

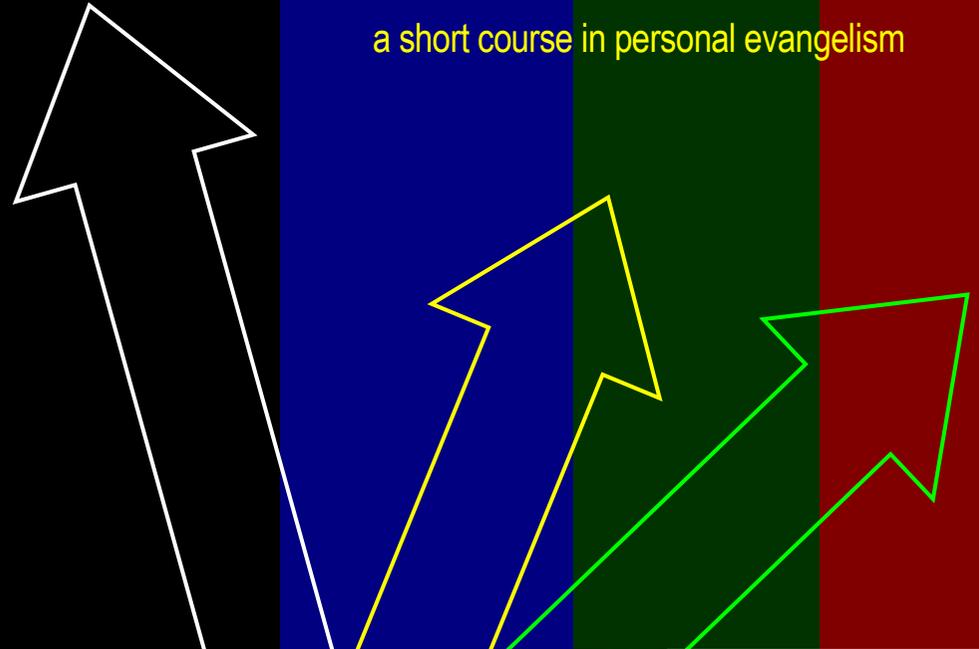
Go and Tell!



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# Go and Tell!

a short course in personal evangelism



Independent Methodist Churches

*Christians in the Community*

## Notes

## **Go and Tell!**

### **Introduction**

**The reason that we are here today is because we believe that we have a story to tell. It is a most important story, and it is one that we share with countless millions of people. It is your story of you being a Christian; how you became a Christian and your experiences of living the Christian life.**

**Many of us find it a difficult story to tell not because of any sense of embarrassment about the subject but because we have never considered it necessary to tell anyone about our Christian faith and experiences. Let's face it the majority of Christians have always left it to the person in the pulpit.**

**Today however, the means of communicating the "Good News" about Jesus Christ have to be changed. Gone are the days when enquiring people would come to church to hear the Christian message. Today we have to go back to the method that has been used at various times throughout the history of the Church, right back to the time of the Apostles, we have to go out and tell our story, and to tell that story with meaning, direction, and passion. That is the purpose of "Go and Tell".**

### **Remember:-**

- We cannot change people, only God can by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- Always allow the Holy Spirit to guide and direct you as occasions and opportunities come your way.

### **Prayer Time**

Again Jesus said “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you” (John 20:21).

That message was to His disciples but it applies just as much today as it did 2000 years ago.



could possibly result in them being lost to the kingdom.

The battle for someone to enter the kingdom is a spiritual one, which the devil will oppose and put all sorts of problems in our way. We need, as Peter says, "To always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have" 1 Peter 3:15.

### **Exercise (10 mins)**

*Short session in groups to focus on how we can help and support those who have responded as a result of sharing "My Story". Spend time listening to feedback on some of the ideas raised.*

### **Feedback Time**

A short time for any questions and observations of the course.

### **To Close**

If you were to go back to the session when you first shared your stories with each other, do you think that you would now share the same story in the same way? Would your story have moved on and changed? Whilst we all have stories to tell, as Christians that story should not remain static. Our stories should be ever-changing as we grow and mature in our walk with the Lord.

