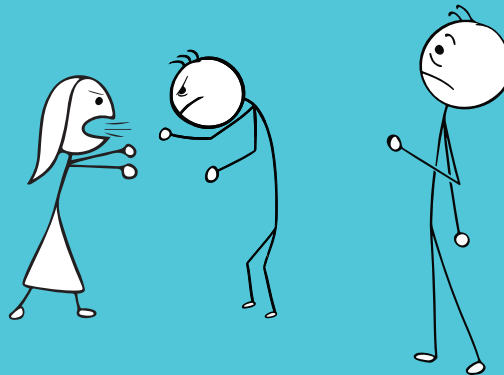


# Exploring Sexual Harassment + The Bystander Effect

A workshop series for youth groups

## TOPIC ONE: THE BYSTANDER EFFECT



ANGLICAN  
advocacy

# PURPOSE OF TOPIC ONE

To familiarise the group with the Bystander Effect and to explore common reasons why people do not intervene in difficult situations.

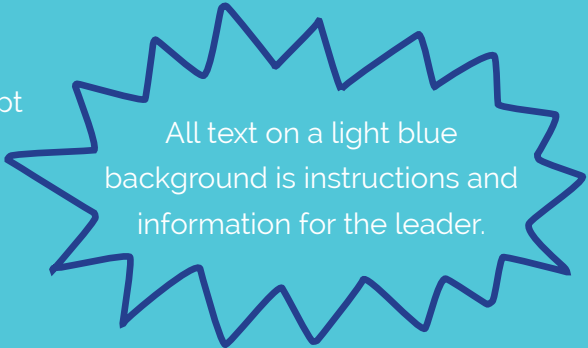


## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES NEEDED FOR THIS TOPIC

- 10 x Reason Cards (provided in the Appendix)
- Blank Situation Card (template provided in the Appendix). For your group to write common situations in which they feel someone should intervene e.g. bullying, offensive jokes
- Marker pens

## STEP BY STEP

1. Leader to pre-read material and get familiar with concept
2. Warm up discussion
3. 10 x Reason Cards activity
4. Good Samaritan discussion
5. Situation Cards activity
6. Summary and closing prayer

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All text on a light blue background is instructions and information for the leader.

# INFORMATION FOR THE LEADER

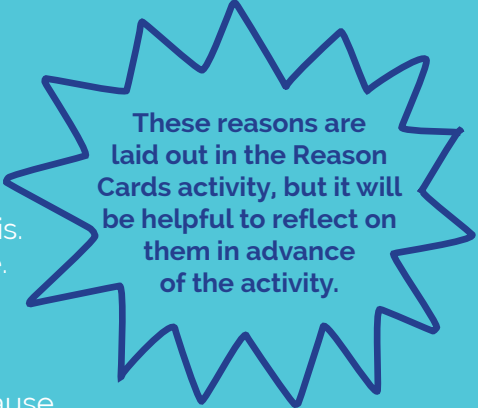


The Bystander Effect is a psychological phenomenon that says the **bigger** a group of people present, the **less likely** people are to speak up or help someone in need.

There are a number of reasons why people won't help in a given situation, such as feeling socially awkward or the ambiguity of the situation. These reasons for inaction are made worse when there is a crowd.

## Here are the top 10 reasons people tend to give for not getting involved:

- **Fear:** Real or perceived, it feels risky or dangerous.
- **Uncertainty:** About what to do or how to intervene.
- **Embarrassment:** Especially if it turns out to be nothing.
- **Not my business:** Not butting in is kind of our way.
- **Doubt:** Ignoring your gut reaction to act because no one else is.
- **Awkwardness:** If no one else joins me the focus will be on me.
- **Time:** I have other priorities or somewhere else to be.
- **Not wanting to be responsible:** What if I get it wrong?  
Surely someone else will help!
- **Not really caring:** Not necessarily a lack of empathy, but because people might just be overwhelmed by their own problems.
- **Assuming others will help:** A larger group makes inaction more likely.

A dark blue starburst graphic with multiple points, containing white text.

These reasons are laid out in the Reason Cards activity, but it will be helpful to reflect on them in advance of the activity.

# INFORMATION FOR THE LEADER (CONT'D)



- The Good Samaritan is a parable that illustrates the Bystander Effect and can provide a good framework for reflection on Christian values around difficulties with speaking up or helping someone in need.
- Be sure to read all the information before you begin. It might be helpful for your group to mix the order up and pull in other ideas from your own work.
- Note that the definition of the Bystander Effect doesn't come up until the end of the first topic. The idea is that by the time the term is used, the group is already familiar with the concept. However, like everything else in this material, alter as you see fit – all the material is informative rather than prescriptive.

