

What does God want for us?

Ted Talks meet the Bible

By Sam Gould, Diocese of Massachusetts, 2014
Adapted by the Diocese of New Westminster, 2020

Introduction

During each week of this five-week curriculum a six to thirteen minute TED Talk is paired with a piece of scripture to invite your group to talk about how we are called to live out our faith. By combining these high quality presentations with scripture we can set the stage for meaningful conversations with spiritual depth that connect to our daily lives.

Feel free to adapt the materials or questions to fit the specific needs of your group.

TED (Technology, Entertainment, Design) is a series of international conferences that invites speakers from different backgrounds and disciplines to share: "Ideas Worth Spreading."

Weekly Format

This is a 90 minute session:

- Open with a gathering prayer. See examples for each week. Watch the TED Talk. Discuss the Talk. Depending on the size and temperament of your group it can be helpful to break up into smaller groups when first responding to the video.
- Perhaps have the participants talk in groups of 2 and 3 first so everyone has the opportunity to be heard. Then gather the larger group together.
- Read the Scripture. Discuss the Scripture. Again, it can be helpful to start with turning to a neighbour or smaller groups.
 - Consider shaping your conversation to relate the passage in the context of the video.
- Consider a way to make commitments at the end of each week. Rather than just leaving this as a conversation, think about how you can invite them to commit to one way they could adjust their daily lives and then follow up with them in following weeks
 - E.g. have each person place a post-it note on a board or wall with what their committing to OR close your time in prayer with each person raising up the change they hope to make.
- Close with a prayer. See examples for each week.

Week One

Focus: God calls all of us into leadership.

Opening Prayer: Spirit of the desert, you drove Jesus to the end of the world to seek your truth and find his calling; scour our hearts and awaken our hunger, so that freed from empty clinging we may serve only you and the Creator; through Jesus Christ, the Lord of the wilds. Amen.

TED Talk: Everyday Leadership by Drew Dudley

http://www.ted.com/talks/drew_dudley_everyday_leadership.html

- How many of you have had a lollipop moment? What happened?

- Have you told the person who made this impact on your life? If yes, what was that experience like. If not, why?
- Using Drew's definition of leadership, over the past week when have you been a leader?
- Do you think this is too loose a way to define a leader? Just the right way? Why?

Scripture: Mark 12: 28-34 (The Greatest Commandment)

- What are the three entities Jesus calls us to love in the Greatest Commandment?
- Which of these is the hardest for you to live into in your day-to-day life? Why?
- Thinking back on your time in church, if you had to say one sentence to summarize the way of life the church asks you to live into, what would it be? How does this message compare with what Jesus is saying should be at the heart of our faith?
- How does this scripture connect to the understanding of leadership that Drew talked about in the TED Talk?

Closing Prayer: Creator of the universe, watch over us and keep us in the light of your presence. May our praise continually blend with that of all creation, until we come together to the eternal joys which you promise in your love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Week Two

Focus: Our call to love God is not unquestioning, but a relationship that we are invited to delve into as our questions and quests for understanding strengthen our faith in God.

Opening Prayer: Holy God, whose Spirit's breath prompts our seeking: transform the night-time of our fear into a welcoming womb for us and all the world; through Jesus Christ, in whom we are born anew. Amen.

TED Talk: The Doubt Essential to Faith by Lesley Hazleton

https://www.ted.com/talks/lesley_hazleton_the_doubt_essential_to_faith?language=en

- What can learning about the history and traditions of other religions teach us about our own faith?
- What do you believe is the purpose of doubt in your life of faith?
- What does it mean for your Christian faith that other groups can take the Bible and find a completely different understanding for what God is calling them to do?
- What have you learned from the Bible about having doubt?

Scripture: Psalm 22: 1-5; Matthew 27:46

- Why do you think Jesus is quoting Psalm 22 right before he dies on the cross?
- What does it mean for your faith if Jesus is unsure at this moment what is expected of him and seems to doubt God?
- What does Jesus submitting to death while still showing some uncertainty about the purpose of his dying teach us about him?
- Where do you find yourself doubting God? How can these questions draw you into a deeper relationship with God?

Closing Prayer: O God, our beginning and our end: accept our doubts, heal our desire for certainty and, by your Spirit's gentle touch, make us a people forgiven and forgiving; through Jesus Christ, the Giver of Peace. Amen.

Week Three

Focus: This presents an opportunity to consider whom God calls us to love when we are told to “love our neighbour,” It is hard in the moment to stand by the bullied for fear of also becoming a victim, but it can be even harder to find compassion for the bully.

Opening Prayer: Blessed are you, God of our hope; you restore the fallen and rebuild the broken walls. Teach us the song of thanksgiving, for you are the strength of your people; through Jesus Christ the Rock of our salvation. Amen.

