



**BIBLE STUDY SESSIONS FOR YOUTH GROUPS
FOR USE DURING LENT 2016**

**15+
YEAR OLDS**

40ACTS 2016

WEDNESDAY 10 FEBRUARY TO SATURDAY 26 MARCH 2016

40ACTS THEME 2016: JESUS AT OUR TABLE

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**URBAN
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WELCOME TO 40ACTS

What is 40acts?

40acts is a generosity challenge which invites people to do Lent a bit differently.

During the 40 days of Lent, 40acts participants will be invited to take part in 40 simple acts of generosity which will challenge them to 'do Lent generously' in 2016.

Lent marks a pivotal point in the history of the church, when Jesus prepared to give himself up as a sacrifice. Traditionally we mark Lent by giving something up, but what if it could be more than that? What if Lent were a preparation for a lifetime of big-heartedness?

Small acts of generosity, performed by thousands of people across the UK and beyond, have the power to make a big change to our communities, to our churches and, ultimately, to our world.

How to use this resource

40acts is a great way for individuals to practically demonstrate and grow their generosity to the people around them. *40acts Together* is about being generous with others: multiplying that generosity and deepening relationships with other givers as well as receivers. These youth group resources were written to accompany 40acts, giving the daily challenges some context and allowing young people to unpack and explore the themes in a group setting.

These resources are split into two age groups: 11 to 14s and 15+. Each age group has seven sessions to work through. One session introduces the theme before 40acts begins and then the remaining six sessions can be done weekly during Lent.

Each session picks up on a different aspect of the 2016 theme (see below) and encourages group members to participate in the daily 40acts challenges during the rest of the week. Each session also contains more activities than any one group can expect to use. This allows the leader to choose the activities that best suit their group, depending on group size, venue and faith level.

There aren't particular recommended activities to default to, but it is suggested that at least one activity from each of the main sections is used in any session, including encouraging your young people to participate in and reflect on the daily 40acts challenges.

These sessions are also available on the Urban Saints Energize website, which contains many more ideas and resources for young people:

www.URBANSAINTS.org/40acts

An introduction to 40acts theme 2016: Jesus at our table

The theme of this year's 40acts small group resource is 'Jesus at our table'.

The sharing of food and being hospitable represents generosity at its most practical. Yet there is something even more fundamental at work when we eat together and welcome others into that fellowship. Sitting at a table to eat in Jesus' time was a sign not just of possible friendship but of acceptance into a totally new, forgiven, restored relationship.

Jesus ate with sinners and with church leaders; he ate with a crowd of five thousand and with children. Table fellowship meant friendship, peace, acceptance and unconditional love: community.

The book of Acts describes the generous community of the early church: *'All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer... They shared their meals with great joy and generosity' (Acts 2:42-46 NLT).*

But why Jesus at OUR table and not at his? At first glance this might seem presumptuous; who are we to invite Jesus to our table? But that is exactly the point. During his ministry Jesus walked the earth without a physical home. Other people's homes became his. He invited himself and was invited to many tables, and indeed this still happens. That is the beauty of the gospel: expectations are reversed and new truths are born.

God, in his great generosity, seeks to sit at our, and at everyone's, table. 40acts this year asks you to invite others to share at the table. Jesus will be there. Welcome to 40acts 2016.

**WEEK ONE:
EVERYBODY'S GOT A
HUNGRY HEART**

→ **Main point**

- To set the scene for the 40acts series
- To explore what everyone hungers for and where (and from whom) we seek to find it

→ **Bible references**

Genesis 2:18, Exodus 16:13–31, Psalm 119:89, Matthew 4:1–11, Matthew 26:17–30, Luke 7:36, Luke 24:13–35, John 6:35, John 21: 1–14

→ **Leader's notes**

We all hunger for something. Physically, we've probably all occasionally made the slightly less than accurate statement that 'We are starving' to describe the interminable gap between mealtimes. But, as we know, our hunger extends beyond our purely physical needs. Whether we're hungry for money, power or possessions, whether we are hungry for relationship, love or acceptance, whether we are hungry for justice, peace or simply more of God in our lives, hunger is a driving force which can have positive or negative outcomes. According to Bruce Springsteen's 1980 hit, *Everybody's got a hungry heart* (and who's going to argue with 'The Boss'?!), it's true that one of our deepest hungers can be the need for relationship. *'It is not good for the man to be alone,'* God says (Genesis 2:18) (and who's going to argue with the actual Boss?!). One of the key ways that Jesus built relationship and community was sharing meals with people.

There is something universally powerful about sitting round the table and sharing food together.

That's why, even in Western society, where gathering around the table is far less common than it was (in the UK 6 out of every 10 meals are eaten in front of the TV), on special occasions, such as Christmas Day, we still tend to gather round the table. Yes, we are feeding our bodies, but we're also feeding our souls.

Reflect on your own experiences of sitting round a table and what those occasions have meant to you. In Jesus' time, the significance of sharing a meal had, if anything, even more cultural significance – think of the outrage caused when Jesus went to eat with tax collectors (Mark 2:16 – see also the story of Zacchaeus, Luke 19:1-10). The fact that we have a record of Jesus eating so many meals with people must indicate that more was going on here – after all, he was even still sharing meals with people after the resurrection. Because it wasn't really about the food – generosity in relationship was one of the key elements of Jesus's ministry and sitting round the table with him was symbolic of the acceptance, forgiveness and restored relationship that he, 'the bread of life', brought to the table.

We need to ensure that our hunger drives us in the right direction, that our focus remains on God and how we strengthen our relationship with him through Jesus.

As a follow-up to this session, we recommend you encourage the group to sign up to the 40acts campaign – www.40acts.org.uk – and engage with the daily challenges throughout Lent, ready to share their experiences with the rest of the group each week (or at least in the final week).

Warming up

1. Title: Cereal stackers

Format: Game

Age group: 15+ (11–14)

Duration: 5 minutes

Equipment required: Two dinner plates, Blu-Tack or Plasticine, drinking straws, Cheerios (or similar)

Description: Prepare two dinner plates by putting a piece of Blu-Tack or Plasticine in the middle and inserting a wooden skewer into this (point down) so that it stands upright. Scatter Cheerios around the outside of the plate, roughly the same amount on each plate. Invite two young people to come up and see how many Cheerios they can stack onto the skewer in 30 seconds. The winner is either the one who has the most Cheerios on the skewer or the one who stacks to the top of the skewer first. If you have time, let the winner have another go and see whether a challenger can beat them.

The point: Just for fun, but it might be good to chat about which breakfast cereal the young people would choose to eat to keep their hunger at bay in the morning.

2. Title: On a roll

Format: Game

Age group: 15+ (11–14)

Duration: 5 minutes

Equipment required: A bread roll (or a ball or beanbag)

Description: Stand the group in a circle with the leader in the centre. The leader throws the bread roll to one of the people in the circle and they have to catch it and immediately throw it back to the leader, calling out the name of a type of bread (e.g. baguette, wholemeal, pitta, etc.) before it returns to the leader's hands. The leader then throws it to

the next person in the circle. If a person hesitates unduly, or calls out something that the leader doesn't regard as being in the category, or repeats something someone else has already said, they are eliminated from the game and must sit down. The game ends when one person is left standing. If you are particularly generous or want the game to go on for longer you could allow participants to include pastries in their answers.

The point: Just for fun, but the use of bread can be linked into the session theme.

3. Title: Pass the roll

Format: Game

Age group: 15+ (11–14)

Duration: 5 minutes

Equipment required: A bread roll (or ball or beanbag)

Description: Get the groups to sit in a circle on the floor. Challenge them to pass the bread roll round the group only using their feet. If the roll touches the floor at any point, they have to start again.

If the roll starts to break up, the biggest piece should be used to pass round. Game is over when the roll has been round the group once, time runs out, or the bread has disintegrated beyond the point where it is possible to pass it.

The point: Just for fun but the use of bread can be linked into the session theme.

Getting Started

1. Title: Dinner time

Format: Video

Age group: 15+

Duration: 10 minutes

Equipment required: A copy of series five of *Outnumbered* and the means to play it

Description: *Outnumbered* is a BBC comedy series centred on the 'everyday life' of the Brockmans, a middle-class family (parents Pete and Sue and children Jake, Ben and Karen) living in West London. Show a clip from Episode 2 where they are attempting to sit round the table to eat an evening meal. Start clip at 6:20 just after Sue says "Sit down and eat" and run through to 7:54 after Sue says "And maybe someone could do the washing up" and screen fades to black (duration 1:34).

You might want to start the clip a bit earlier in the scene, depending on your view of the suitability of the comment passed by Jake when Karen is performing her 'K' routine. Sue says that she's read an article saying that families never eat together any more because family life has become so fragmented.

- Ask the group how this matches their own experience.
- Where do they generally eat their meals? Why is this?
- What do they think may be lost if families don't share meals together?
- What might have made the Brockmans' meal more successful?

The point: Sharing meals together is an opportunity to grow and deepen relationships. It's one of the key ways in which Jesus built relationship with his followers. With so many distractions, finding time to focus on each other can be really challenging, as can finding time to focus on God.

2. Title: Master Chefs

Format: Competition

Age group: 15+ (11–14)

Duration: 15 minutes

Equipment required: A range of cookery books, pens, paper, Post-it notes

Description: Divide the group into at least two teams (or more if you have

a larger group and enough cookery books). Split the cookery books you have available between the teams and give them a sheet of paper, a pen and three Post-its. Tell them that, using the books, they have to come up with a meal that they think the other team would like to eat. The meal must consist of three courses: starter, main course and dessert. Once they have selected a recipe, they can use a Post-it to mark the place in the book and then write down their menu on the sheet of paper.

They should then 'present' their menu to the other team, making every effort to convince them of its deliciousness. Each team should give the team who have devised the meal for them a mark out of ten based on whether they would like to eat it or not. In order to ensure some impartiality, also give a leader up to ten points to award to each menu. The winning team is the one with the most points. The losers have to cook the meal and bring it in next week (well, maybe not, but think whether there is a way you could get the group to cook for real on a future date).

The point: Even if we don't enjoy cooking, most of us enjoy having a meal prepared for us. It's especially meaningful if the chef has taken into account our likes and dislikes and has cooked the meal especially for us and we can enjoy it in the company of friends or family. Sharing food together has a deep social and spiritual significance which we can see represented across every culture on earth. It's something God wired into us when he created us and it's therefore important to ask ourselves why that is.

3. Title: Minecraft misery

Format: Illustration

Age group: 15+

Duration: 10 minutes

Equipment required: None

Description: Find out how many of your group have ever played Minecraft. (Minecraft is a computer game that enables players to build constructions out of textured cubes in a 3D procedurally generated world. Other activities in the game include exploration, resource gathering and combat.)

Read the following story:

Minecraft creator Markus Persson, aka 'Notch', has said that he has 'never felt more isolated' after earning billions in the sale of Mojang, the company he founded, to Microsoft.

Mojang was sold for \$2.5 billion in 2014, after which Notch left the company and said he wanted to focus on more personal projects. But on 29th August 2015 Notch took to Twitter to explain to his 2.47 million followers that 'the problem with getting everything is you run out of the reasons for trying. Human interaction becomes impossible due to imbalance,' he said. Persson has maintained an active presence on social media since leaving Mojang, and has worked on several small-scale gaming projects, but has not released anything approaching the scale and significance of Minecraft since the game was sold.

The purchase of a \$70 million dollar LA mansion – for which he outbid Beyonce and Jay Z – caused a sensation in the tabloid tech press, and resulted in nearly-instant and inevitable recreations of the house inside Minecraft, but Notch says that neither money nor fame has made him happy. "Hanging out in Ibiza with a bunch of friends and partying with famous people, able to do whatever I want, and I've never felt more isolated," he said on Twitter. "In Sweden, I will sit around and wait for my friends and family to have

time to do stuff, watching my reflection in the monitor," he added. "People who made sudden success are telling me this is normal and will pass. That's good to know! Maybe I'll take a shower then." (Source: wired.co.uk 30/08/15)

Ask the group what they think Persson means when he says that, in his situation, "Human interaction becomes impossible due to imbalance."

Make the point that this is not a story about success or wealth necessarily being bad things (we need to avoid the cliché that being rich equals being unhappy!) but is more about how a change of circumstances can damage relationships.

Ask the group to share any experiences they have had where a change in their circumstances has had a detrimental impact on a relationship.

What might Persson do to help him be more fulfilled in his new circumstances?

The point: We were created to be in relationship with others, so it matters to us and it definitely matters to God, who is seeking a personal relationship with us through Jesus. We need to recognise that the things we sometimes hunger for – success, wealth, possessions – are things that can impact on our relationship with other people and with God in unhelpful ways.

Digging In

1. Title: Fasting is feasting (Part 1)

Format: Discussion

Age group: 15+ (11–14)

Duration: 15 minutes

Equipment required: A copy of *Big Hero 6* DVD and the means to play it, Bibles

Description: Ask someone to read Matthew 4:1–11, the story of Jesus fasting in the wilderness. Explain you are going to watch a short film called *Feast* and ask them, whilst they watch it, to think about what the connection might be between the Scripture that has just been read and the film.

Show the short film *Feast*, which is in the Bonus Features menu (6 minutes). It tells the beautifully realised story of the ups and downs of the relationship between a dog and his master, a relationship which is largely dominated by food. In the early stages the dog is completely focused on how much he can eat and is less than impressed when his 'bachelor' life-style is disrupted by his master's new girlfriend, who makes him eat dog food rather than the human food he had become used to. Only when his master falls into depression when his girlfriend walks out is the dog forced to shift his focus away (at least temporarily) from food to what ultimately really matters most, his master's happiness.

When the film has finished, ask the group what they think the connection could be.

Hopefully they will have identified that one of the purposes of fasting is that it gives the opportunity to focus more on God than we might normally do and allows us to strengthen our relationship with him. For most of the film the dog was completely focused on food and not upon relationship.

Suggest that sharing food with people was an important part of Jesus' ministry. It was a key feature of how he built relationships with people but, despite the value he placed upon this, at the start of his ministry he chose to have his focus on the most important relationship of all, the one with his heavenly Father.

Ask the group to discuss the following questions:

- What sort of things can shift our focus away from God?
- What sort of things can help us focus on God?
- What one thing could we take from Jesus' time in the wilderness to help us strengthen our relationship with God?

Ask the group how they can apply this Scripture to their daily life.

The point: Sharing food with people was an important part of Jesus' ministry, but we always need to keep the main thing the main thing. Like Jesus, we need to ensure that our focus remains on God and that strengthening our relationship with him is our number one priority.

2. Title: Today's specials

Format: Bible study

Age group: 15+ (11–14)

Duration: 20 minutes

Equipment required: Bibles

Description: Get every member of the group to share what their ideal pizza topping would be and what they absolutely wouldn't want to see on a pizza (anchovies anyone?).

Introduce the Scripture by putting it into context. Moses has led the Israelites out of captivity in Egypt and into the wilderness, but they soon start to complain about the lack of food. God promises them he will provide meat and bread. Read together Exodus 16:13–31.

Ask the group whether anyone knows what the literal translation of 'manna' is. They may give you some deeply spiritual suggestions but the answer is 'what?' as in 'What is it?' Ask the group what they think the answer to this question was physically (i.e. what we are told the manna tasted and looked like). Does it sound like something they'd like to eat? How would they have felt if

they'd had to eat it for 40 years (Exodus 16:35)?

Ask the group what they think the significance of the provision of manna was in the relationship between God and the Israelites. (It was a sign of God's provision – literally 'daily bread'. It might have not been terribly exciting as a meal but it contained everything they needed to sustain them physically... but only temporarily.)

Read together John 6:48–51, where Jesus compares himself to manna but manna of a very different kind.

Ask the group: what is the significance of what Jesus is saying here? What's their response to what Jesus is saying? How can they apply this Scripture to their daily life?

The point: God has made provision for our physical needs but Jesus is daily bread who satisfies our eternal spiritual needs.

3. Title: Counterfeit gods

Format: Bible study

Age group: 15+

Duration: 20 minutes

Equipment required: Bibles, Keller questions printed/written on individual slips of paper or card (one bullet point per slip) – you can have more than one of the same question if you have a large group

Description: Read together Matthew 4:1–11. Ask the group to identify what weapon Satan was using against Jesus (hunger). Ask them to identify the parallels between the way Satan was tempting Jesus and the way in which we are tempted today (putting our needs first, seeking status or power, worshipping things other than God). What would their definition of the word 'idol' be?

Share this definition of idol given by the American theologian Tim Keller in his book Counterfeit Gods:

"It is anything more important to you than God, anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God, anything you seek to give you what only God can give. A counterfeit god is anything central and essential to your life that, should you lose it, your life would hardly be worth living."

What do the group think of this statement with respect to people's relationships to, say, a pop group, a football team, a hobby, a job, a girlfriend/boyfriend?

Explain that the Hebrew word for idol is gullulim, which effectively translates as 'dungy idols' – which means that when we create idols in our lives we are effectively worshipping a pile of poo! (Yuck!)

In his book Tim Keller suggests some questions we might like to ask ourselves to help identify idols in our lives. Place the slips with the questions on face down and invite members of the group to pick one and, in silence, ask themselves what their answer to the question would be. If you have time they could then put the question back, pick up another one and do the same thing. Some quiet music might help whilst this is happening (you could equally use this exercise as a response time at the end the session).

- What am I living for? What are my hopes and dreams?
- What do I wake up and go to sleep thinking about? Where does my mind naturally go? What do I daydream about?
- Whose opinion matters most to me? If I'm unsure about what to do in any situation, whose opinion comes to mind?
- What gives my life meaning? How do I define myself?
- What do I do to escape? When life gets tough, what do I find comfort, safety, rescue and pleasure in? It

could be work, video games, the silent treatment, hiding in a book, fantasising, etc.

- What do I talk about most?
- What do I spend my money on?
- What am I most afraid of losing?
What do I worry about most?

When you have completed this, ask someone to read Romans 12:1–2. Ask someone to pray that this will be true for everyone in the group.

The point: To help the group recognise that hunger is a weapon used by Satan to try to damage our relationship with God, and to help them seek to identify, and be on guard for, areas of their lives where these attacks may take place.

Response

1. Title: Faith fillings

Format: Worship and reflection

Age group: 15+ (11–14)

Duration: 15 minutes

Equipment required: Enough bread, spreads and fillings for everyone to make a sandwich (taking into account any dietary requirements), plates, cutlery

Description: Read out this part of Deuteronomy 8:3:

'...people do not live by bread alone; rather we live from every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.' (NLT)

Remind the group that this was the Scripture quoted by Jesus when Satan tempted him in the wilderness (Matthew 4:4) and that many people continue to believe that life is based upon satisfying their hunger for money, power, possessions, etc. rather than a total commitment to God and living by every word that comes from him. As quietly as possible (maybe play some suitable music) invite members of the group, including leaders, to make themselves a sandwich adding

whatever fillings they choose. As they do this, ask them to imagine that the filling represents the word of God in their life and to reflect on the following questions:

- Is God's word at the centre of their life?
- Are they filled with God's Spirit, do they need to be refilled or do they feel empty?
- Are there any barriers getting in the way of their relationship with Jesus?

