples closest to Jesus, did not believe until Jesus appeared to him. Since then Thomas has often been called doubting Thomas.

7. Some important words in the story:

Scars: Marks left on a person's skin after an injury. In this story, the scars were the marks of the nails left on Jesus' hands after being crucified

Doubting: This means finding it hard to believe that something is true

8. Read the story in *John 20:24–29*.

9. Were there any English words or phrases that you do not understand?

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10. In verse 28, Thomas called Jesus, "My Lord and my God". What did he mean by this?

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11. Discuss with your partner what you found most interesting about today's stories of Jesus' resurrection.

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John, the story teller, gave his readers the reason for writing about Jesus, his miracles, and the resurrection.

12. Some important words in the passage:

Messiah: Means God's supernatural king of peace who the Old Testament said that one day God would send into the world to begin a kingdom of peace and love. Jesus said that he was this king, the Messiah.

Life: This a shortened way of saying eternal life. That is, having a friendship with God in this life and, after death, going to heaven and living with God as his friend forever.

13. Read *John 20:30–31*.

14. Explain using your own English words why John wrote about Jesus' miracles and Jesus' resurrection.

49. Easter Series 8 ~ Jesus' Resurrection Appearance in Galilee (John 21:1–19)

Introduction:

After his death, and before his return to heaven, Jesus appeared to his disciples (followers) on at least 10 different occasions. The Bible writers tell us that he appeared to individuals, to small groups of disciples, and on one occasion to 500 disciples at once. Today's story is about when Jesus appeared to seven of his closest disciples, including Peter.

Warm up:

What do you remember about Jesus' resurrection from the stories that we have read so far?
Divide into pairs and share with your partner.

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Background to the story:

Jesus' crucifixion is a sad story. Jesus was a very good person who loved, cared about, and helped all people, yet he was killed. Another sad part of the story is that most of Jesus' disciples did not stay with him and support him at his trial and death. Only three female disciples and one male disciple, John, stayed with Jesus until he died. One of Jesus' closest disciples and friends was Simon Peter. Before Jesus' death, Peter told Jesus he would never leave Jesus, or say that he did not know him. Sadly, at Jesus' trial, three times Peter was asked whether he knew Jesus, and three times he said that he didn't.

How do you think that Peter and the other disciples who didn't support Jesus must have felt about this, especially as Jesus had now just come alive again after being dead? Share with your partner

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1. Some important words and phrases in the first part of the story:

Lake Tiberias: Also called the Sea of Galilee, was a large freshwater lake where some of Jesus' disciples were fisherman before they left their fishing and followed Jesus. They travelled with him around the country for about three years before he was crucified

Wrapped his outer garment: This means he put his outer clothing around himself

Charcoal: A fuel for fires made from wood

Shore: This is where the edge of the lake or sea meets the land

Stepped ashore: This means to get out of a boat onto the shore or land

Dragged: To drag means to pull something heavy along the ground

1. Read the story in *John 21:1–14*.

2. Were there any English words or phrases that you did not understand?
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3. Share with your partner why you think Jesus performed this miracle of a huge catch of fish for his disciples?
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4. As already mentioned, most of Jesus' disciples had failed to speak out for him or support him at his trial and death. Now, Jesus did acts of kindness for them by causing them to catch a huge number of fishes, and then making a barbeque for them on the beach. How do you think the disciples might have about this? Share your thoughts with your partner.

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5. Some important words in the second part of the story:

Lambs: These are young sheep. In this story lambs are used as a figure of speech meaning baby disciples or new disciples

Sheep: These animals were farmed especially for their wool. In this story sheep are a figure of speech that refers to all disciples of Jesus. Jesus told Peter to be a leader of the disciples (Christians) and care for them, like a shepherd cares for their sheep.

6. Read the story in *John 21:15–19*.

7. Were there any English words or phrases that you did not understand?

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8. Why do you think that Jesus asked Peter three times if Peter really loved him? Talk about this with your partner.

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When Peter deserted Jesus at his trial and crucifixion this must have hurt Jesus terribly. Yet after his resurrection, Jesus did good things for Peter especially. He appeared to him, helped Peter catch some fish, cooked a barbecue for him, and talked to him. Jesus gave Peter the chance to say that he still loved Jesus. This was Jesus' way of saying that he still loved Peter, and had forgiven him. Jesus also gave Peter a special job of being a leader in the Christian church, and caring for other disciples, that is the first Christians. Peter went on to become one of the most important leaders in the church. However, his story had a sad ending. Tradition tells us that, like Jesus, he was crucified upside down, for being a Christian.

9. What do you think is the meaning of this story for today? Discuss this with your partner, and then share your thoughts with the whole group.

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