

Tearfund
speaker
resources

Bible studies

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Introduction

Throughout the UK, Tearfund has a group of dedicated speakers communicating about our work in local churches. Evidence demonstrates the importance that this group play as they spread the message of Integral Mission. When people call in to give to Tearfund, the most common reason people say they are giving is as a result of hearing about the charity in the pews. As an organization, we are therefore committed to supporting and resourcing our speakers, to ensure that we are helping them to communicate our work as best as we can.

As Christians, passionate about bringing justice and overcoming global poverty, we know that God's heart is to see 'justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!' Amos 5:24. We believe that part of our role as an organisation, is to awaken the church in the UK to God's heart for the poor and the role we have to play. We therefore want every Tearfund talk in a church to therefore inspire people about our work and be grounded in what God has to say about justice in His Word.

During the speaker training, we looked at how you could use AEIOU (Attention, Empathy, Insight, Options, Jesus and You) as a framework for your talk. For more information on the different aspects of this, visit www.tearfund.org/speakerscorner. We suggested that, if you are being asked to preach at a church, the 'Biblical Insight' should make up about 50% of your talk. This resource has been designed to help you with this aspect of your talks.

As you know, Church and Community mobilization is at the heart of our development work. Our local church partners use a church and community mobilisation process known as Umoja, or PEP (Participatory Evaluation Process). Umoja, which means 'togetherness', helps church leaders and their congregations work together with the local community to bring about positive change for their communities.

This process is built around a framework of Bible studies. 'Through Bible studies and interactive activities, Umoja is about empowering the church to go out into the community and help people identify and address their needs with their own resources'¹

¹ Francis Njoroge, Tulo Raistrick, Bill Crooks and Jackie Mouradian, *Umoja Facilitator's Guide*

We have taken a number of the Bible studies used in the Participatory Evaluation Process and built a resource which we hope will help you use some of these passages in your talks. Because they are used in our work around the world, not only will they help you to communicate the role, place and impact they play in development, but also help the church in the UK reflect on these stories and be moved by them.

Each Bible study is in two parts:

- The first part sets the context of the story and the meaning, capturing the Biblical and historical headlines.
- The second part outlines the story itself with a real case study and testimony from our work.

Speakers can select the passage they want to use according to the context in which, and the audience to whom, they will be speaking. The information below will help them to understand at what stage of PEP the Bible study is used.

The appendix contains additional information including: Biblical information and questions raised during PEP training.

Bible Stories and PEP stages

Theme: Church and community mobilization

Romans 12:1-8 (*) Serving God

Acts 2: 43-47 (*) The early church

Stage 1: local church envisioning

Mark 10:46-52: The healing of Blind Bartimaeus - helping the local church to reflect on the unique role the church has in working with the poor.

2 Kings 4:1-7: Elisha and the widow's oil- understanding the resources we have, and if we're willing to share, and with the help of God, how we can address poverty

Mark 6:30-44: The feeding of the 5000

Matthew 5:13-16: Salt and Light- how the church initiative can transform a community

Stage 2: local community envisioning

Luke 10:25-37 The Good Samaritan. Envision the community

Matthew 25:31-46 (*) The judgement of the nations, "I was thirsty and you gave me food"- Not used in the PEP.

Stage 3: Dreaming dreams and Planning for Action

Mark 6:45-56 (*) Walking on water - taking initiative and risk

Luke 4:16-30 (*) Jesus' manifesto- Not used in PEP

Stage 4: Taking action

Nehemiah 2:17-3:32 (*) Rebuilding the walls - working together as a community

Eph 4:1-16 (*) Unity in the church. Not used in PEP

Stage 5: Evaluation: accountability and learning

Did we do what we said we would do?

Did we make a difference?

Could we have used our skills and resources more effectively?

*Planned for a further version of this document

Bible Studies

Local Church Envisioning

Mark 10:46-52: The healing of blind Bartimaeus

In the transformation process used by Tearfund's partners, Bible studies are an integral part of the programme. One of the passages used is 'the healing of Blind Bartimaeus': Mark 10:46-52.

