

The man through the roof

MEETING AIM

To explore ideas of friendship, community and healing.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Luke 5:17-26

BACKGROUND

This session is designed for you to do online in a group video call (on something like FaceTime or Zoom). Make sure you have parental permission to do this, as well as following your church's safeguarding procedure.

This story happens at the beginning of Jesus' ministry: earlier in Luke 5 Jesus calls his first disciples and heals a man with leprosy – a condition that meant sufferers were seen as unclean, yet Jesus touched him and healed him. These stories are almost like the trailer for the Jesus story; the people from Judea and Jerusalem are beginning to share stories of Jesus' healing and good news and getting a sense of excitement about who he is. Of course, we find ourselves in a world still ready and waiting for healing and for Jesus' good news, maybe all the more in this pandemic.

JOINING THE SESSION 5 MINS

As you begin to gather together, break the ice in conversation by asking the young people how the last year has changed the way that they see friendship? This might be particularly interesting given time where contact with friends and peers has been limited with different restrictions and socialising has had to be different. Encourage them to think about this in terms of what might have been gained or lost.

INTRO ACTIVITY 10 MINS

Play charades, but ask the group to act out verbs (rather than movies, books etc). If the group are struggling, feel free to join in, or to encourage them to use the 'sounds like' clue!

Use the chat function over Zoom, or whatever video media you're using, to directly message individuals with their

verbs.

The verbs are: teaching, healing, carrying, laying, crowding, climbing, lowering, forgiving, questioning, rising, walking, praising.

Feel free to add any that you think are particularly pertinent. Ask the group if they can guess the Bible story from the verbs that they've acted out.

BIBLE EXPLORATION 10 MINS

Read the passage together. It might be useful to do a 'screen share' so that you can all follow along the same text together, using BibleGateway or similar, and that way you can show the group how to find passages online as well.

Once you've read the passage together, ask the group to split into two, using breakout rooms. Ask one group to discuss what they can learn from the paralysed man's friends and the other what they can learn from the conversation with the Pharisees. Give them five minutes to discuss this and then bring the groups back together. Ask each group to nominate a spokesperson who can share the points that the group has made.

CHATTING TOGETHER 5 MINS

Continue your discussion using some of these questions:

- Can you relate to the group of friends? What are the times in your life that you've come closest to that kind of a situation?
- What does the act of lowering their friend through the roof tell us about faith and friendship?
- Why was Jesus forgiving the man so shocking to the Pharisees? Would it shock you today?
- What does this story reveal to us about who Jesus is?
- What might be a modern-day equivalent of the friends' act of faith and friendship?

Talking about healing can be complicated and complex when we or people we love have suffered any kind of illness or conditions that leave people paralysed. Situations are not black and white and it can be problematic when we start associating illness with being caused by sin. Do let this become a discussion among the group that is open to difficult

questions – these are an important part of our working our faith out and our relationship with the Bible. Where you can, put difficult questions back to the group to ask what their sense is of the passage.

CREATIVE RESPONSE 10 MINS

You will need: pens and paper (or the whiteboard function on your video software)

Ask the group to think about modern-day equivalent acts of faith and friendship, particularly given the current pandemic. Who in their communities needs particularly creative demonstrations of friendship or being 'carried to Jesus'?

As a group, discuss this and make some practical plans to care for and serve people in their communities – it might even be someone in the group? You might want to act as a mediator of plans to make sure that they're safe, achievable and realistic, particularly under your area's restrictions. It might also be a great encouragement to share the group's plans with the wider church.

PRAYER 5 MINS

Explain that you are going to split your prayer time into two sections today: the first inspired by the paralysed man, and the people that we want Jesus to give special attention to. The second inspired by the closing words in this passage, where the crowds are praising God: "We have seen remarkable things today" (v26).

Lead the group in prayer, and encourage them to use the group chat function in your video software. First open in prayer for the people we want Jesus to give special attention to, and ask the group to name these people in the chat.

