

The Year We Stayed at Home -With Kindness



A Pick and Mix Resource pack of activities and Bible linked materials for reflecting on our shared experiences of the COVID 19 Pandemic



The Year We Stayed at Home With Kindness

*Material created collaboratively by Dawn Lonsdale and Carolyn Gower
With credited guest contributions*

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Why this? Why now?

The COVID 19 Pandemic has been undeniably tough for everyone and particularly for those communities where our Unlock work is focussed.

We believe that **all of us** need, (without moaning or whingeing), to be prepared to acknowledge the energy drain and the emotional cost of COVID 19, for ourselves, for each other and in our communities.

Everyone is more or less bereaved all of the time, even if we have not lost anyone, and even if we have plenty to be grateful for. We have all lost opportunities and precious time with loved ones, we have all had to let go of hopes and dreams and plans; and that disappointment is real and painful. As well as that everyone is dealing with heightened levels of fear and anxiety, and having to manage day to day decisions that potentially have far more significant consequences than we are accustomed to. Many of us know at least some people who have lost loved ones, which is both sad to bear and adds to the fear. Plus we have all had to adjust repeatedly and fairly swiftly to new ways of doing things and to relate, usually by pretty clunky means, to everyone else who is dealing with all of that stuff as well, but probably differently! It's hard to rest and feel refreshed when we do not have access to many of the ways we would usually do that, and the end is still some way off. Self-care and care for one another are going to be really critical over the next 24 months or so at least; and creating safe environments where people can express their pain and vulnerability, without abdicating responsibility or getting sucked into unproductive self-pity, are going to be an essential part of what we need to offer out of our faith, both personally, as Unlock and as Churches.

We may feel that we just want to move on and forget all about it but ultimately that will not help us to grow and learn from these exceptional experiences. It's going to be essential that we support one another to remember and process the collective trauma of COVID 19, that includes allowing appropriate grief, acknowledging anger and remembering effectively, both the good and the bad things.

So we are offering you this resource pack as a way to start to do that work, in your own places, with your own people. We hope and pray that you will find it useful.

Dawn Lonsdale, Chief Officer



We suggest that you begin with the **timeline activities on pages 6&7**. We have noticed that, in the course of this pandemic, the details of what was happening just a few months ago become hazy memories quite quickly. It is hard to keep a clear picture of what happened when; when we last saw so and so, when we last went inside someone else's home, when we last left our home town and so on. The timeline will help us to get some perspective, a long overview of all that has happened. Those experiences will be different for everyone and it will be good to explore them together. You will be amazed at how much you have forgotten! You might return to the timeline activities as part of each of the other sections, or at the end, to see if there are any new insights to add.

We have chosen **six topics** that have formed a part of our own journey and reflections through 2020 and 2021. They are **Lament, Gratitude, Patience, Hope, Kindness and Discernment**. Each topic has its own section, which includes a reflection, some creative activities for groups or individuals, and some Bible material. These sections are not in any particular order and you can use them in any way that you like. **This pack includes the section on Kindness only**. The full pack is also available, as are five other individual topic sections.

You are encouraged to **be selective**. You use as much or as little of the material as you like. You know your people and your place. You know what will connect for folk, and what will engage them; please feel free to **choose** from this material and use only that which seems best suited to your own context. There's no reason why you can't present your groups with some options and respond to what they would like to do.

The **topic reflection/introduction** is on pages 9-15 and is intended as *preparatory reading for group facilitators*. Facilitators can choose how much of that material to share with their groups and how. Please note that there is absolutely no need to provide printed copies of all of the material for everyone involved!

The approaches in this pack are based on the **Unlock learning cycle** which you will find on page 28. Unlock has been using this approach for nearly 50 years. It is linked to the ways in which Jesus taught; using stories and connections with people's day to day lives; and we continue to use it because it works. We recommend that in using this material you use the learning cycle to structure your approach. The most important aspect is that we engage with our *own stories before* we explore what the Bible has to say, not the other way around.

It is important that you take some time when you are planning to **really understand the needs of your local group**, so that you can select activities and material that are appropriate for them, and work in a way that fits your local context. You can use pages 20—27 of our facilitator training pack, '**Unlock DIY**' to help you reflect effectively on the needs of your group(s). <http://www.unlock-urban.org.uk/documents/UnlockDIY2020update.pdf>

We recommend that you give yourself and your group plenty of **time and space** to work through this material. You will all get more out of it if you don't rush it, allow yourselves to be **creative** and to break free of the notion that there are 'right' answers. This is much more about sharing our experiences, what we can discover together, and how we can support one another in doing that, than it is about getting from point A to point B.

The participants are not the only ones who will benefit from thinking about this stuff, but not everyone will come and join in with group activities. So **share what you are doing**; find creative ways to display the results of your activities so that other people can see them and have a moment to do their own reflecting too.

See page 27 & 28 for further Unlock facilitator guidance.



What follows on pages 6&7 is an activity to help us begin to recall, process and understand the impact that the Covid-19 pandemic has had on us personally, as a group, or groups, and also as a community.

The Timeline image maps some of the key events of 2020 (you can add others in 2021) and helps us place our personal key events into this framework.

The timeline image on page 6 is only for illustration. Obviously it is far too small for people to use to work on. The Unlock office has a supply of ready printed A2 copies of the timeline so (unless you have your own facilities to print page 6 at A2 size) you need to contact the Unlock Office and request sufficient copies to have at least one per person for your group(s). There is an order form below, or you can e-mail or telephone the Unlock office providing the necessary information.

The idea is that each person has their own individual copy and can personalise it by adding anything that feels important for them to remember. The coloured squares are deliberately left blank as spaces where people can add in their own personal events, milestones and experiences. Page 7 gives suggestions for the kind of things we might think about and add into our own copy of the timeline. Items can be added using pictures, words or a combination, or using cut out images pasted on. This needn't be a one off activity. We can return to our timelines and add more to them at any stage.

Groups can work both individually and together to help each other remember what happened when.

Ultimately each person's timeline will be their own personal record of their lives during the pandemic, a kind of visual diary, which they can keep and use to recall 'The Year We Stayed at Home', and perhaps to explain what it was like to future generations!