Read the Bible extract

Bartimaeus' story serves as the bridge to the last step in Jesus' life: The King travels into to Jerusalem to face the cross. Bartimaeus is the blind man who 'sees' Jesus as 'the Son of David', while those with sight, who do not recognize him, remain blind (Mark 12:35-40). Solomon was the only king to be called by this title – Son of David - in the O.T.² This title has clear messianic connotations and foreshadows the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem.

Jericho was only about fifteen miles from Jerusalem. The law stated that every male Jew over 12 years of age who lived within 15 miles of Jerusalem must attend the Passover.³ This was clearly impossible for a variety of reasons: people may not have been able to afford the sacrifices they needed for the temple, nor be able to afford to stay away from home during the festival.⁴ Those unable to go to Jerusalem themselves, were in the habit of lining the streets, waiting for the pilgrims to pass.

In Jericho, a large number of priests were working at the Temple. Most were probably on duty for the Passover, but some were probably in the crowd, waiting for this audacious Rabbi, Jesus, with some degree of hostility.

In the middle of this crowd, a beggar named Bartimaeus was waiting. Many poor, sick, disabled, and excluded people from society begged for food or money. In the 1st Century Palestinian context, disabled people were deeply dependant on others for their survival.

We don't know where Bartimaeus came from, how he looked or how old he was, but we have a name. A name means a lot: it means you are unique; it gives you

² R. Alan Culpepper, *Mark: Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary* (Macon GA: Smyth & Helwys Publisher, 2007)

³ W. Barclay, *The Gospel of Mark* (St Andrew press, 3d Ed 2001)

⁴ I.H. Marshall, A.R. Millard, J.I. Packer & D.J. Wiseman, *New Bible Dictionary* (Nottingham: IVP, 1996)

identity and dignity. He had probably learnt about this Rabbi, Jesus a 'man of God', and when he heard the crowd murmuring Jesus' name, he called with boldness after Him: 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!'. But people around him tried to ignore him. Again he had to shout, Son of David, have mercy on me.'

Bartimaeus demonstrated a persistent faith, despite the efforts to silence him and to stop him. In response, Jesus said: 'Call him here!' Bartimaeus was probably surprised by Jesus' reaction. He tried to make his way through the crowd. I can easily imagine people murmuring around him: 'What have you done?' 'Look at this beggar!', 'Move on!', 'Get up!' It might have been a challenge for him to get closer to Christ but we know the end of the story: Bartimaeus made it to him and Jesus healed him. The story goes on to tell us that Bartimaeus decided to become a follower of Christ.

The story of Bartimaeus' healing, not only reveals another of Jesus' miracles but also serves as an example of discipleship. This story has to be read in parallel and contrast to Mark 10:35-45. In both stories, Jesus asks the same question: 'what do you want me to do?' The disciples in Mark 10 (James and John) ask for glory and triumph. Bartimaeus on the other hand makes no demand for glory - he only wants his sight. The healing of Bartimaeus has a discipleship function: the opportunity to become a disciple of Christ is open to all, but it also involves serving others.

In this story, the 'crowd' can be seen to represent the church. We might chose to ignore the poor and disabled, hoping that somebody else might find the solution. But this story clearly challenges that. 'Son of David, have mercy on me.' Yes mercy, this is what this man was asking for.

Tearfund's church partners show Christ's love to some of the most vulnerable and outcast members of society.

In South Sudan for example, the church helps to fight stigma, like HIV. The issue of HIV is still new in South Sudan. Some people see it as a curse or a disease of people who live far away, in towns, or people who come from Kenya or Uganda.'

In collaboration with local churches, Tearfund's partner Sudan Evangelical Mission (SEM) has established teams in seven parishes in Mundri. On a weekly basis they reach out to communities: enabling a basic understanding of HIV through thematic Bible studies, support groups, training manuals and awareness-raising programmes in schools.

'We help people living with HIV to see they are not alone and can live with their families,' says Gulliver.

Stephen (not his real name) is one such person. Last year, he shared his HIV status with a SEM worker. Feeling unable to tell his family, he was drinking heavily, beating his wife and had lost his job. SEM gave him one-to-one support and encouraged him to tell his wife so she could get tested herself. Thankfully, the result was negative.

'Over the last year, we have seen a total change in Stephen. He has gone through counselling, stopped drinking and mistreating his wife, and this month he started a new job,' says Gulliver. 'It was encouraging to see that God is working through us.'

