

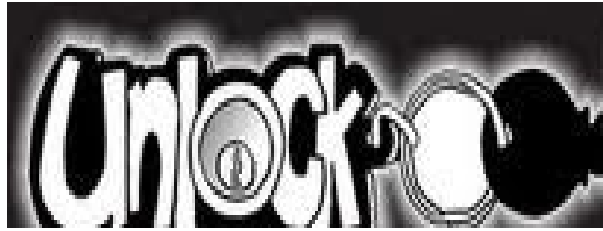
From retirement-quotes.com

What Now?

A Bible resource for use with small groups based on experiences of redundancy and unemployment.

Steve Sowerby, Unlock Birmingham 2011/12

January 2021 Update



CONTENTS

Session one	The Good Old Days	Page 3
Session two	What do I Have to Offer?	Page 10
Session three	Hope for the future	Page 18
Session four	Building a Future	Page 21
Information and leader guidance		Page 24



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Session 1



Unlocking real life stories of urban people
Revealing Good News of the Down to Earth Christ
Releasing life changing skills and confidence

The Good Old Days

Unlocking real life stories of urban people.....

Watch: **Grandma Marie's memories of working in the munitions factories**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p1-w2j5EYvo>

Or:

The life of a miner

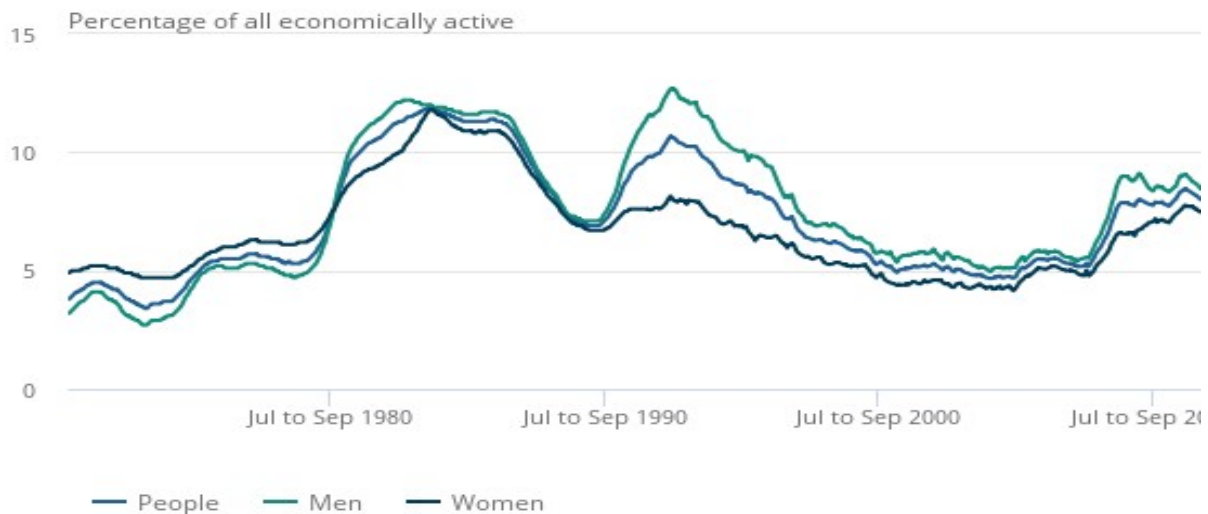
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oAc4EARIC2o>

- Share your memories of work
- What made you feel valued?
- What were your feelings when you left?
- If you have never been unemployed and/or struggled to find work, what feelings do you have watching the video clip or hearing stories of working life?