Covid timeline order form

The Year We stayed at Home

Please mail copies of the Unlock Covid timeline to -

Name: E-mail address

Postal address:

Telephone number (in case we need to check anything with you)

Please send completed orders to the Unlock Office, (C/O Shiloh) 15 Station Road, Rotherham, S60 1HN or to office@unlock/urban.org.uk Tel: 01709 380318.

We welcome (but do not require) donations to cover the cost of printing and postage.



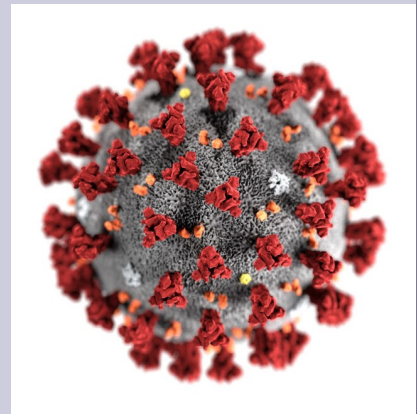
COVID-19 Pandemic Timeline Activities

You can add to the timeline anything that you want to record and remember about your personal experience of the pandemic.

You can use words, symbols, stickers, colours, drawings, pictures, or a combination; as you prefer.

You could include:-

- **Things that just were: -**
 - ◇ Family events, birthdays, etc
 - ◇ Significant moments or turning points
- **Lost or missed things: -**
 - ◇ People, activities or things you have lost or missed
 - ◇ Places you didn't go.
- **New things and things to be glad about: -**
 - ◇ Things you enjoyed
 - ◇ Things you are grateful for
 - ◇ Places you went
 - ◇ Things you made
 - ◇ Things that helped you get through
 - ◇ Things you learnt, or noticed
 - ◇ New things that you didn't do before that you want to keep
 - ◇ People you spent time with, either face to face or in other ways
- **Your responses and reactions: -**
 - ◇ What you discovered about yourself
 - ◇ What emotions did you feel?
 - ◇ When were you most afraid?
 - ◇ When were you most at peace?
 - ◇ Where was God for you; and where were God's people?



We have not included the regularly issued data on case numbers, hospitalisations and deaths. If you want to add in that kind of data you can find it here <https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/>

You might find this Wikipedia timeline useful for reference, especially if you like to have precise dates and details https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_the_COVID-19_pandemic_in_England

You can use the months that are blank, either to continue to journal as the months go by, or to express your hopes for what is to come (or a bit of both!) The big yellow box at the bottom is for you to make a note of things you want to do when it's over that you can't do now.

Once groups can meet again safely the timeline could be used to structure a group or community reflection process.



The work of the mature person is to carry grief in one hand and gratitude in the other and to be stretched large by them. How much sorrow can I hold? That's how much gratitude I can give. If I carry only grief, I'll bend toward cynicism and despair. If I have only gratitude, I'll become saccharine and won't develop much compassion for other people's suffering. Grief keeps the heart fluid and soft, which helps make compassion possible.

~Francis Ward Weller



Photo by Magne Traeland · Unsplash

BRASSBALLS TENDER HEART [@brassballscoachingforlife](#)



Kindness

By Carolyn
Gower,
February
2021

It is often said that 'Love makes the world go round. But is it really love that can claim that accolade?

Isn't it acts of kindness that makes love tangible?

My husband and I had Covid last year and a number of folk expressed their love to us by dropping off food, vitamin tablets, magazines and flowers. All those gifts were greatly appreciated but more than the gifts, we really valued their kindness - we felt loved!

Kindness is a characteristic – a human quality. Interestingly it is not a characteristic that everyone has to the same degree. Some people seem to be naturally kind-natured and others less so. Why is that?

Rory Kinnear (actor and playwright) gives us an insight. He knew kindness from a young age growing up with his sister Karina who had many additional needs and who required the support of others to get through every day. Karina died of Covid-19 in May 2020. Later that year Rory movingly wrote in her memory,

"I have realised the privilege of growing up with these things as a norm, as an anchor because Karina required kindness to live. And such was her spirit, her sense of humour, her gentle strength, her singular passion to survive, that what she was given she returned with interest.

It was a transaction of effort and reward I was fortunate to witness often.



*That anchor of kindness has been what many of us have held on to in this year of loss, restriction and renewal, even more so when we have felt its absence... for all she taught me and revealed – it is the anchor of kindness I hope to hold on to tightest for the rest of my life.*¹¹

For Rory and Karina kindness was like the very air they breathed. Karina needed kindness to live and as a result, Rory has a deep sense of being grounded in kindness. It is as though kindness defines him as a human being - a mark of being truly human. Hold onto that thought.

During Covid-19 in the UK, there have been reports of a **pandemic of kindness**. In February 2021 the Independent reported a survey of 2000 people conducted by the



Travelodge. This study revealed that *'people had been more friendly to one another in the last year, made more of an effort to stay in touch with their relatives and donated more to food banks and other charitable organisations.*' The survey also found *'that people have been talking to strangers more frequently and surprised friends with gifts.'*

Shakila Ahmed, Travelodge spokesperson, commented: *"One key thing that we are experiencing across our hotels is that kindness is prevailing in these challenging and tumultuous times. Our research also shows that kindness is contagious and has been spreading far and wide across the UK during the Covid-19 pandemic."*¹²

If kindness is a mark of being truly human - are people really becoming more truly human?

Can kindness be 'caught' from others? Is it contagious? Wouldn't it be wonderful if it was – if it was a positive pandemic where the 'r' number is well above 1!!

So, how do we grow kindness?

Kindness did not feature much in my upbringing.



I didn't learn how to be kind as child. As a family we were struggling to handle my mum's mental health issues, so self-preservation was the family's default state.

I can remember when I first began to notice peoples' kindnesses. In particular, I remember a friend's kindness after I had my first child. She left a meal on our doorstep when I returned home from hospital. I remember thinking that that was how to be kind to someone!

Once I had noticed one act of kindness, I began to see people being kind everywhere. I set about learning how to do the same.

I am so grateful to my friend for showing me what kindness looked like and helping me begin a journey learning how to be kinder – how to be more truly human.

For followers of Jesus, Jesus is the only 'truly human person' that has walked the earth because he alone measures up to all the fullness that human beings can be.