Although anti-retroviral treatment is now free in South Sudan, the challenge for people is finding reliable and affordable transport to the health clinics. Often they can journey for several hours and use vital income travelling to and from clinics, only to be told that no appointments are available and they will have to return the next day. So when an SEM vehicle is going to the same location, arrangements are made to give people transport.

SEM also runs an eye care programme and supports people with disabilities such as epilepsy, blindness and those who have lost limbs due to landmines.

Mark 6:31-44- Feeding the 5000

Uganda testimony see web site:

- <http://www.pag-uganda.org/projects/food-security/>

Matthew: 5:13-16 Salt and Light

In the transformation process used by Tearfund's partners, Bible studies are an integral part of the programme. One of the passages used is Matthew 5:13-16, Salt and Light.

Read the Bible extract

This extract of the Bible forms part of the Beatitudes, which can be found within the Sermon on the Mount.

Away from the crowds, Jesus uses this opportunity to teach his disciples about God, His Kingdom and the blessedness of those who are persecuted for Jesus' sake. In this passage, two symbols are used - Salt and Light. Salt is not a passive preservative, nor is light shining passively. Rather, we should see salt and light as active agents: Christians are called to be an alternative community which is distinct and different from the rest of the world, bringing out the flavor of Christ.

Christians are called to be a caring community that do not withdraw from the world but instead serve it, and in doing so, beckon outsiders and weary ones, bringing light to the dark and hopeless places.

Light lets us see, and allows us to find the Way.

The Scottish coast can be a dangerous place during stormy weather. This is probably why several lighthouses were built - the first one in the 18th Century.

In December 1900, it was reported that three lighthouse keepers Donal Macarthur, James Ducat and Thomas Marshall went missing from the lighthouse on Flannan Isle, one of seven small islands near Lewis. Their disappearance was reported by a passing ship when the lighthouse, which was normally visible for 24 miles in all weather, was unlit.⁵

⁵ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1378632/Missing-lighthouse-keepers-remembered-after-100-years.html>

Churches can sometimes become like the lighthouse on Flannan Isle. They don't shine any more, they don't light the dark places, and they are empty.

In the well-known story of Grace Darling, the light of the lighthouse was shining 'before others'. On the early hours of 7 September 1838, Grace, looking from an upstairs window of the Longstone Lighthouse on the Farne Islands, spotted the wreck and survivors of the Forfarshire on a nearby low rocky island. The Forfarshire had crashed onto the rocks and broken in half: one of the halves had sunk during the night. As the weather was too rough for the lifeboat, they had to use an alternative route and had rowed nearly a mile to reach the survivors.⁶

Grace Darling was more than a Lighthouse keeper. She and her father felt a sense of responsibility and concern for the lives of those at sea. Their actions and determination that night saved lives.

Both stories of the Lighthouse keepers on Flannan Isle and the Farne Islands show how the presence or lack of light impact this world.

Tearfund's church partners are helping local churches understand their Biblical mandate to be salt and light in their communities. They are mobilising them to not only proclaim the good news, but to be the good news through their actions.

The Pentecostal Assemblies of God (PAG) in Uganda is one of Tearfund's partners. This story comes from their work.

Looking at the history of education in Uganda, almost all the schools in rural areas were started by missionaries. Communities did not believe they could build more schools and maintain them. Nowadays, children in rural areas often have to walk miles to reach the nearest school. If they are able to go, they often arrive late and tired. Many younger children only start attending school at Primary One level and miss their nursery years, which would give them a good foundation for education. PEP, run by Tearfund's partner PAG has helped churches to identify the lack of education as a major problem in their communities and opened their eyes to see how they can help.

"We realised we were poor because we were not educated. However, we were passing on the same problem to our children. We decided to change and to plan for the future of our children to give them the best education that we can afford." Says Pastor Ocen Peter, a PEP facilitator in Ojama and chairman board of directors for the nursery.

⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grace_Darling

They started small –setting up a nursery school in 2009 and employing one teacher. The church later offered a piece of land to the nursery to build a small house. Parents contributed money and other raw materials. They also hired one more teacher and had both of them trained in early childhood development skills with UNICEF’s support.

