

West London Day Centre

Opening question

Look at the picture for a few minutes. Perhaps pass it around the group, or prepare some photocopies to hand out.

The picture is of a man who was homeless. It was taken at the West London Day Centre. Can you think of a reason that someone might become homeless?

Introduction

Over 111,000 people in England asked for help because they were homeless last year. Around 2,700 people sleep rough each night.¹

Every day up to 100 homeless people visit the West London Day Centre. At the centre people can enjoy a warm shower, a hot meal and clean clothes. The day centre team meets with each person to offer him or her practical help too. This may include medical needs, mental health support, or help to find accommodation or look for a job. They also run activity groups including music, art and spirituality to help people build their confidence.

From the Bible

“Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the

least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”

Matthew 25:34-40 (NRSV)

Questions to explore

Read the Bible passage again slowly. Is there a particular word or phrase that stayed in your mind during the reading?

Activity

Choose an activity to respond to this word or phrase from the Bible passage:

- act it out
- draw or write a journal piece
- pray quietly, perhaps with a lighted candle nearby
- create a plasticine model.

OR

Find out about an organisation that helps homeless people where you live? How could you help them?

Prayer

This is an extract from an acrostic Psalm that the Spirituality Group of the West London Day Centre wrote in 2013:

Annoying to be a rough sleeper
Boredom can set in!
Creativity is killed
Despair takes over
Enough is enough!
Feelings of failure in society.
God, where are you?

Can you add the next lines, starting with the letters H, I, J, etc asking God to help?



¹ Statistics from Crisis homelessness briefing www.crisis.org.uk/data/files/publications/Crisis%20Homelessness%20briefing.pdf



How strong is my faith?

Opening question

What do you think is happening in the picture? How do you think the girl be feeling?

Introduction

On the third of January 2015, there was a bomb blast in Maiduguri, northern Nigeria. Some people were killed and many more were injured. Boko Haram is a terrorist group in Nigeria. They want Nigeria to become an Islamic state and they are trying to make this happen by terrible violence.

In January Boko Haram tried to make two ten-year-old girls be bombers. They had been kidnapped and were told that their families would die if they did not do this. But one of the girls did not detonate her bomb. I will call her Halima.

The Nigerian army asked Halima what had happened. She said that she had been kidnapped and been told to detonate a bomb so she could go to heaven. When it was time for her to set the bomb off, she refused. She said it was wrong to kill others. What a brave girl she was. She might have lost her parents and relatives, yet she feared God and chose to obey God. She rejected evil.

God commands us to love our neighbour. In God's word - the Bible - God instructed us not to kill. Despite all the difficulties surrounding her, her faith was strong. What an incredible girl Halima is!

From the Bible

"The Lord loves those who hate evil;
he guards the lives of his faithful;
he rescues them from the hand of the wicked.

Light dawns for the righteous,
and joy for the upright in heart.

Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous,
and give thanks to his holy name!"

Psalm 97:10-12 (NRSV)

Questions to explore

Why do you think the artist chose to just show one person in this picture?

I wonder if we sometimes make wrong choices because of what other people say or do? Can you think of a time when you wish you had acted in a different way? In a quiet moment ask God to forgive you and pray for the strength to act differently next time.

Activity

How strong is my faith in hard times?
What helps me to have faith? What makes it harder?

Draw a picture or make a collage using images and words that encourage you to be strong and faithful.

Prayer

Lord, give us a loving and forgiving heart. Help us to choose what pleases you rather than what wins us praise from people. We pray for peace in northern Nigeria and the release of the other missing girls kidnapped by the terrorists. We pray for those who had to flee from their homes and are living in fear and despair. We pray for prompt positive interventions by leaders. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.





Henry Hare Dugmore: missionary, writer, and translator

Opening question

Have you ever moved town or even country? What did you have to do to get ready to move? How did it feel to leave your home and move to a new place?

Introduction

Henry Hare Dugmore was born in England in 1810. When he was 10 years old his family emigrated to South Africa. In 1830, Dugmore joined the Wesleyan Methodist Church, and began studying for ordination.

He ran the Wesleyan mission station near King William's Town. Henry quickly became fluent in the Xhosa language, and in the 1850s jointly prepared the first translation of the Bible into Xhosa.

From the Bible

"You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven."

Matthew 5:14-16 (NRSV)

Questions to explore

Even though Henry didn't expect to grow up in South Africa, he saw the good that he could do. He let his light shine and he changed the world for the Xhosa people by giving them a Bible to read in their own language.

How we can shine a light where we are? Light a candle and have a few moments of silent wondering with God. Think about your home, family, school and other places you go each week. Maybe God will show you a place where you can shine more brightly.

"Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people."

Genesis 50:20 (NRSV)

"For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope."

Jeremiah 29:11 (NRSV)

It was never the family's plan to live in a foreign country. But it was God's plan. Perhaps difficult things have happened to you. Is it hard to trust that God means it for good? If one of these verses helps you, then try to learn it and use it as a prayer when you are worried.

Activity

Can you find out about any languages that still do not have a Bible translation? Could you organize a small fundraising event to raise money to help?

Prayer

Part of the national anthem of South Africa is a Xhosa hymn written in 1897 by Enoch Sontonga. He was a clergyman at a Methodist School. Translated it means:

Lord, bless Africa
may her horn rise high up
hear Thou our prayers
and bless us.
Descend, O Spirit
descend, O Holy Spirit

Listen to the national anthem on YouTube and you will hear five different languages. It begins in Xhosa, then Zulu, Sesotho, Afrikaans and finishes in English.



