



Practice Devotionals

TEAMWORK

'When they could not find a way to do this (get their friend to Jesus), they went up onto the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus. When Jesus saw their faith, he said "Friend, your sins are forgiven."' Luke 5.19-20 (ICB)

Today our value is **TEAMWORK**. Teamwork in the bible is often called 'unity' but children will find it easier to grasp the concept of Teamwork (in essence we are talking about the same thing!). This is such an exciting topic to cover with a group of children because it recognizes the unique value every child can bring to a group and how important they are.

It is so easy to compare ourselves with other people or imagine what we have to offer isn't as valuable as someone else's contribution. In today's story, Jesus has just begun his public ministry and news has started to spread about his teachings and healings. Jesus is teaching the religious leaders who have come from across the region to listen to him.

We follow some friends who believed Jesus could heal their friend. They not only stood together in the belief that Jesus could heal him, but they also stood together in their combined effort to get their sick friend to Jesus. But the trouble was that Jesus was hemmed in by the crowds and these friends needed to work as a team to get what they came for.

The friends brought different strengths to this problem. They worked as a team. Some of them would have needed to be strong to carry and lift their friend, others will have had the faith to have trusted that Jesus can heal, and still others will have had the practical skills to have taken the tiles off the roof and thought of a contraption to lower the friend through the hole. Without one of these 'team members' the plan wouldn't have worked, yet they worked as a team, united in their efforts to meet Jesus and see their friend healed.

Reflection:

1. When have you work together on a team?
2. It is important that each child in your group feels valued for the part they play in a team which is about recognizing the small contributions someone might normally overlook, i.e. the child who stays behind to clear up the pens, or someone who is quietly encouraging another person. The Bible says we all have gifts to bring, and it gives great pleasure to God when we work together in unity!

Close in Prayer

SHARING

Today's bible passage from Matthew 14:13-21, and we pick up the story after Jesus has had compassion on the crowds and healed many. The evening approaches and as the 5000 men (plus women and children) become hungry the disciples seek a solution from Jesus. In his wisdom and godly perspective Jesus knew what was going to happen but was still keen to see the disciple's faith stretched and their reliance on God deepened.

"You give them something to eat" says Jesus. "We only have five loaves of bread and two fish they answer."

In John's gospel, it says that it was a young boy who bought them this food offering. A simple, small act of sacrifice on the boy's part to share what he had with those around him. He would have less as a result, perhaps even have gone without the meal all together, and yet he freely shared what he had. Isn't it interesting that the disciples have witnessed Jesus healing, his compassion and even him turning water into wine, and yet there is still a confusion or reluctance amongst them to believe Jesus could meet their every need? Jesus goes on to give thanks to God for the food before breaking the bread.

'Then he gave it to the disciples, and the disciples gave it to the people. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.'

Reflection:

1. How do you feel when someone shares with you?
2. How do you feel when someone doesn't share with you?
3. How do you feel when you share with others?

Close in Prayer

SACRIFICE

Seeing another opportunity to disciple his friends he called them over. "I tell you the truth. This poor widow gave only two small coins. But she really gave more than all those rich people. The rich have plenty; they gave only what they did not need. This woman is very poor. But she gave all she had. And she needed that money to help her live." Mark 12:41-44 (ICB)

In today's age most talk of 'sacrifice' is around people sacrificing things now so they can get something better later, however this is more akin to delayed gratification. True sacrifice is painful and selfless. It is forsaking something of great value but recognizing that it could be of more use to someone else. It is the reason we remember the enormous sacrifice of soldiers who went before us, giving the ultimate sacrifice, to ensure we have freedom today. This sacrificial behavior is the bravest love. And of course, Jesus would go on to offer himself as the greatest ever sacrifice, securing our place in God's family.

Today's story is found in Mark 12:41-44 and takes place in the temple, where Jesus is sitting watching the busy goings on around him. The temple money box where people put their gifts was in his eye line and he watches the people put in their money. Many rich people gave large sums of money. Then a poor widow came and gave two very small copper coins. These coins were not worth even a penny.