In the Gospels we see Jesus being kind in so many ways; for example when he touches the leper (Luke 3:12-13). This man would probably not have experienced the touch of another human since his leprosy was first identified. He was an outcast and his illness feared by society. And yet, Jesus reaches out and touches him.

Even on the cross, despite his



agony, Jesus forgives and welcomes the thief dying alongside him (Luke 23:43).

In his kindness Jesus promises to be with us always through the presence of the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul, who participated in at least one murder and probably more, experienced the reality of the Holy Spirit's transformative presence in his own life and became 'kind'. He lists kindness as one of the nine facets of the fruit we see in our lives because the Holy Spirit lives in us (Galatians 5:23). Paul recognised that being kind was a mark of becoming more like Jesus, a mark of becoming more truly human.



We may not have been brought up in 'kind environments' through which we learnt to be kind to others. We may not have experienced much kindness or seen examples of how to be kind. But, by dwelling on the example of Jesus and drawing on the power of the Holy Spirit's presence in us, we can be transformed more and more into his likeness (2 Corinthians 3:18).

We can make our own unique contribution to the pandemic of kindness.

We can build back better.

We can become more truly human - by choosing to be kind.

Throw
kindness
around like
confetti

References

1. [Seven months after my sister's death from Covid, her kindness remains my anchor | Coronavirus | The Guardian](#)
2. [People have become kinder during the coronavirus pandemic, study finds | The Independent \(14/02/21\)](#)



Activities to help us think about Kindness

Choose whichever of these you think your group will relate to best and use them to explore together our own COVID experiences of Kindness.

Reflecting on received kindnesses and suggested responses: -

Recollections of kindnesses throughout the pandemic.

Think about the folk who went out of the way to help us.

Create a 'star display': Cut out star shapes (page 69). We can stick photos of the people who were kind to us in the middle of the stars. The stars can be hung from a wooden circle to create a mobile or stuck onto a thank you display.



Create a 'Thank you for your kindness'

display. We can decorate blank postcards (page 17) with decorative borders and then write our thank you messages on the cards. Arrange on a display board in a community area.

Design and make '**Thank you**' cards and postcards. Make them available to the community to send to people who have been kind to them.

Create '**Thank you**' posters to express thanks to the community and display them in your windows like the NHS ones.



Call to kindness:-

Friendship/Contact Tree.

Think about all our relationships: the people we live with, our immediate family, our wider family, our neighbours, our work colleagues, people we meet at the shops, or at appointments.

Each of us can create a 'Friendship/Contact Tree of the people we know and have contact with (template on page 18). We can decorate the trunk and branches – bark or texture



DO THINGS FOR PEOPLE

NOT BECAUSE OF WHO THEY ARE
OR WHAT THEY CAN DO IN RETURN,
BUT BECAUSE OF WHO YOU ARE.

ENLIGHTENED CONSCIOUSNESS



rubbing maybe. Each person we know and have contact with is represented by a thumb/fingerprint or a cut-out leaf shape (page 19) or leaf that we draw. The names of the contacts are written on or below the leaf shapes.

How kind am I?

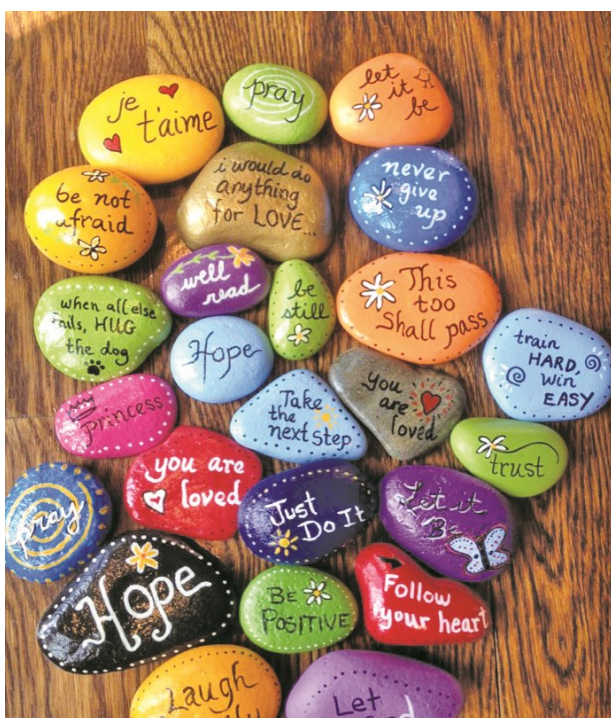
Begin thinking about how we show kindness to all the different people we have put on our Friendship Trees. What small things could we do to show kindness more often or more intentionally? (These can be very small e.g. saying thank you, smiling, complementing them on things they do well, making them a cup of tea/coffee;

buying them a small gift like a bar of chocolate...

Taking kindness out into the community:

As a group make a list of the kinds of things we could do as a group or individually to bless people in our neighbourhood – neighbours, local shops, hairdressers, nurseries, schools, police etc...

Decide which community kindness activities we will do before we meet again (maybe in 2s and 3s - restrictions permitting!) Encourage each other to have a go! (Think about the different 'love languages': words of affirmation; touch; gifts; acts of service; quality time - page 20)



Possible examples:

Write letters or send cards. Other ideas could be: bake for someone; donate to a charity; volunteer; smile; visit someone; shop for someone; take a gift to someone; make cards or paper flowers to give, knit, crochet, sew, items for others, baby-sit or childcare; do some mending or gardening; clean cars; make a phone call; etc... (lockdown restrictions permitting).

