

## Introduction

The story the Good Samaritan is one of the parables of Jesus. He tells it in response to a question from a lawyer, who asks him 'Who is my neighbour?' The story concerns a traveller on the way from Jerusalem to Jericho, who is attacked, robbed and left half-dead by the roadside. Two other travellers, one a priest and the other a Temple lawyer or musician (Levite), both come across the injured man but decide to pass by on the other side. Finally, it is an outsider - a man from Samaria, which was a country that the Jews despised - who decides to stop and show compassion towards the man, who had been attacked. He takes him to a safe place and provides for his recovery. The lawyer and Jesus' listeners must have been very shocked by this story, which showed that this outsider better understood and fulfilled God's command to love than those who were meant to be God's chosen people.

## Preparation

The key issues to be addressed in this session are:

- the challenge to help and care for those who are different from ourselves
- the challenge to face up to and look beyond our prejudices
- the challenge to reach out and welcome the stranger and outsider
- the challenge to treat all people with fairness and compassion
- the challenge to 'love our neighbour as ourselves'
- the challenge to treat others with respect, tolerance and justice

A key Bible verse for this session is:

Luke 10:27 (Jesus said) *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength and with all your mind and your neighbour as yourself.*

## Development

### 1. Way into the theme of this story

Play a game called: Do you love your neighbour?

Explain that the phrase 'do you love your neighbour?' is a way of saying 'Do you really care about other people?' Have the class stand in a circle. Have one person in the middle, who becomes the questioner and who will ask any of the others he/she chooses the question 'do you love your neighbour?' The person questioned can say 'yes' or 'yes but...'

If it is 'yes', then the two people either side of the person who answers must quickly change places. While they are doing this, the questioner must try and grab one of the spare places so that someone else is forced to become the questioner. If they answer is 'yes but...' they should add something like



'yes but... I really love/like people who are footballers' or who wear their hair in bunches... or who like fruit and nut chocolate... or who wear white socks' and so on. Whichever type of person is mentioned, those people must then change places, crossing the circle as quickly as possible to find a new place. While all that is happening, the questioner must try and grab one of the spare places and leave someone to become the questioner. Play this for several rounds, encouraging some clever 'yes but...' answers.

The truth is that we are all more inclined to like certain people and in particular those who are rather like us or similar to us in the things we like and not those who are different.

## 2. Ways of working with the Bible story

3. First, some simple drama ideas for telling this Bible story.

Retell this well-known story using a story circle technique.

The children should stand in a circle and then be numbered 1 to 5 again and again around the circle so that there are about five or six of each number. Now tell the story with plenty of describing words and active verbs in it, while each group of numbers in turn come and interpret what they hear in mime in the centre of the circle.

For example, invite all those numbered 1 into the circle and then tell the story giving them plenty to mime:

*One day a man from Jerusalem decided to visit his friend in Jericho. He put on his best clothes, cleaned his teeth, wrapped and packed a little gift, put some money and his credit-card into his wallet, locked up his house and set off. It was a hot day so he slipped on his sunglasses as he strode off down the Jericho road. He greeted the people as he passed them on the road but soon he was out of sight of the city and the road was winding its way downhill very steeply. The weather turned chillier and he had to pull his coat closer around him. The road was covered in small stones so he had to be careful where he stepped. The road grew narrower and narrower and there were large boulders either side which were dark and looked forbidding. He became very worried.*

Now stop the story and using a signal like waving both arms, clear the circle of those who were numbered 1 and invite those numbered 2 to step into this story to interpret the next part of the parable, which you retell in a similar way, describing how the robbers lay in wait looking out for anybody who was coming and who then jumped on, attacked and stole from the traveller.

Then you clear the circle and invite the children numbered 3 to interpret the arrival of the priest; those numbered 4 to interpret the arrival and response of the temple musician (Levite) and finally the arrival of the Samaritan on his donkey for those numbered 5. At the end of the story, unpack the various sections by wondering together why the people did what they did.

To do this, use a drama exercise known as Conscience-Alley. Ask the children to stand in two lines facing each other with a space in between. One person should now be the priest, who walks slowly between the two lines. The other children become the conscience of this priest. One side offering arguments as to why he should stop to help and the other side saying why he should not do so. Do

the same with the Levite and then the Samaritan.

Explain at some point of course just how hated the Samaritans were by the Jews. They were indeed the outsiders. Jews did not even talk to Samaritans, such was their animosity towards them.

1. Alternatively, here is a way to work with the story of the Good Samaritan, which has been turned into a series of descriptive phrases for the different people involved. Read the story first with your class in an easy-to-read version from the Bible and then using the following poem, see if the children can identify all the characters and why they are described in the where they are.

*Law-explorer meets love-explainer.  
Heaven-seeker becomes trick-questioner.  
Answer-giver surprises puzzled-justifier.  
Patient-listener becomes parable-spinner.*

*Journey-maker meets property-taker.  
Distance-keeper becomes need-ignorant  
Detour-planner turns excuse-finder.  
Stranger-stopper becomes risk-taker.*

*Relief-bringer meets help-crier.  
Donkey-rider becomes care-taker.  
Feared-outsider turns compassion-shower.  
Surprise-ender becomes neighbour-lover.*

*Puzzled-hearer becomes changed-thinker?*

### 3. Discussion starters

- I wonder what the crowd reaction was once they had heard Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan.
- I wonder what the lawyer who started off the discussion thought about the way Jesus answered in the form of the story.
- I wonder why the priest and the Levite, who knew God's laws so well, decided to do nothing about the man who'd been left by the roadside.
- I wonder what the traveller felt like as he watched these religious people pass by on the other side of the road.
- I wonder about whom Jesus would choose to talk in this story, if he were telling it today using characters we might more readily recognise.
- I wonder what the traveller was thinking as he received help from this hated stranger.
- I wonder who learned the most from this story.

