



# Unlocking Baptism Preparation

**Suggestions and sessions that apply  
Unlock's relational, learner centred  
method of Bible engagement to  
baptism preparation sessions.**

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# Introduction

These materials approach baptism preparation as an opportunity to encourage people to see how God connects with their own life experience. They are intended primarily for those that might not usually make those connections and are suited to people that will prefer an informal approach. With a pastoral focus on the stories and experiences of the people you are dealing with, you will encourage them to engage with the Scriptures from their own perspective.

## Why Baptism Materials

These materials have been developed following a request to the Unlock Development Worker in Liverpool in 2008. It is impossible to approach baptism preparation materials without confronting the great variety in attitudes and approaches to baptism and all that surrounds it. This resource was created responding to a Church of England group where it is common to baptise infants and undertake some form of preparation activity with their parents, but this material could also be adapted used in the preparation of adults. Even at the meeting where these materials were requested, it became increasingly clear that what the dozen or so present meant by 'baptism preparation' included a wide range of, often conflicting, ideas. And that was a group from within one denomination in one city!

Unlock does not belong to one denomination and as an organisation does not have a policy or particular position on baptism and at what point in someone's life it is appropriate. We do however seek to support and serve the whole Church in its many expressions as it seeks to unlock the spirituality of those it reaches out to and as it seeks to connect the rich stories of the Bible with the people of today. It is therefore our hope that without taking sides in the debate that surrounds baptism, these materials might be helpful to those who find their Churches connect with their community through families coming for baptism. In response to the request as it was made, the materials have been developed to work primarily with parents that are bringing a child or children to be baptised as infants. However many of the sessions and resources would also be applicable to anyone coming for their own baptism at any age.

These materials are learner-led rather than content-led and therefore do not offer a systematic Bible overview or a set of Biblical truths that will be delivered. Nor do they look at the practical elements of where to sit, when to stand up or sit down during a baptism service.

# Unlock Learning Method

**Starting from our own stories  
makes this approach open to all.**

**No previous Bible knowledge,  
Church experience,  
or even reading,  
is necessary.**

## ***Unlocking Real-Life Stories of Urban People***

Start with the group telling stories from their real-life experience.

## ***Leading to More Experience***

What we learn now is learnt for life & changes us.

We also learn to keep reflecting!

## ***Releasing Life Changing Skills and Confidence***

Change happens as a result of linking real-life experience with the Bible.

This change often leads to action among others.

## ***Revealing Good News of the Down to Earth Christ***

The real-life stories are connected to and compared to similar situations in the Bible.

## **Unlocking Real-Life Stories**

We start by seeking to draw out the real-life experiences of participants in each session, the Group Facilitator uses prompts chosen ahead-of-time, such as questions, pictures, video or music to stimulate stories from group members' memories.

## **Revealing Good News of the Down to Earth Christ**

Having listened to their stories, the Facilitator then contributes something of God's story, usually Bible content but it could equally be Church history or the Facilitator's own experience of God. The key feature is that it connects with the narrative of the participant's story. This can sometimes be prepared in advance as the prompts are likely to draw stories with a certain theme or focus. However, it is important for this method to be flexible. If the group members contribute stories that go in an unexpected direction, your role is to listen actively, and then find the common or most resonant themes and draw on your Bible knowledge and faith experience to find a connection.

## **Releasing Life Changing Skills and Confidence**

Following this, the group are asked to find the connections between their stories and the part of God's story that they have heard. In other words they start to develop a skill; looking for God's presence in their experiences. Sometimes this can be reinforced by a reflective exercise of some kind using a creative process to further the strength of the connections. This activity or additional questions also carry the challenge to take the learning from the session into their every day life. Perhaps giving them the option to face a similar situation in a different way because of what they have discovered.

## **Leading to More Experience**

As group members go through the process of sharing, connecting with Bible content and reflecting on the connections, their approach to similar circumstances in the future changes. Over time people start to reflect and seek out Biblical insight into their daily decisions and experiences.

## **Reflective & Relational**

The reflective cycle centres on the group members' experiences and the input from the Facilitator responds to their stories rather than teaching them a certain point. Unlock's method is not suited to delivering a rigid set content; it is a tried-and-tested way of keeping a relational focus but having a structure within which to introduce a growing base of Biblical knowledge and understanding of God's work in their life.