The enrolment every year has been increasing and according to Rev. Aleu John the children who have graduated from this nursery school, perform well in the primary schools they have gone on to attend. “Teachers from primary schools always advise parents to bring their children to our nursery school before they join primary in order to receive a good foundation. Our goal is to have a primary and secondary school, but we want to build a strong foundation of good performance and quality education for our children and move slowly but surely,” Says Rev. Aleu John, one of the school board members. “We want this school to be the best performing school in Amuria.”

2 Kings 4:1-7 Elisha and the widow's oil.

In the transformation process used by Tearfund's partner, Bible studies are an integral part of the programme. One of the passages used is 2 Kings 4:1-7, Elisha and the widow's oil.

Read the Bible extract

This passage is set in the time of Elisha, a powerful prophet endowed with the spirit of Elijah. In Chapter 4, Elisha is mainly engaged in pastoral work among needy people. The prophet is like a magnet – many people are drawn to him. One story is about a vulnerable, helpless widow, at the mercy of her debtors. Coping with debt was a defining problem for a widow in a patriarchal society. It was an accepted custom in Israel that if a family could not pay off its debts, some members of that family would work for the debtors (Lv. 25:39-41).⁷ The widow in this story was probably a peasant, in contrast with the story of the rich widow, which follows in this chapter. So if her children were taken from her, she would have no one left to work on the land, and as a result, might face a further downward spiral of debt. The woman revered the Lord and believed that Elisha, God's prophet, could help her.

Blinded by our fears and troubles, we do not always see the resources available around us. Elisha in the story asked the widow: 'What do you have?' She replied, 'A jar of oil'. What the widow didn't recognize was the other resources available to her – her neighbours, her faith, her house.

"Go outside, borrow vessels from all your neighbours, empty vessels and not just a few. Then go in, and shut the door behind you and your children, and start pouring into all these vessels; when each is full, set it aside" Elisha told her.

The passage goes on to tell us that, by God's power and miracle, all the empty jars were filled with oil. The woman sold the oil, paid her debts, rescued her children from economic bondage and then lived off the remainder.

Elisha broke the cycle of poverty. The woman was released from her life-threatening debt.

This story also points out that poverty does not only affect people physically and materially, but also socially and psychologically. Many people in poverty describe the fear, the bereavement, the loneliness and isolation that they feel. Millions of

⁷ D.A. Carson, R.T. France, J.A. Motyer & G.J. Wenham, *New Bible Commentary* (Nottingham: IVP, 1994)

people today live with the same economic pressures and emotions that this widow faced.

As the Body of Christ, the Church, we can be the neighbours, the people giving some empty jars to those in need, so the oil can flow, the debts can be paid and the families can be rescued.

'Our vision is not just an end to poverty; it's about local churches being the body of Christ, bringing the kingdom of heaven to earth' Matthew Frost, CEO of Tearfund.

In the PEP, people identify with this story. Like the woman with oil, they realize that they are not without resources. They have more than they realise at first.

The Pentecostal Assemblies of God (PAG) in Uganda is one of Tearfund's partners. This story of Icumar comes from their work.

47 year-old Pastor Icumar Constantine is a father of 10 children. He had always thought that his role was to preach the word of God and ensure that his children had their basic needs met. Being rich was considered evil in his community, and Christians thought that it would stop them from entering the kingdom of God. He therefore never cared about working hard to improve his situation or sending his children to school.

"When PEP started, I learnt that we need to develop not only spiritually but also physically. As we continued learning, we understood how to do this using the resources available locally to us. At first, it was hard for me to understand, but when we did a Bible study, I realised that I had resources around me which I could use to improve my situation," he recalls. "I began by improving my local breed of cattle. I realised that I could benefit more if their quality was better. I therefore sold some of the cows I had, and using this money and some of my savings, I went and bought a Boran bull which I used to cross breed my cattle," he says. One of the heifers has now produced two calves and he has bought a third cross bred bull.

Besides using the acquired exotic Boran to improve his breed, Mr. Icumar is also using it as a great source of income by hiring it out to other people who want to improve their breeds too.

Having succeeded in improving his cattle breeds, he agreed with his wife that they should ensure that there is always enough food in their home. They planted two more gardens of cassava on top of the usual ones they used to plan; to ensure food security.