However they feel, invite them to fill their sandwich generously to show that we serve a generous Father God who wants to abundantly bless his children.

Read the verse again and ask someone to pray, giving thanks for the food and inviting the Holy Spirit to minister to the group as they reflect on what they have been challenged with during the session. Then eat your sandwiches!

Depending on where your group is at, you may want to offer the opportunity, whilst you eat, for them to share their responses to the questions they were asked to reflect on. Alternatively, just enjoy fellowship as you eat together.

The point: To land the idea that whilst we need to eat we also need to feed on God's word.

2. Title: M 4 4

Format: Memory verse

Age group: 15+ (11–14)

Duration: 10 minutes

Equipment required: Breadsticks

Description: Get the group into a circle round a table or suitable space on the floor. Place the breadsticks in the middle. Read out Matthew 4:4: *Jesus answered, 'It is written: "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."' (NIV)*

Ask someone who can remember the verse to repeat it and then take a

breadstick and lay it on the floor or table. Explain you want to lay the breadsticks out so they read 'M 4 4'. Ask someone else to repeat the verse, take a breadstick and lay it down in a similar way. Carry on until 'M 4 4' is spelt out – this will take 10 breadsticks. If you have less than 10 people in the group, let someone place more than one; if you have more, some people can use their breadstick to underline or create a box around the verse reference, or you can divide the group into smaller groups before you start.

When you have finished, ask someone to pray, giving thanks for this Scripture as a reminder of where we need to turn to in order to receive spiritual nourishment.

The point: An interactive way to help remember this Scripture.

3. Title: Fasting is feasting (Part 2)

Format: Worship and reflection

Age group: 15+ (11–14)

Duration: 10 minutes

Equipment required: One copy of the 'Fasting is Feasting' sheet and a pen for each member of the group

Description: This is an opportunity to reflect on what individuals in the group might be willing to give up (fast from) to focus on their relationship with God. This particular exercise doesn't include food and drink as it's specifically aimed at helping them create time to spend with God.

Hand out the sheets and pens. Ask group members to cross out anything that they are unlikely to do over the next seven days. Then ask them to add in at the bottom of the list anything that isn't already listed that they are likely to spend time doing voluntarily over the next seven days. Once they have done that, ask them to score each item on the list from 0

to 7 as an indication of how many days they think they could (realistically) fast from that thing for (i.e. 0 = no days, 7 = seven days). Then, without reference to their scores, ask them to circle the one thing that, if they fasted from it, would give them the most time to spend time with God. Suggest that the item they circled might be the thing that they could consider fasting from (for the number of days they suggested!). If they have circled something with a zero, they might want to have another think.

Have a moment's quiet and ask the group to reflect on where they are currently spending their time and where they currently have space for investing in their relationship with God.

If appropriate, challenge the group to fast from what they have indicated on their sheet, remembering that the purpose of this is for them to be able to focus more on God.

Get everyone to stand in a circle, holding their sheets, and get someone to pray over the group and particularly the time they have available for focusing on God.

The point: To challenge the group to think about giving up something, or doing less of something, in order to invest in their relationship with God.

Takeaway

1. Title: Get your act together – needs

Format: Discussion

Age group: 15+ (11–14)

Duration: 10 minutes

Description: Introduce the group to the 40acts concept (if you haven't already), explaining that every day during Lent there will be a challenge around a different aspect of generosity. Each challenge includes a brief reflection to get people thinking what it means to them. You may wish, if you have internet access, to

show the group the 40acts website (www.40acts.org.uk).

Encourage your group to sign up to 40acts (on the website), so that they can be sent daily email prompts for the challenges. Ask the young people to complete the challenges in the coming week and think through them – ideally discussing them with someone else (a friend, parent, leader or discipler). Ask them to reflect on the following question when doing the challenges this week:

- What are the things you need that God can provide?

You may wish to make space in your next session to get some feedback on what your group have experienced when doing the challenges.

The point: To get group members to participate in 40acts and engage with and reflect on the challenges.

WEEK TWO:
X* (*MULTIPLY)

→ **Main point**

- To explore how God can take what we have to give to others and turn it into something so much greater

→ **Bible references**

Genesis 9:7, Genesis 17:1–2, Deuteronomy 15:11, 1 Kings 17:7–16, Matthew 15:29–39, Matthew 28:16–20, Luke 6:38, John 6:1–15, Romans 4:18–29, Hebrews 13:6

→ **Leader's notes**

When the musician Ed Sheeran released his second album in 2014, many people were wondering why he had chosen to name it after the 24th letter of the alphabet. The trendy and switched on (you can count yourself in this category) of course knew that it wasn't a letter at all – it was the mathematical symbol for multiplication. Multiplication is a powerful thing – after all, it's why we are here!

After the flood, God didn't tell Noah to wander about aimlessly assessing the damage; he commanded him to *'be fruitful and multiply, and repopulate the earth'* (Genesis 9:7 NLT). The Great Commission (Matthew 28:16–20) is effectively Jesus' command to 'go multiply' and that's exactly what we are doing when we are seeking to share faith with young people. The Live Life 1-2-3 movement (see www.livelife123.org for more information) is a movement based upon the simple but beautiful power and potential of the X.

In this session we are exploring how the power of multiplication can be applied to meeting the need of others. In a world where the need we see in our local communities, in our

nation and elsewhere in the world can, at times, seem completely overwhelming, it's good to remind ourselves of a small boy, a basket, five loaves, two fish and Jesus' ability to overcome doubt and despair and multiply blessings so that they not only meet the present need but overflow in their sufficiency (John 6:1–15).

It's possible that at times all of us have played the role of Philip in this story, looked at our meagre resources and thought, 'How on earth are we going to do anything with them?' At those times it's good to remember what Jesus achieved with the boy's act of generosity but also to recall other heroes of faith who put their trust in God's power to multiply.

Abraham, for example, must have been sorely tested when God told him he was to have a son in old age and become the father of many nations. In modern-day parlance it might not have been unreasonable for him to say 'You, God, are having a laugh.' But, as Paul recounts (Romans 4:18–21), *'Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be."* Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah's womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.'

We all need to have some of Abraham's faith in this area and

grasp that, however small or insignificant we think the things we hold in our hands are or our circle of influence is, we serve a generous God who can multiply our acts of generosity to achieve far much more than we can ever ask or think (Ephesians 3:20).

As a follow-up to this session, we recommend you encourage the group to sign up to the 40acts campaign – www.40acts.org.uk – and engage with the daily challenges throughout Lent, ready to share their experiences with the rest of the group each week (or at least in the final week).

Warming Up

1. Title: Right side up

Format: Game

Age group: 15+ (11–14)

Duration: 10 minutes

Equipment required: Plastic bottle, one-third filled with water; a jar of gherkins, peppers or similar

Description: Get the group to sit in a circle of chairs. Place the jar of gherkins in the middle of the circle. Explain that the idea of the game is for each person in turn to throw the bottle in the air so that it performs at least a 360 degree rotation and lands standing up on its base. (It is helpful if you have a bottle with as flat a base as possible – a large Copella fruit juice bottle works well for this game.) Each person has three attempts to do this before passing it to the person on their left.

If they fail, they must complete the forfeit of eating a gherkin (or another forfeit of your choosing). They then pass the bottle to the next person. If the next person succeeds in landing the bottle on its base within three attempts, they pass the bottle on and

the person on their left has three attempts to land the bottle upright or pay a forfeit, etc.

The point: Just for fun

2. Title: Crossing the line

Format: Game

Age group: 15+

Duration: 5 minutes

Equipment required: Masking tape

Description: Place on the floor a line of masking tape long enough for your entire group to stand on one side of it with their toes pointed in. Ask them to stand in this position on one side of the line. Tell them that you are going to give them five minutes and five 'lives' to attempt to get across the line in unison. They can do this in any (safe) way that they devise but, as in a photo finish, they must cross the line, in your judgement, at exactly the same time or they lose a life.

It is likely that they will try a number of options, such as standing in a line and one person saying 'go', which is unlikely to succeed. There isn't a 'right' way to complete this task – they may well come up with a way that you consider achieves the objective, but one way that often works is for one of the team to place their hand flat on the floor and the rest of the team to place their hands on top so that all the fingers line up and for the person whose hand is on the bottom to lift their hand and all the other hands over the line in unison – it's about crossing the line together, not about getting their whole body across the line. Obviously unless you have advanced technology you will have to judge their efforts by eye, so be prepared for controversy!

The point: Just for fun but good for team building

3. Title: Frozen (but not that one!)

Format: Game

Age group: 15+ (11–14)

Duration: 5 minutes

Equipment required: Ice cubes

Description: Divide the group into teams of two or three people and give each team an ice cube. The aim of the game is for them to melt the ice cube as quickly as possible without either putting it down (e.g. onto a table, floor or radiator!) or into their mouths. All team members must hold the ice cube at least once during the course of the game.

The point: Just for fun

Getting Started

1. Title: Chain reaction

Format: Video

Age group: 15+ (11–14)

Duration: 10 minutes

Equipment required: Download of Bayside Community Church's 'Generosity' video from Vimeo vimeo.com/106078353 and the means to show it

Description: Show the video and ask the group the following questions:

- What's the key message that this video is communicating? (Small acts of generosity can have big results; sometimes we have to step out of our comfort zone.)
- What do you think motivated the young man to be generous?
- What did the young guy in the video give the jobless man? (Food, time, friendship, respect)
- We don't see all the details, but can you speculate on what might have happened to lead to the eventual outcome?
- Has anyone in the group ever done anything similar? If so, what happened?

The point: We might not think what we can give is significant, but we have more than we think and God can multiply the blessings we give to others.

2. Title: Waitress doodles

Format: Story

Age group: 15+

Duration: 10 minutes

Equipment required: None but [dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3174789/New-Jersey-waitress-paid-firefighters-meal-rewarded-help-raise-money-dad-s-wheelchair-van.html](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3174789/New-Jersey-waitress-paid-firefighters-meal-rewarded-help-raise-money-dad-s-wheelchair-van.html) has a picture of the bill if you want to show that or other pictures related to the story.

Description: Share the following true-life story:

Tim Young and Paul Hullings from New Jersey are hearty firefighters who live for their work. They once worked 12 hours to extinguish a fire, after which, being completely exhausted, they went to a diner around 6.00 am to request the strongest cup of coffee the diner could provide.

Their waitress that day was Liz Woodward and she just happened to overhear the firefighters discussing a tiresome piece of equipment. Eventually, when Tim and Paul went to pay, the bill they were handed contained the following message: 'Your breakfast is on me today. Thank you for all that you do; for serving others and for running into places everyone else runs away from. No matter your role, you are courageous, brave and strong... thank you for being bold and badass every day! Fuelled by fire and driven by courage – what an example you are. Get some rest. Liz'

But the story doesn't end there. The firefighters learned that Liz's father, Steve, was a quadriplegic and had been paralysed for five years. Liz had

set up a donation page on Facebook to fund a wheelchair-accessible vehicle to transport her father. When Tim heard of this he urged people on Facebook to donate to Liz's crowd-funding campaign, saying 'Turns out, the young lady who gave us a free meal is really the one that could use help...' As a result, donations in excess of \$30,000 were received.

Ask the group the following questions:

- What do you think motivated the waitress to be generous?
- What can we learn from this story?
- Would it have mattered if the story had ended when the firefighters left the restaurant? Why / why not?
- Has anyone in the group ever committed a random act of kindness? If so, what happened?

The point: We might not think what we can give is significant, but we have more than we think and God can multiply the blessings we give to others.

3. Title: Waste not, want not

Format: Quiz

Age group: 15+ (11–14)

Duration: 15 minutes

Equipment required: None

Description: Run a quiz (as best suits your group) using the following questions:

1. How much of the world's food is wasted?
a) 12% b) 33% c) 50% (it's enough to feed 3 billion people)
2. What percentage of food is wasted by UK families?
a) 12% b) 22% c) 33%
3. 4,600 kilocalories of food per day are harvested for every person on the planet. Of these how many are actually eaten?
a) 2,000 b) 3,000 c) 4,000 (the rest get wasted along the way)
4. What percentage of fruit and vegetables is rejected in the UK

before they reach the shops because the supermarkets think they are too ugly?

a) 10–20% b) 20–40 % c) 40–60%

5. How many hungry people could the amount of bread and cereal products thrown away by UK families feed?
a) 10million b) 20million c) 30million
6. Approximately, how many malnourished people are there in the world?
a) 1billion b) 2billion c) 3billion

Source: feedbackglobal.org/food-waste-scandal/

Ask the group:

- How do these statistics make you feel?
- What do you think God thinks about this situation?
- What do you think is the key thing that the statistics demonstrate? (There is enough for everyone)
- Do you think your family contributes to the situation?
- What could you do to help improve the situation?

The point: We need to recognise that we are blessed with more than enough. If we can afford to waste, then we can afford to give, and being better stewards of what we have will allow us to bless more people.

Digging In

1. Title: Feeding in 3D

Format: Bible study

Age group: 15+ (11–14)

Equipment required: Bibles, paper and pens

Duration: 15 minutes

Description: Ask someone to read John 6:1–15 (Jesus feeds 5,000). Divide the group into three. Allocate each group one character from the story: one group Jesus, one group the boy, one group Philip. Ask them

to look at the passage together and answer the following questions from the perspective of their character:

- How am I feeling at the start of the story?
- What do I feel when Andrew says 'There's a young boy here with five barley loaves and two fish. But what good is that with this huge crowd?' (NLT)?
- How am I feeling at the end of the story?

Ask one person from each group to feed back what they came up with for the character they were allocated.

Ask the group what we can learn from this story and how they can apply what they have learnt to their own lives.

The point: To look at what may be a familiar story from a number of different angles. To recognise that Jesus multiplied the boy's generosity and can do the same when we demonstrate generosity to others.

2. Title: Enough is enough

Format: Bible study

Age group: 15+

Equipment: Bibles

Duration: 15 minutes

Description: Share the following quote from Shane Claiborne's book *The Irresistible Revolution*: "I'm convinced that God didn't mess up and make too many people and not enough stuff. Poverty was created not by God but by you and me, because we have not learnt to love our neighbours as ourselves."

What do the group think about this statement? Do they agree?

Ask someone to read Matthew 26:11 ('You will always have the poor among you', NLT). Do the group think that what Claiborne is saying contradicts what Jesus is saying? Is Jesus saying that we should accept that the poor are always going to be around and therefore do nothing to

help them? If we were to interpret it this way, wouldn't Jesus be contradicting his own commandment to 'love your neighbour as yourself' (Mark 12:31). Do the group think Jesus was expressing a feeling that, even though God has provided enough resources, we would never be able or willing to distribute them fairly? (If so, it would certainly seem that this was justified realism.) Suggest that Jesus might have been referring back to Deuteronomy 15:11. Ask someone to read this verse.

Read together 2 Corinthians 1: 3–4. Ask the group what Paul indicates should be the key motivation behind our desire to help ('comfort') others. (That we have been helped by God.) Suggest that our desire to be generous to others should be part of the overflow of the generosity that God has shown to us through Jesus (blessed to be a blessing).

Finally, in the face of so much suffering, finding a way to start 'making a difference' in the world can sometimes seem daunting. Share a quote from Mother Teresa where she says, "We cannot do great things, only small things with great love. It is not how much you do but how much love you put into doing it."

Ask the group:

- Who are the poor in our community?
- What could we do as a church/group to help them?
- What are you going to do as an individual in response to what we have studied today?

The point: To recognise that God has richly blessed us and part of the overflow of that should be our desire to help those in need.

3. Title: Friend to strangers

Format: Bible study

Age group: 15+

Equipment required: Bibles

Duration: 20 minutes

Description: Set the scene for the passage you are going to study. Following the death of her husband, Ruth determinedly leaves her homeland of Moab to accompany her similarly widowed mother-in-law, Naomi, who wants to return to her own homeland of Judah. They travel together to Bethlehem in Judah. Ruth is a 'stranger in a strange land' – what we would refer to today as a migrant. Ruth makes her home in what to her is a foreign land and is determined to work to support herself and Naomi. Read together Ruth 2:1–14.

Ask members of the group to share any situations they have found themselves in where they felt like a stranger. (You may like to have thought of something from your own experience to get the discussion started.) What did it feel like? Did anyone try to make them feel at home?

Why do they think Boaz helped Ruth? (It's likely that someone will suggest that he fancied her! Whilst we can't rule this out, as ultimately they do marry, the evidence more strongly suggests that he was an honourable man simply demonstrating kindness and generosity and, crucially for this study, willing to provide for the needy out of his own abundance. In the cynical age that we live in, we may find that hard to believe, but we need to avoid reading something into the story that isn't supported by the evidence.)

Ask the group whether they, or their family, have been in a situation where they had the opportunity to help a stranger. If so, share what happened.

In recent years migrant and refugee crises have pushed the subject of

how welcoming we should be to foreigners up both the public and political agendas. Ask the group what they think our response should be to those who come to our country seeking a better life or fleeing war or persecution,

Ask the group what lessons we can learn from the example of Boaz.

Ask them to share how they think they could apply this Scripture to their own lives.

The point: The response of Boaz to Ruth's situation is one that we should seek to emulate when we have the opportunity.

Response

1. Title: More than you think

Format: Worship and reflection

Age group: 15+ (11–14)

Equipment required: Popcorn kernels and popcorn machine (or traditional oil, pan and stove if you like living dangerously!), or microwave and microwaveable popcorn

Duration: 10 minutes

Description: Remind the group that in the story of the feeding of the 5,000 (John 6:1–15) Jesus miraculously feeds the crowd from seemingly insignificant ingredients. Reflect that popcorn in its kernel state is small, singularly uninspiring and effectively inedible but, treated in the right way, it seems to multiply out of all proportion to its humble beginnings. Read Luke 6:38:

'Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full – pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back.' (NLT)

Be very clear that, whilst our motivation for giving and generosity should never be our personal gain, God has promised not only to

multiply what we offer to him in order to bless others but also to bless the giver in return. It's win-win if we choose to believe it, but sadly we're more inclined to try to hang onto what we've got.

Ask the group whether they believe that God can multiply anything they do to bless others and have faith in the promise that they will be blessed in return. Pray, giving thanks for God's promises, and then make and eat your popcorn!

The point: Whatever we have to offer to bless others, God will multiply it and bless us in return.

2. Title: Lunch money

Format: Worship and reflection

Age group: 15+

Equipment: A plastic lunchbox (Tupperware box or similar), slips of paper, pens

Duration: 10 minutes

Description: Ask each member of the group to estimate how much they spend (or is spent for them) on lunch in an average week. Preferably without anyone else seeing, ask them to write this figure on the slip of paper, fold it over and place it in the box. Once this has been completed, ask a leader to randomly read out the figures on the slips whilst they or someone else keeps a running total of what it amounts to. Announce the total lunch spend and roughly what that equates to per person per day. In a moment's silence ask the group members to reflect on what they might do to bless someone with just one day's lunch money in the following week (buy someone lunch, donate a gift to charity, buy a gift for someone). Invite them to invite the Holy Spirit to direct their thoughts and challenge them to follow up on anything they hear or decide. In conclusion, share the following verse:

'And don't forget to do good and share with those in need. These are the sacrifices that please God.'
(Hebrews 13:16, NLT)

The point: To give God a chance to speak to the group about how they might start to put some of what has been discussed into action.