# 1

## **What is My Story?**

### **Aim of the Session:-**

- To help participants identify the important events that have shaped their lives and led them to become a Christian.
- To assist Christians to reflect back on their lives to help them explain to others the elements of the Christian faith that they have found so essential.

### **A Lifetime of Events**

(Warm-up Activity requiring Flip-chart and Pens – 10 minutes)

*Ask the members of the group to identify significant events that have happened within their lifetimes. The following text could be used but you may choose to use your own words. Likely events are listed below but they are not exclusive.*

We have all lived through a time of major changes in both society and the world in which we live.

Shall we see what kind of collective list we can come up with. Let's think about major world events, social changes, and technological advancements that have happened in our lifetimes.

## Major Historical Events:

### A selection of what people might suggest:-

- The Second World War
- The Coronation of the Queen
- Suez Crisis
- The Cuban Missile Crisis
- Assassination of President Kennedy
- Decimalisation (1<sup>st</sup> February 1971)
- The 'three day week'
- Margaret Thatcher becoming Prime Minister
- The Falklands War
- The appearance of HIV
- The fall of the Berlin Wall and Communism in Eastern Europe
- The invasion of Kuwait and the first Gulf War
- New Labour and Tony Blair
- Death of Princess Diana
- The Millennium
- 9/11
- Invasion of Afghanistan and the Second Gulf War
- The rise of China
- The Banking Crisis



## Technological Changes

- Jet Aircraft
- Cars for everyone – Mini and Beetle
- Development of Computers
- Men land on the Moon
- Development of Plastics and Resins
- Personal Computers
- Digital Technology
- Mobile Technology
- Global Internet



not know they need Jesus, our privilege is to be there as Jesus' ambassadors to say a word, offer help, perform a good deed, provide a solution to a problem and to pray for them.

## What are the best waters to fish in?

Fishermen know that there are waters where you catch plenty of fish. Some, where a small catch will win a prize and some where you may catch a big fish.

If we look at where we might fish for men, we need to do several things to achieve our goal. We need to find a place of availability, we need to be where non-Christians are. We looked at this in session 3 as a group but in the following exercise we can make this more personal to our own day-to-day living.

### Exercise (10 mins)

*Spend a few minutes making a list of where you come into contact with non-Christians on a regular basis. (Listen to feed back)*

In my experience, when I pray for the Lord to give me openings to share with others, opportunities occur with the most unexpected people. It is important that we stay alert to every opportunity. How many times have you missed an opportunity to say a word, do an act of kindness, show compassion or help to solve someone's problem?

Paul says "Pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly as I should" Col. 4:3-4.

**Prayer is the most important part of fishing for men; we need to wrap ourselves in prayer daily to seek the Lord's plans for our lives.**

With people we need to be prepared to be with them and help them through whatever problems arise that

Holy Spirit. Teach them to obey everything that I have taught you and I will be with you always, even until the end of this age" Matt 28:18-20.

### **What do I need to know about fishing?**

Before an angler starts fishing, especially if he is a novice, he will seek advice from someone who is an experienced fisherman.

He will ask about certain fishing waters, will need to know what equipment is best and what kind of fish he might catch. He might need to know the overall cost of fishing..

We need to check out our story so that it includes what we were like before meeting Jesus, how we came to know Jesus, and what we have been like since submitting our life to Him. In other words, our personal journey before and after, this makes our faith story personal, in our down-to-earth experience, and through it our listeners can then relate to their own lives.

When fishing for men, we need to be aware of and able to use various ways of witnessing in helping the people that the Lord has laid before us.

Amongst these we need to show compassion and concern. "Jesus, when He saw the crowds, He had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd, then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest fields" Matt 9:36-38.

We need to be where non-Christians are, to be helpful, making friendships, doing deeds of kindness, offering non-judgemental love, being concerned with their problems, and having a compassionate listening ear.

In our day to day lives we meet lots of people who do

## **A Story to Tell**

### **What have been the "Big Events" in your life?** (15 minutes)

*Here the presenter will talk about the significant events in his / her own life. The following is an example of the type of incidents that had an effect on the author's life. Your experiences will be different. It is important that you thoroughly prepare your experiences and can present them with little or no references to notes.*

"I think that most people, at some point, spend time looking back on their lives, identifying the key events that have shaped them into the individuals that they are today. Looking back wondering what might have been if we had only pursued a different course or accepted an opportunity when it was offered.

