



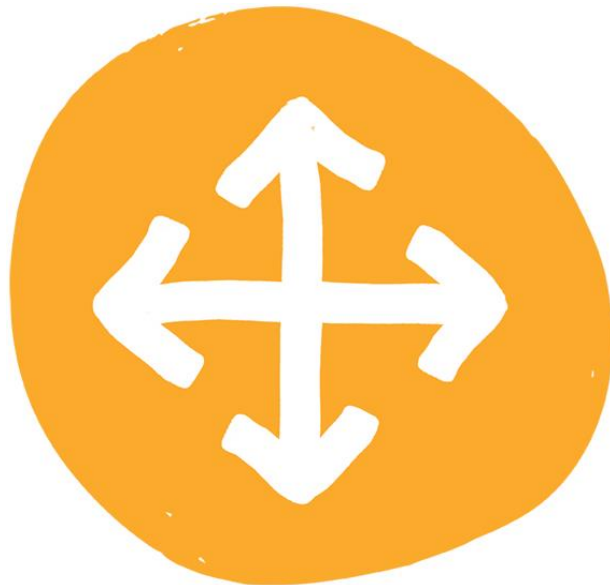
# WAY OF LIFE

A PATTERN FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING

## Sharing Our Faith

## Journeying OUT

*... sharing the love of God with others in both deeds and words*



DIOCESE OF TRURO  
DISCOVERING GOD'S KINGDOM  
GROWING THE CHURCH

# Sharing our Faith

This six session course was written by Revd Canon Dave Elkington as a resource for the Way of Life programme in Truro diocese. The course is available on the diocesan website to download for use as a course for small groups (see [www.trurodiocese.org.uk](http://www.trurodiocese.org.uk)).

## Contents

Session 1: Introduction .....	3
Session 2: What is evangelism.....	8
Session 3: Listening to our culture .....	13
Session 4: Telling our faith story.....	18
Session 5: How to plan and invite.....	25
Session 6: Proclamation and presence.....	27
Appendix: .....	33-38

## How to use this material.

The content of each session consists of an Introductory or Opening exercise followed by a selection of activities to help participants to explore how they can share their faith with others. The local leader will need to decide which sections are most appropriate for their context.

Each session should last between an hour and an hour and a half, depending on your group.

Each session deliberately contains more material than is needed to allow for the needs of the group to drive the material.

Please feel free to contact Dave Elkington if you would like to talk through the use of the material or different ways to approach each session or if you have any further ideas that you think should be added to the material.

Revd Canon Dave Elkington 01208 892811 [djelk@btinternet.com](mailto:djelk@btinternet.com)

## Session 1: An Introduction

### A) Opening exercise

Either a) Using the picture in the appendix and invite the group to circle the character that most represents how you feel about:

- i) You and God
- ii) You and your church
- iii) You and your community
- iv) You and engaging in Evangelism

*[It is important that the group members keep these safe, as they will be referred to later in the course.]*

And/or b) Ask the question:

When you hear the word Evangelism, what comes into mind?

*(Record answers on a flip chart and briefly discuss - not to critique, but to understand.)*

Then:

Which of the following responses strike a chord with you, and which might strike a chord with others and why? *[Taken from Evangelisation in England & Wales, Catholic Communications Service, 2002]*

- \* Bringing Christ to others
- \* Do-gooders
- \* Billy Graham
- \* Form of 'showing off'
- \* Enthusiasm
- \* Fear
- \* 'Happy clappy' won't let me worship in peace
- \* Hyper-activism
- \* Pressurising people
- \* Not my type of music
- \* Spreading the word of God
- \* Rummaging the Gospel
- \* Well-intentioned but too narrow minded

**B) Discuss in pairs these statements about Evangelism. Do any work for you?**

- 'The church is the one organization that exists purely for the benefit of non-members' - *William Temple*.

- ‘To evangelize is so to present Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit that men come to put their faith in God through him, to accept him as their Saviour and to serve him as their King in the fellowship of his Church.’ - *William Temple*.
- ‘My friend is rather shy, but she formed a bridge and Jesus Christ walked over it - A new Christian.’ - *John Young*.
- ‘Evangelism is helping people to belong so that they can believe’ - *John Finney*.
- ‘The vast majority of Xtns came to such a position not through some crisis, but through a process. To put it another way, people are converted more through relationships than through techniques or special efforts’ - *Gavin Reid*.
- ‘Euangelio (that we call gospel) is a greke word, and signifyth good, merry, glad and joyful tidings, that maketh a mannes hert glad, and maketh hym synge, daunce, and leepe for joye.’ - *William Tyndale 1525*.
- ‘Evangelizing is the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize.’ - *Evangelli Nuntiandii, Roman Catholic Apostolic exhortation*.
- ‘To evangelize is to make known by word and deed the love of the crucified and risen Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit, so that people will repent, believe and receive Christ as their Saviour and obediently serve him as their Lord in the fellowship of the Church.’ *Endorsed by the Anglican Primates following the Lambeth Conference*.
- ‘Evangelism is one beggar showing another beggar where he found bread.’ - *D.T. Niles*

### **Why some don't want to talk about evangelism**

**[Here Am I    Send Her    Send Him    Send Anybody    But Me!]**

- Not our task
- Too unsure about their own faith
- Struggling to keep going - no time for evangelism
- Fear of standing up and being counted
- Don't know enough - might lose the debate

- Don't see the need - it does not matter what you believe.

**[Why do we not do it? - Green Evangelism through the local Church - Hodder & Stoughton 1990 page 11ff]**

1. People think it is not their business to do it. Religion is a private business we ought not to talk about it.
2. Many church members do not have a first hand faith. They belong but as yet do not believe.
3. They are not sure where they stand - they have a relationship they believe but they lack confidence in the faith or the church or themselves.
4. They are struggling to keep their own faith going; they have no energy for evangelism.
5. They are afraid of standing up and being counted.
6. They don't know the faith well enough and are afraid of being beaten in an argument.
7. They have no friends outside of church.
8. They don't see the need to evangelize their friends - it does not matter what they believe.