3. Title: Feeding time

Format: Worship and reflection

Age group: 15+

Equipment: None

Duration: 5 minutes

Description: Read out this Native American story:

One evening, an old Cherokee told his grandson about a battle that goes on inside people. He said, "My son, the battle is between two 'wolves' inside us all. One is evil. It is anger, envy, jealousy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority and ego. The other is good. It is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith." The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked the grandfather: "Which wolf wins?" The old Cherokee simply replied...

Ask the group whether they know what the answer was.

"The one you feed."

Ask the group to reflect on their response to this story.

In pairs, or whatever works for your group, ask them to pray over each other that the Holy Spirit will help cut off the food supply to anything within them that is not good, pure and beneficial and in turn feed, nurture and grow the fruit of the Spirit within them.

The point: To recognise that we want what overflows from us to be

good and we need to take responsibility for ensuring this is the case.

Takeaway

1. Title: Get your act together – multiplication

Format: Discussion

Age group: 15+ (11–14)

Equipment: None

Duration: 10 minutes

Description: Introduce the group to the 40acts concept (if you haven't already), explaining that every day during Lent there will be a challenge around a different aspect of generosity. Each challenge includes a brief reflection to get people thinking what it means to them. You may wish, if you have internet access, to show the group the 40acts website (www.40acts.org.uk).

Encourage your group to sign up to 40acts (on the website), so that they can be sent daily email prompts for the challenges. Ask the young people to complete the challenges in the coming week and think through them – ideally discussing them with someone else (a friend, parent, leader or discipler). Ask them to reflect on the following question when doing the challenges this week:

- How might God multiply what you have to give to others?

You may wish to make space in your next session to get some feedback on what your group have experienced when doing the challenges.

The point: To get group members to participate in 40acts and engage with and reflect on the challenges

WEEK THREE: THE HARDEST WORDS

→ Main point

- We all need forgiveness and no one is excluded – but we need the Holy Spirit to help us forgive the unlovable and unforgivable

→ Bible references

Proverbs 25: 21–22, Psalm 133:1, Matthew 6: 14 -15, Luke 7:36-50, 7:47, 17:3-4, 19:1-10, Mark 2:13–17, 11:25, Ephesians 1:7, 4:31–32 Romans 3:23, 5:8

→ Leader's notes

“Sorry seems to be the hardest word”, sang Elton John, a very long time ago (quite possibly before you were born!). That may have some truth in it if we are looking for one hard word to say, but if we look for the hardest three words to say then ‘I forgive you’ must be up there. ‘I forgive you, I forgive me, now when do I start living again?’ sang Kelly Clarkson, slightly more recently. It’s interesting, but not surprising in the self-centred age in which we live, that Kelly generously forgives (whomever) and then generously forgives herself.

There aren’t many places in the Bible where forgiving ourselves gets much of a mention; in fact, to be precise, it doesn’t get a mention at all. We can be forgiven and we can forgive others but we can’t technically forgive ourselves. That’s not to say people don’t genuinely carry around issues of guilt and sin that they feel they need forgiveness for, but DIY forgiveness is a fatally flawed concept that can often paralyse people from seeking or finding the real solutions to their problems. It’s important we remember this because

it’s so easy for us – and even more so for young people – to buy into the idea that the universe rotates around ‘me’ and that in some, if not all, areas of our life we can be our own personal saviour. Through Jesus, God initiated and completed the final word on forgiveness. *‘But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners’ (Romans 5:8 NLT)* and the Bible is clear that *‘In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace’ (Ephesians 1:7, NIV).*

It was clear from Jesus’ ministry that no one was to be excluded from this forgiveness. When he ate with Pharisees, when he allowed his feet to be anointed by an immoral woman (Luke 7:36–50), the message couldn’t have been clearer (except maybe if you were a Pharisee) that we all need forgiveness (Romans 3:23) and with forgiveness comes responsibility – great responsibility (to badly quote Spider-Man’s uncle).

Our desire and ability to love and forgive others is directly related to how much we’ve been forgiven and, more importantly, how much we recognise we have been forgiven (Luke 7:47). Only those who recognise the depth of their sin can fully appreciate the complete forgiveness that Jesus has won for us. It’s from the upsurge of gratitude that we should feel in response to this realisation that a relentless desire to love and forgive others should spring. We really need this because loving and forgiving the people we love can be a challenge at times, let alone loving the unloved or unlovable.

C.S. Lewis wrote, ‘To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable, because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you’, but Philip Yancey in his classic book on grace recognises, in reality, how hard that can be to achieve. He writes;

“I never find forgiveness easy, and rarely do I find it completely satisfying. Nagging injustices remain, and the wounds still cause pain. I have to approach God again and again, yielding to him the residue of what I thought I committed to him long ago. I do so because the Gospels make clear the connection: God forgives my debts as I forgive my debtors.”

Young people need to grasp that it is exactly because forgiveness is hard that they need the power of the Holy Spirit to help them to forgive and to love the unlovable. Generous love produces more love. Jesus eats with all and those who have been forgiven and forgive much - love much.

As a follow-up to this session, we recommend you encourage the group to sign up to the 40acts campaign – www.40acts.org.uk – and engage with the daily challenges throughout Lent, ready to share their experiences with the rest of the group each week (or at least in the final week).

Warming up

1. Title: Grab it

Format: Game

Age group: 15+ (11–14)

Duration: 10 minutes

Equipment required: Chairs, bucket, towel, bar of soap, coin

Description: Divide your group into two teams (you will need an even number). Place two rows of chairs,

one chair per team member, facing each other and an additional chair at the end of the row facing down the middle of the rows. The chairs only need to be so far apart that players can sit on either side without their knees touching. Fill the bucket with water, place the unwrapped soap in this and place the bucket at the other end of the rows (if playing indoors you may want to put something under this to protect the floor).

Seat each team in one of the rows, facing each other, and ask them to hold hands. A leader sits in the chair at the end of the row. With the exception of the two team members nearest to the leader, everyone must look down the row towards the bucket. The leader flips the coin so that only the nearest team members can see it. If it is 'heads', the team member must immediately squeeze the hand of the team member next to them, who then passes the hand-squeeze down the line. When it reaches the person on the end of the row, they must grab the soap out of the bucket and hold it up before the person opposite them can do the same thing.

If the coin is 'tails', nothing should happen and the leader spins the coin again. On a 'heads' spin, the team member who reached the soap first then moves to sit in the chair nearest to the leader and all the team move up one chair towards the bucket. If a team attempts to grab the soap on a 'tails' spin, the person sitting nearest to the leader must move down to be near the bucket and everyone else move back one seat towards the leader.

The game is over when the person who started nearest to the leader has moved down to be nearest to the bucket and successfully retrieves the soap.

The point: Just for fun

2. Title: Emptying the box

Format: Game

Age group: 15+ (11–14)

Duration: 10 minutes

Equipment required: Two empty cube tissue boxes, two adjustable belts or lengths of wide ribbon, an even number of table tennis balls (12–16 in total works well)

Description: To prepare the game, make two slits in the bottom of each box and thread the belt or ribbon through them. Two players go at a time. Strap one box around each player so that it sits roughly in the small of their back (the hole in the box should be pointing outward). Fill each box with an equal number of table tennis balls. The idea of the game is for each player to shake, shimmy, jump or dance until all the balls have fallen out of the box. They can't use hands or lie down to achieve this. The winner is the first player to empty their box. (You may want to play some funky music whilst they attempt to do this.)

The point: Just for fun

3. Title: Forgiveness balloons

Format: Game

Age group: 15+

Duration: 5 minutes

Equipment required: An equal number of two colours of balloons blown up, at least one per person in your group but for total chaos have more; marker pens that will write on the balloons; pushpins/map pins

Description: Divide the group into two teams and give at least one balloon to each person. Each team should have balloons of just one colour. Ask them to think about the sort of things that we may need to forgive people for (e.g. gossiping, lying, being mean, etc.) and write them on their balloon.

One offence per balloon. They can be repeated and they don't have to

be personal to them – this is not confession time! Explain that when someone has offended against you forgiveness is like a sharp pin that lets the anger out of your hurt. Give out the pushpins. The aim of the game is to keep all of your team's balloons aloft and safe whilst trying to pop the other team's balloons. The pins must be held above the players' heads at all times and are the only thing that can be used to pop the balloons. When they pop a balloon they should call out 'I forgive you'. The winning team is the one that still has at least one inflated balloon when the other teams have all been popped.

The point: To help introduce the theme of forgiveness and its benefits

Getting Started

1. Title: Escape to Elysium

Format: Video

Age group: 15+

Duration: 15 minutes

Equipment required: Copy of the film *Elysium* and the means to play it

Description: Introduce the clip. In the year 2159, humanity is sharply divided between two classes of people. The mega-rich live aboard a luxurious space station called Elysium, and the rest live a hand-to-mouth existence in Earth's ruins. The desperate people on Earth, many of whom are seeking medical help as well as a better life, are prepared to take enormous risks and give everything they have to traffickers who can help them escape. On Elysium it is Secretary Delacourt's job to preserve the pampered lifestyle of the Elysium citizens, no matter what the cost. In this clip we see what happens when some of the desperate people from Earth try to reach Elysium. Start the clip at 12:00 mins and run through to 19:00 mins (7 minutes).

- Ask the group whether anyone knows where the name Elysium comes from (it means a state of perfect happiness and was what the Ancient Greeks thought of as heaven).
- Can they recognise any parallels between the plot of the film and contemporary issues (e.g. immigration policy, migrants, refugees)?
- From what they saw in the clip, what would they say characterised the attitude of the people living on Elysium to the people from Earth (e.g. fear, distaste)?
- Again, what do they think the parallels are between these attitudes and the attitudes of our own country to migrants and refugees? Do they think that any of these attitudes are reasonable or justified? Ask them to explain their views.

The point: To introduce that Jesus spent time and ate with both those who were unloved and those who were unlovely. Christians need to be willing to do the same, as those who are forgiven much should love much.

2. Title: 'F' is for forgiveness

Format: Drama

Age group: 15+ (11–14)

Duration: 10 minutes

Equipment required: None

Description: Depending upon the confidence/ability of your group, you can either explain the idea and get some volunteers to improvise the scenario or you can divide everyone into pairs and they can have a few minutes together to decide what they are going to say before performing their drama. Either way the idea is that they improvise or create a conversation between two people. Each person will say one sentence in turn. The first speaker will start with a sentence beginning with 'A' and the

second speaker's sentence must begin with 'B' and so on through the conversation. The scenario they must play out is that the second speaker has done something awful that he needs to seek the first speaker's forgiveness for. This can be whatever they imagine but to make it a little more tricky when the second speaker gets to the letter 'F' his line must be 'Forgive me!' and when he reaches 'J' it must be 'Jesus love you!' Similarly when the first speaker gets to 'I' his line must be 'I forgive you!' You can make 'J' the last line of the sketch (or they can try to get to 'Z' if they want to).

Example:

Anyone seen my cat?

Black one, rather flat?

Car's hit my cat!

Don't get emotional.

Emotional, that cat was my life!

Forgive me!

Going to kill you!

Hold on, you're the Archbishop of Canterbury!

I forgive you!

Jesus loves you!

The point: A creative way of introducing the theme of forgiveness

3. Title: Job satisfaction

Format: Activity

Age group: 15+

Duration: 15 minutes

Equipment required: Post-it notes with jobs written on them, one set per group

Description: Divide your group into two (or more, depending on the size of your group). Write the following jobs onto two sets of Post-it notes (one per job) and stick them randomly onto a wall or on a flat surface with space for each group to gather round.

Lawyer, Police Officer, Call Centre Operator, Traffic Warden, Sales

Person, Politician, Journalist, Teacher, Vet, Member of the Armed Forces, Doctor, Surgeon, Chef, Entertainer

Explain to the group that you are going to do an activity based on a survey (by Solopress.com) on the professions which people most hated and those they most respected. Ask the group to create two lists with five jobs in each list and to discard four jobs which don't fit into either list. List one should be what they think people said were the top five most hated professions and the other list should be what people said were the most respected.

The other four might have received some votes but weren't in the top five. They need to rank the professions they have in their lists in the order they think they appeared in the survey. When they have had time to do this, give the answers, asking the groups to score their results, giving themselves one point for every profession in the correct list and two points if it is in the correct position in that list.

Most hated: Traffic Warden (47.85%), Call Centre Operator (11.9%), Sales Person (11.7%), Police Officer (8.50%), Lawyer (7.85%)

Most respected: Surgeon (33.25%), Doctor (31.35%), Member of the Armed Forces (17.75%), Vet (8.45%), Teacher (6.3%)

Ask the group whether they were surprised by any of the survey findings.

- Do they agree that it is wrong to be prejudicial against any profession? Are the placements in these categories deserved?
- Which of these people would Jesus have been happy to eat a meal with?
- Can they think of anyone they know whom they would be embarrassed

to be seen sharing a meal with?
Why?

The point: To recognise that Jesus was happy to spend time with those who were unloved by society and challenge the group to think whether they can say the same.

Digging In

1. Title: Forgiveness is...

Format: Quiz

Age group: 15+

Duration: 20 minutes

Equipment required: Thumbs, Bibles (or PowerPoint and means to display it)

Description: Ask the group to listen to the following statements. If they believe the statement is true, ask them to give it a thumbs-up; if not, a thumbs-down. If everyone picks the same answer, ask one person to share why they answered that way. If you have a mix of 'yes' and 'no', ask one person from each 'camp' to share their views. Then share the answer you have and the Scripture to back it up. Ask someone to find the Scripture and read it (or alternatively have the Scriptures on a PowerPoint). Group members can keep their own score of how their answers compare with yours.

1. Forgiveness is an option based on our feelings.
False. Forgiveness is an act of obedience to God. Mark 11:25.
2. Forgiveness is a good idea when someone deserves it.
False. None one of us deserves forgiveness yet God gives it to us. Luke 6:37.
3. Forgiveness is rewarded by God.
True. When we choose to honour God and live by kingdom principles, we are rewarded. Proverbs 25:21–22.
4. Forgiveness requires other people to confess or make up.

False. It does not matter what the other person does. Forgiveness is an individual act that we choose to do regardless of the other person's actions. Colossians 3:13.

5. Forgiveness is reconciliation.
False. It takes one person to forgive and two to reconcile. God's heart is that we be reconciled to one another, but this isn't always possible if the other person won't try. Psalm 133:1.
6. Forgiveness is not saying that what the person did to you was OK.
True. What the person did may well have not been OK; that is why you need to forgive. Luke 17:3.
7. Forgiveness is to be continuously offered.
True. It doesn't matter how many times a person hurts or offends you; each time, forgive. Luke 17:3–4.

The point: To get a biblical perspective on forgiveness and draw out where the individuals stand in relation to this.

2. Title: Come dine with me

Format: Bible study

Age group: 15+

Duration: 20 minutes

Equipment required: Bibles

Description: Tell the group you are putting together the 'dream' dinner party and they have the opportunity to invite anyone they like. They have to share who they would invite and why. As this is an imaginary party, they don't have to know the person and the person can be living or dead (nicely resurrected dead, not smelly corpse dead!), but they have to be (or have been) a real person i.e. no superheroes, cartoon characters, etc. They also have to say what that person would bring to the party as a gift for their host.

Read together Luke 7:36–50, the story of the woman who anointed Jesus' feet with expensive perfume whilst he was dining with the Pharisee.

Ask the group to consider the following questions:

- If someone comes round to your house for dinner, are there any customs you or your family tend to follow?
- Do you know what social faux pas Simon the Pharisee seems to have committed? (It would have been customary to wash his guest's feet.)
- Why do you think he omitted to do this? (It could have been he was just socially inept, but maybe he thought he was too good for Jesus and wanted to put him in his place.)
- What was the woman demonstrating in washing Jesus' feet? (Boldness – after all she wasn't an invited guest – faith, kindness, respect, love, humility, devotion, etc.)
- What does Jesus say our response to forgiveness should be? (Overflowing love.)

Suggest that only those who recognise the depth of their sin can appreciate the complete forgiveness that God offers them, and this may have an impact on the extent to which we are willing and able to love others.

Ask those in your group who have already accepted Jesus as their Saviour to reflect (silently) on whether they have truly appreciated the complete forgiveness that Jesus offers them for every sinful thing they have done. To those who have yet to make a commitment, offer reassurance that Jesus can bring forgiveness in any situation. Ask the group to reflect (again, silently) on what they think their personal

response should be to what they have heard today.

Close in prayer.

The point: The extent to which we recognise how much we are forgiven will impact on our fruitfulness.

3. Title: The cost of forgiveness

Format: Discussion

Age group: 15+

Duration: 15 minutes

Equipment required: Bibles

Description: Ask someone to read Matthew 6:14–15 and then share this story:

On the evening of 17 June 2015 a Bible study was taking place at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in downtown Charleston, South Carolina – one of the historically oldest black congregations in the USA. The group had been joined by a young white man who was attending for the first time.

He reportedly listened intently during the study but then started to disagree when they started to discuss the Scripture. When the group started to pray he stood up and produced a gun from his bag. When he was asked why he was threatening churchgoers he allegedly responded, "I have to do it. You rape our women and you're taking over our country. And you have to go." He then opened fire, killing nine people, including the senior church leader, and injuring a tenth person.

The morning after the attack, police arrested a suspect, later identified as 21-year-old Dylann Roof, in Shelby, North Carolina. Roof later confessed that he committed the shooting in the hope of igniting a race war.

"Every fibre in my body hurts. And I'll never be the same," Felicia Sanders, the mother of the one of the victims, 26-year-old Tywanza Sanders, was quoted as saying. "We welcomed

you Wednesday night in our Bible study with open arms."

In subsequent news reports relatives of the victims were quoted as expressing their forgiveness of Roof. Alana Simmons, granddaughter of victim Daniel Simmons Sr, 74, said, "Although my grandfather and the other victims died at the hands of hate, this is proof, everyone's plea for your soul is proof that they lived and loved and their legacies will live and love. So hate won't win and I just want to thank the court for making sure that hate doesn't win."

Bethane Middleton-Brown, the sister of the Rev. DePayne Middleton-Doctor, said, "For me, I am a work in progress. And I acknowledge I am very angry. But one thing that she's always joined in our family with is that she taught me that we are the families that love built. We have no room for hate so we have to forgive."

"I forgive you," said Anthony Thompson, the husband of slain Myra Thompson, 59. "But we would like you to take this opportunity to repent. Repent, confess, give your life to the one who matters most: Christ. So that he can change it, can change your ways no matter what happened to you and you'll be OK. Do that and you'll be better off than what you are right now."