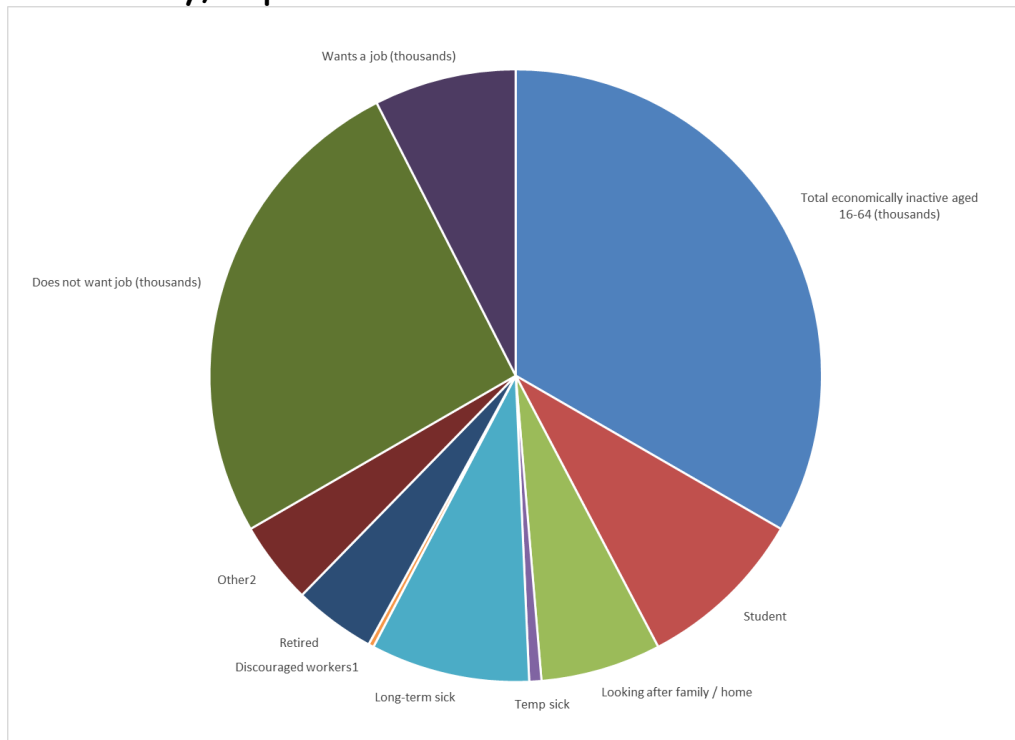
Facts and Figures

Figure 9: The unemployment rate for all people increased 0.7 percentage points on the year, and increased by 0.7 percentage points the quarter, to 4.8%

UK unemployment rates (aged 16 years and over), seasonally adjusted, between January to March 2020



Economic Inactivity, September to November 2020



Data from ONS

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-52660591>



Wikimedia Commons

- If you have ever been made redundant from a job, share your experience of being 'laid off'
- Maybe you were told that only some of the workforce was to lose their jobs. How did it make you feel when you heard that it *might* be you who was to be made redundant?
- If you haven't ever been in employment share your experience of 'signing on'
- How does it make you feel?

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

Jesus often told stories to help illustrate a point, these are known as parables. Have a look at this parable that Jesus told.

Matthew 20:1-16

The Workers in the Vineyard

¹ The Kingdom of heaven is like this. Once there was a man who went out early in the morning to hire some men to work in his vineyard.² He agreed to pay them the regular wage, a silver coin a day, and sent them to work in his vineyard.³ He went out again to the marketplace at nine o'clock and saw some men standing there doing nothing,⁴ so he told them,

You also go and work in the vineyard, and I will pay you a fair wage.⁵ So they went. Then at twelve o'clock and again at three o'clock he did the same thing.⁶ It was nearly five o'clock when he went to the marketplace and saw some other men still standing there.

Why are you wasting the whole day here doing nothing? he asked them.⁷

No one hired us, they answered.

Well, then, you go and work in the vineyard, he told them.

⁸ When evening came, the owner told his foreman, Call the workers and pay them their wages, starting with those who were hired last and ending with those who were hired first.⁹ The men who had begun to work at five o'clock were paid a silver coin each.¹⁰ So when the men who were the first to be hired came to be paid, they thought they would get more; but they too were given a silver coin each.¹¹ They took their money and started grumbling against the employer.¹²

These men who were hired last worked only one hour, they said, while we put up with a whole day's work in the hot sun—yet you paid them the same as you paid us!¹³

Listen, friend, the owner answered one of them,

I have not cheated you. After all, you agreed to do a day's work for one silver coin.¹⁴ Now take your pay and go home. I want to give this man who was hired last as much as I gave you.¹⁵ Don't I have the right to do as I wish with my own money? Or are you jealous because I am generous?

- How does this story make you feel?
- What is your first reaction?
- What do you think Jesus meant by this story?

Releasing life changing skills and confidence.....



Isaiah 55:8

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord.

Wages and salaries are normally either based upon performance or the amount of time a person worked. Sometimes a pay structure may appear to be very unbalanced and unfair.

But God looks at things differently. His love for us comes from who we are, not what we've done. God offers us an invitation to accept his way and it's up to us to choose if we accept his love and his way.

- In response to this, what do we think we are worth? How is our worth measured?
- How do you think God sees or measures our value?
- How do you think the discussion has helped you to think about your life?
- What do you think you can do to make a difference to your life?