This approach is ideal for those that are not regular Church-goers or familiar with the Bible, it works as a relational, gentle form of evangelism. The groups I have worked with here in Liverpool have met over a number of months or years during which time group members not only hear and reflect on a wide range of Bible content but they also develop a habit of reflecting on their experiences and seeking connections with the Bible. Some group members interest in Christianity and faith have grown in that time and they then complement the reflective learning in our Unlock groups with other content-led Bible study else where. The Unlock method meets them where they are and

centres on them but as they move towards more determined discipleship their Bible engagement centres more on God's story than their own.

Unlock's methodology may not sit well for any who have a strong sense of the importance of the content of baptism preparation, there is clearly great value in systematic teaching schemes that will present a core set of information and if that is what you are looking for you need to look elsewhere! We are not suggesting that one way is better than the other but simple offering this approach as an option which you may feel is right for your circumstances.

### **Can we make it better?**

We welcome any feedback or suggestions for improvements as sometimes it is only in using resources that additional ideas unfold. Each element of these materials has been used with at least one group in Liverpool and we hope that they are useful to you.

### **Bible Passages**

Bible text in these materials is taken from the Good News Bible (British Usage edition), published by the Bible Societies and Collins, American Bible Society 1966, 1971, 1976; used by permission.

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# Unlocking the Initial Enquiry

Our approach to encouraging people to engage with the Bible is a process that is centred around the life and experience of each person we work with. So from first contact to the end of the baptism service make the most of every opportunity to listen to their stories and prayerfully consider what Bible character, story, theme or verses connect with what you are hearing.

For many people involved in baptism preparation this pastoral approach will be nothing new. However for others it will be a challenge. If your approach has centred on conveying information to those you are preparing, perhaps the key points of the Christian faith or the underlying principals of Baptism, it will be a radical change. For this approach to work it is essential to make the participants stories more important than what you want to tell them.

During the initial phone call or meeting on your doorstep, making time to listen to people's stories will give you lots of clues for the kind of themes with which people will find connections.

## Unlocking Real Life Stories

*Questions to draw out stories*

### Baptism

What makes you want (your child) to be Baptised?

Does your family have any connections with this church?

Is Baptism an important thing to your whole family?

### Family

Who will the baptism be important to?

What are your other children looking forward to about the celebrations?

How do the other children get on with (child's name)?

### Faith

Are there any ways in which you feel connected with God or the church?

How did you decide on Godparents?

What are the experiences you have had with them that make them stand out?

### Belonging

Where do you belong?

What makes you feel part of something?

### And then...?

Hopefully by asking open questions that show your interest in the people you are dealing with you will gather a lot of stories, it may be that you find there are common threads and patterns weaving through them all – if this is the case let these guide you in your choice of prompt and theme for your group discussion.

# Unlocking A Tour of the Church

*We are very grateful to Alistair & Ruth Fletcher of St Peter's Woolton in Liverpool for sharing with us their approach to baptism preparation which has informed and inspired this part of our resource.*

## **Free for All**

Start the evening by welcoming the group, giving everyone an opportunity to introduce themselves to one another. Explain to the group that this session is going to depend on them contributing thoughts and stories that are inspired by things found in the interior of the Church building.

**Icebreaker:** Send the group around the church and invite them to go anywhere, even to the parts they think are only for the Priest. Before they go, ask them to find something that bewilders them, something that they don't understand or can't work out why it is there. When you call the group back together ask them to tell the rest of the group what they found, invite other group members to explain it if they can and, if necessary and you can, give a brief explanation of the bewildering items.

**Your story:** Ask participants to walk slowly around the interior of the church. As they walk ask them to see if anything in the building reminds them of a story, event or memory from their own life: After 10 minutes or so, or when the majority of the group have returned to their chairs, ask everyone to come back. Invite people to share the stories that came to mind.

*Variations:*

As people walk round the church ask them to look for

- Something that helps them think of God
- Something that makes them want to be part of the Church family
- Something that puts them off church

**God's story:** Once the group have told their stories, prayerfully discern if there is any kind of common thread that you can identify. If so use this to help you to think of a Scripture to share with the group. If there is no common thread you may find it appropriate to share Scriptures that relate to the individual stories.