Icumar also decided to do an income generating activity. On looking at the resources available, he still discovered that land was his major resource. So he

decided to plant citrus. "I first planted 35 grafted citrus seedlings which I bought from my savings. Then I started raising my own seedlings and now I have been able to raise over 400 seedlings which I'm grafting. I'm also raising seedlings for tomatoes. Once I have planted all these seedlings, I will be doing well financially," he narrates.

Having done that, the only thorn in Icumar's flesh was building a permanent house for his family. All along, their understanding was that only 'rich' people would build permanent houses. Their hopes of owning one were inconceivable. However after learning about resource mobilisation and utilisation, Icumar's attitude changed. He realized he could get the block of stone for free and in a month with the help of his wife, they had 4,000 blocks, they could use to build their house. Next he started to raise money for other material, and after six months the four bed-room house was already well advanced and in another two months it was completed.

Icumar's example shows that when people believe in themselves and understand the resources they have, they can overcome their difficulties.

Local Community Envisioning

Luke 10:25-37- The Good Samaritan

In the transformation process used by Tearfund's partners, Bible studies are an integral part of the programme. One of the passages used is Luke 10:25-37, The Good Samaritan.

Read the Bible extract

Jesus is in the middle of a private discussion with the disciples, when the lawyer interrupts him. The question he raises sounds at first out of place, but in fact moves the narrative in a new direction: the practice of God's word.

In this parable all of the characters are anonymous: a man, a lawyer, a priest, a Levite, a Samaritan. They are only identified by their status or by their origin. Priests and Levites (Levites were second-ranking figures to the priests) shared high status in the community of God's people because they were born into priestly family. In this story, they represent the 'holy men'. The Samaritan, in contrast, is the 'outcast'.

Do you ever wonder why the Samaritan stopped? If I had been there I may have asked him a few questions. Below, I imagine the responses:

Who are you and what were you doing on this road?

I'm a travelling merchant. I sell oil, wine, and other things people living in isolated places may need. Travelling between Jerusalem and Jericho is not always very safe but I'm used to.

Did you see the two men in front of you?

I could see them. You walk down from Jerusalem to Jericho. With the donkey and all the heavy parcels you can't go very fast. These two men looked very busy. I guess they were probably priests having finished their duties from the temple and returning to their homes. As you know, the Jews and particularly the priests don't speak with us Samaritans. So I stayed away from them.

What happened when you saw this man injured? Did you know him?

No I didn't know this man. I was surprised that the two others had passed by him and done nothing. After all, the law commands us to love our neighbor, doesn't it? He was looking in a bad way, and at first I didn't think he would survive much longer. I thought about the fact that it could easily have been me lying on the road, and if it had been, I would have been glad if someone had stopped and helped. I

did what I could with what I had: some oil and wine. In a situation like this, you don't think, you just do.

When the lawyer heard this story, he understood his neighbour was not just those that lived near him, but was anyone - a stranger, an outcast, anyone in need. He realised that what he had to do was show mercy and compassion like the Good Samaritan.

When the churches read this story during the PEP, they realize that there is no differentiation between social class, no ethnic and/or sexual difference: their neighbour is anyone in need.

The Pentecostal Assemblies of God (PAG) in Uganda is one of Tearfund's partners. This story about a 'Samaritan's strategy' to help orphans is from their work.

One of the biggest problems faced in Uganda is the increasing rate of orphans and helpless children. This is due to a number of reasons: Uganda has had a series of insurgencies in the largest part of the country for over 20 years. Obviously, many people were killed leaving behind orphans, widows and widowers. Those who survived the insecurity lived desperate lives. Young girls and widows resorted to prostitution for survival. As a result, they would produce children who would never know their fathers. Other children have been orphaned as a result of the HIV epidemic. Some of these orphans are HIV positive, while others are not.

The church has been responding to this problem by providing these orphans with basic essentials. However, these children's futures were not well shaped - the church provided the bare essentials of food, shelter, clothes and access to medical care, but education was considered a luxury.

Even when the government introduced a system for all children to study for free, children still needed to be able to buy stationary and lunch time meals. This meant that many could still not afford to go to school. For those who could manage, many would only attend school to primary seven.

When the church was empowered through the PEP, members realised that it was their role to take care of orphans in their community.

