



## EXPLORING WAY OF LIFE

It would be advisable for the group to commit to completing all the sessions in Exploring Way of Life. This session focusses upon worship and is therefore ideal for this particular part of the Parish programme and can be completed alone if time to complete the whole course is lacking.

### Session 2: Journeying Up

*“Journeying up is about our love of God and our response to his overwhelming love for us. It’s about living for God and not for ourselves.*

*Journeying up means acknowledging that he comes first in our life. And it means we truly are a living sacrifice”.*

#### Resources:

- Way of Life booklet for each participant + pen
- A copy of this whole session for each participant.
- A large copy of Ruby Green Sings (available from Shelley Porter)



#### Check in:

- Spend a few moments settling into this particular time and place. What thoughts, concerns, questions or hopes are you bringing to this meeting. You may like to make a bowl of your cupped hands. Let them rest on your lap and look at them. What are you carrying just now? What is your life full of?
- Now close your eyes and see if you are able to lift your attention from the ordinary concerns of daily life, work, family, church business, relationships and re-orientate yourself again under the loving gaze of God who has your times and all your concerns, in his hand.
- Think back over the days or weeks since you last met. Have you been aware of recalling any of the discussions or insights you may have gained from the last session?
- Share your reflections in twos or in the group as a whole.

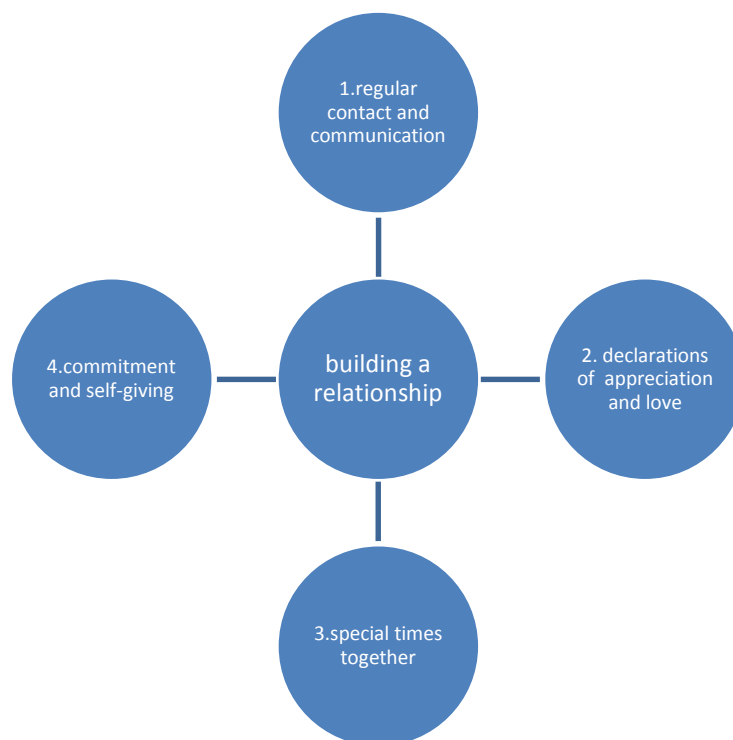


#### Read and reflect:

This second session focuses on the first of the four journeys in ‘Way of Life’: the Journey Up. This begins with an invitation to think about our relationship with God. We think of this as the Journey Up not because God is somehow ‘up there’ but because in this part of ‘Way of Life’ we are invited to look up from the circumstances of our life and to look into the face of the God whose loving gaze is always turned towards us as he seeks our company and we seek

to deepen our relationship with him. Making the Journey Up we lift our heads, raise our gaze to the God who is Lord of creation and Lord of our lives. **Read Psalm 63:1-4 and Hebrews 10:19-25**

What does it take to form a friendship or relationship? What do we need to do to maintain and deepen a relationship once it has been embarked upon? We will probably be able to name a few key factors from our experience. The diagram below may give us a starting place to think about how we might invest in our human relationships and our friendship with God :



## 1. Regular contact and communication



As the old advert said “It’s good to talk”. There are lots of different ways to ‘talk’ but no relationship survives long without regular communication. Think for a moment about your closest relationships:

- What are the patterns of communication and contact between you?
- What are the different ways you have found to ‘talk’?

Even a daily monosyllabic conversations over the morning cornflakes or a quick phone call to a friend are valid forms of communication. It isn't always deep and meaningful and often will focus on the practical realities of our daily lives. What is important is that there is regular contact. Rather like a rhythm or beat gives shape to a piece of music, regular contact maintains the direction of a relationship.

- Do you have any patterns in the way you talk with God?
- What helps you to stay in contact?
- What do you find difficult about communicating with God and listening to Him?

'Way of Life' encourages us to build our relationship with God through daily prayer which may take a variety of forms, including non-verbal ways. Spend some time discussing the joys and challenges of reaching out to God and listening for the ways he may be reaching to us. It may be helpful to share where, when and how you pray, including any resources you use.

***(Group leaders may like to download some of the resources or contacts listed in the 'Way of Life' booklet as ideas and examples).***



## 2. Declarations of appreciation and love



While regular contact helps to maintain a relationship, in order for a relationship to deepen there is a need to express what we mean to one another. Friendships grow through mutual appreciation, being grateful for what we can give and receive, for the ways in which we 'see' who we are through the eyes of those who love us and are honest with us.