[People would not dare to be involved with evangelism if it wasn't for God. Everything hangs from this starting point.]

**'The Church does not have a mission, but the missionary God has a Church' - Jurgen Moltmann**

### **C) Is It Mission Impossible?**

The problem is that the Church and Christianity are not perceived by those outside it as 'spiritual' - they are 'religious' which is not good.

Steve Croft in 'Evangelism in a Spiritual Age' *'People, many of whom had little recent experience, considered it (church) embarrassing, dull, narrow, bigoted, hypocritical, unfriendly, unreal, prescriptive, judgmental, patriarchal,*

*unquestioning, inflexible, nerve-wracking, alienating, corrupt and unable to handle doubt.'*

It comes as a shock for many Christians that people outside of the Church consider themselves more spiritual than Christians - but this is often the case. If our approach to evangelism makes the assumption that we as Christians are bringing spiritual values to people who don't have any, we are in for a rude awakening.

### **Intolerance**

A further problem for the Church is that religion is seen as intolerant. Strangely it seems that a 'tolerant' society is extremely intolerant towards people who hold to different values.

Nic Spencer in 'Beyond Belief?' *'Tolerance was, however, in the eye of the beholder, with each individual drawing the boundary, with intolerance on one side and 'political correctness' on the other.'*

Graham Horsley says of Methodists 'A somewhat cynical definition of the Methodist approach to holistic mission might be: *Love people until they ask why and then fudge it!*'

- If the Church feels inadequate and out of touch it can lead to a number of reactions that are not helpful.
  1. Develop a siege mentality so become a club of like-minded people who cling together for security.
  2. Develop a blame culture. It's someone else's fault - we need a new minister, steward, organist, circuit leadership, national leadership etc. Refer to the culture of Football Clubs and their managers/owners/fans.
  3. Develop a guilt culture - keep doing what is not working - but do it harder and stridently.
  4. Condemn those who are not interested in church as unspiritual, hard-hearted and sinful.

### **D) What can we do?**

- We need to understand some of the important ways that society has changed in a way that impacts evangelism
- We need to explore [re-examine] a Biblical methodology for evangelism.
- We need to identify some practical things that Christians and local churches can do to build confidence.

### **Now Some Good News**

From 'How to be evangelistic without being religious' by *Graham Horsley*

- Many peoples' experience of evangelism is that the people aren't really interested yet Jesus says the harvest is plentiful [Luke 10:2]
- Many people have observed an increasing interest in the spiritual this is demonstrated in many ways:
  1. 72% of the populations declared themselves 'Christian' in 2001 census. This may be a statement about culture and heritage rather than belief, but it is still a significant statistic.
  2. In 2000 35% of babies were born were baptised Christian.
  3. In 1987 48% of population reported having religious or spiritual experiences; by 2,000, this had increased to 78% of the population. David Hay suggests that the increase is not because there have been more experiences but because that the climate has changed and people are more willing to admit to having such experiences now.
  4. The second most frequently visited web sites today (after porn) are those concerned with the mystical and spiritual.
  5. The Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA), the biggest of the three exam boards, reports a 21% increase from 2000 to 2004 in the choices of Religious Studies at A level. Philosophy has increased by 67% in the same period.
  6. Society is undergoing a subtle shift from being consumers of things (material possessions) to becoming consumers of experiences. This explains the huge growth in extreme sports, but also the increase in seeking spiritual experiences of all kinds.

## Session 2: What is Evangelism?

*'The Church does not have a mission, but the missionary God has a Church' -*

Jurgen Moltmann.

### A) 1 Peter 3: 15 & 16

'But have reverence for Christ in your hearts, and honour him as Lord. Be ready at all times to answer anyone who asks you to explain the hope you have in you, but do it with gentleness and respect.'

This is Peter's evangelistic strategy for the Church:

Always be ready to give an answer but look at first half text again:

'In your hearts, set apart Christ as Lord'

The text implies that someone has already asked the question. The best evangelism is in the context of someone asking a question because of the quality of the Christian life, such quality of life is attractive.

### B) What evangelism is not. (Taken from Michael Green 'Evangelism Now and Then')

- Evangelism is not the same as mission.
- Evangelism is not individualistic.
- Evangelism is not an optional extra.
- Evangelism is not shallow.
- Evangelism is not the task of the ordained ministry alone.
- Evangelism is not finding pew fodder.
- Evangelism is not man-made propaganda.
- Evangelism is neither Christian proclamation alone nor Christian presence alone. It is both.
- **Evangelism is not the same as mission**

The 5 Marks of Mission of the worldwide Anglican Church

1. to share the good news of our faith with those who don't know about it
2. to help new believers to grow in their faith
3. to respond to people in need by offering help in love
4. to work towards peace and justice for all people
5. to be responsible in the ways in which we use and care for the world



### **C) Bear Witness**

**Some are called to be evangelists but the whole Church is called to play a part in Evangelism. We are called to bear witness.**

As disciples it is our task and our privilege to share the Good News of Jesus. We need to do this with enthusiasm and at the same time, humility. Being a witness does not mean forcing our views on other people. Christian witness sometimes will involve words as well as actions, sometimes being prepared to discuss our faith with other people, and listening to what they have to say. It will always involve showing our faith by the way we behave.

Standing up for our beliefs is not always easy.

Peter found it so hard that on one occasion he denied Jesus completely. But then two wonderful things happened. Firstly Jesus forgave him - just as he will forgive us, if we are truly sorry when we fail. Secondly, God gave him strength. And with god's help, Peter became a faithful and very effective witness to his Risen Lord.

### **'Stay' and 'Go' Evangelism**

**Go: Matthew 28:19&20**

This well known passage tells the Church to go: they are to go to new places and new people and take the Good News with them. And they are called to make disciples. So, "Go Evangelism" is when Jesus calls someone to leave their home and go somewhere different to share the Gospel.

