

Nechells Unlocks Christmas



Three small group sessions
for use in the run up to Christmas
exploring the joys and
pressures of the season
using Luke's Gospel





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 sessions outlined in this pack apply the learning cycle on page 3, **starting by using a 'prompt'** to draw out group member's stories. It is up to you which prompt you use (from those suggested on page 5) or to find one of your own to connect with your group. Give everyone time to tell their story 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. As this session is designed for those that have some Bible knowledge we suggest you ask the group rather than doing this yourself, perhaps reminding them of any stories that get forgotten. If you want to adapt this session to use with a non-church group you will need to be ready to provide some Bible links if they are unable to do so. Then ask the group to explore **connections, similarities or differences.**

Finally there is a **reflective activity**, 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 effect the type of story that they share, often the newer the group, the more light hearted the stories are likely to be.

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.



Introduction

Unlock uses an approach to engaging with the Bible that is different to traditional Bible studies (see page 3). 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. This is one of a number of free resources on the Unlock website designed for use with such groups.

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.

These sessions were developed for use with a small group of people who were attending a community breakfast run by a church in Nechells in Birmingham in 2009. They were developed by Unlock local project workers in partnership with a local church leader.

These short sessions were designed to be used with a group of people who are not familiar with the Bible. Other similar resources are available to download free from www.unlock-urban.org or from the Unlock office based in Sheffield. However it is our -

experience that each group's circumstances are so unique that it may be best to develop your own materials using themes that you know your group will connect with and reflective activities that are inspired by their own interests.

May God inspire you!

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Unlock Session Planning and Content Outline

Course / Event name: Workshop for Bloomsbury Mission Project
Breakfast Club, Nechells 2009

Authors / Facilitators: Pete and Sam Taylor (Unlock Birmingham 2009–2010) and the Rev'd Peter Little

Session Name: *Nechells Christmas*

Aims: Participants will have the opportunity to tell their own stories in relation to experiences of Christmas. Participants will have the opportunity to share Scriptures that they are reminded of by the personal stories told. Participants will be given the opportunity to reflect on the connections between their stories and the Scriptures and to develop ideas of any plans to change their own thinking or behaviour in the light of their reflection.

Participants will be invited to take part in a reflective exercise to represent their experience, and their reflections on it, in relation to the Bible story they have discussed.

Outcomes: Participants will be more able to engage in a reflective theological cycle starting from their own story or the story of others in the group.

Participants will be more able to refer to the connections made with Scripture and intended changed approach in a similar situation in the future.

Participants will be able to reflect on at least one of their own experiences of Christmas in relation to scripture.

Session Content

Unlocking Real Life Experience

Film / TV clip: clips from 'Love Actually', and 'The Griswald's Christmas Vacation', are suggested for sessions 1 & 2. Both are available on Youtube.

Pictures: a selection of Christmas cards is suggested for session 3.

Own story: Think of experiences of your own which pick up the theme of each session.

Questions: See individual sessions.

Revealing the Good News of the Down to Earth Christ

Bible: Luke 2:41-52, Luke 15:8-10, Luke 12:22-26, Luke 6:27-36, Luke 10:38-41, Luke 2:1-20, plus any other Scriptures which come to mind in light of the stories told?

Releasing Life Changing Skills and Confidence

What connections do participants see between the Scripture and their own experience?

Reflective Activities

Making Christmas cards and decorations and decorating Christmas cookies.



Shop till you drop?

Unlocking Real Life Stories of Urban People



It'll soon be Christmas!
Have you heard Christmas music yet?
Seen the stock and decorations in the shops?

You could use the You Tube clip:-
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XuhdWVe00wE>

This is a scene from Love Actually where Harry is trying to buy a necklace but Rufus the sales assistant is in no hurry!

Does this bring to mind any experiences you have had?

- How is your Christmas shopping going?
- What do you enjoy about Christmas Shopping?
- What do you dislike most?
- Are you glad when its all done?
- Do you like to start early, or leave it all to the last minute?

Revealing Good News of the Down to Earth Christ

Do these stories you have shared bring to mind any passage of scripture?

Bible reading suggestions (see Bible texts on page 7)

- If crowds are talked about – Luke 2:41-52
- If debt has been talked about - Lost Coin – Luke 15:8-10
- Do not worry – Luke 12:22-26



How do you relate to this passage?

Which person in the story do you have most sympathy for? Why?

Are there any links or connections that you want to make between your stories and the scripture passages that have been mentioned?

Releasing Life Changing Skills and Confidence

Reflective Activity - Making Christmas cards with simple card and decorations.
(see <http://www.topmarks.co.uk/Christmas/CuteRobinsChristmasCard.aspx>).

Things to think or talk about:-

- What do you want to remember from this session?
- Is there anything you want to change in your life because of what we've learnt?
- Is there something you intend to do after the things we have thought about?



Crowds—Luke 2:41-52

Every year the parents of Jesus went to Jerusalem for the Passover festival. When Jesus was twelve years old, they went to the festival as usual. When the festival was over, they started back home, but the boy Jesus stayed in Jerusalem. His parents did not know this; they thought that he was with the group, so they travelled a whole day and then started looking for him among their relatives and friends. They did not find him, so they went back to Jerusalem looking for him. On the third day they found him in the Temple, sitting with the Jewish teachers, listening to them and asking questions. All who heard him were amazed at his intelligent answers. His parents were astonished when they saw him, and his mother said to him, ‘my son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been terribly worried trying to find you.’

He answered them, ‘why did you have to look for me? Didn’t you know that I had to be in my Father’s house?’ but they did not understand his answer.

So Jesus went back with them to Nazareth, where he was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart. Jesus grew both in body and in wisdom, gaining favour with God and men.