Then move onto a time where we thank God for the ways that we see his action in our world, and again, encourage the group to write the things they are thankful to God for in the group chat.

Close the group in a final prayer so that they know the prayer time has drawn to a close.

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The centurion's servant

MEETING AIM

To explore Jesus' power to perform miracles and the great faith of the centurion.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Luke 7:1-10

BACKGROUND

This session is designed for you to do online in a group video call (on something like FaceTime or Zoom). Make sure you have parental permission to do this, as well as following your church's safeguarding procedure

Jesus is still at the beginning of his ministry, and word about him is spreading! He has already performed some miraculous healings, as well as shared good news and preached some challenging sermons (in Luke 6) about how he brings good news to the poor and suffering, about forgiving enemies, not judging others, and how to be wise.

The story of the centurion is particularly significant as we see Jesus extending the good news and promise of God's kingdom to those outside of the Israelite community: this was radical inclusion!

GATHERING TIME 5 MINS

Ask everyone to take two minutes to think about and source in their house (if possible) the thing they feel is worth the most to them. You could put it to them as the one thing they'd save from a burning building. When everyone has gone and collected their item, ask everyone to introduce what they've chosen and why it means so much to them.s.

INTRO ACTIVITY 10 MINS

Before the session, familiarise yourself with the whiteboard function in Zoom, where participants can draw on the screen and everyone can see it (use pens and paper if your video software doesn't have a whiteboard function). Explain that you're going to play Pictionary, where the topic is 'Things you value highly'.

Start by choosing something for someone to draw (you could make it a personal preference as a way of getting to know each other), and then send them a message with the thing they have to draw.

As they are drawing, the group guesses what this thing is. Whoever guesses correctly is the next person to draw an object, chosen by the previous drawer (something they then value highly) and so on. You might need to intervene if the turns aren't being shared out evenly enough and just nominate people to have a turn!

BIBLE EXPLORATION 10 MINS

Read the passage through together, screen-sharing the passage where the whole group can see it and read along together.

Split the group into small groups of two or three, using breakout groups. Ask them to summarise the story in 20 words. Give them a few minutes to do so, and then ask them to come back together and share what they came up with.

Then send the groups back into breakout groups and ask them to summarise the story in ten words. After a few minutes bring the groups back to share again.

Finally, ask them to do this one more time, but now summarising what they feel is the most important message of the story into five words!

Ask them to share again, and see what the different groups made of the story – is there a common theme in the bits that they feel are most important to take away from the passage?

CHATTING TOGETHER 5 MINS

Discuss the following questions together:

- What does the passage tell us about the centurion and his servant?
- How does the centurion try to make sense of Jesus' authority? What does this mean?
- Why do you think it was so important for us to know that this is a Roman centurion and his servant?
- What does it mean to have "great faith" (v9)?
- What might this passage teach us about prayer?
- What are the areas in our lives where we could have greater faith in Jesus?

CREATIVE RESPONSE 10 MINS

Rend Collective Experiment have some really good music videos on YouTube. The 'My lighthouse' video is very good and relates to our theme of having great faith in Jesus, using the lighthouse as a metaphor for bringing us safety, refuge and guidance in difficult times.

As a group, watch the video together, using screen share. Don't forget to click the box that enables sound to be shared for better music quality.

Invite the group to watch and turn their videos off while the song is playing, to help them feel less self-conscious. As the song is playing, ask the group members to reflect on their own faith, and the areas that they feel that they need greater faith.

When the song has finished, ask them to come back together. Ask them to keep thinking about the areas that they would like to have greater faith in as you head to a time of prayer..

PRAYER 5 MINS

You will need: pens and paper

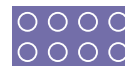
Jesus found out about the centurion's servant through a message that was passed on. This is a great metaphor for us to understand prayer today: the centurion couldn't see Jesus but he had heard of him, and knew that Jesus could perform a miracle of healing, even without being in the house in person.

