

SESSION 1:

WE ARE HERE

ABOUT THIS SESSION

In this session, you'll introduce the *Growing Good* course and start your group map. The theme is 'We are here'. It's about your group and where they are – where they live, what they do, where they go – their locality in the here and now.

AIMS

- ▶ Build understanding of what the *Growing Good* course is, and feel ready and motivated for the next five weeks.
- ▶ Reflect on what you love about your community, and plot your locality out on your map.
- ▶ Recognise that God wants all of us to make a difference where we are.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

Provided in this pack:

- ▶ Your community map

For you to provide/prepare:

- ▶ Flipchart paper (or equivalent) headed 'What we love about where we live'
- ▶ Marker pen for flipchart
- ▶ Pens (multiple) for young people to write on their group map

STEP BY STEP

COMMUNITY

1 INTRO ⌚ 1 minute

Welcome your group to Session 1 of *Growing Good*. Explain that this is an interactive, six-week course to help youth groups explore their community and how they can make a difference in it.

2 OPENING ACTIVITY: WHAT THREE WORDS

⌚ 5 minutes

- ▶ Lead a group brainstorm on what the young people love or enjoy about their area and what makes it special. Tell the group that this is to help them reflect on the good things and the identity of where they live. Write up the things they say, on your flipchart. Where people say similar things, eg 'the beach' and 'the sea', try and write them in groups.
- ▶ After a few minutes brainstorming, work as a group to pick your top three. These are your 'what three words' for your community.

WATCHOUT!

Tell the young people there are no wrong answers. Prompt them with suggestions if ideas are drying up.

3 BIBLE READING ⌚ 5 minutes

Context for leader: In this part of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells His followers how their everyday lives are meant to show God's goodness to the world around them. Jesus is saying that the way we live every day – especially how we treat others – should point people towards God.

'You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.' (Matthew 5: 14-16, NIVUK)

**NIVUK version used for clarity*

Q: Jesus calls His followers (us!) 'the light of the world' and 'a town on a hill'. Why do you think He chooses these things?

- ▶ *Something visible – it can't be hidden / the town represents community rather than individuals: people, us, Christians, the church*

Q: Why is light so important in this passage? What's the purpose of letting our light shine?

- ▶ *People (ie we) are important because we can help bring light / light is positive / we can make a difference / our world is hurting, and it needs us / we help show God's love*

4 YOUR MAP 🕒 15 minutes

- ▶ Remind your group that *Growing Good* is about knowing, loving and bringing God's light into their community. To kick off, you're going to map out your community.
- ▶ Your group should be sat together, ideally around a table. Give them the map to unfold.
- ▶ Start by someone writing the name of your town/community and also your 'what three words' on the map. Then, create your map!
- ▶ Deciding how big an area to cover, plot your church and other key places such as schools/colleges, shopping areas, key roads, pubs, hospitals, estates, care homes, parks, landmarks, food banks and anything else they feel is significant. You can choose what to put in the middle. It should end up looking something like this.
- ▶ As the map takes shape, encourage discussion in a natural way. Eg, 'The X cafe's in this spot – love it there – best doughnuts in town'.... 'The food bank runs here – super helpful for lots of people right now' and so on.
- ▶ Encourage your group to reflect on where and how God is at work in their community – places where there is kindness, creativity, unity and love.



5 BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

🕒 2 minutes

Suggested words for you to adapt: 'Great start, did you all enjoy that? I'm interested, how did it make us feel about our community?... To make a difference where we are, we need to be paying attention to the people and places around us. We'll be coming back to this map over the next few sessions and building from here.'

6 PRAYER

🕒 1 minute

Dear God,

Thank you for our community. Thank you for the people here and for the places we've talked about today. We've read that you call us to be light. We pray that you will show us ways to shine and bring your light this week, and during the next few weeks as we progress through the *Growing Good* course.

Amen



OPTIONAL 'GO DEEPER' CREATIVE ACTIVITY

Find a blank space on the map, write the name of your town/community with each letter in a vertical line, and work together to create an acrostic poem about your community. You can make it as creative or as simple as you want. Here's a basic example:

H - Hard to find work

O - Out of this world sea views

V - Very good for holidays!

E - Everyone is welcome

OPTIONAL 'TAKEAWAY' ACTIVITY

Based on the theme of your 'what three words' OR 'being light', ask your group to take a photo of somewhere/something in their community this week where they see God's goodness. Encourage them to share their pics on a group chat in line with your church's communications policy, or share them at the start of the next session.