

# EXPLORE TOGETHER



Resource Book

Lianne Semans Smith & Lee Herdman



Copyright © Scripture Union  
First published 2015  
ISBN 978 1 78506 027 4

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of Scripture Union.

Scripture quotations are taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION, © 2011 by Biblica, formerly International Bible Society. Used by permission of Hodder & Stoughton, a division of Hodder Headline Ltd. All rights reserved.

The right of Lianne Semans Smith and Lee Herdman to be identified as authors of this work has been asserted by them in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data: a catalogue record of this book is available from the British Library.

Printed in Malta by Melita Press.

Cover design and internal layout by Jake Howe.



Scripture Union is an international Christian charity working with churches in more than 130 countries.

Thank you for purchasing this resource. Any profits from this book support SU in England and Wales to bring the good news of Jesus Christ to children, young people and families and to enable them to meet God through the Bible and prayer.

Find out more about our work and how you can get involved at:

[www.scriptureunion.org.uk](http://www.scriptureunion.org.uk) (England and Wales)

[www.suscotland.org.uk](http://www.suscotland.org.uk) (Scotland)

[www.suni.co.uk](http://www.suni.co.uk) (Northern Ireland)

[www.scriptureunion.org](http://www.scriptureunion.org) (USA)

[www.su.org.au](http://www.su.org.au) (Australia)



# Contents

	<b>How to... Explore Together</b>		4
<i>Session 1</i>	<b>Salt and light</b>	Matthew 5:13–16	6
<i>Session 2</i>	<b>Worry</b>	Matthew 6:25–34	8
<i>Session 3</i>	<b>Jesus calms the storm</b>	Mark 4:35–41	10
<i>Session 4</i>	<b>The birth of Jesus</b>	Luke 1:26–38; 2:1–21	12
<i>Session 5</i>	<b>Simeon and Anna</b>	Luke 2:21–38	14
<i>Session 6</i>	<b>The great feast</b>	Luke 14:15–24	16
<i>Session 7</i>	<b>Easter</b>	Luke 24:1–12	18
<i>Session 8</i>	<b>Jesus and Nicodemus</b>	John 3:1–21	20
<i>Session 9</i>	<b>Pentecost!</b>	Acts 2	22
<i>Session 10</i>	<b>In all you say or do</b>	Acts 18:1–3; Colossians 3:12–17	24
<i>Session 11</i>	<b>Josiah</b>	2 Kings 22:1–13	26
<i>Session 12</i>	<b>God the Creator</b>	Psalms 104	28
	<b>Frequently asked questions</b>		30

# How to... Explore Together

Within our faith communities there is a rich diversity of God's people all at different stages in their faith development and spiritual experience, and all with different learning needs and preferences. We are a beautiful collection of artists, scholars, reflectors, dancers, data collectors, fact finders, readers, sculptors, writers, musicians, actors, talkers and listeners.

Explore Together places the Bible at the centre of this diversity. It is a new and practical tool for helping people to explore God's Word and hear his voice in a way that embraces their natural preferences. It encourages the community to come together to share their thoughts, questions and revelations with each other. Any and all are welcome and there are no barriers to participation.

At the heart of Explore Together is a desire to see people hear from God and learn more of his love for them. It works with big groups, small groups, mixed-age groups, single-age groups, older people, young people, children, families, house groups, church congregations, youth groups, school groups... in fact, Explore Together can be used in any environment with any group dynamic. It is grounded in years of research and tried and tested in a multitude of contexts.

We're so pleased that you've chosen to buy this resource book. It is designed to equip you and your community as you adventure, journey and grow with God. On this page and the next we have a few suggestions on how to get the most out of the 12 sessions in this resource and how to use the accompanying resources on the Explore Together website ([www.exploretogether.org](http://www.exploretogether.org)).

