

Popcorn and Nachos

Flexible Material for 7 - 20 sessions
connecting issues in day to day life and
Bible stories using 7 contemporary
films.

Please Note — This resource is *not* designed for use with children.



Developed by Ruth Childs
Unlock Birmingham Discipleship Development Worker 2011—2013

Popcorn and Nachos

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Regarding Henry

Certificate: 12

Year: 1991

Starring: Harrison Ford, Annette Bening

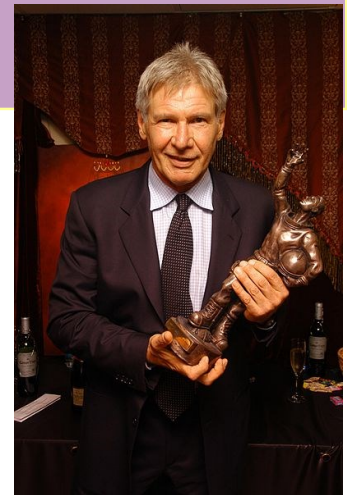
Brief Synopsis: Harrison Ford plays Henry Turner, a ruthless trial lawyer whose life is turned upside down when he is shot in the head during a robbery. He survives the injury with significant brain damage and must re-learn how to speak, walk, and function normally. He has also lost most of the memory of his personal life, and must adjust to life with the family that he does not remember. The film charts his road to recovery through his relationships with his wife, daughter and physiotherapist as Henry learns who he once was, finds he does not like that person and becomes a loving and affectionate man.

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0102768/?ref =nv sr 1>

Unlocking Real Life Stories of Urban people

Themes discussed:

- Self-identity and learning to be who God made us to be
- Making sense of the world amidst change
- Values (e.g. wealth v health, being truly present for those who care for you)
- Redemption/salvation
- Being a wounded healer (the physiotherapist talks of wanting to use his own experience of injury to help others)



Revealing Good News of the Down to Earth Christ

Philippians 3:8 – *“I reckon everything as complete loss for the sake of what is so much more valuable, the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.”*

Luke 19:1-10 (Zaccheus – an example of how meeting with Jesus changed a man).
V9-10: ⁹ Jesus said to him, “Salvation has come to this house today, for this man, also, is a descendant of Abraham. ¹⁰ The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

Psalms 139:13 *“You created every part of me; you put me together in my mother's womb.”*



The Truman Show

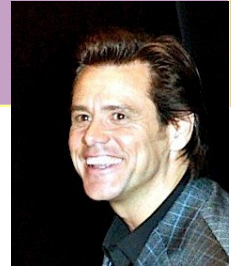
Certificate: PG

Year: 1998

Starring: Jim Carrey

Brief Synopsis: The film chronicles the life of a man (Truman) who is initially unaware that he is living in a constructed reality television show, broadcast around the clock to billions of people across the globe. Truman becomes suspicious of his perceived reality and embarks on a quest to discover the truth about his life.

http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0120382/?ref=nm_sr_1



Unlocking Real Life Stories of Urban people

Possible Issues for discussion:

(1) Self-identity

Q: Have you ever experienced a “Paradigm shift”, when everything you held to be true suddenly collapsed around you?

E.g. bereavement/divorce. Perhaps when the person you always expected to be there suddenly wasn't. You may have felt you were no longer part of a couple but had to find your identity in your own right

Loss of job/ something else that defines who you are. *I spent some considerable time discussing what I meant by paradigm shift with one particular individual who was currently not in work but whose whole identity had been based around his/her employment role. This appeared to make some sense of the situation to the individual concerned and shed some light on present feelings of being at a loss, shaken up etc and we were able to weigh that against the promises of God that we can find our identity in being part of God's creation and a brother or sister of Christ.*

Q: How did you handle it? How did you feel?

Revealing Good News of the Down to Earth Christ

Bible passages considered:

Psalms 139 – “search me and know me... I am fearfully and wonderfully made”

Luke 12:7 – “even the hairs on your head are counted”

Gen 1:27 – “made in the image of God. You have an identity with God”



Luke 12:1-12

As thousands of people crowded together, so that they were stepping on each other, Jesus said first to his disciples, “Be on guard against the yeast of the Pharisees—I mean their hypocrisy.

² Whatever is covered up will be uncovered, and every secret will be made known. ³ So then, whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in broad daylight, and whatever you have whispered in private in a closed room will be shouted from the housetops.

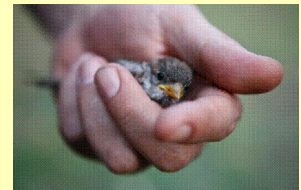
⁴ “I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot afterward do anything worse. ⁵ I will show you whom to fear: **fear God**, who, after killing, has the authority to throw into hell. Believe me, he is the one you must fear!

⁶ “Aren't five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one sparrow is forgotten by God. ⁷ **Even the hairs of your head have all been counted. So do not be afraid; you are worth much more than many sparrows!**

⁸ “I assure you that those who declare publicly that they belong to me, the Son of Man will do the same for them before the angels of God. ⁹ But those who reject me publicly, the Son of Man will also reject them before the angels of God.

¹⁰ “Whoever says a word against the Son of Man can be forgiven; but whoever says evil things against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.

¹¹ “When they bring you to be tried in the synagogues or before governors or rulers, do not be worried about how you will defend yourself or what you will say. ¹² For the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say.”



Q; Verse 4 – fear God! - How does that make you feel? What about when set against verse 7 (Do not be afraid...)?

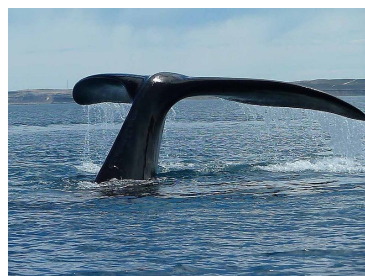
(2) **Control versus pre-destination** (Because of the time spent on the above issues this was only referred to very briefly)

Matthew 24:36-51: “No one can know the day or hour...” Jesus told his followers (and that includes us!) that he will return one day but no one knows when. He gave an example that if someone knew a thief was coming he would not leave his house unguarded. This story reminds us that however chaotic life seems ultimately God is in control. We are in safe hands.

Jeremiah 29:11 “¹¹ For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

Jonah – Re-tell the story of Jonah. He could not escape God. How does that feel???

Is there a difference between God being “in control” or “controlling”? God does not control us like puppets or a remote control car. Knowing God is in control is not an excuse to sit by and do nothing or to become lazy. But it is an assurance that God always has our best interests at heart.