Jesus is using this real-life example to demonstrate the importance of sacrificial giving. He wants us to live our lives sharing our resources with the poor, putting other people and their needs before our own, and serving one another even when it costs us greatly. Our motivation is love - to love God and others bravely - and our reward is knowing Jesus.

Reflection:

- 1- Sacrificing means serving someone. Can you think of anyone who has sacrificed things for you or served you?
- 2- Can you think of anyone you have sacrificed things for or served?

Close in Prayer

RESPECT

'So Jesus went with the men. He was getting near the officer's house when the officer sent friends to say, "Lord, you don't need to come into my house. I am not good enough for you to be under my roof. That is why I did not come to you myself. You only need to say the word, and my servant will be healed. I, too, am a man under the authority of other men. And I have soldiers under my command. I tell one soldier, 'Go,' and he goes. And I tell another soldier, 'Come,' and he comes. And I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and my servant obeys me."
Luke 7:6 (ICB)

In Luke 7 Jesus heads to Capernaum. In the town was an important and powerful army officer who had a very sick servant. The officer loved this servant dearly, but the time was coming for him to die. Desperate for a miracle the great army officer, who had heard of Jesus, sent some Jewish elders to him. The men went to Jesus and begged him, saying, "This officer is worthy of your help. He loves our people, and he has even built us a synagogue."

As Jesus heard the love and respect this officer had for his servant, and the faith he had in God, he was amazed. He turned to the crowd who had followed him and said, "I tell you, this is the greatest faith I have seen anywhere". Then the men who had been sent to Jesus went back into the house. There they found the servant had been healed.'

This army officer showed deep respect, and brave love for his servant. He humbled himself by sending for Jesus' help, and in doing so he encountered the miraculous healing of his servant.

It was once said that a community will show its greatness by how it treats its weakest members. Here we see a powerful man respecting his servant. Obviously, we should treat those in authority with respect, but this story reminds us that to be truly great we need to love and respect those in our communities that are weak and hard to love.

Reflection:

1. What would make you respect someone else?
2. Do you think people respect you?
3. Why do you think they respect you?
4. How does it make you feel when someone isn't respectful?

Close in Prayer

THANKFULNESS

'And when she finds it, she will call her friends and neighbors and say, "Be happy with me because I have found the coin that I lost!"' Luke 15:9 (ICB)

Thankfulness means expressing our gratitude. Many cultures around the world so value thankfulness that they have created national holidays for people to spend a day giving thanks for the blessings of the harvest and God's provision to them. Zig Ziglar once said, "Gratitude is the healthiest of all human emotions. The more you express gratitude for what you have, the more likely you will have even more to express gratitude for".

Even when life is tough, we still have incredible things to be thankful for, and over the course of this session you can ask God to quicken your heart into finding ways to express your thankfulness to Him and others.

Today's story can be found in Luke 15:8-10. It is sandwiched neatly between the parable of the lost sheep and the parable of the lost son. It appears Jesus really wanted to get the message home by telling three similar stories to his audience. In each story we see the lost 'item' from a different perspective but in all three accounts the reunion of the lost item to its owner provokes a joyous gratitude that we are to learn from.

The lady in our story has 10 silver coins. These are precious items to the woman, so when she loses one, she desperately turns the house upside down to find it. The Bible paints a picture of this woman's urgency in locating the coin, and when she does find it, her reflex is enthusiastic thankfulness!

Reflection:

1. What are things that you can give thanks for? Your house, food, friends, family, your church.
2. Why do we say, 'thank you'?
3. How does it make you feel when someone forgets to say 'thank you' to you?
4. Have you ever been thankful to God for something?

Close in Prayer

PERSEVERANCE

'Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, "Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep". I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who do not need to repent.' (ICB) Luke 15:1-7 (ICB)

It has been said that great works are performed not by strength but by perseverance. Perseverance can be an unfashionable concept, especially in a world of instant gratification. But today's Bible story from Luke 15:1-7 is a parable that Jesus told to demonstrate the persevering actions of a farmer in finding his lost sheep.

