



Experience The Bible

Nine Bible studies for use with small groups



6 of the Bible studies were originally created by Janet Rourke, in Liverpool. A further 3 were added by a workshop event in Birmingham.



www.unlock-urban.org.uk

The traditional method of Bible study

The majority of Bible studies begin with a text



And move on to an analysis of the text, and the deduction of general principles



Finally there is an encouragement to apply this to life

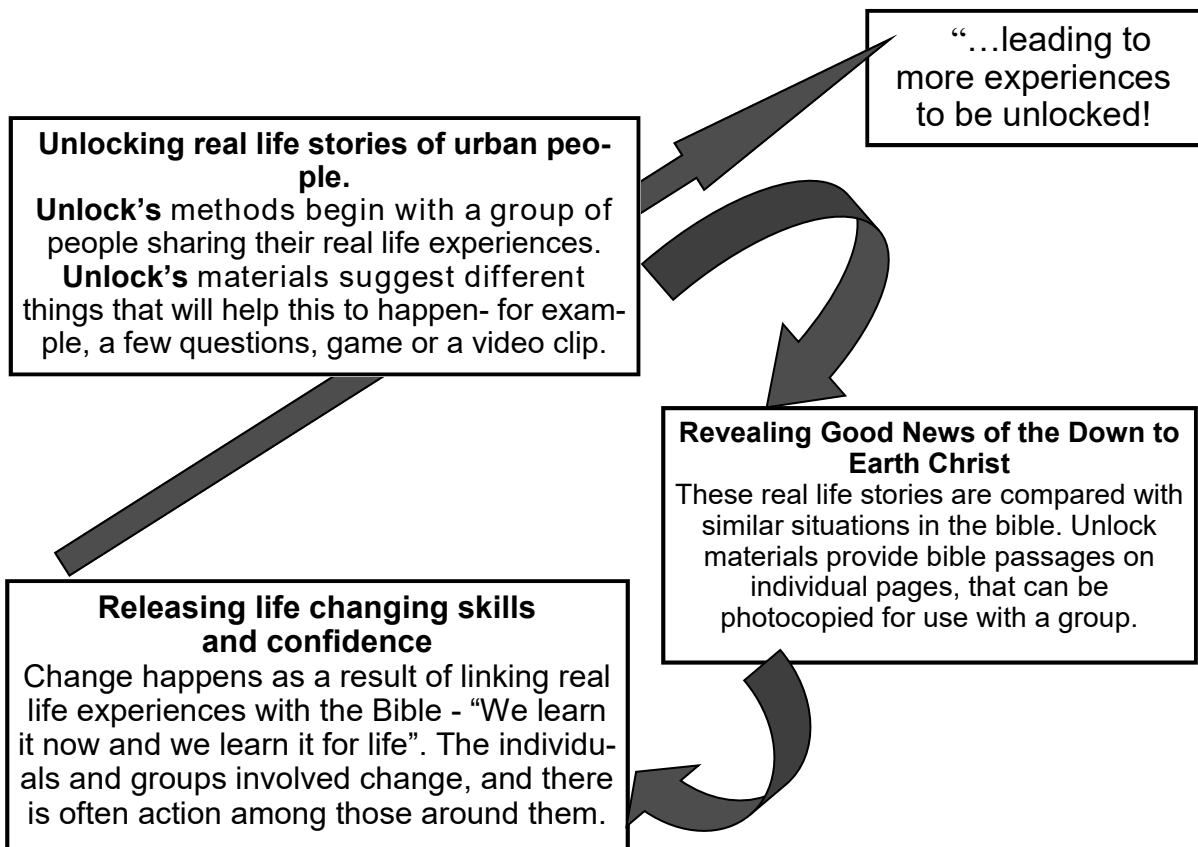
“There was once a man...”

“The Good Samaritan helped his neighbour...”

“We must help others...”

This style provides the logical framework, within which the person can store the information (in his/her mind, in note form on disc) for retrieval when it is needed. This requires a way of thinking and communicating which is based on book and lecture methods of learning; it is not the appropriate method for a vast number of people.

