

SESSION 1 FAVOUR

GOD INTENTIONALLY SEEKS OUT THE PEOPLE NO ONE ELSE CARES FOR.

LEADERS NEED-TO-KNOW

Luke was a well-travelled Greek doctor who spent two years carefully researching the life of Jesus from eyewitnesses so that he could write an accurate account.

When it comes to what we favour, most of us naturally choose what is whole, beautiful, strong, high-performing, rich or clever. But God's favour is very different. We see throughout the Bible that He intentionally seeks out the unexpected: the vulnerable, those living in poverty, the excluded – the people no one else cares for. This is something that Jesus demonstrates again and again in His life.

When we have experienced God's favour for ourselves, it becomes much easier to intentionally seek out and show it to those around us, especially those others would reject, discard, exclude, or write off.



LOOK
OUT!

THE WORLD AROUND ME

Ask the young people "would you rather...?" for each of the options below. As you play, young people can choose an answer by moving to the left or right of a line.

Coke or Diet Coke? Shops or park? McDonalds or KFC? Sun or snow? Nike or Adidas? Cadburys or Galaxy? Cat or dog? Beautiful or clever? Red or blue? iPhone or Samsung?

Now ask, why do we choose what we choose? Why do we favour one thing over another? Answers might include: looks, performance, newness, value for money, usefulness, background, our own experiences, etc.

How God chooses or favours often looks very different to how we do.

LOOK
UP!



THE SPINNER SECTION

Step One: READ. Birth of Jesus, Luke 2:6-18.

Step Two: FIND. Someone who is living in poverty, vulnerable or excluded:

- Mary: a teenage girl, unmarried and pregnant, having her first baby far from home.
- Joseph: sticking by Mary despite not being the father, social disapproval and pressure.
- Jesus: a new-born baby unable to survive without help.
- Shepherds: despised, living on the margins as outcasts.

Step Three: SPIN.

SPIN ONE: BIBLE

The words below in italics are some of the answers young people might find as they look in the text. Allow them to lead but use the thoughts and questions surrounding the words to help facilitate discussion as they explore God's favour in the story.

Remember to alternate between orange Bible spins and blue Action spins.

WHAT DID GOD DO (or not do)?

- *God chose to be born!* Why choose to be born into poverty and obscurity, rather than wealth and fame?
- *Chose an unmarried teenage girl and ordinary young man to be Jesus' parents.* How would you have felt being given this job?
- *God sent angels with a message for a group of lowly outcasts.* Why were they the first to be invited? Who else was invited? (The Wise Men were rich but also unlikely candidates.)

WHAT DID GOD SAY (or not say)?

- *God did not say anything to Mary and Joseph here, but He had already spoken to them (1:28-38).* When things started going wrong, did they doubt God? Does it sometimes feel like God is silent?
- *God said this tiny new-born baby was the Saviour of the world.* Would your plan to save the world start with a helpless baby?
- *The shepherds are invited to go to Bethlehem to see if it is true.* Would you have gone? Why or why not?

WHAT EMOTIONS DO YOU SEE?

- There was no room for Mary and Joseph, and she was in labour. How do you think they felt – *worried, scared*? How do you think they felt about shepherds turning up talking about angels?
- The angels said the birth of Jesus was *good news, causing great joy!* Where can you see that in the story?
- When have you experienced *opposite emotions* (like the shepherds) in the space of a few moments?

WHAT THINGS GO WRONG?

- *No room* – how would that feel?

- *Animals* around while you're giving birth and a *feeding trough* as a cot! Do you think this was how God planned it? Why?
- When the first *angel appeared in the middle of the night*, the shepherds were terrified. What do you think they expected to happen next?

WHAT ARE THE EVERYDAY MOMENTS?

- About 1,500 *babies are born* in the UK each day (NHS Maternity Statistics 2022-23). Most are announced by phone, not angels!
- A *baby bed and clothes*. Why would Dr Luke include this in his write up?
- *Gossip and news travelled fast* even in those days, without social media!

WHAT RULES ARE BROKEN?

- Being a *single mum* was a scandal in those times. Joseph sticking by Mary despite not being the father was unexpected and unusual. How have things changed or not changed in the last 2,000 years?
- *God becoming human* is not in any rule book! Why would God do this?
- Shepherds would not usually *visit a stranger's new-born baby or be welcome* if they did. Do you know who was the first person to visit you after you were born?

SPIN TWO: ACTION

Choose one of the activities below when the spinner lands on DO or YOU. (Check out page 28 if you would like some extra or alternative game ideas.)

DO: If you could invite anyone in the world to a party, who would you invite? Each add three names on post-it notes to a list on a flipchart, whiteboard or wall. Jesus is God and yet the people at his 'birthday party' are the lowest of the low.

DO: Set a timer for three minutes as teams use whatever they can find in the room to create a makeshift cot! Vote for the best one. How does it compare to the feeding trough Jesus was laid in?

YOU: Underline or write down who you relate to most in this story:

- Shepherds, on the fringe, looked down on.
- Mary, trusting God, but with questions.
- Joseph, doing the right thing, but it's tough.
- Jesus, weak, vulnerable, needing others' help.

YOU: A leader prepares a short story of a time they experienced God seeking out and choosing them or they did this to someone living in poverty, vulnerable or excluded. Be honest about difficulties and feelings.

Step Four: FLIP. Read the back of the spinner.

One of the best, but most unlikely, places to see God's favour in action is at the cross, a Roman method of execution reserved for the worst criminals and inflicting awful torture. We might expect that because God shows favour on those people no one else cares for, Jesus might start a campaign to end this brutal form of capital punishment. We would not expect Jesus to willingly go to the cross and die! This is how God shows His favour to us, by intentionally sending Jesus to die in our place, pay for our sins on the cross, and invite us into His family.



LOOK
IN!



HOW THIS IMPACTS ME

Have you ever experienced God intentionally seeking you out and caring for you? Think how God invited the people in the story to know His favour in different ways. They had a decision to make about accepting His favour and finding out more. We also have a decision to make. Do we want to know God's favour? God never turns away anyone wanting to follow Him.

PRAYER PROMPTS:

- Tell God something you have discovered about His favour today.
- Tell Him who you are in the story. Why?
- Tell Him if you would like to know more of Him intentionally seeking you out and caring for you.

HOW CAN I IMPACT OTHERS?

This week, how can we show God's favour to one person others do not care about?

Write down privately the person's name and what you will do. Use "Would you rather...?" prompts to help the young people decide: Talk or send a message? At home or school? Share food or have a drink? Sit next to them or walk with them? Spend time or spend money? Take less than one minute or 10 minutes? Anonymous or known?

Bring your story of who you reached out to show care for back to the Look Up time next week.

LOOK
THROUGH!

