

# Parables

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## Session 1: Seeing beyond the obvious

### Series: Parables

Themes: Understanding the Bible; stereotypes; love

Bible Passage: Luke 10:25-37

Suggested age group: 11-14's

Session aim: To encourage group members to explore whether their opinions of others are based on stereotypes  
To consider what it means to put the needs of others before our own, regardless of who they are

## Way in 1 - Fish bowl

Time: 5-10 mins

Bible knowledge: n/a

With: Small container or hat; three small slips of paper for each person; pen; stopwatch

1. Give each person three small slips of paper and a pen. Tell them they have no more than one minute to secretly write the names of three people or characters they think the whole group will know or have heard of and put the slips back in the container or hat.
2. Divide the group into two teams. Each team must choose someone who is going to lead them through the game. It will help them if this person is quite extroverted!
3. The aim of the game is to use as few words or actions as possible to convey to your group who each person pulled out of the container is. For every name the group guesses in a minute they gain ten points.
4. Choose a team to go first. Their leader pulls the first name out of the container and can use words (apart from the name itself) or actions to help their team guess who it is. As soon as the team guesses correctly, they move onto the next name. The leader is only allowed one "Pass" in a round. They must stop as soon as the minute has passed. If they are only partly through the guessing of a name, they must put it back into the container. It is now the next team's turn.
5. The game continues until the container of names is exhausted. If this occurs part-way through a minute, the team can have an extra point for every five seconds still on the clock.
6. Count out the number of names each team has accrued and applaud the winners. Ask the teams what the key was to guessing quickly. Point out that with many of these people they knew basic facts or rumours about them, but not many of them are really known to them well so they had to make assumptions when describing them.

## Way in 2 - Stereotypes Discussion

Time: 5 - 10 mins

Bible knowledge: n/a

With: Either enough printed faces grids for everyone to see or Power point slide (file – Stereotypes faces grid); projector and laptop if relevant

1. With everyone looking at the 'stereotype' characters, slowly read the following questions allowing time for the group to discuss which of the faces best fits:  
Which of these people – Is a millionaire? Was adopted? Was bullied at school? Is disabled? Drinks too much? Has spent time in jail? Is a Christian?
2. For each statement, the group must suggest which person on the sheet or power point that they think the statement is most likely to refer to.
3. Encourage the group to discuss these answers and give reasons to justify their choices.

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4. Explain that most of these faces have just been randomly selected and nothing about them and their lives. You can tell very little about someone by making assumptions. For example –would you really have been sure that E2 had spent 6 years in a Singaporean jail (Nick Leeson, jailed for bringing down Bearings Bank – known as ‘The Rogue Trader’) A3 was a Christian (Nicky Cruz, converted gang leader) or D5 paralysed from the neck down (Joni Eareckson, Christian speaker, artist and musician) unless you were told or met them?
5. Are they surprised by these facts? Why/why not?
6. Explain that stereotypes and shallow impressions of people can lead to assumptions being made about them. The passage for today is full of characters who had wrong impressions of one another and chose to either live up to or look past such stereotypes.

## Connecting - Stories Matter

**Time:** 25 - 30 mins

**Bible knowledge:** n/a

**With:** Props such as bag of coins, bandages and a small bottle of oil, Bibles or resource sheet 1 ‘Luke 10:30-37’, a big piece of paper and markers to jot discussion notes, stop watch, resource sheet 2 ‘Did you know?’

1. Give a short talk, including the following points:
  - Stories are a great way of grabbing attention and getting a point across in an interesting way. We can all think of films we watched as a child which helped to teach us about the importance of friends, standing up for what you believe in or that when life gets tough you need to keep going. (You may wish to ask them to name some examples).
  - The Bible tells us that Jesus used stories to teach the people, in fact “he did not say anything to them without using a parable” (Matt 13:34-35 NIV)
  - A parable is a story about familiar, every day things with two possible purposes. Either it makes a point about something far greater than is immediately apparent, or it explains something spiritual that would be very difficult to understand otherwise. Some of the parables told are very well known and you may have heard them told when you were younger.
  - But do we really understand the parables? Were they all used for the same purpose? Are they “nice wee stories for primary school children” or in fact do we need to take a closer look at what they really mean to understand more about Jesus?
  - This series is going to look at a number of these parables, mainly those in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke and try and see what different things we can learn about Christianity today when we really look at them closely.
2. Read through Luke 10:30-37 as a group. Ask them some basic questions about it. What do they think of this parable? Is it one they have heard before? What do they think the point of this parable is?
3. Ask the group to imagine that this story is going to be filmed as a one minute teaser for a film of the ‘Life of Jesus’. Give them access to the story and the props you have brought with you to allow them to quickly work out how they would perform it. Make sure everyone is involved (if necessary divide into smaller groups) and ensure that they do not take more than 5 minutes to plan and have a run through. Be strict about the story remaining within the one minute limit, using a stopwatch if necessary. It may help to appoint one of them as director to speed up decisions and tell them to perform the story as if it must be “shot on the first take”.
4. Allow the group to perform their teaser(s). Ask them about how they decided what the key points were to include in it.