Most people will look back to their time at school, their careers, and their choice of partner as key areas in their lives, but even within these broad areas there will be many events that will have had a significant effect on the direction their lives have taken.

When I look back on my life and think back to my school days, I initially regret a wasted fifth form when I simply lost interest, did the minimal amount of work and as a consequence achieved poor exam results. I now know that if I had set my mind to it I could have achieved a lot more than I did but I now have no regrets because even those poor exam results had a major impact on shaping and directing me to the person I am today.

At the same time that I was achieving those poor exam results at sixteen we as a family moved across town and as a consequence I came into contact with a form of “Christianity” that I had never known previously.

That too was to be a major factor in shaping me!

More recently I can think of decisions that I made towards the end of my career that if I had taken certain alternative choices I doubt whether I would be standing here today.”

## **What have been the ‘Big Moments’ in your life, the events that have really altered the course of your life?**

Of course the one mega event that outweighs all the other factors, and subsequently shaped our destiny and moulded us into the people we are today is the day that we accepted Jesus as Saviour and became a Christian. We may not have been called into a life of overseas missionary service but the consequence of that decision will have turned our whole life upside-down. This is what ‘my story’ is all about, identifying both the key events that led you to becoming a Christian and the subsequent effects that being a Christian has then made upon your life.

We need to be aware and sensitive to the fact that people become Christians through different journeys, over various time-spans. There are some who make a sudden and dramatic decision to follow Jesus Christ; an almost ‘Road to Damascus’ experience. On the other hand there are those who make the journey to the Christian faith slowly, asking and seeking over many months, if not years.

I would like us to spend a few moments in quiet thought as we think about the people who we have contact with and whether they know ‘our story’.

### **Why should we share our story?**

**Jesus said "Come follow me and I will make you fishers of men" Matthew 4:19. Are we ready to start fishing?**

**We will consider this analogy and highlight verses from the Bible to confirm our own belief and mission for outreach.**

### **Do I have a licence to fish?**

To be able to fish anywhere in England, we need to obtain a fishing rod licence from a post office, before we are able to put a line in any water. This is similar to us wanting to share our story. We need to check out our story from the point that we personally received Jesus and from which we began a lifelong relationship which has resulted in the gaining of eternal life.

One of the reasons the Bible was written is that **"God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believed in Him may not perish but have eternal life"**. We also need a relationship with the Holy Spirit who is able to prompt us on a daily basis. God said to Paul, "My grace is all you need, for my power is strongest when you are weak" 2 Cor. 12:9. The Bible says that all Christ's followers can have the same confidence in their mission and access to the same power to fulfil it that Jesus had, because they have the Holy Spirit living inside of them.

We have been given all authority in earth and heaven, with a free licence from Jesus to fish for all. "I have been given all authority in heaven and earth. Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples, baptising them in name of the Father, the Son and the

count the number of real friends on one hand.” I don’t know whether you agree with that statement? The key words are probably “real friends”, those people who would stand by you if your life literally fell apart and collapsed, and you would be in a situation of real need. Probably a better classification of people we know would be, ‘real friends’, ‘friends’, and ‘acquaintances’. There are possibly many within our circulation of people contacts who we would count as more than just acquaintances, but not amongst the small group that we would class as ‘real friends’.

Continuing with that train of thought; our “real friends” probably know most things about us, they will share many of our values, and probably our faith as well.

The further that we move out from our closest friends, our “real friends”, to those we class as “just friends”, we then identify those people who don’t know the complete story about us. These “friends” may know that we “go to church”; they may have some knowledge about our involvement with “church”, but will have little or no idea of why we are so involved.

Moving beyond our ‘friends’ we come to our ‘acquaintances’, people we know through work, social activities, neighbours, people we just pass in the street. They will know little about us, we know little about them, but these people present a real opportunity for us to share ‘our story’.