# INTRODUCTION



This introduction is designed to get the group chatting and introduce the topic. Ask questions that allow people to depersonalise their answers at first. There is likely to be a point in the conversation where it is natural to move into the Reason Cards activity.

**Q** Who is your favourite superhero and why?

**Q** Think of a situation in a movie or book in which someone didn't act when they should have. Could you easily relate or empathise with them?

**Q** What kind of situations might actually happen in your school or neighbourhood where someone should say or do something to intervene?

**Q** Has anyone seen a situation where they thought someone should speak up or do something? What happened? Did you do something? Why/why not?

Examples might be someone physically picking on someone, a crash, someone begging, racist comments, a joke about women, bullying, someone yelling for help...

Focus on situations that seem to be common or particularly relevant to your group and write these on blank Situation Cards (see Appendix for template).

**Keep these cards for future sessions.**

# ACTIVITY 1: REASON CARDS



Each card contains one of the 10 most common reasons why a Bystander does not help someone in need.

1. Lay out the 10 reasons cards in the appendix that contain the common reasons people give for not helping someone in need.
2. Have people look them over and select the one that they relate to or are most drawn to.
3. As people feel comfortable have them share why they picked the card they picked.

# BIBLE STUDY: THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN

Luke 10:25-37 (Message Bible)

<sup>30-32</sup> Jesus answered by telling a story. "There was once a man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho. On the way he was attacked by robbers. They took his clothes, beat him up, and went off leaving him half-dead. Luckily, a priest was on his way down the same road, but when he saw him he angled across to the other side. Then a Levite religious man showed up; he also avoided the injured man.

<sup>33-35</sup> "A Samaritan traveling the road came on him. When he saw the man's condition, his heart went out to him. He gave him first aid, disinfecting and bandaging his wounds. Then he lifted him onto his donkey, led him to an inn, and made him comfortable. In the morning he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take good care of him. If it costs any more, put it on my bill – I'll pay you on my way back.'

<sup>36</sup> "What do you think? Which of the three became a neighbor to the man attacked by robbers?"

<sup>37</sup> "The one who treated him kindly," the religion scholar responded. Jesus said, "Go and do the same."

# GOOD SAMARITAN DISCUSSION

There are some comments and notes regarding the background of the parable in the Appendix.

- Q Which of the top 10 reasons from the reason cards do you think was the problem for the Priest and the Levite?
- Q After discussing the story further, does it change how you feel about the Priest and the Levite?
- Q Which reason card do you think was the most challenging for the Samaritan to overcome?
- Q How do you think the Samaritan overcame the reasons for not getting involved?
- Q What cards would be hardest for you/ your peer group to overcome?  
In what situations?

If necessary add a few more relevant situations to your Situation Cards.



## ACTIVITY 2: SITUATION CARDS



Written on these cards are a bunch of situations that happen around us.

**Q** What are the most common situations?

**Q** What are the most difficult situations?

Discuss the situations as appropriate. If relevant, have a discussion about sexist/racist humour (see Appendix for discussion points) and whether that is a situation in which we should intervene. This is a useful conversation because it comes up again in future topics and is one where people's ideas may differ.

**Q** Is it possible to group some of these situation cards with the reason cards that best apply to them?

**Q** Are some of these situations easier to act in if there are more people around? Does it make a difference if you are with friends? Strangers? In a big group?

# SUMMARY



All of these reason cards relate to something called the Bystander Effect. The Bystander Effect is well-studied in psychology. It says the bigger a crowd, the less likely it is that someone will intervene – so the reasons on these cards become even harder when there are more people around.

## Q why might that be?

The Bystander Effect is common to everyone. We shouldn't feel guilty because it is hard to act or speak out – it's a really difficult thing to do. However, we can learn strategies to help us overcome this and be more like the Samaritan in the story.

Pull out two of the cards:

**"I'd be embarrassed if it turns out to be nothing"**

**"I don't know what to do"**

A lot of the reasons for not stepping in or speaking up when someone needs help can be grouped around these two cards. The next topics cover how to know whether someone needs help and how to help. We will explore some specific skills around these questions in the next sessions.

# CLOSING PRAYER



God of love,  
Love drives out fear, help us learn to love.

God of light,  
Help us see the world as you see it.

God of Grace,  
Help us be kind and patient with others and ourselves.

God of this world,  
Help us give up our guilt over things that are not our burden to bear.

