

The Extra Mile Study Guide

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Introduction

This guide is designed to be used with 'The Extra Mile' DVD to explore how its message can relate to us and to our churches today. The suggestions are very flexible. They can be used as provided, but group leaders are welcome to select the sections that will work best for them.

The first part of the guide offers an outline of a discussion session for use in house groups, church meetings or confirmation classes.

It is followed by some ideas for those who would like to explore The Extra Mile a bit further. You will find suggestions for:

- How you might use 'The Extra Mile' in worship
- How your church might get into action
- Two Bible studies to help you reflect on the themes of 'The Extra Mile'
- How you might explore our Methodist heritage further to discover other examples of those who have gone 'The Extra Mile' in service of their community and their world

'The Extra Mile': Feedback Form: One of the most important aspects of 'The Extra Mile' project is the feedback you can give to the Social Responsibility Commission about how helpful it has been. Commission members would be delighted to hear from you about your thoughts on watching 'The Extra Mile'. A FEEDBACK FORM is provided on page 10 and we hope you will use that to keep in touch.

If you would like to discuss how you can take action about any of the challenges raised by 'The Extra Mile' we would be glad to meet with you and give any support we can.

Please contact:

Social Responsibility Commission

London District Office

Methodist Central Hall Westminster

Storey's Gate, London SW1H 9NH

or email to: admin@methodistlondon.org.uk

Group Discussion

1. Opening Devotions

Reading: Luke 4:16-21

Reflections and Prayer: your own, or use the prayer on page 6

2. Activity

Make a list of the members or groups in your church who 'go the extra mile' by caring for those in need, serving the local community, or working for social justice. List the different ways in which they work towards those goals.

3. Read

Read the following introduction to 'The Extra Mile' DVD:

The Extra Mile has been produced by Phil and Pete of Applecourt for the SRC of the London District. It is designed to help Methodists in London to remember that care for others and for our communities and a passion for social justice has been a vital part of our Methodist identity from our very beginnings and remains so today. The Extra Mile also challenges us to find new ways of reaching out in love to those in any sort of need in London today. We can do this both as individuals and churches.

The Extra Mile DVD is a light-hearted reminder of something very profound and important for Methodists - John Wesley's deep passion for social justice and for those in need. It also celebrates some of the Methodists in London today who are continuing to express that same passionate concern - 'in a Methodical way'!

The Extra Mile has lots of fun making a very serious point - two characteristics that are part of the genius of Methodism.

4. Watch

Watch 'The Extra Mile' DVD

5. Discussion

Answer the following questions about the 'The Extra Mile':

- a. What interested you most?
- b. What puzzled you?
- c. What different sorts of action either to care for other people or to work for social justice were mentioned? How many were inspired by John Wesley's example?
- d. If you were making another episode of the 'The Extra Mile', which two or three people and activities from your lists in Activity 1 would you select to be included - why would you chose them?

6. John Wesley

John Wesley's actual words are used on a number of occasions in 'The Extra Mile'.

Doing Good:

"Do all the good you can; by all the means you can; in all the ways you can; in all the places you can; at all the times you can; to all the people you can; as long as you can"

Money:

"Earn all you can, give all you can, save all you can."

"When I have money, I get rid of it quickly lest it find a way into my heart."

Education:

“It cannot be that the people should grow in grace unless they give themselves to reading. A reading people will always be a knowing people.... Think and let think.”

Action for those in need:

“I was still in pain for many of the poor that were sick: there was so great expense, and so little profit....at length I thought of a desperate expedient. “I will prepare and give them physic myself.”

The Gospel:

“The Gospel of Christ knows no religion but social; no holiness but social holiness”

QUESTIONS:

- Which one of these statements do you think is most important for Methodists today – and why?
- Which one of them do you personally find the most challenging?

7. Into Action

At the end of the ‘The Extra Mile’ Phil and Pete say: *“The question is: **what are you doing to get involved?**”*

- What are your answers to that question?
- What might your church do in a Methodical way to go ‘the extra mile’?