Unlock's method of Bible study



Hints for Group Leaders

Preparation:-

- Before the group meets, photocopy the Bible passage for each person; you might also like to copy the questions.
- As in all groups, help the group members to relax in a comfortable place — somewhere “ordinary” - not too churchy!
- Begin with peoples’ real experiences then move onto the Bible.

The questions: Ask a question, and encourage group members to relate their experiences. After quite a few stories, in response to a question, you may like to ask:

“What strikes you as important from these stories/experiences that we’ve shared?”

Other questions that can be applied to individual stories and lead to creative and spiritual discussions are: -

- What’s good about this situation? What are the best bits?
- What are the possible problems? What could go wrong here? Who might suffer? How?
- What are the things here that we really have to think hard about?
- How might it be fixed? What would show us we were on the right track?
- What would the best possible result? What outcome would give us a reason to celebrate?

The Bible: Ask for volunteers to read, don’t put anyone on the spot. Introduce the Bible passage as a story and ask:

“What is the same as and what is different from our experiences?”
It might help to use some of the same questions as above.

Do

- Be well enough informed to answer any simple background questions
- Accept all the stories/experiences that are offered
- Listen to what group members have to say
- Be ready to learn from the group members
- Encourage a time of quiet/prayer at the end of the discussion

Don’t

- Censor the stories/experiences
- Be too quick to explain the “right” interpretation of the passage
- - and don’t let others in the group do that either!



The Neighbour

Luke 10 Verses 25-37

- ▲ Have you ever been mugged or anything like it, and who helped you?
- ▲ Have you ever been passed by and ignored?
- ▲ Have you ever turned a blind eye?
- ▲ Have you ever stopped and helped some one who was in trouble?



The Neighbour

Luke 10 Verses 25-37

Here is an unusual story in which a man got mugged, and received help from someone he didn't expect help from.

Teacher: What must I do to receive eternal life?

Jesus: What do the Scriptures say? How do you interpret them?

Teacher: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and love your neighbour as you love yourself.

Jesus: You are right, do this and you will live.

Storyteller: But the teacher of the Law wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus.....

Teacher: Who is my neighbour?

Jesus: Listen....

Traveller: There was once a man who was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho when robbers attacked him, stripped him, and beat him up, leaving him half dead.

Priest: It so happened that a priest was going down that road; but when he saw the man, he walked on by, on the other side.

Levite: In the same way a Levite also came along, went over and looked at the man, and then walked on by, on the other side.

Outsider: But a Samaritan (an outsider) who was travelling that way came up on the man, and when he saw him, his heart was filled with pity. He went over to him, poured oil and wine on his wounds and bandaged them: then he put the man on his own animal and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Take care of him,' he told the innkeeper, 'and when I come back this way, I will pay you whatever else you spend on him.'

Jesus: In your opinion, which one of these three acted like a neighbour towards the man attacked by the robbers?

Teacher: The one who was kind to him.

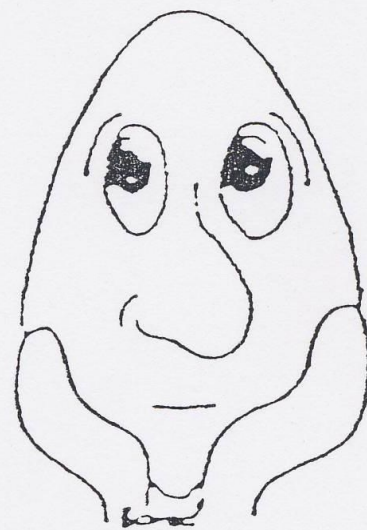
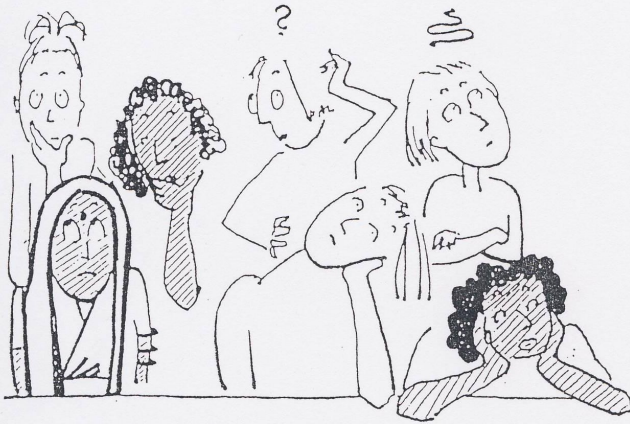
Jesus: You go, then, do the same.



