

# Simple Sundays

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**What is the  
Good News?**



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### Main Idea

Jesus proclaimed good news to the poor. This good news is a gift for the poor parts of our lives, as well as a gift we can share with others who are poor.

### Faith Statement

Jesus proclaimed the reign of God: preaching good news to the poor.

—A Brief Statement of Faith

### You Will Need

Bibles; index cards, pens

## Background

It began early that morning when the messenger arrived and told us that John the Baptist had been killed by Herod. We couldn't believe it. You could see the way Jesus responded to the news: the sorrow, the fear, the anger, and underneath it all, the love for John. Compassion—there's no other word for it really—Jesus seemed filled with compassion.

At first we all just needed to get away, and so we got in a boat, just to float out on the sea, just to be away from everything. The last thing we needed was to have strangers around. But here they came nonetheless: a couple here, a family there, one at a time. In groups as big as twelve, they came and sat on the shore. They seemed patient enough—just waiting, just wanting to see Jesus. And all of us on the boat wanted to get away. We weren't ready to face people. But something different seemed to be going on with Jesus. The compassion that seemed to fill his whole being was now moving him.

Before we knew it, he was in the middle of the crowd. He was touching the people. He was telling them parables as he loved to do. Those who were sick, he touched; and just his touch seemed to heal them. Those who were tired, he touched; and just his touch seemed to renew them. It was as if the compassion inside somehow flowed from him, out of him, and into those he touched. It was as if love was filling the crowd, one person at a time.

The day passed so quickly that we couldn't believe it when evening approached suddenly. Peter went up to Jesus first and told him it was time to quit: the day was over, the people needed to start their journeys back home, and the people needed to get

to the nearby villages to find food before nightfall. It seemed to be such a compassionate thought to send the people away for food, but we were shocked when Jesus responded, "No, you feed them." We were so startled you could see us jump back. The best we could come up with was five loaves of bread and two fish. We doubted we could feed the whole crowd gathered there. But then we looked at Jesus again, full of compassion, and he was moved by that compassion as he broke the bread and shared the fish. We passed it from one person to another, person after person, loaf of bread after loaf of bread, as the food seemed to multiply before our eyes. The feeling of compassion passed from one person to another. It flowed from one body to the next, enlivening the group gathered on the hillside.

You are not going to believe this, but when all the people had been fed—five thousand hungry men, not to mention all the women and children—there were twelve baskets of broken pieces of bread left over! There was enough compassion to feed a hungry world—enough to save the whole world.

## You and Your Youth

Help the young people hear God's good news, which comes to all different kinds of people in many different ways. In each session, the task will be for the young people to hear the way in which the good news is for them, and then to be able to think of ways they can share the same good news with others. A good way to begin your preparation is by praying for the youth, each one by name. Pray that God will help them listen and hear the good news of Jesus Christ. Pray that God will lead you as you meet with the young people.



## Enter

Learn names, encourage interaction, and laugh together as the session begins.

### Remember the Feeling

Invite youth to tell the group about a time when they were suddenly awakened from sleep. Ask:

- How did it make you feel to go from a deep sleep to suddenly being awake?

Ask youth to remember a time when they wanted to be left alone, but a parent asked them to help with a chore. Ask:

- What was your reaction when you were asked to do the chore?

### Opening Prayer

Dear God, help us be open this day to hear your good news. Thank you for coming to us in Jesus to show us your way and to tell us of the good things you want for us. Help us believe and understand this day. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.



## Explore

### Study the Bible

#### Bibles

Read today's story from the Bible or the version offered in Background. As the story is read, try to find your place in the story. Are you one of the disciples, one of the listeners on the hillside, or one who helps share the food? You may want to read it more than once.

Discuss the following:

- Where did you feel yourself in the story?
- What feelings were stirred in you?
- What thoughts or ideas came to mind for you?

In the Bible, the poor are described in various ways, as those lacking financially, relationally, or spiritually. Continue the discussion by answering the following:

- Who is poor in this story?
- What is the good thing they hear in Jesus' words?
- What is the good thing they see or experience in Jesus' actions?
- What is the good news for the poor?

## Who Are the Poor?

The good news that Jesus shared with the poor is also good news for us when we recognize our own poverty and need before God. Only then does the good news become good news for us.

Identify the ways in which youth you know are financially poor.

Identify the ways in which youth you know are poor in relationships.

Identify the ways in which young people you know are spiritually poor.

Discuss the following:

- In what way would you describe yourself as being poor?
- What good news have you heard today that you believe is for you?



## Express

*These discussions are an opportunity to apply the Scripture to our lives. If you do not seem to relate to these situations, then change them to make them relevant to your own life.*

### Youth Issue

You're not rich, but you have lots of good things in your life—family, church, and enough money to do a lot of the things you like to do. And you're glad about these things. They're good. It took a lot of work for your family to get where they are. It takes a lot of work to keep healthy in body, mind, and spirit. So why is there good news for the poor? Why shouldn't it be, instead, good news for those who work hard and do well?

### Action Steps

God's good news calls us first to believe, then calls us to act. Actions follow beliefs. On an index card write down ways you feel you might be called to share the good news with the poor.

- Think about who is poor and in need of good news.
- What is your gift for sharing? (Telling, giving, doing, acting . . .)
- What do you want to do?
- What do you want to say?

Share with each other the contents of these cards.

## Faithful Friends

A faithful friend is similar (but not identical) to a prayer partner. A faithful friend is someone with whom you covenant to share your spiritual journey on a regular basis.

Form pairs to learn about this spiritual practice with each other. The purpose is to have a faithful friend who will listen as you describe your present spiritual practices and who will encourage you in your spiritual life. To get started today, do the following:

- Describe your current spiritual practice to one another (I pray nightly; I keep a journal; I read the Bible every day; I'm not presently doing anything consistently).
- What do you find most meaningful about what you are doing?
- What would be a good way to grow in your spiritual practices?
- Agree to pray for each other during the week.
- Agree that you will join together at the next meeting and share your spiritual experiences for the week.



**Exit**

## Closing Prayer

*Bibles*

Read aloud together Isaiah 61, verse 1:

The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners.

Pray:

God, help us pray for one another this week. Help us look for your presence in our lives. Help us to be open to your guiding Spirit.