**Connecting Our Story and God's Story:** Then ask those in the group to see what connections they can find between their story and the Bible content you have shared. You may want to suggest that they hold on to those thoughts and find some way to record them so that the baptism candidate will later be able to understand the connection felt with God prior to their baptism service. If they are willing, this could even be something that they share during the service.



# Whole Sessions

The following section contains a series of sessions that go through the complete Unlock reflective cycle in each session. They are designed to be used with groups of 6 to 12 adults and will take between half-an-hour to an hour to run, depending on how much group members contribute.

During the sessions you will be asking participants to share stories from their own life experience. If people are going to share their personal stories with you and the rest of the group they will need to know that they are in a safe environment, that they can trust you and the rest of the group to hold their stories in confidence. You might want to consider forming a group agreement at the beginning of your meeting to ensure that everyone is comfortable.

We have also found that having a meal as part of the session is a way to create intimacy and allow for pauses in conversation without them feeling like awkward pauses. It also provides a simple means of preventing anyone dominating the conversation! Rather than a meal before the session we suggest you incorporate the session into a meal time. As you sit down introduce whichever prompt you have selected from the 'Unlocking Life Experiences' section before you eat. Allow lots of space for people to share their stories that relate to the prompt during the meal. If the stories dry up, move onto introducing your Bible content or if the stories are flowing wait until after the meal.

Each session uses a theme that connects with baptism in some way. Prompts are used to encourage participants to share stories from their own lives that relate to that theme, it is up to you to listen carefully to their stories and introduce a story, character or passage from the Bible that connects with their stories. If it is appropriate, use one that we have suggested but you may find that their stories go in a very different direction and that different Bible content is more appropriate.

Give some thought to the space you use and how to make people as comfortable as possible. For some brilliant and simple advice for optimising small groups have a look at 'Once Upon a Group' by Michael and Maggie Kindred, 4M Publications, ISBN-10: 0953049426.

# Somewhere Over the Rainbow

*Theme:* Promises

*Connection with baptism:* Baptismal Vows as Promises

*Image:* Rainbow

*Music:* Somewhere Over the Rainbow e.g.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=hrnT2VEsuHc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hrnT2VEsuHc)

**Icebreaker:** Print and cut out the symbols on the following page. What do these symbols mean?

**Unlocking Life Experiences** *Pick one question to draw out peoples' stories...*

Have you made any promises recently?

Does the picture (of a rainbow) remind you of a personal experience?

Has anyone ever broken a promise to you?

Have you ever made a promise you couldn't keep?

Have you ever used a symbol as a sign of your promise?

**Revealing Good News of the Down to Earth Christ**

"As a sign of this everlasting covenant which I am making with you and with all living beings, I am putting my bow in the clouds. It will be the sign of my covenant with the world. Whenever I cover the sky with clouds and the rainbow appears, I will remember my promise to you and to all the animals that a flood will never again destroy all living beings. When the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between me and all living beings on earth. That is the sign of the promise which I am making to all living beings." Genesis 9: 12-17

Peter said to them, "Each one of you must turn away from your sins and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins will be forgiven; and you will receive God's gift, the Holy Spirit. For God's promise was made to you and your children, and to all who are far away — all whom the Lord our God calls to himself." Acts 2: 38-40

for it is Jesus who is "Yes" to all God's promises. 2 Corinthians 1:20

'Be sure, then, to keep in your hearts the message you heard from the beginning. If you keep that message, then you will always live in union with the Son and the Father. And this is what Christ himself promised to give us — eternal life.' 1 John 2:24 & 25

**Releasing Life Changing Skills**

How are our promises like God's?

Do our stories have any similarities with God's story?

**Reflective Activities**

In the baptism service parents and Godparents make promises about how they are going to bring up their children to keep them close to God. If we could re-write the service what things would you promise? Are there any symbols you would use?



# Shine a Light

*Theme:* Light

*Connection with baptism:* the use of the candle as a symbol

*Image:* Street light on a dark night, electric light bulb, candle in dark surroundings, street lamp through trees (see next page)

*Music:* Take That – Shine, Cold Play – Daylight, Fleet Foxes – Sun it Rises, Gorrillaz – Star Shine, Iona – Light Reflected, Jars of Clay – Five Candles

**Unlocking Life Experiences** *Pick one question to draw out peoples' stories...*

Have you ever been in a power-cut or stuck in the dark?

Are you afraid of the dark? (is your child afraid of the dark?)

Has your child learnt to switch on lights?