- What do you think of the puppet image?
- What about a bungee rope?

It might be suggested that God gives us just enough length to pull away from him but then, perhaps more gently than a bungee, pulls us back to him. Is that image any more helpful? Can you think of any other images?

We have free will and there are some things we must take responsibility for. Jesus' story about the faithful servant

Luke 12:35-48 "Be ready for whatever comes, dressed for action and with your lamps lit, like servants who are waiting for their master to come back from a wedding feast. When he comes and knocks, they will open the door for him at once. How happy are those servants whose master finds them awake and ready when he returns! I tell you, he will take off his coat, ask them to sit down, and will wait on them. How happy they are if he finds them ready, even if he should come at midnight or even later! And you can be sure that if the owner of a house knew the time when the thief would come, he would not let the thief break into his house. And you, too, must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you are not expecting him."

Peter said, "Lord, does this parable apply to us, or do you mean it for everyone?"

The Lord answered, "Who, then, is the faithful and wise servant? He is the one that his master will put in charge, to run the household and give the other servants their share of the food at the proper time. How happy that servant is if his master finds him doing this when he comes home! Indeed, I tell you, the master will put that servant in charge of all his property. But if that servant says to himself that his master is taking a long time to come back and if he begins to beat the other servants, both the men and the women, and eats and drinks and gets drunk, then the master will come back one day when the servant does not expect him and at a time he does not know. The master will cut him in pieces and make him share the fate of the disobedient.

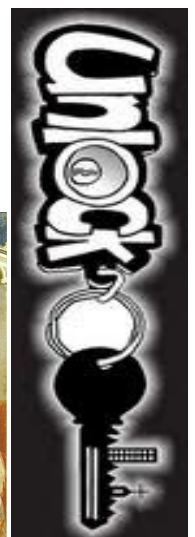
"The servant who knows what his master wants him to do, but does not get himself ready and do it, will be punished with a heavy whipping. But the servant who does not know what his master wants, and yet does something for which he deserves a whipping, will be punished with a light whipping. Much is required from the person to whom much is given; much more is required from the person to whom much more is given.

. . . tells us this. It is about waiting for the end times but meanwhile not just sitting by and leaving it all to God. There are things we can do to make preparation for the return of Christ, to help create the conditions. What do you think those things are? – *not used because of time.*

(3) **Salvation/liberation** (*We ended on this quite powerful note, albeit only mentioning it briefly*)

The creator could not be the liberator without destroying the experiment – Jesus had to die to free us from the binding power of sin/evil.

Matthew 26:28 Jesus' words at the last supper: "This is my blood, which seals God's covenant, my blood poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins".



Mr Holland's Opus

Certificate: PG

Year: 1995

Starring: Richard Dreyfuss

Brief synopsis: A frustrated composer finds fulfilment as a high school music teacher and learns to deal with the disappointment of discovering his son is deaf.

http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0113862/?ref=mv_sr_1



Unlocking Real Life Stories of Urban people

Issue: Dealing with disappointment (initially his career and later Cole's deafness)

Q: Do you ever feel disappointed? E.g. With your children? Perhaps when they make choices you disapprove of? Have you ever felt disappointed or frustrated with life? Give examples – i.e. can you think of a time when you have felt this way? Can you share why?

Revealing Good News of the Down to Earth Christ

Jesus in the temple (even Jesus showed anger and disappointment, although it was not with God but with the way people misunderstood and/or mistreated religion)

John 2:13-22 – It was almost time for the Passover Festival, so Jesus went to Jerusalem. There in the Temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and pigeons, and also the moneychangers sitting at their tables. So he made a whip from cords and drove all the animals out of the Temple, both the sheep and the cattle; he overturned the tables of the moneychangers and scattered their coins; and he ordered those who sold the pigeons, “Take them out of here! Stop making my Father's house a market place!” His disciples remembered that the scripture says, “My devotion to your house, O God, burns in me like a fire.”



The Jewish authorities replied with a question, “What miracle can you perform to show us that you have the right to do this?”

Jesus answered, “Tear down this Temple, and in three days I will build it again.”

“Are you going to build it again in three days?” they asked him. “It has taken forty-six years to build this Temple!”

But the temple Jesus was speaking about was his body. So when he was raised from death, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the scripture and what Jesus had said.



Genesis 32:22-32 – Jacob wrestled with God (Is that how it feels when we're angry or disappointed – do we bargain with God for it not to be true?)

Genesis 32:22-32 – That same night Jacob got up, took his two wives, his two concubines,



and his eleven children, and crossed the River Jabbok. After he had sent them across, he also sent across all that he owned, but he stayed behind, alone. Then a man came and wrestled with him until just before daybreak. When the man saw that he was not winning the struggle, he struck Jacob on the hip, and it was thrown out of joint. The man said, "Let me go; daylight is coming."

"I won't, unless you bless me," Jacob answered.

"What is your name?" the man asked.

"Jacob," he answered.

The man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob. You have struggled with God and with men, and you have won; so your name will be Israel.

Jacob said, "Now tell me your name.

But he answered, "Why do you want to know my name?" Then he blessed Jacob.

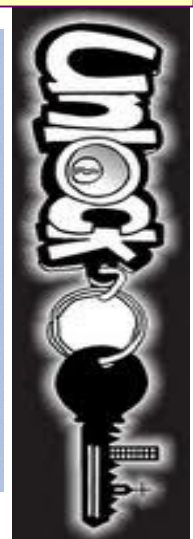
Jacob said, "I have seen God face to face, and I am still alive"; so he named the place Peniel.

The sun rose as Jacob was leaving Peniel, and he was limping because of his hip. Even today the descendants of Israel do not eat the muscle which is on the hip joint, because it was on this muscle that Jacob was struck.

Picture - *We gave out pictures of Jacob wrestling with God for people to take home and meditate*

Romans 8:28 – "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose."

Isaiah 40:28-31 – "Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; **but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength**; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint."



Psalms – e.g. Ps 137 (By the rivers of Babylon) – This is a form of lament - which we don't do often enough, probably because as Christians we feel guilty complaining. But it is OK to do so. Does God lament with us? Do you think God is often disappointed with/for us?

Why lament? Because God listens –

Psalm 116 1&2 - I love the Lord, because he hears me; he listens to my prayers.
He listens to me every time I call to him.

(See page 23 for some Bible texts relating to lamentation taken from 'The Veronica Sessions')

Other issues:

Facing the truth – Have you ever been faced with a harsh truth that you needed to hear?