**Stay: Luke 8: 38&39**

This gives us a different example. The man who has been healed was keen to go with Jesus wherever Jesus wanted him to go but Jesus tells him to stay in his hometown and share his newfound faith with people he already knows. He is not called to be a missionary abroad but to be an effective witness at home. And that's exactly what he did. 'The man went through the town, telling what Jesus had done for him.'

[They almost certainly would have known who he was and would want to know what had happened that had made such a life-changing difference to him].

So, "Stay Evangelism" is where Jesus does not call them to leave but rather to stay and witness to the people at home.

## Exercise

1. Who is the person who most influenced your decision to become a Christian?

- What was it about them that made a difference to you?
- Did they come from another place or from your home territory?

In other words did they come to faith through Go Evangelism or Stay Evangelism?

Most of us will be called to be Stay Evangelists/Witnesses. In many ways this is more difficult.

NB Often in Stay Evangelism, to begin with anyway, **actions** will speak louder than words.

## A Biblical Case Study

### 1. The Church in Acts

Imagine a church like this ...

The Early Church proclaimed this Gospel message of Jesus Christ, and the way they lived their community-life was a wonder to behold. It was way 'outside the box' for the world around them. The methods they used were appropriate for the first century, but the principles of their witness are timeless. The effectively witnessing church in any age follows them.

- i) The Early Church was made up of ordinary people (Acts 4:13), not experts. They faced normal church problems such as arguments about how to do things, (Acts 6:1), theological disputes (Acts 15:1), led by apostles who at times were reluctant evangelists (Acts 10:14) who were prone to doubt (Matthew 28:17). It was clear that the power present in their community did not come from their own giftedness.
- ii) They were desperate enough to pray (Acts 2:42, Acts 4:31, Acts 12:12). There is no effective witnessing life without an effective prayer life. Desperation, or knowledge of a need of God, is a powerful motivating force to pray.
- iii) They were available for the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8) who then does extraordinary wonders (Acts 3:16). Lives beyond human explanation make others take notice.

- iv) They were politically incorrect (Acts 2:36). To call Jesus 'Lord' was dangerous in a time when Caesar was lord. Small wonder they were persecuted for their witness.
- v) They were good news in their local community (Acts 2:27, Acts 3:11, Acts 5:13, Acts 9:36). Before they put the good news of Jesus into words, they *were* good news. Actions and example speak louder than words.
- vi) They were radically inclusive (Galatians 3:28, Acts 10:34-35). It was an extraordinary sight to have, for example, slaves and their owners on an equal footing in a first century community. There was nowhere else like it.
- vii) They welcomed the lost.

In this and in every other characteristic, they were Jesus' body on earth carrying on where he left off and doing what his Holy Spirit equipped them to do.

## 2. The Church in Philippi Acts 16

- Jewish men would pray 'I thank you God that I am not a woman, not a gentile, not a slave'.
- So Paul records 3 converts - one of each - there is a message here. The Gospel comes to Philippi and we are told that among the earliest converts, founder members of the church are a Woman, a Gentile and a Slave.
- There are no second class citizens in the Kingdom - no second class citizens in the Church.
- Interesting thing about Philippi - there was no synagogue there. You need to have 10 Jewish men to have a synagogue - as far as the early church is concerned, they are at the ends of the earth.
- Normally Paul would have headed for the Synagogue to speak to the local Jewish community who would share a background of OT Scripture. But there is no Synagogue so Paul heads for another place where people gather, down by the river.
- A woman, Lydia, v.13-15, is a high powered sharp businesswoman and a seller of purple dye. We know she's successful because she is evidently mistress of her own household and able to offer hospitality to guest.

- As an immigrant from Thyatira in a Roman city, and a woman as well, she would have been tolerated and taxed. As we learn later, the church in Philippi is founded in her house.
- We have a woman....
- The gentile Roman Jailer, v.19-40,
- Jailers were very often ex centurions, rather like some of our police who retire and work for security firms these days. Being a Jailer was a much sought after post. There follows a moving and dramatic story but for now we note we have a woman and a gentile.
- Which brings us to a slave. A Slave girl, v.16-18, she's the full 'Monty' slave, a woman and a gentile. This girl is so unimportant in society she doesn't even warrant a name.
- The greatest community ever, v.40.
- Just think back to the beginning. Paul's first congregation in Philippi was a small group of women, no men, no building to meet in, and no prestigious or influential people in the City. Nevertheless the church in Philippi grew into one of the strongest and most generous of all the churches that Paul founded. We can assume that Lydia played a significant part in that development and growth. They met at Lydia's house - Lydia, a slave girl and a jailer - all there at posh Lydia's house!
- In Philippi the Gospel is on a roll founded on Paul's obedience to the Gospel and Lydia's offer of hospitality. Never underestimate the place and power of hospitality in growing a local church.



- Enjoy the film and call it a night. If a short TV programme you may choose to keep going to the next section

ii) To reflect on any issues raised.

[NB: *It is possible to use Scripture Union Connect Series*]

- An example of a film and possible discussion questions/starters e.g. You may like to use 'Chocolate', 'Matrix', 'Bruce Almighty', 'Homer the Heretic' (Simpsons), 'The Way' starring Martin Sheen or Emmerdale/Eastenders/Corrie on TV.

Over a drink [tea, coffee, wine, whatever] discuss the storyline of the film/programme. Then,

- Invite the group to share how they feel about the film; what emotions/feelings did it prompt in them both initially and now a short time later?
  - Invite the group to identify any issues that the film raises.
  - Does the film offer or point to any value systems or answers to those issues?
  - What questions/challenges do these raise for the Christian faith?
  - What questions might the Christian faith have to the writers of the film?
  - What evidence from scripture do we have to support these points?
  - Do we understand where our values in our culture stem from?
- \* At the end of this session invite the group to each bring to the next session an issue that has featured in a newspaper, magazine, documentary or TV/Radio news item.

