

SMALL GROUP RESOURCES

The following pages contain material for those leading discussion groups as part of the series on the Great 50 Days. As group leaders, you know your groups best. Please feel free to adapt the material to suit the needs of your particular group members.

How to use the material:

In this core resource we have offered two suggested frameworks for use with your group. The first is shaped around suggested Bible readings. The second uses the personal testimony for each week as the springboard for your discussions. Both resources offer some ideas for taking action as a group.

1. Using Bible Passages - Each week begins with a chance to share any thoughts, comments or questions arising from the daily readings, weekly sermons (for those participating in themed preaching), or the discussion from the previous week. Groups could be invited to share something that encouraged them, challenged them, or made them think.

Each session then has a suggested reading or readings, followed by some discussion questions, and a suggested action for your group to undertake. Some additional resources have also been included, which may help you to explore the theme. Please feel free to add additional material of your own.

Each week has three main questions for people to discuss, and some groups may be able to fill a session with just those three questions. For those who would prefer a little more direction, each of the three main questions has some subsidiary questions to aid the discussion. Don't feel that you need to answer all the questions – they are simply there to give a starting point and focus for conversation.

2. Using the Testimonies - An alternative approach is to use the personal stories as the catalyst for your discussions. The stories have been replicated in the group resource. You might simply ask the group what they noticed or what spoke to them in the story. Some potential questions are suggested to help shape the discussion when needed.

Each session ends with the opportunity to turn our talk about mission into action.

As with the first option it is important to adapt the material for use with your group. Please also look at the website (www.thegreat50days.org.uk) for more resources & ideas to use with your group.

We hope that you enjoy exploring A Life of Mission together, and that you and your group will be deeply blessed.

WEEK 1 - HOW WAS I CALLED?

DISCUSSION STARTER:

Think back to the sermon which you heard on Sunday, and the daily reflections from this week. Share anything that encouraged, challenged or surprised you.

READ: Luke 5: 27-32

1. WHAT KIND OF PEOPLE DOES GOD CALL?

Consider the calling of Levi (Luke 5:27-32). You might also like to think about some of the stories of other people who are called by God in the Bible. For example:

Abraham (Genesis 12: 1-4); **Samuel** (1 Sam. 3: 1-10); **Mary** (Luke 1: 26-38); **Levi** (Luke 5: 27-32); **Philip and Nathaniel** (John 1: 43-51); **Mary Magdalene** (John 20: 11-18)

- What do you know about each of the characters? What are they doing when they are called? What are the circumstances in which God calls them?
- What do you notice about how they are called? What are they called from? What they are called to?
- What do their stories tell you about the kind of people God calls?
- How do they respond to God's call?

2. HOW DID GOD CALL YOU?

- When and how did God call you? What were your circumstances at the time?
- Did God call you from something, or to something, or both?
- How did you respond to God's call?
- Has God's called you in other ways since then?

3. WHAT DOES THE CALL TO FOLLOW GOD MEAN TO YOU TODAY?

Read the extract from 'The Vision and the Vow' by Pete Greig

<https://www.24-7prayer.com/blog/565/thevisionfilm>

- What do you think about the things he says are part of the call to follow Jesus?
- Did anything in particular stand out to you?
- What do you think God has called you to do and to be?
- What, if anything, is stopping you from fulfilling your calling?

GROUP ACTION

Give each group member a piece of paper with their name on it. Pass these pieces of paper around the group. For each person, other group members write down the gifts, talents, or call they see in that person.

WEEK 1 - HOW WAS I CALLED?



Sonia Filmer writes...

Daffodils are my favourite flowers as they bring their boldness and cheer year on year in spring, regardless of how bleak or harsh a winter we have experienced. Early on Easter Sunday (2015), local Churches worked together to place over 1000 daffodils around the village of Lanchester, and left them at the homes of those who were house bound, the local nursing homes and hospice. Each daffodil had a tag on it saying “Easter brings new life, new hope” and an encouragement to “take this daffodil home with you”.

‘The idea sprang from the “yarn bomb” of knitted angels in Tynemouth, and the number of daffodils produced was the result of months of knitting by various groups and individuals in the village. At the same time a Facebook page, “Daffodils of Lanchester”, went live. The response on Facebook was beyond all expectation. The number of people who visited the site went into the thousands and there were some heartfelt messages left. The yarn bomb was also reported in the local paper.