Cole confronted his Dad about his priorities and the fact he wasn't dealing with Cole's deafness. This was a wakeup call. Do you ever feel like you need to tell someone else a harsh truth? How do we do it?

Honesty can hurt – possibly refer to the story of Job? His friends tried to console him but were not desperately honest with him.

But:-

Is it different when someone *asks* for an honest answer to when you feel *you need* to reveal a truth?

Proverbs 24:26 - *"an honest answer is like a kiss on the lips!"*

Unheard voices. What of his wife? Do we ignore characters in supporting roles? Bible is full of them – e.g. **Vashti** (see **Esther 1**) – a very strong woman who said "no!" She is the lead character of a story in her own right but often overlooked - she set up the whole Esther story/scenario. *We didn't have time for this. I felt that to do justice to it, we could really have had a whole session on this one story.*

Defining success – how do we define our success? By what we've gained? By what we own? Or by whose lives we have touched?

"We are your symphony!" (Gertrude Lang in last scene)

Philippians 3:8 – *"I reckon everything as complete loss for the sake of what is so much more valuable, the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."*

Revisit theme from "Regarding Henry" (week 1) of "All I Once held dear"
It felt good to recap on a subject we had discussed on a previous week. But at the same time we didn't exclude anyone who had come for the first time this session.



The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel

Certificate: 12A

Year: 2012

Starring: Judi Dench, Tom Wilkinson, Bill Nighy, Maggie Smith, Penelope Wilton, Ronald Pickup, Celia Imrie.

Brief Synopsis: British retirees travel to India to take up residence in what they believe is a newly restored hotel. Less luxurious than its advertisements, the Marigold Hotel nevertheless slowly begins to charm in unexpected ways.

IMDB— http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1412386/?ref=sr_3



This film offers a number of themes which you could explore, or you can just choose one or two.

Unlocking Real Life Stories of Urban people & Revealing Good News of the Down to Earth Christ

(1) Life as a gift:

Graham to Jean - 'I see colours, smiles, the way people see life as a privilege and not a right.'

Q: Do you ever feel that life owes you something? Or can you identify with life being a gift? What does that mean to you?

Galatians 2:20: *"It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. This life that I live now, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave his life for me."*

Romans 6:23 : *"God's free gift is eternal life in union with Christ Jesus our Lord"*

(2) Our value as human beings/measuring success:

In the Western mentality, we are used to measuring our success and worth by the things we do and the position we hold. So when people retire and are suddenly left to their own devices, they can easily feel useless to society.

But God created each of us for a purpose –

Jeremiah 29:11 – *"I alone know the plans I have for you, plans to bring you prosperity and not disaster, plans to bring about the future you hope for."*

This promise is for each of us. And it is never too late. The Bible is full of stories of people that God chose to use in their twilight years. For example Abraham or Moses – see below.

i.e. it is never too late to contribute meaningfully to society. The gifts we each have to offer may be different at different stages of our lives but they are there.

Reflect: Do you feel you have something to offer? What skills do you have now that



you didn't when you were younger? What can you do differently?

(3) Living in the past or the present:

Evelyn - *'there's no past that we can bring back by longing for it. Only a present that builds and creates itself as the past withdraws.'*

People in their old age are more often confined to their daily routine, lingering on happy memories of their past, wishing they could bring back their youth. But real life can turn out to be more exciting than a romantic comedy, even for people in their eighties.

Moses

This was the experience of a well-known historic figure – the prophet Moses. The Bible tells about an extraordinary turn in his life at his old age. God called him to lead the Israelites out of Egyptian slavery. It wasn't until he was eighty that God commissioned him with this great task. 'What a joke! Me? An old shepherd going to Pharaoh?' he must have thought as he wandered in the desert tending a flock of sheep. Society may think you are no longer useful when you've become weary and grey-haired; we may think ourselves inadequate, and not trust ourselves with tasks of any importance – but not God. He never writes people off in their old age.

It is often the late season of our lives that teaches us things we are slow to learn in our youth. It was when he reached his late years that Moses came to realise how swiftly life passes: 'Seventy years are given to us! Some even live to eighty. But even the best years are filled with pain and trouble; soon they disappear, and we fly away'

That's why he prays that God would grant him wisdom to know how to spend the precious time he is given on earth:

NB: Psalm 90 is attributed in its title to Moses but we can't know for sure who wrote it – however the same principles apply.

Psalm 90:12 Teach us how short our life is, so that we may become wise.

At the end of the day, wisdom is a treasure more precious and desirable than any adventures. And it is more accessible than the delights of India. 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom', says the Psalmist to those who wonder where to find it. Wisdom will not leave you wanting. If this is what you pursue, as Sonny says, everything will indeed be good in the end!

Proverbs 9:10 To be wise you must first have reverence for the Lord. If you know the Holy One, you have understanding.

(4) Change

Keep an eye on how the characters change - Maggie Smith's character (**Muriel**) is initially bigoted e.g. demands an "English" doctor at hospital. But she changes after meeting a serving girl from low caste who invites her to her home and cooks for her – a humbling encounter.



Do you have any prejudices? Do you choose who you associate with? We can't always do so. The Bible teaches us to be humble and practice hospitality to all. The hospitality shown by the serving girl was Jesus-like – she had very little



to give but gave it all. This is not just about giving to God directly but doing so by how we give to others and how we show hospitality.

Luke 21:1-4 Jesus looked round and saw rich people dropping their gifts in the temple treasury, and he also saw a very poor widow dropping in two little copper coins. He said, "I tell you that this poor widow put in more than all the others. For the others offered their gifts from what they had to spare of their riches; but she, poor as she is, gave all she had to live on." (Also Mark 12:41-44)

The widow's mite. She gave her all. (Another interpretation of her story is not so much about the fact she gave all but about the fact that what she gave was all she had. Story points out the injustice of the world that Jesus seeks to overturn.

An encounter with Jesus changes people (e.g. Zaccheus.) and opens our eyes to see the truth (e.g. the blind man called Bartimaeus in Mark 10:46-52 (or John 9)"I want to see".

Mark 10:46-52 They came to Jericho, and as Jesus was leaving with his disciples and a large crowd, a blind beggar named Bartimaeus son of Timaeus was sitting by the road. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, "Jesus! Son of David! Take pity on me!" Many of the people scolded him and told him to be quiet. But he shouted even more loudly, "Son of David, take pity on me!" Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." So they called the blind man. "Cheer up!" they said. "Get up, he is calling you." He threw off his cloak, jumped up, and came to Jesus. "What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked him. "Teacher," the blind man answered, "I want to see again." "Go," Jesus told him, "your faith has made you well." At once he was able to see and followed Jesus on the road.