A recent comment that I read stated that every human being has a capacity to have about 130 relationships with other people. These will include, ‘Real Friends’, ‘Friends’ and ‘Acquaintances’. That group of 130 will be constantly changing, some will be permanent fixtures, while others come and go as we progress through life.

### **Excercise (10 mins)**

You may like to write this down

The important factor about a person becoming a Christian is not the length or manner of the spiritual journey but the final point when an individual responds in faith to Jesus Christ.

*At this point divide in pairs and ask them to spend some time telling ‘their story’ to their partner and also in turn listening to the other person’s story.  
(20 minute activity)*

### **You are a Christian, so what!**

*Here participants are given time to think about the realities of their Christian faith and how they can express them to others. You may use the suggested text below.*

You have found the Christian faith to be the most important thing in life. It gives you hope, encouragement and purpose in life but how do you convey that to someone who is not a believer? Spend ten minutes thinking and making notes of why you are confident about the Christian faith. (10 minute activity)  
*Gather everyone together to share their thoughts within the group. List points on a flip-chart. Possible points that might be raised:-*

- Christianity gives meaning to life.
- I have found God to be a real presence and strength in my life.
- I personally know the reality of a flawed life; only Christianity can restore such a life.
- Christianity has provided me with hope for the future.
- The Christian faith provides me with the guides and standards I need for daily living.
- Without Christianity a caring society would cease to exist.

Close the session by asking the group to spend some time in prayer reflecting on their individual Christian journeys and thanking God for the reality of His presence in their lives.

Before the next session ask everyone to spend time writing out the story of their journey to Christianity and the experiences that maintain that faith today. Ask everyone to bring their story to the next session.



# 4

## 'My Story'

### "Real Friends", "Friends", and "Acquaintances"

#### Aims of the session

- To recap and re-focus on the main points raised from the previous sessions
- To continue to encourage and enthuse people to share their faith in God with authority from the Bible

In Session 1 we found 'our story', improved it and hopefully brought it up to date. The most common question people ask or think is "why is it important to you?" Let us re-aquaint ourselves with the points on p.5.

In session 2 we looked at the early church and how they moved out from Jerusalem. We discussed how to share 'our story' asking help from other Christians to enable us to be more confident, to pray with us and allow God's Holy Spirit to work through us.

In session 3 we identified the people we meet on a daily basis. Then we looked at skills in forming relationships and friendships and particularly in listening to people.

*A flip-chart can be used in this session as a visual aid in highlighting who are our 'real friends', 'friends' and 'acquaintances.'*

Someone once told me, "that in life you have many acquaintances but few real friends; in fact you can

## HANDOUT 2

### Listening well

People who share their stories hear a lot about other peoples stories. It's important to learn to listen carefully and to hear what is being said accurately. It's especially important to learn to "listen" with the heart to the stories being told, to share the perspective of the storytellers, and to understand how they are feeling as they tell their stories. To do this well, requires the skill of empathic listening.

### Empathic listening

It may seem obvious but the first rule in listening is to listen, not to speak! It's hard to do, because we all have ideas and responses that we want to share. But sharing our stories is not social conversation. Listening carefully requires concentration. It is important that we listen not only to what the other person is saying but also to what God may be saying through their words. Prayerful silence and careful concentration is a gift.

It's hard to interpret what we hear and naturally to want to share our own point of view. But empathic listening is a way of caring for others by letting them speak and know that they have been heard. The best listener allows the other person to explore his or her own situation and find his or her own answers.

Listening may not mean remaining absolutely silent. It helps people to speak if they receive a response from time to time. This may mean simply saying "Uh-uh" or "Mm" or repeating the last few words the person has said. It is helpful for the listener to reflect back what they think the other person is saying e.g "You seem to be saying....." followed by what has been heard. If a listener doesn't understand what the other person has said, it is important to ask for clarification.

Most or what we communicate is communicated by our bodies, not our words. How do we communicate interest in another person? We can show care by being attentive to the signals their body language gives away. When listening, posture should be open and relaxed, looking at the person who is talking even though they may not make eye contact. It helps to lean slightly in the direction of the talker- but without being intimidating. Listeners should avoid being seen to look at their watch, over the talkers shoulder or being easily distracted. Effective listening is hard work!

