JUST CHURCH
A project of Church Action on Poverty

Session plan

exploring the idea of a just church with children

Who did Jesus listen to ?

One way we can explore with children what it means to be 'a just church' is to consider: who did Jesus listen to? Who did He spend time with? And who did He include in the Kingdom of God?

There are a number of scripture passages you could explore, using any of the suggested activities here. If your church uses the Revised Common Lectionary or the Catholic Liturgical Calendar, Matthew 22:1–14 (the wedding banquet) and Matthew 25:31–46 (the Last Judgement) are used in October and November.

Alternatively, you might use:

- Matthew 8:1–4 - Cure of a leper
- Matthew 9:10–13 - Eating with sinners
- Mark 5:25–34 - Cure of the woman with a haemorrhage
- Luke 7:36–50 - The woman who was a sinner
- Luke 19:1–10 - Zacchaeus
- John 8:3–11 - The adulterous woman



Role-play

- Ask some of the children (or adult leaders) to pretend they are playing together.
- Ask one of the leaders to pretend to be a stranger to the group and stand at the side watching the others playing.
- After a short time, encourage one of the group playing to talk with the lonely person and invite them to join their game.
- Then ask all the children: How did they feel when someone was on the edge of the group? How did they think the person felt? Have they ever felt left out? How did that feel?
- Remind them that in the role-play, the person who is alone is noticed, and included. What do they think about the person who made them feel welcome?

  Talk to the children about some of the stories where Jesus takes time with people, listening to them and making them feel included. Jesus especially does this with people who others have deliberately not included, because of an illness, where they are from, or because of a way they have behaved. Many stories about Jesus remind us no matter who we are or what we have done, Jesus loves us and includes us in his kingdom.
- Lots of people don't feel welcome or justly treated in our world today. Ask the children: what can we do in our church and community to make people feel included and welcome, and to ensure everyone is treated fairly and justly?

Craft

- Read the group the story of the wedding feast in Matthew 22:1–14.
- Make a collage to illustrate the people who came to the wedding feast.
- Ask the young people to think about who the King (God) would invite to the wedding feast today - e.g. refugees; homeless people; prisoners.
- Include them in the picture too, and share it with the wider congregation.



Who would God invite to a feast today?

Using stories from today

- Bring some current newspapers, or print-outs of online news articles.
- Read the story of the last judgement in Matthew 25:31–40.
- Ask the children to list the groups of people the King mentioned being a part of. Which people would he think about today?
- Using the articles, help the children find stories that include people mentioned in the Gospel.
- Encourage them to think about what we can do in our church to make people feel included and part of our community?

Prayer

- Invite the children to write, or dictate, prayers for all the people in our world that don't feel included or welcome.
- They can either be shared during the general service or written round an image of a church with an open door, and pinned up where the wider congregation can see it.



A sycamore in Jericho like the one which Zacchaeus climbed (photo by Daniel Case)

Imagining

- Choose one of the scripture passages that you feel best illustrates how Jesus spent time with people who others excluded (e.g. Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1–10).
- Ask the children to close their eyes while the story is read slowly.
- Invite them to imagine themselves in the story. They might be Zacchaeus, one of Jesus' followers, or a person in the crowd.
- Ask them to imagine what they can see and hear, what might they smell, how warm is it.
- Then notice what is happening in the story. What is Jesus saying to Zacchaeus? What is Zacchaeus saying to Jesus? How does Zacchaeus feel to be chosen by Jesus?
- Follow up: What did the story tell us about Jesus and who he thought mattered? Who would Jesus think matters in our world today?



This resource was written by Church Action on Poverty supporter Miriam McHardy. Miriam is a freelance writer editor and facilitator with a particular interest in the area of faith, justice and the environment.
email: just.folk@mmchardy.org.uk

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