

The role of children and young people

Vision: to explore the biblical perspective on the role of children and youth, examining our own beliefs and assumptions and them in the light of Scripture

Introduction

Before the Bible reflection, orientate yourselves to the biblical perspective on children by brainstorming some of the passages and stories that come to mind as involving children. *What do these show us about how God sees children?* Now follow this 'Lectio Divina' below – remember that, while Jesus is unique, he said we would do the things he has done and even greater (John 14: 12) so it is important not to underestimate the learning from this story about how we respond to children and young people.

Luke 2:41-52

Lectio Divina

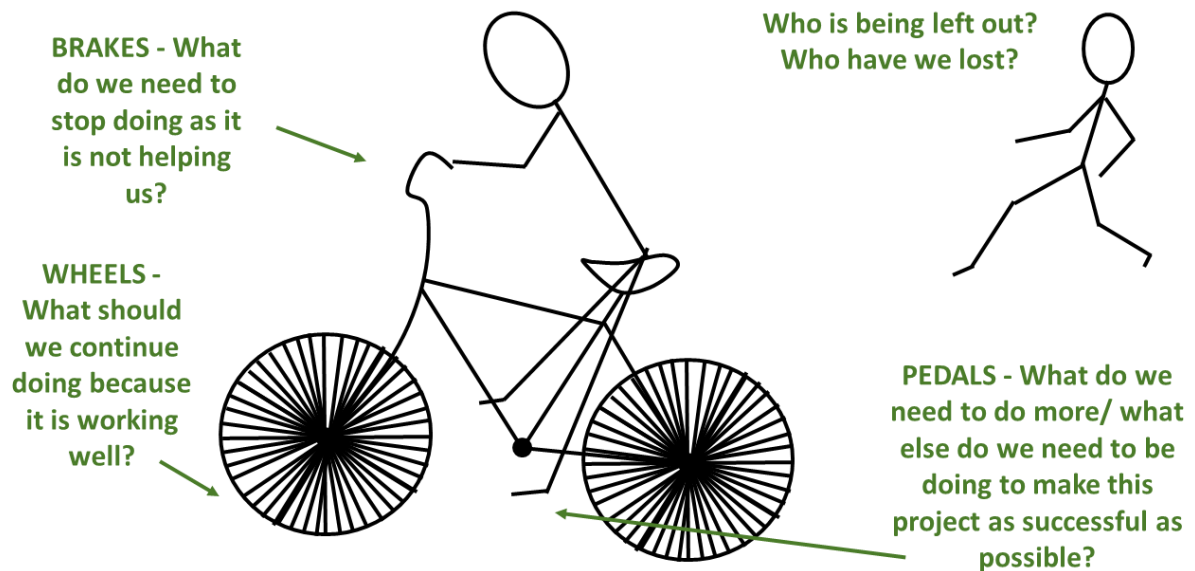
- 1. Reading:** Ask someone to pray for us to be open to the passage with our mind, heart and emotions and for his Holy Spirit to guide us. Read the passage slowly and prayerfully out loud. Read the passage again individually in our heads.
- 2. Meditation:** Take 5 minutes of silence – imagine that you were in the temple when these events occurred. What do you see? What do you hear? What can you smell? What do you feel? How are the people around you reacting? As you reflect on the passage, be attentive to words, phrases and ideas that come to mind. Ponder them in your hearts and listen to what God might be saying to us.
- 3. Prayer:** Join up with one other person first to share your thoughts and feelings and to offer them together to God in prayer. Ask God to show you how he wants us to respond to and act on those.
- 4. Contemplation:** Come together in the whole group to sit or stand together in silence for a few minutes in the presence of God, allowing time just to be with God.
- 5. Living:** Share the thoughts and ideas that have emerged and what God might be saying to us through them and calling us to do.

Act of Love

Pray together and ask God to show us as an individual, group and church something that we can do differently to involve children and youth now in teaching and leading us forward. Use the 'going deeper' activity to strengthen your reflection.

Going deeper:

Bicycle activity: Use the image of a bicycle and the questions overleaf to consider what we are doing as a church to give children and youth leadership, reflecting on who is being left out; what we are doing badly that we should stop; and what we need to do differently or more.



Summary for facilitator:

Children are often overlooked and underestimated, left out of decisions that concern them – but the Bible paints a different picture.

Throughout his ministry, Jesus always values and makes time for children:

- Matthew 18: 2-6: *He called a little child to him and placed the child among them. And he said: "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven...."*
- Matthew 19: 13-15: *Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."*

We must model kind and generous habits to children when they are young and teach them what is right, as their values will influence their behaviour even when they grow up.

- Proverbs 22:6: *Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.*
- Deuteronomy 6: 6-7: *These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.*
- Ephesians 6:4: *Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.*

Children and youth make positive contributions to society and should be encouraged to do so. They should not be underestimated

- 1 Samuel 17:33: *Saul replied, "You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a young man, and he has been a warrior from his youth."*
- John 6:9-13 *"Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?"...*
- 2 Kings 5:*A young girl from Israel served Naaman's wife. She said to her mistress, "If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy."*