Giving people a handmade daffodil was a new way of sharing a hope-filled message to people in our village. We hoped it would provide them some happiness, whatever situation they found themselves in. It certainly caused a great deal of excitement in the village and by 4pm all the daffodils had been collected. A powerful message of God’s love in our community on this special day.

Questions for group discussion:

- *What excites you about Sonia’s story?*
- *Where are the places you might leave a ‘daffodil’ or other symbol in your community?*
- *Who might see them?*
- *What opportunities can the group envisage for unusual and perhaps non-verbal ways of sharing the gospel message in this locality?*
- *Is there an action you can take this week to initiate one of your ideas?*

Encourage each person to look for a symbol of faith or mission this week and to bring a picture or object along next time which speaks to them of faith, calling or mission...

WEEK 2 - WHICH BIBLE PASSAGES HELP ME TO SHARE MY BELIEFS?

DISCUSSION STARTER:

Think back to the sermon which you heard on Sunday, and the daily reflections from this week. Share anything that encouraged, challenged or surprised you.

READ: Luke 24: 13-32

WATCH: If you have Internet access, the following poem might be a good way to begin this session:

David Bowden || “I Believe in Scripture” || Spoken Word

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EZdzjf5uuv4>

1. HOW CAN THE BIBLE HELP US TO SHARE OUR FAITH?

- In the passage from Luke 24, how does Jesus use scripture to explain and share faith? Why do you think he starts with Moses (and the giving of the Law) and the prophets?
- What is the disciples’ response to encountering God through the scriptures?

2. WHAT BIBLE PASSAGES HAVE HELPED YOU IN YOUR OWN FAITH?

- How important has the Bible been in shaping your faith?
- Do you have any favourite verses or passages from the Bible? If so, why are they important to you?
- Is there a particular character in the Bible that you identify with?
- Are there parts of the Bible that you struggle with? How might we deal with these passages?

3. WHICH BIBLE PASSAGES OR VERSES WOULD YOU WANT SOMEONE ELSE TO HEAR?

- If someone you know wanted to start reading the Bible, which passage or passages would you recommend? Why?
- If you had to choose some passages to explain the gospel and the hope you have in Jesus, which passage or passages would you choose?

GROUP ACTION

As a group, choose one of the passages of scripture and have it printed onto cards for each person in the group. Commit to memorising this passage.

WEEK 2 - WHICH BIBLE PASSAGES HELP ME TO SHARE MY BELIEFS?



Tom Sterling writes...

In December 2016, a 29-year-old man was murdered. He had been an alcoholic since his teens. One day I had a conversation with him and he said he would be a Christian but he was too embarrassed. So I ask myself: “What is it we Christians do that is so un-cool or toe-curling to non-Christians?” I prayed with Mark on the street that day and kept praying I’d see him again. Nine months later we met and remained in daily contact until a fortnight before he was killed.

Around the same time as Mark turned up, I had an encounter with Gary. He had lived a completely off-the-rails life. He stopped me in my car to tell me he’d been reading the Bible (specifically the parable of the prodigal son). “I’ve been born again”, he said. “That’s wonderful” I said, “have you found a church yet?” He stared at me quizzically and said, “Tom, don’t you know, this is church?” I didn’t debate the point because I was in a hurry, but Mark, Gary and I started to meet on a weekly basis. We called it church. It was the simplest, most distilled, form of church. We didn’t ‘go’ to church, it was about ‘being’ church. All we did was talk about our lives, read the scriptures and pray. So consider this: “Why have we made church so complicated?”

This tiny church is now six or seven people who variously meet on the same basis. We are all, in some way, broken people on a journey, watching out for each other and seeking the truth. Is what we do really church? “Where two or three are gathered in my name” might define church sufficiently. If it does, any of us can do this kind of church. Why not try it?

Questions for group discussion:

(Invite the group to share the symbols, pictures and objects they have brought from last week.)

- *Mark was profoundly influenced by the story of the Prodigal Son. Is there a passage which was crucial for you at a similar pivotal moment on your faith journey?*
- *If you were to choose one Bible passage to share with someone asking you about your faith today which would it be and why?*
- *Tom poses some questions as he retells his experience. Which of these questions do you think is most important?*
- *Would you like to belong to a church where “All [you] did was talk about [y]our lives, read the scriptures and pray”?*
 - *Is there anything you would miss if your fellowship was restricted to these 3 activities?*
 - *What is central to being church for you?*

Tom suggests we are all broken people on a journey. How can we support each other on the journey this week? Encourage each person to think of what would help them and how they could support someone else in the group.