Random Acts of Kindness: Share any experience of this that people may have. Little acts of service to bless others



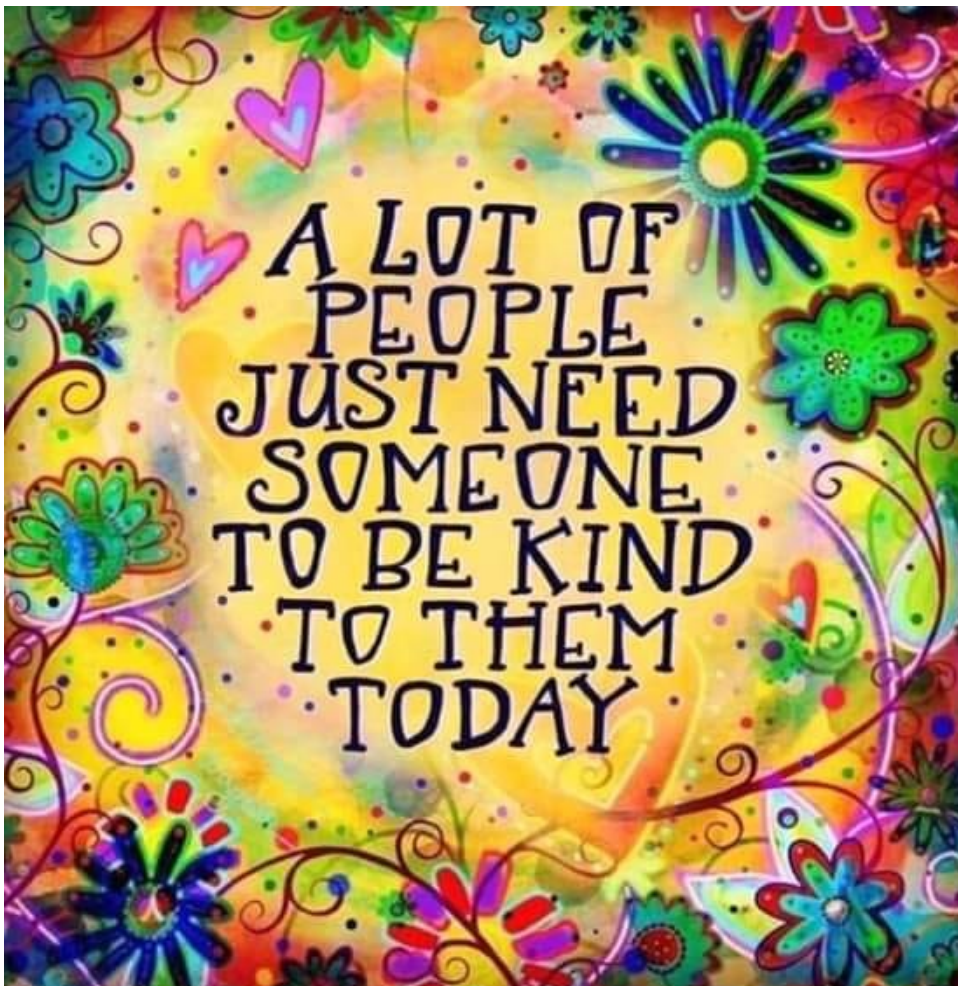
(website www.randomactsofkindness.org).

A similar initiative has been running for several years during Lent:

www.40acts.org.uk

Listen:

- Count on Me by Bruno Mars from the album Du Whops – Hooligans (about friends being there for each other. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Msl2fl3h59I>)
- You've Got a Friend in Me by Randy Newman from the film Toy Story. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zIYOJ_hSs0o
- Stand Up by Sugarland on the album The Incredible Machine (about standing up and using your voice). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=84YIUBCtHCA>
- Lean on Me by Bill Withers from his Greatest Hits https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nx_D0VTHBag
- or by The Glee cast from the Lean on Me album by the Glee cast. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mR6sQDkK6nY>
- Be Kind by The Dailys <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mmkwzOkdz-U>