One of the communities that has done this ministry is Akoboi PAG. During the PEP, the church and community were challenged by the high number of orphans in their community. "As we looked into the problem deeply, we realised that these orphans, just like most of the children in our community were not educated. We also noticed that most of them especially boys had resorted to bad habits of stealing and robbing people at night. As we discussed this further, we realised that if we did not do something to help these orphans, they would be a bigger problem for us," say

Rev. Agama Ezra; senior pastor for Akoboi PAG and a PEP facilitator in Soroti district.

The church helped those that had dropped out of school to gain vocational skills. The church and community quickly became discouraged by the amount of people they needed to help. However, when they studied the parable of the Good Samaritan, they realised that it was God's heart for them to help and that He would help them. They agreed to start an income generation activity and contributed money every Sunday (in addition to their tithes and offering to the church), to help support these orphans. This has enabled them to support over 200 orphans in Akoboi.

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APPENDIX

Exegesis

Gospels

1. Gospel Origin: The first Christians would be surprised find documents called 'A Gospel' since for them 'gospel' (*euangelion*) meant *message of good news* (like accession of new emperor).
2. Nature of the Gospel: style
 - a. The primary purpose of the Gospels, strictly speaking, is not historical. This would be too narrow a definition of what the Gospels were written for.
 - b. The Gospels seek to present the person of Jesus to those already committed to follow him, in order to elicit renewed commitment to his authority and to promote Jesus' example as the pattern for imitation.
3. Purpose of the Gospel
 - a. Historical reason. The original eye witnesses were dying. This gave urgency to the task so that personal knowledge of Jesus' ministry was preserved for future generations.
 - b. Evangelistic reason. C.H. Dodd and others believes the Gospels were written to communicate the Christian message to those who were not yet believers.
 - c. Didactic purpose. To teach new converts to Jesus more about their faith.
 - d. Geographic purpose. To spread the eye-witness testimony further afield.

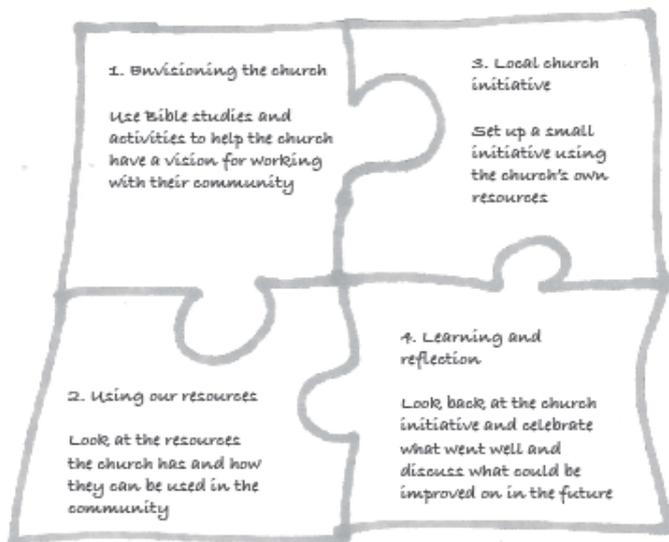
Different Gospels

	Mark	Matthew	Luke	John
audience	Early Christian	Jews	For Greek speaker	All
Style	brief and vivid 'Markan sandwich' to describe Mark literary technique whereby he interrupts a story with what appears to be an unrelated story. Greek as a second language	Jewish style	Greek Historian 2 Books	Spiritual
Sections	Who is this man/Why will Jesus die	5 Sections: 1. The New Law 2. Discipleship and Christian Leaders 3. The Revelation of the Kingdom 4. The church and its administration 5. Judgment	5 major sections: 1-Births of John and Jesus. 2-Preparations for Jesus' ministry 3- Jesus in Galilee 4-Jesus' journey to Jerusalem 5-Jesus in Jerusalem, death and resurrection.	The Book of Signs The Book of Glory
Discipleship/Themes	The Way / Follower of Christ	Jesus as King/The Kingdom	Salvation for all/Holy Spirit/'sing Gospel	Witness, Glory, the seven 'I am'
Christology/Theology	Jesus the Son of God The Messiah, king and son of David The Son of Man The Servant of God	Jesus fulfils the OT story Fulfils the laws and brings the higher righteousness Practical obedience and judgment Jesus brings good news to Jews, Gentiles and the Church		Jesus as the Jewish Messiah Jesus as divine Son Eternal life
When and Where	AD 60- Rome	AD 90	AD 70	AD 90

Church and community mobilization

Romans 12:1-8; Acts 2: 43-47

Envisioning and Equipping the Church



Mark 10:46-52

Main theme is to reflect on the role of the church and how the church really handles with the poor, disabled and people excluded from the community?