WEEK 3 - WHO HAS GUIDED MY FAITH JOURNEY?

DISCUSSION STARTER:

Think back to the sermon which you heard on Sunday, and the daily reflections from this week. Share anything that encouraged, challenged or surprised you.

READ: Esther 4: 6-16 and 2 Timothy 1: 1-5

1. WHAT ARE THE THINGS WHICH SHAPE/INFLUENCE OUR FAITH JOURNEY?

- In the two Bible passages, who or what influenced Esther and Timothy as they grew in faith?
- What other things can guide or help us we grow in faith?

2. IN YOUR OWN FAITH JOURNEY, WHO OR WHAT HAS INFLUENCED YOU?

- Consider your own journey of faith. Who are the people who have helped or influenced you along the way? How did they help you to discover more of God?
- Other than people, what else has helped you to encounter God, and to know and love him more deeply?
- Are there times when you have been aware of God guiding and leading you?

3. WHOSE FAITH JOURNEY COULD YOU BE GUIDING?

- Think about the people in your church, workplace, school, or community. Is there someone who you could walk alongside and guide in their faith journey?
- This week, pray for opportunities to be alongside those people, and the courage to take the opportunities when they arise.

GROUP ACTION

For next week, ask each person to bring an object or photo which represents someone who has guided their faith journey

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

One of the Bible passages which speaks of God's leading and guidance is Psalm 23. Some people have written their own alternatives to that Psalm, which may make helpful reflections during this session.

Here are a few examples:

- The Lord is my compass and the Lord is my choirmaster
<http://nevfam2.tripod.com/material/psalm23.htm>
- The Lord is my boss
<https://re-worship.blogspot.co.uk/2011/05/psalm-23-lord-is-my-boss.html>
- I am a character in The Author's novel –
<http://mcpfaithwriter.blogspot.co.uk/2016/10/23-my-alternative-version.html>

WEEK 3 - WHO HAS GUIDED MY FAITH JOURNEY?



Have you ever thought that God could use three small words to draw someone back to God? That is exactly what happened in my life.

I first made a commitment to follow Jesus on Explorer's Camp when I was 11 years old. From a nominally Christian family there was little support for my new found faith. I continued to attend Sunday School, the school Christian Union and read my Bible for a few days each quarter when I received the latest edition of Keynotes from the youth leader but I didn't grow much spiritually over the next 5 years.

Inwardly I longed to know God's love for me as I had at Camp and persuaded my parents to let me go again. At 16 I was classed as a junior leader which gave the privilege of staying up a bit later. The first night as two of us walked back to the tent one of the leaders, Geoff, called to us: 'Good night girls, God bless you!'

The contrast in the tone and expression in 'God bless you' to the blasphemy I so often heard at school hit me. I laid in my sleeping bag and talked to God about the last 5 years of drifting away from God. There had not been any talks at this point, just three words 'God bless you' was all it took for me to know afresh the love God had for me. Before going to sleep I'd renewed my commitment to follow God - and this time I stuck to it. Little did I know at that time I would end up as a minister.

A postscript to the story is that the summer I was about to enter ministerial training I met Geoff again for the first time in 20 years and was able to tell him the effect the blessing had on my life and where I was heading in September.

We cannot all stand up and preach but we can write in cards or say 'God bless you'. You never know the effect it might have as God does indeed bless the person.

Questions for group discussion:

- *What was special about Geoff's words for Bev?*
- *Are you able to share a moment on your own faith journey when someone said just what was needed to help you to grow closer to God?*
- *Pause to pray in your group for all those who have helped your journeys.*
 - *You might do this in silence, by speaking names, lighting candles or by writing names and placing them around a cross or on a prayer tree.*
- *How easy do you find it to say 'God bless you' to others?*
 - *What might be the impact of saying this instead of 'Goodbye' at the end of a conversation?*
- *Is there someone you could encourage this week? (Bev's story shows that sometimes only simple words are needed to transform a situation.)*
 - *Could the group adopt a 'buddy' system to remind each other before next week?*

WEEK 4 - WHAT IS MY FAITH STORY?

DISCUSSION STARTER:

Think back to the sermon which you heard on Sunday, and the daily reflections from this week. Share anything that encouraged, challenged or surprised you.