*Acknowledgement - Handouts and some of the exercises used in this session are based on material from 'Encircled with Care' and are used with the consent of the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes.*

# 2

## Yours, Ours, Their Story

### Aim of the Session

To take what we learnt from the last session, the development of our personal relationship with God and give ourselves time to consider:-

- What am I doing with my story?
- What am I supposed to be doing with my story?

### My Story becomes Our Story

I am always impressed with anyone who is prepared to share a testimony with either a small or large group. It has such power, shows such courage and makes us feel both exhilarated and to question our own 'power' and 'courage'.

It makes little difference whether it began sixty years or sixty minutes ago, it remains very impressive. I am amazed as the years go by, how people can still recall the exact minute as well as the day and year, but there is also something extra special about new Christians sharing their testimony.

Testimony/Witnessing, in many ways these words are amongst those which have fallen out of use – even in the Church which should be their natural home. It was certainly their birthplace.

*At this point the presenter will tell their story, possibly relaying the first occasion they shared Jesus with anyone.*

## Short Exercise (10 mins)

We are now going to have a short session in which we will break into pairs. We are going to pick-up the task that you were left with after the last session; the one regarding writing down 'Your Story'. We would like you to share some part of it with your partner. You may be a little nervous about sharing your story but the response you get will make you glad you did. If you wish to share it with one of the team here, I am sure they will be pleased to hear it.

On reconvening, seek to encourage open discussion on:-

- Do I feel more confident?
- Have I improved in my approach to sharing my story?

## Welcome to witnessing!

In doing this, we have a story which others want to hear. Not just because we have a captive audience and we have set ourselves up to tell and receive but because our story really is something that others want to hear.

## We can tell 'Our Story' in so many ways:-

Can we share ideas on how we may do this?

(5 mins)

Possible answers will include:-

Love                      Speech  
Actions                  Behaviour  
Smile                     Listening  
Patience

Being there for others

And many more – the qualities of Jesus.



## HANDOUT 1

### The contemporary context in which personal evangelism is shared

#### World context

The modern world we live in is fascinated by "spirituality". All kinds of spiritual issues are discussed in magazines, often in sections to do with health and personal wellbeing. We see a growing interest in faith practices of all sorts, those of ancient religions and those reflecting modern fashions. We can see that human beings continue to experience a spiritual hunger. The big questions of faith are still being asked "Why am I here? Where can I find meaning? How should I treat other people and the planet? And "Where is God in the suffering and struggle of life?"

Our view of the world and faith has been challenged where religious beliefs (some quite fundamentalist) are connected with political events and can be very disturbing. Organised religions, including Christianity, are often perceived as quite judgemental e.g. about sexuality, the roles of women etc.

#### Church context

For many of us there is an embarrassment to talk naturally about God or faith. In church a member may have limited experience of doing so but assumes they will be able to with the "regulars".

Some of the people who used to attend church retain a folk (or real) memory that being approached is likely to mean being interrogated as to why you are not attending church frequently enough or not at all which leads to guilt that then becomes a barrier to visiting church in the future. Our personal evangelism needs to take into account that churchgoing habits are changing greatly and Sunday worship may not deal with family and job commitments.

Are there ways in which we can help people to talk about faith, ask the "big" questions and grow spiritually?

- To encourage members to fulfill their commitments to the great commission.
- To inform a minister or church leader of any special need of those people we meet and/or come into contact with.
- To pray regularly for those in our community.

So is there something about the quality of Christians that allows people to see Jesus? When people feel loved and accepted are they more able to see God's love in action in their own lives and the life of the world.

### **Exercise** (25 minutes)

*Everyone find a partner. One person acts as the storyteller and one the listener. The storyteller describes an occasion where someone has spoken to them about a problem or situation in the last couple of weeks and the listener has to think of ways of introducing Jesus/God/Church/Faith/your story into the conversation.*

*This should be acted out as a role play if possible, with the story teller taking on the role of the person who has shared with them.*

Case Studies will be available for those who have difficulty in identifying a suitable story to tell.

At the end of 10 minutes, everyone changes roles and the exercise is repeated.

