



Neither the one  
who plants  
or the one who  
waters is  
anything, but only  
God, who makes  
things grow.  
1 Corinthians 3:7

# GOING FOR GROWTH

Diocese of Bristol

## Session 3 Communities

### 1 Getting to know one another

*Choose one of the ice-breakers that will help the group get to know one another better and build a sense of community, 3 or 10 might be particularly good. See notes for leaders 2.*

### 2. Looking at the Bible together

*Choose a way to read or listen to this - see notes for leaders 3.*

### Key Bible Passage - Luke 7:36 - 8:3

Jesus is dining with Simon the Pharisee, one of the religious elite, when they are disturbed by a woman of ill-repute coming in and anointing his feet with oil, crying and wiping them with her hair. Simon is horrified and Jesus, sensing this tells him a simple parable of two debtors, one who owes a lot and one who owes a little. Both are let off and the point is made that the one who owed the most will love the most. Simon is presumably feeling fairly self-righteous, yet he has not even shown Jesus the common signs of hospitality normal in that culture. The woman, who knows her sinfulness and how much she has been forgiven, has, on the other hand treated Jesus with almost embarrassing attention. We see Jesus graciously interacting with both.

Soon after this we see a snapshot of those who gathered around Jesus and travelled with him. Many had left the roles that would normally have been expected of them in society in order to be part of this community.

- *Who was in the community that Jesus built up around him? Share some of the things you found out during the week.*
- *What can you identify as characteristics of this community?*
- *What price did people have to pay to be part of this community?*
- *What is the price we might need to pay to build communities centred on Christ?*

**'The search for community is our culture's deepest longing and the Christian faith's greatest promise'**

Ralph Osborne

### **The community centred around Jesus.**

Some of the possible outcomes of these questions are that :- Jesus' community was male & female; variety of social, economic backgrounds; people who had been in a mess but were healed, forgiven; shared resources; travelled and spent time together; had a common purpose/focus; but there is tension especially in Simon's house between inclusion and exclusion - Simon has insulted Jesus by his treatment of him and yet Jesus remains there. Community is not easy to build.

- Split into groups of 2 or 3. Think about your own church community. Who is in it. List the ways in which you are similar to the community Christ built. List the ways in which you are different.
- What needs to change? Come together and pool ideas.

**'The worst disease in today's world is not leprosy or cancer; it is the feeling of being uncared for, unwanted, of being deserted and alone'**

Mother Teresa.

- Share any stories of communities that you have experienced that have demonstrated some of the qualities of the early Christian community.
- How do we take this model into the other communities we are part of such as our work, families, social life? Try to think in terms of what Jesus said about us being light, salt and yeast in the world.

**Within the fellowship of those who are bound together by personal loyalty to Jesus Christ, the relationship of love reaches an intimacy and intensity unknown elsewhere....Where it is experienced, especially across the barriers of race, nationality and language, it is one of the most convincing evidences of the continuing activity of Jesus among men'.**

Bishop Stephen Neill.

### **3. Prayer and reflection**

See Notes for  
Leaders sections 5&6

Jesus commanded us to **love one another**.

Photocopy ( or you could write in large on card yourself) the acrostic which shows some of the things this might involve (all of these are things we are told to do in Scripture).

Have a time of quiet prayer as you reflect on these and ask God how you can begin to be a community which obeys Jesus' command to love one another in this way.

### **4. Preparation for next session**

During the week before session 4 (Creating) read through Genesis 1:1-2:3 or, if you have access to a recording listen to it read.

If you have access to the internet you will find many amazing pictures of galaxies and nebula at [www.NASA.gov](http://www.NASA.gov).

Look for things that excite you about God's creativity in the world at large, in the local community and within the church. Bring one thing to share with the group when you meet; a picture, an idea, a story, an observation

Become s**L**aves to one another

Out do **O**ne another in showing honour

Li**V**e in harmony with one another

Welcome on**E** another

Bear **O**ne another's burdens

Be kind to o**N**e another

Care for on**E** another

Be at pe**A**ce with one another

Encourage o**N**e another

Forgive **O**ne another

Teach & admonish one ano**T**her

Bear wit**H** one another

Be subject to on**E** another

Regard othe**R**s as better than yourself