Casual Labourers

Matthew 20 Verses 1-16

▲ Would you rather be working all day, or hanging about all day?
▲ What sort of equality does this story describe?



Casual Labourers

Matthew 20 Verses 1-16

A story in which men become dissatisfied with their wages, and jealous of others.

Jesus: The Kingdom of heaven is like this.

Storyteller: Once there was a man who went out early in the morning to hire some men to work in his vineyard. He agreed to pay them the regular wage, a silver coin a day, and sent them to work in his vineyard. He went out again to the market place at nine o' clock and saw some men standing there doing nothing.

Owner: You also go and work in the vineyard, and I will pay you a fair wage.

Storyteller: So they went. Then at twelve o' clock and again at three o' clock he did the same thing. It was nearly five o' clock when he went to the market place and saw some other men still standing there.

Owner: Why are you wasting the whole day here doing nothing?

Workers: No one hired us.

Owner: Well, then, you also go and work in the vineyard.

Storyteller: When evening came, the owner told his foreman...

Owner: Call the workers and pay them wages, starting with those who were hired last and ending with those who were hired first. The men who had begun work at five o' clock were paid a silver coin each. 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. They took their money and started grumbling against the employer.

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

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

Jesus: So those who are last will be first, and those who are first will be last.



The Lost Sheep

Luke 15 Verses 1-7

- ▲ Have you ever been lost?
- ▲ How did you feel when you were lost?
- ▲ Have you ever felt responsible for losing some thing valuable?
- ▲ What did you do to find it?
- ▲ Have you ever felt responsible for losing some body?
- ▲ What did you do to find them?



The Lost Sheep

Luke 15 Verses 1-7

A story that Jesus told about losing something valuable.

Storyteller: One day when many tax collectors and other outcasts came to listen to Jesus, the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law started grumbling....

Teacher: This man welcomes outcasts and even eats with them!

Storyteller: So Jesus told them this parable.....Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them- what do you do? You leave the ninety-nine sheep in the pasture and go looking for the one that got lost until you find it. When you find it, you are so happy that you put it on your shoulders and carry it back home. Then you call your friends and neighbours together and say to them,

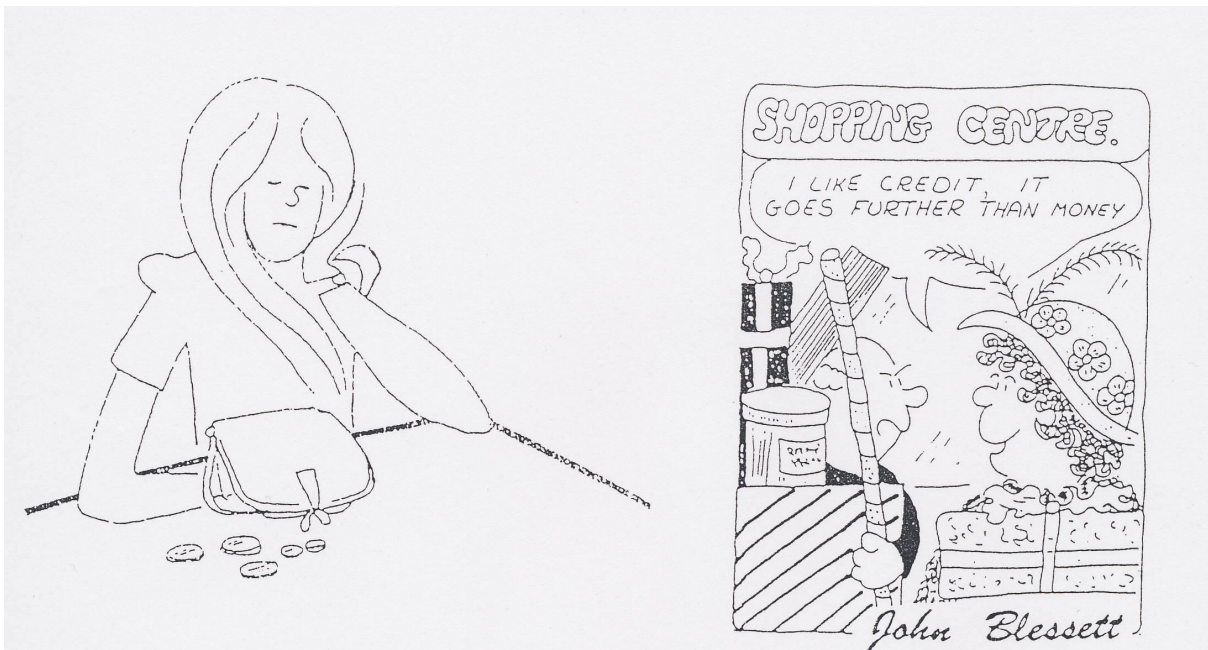
Shepherd: I am so happy I found my lost sheep. Let us celebrate!