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5. Hand out resource sheet 2 'Did you know' for them to read. Explain that those hearing this parable from Jesus would already have known. Does this alter their telling of the story? What do they need to add to their performance to give the story the full meaning that was intended? What do they think the key point is now?
6. Remind them that even with well known parables, reading them carefully is important so they don't miss the main message. Here we see that we are expected as Christians to put the needs of others above our own, no matter who they are or what we have going on around us. Jesus was the ultimate example of this, looking past all the reasons he should ignore our problems and instead loving us enough to die on a cross for us.
7. If there is time they can repeat their performance with any new details they may wish to add having had more time to think about the story.

## Responding 1 - Who is my neighbour?

**Time:** 3 mins

**Bible knowledge:** n/a

**With:** small slips of paper and an envelope

1. The Samaritan in the parable was willing to go beyond the call of duty to help the wounded man, even though he didn't have to, didn't know the man and was technically his sworn enemy. Part of what Jesus wanted to teach his audience was that kindness shouldn't be limited to those we care about or know, but shown to anyone regardless of who they are.
2. Ask the group to reflect on who they find it hard to show kindness to. Give them the option of either sharing this name or keeping it confidential.
3. Challenge them to inconvenience themselves this week, like the Samaritan did, and do at least one kind thing for this person. This could be as simple as holding a door, fetching something for them or as ambitious as including them in something or giving them a gift. Get them to write down what they'd like to do on a slip of paper and seal them in an envelope.
4. Tell the group that this may not be easy, but that's something that many of the parables have in common – they're not simply stories for children because they often present us with a very adult situation to take action on.
5. Make sure that you bring the envelope with you next week to discuss how they got on.

## Responding 2 - Seeking understanding

**Time:** 3 mins

**Bible knowledge:** limited

1. Ask your group to rate the following statements between one and five for how true they are to them, with one being completely false and five being absolutely true. They can indicate their answers with a count of fingers.
  - I am familiar with large portions of the Bible
  - I find some of the parts of the Bible difficult to understand
  - When I get stuck, I don't bother to try and find out what it means
  - When I get to a passage I know well, I skip over it
  - There is more for me to find out even in the most familiar parts of the Bible

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2. Take some time to pray with your group about the studies coming up in the next few weeks. Pray for understanding of challenging parables, fresh insight into more familiar ones and a desire to find out more about what Jesus was telling his followers by using them.

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## Resource Sheet 1 - Luke 10: 30-37

### **The Good Samaritan**

The man said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbour?"

Jesus answered, "As a man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, some robbers attacked him. They tore off his clothes, beat him, and left him lying there, almost dead. It happened that a priest was going down that road. When he saw the man, he walked by on the other side. Next, a Levite came there, and after he went over and looked at the man, he walked by on the other side of the road. Then a Samaritan travelling down the road came to where the hurt man was. When he saw the man, he felt very sorry for him. The Samaritan went to him, poured olive oil and wine on his wounds, and bandaged them. Then he put the hurt man on his own donkey and took him to an inn where he cared for him. The next day, the Samaritan brought out two coins, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of this man. If you spend more money on him, I will pay it back to you when I come again.' "

Then Jesus said, "Which one of these three men do you think was a neighbour to the man who was attacked by the robbers?"

The expert on the law answered, "The one who showed him mercy."

Jesus said to him, "Then go and do what he did."