## **D) Exercise**

Aims:

- i) To recognise issues that provides opportunities to engage in discussion with friends, neighbours, and colleagues.
  - ii) To provide some experience of how to sensitively and thoughtfully engage with the issues of the day.
- 
- i) **To recognise issues that provides opportunities to engage in discussion with friends, neighbours, and colleagues.**

- Invite each group member to name his/her news item and if needed a short explanation of the story.
  - Then invite the group to briefly explain the issue that is raised and the questions it poses to their faith. [It is important not to allow this to develop into a personal point scoring event but keep it to a description of the issues raised].
- ii) **To provide some experience of how to sensitively and thoughtfully engage with the issues of the day.**
- Invite the group to offer biblical evidence for their points of view.
  - *You may want to invite the group to bring ‘items’ at the beginning of all future sessions, not for detailed discussion but to ‘keep their hand in’.*
- \* Some ground rules to be shared at beginning of this section
1. Be brief
  2. Let people finish speaking
  3. Offer opinions not sermonettes

## **Reviewing the mission task in England**

Aims:

- i) To gain an overview of the mission task that faces the church
- ii) To seek to understand the reluctance of many to engage with church.

### **i) To gain an overview of the mission task that faces the church**

The following material is taken from *Mission-Shaped Church* pp37-39, CHP, 2004

- **Regular attenders 10%**

Across the denominational spectrum, roughly 10 percent of the population attend perhaps 5-8 times in a two-month period.

- **Fringe attenders 10%**

Roughly 10 per cent of the population may attend church 1-3 times in a two-month period.

- **Open de-churched 20%**

Forty per cent of the population are 'de-churched'. At some point in their life they attended church. Of these, 20 percent are the 'open de-churched'; people who have left church at some point, but are open to return if suitably contacted and invited.

- **Closed de-churched 20%**

Twenty per cent of the population have attended church at some point in their life, but were damaged or disillusioned, and have no intention of returning.

- **Non-churched 40%**

Forty per cent of the population nationally have never been to church, except perhaps for the funeral or wedding of a friend or relation.

**This 40 per cent is the national average. In urban areas this figure might be as high as 80 per cent of the total.**

These 5 groups might be considered to be different tribes for a missionary to face. Each needs a different response.

### From Principles to Practice

- **Personal**

The ideas below are not aimed at the gifted evangelists, but at those who want to learn.

- **Prayer.**

*[Talk to God about people before you talk to people about God]*

Pray that God will bless them. Pray for the opportunity to share with them.

- **Practical demonstrations of love**

Love people until they ask why and then speak of Jesus.

- **Provocative testimony**

How can we describe our faith experiences in a way that elicits questions from our hearers? And remember 'The art of asking good questions is a key to effective evangelism!'

- **Introductions**

Introduce our friends to other Christians who can share their faith.

- **Cringe free events**



Many churches are good at special evangelistic events but what about cringe-free worship and follow up events?

- **Discipling**

The Church has lately rediscovered the urgency and need for quality nurture groups and events that lead to mature discipleship.

**Further material, see the Appendix**

## Session 4: Telling our faith story

### Aims:

- i) To understand the importance of story
- ii) To gain confidence in telling their faith story
- iii) To improve their faith story telling skills

### Intro Exercise

- Each member can talk for up to three minutes on any subject that interests them.

The purpose of this exercise is to encourage people to talk about themselves.

We can also use this as an opportunity to hone listening skills.

Can you retell another's story?

### A) What makes a good story?

- \* Concise.    \* True.    \*Credible. (Nobody lives happily ever after).
- \* Useful.    \* Jargon-free.    \* Not preaching.

### B) The 4 'P's Framework

Aim: To gain confidence in telling their faith story.

- Provide a framework so that people can prepare their own faith story  
Use of the 4 P's to help prepare your story

#### People

With which character or characters in the Bible do you identify?

How do the lives of Christians in the past encourage/challenge the way we live the Christian faith today?

#### Passages

What bible passage(s) have been important to you in your journey? Share with the group what and why.

#### Psalms

Using Psalm 23, describe the times when these different things have happened to you - what have you learnt about God in these times?

## Places

Is there a place where you know the presence of God in a special way?

What have these places taught you about the Christian faith - from Spring Harvest to Walsingham?

### **C) Helpful Questions**

- Which people or experiences have most influenced my own faith journey?
- What are the milestones in my faith journey?
- When did I first become aware of God in my life?
- How has this awareness developed?
- What are the things about Jesus that makes him special to me?
- How have I experienced the Holy Spirit in my life and what difference has this made?
- What difference has my faith made in my life recently?
- What place does the Church play in my faith journey?
- Have there been times when God has seemed absent?
- How did I learn from these times?
- What doubts and questions remain with me?  
What certainties support me in my journey of faith?

### **B) Mind Your Language**

- Improving your storytelling

#### a) Focus on God.

Make sure the story is about God as well as you - how do we do that without sounding preachy? By making sure that we tell *our* story and don't insist that it should be *their* story.

#### b) Mind your language and avoid the following:

*jargon, exaggeration, too much content, repetition, irrelevance, hidden assumptions, arrogance, criticism of others.*

**\* Write and put on tape an example that people can use to 'spot the goof'.**

c) Practise:

The better we know our story, the more confident we will be. The following may be helpful:

- Develop a theme through your story.
- Link your story with something the person says
- Illustrate it from daily life
- Ask questions of the person about their experience
- Be gentle and humble
- Use humour if possible
- Practise it often
- Pray for opportunities to tell your story

d) Listen to each other's stories and/or record on tape.

*In groups* - What are the stories you've heard told by others 'on the way' that have impacted you?

### C) Two types of story.

The *Lost for words* course of CPAS describes two types of story. The first could be described as '**before - during - after**'. It tells the story of what life was like before discovering Jesus, what happened during that discovery and the difference that receiving Jesus as Saviour actually made to you. An example of such a story from Scripture would be Saul meeting Jesus on the **Damascus road**, as he himself tells it for example in Acts 22:3-21.