8. Closing Prayer

Your own, or use the prayer on page: 8

N.B. Note for Group Leaders – please send lists and any feedback to SRC using the Feedback Form on page 21

Prayers to open and close the discussion group session

Adapted from: *The Weaver, the Word and Wisdom: Worshiping the Triune God* by Michaela Youngson. p.125 and p.127

Opening Prayer

God who calls us together for worship, fellowship and sharing

Send your Spirit upon us

God who calls us to bring good news to the poor

Send your Spirit upon us

God who calls us to proclaim release to the captives

Send your Spirit upon us

God who calls us to bring new vision to all people

Send your Spirit upon us

God who calls us to work for the liberation of oppressed people

Send your Spirit upon us

Grant us courage to travel 'the extra mile'

Send your Spirit upon us and anoint us in our service to you.

Amen

Closing Prayer

In the wilderness where all seems lost
The Spirit of God is upon me
On the journey when I cannot find my way
The Spirit of God is upon me
In the market place, where wealth defeats love
The Spirit of God is upon me
In the Temple where tables are turned
The Spirit of God is upon me
In the Garden, when prayer is all that is left
The Spirit of God is upon me
In the flogging and the trials of despair
The Spirit of God is upon me
In the weeping, denying and fleeing of friends
The Spirit of God is upon me
On the cross, when tears are not enough
The Spirit of God is upon me
In the tomb where death dances in delight
The Spirit of God is upon me
In the Garden, where hope's light is reborn
The Spirit of God is upon me
In the ascending, departing and peace-giving
The Spirit of God is upon me
On the Church I will pour out my Spirit
The Spirit of God is upon me. Amen

Further Activities

1. Developing 'The Extra Mile'

In question 5 of the Group Session, you were invited to choose two or three people and activities from your church who you would include in a future edition of 'The Extra Mile'. The SRC would be delighted if you could interview these people on video (or in writing) and send the recording for inclusion in a future edition of 'The Extra Mile'.

2. Into Action:

What was your answer to question 7 of the Group Session? Why not contact the SRC and tell them what you would like to do? They would be delighted to hear from you and will have guidance support and advice to help you.

3. The Bible:

For further study, Bible studies on the Good Samaritan and on Luke 4:16-21 are provided in this guide.

4. Discovering more about Methodism:

If you are interested in finding out more about the ways in which Methodists built on John Wesley's vision to work for social justice and care for those in need, please contact the SRC who will provide guidelines for exploration and study for groups and individuals.

Using 'The Extra Mile' in Worship

'The Extra Mile' might be used in the place of the sermon in a service together with the Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession based on the actions of early Methodists and the words of John Wesley used in the DVD.

At the point in the service where the sermon would usually take place:

1. Before the service prepare and display a list of the activities in your church that enable people to 'go the extra mile' by caring for those in need, serving the local community, or working for social justice
2. Before introducing and showing 'The Extra Mile' read the list aloud. Give the congregation a moment of quiet reflection to give thanks and to think of other activities not included
3. Introduce 'The Extra Mile' as follows:

The Extra Mile has been produced by Phil and Pete of Applecourt for the SRC of the London District. It is designed to help Methodists in London to remember that care for others and for our communities and a passion for social justice has been a vital part of our Methodist identity from our very beginnings and remains so today. The Extra Mile also challenges us to find new ways of reaching out in love to those in any sort of need in London today. We can do this both as individuals and churches.

The Extra Mile is a light-hearted reminder of something very profound and important for Methodists - John Wesley's deep passion for social justice and for those in need. It also celebrates some of the Methodists in London today who are continuing to express that same passionate concern - 'in a Methodical way'!

The Extra Mile has lots of fun making a very serious point - two characteristics that are part of the genius of Methodism.

