

Messy Church sports session:

The good Samaritan

The parable of the good Samaritan comes in the context of a discussion about striving for excellence, about what rules to keep, and about our relationship with God and with those around us. All these are sporty themes as well as spiritual ones, making it a highly suitable subject for a Messy Church session on sport.

Craft ideas

- Wrap a friend or family member in bandages or toilet paper
- The good Samaritan treated the man's wounds with olive oil and with wine—decorate little glass or plastic bottles of olive oil
- Make wine-bottle candleholders by dribbling an empty wine bottle with warm wax (adult supervision needed) and making a bead necklace to decorate it
- Draw round your hands to decorate a card to give to someone telling them how kind they are
- Make donkeys out of cardboard boxes. Open up a cardboard box and fold the flaps of the base up or down so that you can stand inside the resultant hollow rectangle made up of the four vertical sides. Pull it up to your middle so that it looks as if you are riding the donkey. Make two straps that are stapled or sticky-taped on to the box and are long enough to go over the shoulders.
- Draw traffic signs to colour in: what stops us helping others? What makes us deviate from being a good neighbour? What hazards are ahead?
- Pray about those people we find hard to love. Write their name, or draw a picture of them, on an acetate or Perspex heart. Drop on olive oil as a sign of healing and wrap the heart in a bandage as a sign of care. Let's not make excuses like the priest and Levite did: Jesus calls us to love each other simply and unconditionally. Repeat this exercise with your own name: God knows we can all be hard to love, but he treasures each one of us whatever we're like.
- Make invitations using calligraphy for a dinner4good. See www.dinner4good.com or www.samaritans-purse.org.uk/alive-to-thrive for details.
- Make a first-aid box and fill it with basic first-aid equipment. Add cardboard crosses to give to people whose feelings are hurt. The crosses should be blank on one side to decorate and have a verse on the other side.
- Make a story bracelet with beads of different colours and shapes to tell the story. Three hearts for the love of God, neighbour and self; rectangle for a road; triangle for the mountains; doughnut shape for a robbers' cave; star or jagged shape for robbers fighting; red for blood; blue for the priest; green for the Levite; yellow for the Samaritan; bottle shape for

oil or wine; pony bead for the donkey; square for the inn; silver circles for coins; a further heart shape for 'go and do the same'.

- Make a sand scene using a sand tray and toy people to tell or act out the story
- Cut out pictures from magazines and make a 'who is my neighbour?' collage. Try to find people of different ages, races and genders. Alternatively, invite people to draw a picture of themselves in one house and pictures of others in the next-door house.

Celebration

Introduce the idea of celebrating the Olympic Games (or another major sporting event). Ask people what their favourite sport is. Say that sporting events are all about people doing their very best.

Arrange for some volunteers to be in sports kit to play the parts in the story below. If possible, read the story as if you were a sports commentator. Invite those in sports kit to improvise sports, making the mime as funny as they can.

There was once a man who asked Jesus how he could be the best. Not how he could win a gold medal or a football trophy, but how he could win what mattered most to him. 'Good teacher,' he said, 'how can I win eternal life?' He knew he should love God and love his neighbour, but then he asked Jesus, 'Who is my

neighbour?' And Jesus replied with a story. Perhaps a modern-day version might be a little bit like this:

'Well, here we are on the track between Jerusalem and Jericho and we're here to see some fantastic athletes in action today. There they are, all warming up as you can see. What an amazing bunch they are! Let's give them a cheer!

First off, it's the men's 3,000 metre hurdles, and here's our man from [insert your national team name], running down this very rugged mountain path now. Yes! He's jumped the roadblock signs. Oooh, and he's hurdled over the mountain goat! And there he goes over a large boulder... But what's this? Oh dear, I think he's ended up in the middle of the Taekwondo... and the judo... and, oh dear, is that the boxing team? And surely not the archery team? And what are the javelin throwers doing here? Or the hammer throwers? Or the rapid-fire pistol team? And the wrestlers? These boys are big... ouch!... and brutal... ouch! They've made mincemeat of our poor team member. I'm sure they're not supposed to take all his clothes with them when they run off... And surely they shouldn't leave him bleeding all over the road like that?

But never mind! Here comes another of our team. It's one of the captains! He's going to look after his team member, I'm quite sure... and he's coming up to our injured man now... and he's slowing down... he's stopping... and what's this? He's sprinting

away at full speed! What a turn of speed! What acceleration! Perhaps he thinks it's against the rules to stop and help in the middle of a race? He's going to manage that sprint in record time! Which means medals for him, but what about our poor injured man? Is he out of the race for good?

Ah, good, another of our team captains is coming down the road. Our man will be fine now. He's coming nearer... and nearer... oooh, watch these mental gymnastics as he wrestles with his conscience! And my word, what a magnificent triple jump he does to get as far away as possible when he sees what a mess that man is!

But who's this coming now? Oh no, it's one of the [fill in whichever nationality is the major competitor at the moment] team! What's he doing? He's stopping! He's going over to our man... he's sponging him down! He's giving him oranges! He must be a weightlifter! Look at him lifting him up... and yes! They're off down the road, and now they're in the lead... they're coming up to the finishing line and... they've won this year's steeplechase! This is amazing! Our enemy is our friend! This makes no sense at all! Let's hear it for the man from [opposing team name]!

And Jesus said, 'Which of these men was a neighbour to the man who had been attacked?' Of course it was the one who helped him. Nothing was going to get in the way of the man from [opposing team name]

helping that injured man—not race, religion, or rules of any sort. So if we want to win the best medal of all—the prize of pleasing God—it's very easy! We just have to love God and love our neighbour, and look after other people around us, no matter what everyone else thinks we should do.

Prayer

Sports spectators do a lot of cheering. Invite everyone to join in the following prayer with a big 'Yeeeeeah!' (or 'whoop' or 'hooray' or whatever cheering noise you like best).

Jesus, you are the greatest champion of all (cheer!)

You tell fantastic stories (cheer!)

We want to be the best people we can be for you and for each other (cheer!)

Please help us to remember you every minute of every day (cheer!)

And to put other people first, especially those we don't like (cheer!)

Jesus, you really are the best! (cheer!)

For Hannah and William Fisher, Elizabeth Harley
and Murray Bean, who have exerted so much effort
and skill to interest me in sport to so little effect

Thanks to Martyn Payne, Charis Lambert,
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