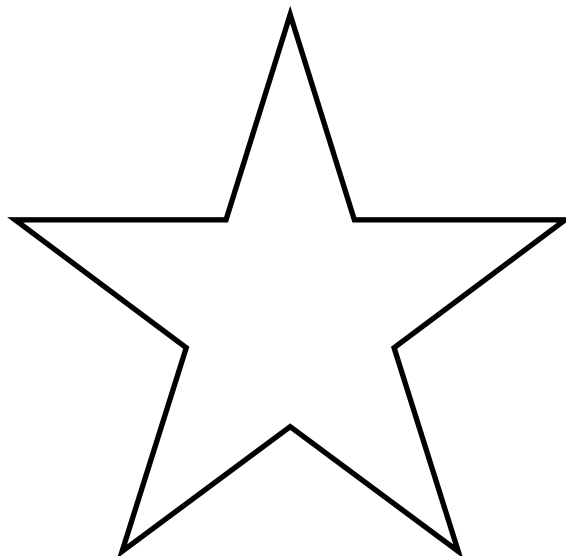
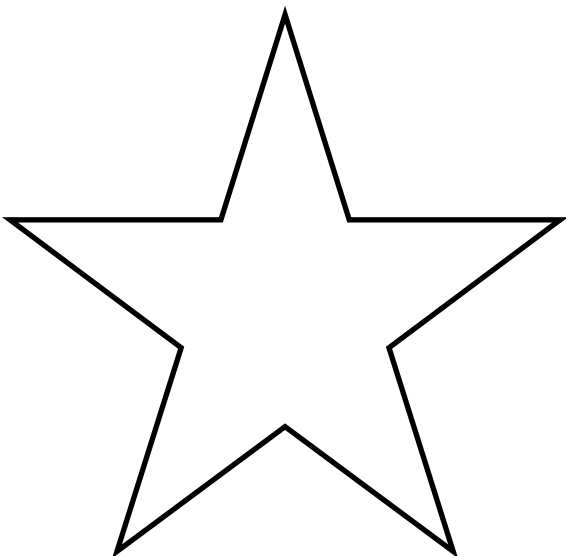
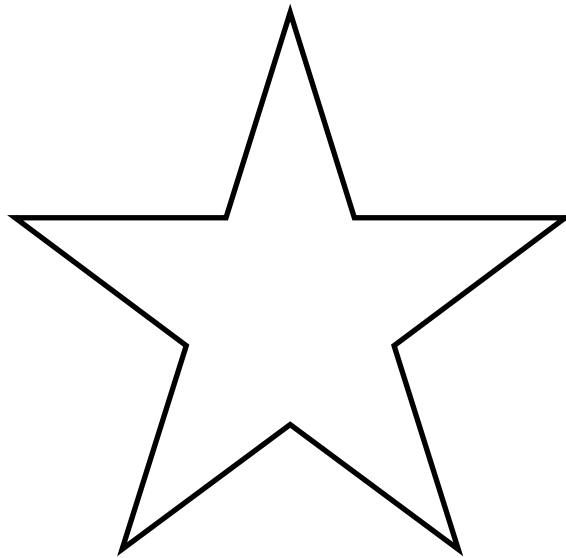
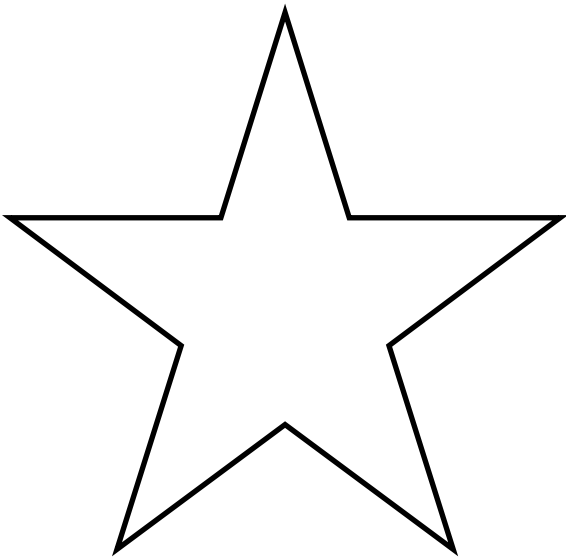
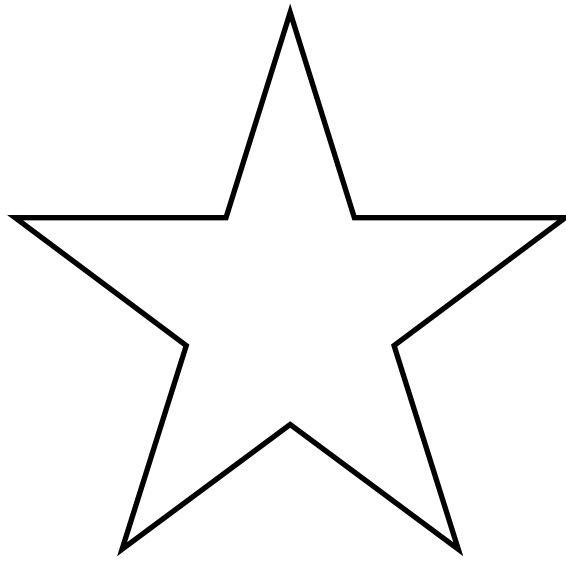
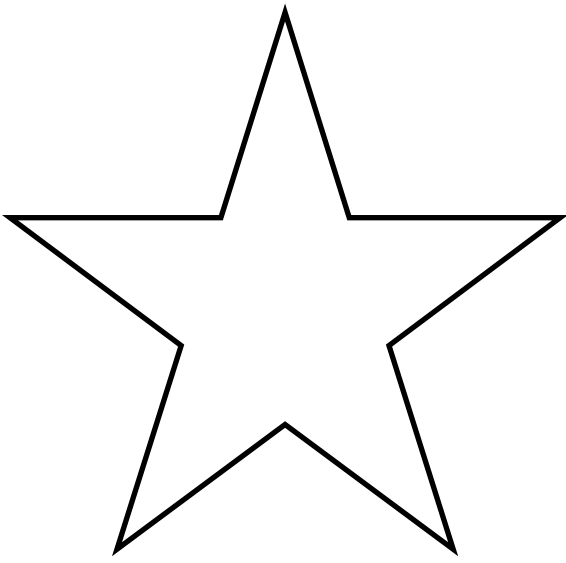


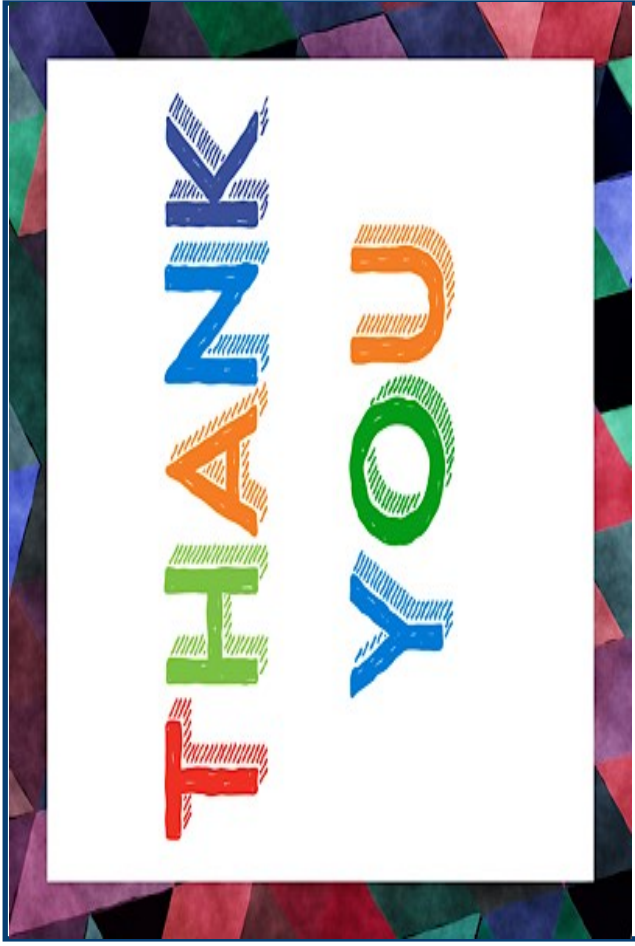
Display & Share:-

Find ways to display your work in a community space; trees, posters, photo display, plants, etc; to help other people to reflect as well.