**Lianne Semans Smith**  
**Lee Herdman**

## The six steps

There are six essential steps to an Explore Together session, each of which can be tailored to slot into any existing structure and space:

- 1 Prepare**
- 2 Presenting the Bible**
- 3 Pray**
- 4 Explore**
- 5 Share**
- 6 Giving thanks**

These steps are explained in detail in each session outline.

Step 4 provides an opportunity for people to engage with God's Word using the Explore Together questions and the six Explore Together zones. Each zone has been carefully designed to cater for particular learning needs and preferences:



Colour Zone –  
for those who learn by seeing



Listening Zone –  
for those who learn by hearing



Chat Zone –  
for those who learn by thinking aloud



Word Zone –  
for those who learn by reading



Busy Zone –  
for those who learn by doing



Quiet Zone –  
for those who learn by reflecting

Individuals can choose to spend all of their exploring time in one zone, but may also choose to visit several zones, depending upon their preferences. There is no right or wrong

amount of time to spend in a zone.

It is quite deliberate that no specific instructions are provided for each zone. Individuals are free to engage however they like with the resources provided in each area as they consider the Explore Together questions for the session.

## Basic kit

Although every Explore Together session is different, there are some common elements that are always included. We will refer to these as the 'basic kit' for Explore Together. Before running your first session we advise that you acquire the following items, and top them up as required:

- Explore Together zone signs (available from [www.exploretogether.org](http://www.exploretogether.org))
- Explore Together background soundtrack (available from [www.exploretogether.org](http://www.exploretogether.org))
- MP3 players (or the means to play downloaded MP3 tracks – eg CDs and CD player)
- plasticine, play dough or clay
- plastic building bricks
- junk modelling items
- pipe cleaners
- pens, pencils and paper
- coloured pencils/pens
- coloured chalk sticks
- pastels/crayons
- glue
- scissors (child-safe)
- masking tape
- white paper
- black paper
- paper of different sorts, sizes and colours
- manuscript paper
- squared paper
- lined paper
- sticky notes
- a selection of Bible commentaries
- a selection of Bibles (different translations)
- children's Bibles and Bible story books, eg *The Big Bible Storybook* (Scripture Union, 2007)
- chairs/cushions/beanbags
- a separate area where people can be quiet

Each session will need a selection of other resources, detailed in Step 1. Many multimedia

resources for each session are available for free from [www.exploretogether.org/](http://www.exploretogether.org/) downloads (using the code from the bottom of page 32).

## Gathering a team

Although it is entirely possible to lead an Explore Together session alone, it is much more effective when there is a team of people working together to share the responsibility and to model involvement. Strategically placed active participants will encourage others to participate.

The colour, word and busy zones benefit from having a carefully placed team member present to keep the focus on the questions, to engage in the zone activity and to draw people into the questions without dominating. The chat zone requires an experienced host to keep everyone focused.

For detailed team member role descriptions visit [www.exploretogether.org](http://www.exploretogether.org).

## FAQs

If you have any further questions, it's likely we've answered them in our FAQ section on pages 30 and 31 at the back of this book. If not, please don't hesitate to get in touch via the Scripture Union website: [www.scriptureunion.org.uk](http://www.scriptureunion.org.uk).

If you'd like to know more about the ideas that underpin Explore Together and hear about our experiences of Explore Together in action please read our companion book:

## Explore Together: The Journey



# Salt and light

Matthew 5:13–16

Themes: teaching, distinctive living, holiness, mission, light

The Sermon on the Mount is thought to have been delivered quite early on in Jesus' ministry. It took place on a mountainside in a town called Capernaum. The crowds gathered to hear what Jesus had to say and they were amazed by his teaching.