HENRY HARE DUGMORE
1810 - 1896
Methodist Missionary

-in-

SOUTH AFRICA

"Proclaim the Gospel to
all nations" MARK 16:15



Discipleship is for life

Opening

Birth can be a very hazardous time of life. The picture overleaf is of a three-day-old baby boy born to proud parents, Alex and Polly, in the Solomon Islands. His life was probably saved because Polly could give birth at the hospital. He needed help to be born safely.

Introduction

Graham and Jenny Longbottom are doctors. When they retired in 2009, they moved to the Solomon Islands to be mission partners in the Helena Goldie Hospital.

This hospital was established by Methodist missionaries and is the only health facility in these islands, which are home to some of the poorest people in the world.

Some of Graham and Jenny's work has been similar to their work in the UK as GPs. Other things have been very different, for example joining the surgery team, which was very challenging. They had to return to studying in the evening and learn many new things. They even built their house themselves!

From the Bible

Graham and Jenny chose these verses to pray over their time as mission partners:

“Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross.”

Philippians 2:5-8 (NRSV)

Questions to explore

It's easy at school, at home and in sport to want to be the best or the most popular. In his letter to the Philippians Paul reminds us that Jesus, who would have had every right to be the most popular and to be recognised as the best “(took) the form of a slave ... (and) ... humbled himself.” How would it feel to change your dream of being famous, or a champion for one in which your goal was simply to follow Jesus more closely?

How do you think it would be different to be a mission partner at different times of life?

- in a gap year aged 18
- in your 30s, perhaps with your partner or family
- after you retire.

Activity

The medical equipment used to help Polly and Alex's baby costs £50. The hospital cannot afford this, and it was paid for by the Australian Church. I wonder if your group could raise £50? The JMA target chart has some ideas for fundraising events.

Prayer

Lord, thank you that you always have good works for us to do, no matter what our age. Help us to see how we can serve you in every situation, with the gifts and skills you have given us. As we sit with you for a few moments in the silence speak to us about ways we can serve you now, and any seeds you would like to sow in our hearts for the future.





Go and bear fruit!

Opening questions

- * How would you describe the picture overleaf?
- * What do you like about it?

Introduction

If you had an apple tree, what would you expect it to do?

I think you would expect it to produce apples! It would 'bear fruit'. The Bible says that people should 'bear fruit' too.

Sit or lie down quietly, perhaps with your eyes closed and listen to these two Bible passages being read slowly.

From the Bible

"You didn't choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name. This is my command: love each other."

John 15:16-17 (NLT)

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Matthew 28:18-20 (NRSV)

Questions to explore

Which passage do you prefer?

Is there a word or phrase or idea that is most memorable?

Write this word or phrase on a piece of paper, and as you listen to the passage read again slowly, draw or write more

pictures or words that you think of as you listen.

If someone asked you to explain the phrase 'bear fruit' what would you say?

Why do you think Jesus uses the word 'lasting' to describe the type of fruit we should produce? What do you think he means?

Activity

How many different types of fruit can you think of?

Play a game of 'My granny's shopping basket' to see if you can think of, and remember, as many types of fruit as you have people in your group!

OR

See if you can think of a fruit beginning with every letter of the alphabet!

Prayer

Guide your group through this reflective prayer:

- * Begin by reading the passage from John aloud,
- * ask God to show you if there is an area of your life that God wants to prune. *(leave a pause for silent prayer)*
- * Can you invite God to do so? *(pause)*
- * Is there a type of fruit that God wants you to produce more of? *(pause)*
- * Ask God to help you to grow in this area. *(pause)*



GO
THEREFORE
AND
MAKE
DISCIPLES
OF
ALL
NATIONS

MATTHEW
28:19



Children and lifelong discipleship

Opening questions

Look at the picture for a few minutes. Pass it slowly around the group, or hand out photocopies.

- * Which part of the picture are your eyes drawn to?
- * What do you like least?
- * How is this different from your church?
- * Is anything the same?

Introduction

Pastor Rosa leads a church in Nicaragua where 90% of the church members are children under 10! Nicaragua is one of the poorest countries in Latin America, and many children live on the streets.

Children are involved in every part of the Sunday service: Bible reading, worship and thanksgiving. During the preaching they sit on their colourful plastic chairs, and many of them speak into the microphone during the act of thanksgiving.

It is amazing to think that it was children who first brought along the few adults who are members of the church. The children were first to find their way to this church and their parents have followed them!

Every Sunday, after the children are fed spiritually they are fed physically with a typical Nicaraguan staple meal of beans, meat and rice. Pastor Rosa serves the children generous portions.

From the Bible

“Through the praise of children and infants you have established a stronghold against your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger.”

Psalm 8:2 (NIV)

People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, “Let the little children come to me; do not

stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.” And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

Mark 10:13-16 (NRSV)

More questions to explore

How do you feel when you hear this story of Rosa, and look at the picture. Does the picture make you feel differently or the same as the story?

What do you think Jesus means when he says that we must receive the kingdom of God like a little child?

Activity

Would someone in your group like to lead a time of thanksgiving, like the children do at Rosa’s church? Begin with a prayer of your own, or use some verses from Psalm 100. Pass a microphone or another object (eg a soft ball) to anyone who would like to add his or her thanksgiving prayers.

Prayer

Father, thank you for your great love for little children around the world. May you continue to use your Church to provide for all our spiritual and physical needs and may we grow in confidence of your love for us. In Jesus’ name. Amen.