READ: Acts 26: 1-29

1. WHY DO YOU THINK OUR FAITH STORIES ARE IMPORTANT?

- Consider Paul's testimony in Acts 26 (you may also want to look at what he says in Acts 22:1-21) . What do we learn about Paul from his story?
- What does Paul consider to be the significant events in his story?
- Why do you think Paul shares his story and not just theological arguments?

2. WHAT IS YOUR FAITH STORY?

- Take a few moments to consider your own faith journey. (Feel free to make notes, draw pictures, or plot things on a timeline if it helps).
- What are the significant events or milestones on your faith journey? When have you been particularly aware of God in your life?
- If you are willing to, share your faith story with the rest of the group. Set yourselves a strict time limit (such as 1 minute per person).

3. WHAT IS HAPPENING IN YOUR FAITH STORY AT THE MOMENT?

- Paul's testimony includes the story of how he came to follow Jesus, but continues right up to what God is doing in the present day. If you could only share the most recent six months of your story, what would you say?

GROUP ACTION

Commit to sharing your testimonies with the wider congregation, either as part of a service, or perhaps as a series of articles in the church newsletter or website.

WEEK 4 - WHAT IS MY FAITH STORY?



Brenda Wood writes...

Following the Together Weekend at our Church which was a special time for us I was asked to participate in the Great 50 Days. At the time the email arrived I was not in a place where I felt I could write down anything worthy of telling. With the deadline very close I drafted a reply regretting I could not write anything intending to send it today.

It is now 4.30am and I awoke remembering an experience which may be worth telling - probably prompted by reading the wayside pulpit on our Church last night 'Santa Claus comes for one day but Jesus is ALWAYS there every day for you and me'. I have only just taken down the Christmas decorations that includes the wooden nativity scene I bought in Nazareth 20 years ago. Doing this brought to mind the response of my 2 year old granddaughter who had been a little difficult and so was taken to sit on the 'naughty step' for a couple of minutes - she did not like this. Afterwards I noticed that baby Jesus was not in His cradle and asked her if she knew where baby Jesus was - her reply was "He's on the naughty step". This made me smile and have laughed with friends about it but really her reply was a profound illustration. She wanted Jesus to be there on the 'naughty step' as she had been and did not like, and it made me think that Jesus will be with us in any situation in our lives and if we ask Him He will help us to cope and get through them.

It is out of season but it is because of that baby Jesus and the life He lived on earth, experiencing many of the difficulties we have today; His death on the cross for us; His resurrection and promise to be with us every day - surely that is worth repeating at any time of the year.

Questions for group discussion:

- *What is your reaction to sitting Jesus on the naughty step?*
- *Have you ever felt that you don't have a story to tell?*
- *What is the story of this group? (How did it begin? Why does it meet here? How did new people join? Who else could be invited now?)*
- *How can we help one another to tell our stories?*
- *Brenda also told us that she is inspired by a friend who despite many health problems puts her troubles at the foot of the cross and says each day to Jesus "I know there is nothing which will happen today that you and me together cannot cope with" - How might the way we put our faith into practice inspire others?*
- *Is there someone you might listen to this week - who's stories do we need to hear?*

WEEK 5 - HOW DOES MY FAITH SHOW IN MY EVERYDAY LIFE?

DISCUSSION STARTER:

Think back to the sermon which you heard on Sunday, and the daily reflections from this week. Share anything that encouraged, challenged or surprised you.

READ: John 4: 7-30, 39-42

1. HOW DOES OUR FAITH SHOW IN EVERYDAY LIFE?

- After encountering Jesus, what is the first thing the woman does? Why? Have you ever felt like that (about anything)?
- How is her new-found faith evident in her life?
- What is it about the woman that convinces others to seek Jesus for themselves?
- What other ways might faith be evident in someone's life? (Consider, for example, Acts 2: 42-47; James 2: 14-18; Acts 4: 32-35; Ephesians 4: 17-32).

2. HOW DO YOU SHOW YOUR FAITH IN YOUR EVERYDAY LIFE?

- What is the one thing everyone knows about you? What are you always talking about?
- Do you think your faith is equally obvious or well known?
- How do you think your faith is revealed in your day to day life?

3. WHAT COULD YOU DO MAKE YOUR FAITH MORE OBVIOUS TO OTHERS?

- Is there anything which stops you from showing your faith? How could you overcome that?
- Are there some changes you could make to your life which would make your faith more obvious to others?