## Prepare

### Resources required

- waves sound effect
- 'Salt and light' sound and fabric introductory story
- 'Salt and light' prayer
- 'Light for the whole world' story text (from *The Big Bible Storybook*)
- 'Light for the whole world' audio recording (from *The Big Bible Storybook* audio book)
- 'Salt and light' image collection
- 'Salt and light' word collection
- Matthew 5:13–16 (CEV)
- 'Salt and light' Explore Together questions (PDF and PowerPoint)

You will also need to gather:

- a large piece of blue fabric
- audio recordings of different translations of Matthew 5:13–16
- salt in shakers
- coloured craft matchsticks
- items from the Explore Together basic kit (see page 5)
- someone to deliver a short sermon on Matthew 5:13–16 (optional)

All available from [www.exploretogether.org/downloads](http://www.exploretogether.org/downloads) (using the code from the bottom of page 32).

## Presenting the Bible

With the community gathered together, begin by sharing the words from Matthew 5:13–16. Consider carefully which version of the Bible you choose to read from.

Alternatively or in addition you may choose to use:

- 'Salt and light' sound and fabric introductory story

Without being tempted to answer them, introduce the following questions to your community for them to consider:

- **How do Jesus' words affect you today?**
- **Why does God want you to hear this?**
- **What is God saying to you?**
- **What do you want to say to God?**

## Pray

Pray for and with your community, asking God to help you hear from him. This time of prayer can be creative, interactive, responsive, meditative or sung. It could also include communion and intercession. Ensure that there is a place set aside where people can go if they feel that they need someone to pray with them specifically. Have a small team of people available to offer prayer if required. Prayer ministry should be available throughout an Explore Together session.

You may like to use the prayer available on the website.

# Explore

Read out your questions from Step 2 again or display them on a screen. Remind your community to consider these questions as they separate into their explore zones. Some may choose to consider all the questions while others may focus on just one. Some may completely ignore the questions and just open themselves up to God.

Invite your community to separate into small groups, around the zone(s) of their preference. Explain that individuals are welcome to spend as much or as little time in each zone as they wish, engaging at whatever level they feel comfortable. Depending upon where your quiet zone is located, you may wish to provide directions and remind people not to disturb one another when using this space.

## Colour Zone

- black paper, yellow and white chalk/pastels
- white paper, coloured pastels
- 'Salt and light' image collection
- copies of the 'Salt and light' ET questions



## Listening Zone

- 'Light for the whole world' audio recording (from *The Big Bible Storybook* audio book)
- audio recordings of different translations of Matthew 5:13-16
- copies of the 'Salt and light' ET questions
- you may wish to deliver a short sermon in this zone



## Chat Zone

- a separate area with chairs, cushions or beanbags
- a chat zone host who is willing to read the passage again and then lead a discussion around the questions
- copies of Matthew 5:13-16 (CEV) or Bibles
- copies of the 'Salt and light' ET questions



## Word Zone

- pens, pencils, paper
- biblical commentaries relating to Matthew 5:13-16
- 'Salt and light' word collection
- 'Light for the whole world' story text
- children's Bibles and Bible story books containing a version of Matthew 5:13-16
- copies of Matthew 5:13-16 (CEV) or Bibles
- copies of the 'Salt and light' ET questions



## Busy Zone

- plasticine, play dough or clay
- construction blocks of various shapes and sizes
- black paper
- salt in shakers
- coloured craft matchsticks, glue
- copies of the 'Salt and light' ET questions



## Quiet Zone

- a separate area where people can be alone with their thoughts and God
- 'Salt and light' image collection (optional)
- copies of Matthew 5:13-16 (CEV) or Bibles
- copies of the 'Salt and light' ET questions



# Share

As your time for exploring together draws to a close, invite your community to come back together into small groups of three to five. Suggest that they share their responses to the questions posed at the beginning.

# Giving thanks

Invite the explorers to share their reflections with the wider community, drawing together their responses and noting any common themes that emerge. Conclude by reading Matthew 5:13-16 again (from the same Bible version used earlier). Then lead your community in a prayer, thanking God for all that he has revealed through this story. Encourage your community to continue their conversations about this story as they leave, and to take with them any artwork/writings/ thoughts from the session.