



Reluctant Evangelist?

How can you sleep?

Aim: to grasp the importance of Evangelism

This session for young people aged 14-18 is from Substance Volume 5. Telling Others? Substance (produced by Scripture Union) is a multi-volume discipleship course for 14 to 18s using tried and tested activities, written by experienced youth workers. Each volume contains ten sessions and a thematic syllabus built around a biblical framework.

This session has been put together using ideas from Session 1 of 4 based around the story of Jonah.

You will need:

- The attached Leaders introduction sheet.
- Bibles
- 'Where's Wally?' books
- Copies of bible passage
- Highlighters
- 4 S's PDF downloadable from
http://www.scriptureunion.org.uk/Uploads/Documents/Substance_Vol5_HowCanYouSleep_4SInstructionsAndBibleVerses.pdf
- On the run animation
http://www.scriptureunion.org.uk/Uploads/Documents/Substance_Vol5_HowCanYouSleep_OnTheRunAnimation.swf
- Song lyrics, Cd's/MP3's of worship songs
- Coloured pencils.
- Large sheets of paper and pens
- TV and DVD player or Computer, digital projector and speakers.
- Video clip

Session.

I have chosen 3 activities from a choice of 9.



BEGIN Title: Reluctance

- **Why: To introduce evangelism and reasons why people might be reluctant**
 - **With: Funny video clip about evangelism**
- Show a humorous clip from a TV show or film to introduce evangelism. One possibility is from an episode of *The Simpsons* called, 'Homer the Heretic'. The clip begins with Homer watching TV, then the Flanders family ring the doorbell. When Homer opens the door, Ned says, 'Neighbour, I heard about your heresy and we've made it our mission to win you back to the flock.' The clip ends when Homer finds himself on a barge heading towards Garbage Island
- Once you've shown the clip, suggest to the group that evangelism is something disliked by those inside the church almost as much as it is by those outside the church. Explain that this is one of the many issues you'll be able to explore together as you delve into the book of Jonah, which contains the story of a very grumpy evangelist.
- Spend some time discussing the following questions either all together, or in small groups, Jot down what people say on a large sheet of paper. The aim of this exercise is not to come up with the 'right' answers; it's to find out what the young people currently think. Keep the sheets of paper handy throughout this module so you can refer back to their responses.
- What is evangelism?
 - Why might people not like to be on the receiving end of evangelism?
 - Why should Jesus' followers be keen to evangelise?
 - What sometimes causes people to be reluctant evangelists?

EXPLORE Title: Where's Jonah?

- **Why: To be challenged by Jonah's mistakes**
- **With: 'Where's Wally?' books, copies of Bible passage, coloured pencils or highlighters, 'On the run' animation**

-In advance, get hold of a few copies of a *Where's Wally?* book. Divide the young people into as many small groups as you have copies of the book and see how many

'Wallys' they can find in 5 minutes. Then introduce the question we'll be looking at in Jonah chapter 1: 'Where's Jonah?!

-Explain to the group that the first incidence of 'Where's Jonah?' is in **verse 3** where Jonah decided to run away from God. If you haven't already introduced the theme in the

-Ask the young people to tell stories of times when they've run away from something. Then show the 'On the run' animation.

- Pose the following questions to your group: 'Why did Jonah physically run away?' 'Why didn't he just stay where he was and ignore God?' Discuss some of the things we might do to try to avoid God (for example we might stop reading the Bible and going to church). Then, use the information in the **leaders' introduction** to explain why Jonah may have run away.
- In twos or threes, ask the young people to spend some time discussing why people might want to 'run away from God' and why it's probably not a particularly sensible idea. Before you move on, ask the young people to consider this question for themselves:
Where are they? Have they ever 'run away' from God? *Are they doing that now?*
- Ask a volunteer to read **Jonah 1:4-6** to the group and introduce the second 'Where's Jonah?' incident. Jonah is asleep while everyone else is fighting for survival.
- In small groups, discuss if there are any similarities between Jonah's actions and the church today. If necessary, explain using the information in the **leaders' introduction**.
- On a large sheet of paper make a list of things that as Christians we shouldn't 'sleep through'. Once again challenge the young to consider the question: 'Where are you?' Ask a leader to say a short prayer asking God to help us wake up, and stay awake.

