

# EBA Mission Parable 10

It has been really encouraging to hear the way that churches who have used these mission mailings have been blessed, encouraged and challenged. Please do consider sharing this parable and questions in a service or perhaps e-mailing it people in your church family or giving it to homegroup leaders. You can access previous parables on the [EBA website](#) and we hope they are a helpful resource for you. This parable is based on real events – one of the scenarios happened.

## **The parable of the wall**

Outside the church is a wall. It separates the church from the street. It's a low wall, just the right height for sitting on. It's a convenient wall. Passers-by will sit on the wall in order to make a phone call, to eat an ice cream (in the summer) and to wait for someone. And the nearby traders use it as somewhere to sit when they take a cigarette break.

The Minister of the church doesn't approve of smoking. It's unhealthy. The smoke is unpleasant for those around. It's not the right image the church wants to project to the community. And even though there is a rubbish bin nearby, the traders tend to flick their cigarette butts into the flowerbeds behind the wall, which irritates the Minister. One day the Minister was passing by the wall and saw one of the traders sitting on the wall, smoking, as usual. The Minister watched as the trader finished her cigarette, stubbed it out on the wall and flicked the butt into the flowerbed...

### *...Scenario 1*

The Minister was incensed: didn't they have any respect? "Excuse me," said the Minister as the trader made her way back to her shop, "Is our wall comfortable?"

The trader sensed possible sarcasm and wasn't sure what to say. The Minister took her silence as an admission of guilt.

"I noticed that you were sitting on our church wall while you smoked your cigarette and then flicked the cigarette butt into our flowerbed," the Minister continued. "We don't approve of smoking – it's unhealthy and the smoke is off-putting so in future please don't sit on our wall, smoking, and please don't flick your cigarette butts into our garden."

The trader mumbled an apology and went back to her shop. The Minister went into the church feeling pleased at having made a point, and ordered a 'no smoking' sign to be attached to the wall. It wasn't long before no traders sat on the wall, no cigarette butts were flicked into the flowerbeds and the Minister felt vindicated.

### *...Scenario 2*

The Minister was incensed: didn't they have any respect? "Excuse me," said the Minister as the trader made her way back to her shop, "Is our wall comfortable?"

The trader sensed possible sarcasm and wasn't sure what to say. The Minister continued: "It's just that I have noticed that you sit on our wall a lot and I was hoping it was comfortable."

The trader grinned. "It's a wall innit?" she said. "I aint expectin' cushions!"

It wasn't long before the Minister started joining the traders on the wall for a chat from time to time. The Minister still didn't like the smoke, and cigarette butts were still flicked into the flowerbeds but the traders felt welcome.

## **Optional questions to inspire you:**

What are the 'walls' and 'cigarettes' for you and your church? What might we need to lay aside in order to take the opportunities that God might be giving us? What small changes in attitude could make a big difference to the people you meet?