

# Family Service Resources

# JOURNEYS OF PROMISE



“Treat the foreigner as you would a local...  
Love him like one of your own.”

Leviticus 19:33-34

  
**Presbyterian**  
CHURCH IN IRELAND

**Youth & Children's Project**  
2016/17

**This is a skeleton outline of some things that you may wish to include when having a family service based around the themes of the Youth and Children's Project this year. It is focussed on the idea that God calls us to love our neighbour.**

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## **Introduction**

- *Show introductory overview video on accompanying DVD*

This year's Youth and Children's Project is about loving our neighbour, but not just about loving our friend or someone who lives down the street. We are thinking about people who have had to leave their homes or even countries because they feel that their lives are in danger. Particularly, we are thinking about refugees who have fled from places like Syria, many of whom are now living in camps in Lebanon.

Many times in the Bible, Jesus emphasises the importance of loving the people around us. However, in the passage we are going to focus on, Jesus calls us to love the person who is most unlike us; the stranger, the foreigner, the refugee. There are different organisations around the world, like National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon (NESSL) and Open Doors, which are helping these people in practical ways, by providing shelter, food and education. But what can we do? We find our answer in the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

## **The Bible bit**

**Read:** The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37)

## **Activity Ideas:**

1. Act It Out: enlist some children or young people to act out the story as you read it.
2. Alternatively, get the children or young people to write a modern day version of the parable and perform it for the congregation before you read the Bible passage.

NB Both of these ideas are suggested activities in the youth resources pack, so perhaps your youth group has already done them and they can be used in the service.

## **Explanation**

At the time, this was a very shocking story for the Jews who were listening. They saw Samaritans as less than them because they had broken some of the Temple laws. Even worse, they refused to travel from their land to Jerusalem to worship! They were outcasts and declared to be 'unclean' by the Jewish authorities. There had been lots of fights and disagreements between the Jews and Samaritans too. This is what makes this story so incredible.

Imagine how the Jewish man must have felt. He had been robbed and beaten, passed over by a Levite and a Priest – two men who the Jews listening would have expected to stop to help him. Yet after everything that had gone on, all the history and bad feeling, the Samaritan was the one who stopped and helped.

The question at the beginning of the passage asks, 'Who is my neighbour?' and by telling this story Jesus is answering that question. He says that we are supposed to radically love – love others as we love ourselves – not just those who are closest to us or are easy to love. In fact he tells us that we are to love all people, regardless of their background, race, religion or gender. In addition, we are called to alleviate all of the suffering and injustice that goes on in our world. Jesus showed us examples of this over and over. Repeatedly he reached out to the needy in his society, even when it was against the Jewish laws to do so.

## **Response**

So what does this mean for us today? The message of Jesus is still the same – he tells us to love our neighbour. It is easy for us to love our family and friends, the lady we see every morning who lives down the street and the postman; but it's not so easy for us to love the stranger, the foreigner, the refugee, the people we aren't familiar with and don't see every day.

The memory verse for the project is taken from Leviticus 19:33-34, which says "Treat the foreigner as you would a local... Love him like one of your own." The Bible tells us not to just be kind to the foreigner, but to treat them as if they were from our own country – to treat them as 'one of our own'. This is the type of radical love that Jesus was talking about when he told the parable of the Good Samaritan. He calls us to go above and beyond to help those who are in need, to love those who are difficult to love, to care for the sick and to welcome the foreigner with open arms.

## **Activity**

While one of the aims of the PCI project is to raise money for people who have fled their homes out of fear, we are also trying to get people thinking and talking about the refugee crisis. Through the project, we are encouraging people to pray for refugees all around the world and challenging everyone to think about what it means to love our neighbour and to welcome the foreigner. The people who are living in fear, who have had to leave home in the middle of the night, who are living in camps like the one in Lebanon – they are our neighbours.

- Have cut-out hearts in each pew and encourage families/individuals to write the name of a person they love who needs help or the name of someone they would like to get to know better.
- During a song or a quiet time, invite them to place the heart in a jar at the front of the church.
- As a church family, pray together for all of the people who are named on the hearts.

## **Prayer**

- Pray for refugees, not only in Syria and Lebanon, but all over the world. Ask God to take away their fear and give them peace.
- Thank God for the work that NESSL and Open Doors have done so far, and pray for guidance as they continue to work in the camps in Lebanon.
- Pray for those who risk their lives to smuggle Bibles into countries where it is illegal to have one. Ask God to protect them on their journeys.

## **Ideas for Later**

- Consider getting a group together to write letters of encouragement to Syrian refugees.
- Plan a prayer walk to encourage members of the congregation to think about going on a journey. As you walk, pray for refugees and the journey they have been on.
- Host a prayer meeting focussing on the needs of refugees.
- Photocopy the Family Devotion and give to members with primary school aged children.

# FAMILY DEVOTION

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## Introduction

Ask everyone to give examples of the sort of help that certain professions give, e.g. doctor, fireman, plumber, nurse, coastguard, minister, home help, policeman, etc. Help children and others involved to think of examples aside from the obvious answer.

## Explain

There are many jobs that are “helping” jobs. The people who do these jobs are very important in our society as sometimes we all need someone to help when we are in trouble.

However, even if we do not do one of these jobs, or are not old enough to do them yet, God asks us all to help those who are in need and to care for everyone. He calls these people who we are to help our “neighbours”.

## Read

Luke 10:29-37: The Story of the Good Samaritan

- Why do you think the priest and the Levite were unwilling to help?
- What do you think made the Samaritan want to stop and help?

There are lots of people in our world at the minute who need help because of all sorts of reasons. The Journeys of Promise Project is aiming to help just some of the people who God wants us to care for. We are thinking particularly about people who have had to leave their homes in Syria in a hurry because of fighting in their own country and they feel that their lives are in danger. Some of these people now live in refugee camps in Lebanon.

There are churches and organisations there that are helping to find these refugees some shelter and food, but they are also helping to provide education for children and Bibles to be able to tell the people about Jesus. We are raising money to help this work, encouraging people to pray for those who have had to leave their homes and encouraging everyone to think about what it means to love our neighbours as Jesus asks us to do in the Bible. These people are our neighbours.

## Activity

Place a jam jar in your kitchen and put all the 20ps that you receive into it.

Pray for the families who have lost so much and had to leave their old lives behind.

Write a letter and draw pictures for some children who are living in refugee camps and send them to the Open Doors UK and Ireland Office (PO BOX 873, Belfast, BT15 1WZ), who will send them on to Lebanon. (It may not be possible to receive replies though so do not build up that hope in your children. Assure the children that they will be distributed though.)

## Pray

Ask God to help you to understand more about what it means to love our neighbours the way the Good Samaritan did. Pray that God will show you other ways that you can help people whether they live close by or very far away. Thank God for all that He has given your family and pray that you will be generous with what you have.