Has a candle or a torch ever made a big difference to a situation you were in?

Has anyone or anything ever 'shed light' on a situation for you in a way that changed the way you saw things?

Has anyone ever shone in your life?

**Revealing Good News of the Down to Earth Christ**

'You are like light for the whole world. A city built on top of a hill cannot be hidden, and no one would light a lamp and put it under a clay pot. A lamp is placed on a lampstand, where it can give light to everyone in the house. Make your light shine, so that others will see the good that you do and will praise your Father in heaven.' Matthew 5: 14-16

'In a loud voice Jesus said: Everyone who has faith in me also has faith in the one who sent me. And everyone who has seen me has seen the one who sent me. I am the light that has come into the world. No one who has faith in me will stay in the dark.' John 12: 44-46

'God has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and has given us a place with the saints in light. You have received the light of Christ; walk in this light all the days of your life. Shine as a light in the world to the glory of God the Father.' From the Common Worship baptism service

**Releasing Life Changing Skills**

Can you see any connections between your story and the story from the Bible?

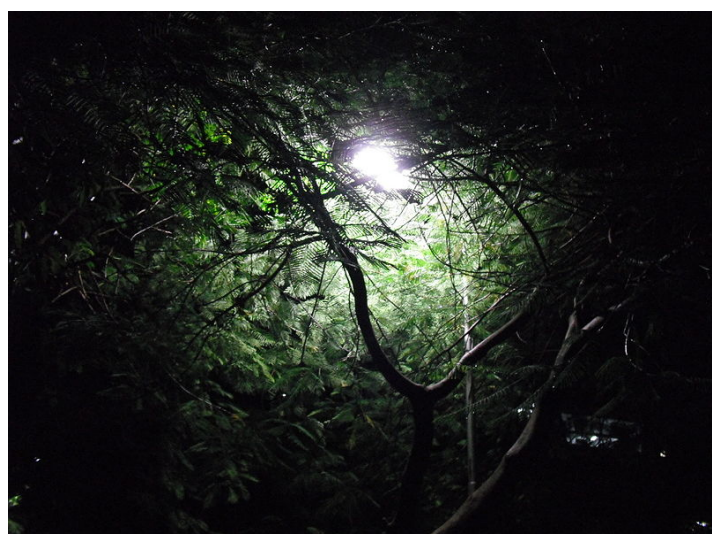
Based on your experiences and the Bible story, how do you think God's light can shine in the life of your children?

Baptism makes us part of God's 'light to the world.' Listening to the stories from others and from the Bible how might we bring light to those around us? In what ways are you aware of God's light in the stories we shared earlier?

## Reflective Activities

The lights in your life – give each participant a piece of black card or paper and a light coloured metallic gel pen or a white colouring pencil. In the centre of the paper ask them to write the words 'light up my life' – then to write or draw people or things that light up their life. You may prefer to ask them to do this thinking about lights in the life of the child or children coming for baptism. (This could also be done focusing on how the participant shines God's love into their community by having their name at the centre and the ways that they show God's love around it).

Light a central candle and suggest that this represents Jesus' light in the world. Give each group member a tea light to represent themselves or their child. Remind them that in baptism they are offering to be part of the church family that acts as God's light here on earth. Ask them to light their candles from the central candle and silently reflect on how they will shine God's love to those around them. Suggest that they can use the candle between now and the baptism to help focus their prayers.



# Blessing

*Theme:* Blessings for us and our children!

*Connection with Baptism:* Blessing

*Film:* Good fairies from Sleeping Beauty

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=H3y9ahewwAw&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H3y9ahewwAw&feature=related)

**Unlocking Life Experiences** *Pick one question to draw out peoples' stories...*

Who has been a blessing to you and your family? How do they bless you?

What kind of blessing would you seek for your child?

Tell us about a moment in your life when you felt really blessed, as though everything was lining up in your favour?

## **Revealing Good News of the Down to Earth Christ**

*Blessings from the Bible:*

'I pray that the LORD will bless and protect you, and that he will show you mercy and kindness. May the LORD be good to you and give you peace.'