Do we always want to see and face up to truth? Change can be very demanding. Once healed the blind man would no longer be able to beg so would have to find another way to earn a living. Also, facing up to CHANGE were Judi Dench (widowhood) and the couple whose marriage ends.

Do you ever resist change? Why? Fear? Fear of what? Fear of failure?

Film quotes - 1h48

"The only real failure is the failure to try and the measure of success is how we cope with disappointment"

1h51 (log, day 51)

"We celebrate the changes. Everything will be alright in the end. If it's not alright it's not the end".



(5) HOPE



Sunny's attitude – “Things will be alright in the end. If they're not alright then it's not the end.” – this is a great representation of the Christian hope we know in Christ.

Matthew 12:21 . . . and in him all peoples will put their hope.

Sonny is accused: “*You photo-shopped it.*” But he replied: “*I offered a vision of the future*” – this is what we are called to do as Christians. Not to mislead or photoshop but offer a vision of future and to reassure (or warn?) people that the way things are now is not the way they will always be.

Hebrews 6:19 We have this hope as an anchor for our lives. It is safe and sure, and goes through the curtain of the heavenly temple into the inner sanctuary.

Mark 16:2-8 Very early on Sunday morning, at sunrise, they went to the tomb. On the way they said to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?” (It was a very large stone.) Then they looked up and saw that the stone had already been rolled back. So they entered the tomb, where they saw a young man sitting on the right, wearing a white robe — and they were alarmed. “Don't be alarmed,” he said. “I know you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is not here — he has been raised! Look, here is the place where they put him. Now go and give this message to his disciples, including Peter: ‘He is going to Galilee ahead of you; there you will see him, just as he told you.’”

”So they went out and ran from the tomb, distressed and terrified. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.



The Secret Life of Bees

Certificate: 12A

Year: 2008

Starring: Dakota Fanning, Queen Latifah, Jennifer Hudson, Alicia Keys

Synopsis: set in South Carolina in 1964, this is the tale of Lily Owens a 14 year-old girl who is haunted by the memory of her late mother. To escape her lonely life and troubled relationship with her father, Lily flees with Rosaleen, her caregiver and only friend, to a South Carolina town that holds the secret to her mother's past. Taken in by the intelligent and independent Boatwright sisters, Lily finds solace in their mesmerizing world of beekeeping.. (from www.imdb.com)

IMDB— http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0416212/?ref=sr_1

Unlocking Real Life Stories of Urban people & Revealing Good News of the Down to Earth Christ

This film offers a number of themes which you could explore, or you can just choose one or two.

(1) Who am I?

Issue: Self-perception, self-identity - all Lily knew about herself was that she killed her mum when she was 4, and the lies her dad told her about her mum abandoning them (that she was coming back for her stuff and not for Lily).

Question: Ever wonder about your own sense of identity and belonging? Do you remember your parents? Your history? Do you have cause to give thanks for your



Galatians 4:4-7 But when the right time finally came, God sent his own Son. He came as the son of a human mother and lived under the Jewish Law, to redeem those who were under the Law, so that we might become God's sons and daughters. To show that you are his sons and daughters, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who cries out, "Father, my Father." So then, you are no longer a slave but a son or daughter. And since that is what you are, God will give you all that he has for his heirs.

earthly family or do you have questions and doubts?

Bible:

(Other translations talk about adoption as children of God)

Question: How do you feel close to God? What makes you sense God's presence? Lily held a picture of her mum to her chest but we don't have pictures of God as we don't know what God looks like. We have pictures of what we think Jesus looked like but no one knows for sure.





Pick carefully some different images of how artists from various cultures have perceived Jesus. For example, “The Christ We Share” available from www.cms-uk.org (Some images can be disturbing so think carefully about your group and pick appropriately.)

Expand: Jesus is more than just the human person. Jesus is the one who “assumes” and heals (define “assume” – takes on all our pain, problems, suffering and all that separates us from God). This is a vital concept in liberation and feminist theology which invites us to think of the “Christ event” and not just the person Jesus or to think of the person as more than a Middle Eastern male. Sometimes to imagine him taking our place we have to imagine him being like

us, a representative of us (e.g. our race, culture etc).

The Good News is that it works both ways, we can be like Christ too.

Aside: Interesting point that against a background of segregation, racial prejudice and the fight for civil rights it is a black woman who helps the white girl find her sense of identity!

Question: What does it mean to find our identity in God? August is like God helping us find who we are. To be part of the Kingdom of God is to live by “Kingdom values” – explain by way of

Matthew 5:1-11 Jesus saw the crowds and went up a hill, where he sat down. His disciples gathered round him, and he began to teach them:

Happy are those who know they are spiritually poor; the Kingdom of heaven belongs to them!

Happy are those who mourn; God will comfort them!

Happy are those who are humble; they will receive what God has promised!

Happy are those whose greatest desire is to do what God requires; God will satisfy them fully!

Happy are those who are merciful to others; God will be merciful to them!

Happy are the pure in heart; they will see God!

Happy are those who work for peace; God will call them his children!

Matthew 20:16 And Jesus concluded, “So those who are last will be first, and those who are first will be last.”



(2) Coping with guilt

Issue: Lily carrying guilt around with her, led by her father to believe her mum’s death was her fault and that her mum wasn’t coming back for her at all but for her belongings.

Question: Do you carry feelings of guilt?