Roof's family released a statement expressing their "deepest sympathies and condolences to families of the victims" and going on to say "Words cannot express our shock, grief, and disbelief as to what happened that night. We are devastated and saddened by what occurred." The statement said, "We have all been touched by the moving words from the victims' families offering God's forgiveness and love in the face of such horrible suffering." The impact of the forgiveness of the families on Roof himself is, as yet, unknown.

- What do the group think about the statements the bereaved families made? Do they think they would be able to make similar statements in similar circumstances?
- Who benefited most from the forgiveness they were offering? Does it matter if Roof rejects or ignores the forgiveness he is being offered?
- Where do they think God was in this situation? Why didn't he step in to protect his people, studying his word, in his house?

Before you end this discussion it would be appropriate to pray for everyone involved in this tragedy who are still living with the consequences of what happened that night.

The point: It's those who truly forgive who stand to benefit most from their forgiveness, but forgiveness is painful and it costs. The members of this church recognised that they had received forgiveness from God through Christ and, as a result, had a responsibility to demonstrate forgiveness and love to others.

Response

1. Title: Forgiveness fizz

Format: Worship and reflection

Age group: 15+

Duration: 10 minutes

Equipment required: Bowl of water, large effervescent multivitamin tablets (enough for one per person), pencils, some quiet music and means to play it

Description: Play some quiet music and get the group into a circle. Place the bowl of water in the middle of the circle. Place the pencils and the effervescent tablets nearby. Ask someone to read the following verse a couple of times.

"Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a

grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."

Colossians 3:13, NIV

Ask everyone to reflect for a moment on whether there is anyone they know they need to forgive for something they have done or said to them (it may be worth reminding them that in forgiving someone they are not saying that what that person did or said is OK). Alternatively, they may like to think whether there is anyone they need to ask forgiveness from.

Ask someone to say a short prayer inviting the Holy Spirit to help prompt people as they reflect on this. If they feel that they that they can make the decision to genuinely forgive someone, invite them to pick up a tablet, write that person's name on it (as best they can) and drop it into the water to symbolise that they are not going to carry unforgiveness over this around any more. If they are committing to seek the forgiveness of another person, ask them to write 'Me' on the tablet and drop it into the water as they pray that that person will graciously forgive them. Be clear that if they can't think of anything or would be participating just because they think they should, then they shouldn't respond, emphasising the importance of giving forgiveness or seeking forgiveness being genuine and authentic.

When everyone has had a chance to respond, pray to seal in the responses made and especially pray for anyone who didn't respond because they don't feel they are in a place to give or seek forgiveness over something at the present time.

The point: To offer the group an opportunity to personalise their response to the forgiveness they have received and respond in kind to others.

2. Title: Set it free

Format: Worship and reflection

Age group: 15+

Duration: 10 minutes

Equipment required: Download of the *Story of Forgiveness* (vimeo.com/137266342) and the means to play it; copy of the song 'Forgiveness' by Matthew West and the means to play it.

Description: Play the *Story of Forgiveness*, which explains how Matthew West was inspired to write the song by the forgiveness demonstrated by a mother who forgave a young man who killed her daughter (and then even successfully petitioned for his prison sentence to be reduced). Play the song and as you listen together ask the group to reflect on whether they could be as forgiving in similar circumstances and, if they are carrying unforgiveness over something less significant than the story on which the song is based, ask them whether it's time to offer forgiveness in the light of the God-honouring example they have just heard about. Close in prayer, asking God to seal in anything the Holy Spirit has prompted the group to do in response to this session.

The point: To help the group understand the transforming power of forgiveness to both those giving and those receiving it.

3. Title: It all adds up

Format: Memory verse

Age group: 15+

Duration: 10 minutes

Equipment required: For every member of the group, a slip with the memory verse on, paper and pen

Description: Ask the group to rewrite the following Scripture in 'SMS speak', particularly focusing on where they can insert numbers to replace words or parts of words:

'Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.'

Ephesians 4:32 NLT

Say that you are looking for the first person who can give you the total that all the numbers in the rewritten verse and reference add up to.

The rewritten verse should be:

Instead, be kind 2 each other, 10derhearted, 4giving 1 another, just as God through Christ has 4given you.

Ephesians 4:32

The answer you are looking for is 57.

The point: To help the group remember a key Scripture linked to the session theme.

Takeaway

1. Title: Get your act together – multiplication

Format: Discussion

Age group: 15+ (11–14)

Equipment: None

Duration: 10 minutes

Description: Introduce the group to the 40acts concept (if you haven't already), explaining that every day during Lent there will be a challenge around a different aspect of generosity. Each challenge includes a brief reflection to get people thinking what it means to them. You may wish, if you have internet access, to show the group the 40acts website (www.40acts.org.uk).

Encourage your group to sign up to 40acts (on the website), so that they can be sent daily email prompts for the challenges. Ask the young people to complete the challenges in the coming week and think through them – ideally discussing them with someone else (a friend, parent, leader or discipler). Ask them to reflect on the following question when doing the challenges this week:

- Who do you need to forgive?
You may wish to make space in your next session to get some feedback on

what your group have experienced when doing the challenges.

The point: To get group members to participate in 40acts and engage with and reflect on the challenges.

**WEEK FOUR:
I HEAR YOU KNOCKING**

→ **Main point**

- To think about what we need to do to grow spiritually day by day and how that relates to our responsibility to be generous to others

→ **Bible references**

Exodus 16, Proverbs 30:8, Matthew 6:9–13, 18:35, Luke 10:38–42, 11:1–4, 5–10, 12:30, 18:4–6, 22:42, John 6:30–35

→ **Leader's notes**

Way, way back in the mists of time there was a song, made famous by the likes of Fats Domino, called 'I hear you knocking', the heart of which was the line 'I hear you knocking, but you can't come in.' In Luke 11:5–10, Jesus tells the story of a man woken up in the middle of the night by his friend who desperately needs three loaves of bread and isn't going to take 'no' for an answer.

One imagines that, had the song 'I hear you knocking' been available at the time, the poor man awakened from his bed might have sung it over his friend, not quite as a blessing. What the desperate need was for three loaves of bread at that time of night we don't know but we have to admire the knocking friend's persistence, which of course is the point that Jesus is making in relation to prayer – pray and keep on praying.

This story comes directly after Jesus has shared what we now know as the Lord's Prayer (Luke 11:1–4), where he exhorts us to ask God daily for the food that we need. These are foundational spiritual disciplines – praying daily and being persistent in our prayers – and very much

something that young people need to grasp to help them grow spiritually. But the story of the hungry man in the middle of the night and, indeed, the Lord's Prayer itself have important messages to teach us about generosity. As we daily pray 'forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us' we are also saying 'as you have been generous to us, so we are generous to other people' and persistently so.

Generosity is a discipline both in receiving and in giving. It can be quite vexing when we exhibit generosity to someone and they feel that, for whatever reason, they have to pay it back in kind or outdo the giver ('Thanks for the three loaves of Lidl sliced white bread that you gave me last night; please accept these six artisan loaves made with rare Patagonian rye flour and goji berries by way of thank you'). If generosity to us sparks any response, it should really be to be generous to the wider community ('as we forgive others'), not to play tit for tat with someone who is generous to us.

When the American business magnate John D. Rockefeller was asked, in relation to wealth, 'How much would be enough?' he famously replied "Just a little bit more." Whilst in this context Rockefeller was talking about the accumulation of wealth (and it's important to remember that he was also a renowned philanthropist), it's a statement which, turned on its head, we could apply to generosity. However generous we already are, how generous could we be? Just a little bit more. As the 19th-century Scottish evangelist Henry Drummond said, "The most obvious lesson in Christ's teaching is that there is no

happiness in having or getting anything, but only in giving."

In this session we want to challenge the young people to think about what they need to do to grow spiritually day by day and how that relates to their responsibility to be generous to others.

As a follow-up to this session, we recommend you encourage the group to sign up to the 40acts campaign – www.40acts.org.uk – and engage with the daily challenges throughout Lent, ready to share their experiences with the rest of the group each week (or at least in the final week)

Warming Up

1. Title: Kick flip tortilla grip

Format: Game

Age group: 15+ (11–14)

Duration: 10 minutes

Equipment required: Large soft tortilla wraps, a pair of scuba flippers and a sturdy plastic (not paper) plate, string or ribbon

Description: Make a hat from the plate and string that will be placed on the participant's head like a helmet. The plate will need to be flat on their head, making a platform. Be sure it is secured with the string. Punch two holes in the plate to run the string through so that it can be tied around their chin. Have them put the scuba flippers on. The object of the game is to kick a tortilla in the air off the scuba flipper and catch it on the plate with no hands. If they miss they pick the tortilla up and put it back on the flipper and keep trying until someone has a successful catch with their plastic plate helmet.

The point: Just for fun

2. Title: Don't blow the joker

Format: Game

Age group: 15+ (11–14)

Duration: 5 minutes

Equipment required: An empty wide-necked glass bottle (e.g. Starbucks coffee drink), deck of cards, something to time a minute with

Description: Place the playing cards face down on top of the bottle with a joker as the bottom card placed face up. This is an individual challenge and each player has one minute to complete the task, which is to blow on the pack of cards so that all the cards with the exception of the joker fall off. Let a few people have a go and see who can do it in the fastest time (if at all!).

The point: Just for fun

3. Title: Use your noodle

Format: Game

Age group: 15+ (11–14)

Duration: 5 minutes

Equipment required: Half a foam swimming noodle, a ball

Description: Form the group into two circles, one in the middle of the other. The outer group should be facing inwards and the inner group outwards. There should be fewer players in the inner circle. Give the noodle to one of the players in the outer circle and the ball to one of the players in the inner circle.

When you say 'go' the players in the inner circle have to pass the ball round their circle (they can pass either way and change direction whenever they want) in order to prevent the players in the outer circle hitting the ball with the noodle. The outer circle players can similarly pass the noodle round their circle in either direction. Set a time limit and give the inner group three 'lives'. They will lose a 'life' every time the ball is hit. If they have any lives left at the end of the time they are declared the

winners; if the outer group manage to take all the 'lives' within the time limit they have won.

The point: Just for fun

Getting Started

1. Title: Generosity in 3.5 minutes

Format: Video

Age group: 15+

Duration: 10 minutes

Equipment required: Download of *3.5 minutes on Generosity with Francis Chan* and the means to play it

Description: In this video the American teaching pastor and writer Francis Chan talks about how the world could be impacted if Christians would give the way that Jesus teaches. Ask the group to share their thoughts on the following questions:

- What two major outcomes does Chan believe there would be if churches were truly generous? (Needy people helped; cynicism of non-believers overcome)
- Do you agree with Chan's statement that many people don't believe in God because when they look at Christians they don't see them exhibiting compassion and love?
- Can you remember the quote that Chan attributes to the missionary Amy Carmichael? ("You can give without loving but you can't love without giving.") Think of an example where someone might give without loving.
- In what ways could you as an individual/we as a group or church respond to this challenge?

In conclusion, share that Chan gives away about 90 per cent of his income, doesn't take a salary from his church, and has donated most of his book royalties, which have totalled about \$2,000,000, to various

charities. Much of the money goes to organisations which rescue sex slaves in foreign countries.

The point: To introduce the idea that generosity has to be lived out on a daily basis and that our faith should be producing fruit.

2. Title: Most generous

Format: Quiz

Age group: 15+ (11–14)

Duration: 10 minutes

Equipment required: Three sheets of paper for each team, each sheet with one of the following symbols (large as possible) written/printed on it: +, -, , =

Description: Divide your group into at least two teams.

Who are the most generous nations in the world? A 2013 survey sought to find out by looking at every country in the world and working out, within the previous month of the survey, what percentage of the population gave to charity, what percentage had helped a stranger and what percentage had done some voluntary work.

They then gave each country a World Giving Index Score based upon the results – effectively showing how generous countries were. Ask the teams the following questions and ask them to hold up the sheet with the '+' on if they think the answer is higher, '-' if they think it's lower, '=' if they think it's equal. Keep the score.

1. Ireland – higher or lower than or equal to Canada in terms of generosity (equal)
2. New Zealand – higher or lower than or equal to Australia in terms of generosity (higher)
3. Myanmar (Burma) – higher or lower than or equal to the United States in terms of generosity (equal)

4. UK – higher or lower than or equal to Malaysia in terms of generosity (equal)
5. United States – higher or lower than or equal to Sri Lanka in terms of generosity (higher)
6. Ireland – higher or lower than or equal to the UK in terms of generosity (higher)
7. Trinidad and Tobago – higher or lower than or equal to Sri Lanka in terms of generosity (equal)

Share the actual list with them:

1. Myanmar and the United States = 1
2. Canada and Ireland = 2
3. New Zealand 3
4. Australia 4
5. UK and Malaysia = 5
6. Sri Lanka and Trinidad and Tobago = 6

(Sources: CAF, Gallup)

Ask the group whether they thought anything on the list was surprising. If so, why?

The point: To get the group to start to think about generosity to others on a global scale and recognise it is more than giving to charity and something that should be practised daily

3. Title: Generosity on a roll

Format: Discussion

Age group: 15+

Duration: 10 minutes

Equipment required: Pair of dice

Description: Get the group to take turns in rolling the dice. Ask each group member the question which corresponds to the number they have rolled. Tick off the questions that have been asked. If they roll a number that has already been used, they are let off answering a question and may pass the dice on.

- Two. What action have you taken recently that has made you feel generous?
- Three. How can you measure how generous someone is?
- Four. Are the poor more generous than the wealthy?
- Five. How would you describe someone who is mean?
- Six. What's the best way to respond to someone's generosity?
- Seven. Can you give an example of when someone was generous to you?
- Eight. Are there any circumstances you can think of where generosity would be wrong?
- Nine. Who would you most like to be generous to?
- Ten. Why are people generous?
- Eleven. Who is the most generous person you know?
- Twelve. If you had £50 to give away right this minute, who would you give it to and why?

Continue until all the questions have been answered or you run out of time.

The point: To help the group share some of their understanding and experience of generosity on a daily basis.

Digging In

1. Title: Three straight 'A's, Part 1

Format: Discussion

Age group: 15+

Duration: 15 minutes

Equipment required: Bibles

Description: Ask the group to share:

- One type of food that they tend to eat every day (be as specific as possible)
- One thing they do every day which relates to their personal appearance

- One other thing that they do or try to do every day as a matter of routine

(Hopefully, some of the group may answer the last question with some example of a spiritual routine that they follow.)

Read together Luke 11:1–4.

Explain that in verse 3 Jesus tells us to ask God to supply our physical needs (food etc.); he also means that we need to be asking God to meet our spiritual needs. Suggest that the Lord's Prayer in itself is daily bread. Jesus has provided us with a simple yet powerful way of connecting with God on a daily basis.

If we find prayer a challenge (most people do at times) and particularly if we find it hard to connect with God on a daily basis, this is the place to start. The Lord's Prayer gives us the opportunity to do three things – which all begin with the letter 'A'!

1. Acknowledge the power of the Father's name and his kingdom (Luke 11:2).

Ask the group what we mean by this. Why is this important? (We acknowledge God's goodness to us; we put him first.)

2. Ask for what we need to live fully.

Ask the group what we mean by this. Why is it important? (We ask for and receive what we need, to be able to fully live the life God has planned for us.)

3. Accept our place in a wider community.

Ask the group what we mean by this. Why is it important? (We need to forgive/love others around us; God is generous to us on a daily basis and we need to be generous to others – not now and then, or when it suits us – but on a daily basis.)

Ask the group whether they can remember what the three 'A's stand for.

Ask the group to share how they could go about applying the 'Accept' element of the Lord's Prayer to their daily lives.

The point: To help the group grasp the significance of the Lord's Prayer not only in their daily devotions but also in the challenge it brings to be generous to others on a daily basis in response to God's generosity to us.

2. Title: Knock, knock

Format: Discussion

Age group: 15+

Duration: 15 minutes

Equipment required: Bibles, a copy of *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey* and the means to play it

Description: Introduce the video clip by saying that, unknown to the hobbit Bilbo Baggins, the wizard Gandalf has arranged for Thorin and his company of dwarves to come round to Bilbo's house for a party. Start the clip at 16:34, when Bilbo is sitting down for his dinner, and play until 20:50 (4 mins 16 secs), when Gandalf appears at the door.

- Ask the group how hospitable they think Bilbo was to his uninvited guests.
- What generally accepted rules of 'social etiquette' were the dwarves breaking?
- Have any of the group had guests at their house who turned up unexpectedly, behaved badly or overstayed their welcome? How was this handled?

Read together Luke 11:5–10, the story Jesus told about someone turning up at a friend's house at midnight, wanting to borrow three loaves of bread.

- Ask the group what they think this story is about. (Persistence in prayer, need)
- Why do the group think that Jesus is encouraging us to be persistent in prayer?

Boldness and persistence in prayer helps overcome our insensitivity – it does more to change our heart and mind than God's. It helps us to clarify what we want (what we really, really want) and helps us to clarify the intensity of our need.

William McGill, a 19th-century physician and politician, put it this way: "The value of persistent prayer is not that He will hear us, but that we will finally hear Him."

Ask the group to explain their understanding of this quote.

Read together Luke 11:1–4 (the Lord's Prayer). Here Jesus is teaching us how we should pray every day and, as it directly precedes his instruction to be persistent, we can safely presume that he wants us to pray on a daily basis and be persistent in those prayers.

This is praying not just for our needs but also for the community around us.

Challenge the group with these questions:

- Are you praying daily for your needs and the needs of others? Are you persistent in your prayers even when you may not get immediate answers?
- Are you ready to be the answer to someone else's prayer today? Are you ready for the unexpected guest – the person in need who you can be generous towards?

The point: To encourage the group to be persistent in prayer on a daily basis, not only for their own needs but also for the needs of others.

3. Title: Help me, Mary

Format: Bible study

Age group: 15+

Duration: 20 minutes

Equipment required: Bibles

Description: Ask the group whether they have any jobs (chores) that they regularly do round the house. What

are they? How long do they take? Are they good at them? Do they enjoy them? Why do they do them? Read together Luke 10: 38–42, the story of Jesus' visit to the home of the sisters Mary and Martha where Martha was very much distracted by her chore of preparing the dinner.

- Ask the group which of the sisters they most identify with.
- What error in hospitality was Martha making? (Neglecting her guest)
- What convention was Mary breaking? (For a woman to sit at the foot of a teacher or rabbi in that culture was highly irregular.)
- The American author Joanna Weaver has written a book called *Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World*.
- What do the group think she means by having a 'Mary heart'? (A desire to focus on spiritual things)
- What do the group think she means by a 'Martha world'? (busyness)
- Ask the group to look particularly at verse 40. What do we learn about Martha's state of mind in this verse? (Most translations say 'distracted'.) Martha wasn't doing anything sinful; she was just 'busy'.
- Ask the group what sort of things distract them from spending time with God.

Read this quote from Joanna Weaver's book *Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World*:

'I missed that point for a long time. I had spent so much of my life concentrating on the "fruit" of my own personal holiness, that I missed out on the connection, the sweet intimacy of being attached to the Vine. And as a result, what I tried to do was as ludicrous as an apple tree branch trying to produce apples by its own effort. "Be good, be good. Do good, do good," the broken branch chants as it lies on the orchard grass.