Number 6: 24 – 26

'Don't you know? Haven't you heard? The LORD is the eternal God, Creator of the earth. He never gets weary or tired; his wisdom cannot be measured. The LORD gives strength to those who are weary. Even young people get tired, then stumble and fall. But those who trust the LORD will find new strength. They will be strong like eagles soaring upward on wings; they will walk and run without getting tired.' Isaiah 40:28-31

'If you are tired from carrying heavy burdens, come to me and I will give you rest. Take the yoke I give you. Put it on your shoulders and learn from me. I am gentle and humble, and you will find rest. This yoke is easy to bear, and this burden is light.' Matthew 11:28-30

*Blessings from baptism liturgy:*

'May almighty God deliver you from the powers of darkness, restore in you the image of his glory, and lead you in the light and obedience of Christ.

May God, who has received you by baptism into his Church, pour upon you the riches of his grace, that within the company of Christ's pilgrim people you may daily be renewed by his anointing Spirit, and come to the inheritance of the saints in glory.'

'God of grace and life, in your love you have given us a place among your people; keep us faithful to our baptism, and prepare us for that glorious day when the whole creation will be made perfect in your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ.'

'The God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ Jesus, establish, strengthen and settle you in faith; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among with you and remain with you always.'

'You have received the light of Christ; walk in this light all the days of your life. Shine as a light in the world to the glory of God the Father.'

## Releasing Life Changing Skills

How do the blessings from the Bible / baptism service connect with the ways you have felt blessed in the past?

Do you see any evidence of God's blessing in the story you told us?

Thinking of your story and the blessings from the Bible: Is there a blessing you would ask God for right now?

## Reflective Activities

As a group write a blessing that could be read as part of the baptism service. Blessing Boxes: Have a gift box ready for each baptism candidate's family; ask them to place in it pictures, stories, Bible verses that have blessed them as a family particularly relating to the baptism candidate. You might want to have some art material or magazines to cut out for any that would prefer collage or drawing to writing. Encourage them to continue to put 'blessings' in the box over the years.

*Please Consider:* In the process of putting this resource together we became aware that the term 'blessings' is quite a church jargon term. Blessings are not necessarily part of every day talk for everyone. Some may be more used to talking about luck or fortune. This might make this session less appropriate for some groups or could even lead to confusion between the idea of blessings that come from God and luck or fate.

# Clean as a Whistle

*Theme:* Washing clean

*Connection with baptism:* cleansing from sin

*Image:* hands being washed on next page

*Sound Track:* you could try: <http://www.jamesgalway.com/>

"As every old-timer can tell you, a good whistle made from a reed or a piece of wood emits a clear tone - but it is easily damaged. Even small particles of debris, or a few drops of moisture, will change the sound of a handmade instrument. In order to emit the pure notes intended by its maker, a whistle has to be absolutely clean. Anything or anyone as clean as a brand-new whistle or as clear as its sound is bound to be good. All of which means that an organisation or person called as 'clean as a whistle' has been judged to be guiltless or flawless." (From "Why You Say It" by Webb Garrison, Rutledge Hill Press, Nashville, Tenn., 1992.)

**Unlocking Life Experiences** *Pick one question to draw out peoples' stories...*

Ever got in a mess you couldn't sort out?

Ever needed help clearing something up?

Ever cleaned up someone else's mess?

**Revealing Good News of the Down to Earth Christ**

'So John the Baptist showed up in the desert and told everyone, "Turn back to God and be baptized! Then your sins will be forgiven." From all Judea and Jerusalem crowds of people went to John. They told how sorry they were for their sins, and he baptized them in the Jordan River.' Mark 1:4-5

'Come near to God, and he will come near to you. Clean up your lives, you sinners. Purify your hearts, you people who can't make up your mind. Be sad and sorry and weep. Stop laughing and start crying. Be gloomy instead of glad. Be humble in the Lord's presence, and he will honour you.' James 4:8-10

**Releasing Life Changing Skills**

How is this like our stories?

Does this make you think of a different story?

Are there any messes that you would like God to help clear up?

**Reflective Activities**

Ask your group to draw or write on their hands, pictures or words about things you would like God to clean up – it may even be you! Or just get your hand dirty with some mud. Then wash it off as you ask God to clean you up.

(We did this using compost, a jug and a bowl in our normal meeting area)





# Belonging

*Theme:* Belonging

*Connection with baptism:* being part of the family of the church

*Image:* box of chocolates, or menu card from a box of chocolates

*Sound Track:* We are Family this is a link to the All Stars Family Foundation

Version [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_Oiu9jW-](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Oiu9jW-)

**Icebreaker:** Show the group a picture of a box of chocolates or better still an actual box of chocolates. Introduce the activity by pointing out that although the chocolates in the box are all very different to each other, they belong together. Ask them what kind of chocolate they are most like and why?



