

Listen, observe, act – in step with God [Group Reflective Activities from MULOA]

If your branch or group has not participated directly with the MULOA process [our global conversations to prayerfully inform the way forward for Mothers' Union] then you may like to engage with it by using these resources.

### **Group Bible Reflection:** Blind Bartimaeus

Objective: Reflect on Mothers' Union's calling to the 'outsiders' and the impact we can have?

<sup>46</sup>They came to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. <sup>47</sup>When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!' <sup>48</sup>Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!' <sup>49</sup>Jesus stood still and said, 'Call him here'. And they called the blind man, saying to him, 'Take heart; get up, he is calling you'. <sup>50</sup>So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. <sup>51</sup>Then Jesus said to him, 'What do you want me to do for you?' The blind man said to him, 'My teacher, let me see again'. <sup>52</sup>Jesus said to him, 'Go; your faith has made you well'. Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.

Mark 10: 46–52

To consider:

THEN	NOW
What was it about Bartimaeus that drew Jesus to him?	Who does Bartimaeus represent in our own locality?
What different reactions came from the crowd and how did they change?	If Mothers' Union is the crowd today, how do we react to the vulnerable and marginalised?
What changes took place in Bartimaeus as a result?	From this learning, what changes in lives should Mothers' Union be helping to bring?

### **Group Bible Reflection:** The Feeding of the 5000

Objective: to see that God wants to use us and our resources to bring about transformation in our own lives and the life of our community.

To consider: What was the need in this story? What were the resources?

<sup>30</sup>The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. <sup>31</sup>He said to them, 'Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while'. For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. <sup>32</sup>And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. <sup>33</sup>Now many saw them going and recognised them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. <sup>34</sup>As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things. <sup>35</sup>When it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, 'This is a deserted place, and the hour is now very late; <sup>36</sup>send them away so that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy something for themselves to eat'. <sup>37</sup>But he answered them, 'You give them something to eat'. They said to him, 'Are we to go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread, and give it to them to eat?' <sup>38</sup>And he said to them, 'How many loaves have you? Go and see'. When they had found out, they said, 'Five, and two fish'. <sup>39</sup>Then he ordered them to get all the people to sit down in groups on the green grass. <sup>40</sup>So they sat down in groups of hundreds and of fifties. <sup>41</sup>Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before the people; and he divided the two fish among them all. <sup>42</sup>And all ate and were filled; <sup>43</sup>and they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. <sup>44</sup>Those who had eaten the loaves numbered five thousand men.

Mark 6: 30–44

- ✂ What did Jesus answer his disciples when they told him that people were hungry?
- ✂ What steps did Jesus take to perform the miracle? Why do you think he used those steps?
- ✂ What does this mean for the way Jesus wants us to work with our community?
- ✂ What resources do we have that we can put in God's hands?

### **Monologue:** Peter walking on water

<sup>45</sup>Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. <sup>46</sup>After saying farewell to them, he went up on the mountain to pray. <sup>47</sup>When evening came, the boat was out on the lake, and he was alone on the land. <sup>48</sup>When he saw that they were straining at the oars against an adverse wind, he came towards them early in the morning, walking on the lake. He intended to pass them by. <sup>49</sup>But when they saw him walking on the lake, they thought it was a ghost and cried out; <sup>50</sup>for they all saw him and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, 'Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid'. <sup>51</sup>Then he got into the boat with them and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, <sup>52</sup>for they did not understand about the loaves, but

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their hearts were hardened. <sup>53</sup>When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored the boat. <sup>54</sup>When they got out of the boat, people at once recognised him, <sup>55</sup>and rushed about that whole region and began to bring the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. <sup>56</sup>And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the market-places, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed.

Mark 6: 45–56

Have a confident volunteer deliver the monologue.

If there is no-one available to act it out, it can be read – but by someone who can convey the feelings of Peter and draw others into the story. It may be helpful to repeat certain phrases during the monologue that stand out as important.

This was one of the worst storms ever. We were all terrified. And then I saw the Lord. I could not believe it – I thought it must have been a ghost but no, it was Jesus walking on the water. When I saw him, nothing seemed to matter, the storm, the fact that I could not swim – nothing. It was Jesus and he was calling me. It was the Lord and I just wanted to be with him, so I said – ‘tell me to come to you’. And he told me to come. The others muttered ‘do not be stupid’ – I think some of them still thought it was a ghost.

Well I started walking and it felt really strange – it was water after all and yet I just thought – Jesus has said come so it must be ok. And I realised my feet were not going under the water – the water felt somehow firm – it was so weird but so exciting too.

Half way there now – and I was still feeling good. I wished Jesus was closer but hey I was doing it – I was walking on water. The others were still telling me to come back. I could hear my brother Andrew, and his words stung me a bit – but he is normally right about me – I do bite off more than I can chew. Why was Jesus not getting any closer? I took my eyes off him for just a second and looked around me.

And, oh my goodness – look at those waves – who do I think I am? I am not Jesus – never will be – I am a fisherman and sensible fishermen go back to shore when the weather gets like this. Jesus was still not getting any nearer – in fact he seemed to be getting further away. The wind was so strong and it seemed to be pushing me back. I am not going to make it – I am not!!

I felt my feet go under – oh no, so far to Jesus – so far to the boat – Should I turn back what should I do? I could feel the water over my ankles now then my knees. The cries of the others were getting louder. I was going under – there was nothing I could do. Lord save me, please save me.

As the water reached my neck I threw my hands up in desperation and suddenly there it was – his hand on mine – strong, incredibly strong. It sent a pulse of power through my whole body and then in a matter of seconds I was up out of the water again, – he supported me back to the boat. The storm still raged but it did not matter because he was with me now – asking me why I had doubted. I was too tired to think about that – and feeling too much of a failure. Maybe later. Of course, as soon as we were back in the boat the waves died down. Part of me wondered why he could not have done that a bit sooner.

We talked about it later – ‘You took your eyes off me’ he said – ‘Never do that. I am bigger than anything else you have to deal with’. Of course, he is right. I have learnt that lesson the hard way, but, I think I can safely say – I will never let him down again.

Spend some time in quiet and then share responses in pairs:

- ✂ What part of the monologue most struck / touched you?
- ✂ How did it make you feel?
- ✂ How does that encourage and inspire us as we go forward?