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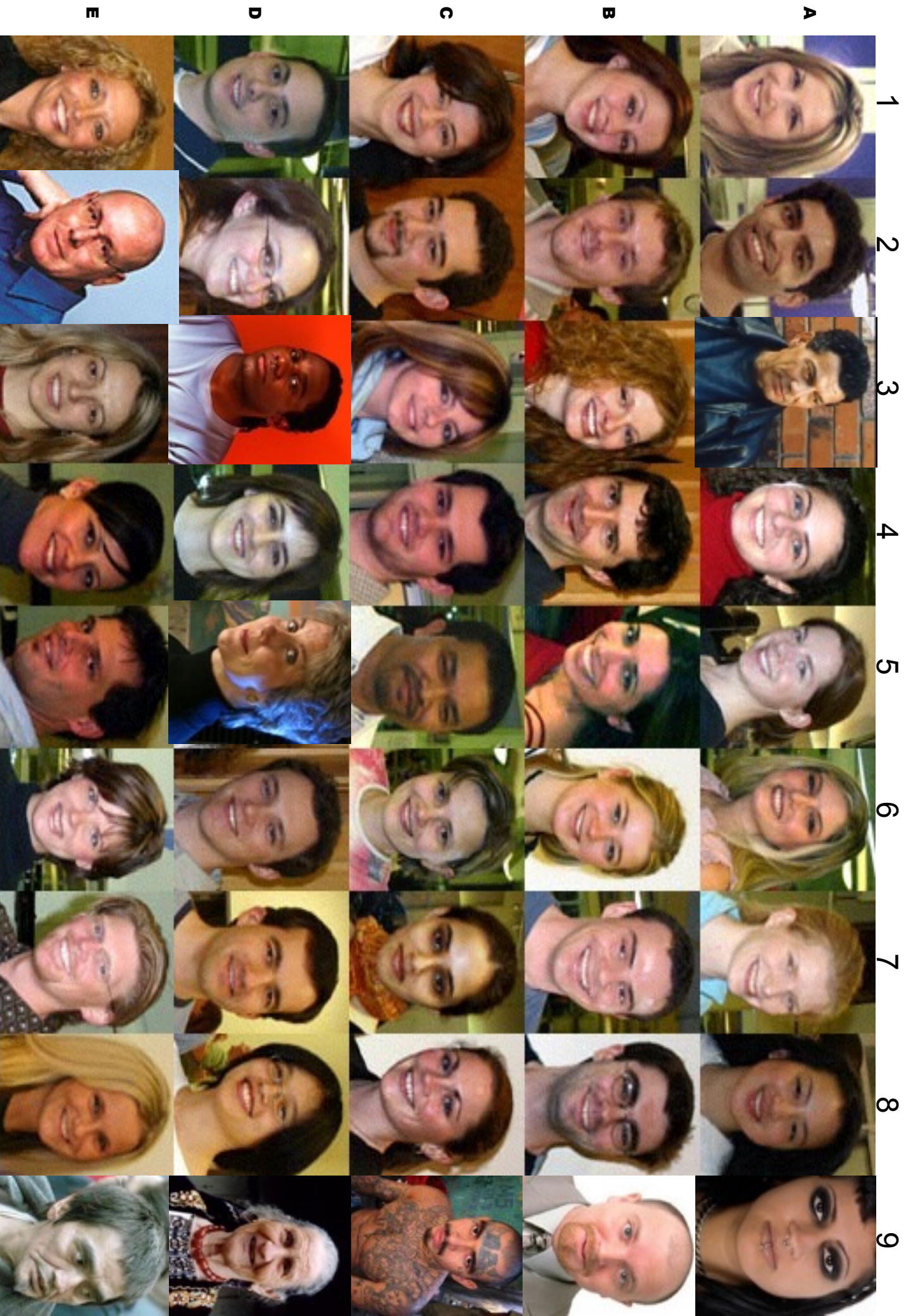
## Resource Sheet 2 – Did you know?

### Did you know?

- The Jews and the Samaritans were bitter enemies. The man in the story had probably gone the longer way from Jerusalem to Jericho, down a road that was well known for robbers, just so he didn't have to go through Samaria.

- The priest and the Levite probably thought they were doing the right thing. By Jewish law, if you touched a dead person you were considered unclean and they wouldn't have been able to do their work in the temple for some time if they had taken the risk of seeing if the man was alive. However they still got it wrong. Jesus spent a lot of time trying to teach the religious rulers that there was no point to keeping these rules so strictly if they stopped them from obeying his one of his most important laws – to put the needs of others over themselves.

- If the robbers had really stripped the Jew of his clothes there was very little way that the Samaritan could tell who he was at all. He went out of his way to help someone who he knew could be his enemy.



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