“That apple should be popping out anytime,” says the helpless, lifeless stick.’

Ask the group what point they think Joanne Weaver is making here.

First-century Jews had a blessing that expressed the commitment a person had to be a disciple of a particular teacher or rabbi; it was ‘May you always be covered by the dust of your rabbi.’

What do they think this blessing means? (Literally that you stick so close to your rabbi that you get covered in the dust that his feet kick up)

Explain that we need to be covered by the dust of our rabbi, Jesus, on a daily basis. Amid all our busyness – even if that busyness is doing good works and serving others – we have to find time to sit at his feet, as Mary did.

Read John 6:35. Just as we need to eat and drink daily to sustain us physically, we need to meet daily with Jesus to sustain us spiritually. Our capacity to serve and be generous to others is dependent upon this; we need to receive in order to give.

Close by praying over the group that they may always be covered by the dust of their Saviour.

The point: We can become distracted from ‘being’ by ‘doing’. It’s vital to spend time with Jesus on a daily basis so that we have the strength to do the work he’s calling us to.

Response

1. Title: Three straight ‘A’s, Part 2

Format: Prayer

Age group: 15+ (11–14)

Duration: 10 minutes

Equipment required: Bibles (enough for each member of the group) or the Lord’s Prayer printed on slips, 12

mini pitta breads, tea towel, 3 hot cross buns, plate, 1 tear-and-share bun, wooden bread board, print-out of prayer station sheets, quiet music and means to play it

Description: Set up three prayer stations.

1. Acknowledge – arrange the mini pitta breads in two piles (six in each) on the tea towel; place the prayer description alongside.
2. Ask – place the hot cross buns on a plate; place the prayer description alongside.
3. Accept – place the tear-and-share bun on the bread board; place the prayer description alongside.

Ask the group to turn to Luke 11:1–4 in their Bibles (or hand out copies of the Lord’s Prayer). Ask them to read this quietly to themselves and then visit the prayer stations in number order. Invite them to visit each station, read the prayer description and pray as suggested. They can then, if they want to, tear off a piece of the bread and eat it (providing they have no allergies). Suggest they re-read the Scripture between stations.

The point: An opportunity to thank God for his goodness, ask for our daily bread and share His generosity.

2. Title: The Evening Question

Format: Worship and reflection

Age group: 15+ (11–14)

Duration: 10 minutes

Equipment required: None

Description: Share the daily routine of Benjamin Franklin (1705–1790), one of the Founding Fathers of the United States (if you have the facilities you can search on-line for ‘Benjamin Franklin’s routine’ if you would like to show the group what the routine looked like). Franklin would rise at 5.00 am and would ask himself ‘The Morning Question’, which was ‘What good shall I do this

day?’ He would then set about the business of his day, and before he went to bed he would ask himself ‘The Evening Question’, which was ‘What good have I done today?’

Invite the group to think back over their previous day. If they had asked themselves Franklin’s ‘Morning Question’ at the start of the day, what would their answer to his ‘Evening Question’ have been?

Give them a moment’s quiet to reflect upon this. They do not need to share. In the light of what they have been exploring in this session, ask everyone to think of a ‘Morning Question’ to ask themselves the next morning and challenge them to ask themselves, at the end of the day, whether they have done it. It could be the same as Franklin’s question, but they may want to come up with their own question. If appropriate, ask some of the group to share their questions.

Further challenge them to see whether they can follow the routine for the whole week. (If possible, take the opportunity to follow up with the group as to how they got on next time you meet.)

Ask someone to pray that everyone will remember to ask themselves the questions during the week and that God will help them achieve whatever they aim to achieve every day.

The point: To offer a suggestion of a helpful spiritual routine that the group can try to apply over the coming week.

3. Title: Bread of life

Format: Memory verse

Age group: 15+ (11–14)

Duration: 10 minutes

Equipment required: A packet of crostini (or similar) – enough to use to spell out ‘Bread of Life’ on a clean surface; a cup of water for everyone in the group.

Description: Read out the memory verse:

Jesus replied, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.'

John 6:35 NLT

Ask for a volunteer to pick a 'letter' and eat it (however many crostini it is made up of), take a drink of water and repeat the full memory verse. If they get it right they can nominate someone in the group to follow the same process. If they get it wrong they have to pick another 'letter', eat that, drink, and have another go. Continue the process until all the 'letters' are eaten.

The point: A fun way to help the group remember a key Scripture

Takeaway

1. Title: Get your act together – prayer

Format: Discussion

Age group: 15+ (11–14)

Equipment: None

Duration: 10 minutes

Description: Introduce the group to the 40acts concept (if you haven't already), explaining that every day during Lent there will be a challenge around a different aspect of generosity. Each challenge includes a brief reflection to get people thinking what it means to them. You may wish, if you have internet access, to show the group the 40acts website (www.40acts.org.uk).

Encourage your group to sign up to 40acts (on the website), so that they can be sent daily email prompts for the challenges. Ask the young people to complete the challenges in the coming week and think through them – ideally discussing them with someone else (a friend, parent, leader or discipler). Ask them to reflect on the following question when doing the challenges this week:

- How might spending time talking with God influence our generosity?

You may wish to make space in your next session to get some feedback on what your group have experienced when doing the challenges.

The point: To get group members to participate in 40acts and engage with and reflect on the challenges.

**WEEK FIVE:
ANOTHER DAY IN PARADISE**

→ **Main point**

- To explore the issue of poverty and how we respond to it – do we really see the need that is all around us?

→ **Bible references**

Proverbs 19:7, Isaiah 58, Luke 3:8, 11, 12:13-21, 16:19-31, Romans 12: 9-21, Ephesians 2:5-7

→ **Leader's notes**

Although at times we may feel uneasy about wealthy pop stars singing about the poor and needy, it is certainly something they occasionally get drawn to, for whatever reason, and, whatever their motives (often very good if they are raising money for charity), at least it makes a change from the banality or downright offensiveness of some of the lyrics which we have to endure.

'We spend cheese, in the West Indies, Then come home to plenty cream Bentleys,' raps Puff Daddy (who obviously has a surplus of Wensleydale). He then goes on to tell us how much cheese, sorry, money, he has and which part of his anatomy that money is sticking out of (the song is called 'Can't Nobody Hold Me Down' if you would like to add it to your playlist).

Back in the days when music was, at least outwardly, a little more refined, Phil Collins, ex-drummer from Genesis, wrote and recorded a song called 'Another Day in Paradise', which was a worldwide hit and has been numerous covered since (it's a particular favourite of TV talent show hopefuls). At the time, addressing criticism that the song, which particularly focused on the plight of

the homeless, was hypocritical, coming as it did from a multi-millionaire, Collins was reported as saying: 'When I drive down the street, I see the same things everyone else sees. It's a misconception that if you have a lot of money you're somehow out of touch with reality.'

Not many of us are in the position to judge whether this statement is true, but when we compare our own personal wealth with that of those living in the poorest places, we might have a question mark over it.

Compared with the majority of people in the world, most of us are wealthy, and sadly the brutal truth is that many of us are out of touch with the reality of what it means to live in abject poverty. That's why one of the most ridiculous and offensive statements someone in the Western world can make – when, for example, their plane is delayed and they have to spend the night in an overcrowded airport – is 'It's like living in a Third World country.' No it's not. Not at all.

Being out of touch with reality is definitely one of the themes of Jesus' parable of 'The rich man and Lazarus' (Luke 16:19-31) as the rich man effectively steps over the starving, sore-ridden, dog-licked Lazarus to get into his house. It seems unlikely that in reality the rich man didn't see Lazarus, but he was effectively invisible to him – covered with a cloak of invisibility manufactured by the rich man's selfishness.

In 'The parable of the rich fool' (Luke 12:13-21) Jesus warned about the consequences of storing up earthly treasure in preference to deepening our relationship with God, and his

story about Lazarus reinforces this. To be in relationship with God is to be obedient to him, to be obedient to him is to do his work, and to do his work is to help the poor.

In this session we want to challenge young people as to whether they are really seeing the need around them, to emphasise that poverty extends far beyond lack of money. In responding to the needs they see, they should be giving of their best – not the scraps that they can spare. Lazarus was only dreaming of the scraps from the rich man's table, but we have a generous God who wants, through us, to surprise and bless those in need far beyond their expectations.

As a follow-up to this session, we recommend you encourage the group to sign up to the 40acts campaign – www.40acts.org.uk – and engage with the daily challenges throughout Lent.

Warming Up

1. Title: Cotton wool headed

Format: Game

Age group: 15+ (11-14)

Duration: 5 minutes

Equipment required: Two blindfolds, four bowls, two spoons, a bag of cotton wool balls, something to time with

Description: Get two volunteers to sit on chairs where everyone can see them. Blindfold them. Give them each a bowl of cotton balls, which they need to place on their lap, and an empty bowl, which they need to place, and hold, on their head. Give them each a spoon, which they must hold by the end of the handle throughout the game. When you say 'go' the participants have 30 seconds to see how many cotton wool balls

they can spoon from the bowl on their lap into the bowl on their head.

The point: Just for fun

2. Title: Greed

Format: Game

Age group: 15+ (11–14)

Duration: 5 minutes

Equipment required: A bucket with a selection of different kinds of wrapped sweets, lollies, small chocolate bars in it; something to time with

Description: As this game relies upon only you knowing how many seconds have passed, you'll need to check there are no clocks visible and phones are put away and any watches taken off.

Divide the group into two or more teams (depending on the size of your group) and stand the teams at points equidistant from the bucket. The game is a relay with one player from each team going at a time and in turn.

When you say 'go' the first member of the team runs to the bucket, takes one item from it and brings it back to their team; once they are back at their team the next person goes, and so on. Tell them that after 15 seconds you will shout out how much longer the game has to run for (e.g. '25 seconds to go') and when the time has run out you will shout 'STOP!'

When the time is up, if anyone in a team is en route to or from the bucket or at the bucket itself they lose all the sweets they have collected. If all the team are at their base, they can keep (and eat!) everything they have at that point.

The point: Just for fun but you can also make the point that greed is something that can be damaging to us (we could lose everything in its pursuit) and prevent us from being generous to others.

3. Title: Pudding Pictionary

Format: Game

Age group: 15+ (11–14)

Duration: 10 minutes

Equipment required: White plastic table cloth, cheap chocolate pudding (one per group) or something similar, items to draw written on slips of paper

Description: This is a messy game and you will need hand-washing facilities!

Come up with a list of things to draw and write/print them on slips of paper. Divide your group into at least two teams, with each team standing by a table covered with a white plastic table cloth. Give each table a chocolate pudding.

The game operates in a similar way to standard Pictionary, with one member drawing a picture of something that you give them to draw and their team members having to guess what they are drawing, in whatever time you allow.

The only difference is that all they have to draw with is the chocolate pudding and their hands. (You may or may not want to give them advice about how to go about it, but one way is to tip the whole chocolate pudding out on the table, smear it flat and then draw in the smear. Lovely!)

The point: Just for fun

Getting Started

1. Title: Getting ahead

Format: Activity

Age group: 15+

Duration: 15 minutes

Equipment required: 'Getting Ahead' quiz sheets and pens (one per person)

Description: Explain that you are going to share the results of a survey which took place across the world to

see what people thought it took to get ahead in life (i.e. be successful). Before you do that, you want to find out what members of your group think. Hand out the questionnaire sheets and pens. Ask the group to complete the questionnaire, indicating how important each thing is by scoring it from 0 to 10 where 0 is not important at all and 10 is very important. Ask them to put a circle around the score they would give for each question.

Ask a few people to share their results.

Share some of the actual findings of this survey (source www.pewglobal.org):

If they scored higher than 7 for the education question, they were in line with every country surveyed. Venezuela thought it was most important, scoring it 9.8, and Japan scored it lowest, at 7.6 (UK scored it 8.8).

If they scored lower than 7 for hard work, they would have been out of step with the rest of the world. Colombia thought it was most important, scoring it 9.7, and Poland scored it lowest, at 7.8 (UK 9.1).

If they scored higher than 6 for the importance of who you know, they were in line with every country surveyed. Lebanon scored this the highest at 9 and Japan the lowest at 6.9 (UK 7.8).

If they scored higher than 6 for giving bribes, they were out of step with the countries surveyed. China scored it highest at 5.5 and the lowest was Brazil at 0.8 (UK 2.9).

If they scored higher than 3 for being male, they were in line with every country surveyed. Nigeria scored this the highest and Tunisia the lowest (UK 4.9).

If they scored being from a wealthy family lower than 4, they were out of step with the countries surveyed.

Nigeria, again, gave this the highest score at 8.5 and Nicaragua the lowest at 4.1 (UK 6.1).

Finally, if they scored being lucky higher than 5, they were in line with the countries surveyed. Pakistan gave this the highest score of 9.1 and El Salvador the lowest at 5.2 (UK 6 – third lowest of all countries surveyed). Ask the group whether anyone was surprised by any of the statistics. Were there any questions they would have liked to see included in the questionnaire that weren't?

Make the point that people across the world have different views on what it takes to get ahead. How do we know which are right and which are wrong?

For a Christian the answer must always be in the light of the word of God, which would, for example, clearly give us a lead on how much we should value hard work and equally how little value we should give to giving bribes and would help us form godly views on other issues that might be less black and white. Godly views help us to be less self-centred, which helps release generosity towards others. In doing this we should be giving of our best.

The point: We need to look at success through God's eyes and not be swayed by human views which don't align with his word. Selfishness is the enemy of generosity.

2. Title: Chinwag

Format: Discussion

Age group: 15+

Duration: 10 minutes

Equipment required: None

Description: Ask the group how well they know their neighbours. Do they know their names? Do they talk to them? How many people do they know in their street? Has their family ever been helped by a neighbour or have they helped a neighbour?

Ask the group to guess what percentage of people, according to a recent survey, didn't know their neighbours' first names (51%).

Ask the group to guess what percentage of people don't know what their neighbours do for a living (75%).

And finally, ask the group what percentage of people apparently wouldn't even recognise their neighbours in person (33%).

Do they think that such low levels of awareness have always been the norm or do they think that people are less connected than they used to be? If the latter, why?

The annual 40acts campaign aims to 'Do Lent Generously' by challenging people to do one act of generosity every day leading up to Easter. Share with the group this true story from the 2015 challenge:

The challenge for Day Two was Chinwag, which was all about getting to know your neighbours.

A man who hadn't spoken to his neighbour for ten years felt he should knock on her door and try to reconnect with her. But he put it off. Then a few days later he resolved to carry out the challenge anyway and so knocked on her door but there was no answer. He noticed that the post was stacking up and he knocked again but there was still no answer. Worried, he called emergency services.

They came and it turned out the neighbour had had a stroke and was unable to move. His timely intervention meant she was rushed to hospital and cared for. Although this man was running late in carrying out the challenge, he still did his best and God used it for good.

Make the point that although this act of generosity was relatively small it did have a cost to the person who carried it out (he had to make the

effort) and the impact was (a) unexpected and (b) significant.

The point: We don't have to look far to find people who would benefit from our generosity. Small acts of generosity can have big results.

3. Title: I could have done more

Format: Discussion

Age group: 15+

Duration: 15 minutes

Equipment required: A copy of the film *Schindler's List* and the means to play it

Description: Introduce the clip by explaining that *Schindler's List* is based on the true story of Oscar Schindler, a German living in Poland during the Second World War who, despite being a member of the Nazi party, helped Jews escape being sent to concentration camps and probably being murdered there by employing them to work in his enamelware factory, at enormous risk to himself.

At the start of the film he is self-centred and egotistical, but by the end of the film he has been totally transformed and he uses his wealth to bribe the Nazi officials to let the Jews work in relative safety at his factory. He runs out of money just as the war is ending. This scene takes places as Oscar and his wife are leaving the factory for the last time.

As a German, he is in danger of being arrested so must go on the run. In the two-disc DVD version of the film this scene is on Disc 2. Start the clip at 40:56, as Oscar and his wife walk away from the factory, and run through to 46:05, when Oscar is driven away and he sees the faces of all the people he has saved through the car window (5 mins 9 secs). It might be worth explaining that although this is now a relatively old film it's not that old and it was filmed in black and white on purpose.

After showing the clip, ask the group:

- Why was Oscar Schindler so upset in the clip? (He thought he could have done more; he still had possessions he could have used to save other lives.)
- Do you think he was right to be so ashamed?
- Do you think Schindler gave of his best to help those in need?

In the clip, he was given a ring bearing the Jewish saying 'Whoever saves one life saves the world entire.' What do the group think this quotation means? (One person can make a difference.)

Suggest that when we see the need in the world it can seem overwhelming, but as this story shows one person can make a difference. The fact that we may never be able to do enough should not stop us trying to do something.

The point: To help the group realise that although the amount of need in the world is enormous, they can make a difference if they give of their best.

Digging In

1. Title: See the need

Format: Activity

Age group: 15+

Duration: 20 minutes

Equipment required: Blindfold, two pens, two sheets of paper, Bibles

Description: Say that you need three volunteers, one person to act something out and two to guess what they are acting out. Once you have your volunteers, tell them that one of them, without speaking or making other sounds, is going to act out a 'need' (e.g. they are hungry and they need something to eat) and the other two have to compete to see who can guess what that need is.

Communicate the need to the person who is going to do the acting.

Just before you start, say that you have forgotten one thing and that is that one of the 'guessers' is going to be blindfolded. Blindfold one of the 'guessers', who will no doubt, correctly, think that this is very unfair. (It's vital that they really can't see, or the illustration isn't going to work.) Tell the 'guessers' that if they think they have identified the need they must not say it but must put their hand up and wait until you say 'stop'. You'll ask them to write down their answers. Ask the actor to do their mime. Give them one minute.

At the end of the time take away the blindfold and ask the 'guessers' to write down their answers. Hopefully, for the purposes of the exercise, the person who was blindfolded either won't have a clue or will be wrong. If they somehow get it right the winner is the person who put their hand up first. It will be a very bad day if the sighted person loses!

Make the point that one of the barriers that can get in the way of us being generous and helping the needy is that we are blind to the need. Even if we are aware of it (e.g. we know there are a lot of hungry people in the world), we may choose, for whatever reason, to block it out. And even if we do see it we may not see what we can do to help the situation.

Read together Luke 16:19–31, asking one person to read the lines of the narrator (Luke's and Jesus' words), one person to read the words of Abraham and one person to read the words of the rich man.

If practical, you could make the link to the illustration you've just done by asking the person who was blindfolded to read the rich man's words and the person who could see to read Abraham's words, but this is not essential. (Note: There is a lot that we could say about this passage, not least what it might have to tell us

about the afterlife, but for this study we are focusing specifically upon what Jesus is teaching in relation to the poor, so you may want to avoid being side-tracked by other themes and leave these for another day.) Just for clarity, it would be worth pointing out that this is widely regarded as being a parable and that the character of Lazarus is not to be confused with the Lazarus whom Jesus raised from the dead.