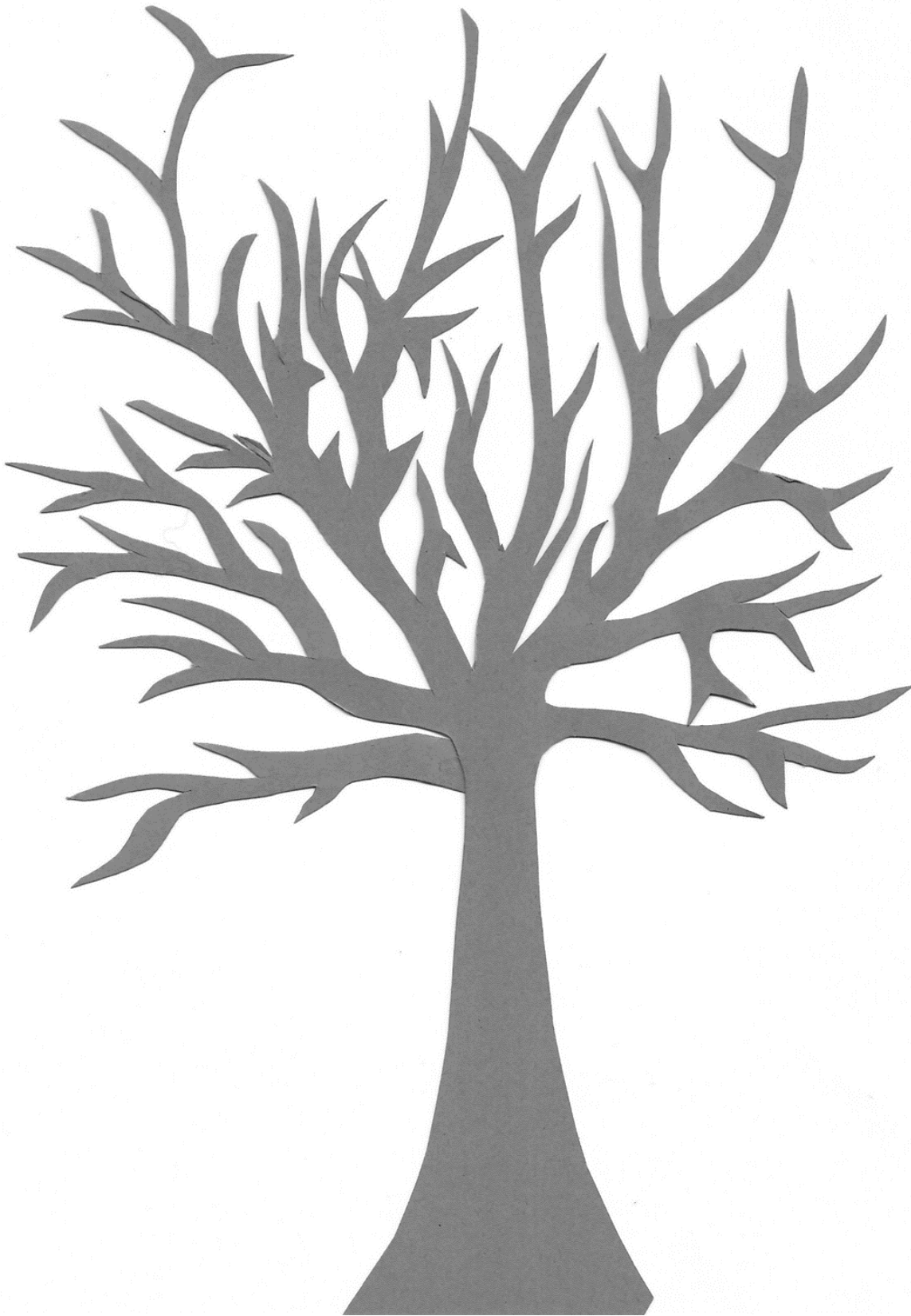


Star templates for Recollections of kindnesses activity on page66





Enlarge this tree template for Friendship/Contact Tree activity on page 66



This will work best if you can enlarge it to A3 or A2. if you can't do that you might need to just invite people to draw leaves rather than using the ones on the next page.



Leaf templates for Friendship/Contact Tree activity on page 66



The 5 Love Languages are a way of thinking about how we receive and give love, not just in romantic relationships but also more generally. You can find out more about them here: -

<https://www.5lovelanguages.com/>

Affirmation: Your coffee is delicious.

Acts of Service: I made you coffee.

Receiving Gifts: Here's a coffee.

Quality Time: Let's go get a coffee.

Physical Touch: Let me hold you like a coffee.



Bible Stories to help us think about Kindness

Choose whichever of these you think your group will relate to best and use them to explore together our own COVID experiences of Kindness.

N.B. The word used for kindness in the original languages of the Bible is translated in different ways by different versions e.g. kindness, mercy, compassion, charity or love seem to be interchangeable between different versions or translations.

The story of Ruth: Ruth's kindness to Naomi; Boaz' kindness to Ruth. Through the



kindness of Ruth and Boaz Naomi moves from despair to happiness, emptiness to fullness and destitution to security and hope.

Use the whole story from the Graphic Bible or a cartoon type strip telling of the story. A number of video versions are available - this is just one

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MhBAd3kCy9g)

[v=MhBAd3kCy9g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MhBAd3kCy9g) (you can stop it at 3 minutes, 28 seconds). Select a version that is most

appropriate and accessible for *your* group.

Alternatively, create a kinetic telling of the story* with members of the group taking up the roles – (Elimelech; Naomi; Marlon (optional); Chilian (optional); Orpah; Ruth; Townsfolk; Field workers and their boss; Boaz; Elimelech's relative; town leaders). Write an abridged version of the Bible text for folk to act out as the story is read (or there is a script here <https://www.commonword.ca/SelectDownloadFormat/82/15355?button=Download> but you may still want to shorten it)

Follow the pattern for a **Kinetic Bible Study***; as follows: -

Identify the characters (see list above)

Each group member chooses a character (miss out the optional ones if the group is small)

Read the story aloud while each character acts out their role *silently*

Staying in character group members respond to the following questions:

- Who am I? Where am I? What do I want?
- What surprises you?
- What is there of brokenness for you?
- What is there of kindness for you?



e. What is there to celebrate?

Group members as themselves. What do I believe? What will I do?

**Please contact the Unlock office if you would like more detailed guidance on this approach.*

The Parable of the Good Samaritan.

The word 'kindness' does not feature in the story but it is told to demonstrate how to 'love' one's neighbour. I suggest that the key driver for the Samaritan man is compassion and kindness. The attitudes of the other passers-by were unkind!

Luke 10:25-37

A teacher of the Law came up and tried to trap Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to receive eternal life?"

Jesus answered him, "What do the Scriptures say? How do you interpret them?"