4. Watch 'The Extra Mile'
5. Invite people to reflect quietly on 'The Extra Mile' for a couple of minutes
6. You may feel it is appropriate to invite members of the congregation to share any reflections in a few words
7. Continue with the prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession - [3 voices to lead the prayers]

Voice 1: Let us give thanks for the work that John Wesley and the early Methodists pioneered:

Voice 2: Amongst the poor

Voice 3: In prisons and schools

1: By helping the sick,

2: Downtrodden

3: and Destitute

1: By giving to charity

2: Campaigning against slavery and every sort of injustice

3: Especially the divide between rich and poor

1: By easing debt

2: Opening orphanages

3: Teaching the importance of knowledge and self-improvement

1: By caring for physical and mental health

2: Opening the first free public dispensary in London

3: And pioneering medical treatment

2: Let us give thanks for the work in our own church – including...

3: Let us give thanks for all the work done that is seen by God alone.

Silence

1: John Wesley said: 'The Gospel of Christ knows no religion but social; no holiness but social holiness'

2: We pray that in our lives and in the life of our church may we reach out with compassion and justice to the needs of our world, in prayer and in action. We pray that those with power in our world today may use it with compassion for justice and peace

3: Lord in your mercy

All: Hear our prayer

1: [John Wesley said] Earn all you can, give all you can, save all you can

When I have money, I get rid of it quickly lest it find a way into my heart.

2: We pray for our use of money. May it have its proper place in our lives, in the life of our church, in our community and society and in the governments of the world. May it be always used for good in your service and to your glory

3: Lord in your mercy

All: Hear our prayer

1: [John Wesley said] It cannot be that the people should grow in grace unless they give themselves to reading. A reading people will always be a knowing people.... Think and let think.'

2: We pray for all involved in education – for children and students, for parents, teachers, school governors and government. We pray for all involved in the search for knowledge and its communication. May all grow in wisdom and in grace and in truth.

3: Lord in your mercy

All: Hear our prayer

1: [John Wesley said] I was still in pain for many of the poor that were sick: there was so great expense, and so little profit...at length I thought of a desperate expedient. "I will prepare and give them physic myself."

2: We pray for those in need in a world where so many suffer terribly.

For refugees.

For victims of human inhumanity and violence.

For any we particularly know to be in need at this time.....

As we call upon you love and help for them, may we be inspired to act passionately and courageously wherever we can

3: Lord in your mercy

All: Hear our prayer

1: Together we pray:

All: O Lord in our calling as people
of the Methodist church may we

Do all the good we can

By all the means we can

In all the ways we can

In all the places we can

At all the times we can

To all the people we can

For as long as we can

In Jesus' Name, Amen

The Extra Mile: Bible Studies

Luke 4:16-30 and Luke 10:25-37

These two studies use familiar and important stories of Jesus from Luke's Gospel to help us explore ways in which we are challenged to 'go the extra mile' today as we reach out in God's love and compassion to the different communities to which we belong.

Luke 4: 16-30 - The Extra Mile: a new vision

This story is set at the very beginning of Jesus' ministry. It is both wonderful – because in it Jesus sets out his vision of what he has been sent to do – and shocking because that vision so angers those who knew him best that they tried to kill him.

Read the story through and share what surprises, disturbs or excites you most.

The Vision and the Scriptures

Jesus read from Isaiah 61:1-2. But he changes it! Read Isaiah 61:1-2 and compare it with what Jesus read. What does Jesus add? What does he leave out? What does this suggest about the importance of the Bible in shaping our vision today?

Proclaiming, Battling, Giving Sight

In Jesus' message, the word 'proclaim' suggests the importance of preaching, teaching and speaking out.

'Bring good news' and 'let the oppressed go free' emphasise practical action.

Speaking out and taking practical action are both vital.

1. Proclaiming the good news: QUESTIONS

- How can the church help individual Christians speak out today?
- What is the good news that our communities need to hear?
- How can we help them to hear it?

- So many people in the different communities to which we belong will have heard the Christian message in different ways and come to the conclusion that it does not make sense for them - how can we help them to rediscover it fresh and exciting ways?