Bible: there are loads of verses about forgiveness. Invite suggestions. E.g. -

2 Corinthians 5:7 Anyone who is joined to Christ is a new being; the old is gone, the new has come.

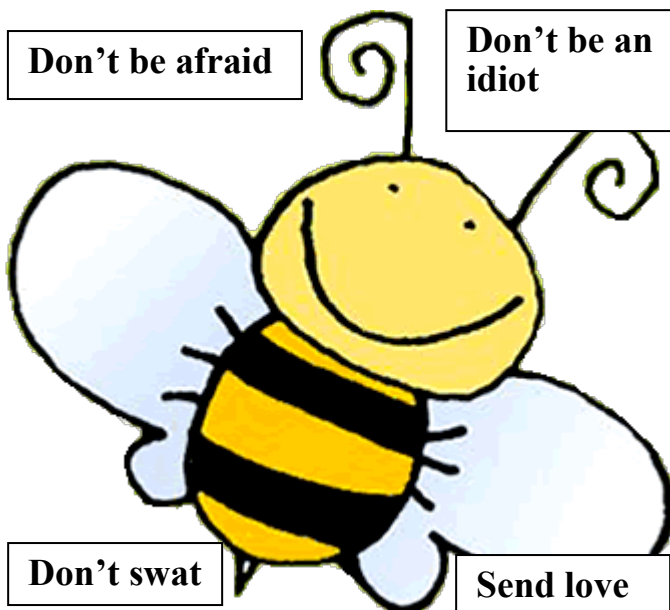
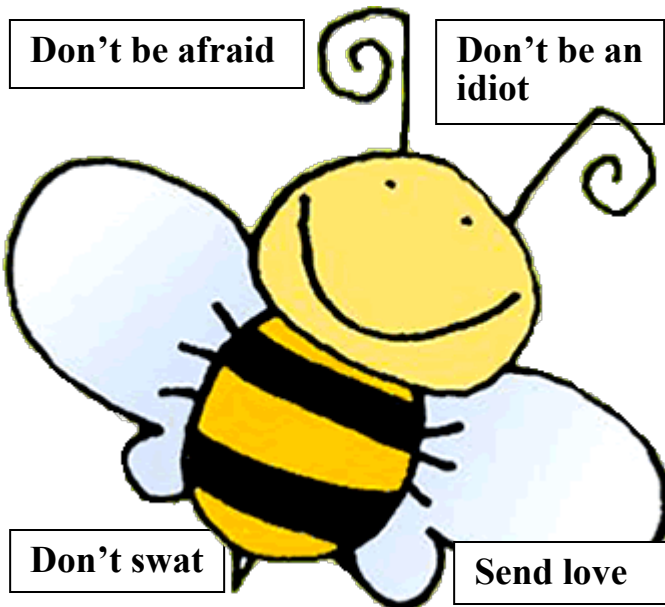
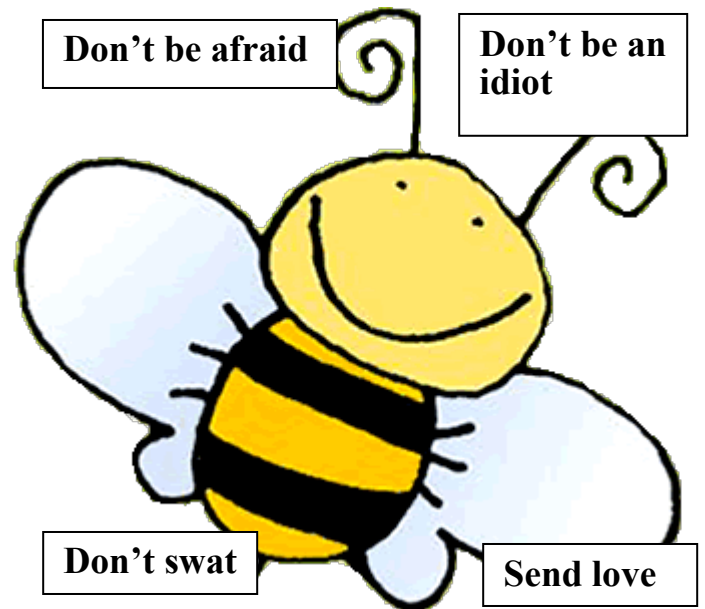
Ephesians 1:3-8 Let us give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! For in our union with Christ he has blessed us by giving us every spiritual blessing in the heavenly world. Even before the world was made, God had already chosen us to be his through our union with Christ, so that we would be holy and without fault before him. Because of his love God had already decided that through Jesus Christ he would make us his sons and daughters — this was his pleasure and purpose. Let us praise God for his glorious grace, for the free gift he gave us in his dear Son! For by the blood of Christ we are set free, that is, our sins are forgiven. How great is the grace of God, which he gave to us in such large measure!

(3) Other miscellaneous issues/quotes:

- God’s transforming power - Can God use a block of wood to bring hope and healing or, when they revered and touched the statue, was it idol worship?
- Values – colour of the house (August referred to it, stating “some things matter more, like lifting someone’s heart”)
- secret life of bees – do you have secrets you keep hidden from others? You can confide in God, as He knows already (Ps 139)
- Bee-yard etiquette – it works in the world just the same - **“Don’t be afraid; don’t be an idiot; don’t swat; send the bees love – every living thing wants to be loved.”**

We gave out bee coasters for everyone’s coffee made by laminating a picture of a bee with the words “don’t be afraid”, “don’t be an idiot”, “don’t swat” and “send love” – see template on next page.





The Life of David Gale

Certificate: 15

Year: 2003

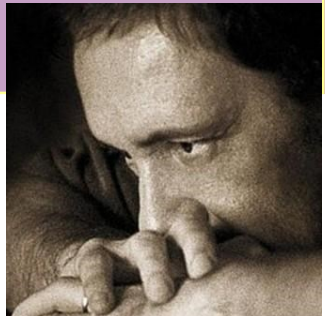
Starring: Kevin Spacey, Kate Winslett

Synopsis: A man against capital punishment is convicted of murdering a fellow activist and is sent to death row. A reporter is granted an interview with him and ends up trying to prove his innocence. But is he as innocent as we are led to believe?

IMDB— http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0289992/?ref=sr_4

Unlocking Real Life Stories of Urban people

This was a longer film so a structured session was not possible. We opted on this occasion to have an open discussion prompted by the following quotes placed on the tables over coffee:



"I want to be remembered as much for how I lived my life and the decisions I made as how I died"

"Nearly martyrs don't count"

"The key to your freedom is inside of you"

"There is no truth, only perspectives"

"Desire is something that once you attain you no longer want"



"Living by our wants will never make us happy. To be fully human is to strive to achieve...integrity, compassion, rationality, self-sacrifice..."

"The only way we can measure our lives is by valuing the lives of others"



Questions asked included:

Q: Was Jesus a martyr? Or more? Was the resurrection essential? Why? – in his resurrection Jesus defeated death and the power of death to separate us from God.

Hebrews 2:14-15 – Since the children, as he calls them, are people of flesh and blood, Jesus himself became like them and shared their human nature. He did this so that through his death he might destroy the Devil, who has the power over death, and in this way set free those who were slaves all their lives because of their fear of death.

Romans 1:4 – as to his divine holiness, he was shown with great power to be the Son of God by being raised from death.

Revelation 1:18 – I am the living one! I was dead, but now I am alive for ever and ever. I have authority over death and the world of the dead.

Q: Is the death penalty acceptable? Are there ever circumstances in which we have a right to take the life of another? Is that God's right alone?

