



Stories 2



Individual stories about real people are often very challenging, inspiring and thought-provoking - all at the same time.

This selection of real-life stories about young people are each followed by a series of questions that can be used for further discussion and reflection.

These stories can be used alongside or instead of a traditional sermon, or they might be used as a focus for prayer, bible study or a local social action project.

Steve

Steve is in his mid teens. He is cheeky, bullied, a bully, fun to be with, can be abusive and nearly always makes you smile – he is the sort of person you can't help but like!

Of late, he has not been in school. A somewhat unfortunate incident with a toy weapon was not appreciated by the school authorities! This led to yet another school exclusion. This time it was a permanent one.

For several months Steve has not attended school. He has spent his time messing about around the town and working part-time laying paving slabs for the local gang master. He gets £5 for half a days work and the whole operation is just about as dodgy as you can get.

The only education he has had over the last few months is from local youth workers. He attends an after school club to do IT and arts and crafts activities. He also works in the youth club as a young volunteer. To many local peoples amazement he has undertaken some basic training in youth work to be a volunteer helper. One of his (ex) teachers has said that what he does with the youth club is 'his life'.

So what's the challenge? Well, Steve is one of the young people who might epitomize the much talked about, media driven, yob culture: out of school, into all sorts of things he would perhaps be better avoiding, prone to anti-social activities and almost completely socially excluded. At the same time, he is keen to learn, enthusiastic and fun to have around. The local youth workers want to reward him for the distance on the journey he has travelled in his work. His voluntary work is significant and commendable – the rest of the local community just doesn't see it that way.

Youth workers often have to be bridge-builders between young people and the churches/communities they work in. The two don't always see things the same way. It appears Jesus had the same challenges: Seeing people as who they really were, appreciating where they had come from and understanding the difficulties life had thrown at them rather than always looking for them to be the finished article – nicely dressed in Sunday best and ready to take their place in middle England (or Nazareth, or Jerusalem or wherever).

We cannot foresee what will happen to Steve. He could become a fine building professional or labourer – equally, he could end up unemployable or in prison. At the moment there are a group of youth workers who accept him and are offering him a life line. At times the life-line seems thin and it is stretched, but it is the best hope he has at the moment. Unless he can stay in school it might be the only hope.

Questions

Sometimes, how people look or behave can put us off engaging with them. What can we learn from how Jesus engaged with people?

How could your church help people like Steve?

In what ways could you help be a 'bridge-builder' between church and young people and young people and community?