



# Small Group Materials

Theme  
Week

Political Abuse  
15

## STARTER



Take a sheet of flip chart paper. Divide it into two. Write 'good' and 'bad' across the top of the columns.

Think of examples of where power is used in society. Decide together which column they fit into. Make sure you get some in each column.

**What makes YOU angry about the way people are treated in our world?'**

## BIBLE



**READ Matthew 14.1-12**

**Why did Herod throw John into prison?**

**What was he hoping to achieve from this?**

**What does the story tell us about the abuse of power?**

**Why does power corrupt people in this way?**

**Does it always corrupt people?**

**READ Matthew 23.1-15**

**Why did Jesus so strongly expose the hypocrisy of the Pharisees?**

**Do you think that powerful people are always tempted in this way?**

**What difference does Jesus expect of his church in the way we exercise power?**

**What is servant leadership, and how are we to exercise it? (Mark 10.42-45 has more on this topic)**

## FOCUS



- ▶ Remind people that we are in our fifth and final section in our review of the ministry of Jesus.
- ▶ Tonight we look at the final theme in this three-week series – 'Prophetic Challenge' – so this brings our JSP programme to a close.
- ▶ We explore how power is used and abused, how people become victims to this – and how Jesus challenges this in the way in which he lives, and in the message that he brings.
- ▶ In doing so we use the word 'political' in the widest possible sense. Therefore, we need to apply this both to our local, national and international political arenas, and also more generally to the way in which our society is constructed and managed.
- ▶ The story focuses on the way in which powerful people can become victims to their own pride and greed
- ▶ The Romans had invaded, and were an incredibly cruel regime. Crucifixion happened regularly and flogging was widespread as the Romans ruled by fear and threat. The slaughter of innocent children at the time of Jesus' birth is typical of the treatment of people by those in authority – Matthew 2.16-18.

## READ John 19.4-16

Think about the events unfolding here.

### What kinds of power do the different people have and how do they use it?

Consider:

- ▶ Pilate
- ▶ The Crowd
- ▶ Jesus

- ▶ Only John gives us this remarkable insight into the mind of Pontius Pilate at the time of the trial of Jesus.
- ▶ It is very clear that Pilate recognises Jesus' innocence – and tries hard to find a way of saving him despite the voice of the Jewish leaders and the crowds.

## DISCUSS



**What do you think the story teaches us about the use and abuse of power?**

**How can we apply this to our church and society today?**

Sum up what the session has been about. Identify any particular issues that you think your church can tackle more effectively.

Take these thoughts into a closing time of prayer

## PRAYER



- ▶ *For a clear sense of what we need to challenge within our society*
- ▶ *For courage and insight as we begin to tackle social injustice.*
- ▶ *For a renewal of our church leadership based on Jesus' model of service.*
- ▶ *For the impact of JSP in our church and individual hearts as we come to the end of the programme.*

JSP  
SHAPED PEOPLE