

God is

INFINITELY MORE

than we could ever imagine...

EXCLUSION TO INCLUSION

Key Passage: John 4

Jesus intentionally chooses to travel to Samaria to get to Galilee. There he meets a Samaritan woman at the well. Jesus asks her for a drink of water. While it was socially unacceptable for them to be talking, this woman realises that Jesus knows all about her and has so much more to give her. No longer would she be the woman known for multiple husbands, but rather the woman who introduced her neighbours to Jesus, the one who could quench their spiritual thirst. Instead of being an outcast or a hated Samaritan, she was now part of God's family.

Session Aims:

1. To help children understand that Jesus knows all about us - the good and the bad things - and still loves us
2. To help children know that Jesus meets our needs
3. To encourage children to explore what Jesus wants to give them

Leader's Reflection:

There are many examples of Jesus' care and compassion towards people who needed to hear his message of love and inclusion for all. In John 4, we read how Jesus revealed himself to a Samaritan woman who had tried to fix her loneliness with other people instead of God. While men would often not speak to women in public, Jesus teaches us that women are important as he talks and listens to her.

The woman was a Samaritan, someone that Jewish people wouldn't associate with, but Jesus shows that people of all cultures matter and he treats her with respect. The woman had made some poor choices, but Jesus valued her and invites her to be part of God's family.



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After meeting Jesus, the woman was so thirsty for Jesus that she knew she needed him in her life. Then she was so excited that she thought about other people she knew who needed Jesus and rushed to tell them so they could meet Jesus too.

Through his actions, Jesus demonstrates his love is for all people, that those who are excluded should be included, and that ultimately it is only Jesus who can provide for our needs. The woman at the well discussed frankly with Jesus her life and feelings.

Allow yourself the time to talk with Jesus and share honestly the concerns and desires in your heart. In preparing for your ministry with children, consider how they might feel being welcomed into God's family. The children will all have their own unique experiences and feelings coming into the session. In journeying with them and inviting them into God's family, do we appreciate and love all children equally? Pray that God will move in ways so that children will want to experience more of Jesus' desire to love and care for them.



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WARM-UPS

If you are following the Vision and Commitment material in series, ask the children to recall the story of Moses and the burning bush:

- How did God reveal himself to Moses?
- How did Moses respond at first?
- How did God move in the situation?
- How have you seen God moving this week?
- Are there ways you have lived boldly for God?

Matching items

Show the children some props which need something else to make them useful or work, such as a tin and tin opener, baby doll and baby bottle, ripped clothes and sewing kit... Can they think of any others? Discuss how in our everyday lives we have invented lots of different objects, but also ways to address the different needs we have.

Salty crackers

Offer salty crackers to the children (please be aware of allergies) or show them a pile of salt. Talk about the effect salt has on our bodies. While salt is important because it plays an important role in making our bodies work properly, too much salt can have a negative effect. People often become quite thirsty if they have eaten salty foods. Water helps address the need our body has after consuming salt. Water is also essential for living. Explain that in our story today we are going to hear about a woman Jesus met while he lived on Earth. She was thirsty, but not just for water, and he provided for her needs.



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TELL THE STORY

A few ideas for sharing the story with children, depending on your group:

- Bible theatre - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Vf3rqnoG5c>
- If you have an older group, a dramatic leader could share the story through a monologue.
- Share reading the account in John 4 together and then use leaders or children to model the conversation between Jesus and the woman again.

I wonder...

- I wonder why Jesus walked through Samaria.
- I wonder why the unnamed woman was at the well at midday, on her own.
- I wonder why Jesus did not go into the town with the disciples.
- I wonder why the disciples asked no questions when they returned.
- I wonder why the villagers listened to the woman and came to Jesus.
- I wonder what Jesus would say to you if he met you at the well.
- I wonder if there are times you have felt left out.
- I wonder if there are opportunities Jesus has provided for you to include others.
- I wonder who you can you tell about the love of Jesus.



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EXPLORE

Collage

Provide lots of resources for the children to create an 'All about me' collage. Encourage them to include the things they enjoy and are good at, as well as the things which they would like to get better at or need help with. If they are comfortable, encourage the children to share and explain their work. Talk about the similarities and differences between each of us, but the fact that Jesus knows everything about each of us just as he knew the woman at the well.

Supporting others

Before the session, identify some needs within your area, corps or group.

Remind the children that after experiencing Jesus, the woman was so excited she wanted to share with everyone about who he was. Either pick one of the identified needs, or share with the children some of the places God has revealed to you where we could show God's love. Some ideas may include creating a card and/or gift for someone who is unwell; baking some treats for someone or a group who could experience God's love; or even what can seem like small things such as going and saying hello and being friendly to someone in your congregation. All of these things could bring a lot of joy to someone who may have been lonely for most of the week.

Full well

Provide the children with lots of junk modelling resources that are adequate for them to make a small well. Ask the children to fill their well with water. Does it



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hold the water? How full can they fill it? Discuss how Jesus promises to fill us and meet our needs so that we are overflowing with happiness.



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PRAY

Play some reflective music to help create a calm atmosphere.

Place a large container of clean water in the middle of the circle with some paper cups around it - or you could provide recyclable cups. (Make sure the container is clean too.)

Ask the children to reflect on the story they have heard today. Consider how Jesus revealed himself to the woman at the well and how she responded to Jesus.

Remind the children that Jesus knows and loves us, whoever we are, wherever we are, whatever we've done. Jesus wants us to know him more and more so he can guide and lead us to live a life for him.

Then take a cup and fill it with water from the container. Explain that the children can use this time to think and pray, asking for more of Jesus in their lives. They can also take a cup, fill it, drink it and pray and listen to what God has to say.



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TAKE HOME

Ask the children to take the cup from the prayer time and write their name on it. Encourage them to take it home this week and use it as a prop to share the story or a key verse that they have heard today with their family or friends. As they use the cup this week, let it remind them that even when they are experiencing difficult times, may they remember that they are loved by Jesus and that he wants to meet their needs.