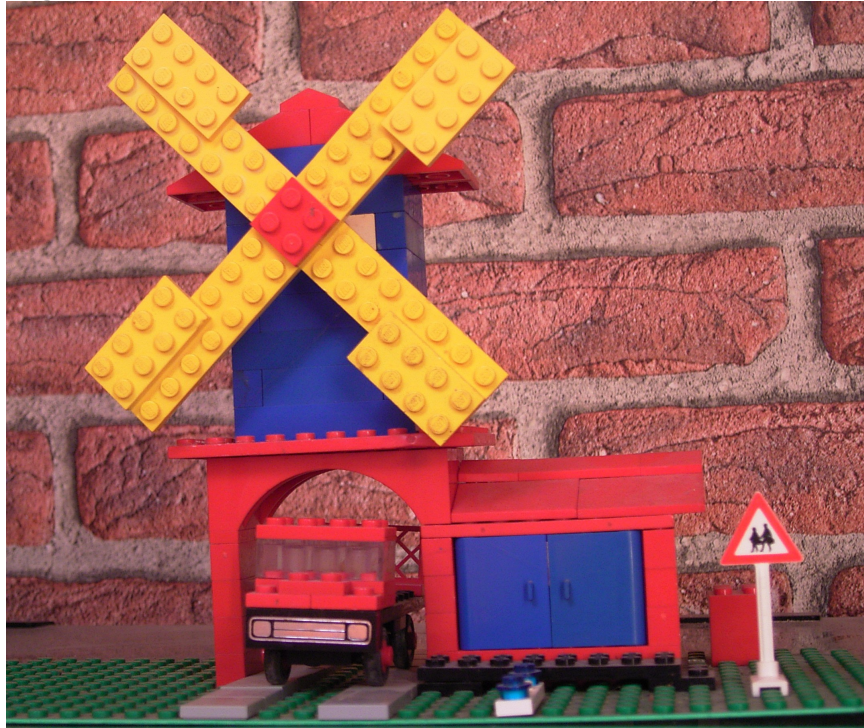
Author's own photo

Ephesians 2:10

¹⁰ God has made us what we are, and in our union with Christ Jesus he has created us for a life of good deeds, which he has already prepared for us to do.

Activity:

Just for a bit of fun, everyone is invited to take some Lego and help build a building, street, etc, or whatever you feel you'd like to make.



Wikimedia Commons

Alternately we could build something from bits and bobs that we might have lying around the house; Toilet rolls, bits of cardboard, etc.

This reminds us that we all have something to contribute however small our contribution.

(If possible you might want to keep the model that the group makes for use in the last of these sessions.)

*Optional - End the session with a prayer.



Session 2

What do I have to offer?



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Unlocking real life stories of urban people.....

Watch: **The Origin of Job Interviews**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b56eAUCTLok>

Job interviews can be a very scary thing for some people.

In fact many people find any conversation where they are being asked lots of questions quite intimidating.

It is easy to feel that we may look foolish and sometimes we can think that the other person is looking to catch us out with tricky questions.

- Share your memories of interviews (or other conversations where the other person has all the power).
- How did they make you feel?

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

Sometimes we can feel as though we are not up to the job...

There are times when we think that we are not able to fulfil the requirements of the job descriptions either because we don't have the right qualifications or the experience that we think we need.

The Bible is full of stories of men and women who did not feel up to the task that God was asking of them and often they would come up with reasons why they thought God had made a mistake in choosing them.

One such man was a man called Moses...

Watch:

http://www.thebricktestament.com/exodus/the_burning_bush/ex03_01.html

(You don't necessarily need to use the full Bible text as it is quite long. It may be sufficient to just use the Brick Testament slides. The text is provided here for the leader's reference.)

Exodus 3:1-4:31

God Calls Moses

¹ One day while Moses was taking care of the sheep and goats of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian, he led the flock across the desert and came to Sinai, the holy mountain.² There the angel of the Lord appeared to him as a flame coming from the middle of a bush. Moses saw that the bush was on fire but that it was not burning up.³

This is strange, he thought.

Why isn't the bush burning up? I will go closer and see.

⁴ When the Lord saw that Moses was coming closer, he called to him from the middle of the bush and said,

Moses! Moses!

He answered,

Yes, here I am.