RESPOND. Title: The God of heaven chooses you

- **Why: To provide an opportunity for reflection and praise**

➤ **With: Song lyrics, CDs/MP3s of worship songs, coloured pencils, '4 S's' PDF copied x2**

- In advance, prepare a space for a worship wander. Print a couple of copies of each of the 4s cards to place in each of the four areas. Here's an outline of each area. However, don't feel like you have to limit yourselves to these ideas - be creative!
- *Scriptures*: Stick up the Bible verses from the PDF around the area. Encourage the young people to read them and then spend some time thinking about them individually before saying *quiet* prayers of praise.
- *Songs*: During this time have worship songs playing in the background, for example 'God of Wonders' or 'Indescribable' by Chris Tomlin. or 'Great In Power (Praise him you heaven), by Darlene Zschech. Have copies of the lyrics available as well as paper and pens so the young people could jot down their own song lyrics.
- *Stories*: Encourage people to share stories with one another about how God has used ordinary people to do great things. These could be stories from the Bible, missionary stories they've heard or read, or stories about times that God has used them. Have a large sheet of paper so people can write these down.
- *Scribbles*: Have paper and colouring pencils available and encourage the young people to draw pictures that represent how amazing God is. If they get stuck for ideas, suggest they illustrate the scriptures, songs and stories from the other areas.
- Explain to the young people that we learn a lot about God from what we read in the book of Jonah. Not only do we find out about his plans, we discover what he is like. Jonah 1:9 contains Jonah's proclamation about the one he worships: *'the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the land.* Invite the young people to spend some time with God, wandering around the different areas at their own pace, choosing which ones they want to spend time at. Using the time to listen to and respond to God.



- At the end of the session come together to consider ways that they might make known the 'Good news' where they are as a group and as individual followers of Christ.

Close your session with prayer.



LEADERS INTRODUCTION SHEET

Are you a reluctant evangelist? I know I am - and it annoys me! I long for people to start following Jesus, because I honestly believe that it's only Jesus who can give us life in all its fullness (John 10: 1 0). Yet, so often, for so many reasons, I'm reluctant. So I'm both challenged and encouraged by the book of Jonah which contains the story of a reluctant evangelist who has a tendency to be a little grumpy.

We pick up Jonah's story when God tells him to go to Nineveh. Jonah could have responded, 'What a great opportunity to serve God! I can't wait to go and urge people to repent.' However, this is not how Jonah reacted! Jonah 3: 1 0 - 4:2 provides us with a clue as to why Jonah responded in the way that he did. Jonah was an Israelite and the Israelites had somewhat misunderstood God's plans. They liked being God's 'chosen people' and they didn't want anyone else to spoil what they had going with God. In fact, they quite liked it when God punished other nations!

But, before we judge Jonah, let me offer a modern day comparison, because I think we can all be a little like Jonah sometimes. Imagine your church suddenly doubled in size; but all the new people are prostitutes, drug addicts, gangsters and thieves. Your church would look somewhat different, wouldn't it? And I suspect, if you're honest, you might feel a little uncomfortable.

So Jonah ran away. However, one question has always puzzled me: why did he actually run away? Why couldn't he have just stayed where he was? Well, I suspect that Jonah didn't want to be haunted by his disobedience and where he lived was probably full of reminders. We also need to remember that, in Jonah's day, God was much more associated with a geographic area. Therefore, Jonah tried to escape! Have you ever tried to ignore God for a while? Although I doubt that you tried to physically run away like Jonah did, your approach was probably fairly similar. You probably avoided the things that reminded you that you were disobeying God. Perhaps that meant you attended church less frequently, and stopped praying and reading the Bible.

Jonah quickly discovered, as you may have done, that his plan was flawed. We soon find Jonah on a boat in a severe storm. But while the sailors were holding a prayer meeting, Jonah, who believed that his God was the only God who could do something about the problem, was having a quick nap! This is often compared to the inaction of the church when so many people are desperate for salvation. It presents us with a real challenge - are we sleeping in our comfortable churches while there are so many people outside who need our help?

When Jonah is accused of being the cause of all this trouble, he finally seems to turn a corner. He tells the sailors a little about himself and the God he worships. Then he is prepared to help them by sacrificing his life for them (foreshadowing what Jesus would later do). Then the sailors encountered God's power when the storm ended just as Jonah had told them it would. Finally, we read of how the sailors offer sacrifices and make promises to God. It's unlikely that they turned their backs on all their other gods and became fully devoted followers of the God Jonah had told them about. However, they



made steps in the right direction. Despite Jonah's initial reluctance, this episode provides us with an excellent picture of effective evangelism: allow people to find out about us, tell people about how great God is, help people, and encourage them to encounter God's power for themselves.

Throwing lots: The 'casting of lots' was a common practice in Bible times. In Proverbs 16:33, we read that God can make his will known when lots are thrown. In the Old Testament it was the method to decide which Jews returned to Jerusalem after the exile (Nehemiah 11: 1) and in the New Testament the disciples used lots when finding a replacement for Judas Iscariot (Acts 1 :24-26).