Matthew 5:38-42 – You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' But now I tell you: do not take revenge on someone who wrongs you. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, let him slap your left cheek too. And if someone takes you to court to sue you for your shirt, let him have your coat as well. And if one of the occupation troops forces you to carry his pack one kilometre, carry it two kilometres. When someone asks you for something, give it to him; when someone wants to borrow something, lend it to him.

Q: What is truth?

Jesus undid the old rules and turned them upside down because they had been abused. He came into a corrupt world where the Roman super powers kept people in their places by lies and by force. His teaching was aimed at highlighting injustice.



Roman soldiers were allowed to slap a Jew if they were rude but they always used the palm of their right hands on someone's left cheek. It was deemed abusive and unacceptable to use the back of your hand. If you offered them your right cheek they had no choice but to use the back of their hand and were shown up to be bullies.

Alternative interpretation: If a person had already hit you with the back of his hand by offering the other cheek you are saying "hit me as an equal". Either way you would be exposing injustice.

Similarly, soldiers could demand that a Jew carry their belongings for up to a mile. If you continued on for a second mile it looked like they had broken the acceptable bounds and once again would be shown up to be a bully/ abuser.



Q: Does Christ live in us?

(“The key to your freedom is inside you”) Or is that reducing our understanding of the vastness of God? Are we, in fact, called to live in him? What is the difference? Does it help to think of Christ as unlocking the door to eternal life? Or does it help to think of the key inside us as the Holy Spirit, the key to living as Christ calls us?

Perhaps a good explanation is that Christ lives in us by the Holy Spirit, the third part of the trinity?

Galatians 2:20 - so that it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. This life that I live now, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave his life for me.



Pleasantville

Certificate: 12

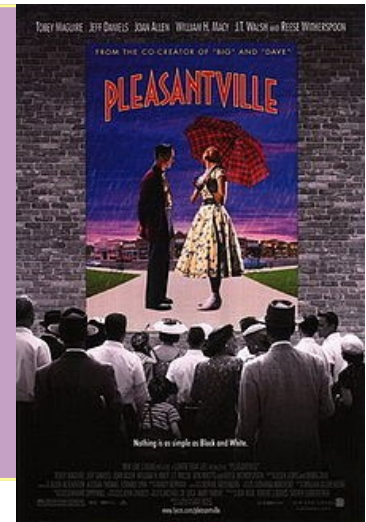
Year: 1998

Starring: Tobey Maguire, Reese Witherspoon

Brief synopsis: Two 1990's teenagers find themselves in a 1950's black and white sitcom where their influence begins to profoundly change that complacent world. As they do so the scenes and the people gradually start to change from black and white to colour.

In the promotion for this session we asked the question "Are you a monochrome or a technicolor Christian?"

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0120789/?ref =nv sr 1>



Unlocking Real Life Stories of Urban people

In the film it is real emotions (not just sex as we are at first led to believe) that bring colour to Pleasantville.

Q: Does life ever feel a little safe or a bit dull for you? Do you ever crave some excitement? Does

John 10:10 – The thief comes only in order to steal, kill, and destroy. I have come in order that you might have life — life in all its fullness.

Ephesians 3:20-21 – To him who by means of his power working in us is able to do so much more than we can ever ask for, or even think of: to God be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus for all time, for ever and ever! Amen.

there ever feel like something is missing? Christ came that our lives might be filled abundantly.

Q: What does "abundant life" look like?

The Greek word used is "*perissos*" which means 'superior in quantity or quality' 'exceedingly' 'very high' 'advantage' 'beyond measure'

"It's good to feel, better than being numb, even if it means feeling bad sometimes"

Or - Life in all its fullness?

A quote from a bipolar patient who was fed up with being drugged to keep stable.

N.B. WE DON'T recommend giving up medication without medical advice but it is an interesting concept.



What do people think about:-

- Being truly present?
- Living in the moment, every moment? Rather than rushing through life and just living for tomorrow?

One person asked - Is it about having a breadth of experiences or about holding onto and valuing deeply the few experiences we have each had and really valuing our lives?

One person offered the fact that we can always hold on to the promise that whatever life

Matthew 28:20 – I am with you always.

offers God in Christ is with us

Other thoughts - Colour represents the transformation from repression to enlightenment – with the dawning of Christian truths.

"This movie is about the fact that personal repression gives rise to larger political oppression...That when we're afraid of certain things in ourselves or we're afraid of change, we project those fears on to other things, and a lot of very ugly social situations can develop"."

Director Gary Ross stated,



2 Samuel 1:17 [*David's Lament for Saul and Jonathan*] David sang this **lament** for Saul and his son Jonathan, **2 Samuel 1:17** (in Context) **2 Samuel 1**(Whole Chapter)

2 Samuel 3:33 David sang this **lament** for Abner: Why did Abner have to die like a fool? **2 Samuel 3:32-34** (in Context) **2 Samuel 3** (Whole Chapter)

2 Chronicles 35:25 The prophet Jeremiah composed a **lament** for King Josiah. It has become a custom in Israel for the singers, both men and women, to use this song when they mourn for him. The song is found in the collection of **laments**. **2 Chronicles 35:24-26** (in Context) **2 Chronicles 35** (Whole Chapter)

Psalms 89:38 [*Lament over the Defeat of the King*] But you are angry with your chosen king; you have deserted and rejected him. **Psalms 89: 37-39** (in Context) **Psalms 89** (Whole Chapter)

Psalms 137:1 [*A Lament of Israelites in Exile*] By the rivers of Babylon we sat down; there we wept when we remembered Zion. **Psalms 137:1-3** (in Context) **Psalms 137** (Whole Chapter)

Micah 1:2 [*A Lament for Samaria and Jerusalem*] Hear this, all you nations; listen to this, all who live on earth! The Sovereign Lord will testify against you. Listen! He speaks from his heavenly temple. **Micah 1:1-3** (in Context) **Micah 1**(Whole Chapter)

Micah 1:8 Then Micah said, Because of this I will mourn and **lament**. To show my sorrow, I will walk around barefoot and naked. I will howl like a jackal and wail like an ostrich. **Micah 1:7-9** (in Context) **Micah 1**(Whole Chapter)

God listens:

Psalms 116:1 [*Someone Saved from Death Praises God*] I love the Lord, because he hears me; he **listens** to my prayers.

Psalms 116:1-3 (in Context) **Psalms 116**(Whole Chapter)



Releasing Life Changing Skills and Confidence

Because each of these sessions takes a long time to deliver due to the need to watch all or most of a film, no creative activities were included in them.