In this sort of testimony there is a definite 'cross-roads', which is described. Saul who becomes St. Paul tells of the moments when he has a dramatic encounter with the risen Lord Jesus. From then on the whole direction of his life is changed; he is never the same again. It's not often you'll hear a testimony as dramatic as St. Paul's ("once I used to organise the killing of Christians, then I met Jesus and became the world's greatest missionary ..."), but it is true that the pattern of 'Before - during - after' fits the story of many people.

Dangers to avoid with this type of story are not to dwell on unsavoury descriptions of life 'before', nor to go into great detail about what you did. Explain how you were led to the point where you received Jesus and became a Christian; and explain the difference it made to you, not only in what you did but even more

importantly in how you thought. The work of the Holy Spirit is as much about renewing our mind as changing our behaviour for the better.

The second type of testimony is more of a process, a journey like that of the two companions on the **Emmaus road**, as opposed to the drama of the Damascus road. It could be described as ‘**remember - react - result**’. Those of you with this type of story remember the way you were drawn into receiving Jesus over a period of time; maybe you were brought up in a Christian household, and it was over a period of time that your faith in Jesus became personal to you. As you grew in that faith, you reacted differently to circumstances in your life as the Holy Spirit led you. The result may be just as dramatic as that experienced by Damascus road types, but not as obvious.

A danger to avoid with this type of story is to feel it’s not exciting enough and therefore you want to apologise for it, or to exaggerate details. The fact is that both types of story are of equal value. Never apologise for what God has done and is doing in you! More people will be able to relate to an Emmaus road-type story. Conversion is always miraculous, a work of God, but no less so when it happens over a period of time than in an instant.

Whatever your story, remember the point of it:

**It’s about Jesus, not you.**

So ask yourself: can others recognise you in your story? Can they recognise Jesus? And this week, as we’ve been thinking ...

- Having a story and telling it like it is (John 9:25). The man born blind only needed to say what he did in a few words. He could have ducked the issue, taken the easy way out and said, “I don’t know.” Telling a story is saying what we do know. That can take courage. It’s worth practising to do it well and to do it boldly.
- **To conclude**

Invite everyone to write down their story in 100 words or less. Ask for volunteers to approach you at the end of the evening who would be willing to tell their story the following week.

### **Speak the way you speak**

Our mental image of “evangelism” is often masculine and argumentative, maybe because much that’s written about evangelism is by men. It’s extroverted and eloquent, “Different people will speak the gospel in different ways.” If you are introverted, relational and reflective, so these things will characterize your gospel speech, and that’s just fine.

### **Talk about your life with God**

(and do it from the start) “I’ve been praying for you”; “We went to church on the weekend”; “I’ve been thinking about...”: there are lots of little ways to talk about God without explaining the whole gospel.

### **Listen more than you talk**

“Do twice as much listening as talking”; understanding their story is important too.

### **Get ready to answer the questions you know are coming**

We all know what the questions are likely to be: “How are you?”, “What do you do?”, “What are your plans?” Why not get ready to include God in the topics you know are coming?

### **Bring it all back to Jesus**

In the end, it’s Jesus we want people to meet. It’s the gospel - the good news of his life, death and resurrection - that will bring people to him. So that’s where I want my conversations to end up. If I can bring every question back to Jesus; if I can talk about the hope I have in him; well, that’s half the battle. The rest happens as God’s Spirit works in people’s hearts.

- Having a story and telling it like it is (John 9:25). The man born blind only needed to say what he did in a few words. He could have ducked the issue, taken the easy way out and said, “I don’t know.” Telling a story is saying what we do know. That can take courage; it’s worth practising to do it well and to do it boldly.

## What's Your Style?

The New Testament makes it clear that not everyone may have the spiritual gifting to be a preaching evangelist. But as noted already, everyone *is* called by God and equipped by the Holy Spirit to the work of witnessing. What's your style? Here are five:

1. Confrontational (Peter in Acts 2:36-37). This is the classic approach of the evangelist who preaches Christ crucified and the outcome is the response of 3,000 people accepting his message (v. 41). It's appropriate in preaching situations when an evangelistic address with an appeal is needed. There are times in conversations also when it is right to speak the truth about Christ dying for our sin, and to invite a response - that's usually when we know the person we're talking to, or they have asked us about the "reason for the hope we have". Without a challenge, no one will respond.
2. Intellectual (Paul in Acts 17:2-4). No one can be argued into the Kingdom of heaven. If clever rhetoric alone were to win anyone over, they'd be argued out of their commitment by the next convincing speaker. St. Paul resolved not to use any manipulative methods in his evangelism (1 Corinthians 2:4). But there is a place for arguing the theological basis of God's truth. The Holy Spirit used St. Paul to argue for the truth about God in Christ in many places where this approach was needed. His undoubted theological learning and background made him an ideal person for this - it was his style, it was who he was. Some people have genuine questions, which need answers before they can take the next step.
3. Your Story (Paul in Acts 22:3-21). As we'll be seeing later in the course, there is an undeniable power to your story. No one can argue with it for a start. Paul tells the story of how he became a follower of Christ more than once because God uses our story, what in the jargon we call our 'testimony'. A man born blind gives a two-sentence testimony in John 9:25 - "One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!" We've all got a story. We need the courage and the opportunity to tell it.
4. Invitational (Levi in Luke 5:29). Levi invites Jesus and a crowd of his former colleagues to a meal at his house. This is another witnessing style - inviting friends to a place where they might meet Jesus. It could be an enquirer's

course, house group, a church service or as in Levi's example, a dinner party.

5. Servant-hearted (Dorcas in Acts 9:36). There was something distinctive about the life of Dorcas that made her stand out so that others admired her example. Whatever style of witness we may be, it needs to be backed up by who we are.

Which style do you think most looks like you?

*[Share in groups].*

### **Sowing seeds**

This is not about being a salesman (always trying to sell the product) or a submarine (never mentioning it). What would you say to the following?