The man answered, "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.'" "You are right," Jesus replied; "do this and you will live."

But the teacher of the Law wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "Who is my neighbour?"

Jesus answered, "There was once a

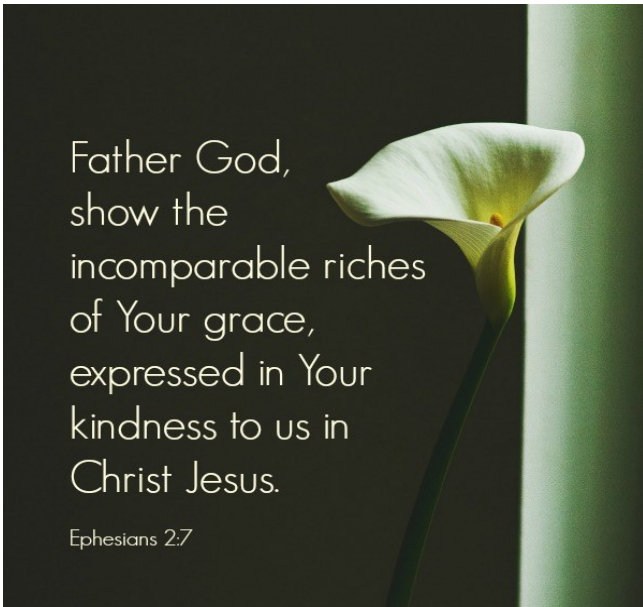
man who was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho when robbers attacked him, stripped him, and beat him up, leaving him half dead. It so happened that a priest was going down that road; but when he saw the man, he walked on by on the other side. In the same way a Levite also came there, went over and looked at the man, and then walked on by on the other side. But a Samaritan who was travelling that way came upon 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.'"

And Jesus concluded, "In your opinion, which one of these three acted like a neighbour toward the man attacked by the robbers?"

The teacher of the Law answered, "The one who was kind to him."

Jesus replied, "You go, then, and do the same."





This story could be told by acting out the parable section in the same way as suggested above for the story of Ruth – there are only 4 people, plus the robbers and an innkeeper.

The story could be used as a way into discussions about people’s experiences of kindness during the pandemic, or as a way to begin to think how to express kindness to one’s community.

You can explore questions such as - who has been a ‘Good Samaritan’ for

you? When have you helped someone who *no one else was prepared to help*?

Kindness – one of God’s characteristics:

Galatians 5:22 Kindness is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit

Titus 3:2-7 God’s kindness and love in salvation.

Tell them not to speak evil of anyone, but to be peaceful and friendly, and always to show a gentle attitude toward everyone. For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, and wrong. We were slaves to passions and pleasures of all kinds. We spent our lives in malice and envy; others hated us and we hated them. But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour was revealed, he saved us. It was not



because of any good deeds that we ourselves had done, but because of his own mercy that he saved us, through the Holy Spirit, who gives us new birth and new life by washing us. God poured out the Holy Spirit abundantly on us through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that by his grace we might be put right with God and come into possession of the eternal life we hope for.



Hosea 11:3-4

Yet I was the one who taught Israel to walk. I took my people up in my arms, but they did not acknowledge that I took care of them.

I drew them to me with affection and love. I picked them up and held them to my cheek; I bent down to them and fed them.



Kindness – a characteristic of Jesus’ followers:

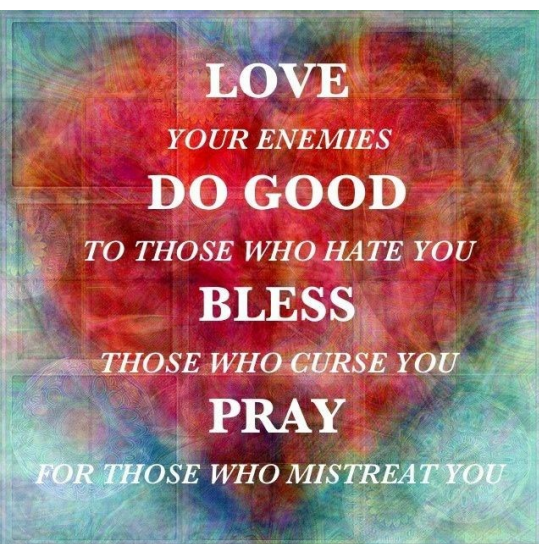
Luke 6:27-36



“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 mistreat 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 do that! And if you lend only to those from whom you hope to get it back, 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 children of the Most High God. For he is good to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful just as your Father is merciful.



1 Corinthians 13:4-8a Part of Paul’s description of love. Love is patient and kind; it is not



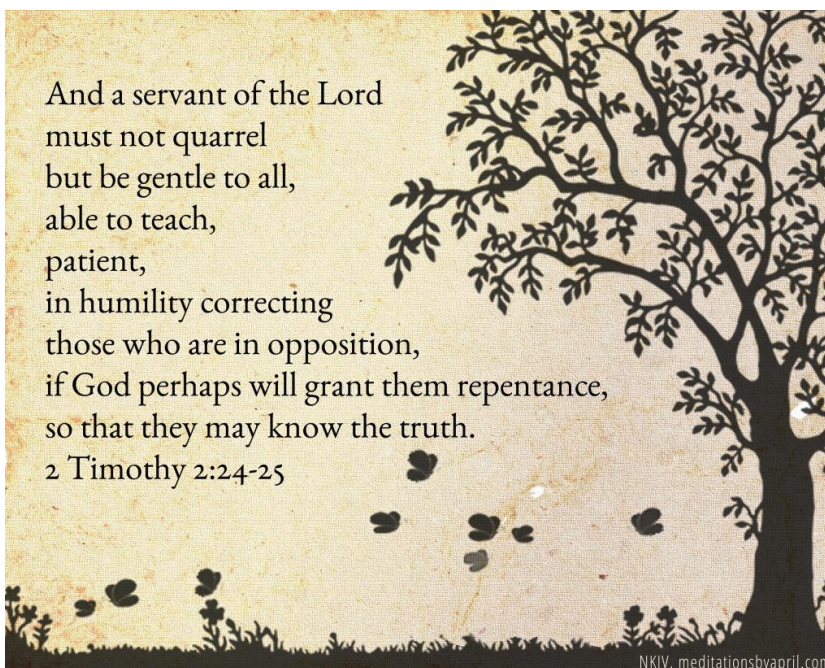


LOVE
is patient **LOVE IS KIND**
it does not envy it does not boast
it is not proud
LOVE IS NOT RUDE IT IS NOT **SELF SEEKING**
IT IS NOT EASILY ANGERED
it keeps no record of wrongs.
love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the **TRUTH**
it always trusts hopes perseveres
Love never fails.
1 Corinthians 13: 4-8

jealous or conceited or proud; love is not ill-mannered or selfish or irritable; love does not keep a record of wrongs; love is not happy with evil, but is happy with the truth. Love never gives up; and its faith, hope, and patience never fail. Love is eternal. There are inspired messages, but they are temporary; there are gifts of speaking in strange tongues, but they will cease; there is knowledge, but it will pass.