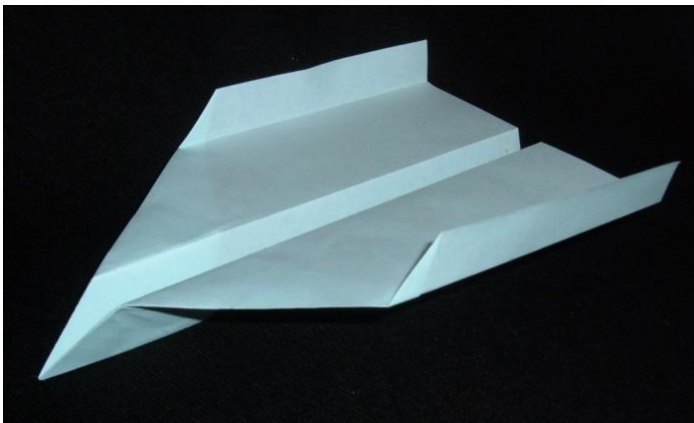
Unlock resources do usually include some creative activity for the following reasons. . . .

- It helps people to *feel* what they are learning rather than just thinking it. Things we feel are much more likely to stay with us and affect our behaviour than things we have thought.
- It usually generates some image or item that people can take home with them which will remind them of what they have been learning
- Doing something creative together creates an unforced space in which people can continue to reflect and discuss the issues without it feeling like a space that has to be filled with 'answers'.



On the next page we have offered some outline suggestions for creative activities that you might offer as part of each session. You may want to consider exploring each film over more than one session, watching the film together on one occasion and following that with a further session or two to explore some of the issues including a creative activity. Obviously the closer together these groups of sessions can be the better, so that people have not forgotten the film by the time the follow up session takes place.

It doesn't much matter what the creative activity is so long as it links in some way to what you have been discussing. Choose something that will be simple to deliver and straightforward to set up, and for which you can access the resources/materials easily and



inexpensively. A vast range to creative activity ideas is available on the internet. If this is an area where you lack experience or confidence consider recruiting someone else to help you with it while you take care of running the session.



Regarding Henry

Create a little person from modelling dough; give it a face and a name and reflect on **Psalm 139:13** Keep it for use in the next session (see below).

The Truman Show

Make a wig for your modelling dough figure out of thread or wool stitched into a piece of sock or stocking. Make sure you know how many hairs you have put on it's head and reflect on Luke 12:6&7.



Mr Holland's Opus

Make and fly paper planes (if anyone is really artistic you can draw eagles on to them) and reflect on Isaiah 40:31

The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel

Your activity needs to be chosen to reflect the theme you choose to follow; life as a gift, our value as human beings and criteria for success, living in the present, handling change, hope.

The Secret Life of Bees

Make a 'patchwork guilt'. Cut squares, triangles or hexagons from patterned wrapping paper or decoupage papers using a hexagon template. Arrange them into a pattern and stick them down on an A4 backing sheet. Each hexagon represents something they want forgiveness for or are struggling to forgive. Invite participants to take them home and use them to help them reflect. Alternatively you could use the plaited wristband activity from the Unlock resource 'I Don't Believe it!' (<http://www.unlock-urban.org.uk/documents/Idontbelieveitupdated.pdf>)

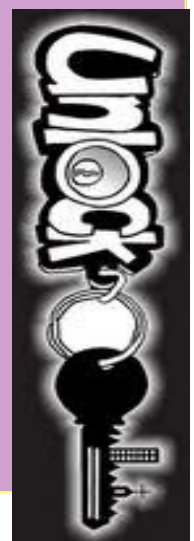


The Life of David Gale

Print postcards with quotes from the film or one of the bible passages in the middle and space for some decoration around the edge. Allow people to choose one to take home and encourage them to decorate it with coloured pens or pencils or stickers, as they talk.

Pleasantville

Provide collage materials and invite people to make in image that represents 'life in all it's fullness' for them.



For Group Leaders

Resource name: *Popcorn and Nachos*

Authors / Facilitators: Ruth Childs (Unlock Birmingham 2012/2013)

Aims: To enable participants to engage with their own stories in relation to a number of issues that particularly affect young people (including feeling ignored, dealing with death, sex and self-esteem, freedom and truth, God's equipping us, God in control, identity, hope, power and injustice) using widely accessible film and cinema material. To create opportunities to explore how their own story connects with the bigger story within scripture. To be able to reflect on the impacts, both positive and negative, of our attitudes and actions. To enable participants to reflect theologically on situations in their lives and in society, and to make reflective and informed choices about how they respond to challenging experiences and circumstances.

Outcomes: The group will be more able to engage with each other, using a reflective theological cycle, starting from their own story or the stories of others in the group, or things that have affected them on a daily basis, without necessarily having to have to understand at an intellectual level. The group will be more able to refer to the connections made with Scripture, and intended changed approaches in similar situations in the future. The group will be able to reflect on their own experiences, and topical issues which affect them, and to do this in relation to scripture. The group will be better able to manage the points of crisis and tension in their lives with reference to scripture.

Session Content

Unlocking Real Life Experience

Media: the sharing of participants' own stories is facilitated starting from watching a film or selected clips and inviting them to see if there were any issues they could identify with - this may have to be teased out by *gentle* questioning, giving time for reflection and response.

Own story: Within our own narratives and situations are threads that can be woven into scripture and understood, helping us recognise our connections with God's story. The contents of this resource were designed for a specific group of people with particular needs. Other groups will have different needs.



For Group Leaders

Planning and Content Details

Group Leader's page

Questions: See individual sessions for questions and challenges.

Revealing the Good News of the Down to Earth Christ

Bible: Passages used (examples):

Regarding Henry - Philippians 3:8, Luke 19:1-10, Psalm 139:13

The Truman Show - Psalm 139 (self-identity), Luke 12:7, Genesis 1:27,

Luke 12:1-12, Matthew 24:36-51 (control verses pre-destination), Jeremiah 29:11, Luke 12:35-48, Matthew 26:28 (salvation/liberation)

Mr Holland's Opus - John 2:13-22 (dealing with disappointment), Genesis 32:22-32 (Jacob wrestled with God), Romans 8:28, Isaiah 40:28-31, Psalm 137 (By the rivers of Babylon), Psalm 116:1-2 (lament) Proverbs 24:26, Philippians 3:8

The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel - Galatians 2:20 (life as a gift), Romans 6:23, Jeremiah 29:11 (our value as human beings/measuring success), Psalm 90:12 (living in the past or the present), Proverbs 9:10, Luke 21:1-4 (change),

Mark 10:46-52, Matthew 12:21 (hope), Hebrews 6:19, Mark 16:2-8

The Secret Life of Bees - Galatians 4:4-7 (who am I?), Matthew 5:1-11, Matthew 20:16, 2 Corinthians 5:7 (coping with guilt), Ephesians 1:3-8

The Life of David Gale - Hebrews 2:14-15 (Was Jesus a martyr?), Romans 1:4, Revelation 1:18, Matthew 5:38-42 (Is the death penalty acceptable?), Galatians 2:20 (Does Christ live in us?)