Luke 15:8-10

Jesus said “. . .Or suppose a woman who has ten silver coins loses one of them—what does she do? She lights a lamp, sweeps her house, and looks carefully everywhere until she finds it. When she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbours together, and says to them, ‘I am so happy I found the coin I lost. Let us celebrate!’ in the same way, I tell you, the angels of God rejoice over one sinner who repents.”



Luke 12:22-26

Jesus said “. . .And so I tell you not to worry about the food you need to stay alive or about the clothes you need for your body. Life is much more important than food, and the body much more important than clothes. Look at the crows: they don’t sow seeds or gather a harvest; they don’t have store-rooms or barns; God feeds them! You are worth so much more than birds! Can any of you live a bit longer by worrying about it? If you can’t manage even such a small thing, why worry about the other things?”



Do You Really Like Christmas?

Unlocking Real Life Stories of Urban People

You could use the You Tube clip of the Griswolds Christmas Vacation:- <http://www.youtube.com/watch#!v=Spmqbs8YCW8&feature=related>
At the beginning all looks perfect but soon cracks begin to appear. All that hard work!!

Does this bring to mind any experiences you have had?

- What do you really like about Christmas?
- What don't you like?
- Does Christmas bring you stress and hassle?
- Anyone ever wanted to cancel Christmas?
- How do you feel at Christmas? (lonely/sad)
- What would you make different about it if you could?
- Are you glad when it is all over?



Revealing Good News of the Down to Earth Christ

Do these stories you have shared bring to mind any passage of scripture?

Bible passage suggestions

Luke 10 Mary & Martha (see Bible texts on page 9)

Give out little bags of M&M's to remind people of Mary and Martha.

How do you relate to this passage?

Which person in the story do you have most sympathy for? Why?

Are there any links or connections that you want to make between your stories and the scripture passages that have been mentioned?

Releasing Life Changing Skills and Confidence

Reflective Activity- decorating a Christmas cookie with icing, sweets and chocolate. (see <http://www.mahalo.com/how-to-decorate-christmas-cookies>). M&Ms can be used here.



Things to think or talk about:-

- What do you want to remember from this session?
- Is there anything you want to change in your life because of what we've learnt?
- Is there something you intend to do after the things we have thought about?



Luke 6:27-36

“But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who ill-treat you. If anyone hits you on one cheek, let him hit the other one too; if someone takes your coat, let him have your shirt as well. Give to everyone who asks you for something and when someone takes what is yours, do not ask for it back. Do for others just what you want them to do for you.”

“If you love only the people who love you, why should you receive a blessing? Even sinners love those who love them! And if you do good only to those who do good to you, why should you receive a blessing? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount! No! love your enemies and do good to them; lend and expect nothing back. You will then have a great reward, and you will be sons of the Most High God. For He is good to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful just as your father is merciful.”

Luke 10:38-41

As Jesus and his disciples went on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha welcomed him in her home. She had a sister named Mary, who sat down at the feet of the Lord and listened to his teaching. Martha was upset over all the work she had to do, so she came and said, ‘Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her to come and help me!’

The Lord answered her, ‘Martha, Martha! You are worried and troubled over so many things, but just one is needed. Mary has chosen the right thing, and it will not be taken away from her.’



What is Christmas really about?

Unlocking Real Life Stories of Urban People

Have a selection of Christmas cards, one with a traditional picture of Jesus in a manger, one with Santa clause, one with a snow scene etc; and talk about what each card is showing about Christmas.

Does this bring to mind any experiences you have had?

- What for you is Christmas about?
- Do you enjoy the time spent with family and friends?
- To what extent is Christmas about community for you?
- How do you feel about peace and goodwill at Christmas?
- Has anything really unexpected ever happened which changed Christmas for you?



Revealing Good News of the Down to Earth Christ

Do these stories you have shared bring to mind any passage of scripture?

Bible passage suggestions

Luke 2- The Christmas story (on page 11).

How do you relate to this passage?

Which person in the story do you have most sympathy for? Why?
Are there any links or connections that you want to make between your stories and the scripture passages that have been mentioned?



Releasing Life Changing Skills and Confidence



Reflective Activity - making salt dough Christmas decorations. (see <http://www.easychristmas.org.uk/easy-salt-dough-decorations/>)

Things to think or talk about:-

- What do you want to remember from this session?
- Is there anything you want to change in your life because of what we've learnt?
- Is there something you intend to do after the things we have thought about?



Luke 2:1-20

At that time the Emperor Augustus ordered a census to be taken throughout the Roman Empire. When this first census took place, Quirinius was the governor of Syria. Everyone, then, went to register himself, each to his own town.

Joseph went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to the town of Bethlehem in Judea, the birthplace of King David, Joseph went there because he was a descendent of David. He went to register with Mary, who was promised in marriage to him. She was pregnant, and while they were in Bethlehem, the time came for her to have her baby. She gave birth to her first son, wrapped him in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger—there was no room for them to stay in the inn.

There were some shepherds in that part of the country who were spending the night in the fields, taking care of their flocks. An angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone over them. They were terribly afraid, but the angel said to them, ‘Don’t be afraid! I am here with good news for you, which will bring great joy to all the people. This very day in David’s town your Saviour was born—Christ the Lord! And this is what will prove it to you: you will find a baby wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger,’

Suddenly a great army of heaven’s angels appeared with the angel, singing praises to God:

‘Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom He is pleased!’

When the angels went away from them back into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, ‘let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us.’

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph and saw the baby lying in the manger. When the shepherds saw him, they told them what the angel had said about the child. All who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said. Mary remembered all these things and thought deeply about them. The shepherds went back, signing praises to God for all they had heard and seen; it had been just as the angel had told them.