2. Battling oppression: QUESTIONS

- Which people are 'captive' in our communities today?
- What 'forces' imprison them?
- How can we best work towards setting them free?
- How can we as a church respond in practical ways that make a difference?

3. Sight to the blind: THE CHALLENGE

The third part of Jesus' vision, and the words that Jesus added (perhaps from Isaiah 42:7) comes at the heart of his message and is therefore of tremendous importance – 'the recovery of sight to the blind'

Jesus' miracles included giving sight to those who were physically blind. It made a huge, exciting and disturbing impact on their lives – Luke 18:35-43 (Mark 10:46-52) and John 9 (note especially verses 35-41)

But the greatest problem Jesus faced would be with those who were blind to his vision – who simply could not or would not see what he was getting at, unless somehow the Spirit helped them to see.

This was not a new problem in the story of God's dealing with people!

READ verses 25-27

Jesus has already caused alarm because of the place he stopped in the Isaiah reading, missing out any mention of 'the day of vengeance of our God', when the foreign powers and cultures that had oppressed the people would be overthrown. Now he increases the tension as he gives examples from the Old Testament of how people at the time of Elijah and Elisha had their eyes opened to God's purposes.

The examples of two foreigners – and even more challenging, one of them a woman, the other a military leader of the sort who must have made the lives of ordinary Israelites a misery, would have been very controversial. But maybe it needs such 'outsiders' to help God's people recover their sight.

Kenneth Bailey writes: *'In every culture the message of the gospel is in constant danger of being compromised by the value system that supports that culture and its goals. The stranger to that culture can instinctively identify those points of surrender and call the community back to a purer and more authentic faith. But such infusions of new life are usually resisted.'*

QUESTIONS:

- With such examples in mind, who are the people today who help us to see?
- In what ways might our eyes be closed by the culture and the values we are most used to?
- What stops us from being alert to the insights that those of other cultures might bring?
- Elijah was sent to the widow – to whom is your church being sent today?
- God sent Naaman to Elisha (and Elisha was most unwelcoming – not a good Methodist therefore!) – Who are those in need being sent to us today?

4.The Extra Mile

From your studies and discussion:

- What are the challenges facing us as Methodists in the London District as we seek to respond to Jesus vision in the different communities in which we live and work today?
- At what points in particular do we need to 'go the extra mile' to be able to see and to share Jesus' vision?

Luke 10:21-37 The Extra Mile: Becoming a neighbour to...?

This story follows one of the high points of Jesus ministry – 70 disciples had been sent out on mission to proclaim the Kingdom of God and to help and heal people in the ways Jesus himself had done. They returned joyfully and Jesus rejoiced at what they reported. In a moment of passionate prayer, Jesus thanked God for what had been revealed to even the simplest of his followers. At that special moment, Jesus is asked a question that leads to him telling one of his most shocking parables.

Read Luke 10:21-37

1. The same two questions: if a young person in your church asked the same two questions as the lawyer, how would you answer?
 - What must I do to inherit eternal life?
 - Who is my neighbour?

2. The wounded man: the wounded man is assumed to be a Jew, but he is unconscious, wounded and stripped so there is no way of being certain. If the victim was a fellow Jew, and especially a law-abiding Jew, the priest and the Levite would have been responsible to reach out and help him. But this victim was naked and unconscious. How could they be sure of his identity? No doubt they wanted to do their duty according to the Law, but what was their duty? As responsible members of the Temple staff if they were defiled by contact with the man, they could become responsible for grave dangers to Temple worship and even run the risk of execution because of their uncleanness. Jesus listeners would have been aware of this. Perhaps they were expecting the next traveller on the road to be a Jewish layman, who would not have the same pressures with regard to the Temple and the Law. But it was not a Jew. It was a hated Samaritan. Did you notice that at the end of the story when Jesus asks his question final question, the lawyer

avoids even using the word 'Samaritan'? Hatred and prejudice run very deep.

