



# Session 1: Just lyfe introduction

## Stepping into the Just lyfe stream...

We live in a competitive, consumerist world, where what we have seems to matter more than who we are, where social networking replaces face-to-face relationships and where few of us even meet our neighbours – let alone know them. The Just lyfe stream explores themes of justice, compassion and peace in all arenas of life, from personal to social to global.

As with the other streams, the actions we take are not the end goal. True compassion is motivated by a genuine heart, is empowered by the love of God and embraces the possibility of positive change.

One of the remarkable aspects of this stream is its double effect: in the process of coming alongside others, we too are helped. As we learn to develop a heart of compassion and to see the world as God sees it – we too are truly blessed.

### Previous session review

- Recap on your experience of the previous challenge. How did it go? Was it helpful?
- If you weren't able to try the challenge, explore the question: Where and how did you experience God last week?

## Read

*Read the passage several times through, slowly and prayerfully. It might help to use your imagination to picture the scene. At the end of the text you will find helpful background information in our 'Setting the Scene' section.*

*As you read, look out for shockers and blockers.*

**Shockers** – a phrase, word, image or something from the text that resonates, stands out or connects with you.

**Blockers** – something from the text that raises questions for you.

### Matthew 25.31–46

Jesus continued: When the Son of Man comes in his glory with all of his angels, he will sit on his royal throne. The people of all nations will be brought before him, and he will separate them, as shepherds separate their sheep from their goats.

He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the king will say to those on his right, "My father has blessed you! Come and receive the kingdom that was prepared for you before the world was created. When I was hungry, you gave me something to eat, and when I was thirsty, you gave me something to drink. When I was a stranger, you welcomed me, and when I was naked, you gave me clothes to wear. When I was sick, you took care of me, and when I was in jail, you visited me."

Then the ones who pleased the Lord will ask, "When did we give you something to eat or drink? When did we welcome you as a stranger or give you clothes to wear or visit you while you were sick or in jail?"

The king will answer, "Whenever you did it for any of my people, no matter how unimportant they seemed, you did it for me."

Then the king will say to those on his left, "Get away from me! You are under God's curse. Go into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels! I was hungry, but you did not give me anything to eat, and I was thirsty, but you did not give me anything to drink. I was a stranger, but you did not welcome me, and I was naked, but you did not give me any clothes to wear. I was sick and in jail, but you did not take care of me."

### Setting the scene:

- This vivid picture describes a scene in which all the nations (i.e. people) are judged.
- The Messiah/Jesus/Son of Man is often pictured as a shepherd in the Bible - see for example Isaiah 40.9-11 and Ezekiel 34.23.
- In Ancient Palestine it was common for the sheep and goats to be herded together, and were often hard to tell apart. The 'sheep' are an Old Testament image for God's people.
- Right and left in Jewish culture symbolizes blessed/cursed or good/bad.
- As well as referring to the future, this passage launches us on a mission of compassion to the world today. As we serve others, we also serve Jesus.

Then the people will ask, "Lord, when did we fail to help you when you were hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in jail?"

The king will say to them, "Whenever you failed to help any of my people, no matter how unimportant they seemed, you failed to do it for me." Then Jesus said, "Those people will be punished forever. But the ones who pleased God will have eternal life."

Contemporary English Version (CEV)

## Reflect

*After you have all had time to read the text, pause and be still to listen to God through the Scriptures.*

*Begin your reflection time by each naming your shockers and blockers. Listen carefully to each other, share your thoughts and reflect on this passage together.*

### You might also like to explore these questions:

**Q1.** How good are you at encouragement, serving and compassion – does it come easily and naturally to you?

**Q2.** In what sense are we blessed as we bless others? Have you experienced this?

'Our intention to live as apprentices of Jesus must be worked out in the public, social and political realms. God's grace is given not only to change us, but to touch others through us.'

*Christopher S Webb  
(Author & Deputy Warden,  
Launde Abbey)*

## Respond

*Just lyfe challenge: As a group, create a challenge that will help you increase your compassion for others or choose from the following.*

### Challenge ideas:

#### 1. Let's talk

Surprise someone this week with a real encouragement. Send a text, email or make a call to someone who is struggling – tell them what they mean to you as a friend. Or if there is someone you need to rebuild a relationship with, invite them over for a drink or a meal. Ask for their forgiveness and seek reconciliation and a new start.

#### 2. Mood Changer

This week, try to bring a breath of fresh air to your workplace or home. Make it your aim to speak well of everyone, try and turn gossiping conversations around and if you do find fault in someone, find a way to flip it round so you can come alongside them and help them to grow. Pursuing a compassionate life includes breathing new life into our relationships and interactions by representing Jesus and his love to the people around us.

#### 3. Compassionate

The phrase 'compassion fatigue' describes a phenomenon where sometimes, when we're surrounded by a cacophony of competing needs, it can feel easier to switch off to them all. Why not turn this around. If you don't already, choose to support something that you feel passionate about - where you can make a difference. Even better, spend some time asking God where he would like you to direct your resources. It could be a charity where your support could help to relieve poverty or something closer to home such as a homeless project that you could bless with your time. Whatever it is, why not make a sustained commitment to take a stand and get involved.

## Group Prayer

You might like to commit to praying for each person in the group this week as you explore ways to increase our compassion and love for God, the world and all people.