⁵ God said,

Do not come any closer. Take off your sandals, because you are standing on holy ground.⁶ I am the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

So Moses covered his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

⁷ Then the Lord said,

I have seen how cruelly my people are being treated in Egypt; I have heard them cry out to be rescued from their slave drivers. I know all about their sufferings,⁸ and so I have come down to rescue them from the Egyptians and to bring them out of Egypt to a spacious land, one which is rich and fertile and in which the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites now live.⁹ I have indeed heard the cry of my people, and I see how the Egyptians are oppressing them.¹⁰ Now I am sending you to the king of Egypt so that you can lead my people out of his country.

¹¹ But Moses said to God,

I am nobody. How can I go to the king and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?

¹² God answered,

I will be with you, and when you bring the people out of Egypt, you will worship me on this mountain. That will be the proof that I have sent you.

¹³ But Moses replied,

When I go to the Israelites and say to them,
The God of your ancestors sent me to you, they will ask me,
What is his name? So what can I tell them?

¹⁴ God said,

I am who I am. You must tell them:
The one who is called I AM has sent me to you.

¹⁵ Tell the Israelites that I, the Lord, the God of their ancestors, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, have sent you to them. This is my name forever; this is what all future generations are to call me.¹⁶ Go and gather the leaders of Israel together and tell them that I, the Lord, the God of their ancestors, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, appeared to you. Tell them that I have come to them and have seen what the Egyptians are doing to them.¹⁷ I have decided that I will bring them out of Egypt, where they are being treated cruelly, and will take them to a rich and fertile land—the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

¹⁸ My people will listen to what you say to them. Then you must go with the leaders of Israel to the king of Egypt and say to him,

The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, has revealed himself to us. Now allow us to travel three days into the desert to offer sacrifices to the Lord, our God.

¹⁹ I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless he is forced to do so.²⁰ But I will use my power and will punish Egypt by doing terrifying things there. After that he will let you go.

²¹ I will make the Egyptians respect you so that when my people leave, they will not go empty-handed.²² Every Israelite woman will go to her Egyptian neighbours and to any Egyptian woman living in her house and will ask for clothing and for gold and silver jewelry. The Israelites will put these things on their sons and daughters and carry away the wealth of the Egyptians.

Exodus 4

God Gives Moses Miraculous Power

¹ Then Moses answered the Lord,
But suppose the Israelites do not believe me and will not listen to what I say. What shall I do if they say that you did not appear to me?

² So the Lord asked him,
What are you holding?
A walking stick, he answered.

³ The Lord said,
Throw it on the ground. When Moses threw it down, it turned into a snake, and he ran away from it.⁴ Then the Lord said to Moses,
Reach down and pick it up by the tail. So Moses reached down and caught it, and it became a walking stick again.⁵ The Lord said,
Do this to prove to the Israelites that the Lord, the God of their ancestors, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, has appeared to you.

⁶ The Lord spoke to Moses again,
Put your hand inside your robe. Moses obeyed; and when he took his hand out, it was diseased, covered with white spots, like snow.⁷ Then the Lord said,
Put your hand inside your robe again. He did so, and when he took it out this time, it was healthy, just like the rest of his body.⁸ The Lord said,
If they will not believe you or be convinced by the first miracle, then this one will convince them.⁹ If in spite of these two miracles they still will not believe you, and if they refuse to listen to what you say, take some water from the Nile and pour it on the ground. The water will turn into blood.

¹⁰ But Moses said,
No, Lord, don't send me. I have never been a good speaker, and I haven't become one since you began to speak to me. I am a poor speaker, slow and hesitant.

¹¹ The Lord said to him,
Who gives man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or dumb? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? It is I, the Lord.¹² Now, go! I will help you to speak, and I will tell you what to say.

¹³ But Moses answered,
No, Lord, please send someone else.

¹⁴ At this the Lord became angry with Moses and said,
What about your brother Aaron, the Levite? I know that he can speak well. In fact, he is now coming to meet you and will be glad to see you.¹⁵ You can speak to him and tell him what to say. I will help both of you to speak, and I will tell you both what to do.¹⁶ He will be your spokesman and speak to the people for you. Then you will be like God, telling him what to say.¹⁷ Take this walking stick with you; for with it you will perform miracles.

- Why did you think Moses didn't want to do what God wanted?
- What excuses did he give God?

Jesus chose twelve men to follow him; to learn from him and to continue his work when he had gone, and we hear how he called four of them in:

Matthew 4:17-22.

From that time Jesus began to proclaim, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.'

As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the lake—for they were fishermen. And he said to them, 'Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.' Immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.



Microsoft clipart

- what is different about this story compared to the one about Moses?
- Share with each other for a few minutes your thoughts and feelings about this story.

