

## SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION 2

# DIGNITY



### PREPARATION

The following could be useful to help you with this discussion:

- Bible
- Candle
- Post-it notes
- Pens

### OVERVIEW

When Lisa-Marie lost her job, she struggled to pay the bills and was forced to go without food in order to make sure her children didn't go hungry.

**“Going to a food bank was the hardest thing I've ever done, but the best thing I've ever done,” she said. “I thought I'd let people down because I was having to ask for help, but if it wasn't for the food bank I don't know where I'd be – in a lot of trouble, I think.”**

Across the UK, more people than ever are facing extreme poverty. And like Lisa-Marie, for many people one of the most difficult things about that situation is a sense of embarrassment, or a loss of dignity – and that's the theme of this week's session.

Today we want to look at what dignity is, what the Bible has to say on this topic, and how we can respond to some of the needs in our world where people close to us feel a loss of dignity.

Dignity is the state of being worthy of honour or respect. Sometimes we might feel that our dignity has been taken away because of life's circumstances or the way people treat us. Take the man in chapter 8 of Matthew's gospel who has leprosy, a disease historically associated with shame and embarrassment. It's highly likely that this man would have been cast out by society and possibly even his own family.

But look at how Jesus responded. Matthew 8:3 tells us that Jesus 'reached out and touched the man' before making him clean. He went against the norm, wasn't worried about other people's opinions, and he made the man well, restoring his dignity.

Fast forward a couple of thousand years and leprosy is almost non-existent in the UK, but shame and social exclusion continue to deeply impact people's lives. Being unable to afford to show hospitality to others or take part in activities that many people take for granted can make it difficult for people to maintain a sense of dignity. The loss of a job or being unable to work because of ill health can sometimes eat away at people's confidence or sense of self-worth, however much we might know that these things are nothing to be ashamed of.

Dignity involves treating everyone with respect and showing that all are valued, honoured, and equal. Jesus demonstrated it – not just with the man he healed but in the gentleness he extends to his disciples when they make mistakes and even betray him, with the tax collector whom he befriended, and even with the crowd when he turned water into wine, saving them the embarrassment of running out of wedding drinks! His message is that all should be shown dignity – what a challenge for us as we go about our daily lives.



## READ

Let's reflect on some key Bible verses about dignity. Take a few moments of quiet time as we ponder God's Word and ask Him to guide us and speak to us through our time together.

## TIP

You could light a candle or play some gentle worship music in the background. This could aid your reflective time in God's presence.



### PROVERBS 31:25

"Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she smiles at the future."



### PSALM 139:14

"I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well."



### GALATIANS 3:28

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

# DISCUSS

- 1** What's the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the word dignity? Spend a few moments discussing.
- 2** The Bible says we are all 'fearfully and wonderfully made'. What's wonderful about you? Name what you think is your best God-given trait. Don't be embarrassed! (You might be able to help each other out with this if people find it difficult).
- 3** Can you think of an occasion where either you or someone else found it difficult to maintain a sense of dignity? What could have helped to restore this?
- 4** Has anyone ever trusted you with a responsibility that felt like a 'step up' or an opportunity to use a skill you have in a new way? How did this make you feel?
- 5** How might you show dignity to others? Perhaps one of the following ideas could be developed into activities for your small group to engage in – or are there any other practical ideas you have?
  - Is there someone at work, in church, or amongst your family and friends who often gets overlooked? Why not make some time to listen to them and get to know them better?
  - Ask someone you might not normally take the time to talk with what they think about a topic in the news and see what you can learn from them.
  - Is there a neighbour who is lonely and doesn't get many visitors? Why not offer to have a coffee with them and get to know them?
  - Next time you see someone doing something well, or that makes a positive difference to others, tell them and speak words of affirmation.

## TIP

You could split your group into smaller groups if that dynamic would work best. Perhaps appoint a spokesperson in each group to report back to the larger group for feedback afterwards

## PRAY

**We are going to close today's session with a time of prayer.**

What a great opportunity to ask God to show us his heart for all people. Ask that we would see others more like he does and that we would grow in our awareness of the creativity and unique potential that God has given to every person. Pray about how you might respond to needs in your community and help people experience honour, respect, and dignity.

## TIP

Sometimes praying out loud can be awkward. Depending on your group's preferences, you could ask everyone to write down their prayer needs on Post-it notes and then the group could collectively pray for everyone's needs and suggestions.