

GOOD NEWS WORKSHOP

An SCM Workshop

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

This SCM workshop aims to help us explore our understanding of Good News, and in particular the Good News that Jesus speaks about. You'll need to allow at least 80 minutes to go through all the activities in this workshop.

You will need newspaper articles (see below), paper and pens and print outs of the bible quotes and questions overleaf for each group. You should also think about having some tea and cake (the ultimate ice breaker) and a big smile—enjoy!

INTRODUCTION (5 MINUTES)

Ask each person in turn to introduce themselves and relate one good thing, and one bad thing that has happened to them recently or in the past (preferably nothing too personal or too serious). One of these should be true and the other one false. The rest of the group has to guess which statement is true and which is false. Consider prizes for those who make the most correct guesses, or for the best liars.

ASK THE QUESTION(S) (10-15 MINUTES)

Bring along a selection of newspaper articles, some that clearly relate good news, some bad. Try to get several ambiguous articles, or to encourage discussion on the articles, e.g., news of a company getting big profits for the year – but what is their humanitarian record? News of oil shortages – bad news for short-term energy needs, but good news for carbon emissions? News of a revolution or the fall of a dictator – good news perhaps for democracy, but bad news for peace and stability?

If you can't find much in the newspapers today, consider some major world events: the moon landing, the assassination of Martin Luther King, the fall of the Berlin wall, 11 September 2001, the fall of Saddam Hussein, Britain's successful bid to host the Olympics in 2012...

Ask the group to divide the articles into those that contain good and those that contain bad news. Ask them to give reasons for their decisions.

EXPLORE THE ISSUE(S) (30 MINUTES)

This activity involves splitting into small groups of 3 or 4 and doing a role play.

Each person in the group takes on the role of one of these characters:

- The witness to a great and happy event (the birth of a child, the success of a great undertaking, the discovery of something that was lost, or has been looked for a long time).
- The messenger that is taking the good news of this event to someone who will be very happy to hear it.
- The recipient of the news.

Act out this scenario as a group. Then discuss the following questions within the small group.

1. What are the thoughts, feelings of each character throughout the scenario?
2. What is the effect of sharing the good news? Does sharing it increase the joy of the event itself?
3. Was the good news expected or unexpected? How would this factor affect the emotions involved?
4. Now we can just send a text or email to share good news, in Jesus' time you would have walked for days; what difference would this make? Would you make this kind of effort now?

Next, consider the following. Good News is a central idea for Jesus Christ in the gospels, and for the gospel-writers. Jesus saw what he had to say as good news, and the writers of the New Testament say Jesus himself was the good news. Ask participants to get into pairs, read the verses below and discuss the questions (you may want to write this up somewhere),

This is the Good News about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God (Mark 1:1).

Jesus travelled throughout the region of Galilee, teaching in the synagogues and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom. And he healed every kind of disease and illness (Matthew 4:23).

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free” (Luke 4:18).

This is the message of Good News for the people of Israel—that there is peace with God through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all (Acts: 10:36) (New Living Translation)

1. What was it that the gospel-writers saw as good news? Do you think it was / is good news?
2. Is there any part of it that is particularly persuasive, or unpersuasive?
3. Why do you think they were so certain that what they had to say was good news?
4. Why do people today still see it as good news?
5. Is it still “new” news, or do people now already know what Jesus had to say about God and people?

INVITE THE RESPONSE (15 MINUTES)

Invite a more personal response to the question, by encouraging people to reflect on the following questions. You may invite people to share their answers, as appropriate, or simply ask them to write them down as a reminder of what, for them, is the core of the good news of Christ, and to encourage each other to live according to that good news.

1. What, for you, is the most central part of the 'good news' that Jesus showed and taught?
2. How do you / would you communicate or exhibit this good news?

CLOSING THE SESSION (5 MINUTES)

Ask someone to close the session in prayer. Here is a prayer you could use:

*Dear God,
You are yourself the herald of good news, thank you. Don't let us stifle the joy and wonder and excitement that is the proper response to the wonderful news that you are and bring. Give us the integrity and the strength to receive your good news, and to be good news to the world.
Amen*

FUTURE DISCUSSIONS AND MORE RESOURCES

If your group is interested in exploring this theme further, then you could try some of these topics for further discussions or invite a speaker. Get in touch with the SCM office if you need any help or resources (scm@movement.org.uk).

- *Use the SCM Mission workshop to explore Good News further*
- *Political theology, the political gospel of Christ, good news for the poor?*
- *The Scandalous Gospel of Jesus: What's So Good about the Good News? by Peter J. Gomes (HarperOne 2008)*
- *The Orthodox Heretic: And Other Impossible Tales by Peter Rollins (Paraclete Press 2009)*
- *The Things He Said by Stephen Cottrell (SPCK 2009)*
- *The Drama of Mark by Morna Hooker and John Vincent (Epworth Press 2009)*
- *www.scottishstorytellingcentre.co.uk find out more about oral storytelling*