In our acts of corporate worship (whether Service of the Word or the Eucharist) we are helped to look up again and see God and the way he seeks to be in relationship with us. In these services we deepen our relationship with God; through the liturgy we declare who God is and what he has done for us. 'Eucharisteo' means thanksgiving (see Luke 22:19 - 20) and the service of the Eucharist includes us in an intentional speaking out of the truth of Christ's action for us here and now, and for all God's people across the ages.

***(Group leaders have copies of one or more of the Eucharistic prayers or Service of the Word so that everyone can have sight of one).***



Spend some time reading over the words of the service(s). In twos and threes and discuss together either:

- How does the liturgy enable us (through the ordinary stuff of daily life: bread, wine, a meal shared with friends, laying the table and washing up) to look up and see God who is reaching out to meet with us?

- What words, phrases or actions in the Eucharist give us a Way, a form to respond and speak out our appreciation and thankfulness to God?
- Are there particular ways, personal to you, that the Eucharist might help you make the Journey Up to God?

Or:

- If you regularly use a Service of the Word rather than the Eucharist, how does that give you ways to give thanks and 'look up' to see God?

The Eucharist is a focus for our giving thanks to God but there are many ways that we might express our gratitude to God and be moved to lift our heads to worship him. You might like to look at other forms of worship that are used in your church community but spend some time also sharing together other activities or situations that draw you to give thanks to God eg a walk on the coast path, playing with grandchildren, visiting an art exhibition, watching a film.....

### 3. Special times together



All relationships benefit from some intentional time together, perhaps out of the normal routine and contexts of everyday life. We may go on holiday with family members or friends or plan some time out together. Relationships are maintained and deepened by some deliberate face to face contact where we may need to say we're sorry or listen more attentively or just remember again why we love each other.

A Franciscan once said that our prayer life can be likened to getting our daily nutrition through the discipline of regular meals; if we are in the habit of eating a balanced meal and veg most days we can then enjoy a special day when we just grab a Mars Bar and go. Daily prayer does benefit from the rhythm and routine of time, place and content but we are also free to 'take days off together' with God; to change the routine and do something different. It is possible to plan such special times together with God through some reflective time, a new or different way of praying, a Quiet Day, retreat or conference.



***(Group leaders gather some of the information related to the suggestions in the 'Way of Life' booklet under this section in order that the group can discuss resources or experiences they have had).***

### 4. Commitment and self-giving



We will all have experienced the challenges of sticking with those we care about through thick and thin, when we understand them and when we don't. Most friendships reach a point where they ask us to show our commitment to the other person and this usually involves some cost to our time, our emotional investment, even our own security. It can be a costly business to really be seen and known by other human beings, and as Christ's disciples.

### Read together Philippians 2:1-14

In this passage we are encouraged to follow Christ's example to give ourselves, to commit to living out God's purposes and call even when obedience is costly and humbling. Discuss together how we might respond to Christ's self-offering for us in practical giving of our self and our resources, including our finances and possessions.



Write and review:

Now spend some time quietly reading back through this last section and using page 9 in the 'Way of Life' booklet to make a practical response. As a group you may like to find ways of making a commitment together (for example to go to a quiet day or diocesan event as a group, or to read a book on prayer together).



**Group leaders: Be prepared to be selective about the different sections in this session as there is a lot of material to work through. For example you could suggest that this 'Write and Review' section be done individually at home before the next session. If so it will be important to give some time at the next session to allow people to share how they got on or to remind people to revisit it.**



PONDER AND PRAY:



James Chapin, *Ruby Green Sings*

We began this session with some quiet, seeking to lift our gaze from the concerns of our daily lives to look again at God who is Lord of the universe and yet gives himself sacrificially to be in relationship with us. From there we went on to explore the Journey Up, responding to God's overwhelming love for us. The image above may give us a way to return to that stance of prayer. There is a single-heartedness poise and clarity of purpose about the figure in this picture. You may like to prayerfully find a similar spiritual stance. Perhaps this can be an image for us of the Journey Up in which we shift our focus to live for God, committing ourselves to growing in relationship with him, offering our prayer, our attention, our practical resources, ourselves to him as Lord.

Pray for each other and conclude with Psalm 63 as a prayer with refrain

**Refrain:** *My soul is a thirst for God, even for the living God.*

**O God, you are my God; eagerly I seek you; •  
my soul is athirst for you.**

**My flesh also faints for you, •  
as in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water.**



**So would I gaze upon you in your holy place, •  
that I might behold your power and your glory.**

**Your loving-kindness is better than life itself •  
and so my lips shall praise you.**

**I will bless you as long as I live •  
and lift up my hands in your name. *Refrain***

**My soul shall be satisfied, as with marrow and fatness, •  
and my mouth shall praise you with joyful lips,**

**When I remember you upon my bed •  
and meditate on you in the watches of the night.**

**For you have been my helper •  
and under the shadow of your wings will I rejoice.**

**My soul clings to you; •  
your right hand shall hold me fast. *Refrain***