Ask everyone to get a pen and paper. Encourage them to think of this story as they write their own message to Jesus. If they were having to give Jesus great faith with something that they value very highly in their lives right now, what would those be?

You could even play 'My lighthouse' again, as the group write their prayers down. At the end, encourage them that Jesus hears our prayers today, even when he might feel far away. End this time of prayer by thanking Jesus that he hears our prayers, asking him to help us have faith as great as the centurion in the passage, and asking him to help us with the parts of our lives that can feel hardest to trust to him.

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The storm at sea

MEETING AIM

To explore our relationship with prayer in crises.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Luke 8:22-25

BACKGROUND

This session is designed for you to do online in a group video call (on something like FaceTime or Zoom). Make sure you have parental permission to do this, as well as following your church's safeguarding procedure.

Being caught in a storm in a fishing boat in the middle of a large lake will be outside the experience of most young people (OK, nearly all young people). However, the truths that this story reveals about Jesus, his power and how much we can depend on him in times of crisis are very real. The past year has been full of times of crises. How can Jesus, who commands the wind and waves, be relied upon today?

JOINING THE SESSION 5 MINS

As your group join you online, ask each person what was the worst nightmare / panicked situation they have ever had. Are there any situations where you have immediately resorted to crying out to Jesus? This is just a bit of fun, but do go with it if the young people open up about tough times.

INTRO ACTIVITY 10 MINS

You will need: scene from a movie where characters get into difficulty at sea

Before the session, choose a scene from a movie where characters get into difficulty at sea, such as *The Perfect Storm* or *In the Heart of the Sea*. Show a clip from the film and ask the group how they might have felt in the same position. Do they have any fears of boats or water? How bad would things have to get for them to start panicking? Would they act in the same way as the people in the film?

BIBLE EXPLORATION 10 MINS

You will need: pens and paper; map of the Parthian Empire

Invite the young people to create a boat out of whatever they can find at home. Make sure they build it in front of their camera so that they can be seen.

Read or retell the story with the young people acting it out. When you get to the part when the storm hits, raise your voice as you read or retell. Encourage the group to rock about in their 'boat', shouting and screaming. Invite the young people to panic and scream out loud, while the disciples are panicking! When Jesus stands up to calm the storm, everyone should fall silent.

Chat about what the disciples must have felt like. Wonder at how and why Jesus stayed asleep for so long, even though the storm was so rough. What connections between this story and the young people's lives now can they make?

CHATTING TOGETHER 5 MINS

Ask the group these questions, making sure everyone has the chance to contribute:

- Were the disciples right to panic? Why?
- Were you surprised by Jesus' reaction? Why? What would you have thought he would do?
- What would a modern equivalent be of this story?
- How important is it to feel in control?
- What does prayer achieve in those situations?
- Is there a difference between a panicky prayer and a faith-filled prayer? What makes a good prayer? What prayers does God like best?
- What can we do as well as pray?

CREATIVE RESPONSE 10 MINS

Try this method of enacting the Bible story again, but this time, think about stressful and panicky situations that the group might find themselves in during their day-to-day lives. This could be exam stress, feeling scared at night, when we get trolled online...

Have one of the young people describe a particular situation. Everyone should panic until that person shouts: "HAVE FAITH!" At which point, everyone must fall

silent. Try to get everyone to have at least one go.

What conclusions can the young people draw from this exercise? Is it easy to let Jesus take control and calm down? Or do their thoughts and anxieties run away with them still? Share a story from your own life about a time when you had faith in Jesus during a stressful and scary time (or invite a volunteer to visit your group and share a story). Give space for the group to ask any questions they like.

PRAYER 5 MINS

You will need: bottles of bubble mixture (you may need to deliver these to the young people before the session); 'The prayers of the saints' by Matt Redman and the means to play it

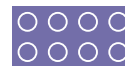
Explain that God loves to hear us speak to him – that the Bible says the prayers of the saints are like sweet-smelling incense (read Revelation 5:8) – so, to illustrate and visualise that, you are going to use bubbles to symbolise prayer.