QUESTIONS:

- Which characters might Jesus have used in his story if he was telling it for us today?
 - The possible reasons why the Priest and Levite did not stop to help would have been powerful and important ones at the time. What sorts of reasons do we give when we struggle to help those in need today?
 - Towards which people does prejudice run most deeply in your context today?
3. The cost of compassion. The Samaritan is using all his available resources (oil, wine, a cloth wrapping, riding animal, time, energy and money) to care for the wounded man. One writer comments: *"Yes, indeed, love that fails to give money as charity or as alms is common in the world. But heartfelt love that is free from the seeking of praise and honour and which is willing to endure distress, suffering and loss, in the path of good works, such as is set forth in this parable, is extraordinarily rare."*
- What are your reactions to this statement?
 - In your opinion where are the places we encounter the most needy today?
 - How far is it realistic to expect Christians to go the extra mile?
4. 'Go and do likewise' - the extra mile ... to the inn!

In his examination of this parable Kenneth Bailey makes a startling point about the last 'scene', at the inn. It is worth quoting at length. He writes that we tend to overlook how *'the Samaritan risks his life by transporting the wounded man to an inn within Jewish territory. Such inns were found in villages, not in the wilderness. There are no archaeological remains to indicate that there was an inn in the midst of the wilderness between Jerusalem and Jericho at the time of Jesus. The listener to the story would naturally expect the Samaritan to take the wounded man down to Jericho where such an inn could be found. The Samaritan would be expected to unload the wounded man at the edge of Jericho and disappear. A Samaritan would not be safe in a Jewish town with a wounded Jew over the back of his riding animal. Commu-*

nity vengeance may be enacted against the Samaritan, even if he has saved the life of the Jew. I have read of and personally witnessed these grim realities in the Middle East.

The last scene takes place the following day at the inn. Two denarii would have covered the bill for food and lodging for at least a week, perhaps two. The overlooked reality of the Samaritan's final act is that he risks his life to care for this man in a Jewish inn. After the Samaritan has paid his bill he has yet to escape the town. Was there a crowd waiting for him outside? Was he beaten or killed? We do not know. The story is open-ended as with many of Jesus' parables and the listener must supply the missing conclusion. Why did the Samaritan expose himself to potential violence?

At the time, people could be sold as slaves if they could not pay their debts. (Matthew 18:25). Any lodger in a commercial inn who could not pay his bill risked being sold as a slave by the innkeepers, who in general had bad reputations. This particular victim had nothing, not even clothes. The Samaritan was obliged to make a down payment and pledge himself to settle the final bill lest his rescue of the wounded man be in vain. Without such an extraordinary effort the Samaritan might as well have left the poor man to die in the wilderness."

With that in mind we return to the Lawyer's questions and Jesus' response. The lawyer's question, "Who is my neighbour?" is the wrong question. Jesus instead challenges him to ask "To whom must I become a neighbour?" The parable replies, "Your neighbour is anyone in need, regardless of language, religion, race or culture." The demands of this vision are limitless.

- To whom do you think we need to become a neighbour today?
- How can Methodists in London today become neighbours to the most needy in our communities and in our world?
- What are the pressures that make becoming a neighbour to the most needy difficult in today's world?
- What might this parable have to teach your church today about how we are called to go the extra mile?

Feedback Form: 'the Extra Mile'

Name:

Church:

Circuit:

When did you use 'The Extra Mile'?

With what group?

Did you use it in

- A discussion group?
- If so, what ages and what sort of group?
- In worship?

1. What parts of 'The Extra Mile' did you especially enjoy?

2. What parts did you struggle with?

3. What did you feel you learnt?

4. If you used the Group Discussion section on pages 4 and 5, please attach your answers to question 5d

5. Into Action [page 8?] In what ways if any would you value help from the SRC in planning any response you might want to make to go 'the extra mile'?

6. Have you used 'The Extra Mile' in worship?

7. Any further comments or suggestions about 'The Extra Mile' and helping the church grow in its service of God in social justice and reaching out to those in need?

Please return to:

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