

FOUR PERSPECTIVES

A Bearing a burden

Tom is carrying a rucksack. It is heavy and he cannot take it off. He feels as if he has been carrying it for ever. The straps dig into his shoulders and the heavy bag gets in the way as he goes through the day.

Talk about:

- How would Tom feel?
- What would it be like to carry such a burden?
- What would he like to happen?

Act out:

- Imagine you have this burden; what is it like to be weighed down?

One day, along comes Joshua. He offers to take the rucksack, if Tom would like.

Talk about:

- How does Tom feel about the idea of getting rid of the bag?
- What does Tom say?
- How does it feel to have the weight lifted off?
- How does Tom feel towards Joshua?
- What might he do in response?
- Which words might you use to describe what Joshua has done?

A Bearing a burden

Christians generally see sin as a burden. When they don't have the right attitude to God or to others, or if they act selfishly, they often feel guilty. They want to be good, but don't always manage it. They believe that Jesus will take the burden away if they ask him for forgiveness.

In groups, think of how to act out and present two freeze-frame images - one to express how a Christian might feel when they have upset God, and one showing how they might feel after their sins have been forgiven.

B Stepping in

Rachel is walking to school one cold winter morning, when there is a terrible accident. A car starts skidding on some ice, heading straight for her.

Talk about:

- In that instant, how does Rachel feel?
- What does she fear?
- What does she hope for?

Just then, Joshua, who was walking a few steps behind her, dives forward and pushes Rachel out of the path of the oncoming car. The car hits Joshua instead. An ambulance is called. Joshua is taken to hospital with serious injuries. A few days later, Rachel visits Joshua in hospital.

Talk about:

- Why would Joshua do such a thing?
- How might Rachel feel about what has happened?
- What could Rachel do to show her gratitude?

B Stepping in

Christians believe that God loves them and that Jesus saves them from a terrible fate - life without God after they die. As a result, they want to please Jesus, and show gratitude for his sacrifice on the cross. This means that they want to follow Jesus' teachings.

In pairs, look at this list of Jesus' teachings. Come up with an example of an occasion when it would be really difficult to follow this teaching. Take one and draw a short storyboard showing how a Christian might remember Jesus, to help them do the right thing.

- Do not boast
- Love your enemies
- Do not get angry
- Don't worry about what will happen tomorrow.
- Do not spend all your time gathering up riches for yourself
- If someone is ill, look after them.

Lost

Imagine you're on holiday with some friends and have gone walking alone in some woods one afternoon. It's peaceful and calm as you walk deeper into the woods. Gradually, as the sun goes down and the shadows lengthen, you realise that you don't know where you are.

Talk about:

- Have you experienced being lost?
- How did you feel?
- What thoughts might go through your mind in the story above?
- What sights and sounds would you experience as darkness falls?

As the hours go by and your panic increases, the light goes and you are left in darkness. Eventually you hear a voice calling your name and you see a light through the trees. You call out, and the light comes towards you. It is one of your friends, Joshua, who has been out searching for you and who knows the way back out of the wood.

Talk about:

- How would you describe the moment you heard the voice, then saw the torchlight, then saw your friend coming towards you?
- What might the two of you say to each other?

Lost

Jesus told a story about God being like a shepherd who searches for a lost sheep (Luke 15:1-7). He also described himself as a good shepherd, prepared to lay down his life for his flock, and leading his people to safety (John 10:11-16). Christians also believe that Jesus does not just show them the way to heaven, he actually *is* the way. Through Jesus' sacrifice, he opens the way to heaven. Following Jesus is like being found by someone loving and trustworthy, who leads a person home.

Individually or in pairs, produce a piece of artwork that expresses the idea of being lost and then found. You might do a collage, using colours and images symbolically. Write a short paragraph explaining your picture and showing how it links to Christian beliefs about Jesus.

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Taking someone's place

Sam is in trouble! After messing about with some friends, Sam has broken a window at school. The only problem is, Sam is often in trouble, and this is the latest in the long line of such accidents. This might be the last straw – perhaps Sam will face serious punishment now.

Talk about:

- How does it feel when someone knows they've done wrong?
- What if they have let down someone they respect and know they have to face the consequences?
- How does it feel when someone knows they deserve to be punished, and that this time it's serious?

As Sam realises that it is time to face the head teacher and take his punishment, Joshua, a friend who was nearby, offers to take Sam's place. Joshua is prepared to go to the head teacher and take the blame, taking the punishment and letting Sam go free this time.

Talk about:

- Why might Joshua be prepared to take the blame?
- Would Sam accept the offer?
- If Sam accepts, how might Sam respond to Joshua afterwards?

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Taking someone's place

Christians believe that in the Old Testament, God arranged to deal with people's sins through sacrifice. An animal – sometimes a lamb – was offered. The worshipper said sorry for their sins then put their hand on the lamb, a symbol for transferring their sins onto the lamb. The lamb was then killed and the body burned on the altar. The worshipper's sins were gone! It was as if the lamb had taken the punishment for the worshipper. They were now at one with God again.

Imagine what it would be like to be able to take all the wrong things you have ever done or said, or even thought – to put them onto paper and then burn the paper. As the flames lick upwards, the paper turns black and crumples, the writing disappears, leaving smoke and ash.

How would it feel – to let go of the guilt of all those wrong things? Why might someone be happy with this?