GROUP ACTION

Ask everyone in the group where they will be this time tomorrow. Pray for one another for opportunities to demonstrate your faith in those situations.

Additional Resources:

Isabel's Story - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U0xLfxcc0n0>

Spoken word (woman at the well - two versions)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q49BbfgJbto>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5y2GImTxpkM>

WEEK 5 - HOW DOES MY FAITH SHOW IN MY EVERYDAY LIFE?



Sharon Harbottle writes...

'Would you lead Bible Study on Friday at 5pm?' I was asked at short notice near the end of a busy week of preparing courses, writing devotional material and teaching adults. It is hard for me in French and Creole but I reluctantly agreed. Arriving 15 minutes early, 50 people were already present, all under 40 years old. The numbers swelled to 150 through the devotions. The people were eager, hungry to learn, to share the good things that God had done for them, to memorise the scriptures and apply them in their lives.

As it went dark and people continued to meet using torchlight I was humbled by 2 hours of presentation, small group work, feedback and such singing and praying. Yet it is the same at any training course in which I am involved through the Department of Christian Education, be it training 300 preachers, 250 stewards, Sunday school teachers or evangelists. All want a better understanding of their faith and the printed booklets that accompany such courses. Materially Haitians own so little so a study book, Bible or Hymnbook is precious. Spiritually they are rich but aware that their faith needs deepening and daily growth.

It is hard not to make comparisons with the UK and the little time we invest in Bible study or courses to strengthen our faith, yet whenever we are, lives are changed, people are empowered and society is transformed as the Good News is shared. Phrases like 'Now I understand, I did not know that before, I can now'... are music to a teacher's ears and I thank God that I have been called to use my skills and passion, in Haiti, for these few years.

Questions for group discussion:

- *What skills and passions do you notice Sharon using as she lives out her faith in Haiti?*
- *How are you nurturing and growing your faith week by week?*
- *How might your skills and passions serve your community?*
- *Read together the poem on day 29. It reminds us of many ways in which our lives intertwine with those of others when we are interested in one another. How might the poem challenge and encourage us as we live out our faith?*
- *Is there something we could do as a group to live out our faith here? (Simple acts of blessing include organising a litter pick, buying 'It's Your Move' books for year 6 school leavers, picking up library books for someone housebound?)*

WEEK 6 - WHY DO I SHARE MY FAITH?

DISCUSSION STARTER:

Think back to the sermon which you heard on Sunday, and the daily reflections from this week. Share anything that encouraged, challenged or surprised you.

READ: Matthew 28: 16-20 and Acts 1: 7-8

1. WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR CHRISTIANS TO SHARE THEIR FAITH?

- Why do you think Jesus asks His follows to pass on their faith and the things He has taught them?
- Looking at the instructions Jesus gives His disciples in Matthew 28 and Acts 1, what will sharing their faith involve? What does Jesus ask them to do and to be?
- Jesus gives His followers an important task, which must have seemed quite daunting. What encouragement are they given about the task of sharing their faith?

2. WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR US TO BE ABLE TO SHARE OUR FAITH?

WATCH - If you are able to, watch the video 'Talking Jesus'

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sNPayyT_G2A

- What are some of the ways in which people hear about the Christian faith?
- Why might it be important for us to be able to share our faith? Why can't we just leave it to the 'experts'?
- Romans 10:14 says that people cannot believe in someone they haven't heard about, and cannot hear without someone telling them. Think for a moment about the people you know. Are there people who might not hear about Jesus from anyone else other than you?

3. WHAT STOPS YOU FROM SHARING YOUR FAITH WITH OTHERS?

- Are there things which stop you from sharing your faith, or being confident in telling other people about Jesus? What are some of the barriers you need to overcome?
- What would help you to be more comfortable sharing your faith?
- Is there one practical step you could take this year to build your confidence?

GROUP ACTION

As a group, commit to a random act of kindness as a way of sharing your faith (for example, leaving a gift for someone, with a note telling them God loves them)

WEEK 6 - WHY DO I SHARE MY FAITH?



From John Wesley's Journal, March 1738:

"Saturday, March 4 – I found my brother at Oxford, recovering from his pleurisy; and with him Peter Bohler; by whom, in the hand of the great God, I was, on Sunday, the fifth, clearly convinced of unbelief, of the want of that faith whereby alone we are saved.