Jesus: In the same way, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine respectable people who do not need to repent.

The Lost Son

Luke 15 Verses 11-32

- ▲ What do you expect to inherit?
- ▲ What have you inherited?
- ▲ How did you feel about being a younger son or daughter?
- ▲ Did your parents give you everything you asked for?
- ▲ Have you ever had the opportunity to spend- spend- spend?
- ▲ Have you ever felt rejected when your money ran out?



The Lost Son

Luke 15 Verses 11-32

A story that Jesus told about family life.

Storyteller: There was once a man who had two sons.

Younger Son: Father, give me my share of the property now.

Storyteller: So the man divided his property between his two sons. After a few days the younger son sold his part of the property and left home with the money. He went to a country far away where he wasted his money in reckless living. He spent everything he had. Then a severe famine spread over that country, and he was left without a thing. So he went to work for one of the citizens of that country, who sent him out to his farm to take care of the pigs. He wished he could fill himself with the bean pods the pigs ate, but no one gave him anything to eat. At last he came to his senses and said,

Younger Son: All my father's hired workers have more than they can eat, and here I am about to starve! I will get up and go to my father and say, Father, I have sinned against God and against you. I am no longer fit to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired workers.

Storyteller: So he got up and started back to his father. He was still a long way away from home when his father saw him; his heart was filled with pity, and he ran, threw his arms around his son, and kissed him.

Younger Son: Father, I have sinned against God and against you. I am no longer fit to be called your son.

Storyteller: But the father called his servants.

Father: Hurry! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and shoes on his feet. Then go and get the prize calf and kill it, and let us celebrate with a feast! For this son of mine was dead, but now he is alive: he was lost, but now he has been found.

Storyteller: And so the feasting began. In the meantime the elder son was out in the field. On his way back, when he came close to the house, he heard the music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked him,

Elder Son: What's going on?

Servant: Your brother has come back home, and your father has killed the prize calf, because he got him back safe and sound.

Storyteller: The elder brother was so angry that he would not go into the house; so his father came out and begged him to come in. But he answered his father,

Elder Son: Look, all these years I have worked for you like a slave, and I have never disobeyed your orders. What have you given me? Not even a goat for me to have a feast with my friends! But this son of yours wasted all your property on prostitutes, and when he comes back home, you kill the prize calf for him!