Releasing life changing skills and confidence.....



Microsoft clipart

Sometimes its not easy to trust others when we feel we've been let down in the past or we find life itself a struggle, but *God* wants us to trust him in all things.

And like Jesus' call to Peter, Andrew, James and John, God calls all of us to follow him, even if we don't know what the future holds or if we don't know where we are going.

Sometimes all we need is someone just to give us a chance when it feels that everyone else is against us. The Bible tells us of how Jesus called a man to follow him even when everyone else thought that Jesus shouldn't because he was not a very popular person at all.

Mark 2:13-17

Jesus Calls Levi

¹³ Jesus went back again to the shore of Lake Galilee. A crowd came to him, and he started teaching them.¹⁴ As he walked along, he saw a tax collector, Levi son of Alphaeus, sitting in his office. Jesus said to him,
Follow me. Levi got up and followed him.

¹⁵ Later on Jesus was having a meal in Levi's house. A large number of tax collectors and other outcasts was following Jesus, and many of them joined him and his disciples at the table.¹⁶ Some teachers of the Law, who were Pharisees, saw that Jesus was eating with these outcasts and tax collectors, so they asked his disciples,

Why does he eat with such people?

¹⁷ Jesus heard them and answered,

People who are well do not need a doctor, but only those who are sick. I have not come to call respectable people, but outcasts.

Activity:

To help us understand how God calls and guides us, and to have fun as well, we are going to try and guide one another round an obstacle course. (Chairs and tables rearranged should suffice) The problem is that one person will be blindfolded while another guides them round the course.

Everyone else will be shouting out instructions to try and put them off the course.

**note to leaders (this activity works well when demonstrating how we listen out for God's voice among many and can be used as an illustration for many other Bible verses too)*

*Optional - End the session with a prayer.



Session 3

Hope for the Future



There is always hope by Krzyho

<http://somalithinktank.org/diplomatic-shift-offers-real-hope-for-somalia/>

Unlocking real life stories of urban people.....

Watch: What is Hope?

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D3GyVe9HqSU&feature=plcp>

**note to leader (this video has a strong Christian message. Depending on the nature of your group, at this point of the session you may want to just play some of the clip.)*

- What does hope mean to you?
- Share your experiences of hope/hopelessness/hopefulness

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

Mark 4:35-41 Jesus stills a storm.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yyzwCpofQSA>

This story from the Bible tells of how Jesus disciples thought that they were all going to drown because of the big storm that had brewed up and was threatening to sink the boat and everyone on board. Meanwhile, Jesus is fast asleep on a cushion!

The fear of what might happen became too much for them and there must have been a sense of hopelessness.

Now, let us remember that a few of these men were hardy fishermen, used to spending hours on the rough Sea of Galilee.

So, this storm must have been something else!

- Close your eyes for a few minutes and try to imagine that you are in this boat. The storm is raging, the boat is filling up with water, there is sheer panic and someone is fast asleep in the stern. *(If you really want to bring this alive for people you could use a water spray and an electric fan on them to imitate the wind and rain!)*
- What are you feeling right now? Fear, hopelessness, anger?
- What other emotions?

So we can imagine all of these emotions that the disciples of Jesus must have felt when faced with what they thought was a hopeless situation.

But Jesus woke up and stopped the storm, just like flicking a light switch.

For God, there is nothing that is impossible for him to overcome.

Luke 1.32-38

He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end. 'Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?'

The angel said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be

barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.' Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.' Then the angel departed from her.

- If there is nothing impossible for God, then all things are possible.
- If you could ask God to do just one thing for you what would it be and why? (Keep it clean!!)

Releasing life changing skills and confidence.....



<http://yorkshireshepherd.blogspot.co.uk/2011/12/hold-on-to-hope.html>

Proverbs 23.18

*Surely there is a future,
and your hope will not be cut off*

Activity:

Split the group into pairs and give each pair some old magazines and ask them to make cut out words (and/or images) to make two collages - one with words and/or images that are hopeful and one with words and/or images that are not hopeful.

Ask each pair to display their collages to the group.

Now ask the pairs which words they use most frequently, and discuss how they might incorporate more of the words that are hopeful into everyday use.

*Optional - End the session with a Prayer.



Session 4

Building a Future



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Unlocking real life stories of urban people.....

Watch: [Monty Python](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t2c-X8HiBng)-The Annoying Peasant

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t2c-X8HiBng>

- What for you makes a good community?
- Are good communities based on wealth or health?
- If you were to build a new town what would be at the centre and why?

