

# FREE to GO

The Bible – God's love liberating lives

Because each youth group is unique, you will need to adapt the following material to fit your group's needs. Use this flexible programme with optional activities to create your own session lasting 35-50 mins. You are unlikely to have time to use all the provided content. All Bible readings are quoted from the Contemporary English Version (CEV).

## Reading

Luke 4.16-24

## Learning objective

To understand the Bible's impact and know how to apply its message of freedom.

Resources you may need:

- Balls of wool
- Scissors
- Microphone/ mic stand
- Post-it notes
- Pens
- Large Bible
- Pew Bibles

## Welcome

Welcome each young person by name on arrival.

## Starter [10 mins]

Play a game familiar to, and liked by, your group, such as dodge ball. Stop the game after a few minutes and introduce a new, additional – but unnecessary – rule, stating this is

designed to make the game fairer or safer. For example, only those wearing trainers (safer) can touch the ball with their right hands; for their protection, non-trainer wearers can only touch the ball with their left hand. Re-start the game.

After a minute or two stop the game and introduce another add-on rule – again supposedly to make the game fairer and safer. For example, the tallest half of the group is now only permitted to stand on one leg; the shortest half of the group can continue to stand on both feet. Re-start the game. Once again, a minute or two later, introduce another new rule to make the game supposedly fairer or safer. For example, those with blue eyes must 'piggy back' those with different coloured eyes. You can adapt this add-on unnecessary rules principle to any game – indoor board games, outdoor sports.

Ask the group if they enjoyed playing this new version of the game, and then ask what effect the new add-on rules had on the game. For example, they might say:

- It made the game increasingly complex (hard to remember all the new rules)
- Too many rules stopped the flow of the game
- It was unclear how the new rules made the game fairer or safer
- It became difficult to remember what the original game was like

Make the point that sometimes the joy of a game is in its simplicity. Participating is fun. While some rules are always needed, too many rules can quickly spoil a game.

Today, we're thinking about freedom and, in particular, the freedom that God brings – as described in the Bible.

### Wool groups [5-10 mins]

Sit the group on the floor in a circle, facing each other. Take a ball of wool and loosely tie the thread's start to one of the group member's wrists (make sure the wool is loose enough to slip off the wrist in an emergency).

Each person throws the ball of wool to another group member, saying their name as they do so. The recipient of the ball of wool loosely wraps the wool around one of their wrists and then throws it to someone else. Continue until the wool runs out. By the end you should have a very tied-up group!

**Extension activity:** For groups familiar with the Bible, as they throw the ball of wool, challenge them to name one of the 66 books of the Bible. Repeat until they run out of either wool or books of the Bible.

Ask the group how they feel. What words would they use to describe this?

Make the point that over successive generations people added increasing layers of *additional* rules and regulations. Their intention was to guide people on how to stay on the right side of God. But, far from feeling helped, people felt tied up with endless rules and regulations. They felt trapped and constrained, not free.

Jesus challenged the unnecessary additional rules that some religious people had made. These add-ons (not found in the Bible) distorted God's original message of freedom. For example, God gave a regular day of rest (the Sabbath) as a gift. This freedom to enjoy a rest day was later distorted by those who made an add-on rule not found in the Bible that those who walked 914.4 metres (2,000 cubits) or more on a Sabbath were law-breakers (914.3 metres or less was permitted).

This led to people keeping the 'letter', not the 'spirit', of the law. They felt smug (proud) on the occasions they were able to keep these add-on rules (while despising those that failed to do so). Yet the more add-on rules that were applied, the more they felt failures. This wasn't what God wanted for them – or us.

The group should remain tied up for the next activity.

### Good news/bad news [5 mins]

Play a game of good news/bad news (ideally while still tied up in wool). The first person starts by saying: 'The bad news is ...' [and gives some bad news]. For example: 'The bad news is ... my home caught fire yesterday.' The next person responds: 'But the good news is ...' [and gives a good news response]. For example: 'But the good news is ... me and my whole family are coming to stay with you for the next nine months while our home is rebuilt.' Each contribution should link to the next. For example: 'The bad news is ... we have no spare rooms.'

Newspapers are often full of 'bad news'. 'Good news' is rarely given the same attention. And yet it is 'good news' that transforms lives.

### Applying the Bible [5 mins]

Luke tells us that it was Jesus' habit each week to worship with others [verse 16]. Jesus read the Scriptures (the Hebrew Bible, what we now call the Old Testament) to see what they had to say to him [verse 17]. On this occasion, he read:

The Lord's Spirit has come to me, because he has chosen me to tell the good news to the poor. The Lord has sent me to announce freedom for prisoners, to give sight to the blind, to free everyone who suffers, and to say, 'This is the year the Lord has chosen.' (Luke 4.18-19 CEV)

Jesus' message was 'good news', not 'bad news'. What would the poor think was good news for them? How did Jesus bring good news to the poor? For example: fed the five thousand;

encouraged the rich to be generous; socialised with them; healed them of socially-excluding diseases; forgave their sin.