**Unlocking Life Experiences** *Pick one question to draw out peoples' stories...*

Where do you feel like you belong and why?

Do you remember feeling left out on any particular occasion?

Is there a story or experience from your life that shows how your family belongs together?

Have you had any experience of meeting with people of faith (from Church) that make you want to belong here?

## Revealing Good News of the Down to Earth Christ

'Tax collectors and sinners were all crowding around to listen to Jesus. So the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law of Moses started grumbling, "This man is friendly with sinners. He even eats with them."

Then Jesus told them this story:

If any of you has a hundred sheep, and one of them gets lost, what will you do? Won't you leave the ninety-nine in the field and go look for the lost sheep until you find it? And when you find it, you will be so glad that you will put it on your shoulder and carry it home. Then you will call in your friends and neighbours and say, "Let's celebrate! I've found my lost sheep."

Jesus said, "In the same way there is more happiness in heaven because of one sinner who turns to God than over ninety-nine good people who don't need to.'" Luke 15:1-7

'Think how much the Father loves us. He loves us so much that he lets us be called his children, as we truly are.' John 3:1

'My sheep know my voice, and I know them. They follow me, and I give them eternal life, so that they will never be lost. No one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father gave them to me, and he is greater than all others. No one can snatch them from his hands, and I am one with the Father.' John 10: 27-30

'I won't leave you like orphans. I will come back to you. In a little while the people of this world won't be able to see me, but you will see me. And because I live, you will live. Then you will know that I am one with the Father. You will know that you are one with me, and I am one with you. If you love me, you will do what I have said, and my Father will love you. I will also love you and show you what I am like.' John 14: 18-21

## Releasing Life Changing Skills

How does your sense of belonging relate to the way this Bible passage talks about belonging?

Are there things in common between how you belong and how belonging is described in what we just heard?

We've thought about belonging in terms of (chocolates in a box, parts of a body, a lost sheep, brothers) is there a helpful image you could suggest that makes you think of belonging?

# Water

*Theme:* water

*Connection with baptism:* water

*Image:* Rings on the surface of water or rain storm

*Music:* Perpetuum Jazilee Choir performing I bless the rain down in Africa creating the sound of a rainstorm with hands and feet as an introduction

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JpbyM8k7e2Q&feature=related>

## **Icebreaker:**

Have you ever got caught in a rain storm?

Or hold up this picture and ask if it reminds anyone of a story from their experience?



**Unlocking Life Experiences** *Pick one question to draw out peoples' stories...*

Have you ever been really thirsty?

What does water make you think of?

Tell us about an event or story from your life when water has been important?

## **Revealing Good News of the Down to Earth Christ**

'The well that Jacob had dug was still there, and Jesus sat down beside it because he was tired from travelling. It was noon, and after Jesus' disciples had gone into town to buy some food, a Samaritan woman came to draw water from the well.

Jesus asked her, "Would you please give me a drink of water?"

"You are a Jew," she replied, "and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink of water when Jews and Samaritans won't have anything to do with each other?" Jesus answered, "You don't know what God wants to

give you, and you don't know who is asking you for a drink. If you did, you would ask me for the water that gives life."

"Sir," the woman said, "you don't even have a bucket, and the well is deep. Where are you going to get this life-giving water? Our ancestor Jacob dug this well for us, and his family and animals got water from it. Are you greater than Jacob?"

Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will get thirsty again. But no one who drinks the water I give will ever be thirsty again. The water I give is like a flowing fountain that gives eternal life."

The woman replied, "Sir, please give me a drink of that water! Then I won't get thirsty and have to come to this well again."

Jesus told her, "Go and bring your husband."

The woman answered, "I don't have a husband."

"That's right," Jesus replied, "you're telling the truth. You don't have a husband. You have already been married five times, and the man you are now living with isn't your husband."

The woman said, "Sir, I can see that you are a prophet. My ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews say Jerusalem is the only place to worship."