**Feed back** - Listeners comment on how easy or difficult it has been to share their faith.

Check to see if everyone is okay and offer the opportunity for people to ask questions and then have a short period of reflective prayer

### **Closing prayer** (3 minutes)

We find not just that we have a story that affects our lives (link back to the opening aim 'What am I doing with my story') but we also find in our other captive audience – our Church, that it has and will affect others:-

- We find it brings us friendship and love
- We want to keep it and let it grow
- We want to celebrate it together
- We want to learn more from others
- We want to share it with others like ourselves
- We hope that others want to join in with us
- We have found that my story is our story

## **Sharing Our Story**

*The aim of this section is to give emphasis to why God chose us in particular, and how others can come to know Jesus as our Saviour simply because we have introduced them to Him.*

*Ideally a story of how God has used you, with your skills would be best but if that is not possible the following is inserted as an alternative.*

“When the Church started to spread it was because some were prompted to move out of Jerusalem through fear of persecution and opposition. They were not running away but rather the Holy Spirit used their negative thoughts to spread the gospel to the wider world.

In the same way, the Holy Spirit used people, the most surprising people, to the maximum effect because of who they were or rather who they used to be.

Philip takes centre stage in Acts Chapter 8. His encounter with the Ethiopian official is one learnt by many of us at an early age, repeated often by many a speaker seeking to encourage Christians to share the gospel to those seeking to know about Jesus. However, there is another story in Acts 8 just as dynamic but seldom used. A story recorded by Luke amongst a rapid series of events as the church 'breaks out' from Jerusalem. It's the story of Philip in Samaria and his encounter with Simon the Sorcerer (Acts 8 9/13).

Simon practiced his sorcery in Samaria and by all accounts was very impressive; he amazed all the people (v9). Like many today, he boasted he was someone great, and all the people gave him their attention 'This man should be known as the great power' they exclaimed. He amazed them for a long time (v11). Then he met Philip, heard the good news, believed and was baptised. He then followed Philip everywhere.

Can you imagine the impact that this had upon the people who had looked up to Simon? For his followers to see him, following a man who belonged to the one true God. Can you sense the impact this person was having on his followers, who by all accounts adored him, praised him and saw him as 'The Great One.' The story of the conversion of the notorious Simon must have done much to demonstrate to the people of Samaria the true power of God's real love for His people everywhere.

The account also highlights where our testimony can have the greatest impact. For Simon it was to be in Samaria, where he would be known for his previous life and where he could now share the love he had

## **Barriers and Problems** (30 minutes)

*Ask everyone to get into three's and discuss the problems and barriers that they encounter when making relationships and sharing the good news (& your story)*

At the end of the time ask everyone to give feedback

**Where are the places of everyday conversation and refreshment where relationships are formed and deepened and how do we create opportunities for encounter?**

*Spend a few moments in open discussion. Examples could be at the library, tea dance, coffee morning, art/craft group.*

### **Input**

Think about the Samaritan Woman and Jesus— a story of "well-being".

Jesus and the woman engaged in a significant theological conversation - they talked about God and where to worship. He moved the conversation from an exchange about practical needs to a dialogue about spiritual health.

Jesus was non-judgmental in His approach. He took into account the reality of the situation. Can we do that without imposing our particular ethical view point?

Jesus did not patronise the woman and showed genuine interest in what she had to say. The quality of the conversation allowed her to see a new truth. He gave her recognition and worth as a human being and in doing so allowed her to recognise Him as the Son of God, the one who would make a difference to her life.

**Prayer Time** (5 minutes)

**Introduction** (8 minutes)

Welcome everyone and explain the outline of the session

Before we begin we need to think about why is it we want to share our faith and our story. Could it be because we care? We care about the person's salvation but we also care about that person and the quality of their life.

It shouldn't just be about filling pews in our churches, even though that is important in our smaller churches, because we should be into Kingdom Growth and not our church growth, which is good if it happens.