### 4. Idea to present this story as a class assembly



The assembly's aim is to explore the challenge of caring for others as much as we care for ourselves

The famous story of the Good Samaritan has been told and retold so many times that it is hard to recapture the impact it must have had the first time. There would have been a sharp intake of breath followed by an uncomfortable shuffle among the crowd, when Jesus introduced the outsider as the hero and the one they ought to imitate. No wonder people never forgot this parable, even if they often struggled, like many of us, to put it into practice.

To try and recapture the power of this story ask the following multiple-choice question, where it is the most unlikely answer that is the true one.

Where are you most likely to see little green men?

- a. in your dreams
- b. in a storybook
- c. in the streets of your town
- d. on Mars

(The answer is c. There are little green men visible all day long at intervals on the pedestrian face of all traffic lights!)

Now follow this up by asking another question:

Who do you think is most likely to come and help you if you are in trouble, out of the following?

1. a vicar
- b. a social worker
- c. your worst enemy

Now use ideas from the drama section above to present the story of the parable.

I wonder why Jesus wanted to shock everyone like this with his story? It certainly made his audience sit up and pay attention. Real compassion could come from anywhere and often takes us by surprise when it does. Similarly, the opportunity to show real compassion often comes any time and when we least expect it. Sadly the result is that we often end up doing nothing.

The story's challenges could now be neatly summed up in three simple chants, which could be learnt and performed by three groups of children.

One group of children represents the robbers in the story.

The second group represents the priest and Levite.

The third group represents the Samaritan.

Chant for group 1: *What's yours is mine and I'm going to take it.*

Chant for group 2: *What's mine is mine and I'm going to keep it.*

Chant for group 3: *What's mine is yours and I'm going to share it.*

Use these three statements as points for reflection as you finish your presentation or assembly, encouraging the children to think what sort of response they will make to situations where they face people in need or people who are outsiders.

A possible song to accompany this presentation could be:  
'When I needed a neighbour were you there?'

### 5. Ideas for working out what this story means for people today

This can be linked to a Circle Time session and explores PSHE issues.

Introduce some of the following situations. Talk thorough the issues that arise and explore how Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan might help them respond to these modern-day experiences.

#### *Situation 1*

You have been shopping in a strange town with your parent/carer. It is sales time and the centre is especially crowded. You stop to look in a sports shop window and are so absorbed in your own team's new strip on display that you don't hear your parents tell you that they're off and where you are to meet them next. By the time you turn around and look for them, they are gone. Foolishly you try looking for them by moving away from where you are but the more you search for them the more lost you become. Finally you sit down on a bench in the middle of the shopping centre and begin to panic. While you're sitting there, you spot each of the following three people going by in the distance:

1. A teacher from your school.
2. Your neighbour.
3. Someone from your class with whom you just don't get on at all.

As a group talk through which of these three might be the best one to help you and why?  
Now explore how they feel when it turns out it is the last of these three - the deadly enemy - who is the one who sees you first and comes over and asks if she/he can help.

#### *Situation 2*

Who are the real outsiders today? And why do we find it so hard to relate to them?  
Here is a list of possible outsiders that may occur to most children. Can the group think of others?

The child who turns up new to your class halfway through the school year  
A new neighbour in your street  
Someone visiting your area or school for the day  
A refugee from another country who is housed in your town  
An asylum-seeker that you meet at your church/club  
A child you meet out who wears different clothes and speaks in a different way than you're used to

As a group explore what different feelings you have towards these people.  
How do we spot people in genuine need? How can we recognise how they really feel and as a result be able to offer genuine help?

**6. Ideas for extension material**

7. Read together a story which recounts the experience of a refugee - for example:

*Kiss the Dust* by Elizabeth Laird

*Lost for Words* by Elizabeth Lutzeier

*I am David* by Anne Holm

Use this book for your Literacy work or perhaps in a book club way with a group.

8. Invite to your class someone who works with the Refugee Council locally to talk about his or her work.

9. Conduct a survey among parents and friends about what they know of and what they think the main lesson is in the story of the Good Samaritan. You might have to retell the story simply in some cases.

Are there different ways of understanding this parable? Do you think Jesus would be happy that this story is so well known or did he intend something else with this story?

10. The lawyer gives an answer to his own question in the beginning of the story in Luke 10 when he links loving your neighbour with loving God with all one's heart, mind, soul and strength.

**Further Questions**

- Although the parable then focuses on what it means to love your neighbour, what part should the other half of the law of love play?
- Do you think for Christians (or others) there might be a danger that love of our neighbour might become separated from love for God? Or does that not matter?
- For a Jewish audience, the idea of a Samaritan offering help to a Jew would have been impossible. For Christians (or others), is there a danger of using this story to encourage people to be good neighbours without recommending the strength and power that comes to do this from being good friends with God?