"Immediately it struck into my mind, 'Leave off preaching. How can you preach to others, who have not faith yourself?' I asked Bohler whether he thought I should leave it off or not. He answered, 'By no means'. I asked, 'But what can I preach?' He said, 'Preach faith till you have it; and then, because you have it, you will preach faith'.

"Accordingly, Monday, 6, I began preaching this new doctrine, though my soul started back from the work. The first person to whom I offered salvation by faith alone was a prisoner under sentence of death. His name was Clifford. Peter Bohler had many times desired me to speak to him before. But I could not prevail on myself so to do; being still, as I had been many years, a zealous asserter of the impossibility of a deathbed repentance".

Why a story from John Wesley in the midst of these contemporary experiences? It's reassuring to know that John Wesley, who we many hold in such high esteem in Methodism, had such times of self-doubt and uncertainty in his faith. We are not all preachers, but we can all try to uphold the instruction to 'Share faith until you have it, and then, because you have faith, you will share faith'. No excuses then!

Questions for group discussion:

- *Does it help to know that John Wesley suffered times of great doubt and uncertainty?*
- *Do we need to have the 'answers' to share our faith?*
- *Invite the group to tell each other of a time when sharing your faith has taken you outside your comfort zone (this might be done in pairs or together to suit your group)*
- *Wesley expressed doubt about 'deathbed repentance'.
- Do you think it is ever too late to repent?*
- *Who today might be seen as being beyond salvation?
- Who do we find it difficult to love?*
- *'All need to be saved, All may be saved, All may know themselves saved. All may be saved to the uttermost'. How do you respond to these words which are attributed to Wesley's teaching? (If time allows you could ask the group if there are any other words from the Wesleys which inspire or challenge them - these might be from hymns, sermons or the diaries.)*

Wesley also said *"Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can."* Look for all the opportunities you can this week to do *"all the good you can"*.

WEEK 7 - WHO SHOULD I SHARE JESUS WITH?

DISCUSSION STARTER:

Think back to the sermon which you heard on Sunday, and the daily reflections from this week. Share anything that encouraged, challenged or surprised you.

READ: Acts 16: 9-33 (and Acts 1: 8)

1. WHO DO YOU THINK CHRISTIANS ARE CALLED TO SHARE THEIR FAITH WITH?

- Who does Paul attempt to share faith with first? Why do you think that is?
- Who else does Paul have an opportunity to share his faith with?

2. WHO COULD YOU SHARE YOUR FAITH WITH?

WATCH - If you are able to, watch the video of Zoe's story:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gH_sRBejKKU

- Who are the people closest to you who don't yet know Jesus? Have you ever tried to share your faith with them? What happened?
- God gave Paul a vision of the people he wanted him to share his faith with. Are there particularly people that come to mind when you think about sharing your faith? Are there some who already have an interest in, (or an openness to) the Christian faith?
- Paul took advantage of opportunities to share his faith wherever possible, often with people he didn't know. How do you feel about sharing your faith with strangers? Does it feel more or less difficult than sharing faith with people you know?

3. WHAT WILL YOU DO TO SHARE YOUR FAITH?

- In previous weeks we have looked at different ways of sharing our faith: telling our faith story, living in a way which speaks of Jesus or makes those around us ask why we live as we do, sharing bible passages/verses, offering to pray with/for people. Which of these comes most naturally to you?
- Can you think of any opportunities coming up in your life where you could share your faith naturally?

This week, pray for:

- A person you would love to come to know Jesus
- An opportunity to share your faith
- Courage to see unexpected circumstances as opportunities to share faith

WEEK 7 - WHO SHOULD I SHARE JESUS WITH?



I guess for most of us there are people we know and love, whom we have prayed for over many years to come to know the love of God for themselves. At times it's tempting to give up... please don't.

I have prayed for my friend Julie for over 20 years. Julie and I would often have really deep conversations about the world, spirituality and life in general. I love sharing with her - she's a really interesting, perceptive friend. Julie would never describe herself as a Christian, didn't want to go to church, but was always interested to hear about my faith. At times she would challenge me - particularly if I said something she disagreed with!

Last year, Julie encountered God.