Ask the young people to blow bubbles and enjoy playing with them.

Follow on from this (you may need to ask them to calm it down a bit!), play 'The prayers of the saints' by Matt Redman in the background. Ask the young people to think personally of a prayer – something they need God to help them with or something they want to thank God for. Go around the circle to pray, but get the person before each pray-er to blow bubbles into the middle as they are speaking.

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The large crowd

MEETING AIM

To discover that God cares for the needs of his creation and can provide abundantly.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Luke 9:10-17

BACKGROUND

This session is designed for you to do online in a group video call (on something like FaceTime or Zoom). Make sure you have parental permission to do this, as well as following your church's safeguarding procedure.

This is Luke's account of the story of Jesus feeding 5,000 men. Really helpfully, the video that I've suggested you use on YouTube gives us a wider context of this story in the other Gospels and in light of the Old Testament.

JOINING THE SESSION

5 MINS

Ask the group to go and make the most impressive refreshment that they can with what they have in their homes in five minutes. Tell them that you're setting a timer for five minutes. Once the timer has gone off, ask the group to display their refreshments and explain what they did to make them particularly impressive!

INTRO ACTIVITY

10 MINS

You will need: pens and paper or an online version of Scattergories

Everyone in the group chooses a category which is written down (or put into the website), such as cartoon characters, types of drink, cities, boys' names...

Then a random letter is generated and the group have to think of something for each category that begins with that letter. The round finishes when someone has filled in something for every category. If I'm marking it myself, I usually award ten points for every original item in a list, five points for every item that someone else has also named, or double points for alliteration (such as Daffy Duck or Tetley's Tea!).

BIBLE EXPLORATION

10 MINS

You will need: cartoon retelling of the story (such as this one)

Share the video on screen. (If you're on Zoom, remember to tick the box to enable sound to be shared across for better sound quality.)

If you think it would be useful, ask the group to read the passage together before or after watching this together, explaining that you're looking at the Luke 9 version.

CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Get the group to discuss the passage and help each other understand it by reflecting together on the following questions:

- Why do you think this story is told in all four Gospels? Why would it have been so important to the writers of the Gospels?
- Given the Old Testament stories of God providing manna and quail, what would have been symbolic to the Israelites at the time who had grown up with these stories? What would this have told them about who Jesus is?
- What does this kind of miracle tell us about who God is?
- How do you think the disciples would have felt as the story progressed?

CREATIVE RESPONSE

10 MINS

One of the things that we learn from this passage is that God's heart is to care for the hungry. A problem we live with globally and locally is that there are still people who are unable to buy food, and one of the responses has been to open food banks.

As a group, do some online research into local food banks in your area. Find out what the foods are that these food banks are asking for, and where and how you can drop food off. Ask the group to think about how you might individually give to food banks, but also how you might be able to mobilise family, friends and the church community to give to food banks, by becoming more aware of what they need and how they might be able to give to them.

PRAYER

5 MINS

You will need: paper; scissors; pens

You are going to make paper-chain people as a helpful reminder for the people that you are going to pray for. Ahead of the session, make a trial paper chain of people so that you are familiar with how to cut the paper and can talk the group through it.

Once the paper chains are cut, ask the group to write down the names of people or groups of people that they will pray for. It could be people who are hungry, or people who have other kinds of needs that they want to ask God to miraculously provide for. Encourage them to put their paper chain people somewhere that will remind them to keep praying for these people!

Finish the time of prayer with a prayer for the whole group and the people that they've named:

"Jesus, you provided food for thousands out of a small amount of food. Remind us that this it is the same God who we come to when we pray today. We think of all the people we've named, people who are hungry, or people who need your provision in all kinds of other ways. In your mercy, we bring them to you and ask that you would give them all that they need. Amen."

Encourage the group to stick their paper people chain up somewhere in their house, to remind them to pray throughout the week.

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