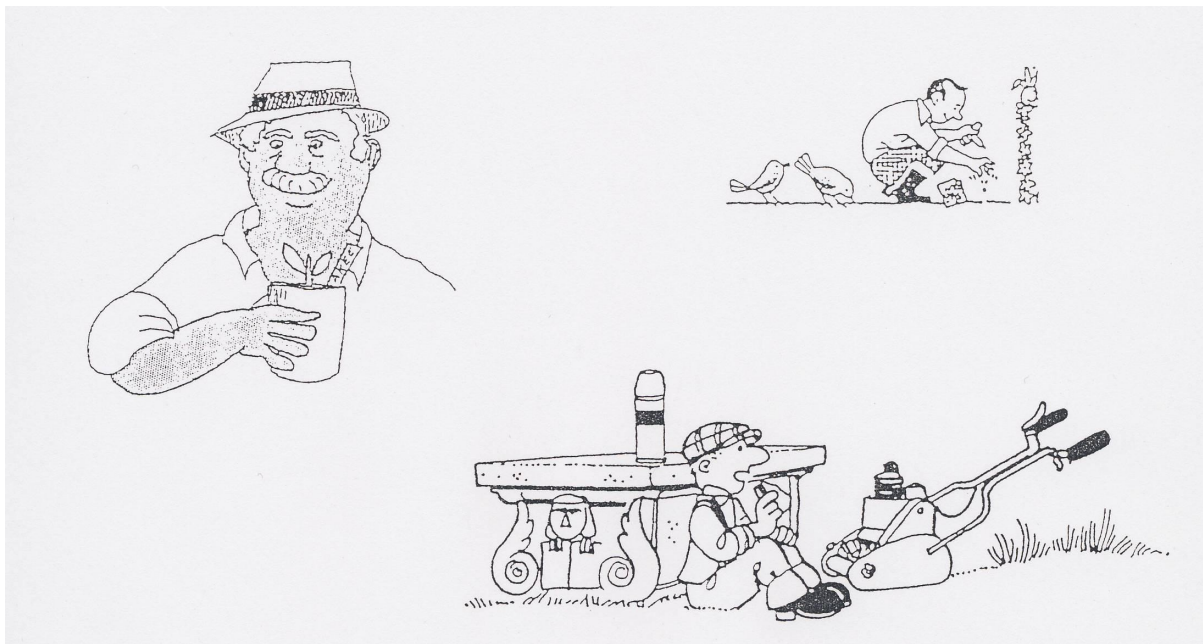


The Sower



Luke 8 Verses 4-8

- ▲ Have you ever tried to grow anything?
- ▲ What helps you to grow/blossom?
- ▲ What stops you growing?
- ▲ How do you feel when things don't grow?
(and how do you think God feels?)
- ▲ Where do things grow best around you?
- ▲ Have you ever seen good growth in bad places?



The Sower

Luke 8 Verses 4-8

A Story that Jesus told about growing plants.

Storyteller: People kept coming to Jesus from one town after another; and when a great crowd gathered, Jesus told this parable..... Once there was a man who went out to sow corn.

Voice 1: As he scattered the seed in the field, some of it fell along the path, where it was stepped on, and the birds ate it up.

Voice 2: Some of it fell on rocky ground, and when the plants sprouted, they dried up because the soil had no moisture.

Voice 3: Some of the seed fell among thorn bushes, which grew up with the plants and choked them.

Voice 4: And some seeds fell in good soil; the plants grew and produced corn, a hundred grains each.

Storyteller: And Jesus concluded -

Jesus: Listen, then, if you have ears!

Seventy Times Seven

Matthew 18 Verses 21-35

- ▲ How do you feel when the final demand comes through the door?
- ▲ How do you feel about someone who owes you money?
- ▲ Has anyone ever refused to forgive you?



Seventy Times Seven

Matthew 18 Verses 21-35

The Story of a short-sighted man.

Storyteller: Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord if my brother keeps on sinning against me, how many times do I have to forgive him? Seven times?”

Jesus: No, not seven times, but seventy times seven, because the kingdom of heaven is like this.

Storyteller: Once there was a king who decided to check on his servants accounts. He had just begun to do so when one of them was brought in who owed him millions of pounds. The servant did not have enough to pay his debt, so the king ordered him to be sold as a slave, with his wife and his children and all that he had in order to pay the debt.

Servant: (on his knees before the king): Be patient with me, and I will pay everything!

Storyteller: The king felt sorry for him, so he forgave him the debt and let him go. Then the man went out and met one of his fellow-servants who owed him a few pounds. He grabbed him and began choking him.

Servant: Pay back what you owe me!

Fellow-servant: Be patient with me and I will pay you back.

Storyteller: But he refused; instead he had him thrown into jail until he should pay the debt. When the other servants saw what had happened, they were very upset and went to the king and told him everything. So he called the servant in.