TED Talk: To This Day...for the bullied and beautiful by Shane Koyczan

https://www.ted.com/talks/shane_koyczan_to_this_day_for_the_bullied_and_beautiful/transcript?language=en (contains some profanity)

- What images from the talk most resonated with you?
- Shane uses poetry as a way of coping with the way bullies treated him. What do you do to deal with people who are mean to you?
- Why do you think people bully each other?
- How has your impression of bullying changed as you have gotten older?

Scripture: Matthew 5: 43-48

- What is the ultimate goal of loving our enemies?
- How can we show love to our enemies?
- What are the times when it is hardest to love our enemies? When is it easiest to love them?
- If we think back on the bully situation in light of this scripture, whom are we called to love? How can you do that in a school or work setting?
- Is this a realistic way to live your life?
- Is there a change in your life that you can commit to doing that will help you to better love your enemies?

Closing Prayer: O God of peace, who has taught us that in returning and rest we shall be saved, in quietness and confidence shall be our strength: by the might of your Spirit, lift us, we pray, to your presence where we may be still and know that You are God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Week Four

Focus: When we are called to go out and share the Good News with the world, it is important that we have the spiritual foundation to know God in our own lives and to see ourselves as beloved or else we will burn out.

Opening Prayer: Give to your Church, O God, a bold vision and a daring charity, a refreshed wisdom and a courteous understanding, that the eternal message of your Son may be acclaimed as the good news of the age; through him who makes all things new, even Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

TED Talk: How do you define yourself? by Lizzie Velasquez

https://www.ted.com/talks/lizzie_velasquez_how_do_you_define_yourself/transcript?language=en

- How would you feel to have millions of strangers make cruel comments about you and judge your value as a person?
- How do you think Lizzie was able to overcome this? Do you think you would be able to overcome this?
- Who are the people in your life who set expectations for you? How does it feel to have other people expect things from you?
- What are the expectations or goals you have set for yourself?
- Do you think it's good to have expectations?

Scripture: Luke 17: 11-19

- What do you know about the social standing of lepers during the time of Jesus? Who are the lepers in our society today?
- What do you think is the significance that only one of the ten lepers who was healed turned back to thank Jesus?
- What do you think it means that the other nine lepers who didn't turn back were still healed?
- How does our society use physical appearance to draw distinctions between people? What are other things our society has used to create social divisions?

Closing Prayer: The leader invites everyone to offer a prayer for the person on their right such as, "Strengthen *N* in your love, and guide *him/her/them* in the way of the Lord.

Week Five

Focus: The work of God in the world is not easy, but that is why we are not sent alone. Not only do we as a church enter into this work as a community, supporting each other every step of the way, but we also must remember that this work can only be possible with God.

Opening Prayer: God of pilgrims, teach us to recognize your dwelling-place in the love, generosity, and support of those with whom we share our journey, and help us to worship you in our response to those who need our care; for all the world is your temple and every human heart is a sign of your presence, made known to us in Jesus. Amen.

TED Talk: Never, Ever Give Up by Diana Nyad

http://www.ted.com/talks/diana_nyad_never_ever_give_up.html

- What do you find most impressive/shocking/amazing about the story of Diana Nyad?
- What would you have told her if you were her coach and friend, if you knew she was having hallucinations of the Taj Mahal?

- What do you think the significance is that Diana Nyad is a household name for swimming from Cuba to Florida, but that she was only one person on a team and couldn't have done it without all of the other people? What does that say about our society?
- Why should we care about Diana Nyad?

Scripture: Psalm 23: 1-6

- How do you imagine God from this passage?
- What does this passage imply about being alone in the world?
- Is there a difficult time in your life when you depended on God to support you through it? If yes, what happened? How did that feel? If no, when do you want the support of God?
- Why might you not turn toward God in times of need?
- At what times in your life do you feel most alone? Is there a way for you to turn to God in those moments? What strength could come from that?

Closing Prayer: God of our beginnings and endings, we celebrate all we have shared with each other and ask your blessing as we continue on our journey. May the love that is in our hearts be a bond that unites us forever, wherever we may be. May the power of your presence bless this moment of our leave-taking; for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer. Amen.

Key Insights:

My Favourite Parts:

Prayers:**Week One**

Opening - *Prayers for an Inclusive Church*

Closing - *Book of Alternative Services, p.132*

Week Two

Opening - *Prayers for an Inclusive Church*

Closing - *Prayers for an Inclusive Church*

Week Three

Opening - *Book of Alternative Services, p.794*

Closing - *Book of Common Prayer (TEC, 1979), p.832*

Week Four

Opening - *Celebrating Common Prayer, p.263*

Closing - *Becoming the Story We Tell*

Week Five

Opening - *Book of Alternative Services, p. 811*

Closing - *Celebrating Common Prayer, p.302*

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