- "How was your weekend?"
- "What is the world coming to?"
- "I'm not religious."
- "The church is full of hypocrites."

In everyday encounters and conversations, there may be opportunities for you to be a witness to the difference Jesus makes to your life. It may be in the form of a simple comment or a story, which, like the parables of Jesus, is like sowing a seed to see what happens.

If for example you were asked about what you did this weekend, it would be possible to say what you watched on TV. But if you were to 'get out more' from what's comfortable and easy, you could sow the seed of the fact that you went to church. You don't need to give a 5-minute testimony or a 20-minute sermon; it's just a simple seed we're talking about here, something that says you are not ashamed or secretive about the one you profess to worship.



## Session 5: How to plan and invite

### Intro: Giving an invitation

Think for a moment about your local gym or fitness centre. Do you know where it is? If it's not part of your life to go there, would you ever consider doing so? Some reasons why you wouldn't go there might be these: you'd feel out of place, everyone else knows what to do and you wouldn't, you're not that sort of person, all of which are excellent reasons and exactly the same sort of reasons why many people would never go to church.

But it could be very different if a friend invited you to the gym, especially if the gym made an effort to welcome newcomers so they wouldn't feel out of place. Some gyms do this very successfully. The church might learn something from them.

### A) Levi

We could learn something from the example of Levi who invites his friends to a party where Jesus is present (Luke 5:29). His home is a safe place where no one feels threatened, but it's also a meeting place with Jesus.

Discuss:

What would the equivalent of Levi's party be for you and your church?

Share in groups.

### B) Preparing an event - Some Initial questions

Would your particular friends feel comfortable if:

- They knew they were coming to a discussion?
- They knew they were coming to enjoy a good meal?
- They were coming to share in some kind of outing?
- They knew that they would be listening to a good speaker?
- They knew they would be playing a game of some sort?
- They knew that they would be listening to people telling their stories?

- They knew that if they wanted to, someone would pray for them in confidence?
- They knew that there would be background music?
- They knew there would be singing of religious songs?

**Which of these topics would their friends be likely to be interested in?**

- \* Stress - causes, symptoms and cures, and where faith fits in
- \* Money, sex and power - good for us or bad for us?
- \* How to be happy?
- \* Has science made God unnecessary?
- \* When things go wrong - strategies for coping in life's most difficult moments.
- \* How to deal with difficult people?
- \* How to live a life that makes a difference?
- \* How to make relationships work?
- \* Secrets of family life.
- \* How to find a faith, which works.

We need:

**1. Cringe free events**

**Many churches are good at sowing events but what about cringe-free worship and follow up events?**

**2. Discipling**

**The Church has lately rediscovered the urgency and need for quality nurture groups and events that lead to mature discipleship.**

Further details, see Appendix pgs 33-38

## Session 6: Proclamation and Presence

### A) Questions for Churches

**What would life under God's rule look like HERE?**

1 in 5 Anglican Churches grew by more than 10% between '89 and '98

What do churches have to become to be one of those 1 in 5?

- Blaise Pascal - 'Pensees' "Make it attractive, make good men wish it were true, and then show that it is." We can show that it is true but the first bit - how do we make people wish it were true?

### 1 Peter 3:8

Peter's evangelistic strategy for the Church - Always be ready to give an answer.

- 3:15: This text implies that someone has already asked a question. The best evangelism asks in the context of someone asking a question because of the quality of Christian life. Such quality of life is attractive (1 Peter 2:12).
- 3:15 is a very popular text but look at first part of verse '*In your hearts, set apart Christ as Lord*'.
- Acts 2:12 Pentecost events - crowd 'What does this mean?' Peter answers.
- If the quality of Church life does not provoke questions then we won't get far.

### Questions for Churches

- **What would life under God's rule look like HERE?**

From Graham Tomlin - 'The Provocative Church'

- What would be different if Xt had his way?
- What are the idols of our area? [You can tell by what people make sacrifices for - property, holiday, clothes, season ticket etc.]
- What Kingdom qualities need to be experienced?

- If all our resources are maintaining the old in decline, there is no resource for 'new church'.

Ephesians 3:10 'Through the Church wholeness to be made known again through the Church'

Jesus brings new relationship with ...

- A Church where worship, (hate it or love it) was dynamic. Notice how it was assumed/accepted that people will just drop in. Notice the worship has a real effect - the visitor is enabled to realize that God is really there.
- How do we build into our churches the sort of worship that enables people to encounter God?

It's about expectation. Do we on a Sunday morning expect God to turn up and do something? Do we expect, anticipate, the danger of coming into the presence of the Living God? The worship at Corinth you might have loved or hated but you would not have said it was boring.

Worship is the shop window.

- Ourselves - Discipleship. Jesus brings wholeness to human life.

Sportsmen go to Priory to quit drugs, alcohol etc. They don't get preached at. They are given practical ideas and help to give up drugs etc. When you teach a child or an adult to ride a bicycle or swim, they actually get to ride or swim. We don't just exhort and say 'you should'.

- How is our Church enabling people to overcome those bad/destructive habits?
- How about a seminar on 'how to forgive'?
- Discipleship as a word is close to Discipline and accountability.

All this becomes a checklist - 'How is your Church doing in these different areas?'

A Church that has dedicated aims and active programmes in these 5 areas - that would be a Provocative Church. I would like to belong to a Church like that. It would be attractive to others. It would invite people to ask the question 'Why?' 'Why is your Church doing/like this?' And that is Evangelism

This kind of Church would strike a chord and resonate with the spiritual searcher.

## **A) 5 Key Relationships**

- 1. A new relationship with God - Adoration**
- 2. A new relationship with others - Belonging**
- 3. A new relationship with creation - Compassion**
- 4. A new relationship with the self - Discipleship**
- 5. A new relationship with words - Evangelism**

Churches are often far too busy doing far too many things, and as a result do few of them well ... it may help to offer a number of key questions a church might ask itself to test its own relationship to the kingdom.