### Think, pair, share [5 mins]

Jesus said: 'What you have just heard me read has come true today' (verse 21). What could the Church (or your youth group) do practically to enable people today to experience the reality of this freedom for themselves?

THINK in silence on your own about this (30 seconds).

PAIR up with someone and swap your ideas (45 seconds).

SHARE with the rest of the group your best idea.

As each idea is revealed, cut some of the wool that is restricting the group. Use this to symbolise the freedom that Christ brings, as outlined in the Bible.

### Shocking gospel [5 mins]

Jesus' audience was shocked and deeply offended by his claim that God brings freedom to all people. They thought God only favoured Jewish people. They were so angry, they tried to throw Jesus off a cliff (verses 28-30)! Ask the young people to think about what would have an element of shock value today. For example, God grants spiritual freedom to a convicted serial killer. God's freedom is offered to ALL and it still feels a bit shocking!

**Extension activity:** 'Mock the Week' is a TV comedy programme that relies heavily on improvisation. In one feature, participants are given a theme and take it in turns to step up to the microphone to deliver spontaneous lines. Use this format to challenge your young people to step up to the mic to announce their shocking freedom statements. For added effect, position a microphone and mic stand in the centre of the room.

### Reading the Bible [5 mins]

Challenge your young people, in teams if appropriate, to produce a creative reading of Luke 4.16-24. This could be filmed, acted or painted. Here are some examples:

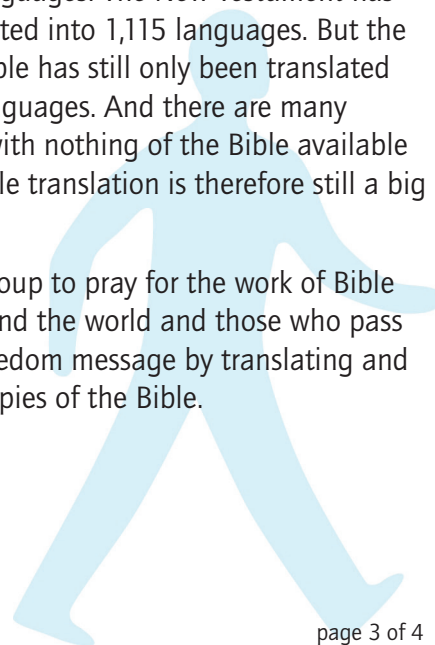
- Break the passage down into 20-30 tiny sections and film and edit together a random cross-section of individuals and groups in your local community saying the words. Celebrate the diversity!
- Film a close-up of just the mouth of someone reading the passage. It looks and sounds dramatic when played back!
- Use Lego, Scrabble or fridge magnet letters to animate the reading.

Either set this challenge as a follow-up to today's session or as an activity undertaken in advance. With the permission of participants, post the readings on [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) and screen them in a church service, as well as the youth group. For added impact, host your own Academy Awards ceremony, with Oscars for a variety of categories (e.g. best creativity, best art work, best 'extra', best comedy).

### Prayer [5 mins]

Many people in our world still don't understand the freedom God offers us in Jesus because the Bible just isn't available in their language. There are approximately 6,900 languages in the world today. Parts of the Bible are available in 2,400 languages. The New Testament has been translated into 1,115 languages. But the complete Bible has still only been translated into 426 languages. And there are many languages with nothing of the Bible available to them. Bible translation is therefore still a big challenge.

Invite the group to pray for the work of Bible Society around the world and those who pass on God's freedom message by translating and providing copies of the Bible.



1. Pass a copy of the Bible around the group. Invite members to pray aloud or silently when the Bible comes to them.
2. Place a large copy of the Bible in the room (possibly open at Luke 4.16-24) and supply the group with Post-it notes and pens. Invite them to write their prayers onto Post-it notes and attach them to the Bible.
3. If you have access to a large quantity of 'pew Bibles' (you'll need up to 38), ask the young people to spell out key words they want to use as a focus for their short prayers. Use the Bibles on the floor to form the letters. Keywords: BIBLE; LOVE; HOPE; FREEDOM.

Play some ambient music and invite individuals to read the passage aloud a number of times, slowly, pausing between each reading. Ask the young people to think about what this Bible passage has to say to them, either as individuals or as a group.

For other prayer resources check out:  
[biblesociety.org.uk/support-us/pray-with-us/](http://biblesociety.org.uk/support-us/pray-with-us/)

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These activities are written by **Danny Brierley**. Danny is an RE teacher in inner-city Birmingham and member of Chawn Hill Church, Stourbridge.

