

Module 2: Just Jesus



Aims of this module

- To explore the importance of justice in the ministry of Jesus.
- To reflect on how this deepens our understanding of God and how we live out our faith in the world.



Notes for group leaders

This session is designed to get people to explore the implications of God's love. We reflect on the teaching of Jesus and look at what that means for us today. We think about the oppressive economic and political situation in which Jesus lived and his response to that injustice.

Some alternative activities are offered and the facilitator, or the group, needs to decide beforehand which are most suitable.



Resources required

- Copies of the "Words" handout (Handout 1) for everyone – or alternatively, pictures from the pack *The Christ We Share* if you have been able to access them.
- A selection of newspaper and magazine clippings for Activity 3.
- Copies of the "Values" sheet (Handout 2) for everyone.
- Opening and closing worship sheets (optional).



Extras

There are two Extras available from www.justchurch.info to accompany this module:

- A set of **background notes** on the world Jesus lived in and his agenda. This is designed to help you to introduce the module. You can, of course, reproduce it as a handout if you wish.
- A **Bible study sheet** which you might give people to take home with them so that they can read and reflect further.

Remember, you can run the module without using the Extras at all. Only use them if you want to explore the topic more deeply.



Opening worship (5 minutes)

Use the worship resources provided at the end of this module, or prepare your own.



Activity 1: Jesus' friends (20 minutes)

Reading

Ask someone to read Matthew 25:31–46.

Reflection

Jesus' choice of friends is one of his more startling and uncomfortable qualities. To follow Jesus during his public ministry meant walking with his friends too.

“Expect the Spirit of God to be alive and active – far beyond your tribal boundaries.”

Jim Cotter, Anglican priest

“Shoes ... separate us from the richness of the earth, shield us from the roughness of life and trod down fresh shoots and springs of life.”

Marjory Macaskill, quoted in ROOTS

Follow-up questions

Think about and share with each other:

- Who do we know that walks comfortably among those whom society does not welcome?
- What separates and shields us from others?
- What might it mean for us to walk or live comfortably with Jesus' friends?



Activity 2: Describing Jesus (25 minutes)

Choose **ONE** of the following two options:

Option 1: Words exercise

- Give everyone a copy of Handout 1, and ask them to read through the list of words that may describe Jesus.
- Ask the participants to each circle two words from the list that best describe the Jesus they know, and two which definitely do *not* describe him. They can add one word that's not on the list if they like.
- After this has been completed, ask the participants to move into pairs or threes and then share with one another the words they chose – and why they chose them.
- Ask the small groups to try to choose *one* word they can all agree on.
- Ask small groups to feed back their word to the big group.
- Say to the group that we have so far used many words to describe the person of Jesus. Some historical figures can be “defined” by just one word, for example:
 - Charles Darwin – Evolution
 - Mrs Beeton - Cooking
 - Billy Butlin – Holidays
 - Florence Nightingale – Nursing

Jesus was infinitely more than a historical figure, but ask the group if they can come up with one word to describe the whole of Jesus' activity. What one word can sum up the life of Jesus?

or

Just Church: facilitator sheet

Option 2: Pictures exercise

You will need a copy of *The Christ We Share*, a picture pack from USPG, for this exercise.

- Lay out all of the images on tables, and add your own images as you see fit.
- Ask participants to choose an image that engages them; it may be because they like the image or because it represents the Jesus they have experienced. If a participant wants to choose another image which they have but is not on display, ask them to hold the image in their mind's eye and be ready to describe it.
- Ask people to move into smaller groups and to share with one another the image they chose and what it reveals to them about the Christ they know.
- What one word would describe their image?
- Ask the groups to return to the big group and follow the guidelines from the last bullet point in Option 1.



Activity 3: Current events (25 minutes)

You will need to bring along newspaper cuttings – local, regional, national – reflecting political, economic and social events or issues.

Invite everyone to look at the cuttings and discuss what the articles say about poverty and justice – or the lack of justice. What do the issues raised say about our relationships with each other? Are they signs of God's will being done?

What are some of the characteristics of the love and justice of God – his "Kingdom" or rule that we pray for in the Lord's Prayer?