Explain that the Pharisees considered wealth to be proof of a person's righteousness (the quality of being morally right). Ask the group:

- Why does the rich man find himself in hell? (He's there because he is selfish, not because he is rich.)
- How does the rich man demonstrate his low opinion of Lazarus and his high opinion of himself, even when he finds himself in hell? (He asks Abraham to send Lazarus, like a servant, on various chores.)

Explain that the rich man's actions were contrary to what we read in the Old Testament. Ask someone to read Proverbs 19:17: *'If you help the poor, you are lending to the Lord – and he will repay you!'* (NLT).

Explain that the Hebrew word for 'poor' in this passage is dal, which has a meaning that extends beyond the financial.

Ask the group whether they can think of things that people can be poor in other than money (e.g. time, energy, friends).

Lazarus had hoped to eat the scraps that fell from the rich man's table.

What do the group think God's expectation of us is in relation to this? (We should be giving our best to those in need, not just scraps.)

When people give food to needy people, say via a foodbank, do the group think they would tend to give the same quality brands of food they

eat at home? Or better brands? Or economy brands? Why do they think that's the case? What do they think the 'right' thing to do is?

Ask the group how they could go about applying what we learn from this passage to their daily lives.

The point: We need to ensure we are not blind to the needs around us. Selfishness can have disastrous, eternal consequences. We should give of our best.

2. Title: Live 58

Format: Discussion

Age group: 15+

Duration: 20 minutes

Equipment required: Download of short version of *58: The Film* from www.live58.org and the means to play it (or a good internet connection), Bibles

Description: Read Isaiah 58:10–12 together. Introduce the clip by saying that Live58 (who produced the film) is 'a growing network of pastors and church leaders working together through a vibrant peer-to-peer network equipping and empowering the Church' to live as described in Isaiah 58.

Show the clip starting at 1:03:46 with the narrator saying 'Campaigning against unjust systems that oppress the poor...' and run through to 1:10:10 after the speaker says, 'God is going to use us to change the course of history' (6 mins 24 secs) .

Ask the group whether they can remember how much more generous in percentage terms the second interviewee (Dr Todd Scott from Compassion International) said that Christians would need to be to make a significant difference to world poverty (1%). Does this statistic surprise them?

Dr Scott suggests that Christians need to take three steps to help God

advance his purposes in the world. Can the group remember any of these? (Align your heart to God, see as he sees, use the resources he's given you.)

Chris Durso, the Director of Youth Explosion in NYC, says that 'turning up for meetings is not enough'. What does Chris mean and what's the group's response to this statement? He asks the question 'How can we convince people to get out of their comfort zone?' in relation to our responses to the poverty and suffering we see in the world. What do the group think is the answer to this question?

The final interviewee on the clip is an investigator for the International Justice Mission, an ex-marine who has given up a comfortable retirement in California to help fight the sex trade in Kolkata in India (so dangerous is his job that he can't be named in the film).

This is a great example of someone giving of their best to help the needy – he hasn't just given what he can spare or what was convenient; he has given up everything to help those in need.

Pray for the Live58 project and that your group may catch something of God's heart for the poor.

The point: To recognise that Christians are called to make a practical difference in the world and this starts by aligning our hearts with God's.

3. Title: Like/dislike

Format: Bible study

Age group: 15+

Duration: 20 minutes

Equipment required: Bibles (whatever is available plus a copy of *The Message*), flipchart-size paper, marker pens

Description: Prepare two sheets of paper. Head one 'Like' and the other

'Dislike'. Divide the group into two (or an even number of small groups if you have a large group). Give each sub-group one of the sheets and ask them to read Romans 12:9–21 together. Ask the group to imagine that Paul, the writer of this letter, is posting short updates onto Facebook based upon this letter. Some are things he is encouraging us to do ('Hate what is wrong') and others are things he is discouraging us from doing ('Don't just pretend to love others').

Obviously if Paul were posting on Facebook we'd 'Like' everything he says in this passage, but for the purposes of this exercise ask those with the 'Like' sheet to list the things Paul is encouraging us to do and those with the 'Dislike' sheet to write down what he's encouraging us not to do (i.e. what he dislikes). Tell the group that whilst Paul provides a 'dislike' to balance most of his 'likes', they may find a few cases where he hasn't specifically done this, so they might want to decide what they think the opposite would be and write this down. Once they have done this, get one sub-group to read out one of the things from their list and the other sub-group to share the statement that balances that.

Once you have completed this, ask someone to read the same passage from *The Message*.

Ask the group whether there are any aspects of what Paul is saying that they would find harder to do (or not to do) than others. Why?

Ask whether anyone can remember how *The Message* version says we get the best of (overcome) evil (through generosity; by doing good)

In conclusion, ask the group to reflect privately for a moment on how they could perform an act of generosity in the coming week to overcome evil.

Pray that if they have thought of something they will have the courage and opportunity to follow through on it.

The point: To help the group to gain a deeper understanding of God's recipe for living and to realise that they have the opportunity to overcome evil through their generosity.

Response

1. Title: Care

Format: Worship and reflection

Age group: 15+

Duration: 5 minutes

Equipment required: A copy of the song 'Care' by Kid Rock and the means to play it (or the video of the song on YouTube if you have a good internet connection)

Description: Although Kid Rock is not a Christian artist, this song carries a good message about the starting point of helping those in need being about softening our hearts to the need around us. Ask the group to get comfortable and close their eyes so they can really focus on the words of the song.

Ask someone to pray that members of your group will have compassion for the poor and those in need and that this may lead to greater practical engagement with issues of social justice.

The point: Although the need that we see around us can at times seem overwhelming, we must not become hard-hearted. The starting point of making a difference is caring.

2. Title: I can see clearly now

Format: Prayer

Age group: 15+ (11–14)

Duration: 10 minutes

Equipment required: Monopoly money (or similar), newspaper cuttings showing people in need or

printouts of articles/pictures downloaded from the internet, slips of paper, pen

Description: Lay out your pictures/articles on the floor or table. Lay out the money on top of them so that they are completely covered. Write random amounts of money on the slips of paper. (Make sure they are divisible by the denominations of Monopoly money you have.)

Explain that in order to help people in need we need to see their need. Money, possessions and a comfortable lifestyle are some of the things that can get in the way of us seeing clearly. Hand the slips of paper out to the group and get them to stand round the cuttings and money you have laid out. Pray that God will help the group see more clearly the needs of others. Then ask them to pick up, in turn, the amount of money which corresponds to what is written on their slips (in as few notes as possible), to reveal what is underneath. Encourage the group to do this prayerfully. Continue until you have revealed all or most of your articles. Ask the group to pick an article or picture and pray in pairs over the need they see in it.

The point: To give the group an opportunity to reflect on what can hide the needs of others from them and to pray for those in need.

3. Title: Memory verse

Age group: 15+ (11–14)

Duration: 10 minutes

Equipment required: Bibles, selection of newspapers or magazines, scissors

Description: Divide the group into two or more teams. Ask them to look up the following verse:

John replied, 'If you have two shirts, give one to the poor. If you have food, share it with those who are hungry.'

Luke 3:11 (NLT)

Ask the teams to recreate the verse using the newspapers or magazines – either by finding a word (e.g. 'poor') in the newspaper and cutting it out or by finding a picture that obviously represents that word (e.g. a picture of some shirts).

They should lay out the memory verse, which should include the reference, so that you can read it. If you want to make it competitive you can award 1 point for every word or number they use and two points for each picture (you can allow some creativity here, within reason!). You can make it a race between the teams to complete the memory verse or decide a winner on the number of points gained.

The point: A creative way to help the group remember a key verse

Takeaway

1. Title: Get your act together – poverty

Format: Discussion

Age group: 15+ (11–14)

Equipment: None

Duration: 10 minutes

Description: Introduce the group to the 40acts concept (if you haven't already), explaining that every day during Lent there will be a challenge around a different aspect of generosity. Each challenge includes a brief reflection to get people thinking what it means to them. You may wish, if you have internet access, to show the group the 40acts website (www.40acts.org.uk).

Encourage your group to sign up to 40acts (on the website), so that they can be sent daily email prompts for the challenges. Ask the young people to complete the challenges in the coming week and think through them – ideally discussing them with someone else (a friend, parent, leader or discipler). Ask them to

reflect on the following question when doing the challenges this week:

- What will you do to help change the lives of those in poverty?

You may wish to make space in your next session to get some feedback on what your group have experienced when doing the challenges.

The point: To get group members to participate in 40acts and engage with and reflect on the challenges

**WEEK SIX:
A NEW DAY**

→ **Main point**

- To explore how God is changing us – how we are being transformed by our relationship with Christ

→ **Bible references**

Psalm 51:10, Ezekiel 36:26, Luke 19:1–10, Romans 12:2, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Ephesians 4:20–32, Titus 3:5, Revelation 3:20

→ **Leader's notes**

If you have ever had the opportunity to visit the Holy Land, you'll know that the experience can be a curious mix of the deeply moving and the intensely frustrating.

Following in the footsteps of Jesus through Jerusalem or sitting on the shores of the Sea of Galilee is a profound experience for any Christian, yet the numerous and often contradictory accounts of where events in the Bible actually took place can leave your head spinning and in some cases stretch credibility to beyond breaking point.

If you go to Jericho, the place where Jesus met the tax collector Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1–10) and invited himself to dinner, there are at least three sycamore trees which hold claim to being the actual sycamore tree that the height-challenged Zacchaeus ('a notorious sinner', NLT) climbed to get a better view of Jesus. That sycamore tree was largely unaltered by its encounter with Jesus but the same could not be said of Zacchaeus. He was transformed.

One imagines him stepping out of his house after dinner with Jesus to the strains of Muse's song 'Feeling

Good': 'Birds flying high, you know how I feel, Sun in the sky, you know how I feel... It's a new dawn, it's a new day, it's a new life for me. 'Or maybe back in Zacchaeus' day he was more likely to reflect on the words of Ezekiel 36:26 *'...I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh'* (NASB). Jesus not only invites himself to dinner but successfully completes a heart transplant in the process.

There is no doubt that after his encounter with Jesus, Zacchaeus is a 'new creature' (2 Corinthians 5:17, NASB). It's a new day for him and he's going to live differently from now on. When we work with young people we quite rightly talk about the process of 'inviting Jesus into your life'. Jesus himself says, *'Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me'* (Revelation 3:20, NIV).

In the story of Zacchaeus, Jesus just cuts to the chase: *'I must be a guest in your home today'* (Luke 19:5, NLT). This is not standing at the door patiently knocking Jesus; this is insistent, not taking 'no' for an answer Jesus. It's important to communicate the message of Revelation 3:20 to young people, but it's also important that we communicate that this isn't gentle, apologetic tapping; it's urgent, 'please respond now' knocking. If they haven't offered that invitation to Jesus to come into their life, the urgency is for them; if they are Christians, it's urgency Jesus wants to pass on to them for the lost – their

friends, their family, their community – and the needy in the world.

The most common words used by aid charities when they appeal in response to humanitarian crises are 'urgent need'. We don't need to climb a tree to get a better view of the need in the world, but we do sometimes need to be reminded that the need is urgent. In order to respond to that need – in order to be able to respond to that need – we need to allow our relationship with Jesus to transform us.

This can be an area of struggle for us all but particularly for young people where we need to help them grasp that inviting Jesus into their life (answering the knock) is only the start of an ongoing process of transformation. If they think they have arrived, the gap between what they have committed to and what they actually demonstrate in their lives will become unsustainable.

We need to challenge young people to ask themselves whether their relationship with Jesus is transforming them. If not, why not? Are they allowing Jesus to sit at their table and transform them? Are they teachable? Are they allowing their mind to be renewed (Romans 12:2)? Is their new day a blessing only to them or also to the lost and needy in the world they live in?

As a follow-up to this session, we recommend you encourage the group to sign up to the 40acts campaign – www.40acts.org.uk – and engage with the daily challenges throughout Lent.

Warming Up

1. Title: Giant candy ball

Format: Game

Age group: 15+ (11–14)

Duration: 15 minutes

Equipment required: A chocolate orange (or similar), a lot of wrapped sweets (chews, lollies, small chocolate bars), bubble wrap, cling film, Sellotape, pair of dice

Description: To prepare the giant candy ball, discard the packaging from the chocolate orange (with the exception of the foil) and wrap in bubble wrap. Place a sweet on the wrapped orange and wrap in cling film. Basically you need to create an impenetrable ball as possible by building up the layers using cling film and tape and any spare bubble wrap that you have and by placing sweets between each layer (as the ball gets bigger you can add more sweets per layer).

Using the tape is important to keep it all together and make it difficult to get into. You're aiming for something which is at least the size of a basketball. When you have finished your creation, it should look a bit like a sweet shop encased in a ball of ice!

To play the game, sit the group in a circle and give the ball to one player and the dice to the player on their left. When you say 'go' the player with the ball can start to tear at the layers to extract the sweets (using only their hands). Anything they extract they can keep.

Meanwhile the player on their left is rolling the dice to see whether they can get a double. If they do, the ball passes to them and the dice go to the player on their left, and the game continues until someone retrieves the chocolate orange. You may want to set a time limit or let the game run its course.

To make it even more difficult you can make the person who has the ball wear gloves, but if you do you may not want to use so much tape in constructing the ball (otherwise you will be there all day!).

The point: Just for fun

2. Title: Let's go nuts

Format: Game

Age group: 15+ (11–14)

Duration: 5 minutes

Equipment required: 10 hexagonal metal nuts (all the same size), two wooden skewers (or similar), a table

Description: Ask for two volunteers to compete against each other and ask them to stand by the table. Give them each a skewer with five nuts threaded on it. Tell them that when you say 'go' they have one minute to stack the nuts on the table, one on top of another, using only the skewer.

The nuts must be stacked so that they stand upright on one of their six sides. The winner is either the first person to complete the task or the person with the highest stack at the end of the time. Repeat with new players if there is time.

The point: Just for fun

3. Title: Noodle Thief

Format: Game

Age group: 15+ (11–14)

Duration: 10 minutes

Equipment required: Two foam pool noodles (a foam toy or floatation device:

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pool_noodle), a timer

Description: Stand the group in a circle and lay one of the noodles in the centre. Ask for a volunteer to be the Noodle Protector. They should stand in the centre of the circle with one foot on either side of the noodle. Their job is to stop the Noodle Thieves in the circle stealing the

noodle on the floor. Give them the other noodle as their 'sword'. The idea of the game is that one of the Noodle Thieves has to grab the noodle on the floor and take it back to their place without being hit by the Noodle Protector's sword.

If they are hit whilst they are inside the circle they are 'dead' and have to sit out for the rest of the game. The Noodle Protector must keep their feet astride the noodle at all times. The game continues until one of the Thieves steals the noodle or until all the Thieves are 'killed'. You may wish to set a time limit of 5 minutes. If there is time, let another person be the Noodle Protector and play again seeing if they can keep it safe for a longer period of time.

The point: Just for fun

Getting Started

1. Title: You can do it

Format: Video

Age group: 15+ (11–14)

Duration: 10 minutes

Equipment required: Copy of the film *The Way, Way Back* and means to play it

Description: Explain that *The Way, Way Back* is the story of 14-year-old Duncan who reluctantly goes on summer holiday with his mother and her boyfriend Trent.

Duncan lacks confidence and this isn't helped by Trent's attitude towards him. In the opening scene Trent asks Duncan to rate himself on a scale of 1 to 10. Duncan reluctantly says he thinks he's a 6. Trent says he thinks he is more like a 3. Duncan meets Owen, who works at the local Water Park and offers him a part-time job.

Start the clip at 49:35, as Duncan arrives for his first day at work, and end at 54:36, after he falls over (5 mins, 1 sec). The clip shows what

happens when Owen asks Duncan to break up a group of young people who are having a dance-off by the side of the pool.

Ask the group why they think Duncan took up Owen's challenge to break up the group of young people. (He wanted to make a good impression; he responded to Owen's confidence in him.)

Have the group got any examples of situations which they were nervous or worried about where they were encouraged by another person? Ask them to share.

The Way, Way Back shows how Duncan is transformed through spending time with Owen and through Owen's willingness to invest in him. Make the connection that the same can be true for us when we choose to spend time with Jesus. Whatever our view of ourselves is, we can be transformed through our relationship with Jesus, provided we choose not to settle for staying the way we are.

The point: To introduce the theme of transformation through relationship with Jesus.

2. Title: Alter egos

Format: Quiz

Age group: 15+ (11–14)

Duration: 10 minutes

Equipment required: None

Description: Divide the group into two (or more) teams. Explain that you are going to read out a list of superhero alter egos (i.e. the name of the person when they are not a superhero) and they have to tell you which superhero they are.

After you read each question, the first person who can do a flying Superman pose (standing up, fist pointing in the air) can have the chance to answer for their team. The names are:

Tony Stark (Iron Man)

Natasha Romanov (Black Widow)

Steve Rogers (Captain America)

Logan (Wolverine)

Bruce Banner (The Hulk)

Susan Storm (Invisible Woman – Fantastic Four)

Peter Parker (Spider-Man)

Sam Wilson (Falcon)

Bruce Wayne (Batman)

Reed Richards (Mr Fantastic)

Hank McCoy (The Beast – X-Men)

Clarke Kent (Superman)

Scott Lang (Ant-Man)

Announce the score for each team.

Explain that being a Christian is all about transformation. It's allowing ourselves to be transformed through our relationship with Jesus and then using the power that comes to us through the Holy Spirit to help transform the lives of others.

It's important that we don't treat our faith as a costume that we put on and off when it suits us or when it is needed. The change we seek through a relationship with Jesus should be permanent, and the more time we spend with him the more we are transformed.

The point: We should be seeking transformation in our lives that is permanent and deeply rooted and that comes through investing in our relationship with Jesus.

3. Title: Come dine with me

Format: Drama

Age group: 15+ (11–14)

Duration: 10 minutes

Equipment required: Three copies of the 'Come Dine with Me' sketch, a table and two chairs (other props as available)

Description: Ask three people to perform the sketch for the rest of the group, then discuss the questions at the end of it.

The point: Jesus is seeking relationship with us. Are we willing to

accept his invitation to fellowship with him?

Digging In

1. Title: Is the kettle on?

Format: Bible study

Age group: 15+

Duration: 20 minutes

Equipment required: Bibles, paper, pens

Description: Divide the group into two (or more) teams. Give each team two minutes to come up with a list of as many things that transform from one thing into another as they can – encourage them to think as widely as possible (tadpoles, ice, Autobots, etc.). Ask them to share their lists in turn and cross any things off their list which are said by another team. Declare the winning team the one that had most things on their list that were unique.

Introduce the Scripture as a story of how an individual's life was transformed by an encounter with Jesus. Read together Luke 19:1–10.

This story is one which is very popular to use with younger children. Why do the group think that is?

Explain that tax collectors like Zacchaeus were generally despised for their unethical practices and, in many cases, doing the dirty work of the Roman authorities. Jericho was a great centre for business so, as a chief tax collector, Zacchaeus would be handling a lot of money. We know he was sometimes dishonest because he admitted that himself.

Ask one team to look at the story from the perspective of Zacchaeus and another from the perspective of the onlookers.