2 Corinthians 6:6-7

By our purity, knowledge, patience, and kindness we have shown ourselves to be God's servants—by the Holy Spirit, by our true love, by our message of truth, and by the power of God. We have righteousness as our weapon, both to attack and to defend ourselves.



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!

Unlock uses an approach to engaging with the Bible that is different to traditional Bible studies, based on a reflective learning cycle which is a tried and tested way of introducing people to the Bible in a non-threatening way (see below). We usually work 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 life. Our approach starts from the stories and experiences of group members, whereas a more traditional approach starts from the Biblical text. It has been found to work well with small groups of urban, oral learners. 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. Unlock's approach can help with that.

There are many free resources on the Unlock website www.unlock-urban.org.uk/resources designed for use with such groups. However, because each of these resources was designed for a particular

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group in a particular time and place they are unlikely 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.

If you have any queries relating to Unlock materials, please contact:

Unlock, 15 Station Road, Rotherham S60 1HN

01709 380318 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.

Releasing life changing skills and confidence

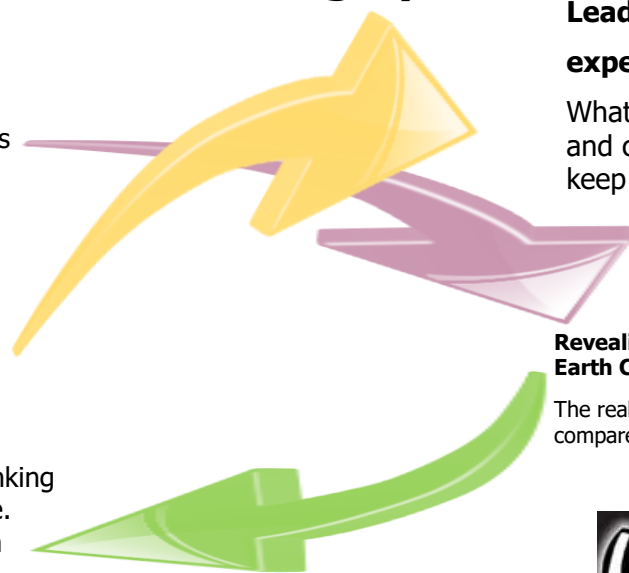
Change happens as a result of linking real life experience with the Bible. This change often leads to action among others.

Leading to more experience

What we learn now is learnt for life and changes us. We also learn to keep reflecting!

Revealing Good News of the Down to Earth Christ

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



10 principles of Training used by Unlock in its work

1. Pay attention to the local, regional and cultural factors that influence people's lives
2. Develop the ability to help other people tell their stories.
3. Take a genuine interest and enjoyment in LISTENING to other people's stories.
4. AFFIRM and ENCOURAGE people so that they can be confident enough to formulate their own questions, and not to impose our own answers on other people's questions.
5. Be PATIENT and WAIT for people to see the gaps in their own knowledge.
6. Believe that people can make sense of the Bible and their own experience, and make the connection between the two; and that God by his spirit will lead people to truth and action.
7. Encourage working together in groups where each person's contribution is valued, and where diversity of opinion is accepted and tolerated.
8. Be aware of what is going on in and between people in such groups.
9. Work with a group so that it can come to its own conclusions and decide on its own actions.
10. Value everyone as a 'Treasure –chest of information and experience'; seeing our task as one of giving people the keys to undo their treasures.

And some Dos and Don'ts

Do: -

- Know and use each person's name
- Accept whatever is offered and encourage further contributions
- Encourage everyone to have a go
- Find non threatening questions to enable people to join in
- Build trust between group members
- Try to work with groups of between 5 and 15 people
- Create an environment where each member has confidence to contribute
- Encourage and enable people to draw on their own experience as a primary learning tool
- Help the group to work together
- Make it clear that you value each person's opinion enough to want them to say what they think
- Gather information about what is already known and shared in a group before introducing new information



- Ask questions like, 'What do you think?' 'What would you like to change?', 'How are you going to change it?', 'What's the best thing about . . .?', 'What's the worst thing about . . .?'
- Encourage participants to consider where their information has come from and how their views have been formed.
- Create experiences for the group to reflect on, you can use film, drama, pictures, paintings, or photographs, cartoons, music, creative activities, community experiences.
- Stress the vastness of the data which the group already possesses.
- Give chances for people to respond, question, discuss.
- Introduce new information (including the Bible) in manageable chunks
- Expect change
- Help the group apply the Word to the here and now. 'What has this got to do with me? With us?'
- Work at presenting in the language of the group.
- Be creative
- Adapt published material to the needs of the group
- Write or make your own material
- Create flexible programmes that can adjust to group needs as they emerge
- Seek the group's agreement for the programme, allow them to modify it as necessary
- Listen attentively

Don't: -

- Use religious language, jargon, or clichés
- Use middle class illustrations, examples, case studies
- Assume a familiarity with the bible
- Tell people what they should do, think, believe; don't say, 'This is how it is.'
- Put people on the spot, or in the spotlight
- Make assumptions about people's lifestyles and domestic arrangements
- Don't ask questions with 'right' or 'wrong' answers or that rely on knowledge, rather than experience
- Make value judgements about people who think and learn differently to you and your friends
- Assume that everyone can read – or that no one can
- Lecture, give out handouts, issue book lists.



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