**Exercise** (10 - 15 minutes)

*In small groups of 4 or 5 discuss for 10 minutes the places that they meet people in their day to day lives.*

*Some examples for prompting:-*

Walking down the street to the shops

At the shops, post office, library, etc

Walking the dog

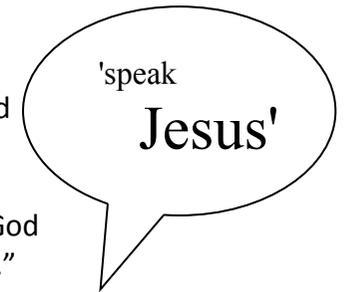
At the school gates

In work

In the church hall if you have community activities which the public attend

Each group to feed back after recording their responses on a flip-chart. Individuals can also take the opportunity to make a personal list of people for future use.

found through his spiritual rebirth. It should make us mindful of the lives we created for ourselves before we came to know of God's love and can be an indication of just what God wants us to do with Our Story."



When Jesus told His disciples to go out (Matt 28) he did not say to Norfolk, Suffolk, Cornwall, Scotland. Not even Manchester, Preston or Southport. 'To go to Jerusalem' meant to stay where they were. Nor did he say that when they arrived they were to go around knocking on doors, give out tracts, organise a major rally or start a Church with a big Sunday school. What did they do? They had fellowship one with another and they shared their Stories of Jesus. They thrilled in the teachings and what each understood by them. They learnt amongst themselves, eventually with the Holy Spirit's guidance to 'speak Jesus'.

Did they have a good time – too right they did! They learnt their skills – each one to himself, what worked with others, how to tell the stories of Jesus. They learnt about each other, their joys and sadness, they became a community and developed a community strength and courage as they were 'encouraged' and supported by each other. What one could not do, another realised it was their skill, when one could not understand, another helped with their knowledge. Today we call it a Church.

When we ask, 'What am I supposed to be doing with My Story?' we have an immediate answer from Jesus – "go to Jerusalem".

It is here where:-

- We can share our story with like minded people
- Familiar people we know, often our friends and family
- We feel comfortable in familiar surroundings
- People know our story and we can carry on where we left off
- I know I can trust others when needed

It may be that I am not describing what happens in your Church. Well, in part, maybe that's why we are here today. The early gatherings in Acts were very vibrant meetings – worship, prayer and study but most especially they were 'grow-bags' – places to develop relationships based upon what they and others understood of God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. We must identify skills and again develop.

Even in Jerusalem those early disciples had problems, but they had a plan – a vision that firstly they would work at 'Home'.

When we look at the early church recorded for us in the book of Acts, we find that a real benefit was achieved by them being 'together'. It was their fellowship that gave them an outlet to express their hopes and fears, fellowship that enabled them to share Jesus – what they understood and what caused them to wonder what Jesus was meaning for them. Fellowship that enabled them to learn through practice how to share Jesus.

# 3

## Sharing our faith and our story

### Aims of the session

#### To explore

- The people who you come into contact with outside of your church circle
- The barriers and problems that you encounter when making relationships and sharing the good news
- Ways of introducing Jesus/God/Church/Faith into the conversations that you have with non-church people.
- Where are the places of everyday conversation and refreshment, where relationships are formed and deepened?

#### To reflect

- The quality of the relationships we share
- The story of the Samaritan woman and her meeting with Jesus

#### To understand

- How do we create opportunities for encounter where we can share our story
- The contemporary context in which our relationships are formed
- Being "there" for the people you meet and having an equal, valued and caring relationship
- The importance of listening skills

### **Short Exercise (10 mins)**

*Again, sit with someone who you know and firstly write down what you feel are your strengths. Then ask the other person what they feel your strengths are, be honest and consider those surprising qualities others feel you have – they are God-given.*

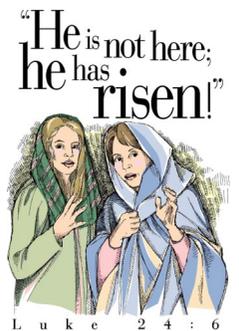
*If you have time, repeat with weaknesses.*

### **Preparing to Share Our Story**

In this session we realise our need to share our story and that we are not alone. Some have had their story and wanted someone to tell it to for a long time, maybe even years. Others maybe are struggling to get started, not knowing what to do. Well we have seen that the ‘appointed’ place to start is amongst other Christians, where we will find it easier and more comfortable with people who know us and we know them.