Use Handout 2 on "Values" to help identify the apparent values of British society and God's values, under the headings: Economic, Political and Social. Do you see in your local area any signs of the Kingdom of God?



Action points (10 minutes)

Help the group to decide how they can put their learning into some sort of action. Ask:

After what you have heard, learned and experienced this evening, how do you feel you can respond to the call of Jesus and the Kingdom of God?

In what ways might you seek to do this:

- In your personal life?
- In your relations with others, especially the disadvantaged?
- In your workplace or local community?
- In your parish or church community?

Be sure to note down the ideas that emerge – you'll come back to them in the "Just Action" module.



Closing worship (5 minutes)

Use the worship resources provided later in this module, or prepare your own. You might also want to say the *Just Church* prayer (see the introduction) together to end the session..



Handout 1: Words

Here are some words or phrases which could be used to describe Jesus.

Pick two words that you would use to describe Jesus, and two that you definitely wouldn't. You can also add an extra word of your own, if there's one you'd like to use that isn't listed here.

friendly • law-breaker • compassionate • merciful • awkward
good-humoured • angry • forgiving • unclean • troublesome
generous • humane • forbearing • easy-going • liberal • outcast
sympathetic • disturbing • strict • warm-hearted • challenging
supportive • difficult • open-handed • hospitable • God-with-us
understanding • loving • poor • sensitive • strong • blasphemer
revolutionary • conservative • annoying • lively • fun • caring
upright • indignant • unsettling • meek-and-mild • drinker • just
clown • lawbreaker • charlatan • storyteller • revolutionary
victim • scapegoat • judge • gentle • blasphemer • unwashed
outsider • sinner



Society's values

Kingdom values

	Society's values	Kingdom values
Economic level		
Political level		
Social level		

Just Jesus



Opening worship

Opening prayer

Leader: Violence, War, Hunger, Slavery, Homelessness.
O Lord, why don't you deliver us?
O Lord, why do you hide your face from us?

All: O Lord, where in the world are you?
Why don't you come down and save us?
Can't you see your people suffering?
Can't you hear their cries of pain?

(Pause)

Leader: Or, Lord, could it be that you are already here?

All: Christ, you are already here.
We are your body –
we are your ears and eyes and hands and feet.

Christ, unite us.
Help us to work for justice and peace
in your divided, suffering world.
Amen

Neil Paynter, Wild Goose Publications





Closing worship

The Stone the Builders Rejected

Leader: Let us pray for those whose lives are wilderness...
Those who are hungry and thirsty...
Those who are all alone...
Those who are prevented from being the people God made them to be...

All: For the stone which the builders rejected is made the cornerstone.

Leader: Let us pray for those whose own will not receive them...
Those who are not listened to...
Those who are under constant threat...

All: For the stone which the builders rejected is made the cornerstone.

Leader: Let us pray for those whose calling is denied...
Those who cannot speak their name...
Those whose gifts are not recognised and affirmed...

All: For the stone which the builders rejected is made the cornerstone.

Leader: Let us pray for those who are judged and condemned...
Those who are blinded by their own self-righteousness...
Let us pray for ourselves...

All: For the stone which the builders rejected is made the cornerstone.

Leader: O Christ, you lived as an ordinary man,
Not in style but simply,
Yet you still caused and uproar, and questions everywhere;
You drew the expectations of hungry crowds,
And brought buried conflicts to the light.
May we, who are sometimes swayed by the crowd's approval,
And who often avoid conflict for fear of its cost to us,

All: Stand firm in the gospel of justice and peace
And follow faithfully in your way of compassion and solidarity
With those who are poor and excluded,
Wherever it may lead us.
Amen

Kathy Galloway, Iona Community

Closing prayer and blessing

Leader: Living God, you taught us that faith without works is dead, so temper our faith with love and hope that we follow Christ and give ourselves freely to people in their need: then the lives we live may honour you forever.
Amen

All: May God bless us and keep us; may Christ smile upon us and give us his grace; may he unveil His face to us and bring us peace.
Amen

Iona Community