

## July 2024 – Experiencing Jesus

Please note Bible stories and themes may occasionally differ from this overview.

This month our weekly content pairs words side by side as we recall four moments of experiencing Jesus. We learn about forgiveness through Dust and Wood; about searching God through One and Ninety-Nine; about a law teacher who wanted to trick Jesus but ends up close to the Kingdom in Love God and Love Others; before concluding at Simon's house with Dinner and Perfume. Whether it's addressing a crowd on a hillside, placing a child at the centre, talking to a teacher of the law or dining with Simon and his visitor, all are experiencing Jesus as we Explore It this July.

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### Session 1 July 6/7

**Session Aim: To see how Jesus got his message across**  
**Bible Ref: Matthew 7:1-5**

#### Today's fruit

Self-control is part of Jesus' life in us. Looking at our own faults before pointing out those of others might take some practice.

#### Dust and wood

Jesus travelled around Galilee, teaching in the synagogues and sharing the good news about the Kingdom of Heaven. After he had healed people of diseases, crowds gathered to see and listen to him. It was so busy that Jesus went up on a hill, sat down there and began to teach. **The crowd experienced Jesus.**

Jesus advised people never to judge but to show forgiveness instead. Using humour, he tells how we always see the little piece of dust in another's eye but don't see the big piece of wood (a plank or a log!) in our own. Jesus wanted people to know that God is a forgiving God. Our lives can become a reflection of him with the fruit of the Spirit in us.

But judging others is very easy – we do this when we see small faults. Forgiveness is not – other people's faults always seem so big to us.

If we can look at ourselves first, we will see others more clearly. If we don't look at ourselves, we are a hypocrite. Jesus pointed out that our insides and outsides need to match; he wants us to see clearly so that our motivations match our behaviour.

#### Think about

Jesus did not have a stage or a microphone. With such a crowd, he had to find higher ground. Have you ever had to take action to make yourself heard?

The best teachers find creative ways to help us remember. Jesus used the language of dust and wood to help people understand the difference between small and big faults. Recall a creative lesson you never forgot.

How do you notice when someone annoys you? Have you ever thought about how you might annoy them? Without doing this, we are hypocrites – our insides don't match our outsides.

Some things in life are small which might appear big to us at the time. Has this ever happened to you with a worry?

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## Session 2 July 13/14

**Session Aim: To know that children matter to God**

**Bible Ref: Matthew 18:2-4,10-14**

### Today's fruit

God's love is shown in the way the shepherd leaves the 99 and searches for the one lost sheep.

### One and ninety-nine

Using a child as an example of being humble, we remember today that Jesus had a habit of making lessons memorable. He teaches how much God wants everyone to know him; he doesn't want anyone to feel lost but instead to know we are found.

In particular, God wants children to know him, so Jesus tells a story about a shepherd with 100 sheep but loses one of them. He searches for it, finds it and is happy.

In this very simple story Jesus has taught us more about God, whose love for everyone means that he would be like the shepherd who searched until the lost sheep was found.

Children matter to God, and we hope that Explore It explains this in new ways every week of the year. **We hope it helps you to experience Jesus.**

### Think about

I wonder why Jesus placed so much value upon children? In verses 2-4 he stands a child before his followers and mentions being humble. In what way are all children humble?

Have you ever been lost and then found? We may know where we are, but perhaps we can still have a feeling of being lost even when we are with other people.

In what ways do adults sometimes overlook children, or what could they learn from children?

Were you surprised that the shepherd left the 99 to go and look for one lost sheep? Does this tell you anything about God's love?

### 13/14 July: Together 24

This weekend is The Salvation Army's conference in Wales, *Together 24*. Pray that children will feel valued by adults and have their own sense of being found by God.

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## Session 3 July 20/21

**Session Aim: To discover how Jesus answered a tricky question**

**Bible Ref: Mark 12:28-34**

### Today's fruit

Faithfulness is shown when we trust in God's Kingdom; God's faithfulness is reflected in us when we love him and other people.

### Love God and love others

Today we find that a teacher of the law asks Jesus a tricky question – which one of the Ten Commandments is the most important? As usual, Jesus surprises us with an unexpected reply, giving two answers instead of one – loving God and loving our neighbour are the two most important commands.

The man agrees, adding that this was more important than a tradition of his day – to sacrifice animals to God. Jesus liked this, saying that the man's wisdom brought him close to the Kingdom of God.

For some people, God's Kingdom might sound like a place, but Jesus teaches that the Kingdom happens when God's ways are being done. In Jesus it was in front of us and the teacher of the law saw it close up. **He experienced Jesus.**

### Think about

In the past *Explore It* has studied the Ten Commandments. Can you remember any of them?

It's interesting that today reminds us of Session One, where Jesus taught about insides and outsides being right. 'Outsides' could be traditions and rules, whereas 'insides' are about how we think about and treat God and others around us. What 'outside' rules does your church have? What 'inside' rules did you show this week at school?

How does it feel when someone tries to trap you with a question? Why did people do this to Jesus?.

### Summer 2024: Residential camps

This summer, even this week, The Salvation Army has many residential camps taking place. Pray that children would be encouraged to live out the greatest commandment alongside their friends

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### Session 4 July 27/28

**Session Aim:** To consider the worship we can bring to God

**Bible Ref:** Mark 14:3-9

#### Today's fruit

Love was shown by Jesus for Simon, and love was then shown by the woman for Jesus. His action had made an impact upon her life.

#### Dinner and perfume

A man called Simon was known to have had a skin disease, but he invited Jesus to share dinner at his house. Jesus socialised with all people, especially those nobody else wanted to share time or food with.

Then a surprise happened. A woman entered Simon's house with a jar of expensive perfume and poured it over Jesus' head. Other people were around watching, and some told her off for wasting expensive perfume.

Jesus surprises his audience in three ways:

1. He said it was a beautiful thing because it was the only thing she could do.
2. In line with traditions for treating dead bodies, he said she was preparing his body for burial (Jesus knew he was going to die soon).
3. People will remember this woman whenever the good news is told.

Jesus stays calm and is able to explain these events in a way that teaches others around him. His whole life was about loving God and loving others. It was going to be cut short, but he wanted us to know one thing about worship – he is most interested in bringing what we can, not what we cannot.

In yet another memorable event and teaching in the life of Jesus, both **Simon and the woman experience Jesus**.

#### Think about

Jesus accepted Simon's invitation to dinner. How does this challenge us in how we might choose our friends?

How much might a year's wages be? If you receive pocket money, how do you decide whether to spend money on yourself or give some to help others?

We may not have much, but perhaps doing all we can for God is always a beautiful thing. What could you do for someone today? We might call this worship.

How would you feel if Jesus told you he was going to die? Would you want to save him or would you think he had got this wrong?

#### 27/28 July: Welcome Sunday

This weekend is *Welcome Sunday* in The Salvation Army. Find out what this means and, just as Jesus advised in the case of Simon and the woman, see if you can use what you have to offer a loving welcome to somebody new.