The Pharisees (Jewish Leaders) find Jesus teaching tax collectors and sinners. It is perhaps hard for us to grasp the stigma that eating and befriending sinners will have held in that culture and time. Jesus begins to teach them all, sinners and pharisees:

This wonderful story was like a slap in the face to the Pharisees. These 'righteous' men would consider their favor with God automatic, and yet Jesus is telling them that the sinner's he dwells with are being relentlessly pursued by a loving God.

Over the past few years, a Christian song has become popular:

'Oh, the overwhelming, never-ending, reckless love of God. Oh it chases me down, fights 'til I'm found, leaves the ninety-nine. I couldn't earn it, I don't deserve it...' (Cory Asbury)

Reflection:

1. Have any of you ever completed a jigsaw? Well, that is a time you have persevered. It takes a lot of trying, and you can't give up, but at the end you have finished!
2. Have you ever finished something that has made you really proud because you persevered and didn't give up?
3. Can you remember a time when it was really hard to persevere and maybe you gave up?

Close in Prayer

EMPATHY

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself”
Luke 10:27 (ICB)

We all need to understand and practice empathy in being an effective part of God’s team! Empathy is about understanding and sharing other people’s emotions and feelings. Children will be at hugely different levels in their understanding and ability to act empathetically towards others so today is about helping them understand that God wants us to love each other, and in doing so empathy will follow!

The passage today is from Luke 10.25-37 ICB. It is the well-known parable of the Good Samaritan.

A man asked Jesus ‘And who is my neighbor?’

So, Jesus told the story of a man heading from Jerusalem to Jericho when he was attacked and robbed. Injured and alone he sees a priest coming, but as the priest draws closer and sees the beaten man he crosses over the road and walks on. Next a Levite comes, and also crosses the road to ignore the injured man.

Perhaps the biggest irony in this parable is the fact that the roles of both the Priest and the Levite are to help people worship and draw closer to God in the temple. And yet, here they are both absconding from their responsibilities as so called ‘godly’ men. And then, the hero of the story, the one demonstrating love and empathy, the Samaritan enters the picture.

Reflection:

1. Can you describe empathy in your own words?
2. How does showing love to another person make them feel better?
3. When you are happy or sad do you want people to share those feelings?

Close in Prayer

SELF-RESPECT

But the Lord said to Samuel, “Don’t look at how handsome Eliab is. Don’t look at how tall he is. I have not chosen him. God does not see the same way people see. People look at the outside of a person, but the Lord looks at the heart.” (1 Sam 16: 6-7)

The passage today is from 1 Samuel 16:4–13 where the prophet Samuel comes to Jesse’s house to anoint the next king. Now, King Saul had been very tall, handsome and looked just the way people thought a king should look like! So, Samuel went to Jesse’s house, expecting to find someone similar. But he was in for quite a surprise! Have a read of these verses that tell the story:

‘When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab. Samuel thought, “Surely the Lord has appointed this person standing here before him.” But the Lord said to Samuel, “Don’t look at how handsome Eliab is. Don’t look at how tall he is. I have not chosen him. God does not see the same way people see. People look at the outside of a person, but the Lord looks at the heart.”’ (1 Sam 16: 6-7)

Samuel was probably more than a bit confused! People naturally want to rate others based on their appearance. We all judge a pizza by the topping, don’t we?! But God sees us differently. He looks on the inside for our true worth and value. After the first son Samuel tries again and again but none of them were the chosen son. So, Samuel said do you have any other sons?

‘Jesse answered, “I still have the youngest son. He is out taking care of the sheep.” Samuel said, “Send for him. We will not sit down to eat until he arrives.” So, Jesse sent and had his youngest son brought in. He was a fine boy, tanned and handsome. The Lord said to Samuel, “Go! Appoint him. He is the one.” So, Samuel took the container of olive oil. Then he poured oil on Jesse’s youngest son to appoint him in front of his brothers. From that day on, the Lord’s Spirit entered David with power.’
(1 Samuel 16:11-13)

God chose David for a really special purpose! He chose him even though his own family forgot to invite him to the anointing party and left him out in the fields!

Reflection:

1. God has chosen you for a very special purpose.
2. What do you think your special purpose is?

Close in Prayer