

BROKEN

A six week study course: Leaders' notes

Number of Sessions

The series had 6 episodes so this course does too. If you are running it as a Lent course you will need to work out how to find the time to have 6 sessions rather than 5.

Length of Group

The episodes are an hour long. This means that your group will need to be at least 1 ¾ - 2 hours long in order to give time to watch the DVD and then discuss. I suggest that people have tea and coffee while watching the film and then spend the remaining time in discussion.

Synopsis

If you don't have time to watch the episode every week (or you agree to watch it in advance) a brief synopsis is included to remind you of the key themes.

Printing

Although designed in colour the handouts will print well in grayscale. I have tried to keep each handout to 2 sides, occasionally that wasn't possible and they have spilled onto 3 sides.



Introduction

The TV series, *Broken*, written by Jimmy McGovern and starring Sean Bean is set in an estate parish somewhere in the UK. The church used at the centre of the series is in Liverpool but the series never explicitly states that this is where the narrative is set. The series focuses on the life and ministry Father Michael Kerrigan, a Roman Catholic, priest who, despite past trauma and anxiety about his own inadequacies, attempts to bring the light of Christ into the lives of the people amongst whom he ministers. The series portrays real life at its most gritty and unvarnished, and in doing so raises many questions along the way about how to live faithfully when life is very hard.

The series was originally on the BBC but is no longer on i-player. It can be bought easily as a DVD.

This course arose out of numerous conversations I had with people after the series aired. So many people commented that they thought it would make an excellent Lent or study course that I thought it would be interesting to have a go. I have shaped the course around the principles of the series

Questions

The suggested questions are simply provided in order to get your conversation started – if it starts of its own accord, don't worry too much about following through each question. You might want to pick one from each group of questions or even just one group.

The issue to bear in mind for this course is 'how do we begin to ask or answer questions, such as are raised in this series, from the perspective of our Christian faith?' It is worth keeping this in mind throughout the course

Bible Passage

For each week, I have chosen a passage which in some way overlaps with the themes of that week's episode. If you would like to have a Bible passage at the heart of your discussion I suggest that you use a form of lectio divina or meditative reading of Scripture. Read the passage slowly 2-3 times, leave silence after the first reading, invite people to say a word or a phrase that struck them after the second reading. You could, if you liked, read the passage and do a brief reflection before you watch the episode so that you have its words in your mind as you watch the film.

I have not printed the passage out because I thought it would be best if it was read in the translation with which most people are familiar. This will be different for different groups.

itself – which raises far more questions than it ever answers. The idea of the course is to provide the space for people to pick up the questions raised in the series and to explore how they might want to answer them.

Prayer

Many of the themes in this series are upsetting (some very upsetting). Make sure you leave time for prayer at the end of your session in order to enable people to gather up what you have been talking about before God. Depending on your tradition you might like to end with open prayer or with the structure of prayers provided. The bidding prayers are all focussed around the events in each episode.

It can be helpful to light a candle as you begin to pray to mark the movement from discussion to placing yourselves in the presence of God.



Warning!!

THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT. I have mentioned a few times already that this series contains disturbing story lines. It does! It is not for the faint-hearted. The series contains lots of swearing, and themes of death, suicide, abuse, violence etc.... You need to be careful about who is in your group and make sure that they know what they are coming to before you begin. The series is given a 15 rating, but I would say the themes it deals with might suggest an even higher rating.

There may be people in your group who need someone to talk to as a result of the issues raised in the series. There is a list of numbers to print out for anyone who might need to talk. PLEASE make sure that these are readily available for everyone so that they do not need to ask for them.