- Adoration - Do regular members find that Sunday worship feeds their own spiritual life, enabling them to draw close to God and taste both intimacy and awe?
- Belonging - Is there a structure within which every member of the church can give and receive care? Do most people feel they have a contribution to make, or are they mainly passive recipients?
- Compassion - Does the church do anything that expresses practical effective concern for its local community? Is it appropriate for the needs of that community and the resources of the church?
- Discipleship - Is there a structure that enables Christians to be accountable to each other for their Christian growth? Does teaching give practical strategies for developing life under God's rule?
- Evangelism - Does the church have a place for searchers to explore and ask questions, whether Alpha or something similar?

### **The Provocative Church**

“One inner-city church put aside a weekend and many pots of paint to brighten up a dank, urine-soaked subway nearby, inviting local residents to join in, and generating no small stir in the area. In a wealthy area, another church youth group put on a concert and performed music in a local shopping mall to raise money not for themselves or their church, but to enable the digging of a well in a village in Nigeria. A group of Christian students borrowed their college's dining hall, and invited their friends to a simple African meal with music, yet charging them a high price, so that the profits could go towards the rebuilding of educational prospects for young black South Africans.’

These things can be done not for effect or to impress, but just because they

were the kind of things Jesus did. They are the kind of things that happen in the kingdom of God - creation is renewed, the thirsty are given water, and the poor are given hope. Actions like these have their own integrity as a sign of God's rule. Although not performed for evangelistic effect, the inevitable result is that when it comes to direct evangelism, such churches tend to find it works better. There is a clearer sense of what people are being invited into, and into the kind of life that Christian faith involves." [Tomlin page 136]

In line with modern business practice, many churches now have mission statements. Very often these are so general and vague that they mean very little. Imagine, however, a church that had as its mission statement 'to teach ordinary people how to love God and love their neighbour'. It's not a bad description of life under the rule of God, and sets a very practical agenda for a local church.

#### **B) A Positive Church from 'Jesus The Evangelist' - Robin Gamble**

- Jesus' Galilee Ministry and region

20 Healing miracles:

17 in Galilee

[Jerusalem - Malchus ear; Pool of Bethesda; Man born blind - all in John]

9 Miracles over nature:

8 in Galilee [Jerusalem - Fig Tree]

3 Raising the dead:

All in Galilee

32 in Total 28 of which took place in Galilee

NB This not necessarily advocating a signs + wonders ministry

- Preach the Gospel, 'use words if you have to,' usually used by those wanting a get-out clause. But St Francis was famous for being a preacher and proclaimer ... Of course we all know how words can be misused to manipulate and exploit ... But non-use is not the answer to wrong use. [p55]
- Jesus travelled between the Jewish villages. Josephus tells us there were 240 of these. Most of his time was around the North West, around Bethsaida, Gennesaret, Chorazin and Capernaum where he had his base - far away from Jerusalem and its power bases.

- The Galilee was not a huge area. Most of the places Jesus visited would have been within a two-day walk of his base at Capernaum, so it looks as if he had a semi-itinerant, Pied Piper sort of mission. [p103]
- Occasionally he travelled further afield, to Tyre in the north and the ten towns of the Decapolis to the south-east, perhaps to test out the waters, but he always returned to the Galilee area.
- Feeding of 5,000 and 4,000, some claim is versions of the same story. But notice the differences: [p103]
  - i) 5,000 happened in Galilee - people sitting on the grass - 12 basketfuls of leftovers. Symbol of mission to 12 tribes of Israel.
  - ii) 4,000 happened outside Jewish territory in the desert - this time 7 basketfuls - a significant number - sufficiency to feed the Gentiles.
- ‘They are drawn to the *spiritual* or sacred. Tarot cards, dream-catchers, meditation, Buddhism, angels, icons, retreats and sacred-places are all popular’
- ‘Some are desperate for *healing*, be it in body, mind or spirit. Today we are hungry for good health and deep peace.’
- Many are longing for *relationship* and community. Acceptance, welcome, friendship, love and a sense of belonging are what we all need in a lonely and privatised world. We have seen them on the television in *Friends*, *Auf Wiedersehen Pet* and *Coronation Street*, and we want to be part of them.
- These three gateways each represent basic human needs. [p 189]

#### **Growing the church the Jesus way. [p.245]**

According to Rick Warren and *The Purpose-Driven Church*, there are five dimensions to a growing church. A church grows:

1. Warmer through fellowship.
  2. Deeper through discipleship.
  3. Stronger through worship.
  4. Broader through ministry
  5. Larger through evangelism.
- ***A Positive Church***

**‘Positive people make things happen. Negative ones have a tendency to magnify their problems, predict their failure and bring about their own downfall.’**

‘As we have seen, Jesus never reduced the work of evangelism and church growth to an easy-going, formulaic, straightforward ‘follow the maker’s instructions’ sort of programme. In his own mission he constantly had to face up to his own disappointments, rejection and - yes, let us use the word - failure. In the growth parables, he taught his followers and all future church-builders to expect thin soils, interferers planting weeds at night, dead branches that need pruning, trees that bear no fruit and sheep that get lost.

Nevertheless, they are still called the parables of *growth*. Why? ‘Because, despite all the problems, barriers and false dawns, Jesus still anticipated the growth of his kingdom and the fruitfulness of his people.’



## APPENDIX

Resources you may also find helpful when using this course:-

Faith Sharing - a Simple Guide

Serving others - a Simple Guide

Christianity - an Introduction

Leading the Way, Sharing: our faith

Leading the Way, Serving: others

### **How To Be Good - Nick Hornby**

*Molly has told mum Katie about her friend Pauline's Pentecostal church.*

Eventually I manage to convince Molly that we are Church of England, although this line of argument is not without its horrifying moments either, and two of us cruise the neighbourhood in the car, looking for the right church putting on the right show at the right time. We strike it lucky almost immediately: Molly spots a few ancient parishioners hobbling into St. Stephens, a couple of streets away, and we park the car right outside. [If you are the kind of person whose choice of entertainment is governed by ease of parking, then I thoroughly recommend Anglican Sunday services. You can arrive at five to ten for a ten o'clock service, and you're away by two minutes past eleven. Anyone who's had wait for an hour in the Wembley car park after a Spice Girls concert may find this attractive.]