God of hope,  
Help us find hope in difficult situations.

God of joy,  
Help us approach these subjects with playfulness.

Grant us the insight to see others in need, and the wisdom to know what to do.

# APPENDIX 1: "I WAS JUST JOKING"

Optional Discussion on sexist or racist humour.  
See Topic Three for a more in-depth discussion.


**Q** *How can we tell if a joke is funny, hurtful or harmful?*

One possible rule of thumb is to ask if the joke you are hearing (or telling) is 'targeting up,' or 'targeting down.'

Is it at the expense of a minority or marginalised group? It might still be inappropriate if it is targeting up, but groups in positions of power have less vulnerability and more ability to speak up for themselves. Power imbalance is a common biblical theme, and is ever-present (along with injustice) in society. It is usually less harmful to err on the side of a marginalised group over the sensitivity of a more powerful group.

**Q** *Sometimes one listener will find a joke funny, while someone else is offended. Is it our responsibility not to offend? Or is it the listener's responsibility to not take things seriously if we are 'just joking'?*

**Q** *Does it make a difference if you're telling an in-joke amongst a circle of friends or if the target is a stranger? How can we tell if a line is crossed?*



This is a really valuable conversation to have with your group because there is no absolute 'right' answer. It's an opportunity to practice respectfully disagreeing and hearing different opinions without getting defensive.

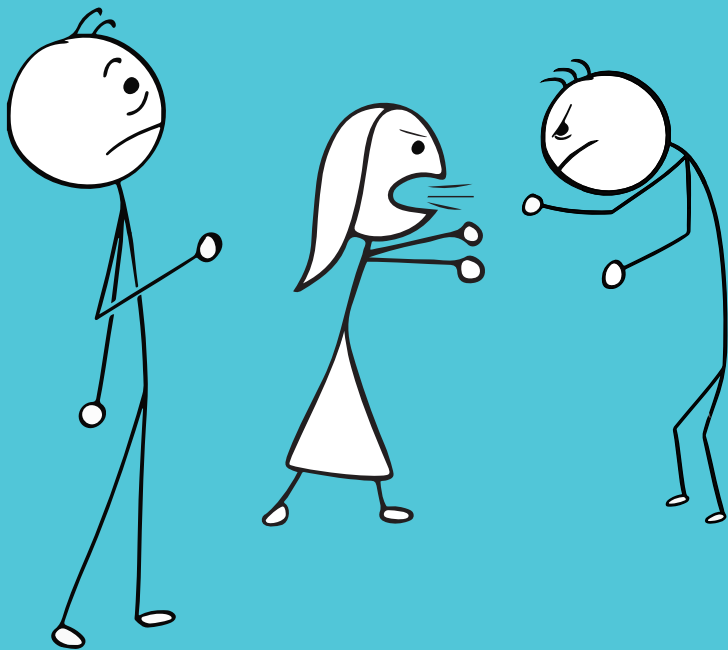
## APPENDIX 2: SOME THOUGHTS ON THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN

We assume that you are able to do your own work on the parable of the good Samaritan so these are just a few points, rather than a full study.

- At the time, touching a dead body was considered to make you unclean. This meant the Priest would have had to go through a ritual purification process before being able to do his job.
- The Levite probably worked with the priest and may have taken a hint from the Priest's inactivity for doing nothing.
- Equally, tradition at the time said that while you were obliged to help your neighbour, the term only applied to your immediate people group. Being stripped naked and unconscious meant there were no identifying markers (clothes or speech) as to who this person might be. Samaritans were hated and considered outcast by the listeners to Jesus' parable. The Priest and Levite therefore had religious and traditional reasons for not helping.
- It is also possible it might have been a trap, making fear a possible reason for crossing to the other side.

# SOME THOUGHTS ON THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN (CONT'D)

- Jesus casts the hated Samaritan as the hero. Although the term Samaritan is now synonymous with the action of helping, at the time it was simply the ethnicity of a despised group of people. It could be worth considering who Jesus would cast in that role now, for his story to have the same impact.
- All the same barriers existed for the Samaritan, who acted anyway.
- Additionally, for a Samaritan to enter a Hebrew town with a beaten and unconscious body over his donkey may have been a risky act.