Ask those looking at the story from Zacchaeus's viewpoint to consider the following questions:

1. Why do you think Zacchaeus was so desperate to see Jesus?

2. Why do you think he was so excited when Jesus invited himself to dinner?
3. Do you think the outcome of the dinner was one that Zacchaeus anticipated?

Ask those looking at the story from the onlookers' viewpoint to consider the following questions:

1. Do you think the onlookers were surprised when Jesus singled out Zacchaeus? (How did Jesus know his name? Had the crowd been whispering about him?)
2. Do you think that the onlookers were grumbling simply because Jesus was having dinner with a 'notorious sinner'?
3. Why might the onlookers have been upset that Jesus called Zacchaeus 'a true son of Abraham'? (They wouldn't have wanted to acknowledge that a fellow Jew could be a tax collector or that a Jew could be lost.)

Ask the group to feed back their thoughts.

Explain that Zacchaeus was not only transformed in this story; he was also restored. Make the point that none of us are good enough to sit at the table with Jesus but nevertheless he seeks us out and desires relationship with us. Whatever we have done we can be transformed and restored by accepting Jesus' invitation to enter our 'house' (our hearts).

Ask the group to reflect on who the tax collectors in their lives might be. Is it time to start thinking about widening the circle of people they are willing to spend time with? Are there individuals whom God is asking them to seek out and bless? What action could they take in response to this Scripture?

The point: Forgiveness and acceptance is not confined to one type of person or social group; it is

available to everyone and we are called to be carriers of that message.

2. Title: Unreachable?

Format: Discussion

Age group: 15+

Duration: 15 minutes

Equipment required: Download of the video *Unreachable – The Story of Darrell Tunningley*

vimeo.com/39532108 and the means to play it, Bibles

Description: Read together Luke 19:1–10, the story of Jesus and Zacchaeus.

- Ask the group what they think the main themes of this story are (transformation, reaching the lost, restoration).
- Ask them whether they believe that Jesus is still transforming lives in this dramatic way today. Have they got any experience of this themselves or testimonies they have heard?

Introduce the video, explaining that it shows something of the story of Darrell Tunningley, a young man whose encounter with Jesus when he was serving a prison sentence in HMP Wolds for armed robbery completely changed his life. Watch the video together (it runs about 3 mins).

- Ask the group what similarities they can see between Darrell's story and the story of Zacchaeus.
- Do they think that the changes that Jesus brings to people's lives need to be so dramatic to be significant?
- What does Jesus mean when he says '*For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost*' (NLT)?
- If we are forgiven and restored by Jesus, what do you think our response should be? (Gratitude, desire to reach the lost)
- Ask the group to reflect on whether they are being challenged by

anything in Darrell's testimony or the story of Zacchaeus?

The point: Lives are transformed when people fellowship with Jesus. We are called to share the gospel with others.

3. Title: Jesus Swagger

Format: Discussion

Age group: 15+

Duration: 20 minutes

Equipment required: Bibles, 'Worldy Swagger v. Jesus Swagger' written up on a flipchart or on a PowerPoint slide

Description: Ask the group how they would define the word 'swagger'? (How a person presents themselves to the world. Swagger is shown in how the person handles a situation. It can also be shown in the person's walk.)

Share the following:

In his book *Jesus Swagger* the American pastor and blogger Jarrid Wilson challenges young people to drop the pretences and poses of false Christianity and walk like a true follower of Jesus. Jarrid shares his own experience at high school:

"Based on the expectations of the world around me, fitting in was something I felt compelled to do to 'be somebody'... I was conforming to the world without even realizing it. My swagger resembled nothing of Christ and everything to do with creation."

Ask the group what they think Jarrid means by his swagger resembling nothing of Christ.

Honesty time! Ask the group whether this is something they can relate to in their own experience/behaviour.

Share what Jarrid goes on to say:

"The worst thing is that I claimed to be a Christian during my entire high school experience. I mean I went to church, attended Bible study and even memorized a few verses, but the

reality is I never let the message of Jesus completely transform me, nor did I share my faith with others.”

Explain that the Apostle Paul describes what we practically need to do to be transformed in his letter to the Ephesians. Read together Ephesians 4:20–32.

Ask for a show of hands if members of the group recognise anything on the list that they need to stop doing or maybe need to do more of (if not everyone puts their hands up you may want to read the passage again!). Make the point that even when we make a commitment to follow Jesus we are still a work in progress, so a passage like this helps us check on how we are doing.

Show the group the following, which is Jarrid’s illustration of the difference between ‘Worldy Swagger’ and ‘Jesus Swagger’:

Worldly Swagger
Based on image
Comes and goes with popularity
Seeks its worth from others

v.

Jesus Swagger
Based on internal strength from God
Stays eternally grounded
Knows its worth comes from Christ

Talk through both lists. Check for understanding. Ask whether anyone can think of any specific examples (real or hypothetical) that help illustrate the points on the list.

Ask the group to reflect (privately) on what they might do differently in response to what you have been discussing today.

Conclude with the following quote from Jesus Swagger:

“Jesus swagger comes from living a life that resembles nothing of ourselves, and has everything to do with the one who created us. It has nothing to do with how we fashion ourselves in the mirror. Our swagger

is divine, holy, audacious and graceful. It’s unlike anything the world has ever seen. And I promise you it’s something they will never forget.”

Suggest that any of the group who are on Twitter might like to follow the author of Jesus Swagger @JarridWilson

The point: Being a follower of Jesus is about allowing ourselves to be transformed so that our beliefs are apparent in the distinctiveness of the way we live our daily lives.

Response

1. Title: Live like that

Format: Worship and reflection

Age group: 15+

Duration: 10 minutes

Equipment required: Copy of the song ‘Live Like That’ by The Sidewalk Prophets and the means to play it

Description: Explain that this song is a challenge to those who follow Jesus to consider what difference Jesus is making in their lives. Are they (we) being transformed to be more like him?

Part of the lyrics say:

People pass

And even if they don't know my name

Is there evidence that I've been changed

When they see me, do they see You?

The song was written by the lead singer of the American band The Sidewalk Prophets, Dave Frey. Share some of his thoughts on the song before playing it:

“There comes a point in our lives when we’re confronted with a question, one that faces all of us who struggle in the face of addiction, sickness, brokenness and loneliness. That question is this: What exactly is this life for? It’s in those times that

we’re reminded of those who have impacted our life: grandparents, parents, teachers and pastor. We realize that in them we saw a deep passion, an unashamed faith and a love that knew no bounds. Whether they knew it or not, we saw Christ in them.

When we leave this world, our desire is to have others say ‘I want to live like THAT’ not because of how we lived for ourselves, but because of how we let Christ live through us. We want to be known as people who’ve laid it all out on the line for the sake of having Christ speak through us – not for our glory but for His. We want to live like that!”

Once you have listened to the song, pray together that members of the group will be transformed or continue to be transformed by the love of Jesus and that love will be exhibited in every part of their life.

The point: To challenge the group to think about what it means to live like Jesus

2. Title: RSVP

Format: Worship and reflection

Age group: 15+

Duration: 10 minutes

Equipment required: Pens, invitation acceptance cards and ‘with regret’ cards (enough for one of each for every group member)

Description: Suggest to the group that if they visit their local card shop they can find a seemingly endless range of cards for every possible occasion. What they probably won’t find is any ‘I’m inviting myself to dinner’ cards as, normally, this would be seen as a breach of social etiquette.

Jesus was not averse to breaking social customs, particularly when he had a point to make. In Luke 19:1–10 we see him inviting himself to the house of the tax collector Zacchaeus,

breaking, in the eyes of the onlookers, all sorts of social rules, not least in that he was going to share a meal with a 'notorious sinner' (NLT).

This exercise demands that the group members are very willing to be honest with themselves before God. Ask them to imagine that they have received a card from Jesus saying that he is coming round to their house for dinner.

What's their response to that going to be? Whether their life is super-tidy at the moment or just a bit messy, are they up for that? Are they excited to spend time with Jesus and be transformed by being in his presence? Or, if they are honest, does the thought of Jesus coming round to dinner fill them with dread? Are they a bit embarrassed that their life is a bit messy at the minute and sitting at the table with Jesus is really the last thing they want to do (at least until they have tidied up a bit)? Hand out the cards and pens, giving everyone both an acceptance card and a 'with regret' card. Ask them to find a space in the room. Remind the group that, as in the story of Zacchaeus, when Jesus invites himself round to dinner he brings challenge, yes, but he also brings forgiveness and restoration.

Again, ask them to imagine that Jesus has invited himself round to dinner. If they are happy and excited by that prospect, ask them to complete the 'thank you for your invitation' card – they can write on it whatever they want, maybe expressing why they are looking forward to spending time with Jesus. If the prospect of Jesus coming round for dinner isn't at the moment something that they would look forward to, ask them to complete the 'with regret' card, again writing whatever they want, but maybe explaining why they would find a visit so hard at the present time. Once the

group have completed the cards, ask them to seal them in the envelopes. Ask the group to stand, holding their cards. Explain that the cards are for them to take away with them. What they contain is between them and God, but challenge them to do one of two things during the course of the week. If they completed the 'thank you' card, ask them to find space in the week to open the card, remind themselves of why they accepted Jesus' invitation and have that meal with him by spending some time, or extra time, in his company (whatever that means to them – praying, reading the word, worshipping). If they completed the 'with regret' card, challenge them either to find the courage to share with a leader or a trusted friend why they weren't able to send the 'thank you' card or to find some space in their week to open the card, re-read it and pray that Jesus will bring forgiveness, restoration and transformation to their lives.

Pray over the group.

The point: To help the group reflect on how they are doing with their own relationship with Jesus at the present time

3. Title: Transformation reflection

Format: Worship and reflection

Age group: 15+

Duration: 10 minutes

Equipment required: Printout of transformation Bible verses, a good internet connection and the means to show *Transformation* (vimeo.com/9214773)

Description: *Transformation* is an animation by Nate Grubbs set to music by Max Richter. It is a beautifully realised image of the life of a tree over the course of a year from autumn to summer. It last 6 mins, 6 secs.

Distribute the transformation Bible verses. Introduce the reflection by explaining that it shows the life of a tree over the course of the year. Make the point that although there are times when it may seem that little is happening, transformation is taking place.

Individual changes may be small but they result in significant change from season to season. Whilst our relationship with Jesus can bring dramatic and immediately obvious changes in our lives, sometimes the transformation is slower. The important thing is that we allow Jesus to transform us day by day as we fellowship with him. As the video plays, ask the group to reflect on whether they are allowing Jesus to transform them.

Invite a number of people to read the Bible verses aloud as the video is playing. Encourage them to leave a pause after each reading to allow people to reflect on what has been read and the images on the screen. Close in prayer.

The point: To give the group the opportunity to reflect on the nature of transformation and the extent to which they are allowing Jesus to transform their lives.

Takeaway

1. Title: Get your act together – change

Format: Discussion

Age group: 15+ (11–14)

Equipment: None

Duration: 10 minutes

Description: Introduce the group to the 40acts concept (if you haven't already), explaining that every day during Lent there will be a challenge around a different aspect of generosity. Each challenge includes a brief reflection to get people thinking what it means to them. You may

wish, if you have internet access, to show the group the 40acts website (www.40acts.org.uk).

Encourage your group to sign up to 40acts (on the website), so that they can be sent daily email prompts for the challenges. Ask the young people to complete the challenges in the

coming week and think through them – ideally discussing them with someone else (a friend, parent, leader or discipler). Ask them to reflect on the following questions when doing the challenges this week:

- Can you change? Do you see others changing?

You may wish to make space in your next session to get some feedback on what your group have experienced when doing the challenges.

The point: To get group members to participate in 40acts and engage with and reflect on the challenges

**WEEK SEVEN:
DON'T YOU FORGET
(ABOUT ME)**

→ **Main point**

- We are called into fellowship with Jesus, and the community of believers, to reach out to those in spiritual or physical need

→ **Bible references**

Psalm 69:21, Matthew 25:37–40, 27:35–54, Mark 15:24–39, Luke 23:26–43, 24:13–35, John 7:37–38, 19:18–30

→ **Leader's notes**

If only there were a prize for identifying where the title of this session comes from. There isn't, so we'll simply say that, back in the mists of time (again), there was a pop song with this title (well done if you can cast your mind back that far!).

There are two specific points in the Easter story where this sentiment is expressed, and the respective speakers and circumstances couldn't be more different from each other. The first is at the Last Supper, where Jesus shares the Passover meal with his disciples, breaks bread and says, 'Don't you forget (about me)' or, more accurately, 'Do this to remember me' (Luke 22:19, NLT). The second is less than 24 hours later when Jesus hangs on the cross and one of the thieves being crucified alongside him says, 'Jesus, don't you forget (about me) or, again more accurately, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom' (Luke 23:42, NLT).

The contrast between the two moments couldn't be more stark, but both have something to teach us

about the nature of community. In the first, the disciples were sharing intimate fellowship with Jesus, the most significant meal amongst many significant meals that they had shared with him over the course of his ministry. At the table was sitting one (Luke 22:21) who was by his actions potentially going to break up the community he had been part of. Judas was not only betraying Jesus; he was betraying all the community of his followers. His selfishness, even though it would ultimately create a stronger community that he could ever have imagined, would have dire consequences both for himself and for the one he was betraying.

At the crucifixion, it was the criminals being executed alongside Jesus who demonstrated both of the faces of what it means to be in community. One of the criminals only had concern for himself as he scoffed at Jesus, 'So you're the Messiah, are you? Prove it by saving yourself – and us, too, while you're at it!' (Luke 23:39, NLT). He was, in effect, a community of one – only really interested in what he could get out of being near to Jesus. The other criminal recognised Jesus for who he is and as a result was welcomed into an eternal community: 'I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise' (Luke 23:43, NLT).

If we're honest, it's hard not to sometimes be a little irked by the deathbed conversion, especially if we have been faithfully following Jesus and labouring away in his name for many years. It can seem somewhat unfair that someone (anyone), no matter how wildly they have lived, can put their trust in Jesus at the last moment of their life and join him in paradise. Disney FastPass has nothing on this. You would imagine

that someone like the Revd Billy Graham would find this particularly irksome, but far from it. Billy Graham says: 'I am not going to heaven because I have preached to great crowds or read the Bible many times. I am going to heaven just like the thief on the cross who said in that last moment "Lord, remember me."' Beautiful.

Beyond the cross, despite Judas' efforts and the mocking voices who thought that 'It is finished' (John 19:30) meant Jesus was finished, the disciples, as much to their surprise as anyone else's, quickly found themselves back in community with Jesus and even, for a short time, sharing meals with him again (Luke 24:13–35, John 21:12). So we see that, even on the cross, Jesus was reaching out to others, drawing them into community with him.

As this series comes to a close, this is an important reminder to us – and to our young people – that we are not called to be communities of one but to enter into fellowship with Jesus and the community of believers so that we can reach out to those in spiritual or physical need. These are the thirsty people in our world today. When Jesus cried 'I am thirsty' (John 19:28), whilst he was fulfilling Scripture (Psalm 69:21) there is little doubt that he was actually thirsty.

He had refused an earlier drink because it contained a sedative, and the drink that he finally accepted when he knew his job was done, Roman sour-wine home-brew, was hardly going to help his situation. But if he had accepted the first drink, he would have undoubtedly been less thirsty, so why, along with everything else that he had to endure, did he allow himself to be so thirsty?

Max Lucado answers that question this way: 'Why did he endure all these feelings? Because he knew you would feel them too. He knew you would be weary, disturbed, and angry. He knew you'd be sleepy, grief-stricken, and hungry. He knew you'd face thirst. If not thirst for water, at least a thirst for the truth, and the truth we glean from the image of a thirsty Christ is – he understands. And because he understands we can come to him.' Jesus loves the thirsty; after all he came to bring us living water (John 7:37–38). Jesus loves the thirsty and so should we.

Let's encourage our young people to reflect on who are the thirsty or hungry people they know and what they are going to do to demonstrate the love of Jesus by helping to meet their spiritual or physical need. Jesus says to us and to them, 'Don't you forget (about me).'

As a follow-up to this session, we recommend you encourage the group to sign up to the 40acts campaign – www.40acts.org.uk – and engage with the daily challenges throughout Lent.

Warming Up

1. Title: Balloon blast

Format: Game

Age group: 15+ (11–14)

Duration: 10 minutes

Equipment required: Paper or plastic cups, balloons, tables, timer

Description: The idea of this game is to place a row of cups along the edge of a table and for players to see how many cups they can blow off the edge of the table in 1 minute, using only the air from a balloon that they blow up themselves. They start with an empty balloon and can fill it and re-fill it (from their own lungs!) as

many times as they want during the minute. No part of their anatomy (or the balloon) can touch the paper cups. If you are limited for tables, just put the cups round the edge of the table and have one person going at a time, keep count of how many cups they blow off and then see whether anyone can beat their score. If you have plenty of tables (and cups) you could either have two or more tables competing at once or set up a row of tables with cups in a row down the long edge and have two people race each other to see how many cups they can blow off in a minute.

The point: Just for fun

2. Title: Noodle hockey

Format: Game

Age group: 15+ (11–14)

Duration: 10 minutes

Equipment required: An even number of pool noodles (ideally in two different colours), a beach ball (or similar), markers for goals

Description: This is effectively hockey (or Unihoc) but using pool noodles rather than sticks (kinder on the ankles!). It can be played with any even number of players, so adapt the game according to the size of your group/room and the number of pool noodles you have. Basically teams have to score by hitting the ball into their opponents' goal using only the pool noodles. Note: The more competitive players will soon figure out that better control and power can be obtained by folding the noodle in half and using it that way. Be clear that this is against the rules!

The point: Just for fun

3. Title: In the loop

Format: Game

Age group: 15+ (11–14)

Duration: 10 minutes

Equipment required: Duct tape

Description: Make a loop out of 250cm of duct tape. To do this, as you pull the tape out of the roll fold it in half lengthways so that the sticky side sticks together. Secure the ends together with more tape. Ask the group to stand in a circle holding hands. Ask one pair to put the tape loop so that their joined hands go through the middle of it (it should be resting on their hands). When you say 'go' the idea is that the group have to pass the loop round the circle as fast as they can in a clockwise direction. They must not break hands at any point and they must not move from where they are standing.

The point: Just for fun

Getting Started

1. Title: Strawberries and...

Format: Activity

Age group: 15+ (11–14)

Duration: 10 minutes

Equipment required: Strawberries, vanilla ice cream, chocolate sauce, balsamic vinegar, small bowls, spoons (enough for everyone to have their own portion)

Description: Having checked for any allergies, place a few strawberries in each bowl together with a small scoop of ice cream. Hand the bowls round the group along with the spoons. Now say that you are going to pass round two toppings they can add to their ice cream: chocolate sauce and balsamic vinegar.

They can choose which one they have but say that, whilst vinegar may seem an odd thing to add to dessert, it is sometimes added to desserts – particularly strawberry desserts – in restaurants because it heightens the flavour of the strawberries. This is true but it may be that your group are sceptical (especially if you have a reputation for feeding them disgusting things in order to illustrate a point!). It would be good, however,

if you could get at least one person to try the dessert with the vinegar on. Explain that just before Jesus died on the cross he said, 'I am thirsty', and the Romans gave him wine vinegar to drink off a sponge. However nice (or not) vinegar is on strawberries or on chips, it is usually not regarded as a thirst-quenching drink.