King: You worthless slave. I forgave you the whole amount you owed me, just because you asked me to. You should have mercy on your fellow-servant, just as I have had mercy on you.

Storyteller: The king was very angry, and he sent the servant to jail to be punished until he should pay back the whole amount.

Jesus: That is how my Father in heaven will treat every one of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart.



Jesus and Zacchaeus

Luke 19 Verses 1-9

- ▲ Have you ever been up a tree?
- ▲ Have you ever been shut out?
- ▲ have you ever been singled out and patted on the back?



Jesus and Zacchaeus

Luke 19 Verses 1-9

Another story from the Bible where Jesus met a man who was thought to be a parasite. Zacchaeus collected money for the occupying power from the local community and always pocketed some of the proceeds. He was hated for this.

Storyteller: Jesus went on into Jericho and was passing through. There was a chief tax collector there named Zacchaeus, who was rich. He was trying to see who Jesus was, but he was a little man and could not see Jesus because of the crowd. So he ran ahead of the crowd and climbed a sycamore tree to see Jesus, who was going to pass that place, he looked up.....

Jesus: Hurry down, Zacchaeus, because I must stay in your house today.

Storyteller: Zacchaeus hurried down and welcomed him with great joy. All the people who saw it started grumbling.

Crowd: This man has gone as a guest to the home of a sinner!

Zacchaeus: Listen Sir! I will give half of my belongings to the poor and if I have cheated anyone, I will pay them back four times as much.

Jesus: Salvation has come to this house today, for this man also, is a descendant of Abraham. The Son of Man came to seek and save the lost.

Jesus and the Woman at the Well

John 4 Verses 6-18, 27-29

- ▲ Have you ever been embarrassed?
- ▲ Have you ever tried to pull the wool over someone's eyes?
- ▲ Have you ever had an unquenched thirst?



Jesus and the Woman at the Well

John 4 Verses 6-18, 27-29

Here is a story about a meeting between a woman of doubtful character, and a respected teacher.

Storyteller: *Jesus, tired out by the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon. His disciples and gone into town to buy food. A Samaritan woman came to draw water.*

Jesus: *Give me a drink of water.*

Woman: *You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan-so how can you ask me for a drink?*

Storyteller: *Jews will not use the same cups and bowls that Samaritans use.*

Jesus: *If only you knew what God gives and who it is that is asking you for a drink, you would ask him, and he would give you life-giving water.*

Woman: *Sir, you haven't got a bucket, and the well is deep. Where would you get that life-giving water? T was our ancestor Jacob who gave us this well; he and his sons and his flocks all drank from it. You don't claim o be greater than Jacob, do you?*

Jesus: *All those who drink this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring which will provide him with life- giving water and give him eternal life.*

Woman: *Sir, give me that water! Then I will never be thirsty again, nor will I have to come here to draw water.*

Jesus: *Go and call your husband, and come back.*

Woman: *I haven't got a husband.*

Jesus: *You are right when you say you haven't got a husband. You have been married to five men, and the man you live with now is not really your husband. You have told me the truth.*