Now we just need to consider ‘Our Story’ and how we can present it because it is often how we handle ‘Our Story’ that can lead to our downfall— being prepared.

I wonder how many of the Israelites, who left Egypt, looked out of their tents every morning and saw the manna, but before they thought ‘food’ they thought ‘Oh good, God is still with us’! Our Story is about what God has, is and will do for us. That extends itself in this session to others in our church and beyond. Witnessing is allowing God to work in you and through you to others, we must never witness unless we feel ourselves





## The Sum of Our Story

*An open session to highlight the main themes that we have covered.*

Our Story should be one of:-

- Allowing it to be God's Story
- Allowing it to move on to others
- Allowing it to live in others as it lives in us
- Allowing Our Story to become Their Story
- Allowing God's Spirit to fulfil His purpose in 'Our Story' and become 'Their Story'.

It is 'Our Story' to tell, but its God's Story we share. Sharing is what we naturally should want to do – in much more ways than speaking.

Caring

Growing

Tell others of 'Our Story'

Before we received 'Our Story' it was shared, cared for, grown then released to us. We need to be ready to release it to others and the method is clear. We have to do the same, that's the only way it can become 'Their Story'.

You may well still be wondering – 'But why me?'

Watching a recent Songs of Praise Choir Contest, I noticed that one of the choirs gave the first verse to a soloist. It was a Welsh school choir and she was about 14 years old. A little nervously at first, she sang out gaining confidence as she went. Afterwards, the first

believe we have come here today to help ourselves and maybe others to know how to present that story. Equally I believe we know that the story wants to be released. We know that it's bigger than just us but we still hold back. Maybe we have struggled with this for some while and we have arrived at this point before and found we just cannot do what is necessary.

We all have that sense of wanting to do better, we have to do better – for ourselves, our church, those we love and those with whom we come into contact but especially for Jesus. I would rather want to remind us all, and it is the focus of 'Go and Tell' that we have a story to tell and it is we who have been asked to tell it in all the ways we determined earlier – love, actions, smiling as well as speaking of Jesus.

I would also want to remind us that it not 'Our Story' but God's.

He gave Jesus to us out of His love, a love that wants us to love Him in return. It's the Holy Spirit who I believe is prompting us to be here today and encouraging each of us to 'tell someone today' - which is why we are giving us all the opportunity to talk to each other about Jesus.

Again it's God's story and He wants us to tell it just as we can.

### **Short Exercise**

*In two's let us consider what each of us may need to help us to be prepared to share. There may be more than one item.*

*You may start with 'well I cannot speak, but I can do this or that'. This is fine but I suppose if you did not get round to looking at weaknesses earlier then maybe you can look at those now.*

*In addition, note down where you feel you should be able to overcome weaknesses, what you need, and whether you know someone who can help you. Again, ask the other person if you are right in believing you need that skill – again you may be surprised by their response.*

#### **Feedback**

*This will be based upon looking for weaknesses people feel exist. This may be within themselves, their Church or something else.*

## **Growing Our Story**

How do we make sure the same thing does not repeat itself?

Well we can be reassured as we look again at 'What am I supposed to be doing with Our Story'?

We are in good company – the disciples.

For example, Judas betrayed Jesus

Peter did not want to admit in the palace courtyard that he even knew Jesus

They all scattered and ran away from Jerusalem when Jesus was crucified.

They tried to go back to what they had been doing before – as if nothing had ever happened.

Does any of that sound familiar?

This time we have to grow ourselves as did the early Church. We have considered the role we have within our church and also the role our church has to develop us as Christians and sharers of the gospel.

- Our Story grew in the early Church
- Out of closed rooms, from houses into streets
- To other towns, regions, countries
- They were exposed to the same teaching, same Spirit, same God
- Our Story grew beyond themselves, out of the groups, out of the meeting places
- Because they knew it was bigger than them – they could not contain God's Story.

### **Short Exercise (10 mins)**

In groups or individually, let us now consider:-

*"What do you feel you need to do to establish within yourself the desire to share the Gospel and who do you feel can help you achieve that desire? Don't just think of 'Church' but rather be specific and use names."*

*If you feel that you cannot see where this support will come from then please speak to one of the team today.*