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

Watch: Building stronger communities

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ZdKQCEZ2Lo>

The Bible tells us of how the first Christians lived and worked as a community; of how everyone was looked after and everyone was happy.

Acts 2:44-47

All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

- Imagine you were part of a community like this, where everyone gave something to the community.
- What do you think you could offer to the community and what do you think the community could do for you?



Microsoft clipart

Releasing life changing skills and confidence.....

Activity:

Play the classic game 'survival', where the group have to discuss what they would need to survive if they had been stranded on a desert island.

http://www.ehow.com/way_5339790_christian-team-building-games-activities.html

Or

Before the group members arrive, create a grid on the floor using masking tape. The grid will need to be larger for more participants and smaller for fewer participants. Inside the grid, tape off a clear path through. Then, create a labyrinth using the masking tape around the path through, so that the "real" path isn't clearly visible. There should only be one way to get through the labyrinth.

When the group arrives, have them line up, and allow one person to try getting through the labyrinth at a time. When several people fail, allow the rest of the group to begin calling out instructions or suggestions. When people still fail, have group members inside the labyrinth step out and allow some time for the entire group to study the maze and devise a plan for getting through it. After this time, the group members in the maze should have an easier time getting through it. Use this activity to illustrate that everyone must take time to cooperate and agree for a task to be successful

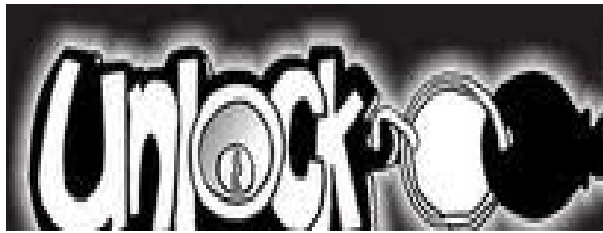
http://www.ehow.com/way_5339790_christian-team-building-games-activities.html

Revisit the first session by looking at the activity and ask the group to discuss what they might change to their construction in the light of what they have learned over the four sessions.

Jeremiah 29:11

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.

*Optional - End the session with a prayer.



Who are we?

Unlock is a Christian charity that was founded in 1972. It exists to help urban churches of any denomination to respond to the challenges in their areas. We are especially concerned with Bible engagement in 'traditional tabloid' ('non-book', 'oral learners', or 'text-shy') cultures.

What do we do?

As well as deploying our team of workers, we publish a variety of group Bible study packs, games, Lent courses and audit materials and provide training. 'Unlock more than you think' and 'Unlock DIY' will give you more ideas about using Unlock's methods.

What don't we do?

We don't offer pre-packaged answers. Each group has to work creatively within its own unique situation, and we offer to assist in that process. What we do will depend on the need being felt. We'll try to find someone from our team of workers to help you!

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 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.



Our approach is to take people's own experience and/or context as the 'text'. Everyone can speak with authority about their own experience or context. These 'texts' are already 'stored' in their own, or their community's, memory. They do not have to be learned; they are already familiar. But they can be explored, compared to other 'texts', including stories in the Bible, critiqued, and learning drawn from them, which can be applied.

In other words, we can learn about our faith simply by:

1. *Sharing stories from our own everyday experience and*
2. *Relating them to the stories in the Bible and*
3. *Deciding what to do about it*
4. *Then taking action and*
5. *Sharing stories of the actions we have taken and so on . .*

This material aims to:

Let people reflect on the links between their own stories and the stories in the Bible. It is particularly suited for a small group who are not in a traditional church setting.

This material will not:

Provide black and white answers to how we should respond to Biblical texts. It is best used as a guide to help on the journey of exploring possible solutions through telling stories, relating them to the Bible and responding to them individually and together.

Ground rules for participants:

The first session should set out some "ground rules" for the discussions, to let people know what will happen in them and how they are expected to contribute. Decide these together so everyone can have a sense of ownership as to how the group is run.

Some examples are as follows:

** Everyone will contribute as much or as little of their personal stories that they are comfortable with.*

** Everything said during these sessions will stay within the group and be treated as confidential, whether it's someone's personal story or opinion.*

** People can opt out of exercises, without having to give a reason for it.*

** Most discussions will be "unfinished" and be interrupted after short periods of time. This is as it should be, since the aim is to start discussions, not finish them.*

** There are no "right" or "wrong" answers or opinions, and those who perhaps have more in-depth knowledge of the Bible should feel free to contribute to the discussions with "facts" provided they know that those comments are not more valid than other opinions expressed in the group.*



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