It has everything I want. The vicar is indeed a kindly middle-aged lady who seems vaguely ashamed of her beliefs; the sparsity of the congregation, and its apparent lack of interest in anything or anyone, allows us to sit towards the back and pretend that we're nothing to do with anything or anybody. Molly is of course the youngest person in the pews on this side of the church, but I am probably the second youngest, by ten or fifteen years, although with a couple of them it's hard to tell: time has not; it is fair to say, been kind to some of these people. God knows what cause is and what effect here is.

We sing a hymn, 'Glorious Things of Thee are Spoken' - an easy one, easy-peasy, clearly remembered from school assemblies and assorted weddings, and both Molly and I join in with both energy and expertise, even if we do say so ourselves; and then there is a reading, and then there are notices. They're having a bring-and-buy sale. The reason there is no choir this week is that it has been invited to join

forces with another choir to do something else somewhere else ... I start to drift off. I have never been to an ordinary church service before. I have been to weddings, funerals, christenings, carol services and even harvest festivals, but I have never been to a bog-standard, nobody-there Sunday service.

It all feels a long way from God - no nearer than the bring-and-buy sale would be, and much further away than I imagine Molly's friend Pauline is at this precise moment. It feels sad, exhausted, defeated; this may have been God's house once, you want to tell the handful of people here, but He's clearly moved, shut up shop, gone to a place where there's more of a demand for that sort of thing. And then you look around and wonder whether the sadness isn't part of the point: those who are able to drag themselves here once a week are clearly not social church-goers, because there is nothing social happening here. This isn't a place to see and be seen, unless opera glasses are placed on the backs of the pews.

You'd have to walk twenty yards to shake somebody's hand. No, these people are the hardcore, the last WASPs in Holloway, the beaten and the lonely and the bereaved, and if there is a place for them in the Kingdom of Heaven, they deserve it. I just hope that it's warmer there than here, and there is more hope, and youth, and there is no need for bring-and-buy sales, and the choir of angels isn't singing elsewhere that day, but you rather fear it might be; C of E heaven is in all probability a quarter-full of unhappy old ladies selling misshapen rock cakes and scratched Mantovani records. Every day of the week, for all eternity.

### **Their Culture - Our Culture**

Here is a question:

*Does the culture of the church make you feel that the Gospel is relevant to contemporary life and to contemporary people?*

And if not, why not?

You see there is a mystery in all this: why is the church irrelevant to contemporary people?

- After all, Christians are contemporary people. Most Christians have a very good grasp of UK culture - they live in it. They wake up in the morning, listen to the radio, read newspapers, go to work, are managed, trained,

motivated in particular ways, go shopping, play football, watch TV... the church is *in* the world day in, day out. Relevance ought to be really easy.

- The reality is that - Their culture is our culture - So here's the mystery: Why is so much of the way we do things alien and off-putting to explorers, when during the week we have so much in common with them?
- Because we have created a community in which the way things are done, does not reflect the culture of the bulk of the people in the church. We cannot express ourselves. We do not use the language that most people use. We do not address the issues that most people want addressed. We do not give people an opportunity to ask the questions that are really on their minds. We do not create ways of relating and meeting and ways of learning that resonate with the ways of relating and meeting and learning of contemporary life.
- Now it would be easy to reduce all that to questions of style - certainly we need to create contexts in which people can express themselves to God and to one another - to allow spontaneity, creativity, and so on.
- But more importantly we need to create contexts in which people can be real with one another and before God.
- The point is this: Our key challenge is not to create a church culture that is relevant to outsiders but to create a church culture that is real and authentic and genuinely enriching for our own people.
- If we do that, we will inevitably create a culture that will be much more relevant to many who don't yet know Christ.

### Positives

#### Half full Half Empty

#### It really does depend on how you look at it

- Church can be/is

Connected - meet with, phone, e-mail, 20,30,40,50 people a week...

Cross-cultural -

Cross-generational - One of the last places where people of different ages relate ... you don't see many 47-year-olds clubbing - at least I don't but in the workplace the 47 year-old can network.

- Looked at in this way - the whole picture begins to change - suddenly 2% of a huge population is a lot of people... that's 1 in 50. On average each of us knows 100 people. We have the people to reach in our nation. Suddenly the fact that the average Christian in work or school or university spends 40 hours a week or so with on average 50 people becomes a huge resource...
- Suddenly the reality that the average parent with a five year old trundling up at the school gate will relate to 30 sets of parents for the next 6 or 7 years is a huge opportunity...
- Suddenly the fact that the average pensioner in a home spends 12 hours a day relating in a community of 30 or 40 people is a huge opportunity.

If we are not careful we hold a picture of the church in the ghetto... Well if it is it's our own fault!

Because the reality is that Monday to Friday the majority our people are out there... up close and personal:

And it is the failure to release that resource that is one of the church's key problems...

The question is not how can this person serve in the church but how does God want to use this person in the kingdom?

How can we create Christian communities that help release people's strength where they are?

Equip them for Evangelism and witness

### **Where are they at 11am Monday morning?**

#### **11am in the morning**

The focus of evangelism is people's daily lives.

Where will you be 11am Monday morning?

Ask everyone to stand when their place is called out

Home, Shopping, bed [that's the clergy!], school/college, work

That is the focus - where people are then because the coalface of evangelism is ordinary Christians in contact with people in their everyday lives.

**Contact with people:**

**Interest groups**

**Family**

**Colleagues**

**YOU**

**Acquaintances**

**Neighbours**

**Friends**

Blob Tree





**Way of Life** resources are produced by the Diocese of Truro Discipleship Team. They are designed to help individuals, small groups, and congregations explore their faith and enable them to flourish in Jesus Christ.