Jesus said to her:

"Believe me, the time is coming when you won't worship the Father either on this mountain or in Jerusalem. You Samaritans don't really know the one you worship. But we Jews do know the God we worship, and by using us, God will save the world. But a time is coming, and it is already here! Even now the true worshipers are being led by the Spirit to worship the Father according to the truth. These are the ones the Father is seeking to worship him. God is Spirit, and those who worship God must be led by the Spirit to worship him according to the truth."

The woman said, "I know that the Messiah will come. He is the one we call Christ. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

"I am that one," Jesus told her, "& I am speaking to you now." John 4:1-26

'I will bless the thirsty land by sending streams of water; I will bless your descendants by giving them my Spirit. They will spring up like grass or like willow trees near flowing streams. They will worship me and become my people. They will write my name on the back of their hands.' Isaiah 44:3-5

'God blesses those people who refuse evil advice and won't follow sinners or join in sneering at God. Instead, the Law of the LORD makes them happy, and they think about it day and night. They are like trees growing beside a stream, trees that produce fruit in season and always have leaves. Those people succeed in everything they do.' Psalm 1:1-3

### **Connecting Our Story and God's Story**

Does water in the Bible represent something similar or different to what it makes you think of?

After thinking about your story and hearing the Bible story will you now think of water differently when you see it used in the baptism service?

Do our stories have any similarities with God's story?



# Taking a Stand

*Theme:* public declaration

*Connection with baptism:* declaration of faith

*Image:* anything with an odd one out (such as the white chocolate on p18)

*Music:* Bob Marley, 'Get Up Stand Up', Delerious, 'I'm not ashamed of the Gospel', Eurythmics, 'Would I lie to you'

## **Icebreaker:**

Ask the group to think of a very unusual fact about themselves and to make up 2 more! Ask them to tell the group all 3 things and then the rest of the group vote on which one is the fact.

## **Unlocking Life Experiences** *Pick one question to draw out peoples' stories...*

Have you ever stood up for the truth or for someone you loved even when it was costly or embarrassing?

Is there something amazing one of your friends or family have done that you are so amazed by that you just can't help showing off about it?

Have you ever had to speak publicly about something important to you?

Has anyone ever doubted something that you said?

## **Revealing Good News of the Down to Earth Christ**

'Very early on Sunday morning the women went to the tomb, carrying the spices that they had prepared. When they found the stone rolled away from the entrance, they went in. But they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus, and they did not know what to think.

Suddenly two men in shining white clothes stood beside them. The women were afraid and bowed to the ground. But the men said, "Why are you looking in the place of the dead for someone who is alive?"

Jesus isn't here! He has been raised from death. Remember that while he was still in Galilee, he told you, 'The Son of Man will be handed over to sinners who will nail him to a cross. But three days later he will rise to life.' " Then they remembered what Jesus had said.

Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and some other women were the ones who had gone to the tomb. When they returned, they told the eleven apostles and the others what had happened. The apostles thought it was all nonsense, and they would not believe.' Luke 24: 1-11

## **Connecting Our Story and God's Story**

In the baptism service you will be standing up to say you believe in God. How do you feel about that after thinking about your story and what we have heard from the Bible?

Do our stories have any similarities with God's story?

## **Making something of it**

Ask group members to take it in turns to stand up and say what their reasons are for going forward with the baptism.

# Prompts to Start a Session

The Unlock Methodology provides you with a simple framework that makes it possible to engage with the Gospel starting from people's experience. Whilst this pack provides you with some sessions that have a complete framework for you to follow, as we said in the introduction, you know those you are working with and we don't, so you are far better placed to work out the kind of themes that will connect with those in your community. Using the Unlock Methodology as a framework to plan a session that is tailored to those you are working with will be better than using one of our pre-prepared sessions.

Here are some suggestions for prompts that you could start from:

## Images



## Video clips

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vr3x\\_RRJdd4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vr3x_RRJdd4) Free hugs campaign

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2g\\_70Ss8trA&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2g_70Ss8trA&feature=related) The Family man – the beginning

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FRhABU0BiOU> The Family Man – the ending

## Objects

A nappy or a cookery book or a key or an elastoplast

## Music

Unwritten by Natasha Bedingfield from the 2004 album Unwritten

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dg\\_7TL5PAzA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dg_7TL5PAzA)

New Beginning by Tracy Chapman from the 1995 album New Beginning

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7fNYEQYNjtg>

## Questions

What is the happiest moment of your life?

What experience in your life has made you feel most loved?