Questions raised during PEP training:

1. What are the changes you notice in the attitude of the crowds towards Bartimaeus in this story?
2. What are the reasons for these changes?
3. If the crowd represented the church today, what negative attitude does the church have towards people who are vulnerable and marginalised?
4. What can be done to address these negative attitudes?

How did Jesus use the crowd to respond to Bartimaeus' needs?

Key learning points that should come out of the discussion:

1. The crowd represents the church, and Jesus challenges the church to have a focus on the vulnerable and marginalized
2. Jesus used the crowd to bring Bartimaeus to him and to be at the centre of the crowd. In the same way, the church is called upon to put the marginalized and vulnerable at the centre of the church's ministry
3. Jesus responded to Bartimaeus by finding out what his needs were and responding accordingly. He also involved others in meeting those needs.

2 Kings 4:1-7

Elisha and the jars

Read 2 Kings 4:1-7



Discuss the following questions:

1. What were the key events in this story?
2. Who played what role?
3. What were the resources available to the widow and her sons?
4. What can we learn from this story which we could apply to how communities can use what they have got to overcome problems of poverty?
5. Look at the table below and get the participants to construct their own version, similar to this one. This is a good way to introduce simple planning skills which they can use for planning a church or community project, using their own resources.

Her needs	Her resources
Release from inherited debts of her husband	Small amount of oil
Protection of children who could be sold into slavery to pay for debts	Empty jars
Future income	Wisdom of Elisha
	Prayer
	Family labour

Key point: With God's help, and if we are willing to share, the resources we have can make a difference in addressing our poverty.

Matthew 5:13-16

Step 2: Bible study



Salt and Light

Read Matthew 5:13-16

Think of ways that you may be able to illustrate this passage visually (eg, having two foods to taste: one with salt, the other without; putting a candle under a bowl).

1. What are the natural characteristics and uses of salt?
2. What do you think Jesus meant when he said: "You are the salt of the earth"? In what ways do you or your church act as "salt" in the community?
3. What happens when salt loses its saltiness – to the salt and to the things it is used on? What challenge is there for us as the church?
4. What are the uses of light?



5. What does Jesus mean when he says "Let your light shine before men"? In what ways do you or your church act as light in your community?
6. How can your new church initiative help you to be salt and light in your community?



Mark 6:30-44

The feeding of the five thousand

Read Mark 6:30-44



Discuss the following questions and brainstorm answers on to a blackboard or a large piece of paper:

1. Who are the main players in this story?
2. What specific actions did they take?
3. What was the need in this story? What were the resources?

Then break into twos or threes and answer these questions:

4. What steps did Jesus take to perform the miracle?
5. In this story, what did Jesus focus on? What did the disciples focus on?
6. How were the resources used to meet the need identified?

Finally, come back together and discuss as a group:

7. Why do you think Jesus used those steps? List them.
8. How could he have performed this miracle differently? Why did he not do it differently?
9. What does this passage tell us about the way we should facilitate the church and the community to meet their needs?
10. What would a miracle look like for our community? Think about the resources we have to put in God's hands.

Local community envisioning

Luke 10:25-37

The good Samaritan

Read Luke 10:25-37

You may find it helpful to act out the events of the story so that people are able to visualise what is going on.



1. What is happening in this story? List the different people involved in the story, and what they each do.
2. What do you think motivates each person in the story to act in the way they do?
3. Who do you think each person in the story represents in our community today? Who do you identify with?
4. Who in the community are our neighbours? What needs do they have? How does Jesus tell us to love our neighbours?
5. Our upbringing can make it hard for us to relate to certain groups of people, such as those of different ages, level of education, caste, tribal group, or those who are very poor. How can we overcome these feelings? How can we help our children to grow up able to relate to people of all kinds?
6. From this story, what do you think Jesus requires of the church?

Key point: The church should not ignore the needs of people in the community, but instead should use its own time and resources to come alongside and help those in need, even if this is difficult or costly.