Pleasantville - John 10:10 (Does life ever feel a little safe or a little dull for you?), Ephesians 3:20-21, Matthew 28:20

Lament - 2 Samuel 1:17, 2 Samuel 3:33, 2 Chronicles 35:25, Psalm 89:38, Psalm 137:1, Micah 1:2, Micah 1:8, Psalm 116:1

The Bible passages suggested are a selection from which facilitators can choose. It is not necessary to use all of them and if the group's discussions go in a different direction you may need to choose others that are more appropriate.

Releasing Life Changing Skills and Confidence

By connecting God's story with our own, participants begin to encounter alternative responses to the issues and pressures they encounter in their day to day lives.

Reflective Activities

Some sessions only require participants to watch films/clips and begin sharing. A selection of optional creative activities to help people think through the issues in the sessions are offered on page 25

Throughout this material the pale blue text indicates facilitator's notes, mostly made in the light of the experience of actually running these sessions.



Unlock, by various names, has been around since 1972, trying to help (mainly) urban Christians to understand and share their faith appropriately. Our life experience matters; our stories; our joys and sorrows. The Bible has plenty to say, more than we'll ever know, about our lives, if we know how to read it and apply it - if we know how to **UNLOCK** it!

The work outlined in this pack applies the learning cycle on page 30, **starting by using a 'prompt'** to draw out group member's stories. In this case the suggested prompts are all films. After watching the film give everyone time to tell make their own connections between the film and their own experiences and listen carefully as they do. What are the themes and issues arising in the stories? Try to remember so that you can remind people later if necessary.

The next stage is to **find part of the Bible** that comes to mind having listened to the stories. If you are using these sessions with a non-church group you will need to be ready to provide some Bible links, but only if they are unable to do so. It is always worth giving them a chance to come up with a Bible link for themselves first; they may surprise you! Then ask the group to explore **connections**, similarities or differences.

Finally there is a **reflective activity**, (suggestions on page 25) giving people an opportunity to reflect on the session and any action they might want to take as a result. The reflective activity creates space in which discussion and reflection can continue in an unforced way.

How well the group know and trust one another will affect the type of story that they share, often the newer the group, the more light hearted the stories are likely to be.



Unlock uses an approach to engaging with the Bible that is different to traditional Bible studies (see page 30). Unlock's approach starts from the stories and experiences of group members, whereas a more traditional approach starts from the Biblical text. Unlock's approach has been found to work well with small groups of urban, oral learners from outside of the church. There are many free resources on the Unlock website designed for use with such groups. However, because each of these resources was designed for a particular group in a particular time and place they are unlikely to be a perfect fit for your group as they stand. They are offered more as inspiration to you to design your own materials along the same lines, rather than as ready to use packages.

Unlock usually works with people outside of church who may be interested in finding out a bit more about faith but perhaps are not attracted to the formal methods of learning often associated with church. Our work is based on a reflective learning cycle and is a tried and tested way of introducing people to the Bible in a non-threatening way. Many churches have activities that draw in members of their surrounding community but then struggle with how to move on from those relationships into exploring faith, especially in urban environments where anything formal might be treated with suspicion.

This resource has been developed by an Unlock worker in Sandwell (near Birmingham) The sessions were aimed at adults and discussed issues they

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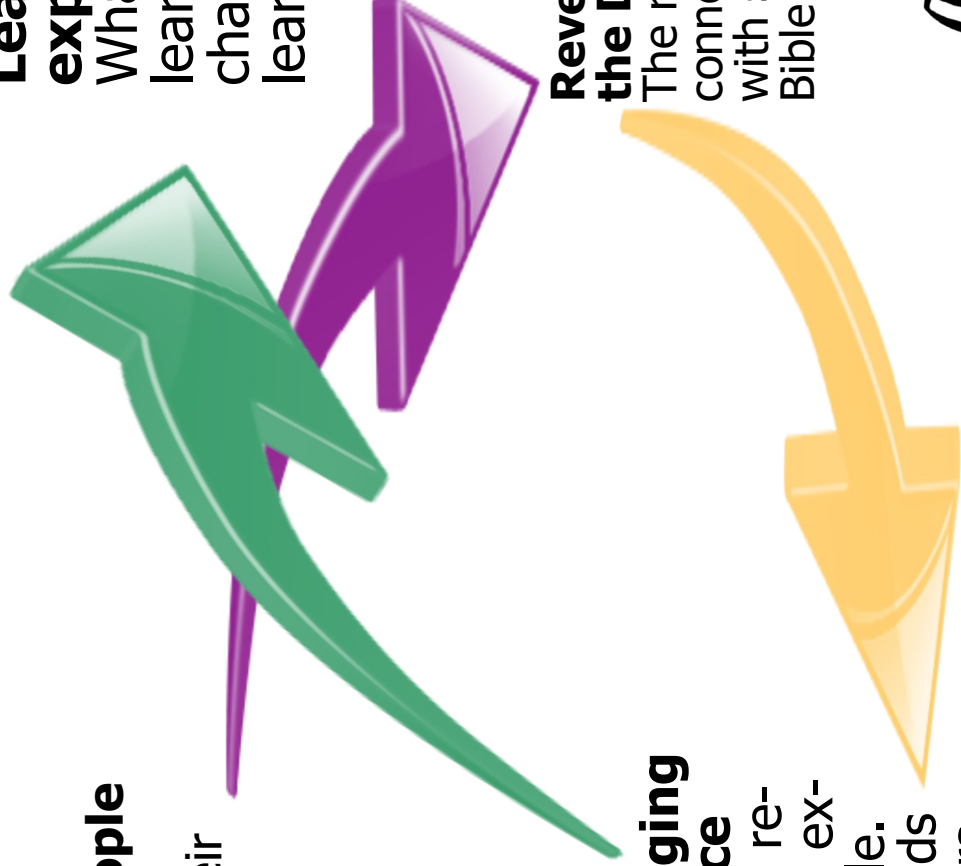
office@unlock-urban.org.uk



The Unlock Learning Cycle

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 and 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 with similar situations in the Bible.



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