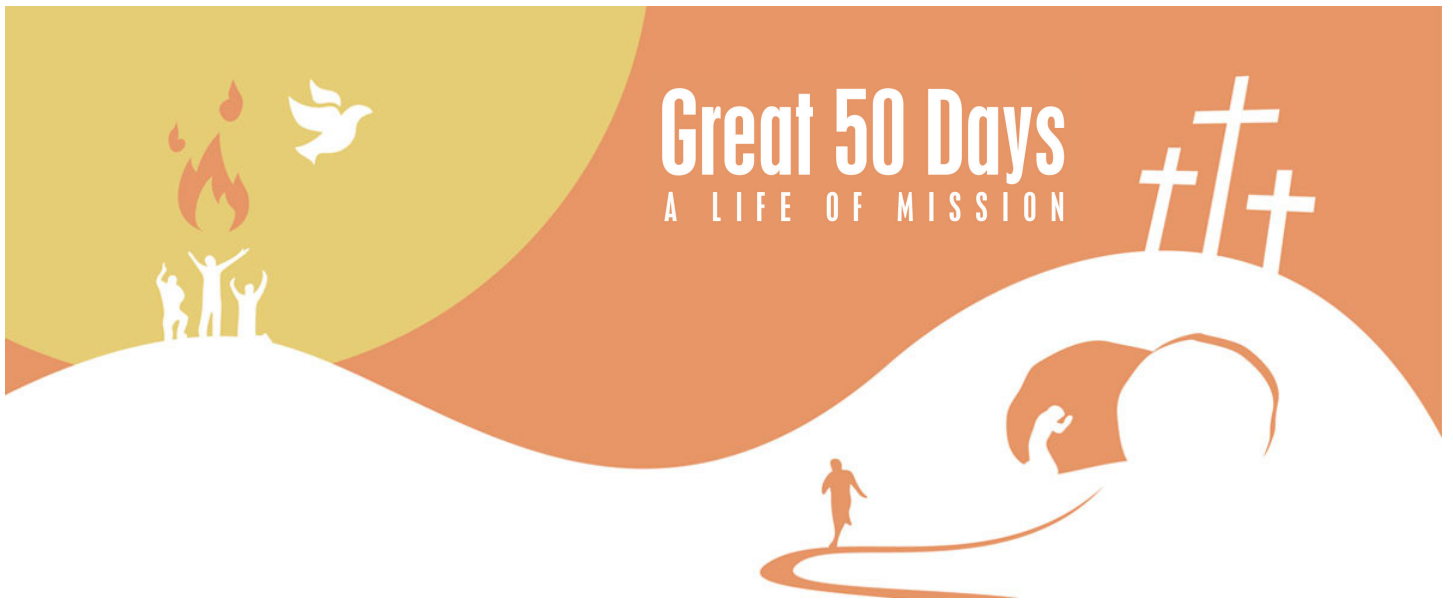
Did this happen in a church service? No. Did this happen as she read one of the books about spirituality that I suggested? No. Did it happen in one of our many conversations? No. God simply, yet oh so profoundly, showed His love to her whilst she was on her own, contemplating life. She might not have the 'churchy' religious language to explain what is happening in her life, but I am without doubt that it is God. And I am so very excited and happy for her.

I'm not saying church and evangelism aren't important... what I am saying is that at the end of the day we need to remember that new birth is God's work. Our job is to faithfully pray and look out for what God is doing and join in. Our job is to take every opportunity to share faith and pray for spiritual enlightenment. If our friends and family members respond to that then praise God! If they don't, then we keep on sharing, we keep on praying, we keep on hoping.

Questions for group discussion:

- *What did you notice in Elaine's story?*
- *How did Elaine express her faith in her relationship with Julie?*
- *What do you think Elaine means when she says that "new birth is God's work?"*
- *Is there anyone you have prayed for over a long period of time? Are you able to share any of the story?*
- *Some of us find it hard to continue to pray when we cannot see a change taking place. What might prompt us to keep on praying? (For some people a physical reminder such as a carefully placed photograph of wristband helps to remind them. Some keep a prayer notebook. For others a regular activity can be the prompt - washing up, waiting at traffic lights...)*

Offer each person a "pocket reminder" to encourage them to pray for someone each day this week. This could be a pebble, a button, a foam cut-out person, a small card. Suggest they write the initials of the person on the reminder and keep it in the pocket of a garment they wear regularly. Whenever you feel it in your pocket hold that person in God's presence.



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Again we hope that you enjoy exploring “A Life of Mission” together, and that you and your group will be deeply blessed as you learn, share and grow together as disciples of Jesus Christ.