Suggest that as well as having physical needs we all have spiritual needs and that only Jesus can satisfy that thirst. People try to satisfy this thirst in all sorts of other ways but it is the equivalent of trying to refresh ourselves by drinking vinegar.

The point: To introduce the idea that Jesus is the 'living water' that brings refreshment to the spiritually thirsty.

2. Title: Child of God

Format: Discussion

Age group: 15+

Duration: 10 minutes

Equipment required: None

Description: Share with the group the story of Chris Arnade. Arnade had worked on Wall Street in New York, the financial centre of the USA, for 20 years before he gave up his job to start photographing homeless addicts in the South Bronx.

Chris was a self-confessed atheist but his time in the Bronx led him to write an article entitled 'The people who challenged my atheism most were drug addicts and prostitutes'. He said that he was fully expecting the community he was working with to share his atheism, as they were living in desperate circumstances with little hope and not much to be thankful for. The reality, he found, was quite different.

The first addict I met was Takesha. She was standing near the high wall of the Corpus Christi Monastery. We talked for close to an hour before I took her picture. When we finished, I asked her how she

wanted to be described. She said without any pause, 'As who I am. A prostitute, a mother of six, and a child of God.' He goes on to explain Takesha was raped by a relative when she was 11.

Her mother, herself a prostitute, put Takesha out on the streets at 13, where she had been for the last 30 years. Takesha said, 'It's sad when it's your mother, who you trust, and she was out there with me, but you know what kept me through all that? God. Whenever I got into the car (of a client), God got into the car with me.'

Arnade goes on to say, 'In any crack house, in the darkest buildings empty of all other furnishings, a worn Bible can be found lying flat amongst needles, caps, lighters and crack pipes.'

In these last three years, out from behind my computers, I have been reminded that life is not rational and that everyone makes mistakes. Or in Biblical terms, we are all sinners. On the streets the addicts, with their daily battles and proximity to death, have come to understand this. Many successful people don't. Their sense of entitlement and emotional distance has numbed their understanding of fallibility.

He goes on to suggest that many atheists (such as Richard Dawkins) have a 'see how clever I am' attitude, removed from humanity and judging people who don't share their point of view.

Ask the group what their reaction to Chris Arnade's experience is. How does it make them feel? Why do they think he found such strong faith alive in this community? What do they think Takesha meant when she referred to herself as a child of God? What do they think Chris means when he says that successful people's sense of entitlement has numbed their understanding of fallibility? Do

the group think that the more comfortable your life is the more difficult it is to engage with the message of Jesus? Why? What is the challenge to us that comes out of these stories from the Bronx?

You can read Chris Arnade's article at [theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/dec/24/atheism-richard-dawkins-challenge-beliefs-homeless](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/dec/24/atheism-richard-dawkins-challenge-beliefs-homeless)

You can see some of his photographs on his Facebook page [facebook.com/Chris-Arnade-Photography-281993958534617/](https://www.facebook.com/Chris-Arnade-Photography-281993958534617/)

The point: To demonstrate that God is at work even in the darkest places and to challenge the group to think about how circumstances can impact upon faith levels.

3. Title: You didn't see that coming

Format: Video

Age group: 15+

Duration: 10 minutes

Equipment required: Copy of *Avengers: Age of Ultron* and the means to play it

Description: If any of your group haven't seen this film the plot may be too complicated to explain in detail, but in a nutshell: Having retrieved the sceptre once wielded by Thor's brother Loki, Tony Stark (Iron Man) and Bruce Banner (the Incredible Hulk) discover an artificial intelligence within the sceptre's gem and secretly use it to complete Stark's 'Ultron' global defence programme.

In the process they unexpectedly create Ultron – an entity who believes that he must eradicate humanity to save the Earth. After various plot twists, the Avengers along with the Maximoff twins – the telepathic Scarlet Witch and the superhuman speedy Quicksilver – accompany the Avengers to Sokovia, where Ultron

has built a machine to lift a large part of the city skyward, intending to crash it into the ground to cause global extinction.

The clip takes place just after the Avengers have managed to drive Ultron and his army off the now airborne city. Whilst the Scarlet Witch guards 'the core' which controls the city's trajectory and prevents it from crashing to the ground, some of the other Avengers pursue Ultron whilst Hawkeye and Quicksilver help evacuate civilians from the city onto a SHIELD Helicarrier.

Start the clip at 1:52:44, just before Captain America says 'We've got to move out, and run through to 1:57:19, just after Hawkeye says, 'It's been a long day' (4 mins, 35 secs).

The main part of the clip shows Quicksilver sacrificing his life to save Hawkeye, who in turn has returned to the city to rescue a boy who has been left behind.

Ask anyone who has seen the full movie whether they can remember any of the history of the Maximoff twins (basically at the start of the movie Quicksilver and his sister were fighting against the Avengers but by the end of the movie they had switched allegiances).

Share Jesus' words from John 15:13: *'There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends'* (NLT).

Explain that this is exactly what Jesus has done for us – just like the boy in the movie, we were lost and without hope, but Jesus stepped in to save us by placing himself between us and effectively taking the bullets for us – except he took them as nails on the cross.

Quicksilver was only willing to make that sacrifice because he had changed his allegiance from the 'bad guys' to the 'good guys'. Jesus was

crucified alongside two thieves – one who mocked him and one who, in the last moment of his life, decided to believe in Jesus and switch his allegiance from darkness to light.

We may never be put in a position where we actually have to lay down our own life for another person, but it's important that we know where our allegiance lies – our eternal destiny depends upon it, as does the eternal destiny of our friends and family who don't know Jesus (along with countless others in our nation and beyond). We can seek to rescue them through sharing our faith and helping draw them into the community of believers.

The point: Jesus' death on the cross was the ultimate example of self-sacrifice. Our allegiance needs to be to him not only so that we are saved but also so that we can save others through sharing the good news about what he has done. The aim is to challenge the group to think about whose side they are on.

Digging In

1. Title: **Each day is a diamond**

Format: Discussion

Age group: 15+

Duration: 20 minutes

Equipment required: Bibles, a copy of '10,000 Reasons' by Matt Redman and the means to play it

Description: Share this story:

Andrew Chan was an Australian who was convicted and executed in Indonesia for drug trafficking. He was the co-ring leader of a heroin-smuggling operation from Australia to Indonesia. He was arrested in 2005 and, after being sentenced to death, was kept on death row for 10 years. On 27th April 2015 he got married to Febyanti Herewila, whom he had met when she was visiting another prisoner. On 29th April 2015

Chan and seven other prisoners were brought in front of a firing squad. They refused blindfolds. As he was executed, Chan was singing this song.

Play some or all of the Matt Redman track.

Chan had become a Christian whilst he was in prison and was described by the prison governor, in an appeal against his sentence, as a model prisoner. He organised courses in prison, led an English language church service and was a mentor to many other prisoners.

At his funeral service, which took place at Hillsong Church in Australia, a message written by Chan was read out.

It included this advice: 'Treat each day as a diamond for each day is valuable as you can never buy it back. Learn to use it in doing the things you love, spend it with the people you care for most because we just never know when we say goodbye.'

Chan's message continued: 'My last moments here on earth I sing out "Hallelujah!" I ran the good race. I fought the good fight and came out a winner in God's eyes and men ... I leave now in peace and love, I pray that you will all know how I valued and treasured your love and friendship. As you all leave here today, who will you witness to today?' Chan's coffin was given a standing ovation as it left the church.

Ask the group what they think about Andrew Chan's story.

Read together Luke 23:32–43.

Ask the group what comparisons they can see between this passage and the story of Andrew Chan.

What do the group think about the fact that someone could live as wildly (sinfully) as they want to and then put their trust in Jesus just before they die and still get to heaven (be

saved)? Why do they think that waiting until you are on your deathbed to decide to believe in Jesus might not be a very good idea? Explain that that the criminal on the cross showed extraordinary faith because, whilst the disciples thought that everything Jesus had spoken about had come to nothing through his execution, he saw Jesus as the king he was.

Challenge the group to think about what their response should be to the story of Andrew Chan and the example of the thief on the cross. If they haven't made a commitment to follow Jesus, what are they waiting for? If they are already following Jesus, how would they respond to Andrew Chan's question 'Who will you witness to today?'

The point: We shouldn't wait until the last minute to put our faith in Jesus. Faith should rise in us when we see Jesus for who he really is and we should be his witnesses.

2. Title: Thirst quenching

Format: Discussion

Age group: 15+

Duration: 15 minutes

Equipment required: Bibles, 'Water Facts' sheets, envelopes

Description: Print off the 'Water Facts' sheets and cut them up, putting one set of questions and answers in each envelope (make up as many as you need in order to split your group into 3s or 4s). Hand one envelope to each group. Ask them to take the slips out of the envelope and say that you would like them to match up the questions with the correct answers. Give them a few minutes to do this before reading out the answers (the correct answers are the ones that correspond to the position of the questions on the 'Water Facts' sheet).

Reflect that having clean water is a luxury that we can take for granted and, whilst we at times may get thirsty, we only have to turn on a tap to quench our thirst. This is not something that is enjoyed by many people in the world. Whilst some people have survived 8 to 10 days without water, most of us would start to be in serious trouble if we didn't drink anything for 3 days and even less time if the weather was very hot. Make the point that we need to drink to satisfy our physical thirst but every one of us also has a spiritual thirst.

Ask the group what they think you mean by 'spiritual thirst'.

Read together John 19:28–30.

Ask the group for their understanding of what John means when he says, 'Jesus knew that his mission was now finished' (NLT).

Ask someone to read Psalm 69:21. Explain that this Scripture is generally regarded as the one that John is referring to when he says that to fulfil Scripture Jesus said, 'I am thirsty.' Do the group think that Jesus was only saying this to fulfil the Scripture or do they think he was actually thirsty?

What do they think the motives of the Romans were in giving Jesus sour wine? (We don't know; sour wine might equate to 'cheap wine' and simply have been what the Romans were drinking as they waited for people to die.)

Suggest that we live in a spiritually thirsty world. What ways can the group think of in which people seek to alleviate their spiritual thirst? (Other faiths, belief systems, consumerism, sex, drugs, etc.) Do they think that any of these are likely to help? In what ways and for how long?

Suggest that trying to satisfy spiritual thirst with anything other than Jesus is like drinking sour wine. Even if it is

moderately refreshing at first, it isn't going to satisfy us for long.

Read together John 7:37–38.

Make it clear that only the 'living water' of Jesus can satisfy our spiritual thirst.

Challenge the group to reflect on whether Jesus is the only place they are turning to for spiritual refreshment. Is Jesus 100% the place they turn to for this or are they sipping or drinking the equivalent of sour wine in some areas of their life which they haven't offered up to Jesus?

The point: Jesus is the only source of spiritual refreshment that we should need or have. He can quench our spiritual thirst if we allow him to.

3. Title: Mystery diner

Format: Discussion

Age group: 15+

Duration: 20 minutes

Equipment required: Bibles, a mystery person envelope, a copy of the song 'The Wrong Direction' by Passenger and the means to play it
Description: Write the name of one of your group members on a piece of paper and place it in an envelope (alternatively you could use a photograph of them if you have one). Ideally that person should be in the meeting.

Say to the group that you are going to give them 20 questions to identify the name of the well-known person whose name/picture is in the envelope. The usual rules of this game apply in that you can only answer 'Yes' or 'No' to their question. Allow each member of the group only one question initially and only allow individuals to ask additional questions once everyone has had at least one turn. In all probability the groups will initially expect the 'well-known' person to be a celebrity of some sort, so don't do

anything to dispel that line of thinking in your introduction. When they have either guessed correctly or run out of questions, reveal who the person is. Make the point that at the start of the game they weren't expecting to see that person's name/picture in the envelope.

- Ask the group whether they have ever bumped into someone that they know quite well but haven't recognised.
- Ask them to share what happened.
- Why didn't they recognise them?

Read together Luke 24:13–35, the story of the disciples' encounter with the risen Jesus on the road to Emmaus.

- Ask the group whether they know when, we are told, the last time was that Jesus had anything to eat or drink prior to this meeting. (When he was given the sour wine to drink on the cross.)
- Do the group think that the resurrected Jesus needed to eat? (No.)
- If this is the case, why do they think he did share this meal (and others) with the disciples? (To prove he wasn't a ghost; because sharing a meal together builds relationship and community.)

Ask the group the following questions:

- Where have you encountered God in a place where you least expected it?
- What might keep you from recognising Jesus even when he's right next to you?
- What would have to happen for you to open your eyes to Christ's presence?
- How can you help other to see a Jesus who is 'invisible' to them at the moment?

Suggest that one of the significant things about this passage is that the

disciples were walking in the wrong direction – away from the community of believers in Jerusalem. Explain that you are going to play a song by Passenger called 'Wrong Direction'.

While in no way a Christian song (listen to it in advance and make sure you're happy about playing it to your group), its lyrics strongly capture the sense of realisation we can all get at times that the direction we're travelling in in our lives is not the correct one. One of the lines goes: 'I thought I was close but on further inspection, seems I've been running in the wrong direction, oh no.' Whilst you listen to it ask the group:

- To reflect on whether they feel they are heading in the right direction with their relationship with Jesus.
- Do they need a change of direction?
- Can they think of people they know who are definitely heading in the wrong direction, away from Jesus and away from salvation?
- What can they do in response to the session today to help them make Jesus known?

Once you have listened to the song, ask the group to share any reflections or anything the Holy Spirit may have said to them. Pray together.

The point: To challenge the group to think how they can be more aware of Jesus' presence and to reflect on how they can make Jesus known to those to whom he is currently 'invisible'.

Response

1. Title: We believe

Format: Worship and reflection

Age group: 15+ (11–14)

Duration: 10 minutes

Equipment required: A copy of 'We Believe' by Bright City and the means to play it, a sheet of flipchart paper, Post-it notes and pens

Description: Write 'Jesus' in large letters on a sheet of flipchart paper. Lay the sheet on the floor and get your group to sit round it. Hand out the Post-it notes and pens.

Explain that you are going to listen to the song 'We Believe' by Bright City and what you want them to do is, every time they hear something we believe about Jesus (e.g. 'Light that shines into the dark', 'You're the only way', 'There's power in Your name', 'You're stronger than the grave') in the song, write it on a Post-it and stick it on the flipchart paper. Keep going even when the words repeat – you want to emphatically cover the sheet with things that 'we believe'.

Ask the group to stand round the sheet and pray out loud prayers of thanks to Jesus, using the things that they have identified as things we believe about him.

The point: To celebrate and give thanks for the things that we believe about Jesus

2. Title: River wild

Format: Worship and response

Age group: 15+ (11–14)

Duration: 10 minutes

Equipment required: A Bible, blue cloth, stones or pebbles (two per person), groundsheet or similar, some suitable music to play quietly

Description: Lay the cloth on the floor, using your creative skills to make it look as much like a river as possible. Explain that one end is the deep end of the river and one end is the shallow end (indicating which is which). Ask the group to imagine that roughly halfway between the deep end and the shallow end is quite a nice, calm pool of water.

Explain that this is not like a normal river that starts as a trickle and ends up wide and deep; this represents the river of living water that flows from Jesus – the closer you are to Jesus,

the deeper and more powerful the flow of water is; the further away you are, the weaker the flow of water is. Give each person two stones and ask them to stand along the 'banks' of the 'river'.

Ask someone to read John 7:37–38. Then explain that you want the group to think about where in the river they are in relation to Jesus.

- Are they close to him, enjoying the power and depth of the living water?
- Are they stuck in the middle pool, not really moving anywhere?
- Do they think they are very much in the shallow end, a long way from the source of living water?
- Are they at any point in between – or not even in the river at all?

Once they have reflected on this for a moment, ask them to do the same exercise for someone they know – it might be a friend or family member who doesn't know Jesus yet or a Christian they know who needs more of Jesus' living water in their life. What could they do to help that person receive more of Jesus' living water in their life?

Give them a moment to reflect on this, then ask them to place one of their stones in the 'river' or on the 'river bank' to represent them and one stone to represent the person they have thought of. They can place the stones in any order, so no one will know which one specifically relates to them.

If appropriate, you may want to offer the opportunity for individuals to receive prayer ministry from leaders or other members of the group. Either way, take the opportunity whilst you stand by the 'river' to pray

about some of the things that you have been thinking about in today's sessions.

The point: To remind the group that Jesus is the source of living water in their life and to reflect upon their own relationship with him and that of someone close to them.

3. Title: Thirst quenchers

Format: Prayer

Age group: 15+ (11–14)

Duration: 10 minutes

Equipment required: Pens, plain cocktail umbrellas, straws, glasses or plastic cups, ice, selection of juices, cordials, mixers

Description: Give out the cocktail umbrellas and pens. Ask everyone to write Jesus' words from John 7:38, '*Anyone who believes in me may come and drink!*' (NLT), onto their umbrella, then challenge them to come up with the most refreshing drink they can make using the ingredients that you have provided. They also have to come up with a name for the drink that reflects something that you have been talking about in today's session. Get them to share the names of their drinks and encourage them to taste each other's. Have a vote on the best cocktail name and the most refreshing drink.

Ask the group to think of one person they know who they think really needs the 'living water' of Jesus in their life right now. Get the group into pairs and ask them to share the name (not the details) of the person they have thought of with their partner and then pray for each other's named person. If your group isn't confident at praying, you may

want to suggest some wording that they might like to use.

The point: To remind the group that only Jesus can quench our spiritual thirst and to encourage them to pray for people they know who may need that refreshment in their lives at the present time.

Takeaway

1. Title: Get your acts together

Format: Discussion

Age group: 15+ (11–14)

Duration: 10 minutes

Equipment: Nothing (although you may wish to provide access to the internet and a device to view the 40acts website on)

Description: Take some time to discuss with your group what they have experienced and learned from taking part in the 40acts challenge. Encourage the group to share their experiences all together and then to take some time (either at the time or once they get home) to reflect individually on the following questions:

- What difference has taking part in 40acts made to you?
- What changes will you keep up now that the challenges have ended or are drawing to a close?

If you have members of your group who have not been able to access the 40acts challenges, remind them where to find them (www.40acts.org.uk) and tell them that it is not too late to read them and put the challenges into practice!

The point: To reflect on the whole 40acts experience and commit to applying some (or all!) of the challenges in their own lives.

Acknowledgements

This resource has been created by the content teams at Stewardship and Urban Saints.

About Stewardship

We help people give. Since 1906 Stewardship has provided advice, guidance, inspiration and practical tools to make it easy for people to give easily and tax effectively.

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About Urban Saints

Since 1906 Urban Saints (formerly known as Crusaders) has been reaching out to children and young people with the good news of Jesus Christ.

We are passionate about working with children and young people who have no church connection, helping them to realise their full God-given potential as they journey from childhood to adulthood.

For more online youth resources go to the Energize site on the Urban Saints website:

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