I don't  
want to  
butt in

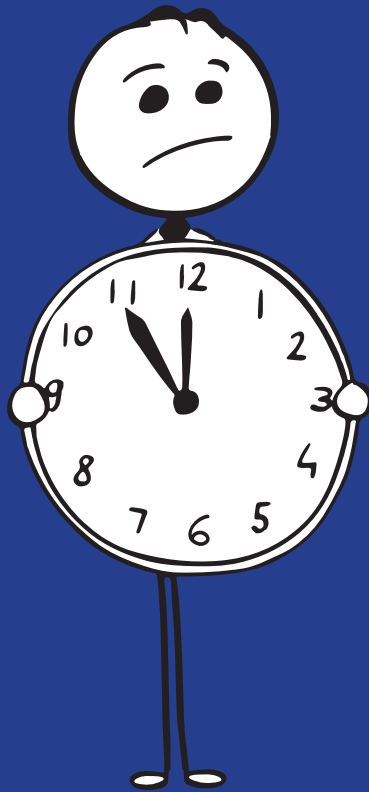
Reason #1

10 Reasons for not helping









I don't  
have  
time







Someone else  
will help





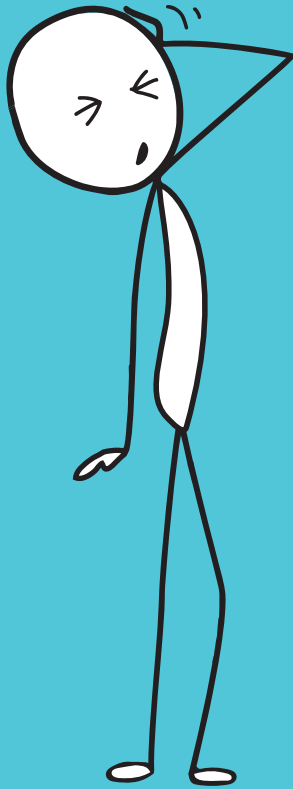


Maybe it's not as  
**SERIOUS**  
as it seems...

...Everyone else  
is so  
**CALM**





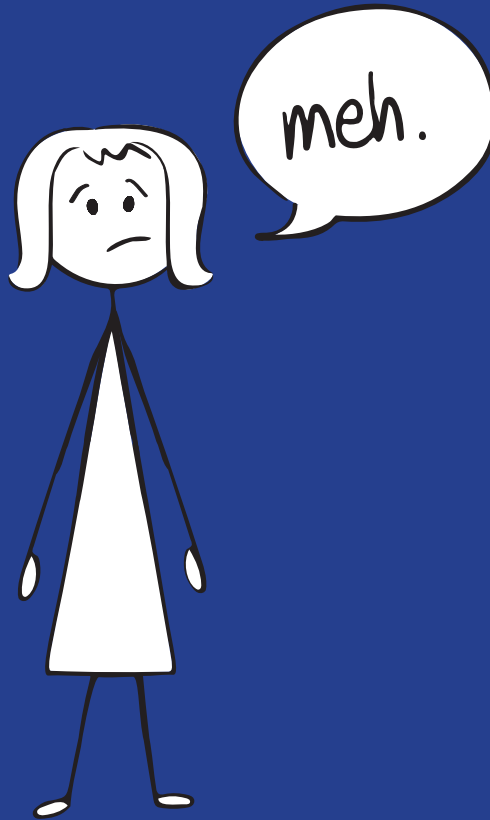


I'd be  
EMBARRASSED  
if it turns  
out to be  
NOTHING









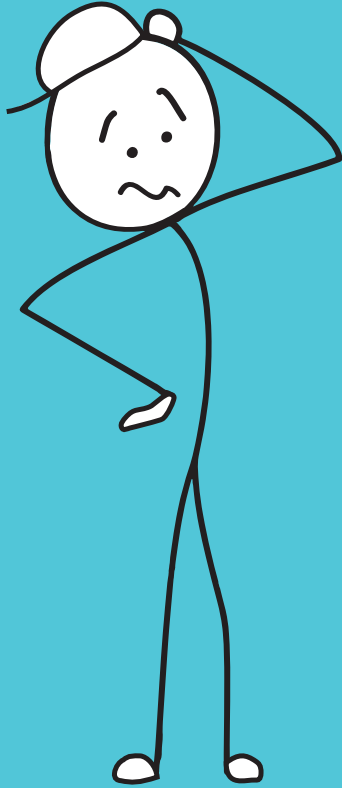
I don't  
care

Reason #6

10 Reasons for not helping







It might be  
**AWKWARD**  
to help when  
**NO ONE ELSE IS**





It's too  
risky



Reason #8

10 Reasons for not helping







I don't  
know what  
to do









Surely someone  
has already  
**CALLED FOR HELP**





A likely situation in which someone should speak up or intervene is...

Situation Card