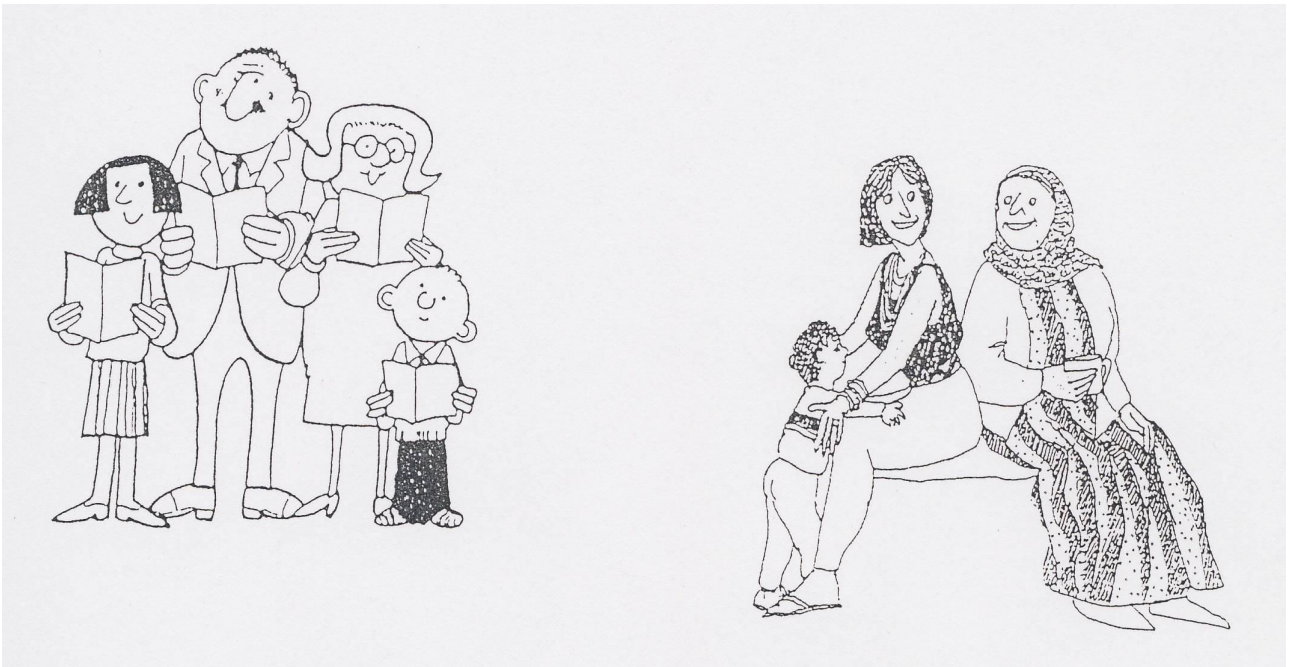
Storyteller: *Jesus' disciple returned, and they were greatly surprised to find him talking with a woman. But none of them said to her, "what do you want?" or asked him, "Why are you talking with her?" Then the woman left her water jar, went back to the town, and said to the people there, "Come and see the man who told me everything I have ever done. Could he be the Messiah?"*



Family and Friends

Mark 6 Verses 1-6

- ▲ How do you get on with your family?
- ▲ Do they listen to you?
- ▲ Do they think you are strange?
- ▲ Has your family ever stopped you getting on?



Family and Friends

Mark 6 Verses 1-6

A story from the Bible about Jesus going back home and causing problems.

Storyteller: Jesus went back to his home town, followed by his disciples. On the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue. Many people were there; and when they heard him, they were all amazed.

Voice 1: Where did he get all this?

Voice 2: What wisdom is this that has been given him?

Voice 3: How does he perform miracles?

Voice 4: Isn't he the carpenter, the son of Mary, and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters living here?

Storyteller: And so they rejected him.

Jesus: Prophets are respected everywhere except in their own home town and by their relatives and their family.

Disciple 1: He was not able to perform any miracles there, except that he placed his hands on a few sick people and healed them.

Disciple 2: He was greatly surprised, because the people did not have faith.

JANET ROURKE

Janet Rourke has been associated with the Church Army since her three years of training at its college which ended in 1959. Her Christian life began with conversion at a children's camp at the age of 14. Alongside husband Roland she spent 16 years in East London mostly in a hostel for homeless men in Stepney and Spitalfields. Janet has also worked in a Council estate in Huyton, Merseyside.

She says-

"I have always worked with Urban people but my Christian experience has taken me away from my own working-class roots. I have been moulded into a middle-class person. In East London I hadn't really been part of the community and when I went to Huyton I had to look again at my roots. What had the church done to me? How much of my ideas about the Gospel were preconceived.

It was a great relief when I found that I could stop having to go to the top of a view in the Lake District and say, 'Oh! Isn't God's creation wonderful.' I could experience God in my own urban scene.

The Bible speaks to everyday life and I needed some way of relating it to the small groups I am working with. These Bible studies have been used by a group of 7 people. I doubt whether any of them read more than a newspaper. They are not book people. I don't think there's a book in A's house. Socially the group was very mixed. One only was a 'breadwinner' and one had a degree."



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